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REPORT ON THE LAKESIDE COTTAGE JOHN HAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE NEWBURY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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The John Milton Hay Estate is a 163.5-acre tract of woodlands, fields, lawns, ornamental gardens, and structures located on the eastern shore of New Hampshire's Lake Sunapee. Long a popular location for summer homes, Lake Sunapee is noted for its 1,092-foot elevation above sea level, its pure waters, and its scenic setting, which is dominated by the nearby 2,743-foot peak of Mount Sunapee. The buildings on the Hay Estate include a large summer home, a gatekeeper's lodge, a lakeside cottage, a garage, a boat house and wharf, and some small water-supply structures; all contribute to the character and significance of the property.

The land of the estate slopes from a hilltop on the east toward the lake on the west, exhibiting gradients of between three and twenty-five percent. The land surface is irregular, strewn with glacially-deposited boulders of granite, and underlain with bedrock ledge that reveals itself in frequent outcroppings where exposed by glacial action or by subsequent erosion. The topsoil is a sandy loam, ranging in geological classification from "very rocky" to "extremely stony." The subsoil is glacial till of varying depths. The shoreline of the lake is largely defined by a border of glacially-rounded stones and boulders, although there are about three hundred feet of sandy beach at the southwestern corner of the property.

The land supports a northern forest of mixed hardwood and softwood species, including among the hardwoods sugar maple, red maple, red oak, basswood, American beech, black locust, tupelo, aspen, and black, yellow, and canoe birch. Softwood species include eastern white pine, eastern hemlock, red pine, and red and white spruce. Some of the larger trees on the property, estimated to be over two hundred years old, are remnants of virgin climax forest that were inaccessible to nineteenth-century loggers and thus escaped harvesting during the age of agriculture and logging.

Some distance from the main house and reached by a winding woods road is a lakeshore cottage built by Clarence and Alice Hay in 1914. Standing in a small clearing near the shore, this cottage was designed in the colonial revival style by architect Prentice Sanger. It is one-and-a-half stories high and has an L-shaped floor plan that embraces a small enclosed garden, with a central pool, between its two arms. Long covered with sawn wooden shingles, the roof was

recently re-shingled with asphalt “architectural” shingles. The walls are clad with split wooden shingles, painted white.

The main building of the cottage resembles a low “Cape Cod” house and has three evenly-spaced six-over-six windows on its south elevation. Its east and west gable ends each have a three-part window placed at the center of the first story, with a semicircular opening, filled with a fan sash, in each gable. A large brick chimney rises within the structure, piercing the roof at its intersection with the northern wing. Extending north from the main building is a second unit, also a story and a half in height. This portion of the cottage has a central chimney and an asymmetrical east-facing facade with a doorway and portico near its center, flanked by a single window south of the door and two windows north of the door. The western elevation of the wing has four evenly-spaced windows that provide views of a garden terrace. The roof of this portion of the building is pierced by two dormers on both the east and west slopes. Attached to the northern end of the wing is a small gable-roofed unit.

Within, the southern section of the cottage is a single spacious room with glazed corner cupboards, window seats beneath its eastern and western windows, a plate rail surrounding the room, and a large fireplace projecting from its northern wall. The walls of the room are paneled below a chair rail and have a crown moulding at the ceiling. The ceiling is interrupted by two deep, cased “summer” beams that flank the fireplace and extend north-and-south across the room. Other rooms in the cottage have plastered walls and well-detailed wooden trim.

The area immediately south and west of the cottage is leveled as a terrace and surrounded by a wall composed of low brick piers that support panels of heavy wooden lattice in alternating patterns. Within this enclosure, brick paths and seating areas are interspersed with beds of daylily, iris, and other hardy perennials. The area embraced by the two main components of the cottage forms a sheltered west-facing area that has a circular pool much like that in the stone-walled garden enclosures of the “Pan Grove” north of the main house.

Northwest of the cottage, on the shore of the lake, stood a private dock with a nearby boat house. The boat house was a small, gable-roofed structure of framed construction, with double doors on the landward side. The building was sheathed in waney-edged pine slabs, applied horizontally.

As originally constructed, the main Hay house and the lakeside cottage were accompanied by service structures that no longer exist. A letter of 1896 refers to enlargements then being carried out to an already existing stable. The stable stood just west of the existing garage building and is indicated on Prentice Sanger’s topographic plan of 1915. As enlarged in 1896, the structure was a rectangular building with a long wing to its west and an open shed attached at right angles to this wing.

The letter of 1896 also mentions an ice house, newly constructed that year.

Sanger’s topographic plan of 1915 shows that a detached rectangular woodshed (seen in early photographs to have been a simple gable-roofed structure) stood some distance east of the end of the lengthened service wing of the house.

Family photographs also reveal the former existence of a rustic log cabin north of the main house, between the dwelling and the walled gardens. This is thought to have been constructed by Clarence Hay after he received title to the property in 1906 and to have been used by him as an off-season camp before the lakeside cottage was built in 1914. The cabin is shown on the 1915

plan of the property. The building appears to have been removed during the 1920s as the increasingly formal landscaping of the grounds made its rustic appearance seem out of place.

Prentice Sanger was principally a landscape architect. His work at the Hay Estate from 1915 concentrated as much on the grounds as on the buildings. Clarence and Alice Hay were likewise knowledgeable and enthusiastic gardeners who worked for decades to transform the original rock-strewn pasturelands and irregular topography around the house into cultivated lawns and gardens.

After inheriting the property in 1906, John Hay's son, Clarence, seems to have done little to alter the topography around the house, although by 1909 he had built the walled gardens north of the dwelling.⁷ Only after Clarence Hay and Alice Appleton were married in 1914 was an effort made to groom the pastureland around the main building. Photographs taken in the summer of 1915 show the rocky land around the house plowed and planted to potatoes as a temporary crop; photographs taken the following summer show a smooth, mowed lawn around the building.

Architect Prentice Sanger's first principal landscaping effort near the main house was to redesign the principal approach. Previously, the western elevation, facing Lake Sunapee, had been considered the principal facade of the building, and access to the property was gained principally by private launch or by commercial steamer. Sanger's original baseline plan of 1915 shows that the driveway from the public road to the east (now New Hampshire Route 103A) approached a stable and garage north of the house and then passed on to the new cottage at the shore of the lake. Only a vaguely-indicated branch drive approached the northeastern end of the service wing. Sanger proposed a two-part change to this plan. First, he planned a new and better service road that curved around the eastern end of the service wing and approached it from the south, removing service traffic from the vicinity of the main dwelling. In the spring of 1916, Sanger followed this idea with the second part of his proposal: a plan for the development of a landscaped driveway court within the area embraced by the main house and the service wing. Family photographs show that this court was completed by the end of the 1916 season. Development of this court symbolizes the transition from water to automobile transportation and represents the increasing importance of the eastern facade of the house, formerly regarded as the rear elevation of the building.

At the same time he was redesigning the approach to the house, Sanger was commissioned to design a set of fieldstone farm buildings for an expanded dairy herd. Located south of the main dwelling, the farm buildings and their surrounding lands were sold in 1945 when the dairy operation became too costly to maintain. This portion of the Hay Estate is not included in this nomination.

After the new automobile court was completed in 1916, further refinements to the landscaping until the 1940s consisted almost solely in development of the gardens by Alice and Clarence Hay, sometimes with Sanger's advice. In 1924 and 1933, stone retaining walls west of the main house were rebuilt to permit the creation of the flat terraced levels, which were planted with perennial beds and roses. Other rose beds were planted within the stone walls that enclose the terrace south of the house. About 1926, Clarence Hay began construction of the alpine rock garden that descends the hillside south of the house. The garden was gradually elaborated and refined through 1935 or 1936. A major hurricane in 1938 damaged the woodlands surrounding the house but, in general, the buildings and grounds were at the peak of their development during the years prior to World War II.