

A brief description of the condition of the Parker Cooper's Shop

Parker Farm LN Open Space

Baboosic Lake Road; Amherst, NH 03031.

November 5, 2020

General description and condition

The 15 X 18 ft. building is a vernacular timber framed structure dating from mid-nineteenth century (c1840). It is aptly described as a “shop” rather than a shed or other purpose-built farm structure. It appears to have been used as a cooper's shop as remnants of hoops and other items suggest. The structure has had at least one generation of remodeling, likely in the mid-20th century. There is no evidence to suggest that the building has been moved, or is in its original location. The foundation is rubble field stone that has partially collapsed on the east side.

The present condition of the building is poor. The rear roof has fallen in due to a leaking roof that over time rotted the rear plate causing the rear rafters to collapse.

The timber frame is of second growth eastern white pine likely harvested on the Parker farm. The hewing for the frame is coarsely done suggesting that it was either done by an inexperienced worker or was not considered an important enough structure to warrant more careful work. The joinery however, is well done with clear joint layouts accurately cut and fit. The timber frame joinery is described as “Scribe Rule” style where each component piece is fitted to its unique location. This style of framing is a bit outdated, as most timber framing in this 19th century period is cut using a system of joint layout called “Square Rule”, a system where similar components such as braces are cut the same and can fit in all locations. Square Rule is easily identified by reduced sections in the timbers at the joinery site to create all the same size timber throughout the frame. The suggestion here is that the framing carpenter was continuing to use the older, more traditional framing style.

Many farm buildings are timber framed with horizontal scantlings used as “nailers” for vertical wall sheathing similar to the adjacent “Corn Crib”. This building was framed with vertical studding with horizontally applied sheathing and a full flooring system in the same way as a standard dwelling of the period.

The stud spacing is unusually wide and has made it difficult to understand where the original door and window placements were, but the current configuration shows a substantial remodeling that is clearly 20th century work. Double shed doors were installed on the road side and several windows were installed on the west and south sides. The new circular sawn sheathing and the asphalt shingle siding are likely from post WWII period. The roof sheathing is vertically sawn and original.

The interior of the building is divided in two spaces with a more finished space on the west end that has its own entrance, a plastered ceiling and walls. The plaster on the exterior walls is crudely done as a single layer on sawn strip lath (typically 20th century). The wall plaster is also curiously odd as it is plastered between the studs rather leaving the face of the studs exposed. The collapsed plaster ceiling is of better quality, but also likely dates from the same time. The plastering suggests that the space was heated and possibly used as a living space for a “hired hand “. There is no partition between the two sections remaining, but there may have been one to complete that side of the room. The east side is unfinished with the entrance through the double doors. The east gable wall also shows signs of a previous stove chimney, but no brick work remains.

Going forward

The condition of the building severely limits the possibilities of reuse. It is incapable to be moved as a whole since the structure is so compromised. There is enough information to dismantle and reconstruct the missing components, but the cost of such a restoration would be as expensive or more than creating a new structure.

It is also unclear what the end use would be for such a structure. Until that that is determined it is difficult to describe plans for reconstruction. Unfortunately, the window for opportunity to save the structure may have come and gone, and the best course may be to demolish the building as it is increasingly becoming a safety hazard and liability for the Town.

If the building is to be saved, there must be immediate action before the winter season to stabilize the structure from further deterioration by constructing a temporary rear roof to protect the remaining fabric. This could be a simplified roof constructed with dimensional lumber and plywood or sheet metal roofing.

Photos



North Elevation



East Elevation



South Elevation



West Elevaton

Interior Photos



Rear plate
rotted due to
long-time
roof leak



North (roadside) hewn plate and rafters with original roof sheathing.



South rafters collapsed



Remains of coopered ware



South west corner showing plaster between studs



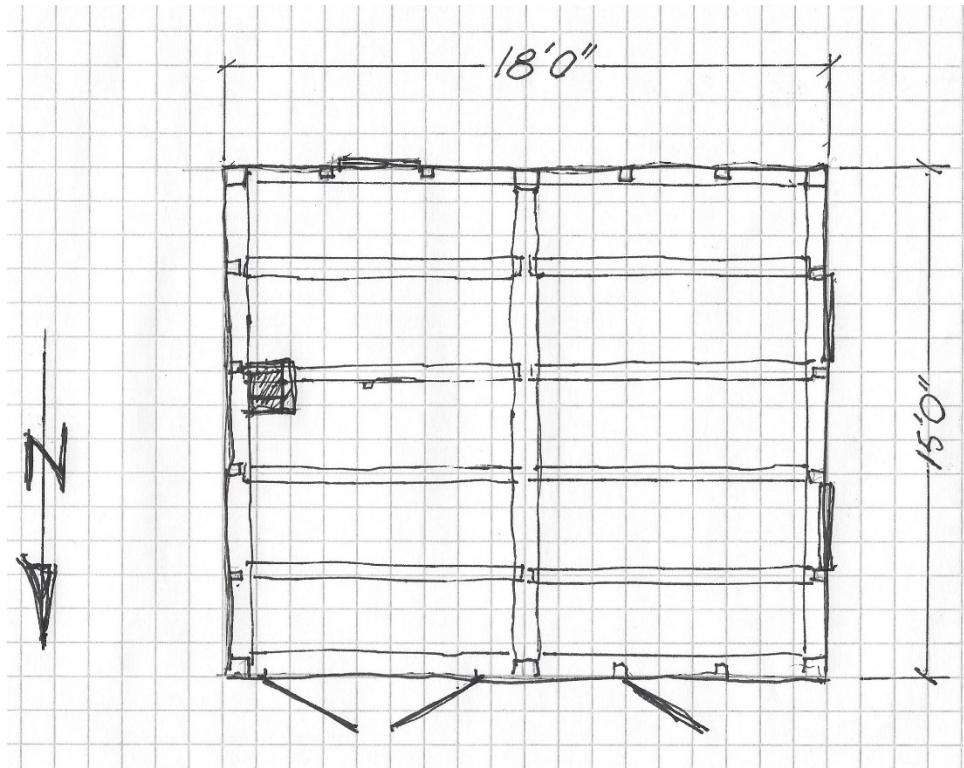
West gable end showing collapsed plaster ceiling and roof



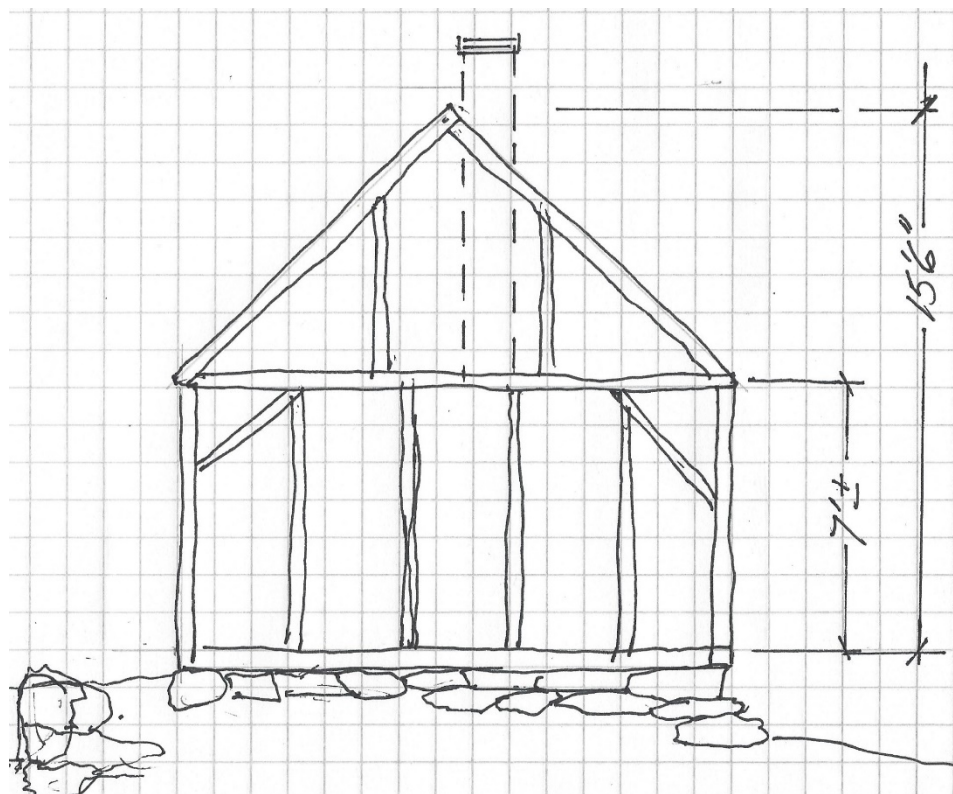
Typical hewn attic floor joist cog joint



20th century circular sawn sheathing (East end)



Typical plan



Typical section

(Snapshot of J. Parker Farm, Baboosic Lake Road, Amherst, NH)
(Reference: 1858 Amherst, NH Town Map)



(Snapshot of J. Parker Farm, Baboosic Lake Road, Amherst, NH)
(Reference: New Hampshire Stone Wall Mapper- Corn Crib and Cooperage- November 2020)

Latitude/Longitude (Cooperage): -71.588; 42.873

