



Washington New Hampshire Historical Society Barn

📍 100 Half-moon Pond Road
Washington, NH

🌐 www.wnhhs.org/museums



Story Map

What's Special About This Site

John and Saphronia Weston built this Yankee style barn during the 1850's. Yankee barns differ from the earlier English style in a number of ways, but key differences include the door being located in the gable end instead of the side wall, the use of common rafters, the exterior boarding running horizontally instead of vertically, and a more steeply pitched roof. An important advantage of the Yankee barn over the English barn was that locating the main door in the gable end made a Yankee barn easier to expand. Additional bays could simply be added to the end as needed. Examples of Yankee barns can be found dating back to the 18th century, but most were built in the 1850's, a time period considered to be the heyday of New Hampshire agriculture.



Photo by Bill Mulcahy

Barn History and Use

This barn was constructed around the 1850s and was used to house a few horses and cows, due to its small size. It was owned by the Newman family. In 2003 the Bruen family donated the barn to the Historical Society to be used to house their agricultural artifacts collections, as well as exhibits that provide an understanding of everyday life in rural New Hampshire's hill towns during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The following year the Washington Historical Society hired Richard M. Thompson to renovate the barn for its new use. The basement was restored and structurally improved with the addition of gunstock posts. It was also completely re-clapboarded and the wood-shingled roof was replaced with a metal one. In October 2004, there was a barn dance to celebrate the completion of the barn renovation.



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Levy

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Architectural Features

This Yankee-style barn is on the small side, with small windows located along the side, which was suitable for the livestock that lived there. The barn's external features include a front transom window and two front-facing windows above it. The barn has a pocket door that slides internally in a channel along the inside wall of the front of the barn to provide a large entryway. The barn is covered in clapboards which is rare due to the amount of effort that it takes to make a clapboard.

Interior features include common rafters that are centered, as well as sawn timbers and cross members, horizontal boarding, and scaffolding for a hay pitch. The barn is a three-bay barn, which is in twelve-foot divisions. The barn has a basement with a high ceiling which is atypical. The basement was likely used for manure storage, and cows and pigs were known to have been kept there. The basement has bracing, big timbers, a granite rock foundation, 3-over-3 windows, and sawn timbers.



Photo by Bill Mulcahy

What You Can Do Here Now

Today the barn houses an extensive agricultural artifacts collection, as well as exhibits showing what life was like here during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Next door, the Society's main museum displays hundreds of items, special exhibits, and local genealogical and vital statistics information. The barn features exhibits on historic farm machinery and implements, maple sugaring, blacksmithing, a slaughter wheel, an old fashioned kitchen, and even a town hearse from 1895. They are open on Saturdays from July until Labor Day. Check www.wnhhs.org/museums for hours.



Photo by Bill Mulcahy

For Further Reading

Washington Historical Society Newsletter, Fall 2003 (Washington NH Historical Society), https://www.wnhhs.org/_files/ugd/dbabcf_a1bb4252032141b19b9d2ce6fcc85bfb.pdf?index=true

"Our History is in the Barn", (Washington NH Historical Society, August 11, 2021), <https://youtu.be/gLy6BPPVGRg?si=nvfGKU6F4hQex5OC>.

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).