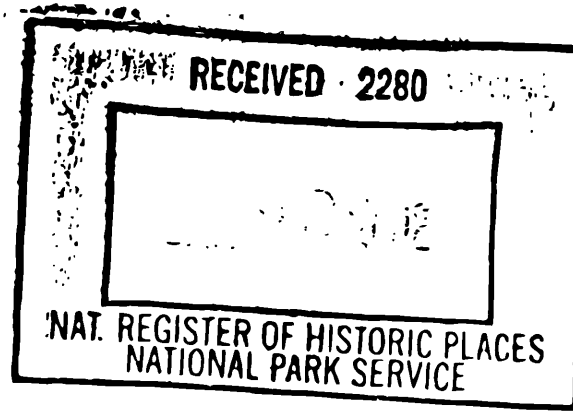


DEC 17 2001

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



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OK

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name James, Benjamin, House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 186 Towle Farm Road not for publication

city or town Hampton vicinity

state New Hampshire code NH county Rockingham code 015 zip code 03842

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James McConcha 1/28/02
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
NEW HAMPSHIRE
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

3-13-02

Benjamin James House
Name of Property

Rockingham County, NH
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial/Postmedieval English

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Wood

roof Wood shingle

other N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Benjamin James House
Name of Property

Rockingham County, NH
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1723

Significant Dates

1723

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

James House Association

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The Benjamin James House is a 2 1/2-story, side gabled dwelling built about 1723 with additions and alterations dating from the mid 18th to mid 20th centuries. As originally built, the James House was a two room-deep, center chimney house. The projecting entrance vestibule is a later addition and the rear ell may predate the main house. Beyond its exterior appearance, the house is most notable for its fully chamfered post-and-beam frame which features three posts in each of its four framing bents. This three-post bent framing system accommodates a floor plan which has rooms on either side of a central chimney and is two rooms deep on each floor, a system which later became the most common plan for timber-framed center chimney houses in northern New England. The James House may be the earliest complete and extant example of this house type in the state.

When the house was constructed a well-traveled road crossed in front of the house. As seen today, the house is set with its back to Towle Farm Road and its facade oriented to the south. Measuring 36'6" by 26', the main house is set above a stone foundation which is largely obscured by wood clapboards and a wooden watertable which extend nearly to the ground. (The foundation at the southeast corner of the house has been reinforced with concrete.) Many of the clapboards and the simple cornerboards date to the late 19th or early 20th century. The north side of the ell was reclad in 1998 with narrow quarter-sawn, hand-planed, scarf joint clapboards. The house is capped by a gable roof, recently sheathed in cedar shingles. Today, the house is without chimneys. Two tall brick chimneys dating to the late 19th century previously rose from in front of the roof ridge, on either side of the location of the former central chimney. An additional, 20th century brick exterior chimney was centered on the west gable end but has been removed, leaving only a painted outline to suggest its former location.

Facing south, the principal facade is composed of three bays over five bays. Centered on the first floor is a projecting pedimented entrance porch. The early 20th century exterior door displays two vertical glazed panels over a horizontal raised panel and two lower, smaller, vertical panels. The west wall of the vestibule is punctuated by a 6/6 window with 6" x 8" glass panes. This window is one of the two oldest on the house (the other is above the entrance) and was apparently relocated from elsewhere on the house when larger Federal-era frames were installed. On either side of the entrance vestibule there are two large windows with Federal-era frames but early 20th century 2/1 sash which replaced Federal-era sash of a 9/6 configuration, with 8" x 10" panes of glass. The projecting vestibule is a Federal-era addition to the house. The elongated windows are a late 19th century alteration which installed Federal-era windows recycled from an unknown structure.

On the upper floor, three small windows are arranged symmetrically across the facade, directly below a shallow eave cornice which has recently been replaced. The central window contains a small 6/6 original sash which was not replaced in the late 19th century with the longer 6/6 Federal-

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era sash due to the lack of space between the bottom of the window and the entrance vestibule below. Discovered in 1997, stored in the attic, the sash was re-installed, replacing a 20th century diamond-paned unit. The two outside windows on the south elevation, second floor, contain a 6/6 sash which is slightly larger than the center opening, corresponding to the late 19th century alteration.

Both the east and west gable ends display close eaves and are two bays wide. Two early 20th century 2/1 sash light the first floor on the east gable end. On the west elevation, two 9/6 Federal-era windows remain on the first floor. Both the east and west elevations have 6/6 windows on the second story. Lighting each end of the attic is a small 6/6 window. The rear elevation of the main house was completely resheathed in bevel boards in 1998, awaiting its new clapboarding. Until then, it is without openings.

Extending the east elevation of the house is a two-story ell which was moved to this site in the mid 19th century. The ell is set on a fieldstone foundation; additional foundation stones to the north provide an indication of the original longer dimensions of the ell. The east and west elevations of the ell are without openings and are sheathed in horizontal flushboard dating to the 1998 renovations. The north gable end is clapboarded and is punctuated by a single bay of openings consisting of a 9/6 window on the first floor, a 6/6 on the second story and a 3 x 2-light window in the attic. The three hand-made double sash windows, crafted in the style of the 18th century, were installed in 1998.

The house presently occupies a 1.1457 acre parcel of land bordered on the north by Towle Farm Road, on the east by Interstate Route 95 and on the west and south by town-owned land which was once part of the James House property. A short, paved driveway leading from Towle Farm Road and ending in a turn-around is located to the west of the house. Two large, mature trees frame the view of the south facade, a maple tree towards the east and an ancient American ash on the west. The latter is judged to be about 150 years of age, as observed by Susan E. Schnare, D.Phil., Historic Preservation Consultant in Landscape Design. A small storage shed of recent construction is located to the southeast of the house. The remainder of the parcel is wooded.

The present house parcel was subdivided in 1995 from a larger piece of land. The remaining 14.4 acre lot to the west once included the James' former carriage house (later converted to a dwelling) and the James House barn. Both buildings were removed in 1996 by the Town of Hampton, which owns the remaining acreage.

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Interior Description

The center entrance hall measures 8' by 19' and incorporates the 8' by 10'8" space originally occupied by the central chimney stack (6'9" between the chimney girts), as well as the 8' by 3' space associated with the projecting vestibule. The chimney was removed about 1881. A late 19th century straight-run staircase constructed of stock millwork rises along the eastern wall of the entrance hall. (The present staircase appears to be the third staircase constructed. Evidence suggests that a second, double-return staircase was in place in the mid 19th century.)

There is evidence that the original winding staircase began with a left-hand rise; treads measured 3'7" wide on a 8 3/4" rise. Steps in each of the three sections of the staircase were set on enclosed stringers. More than likely, it was an open stairway supported by a hand-rail with balusters. To the left of the bottom step, a partial partition of vertical feather-edged pine sheathing defined the base of the stairway. On the east wall of the stairway, there is a small area of unpainted vertical pine sheathing which is covered with graffiti, scratched into the pine by generations of James family children. The portion of the eastern chimney girt which was exposed in the stairway is neatly squared, planed and chamfered with lamb's tongue stops at the back wall of the original stair and at the joint where the girt meets the southeast front chimney post. The chamfering of the post apparently dates to the Federal period and coincides with the construction of the vestibule which left it exposed. The ceiling height in the entrance hall, and throughout the first floor of the house, is seven feet. (The second floor ceiling height is lower, closer to six feet.)

To the east of the entry is the parlor, which measures 14'6" by 16' with a large chestnut summer beam measuring 15" by 9" running parallel to the ridge line of the roof. Floor joists laid 23 1/4" on center are framed into the summer beam and girts with simple butt-cog joints, a framing technique which is consistent throughout the house. The summer is framed into the girts with a tusk tenon on each end. The summer is fully finished with flat chamfers and well-executed lamb's tongue stops, and the floor boards above are left rough on the underside. This decorative treatment is typical in First Period structures where the framing was meant to be exposed to view.

Surprisingly, however, the summer beam, joists, and flooring show no signs of soot deposits, even near the fireplace. This lack of smoke residue suggests that the ceiling was plastered over the riven lath and the framing cased in pine from the very beginning. The covering of the decorative but old-fashioned treatment of the ceiling frame is consistent with other evidence of this being the "best" room in the house.

Because of its function as the "best" room, the East Parlor shows evidence of frequent remodeling. The only original finish, other than the ceiling, is a small section of vertical feather-edge sheathing on the fireplace wall. The fireplace surround features fielded paneling with moldings typical of the

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early Federal Period. The other three walls feature plaster walls over split-board lath and a fielded panel dado and cap rail in Georgian Period moldings, probably added in the mid-18th century. The dado on the south wall was partially cut away when the front windows were elongated in the late 19th century, extending well into the paneled dado. In the southeast corner, a cupboard with cast iron butt hinges dates from the Federal Period and replaced a Georgian corner cupboard, evidence of which is still visible on the floorboards.

To the west of the entrance is the hall, a slightly smaller room measuring 14' by 16' with a large chestnut summer beam, 15" by 9", running parallel to the ridge line of the roof. This summer beam is fully finished with flat chamfers and nicely executed lamb's-tongue stops. The riven lath used in the plaster ceiling shows that, as in the parlor, the ceiling was enclosed from the start. The chimney girt is not chamfered and shows no smoke residue, evidence that it was cased in pine boards from the very beginning. The other girts are chamfered and were also cased from the start.

The original fireplace wall of the hall no longer exists although the location of the hearth is evident and the size of the firebox can be determined by evidence on the top rail. The location of the door frame to the entrance hall and an adjacent door to the cellar are also still apparent. Evidence in the ceiling indicates that along this wall raised paneling was removed and updated in a simpler, Federal-style sheathing. The other three walls retain nearly all of their original pine vertical sheathing. The sheathing conforms to the local practice of alternating boards with two feathered edges and ones with a thumbnail bead and ploughed groove on both edges. The sheathing on the south wall of this room was altered by the extension of the two windows in the late 19th century. On the wall, there is still evidence of the shutters for the windows that slid across the surface of the interior wall. On the north wall there is a large Federal-style cupboard, notable for the 52" wide, four-panel door hung on H-hinges. In the northeast corner of the room, originally located above the firebox, there is a small cupboard with foliated hinges.

The framing of the rear service rooms is one of the features which distinguishes it from others of its period. The girts at this level are not continuous from the front of the house to the rear, but are mortised into the intermediate posts. The end wall girts are of normal size, but the chimney girts, which are 8" by 12" in the front bays of each bent, are reduced to 6" by 8" in the rear bays.

The rear rooms on the first floor of the main house contain the remnants of a service room, 22' by 10', occupying the northwest corner of the house and a buttery or dairy, 14'6" by 10', in the northeast corner. The west end of the service room was set aside for use by various James family widows beginning in the early 19th century. A partition (no longer extant) was erected resulting in the formation of a small, 8'4" by 10' bedroom.

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The service room may have been originally unfinished and unheated. Cuts in the chimney posts show that the frame was altered to accommodate a large cooking fireplace with a side bake oven when the rear room was converted for use as a kitchen in the mid 18th century. This later kitchen has lost most of its interior finish, including the cooking fireplace and fireplace surround. Much of the vertical pine sheathing on the south wall between the hall and the west bedroom is intact. The west wall retains early plaster on riven lath above two board horizontal wainscoting with evidence of a chair rail visible. The ceiling is plastered over accordion lath. The north exterior wall was badly rotted, and was re-framed and resheathed with appropriate materials in 1997-1998.

The room in the northeast corner appears to have once been a buttery or dairy. The walls have an interior layer of horizontal rough-sawn sheathing, covered with riven lath and plaster. This extra layer of sheathing was designed for insulation to keep the room cool in summer. The ceiling is also plaster on early riven lath. The partition wall between this room and the kitchen is missing, but remnants of the feather-edged vertical sheathing and door frame are evident above the plaster ceiling along the chimney girt. The window on the east wall is probably a later addition. The original window would have been smaller to minimize heat flow into the room.

On the second floor, the stair hall is primarily late 19th century in character, and was plastered over machine-sawn lath. As on the first floor, the hallway occupies the narrow space of the original upper hall, and the large space which was opened up when the central chimney was removed in the late 19th century. The only early feature of the upper hall is the 6/6 window on the south wall.

The principal chambers on the second floor are the same size as the rooms below and feature fully-decorated framing timbers that have never been encased or covered from view. The summer/tie beams have flat chamfers with bevel stops, whereas the girts and posts have flat chamfers and run-on stops. The beams on this floor run perpendicular to the ridge line, and are continuous from front plate to rear plate, to function as tie beams. The chimney girts and end girts are also used as ties. A peculiar feature of the James House frame is that the middle posts are framed just as if they were part of the exterior wall frame. The middle posts in the three-post bents are jowled or "gunstocked" at the top to accommodate a tenon into the tie beam and a partially housed tenon joint into the medial wall plate. The tie beams are dovetailed into the medial plate, and the joints are stabilized at this point with windbraces rising from the posts to the ties and to the plate. The presence of an intact windbrace on the west side rising from the middle posts to the chimney girt makes it unlikely that any of the chambers on the west side had fireplaces in the 18th century. However, the windbrace on the east side has been partially cut-out, supporting the belief that a small fireplace may have once been located in the southeast chamber.

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Physical evidence suggests that the east half of the second floor was finished first. The outside walls of the southeast chamber are sheathed in wide tongue-and-groove vertical boards with a 3/8" bead. In contrast, the interior walls of the room are finished with a peculiar type of vertical sheathing with a feathered or fielded edge on the tongue sides and square edges on the grooved sides, instead of the more typical thumbnail bead. The ceiling is plastered on accordion lath and is documented by an inscription on the chimney tie which reads, "Began to plaster May 11, 1762." Prior to that date there may have been a board ceiling or the beams may have been left exposed. On the north wall of the room there is evidence of several former doorways and a closet which is a later addition. The boards next to the closet appear to have been reused from other areas of the house. Evidence suggests that a small fireplace may have been later added to the northwest corner of the room, although it is no longer extant.

The southwest chamber retains a single board of the same early tongue-and-groove sheathing that is in the southeast chamber. The exterior walls are plaster and the north wall has Federal Period beaded-edge vertical sheathing and a Federal-period closet. Cut marks on the north wall indicate a doorway which was partially cut out but never completed.

The northwest chamber has Federal Period beaded-edge sheathing on the walls and on the ceiling although the boards are attached with modern nails, probably dating to the late 19th century. This rear chamber was always unfinished storage space although the half of the room nearest the hall was made into a bathroom in the 1930s (this bathroom has been removed).

The northeast chamber is of interest primarily because of its early 18th century whitewashed pine board-and-batten ceiling, handplaned and installed with hand wrought nails. Only a few fragments of the battens survive but paint shadows indicate their location, size, and profile. A 6/6 window punctuates the east wall. Notches in the frame reveal that the present window is a later replacement and that the original window was somewhat smaller, owing to the smaller glass panes used. A four-panel door leads into the room and an angled wall and worn spots on the floor indicate the traffic pattern leading to the house's back stairs, actually located in the adjacent ell.

The attic is unfinished except for a small unheated room on the east end. This room features unpainted Federal Period wainscoting and trim, and an arched plaster ceiling on split board lath. The roof frame is of the principal rafter type, with short angled struts rising from the tie beams to the rafters, forming a large truss. The roof is mostly framed in pine, its principal rafters, however, are oak with some chestnut. The 50" x 42" dimensions of the original center chimney are still discernible from cuts in the ridgepole and the roof sheathing boards. The stairs which currently access the attic are not in their original location, which would have been closer to the front of the house. Close inspection of the present staircase indicates that when it was installed in its present

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location it was turned upside-down, evidenced by the wear on what would have originally been the treads but which now serve as risers.

The cellar was originally accessed by a split-log puncheon stair which remains under the location of the original main stair. There is a partial cellar under the east side of the house and it is enclosed by loose rubble walls. The chimney base is packed earth held by a rubble retaining wall.

To the north of the buttery is a 2 1/2-story ell which is a remnant of a separate structure that was relocated from a nearby site and attached to the James House before 1850, probably during the 1840s. By that time, it had become fashionable, with the advent of "cook stoves", to add an ell onto a house so that a new kitchen could provide space for the new stove. Thereafter, cooking moved from the fireplace to the stove. Evidence of weathering on the north wall of the main house confirms that the ell was not always connected to the main house.

The ell is notable for its story-and-a-half jowled posts, chamfered framing members, and evidence of a fully-enclosed stairway. There are conflicting opinions as to the origins of the ell. Physical evidence suggests that is an 18th century piece of a high-posted house, notable for its exposed, heavily-whitewashed ceiling. Whether this could indeed be the house which Benjamin James built on the property c.1707, prior to the construction of the main house, or whether it is a separate structure relocated from a nearby site remains a mystery. A woodhouse, formerly located at the north end of the ell, was removed in 1931 when the Campbells bought the property. As has been mentioned previously, the north side of the ell was reclad in 1998 with quarter-sawn, hand-planed, scarf joint clapboards.

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The Benjamin James House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its significance in architecture. It is an important representation of domestic timber framing dated to the first quarter of the eighteenth century and related to a vernacular house form that was being introduced into southeastern New Hampshire at this period. The house exemplifies a method of construction utilized for two-room-deep, two-story houses, a building type that subsequently became a dominant urban and rural house form in southeastern New Hampshire. Having been dated by dendrochronology to 1723, the James House is regarded as perhaps the earliest surviving example of this large and characteristic vernacular house type in New Hampshire.

The James House has undergone a number of stylistic remodelings over the course of its long occupancy by two families, but its frame remains an intact example of structural design and carpentry techniques that were first introduced for large center-chimney houses in the first quarter of the eighteenth century in coastal New Hampshire. The house retains integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. The integrity of the original design of the house was compromised in the late nineteenth century by the removal of the central fireplace chimney and the substitution of stove chimneys, but the integrity of design of the frame of the structure was unimpaired by this chimney alteration.

The James House is composed of four bents, which are assemblages of posts, girts at the second-story level, and tie beams at the roof level. Each bent is a structural frame that runs through the depth of the house from front to back. Two of the bents define and support the end walls of the house. The two inner bents define the chimney bay at the center of the structure.

Each bent has three posts: one in the plane of the front wall (facade) of the house; one in the plane of the rear wall; and a third, called a prick post, defining a plane that lies just behind the rear face of the original central chimney. The prick posts mark the transition from the front rooms of the house to the rear rooms, and help to support partitions that separate front rooms from rear rooms.

In each of the two bents that flanked the original central chimney and define the chimney bay, the girts that connect the front post to the prick post at the second story level are heavier than the girts connecting the prick posts to the rear posts. This change in size may be accounted for by the fact that the front rooms are deeper than those at the rear of the house, and that bridging joists (summer beams) are framed into the centers of these heavier girts in the front portion of the frame. At the same time, the lighter dimensions of the girts in the rear portion of the house may denote the carpenter's sense of structural hierarchy. Since two-room-deep houses were rare when the James House was built in 1723, the carpenter may have regarded the rear range of rooms as a subordinate addition at the back of what was then seen as the standard, one-room-deep frame of a hall-and-parlor house.

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The tops of the posts in each of the four bents of the frame are linked together in two directions. Each bent is connected to adjacent bents by three wall plates. One lies at the top of the front wall of the house and one at the top of the rear wall. A third wall plate, which might be called a chimney or medial plate, connects the tops of the prick posts and runs through the length of the house just behind the chimney stack.

The tops of the posts are connected through the depth of the house by tie beams, which rest upon the wall plates and are secured to the plates by lapped dovetail joints cut into the upper surfaces of the plates and the lower surfaces of the ties. The tie beams link the front and rear wall planes of the building and provide support for the feet of the rafters, resisting the tendency of the rafters to spread outward under wind and snow loading. The juncture of posts, plates, and tie beams is further stiffened in the James House by sawn diagonal braces that rise from the posts to the undersides of the horizontal members.¹

The house has six sets of rafters, four of which are supported by the four bents of the house. Intermediate tie beams, not supported by the four bents, span the depth of the house halfway between the end walls and the chimney bents, supporting the feet of the additional two sets of rafters. All rafters are hewn to rather light cross-sections, and are trenched at their tops to receive purlins. The roof frame has two purlins on each roof slope, and a ridgepole at the apex of the rafters. Because the rafters are fairly light members, they are stiffened by diagonal struts that rise from each tie beam to intersect the bottoms of the rafters at about one-third of their height.

The frame of the James House combines advanced attributes and other features that were traditional at the time of its fabrication in 1723. Among the traditional features are several that might have been seen for almost a century in local building, and others that had become commonplace at least a quarter-century before the James House was built. Among the most ancient attributes of the frame are the flat chambers and lamb's-tongue stops that decorate the bottom edges or arrises of the summer beams on the first story. Such features, sometimes flat and sometimes quarter-round, are seen on the summer beams of all seventeenth-century houses in the Piscataqua River region of New Hampshire, including the Jackson House of about 1664 in

¹ For illustrations of the framing joints that link posts, wall plates, tie beams, braces, and rafters, see James L. Garvin, *A Building History of Northern New England* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2001), p. 13 and Abbott Lowell Cummings, *The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625-1725* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), fig. 53, p. 58.

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Portsmouth, the region's oldest surviving building. Similarly, the chamfered corners of the posts of the James House are echoed in similar treatments in most of the earlier houses of the region.²

One peculiarity of the chamfering in the James House is that the large chestnut bridging joists (summer beams) above the parlor and sitting room appear to have been covered with planed casings from the first, despite having been decorated with flat chamfers and lamb's-tongue stops. It appears that the carpenter who framed the house persisted in applying traditional decoration of a type to which he was accustomed, but that the joiner who finished the rooms tended toward the newer idea of covering structural members, formerly exposed to view, with casings. This same use of planed casings on summer beams that had been prepared with chamfers has been observed in houses of an earlier date in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, some twelve miles from Hampton. Here, the summer beams of the John Lowe House of 1702 were chamfered, yet these structural members were cased from the beginning.³

A somewhat more modern attribute of the James House frame is the use of simple joints where joists are framed into supporting members like summer beams, girts, or tie beams. The builders of older houses like the Jackson House (c.1664) employed more complex forms of tenons, referred to as "tusk tenons" or "bare-faced tenons with diminished haunches," in connecting joists to supporting members. These joints required a fairly complex shaping of both the tenons at the ends of the joists and of the mortises that received the joist ends. The joists of the James House, by contrast, are square-ended. These ends simply drop into square notches that are cut into the upper edges of summer beams or girts. These simple joints are called "butt-cogged" joints. While butt-cogged joints cut more wood from the supporting members, weakening their capacity to function as beams, such joints offer greatly increased economy of labor and time in fashioning the frame.

The use of butt-cogged joints in New Hampshire can be traced to the years just before 1700, some twenty-five years before the James House was erected. Several Portsmouth houses, including the Sherburne House of 1695 and the John Lowe and John Jones Houses (both 1702), employed such joints throughout.⁴

The greatest significance of the James House is found in the overall design of the dwelling and its frame, and in the fact that this frame has been dated accurately. Whereas the detailing of the

² For a discussion of the evolution of chamfering, including the increasing occurrence of flat (rather than quarter-round) chamfers in southeastern New Hampshire by the late 1600s, see Richard M. Candee, "Wooden Buildings in Early Maine and New Hampshire: A Technological and Cultural History, 1600-1720" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1976), pp. 217-19.

³ Ibid, p. 219.

⁴ Ibid, p. 217-19.

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James House frame is fairly typical of its period, the layout of the frame represents the earliest known example in New Hampshire of the use of the three-post framing bent. Development of the three-post bent was necessary to the introduction of the two-story, two-room-deep dwelling that remained a standard large house form in New Hampshire for nearly a century.

Dendrochronology has established the date of construction of the James House as 1723 - the earliest instance yet discovered in southeastern New Hampshire of this floor plan combined with this method of framing. The James House is now recognized as a precursor of innumerable three-post-bent frames used throughout southeastern New Hampshire for large, two-story, center-chimney dwellings.

Dendrochronological dating of wood requires the presence of samples that include uninterrupted annual tree-ring sequences extending from the cambium layer just beneath the bark (indicating the year in which the tree was cut) inward toward the pith or center of the tree. Dendrochronology also requires a large body of comparable tree-ring sequences from samples of the same species of tree, gathered at locations not too far removed from the sample in question. Such comparable sequences are necessary because trees of different species react differently to weather conditions during a given year, and because weather conditions differ among wide geographical regions. To obtain an accurate date for a given sample of wood, that sample must be compared to dated samples of a similar species that grew within a region that experienced similar broad meteorological patterns and thus encountered similar stimuli from year to year.

In the year 2000, continuing dendrochronological research in Massachusetts produced a Boston Regional Master Dating Chronology for red and white oak (*Quercus rubra* and *Quercus alba*), providing tree ring data for these species between 1513 and 1997.⁵ Specimens of white oak from the James House were subjected to examination by Paul J. Krusic of the Great Bay Tree-Ring Lab in Durham, New Hampshire, in the autumn of 2000 and compared to this Boston-area chronology.⁶ Until this analysis was completed for the James House, the northernmost oak samples that had been subjected to tree-ring analysis were obtained in Amesbury, Massachusetts. Dendrochronological analysis of the James House marked "the first time [that] dendrochronological methods have been applied to a structure so far north."⁷ Tree-ring data from

⁵ Paul J. Krusic, "Addendum [to the] First Dendrochronological Examination of the James House, Hampton, N.H.," January 29, 2001.

⁶ Paul J. Krusic, "Final Report: First Dendrochronological Examination of the James House, Hampton, N.H.," September 24, 2000' and "Addendum [to the] First Dendrochronological Examination of the James House, Hampton, N.H.," January 29, 2001.

⁷ Krusic, "Final Report: First Dendrochronological Examination of the James House, Hampton, N.H.," September 24, 2000.

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the James House thus opens up the possibility of further extending master dating chronology for oak throughout the natural range of white oak, which extends into the earliest-settled regions of New Hampshire.

The presence of much white oak and American chestnut in the James House proved fortuitous for dendrochronology, but is not characteristic of the majority of house frames thus far identified in New Hampshire before 1725. Although oak was used for the posts of larger buildings, such as meeting houses, in southeastern New Hampshire throughout much of the eighteenth century, eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) was generally preferred for most elements of house frames except for diagonal braces, which were almost always sawn from oak. In Massachusetts, by contrast, oak was widely preferred as a framing timber for houses as well as for larger structures.⁸ In keeping with Massachusetts tradition, the James House frame utilizes white oak and American chestnut hardwoods for corner posts, sleepers, summer beams, rafters, and chimney girts.⁹ Perhaps the fact that Hampton was initially granted and settled in 1638 under the authority of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay accounts for the presence of so much hardwood in its frame.

The James House was not the earliest recorded two-story, two-room-deep, center-chimney dwelling in New Hampshire's seacoast region. The earliest such house now known was that of Lieutenant-Governor John Wentworth, built circa 1700 in Portsmouth. A second such dwelling was the Sampson Doe House, built about 1706 in the Lubberland section of Newmarket. Both houses stood within a dozen miles of the James House. Both were destroyed in the early twentieth century, and today are known from graphic and photographic records, or from surviving architectural features. Both of these earlier houses differed from the James House in having two-post framing bents rather than three-post bents. In each case, the range of rear rooms behind the central chimneys was defined by a second bridging joist or summer beam on each side of the chimney. The partitions that divided front from rear rooms were erected beneath these rear summer beams. There were no prick posts or longitudinal internal girts or wall plates lying behind the chimneys to define the rear rooms. The James House remains the earliest surviving example of the three-post frame.

The three-post bent became the standard framing method for two-story, two-room deep houses with central chimneys. The structural form endured as long as New Hampshire carpenters built large, center-chimney dwellings, well into the early nineteenth century in some areas. The James House may therefore be regarded as the earliest intact example of a framing method that became the standard for center-chimney dwellings of two stories, long regarded as a standard vernacular house

⁸ Cummings, *The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay*, pp. 49-50; Garvin, *A Building History of Northern New England*, pp. 7-8.

⁹ Tom Hardiman, "James House Description" (typescript), March 28, 2000.

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type in the older sections of New Hampshire. The only further evolutionary change that occurred in later examples of the three-post frame was the gradual supplanting of the principal bridging and binding joists (summer beams) on the first and second stories by closely-spaced common joists. These common joists span the full depth or width of the front structural bays of newer houses.

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources has studied later New Hampshire examples of center-chimney houses with three-post bents. These examples include the William Cario, Jr. House (c.1760), Newfields, New Hampshire; the Sawyer House (c.1794), West Franklin, New Hampshire; the William Hill House (c.1800), Strafford, New Hampshire; the Samuel Bartlett House (c.1805), Northwood Narrows, New Hampshire; and the Enoch Page House (1806), South Sutton, New Hampshire. Each of these dwellings express varying stylistic features proper to their periods of construction, but shares the basic framing principles established in the James House of 1723.

Historical Background

The Benjamin James House was built in 1723 near the western border of Hampton, one of the four original towns of the Province of New Hampshire. The house was constructed for Benjamin James, who arrived in Hampton in 1690 to learn the trade of a weaver. James served a five or seven year apprenticeship to John Stockbridge. In 1702, Benjamin James, now a master weaver, married Susanna Smith, daughter of John Smith, the tailor. The partnership was no doubt a profitable one for Benjamin James, who gained a steady customer in his father-in-law who was also the son of one of the more affluent men in Hampton.

On November 20, 1705, Benjamin James purchased four acres of land from Zachariah Brackett, a weaver. The land was located towards the westerly end of the "Drakeside", in an area that had not yet been settled. According to James family tradition in 1707 Benjamin James built a modest, rectangular, one-story house with loft. If so, its exact location remains unknown. Over the next three decades Benjamin added substantially to his land holdings. Thirty acres of pasture were purchased in the neighboring Timber Swamp and six acres were acquired in Drake's Meadow. Although James described himself as a "weaver" in early deeds, by 1720 he described himself as a "husbandman". Town records indicate that Benjamin James was well-respected by his fellow townsmen. In 1728, Benjamin was chosen constable of Hampton; his responsibilities included the collection of taxes.

By 1722 Benjamin and Susanna James had eight children. About 1723 it appears that Benjamin constructed a larger, nine-room house which is the present James House. (Dendrochronological

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examination of the white oak timbers used to build the James House has matched a sample taken from the basement beam with samples taken earlier throughout the house, the majority of which, with the basement beam, confirm that the wood was cut in 1723.) What happened to the earlier cottage is not known with certainty, although there are those who believe that the structure was later attached to the rear of the later main house. While the exterior of Benjamin's new house indicated that he had reached a certain social status, the interior did not. It appears that only two rooms were entirely finished when the family moved in - the large hall and the buttery with the parlor completed next. On the second floor, work began first on the east side of the house, above the parlor and buttery. The framed ceilings in several of the rooms were finished as inexpensively as possible or left open for some years. The northwest chamber was probably left unfinished until the nineteenth century and appears to have been used for the winter storage of certain crops.

The builder of the Benjamin James house is not known although it seems likely that a local carpenter named John Moulton would have been involved. John Moulton married Rebecca Smith, Susanna James' sister, in 1713, becoming a brother-in-law to Benjamin and Susanna. Considering the strong family relationships which would have existed in a small rural town, it seems more than likely that John Moulton had a role in the construction of the James House.

Benjamin's fourth son, Jabez James (1717-1752), also became a weaver and established a prosperous business with his father. Every aspect of the woolen process, from the raising and shearing of the sheep to the weaving of dyed spun thread, took place on the James farm. In 1740, Jabez James married Mary Lane (the daughter of Deacon Joshua Lane, the most respected man in Hampton) and brought her to live in the homestead. They had three children before Jabez died at age thirty-five in 1752, five years after his father. By 1755 Mary had married again and young Joshua, the only surviving child of Jabez and Mary, inherited all the James property. At the time Joshua was only twelve years old.

Like his father and grandfather, Joshua James (1740-1809) became a weaver. On December 20, 1759, his apprenticeship completed, Joshua married Huldah Fogg. It appears that soon thereafter Joshua began completing any areas of the house that had been left unfinished as well as making some major renovations. In 1762 he had the ceiling plastered in the southeast bedroom. On the first floor Joshua apparently had a bedroom constructed in the northwest corner of the service area and took the cooking and food preparation out of the hall by constructing a new kitchen in the center of the service area. The new kitchen included a new fireplace with a bake oven which opened into the central chimney. When Huldah became a widow, by the terms of Joshua's will, she was to have the hall and the rear bedroom as a part of her third of the property. It appears that sometime after the Revolutionary War, Joshua also updated the parlor. The corner cupboard and

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the feather-edged pine sheathing were largely removed, replaced with a Georgian style raised panel dado with a chair rail below plastered walls.

Joshua James was very active in town politics and war efforts during the Revolutionary War period. In 1773-4, 1775 and again in 1777 he was elected selectman. In 1777 Joshua was appointed to go to Exeter and procure the materials necessary for making lead bullets and to see that they were manufactured. Twenty-eight volunteers, one of whom was Joshua's oldest son, Jabez, armed with the bullets, set off with Col. Jonathan Moulton to the Hudson where under General Gates they helped beat the British decisively at the Battle of Saratoga.

Joshua James' second son, Edmund James, (1770-1849) married Elizabeth Fogg, daughter of Deacon John Fogg, prior to 1797. By the 1790s, Edmund had completed his training as a carpenter-house joiner by which he could do fine finishwork, beyond the province of an ordinary carpenter. Edmund was a sawyer and shareholder at Coffin's saw-mill. Town records indicate that Edmund was responsible for sawing the boards for the town poorhouse in 1807. Back at home, Edmund demonstrated his skills as well and was apparently responsible for adding a number of Federal-style refinements to the house. He constructed a projecting closet in one corner of the parlor and another Federal closet in the first floor bedroom beyond the hall chamber. Outside, the enclosed vestibule was added onto the front entrance. It is not known whether these improvements were initiated by Joshua or whether Edmund completed them after he inherited the house in 1809, although Edmund would have almost certainly been involved in either case. In addition to his father's real estate Edmund also inherited personal effects including Joshua's loom, warping bars, clock, gun and andirons. Joshua's will, drafted in July 1808, also made specific provisions for his widow Huldah, reserving to her "the privilege of my west Lower Room and bedroom behind it". (Rockingham County Probate Records, Old Series, #8101, New Hampshire Archives, Concord.). Again, it remains unknown whether the insertion of the new fireplace in the north service area took place during Joshua's lifetime or after his death. During his ownership, Edmund also built a large carriage house to house his carriage or chaise.

Edmund James was a farmer with interests in timber, who is known to have sold wood. He was also prominent in town affairs and in 1810 he donated money to build Hampton Academy, then a private preparatory school. It is not known if Edmund continued the trade of weaver. In 1847, with a shaky signature, Edmund quitclaimed the homestead farm to his second son, Joshua James II (1805-1858). When Edmund died at the age of 79 in 1849, his second wife was given dower rights which included the west half of the dwelling house "from the center of the south front door through the chimney to the northerly side thereof...to the northerly point of the wood house".

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According to the 1850 U.S. Census, on June 1st of that year the James Farm consisted of 65 improved acres and 20 unimproved acres. The farm had a value of \$3,500. Livestock on the farm included a horse, five milk cows, two oxen, six sheep and two pigs. There were orchards and crops being raised included Indian corn, oats, and potatoes. Additional products included wool, butter, and cheese. In addition to inheriting the homestead farm, Joshua, a carpenter, also inherited his father's share in Coffin's sawmill where, like his father, he took his turn as a sawyer. The changes or renovations which Joshua made to the James House are not clear. For instance, it is not known whether it was Edmund during the 1830s, his son, Joshua II, during the 1850s or even Joshua's widow in the 1860s, that was responsible for setting off the plastered room with a coved ceiling from the open garret. It appears that the ell to the house was moved to its present location in the 1840s, either from another area of town or from elsewhere on the property.

Joshua II had married Martha Ann Leavitt in October 1841. They had four girls and one boy, Joshua Edmund who was less than six months old when Joshua II died in 1858. Contrary to the usual custom of the day, Joshua II demonstrated total trust in his wife's abilities and at his death, bequeathed the homestead and all of its property to Martha Ann stating that "she is to manage it as she thinks best for the support and education of our children".

Despite being left with three young girls, aged twelve, seven and five and an infant son, Martha Ann James (1821-1905) kept the farm operational, probably with some assistance from extended family or hired labor although Census records do not specifically mention any hired hands being in residence. In 1860 the farm included 55 tilled acres and 10 unimproved acres and was still valued at \$3,500. The farm sold milk to Boston markets, sheep for wool and also raised hogs to butcher. Under Martha's ownership, the James barn was extended to eight stalls and the western half of the carriage house was made into a milk room, laid with a brick floor. However, over the next twenty years production on the farm declined. By 1870, the tilled acreage had been reduced to 40, the unimproved acres increased to twenty and the farm was no longer raising sheep. The value of the farm in 1870 had been reduced to \$2,000. In 1880 the farm was still valued at \$2,000 but only eighteen acres were being tilled.

During her ownership, Martha Ann James made many significant alterations to the James House. Recycled Federal-style windows with larger muntins replaced the original windows all over the house, except for the small window above the vestibule. Because the windows installed on the ground floor were considerably longer than the original windows, cuts were made into the dado and paneling to frame them (without a proper sill). Wallpaper was installed over the paneling in every room of the house except the parlor, with layers of newspaper laid before applying paste to the wallpaper. About 1880 the central chimney was removed, replaced by two slender, more widely-spaced chimneys. The replacement of the original chimney made possible the introduction of small

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parlor stoves in several rooms which gave off more heat than fireplaces. All of the fireplace fire boxes were removed and the fireplace walls replaced, except in the parlor where the surround remained. About 1890, the existing staircase in the front hall was replaced with the present staircase, constructed of stock millwork. A picture of the exterior of the newly modernized James House was included in Joseph Dow's History of Hampton, published in 1892. The photograph shows that the roof had been reshingled and that the front of the house had received a face-lift with new, freshly-painted clapboard siding, capped with cornerboards. The James House was the only Hampton house to appear in the second volume of Dow's history.

During the period when his mother was managing the farm and spending a great deal of money on home improvements, Joshua Edmund James (1857-1927) married Jennie Crosby in 1886 and brought her to live in the James House. Their only son, Joshua Hale, was born in 1888. After his mother's death in 1905, Joshua E. James inherited the property. It was probably after Martha Ann's death that the Federal-style windows on the first floor front and east side were replaced by large 2/1 doublehung windows, haphazardly installed. The rest of the exterior of the house was clad with new wooden clapboards attached with modern nails.

After his mother's death, Joshua continued to sell milk to the Lynn Dairy although profits were meager and much of the family's funds had been depleted in the house improvements. By 1920, if not earlier, Joshua suffered his first stroke. By 1922 he had his fourth stroke which left him bedridden for five long years. Although Hale married and left home in 1919, he had no aptitude or interest in farming. Cattle had to be sold, farming ceased and the outbuildings were left to deteriorate. Eventually committed to the New Hampshire State Hospital in 1926, Joshua E. James transferred all the James estate to his wife, Jennie or to his son, J. Hale. Joshua died in 1927 and Hale died three years later. In 1931 Jennie James sold the property to Winfred and Gertrude Campbell of Windham, New Hampshire ending the 224-year ownership of the property by seven generations of the James family.

In 1931 the woodshed part of the ell was demolished (in order to satisfy a bank's conditions for granting a mortgage) leaving the final portion which they raised the roof of to conform to the roof of the main house. When the Campbells moved into the James House, it had no electricity, no running water and no central heating. Within a year, the Campbells' son, Irving, his wife and child moved in with his parents. By this time, electricity had been crudely installed with electric wiring for a shallow center piece lighting fixture drilled through the massive chestnut summer beams. Heating continued to be provided by small stoves. Running water was supplied to a kitchen area located where the downstairs bedroom and former kitchen had been. A bathroom was soon installed in one half of the space formerly functioning as a storage room.

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Under the Campbell's ownership dairy farming was suspended and the land was used to raise strawberries, raspberries, peas and corn. Part of the eight-section barn was torn down and the lumber was used to build a hen house. The Irving Campbells left the large house in 1936 and remodeled the carriage house for use as a dwelling, adding additional rooms and a second story. Inside the main house, in an ill-conceived attempt to insulate, much of the original woodwork was encased in "Beaver Board".

When Winfred Campbell died in 1954, all farming ceased. The property passed to his second wife, Florence Graves Campbell and upon her death in 1972, to Winfred's son, Irving Campbell, who continued living in the former carriage house. The main house remained unoccupied. After the death of Irving Campbell and his wife in 1983 and 1988 respectively, the ownership passed to their children. Realizing the historic value of the site and the need to stop further deterioration of the house, concerned citizens founded The James House Association in 1994. When the house was purchased by the Association in 1995 (along with an acre of land), it had been vacant for over twenty-four years. In 1996 the Town of Hampton purchased the remaining fourteen acres of the James Farm. The barn and former carriage house on the property were demolished shortly thereafter.

Prior to the start of restoration work on the house, considerable research and documentation was collected. The condition of the house prior to restoration was documented with measured drawings and 4" x 5" photographs. Before grading around the house to correct drainage problems, archaeological investigation was conducted at the site in August 1996 in collaboration with the Strawberry Banke Archaeology Department.

Under the guidance of master craftsman Robert Pothier of First Period Colonial Restoration, Kingston, New Hampshire, the twentieth century Beaver Board which covered much of the house's interior has been removed, exposing a wealth of 18th and 19th century craftsmanship. The chimneys in the house were removed, the roof was repaired and flashing was added at the sills of the house. On the north side of the house new sills were installed and the north wall was reconstructed. The roof framing on the ell was replaced with one of a steeper pitch and as much of the original material as possible was retained.

In order to attempt to determine a more accurate date of construction for the house, in 2000 the James House Association secured the services of Paul J. Krusic, Jr., PhD. Research Associate, of the Tree Ring Lab at Columbia University and Volunteer USDA Forest Service, Northeast Experiment Station in Durham, New Hampshire. Samples were gathered from white oak timbers in the James House during August 2000 with additional samples taken in late November. The

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results of this dendrochronological examination indicates that the tree used for the basement beam was cut in 1723.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property constitutes Map 139, Lot 26 in the local tax assessor's records. Boundaries are indicated on the attached sketch map.

Verbal Boundary Justification

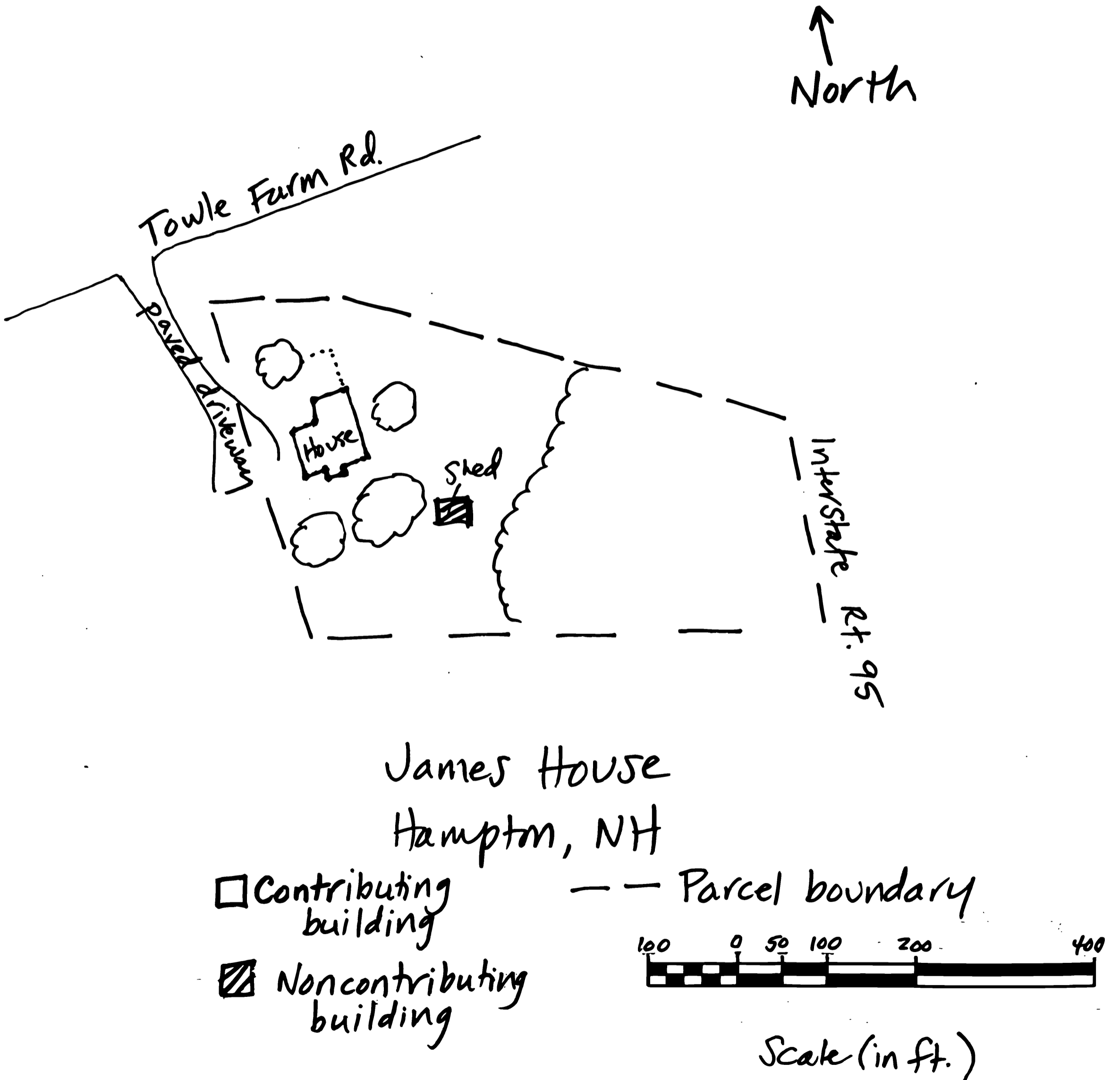
The nominated property includes all that remains of the original property constructed by Benjamin James in 1723. Additional acreage which has been subdivided over the years has not been included.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Benjamin James House
Hampton (Rockingham County)
New Hampshire

Section number _____ Page _____

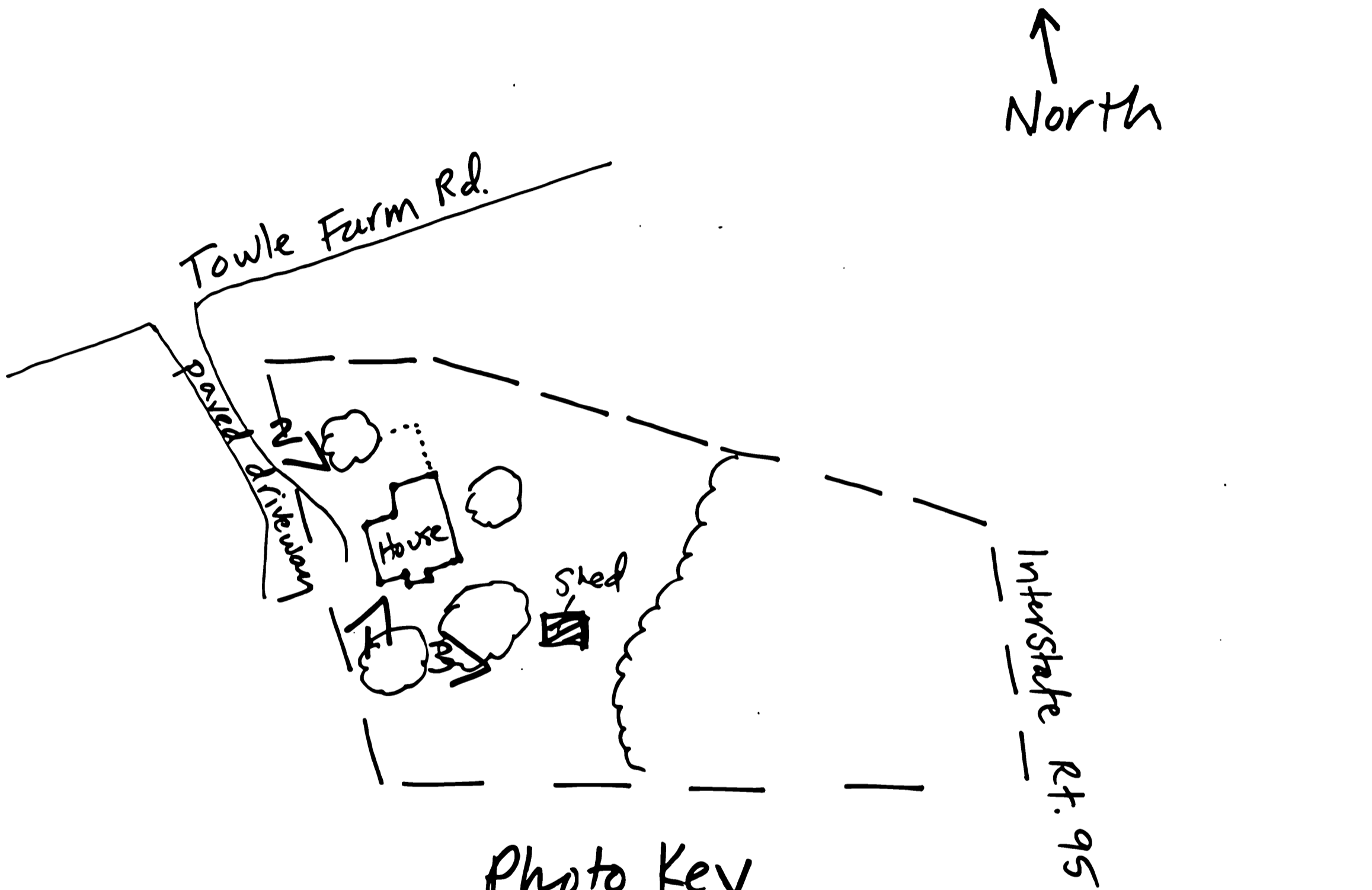


Photo Key
James House
Hampton, NH

- Contributing building
- Noncontributing building

— — Parcel boundary



Scale (in ft.)

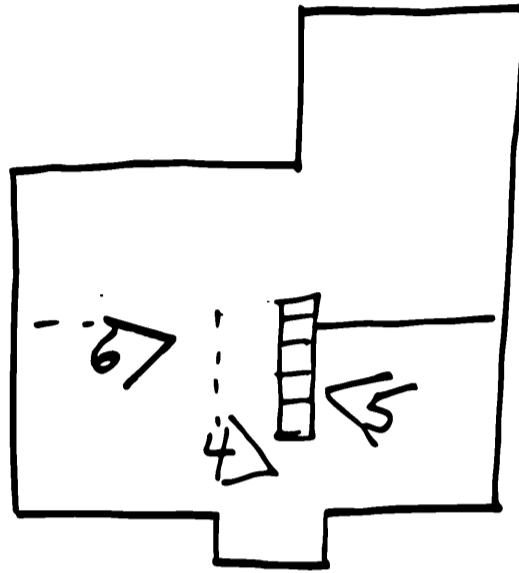
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

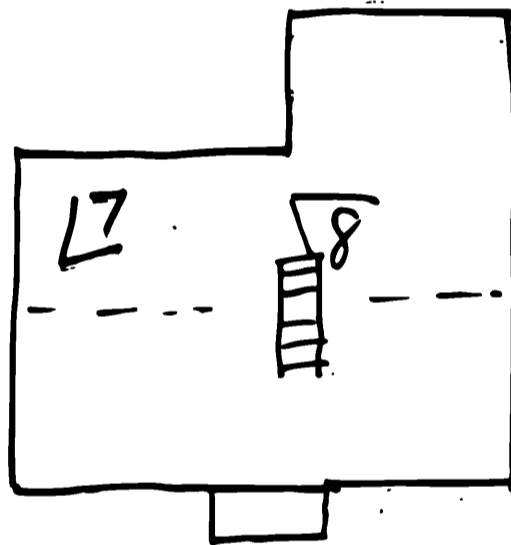
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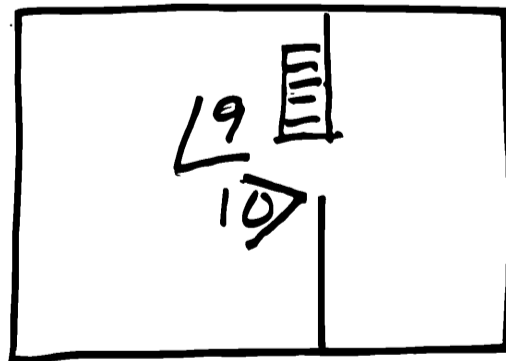
First Floor



Second Floor



Attic



Interior Photo Key
James House Hampton, NH