

William Pepperrell House
State Route 103
Kittery Point
York County
Maine

HABS No. ME-128

HABS
ME,
16-KITPO,
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLIAM PEPPERRELL HOUSE

HABS No. ME-128

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Location: Pepperrell Cove, on Maine Highway 103,
Kittery Point, Maine

Present Owner: Mr. Joseph Frost, Kittery Point, Maine

Present Status: Private dwelling of Joseph Frost and family

Significance: Structure and interior finish in good state of preservation or accurately restored. Long association with notable owners and visitors.

Chain of Title: The house was built on one acre deeded to Col. William Pepperrell November 14, 1682, on the occasion of his marriage, by his father-in-law, John Bray. When he died the house passed to his son, also William Pepperrell, Baronet, in 1733. The Pepperrells were Tories, and by the end of the Revolutionary War the Baronet died, his wife moved to the Lady Pepperrell House, his grandson and heir, William Sparhawk Pepperrell, fled to England, and the estate was confiscated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and sold at auction, 1793. Captain Samuel Smallcorn bought it, and sold it in 1793 to Major Thomas D. Cutts who opened the house as a tavern and carried on a fishing business. In a few years, through mortgage, it passed to his kinsman Richard Cutts. Elder Jesse Meader and Jesse Frisbee bought it in 1834. Meader and Frisbee's heirs sold it to Charles G. Bellamy and Thomas O. Hoyt in 1845. Bellamy and his descendants kept the house until 1945 when they sold it to H. Martyn Frost, father of the present owner. (Moses Safford, Historic Homes of Kittery, and Mr. Joseph Frost.)

Date: ca. 1682-1683

Architect: Unknown

Builders, original plans, etc: Unknown. The original house was two stories, nearly square, 34 by 45 feet on the ground floor with a sharp roof and two chimneys. (Safford, Historic Homes of Kittery.)

Alterations:

About 1720 or 1730 the second William Pepperrell changed and enlarged the house; he added a 15 foot bay to each end, making the house 75 ft. long, changed the roof from a sharp to a curb or gambrel roof, added two chimneys, put Lutheran windows on the south side, and finished the inside, including the fine paneling which still exists, and details such as the mahogany-grained beehive cabinet in the dining room. Traces of formal walks in patterns of beach-stone can still be found under the turf on the south, and were probably installed about 1730. According to Joseph Frost, the northeast corner of the basement was a wine cellar, separated by stone partitions from the rest of the basement and entered only through a trap door in the kitchen floor. He believes it was built about 1730. Moses Safford describes the interior and setting about 1750 in more detail: "The 'hall' on the left of the main entrance and chamber above it were elaborately finished, and in the days of the baronet were hung with family portraits and those of his contemporaries and official associates.

"The sitting room and chamber above it on the right was little less attractive in finish and decoration. Adjacent to the former was a library patronized by the Reverend Doctor Benjamin Stevens, whose aid in its selection was the natural service of a respected pastor and intimate friend. The entrance hall was spacious but plain in finish. The stairway was broad and easy of ascent, being decorated in carved balustrades. A paved walk of cobble-stones extended around the house and led to the barge landing directly in front, at the lower end of which were large dressed stone steps.... He enclosed a park on the west of the way leading to the wharf with a wall six feet high, which was surmounted with a picket board fence of the same height on the shore side, and a wall of corresponding height on the other sides, in which were kept moose, deer and a variety of game." About this time, the wharf, four stores, and the family tomb, the tablet for which was prepared in London, were built about the property. The tomb, still existing north of the house, "was built in the front center of the 'Great Orchard', which was planted with apple and pear trees."

About 1830 the brick ovens in the kitchen were made into closed ovens. Mr. Frost reports that the Bellamys were careful to preserve the old house; for example they added locks to doors but always kept the original locks, too, and kept the blocks carefully cut from paneling to accommodate their stove pipes. In 1849 the Bellamys made significant changes; they removed

12 feet from the east end and 13 from the west, and took down the two newer chimneys. The dining room paneling on the east was moved up to form the new east wall although a door (now painted over) in the paneling suggests it was never the outside wall, but some other room must have been easternmost. A north-south hall was left on the west end, and a west door installed. New window glass was put in all but some of the north window; and the window frames were overlaid with new wood (now removed). They also changed the overdoor to square headers but it is now restored. They added a storm porch on the east, which crumbled off by the 1930's, and built an open stair from the east end of the second floor to the attic, and a stairway in the south-west corner from first to second floors. The Frosts built another storm porch in the same spot in 1950, made the open stairs into hidden stairs to the attic in 1945, and replaced the southwest stairs with a bathroom in 1945. The Bellamys, having eleven children, also installed many partitions in rooms and about stair hall, for privacy and better heating, all of which have been removed. The Bellamys added sinks and one faucet to the kitchen but no other plumbing. The early Bellamys used the present kitchen (northeast corner, first floor) for a kitchen but later ones used the southwest bedroom. Some time before 1880 they removed the block trim that had been under the cornice outside. Mr. Frost says the house's front rooms are still much as the Pepperrells built them, but the back rooms' interior finish is mainly from the Bellamy's. Original floors are still in the living room, master bedroom (SE) and possibly the front hall.

The next group of changes occurred after 1945, when the Frosts bought the house. They removed Bellamy additions of partitions, hardware, window framing, etc., and put back all Pepperrell paneling, finishes and detailing such as the overdoor. In 1946 they closed up the stair between first and second floors at the northeastern corner of the house, and installed a bathroom in this corner of the second floor. They removed a similar stair in the southeast corner and added bathrooms on both floors there. In 1945 they wired the house, installed forced air heating with floor vents, and plumbing in the kitchen. They also put new sub-timbers beside and under the original ones in the basement. The Bellamys had blocked up the north door and the Frosts, because of drainage problems, blocked up the opening in the stone

wall, which had led to the door. (Safford, Historic Homes of Kittery, interview and photographs of Joseph Frost.)

Historical Events
and Persons:

The Pepperrell family were landholders owning up to thirty miles of estate along the Maine coast in the 18th c. Col. William Pepperrell, the first of the family, built up a great colonial shipping firm. His son, Sir William Pepperrell, led the capture of the French fortress of Louisbourg, and was the first American to be made a general in the British royal army and the first to be made a British baronet. He was also president of the governor's council for many years, and acting governor of Massachusetts for a few months. The next William Pepperrell was grandson of the first baronet; his father was Nathaniel Sparhawk and he changed his name to Pepperrell when he inherited his grandfather's fortune. He served as royal councillor and was made a baronet in 1774. Shortly after, he went to England where he led the Loyalist cause, and he never returned to America.

During the Revolutionary War the mansion was a barracks for American troops, and then occupied by Joshua Fernald, a patriot returned from the war. In the 19th century Senator Bellamy entertained many political figures at the house. His son, John Haley Bellamy, was the greater carver of figureheads and eagles. Mark Twain, William Dean Howells and Winslow Homer were among the visitors to the house. In the 20th century the house has entertained the poet Robert Frost, a distant cousin of the present owner (Frost, Colonial Village, and Mr. Joseph Frost.)

Views:

In John Mead Howells' Architectural Heritage of the Piscataqua (Architectural Book Publishing Company, New York, 1937) figs. 167, 170, and 171, are photos of "the widest and deepest stair landing that the writer has observed in any early house" and the great stair hall, also the stair landing from above, and also wood paneling in the west drawing room. Fig 166 is a photo of the house from the front right. Opposite the title page of Emma Nason's Old Colonial Houses in Maine (Augusts, Maine, 1908) is a view of the west end of the house. The Architectural Review (July 1918, pp 13-15, plate 11: "Survey of Existing Colonial Architecture in Maine" by Frederic Hutchinson Porter) reproduced photographs of the dining room door and the Pepperrell Tomb, and a sheet with partial floor plan, elevation of north side of parlor, profiles of moldings, and an end elevation of the Tomb. The Frosts own many photographs

of the house including two daguerrotypes made just after the 1849 changes, but none before the changes. A reproduction of an old and not entirely accurate engraving shows the house with two extra bays and four chimneys (owned by Frosts). The Frosts also own copies of the 1886 site plan by Moses Safford. A photo of 1880 shows the block trim under the cornice gone. Another shows the east side without an ell.

Sources:

Interview August 1965 with Joseph Frost, Kittery Point, Maine. Photographs and deeds in possession of Mr. Frost. John E. Frost, Colonial Village, Cabinet Press, Kittery Point, Maine, 1947. Moses A. Safford, Historic Houses of Kittery pp. 118-121, in Maine Historical Society, "read before the Maine Historical Society Dec. 7, 1893." Emma H. Nason, in Old Colonial Houses in Maine, Augusta, Maine 1908, pp 6-12, describes the love affairs, tragic deaths, etc. of people early connected with the house, and quotes a description of the trousseau of Sir William Pepperrell's daughter, Elizabeth.

Prepared by Martha Kingsbury

HABS Maine III
1965

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. This structure is an unusually well preserved mansion of the mid 17th century, especially valuable for its excellent stairhall, paneling, original hardware and fragments of early framing.
2. Condition of the fabric: Excellent

B. Technical Description of the Exterior:

1. This is a two story wood frame house on the north side of the Piscataqua River near Fort McClary, the Bray House, Sparhawk Hall, Congregational Church and the Lady Pepperrell mansion. It has a gambrel roof, two brick chimneys and a small entrance shelter or "dingle" at the east end of the structure. The exterior is wood shingles, simple paneled pilasters at each corner, boxed cornices parallel to gambrel, flush fascia at gambrel ends. The exterior is painted brown with white trim. Over all dimensions are 34'-0 x 43'-0.
2. Foundations: Low foundation walls are clay brick in running bond above grade, random rubble below grade to bed rock and/or hard pan. Miscellaneous brick piers. Fireplace foundation is brick with flat round arch.
3. Wall Construction: Exterior faced with sawn wood shingles of various widths, 4" weathered, in even courses. 8" water table, paneled 12" pilaster at each corner with simple molded cap. Shingles are over horizontal siding.
4. Structural system: Post and beam. Hewn beams, mortise and tenon joints. One beam for first floor has worked edges in ovolo profile. Joints are pegged or/and nailed. Fragments of an early gable roof are visible in the attic, where the gambrel lower pitch has been obtained by scabbing a secondary piece of timber to the outside of the original chord. The upper pitch of the gambrel is obtained by removing part of the original chord and introducing five new segments. Purlins run between roof trusses. Sheathing is horizontal, double boarded.

5. Stoops: Flagstone
6. Bulkhead: Rubble masonry walls, two wood board doors.
7. Chimneys: Two square brick chimneys painted white except for two corbelled courses painted black.
8. Doorways and doors:
 - a. South (river) entrance: Pediment, broken cornice, pulvinated frieze, fluted rectangular pilasters. Door is paneled one side, six panels, top two with bull's eye glass. Modern storm door to exterior, 12 lights.
 - b. West entrance: Similar to south entrance Six panel door one side.
 - c. North entrance: Similar to west entrance, four panel door.
 - d. South doorway into dingle: Broken cornice, fluted pilasters. Six panel door one side.
9. Windows: Single hung 12/8, 8/8, 6/6. Window in stairhall, north elevation, has round head section of seven lights with twelve below, over twelve; molded semicircular cornice. Large quantities of old glass. Muntins vary in thickness, with heaviest in north elevation. North window openings are smaller than on the south. Basement windows of four lights are fixed.
10. Roof: Gambrel roof, asphalt shingles. Wood trim at pitch break. Wood shingles on dingle roof, modified gambrel. Boxed gutter, metal and wood down spouts. Boxed cornice with recessed soffit, molding between cornice and frieze, returns over pilaster caps at gambrel ends. No overhang at gambrel ends of roof.

C. Detailed Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Access from bulkhead and a stair below central stairway. Full and crawl spaces under most of house. Misc. brick piers, wood posts and pipe columns. Modern heating equipment. Cement floor.
- b. First floor: Principal access through south entrance into central stairhall with doorway west wall to parlor, dining room to the east,

and to two small rooms beneath the stair landing, with access to north doorway and to basement. A small hallway extends across the west side of the building to receive the west doorway, cut off for a toilet, and to the library at the northwest corner of the building. There is a tight L-shaped stair from the library to the second floor, located beneath the attic stair from the northwest bedroom. The library has a doorway into the two small rooms beneath the stair landing and to the kitchen at the northeast corner of the building. The kitchen has a doorway into the dingle and a tight stairway in the northeast corner to the second floor (closed off).

- c. Second floor: The stairhall at the second floor provides access to rooms at the southwest and southeast corners. The ceiling of the stairhall 2nd floor is a flat vault with coffer insert terminated with flat triumphal arch at second floor hall. The southwest room is separated from the northwest room by a fireplace, walls, and closets. Short halls, one at the west end of the building and one interior with stairway to first floor library. The southeast bedroom is separated from a bathroom by a closet and fireplace wall. A short hall on the east provides access to the bathroom and to a northeast corner stair to the kitchen first floor.
- d. The attic is a large single space, partly divided by chimneys, truss chords, a partition and partition fragments.

2. Stairways:

- a. Central stairway: Right hand "U" shaped stair opposite front entrance, square newels, flutes and stopped flutes, three differing carved balusters per tread (Portugese twist, turned, and fluted); molded hand rail, curved and broken to receive newels at turnings; 6" risers 11-3/4" tread; boxed string decoration first run; boxed string and soffit at second run.
- b. Stairway to basement: Unimportant

- c. Stairway from library to second floor: L shaped stair with wedged-shaped treads, 10" risers, 10" treads.
 - d. Stairway from kitchen to second floor: Corner stairway closed off to serve as pantry, 1st floor; closet, second floor.
3. Flooring: Wood floors; stairhall and west hall, first floor painted black and white in squares at diagonal. Boards of various widths, floors painted black, grey, brown and plastic covering.
 4. Ceiling finish: Plaster in all rooms.
 5. Walls: Walls are plastered, paper on painted finish, or wood paneled and painted white, off-white, green and ochre. Wood flush and/or paneled wainscot.
 6. Room finishes, by room:
 - a. Stairhall first floor:
 - (1) Floor. Black and white squares on diagonal, on wood board flooring.
 - (2) Walls. Paneled, two feather-edged panels vertically, molded chair rail. Paneled wainscot below stair hand rail, plaster and paper above.
 - (3) Ceiling: Plaster
 - b. Stairhall second floor:
 - (1) Floor: Black wood board floor
 - (2) Walls: Paper on plaster, wood paneled wainscot. Flat triumphal arch springs from pilasters at head of stairs. Painted cherubs at each side of arched window head at stair landing.
 - (3) Ceiling: Vault and coffer over stairway, paper on plaster, wood cornices and plastered coffer ceiling
 - c. Parlor:
 - (1) Floors: Wood boards painted black
 - (2) Walls: Paneled, painted grey, two panels vertical with molded chair rail. Panel round-head door at right of fireplace reflected by paneling at the left.

Details include fluted and stop-fluted pilasters, 2 stepped faced. Doors are six and eight panels, original hardware. Heavy molded cornice with recessed soffit.

(3) Ceiling: Plaster

d. Dining room:

- (1) Floors: Wood boards painted brown.
- (2) Walls: Paneled, painted green. Two panels vertical, molded chair rail. Door fragment, 6 panels, in east wall. Bee hive cupboard at right side of fireplace. Six panel doors, original hardware.
- (3) Ceiling: Plaster painted white

e. Library:

- (1) Floor: Wood board painted black
- (2) Walls: Wood paneled wainscot, cabinets and bookshelves painted ochre. "Parson cupboard" over fireplace. Door behind bookcases and cabinets with lights into room beneath stair landing.
- (3) Ceiling: Plaster painted white

f. Kitchen:

- (1) Floor: Plastic covering. Trap door (covered) led to wine cellar (former)
- (2) Walls: Plaster
- (3) Ceiling: Plaster

g. Southeast bedroom:

- (1) Floor: Wood boards painted black
- (2) Walls: Wood paneled, two vertical panels, molded chair rail, painted ochre. Six panel doors, some original hardware.
- (3) Ceiling: Plaster. white

h. Southwest and northwest bedrooms are similar:

- (1) **Flooring:** Wood boards painted grey
- (2) **Walls:** Plaster and papered. Wood panel wainscot and chair rail.
4, 5 & 6 panel doors
- (3) **Ceilings:** Plaster

7. Trim: Excellent trim throughout, detailed in this report by location. In general,

- a. 3 panel interior window shutters in north and south windows, four shutters per opening fold into reveal each side.
- b. Pilaster design consists of paneled base, fluted and one and two stepped faces reeded shafts. Molded surrounds of fireplaces and panels are in combinations of ovolo, cavetorus, bolection, etc. All arched openings have paneled soffits and simulated keystones. The carved balusters of the central stair balustrade are of especial value.

8. Hardware: Unusual amounts of original hardware including "L" shaped strap hinges on river side door, brass box locks with knobs and escutcheons. Hardware is contemporary with structure.

9. Heating:

- a. Modern hot air system oil fired
- b. Fireplaces in all major rooms, two with dampers, all in working condition. Masonry faces are marbelized, delft tile, or painted brick. Hearths are brick or 8" ceramic tile. 19th century oven hardware in kitchen.

10. Lighting: Modern electric. original brass chandelier in dining room and library.

D. Site:

1. This structure is located on the north shore of the Piscataqua river. Route 103 is to the north; partly enclosed by low masonry wall.
2. **Outbuildings:**
 - a. Garrison or block house, 1734, not included in survey, moved to site by present owner.
 - b. Counting House, later John Bellamy's wood carving shop, is one and half story wood

frame building.

- c. Character: modern
- d. Cribstone docks at foot of slope are the original Pepperrell wharf.

Prepared by: N. Blair Reeves
HAB Coastal Maine
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