

JOHN SHELDON "OLD INDIAN HOUSE"
(Fragments of the original house
demolished in 1848, now in Memorial
Hall Museum, Deerfield Village,
Franklin County, Massachusetts)

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOHN SHELDON "OLD INDIAN HOUSE"

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(Fragments of the original house demolished in 1848, now in Memorial Hall Museum, Deerfield Village, Franklin County, Massachusetts.)

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. History of the house - John Sheldon built it in 1698 and lived there until 1708. His son Ebenezer took over and managed a tavern there until 1723, when his father gave him the property. Ebenezer continued with the tavern until 1744, then sold it to Jonathan Hoyt. The tavern under David Hoyt, his son, became the local Post Office and meeting place for the Tories during the Revolution. David gave the property to his son, Colonel Elihu Hoyt, in 1813. His son Henry lived in the house after the Colonel's death, until 1848, when he built a new house nearby, and dismantled the old house. (1)

John Sheldon built the house on Lot No. 12, part of lot 13, and part of the training lot so that it could be within the stockade which had been built in 1690. (1)

This house was attacked, along with others in Deerfield Village, on February 29, 1703-4. Of about 15 houses within the stockade, 9 survived, this one among them. Of about 26 houses outside the stockade, 15 survived. (2)

At the time of its demolition, this house was thought to be the last one remaining which had survived the Indian attack of February 29, 1703-04. (3)

- B. Preservation of the door - The door came into the possession of David Starr Hoyt in 1848. In 1863 he sold it to Daniel Denison Slade, M.D., of Boston, Mass. In 1868 it was purchased by the board of trustees of the Old Indian House, and placed in the Pocumtuck House (hotel). When that building burned in 1877, the door was rescued and placed in the "old corner store" for a time, then in a corn-house of Nathaniel Hitchcock. In 1879, it was taken into the custody of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, and placed in the newly prepared Memorial Hall Museum. (4)
- C. Preservation of the other fragments - The brackets and window casing are listed in the catalogue of Memorial Hall Museum, 1886, as belonging to Mrs. C. W. Hoyt. (5) This indicates the probability that they had been preserved by the Hoyt family until they were placed in the museum.

D. References

- (1) Jennie Arms Sheldon, John Sheldon and the Old Indian House Homestead. A paper read before the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association at its Field Meeting, August 22, 1911. T. Morey and Son, Greenfield, Mass., 1957 (reprint). Copy at Memorial Hall, Deerfield, Mass.
- (2) George Sheldon, A History of Deerfield, Mass., 1636-1886; E. A. Hall & Co., Greenfield, Mass., 1895. Vol. 1, page 305.
- (3) Notes by Louise Hall, June 26, 1956. Copy attached hereto.
- (4) History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Vol. III, page 400 ff. Rev. P. Vorhees Finch, Dr. Slade and the Old Indian House. Copy in Memorial Hall, Deerfield, Mass.
- (5) Catalogue of the Relics and Curiosities in Memorial Hall, Deerfield, Mass., Deerfield, Published by the Association, 1886. Pages 25, 28.

E. Old Views

1. Photographs of the door as exhibited in Memorial Hall Museum:
 - a. A Guide to the Museum of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, by George Sheldon, Deerfield, 1908. page 12. In Memorial Hall Library, Deerfield, Mass.
 - b. Frontier of Freedom, by Samuel Chamberlain and Henry N. Flynt; Hastings House, publishers, New York 22, 1957. page 135 (photograph by Samuel Chamberlain)
2. Important old views of the house:
 - a. Frontispiece of Volume 2, George Sheldon, A History of Deerfield, Mass., 1636-1886. E. A. Hall & Co., Greenfield, Mass., 1896.
 - b. Frontispiece (engraving) of Brief Sketch of the First Settlement of Deerfield, Mass., by one of the descendents of the first settlers of the town, Greenfield, 1833, James P. Fogg, printer. In Memorial Hall, Deerfield, Mass.

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- c. (Various paintings of this house are to be seen in Memorial Hall Museum, but they appear to have been made after the destruction of the building -- presumably based largely on the views noted above).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION, DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSE

- A. The following statement was given by David Hoyt on February 8, 1799, for purpose of National Taxation:- (*)

Large house, 2 stories high 42 x 21 ft.
 Kitchen, 1 story high, 42 x 13-1/2
 Bedroom, 1 story high, 15 x 14
 18 windows in all. Square feet of glass 102 feet, 62 in.
 Horse-house 25 x 12
 Saddle-house 10 x 9
 Corn-house 18 x 16
 Barn 62 x 32
 Barn 24 x 18
 Cow-house 64 x 12
 Stable at end of barn, 24 x 9-1/2

- B. According to Nathaniel Hitchcock (**):

The house stood at the NW part of the fort enclosing meeting-house hill. Two stories high; the upper story projected in front over the lower; the ends of four large beams were seen, supported by four oak brackets, three feet long, 16" wide at the top, 3" thick. A steep roof, with a good finish at the ends, which projected out at each end, supported by four smaller brackets. It was about 50 feet long and 30 feet wide, including the lean-to, which was longer than the main house. The house was built of large oak and yellow pine timber, much of it 10" x 14"; the walls were filled with brick. The four windows in front were 3'-4" x 2'-7"; two sashes, each with eight panes of 7" x 9" glass. Originally, it is said, there were diamond panes, which were set in lead. There was a narrow window over the door. The lower windows had heavy wooden shutters, while the stout plank door was filled with nails, and had a strong bolt. Chimney ten feet square at the bottom. Walls boarded. Summer-tree 20" x 14". Large fireplace.

- C. References

1. (*) History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, published by the Association, Deerfield, Mass., 1890. Vol. 1, 1870-1879. page 280.

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2. (**) History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, published by the Association, Deerfield, Mass., 1890. Vol. 1, 1870-1879. pages 277-280. Nathaniel Hitchcock, Recollections of the Old Indian House.

PART III. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION FURNISHED BY MISS LOUISE HALL,
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA.

(From the Greenfield Gazette, n.d., reprinted with comments in The New England Historical & Genealogical Register, II (1848), pp. 110-111.)

EP. HOYT, ESQ. (correspondent of LEVI WEEKS) & THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT 1847.

"A RELIC OF ANTIQUITY.

"(Our friends will doubtless rejoice with us, that an attempt has been made to preserve the old house at Deerfield, so famed in New England story, from being struck from the page of history. We mean the visible history to the traveller. New England is a book--the area of its towns and cities are its leaves, and we should preserve as much of the old edition as we possibly can, that the identity of it may not be lost--that Deerfield may continue to be Deerfield still.

"Though we rejoice at the attempt to preserve the old mansion, we shall rejoice more when we hear that some able individuals have come forward to aid in its rescue; for we are informed, that 'the one thing needful' is yet wanting, notwithstanding the efforts of the efficient committee hitherto.

"The following notices have appeared in the Greenfield Gazette:)

"THE 'OLD HOUSE' IN DEERFIELD.

"We regret to learn that the Old Indian House, situated in the ancient village of Deerfield, which escaped destruction when that place was burned by the French and Indians, in 1704, has become so inconvenient for a residence, that the proprietor, Mr. Hoyt (not "Ep.," though he had been born in the house in 1765--LH), deems it necessary to take it down and erect a new house on the old site.

"We understand that Colonel John Wilson, of Deerfield, has for some time been in negotiation with the proprietor, for the

purpose of purchasing this 'time-worn' building, and removing it to some suitable place where it may be preserved from further decay by a few trifling repairs. He proposes to preserve the ancient structure as it is--the old door that bears the marks of the savage tomahawk, as it was--the room in which Mrs. Sheldon was killed by a shot which perforated the front door, and all the bullet-holes made in the same room, for the inspection of the inquiring traveller.

"The house has long attracted the attention of the antiquary, and at this time has become a relic of public interest, which few travellers omit to visit on their passage through the village.

"As the house has no intrinsic value, only as a relic of olden time, it is believed it may be purchased for a small sum, and another site procured for a reasonable price. Will the public feel such an interest in its preservation as to give their aid in the contemplated purchase and removal, or suffer the last memorial of Indian warfare in our part of the country to be lost and forgotten?

ANTIQUARY

"Deerfield, Nov. 16, 1847.

"At a meeting holden by citizens of Deerfield, for taking into consideration the subject of preserving the 'Old Indian House,' which escaped conflagration in the destruction of that ancient village in 1704, it was

"Resolved, That we regret that the 'Old Indian House,' the last memorial of Indian warfare, we believe, in this Commonwealth, is in such a state as to render it necessary for the proprietor, Mr. Hoyt (not "EP."; see above--LH), to take it down, or to have it removed, to give place for erecting a new house on the old site; and, whereas, certain negotiations have taken place with the present owner for the purchase of this ancient relic, with the view of preserving it for future generations,--Resolved, That we highly approve of the same, and recommend the measure to the favorable consideration of the public and individuals who may feel an interest in the subject.

"Resolved, That a committee of five be chosen to address the public and individuals on the subject, and use such measures as they may think advisable for procuring the necessary aid to accomplish the object in view.

"Voted, That Rev. Samuel Willard, D.D., Gen. Epaphras Hoyt, Doct. Stephen W. Williams, Col. John Wilson, and Pliny Arms, Esq., be the committee to carry the foregoing resolutions into effect.

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"Voted, That the doings of this meeting be signed by the Chairman and Secretary, and published in both the papers of this community, and in such other journals as may be pleased to copy.

SAMUEL WILLARD, Chairman.

"JOHN WILSON, Secretary.

"Deerfield, Nov. 29, 1847."

(N.B. The movement failed, and the old Indian House was demolished in 1848. LH has childhood recollections of being taken to Deerfield to see the tomahawk-scarred door of the Old Indian House, preserved in the Memorial Hall of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association; at that age, she was more impressed by the blond-haired scalps likewise preserved there! The Old Indian House was reconstructed in 1929 by the Deerfield Historical Society.

LEVI WEEKS (1776-1819) did not come from Deerfield, but he lived there briefly about 1806--long enough, apparently, to have become quite friendly with EPAPHRAS HOYT (1765-1850), who in 1806 began to teach at Deerfield Academy a course in the "Theoretical and Practical Art of War," and also interested himself in an ill-fated bridge over the Deerfield River.

LOUISE HALL, 26 June 1956)

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service - September 1959

PART IV

The following is a copy of an article by Amelia F. Miller, "The Indian House," Deerfield Alumni Journal, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (Deerfield, Massachusetts: Deerfield Academy, Autumn, 1960), pp. 3-12. The article has the following illustrations: copy of a now lost daguerreotype of the Old Indian House taken before 1848; c. 1906 view of the house built in 1848 on the site of the Old Indian House; detail of David Hoyt's tax list 1799; the 1848 house before demolition; door of the Old Indian House; detail of a chest which belonged to Sarah Hawks; the 1848 house under demolition; section of 1848 house wall, after clapboards were removed, showing shadow molded boards from Old Indian House; side view of chest probably made by John Hawks, showing shadow molding; the porch of the 1848 house showing walls filled with seventeenth century brick; front hall of the 1848 house during demolition showing old boards; salvaged old brick; upstairs of the 1848 house during demolition showing old boards.

In 1848 a disheveled, unkempt, unpainted house, whose roof had shingles missing and whose clapboards were loose and falling away, stood facing south on the Deerfield Common. It had stood on this spot for at least one hundred and fifty years, silently witnessing the town grow from a struggling frontier outpost into a peaceful farm community. As the home of Ensign John Sheldon it had withstood the treacherous attack of Indians and French on the night of February 29, 1704. As the tavern of David Hoyt it had heard the news of the battle at Lexington, April 17, 1775. Matters of town and national politics had been discussed under its roof and village youths had played at quoits before its door. Standing two stories at a time when its neighbors were small one or two room cottages, once it had been the grandest mansion in Deerfield.

Mr. Henry King Hoyt, owner of this house in 1848, was aware that it should be saved, but his attempts to interest his fellow townspeople in a project of preservation were fruitless and his desire to provide his bride with a suitable home outweighed the whisperings of his historic conscience. He finally caused the dilapidated dwelling to be demolished and had raised on the same spot an attractive white frame house.

Almost immediately, among those interested in antiquities, shame and regret followed the destruction of the old house. Antiquarians began to write of it and its history. Artists began to sketch and paint it from memory. Deerfield citizens collected fragments as they lay about. Over the years we have come to call this house, "The Old Indian

House," and although no one alive today has ever laid eyes upon it, it is one of the most celebrated and best known structures in all New England.

In recent times the white frame dwelling erected by Mr. Hoyt in 1848 has been used as a dormitory for freshmen of Deerfield Academy and this also has been called the Indian House. In 1930 Mr. William Gass constructed a replica of the Old Indian House, which now stands on the main street toward the north end of town and this reproduction is likewise known as the Indian House. For purposes of clarification these two later buildings will be referred to hereafter specifically as the 1848 house and the reproduction house.

Early this summer, the 1848 house was in its turn to be taken down to make way for a new classroom building for the Academy. The new building was nearly completed on its site behind the 1848 house and was squeezing forward to within an arm's reach of the house. All that remained was to eliminate the 1848 house to allow space for the new portico. On the morning of June 28, 1960, a small group gathered on the Common to watch, as others had watched years before, while wreckers came with pinch bar and hammer. On this morning when the demolition was commenced, two points of view prevailed among the on-lookers. There were those who had been waiting patiently for many months to obtain an unobstructed view of the new building and there were those who with an inkling of things to come were hovering, anxious to study the structural composition of the 1848 house. The secrets given up by the 1848 house as it was slowly leveled to the ground reveal a new and fascinating chapter in the history of the Old Indian House.

The first owner of the land on which the Indian House stood was Joshua Fisher, who sold his rights to John Pyncheon in 1665. This lot of land, which contained slightly more than five acres, was designated as number 12 in the laying out of home lots in 1671. The present Brick Church and Post Office now occupy parts of the original lot. Although an attempt had been made to settle in Deerfield as early as 1669, the general uprising in 1675, known as King Philip's War, had caused the first inhabitants to disperse. In 1682 a large number of families returned to rebuild their homes and a substantial stockade. Never again was Deerfield entirely abandoned. The year of permanent settlement is given as 1682. In 1683 John Hawks bargained with Pyncheon to buy this lot and is said to have lived somewhere on it until 1687, when apparently, not fulfilling his bargain, he forfeited his title, and soon after Pyncheon resold it to Ensign John Sheldon.

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It is certain that Ensign Sheldon was the builder of the Indian House or more properly that he had it built and was its first occupant. The exact year of construction is not certain, but it can be stated with assurance that it was standing at the time of the massacre in 1704. It is dangerous to rely on any local tradition unless documentary evidence is also available. In this case the local tradition is substantiated by eye-witness accounts of bullet holes in the east bedroom walls, by hatchet scars on the front door, which has been preserved and is now in Deerfield's Memorial Hall, and by an early manuscript written by Elinu Hoyt, whose grandfather was present on the night in 1704. Mr. Hoyt writes in 1833, "the precise time when this House was built is not now known, but it is believed that it was probably not far from the time that the Inhabitants returned to rebuild the town in 1682. Certainly between that period and the time of the attack in 1704."¹

Admittedly then, dealing with no actual documentation but rather with strong circumstantial evidence, the house can safely be said to have been built at least before 1704. It seems questionable whether the house can be dated more precisely than this or, for that matter, whether it is necessary to do so. Elinu Hoyt, quoted above, has suggested 1682. Nathaniel Hitchcock places it in 1688.² The boulder serving as a marker on the lot claims 1698 as the date when the house was built. In his History of Deerfield, George Sheldon states that in 1698 Ensign John Sheldon "bargained with the town for about one-fourth of an acre out of the training field, that he might build his house within the stockade."³ A search has been made in existing town records, but at this time George Sheldon's source for such a statement has not been located. If however, we grant the possibility of his having had access to records that have since been lost or destroyed, this petition to the town for land on which to build a house would determine the date of the house as being 1698.

Ensign John Sheldon was born in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1658 and settled in Deerfield in 1687. He was one of those public spirited men who are universally called in town histories and genealogies as "prominent in town affairs." He was selectman, innkeeper and deacon of the church. In 1679 he married Hannah, daughter of John Stebbins of Northampton, she being at the time of her marriage fifteen years of age. It was this Hannah Stebbins Sheldon who by tradition was shot through the neck while sitting in her bed in the east room of the house on the fateful night of 1704. John Sheldon, Junior, and his wife, also a Hannah, were present in the house that night, and it is reported, "the enemy was so intent upon cutting through the front door that John and his young wife jumped from the east chamber

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window unobserved; she was disabled by a sprained ankle, but Hannah urged her husband to fly to Hatfield and give the alarm; he was bare-footed but he protected his feet as he ran over the snow by tearing up a blanket and tying the strips around them."⁴ This second Hannah was carried off to Canada and redeemed by her father-in-law the following year.

Ensign Sheldon removed to Hartford about 1707 where he remained until his death. The house passed to his son Ebenezer who lived in it and kept tavern there until about 1743 when he removed to the settlement called Fall Town, now Bernardston, Massachusetts. On June 22, 1744, Ebenezer Sheldon sold the house to Jonathan Hoyt, whose son David Hoyt had married his daughter Mercy the previous year.

Born in 1722, David Hoyt lived the remainder of his life in the house, dying there at the age of 92. He was a soldier, innkeeper, "make of wiggs and foretops," and possibly also a cabinet maker of considerable skill. One of his ledgers which is preserved indicated that in 1754 he sold wigs for about four or five pounds. A foretop sold to Nathaniel Hervey on July 10, 1754, cost a mere ten shillings. On this same day he purchased hair from four men of Deerfield for which he paid six shillings an ounce.⁵

Certain pieces of furniture which either still remain in the homes of David Hoyt's descendants or have just recently been placed in museums have always been accepted by these descendants as made by him for his daughters at the times of their respective marriages, and one in particular is branded with his initials DH. The inventory taken at the death of his son Elihu, to whom all his personal estate passed, shows a large quantity of joiner's tools.⁶

In contemporary documents he is called "Landlord Hoyt" or "David Hoyt, Innkeeper" and it is probably in this role that he is best remembered. His day books show the sale of enormous quantities of "Flipp" and other drinks such as toddy and punch.⁷ It has been claimed that his tavern, the Old Indian House, was the unofficial headquarters for the Tories of Deerfield in the early days of the Revolution. This claim is now believed to have been greatly over-emphasized. It is true that he himself was by belief loyal to the King and therefore quite naturally would have attracted patrons of similar political persuasion. However, a diary kept in the years of 1774-75 by a young medical student, Elihu Ashley, son of the Reverend Jonathan Ashley, indicates that Hoyt's tavern was actually frequented quite impartially by Whig and Tory alike.⁸ It served as the terminal for the post rider, one Silent Wilde, who arrived weekly with the newspapers from Boston and Worcester, and was a gathering

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place for all who wished to tarry over a bowl of toddy or a mug of brandy and there exchange news of all sorts.

Elihu, youngest son of David Hoyt, inherited the family home in which he lived throughout his life. He was in the state legislature most of his adult life and according to George Sheldon, "much employed in minor offices of trust and honor."⁹ Of his seven children, only two sons reached manhood, Charles, who moved to Florida, and Henry King, who inherited the house in 1833.

The life span of the Old Indian House was drawing to a close, for with the ownership of Henry King Hoyt there came the demolition of 1848, one year before his marriage to Miss Catherine Wells.

It would not be fair to create the impression that Henry Hoyt was a thoughtless, unfeeling leveler of antiquity. It has already been pointed out that he made considerable but vain attempts to save the old house. Nathaniel Hitchcock states that he "offered to sell it with the home lot . . . for the sum of \$2100, provided it be kept as a public relic of the past; but so little interest was felt in the subject in the town that the money could not be raised, so the matter was dropped."¹⁰ Today in the history of preservation this attempt to save the Indian House is believed to be the second known effort of this sort in New England. Actually there was fairly widespread interest in the matter. The following letter was written from Boston December 11, 1847, by Henry Williams to Pliny Arms in Deerfield:

"Dear Sir,

I have learned through the News-papers, or in some other way that measures are in contemplation in Deerfield for the preservation of the ancient "Hoyt House," and that you are one of a committee chosen to effect the object. I have also understood that among other things it was a part of the proposed plan to remove the house to another location. It is on this account that I venture to address you. On the subject of preserving for a long time to come, this interesting and ancient structure no man in the Connecticut river valley cherishes stronger feelings than I do. Its history as connected with the early settlement of the town is such that I should consider its destruction as the vilest vandalism that could be perpetrated; and the idea of moving it from its present site is almost as bad as its utter demolition. I cannot but hope that there is sound and right feeling enough in the community to save and perpetuate this cherished relic of antiquity. . . .ll"

The hopes of Mr. Williams and many others did not materialize, and

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the old house fell, just as has its successor this past summer. Fortunately a certain Mr. John Popkins had, in 1848, established a studio for taking daguerrotypes in Greenfield. Today there is preserved in Memorial Hall in Deerfield a rather unsatisfactory likeness of the house taken by him. Another daguerrotype, perhaps also taken by Popkins, disappeared in Amherst, Massachusetts in recent years. A photographic copy of this second daguerrotype was made about 1900 by a man named Lovell, and this view provides a clearer and more informative likeness of the house.

Also available is David Hoyt's list of house buildings and land compiled on February 8, 1799 for purposes of national taxation.¹² In this list Mr. Hoyt gives exact dimensions of his house. The house is described as a large house, two stories high, 42 x 21 feet, the kitchen, one story 42 x 13-1/2 feet, and the bedroom, one story 15 x 14 feet. There were eighteen windows in all, and in addition to the house there were on the lot: a horse house, a saddle house, a corn house, two barns, a cowhouse, and a stable at the end of one barn.

Mr. Nathaniel Hitchcock, who was aged thirty six at the time the house was demolished, described it in a paper read before the annual meeting of the Pocumtuck Memorial Association in 1875.¹³

"The house was built two stories high; the upper story projected in front over the lower; the ends of four large beams were seen, supported by four oak brackets, three feet long, sixteen inches wide at the top, and three inches thick; a steep roof, with a good finish at the ends, which projected out at each end supported four smaller brackets. It was about fifty feet long and thirty feet wide, including the lean-to, which was longer than the main house. The house was built of large oak and yellow pine timber, much of it 10 x 14 inches;¹⁴ the walls were filled with brick. The four windows in front were three feet four inches by two feet seven inches; to sashes, each with eight panes of 7 x 9 glass. Originally, it is said, there were diamond panes, which were set in lead. There was a narrow window over the door. The lower windows had heavy wooden shutters, while the stout plank door was filled with nails, and had a strong bolt, making the house bullet proof. . . . The chimney was, I think, ten feet square at the bottom, with three fire-places. We will step into the west room, called the bar-room. The walls were ceiled with wide boards, the floor and walls kept clean with soap and sand. . . . Over head, in the centre, was the summer-tree, a timber 20 x 14 inches, into which the joist was framed, planed (and so was the under side of the chamber floor), with no lath or plaster.

The great fire-place was eight feet long, including the oven; a large stone mantle-tree held up the front of the chimney, leaving a fire-place about five feet high above the hearth. The wood-house opened into the cellar-way on the right of the fire-place. The wood-house and wash-room were built later than the lean-to, I think and were not as high, and extended west of the lean-to about 30 feet; from the wood-house you came into the wash-room, then stepping up a step, into the kitchen, with a big fire-place.

East of this room was a bed-room. We now go into the east front room, finished much as the west room, but the walls were whitewashed. The fire-place was not half so large as in the other rooms. It was built of large smooth stones, a box going so far back into the chimney as to prevent most of the heat from coming into the room. . . . I think I never went up into the chamber but once. But one was finished, I think. . . . West of the house was the well-sweep, with a moss-covered bucket and good water; the well was very near the door into the wash-room, . . ."

With these few seemingly meager sources: The Hitchcock description, the tax list dimensions of 1799, a daguerrotype, a photographic copy of a daguerrotype, and existing fragments, there is actually more information available about the appearance of the Old Indian House than about many houses that have come down at a much later date.

Most treasured of all the relics from the Old Indian House is the "hatchet-hewn" doorway, now standing in Memorial Hall and visited each year by hundreds of adults and wide-eyed school children, who are told of the massacre and ensuing march to Canada. Before coming to rest in Memorial Hall in 1879, the old door was owned by Dr. Daniel Denison Slade of Boston, who had purchased it about 1858 from a member of the Hoyt family. No sooner had it left Deerfield than attempts were made to recover it. In 1867 Dr. Slade wrote, "Since it [the door] came into my possession, I have always felt some compunction in regard to it, not that it was not fairly mine by the right of purchase, but that it rightly belonged to the town of Deerfield, and should be forever retained by that town as a most sacred relic."¹⁵ The door was given over to the custody of Mr. Charles O. Phillips, landlord of the Pocumtuck Hotel, and there it remained until May 18, 1877, when the hotel burned and the door was heroically rescued by Mr. Frank Nims. Since 1879 it has stood in Memorial Hall.

Some skeptics have pointed out that it seems unlikely that any family would retain such a ventilated door on its home throughout 104 blustering New England winters. The solution appears quite obvious after careful examination of the door, where nail marks around the hole dis-

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close that once there was some sort of a backing or patch. In the early photograph this patch is barely discernable.

Of the interior appearance of the house nothing beyond Mr. Hitchcock's description was known for certain until recently. It was presumed to have been finished in a manner similar to known seventeenth century houses, that is, panelled from floor to ceiling with wainscoting composed of feather edged and beaded sheathing.

When it was understood in the Spring of 1959 that the 1848 house was to be either moved or razed within the year to allow space for the Deerfield Academy classroom building, several persons were led by general curiosity to explore the 1848 house. In the attic, to their amazement and excitement, they discovered floor boards bearing seventeenth century shadow mouldings. These boards were obviously re-used and once had been the interior woodwork from a much earlier house. When it was remembered that the 1848 house was constructed immediately upon the wrecking of the Old Indian House and upon the same spot, it seemed equally obvious that these attic floor boards had come from the house of Ensign John Sheldon. Any possible doubt as to their origin was dispelled when a check revealed that no other early house had been pulled down in or around 1848 which might have provided similar boards.

This significant discovery was reported to Mr. Henry N. Flynt, the President of the Board of Trustees of Deerfield Academy and the President of the Heritage Foundation. He and Mrs. Flynt took immediate steps to have the attic floor boards carefully removed and stored in a safe place.

Before the boards were stored away they were carefully examined, measured and photographed, and while this was being done a new and provocative question was raised. Who was the joyner? It is doubtful if anyone had given thought in recent years to the name of the man who had actually run his moulding plane over these boards to work the onetime fine panelling. Now with the product in hand it seemed imperative to try to identify this anonymous craftsman. A scarcity of seventeenth century building records renders it extremely difficult to rescue the names of carpenters and joyners and often impossible to link the names, once uncovered, with any specific house. Nevertheless this search was begun.

A list was compiled of all the citizens living in Deerfield before 1700 and an attempt made to ascertain the occupation of each. The results were unbelievable and almost uncanny as far as the present problem is concerned. There appear to have been three men in town at this period who were woodworkers. Of these, two were called car-

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penters and one as a joyner. By definition a carpenter was one who did the heavy, rough labor in construction, the scoring, hewing, mortising and fitting of large timber. A joyner, however, was a furniture maker who also did fine work on a house, carved panelling and decorative detail both inside and out. The one joyner known to have been living here before 1700 was Sergeant John Hawks, first resident on the Indian House lot.

John Hawks was born in Windsor, Connecticut, in 1643. In 1660 he removed with his family to Hadley, Massachusetts, settling on the west side of the river in the section later to become Hatfield. He lived there near the Allis family, many of whom were joyners and have long been established as the makers of numerous carved chests, generically called "Hadley" chests. It is entirely possible that Hawks served his apprenticeship in the Allis shop and there learned the skilled techniques of joynery. In 1683 or 1684, Hawks settled in Deerfield, and although he forfeited the right to lot 12, the Indian House lot, he remained in the town until sometime after 1704. In 1696 he was granted the contract to "finish" the new Deerfield Meetinghouse. In the context of seventeenth century joynery, "to finish" did not imply to complete so much as it did to undertake to do the fine decorative work, which would quite naturally fall due as a particular structure neared completion.

Dr. Clair Luther in his book, The Hadley Chest, nominates John Hawks as his candidate for maker of at least six carved chests, and this candidacy is strongly supported by family connections and relevant dates. Careful examination of two of the Hawks' chests shows the characteristic floral design on the fronts and shadow moulded stiles on the sides, the same type of moulding that appeared on the attic floor boards in the 1848 house.

Knowing then that the skill of Sergeant John Hawks was sufficient to merit him the Meetinghouse contract, that he produced furniture of exceptional quality, that he was the only joyner in Deerfield in the period 1697-1704, it is tempting to take the final step and propose his name as master craftsman in the building of the Old Indian House.

Traces of more re-used timber were found throughout the 1848 house, but these could not be removed without seriously damaging its fundamental construction. A year of uncertainty followed, a year of wondering whether the 1848 house was to be moved to another location or to be torn down. Then, shortly after Commencement 1960, a decision was reached that the 1848 house was to be demolished.

Once again Mr. and Mrs. Flynt were anxious to see that the house was

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dissected with every possible precaution and engaged Mr. William Gass, a man of great experience in this sort of work, to supervise the task.

When superficial coverings such as clapboards and plaster were first torn away it was immediately apparent that the entire 1848 house had been constructed from the boards and framing pieces of the Old Indian House. Every outside wall had been sheathed with these ancient boards. A large percentage bore the shadow moulding pattern found in the attic floor, some on both sides, indicating they had originally served as partitions. Some were whitewashed and some were painted the dark red called "Spanish Brown." Several of those covered with whitewash showed clearly where ceiling joists had once lain. The average width was about eighteen inches and one measured 29-1/2 inches across.

The discovery of these boards had been more or less anticipated, but it came as a complete surprise to find that the outside walls of the first floor had been entirely filled with large handmade brick, laid up in neat order in lime mortar. Traces of the original old clay mortar were found when the lime was cleaned away, an indication that they too were re-used. Clay was the earliest form of mortar used in the area. Their age unquestionably predates 1848, and it can be claimed with no hesitation that these bricks were taken from the Old Indian House chimney.

Some have expressed doubt that the old chimney could have provided a sufficient quantity of brick to line completely the downstairs walls of the 1848 frame house. It must be pointed out that upwards of 20,000 brick would be required to build a chimney with a ten-foot-square base. An approximate count was made as the brick were removed, and the number came to only around 1,500.

With only two days reprieve before the bulldozer was due to arrive to fill in the now rubble-filled cellar hole of the 1848 house and to smooth out the grounds in front of the classroom building, the members of the Heritage Foundation Summer Fellowship Program undertook to excavate in and around the old stone well that had been covered by a recent addition to the 1848 house. The opening was found to lie about three feet below the level of the yard, the top having presumably been removed when the addition was built. The well had been filled in, and there was hope that in cleaning out the fill that artifacts would appear that could be positively identified as seventeenth or early eighteenth century. As buckets full of fill were lifted from the well they were sifted carefully, and the residue was quite disappointing. Fragments of pottery, pieces of old clay pipe and a large quantity of old nails were brought up, but in among them were objects of obvious twentieth

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century origin. The implication was clearly that the well had been filled in quite recently with soil that had lain nearby and contained a conglomeration of material collected there during a long period of years. The most interesting result of this excavation was the knowledge gained of the well itself. Although there is no positive assurance that the well was contemporary with the building of the Old Indian House, an examination of the early photograph indicates with relative assurance that the present well is the same that was in use before the Old Indian House was demolished, and at least predates 1848. It was laid up with a mixture of rough rock and water rounded stone of a single thickness, until within three feet of the bottom, when two thicknesses were employed. The well was consistently 2-1/2 feet wide, and water was found after removing a layer of clay at a depth of 14 feet, 6 inches. Under the layer of clay, at water level, a bucket, chain, shovel handle and wooden box, all of undetermined date, were discovered. One of the Heritage Foundation Fellows, who worked at the bottom of the well, reported that the base consisted of a wooden sill type structure, resembling a square form, 2' 6" x 2' 9", made of boards 10" x 2", laid double, making the frame 20" high. There was no possibility of removing this frame since it lay under the rock walls of the well. Once the water had been released by the removal of the clay layer, the well began to fill rapidly and it was declared dangerous to continue the excavation. The well has now been filled in once again and what lies beneath the wooden frame remains for future archaeologists to determine.

The anticipations of each spectator on the morning of June 28, 1960, have been fulfilled. There is no longer an Indian House facing south on the Deerfield Common. There stands today behind the old site a proud new school building.

FOOTNOTES

1. Elihu Hoyt, unpublished manuscript in Memorial Hall, Deerfield, A Brief Sketch of the First Settlement of Deerfield, Mass., 1833.
2. Nathaniel Hitchcock, Recollection of the Old Indian House, paper read before the Pocumtuck Memorial Association, Feb. 23, 1875.
3. George Sheldon, A History of Deerfield, Mass., Greenfield, Mass., 1896, Vol. I, p. 601.
4. Sheldon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 294.
5. David Hoyt, Ledger, Memorial Hall, Deerfield, Mass.

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6. Franklin County Registry of Probate.
7. David Hoyt, op. cit.
8. Elihu Ashley, unpublished diary, 1773-1775, Memorial Hall, Deerfield, Mass.
9. Sheldon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 216.
10. Hitchcock, op. cit.
11. Letter in Indian House Drawer, Manuscript Collection, Memorial Hall, Deerfield, Mass.
12. List of Mr. D Hoits Land House outhouses &c Feb^y 8, 1799 As Given in to the Federal List, document in Manuscript Collection, Memorial Hall, Deerfield, Mass.
13. Hitchcock, op. cit.
14. Recent analysis by the Yale School of Forestry shows that the ceiling joists and studs from the Old Indian House were made of chestnut.
15. Rev. P. Voorhees Finch, Daniel Denison Slade, M. D. and the Old Indian House Door, paper read before the Pocumtuck Memorial Association, Feb. 23, 1897.