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REPORT ON THE CORNISH BRIDGE BUILDING, 45 BRIDGE STREET, WINDSOR, VERMONT

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The following report is based on an inspection of the building at 45 Bridge Street in Windsor, Vermont, on the afternoon of April 25, 2003. Also present at the inspection were the building's owner, Susan Richardson; David W. Wright, president of the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges; Stephen W. Weston of Winthrop, Maine, building and furniture conservator; and James B. Atkinson, president of the Cornish, N. H., Historical Society. One purpose of the inspection was to begin to assess the date, evolution, and character of the building. A second purpose was to consider the feasibility of rehabilitating the structure as a museum that will interpret architectural technology and the history of the Proprietors of the Cornish Bridge, the corporation that owned the property between 1826 and 1919.

Summary: The building at 45 Bridge Street appears to have begun its existence as a shop, store, or warehouse. At some point after it was erected, the building was converted to a dwelling through the addition of a brick chimney that includes a kitchen fireplace and oven, and two parlor fireplaces. Even after the conversion of the building to a residence, a front room appears to have been utilized as a store, office, or counting room. The building underwent a number of further remodelings during the latter nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, most notably around 1900 when its exterior doors and window sashes were modernized, and when various interior changes were made. Almost all the discernible changes to the building, except for the installation of modern plumbing and heating equipment, appear to have occurred during the ownership of the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge, which ended in 1919.

History of the building: This property, long owned by the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge, has benefited from careful documentary research by Pamela H. Sprague. As an employee of the New Hampshire Department of Public Works and Highways during the

early 1980s, Ms. Sprague was charged with preparing a report on the corporation's property in preparation for the rehabilitation of the Cornish-Windsor Covered Bridge.

In her thoroughly researched report, entitled "The Proprietors of Cornish Bridge and the Cornish, N.H.-Windsor, Vt. Covered Toll Bridge," Pamela Sprague provided the following documentary references to the building at 45 Bridge Street.¹

Soon after the second bridge opened [in 1824], the Proprietors saw fit to increase their real estate assets. Although history sheds little light on the details of the situation, deed records show the proprietors purchased the property at 45 Bridge Street in 1826.² The reason for the purchase is unknown and we may only speculate about the Proprietors' intentions.

The Proprietors purchased the property from Benjamin Burke who, up until the previous year, had been their toll gatherer. Burke had purchased the property ten years earlier from Beza Tucker, a Boston merchant.³ As soon as Burke paid off the balance of his mortgage with Tucker in 1826, he wasted no time in selling the property to the Proprietors through their treasurer, Edward R. Campbell.⁴

When Burke acquired the property in 1816, it included a store (probably part of the existing house) as well as a barn.⁵ The barn was probably removed shortly thereafter, since Burke was being taxed for only one building by 1817. The fate of the store is uncertain, as no further references to it are found among any of the records consulted to date. Tax records for this period refer to 45 Bridge Street as "The Burke House," implying that Burke probably resided there during the period he owned it, which was also the time period he was employed as the toll gatherer. While this does not preclude the possibility that Burke also maintained a store in his home, we find no specific information to indicate this was so. During 1817, Burke was taxed for his profession as a "mechanick," so perhaps he pursued this livelihood at 45 Bridge Street. The fact that Burke appears to have claimed 45 Bridge Street as his home is somewhat curious in itself, since we know that Mr. Burke's duties as toll gatherer were being partially compensated by the free use of the Proprietors' house, barn, and garden [on the] opposite [side of] the road at 42 Bridge Street. Perhaps this is simply indicative of the quality of the toll house accommodations. In any case, it does not appear that Burke officially collected tolls from his

¹ [Pamela H. Sprague,] "A History of the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge and the Cornish, N.H.-Windsor, Vt. Covered Toll Bridge, 1796-1943," [Concord, N.H.: New Hampshire Department of Public Works and Highways, 1984], pp. 16-17.

² Windsor, Vermont, Registry of Deeds, Town Clerk's Office, Windsor, Vermont, Vol. 13, page 461; Vol. 14, pages 14-15.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, page 228.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 13, page 461; Vol. 14, pages 14-15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, page 228.

house. Tax records clearly declare 42 Bridge Street as being the “Toll House” for this period.

The Proprietors’ purchase of the 45 Bridge Street property in 1826 may have been due to any number of reasons. The corporation was entering a period of relative prosperity and Benjamin Burke had just recently left their employ. Perhaps the Proprietors were seeking to secure rights to the property which they had previously enjoyed without fee while their employee Burke owned the land. Or perhaps the Proprietors operated a store or other business at this location, just as Burke may have been doing. We do know, however, that the Proprietors proceeded to lease the house to a long list of tenants from 1826 until [its] being sold in 1919 to the National Acme Company. None of these tenants appear to have had any direct connection with the corporation, again suggesting that the property had no direct relationship to the day-to-day operations of the toll bridge during this time period.⁶

In tracing the history of the building at 45 Bridge Street, Sprague further notes on pages 19 and 20 of her report that

The Windsor Grand Lists indicate that the tolls were still being collected from the property at 42 Bridge Street and that the house opposite (the former Burke House, 45 Bridge Street) was being leased, as it had been for several years previous. As early as 1838, records show that both of the houses owned by the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge were occupied by tenants.⁷ Thomas Donaghue resided in the house on the north side of the street (the Burke House) from at least 1838 to 1846.⁸ During 1847, an individual referred to as E. Brown leased the house on the north side and continued to reside there through at least 1850.⁹ The toll house on the south side of the road was occupied by tenants as well . . .

Continuing her chronology down to the company’s disposal of the building at 45 Bridge Street, Sprague notes on page 27 of her report that

During its last years in operation, the toll bridge was run basically as it had [been] for the past hundred years. During the early part of the 1900’s, the corporation continued to employ one toll gatherer and continued to lease the two houses adjacent to the bridge.¹⁰ Harry Corey

⁶ In a discussion of the third bridge on page 17 of her study, Pamela Sprague noted that the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge voted in 1849 to rebuild after the second bridge was destroyed by flood, selling all their unneeded real estate and building materials to raise cash. Despite this vote, “the Burke property was not sold, implying that it was certainly needed for their use in some unknown capacity.”

⁷ Windsor, Vermont, Tax Records (Grand Lists), Town Clerk’s Office, Windsor, Vermont.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Toll Keepers’ Journals and other miscellaneous papers from the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge, 1896-1935 (New Hampshire Historical Society).

leased the house on the north side of the street from approximately 1910 to 1919, when the Proprietors sold the house to the National Acme Company.¹¹ (Two years later, Mr. Corey bought the house from National Acme.) On the south side of the street, the toll house was being occupied by various tenants . . .

Ms. Sprague did not attempt a physical examination of the house. Rather, she collated and analyzed the documentary evidence to be found in the Windsor town records and in the records of the Proprietors of the Cornish Bridge. As noted above, Ms. Sprague determined that the first legal connection between the building and the Proprietors occurred when the corporation bought the property from Benjamin Burke in 1826. Ms. Sprague noted evidence that there was a store on the property at least as early as 1816.

The New Hampshire Department of Public Works and Highways employed a second investigator to carry out a building-by-building survey of all structures that might be affected by rehabilitation of the covered bridge. Christopher Closs of Closs Planning Associates submitted a draft request for a determination of eligibility for 45 Bridge Street on December 15, 1983. This document includes a description of the exterior and interior of the building, a summary statement of its significance, a bibliography, a series of plans that document land sales and subdivisions of properties along Bridge Street in the vicinity of the structure, a tabular summary of the Windsor “Grand List” tax records for the property, and photographs of the structure as it appeared in 1983.

Citing information provided by Mr. and Mrs. Otis Place, then the owners of the house, and by Katherine Conlin, then president of the Windsor Historical Society, Mr. Closs repeated a traditional belief that “45 Bridge Street is popularly held to be the first toll house associated with the original bridge crossing the Connecticut River between Cornish, New Hampshire and Windsor, Vermont. The structure was reportedly used as a toll gathering station between 1796-1806 and was reportedly the house of Jonathan Chase, entrepreneur and principal organizer of the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge (corporation).”¹²

Under the Summary Statement of Significance, Mr. Closs elaborates upon these traditional understandings.

Tax records reveal that the structure was erected by 1806.¹³ It is probable that the building was constructed as early as 1793, when Jonathan Chase purchased from Elisha Hawley a ten-acre tract of land on the west bank of the Connecticut River in Windsor, Vermont.¹⁴ Chase had successfully operated a ferry between Cornish, New Hampshire, and the Vermont community since 1784 under a charter granted by the New Hampshire

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Closs Planning Consultants, “Request for Determination of Eligibility, National Register of Historic Places, 45 Bridge Street, Windsor, Vermont,” December 15, 1983, “II. Property Name” (unpaged).

¹³ Windsor, Vt., Tax Records (Grand Lists). Town Clerk’s Office, Windsor, Vt.

¹⁴ Windsor, Vt., Registry of Deeds, Vol. 5, page 5. Town Clerk’s Office, Windsor, Vt.

Legislature. It appears that his vision of a toll bridge near the ferry site had materialized by June, 1793, when he petitioned the legislature in Concord for “a grant for the bridge.”¹⁵ By an act of the New Hampshire Legislature, the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge were incorporated in January of 1795, with exclusive rights to erect a bridge at the ferry site.

When the toll bridge opened on October 18, 1795, a facility suitable to the collecting of tolls had not been erected by the Proprietors. At the corporate meeting the previous day, it was voted to rent the house of Jonathan Chase for this purpose.¹⁶ While this arrangement was to have lasted only six months, tax records reveal that the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge were not assessed on “improved” property in Windsor until 1806, when a structure was erected on the site of the structure now identified as 42 Bridge Street.¹⁷

In 1805, the heirs of Jonathan Chase sold the property to Elizar Hubbard, who, in 1810, transferred ownership to Beza and Nathaniel Tucker. In 1816, Benjamin Burke, who had been appointed tollkeeper in 1811 and was to serve in that capacity until 1825, acquired the house and land. In 1826, having extinguished his mortgage to Beza Tucker and no longer in the employ of the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge, Burke sold the property to the latter, where it remained until 1919; in that year, the National Acme Company purchased it, ostensibly to supplement rentable worker housing.¹⁸

Both Sprague and Closs find in the documentary record a possibility that the structure at 45 Bridge Street may date from the early 1800s. The inspection of April 25, 2003, by contrast, suggested that the current building began its existence as a store or warehouse, perhaps about 1830. After its use for that purpose for a few years, the structure was remodeled into a dwelling through the insertion of a chimney that was designed for domestic use. The chimney of the house, designed with traditional fireplaces and a brick oven rather than relying on airtight stoves, seems unlikely to date after 1840. Thus, the documentary record of older structures on this parcel of land apparently refers to a structure or structures that predated the purchase of the property by the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge. Further discussion of these conclusions will be found at the end of this report, following a description of the datable features of the building.

Floor plan of the building: The building is a 1½-story, gable-roofed dwelling with a gable-end entrance facing Bridge Street to the south, and a second entrance approximately in the middle of its western wall. Its floor plan, as altered by the removal

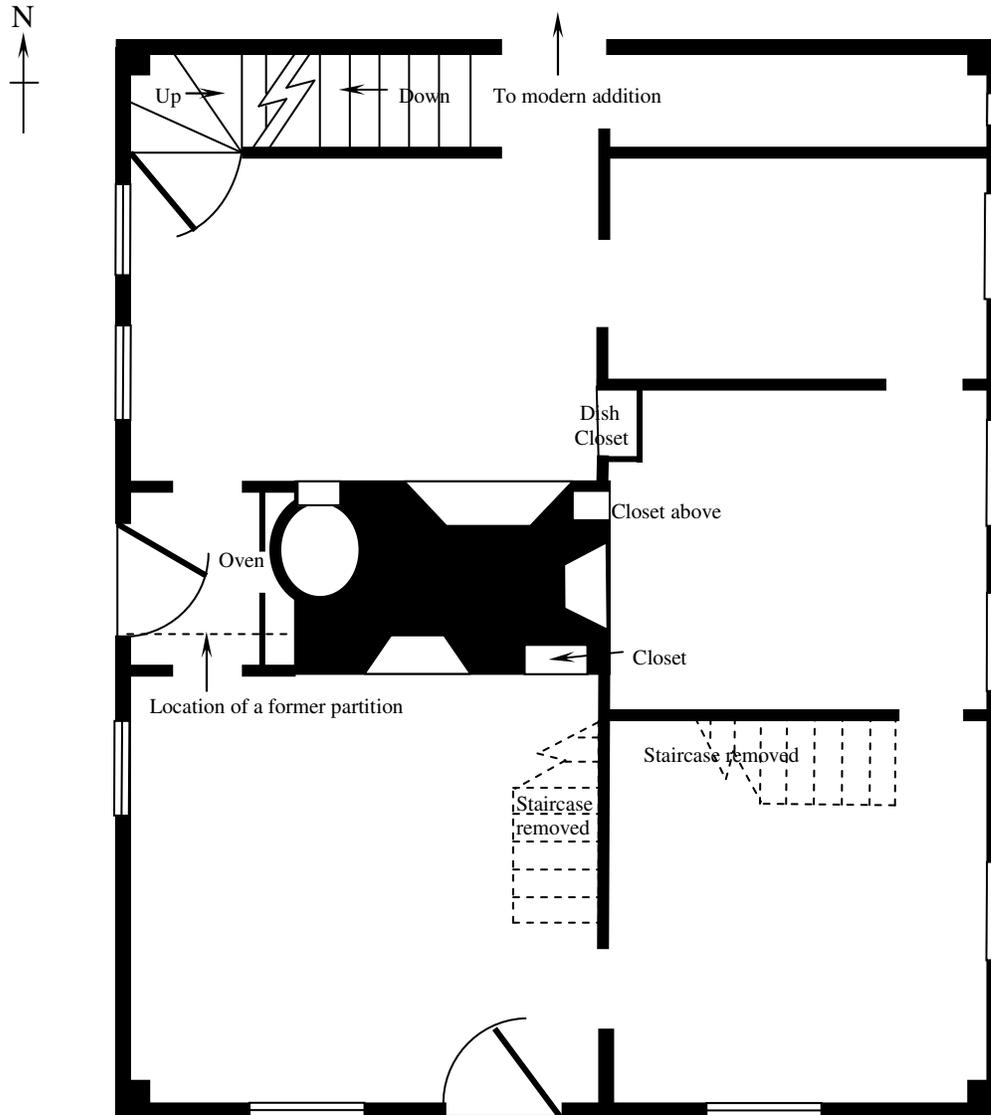
¹⁵ N. H. Secretary of State, Corporations Division; legislative documents pertaining to the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge: 1795 Laws of New Hampshire, Chapter 23.

¹⁶ Record of the Doings of the Proprietors—Cornish Bridge, 1796-1936. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N.H.

¹⁷ Windsor, Vermont Tax Records (Grand Lists).

¹⁸ Toll Keepers Journals and other miscellaneous papers from the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge, 1896-1935. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, N.H.

of certain modern elements during recent investigations, is approximately as shown below (not to scale):



Bridge Street

Building frame: Where it can be seen, the frame of the building was almost entirely sawn in a reciprocating sawmill. Sawn elements include the rafters and the first floor girders and joists. While the wall posts, studs, and braces are covered with lath and cannot be seen, it presently appears that the entire frame is the product of a sawmill.

As suggested on the plan above, it appears that the building has posts only in its four corners. If others exist, they have been hewn back flush with the wall surfaces, or cut off above window openings.

The roof frame of the house is composed of about ten pairs of common rafters. The rafters are thick planks, sawn with a taper, being deeper at their feet than at the apex of the roof. The tops of the rafters are half-lapped and pinned with treenails. The building has no ridgepole. Near the front of the house, a pair of secondary rafters has been added inside the gable rafters to support added roof boards that project well beyond the Bridge Street façade. This appears to have been done when an original close-boarded eave line was given the pronounced overhang seen on the façade today. This change was probably made when the building was converted to a dwelling, and was evidently intended to impart some suggestion of the Greek Revival style to the façade.

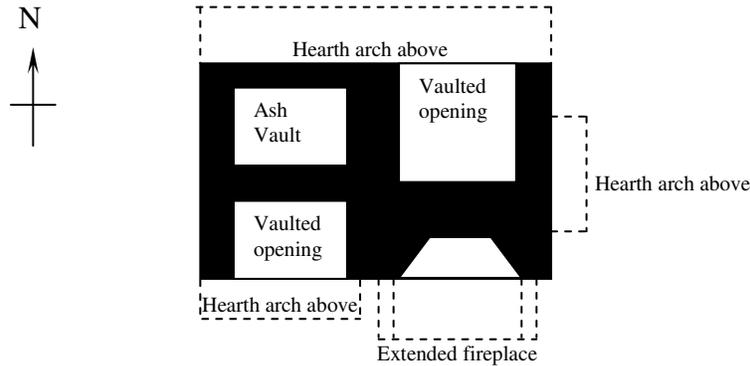
Chimney: The chimney is constructed of bricks that appear to be of medium hardness, laid in lime-sand mortar rather than the clay mortar that was common in wooden houses before the 1830s. A portion of the top of the chimney has been rebuilt using bricks of a different size and color from the originals, but the chimney retains its original bricks and projecting drip courses just above the roofline. The top of the chimney presently appears to be considerably lower than early nineteenth-century practice would dictate.

The chimney was carefully built by a mason who invested considerable skill and ingenuity in providing three fireplaces with their forehearths and an oven on the first floor, a fireplace and ash vault in the basement, and convenient recesses for the small closets mentioned below. Because such elaborate chimneys fell out of disuse when airtight stoves and kitchen ranges became common during the 1830s and later, we may assume that this chimney dates from 1840 or earlier.

As seen in the basement, the chimney base is rectangular in plan. It has three principal piers, spanned by two brick vaults. One of these vaults creates an arched opening beneath the kitchen fireplace. This void extends through about half of the depth of the chimney base, but is closed by a brick wall. Beyond this wall, built against the southern face of the chimney base, is a projecting basement fireplace of modern construction, fitted with a loop of iron pipe and perhaps contrived as a means of heating water. Behind this modern fireplace is an old fireplace that is recessed into the original chimney base.

West of this basement fireplace is a second, narrower vaulted opening that does not extend through the full depth of the chimney base. North of this arched opening, the chimney base appears to be an enclosed hollow box. An ash chute in the western jamb of the kitchen fireplace apparently connects with this receptacle, which would have functioned as an ash storage vault. A small opening at the northern base of the vault permits ashes to be removed.

The forehearths of the three first-floor fireplaces are supported by brick arches that spring from the upper faces of the chimney base. Because the girders or joists that trim these forehearths are located some distance from the walls of the chimney base, the brick arches rise to an apex and then curve downward to meet the trimmers, rather than being merely the usual quarter-circle of brickwork.



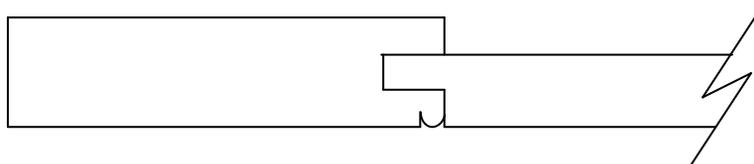
Plan of chimney base

The fireplaces on the first floor are of a shallow Rumford pattern. The face of the fireplace in the southwest front room, together with the flanking brickwork beneath the closet to its right, appears to have been painted or whitewashed repeatedly, a treatment that is not characteristic of domestic fireplaces except in kitchens. The finish bricks of the hearths of the three fireplaces have been removed to permit floorboards to be laid in these areas.

The oven stands adjacent to the kitchen fireplace on the west side, as shown on the floor plan. Its domed top is parged with lime-sand mortar, and is visible through the door of a small closet set into the wall opposite the western entrance of the building.

Interior joinery: The house retains interior doors of several styles, ranging in type from the period around 1800 through the 1830s. Several of these doors have been detached from their jambs and are stored in the building. Without carrying out paint color analysis to determine the color sequences of various rooms, it is presently impossible to know whether these doors were always in the building, or were introduced from other buildings.

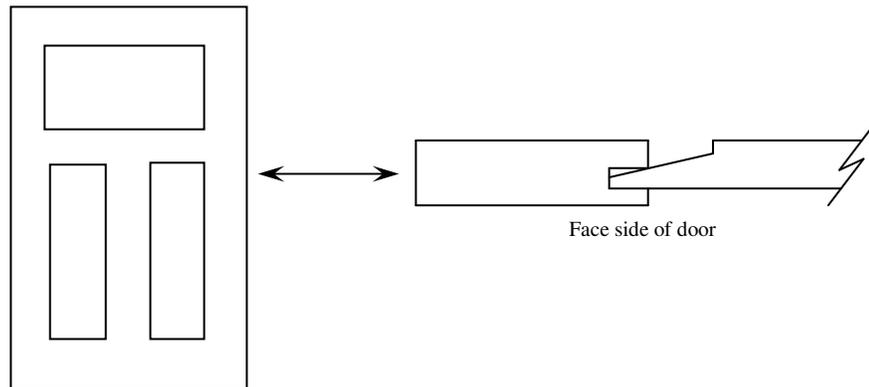
Among the several styles of door that remain in the building are two four-panel doors of the following cross-section. One of these is hung on strap hinges to close off the foot of the rear staircase to the second floor. The other is detached from its jambs. These four-panel doors are of a somewhat uncommon type that was seen across northern New England from about 1810 to about 1830, usually in less pretentious houses:



Four-panel doors

An examination of paint sequences on these doors and in various rooms of the house may reveal whether these surviving examples were installed when the building was converted to domestic use, or whether they preceded the current domestic layout.

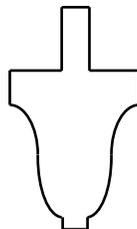
The house also has two chimney closets that bear small doors of a different style. As seen on the floor plan above, one of these closets opens above the dome of the oven. The other is set above the flank of the chimney above one corner of the kitchen fireplace, but opens into the central room on the eastern side of the house. The similarity of these two doors suggests that they have been in their current positions since their installation, although the door in the west central room has been reversed and re-hung with its never-painted interior face exposed to view. Both doors are of a pattern that stylistically suggests a date after 1830:



Small closet doors

For the most part, the remaining old interior joinery is simple in character and suggests the Greek Revival style of the 1830s or later.

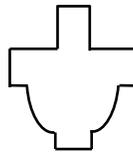
All window sashes remaining in the upper stories of the house have been changed to two-over-two units of a modern muntin profile:



Muntin profiles, first and second floors

This change of sashes appears to have occurred at the same time as other early-twentieth-century modernization in the house: the installation of beaded “ceiling board” wainscoting in the kitchen and on the ceiling of the front room, the replacement of the front and side exterior doors, and possibly the finishing of the second-floor bedchambers, which appear to be plastered over modern, circular-sawn lath.

In the basement, however, a heavy board and batten door formerly opened onto the yard and the adjacent riverbank on the easterly side of the house. To the south of this door, a pair of horizontally sliding window sashes remains in place to light the cellar room that is furnished with the fireplace. These sashes are of an early nineteenth-century pattern, as shown below. If original to the building, they may reflect the pattern of the windows that were replaced around 1900 on the first and second floors.



Basement window sash muntin profile

Evolution of the building: Basing our analysis on the various elements described above, we may develop a theory concerning the evolution of this structure. Although we lack the advantage of full visibility of all hidden framing elements of the building, we were able to study certain elements that were hidden from view during the early 1980s, when Sprague and Closs attempted to date the structure while the building was still occupied as a residence by owner Otis Place.

Normally, the presence of a building frame that is composed almost wholly of sawn members would suggest a date of the 1830s or later. There are, however, examples of all-sawn building frames dating from the 1820s, or even earlier, in certain locales in northern New England. And at present, we have not seen enough of the wall framing of the building to know whether it may have an earlier character than the roof frame. It is possible that the sawn roof frame was added to an earlier building carcass constructed of hewn members.

If the four-panel doors described above are found to be original to the building, they suggest a date of 1830 or earlier. There is at least one other four-panel door now in the house that is of a somewhat more typical Federal-style pattern, again suggesting that the interiors of the structure, as originally built, had some doors and other joinery that may have been retained and reused during later remodelings.

As noted above, this building frame is unusual in having no intermediate wall posts that define a chimney bay. Unless such posts are well hidden, the frame seems to possess

only four corner posts of moderate size. The remainder of the exterior wall fabric may be supposed to have lighter studs, presumably sawn, placed at unknown intervals.

The chimney of the house, described above, was skillfully built and provides an unusual number of amenities for a small stack in a small building. The combination of a basement fireplace and ash vault, three first-story fireplaces, and an oven with a separate flue required virtuosity on the part of the bricklayer. The chimney also signals the conversion of what had evidently been a store or commercial building to domestic use, although, as noted above, the character of the southwest front room suggests the continued use of that room as a store or office even after the current chimney was installed.

Because the building frame evidently did not provide for a chimney of this size and elaboration, the chimney intersects, and in some cases severs, framing elements that stood in the way of the stack. One such element is a floor girder in the basement. This apparently had to be cut to make room for the chimney base, and was thereupon supported by a brick partition built beneath it. A second severed element is a tie beam, visible in the closet above the oven, as described below.

It is not easy to date a chimney such as this. Technologically, the chimney could date anywhere from about 1800, when side ovens with separate flues became popular, through the 1830s, when air-tight stoves and cooking ranges generally supplanted open fireplaces. The oven in this building appears always to have been closed with a sheet iron stopper rather than fitted with a cast-iron door and damper, again denying us a datable feature. The chimney is, however, built entirely with lime-sand mortar. Except in brick houses, most chimneys were cemented with clay-sand mortar through the early 1800s. Thus, the choice of mortar suggests a relatively late date, probably after 1830.

The two three-panel closet doors illustrated above provide access to recesses that relate to the current chimney. If we can assume that these doors were installed when the present chimney was built, it seems fairly certain that the chimney must date somewhat after 1830. The panel pattern, combining horizontal and vertical panels, and the unmoulded stiles and rails, are both characteristic of the early Greek Revival period.

We can presently know little about the floor plan of the building before the present chimney was constructed. Above the oven, as seen through a closet door in the side entry, the chimney intersects and interrupts (or perhaps supports) a lateral tie beam that bears one visible mortise for a now-missing stud. The now-missing partition defined by the beam and stud is indicated on the floor plan (above) near the western entrance.

The tie beam supports the ends of split board laths, apparently attached to the beam with cut nails. These laths bear a remnant of a plastered ceiling, blackened with soot. This evidence suggests that the front of the house (or at least the southwest front room) had a plastered finish before the current chimney was built. If the visible soot did not originate in smoke leakage from a stovepipe that later passed through the fireplace wall (a possibility), then this front room must have been heated by a previous fireplace, located

in a still-unknown position. Possibly the building had a smaller, non-domestic chimney that stood in the approximate location of the current chimney.

With all these features before us, we may propose a theory on the evolution of the structure. This theory will be subject to modification or correction as closer study discloses more about the datable elements of the building, and as more detailed scrutiny of deeds and other documents allows a better understanding of other buildings that apparently occupied this lot from the early 1800s. Deed research should ideally be coupled with research on the tenants of the property from the time of its purchase by the Proprietors of the Cornish Bridge in 1826. Since the building was leased to tenants immediately and continuously, the occupations of these tenants could have some bearing upon the uses and adaptations of the structure.

Based on the nature of the building frame—apparently wholly sawn (except probably for the long wall plates)—and on the fact that it lacked a central chimney bay defined by wall posts, we may theorize that the frame originated as a store or commercial construction about 1830. We may assume that the four-panel doors illustrated above, being of a pattern that was current in 1830 and earlier, were installed in the building at the time of its construction. Further proof of this may be offered by paint layering. If these doors retain the paint color sequences of the rooms in which they hang (or were hung until recently), yet also have a series of earlier layers of paint not seen on surrounding, newer woodwork, we may assume that the doors predate the remodeling of the house for domestic use.

Based on the blackened plaster ceiling visible above the front fireplace, we may assume that the front room, and perhaps the entire front portion of the building (now subdivided into two rooms) had a plastered ceiling from the time of construction. The accumulation of soot on this old plaster surface seems to indicate that this front room was heated by a fireplace prior to construction of the current chimney.

Although we do not yet know the occupations of the tenants of 45 Bridge Street following purchase of the property by the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge in 1826, we may assume that the building the Proprietors erected on this site was intended for use as a store, just as an earlier building on the property had apparently been utilized by Benjamin Burke, the toll gatherer from whom the Proprietors purchased the property.

Based on the nature of the chimney, we may further hypothesize that the store building was remodeled into a fully-developed dwelling by 1840 or before. As noted above, this assumption is based on two observations. First, the present chimney does not appear to be original to the building, since it intersects and interrupts several structural members that ordinarily should be continuous across the structure. Second, the chimney was clearly built without reference to stoves for heating and cooking. Although the chimney later accommodated stoves, it was clearly built for traditional heating and cooking by open fireplaces and a brick oven. Heating and cooking by open fireplaces began to give way to heating and cooking in stoves during the 1830s and 1840s. The relatively late date of this chimney, probably after 1830, is also suggested by the use of lime-sand

mortar throughout, rather than the clay-sand mortar that had been traditional through the early 1800s.

Evidence of the joinery around the chimney further suggests a date after 1830. As shown above, the two closet doors that were installed in conjunction with this chimney are later and simpler in style than the four-panel doors that are found elsewhere in the building. These closet doors distinctly reflect the Greek Revival style, rather than the federal style seen in the four-panel doors.

It is probably significant that Pamela Sprague discovered that “Thomas Donaghue lived in the house on the north side of the street (the [former] Burke House) from at least 1838 to 1846,” followed by an E. Brown, who lived there at least through 1850. Donaghue’s period of residency, in particular, matches the apparent date of the installation of the present domestic chimney and its closets.

Despite the fact that the building appears to have been converted from a store or commercial building to a dwelling around 1840, the front room retains the appearance of a store or office. As noted above, the whitewash on the face of the fireplace and its flanking brickwork suggests a non-domestic use. So does the oldest of the joinery that survives in the room, including the unusually wide chair rail and the board-and-batten cabinet door to the right of the fireplace.

Similarly, the atypical installation of beaded “ceiling board” on the room’s ceiling around 1900, commonplace in railroad depots but seldom seen in houses, suggests a non-domestic use of this single room as late as the turn of the twentieth century. Perhaps further research will reveal the uses of this room through the latter half of the nineteenth century. The heated basement room below is also uncommon, and presumably also had a specialized non-domestic use.

Suggestions for further research: Researchers Pamela Sprague and Christopher Closs traced the title to the parcel of land at 45 Bridge Street back to the early 1800s, a time before the apparent construction date of the present building. They further found references to various tenants who leased the property from the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge from 1826 until sale of the parcel in 1919. Given the theories presented above about the original commercial use of the building and its subsequent adaptation to a fully equipped house, it will be important to scrutinize these deeds and lease agreements for evidence that may shed light on the occupancy and uses of the building. Other sources may supplement the information to be found in the deeds on file in Windsor. Tax records and United States census returns for each decade through 1910 or 1920 may offer information about occupants, their families, and their trades. The corporate records and miscellaneous papers of the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge, especially the fairly extensive records at the New Hampshire Historical Society, may shed important light on the building if examined with the current questions in mind.

As noted above, paint color research should also reveal whether the four-panel doors in the house, which are of an older style than the woodwork surrounding the chimney and

also of an older style than some of the door casings in the house, have always been installed in their present locations, and also whether these doors have a longer paint history than the woodwork around them. This information should help to establish whether or not these doors are relics from an earlier interior layout of the building.

Feasibility for museum use: The present building at 45 Bridge Street appears to be entirely the creation of the Proprietors of Cornish Bridge, apparently dating from just after the Proprietors' purchase of this property in 1826. If the research suggested above reveals the evolution and uses of the building after 1826, that story will be inextricably related to the enterprises of the Proprietors and to the three bridges that have stood adjacent to the property since the first bridge of 1796 was destroyed in 1825. Thus, the building will serve as an excellent medium through which to portray the enterprise of the Proprietors.

As noted throughout this report, the building at 45 Bridge Street also contains rich evidence of its own evolution, much of it not yet fully examined or understood. Once it is documented, the complex and interesting evolution of the building will make the structure an excellent laboratory and museum of architectural and technological change.

Full understanding of this building will require the investment of more time, both for physical investigation and for documentary research. But once the full story of this building and its lot are known, that story will enrich the history of the adjacent bridge, which is one of the most significant spans in the United States.

Thanks to the presence of a modern and flexible addition on the rear of the building, further investigation of the structure may be extended over a considerable time. The addition will provide for many future uses and programs without interfering with the older portion of the building or requiring its hasty examination or adaptation.