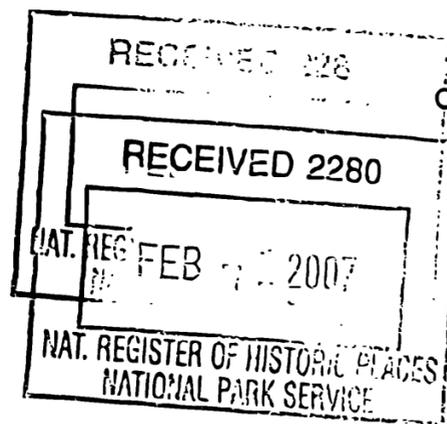


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



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 any 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 ROLFE BARN

other names/site number NATHANIEL ROLFE BARN

2. Location

street & number 16 Penacook Street

N/A not for publication

city or town Concord (Penacook)

N/A vicinity

state New Hampshire code NH county Merrimack code 013 zip code 03303

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.)

Thomas McConaha
Signature of certifying official

1/29/07
Date

NEW HAMPSHIRE
State or 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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Calson H. Beall

3-15-07

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	
3	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding
AGRICULTURE /animal facility
AGRICULTURE /storage

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation GRANITE
STONE
 walls Weatherboard
 roof ASPHALT
 other N/A

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

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 significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory history.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
ca. 1790

Significant Dates
ca. 1790

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a 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.

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
N/A

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property** 1.5 acres**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>19</u>	<u>289880</u>	<u>4795310</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

xx See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)**11. Form Prepared By**name/title Elizabeth Durfee Hengen with building analysis assistance from James L. Garvin, State Architectural Historian, and Allen Charles Hill, AIAorganization Preservation Consultant date October 30, 2006street & number 25 Ridge Road telephone (603) 225-7977city or town Concord state NH zip code 03301**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name The Penacook Historical Societystreet & number 16 Penacook Street telephone 603-753-6664city or town Penacook state NH zip code 03303**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Rolfe Barn
Concord (Penacook) New Hampshire

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Rolfe Barn is located on the west side of Penacook Street, in a semi-rural area near the Merrimack River on the eastern fringe of Penacook, a village that falls within Concord, New Hampshire. The barn is sited at the east end (nearest the street) of a 1.5-acre open lot. Also on the lot and clustered near the barn are two contributing buildings—a late eighteenth century house and a late 19th or early twentieth century wagon shed, collectively known as the Rolfe Homestead—and one non-contributing building, a house built in 1998.

The barn is located close to the edge of Penacook Street, oriented south, with its long axis running east to west. It is a double English barn with seven bays, built in a single building campaign in the late eighteenth century, and measuring 85' in length, 33' in depth and 28' in height. It rests on a rough-cut granite and stone foundation; cellar access is provided through openings in both the east and west ends. (Plug drill marks in the granite indicate the cellar was excavated later, likely in the 1830s or 1840s. The crudeness with which the foundation was laid, with the wall batter in some cases extending into the cellar, is strong evidence that the barn was underpinned from below, while standing in its original location, rather than moved to this spot later.) Exterior walls that are exposed to the weather are sheathed in clapboards (added in the early twentieth century), while those protected by the north ell and leanto have a mix of wood shingles and vertical board sheathing. (The sheathing boards are original to the barn, while the wood shingles date from the second half of the nineteenth century). Trim consists of wide corner boards and flat door and window casings.

The primary entrances—two wagon openings in each of the two drive bays—have early large, two-leaf drive doors at the two south entrances (one is hinged and the other rolls on an exterior track). The northwest entrance was framed down slightly around the turn of the twentieth century and a smaller, two-leaf, hinged door inserted. The northeast entrance, now obscured by the north ell, was also framed down, and a pass-door installed. A mix of fixed and sliding windows are found on each elevation; sash has mid-late 19th century muntin profiles.

The Rolfe Barn retains an intact frame, whose symmetry and coherence indicates that the structure was built by a single team of carpenters in a single building campaign. With the exception of its great length, over-sized posts, and smoothed surfaces, it is typical of late eighteenth century New England barn frames. The primary structural system is adze-smoothed hewn timber, with up-and-down sawn secondary members. Joints were cut using the scribe rule. The eight hewn bents divide the building into seven bays—essentially two separate English barn frames with a connecting central bay. Each frame consists of posts at the exterior walls and mid-

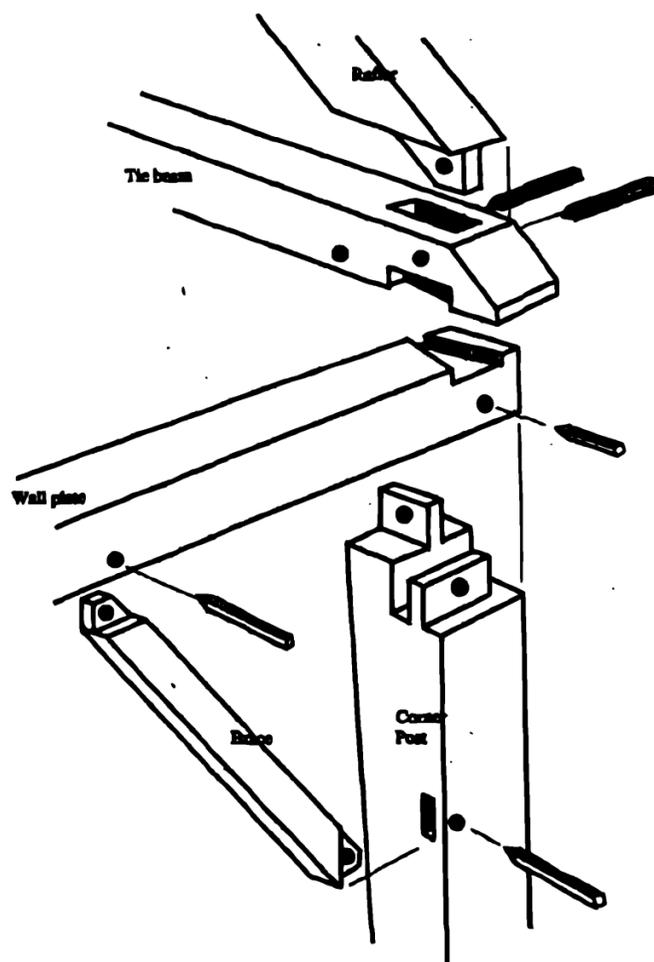
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Rolfe Barn
Concord (Penacook) New Hampshire

way, with horizontal girts spanning the posts at loft level. The posts have haunches for dropped wall plates. The end bents have two intermediate posts, while the inner bents have one. A continuous wall plate extends over the top of the wall posts to stabilize the bents. Each plate is made in two pieces, joined in the center bay with a half-lap splice—the conclusive evidence that the entire structure was built in a single unit. The original exterior cladding was up-and-down sawn boards, applied vertically, nearly all of which survive beneath the clapboards that were applied in the early twentieth century. Hand-made wrought nails can be found securing the vertical exterior boarding that is exposed inside the north ell and leanto.



*Diagram of Rolfe Barn framing system
drawn by James L. Garvin*

The purlin roofing system consists of eight principal rafters that rest on and are locked into tie beams, purlins, and diagonal braces. Roof sheathing boards run vertically the length of each

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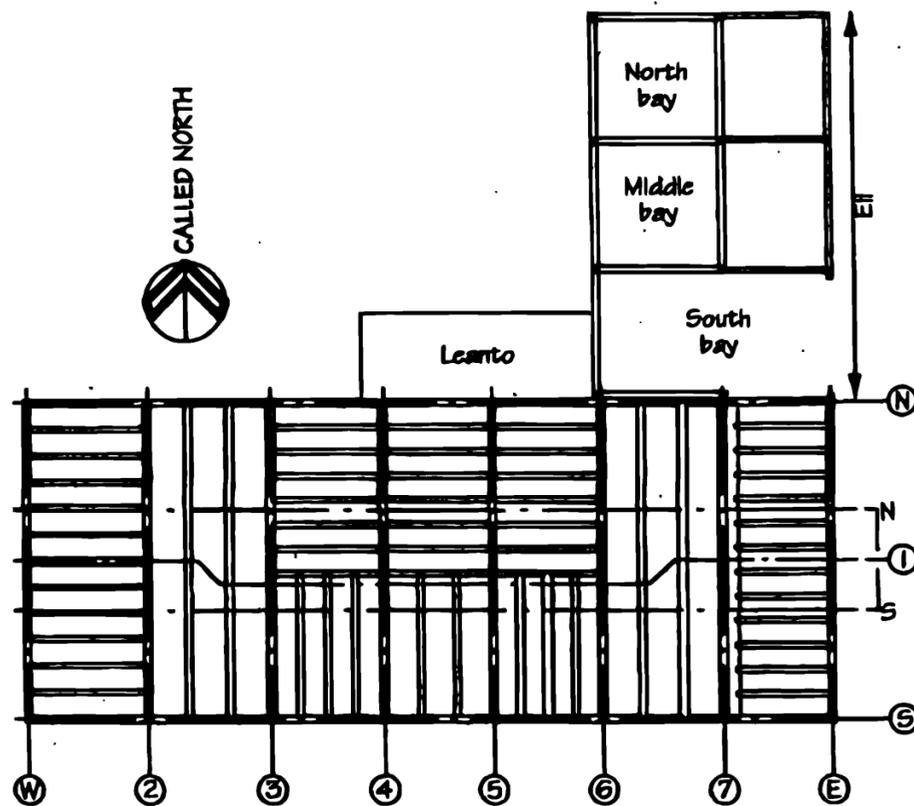
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Rolfe Barn
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slope. All of the rafters and tie beams are hewn, while the girts, purlins, braces and sheathing boards are up-and-down sawn.¹

The interior of the Rolfe Barn is laid out like two English barns butted together. Two central drives/threshing floors, both open to the roof, are flanked by two-story bays, the upper of which served as haylofts. Additional hay storage was obtained by flooring the open drives with loose planks to create temporary lofts, or scaffolds. (Many of these planks remain stored in the barn's lofts.) Portions of the barn reflect an early twentieth century reconstruction, when it was fitted out with a cow tie-up in the northeast corner, horse stalls in the north end of the three center bays (a total of eight stalls and a center access aisle), and a box stall and tack room in the south end of the center bays. These alterations coincide with the shift in the barn's primary function from agriculture to housing work horses used the Rolfe family's shop.



Rolfe Barn floor plan
drawn by Allen Charles Hill

¹ These sawn members possibly came from one of the two sawmills a mile or so away at the Borough, but more probably from a recently erected sawmill across the Contoocook River in Boscawen.

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Section 7 Page 4 Rolfe Barn
Concord (Penacook) New Hampshire

The barn's north ell is a single-story, 41' x 25' structure with clapboard walls (which pre-date those on the barn) and an asphalt-clad roof. The east (front) elevation is divided into three bays, each with a drive opening. The south bay is open, while the other two have interior sliding doors made of vertical beaded matched boards.

The north ell was built in two sections. The west part is a sawn timber-frame, shed roof structure that was free-standing before it was appended to the north wall of the barn, where it blocked the northeast drive door. The east part was constructed against the earlier portion when the latter was married to the barn, sometime prior to 1886.²

The most recent addition to the barn is a leanto, erected in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Its walls are clad in horizontal boarding and the roof in asphalt shingles. It lacks a formal foundation.

Nathaniel Rolfe House, ca. 1774/ca. 1778 (contributing building)

The Nathaniel Rolfe House is the oldest structure on the property. It is a 1 ½ story, 47'x22' side-gabled, 6x1-bay structure on granite posts that is located southwest of the barn, facing east toward the street. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles; a single chimney projects from just below the ridge, set just south of the mid-point. The gable ends have Greek Revival type cornice returns. Walls are covered with clapboards and trimmed with plain cornerboards and casings. The façade windows have mid-nineteenth century 6/6 sash, while the remainder, with one exception, have Federal-era 9/6 sash. Each window is flanked with wooden blinds. The east-facing façade has an entrance in the outer bays, with two windows to its side. The doorways have mid-nineteenth century, four-panel doors and Federal-era, three-light transoms above. The shadow line of a rear ell survives, though it was removed ca. mid-1950s, after the last occupant left the building. The rear entrance and window to its left would have led into the ell.

The house was moved to this site ca. 1888 from Merrimack Street, but its original site is thought to be the current site of 6 Penacook Street, just north of the barn, where it stood until ca. 1849. The house was erected in two sections; the north section appears to be the earlier part and likely erected ca. 1774. The south (and larger) section was probably added (or moved from elsewhere and appended) within four years or so.³ Since the mid-1950s, the building has been vacant.

² The ell in its current configuration appears on the 1886 birds-eye view.

³ A thorough discussion of the evolution of the house can be found in the *Nathaniel Rolfe Homestead Historic Structures Report* (Hengen & Hill, 2006). Despite the moves, the house has always sat on land historically associated with the Rolfe family farm.

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Wagon Shed, late 19th or early 20th c. (contributing building)

The wagon shed is situated along the north lot line, providing an informal enclosure with the barn and its north ell. It is a simple, lightly-built, two-bay, gable-roof structure with a circular-sawn frame. It sits on stones and is oriented parallel to the barn. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The exterior walls are clad in horizontal board sheathing; the clapboards on the east bay (east and north elevations) were applied later. The shed is open to the south. The east bay has a pair of sliding vertical-board doors that were probably added later.

A photograph of the building taken ca. 1919 shows a gable-roof addition on the west end, slightly smaller than the shed. The photograph also shows a corn crib immediately west of that addition. Neither building survives.

House, 1998 (non-contributing building)

Erected in 1998 as a single family residence, this house encloses the barnyard formed by the barn, its north ell, and the wagon shed. It is a one-story, gable-roof, modular dwelling with a partially exposed basement. The roof is slightly higher in the center bay and extends over a shallow façade porch supported by simple posts. A single brick chimney rises from the ridge, at the north end of the center bay. Walls are covered with vinyl siding and the roof with asphalt shingles.

The house is currently rented to caretakers of the property.

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**Rolfe Barn
Concord (Penacook) New Hampshire**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Rolfe Barn is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C within the area of Architecture for its distinctive characteristics and method of construction. It is an excellent example of a late-eighteenth-century, timber-frame structure that exhibits all of the characteristics of that method of construction. It is particularly distinctive for its over-sized framing members, unusually high caliber of workmanship, remarkable degree of structural and architectural integrity, and as a rare and well-preserved example of a double English barn that was constructed in a single building campaign. No other barn in New Hampshire is known to be comparable. The property possesses integrity of location, feeling, and association, and an exceptionally high level of design and workmanship. While its integrity of setting was affected by nineteenth century residential development that occurred on much of the barn's original open fields, that change does not compromise the overall significance of the barn. The period of significance and significant date under Architecture coincide – ca. 1790—reflecting the approximate date when the barn was constructed.

Architecture

The Rolfe Barn is significant as an excellent example of a late-eighteenth-century, timber-frame structure that retains all of the characteristics associated with that type of construction. Its primary frame consists of posts with haunches for dropped wall plates and on which the tie beams rest. The wall plate consists of two beams, spliced together in the center bay. The frame is reinforced with rising braces at every intersection. All of the exterior walls have vertical sheathing, and hand-made wrought nails are visible where the boards are exposed to the outside. The roof system, also typical of the late eighteenth century, has principal rafters that rest on and are locked into tie beams, purlins, and diagonal braces. Roof sheathing boards run vertically up each slope.

All of the principal framing members, including posts, tie beams, and rafters, are hand-hewn and adze-smoothed. The girts, braces, purlins, and sheathing boards are up-and-down sawn. The entire framing system is scribe rule, a method of construction that gave way to square rule framing in the 1830s.

The Rolfe Barn is not only representative of late eighteenth century timber construction, but a structure with exemplary craftsmanship. Its primary posts are immense, creating one of the staunchest and heaviest building frames to survive in New Hampshire from

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Rolfe Barn

Concord (Penacook) New Hampshire

this period. Yet, the hewn timbers are all finished with a adze—an extra step generally reserved for a meeting house frame or one erected for a seacoast merchant. At the Rolfe Barn, it represented an unusual expenditure for an agricultural building. The very size and level of workmanship of this barn speaks to the fertility of the alluvial soil that surrounded it.

Finally, the Rolfe Barn is significant as a rare surviving example of a double English barn constructed in a single building campaign. The English barn, the standard design for New England barns until the third decade of the nineteenth century, is characterized by the placement of the primary entrance on the front eaves-side wall. Its framing system usually consisted of four bents, to create three interior bays: a center drive/threshing floor flanked by animal stables on one side and a haymow on the other. While double English barns—a barn consisting of either six or seven bays—were sometimes built, it was more common for a single English barn to be enlarged at a later date, either by building leanto additions, adding a basement or lengthening the barn by adding extra bays at the end. A double English barn built in a single building campaign was uncommon in the eighteenth century, and only a very few survive today anywhere in New England.¹

Historical Background

The Rolfe Barn was erected by Nathaniel Rolfe, and possibly his brother, Benjamin, who were the first to settle this land, in the early 1770s. The barn initially accompanied the Nathaniel Rolfe House (part of this nomination) and the substantial agricultural acreage around it. For 200 years, its history was intricately tied to the Rolfe family and the various houses it owned in the immediate area.²

Benjamin and Nathaniel were third-generation Concord landowners. Their grandfather, Henry Rolfe, was one of Concord's original proprietors. From Concord's initial settlement in 1726, the Rolfe family figured prominently in local history, and subsequent generations continued to play key roles in the community's agricultural, industrial, and social development.

¹ Visser, 1997: 68. Visser did not even include single-built double English barns in his lengthy discussion of barn types in *New England Barns and Farm Buildings* (1997), since so few exist anywhere in New England. [Visser interview]

² A detailed account of the Rolfe family in Penacook can found in the *Rolfe Homestead Historic Structures Report* (Hengen & Hill, 2006).

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Rolfe Barn

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Henry Rolfe (1677-1752) was born in Newbury, Massachusetts to a family that numbered among its first settlers. In 1726, he became one of one-hundred proprietors of the new plantation of Penny Cook on the Merrimack River.³ That winter, he and a few others hunkered down in the frontier community, a period described in the proprietors' records as a time of bitter cold with little food. The following spring, Rolfe served on a committee of three charged with ensuring that the conditions of settling the new town were carried out. Among the necessary items were building a sawmill and a grist mill, so that settlers could begin to erect houses; selecting a minister; and laying out roads and a burial ground. In 1730, Reverend Timothy Walker arrived in Penny Cook, where he ministered to the settlers until his death in 1782. He and his descendants were closely intertwined with the Rolfe family. Appointed moderator, Henry Rolfe presided over early town meetings. In late 1732, he submitted a petition to the Massachusetts General Court imploring that it allow the settlement to become an incorporated township in order to better conduct its affairs. In 1737, he served on a committee to review the boundary dispute between Massachusetts and New Hampshire.⁴

Henry Rolfe received a 1 ½ acre house lot, as well as a seven-acre home (or field) lot, for which he paid five pounds. He subsequently purchased a number of additional lots scattered throughout the township, several of which had been forfeited for lack of payment. A report of the status of each proprietor's lot in 1731 indicates that Rolfe had built a house that was inhabited. Rolfe's home was one of sixty-one occupied dwellings in the new community, and his lot one of several hundred cleared acres, as the proprietors worked toward their goal of incorporating a township. Rolfe and his wife, Hannah Toppan (1679-1758) of Newbury, had six children. While Henry remained in Concord until 1735, it appears that Hannah stayed behind in Newbury her entire life. However, two of their sons, Benjamin and Nathaniel, ultimately settled in Concord.⁵

Henry's son, Benjamin Rolfe (1710-71), a recent graduate of Harvard College, was living in Concord by 1731, when he became the clerk for the proprietors, a position he held for

³ Concord was initially the plantation of Penny Cook (sometimes spelled Pennacook). In 1734 it was incorporated as the Town of Rumford, renamed Concord in 1765.

⁴ Bouton, 1856: 83-90, 114-19, 140. The importance of mills in the new settlement was underscored by the offer of both fifty pounds and fifty acres to whomever carried out this need.

⁵ Bouton: 128-131. After 1735, Henry Rolfe's name no longer appears in Concord town records, and the Newbury history reports that that same year, he was appointed to a committee charged with dividing Essex County into half. [Coffin, 1845: 204]

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nearly forty years. Over the years, Benjamin held every major office in town, including the only town clerk between 1732 and 1769, selectman during the 1730s and 1740s, state legislator, and clerk to the commission appointed in 1737 to determine the boundary line between Massachusetts and New Hampshire. At the age of sixty, Benjamin married Reverend Walker's oldest daughter, Sarah, who was half his age. The couple had one son, Paul, born in 1770. A year later, Benjamin died, leaving an estate valued at over four thousand pounds, making him the wealthiest man in Concord.⁶

Far less is known about Henry's other son, Nathaniel Rolfe (1713-1808), and the father of the two brothers who settled in Penacook. Nathaniel was living in Concord by 1736, when he was appointed a fence viewer. Over the next several years, his name appears regularly in the Concord town records, as he assumed various offices. In 1742, he married his cousin, Hannah Rolfe of Newbury (1720-93), the granddaughter of his uncle, John. The couple was living in Concord the following year, but shortly moved to Newbury. Both deeds and birth records reveal they moved to Haverhill, Massachusetts by 1748, where they remained through at least 1762 and probably long afterward.⁷ By 1778 they had returned to Concord, as Nathaniel was chosen to represent Concord at the General Assembly in Exeter that year. The couple established a farm on North State Street in West Concord.⁸

Two of Nathaniel and Hannah's sons, Nathaniel (1744-1829) and Benjamin (ca. 1752-1828) and both born in Newbury, established the Rolfe Farm on the west bank of the

⁶ Bouton, 1856: 102, 513, 555-56. Slightly over half of Benjamin Rolfe's worth was in real estate, which would have included his "mansion" house at the junction of South Main and Water streets, later known as the Rolfe and Rumford Asylum. (The house was torn down in the mid-twentieth century.) A year after her husband's death, Sarah married Benjamin Thompson. Twelve years her junior and a handsome local school teacher brought to Concord by Sarah's father, Thompson exploited the wealth and social standing he acquired from the marriage to ingratiate himself with the British military. Within a few years, he left his wife and their young daughter to move to Europe, where he remained the rest of his life, eventually adopting the title Count Rumford.

⁷ Concord Town Records, 1732-1820; Merrimack County Registry of Deeds; Moore, 1824: 40; Bouton: 154; Rolfe, ca. 1981: I-5.7; Henderson, 1991.

⁸ Their farm may have included the four-acre Lot 9 acquired by Henry Rolfe in the "Rattlesnake Plains" division, as West Concord was called (see Bouton: 86, 127). It is also thought to be the same farm that was later adapted as the Town Farm for paupers. That farmhouse still stands at the northeast corner of North State and Peabody streets, and was purchased by the town in 1827 from Timothy Walker 3rd, the grandson of Reverend Walker. [Amsden: 25:11]

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Rolfe Barn
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Merrimack River in Penacook in the early 1770s.⁹ Penacook in 1770 was not entirely uninhabited, but there were no settlers near the Merrimack River on the Concord side. Since 1737, there had been ferry service from Canterbury to just above the mouth of the Contoocook River, servicing the earliest settlers in Boscawen, and a road linked Concord and Boscawen. At the Borough, the section of Penacook west of the village where Washington, Borough and River Roads converge, and approximately 1 ½ miles from the Rolfe Farm, Richard Elliot built a sawmill and dam by 1760, which operated for many years by successive family members. By 1790, it was joined by a second sawmill, as well as a grist mill, both built by Abel Baker. Across the Contoocook, on the Boscawen side of Penacook Village, Jeremiah Chandler erected a gristmill and sawmill at about the same time, joined by a carding and finishing mill a decade later.¹⁰

The land that Nathaniel and Benjamin Rolfe settled was part of their grandfather's substantial holdings, since passed to his sons. In 1739, Henry purchased land from Nicholas White, possibly the 118-acre Lot #98 in the Eighty-Acre Division, which was bounded by the Contoocook River.¹¹ Circa 1774, the brothers erected the north half of the

⁹ Accounts differ as to when the brothers arrived in Penacook. Local historian Bouton, writing in 1856, states that they came "to this town" about 1758, but unfortunately does not reveal his source for this date (see p. 236). In 1758 Nathaniel would have been fourteen years old and Benjamin only six. Even if Bouton was referring to Concord, rather than Penacook, when he wrote "to this town," the date still does not jibe with documentary records, as the brothers' parents were living in Haverhill, Massachusetts in the 1850s and at least as late as 1862. Twentieth century historian, Grace Amsden, also states that they settled here "as early as 1758." A meticulous researcher, Amsden unfortunately does not provide documentation for this claim, but was probably reiterating Bouton's claim. [Amsden, ca. 1930-60: XIV:2] By contrast, the brothers' great-grandson, Abial W. Rolfe, also an amateur historian, places their arrival ca. 1770. [Rolfe, 1913] This date fits their ages – by then twenty-six and eighteen – as well as the date of the house.

¹⁰ Brown, 1902: 8-9.

¹¹ An examination of Book 63/286 at the Rockingham County Registry of Deeds would likely reveal whether this purchase was Lot #98. White also owned nearby Lot #97. According to Brown's *History of Penacook* (p. 317), Henry Rolfe first obtained land in Penacook in 1736, but the index of Rockingham deeds at State Archives did not list any purchases by Rolfe in that year. In 1738, Henry's son, Nathaniel, bought land along the Contoocook River (see RCRD Book 94/457), and an examination of the Proprietors' Records (Vol. III) and accompanying plans show a number of lots purchased by Henry in the vicinity of the Contoocook and Merrimack Rivers, though identifying exact locations is difficult, if not near impossible, since the plan of lot divisions within the Contoocook Plains, as this area was known, is not known to exist. Furthermore, some of the lots in this area were laid out in March, 1737, in what was known as the Eighty-Acres Division, referring not to the acreage of each lot, but to a group of 107 previously undivided lots scattered throughout the town and ranging from five to 154 acres. These lots appear on a series of hand-drawn plans, but there are seldom any reference points to assist in locating them. The committee of two responsible for this division was Benjamin Rolfe (Henry's son) and John Chandler.

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Nathaniel Rolfe House on the current site of 6 Penacook Street— a short distance north of its current site.¹² Within a few years, the brothers enlarged the house by appending another freestanding structure to its south end. This may have occurred in 1778, the year of Nathaniel's marriage.¹³

Nathaniel Rolfe was evidently an astute individual with a knack for real estate and farming. In 1778, he ranked in the top seven percent of Concord taxpayers.¹⁴ That year, Nathaniel and Benjamin each received from their father a quarter interest in a number of tracts, most of which had been purchased by Henry Rolfe. Included among them were two lots from the Eighty Acre Division: 105 acres (Lot #16) initially allotted to Thomas Coleman and 91 acres (#49) that had belonged to Stephen Osgood. Though the location of the Osgood lot is not clear, Coleman's lot, described as bounded by the Contoocook and Merrimack Rivers, clearly became part of Rolfe Farm. Also among this conveyance from their father were seven smaller parcels totaling fifty acres and located in "Contoocook Plains" as the region around the Rolfe Farm was then known. The transaction also included an interest in "all of the buildings on the above premises." Nathaniel additionally received the entirety of Nathaniel Jones' lot in the Plains — 130 acres bounded by the Contoocook River. For this land, Nathaniel and Benjamin paid their father 1,800 and 150 pounds respectively. In 1778, 1782 and 1784, Nathaniel again purchased land: a seven-acre lot laid out for Ephraim Davis, 154 acres described as No. 6 in the Eighty-Acres Division and laid out to Nehemiah Carlton, two thirteen-acre lots laid out for Thomas Larnard and Robert Kimball, and a 5 ¼ acre lot laid out for Benjamin Parker. Thus, by 1784, Nathaniel owned a minimum of 322 acres and had an interest in at least another 246 acres.¹⁵

In 1778, Nathaniel married Judith Walker Chandler (1744-1806), one of Reverend Walker's three daughters and the widow of Capt. Abial Chandler.¹⁶ Judith brought her three young daughters with her to the Rolfe Farm, and the couple had another three children between 1781 and 1785. The oldest, Abial, was named for her late husband. In

¹² Rolfe, 1913. It is likely the men initially built and occupied a crude log structure while they constructed the house.

¹³ Bouton, 1856: 686.

¹⁴ Bouton: 758. Nathaniel's land holdings were valued at eleven pounds, fourteen shillings and eight pence.

¹⁵ Books 1/109-110 (1778), 1/111-112 (1779), 1/113 (1782) & 1/114 (1784).

¹⁶ Frederick Rolfe's family genealogy gives the conflicting marriage date of 1780 (March 16th). At her father's death in 1782, Judith inherited 150 pounds, a sum that may have furthered Nathaniel's ability to purchase his real estate.

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1784, Benjamin Rolfe married Molly Sweat (ca. 1764-1803). Molly was the daughter of Benjamin Sweat, a weaver who came to Concord from Kingston and was one of the early settlers in the Borough. Between 1785 and 1793, the couple had five children. If the house had not yet been expanded to accommodate Nathaniel's new family, it must have been for Benjamin's expanding family. In 1793, there were up to fifteen people living under its roof.¹⁷

By all accounts, Benjamin Rolfe was an adventurous man, describes as "a man of great energy and push, of remarkable strength of mind and body; just the qualities to constitute the successful pioneer settler where a home is to be hewn out of the wilderness."¹⁸ In the winter of 1794-95, Benjamin and his family left Concord to pioneer in Rumford, Maine, leaving behind their eldest son to complete the school year. The following spring, ten-year-old John walked to Rumford – alone, following a blazed trail. Located in Oxford County, east of Bethel, Rumford was closely linked to Concord. In 1774, Col. Timothy Walker (son of the minister) and other residents of Concord petitioned the Massachusetts Bay Province to create the township as a means to compensate for the lost time and expenses they had incurred due to the lengthy boundary disputes between Bow and Concord. Five years later, the first settlers arrived, soon followed by others – all from Concord. Not only did they name the town after Concord's original name, but they named a river that flowed through it the Concord River. Before Benjamin left Concord, he sold to his brother his interest in the land they had acquired from their father; whether the barn was then built remains unknown.¹⁹

By the 1790s, Nathaniel Rolfe's farm of well over 300 acres – and likely as much as 500 acres – extended west of the Merrimack River, as far as Village Street (until recently called South Main Street), and south from the Boscawen town line to Goodwin's Point.²⁰

¹⁷ The 1790 census lists both Benjamin and Nathaniel as heads of households. Within Benjamin's household were one adult man (Benjamin), two men under sixteen (his sons) and three women (his wife and two daughters). Nathaniel's household included two adult men and three men under sixteen; since the couple had only two sons, it suggests there may have been two hired hands living with the family.

¹⁸ Lapham, 1890: 131-33.

¹⁹ Book 2/64. This land represented the sum total of Benjamin's holdings in Concord.

²⁰ Nathaniel's great-grandson, Abial W. Rolfe, writing in 1913, described the land holdings thus: "[it] comprised all the [land?] lying between the main road leading to Boscawen, the town line on the north, the Merrimack River as it originally run, and on the south to the road leading from Main road to Sewalls Falls, thence from a point on said road about 2/3 the distance from Main road to road leading to R.R. station at Penacook, thence to what is now the old channel of Merrimack river to a point about 100 rods east of said road." While Nathaniel owned nearly 600 acres by 1784, not all of the land was in Penacook.

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He took an interest in civic affairs, serving on the committee that divided the town into school districts in 1807, as required by state law. Either he or his father was elected surveyor of highways in 1780.²¹ Despite his wealth and prominence, he continued to reside in the modest house and died there in 1829. However, ca. 1790, he erected a magnificent barn—the Rolfe Barn—a structure of immense proportions that underscored his exceptionally prosperous agricultural enterprise.

At the time Nathaniel built the barn, New Englanders knew of only one type of barn, the so-called English barn. To build a structure that could house the overflowing harvests of Concord's intervals, Nathaniel had a single solution available to him: construct two barn frames of the type he knew and link them solidly together as one enormous twin structure – and that is what he did.

David Brown, in his 1902 history of Penacook, provides some insight into the extent of Nathaniel's character and agricultural operations. During the notoriously cold summer of 1816, when there were frosts each month and few crops survived, Nathaniel Rolfe was one of the few farmers in New Hampshire able to raise corn in any quantity. Though prices for the crop soared, he refused to sell it commercially, instead selling it at the previous year's price to the poorer families in the Borough.²²

A decade before he died, Nathaniel sold a third of his homestead land to his two sons, Deacon Abial Rolfe (1781-1840) and Capt. Henry Rolfe (1785-1859); the remaining third passed to them shortly before his death.²³ Capt. Henry and his wife, Deborah Carter (1786-1849), whom he married in 1808, had their first four children in the Nathaniel Rolfe House. In 1815, the couple built 41 Penacook Street just up the street, where they went on to have another seven children. Deacon Abial, who never married, remained in the Nathaniel Rolfe House until 1834, when he erected 11 Penacook Street across the street from the barn.

Deacon Abial was a well respected and beloved citizen to whom others often turned to arbitrate disputes. Trained as a surveyor, he surveyed boundaries of most of the farms in

²¹ Bouton: 758; Concord Town Records: 181.

²² Bouton: 371-372; Brown, 1902: 216.

²³ Book 1/120 (1818), 3/551 (1818), 18/502 (1829). The first conveyances were for \$2,500 each, and the final for \$1,000. There is no record that Nathaniel's other child, Judith, wife of Nathan Chandler, received any of the family land, though coincidentally, her son, Nathan Chandler, purchased nearby 35 Penacook ca. 1835.

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the vicinity. He obtained his title from his thirty years as deacon at the First Congregational Church in the center village. He was a zealot in his religious work and remembered years later for his "downright integrity and piety."²⁴

Capt. Henry Rolfe received his military title while serving in the Eleventh Regiment of the New Hampshire militia. Like his brother, he was active in religious and educational affairs. In 1830, his family was one of seven with children in the village. For years, the nearest school was at the Borough, the largest and busiest part of Penacook – but a long walk for the Rolfe children. It was not until 1835, when the Fisher brothers arrived in Penacook, that the village began to grow.²⁵

Under the umbrella corporation Contoocook Manufacturing and Mechanics Company, Freeman and Francis Fisher, Boston merchants, industrialists and brothers, purchased the land and waterpower rights between the Borough and lower falls and erected a stone cotton mill, the Contoocook Mill, on the north side of the Contoocook in Boscawen. Although the Fishers did not remain long in Penacook, their enterprise proved the impetus for the village's development, and their name lingered in the newly formed village of Fisherville. (The village was not renamed Penacook until 1883.) After five years standing idle, the mill was soon leased to Henry and John Brown, of Attleboro, Massachusetts, who began producing cotton cloth in 1843. Shortly thereafter, the company erected a second stone mill, the Penacook Mill, which stood on the Concord side of the river. An economic backbone of the village, the two mills spurred other industries in the mid-late nineteenth century along the river, including axle, ax and hatchet, flour and corn mills; New England's largest furniture factory; a mill that specialized in dining tables; woolen manufacturing; and an excelsior (used as a packing material and for furniture stuffing) factory.

A decade before the start of major industry in Penacook, Capt. Henry Rolfe founded the family industry, a move that gradually shifted the family's pursuits from agriculture to industry. In 1825, he erected a sawmill on Merrimack Street, the first mill to be erected in the center of Penacook Village on the Concord side of the river. The mill stood on an artificial stream that came out of a pond near the river's mouth.

²⁴ Amsden, XXV: 21-22; Bouton, 1875: 36; Brown, 1902: 90.

²⁵ Brown, 1902: 218.

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Near the mill, Rolfe created a public landing on the Merrimack River, on the east side of Penacook Street at the juncture of Merrimack Street (near the Rolfe Barn and later the site of the depot), where the lumber could be loaded onto rafts and floated down river, eventually to Boston Harbor.²⁶ The landing also accommodated logs and sawn lumber from mills at the Borough and even farther afield, from Hopkinton and Warner. The material floated down the Contoocook River to the falls, where it was loaded onto carts and carried overland to the landing. Much of the lumber was used to construct mills and churches in Lowell, a fast-growing manufacturing town, and some found its way to markets in Boston.²⁷

In 1837, undoubtedly anticipating rapid development in the wake of the Fishers' new cotton mill, Capt. Henry Rolfe erected a planing mill in the village, on the north bank of the Contoocook River in Boscawen. Under the name Henry Rolfe & Sons (i.e., Capt. Nathaniel, Col. Abial and Timothy), the shop turned out sash, doors and blinds. Circa 1850, the family added a box shop that made boxes for the shoe and dry goods business. With the exception of a furniture shop, the Rolfe shop was the largest local employer.²⁸ The Rolfes sold their sawmill in 1864 to William Blanchard, who replaced it with an excelsior factory.²⁹ In 1866, two of Nathaniel's sons, Charles M. and Abial W., assumed control of the business, which they renamed C. M. & A. W. Rolfe and relocated to Commercial Street on the Boscawen side of the river. In 1880, they moved it back to the Concord side, near the site of the former Rolfe sawmill, taking over James Crowther's sash and door shop and expanding it over the years. It was powered by steam and described, albeit by them, as "one of the best equipped establishments of the kind in New England." It was well-served by the Northern Railroad, which passed within a few feet. A passenger and freight depot had long replaced the public river landing, and the Rolfe shop erected storehouses on their agricultural land close by the railroad tracks. Starting ca. 1893, the brothers also leased the former Whittaker sawmill from the Penacook Electric Light Company at the Borough, where they cut lumber for the shop and made cases.³⁰

²⁶ Amsden, XIV:3; Brown, 1902:11. By 1814, the Merrimack River was navigable from Concord to Chelmsford, with locks and canals bypassing the various falls. In Chelmsford, traffic continued along the twenty-seven mile Middlesex Canal to Boston.

²⁷ Rolfe, 1901: 66; Brown: 317.

²⁸ Brown, 1902: 271.

²⁹ Brown, 1902: 29.

³⁰ Rolfe, 1901: 67; Brown, 1902: 29-32, 44, 477. For much of its passage through Penacook, the Northern Railroad crossed land sold to it by the Rolfes.

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The shop operated for over 100 years, under five generations of Rolfe family ownership and management, not closing until ca. 1941. In 1902, it employed fifty people and produced 2,000,000 feet of pine lumber annually.³¹ Many of its employees built and occupied houses nearby, along Merrimack, Penacook and Rolfe Streets.. At the time it closed, the sash, door and blind shop was Penacook's longest operating industry – and the only one run by successive generations of the same family. During this period, the use of the barn slowly shifted from solely agricultural purposes to housing the shop's work horses.

Between 1834 and 1849, one or several of Capt. Henry's eleven children probably occupied the old Nathaniel Rolfe House at various times. According to family records, it was Henry's oldest son, Capt. Nathaniel, who moved the house around the corner to Merrimack Street ca. 1849, where it stood just west of 116 Merrimack Street for the next forty years.³² The barn, however, remained on its original site. Given its enormous capacity, it is likely all of the Rolfes in the vicinity shared in its use.

Capt. Nathaniel (1814-1900) married Mary Jane Moody (1817-1876) in 1839. Immediately after their marriage, the couple lived with Nathaniel's uncle, Deacon Abial, at 11 Penacook Street, where their first two children were born, in 1841 and 1843.³³ Though Capt. Nathaniel inherited 11 Penacook Street (and the barn, which was part of the same property) upon his uncle's death in 1840, the couple moved to 41 Penacook Street by 1844, remaining there for a few years before ultimately settling in the Nathaniel Rolfe House with their four children and two hired laborers. By 1858, Capt. Nathaniel and his family had vacated the Nathaniel Rolfe House for 11 Penacook. Capt. Nathaniel managed the Rolfe shop, but considered farming his primary occupation.³⁴

After Capt. Nathaniel vacated the old Nathaniel Rolfe House, his brother, Col. Abial (1823-1903), moved in. Col. Abial married Sarah Elizabeth Call (1821-1881) of Boscawen in 1847, and their only child, Lizzie, was born the following year. The family was living in the house by 1858 and remained there for forty years. In 1860, in addition

³¹ Brown, 1902: 348.

³² Why the house was moved remains a mystery, unless its new site offered better expansion opportunities for Nathaniel's growing family.

³³ The 1840 census indicates the couple shared the house with five other men and two additional women

³⁴ 1850 & 1860 Population Census; Rolfe, 1913.

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to the family of three, the small house was home to a farm laborer, a teamster, a dressmaker, an Irish day laborer and an Irish domestic.³⁵

Several years after his wife died, Col. Abial moved the house to its third – and final – site on Penacook Street just southwest of the Rolfe Barn.³⁶ On this final site, the house sat on granite posts, without a cellar (which it had on the previous site), and the chimney was set on a pile of fieldstones. Its location in what was the south barnyard was not a typical spot for a residence. Perhaps the family planned to convert it into an outbuilding, or perhaps it saw the location as a temporary resting spot, planning ultimately to locate the ancestral home in a more advantageous spot. However, it was never moved again, and it did serve as a residence for tenants for another sixty years.

Though the Rolfes were engaged in industrial enterprises throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, they continued to farm their land. The four agricultural censuses from that period shed some light on their activity. In 1850, Captain Henry Rolfe, by then residing at 11 Penacook, but still owning 41 Penacook Street, is the only Rolfe head of household listed in that census, and it appears his figures combine farming activity for both properties. His farm, which included the Rolfe Barn, consisted of 300 improved acres and 200 unimproved acres, by far the largest in the vicinity, though its value of \$3,000 is not unusual. His farm implements were valued at \$600 – double that for farms of far higher value. Live stock on hand that year included 2 horses, 11 milk cows, 4 working oxen, 15 cattle, 31 pigs and 65 sheep, for a total value of \$1,190. Compared to his neighbors, Rolfe stands out for the number of milk cows, sheep and pigs. His fields produced 100 bushels of rye, 1,200 of corn and 50 of oats; the first two amounts were exceptionally high, while the amount of oats was comparatively low. Crops and dairy products included a whopping 700 bushels of potatoes and 700 pounds of butter and bountiful amounts of hay (100 tons) and orchard products (valued at \$100). The farm's 200 pounds of cheese were more typical, as was the value of slaughtered animals. Unlike a few of his neighbors, Rolfe did not report any honey, maple syrup or grass seeds.

Ten years later, his sons, Captain Nathaniel (by then residing at 11 Penacook Street) and Timothy (who was living at 41 Penacook Street), appear in the census. While Timothy had a barn on his property, it is probable he also had access to the far larger Rolfe Barn

³⁵ 1860 Population Census.

³⁶ In place of the house, Col. Abial erected a new and much larger house (116 Merrimack Street), as well as two tenements (104-06 & 110-12 Merrimack Street), occupied by employees of C.M. and A.W. Rolfe's shop.

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across from Nathaniel's house. Nathaniel's farm is listed with 86 acres of improved land and 57 of unimproved, while Timothy's was 98 and 89 acres respectively; the overall farm values were \$8,000 for Nathaniel and \$7,000 for Timothy. The figures valuing their farming implements and reporting numbers of livestock and crops are remarkably similar, often the same figure, for the two farms, leading one to speculate whether much was shared between the two properties. Primary differences appear in the number of cattle (nine on Timothy's farm and only one on Nathaniel's), sheep (eleven on Timothy's and none on Nathaniel's) and pigs (ten on Timothy's and twenty-nine on Nathaniel's). The two farms' potato (50 bushels), corn (200 bushels) orchard (valued at \$10), and hay crops (22 bushels) are listed identically, as is the butter (250 pounds) and cheese (406 pounds) production. Even if the figures are combined, it is clear that overall crop and butter production had dropped sharply since 1850, while cheese production had quadrupled.

In 1870, Abial W. Rolfe, the son of Capt. Nathaniel, is the only family name to appear in the agricultural census. It is probable he and his new wife were living at 11 Penacook Street with his parents. The nine acres listed in the census could not reflect the size of the farm, although overall operations had clearly been substantially scaled back, likely reflecting increased involvement with the family industrial enterprises.³⁷

Abial W. Rolfe is again the only family member to appear in the 1880 census, and if the figures are accurate, reveal a barely existent agricultural operation. His farm is listed with neither tilled, unimproved nor woodlot acreage and only three acres of pasture land, and the value of farm production is a mere \$15, far lower than any of his neighbors. The only livestock on hand were two chickens. Crops were limited to potatoes (a paltry ten bushels) and fifteen apple trees which bore six bushels. (The proportion of trees to gathered fruit is strikingly low.)

By then, the agricultural land west of the Rolfe Barn had become house lots on a new street named "Rolfe Street." Nearly all of the residents on the street were employed at the nearby Rolfe shop, and many were of Irish descent.³⁸ The barn itself was also tied to the shop, sheltering its draft horses.

³⁷ Much of the data for A.W. Rolfe in the 1870 census seems to be missing, so the actual extent of his agricultural activity is difficult to judge.

³⁸ Book 176/430 (1866); Brown, 1902: 477-79; 1886 birds eye view; 1892 map. According to the 1866 deed, the Rolfes sold this land to neighbor and shop employee Hazen Knowlton to pay creditors.

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After the Rolfe shop closed in 1941, the barn housed household animals and was used for storage. Some of the smaller outbuildings around it were gradually removed, as was the rear ell of the Nathaniel Rolfe House.

In 1991, the remaining buildings—house, barn and wagon shed—and their 1 ½ -acre lot, were sold together with 11 Penacook Street, with which they shared a deed, out of the Rolfe family to John and Constance Zobel. Marjorie Rolfe re-purchased the Nathaniel Rolfe House (but not the land) to ensure the uninhabited, unimproved house was protected. The barn continued to serve as storage for a neighboring farmer. In 1998, the Zobels sold 11 Penacook Street, retaining the 1 ½-acre lot across the road, and built a new, modular house immediately west of the barn.

In 2002, the Zobels unexpectedly and quietly sold the Rolfe Barn to Robert Betchart, of Newbury, Massachusetts, a specialist in renovating old buildings. Before anyone locally even realized the barn had been sold, Betchart re-sold it to Ken Epworth of Windsor, Vermont, who intended to disassemble and rebuild it as the pivotal structure in a complex of three New England barns converted into a single residential compound at an undisclosed site and for an undisclosed client. Over the next four months, a massive campaign evolved to keep the barn in Penacook. The barn's plight and the efforts of The Penacook Historical Society received national press coverage, including articles in the *Christian Science Monitor*, *USA Today* and front-page stories in the *Boston Globe*. The Society and concerned citizens petitioned the Concord City Council that the loss of the barn would mean the loss of a key part of the city's history, as well as of a building unique to the State of New Hampshire, and convinced the city to take the structure by eminent domain. With his plans in disarray, Epworth instead sold the barn to the society, which contemporaneously purchased the entire 1.5-acre lot (and later assumed ownership of the Nathaniel Rolfe House). Since 2003, the society has completed a Historic Structures Report and undertaken stabilization work on the barn, as it moves toward preparing the property for use as its headquarters.

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GEOGRAPHIC DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the Rolfe Barn includes the entire 1.5 acre lot on which it is located: Concord Assessors' Map P004, Lot 2, Block 3.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary for the Rolfe Barn is defined by the legally recorded lot line of the parcel on which it is located. The boundary includes the one other surviving agricultural outbuilding associated with the Rolfe Farm, as well as the dwelling house occupied by the first Rolfes to farm here.

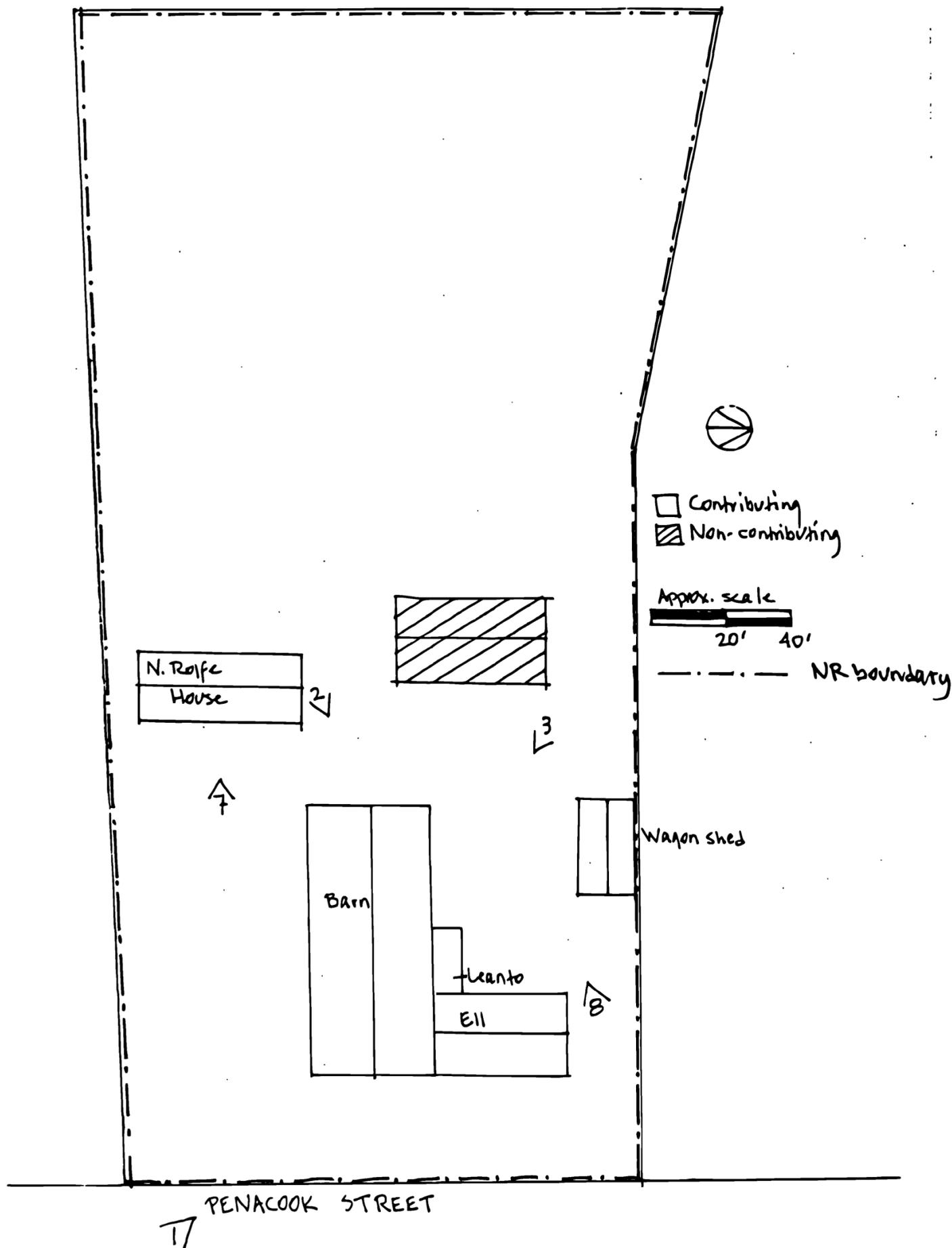
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Rolfe Barn
Concord (Penacook), New Hampshire

PROPERTY SKETCH & PHOTO KEY MAP



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National Park Service

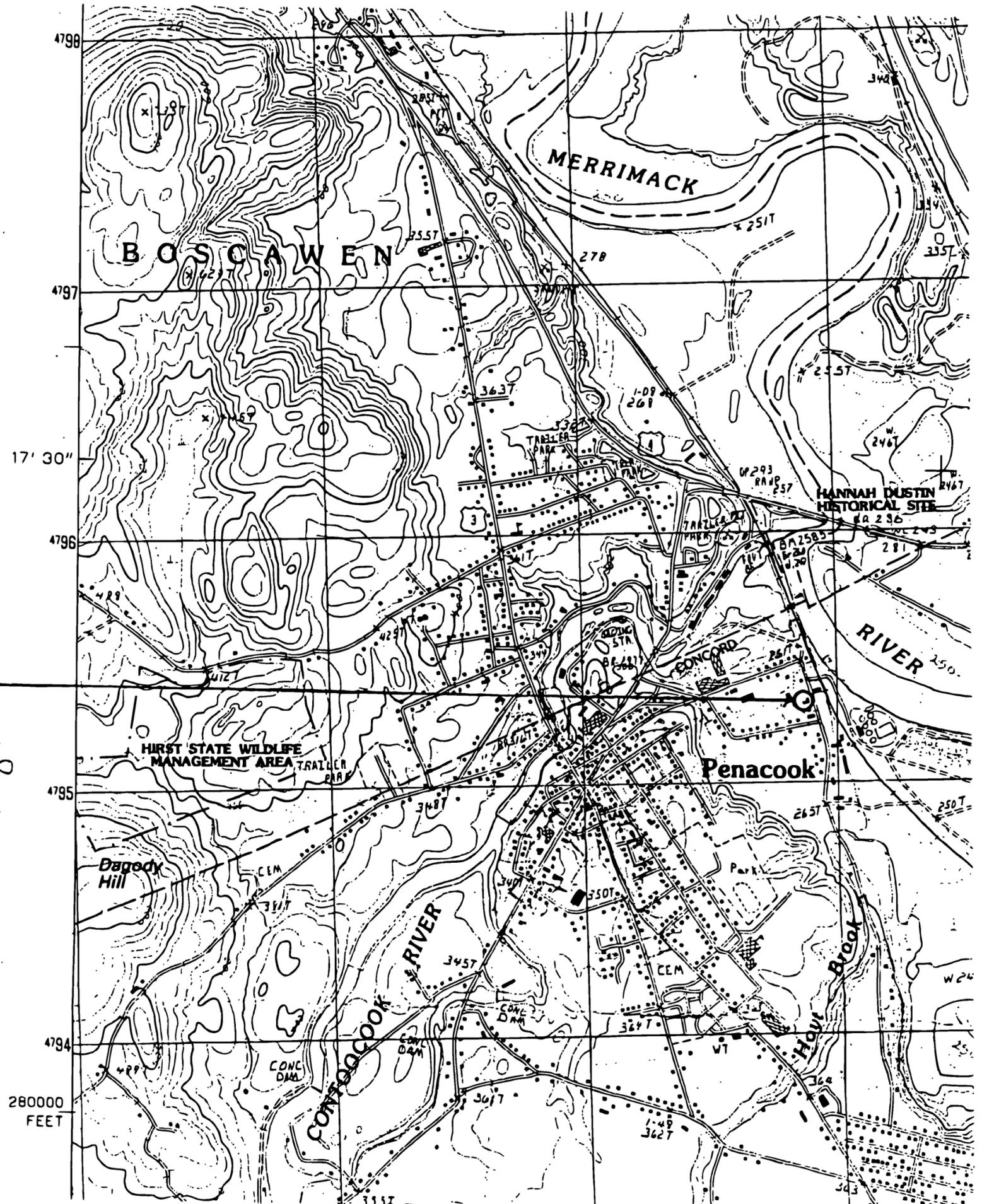
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Rolfe Barn
Concord (Penacook), New Hampshire

USGS MAP



ROLFE BARN
Concord (Merrimack
Co.), N. H.
19/289880/4795310

United States Department of the Interior
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Rolfe Barn
Concord (Penacook), New Hampshire

Photo #7

View: Nathaniel Rolfe House, east (front) elevation.

Photo #8

View: Looking west, at north elevation of barn (left), 1998 non-contributing house in center, and east elevation of wagon shed at right.