



## NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

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### **SMITH FARMHOUSE (MEAD BASE) SANDWICH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

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The Smith Farmhouse is a wood-framed dwelling that standing over a full cellar. The house stands on a southerly-sloping site north of Sandwich Notch Road. The main dwelling faces south and measures 36'-8" long by 26'-7" deep. Attached to its eastern end is an early wing that measures 44'-3" long by 16-0" feet deep. Attached to the eastern end of the wing is a modern (1965) commissary measuring 16'-0" by 24'-0", with an added walk-in cooler, and a laundry addition (c. 1988), measuring 12"-0" by 15'-0".

The cellar of the Smith Farmhouse is fully excavated and walled with native, glacially-rounded fieldstone, laid dry. The cellar walls extend a few inches above grade to support the sills of the house. The walls have no split granite underpinning, although the first floor girders are supported by split granite columns. Basement walls are mortared above grade. The cellar floor is unpaved. A large areaway and opening provide access to the basement on the western end of the house.

The main house is a story-and-a-half kneewall Cape Cod dwelling or "classic cottage" dating from about 1850. The building has a five-bay façade and is two rooms deep. Its central doorway is strongly Greek Revival in character, with a four-panel front door, five-light, full-length sidelights, wide wooden pilasters supporting a deep architrave, and a deeply projecting cornice with a heavy ogee crown moulding. Exterior window casings are flat, with head casings that project slightly beyond the outer edges of the side casings and have a shallow wooden cap. Window sashes are six-over-six, and both the sashes and the doorway sidelights have thin ogee-profile muntins that are characteristic of the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

The western end of the house has three windows on the first story, spaced somewhat asymmetrically to provide two windows for a former front room and one for a former

rear room; the partition separating these former rooms has been removed. On the second story, two symmetrically placed rooms light a front and a rear room.

The eastern end of the house is partly covered by a wing and its porch. This end of the house has no windows except for a single second-story window in the gable end, placed just above the front slope of the roof of the wing, and a small, centrally-placed attic window.

The rear elevation of the house has three windows, placed as needed to light the western first-floor room, the bathroom in the center of the house, and the kitchen; the latter has an exterior doorway adjacent to its window. The bathroom and kitchen windows appear to be modern, but the rear window of the western room matches other old windows in the house.

The house is fully clapboarded. Moderately wide corner boards support an architrave composed of a single, deep board. The architrave supports a deeply projecting cornice that defines both the horizontal and raking eaves of the house. Short but deep cornice returns mark the corners of each end elevation of the house. The cornice is composed of a deep plancia, a shallow fascia, and a flat, diagonal crown moulding with a small, square fillet at its base.

The frame of the main house is not exposed to view except in the cellar and attic. Evidence indicates that the carcass of the house is composed of four bents, each having a front and rear post and a heavy wooden girder or anchor beam that runs through the depth of the house beneath the second floor. The wall posts rise about three feet above the attic floor, supporting a roof frame that creates slanted ceilings in the second-story bedchambers. To resist the outward thrust of the rafter feet, the anchor beams in the central two bays of the house are connected to the upper ends of the posts by heavy, diagonal wooden ties, sawn in a reciprocating sawmill. The ties on the westernmost of the two middle bents lie within closets, but the ties of the middle bent on the east project into the single bedchamber that lies on the eastern end of the second floor.

The attic is lighted by a single, small, six-over-six window in the upper portion of the eastern gable. The roof frame of the main house is composed of four sets of heavy rafters that are connected by purlins. The rafter couples are placed at approximately equal intervals in the roof frame. While the end rafters lie atop the end wall bents of the house, the two inner pairs of rafters do not align with the wall posts of the wall frame, but rest on the wall plates to the east and west of the inner posts below.

The rafters were hewn with a broadaxe. Some of the purlins are hewn; other purlins, and the ridgepole, are spruce poles. Collar beams connect each pair of rafters at about mid-height, supporting the ceilings of the second story bedchambers and stairhall. Roof sheathing is sawn in a reciprocating sawmill, and is applied vertically, running from ridge to eaves. Former openings in the roof, now covered with sheathing, indicate that two small stove chimneys rose through the house approximately in the centers of the eastern and western structural bays. Corresponding openings, now boarded over, are visible in

the floors of the second story. The main house presently has a single chimney, a stack of concrete blocks that rises just inside its eastern end wall, penetrates the roof behind the ridge, and provides a connection for a coal stove in the meeting room in the adjacent wing.

The first floor frame of the house, visible in the cellar, has largely been replaced. Some of the floor joists are second-hand hewn timbers that appear to have been taken from a barn or other outbuilding; others are of mixed origins. The floor joists are reinforced by heavy, creosoted trestles that run through the house from front to back at right angles to the joists, supporting the ends of the latter. Chimney bases, or chimney locations in the first floor membrane, are not readily visible in the cellar.

The Smith House has a central stairhall, flanked originally on the first floor by two rooms on the east and two on the west. The partition that divided the western side of the house into front and rear rooms has been removed, but its location, and that of a doorway connecting the former front and rear rooms, remain visible in the floor. The dwelling retains its subdivision into two rooms on the east, with the rear room being a kitchen. A room that subdivides the rear portion of the central stairhall is now used as a bathroom.

The second story of the house retains two bedchambers on the western side of the staircase. The room to the east of the staircase is a single chamber that extends through the depth of the house, and may never have been subdivided.

Most walls and ceilings of the house are now covered with gypsum board or other sheet materials; the walls of the stairhall are covered with plywood or composition-board "paneling." The ceiling of the southeast room on the first floor is sheathed with beaded ceiling board. Only a few closets on the second floor retain lath and plaster. In these areas, lathing appears to be composed of individual, circular-sawn laths.

Throughout the first story, the house is characterized by simple interior joinery that expresses the Greek Revival style. Door and window openings are surrounded by simple, square-edged, hand-planed side and top casings, with the ends of the top casings projecting slightly beyond the outer edges of the side casings. Doors have four panels, are hung on loose-joint butts, and have Blake's patent cast iron thumb latches. A number of door openings lack doors, but several doors are placed on the floor joists of the attic of the wing and probably could be returned to their original locations. Of the doors that remain in use, several have no mouldings around their stiles and rails, but have feather-edged panels on both sides.

The most elaborately finished area in the main house is the central stairhall. The staircase has a heavy turned newel post, with a similar post at the second floor. The balusters are also turned above and below square sections that are placed at about one-third of their height. The patterns of both the newel post and the balusters suggest a date in the late nineteenth century. The staircase may have been rebuilt at that time, possibly in conjunction with such other work as re-plastering or construction of the wing to the east of the main house.

Extending easterly from the eastern elevation of the main house is a long one-story wing. This structure has been converted on the interior into a meeting room with vertical pine wall sheathing and with a fireplace of concrete blocks and bricks. The frame of the wing, visible in its attic, is circular-sawn. The roof is framed with common rafters and has corresponding joists at their feet, suggesting an approximate construction date in the late nineteenth century. An internal gable wall in the attic, with a boarded gable window, reveals that the wing was once shorter than its present length.

Extending along the southern façade of this wing is a sheltering porch with a roof of shallow pitch. The front of the porch is supported by four columns, each composed of a pair of square wooden posts connected by wooden spacers that give the illusion of a single wide posts with long voids at its center. Bandsawn brackets of ogee outline connect these posts with a beam that supports the feet of the exposed porch rafters. These posts suggests a date in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

Like the main house, the wing is clapboarded. Two of its south-facing windows have been replaced by modern units with wide picture windows flanked by double-hung sashes, but original sashes in the wing retain a muntin profile very similar to that seen in the main house.