

**Observations
on the
Reverend James Keith Parsonage
and
the 17th Century
in West Bridgewater, Massachusetts**

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I want to thank the Old Bridgewater Historical Society for allowing me to poke around the Keith Parsonage on July 9, 2016. The visit prompted me to search for answers to numerous questions that I had regarding the house and 17th century West Bridgewater in general. I thought I would share my findings with you, although much of this you probably already know. I find that it helps me to process an assortment of information if I organize it and write up something. This study is also personal for me as my wife is a descendant of Reverend James Keith, through his son Joseph.

Bridgewater was founded in 1656 and the town eventually needed the services of a pastor for their flock. Their first minister was Benjamin Bunker, but he only remained in the town from 1660-1661 or 1662, and declined the invitation to settle among them. Bunker was the son of Judith and George Bunker of Charlestown. He was born in 1635 and graduated from Harvard in 1658. He became a full member of the church in Malden on April 29, 1660, and was ordained as pastor in that town on December 9, 1663 (Corey 1899: 238). The time in Bridgewater appears to have been his first ministerial work after college and may have never been intended, at least by him, to be permanent.

The Town of Bridgewater, in an effort to entice a new minister, one who would remain in town, decided on December 26, 1661 to build a house on town land for a minister, and to freely give the house and land to the minister that shall live and die among them. Construction on what would become the Keith Parsonage probably began the following spring of 1662. Spring is the most common season for building timber frame structures, as the wood that is hewn for the main timbers is green and full of sap at this time. Working green, versus dry, seasoned wood, is easier and after the green timbers are framed, they all dry at the same rate and become locked together, to the point that, over 200 years later, they often require excessive means to separate them, even after the wooden pins (treenails/ trunnels) are removed.

The house probably remained unoccupied for two years, and possibly unfinished, until after May 13, 1664, when the town voted to employ two persons (John Willis Sr. and John Amos) to finish the chimney and hearth with stone, clay, and 200 bricks. The bricks were to be used for the back, hearth and the oven, and the two men were licensed to find all the materials- the clay (for laying the bricks and maybe the stack), stones (possibly for the chimney base) and the bricks. The quantity of bricks approved would not be enough to build an entire chimney, hearth, and an oven, so a portion of the hearth or chimney, at least the base and maybe a portion of the stack within the frame of the house, may have been stone or clay with the visible parts (hearth walls, back, and the oven) being brick. Alternately, the chimney may have been wattle and daub and the bricks were used for the oven. A house as small as this parsonage would not typically have had more than one hearth, and the one that it did have would have been in the main living area, the hall, serving as a heat source as well as the location for cooking. It is also possible that there was only one hearth and that the 19th century transcriber read it as "hearths" instead of hearth. Review of the original record would help to solve

this problem. In any event, no matter how many hearths they built, the men were to be paid 20 bushels of corn for this work.

A few months latter, on October 11, 1664, the building was probably unoccupied and the town voted to pay to cover/ roof the house a second time and to put glass in the windows, provided they can get the glass and the boards for the roof (Puffer 1889: 7, original town records page 43). The roof of the building may have been thatched or covered with poor quality boards and the windows may have not been present at all, boarded up as no one lived in the building, or they may have been of oiled paper, as was sometimes done in the earliest "pioneer" houses. Since no one was living in the house, the windows were probably just open holes.

Latham and Puffer record that on February 18, 1664, the town "...being met together, doth declare and hold forth that the town did resigne and make over to Mr. Keith, the house and grounds belonging to the minister's lott or purchase, according to the tenour of the agreement made betweene Mr. Keith and the towne, and give him free liberty to possess it." (Puffer 1889: 8 from the original town records page 44). As this is recorded a page later than the October record where the roof and windows needed to be seen to, I suggest that that the February agreement with Keith occurred in 1665 and not 1664 and that in the original records it may be recorded as 1664/65 due to the difference between the Gregorian and Julian calendars. The original records should be examined to determine if this is the case. If it is, then it means that the town fixed up the house to make it livable prior to Keith living in it. The alternative would be that the town agreed that the house would be his, and then waited eight months before fixing it up for him. I think the former scenario is more likely.

The parsonage lot measured 12 acres in size- two of the original settler'souselots of six acres each. Acreage in the 17th century was measured in long strips half pole in breadth and three in length (83 x 492 feet). Six acres would measure 498' x 492' while 12 acres would measure 996' x 492'. We know from his will that he was also granted an additional 10 acres at some point, making his total 22 acres. This additional 10 acres was probably to the north of his first grant, as the original lots in the town were laid out parallel to the Town River. Looking at a modern map, his 22 acres, if his house was in the center, may have lain approximately where the adjacent farm with the possible location of the first burial ground and meetinghouse being just east of it (**Figure 1**).

Keith's original house appears to have been a simple, two-story structure measuring 16' east to west by 17' north to south (**Figure 2**). It would have looked similar to the Browne House in Watertown, Massachusetts. The front door was on the south side, facing the river, and the second story was probably accessed by means of a ladder, possibly located inside the front door. The hearth was probably along the east wall, north of the summer beam, and the whole first floor would have been used as a traditional hall- a multipurpose room where daily activities and sleeping took place. The chamber, the second floor, would have been used for storage and for sleeping and was probably originally unfinished. The building may have had a lean to extension on the north side, but this is pure speculation and is not recorded anywhere.

In Massachusetts Bay, Abbott Lowell Cummings has noted that "a significant portion of surviving seventeenth century two-room, central-chimney houses...commenced life as dwellings of single-room plan, so even though the parsonage seems small to us today, it was typical of the period. Clearly the immediate need for shelter under pioneer conditions...seems to have dictated for many of the settlers at every class and economic level a simple single-unit dwelling for

a start, to be soon enlarged as their situation in life improved.” (Cummings 1979:22). Basically, a starter home. Cummings found that the earliest surviving houses of one room plan in Massachusetts Bay had been enlarged several times in their existence. The expansion began longitudinally and then laterally with a lean to addition to the rear (Cummings 1979:23). Paul Chase, when he reviewed 17th century probates, found that in Plymouth Colony most houses through 1675, appear to have been of a single room design (Chase 1985: 60). Chase also noted that one-room houses appear to have been more common for individuals with estates valued at or under 90 pounds, the amount which appears to mark the difference between the wealthy and the common people in seventeenth century Plymouth Colony (Chase 1985: 62).

In Massachusetts Bay, single bay cottages were common throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth (Cummings 1979: 22). A 1640 contract stipulated that the house to be built was “16 foot long and 14 foote wyde...the Chimney framed without dawbing to be done with hewen timber.” (Cummings 1979:22). Cummings found that of the dwellings whose dimensions were recorded in documents from 1637 to 1706, 39 were single-bay cottages with only two being less than 15 feet square (Cummings 1979: 22). Seventeen of the measured from 22-28 feet long and 18-20 feet wide (Cummings 1979: 22). These small houses appear to be limited to individuals with limited means with estates ranging from £15-163 (Cummings 1979: 22). This was not always the case though, as deputy to the General Court John Whipple also had a single-bay house (Cummings 1979: 22).

James Keith is believed to have been from Scotland, perhaps Aberdeen, and possibly having been born in 1643. He may have studied at Marischal College in Aberdeen, where it is said that his name appears on the 1657 roll (at age 14) and is believed to have arrived in Boston in 1662. Most of this information came from Ziba Keith's 1889 *A Genealogy of the Descendents of Benjamin Keith*, which is the earliest reference to his Aberdeen connection, although the author states that his name was not found on the rolls there (Keith 1889: 11). The original reference to his name being on the 1657 roll could not be found, and maybe someone could furnish an original document reference.

Latham states that in 1678 the house was enlarged by means of an 18' x 34' addition to the east side of the original house, creating a classic New England saltbox style house- two stories high on the south side with a one story ell on the north side and a long, sloping rear roof. This enlargement was recorded in the town records: “The towne being mett together the twentieth of Desember 1677, Did accor & Agree to give frely to Mr. Keith twenty and foure pounds to be paid at his house, the one half to be paid in Indian corne, and the other half in bords and Clabboards, by the last of Aprill Insuing the Date hearof, and the said twenty four pounds to be raised by way of rate upon the Inhabitants of the towne, which was given to Mr. Keith towards the building of him A convenient Roome or dwelling house, the boards at 5s a hundred and clabboards shaven at 5s per hundred.” (Puffer 1889: 11 from the original town records page 74). The new addition was probably built in the spring of 1678. The conversion of the square, single-cell house to a salt box was accomplished through the construction of an eastern ground floor room with a chamber above it, and a lean to on the rear. A lean to that is 18' wide would have been very uncommon in the period, especially on a house that only measured 17' wide to begin with. It is more probable that the lean to, which are traditionally 1 story high at the rear, would have measured 8-10' wide and 32' long, which is the length of the present building (**Figure 3**).

The enlarged kitchen may have had separate storage rooms at the east and west ends (one of which is often referred to incorrectly as a “borning room” in historic house museums), that would have

functioned as a buttery used for liquid storage, and a dairy room. The second floor remained unfinished and a cellar was added beneath the new east room. Latham noted the presence of a stone (lined and capped?) drain leading south to the river in the cellar floor. The one other house I know of that had a drain in the cellar was the Three Cranes Tavern/ Great House (1629-1775) in Charlestown. The presence of a drain indicates that flooding, or at least excessive moisture, was a problem in this cellar (which is probably what lead to the need to replace the substructure in this area in the 1970s).

The new addition probably became the hall and the original room would have now functioned as a parlor. Halls were originally the main work room of the house where all the cooking and working was carried out while the parlor was an intimate, more private room used as a bedroom for the parents and as an entertainment room when special guests came over. In the case of the Keith Parsonage, the presence of a rear ell, which functioned as the kitchen and essentially became the location of many of the activities that originally took place in the hall (tool sharpening, food processing, tool storage, craft productions- basically the more messy activities), meant that the hall space was redefined in the late 17th century. It no longer functioned as a work space, but became a place where guests could be entertained and wealth could be displayed. A person such as Reverend James Keith would have had need for a larger space to discuss community and spiritual matters with townspeople, making the hall an ideal space for such meetings.

The layout of Keith's house is clearly represented in his probate inventory, dated August 25, 1719, taken just over a month after his death on July 23, 1719. The original copy of his probate could not be found in the Plymouth County probates, but Latham states that it was present in the fourth volume of probate records on page 185 (Latham 1882: 243). The probate, as reproduced by Latham, is presented below*:

1. Apparel,	£27, 13s.
2. In the new chamber, one feather bed, case of draws, chairs, tables and looking glass,	28, 16,
3. To things in new lower roome, one feather bed with its furniture, 2 tables, table-cloth, napkins chairs and wheels.	17, 5, 6
4. To the old west roome, one bed, bedding, with chairs and chest,	13, 15,
5. To the old chamber, to lumber	3, 7, 6
6. To the things in the kitchen, of pewter, iron and brass vessels, with tables and chairs	12, 19,
7. To quick stock,	21,
8. To hay, 6 load,	10,
9. To library of books,	30,
10. To money,	2, 15
	<hr/>
	£167, 11s,

*(note that "quick stock" probably refers to livestock and that the library is not a separate room, just a collection of books, either on shelves or stacked, within the house)

It should be noted that the value of the house and lands were not recorded in this probate. If they had been, the bottom line would have been much higher. A survey of 25 other probates from men

living in Bridgewater between 1711 and 1725 indicates that Reverend Keith's estate fell in the upper middle of those reviewed (**Table 1**). As can be seen, 15 of the 25 probates totaled less than Keith's

Table 1. A comparison of Bridgewater probate totals 1711-1725

Name	Probate Date	Amount Rounded Up in Lbs	
Israel Washburn	1721	7	
John Howard	1713	20	
Joseph Shaw	1719	20	
Richard Holt	1719	32	
Thomas Whitman	1712	39	
John Wormall	1711	41	
Thomas Snell	1723	67	
Noah Washburn	1717	68	
William Ames	1712	87	
Samuel Lothrop	1724	94	
Zacheus Packard	1725	95	
Elihu Brett	1711	110	
Nathaniel Packard	1721	155	
Jonathan Washburn	1625	162	
Jacob Leonard	1717	165	
James Keith	1719	167	
John Reed	1716	175	
Peter Dunbar	1720	190	
Joseph Hayward	1718	213	
Nathan Perkins	1723	223	
Edward Mitchell	1717	421	
John Bolton	1722	425	
Ebenezer Whitman	1713	445	
William Brett	1724	1096	
John Fobes	1725	1133	
Total		5650	226 average
Total w/out upper extremes		3421	148.7 average w/out upper extremes

while only nine were higher, with two being extremely higher than anyone else. If the extremes are removed, then the average probate total was 148.7 lbs, placing him in the upper half of society. His will contains less details about his personal and real estate totals than his probate does, but it shows that he had previously given his seven children shares of the estate before he made his will, so that, even though there is little of his estate really reflected in the document, he was well-enough off to leave them each their inheritances. He then left his eldest son James his best items (best saddle, bridle, brown cloak, boots, hat, shirt), the remainder of his clothing to his sons, 10 lbs to his son Josiah, and the remainder of his estate to all of them jointly, to be sold and the profits split amongst them. Clothing in the 17th century was seen as a way of banking wealth, so the inheritance left to James may have been fairly substantial (Trautman 1989).

The probate indicates that the west room and its chamber was the oldest part of the house and that the east room and chamber, referred to as the new lower room and the new chamber, were the east part of the house. It is interesting to note that the new addition, while having been built over 41 years prior, were still referred to as the “new” room.

Keith's will, dated July 13, 1718, ten days before his death, leaves the house and 22 acres of land to all of his children, to be sold and the profits to be equally divided amongst them. Latham reports that the property remained in the Keith family until 1723, when presumably it was sold and the

children each received their shares. It was next owned by Ephraim Forbes, his brother, and his brother's son, until 1792. It was then sold to Amasa Howard and his daughters until 1834, when it was sold to Thomas Pratt and his son George until 1882 (Latham 1882: 240). It is probable that the next owner, Ephraim Forbes, added the quirked beading and paneling.

The next major construction was recorded by Latham as having occurred in 1837 when Thomas Pratt, cut 14' off of the north side of the house, completely removing the north ell and kitchen, so that the south and north sides of the house were now the same height but leaving the south roof 13 1/2' long and the north one only 12' long. Pratt also removed much of the old chimney and fireplaces, replacing them with much smaller versions. The bricks that were removed were said to have been larger than 19th century bricks and were laid in clay. Pratt also removed the shingles from the house and replaced them with clapboards. Pratt's "renovations" created a house that measured 32' east to west by 20' deep with a porch annexed to the back side. The windows were left in their original places, but instead of diamond shaped panes and casements, they had square panes and were double hung. The front door was probably replaced at this time with a simple 19th century paneled door (**Figure 4**).

The Location of the Meetinghouses and Burial Grounds

As Reverend Keith was the town's minister and spiritual leader, two locations in the town, the meetinghouse and the burial ground, were the foci of his community life. One of the questions that I had upon first visiting the house was, where are these important sites? The only investigation into their locations was done in the 1880s by Latham.

Latham reported local lore that burials, or at least possible markers, had been found at two unrecorded possible burial ground locations in the town. Latham recorded that the first possible unrecorded burial ground, was evidenced by a tradition that some burials had been found in the field and ground between the houses of Francis and Benjamin Howard's houses on the west side of Boston Road (Howard Road). He also reported that there were natural stones that were presumed to be grave markers in the highway (Howard Street) west of the center line. He concluded that there was nothing definite known of it being a burial place of much extent, but that it may have been the first burial place used for just a few years (**Figure 5**).

The second burial place was believed to be located opposite the house of Gamaliel Howard on what is now River Street near the Green (Latham 1882: 5). This burial ground was mentioned in 1689, when it was recorded that John Field's land lay on the north side of the meeting house, being four pole wide and bound in the corner next to the meeting house and Thomas Snell's land by a stone and running the length of the highway to Sandy Hill and a burial place for the neighbors (Latham 1882: 4). Latham states that in 1729 the town voted to build a new meeting house "at the burying place to the northward of the center of travel" (Latham 1882: 4). Latham surmised that this burial ground was located where, in 1835 Reverend Richard Stone and in 1845 Edward Capen, dug cellars for their houses, striking several graves in coffins in each cellar, which are about 8 rods apart, meaning that the whole graveyard may have occupied 40-50 rods of ground (Latham 1882: 5). This land would have been where the CVS is today, with a portion of it possibly surviving along River Street. Latham identified the meetinghouse referred to as being the one built in 1674 where the soldier's monument is today. John Field lived where Jonathan Howard lived in 1882 and Snell's land was where the "Byram Tavern" was located (Latham 1882: 5) (**Figure 5**).

The possible third burial ground was begun in 1683 and is located on South Road. Latham reported that it was originally 1 acre in size but was enlarged in 1840 to its present triangular shape. A carriage way was present on the north and east sides and the whole thing was enclosed with a stone wall. In 1870 it was noted as being overgrown, so money was raised and the ground was dug over, graded and smoothed (Latham 1882: 1). He also stated that headstones were righted and footstones were moved to the backs of the headstones or were removed, so as to facilitate easier mowing (**Figure 5**).

The location of the first meeting house is not known, but Latham postulated that it was located either near the possible first burial ground or more probably by what he thought was the second one, opposite Gamaliel Howard's house, which would place it near the second and third meetinghouses (**Figure 5**). The first meeting house was in use from 1661-1674, the second from 1674-1731, and the third from 1731-1823. One of the arguments against the first meeting house being near the latter ones, is the idea that the parsonage and parsonage lands would be located near the meeting house and burial ground. Meeting houses were often placed on town commons, where as parsonage lands were often donated by someone for the use of the minister or set aside by the town for the purpose of enticing a minister to remain in the town. I don't think that they would necessarily be located near the meeting house, but I do think that the meeting house would be located near the burial ground. If a burial ground was located on Howard Street, there is a good chance that the meeting house would be there as well. The yard area in question could easily be scanned with ground penetrating radar to search for possible burials and any anomalies identified could easily be tested to determine if they are, in fact, burials. This could be done by excavating the topsoil down to the level of the subsoil and clearing it off to see if a grave shape appears. If a few similar anomalies are identified as possible graves, then the burial ground has been identified with no disturbance of human remains.

Bridgewater and King Philip's War

Keith was minister in Bridgewater during a critical time in the town and Plymouth Colony's history. Other authors have covered King Philip's War in more detail and with greater authority than I, so suffice it to say, it was a war that was a long time coming in New England and which was the result of increasing friction between the Native people and the English colonists.

The following list charts Bridgewater's involvement in King Philip's War (1675-1676):

June 21, 1675	Bridgewater men to Swansea to help them
November 1, 1675	Meeting house fortification ordered
November 20, 1675	Reverend Keith house fortification ordered
April 9, 1676	House and barn of Robert Latham burnt
April 11, 1676	16 men of Bridgewater ordered to march
May 8, 1676	Tispaquin attacked
July 14/15 1676	Attacked again but no damage done
July 20, 1676	Bridgewater men pursued the Native that attacked on July 14/15 and captured 16 of them
July 31, 1676	Philip arrived at the Taunton River
August 1, 1676	Party of Bridgewater men went to pursue Philip and fought them at the tree crossing the river, killing some of the best men including Philip's Uncle Akompoin

August 2, 1676	Bridgewater men guided Benjamin Church to the spot where they had previously fought, spotted Philip, pursued, and captured Philip's wife and son, all those who were captured were sent to Bridgewater where they were held in the town pound before being brought to Plymouth
August 3, 1676	Prisoners taken from Bridgewater to Plymouth
August 12, 1676	Philip killed

With the commencement of hostilities in June of 1675, Plymouth Colony's colonial government urged residents of interior towns to abandon their homes and flee to the coastal area where the population was more concentrated and the threat of attack was perceived to be less. The residents chose to remain, and while several outbuildings and up to 13 homes were burned, the town was never abandoned or under threat of serious attack.

Bridgewater's militia first became involved in the conflict on June 21, 1675, the same day that the first attack was carried out by the Native people. Upon hearing of the attack on Swansea, 17 well armed men rode to Mattapoisett near Swansea to help strengthen the garrison there (Mitchell 1840: 37). They were met by people fleeing Swansea and urged to turn back, but did not. After finding the garrison secure, they returned to Bridgewater. Presumably deliberations were made in the town following this incident regarding what the best course of action would be. On November 1, 1675 the town decided to fortify the second meeting house. The structure is believed to have been located where the Town Green is today, located where a war memorial stands. It was built in 1671 and is recorded as measuring 26' x 40' with 14' high studs, meaning the walls below the roofline were 14' high. Three years after its construction the young men of the town were allowed to build galleries in it and to have the front seats of the gallery for themselves (Mitchell 1840: 61).

The fortifications that were to be made, were substantial:

"It was agreed upon by the towne mett togeyther, the first of November 1675, that there should be a fortification aboute the meeting house for the safty of the towne in the time of danger, to be made with halfe trees seven foot hie above the ground, 6 rood long and 9 rood wide beside the flankers, every quarter or squaderon to doe each of them a side or an end: and they thad doe the ends must make each of them a doore and each of them a flanker, and this worke to be finished and donn by the 6th of November insuing the date hearof." (Puffer 1889: 9, original town records page 71).

The fortification was approximately 148.4' (or maybe rounded up to 150') long (roughly east to west following the presumed orientation of the meetinghouse) by 99' (probably rounded up to 100') wide (presumably north to south). If the meeting house was, as recorded, 26' x 40' and was placed at the center of the fortification, this would have left approximately 55' between the gable ends of the meetinghouse and the fortification walls and approximately 37' between the long walls of the meetinghouse and the fortification (**Figure 6**). Flankers are round square fortifications made at opposing corners of a fortification that allow defenders the ability to shoot down the lengths of the walls that they protect. Gates were located in close proximity to the flankers for ease of defense. The walls of the fortification were made of split logs rising 7' above the ground and either buried in a trench or spiked or trunnelled to rails in a post and rail construction.

Later that same month, on November 20, 1675 the town agreed that "... there should be a gareison made about Mr. Keith's house, and the counsell shall take notice of what was to be donn, and to devide to every squaderon their share." (Puffer 1889: 9, original town records page 71). It is not

specified what the garrisoning should be, but it may have been similar to what was proposed for the meetinghouse.

Bridgewater was attacked for the first time on April 9, 1676. Just before noon, while the townspeople were assembling (probably at the fortified meeting house), they heard guns being fired from some of the fortified houses (garrisons), and found that Robert Latham's house and barn were on fire. The farm, which is believed to have been located on the Sachem Rock Farm property in Bridgewater, had been abandoned as the inhabitants living outside the main center of town moved to the protection of the more nucleated settlement around the meetinghouse. The greatest loss at the farm was in lumber, which may refer to actual sawn boards or timbers but which probably refers to the more common use of the word in the 17th century as a catch all for stored, extra, or surplus items. The corn and the most important items of the house were saved and a few other outlying out-buildings were rifled and a couple of horses were killed. It appears that the raiding party was a quick hit and run, possibly designed to take advantage of the fact that the outlying farms were deserted and that the majority of the town would have been away from home at Sunday meeting, in much the same way as had happened at the Clark Garrison house in Plymouth on March 12 of the same year.

Bridgewater was ordered to provide 16 men for the colonial forces, and on April 11, 1676, they, along with 284 other militia men, were ordered to march (Baylies 1866: 118). The town was attacked a second time on May 8, 1676 when the Middleborough (Nemasket) sachem Tispaquin made an assault on the south side of Town River at the east end of the village. The attackers set fire to numerous houses located on the outskirts of the settlement, but townsmen soon arrived from the garrisons and drove them back while a heavy shower of rain doused the burning houses. Tispaquin renewed the attack on the north side of the river but was again repulsed and retreated to an abandoned house three miles from the village center where they spent the night, after which they burned this house and its barn as well as another house a short distance away before leaving (Baylies 1866: 121). It is said that a total of 13 houses were burned that day along with four barns (Mitchell 1840: 38). Five of the houses were in the village proper while the remainder were on the outskirts (Mitchell 1840: 38).

The town was again attacked on July 14/15 with no harm being done. This attack led the Bridgewater townspeople to pursue an offensive strategy and on July 20th the citizens captured 2 men and 14 women or children at Nemasket and returned them to the town (Baylies 1866: 122). At the end of the month, on July 31, the townsmen learned that Philip had arrived at the Taunton River, and it appears that they decided to take it upon themselves to capture him and end the war. The men caught Philip and his party at a tree that the Natives had felled for crossing (which is believed to have possibly been at the river near Sprague's Hill in Bridgewater [Figure 7]). They fought and some of Philip's best men, including his uncle Akompoin, were killed (Baylies 1866: 160). Apparently a messenger had been sent by someone (not necessarily someone from Bridgewater, but possibly by the same someone who had informed the town that Philip was crossing the Taunton River) to the governor of Plymouth Colony in Marshfield. The governor traveled to Plymouth and summoned Benjamin Church from Sunday service to relay the information. Church marched to Bridgewater and learned of the townsmen's engagement of Philip's forces on the 31st. On August 1st the townsmen from Bridgewater led Church's forces to the place where they had skirmished the previous day. Arriving at the tree crossing, they spied a Native sitting on a tree stump on the far side, who Church was about to shoot at, but was prevented by one of his own Native guides who said that the seated man was an ally. Turns out it was Philip. Church and the rest of the party

crossed the river and gave pursuit, eventually capturing many of Philip's followers, including Philip's wife and son (Baylies 1866: 161). The captives were brought to Bridgewater and were secured in the town animal pound (which was probably located near the meeting house) for the night, being conveyed to Plymouth by Church the next day. The captives in Bridgewater reportedly were "well treated with victuals and drink, and had a merry night; and the prisoners laughed as loud as the soldiers, not having been so well treated before for a long time." (Baylies 1866: 163). Church then continued to pursue Philip until he was killed by a Native named Alderman on August 12, 1676.

After the cessation of hostilities in southeastern New England, an important question remained as to what to do with the captured Natives who had followed Philip, especially his 9-year-old son. The question of his fate was to be decided by the ministers of Plymouth Colony- Mr. John Cotton of Plymouth and Mr. Samuel Arnold of Marshfield. They argued it to the court thus:

"The question being propounded to us by our honorable rulers, whether Philip's son be a child of death! our answer hereunto is, that we do acknowledge that rule, Dev.xxiv, 16, to be moral and therefore perpetually binding, viz. in that particular act of wickedness though capital, the crime of the parent doth not render his child a subject to punishment by the civil magistrate; yet, upon serious Consideration, we humbly conceive that the children of notorious traitors, rebels, and murderers, especially such as have been principal leaders and actors in such horrid villanies, and that against a whole nation, yea, the whole Israel of God, may be involved in the guilt of their parents, and may, *salsa republica*, be adjudged to death, as to us seems evident by the scripture incidents. of Saml, Achan, Haman, the children of whom were cut off by the sword of justice for the transgressions of their parents, although, concerning some of those children it be manifest, that they were not capable of being 'coactors therein.' (Church 1865: 127)

Increase Mather added, ' It is necessary that some effectual course should be taken about him. He makes me think of Hadad who was a little child when his father (the chief sachem of the Edomites) was killed by Joab; and, had not others fled away with him, I am apt to think that David would have taken a course, that Hadad should never have proved a scourge to the next generation.' (Church 1865: 127).

But, Rev. Keith apparently either wanted to be merciful or at least was sympathetic to the plight of a child similar in age to his own eldest son. He wrote in a letter to Mather ' I long to hear what becomes of Philip's wife and son. I know there is some difficulty in that Psalm cxxxvii, 8, 9, though I think it may be considered, whether there be not some speciality and something extraordinary in it. That law, Deu. xxiv, 16, compared with the commended example of Amasias, 2 Chron. xxv, 4, doth sway much with me, in the case under consideration. I hope God will direct those whom it doth concern to a good issue. Let us join our prayers at the throne of grace with all our might, that the Lord would so dispose of all public motions and affairs, that his Jerusalem in this wilderness, may be the habitation of justice and a mountain of holiness, that so it may be also a quiet habitation, a tabernacle which shall not be taken down.' (Church 1865: 127).

The argument boiled down to the choice of executing the boy and his mother so that he does not grow up to potentially foment troubles on the Colony in the future, or sparing his life so as not to punish the boy for the sins of the father. Much as Pilate did with the decision regarding the execution of Christ or the Massachusetts Bay Colony did when Miantonomo was fomenting discontent against the English in the 1640s, they decided to wash their hands of the problem, and

sold the two, along with many of the other "rebelling" Natives, as slaves to be shipped to the Caribbean to work on plantations there. Such a decision was essentially as much of a death sentence as a swift execution in Plymouth, and it is probable that few of those shipped down there survived.

Architectural Study

The 1996 MACRIS (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System) survey, conducted by students from Boston University, concluded that "While it is likely that a dwelling was originally sited at the location of the present dwelling, it is unclear if the building now present contains that original structure. Based on physical evidence, it appears that the present building was built in two sections. The first, a single cell, two-story house was likely constructed in the seventeenth century; this is the southwest section of the house. Additions were made adding the southeast portion of the house and the lean-to prior to 1719." (MACRIS 1996).

The MACRIS study also concluded the following (notes in parenthesis are mine):

Southeast Lower Room

- The southwest room has a summer beam running from the west wall to the chimney girt (indicating that the room was the original room of the house and the east room was added).
- The beam's casing has a quirked bead edge (typical of the early to mid 18th century)
- Paint and plaster evidence remain, on the summer beam and ceiling joists, which suggests the ceiling was originally plastered (but the lathe looks 19th century so it probably dates to ca. 1837 when Pratt made his renovations).
- The fireplace breast and wall paneling are said to be part of the 1970s restoration (the hearth is made of 19th bricks and dates to Pratt's renovations)

Southeast Upper Room (Chamber)

- The chamber above has exposed, rounded gunstock corner posts and exposed wall braces
- Stylistic alterations may have been made to this section of the house when the southwest section was added.
- The summer beam runs longitudinally, north to south

Southwest Half

- All remaining construction details in the southwest section of the dwelling support an early eighteenth century construction date (or at least a first half of the 18th century upgrade).

Southeast Room

- The southeast section of the dwelling appears to vary from the southwest in that the summer beam runs from the front to rear girt on both levels of the building (this is, in fact, not true, the summer beam runs transverse, east to west, just like the west room).
- The summer beam has a quirked bead decoration (dating to the first half of the 18th century)
- Quirked bead covers decorate the girts, and form the upper edge of the feather-edge wall paneling on the other walls (matching the quirked edge of the summer beams indicating it was all done at the same time).
- Raised panels decorate the fireplace breast and doors of the fireplace wall (again, first half of the 18th century)

- The chamber above also has raised paneling details (again, first half of the 18th century).
- The boxed framing of this section of the dwelling exhibits construction details which are, for the most part, consistent with the early to middle decades of the eighteenth century.

Kitchen/ Lean to

- Remaining physical evidence on the first level of the lean-to area is said to date to the time of the 1970s restoration when it was necessary to rebuild the space to accommodate visitors to the house museum.

Attic

- The cantilevered frame at the rear of the second level and the sequentially numbered rafters in the attic seem to confirm the addition of the lean-to at the point when the southeast section was added to the house.
- Sections of shadow molded sheathing and other remnants of recycled materials were visible in the cellar and attic at the time of the 1970s restoration.
- Changes made at the time of the restoration in the 1970s have restored the exterior of the building to its early-eighteenth century appearance.

It seems from the MACRIS report, that in their opinion, the quirked beading and paneling are the most damning pieces of evidence that apparently caused them to favor an early to middle 18th century date of construction for the house. I think that the presence of definite evidence that the building was not all one build and the fact that this evidence matches with Rev. Keith's probate, is the best evidence that the building was constructed when it was believed to have been, the early 1660s. It is probable that the quirked beading and the paneling represent an attempt by the next generation to upgrade the house.

2016 Preliminary Architectural Survey

I conducted the preliminary architectural survey of the Keith Parsonage on July 19, 2016 with the assistance of Greg Lott of the Old Bridgewater Historical Society. Seven areas were surveyed:

- the attic
- the second floor north room
- the second floor west room
- the first floor west room
- the first floor east room
- the kitchen
- and the cellar

The goal of the survey was to:

- identify architectural elements that dated to the Reverend James Keith period of occupation
- determine if any evidence of the original ca. 1662 structure is visible
- evaluate the findings of the 1996 MACRIS survey
- determine the extent of the destruction caused by the 1970s restoration
- collect measurements of 17th century elements
- use the accumulated data to make recommendations regarding the future use of the house

A glossary of timber framing terms used in this report and a generalized drawing showing the use of the various timbers is presented in Appendix B and the measurements that were collected are in Appendix C.

The survey began in the rebuilt kitchen. The goal of this portion of the survey was to measure the dimensions of the bricks in the kitchen hearth to determine if they were consistent with 17th century examples. Seventeenth century bricks are wider, thinner, and longer than 18th or 19th century bricks. The dimensions of those that make up the hearth walls and the oven averaged 8 1/2" long by 4 1/2" wide and 2" thick, consistent with a 1678 construction date for the hearth and oven (**Figure 8**). The bricks on the floor of the hearth are handmade but are more consistent in size and shape to 18th century bricks, meaning that the floor appears to have been replaced in the 18th century. One interesting finding was an area of what appears to be wear on the bricks that form a shelf in front of the hearth. The wear may be consistent with the opening and closing of the oven door and possibly the use of an iron peel to remove baked goods. A second goal of the hearth survey was to roughly determine how much the 200 bricks mentioned in the 1662 court order, would actually cover. Each of the walls of the hearth were found to contain 93 bricks, meaning that the 200 bricks mentioned in the order were probably just for the oven and maybe the oven and brick pillars in front of a stone or clay hearth and chimney. No traces of the original wooden lintel are visible when looking into the front of the hearth but it is probably present beneath the 1970s reproduction paneling covering the hearth. It would be worthwhile to carefully remove the paneling to get a look at the original hearth face, just as the Keiths would have seen it.

The original lean to was probably shorter than it is now. Lean to roofs have generally been found to extend to the second story floor level above the ground, and that the lean to may have been up to 10' shorter than it is today, suggesting it may have originally been between 8-10' wide and not the present 18'. The present size is probably the result of the desire of the 1970 renovators to give more space in the rear of the house for visitors. Removal of a few kitchen floorboards and excavation of a few test squares or a narrow trench or two would be enough to determine the original width of the lean to and to determine if the original 1662 house had some sort of lean to as Latham interpreted it to have.

The back stairs leading from the first to second floors were also added in the 1970s. The north wall of the staircase represents the north wall of the house after Pratt's 1837 renovations, and it appears that the present staircase did not exist. Joist pockets are present on both the north and south sides of the stairwell, indicating that there was once a floor here (**Figures 8 and 9**).

The investigation then proceeded to the attic. It was determined that the boards on the roof of the building had been replaced at least since the Society acquired the house, probably in the 1970s. The rafters are original to the 1678 expansion of the house, in is called a principle and common rafter system. Basically, this means that there are some larger, principle rafters and between them are interspersed smaller, common rafters. All the rafters were found to have been numbered in pairs on the ground by the builders prior to hauling them up and erecting them. In this way, the paired rafters could be correctly fitted on the ground first, and then hauled individually up to the roof and rejoined with their mates. The principle rafters were numbered I to III and the common rafters were numbered I to VIII. Numbering was sequential west to east and all pairs remained together. This indicates that the framing has not been removed and reshuffled since it was erected in 1678. The tops of the rafter are joined with what is called brindled joints, very consistent with the 17th century (**Figure 10**).

Two boards were removed from the south floor of the attic at a point where the original frame would have joined with the 1678 frame along the front of the house. It appears that this portion of the original top plate had been replaced in 1970s, probably due to rotten wood, a problem that remains evident at principle rafter II, which is rotten at the base but was substantially braced with bolts and plates, probably in the 1970s. Removal of the boards revealed the floor joists, which were whitewashed on the lower and side faces, indicating that the southeast chamber had a whitewashed ceiling, possibly since it was built in 1678 (**Figure 10**). The room would not have originally had a plastered ceiling, just whitewashed joists and floor boards. The undersides of the attic floorboards were not whitewashed, indicating that they were probably replaced in the 1970s.

The stairway from the attic to the second floor appears to have been added in the 19th century, probably by Pratt. Three joist pockets are visible on either side of the present stairway to the attic, indicating that the floor extended over this area as well (**Figure 10**). Access to the 1678 attic may have originally been via a ladder or possibly a set of stairs in the area of the south staircase, that have since been removed. The original 1662 house may have been open from the chamber floor to the roof with no attic floor being present. Further investigation in the west half of the attic that would involve the removal of the attic floorboards may help to determine when the floor was added over the oldest portion of the house.

The rear plate of the house was found to be one roughly hewn timber measuring 32' long. The presence of a single timber along the back of the house indicates that at least the upper frame of the house was removed when the addition was put on in 1678 and that, at least for a brief period, the house would have lacked a roof and back wall. The tie beams, the timbers running north and south across the house, were also replaced at this time with the new ones having what is called a cantilever at their north ends (**Figure 11**). This cantilever was used to help provide support for the roofline which extended over the kitchen lean to that was integrated into the 1678 build. This gave the back of the house a consistent roof pitch, as it does today. The staircase that leads up into the attic today does not appear to have been present in the original 1678 house, as three joists were removed, probably in the 19th century, when that set of stairs was added. The attic was probably originally accessed by a ladder or set of straight, simple stairs from the second floor. Removal of additional floorboards should reveal the location of the original access into the attic.

The chimney was found to have been substantially rebuilt in the 1970s, with only the lower approximately 4-5' remaining. In the attic, the chimney is covered with cement and has tin flashing at the junction with the second floor.

The layout of the original parsonage house poses a challenge due to the many modifications that have been made to the house over the years, but I think that it can be confidently said that it measured 16' x 17'. When making a small 17th century house, the most basic thing needed is the frame- four corner posts, sills below, girders in the middle, plates above that, rafters crowning it all and a summer beam and floor joists giving you a chamber above your hall. The corner posts from the original house appear to remain in their corners- beautiful long gunstock posts (called that because the shape of the top end of the post resembles a gun's stock) in the upper chamber that show that the house must have been two stories high (**Figure 12**). The tops of the posts are shaped as such not as a design choice, but to accommodate the complex framing system that interlocks three separate pieces at the post's apex. The length of these gunstocks is classic middle 17th century (they became shorter as the century went on and eventually disappeared as the framing techniques changed after 1725). Rising from two faces of the posts are braces, called rising braces, used to

give rigidity to the frame (**Figure 12**). The use of rising versus falling braces, ones that go down instead of up, is indicative of an West Country building tradition versus an East Anglian one and, again is classic 17th century. The edges of the posts are chamfered, basically the sharp corner has been removed with a chisel or plane, and this was purely aesthetic. The rising braces have been removed from the southwest corner post, presumably in the 1970s, but at least one and possibly both are present in the attic. These should probably be replaced, as they are important structural elements.

The summer beam in the southwest room runs east to west and is referred to as a transverse summer beam (**Figure 13**). It is connected to the wall girders, the timbers that connects the front and back of the house and that forms the chamber floor. The position of the summer beam in the Keith House is somewhat unique and is probably the result of the town trying to cut corners when they originally built the house. The summer beam usually is let into the wall girt on one end and into the chimney girt, the beam that runs longitudinally from the front to the back of the house and that forms the inner side of the chimney, at the other end. In the Keith House, the chimney girt has been eliminated and the summer beam is let into the girt on the opposite wall, making the summer beam span end girt to end girt. There may be evidence of a chimney girt that runs from the summer beam to the north wall plate, on the north side of the summer beam. The only way to see it would be to remove some 1970s paneling.

The position of the summer beam (called such after the Anglo-French word *somer* meaning pack horse or weight bearer [Cummings 1979: 55]) at 7' north of the south wall, means that the original chimney must have been north of that beam. The width of the chimney is hinted at by chamfering at its east end. This chamfering is only visible if you stick your head in the hole in the east room closet wall and look up, and measures approximately 3' long (**Figure 13**). This chamfering may have been done on the beam when the chimney was originally installed and is probably associated with the framing of the chimney or the erection of a possibly later (ca. 1678) brick chimney stack. The quirked beading that is present on the remainder of the beam to the west is a technique that has only been dated to after 1690 and indicates that the original beam probably had an unfinished edge with the bead being added later, possibly by the next owner in ca. 1723 (Cummings 1979: 159).

The chamfering on the south side of the summer beam extends behind the present stairs to within about 3' of the east wall. This indicates that the stairs were not always as they now appear. Cummings presents an excellent discussion on the evolution of the staircase in Massachusetts (Cummings 1979: 162-167). The earliest houses lacked stairs altogether, making do with ladders leading from one floor to the other. In Plymouth Colony, we know this was at least sometimes the case, because in 1648, the coroner's inquest into the death of four year Martha Clark in the Richard Bishop house in Scituate shows that the chamber was entered by such as ladder:

“Wee declare, yt coming into the house of the said Richard Bishope, wee saw at the foot of a ladder wch leadeth into an upper chamber, much blood; and going up all of us into the chamber, wee found a woman child of about foure years...” (Plymouth Colony Records 1648 Volume 2: 133). (The child was found to have had her throat cut by her mother, who confessed and was hung).

Cummings found that in New England, the front entry and the staircase was combined and that the staircase was crowded against the chimney mass (Cummings 1979: 162). Early staircases are invariably narrow, walled, and steep and as a result of these attributes, which, by the end of the 17th century people appear to have begun to find inconvenient, as well as the heavy wear and changes in

aesthetics, front entry staircases were always vulnerable to renewal (Cummings 1979: 163). This means that they were frequently updated and refurnished, leading the rare survival of an authentic 17th century staircase. The earliest ones that have survived, invariably start from the right and have three winders before leading to a narrow and steep straight rise to the second floor. The treads were secured to a newel post that extended from the floor to an upper framing member, and could also have a door at the top that could be closed to keep drafts out of the chamber (Cummings 1979: 163). In the very late 17th century balusters appear, earlier on high up and not extending to the treads. Upon reaching the second floor, access to the attic was almost invariably through a set of very steep stairs located over the ones coming up from the first floor (Cummings 1979: 167).

The stairs at the Keith House rise from the left side of the hall and are generally not steep or narrow. No staircase to the attic is present above these stairs. The style of the stairs appears more consistent with a 19th century date and probably date to when the house was renovated by Pratt. The backstairs leading up to the attic were probably added at this time as well. Removal of the floor boards in the attic may indicate the location of the original staircase or entry into the attic.

The front door of the house appears to have been replaced in the 1970s. A 1961 photograph of the front of the house (**Figure 14**), shows a simple, single door, while the present doors are 19th century double doors. It is unknown why the renovators in the 1970s decided to replace what was probably a ca. 1837 door with a later style of door. The glass above the door was probably replaced at the same time, and the bullseye pane on display inside the house probably came from this 19th century transom over the door. Seventeenth century doors would have been simple and practical batten board affairs.

No summer beam is present in the southwest chamber with only simple joist framing being found. This chamber is divided into north and south rooms, but it is not known if this is a 17th century division or a later one. At least the north walls and probably the ceiling of the southwest chamber are made of 1970s plasterboard with skim coat of plaster on that. The exposed corner post in the northwest corner bears a rising brace.

Fewer framing and construction details were visible on the east side of the house. In the southeast room, most of the paneling appears to have been added during the 1970s restoration, with the possible exception of the paneled door at the south side of the west wall. This door bears beautiful early to mid-18th century hinges and is probably original. Inside the closet, the junction between the lower, original portion of the chimney and the upper 1970s rebuild is clearly visible at approximately 5' above the floor. It also appears that a veneer of brick was applied to the front of the original hearth, possibly effectively sealing the old hearth behind this 1970s layer. An old wooden board or lintel is visible behind the veneer at 53" above the floor (**Figure 15**). The summer beam in this room is located 9" further to the north than the one in the southwest room, possibly so that additional stress was not put on the same point as where the beam was let in on the west side. This beam is also larger than the one on the west side, measuring a full 12" wide. It bears the same quirked beading, but this may also have been added at a later 18th century date after the occupation by the Keiths. The northeast and southeast corner posts in the second floor chamber appear to be covered with possible 18th century boxing, and as a result, it is not possible to see if they have gunstock ends, but it is known that the northwest post does. Determining if the east end posts have gunstock post or gunstock posts that match the ones on the west side is an important step in examining the expansion of the house in 1678. If the posts are found to exactly match those to the west, it may mean that they were made by the same carpenter. If they are different it would confirm

that the east room was just added to the west one and would show that the work was done by a different carpenter. The degree of finish on the posts would also indicate how serious the carpenter, and the town, was about doing the work- were they just doing it to quickly throw something up or were they being careful and spending extra time on it to make it look as nice or nicer than the west side.

The summer beam in the southeast chamber runs longitudinally (north to south) in opposition to the transverse lower room summer beams. This was probably done to help tie together the front and back of the house.

Finally, we attempted to probe the cellar floor to determine the location of the drain that Latham mentioned, but we were stymied in this effort due to the fact that the entire floor of the cellar is cobbled. This may have been done in attempt to keep it drier or at least less muddy. While probing in the cellar, we also noticed that the entire substructure visible here had been replaced with modern material in the 1970s. There is no reason why this could not be replaced with timber framed hewn timbers, replacing what was originally there with new materials in an authentic way.

Summary and Conclusion

The preliminary architectural and background research survey that I conducted at the Keith Parsonage for the Old Bridgewater Historical Society, was able to clear up some of the misunderstandings and ambiguities raised by the 1996 MACRIS survey. I was able to locate portions of the house that date to the James Keith period. Evidence from the first construction efforts in 1662 and the 1678 expansion were abundant, but so too were changes wrought by Pratt and, more disastrously, the 1970s restoration. Many of the elements now visible appear to have been the result of these later two episodes of work on the house, and the removal of some of those latest elements may significantly help to better understand and present the history of the house.

The original 1662 house measured 16' east to west by 17' north to south, and was framed by four corner posts, girts, plates, and a summer beam as well as floor joists and wall studs. The walls were probably planked on the exterior and may have been only whitewashed on the interior. The hearth, which was probably built two years after the body of the house and the roof were erected, may have been made of a combination of wattle and daub and stone and brick masonry. The upper portion of the chimney stack may have been wattle and daub while the lower portion may have been stone with brick facing and a brick oven. Windows may not have been present for the first two years, with the interior framing for diamond paned casement windows being framed out, but the whole thing just planked over. When the time came to install windows, holes would have been cut through the wall planks at the framing locations and the windows could have been installed. Alternately, the window framing may not have been added until the time came to install the windows, as the size available may not have been known until that time. The window holes could have also been placed when the house was first framed, but it seems unlikely that the holes would have been filled with oiled paper or anything other than boards, until someone was actually living in the house. The roof of the building may have been lightly boarded over just to keep the weather out, or it may have been thatched, but as it was re-roofed two years later, whatever means to cover it that were employed in 1662, were not meant to be permanent.

Keith and his family resided in the small house until 1678 when the town granted him funds to enlarge or rebuild his house. At this time it appears that he had the house expanded to the east and north with a larger room being built east of his original house and a kitchen lean to spanning the

rear. The original chimney was removed (traces of which may remain below the present floorboards), and a new, much more substantial chimney with three to four hearths was added. All traces of the original roof were removed and a more substantial roofing system was added. A narrow front staircase may have also been added at this time, replacing what was probably just a ladder to the chamber above the original hall. A cellar was added beneath the new hall as well.

It appears that at some point in the 18th century, quirked beading was added to what were probably unfinished summer beams and paneling consistent with a first half of the 18th century was installed. This update of the interior of the house probably happened after it passed out of the hands of the Keith family.

The Pratts, in 1837, substantially updated the house, removing the rear lean to so as to create a more “modern looking” house. The original shingles were removed and clapboards were added and the front staircase and a set of stairs up to the attic were added at this time. The front door was replaced and the windows, which were probably updated in the 18th century, were again replaced.

The 1970s renovation attempted to reverse some of the changes made to the house by the Pratts, but in some ways, resulted in a less accurate reconstruction. The oldest room of the house was “rusticated” in an attempt to make it look more old-timey, and 18th century style paneling was added throughout the house. Modern 2x4s and plasterboard were used to replace crumbling walls and floors. The 1678 chimney was truncated to a height of approximately 5' and replaced with modern brick, wire, flashing, and cement, the rear lean to was rebuilt, probably in a form larger than it was before, and rear stairs were added.

Throughout all these changes, many traces of the original 17th century structure remain visible and many more are believed to lie buried beneath some of those later renovations.

Recommendations

National Register of Historic Places Listing

While many historical societies and historic houses become fixated on getting their property on the National Register, it should be remembered that listing is an honorific, a pat on the back to say that your property is important in the history of the country, and really not much more. It does not protect a property from future development or change and does not immediately make it eligible for tax benefits or grants. It is generally a long process, taking up to two years in some cases, and involves a significant amount of background research and documentation. In theory it can be done by the individual society or organization, but because of the significant amount of time involved, many often hire a consultant to do the work for them. For example, the Duxbury Historical Commission recently received Community Preservation funding to have a consultant begin the paperwork to have Myles Standish Homesite (an archaeological site) put on the Register. The total for the grant was over \$30,000.00. Personally, I think that while listing on the Register is a noble mission and one that every eligible property should shoot for, in the short term immediate future, it should not be an ultimate objective. Maybe a ten year goal, but not one that a society should focus on immediately when other more tangible things need to be done first. There is a lot of information online regarding the benefits, or lack thereof, for working on getting a property on the Register, and these should be reviewed before the long term goal of doing so is attempted.

Redefining the Historic House

Historic houses are generally boring. Really, when you think about it, they are often display the same variety of historic items donated to the house that represent old-timey stuff and nothing more: a case of Native artifacts from the general area (most often with no real information on where they came from), maybe a few family artifacts, and mixed period pieces in museum set rooms. What the visitor generally sees is the same in each historic house, neat and tidy displays, presented with many of the same historic house myths (see

<https://historymyths.wordpress.com/category/history/> for a good website that debunks many myths commonly heard in historic houses), with only the family story being different.

The Keith Parsonage has amazing potential for redefining historic house presentation, and ironically, this is due to the fact that so much was changed during the earlier 1970s restoration. There is a lot of restoration present in the house, bad by our 21st century standards but probably pretty typical of the 1970s mindset. Somethings really can't be changed- like the three-quarters of the chimney made from Portland cement and 1970s bricks, but other things could be undone and redone in a way that would be more appropriate for the story of the house and its occupants and as part of an ongoing exhibit. My preliminary evaluation of house appears to show that what is left of the original Parsonage (ca. 1662-1719) consists of:

- the six upright corner posts of the original house and the 1678 addition
- the rising wind braces, at least in the upstairs portion of the house
- the summer beams
- the second floor and attic floor joists
- the back top plate from the 1678 addition
- the top girts on the east and west sides
- the rafters and roof system
- the girts between the first and second stories
- the kitchen hearth and oven
- parts of the fireplaces from the 1678 addition

Possible original elements that could not be seen, but that may remain include:

- the plank framing between the inner walls and the outer clapboards
- the front sill
- the east and west sills
- wall studs

Elements that are gone include:

- the front top plate
- the first floor joists and probably the framing members from at least the east side of the house
- the kitchen and northern portion of the salt box addition
- possibly portions of the east and west hearths
- the original wall coverings (plaster and/or wainscot) in all the rooms

I would suggest that the Society think about removing some, of the elements added in the 1970s. It seems, based on the photographs I have seen, that most of them were added in order to make the oldest part of the house look "pioneer" and "rustic" (**Figure 16**) and to continue and expand upon the 18th century paneling that appears to have been present in at least a portion of the east half of the house. The west/ original room could be stripped down to the bare plank and timber framing all

around (walls and floor) and then the evidence of what was originally there could be examined and subsequently replaced. This replacement could be done over time, not all at once, and the room could be rendered back to an accurate semblance of what it may have looked like in the 17th century. Evidence that could be found include original window positions and sizes, wall finishing (whitewashing and/ or plastering), hearth location and arrangement, and original stair location. Archaeology could also be done under the floor, an area that should bear evidence of the very first construction and occupation at the site as well as subsequent renovations. This renovations would reveal whether the original hearth was stone or wattle and daub, whether the replacement hearth built in the 1660s was completely brick or a combination of brick and stone, and possibly even what the original windows looked like.

All this work could be conducted as a long term, very unique, living history, museum experience with some of the work even involving community volunteers helping to whitewash, paint, mix plaster, do archaeology or a variety of other activities. I am not sure whether Community Preservation funding could be granted for this (although one has to be careful with CPA funding as it often has its own strings attached that may limit Society control of the process), but crowd funding is becoming an increasingly important source of funding for projects, something that I don't think many historical societies have tapped into yet. Traditional capital campaigns among members and descendant groups are also another important source of support. The beauty of this type of project is that it can be done slowly over time, is great publicity, makes the house unique, and, when done correctly, is an educational experience for the society, the public, and the historic renovators involved. It is important that the work be done as authentically as possible with only a minimum of modern shortcuts being made, so that the end result would be an authentic reconstruction of what was probably, or what was possibly, there. It is equally important that every step of the process be documented, posted on social media, and archived so that someone 50 years from now knows what is real, what is not, what was done, and why.

Following a professional inspection of the chimney and approval of use of the hearth, cooking demonstrations could be offered as a special event at the Keith House. The Nye Homestead in Sandwich uses their late 17th century/ 18th century hearth on a regular basis for such demonstrations, and there are many qualified period cooking specialists out there who know how to use these hearths without endangering the house itself.

Short of this large scale re-renovation of the house, I would also suggest thinking about trying to redefine what story you want to tell in the house, and really try to use the building to do so. Another idea is to make the house come alive with smells, sights and sounds so that it would seem to the visitor that they are not just visiting a historic house, but are visiting someone's house. Beds can be unmade and look like they were just vacated, chamber pots should be visible and maybe even a bit smelly (with vinegar or some such thing, no need to get too authentic), ashes in the hearth, smokey smell in the kitchen, bread just out of the oven, fresh bread smell, herb smells, nice kitchen garden outside, not a beautiful lawn- maybe a bit wild with appropriate weeds appropriately whacked down with a sickle instead of a weed whacker, activity areas in the yard, laundry hanging around, dirty dishes-the kind of "stuff" that brings a house alive! A simple electronic system could be set up that would loop sounds or conversations so that it would seem like there are other people from another time in the house living their lives and that the visitor is just a fly on the wall. I have a really good article about how this was done in other places if anyone is interested. Again it doesn't have to be the whole house, maybe just a special room where one can "travel back in time and really see,

smell, and hear the house. Again, something that would make the house unique and a place that would attract all kinds of people.

Archaeological Testing

I would love to see some archaeological testing done around the house, but then I may be biased. I do see that testing has the potential to:

- locate significant features such as the fortification that was built around the house in 1676
- locate the stone drain in the cellar and the yard
- recover artifacts that were actually used by the occupants of the house, artifacts that could now be used to help correctly furnish the house and tell the story of the occupants on a more personal level
- further the educational goals of the Society by being a stepping-off point for the discussion of 17th century West Bridgewater and its role in King Philip's War
- advertise the property through news stories and publicity regarding any excavations
- bring recognition to the property for its local, regional, and national importance
- help design the yard area around the house to more accurately reflect the activities (refuse disposal, garden beds, plantings, work areas, fencing) that would have occurred there
- generate revenue for the Society through open community archaeology programs
- eventually help place the property on the National Register of Historic Places through its significance as an archaeological site

Any testing should be done with the shared goals of education, research, and publicity in mind. Testing should be used as an event for the society and should be widely advertised. People love archaeology and will travel to see it being done and to have the opportunity to experience first hand something that most people may only get to see on TV. At the same time, there should be specific research questions that are being tested and a specific timeline for processing, reporting, and returning the artifacts to the society. It is recommended that, while work should be conducted by community members and even avocational archaeologists, a professional archaeologist should be on site and in charge of all aspects of the work.

Final Thoughts

In summary, the Keith Parsonage is a wonderful example of the very rare 17th century cottage and contains lots of potential for further study of 17th century archaeology and architecture. I would recommend removing many of the 1970s renovations and conducting archaeological testing beneath the floors and around the building itself. This would need to be done in a systematic way with detailed documentation of what is being removed and what is uncovered. I recommend replacing the 1970s material with period correct architectural elements. I would also recommend that the Old Bridgewater Historical Society initiate an open archaeology community program where they attempt to locate some of the sites associated with the 17th century, especially the King Philip's War era of the 17th century. These sites would include the following:

- the possible meeting house and burial ground on Howard Street
- the meeting house locations on Town Green
- the meeting house fortification on Town Green
- the town pound (possibly on Town Green)
- the possible cemetery across the street west of Town Green
- the palisade around the Reverend Keith house
- Robert Latham's homesite

- the homesite locations of as many of the other 17th century settlers
- the location of the crossing where the men from Bridgewater engaged King Philip

These sites could be located with a combination of ground penetrating radar, systematic metal detector survey, and archaeological testing. Any of these investigations could involve the general public and be a great source of information for researchers, archaeologists, and townspeople.

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Appendix A
Figures



Figure 1. Possible layout of Reverend Keith's acreage.

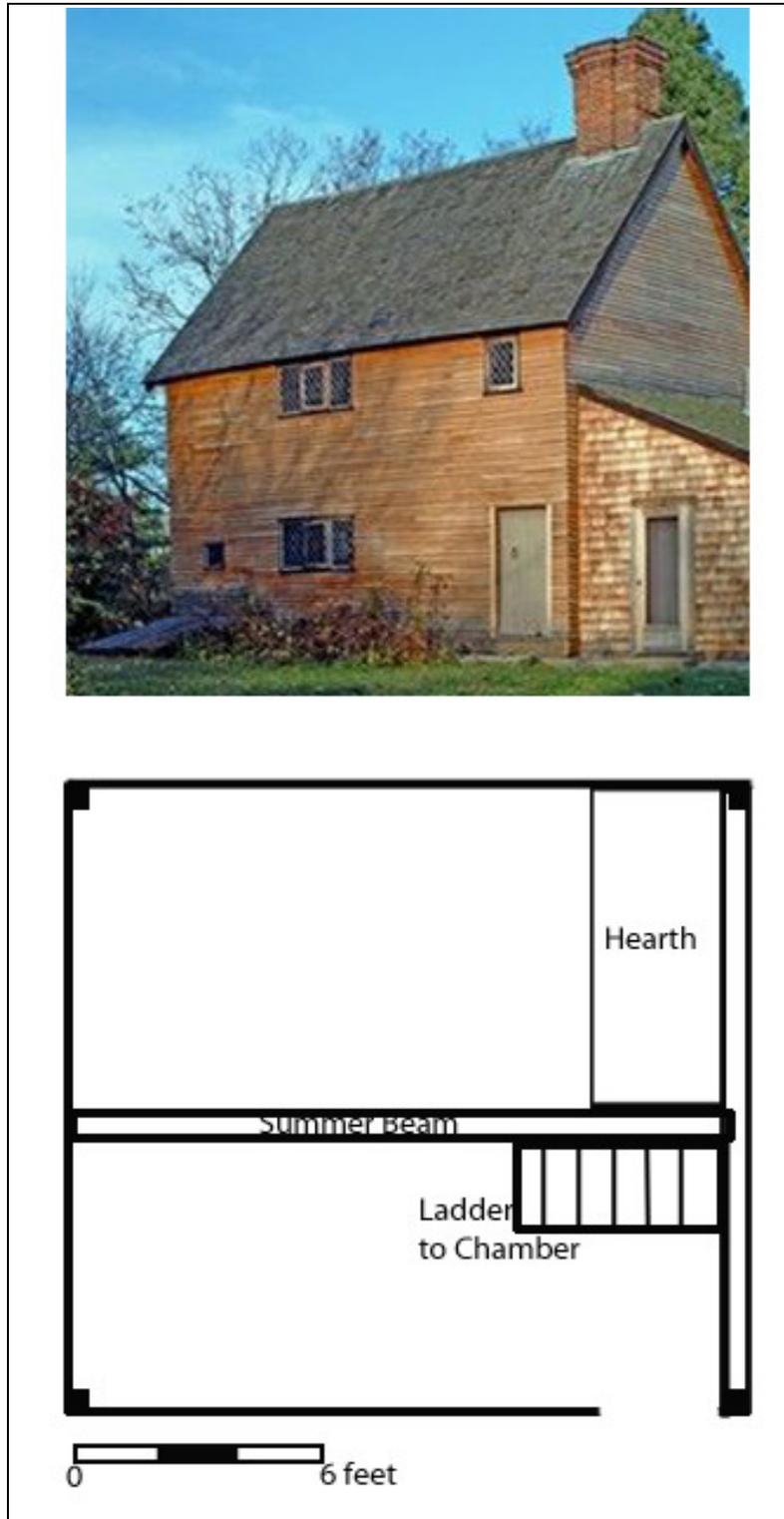


Figure 2. Conjectural layout of the original Keith house based on the architectural elements visible in the present house (bottom) and a south side entrance view of the Browne House in Watertown, Ma.

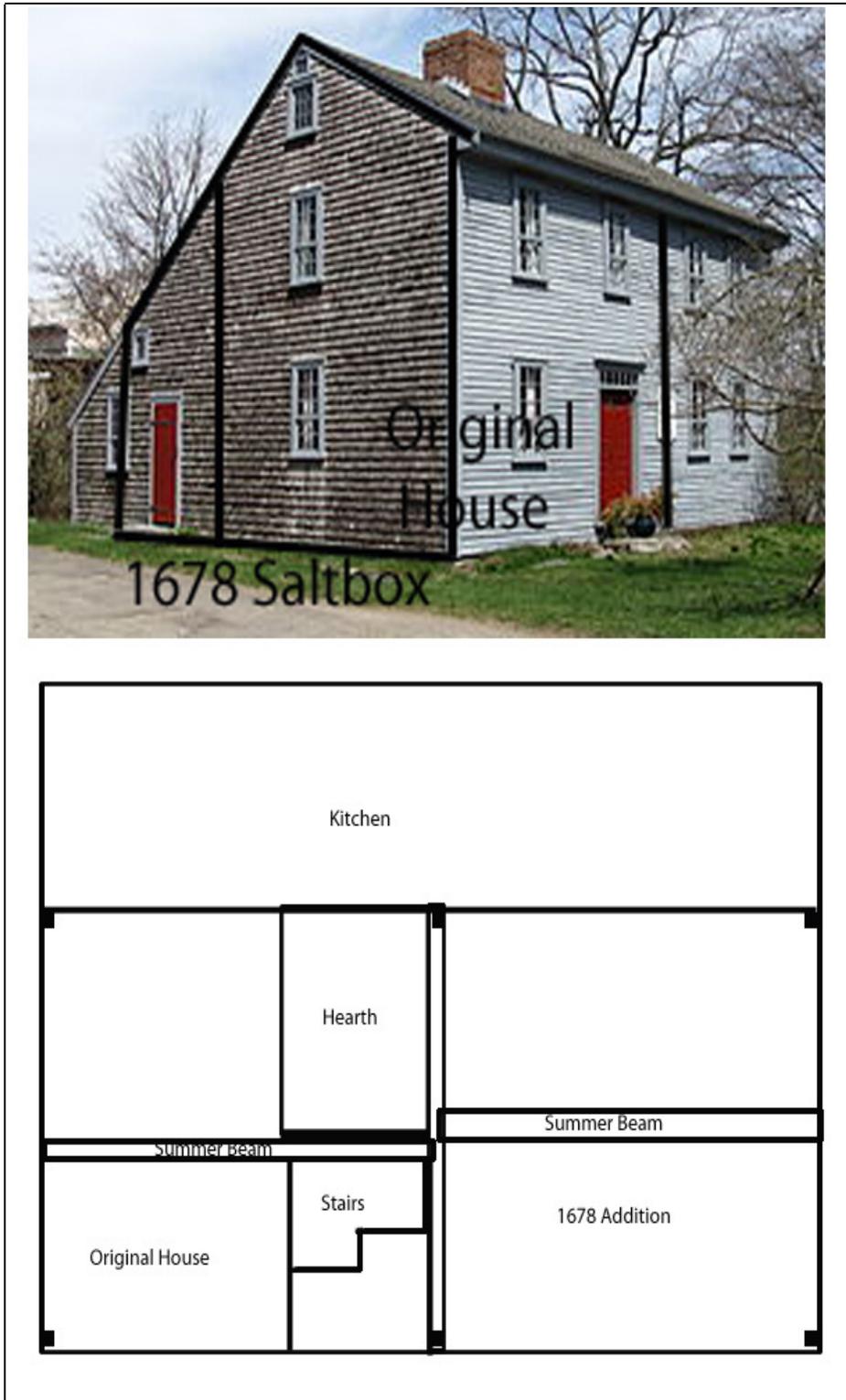


Figure 3. Layout of the house after the 1678 addition.



Figure 4. Comparison of the house today (bottom) and as it looked after Pratt's 1837 renovation (top).

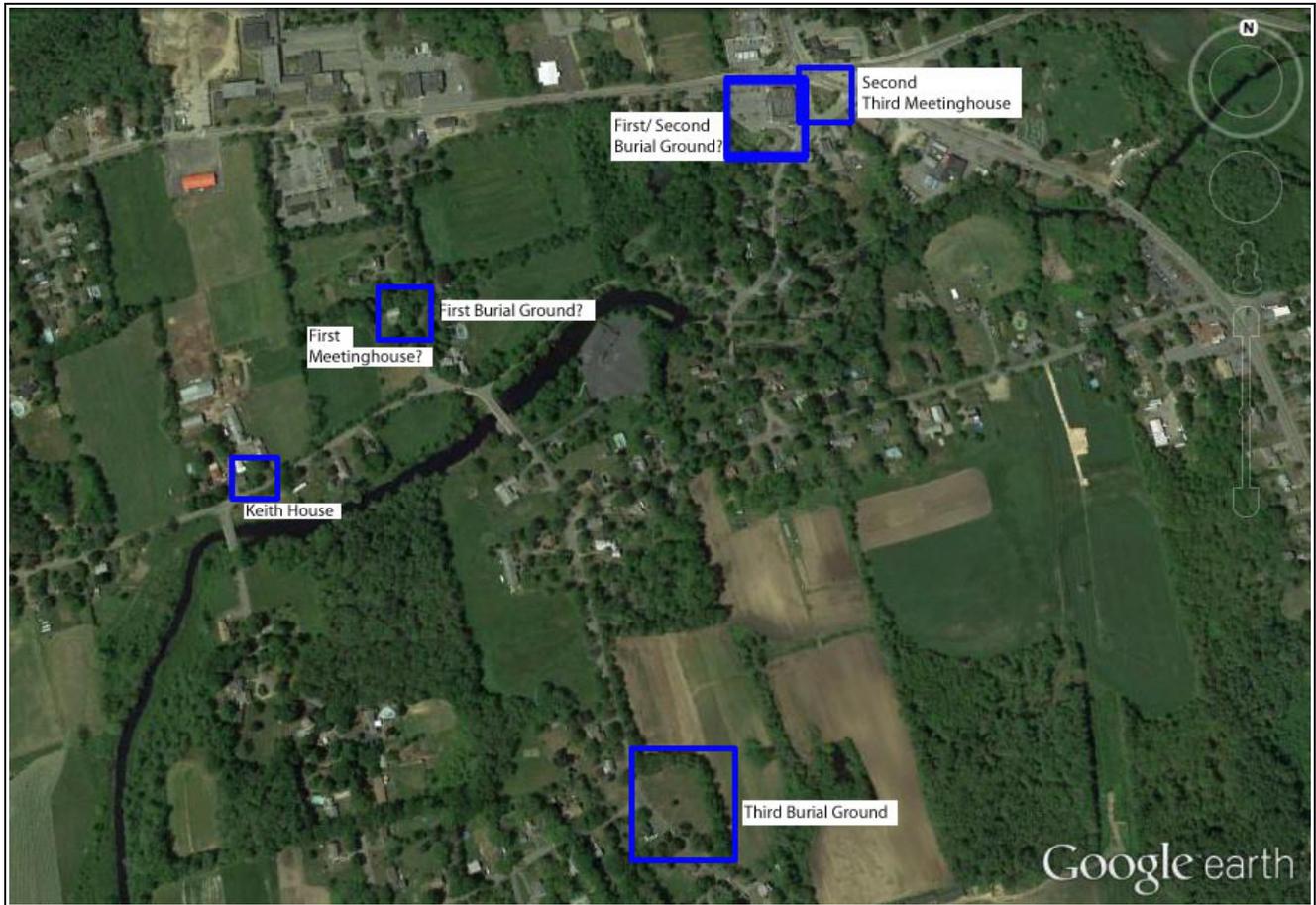


Figure 5. Locations of possible and known burial grounds and meetinghouse locations based on Latham's research (1882)

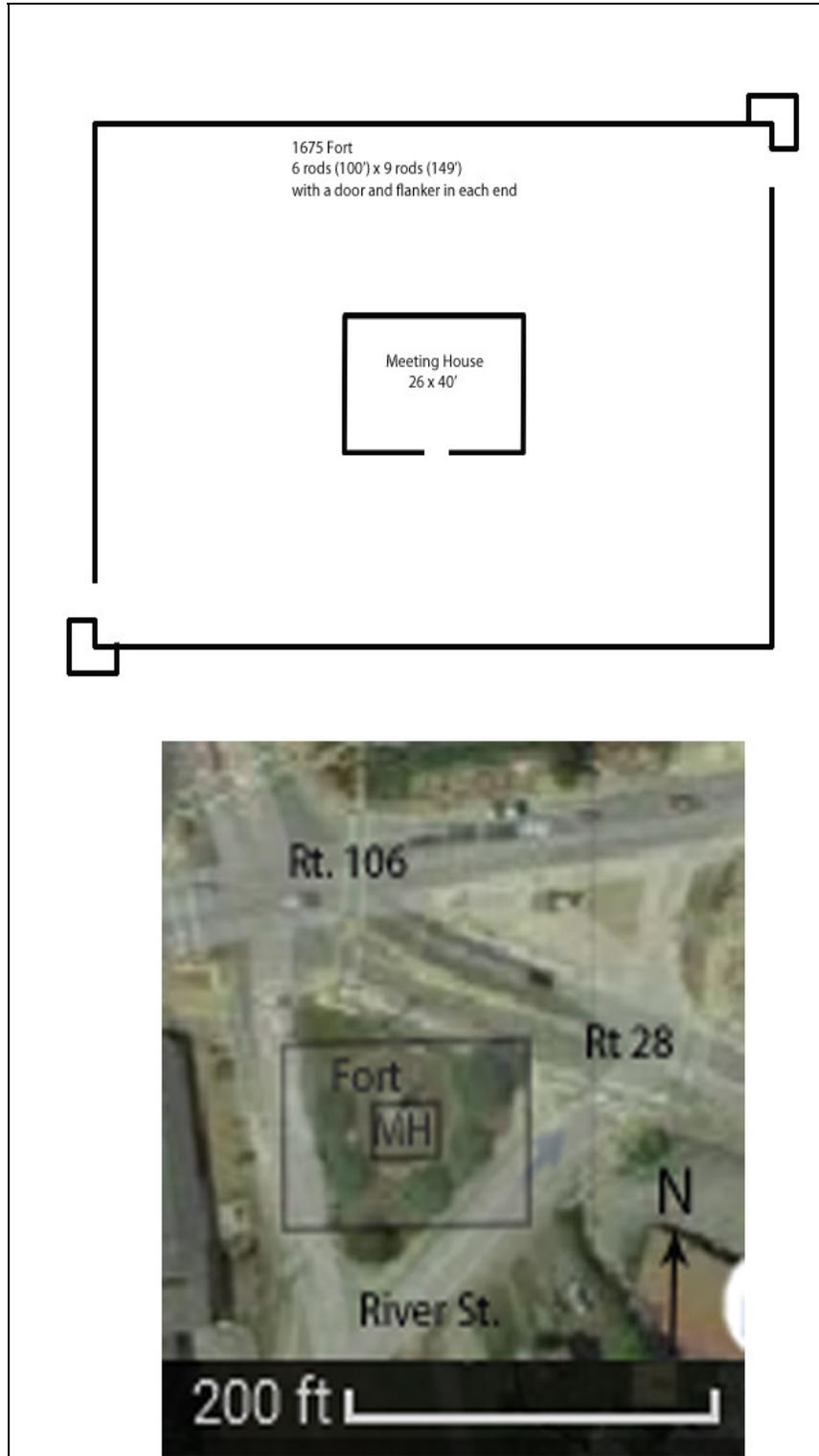


Figure 6. Layout of the meeting house fort based on town records (Top), and its possible location today (Bottom)

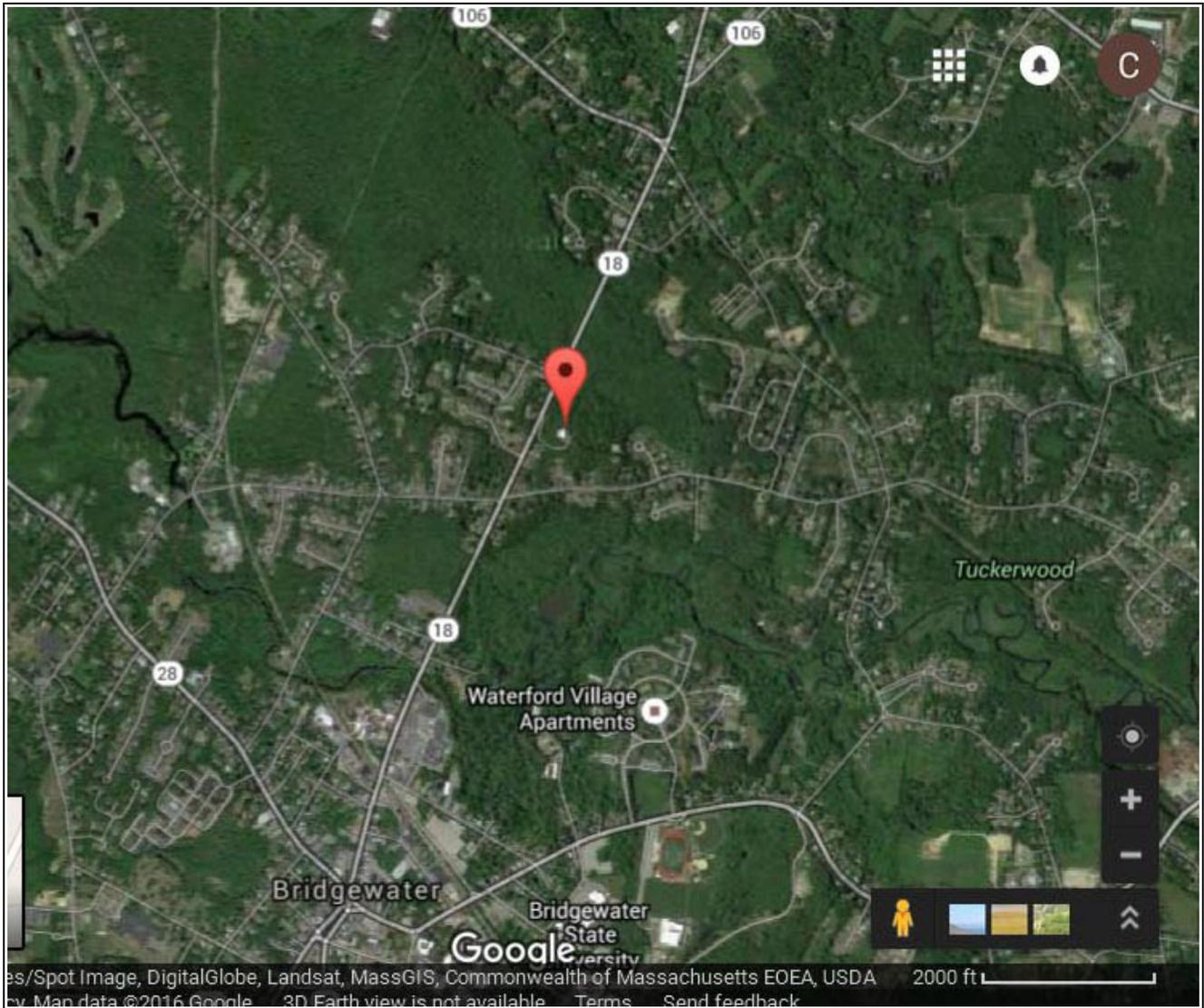


Figure 7. Location of Sprague's Hill, Bridgewater.



Figure 8. Kitchen hearth and bake oven. (Top left: general view of hearth and oven; Top right: inside the bake oven; Bottom: bricks on front of oven showing possible use wear from door and possibly oven peel)



Figure 8. Back stair joists showing the stairs were added in the 1970s.



Figure 9. The north wall of the house (left side of picture) at the top of the back stairs that was added by Pratt in 1837.



Figure 10. Architectural features in the attic. (Top left: apex of 1678 rafters; Top right: whitewashed joists beneath the attic floor; Bottom left: joist pockets on stairwell to attic; Bottom right: joist pocket and roofline at cantilever).



Figure 11. Cantilever visible in the second floor.



Figure 12. Corner post with gunstock visible on second floor north side (Top left: north center post of the house; Right: gunstock post and rising brace in the northwest room; Bottom right: detail of chamfering on gunstock post).



Figure 13. Summer beam in the southwest room (Top: view of summer beam with quirked beading in the room; Bottom: view from inside the southeast room closet showing chamfering and beading behind staircase).

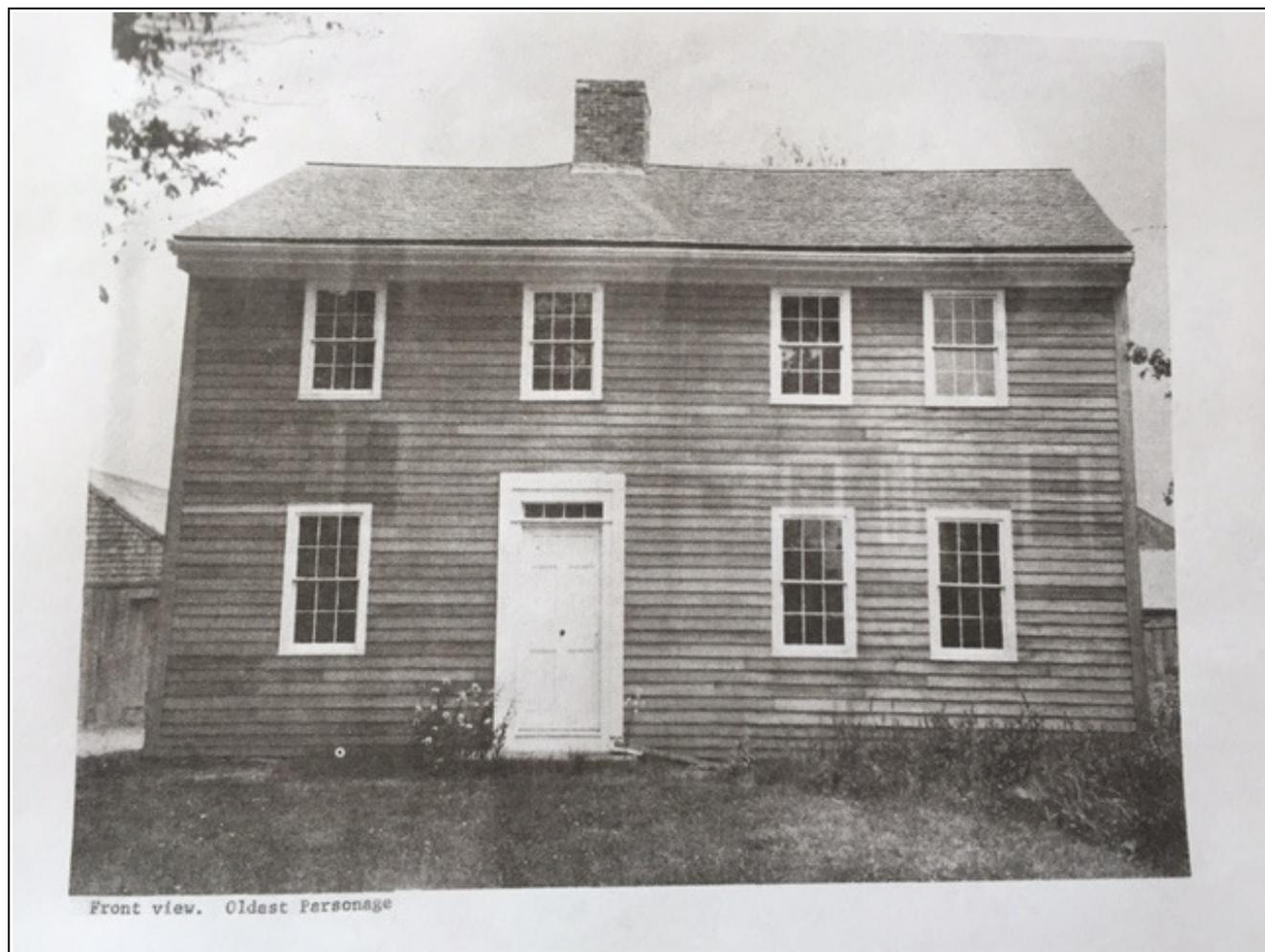


Figure 14. Photograph of the house showing the front door.



Figure 15. A view inside the southeast room closet showing the old brick, 19th century lathe, and the old board or lintel (within the black rectangle).



Figure 16. The southwest room of the house (Top: before the 1970s restoration; Bottom: as it appears today).

Appendix B
Timber Framing Glossary

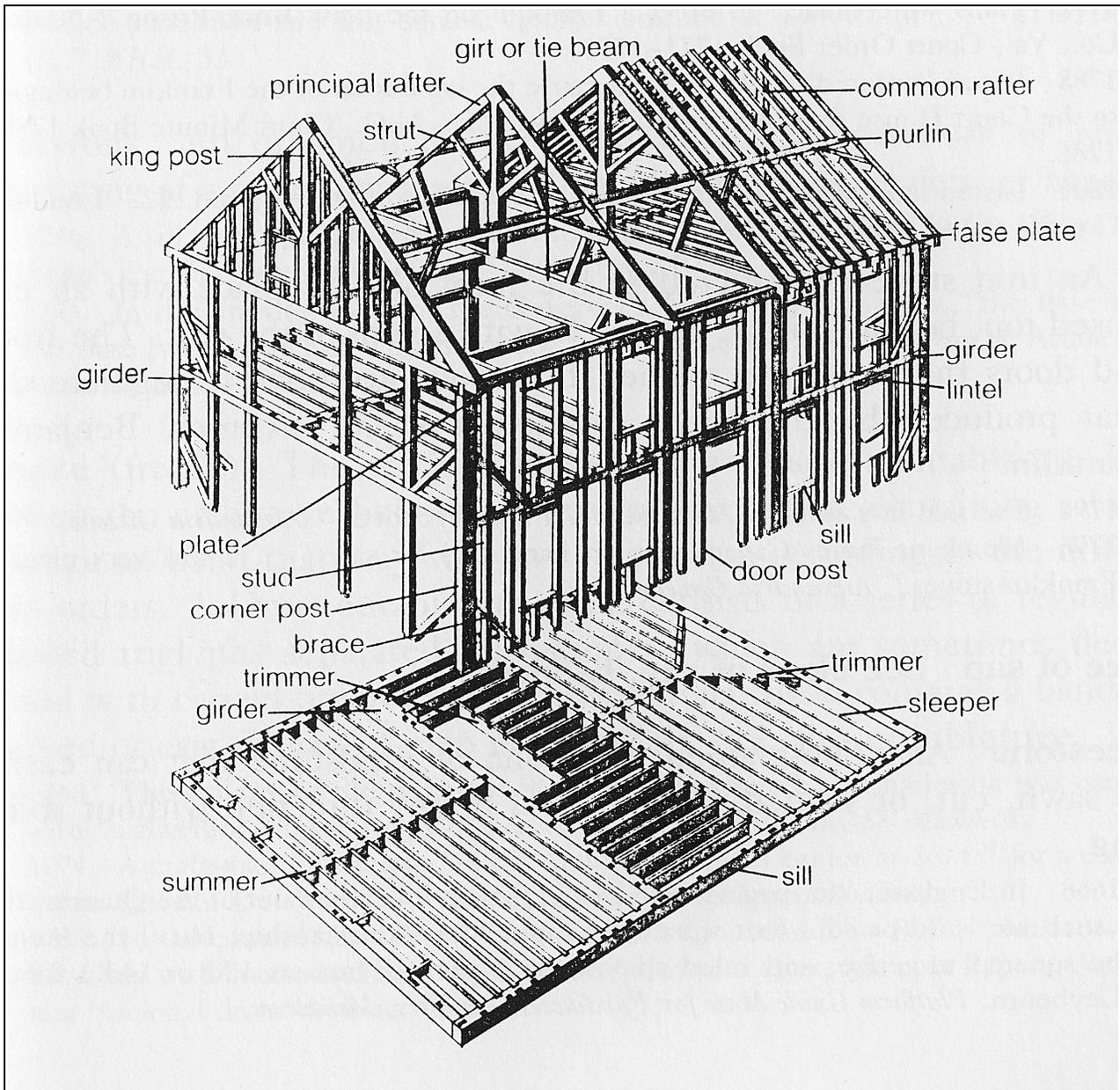


Image from: <http://hisp305.umwblogs.org/historic-building/study-guides/wood-frame-construction-framing/>

Brace: Diagonally running timbers between horizontal and vertical members that help to strengthen the structure through compression and tension

Girts: A main timber usually running perpendicular to the ridge and below the plate that have the secondary task of carrying joists. You can have end girts, chimney girts, wall girts.

Joists: Narrow timbers running between summers or tie beams that support the floor.

Plates (top or wall): Main timbers running parallel to the ridge of the roof. These are the top most timber of wall framing and receive the rafter feet.

Posts (corner and wall): These are main timbers located at the corners or along the length of the walls that support the summers .

Scarf Joint: A splice along the length of a sill or plate used when replacing rotten portion or extending length of timbers.

Sills: The lowest main member of a frame and usually the largest beams in the house. These support the weight of the house on the foundation and run between posts.

Stud: A vertical secondary framing member between posts. Wall coverings are attached to the studs and they are mortised into the main frame.

Summer beam: A large intermediate main beam that carries the joists. Summer beams run parallel to the roof ridge (a bridging summer beam) or perpendicular to it (a binding girt). These are carried at the gable by wall posts called prick posts.

Tie beams: A horizontal timber that ties the front and back of a structure together. Any girt, binding summer, chimney girt and rafter collar would be a tie beam.

Appendix C
House Measurements

Dimensions

South Side of House: 32' 6"
 SE corner to East side of front door: 17' 4"
 SE corner to West side of front door: 21' 9"
 West Side of House: 34' 1/2"
 SW corner to South side of door: 21' 1"
 SW corner to North side of door: 24' 3"

Southwest Room: 9' 6" east to west by 16' 6" north to south
 Summer beam: Located 7' north of south wall

Joist Spacing: Joists 1-4 on south side of summer beam 5-8 on north side
 2' spacing center to center between all joists

Joist Dimensions:

Joist 1: 3" x 4"
 Joist 2: 3" x 3 3/4"
 Joist 3: 3 1/2" x 4"
 Joist 4: 3" x 4"
 Joist 5: 2 1/2" x 4"
 Joist 6: 3 1/2" x 4"
 Joist 7: 3 1/2" x 4"
 Joist 8: 3" x 3 3/4"

Southeast Room: 16' east to west by 16'6" north to south
 Summer beam: Located 7'9" north of south wall
 In Closet Possible lintle or Old Paneling: 4' 5" (53") high
 Height of old brick in chimney: 53"

Entry way: 6' 6" east to west by 5' north to south
 Entry way east side floor: 3' north to south by 3' 6" east to west
 Entry way west side floor: 2' 8" east to west by 2' north to south

Bake Oven: 63" deep 2' wide at north end
 Hearth: 93 bricks on east and west sides of hearth walls
 Bricks: 8 1/2" long 4 1/2" wide 2" thick

Attic

1678 Addition Back Plate Dimensions: 4 1/4" wide x 4 3/4" thick
 Center Gunstock Post Dimensions: 7 1/2" square 33" long gunstock 2" wide gunstock
 NW gunstock Post Dimensions: 7 1/2" square 28 1/2" long gunstock 2" wide gunstock
 West Side Rising Brace off Center Gunstock Post: 5 x 2 1/2"
 North Side Rising Brace off Center Gunstock Post: 4" x 3"

Framing around Chimney Mass: 11" wide double joist set up on south side
 5' 3" south side of chimney framing to north side at north wall

Rafter Layout West to East:

West Gable-Common Rafter-Common Rafter-Common Rafter-Principle Rafter-Common Rafter-Principle Rafter-Common Rafter-Common Rafter-Principle Rafter-Common Rafter-Common Rafter-East Gable

Rafter Spacing West to East:

West Gable to Common Rafter I:	32"
Common Rafter I to Common Rafter II:	28"
Common Rafter II to Common Rater III:	28"
Common Rafter III to Principle Rafter I:	28"
Principle Rafter I to Common Rafter III*:	39 1/2"
Common Rafter III to Principle Rafter II:	38 1/2" end of southwest half of house
Principle Rafter II to Common Rafter V:	32"
Common Rafter V to Common Rafter VI:	31"
Common Rafter VI to Principle Rafter III:	32"
Principle Rafter III to Common Rafter VII:	33 3/4:
Common Rafter VII to Common Rafter VIII:	28 1/2"
Common Rafter VIII to East Gable:	33 1/2"

* III as written on rafter, not IV

Rafter Timber Dimensions:

	Width x Thickness
West Gable:	5 3/8" x 4 1/4"
Common Rafter I:	4 x 3"
Common Rafter II:	4 1/8" x 3"
Common Rafter III:	4 1/4" x 3 1/4"
Principle Rafter I:	7 1/8" x 3 5/8"
Common Rafter IIII:	3 5/8" x 3"
Principle Rafter II:	5 11/16" x 4 1/8"
Common Rafter V:	4" x 3"
Common Rafter VI:	4 3/16" x 3"
Principle Rafter III:	6 7/16" x 3 3/4"
Common Rafter VII:	3 3/4" x 2 3/4"
Common Rafter VIII:	3 5/8" x 2 3/4:
East Gable:	5 1/2" x 4"

Dimensions of Open Cog Joist pockets on stairway up to Attic:

South:	3 1/2" x 4 3/4" x 2" deep
Middle:	3 1/2" x 4 1/2" x 2" deep
North:	4" x 2" x 1 3/4" deep

Northeast Corner Gunstock Post Dimensions on Second Floor: 6 1/2" wide east to west

Back Stairs Open Cog Joist Pockets:

Spacing West to East: West end to Second Joist Pocket:	23 1/2"
Second Joist Pocket to Third Pocket:	19 1/2"
Third to Fourth Pocket	21 1/2"
Fourth to Fifth Pocket:	21"

Each pocket 3 1/2" x 3 3/4"

Second Story Plate Visible in Back Stairs: 10 1/2" wide