

HARVEY L. WHITE FARM, SAP HOUSE  
East side of Route 202, approximately 600 feet  
north of the Hillsborough/Antrim town line  
Hillsborough  
Hillsborough County  
New Hampshire

HABS No. NH-226-A

HABS  
NH  
6-HILL,  
2A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HABS  
NH  
6-HILL,  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HARVEY L. WHITE FARM, SAP HOUSE

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Location: East side of Route 202, approximately 600 feet north of the Hillsborough/Antrim town line, Hillsborough, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire.

USGS Hillsborough, New Hampshire Quadrangle  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:  
19.262700.4776400

Significance: The Harvey L. White Farm Sap House is a late example of a building type that was common to family farms throughout New Hampshire and Vermont in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite its deteriorated condition, the building continues to convey its original function. It is the only known pre-1940 sap house to survive in the Town of Hillsborough. The sap house is a contributing building within the White Farm, which was determined eligible on August 9, 1992.

Description: The sap house is sited approximately seven feet from Route 202, at the edge of a river terrace that drops directly behind the structure. It is a one-story, 10-1/2' x 14', post and beam building sited gable end to the road. The building is covered with vertical sheathing and capped with a gable roof covered with horizontal wood sheathing beneath roll asphalt roofing. It rests directly on the ground, lacking a foundation. Its two most distinctive features are the wooden, gable-roof ventilator with its sheet metal cap and the remains of a roughly-formed wooden platform attached to the north wall and covered by the extended north slope of the roof. The platform was used to hold the storage tank in which sap was stored until poured through a small hole in the north wall into the evaporator tank inside the building. Presumably, firewood was also stored here. A door made of vertical boards and a window opening are found in the south wall. Both gables have an elongated rectangular opening, and the east wall has an opening in the lower section of the wall. The interior of the building is open and empty of equipment. Walls are unfinished, the floor is dirt, and all of the principal framing members are reused, rough-hewn logs. A simple wooden bench is located along the south wall and some rough shelving remains on the east wall. The west wall is

partially covered with sheet metal.

The sap house is typical of those built in New Hampshire and Vermont throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among its characteristics typical of the building type are the gable roof, elongated wood ventilator, sheltered exterior storage space and the single room interior. Although most sap houses were built within the sugar bush, the roadside location of this building was not inappropriate for the early automobile era.

History:

The sap house was erected by the Bennett family, owners of White Farm between 1926 and 1952.<sup>1</sup> The building was erected shortly after Elmer E. Bennett of Dracut, Massachusetts arrived at this farm in 1926. The Bennetts tapped the large number of sugar maples that grew on the hillside behind their farmhouse across the street. The sap house was located on the shoulder of Route 202 in order to catch passing traffic; the family typically boiled the sap on Sundays to attract passersby with the aroma and activity.

Following Elmer Bennett's death in 1937, the farm was passed to his wife and daughter, Mary B. Bennett, in whose possession it remained until 1952. Local residents do not recall that the sap house was again used until the property was purchased by the Edgecombs in 1952 and used on an infrequent basis. In 1965, Anna M. Edgecomb subdivided the 96 acre farm. The sap house and accompanying 1.6 acres, as well as 18 acres of land to the east, as far as the river, were sold to Fairfield Whiting, who owned the Whittemore Farm immediately to the south, just over the town line in Antrim.

Although by then no longer part of White Farm, the sap house was used for a short period around 1969-1970 by Robert and Norma Fowle, current owners of the White Farm. By then, however, with the increased traffic on Route 202, the sap house's proximity to the road and its small size made for cramped quarters; since 1970 it has not been used.

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<sup>1</sup>It is quite possible that this was the first sap house on this farm. Birdsey Proctor, who lived here between 1912 and 1926, did not have a sap house, according to longtime neighbor Albert Mills. Harvey L. White's inventory at the time of his death in 1906 shows he owned many buckets but no evaporating equipment, lessening the need to shelter the production process.

Sugaring Process  
and Original  
Equipment:

Research on maple sugar processing suggests that sap houses were first built in the 1860s when the earliest evaporators were manufactured.<sup>2</sup> Prior to that time, sap was boiled outside in large tanks. The process used at the White Farm Sap House was typical: the sap was brought to the house in a gathering tank drawn on a sled. It was then poured into a storage tank, which sat on the exterior platform and fed via a pipe through the wall into the first of three evaporator tanks in the sap house. A float in the storage tank controlled the flow of sap into the evaporator tank. As the sap boiled, it thickened and was automatically siphoned into the next evaporator tank. From the third tank, it was poured into jugs, ready for use. Beneath the three tanks was a cast iron fire box. At its far end, steam escaped and was vented through the roof ventilator. The original equipment was removed prior to 1969 and has not survived.

The amount of syrup produced at this sap house by the Bennett family is not known, but it appears to have been a relatively small operation. The sugar bush at this farm did not rank the White Farm as one of Hillsborough's larger producers in the 1880s or 1890s, a time when maple sugar and syrup was an important local crop. The White Farm Sap House was built at the same time as a similar sap house on the Whittemore Farm. Since the equipment bought by the Smith family for that facility and the equipment installed by the Bennetts were identical, it is presumed they were purchased at the same time. Both facilities took advantage of the Sunday traffic along Route 202, one of the state's primary roads in the early twentieth century. The Whittemore Farm Sap House was taken down around 1970, leaving the White Farm Sap House the only known pre-1940

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<sup>2</sup> Vermont Historic Preservation Plan. "Agricultural Theme". May 1990.

sap house in Hillsborough.<sup>3</sup>

Sources:

**Books, Pamphlets and Articles**

Adams, W.I. Lincoln, *Woodland and Meadow. Out of Door Papers Written on a New Hampshire Farm.* New York: The Baker and Taylor Co., 1901.

Baldwin, Harrison, C., *The History of Hillsborough, NH, 1921-1963.* Peterborough: Transcript Printing Co., 1964

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*The Hillsborough Register*, 1905. Compiled by Mitchell, Daggett & Weston. Brunswick, ME: H.E. Mitchell Co.

New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources: National Register and Determination of Eligibility files.

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<sup>3</sup> The 1880 Agricultural Schedule for Hillsborough shows that Harvey White produced 300 pounds of syrup in 1879. The majority of the town's farms produced between 200 and 400 pounds, although 600-700 pounds was not uncommon; Brickett, Rev. Harry, "History of Hillsborough". In *The History of Hillsborough County, New Hampshire.* Hurd, D. Hamilton, ed. Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1885, pp. 391-434; Albert Mills interview, 1992.

Russell, Howard S., *A Long Deep Furrow*. Hanover,  
NH: University Press of New England, 1982.

United States Bureau of Statistics. Agricultural Schedule, Town  
of Hillsborough, 1880.

Vermont Historic Preservation Plan. "Agricultural Theme".  
May 1990.

### **Interviews**

Albert Mills, resident of neighborhood since 1927; former owner  
of Whittemore Farm.

Robert Fowle, current owner, White Farm

### **Photograph Collections**

D.A.R. Museum, Governor Smith Residence, Hillsborough, NH  
Robert Fowle (private collection)  
New Hampshire Historical Society

### **Maps and Atlases**

1858 *Map of Hillsborough, NH*. Surveyed by J. Chase Jr. Published  
by Smith, Mason and Co.

1892 *Town and County Atlas of the State of New Hampshire*.  
Compiled by D.H. Hurd & Co., Boston.

### Project

#### Information:

This HABS report was prepared for the New Hampshire Department of Transportation in connection with roadway improvements on Route 202 in Antrim and Hillsborough. A realignment of Route 202 will necessitate the removal of the White Farm Sap House. The Memorandum of Agreement for the project stipulated that the Sap House be documented to provide a permanent photographic and written record of the property.

HARVEY L. WHITE FARM, SAP HOUSE  
HABS No. NH-226-A (Page 6)

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Preservation Consultant  
Concord, New Hampshire  
July 31, 1992

SAP HOUSE FLOOR PLAN

