



Cleveland Barns

Susan Colgate Cleveland Library Learning Center at Colby Sawyer College



541 Main Street
New London, NH



www.colby-sawyer.edu



Story Map

What's Special About This Site

The Susan Colgate Cleveland Library Learning Center, also known as the Cleveland Barns, is composed of two barns oriented perpendicularly to each other. Both barns are considered New England style barns. The barns were framed with heavy timbers using mortise and tenon joints anchored onto stone foundations and adorned with cupolas.

The barn to the right of the main entry has hand-hewn wooden rafters and struts. Common rafters and major

purlins support roof boards that run horizontally along the length of the barn. Originally, the barn would have had large barn doors at both ends with what appear to have been transom windows. There are three over three windows at both ends at the top of this barn.

Unlike the barn on the right, the roof boards for the barn to the left of the main entrance were vertical, running perpendicular to the roof seam. There is a hayfork and hayfork track, rafter ties, and major rafters and common purlins.



*Cleveland Library Learning Center
Photo courtesy of Ryan Cutting*

Barn History and Use

The Susan Colgate Cleveland Library Learning Center came into being in the 1980s when the need for a new library to better suit the needs of the students became apparent, and the two pre-Civil War barns were chosen to house the new library. Originally, the barns were part of the Colby Homestead, which

was established around the 1780s by one of the college's founders, Lt. Joseph Colby. His son, state governor Anthony Colby, was also a co-founder of the Colby Academy, and grew up on the Colby farm. The barns were used by the Colby family as dairy barns, housing cows in stanchions, and remained



*Historic Image of Cleveland Barn.
Photo courtesy of Colby Sawyer
Archive*

Continued on the next page

in family ownership until 1981. A year prior to the sale of the property, the college pursued the conversion of the barns into the new library and hired the Burley Partnership, an architectural firm based in Vermont, to aid in the barn

relocation and renovation. The barns were moved from the Colby Homestead to their current site on campus, and construction began for the new library in 1984. The Library opened its doors on September 8th, 1985.

Preservation Efforts

The barns have had many renovations over the years as they have been updated to fit the evolving needs of the college students. Yet many of

the Cleveland Barns' original and historic architectural elements can still be seen by the public today.



*Historic image of barn relocating.
Photo courtesy of Colby Sawyer Archives.*

What You Can Do Here Now

The Cleveland Library is open to the public and houses print and electronic collections, group and individual study spaces, and computer workstations. It also hosts student tutoring and support services. The library is home to historical archives with documents and artifacts, and a collection that highlights the college's connection to the Colby, Colgate, and Cleveland families. The library hosts public events, lectures, and exhibitions

throughout the year.

The campus is nestled in the heart of New London, a quintessential New England village which is surrounded by natural beauty of Lake Sunapee and the Kearsarge Mountain Range. One can easily stroll around campus, take in the view, admire the gardens that bloom around spring and summer, and enjoy downtown New London, which offers plenty for visitors to enjoy.



*Interior of Cleveland Barn silo.
Photo courtesy of Ryan Cutter.*

For Further Reading

Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings, by Thomas Durant Visser (University Press of New England, 1997).

Barns: Their History, Preservation, and Restoration, by Charles Klamkin (Bonanza Books, 1979).

Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of New England, by Thomas C. Hubka (University Press of New England, 1984).

An Age of Barns, by Eric Sloane (Funk and Wagnalls, 1967).

Preserving Old Barns: Preventing the loss of a valuable resource, by John C. Porter and Francis E. Gilman (Peter E. Randall Publisher, 2019)