

# The French-Taylor House

970 Whittier Highway,  
Moultonborough, New Hampshire



## Historic Building Condition Assessment

July 2017/ Revised February 2018

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#### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to assist the Town of Moultonborough in evaluating the existing condition of the historic French-Taylor House, locally known as the Taylor House, as the Town moves toward a community process to determine future uses for the property. Following this Condition Assessment with structural evaluation, the next step toward determination of appropriate future uses would be a Re-use or Feasibility Study. In June 2017, the Taylor House was determined eligible for the NH State Register of Historic Places by the NH Division of Historical Resources (NH DHR); this is a pre-requisite for state-funded study and repair grants.

The Town acquired the 5-acre Taylor property with existing house and barn in March 2014. This property is situated at the center of Moultonborough Village on Route 25 (the town's historic Main Street). Prior to its purchase, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was completed (Calex Environmental, LLC) in June 2013. Since a specific future use for the building has not yet been determined, the recommendations of this Report are intended to arrest further deterioration (especially following the damage to the property from Storm Stella in March 2017) and to return the building to a stable condition until its future use is identified.

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## Introduction



The French-Taylor House is a prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century building on Whittier Highway, the principal roadway and historic 'Main Street' of Moultonborough, now the heavily trafficked Route 25 corridor. The house gets its name from its two most noted owners, James E. French (1845 – 1919), a state political figure, and Adele Taylor, its last resident who was also the Town's longest-serving librarian (from 1947 to 1992). Much more history of interest about James E. French and his career is available on the website of the Moultonborough Historical Society and that of the Moultonborough Public Library, and in archival collections of the NH Historical Society and the NH State Library in Concord.

Concurrent with our investigation, a separate report establishing the historical and architectural significance of the house was prepared by architectural historian Dr. James L. Garvin of Concord (the recently retired State Architectural Historian). Initial drafts of his findings have been very helpful in the preparation of this condition report. In particular, his analysis of the evolution of the house, and the major modifications c. 1900 brought about by James E. French, point the way to understanding some of the current issues with the building. Dr. Garvin aided the Moultonborough Heritage Commission in preparation of the Individual Inventory Form for the French-Taylor House submitted to the NH Division of Historical Resources in June 2017, which resulted in the building's Determination of Eligibility (DOE) for the NH State Register of Historic Places, the pre-requisite for this study and other state-funded grant projects.

As part of this Building Condition Assessment Report, a separate structural report on the house was prepared by Brian Ki of Team Engineering in Bedford NH, which evaluates the condition and general safety of the building frame (see Appendix). Ki's field investigation took place in August 2017, assisted by Norman Larson (Moultonborough Heritage Commission) and Mike Kepple (Moultonborough Department of Public Works). I first visited the Taylor House on June 8<sup>th</sup> and was introduced to the building by Cristina Ashjian, Chair of the Moultonborough Heritage Commission. The building has been unoccupied since the departure of Adele Taylor in 2006. A committee identified potential uses for the property in 2013, including the re-use of the existing buildings (potentially for commercial or public use); the Town of Moultonborough purchased the Taylor property in 2014. My preliminary examination showed some building movement of the house frame, some water damage and of course, the extensive roof repairs necessitated by Storm Stella in March 2017. In general, the building showed signs of deterioration consistent with an unoccupied structure of its age, but nothing particularly alarming was noted.

We returned to the building on July 18<sup>th</sup> for a more detailed review and investigation. Using unscaled plan sketches as a base, we were able to generate the plans included in this Condition Assessment Report. It is important to note that these are not measured plans; configurations of rooms and positions of features were worked out only by observation of their relative positions and a few known dimensions. Nonetheless, by overlaying the various level plans, it is possible to draw some conclusions about what is going on in the building and to make recommendations. Any serious remedial work will require a proper measured drawing set, including plans and elevations. A narrative description of our observations and proposed corrections, walking the reader through the building and following the Building Plans (see page 29), are found in the Physical Description/Existing Conditions section of this report.

## History and Development of the Property

Located at the center of Moultonborough Village, the French-Taylor House is an important community landmark, significant both for its architecture and for its history. It stands directly across from the Moultonborough Grange Hall (c. 1810) on what was once Moultonborough's Main Street (now busy Route 25). The property, with just over five acres in the center of the village, features an open field, trees and a wooded side lot, mature plantings, a stone well, and stonewalls. The attached barn likely functioned as a combined stable and carriage house. An example of a broad-gabled Greek Revival dwelling, the main house was built c. 1840, and expanded and remodeled c. 1900 by the prominent figure James E. French, who resided at the property from 1871 until his death in 1919. In his June 2017 report, James L. Garvin notes how "Evidence within the house indicates...(it) was enlarged by lifting the roof structure and by adding a new second story to both the main house and to the wing;" this change can be seen in historic photographs (and in Garvin's illustration of the altered frame c. 1900).

James E. French was a prosperous business owner who owned what is now known as the Old Country Store (c. 1780), a landmark destination in Moultonborough Village. French was also an influential public official with a lengthy record of public service in both local and state government; his controlling political role drew the unflattering attention of the *Boston Herald* in 1907. His local legacy is closely tied to philanthropy, as funds provided by his will were used to build the Moultonborough Public Library (1929). A few years after his death, the "French house" was sold to Adele Blanchard, and the property passed through the women of that family to its last occupant, Adele Taylor, who was the town's longest-serving librarian. The Taylor House, as it is locally known, retains integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association for the period of its enlargement c. 1900 to the present.

The house has been vacant since 2006, and was purchased by the Town in 2014. In March 2017, a significant storm struck Moultonborough, uprooting trees, many on the subject property, and damaging buildings, including the house which lost the majority of its roof shingles on the northerly side.

## Preservation Objectives

Future plans for the property have not yet been determined, including whether it will continue as a town-owned building or be transferred to be preserved by some other entity or person. Similarly, the proposed use for the property has not yet been determined and is not in the scope of this report. It is clear, however, that some form of low-intensity use, including continuance as a residence would be consistent with preservation goals. Conversion to retail, professional or municipal offices may also be appropriate.

Due to its age and significance, and especially its determination of eligibility for the State Register, any work contemplated or performed on the French-Taylor house should be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. This report was prepared with this framework in mind. The standard for *rehabilitation* seems to be the best fit in this situation. This is not an onerous restriction on the work, and is consistent with good building practices informed by the special situation presented by this important structure.

## The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

The Standards are a series of concepts about maintaining, repairing, and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or making alterations. They provide practical guidance for decision-making about work or changes to a historic property. Applicants to the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) and some other preservation grant programs must be willing to adhere to these Standards. Of the four different Standards, the N.H. Division of Historical Resources generally recommends adhering to the Standards for Rehabilitation as outlined below.

### Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

More on the Standards and associated Guidelines, which offer general design and technical recommendations to assist in applying the Standards, can be found at:

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>. Together, the Standards and Guidelines provide guidance and a framework for decision-making about work or changes to an historic property.

## Character-Defining Features

Part of defining the preservation objectives is the identification and ranking of significant surviving elements of the building. Many of these are well preserved. These period features are described in Garvin's *Report on the French-Taylor House* (June 2017, see appendix), and in the DHR Inventory Form (MOU 0038). Such character-defining features, when possible, should be protected and preserved in the course of any future work on the building. Garvin notes, "The house also retains and displays significant structural and stylistic attributes from the period of its original construction, making it a valuable example in the study of broad-gabled houses in New Hampshire and of the range of expression of the Greek Revival style in the state." The following list summarizes the stand-out features, interior and exterior, and identifies the likely period of their origin:

### Highest Importance

1. Exterior trim; wide corner boards, eave trim and gable end cornices, paired roof brackets, amber glass lightning rods.
2. Porch improvements (c. 1900); north side screened porch, door-yard porch, decking, posts, lattice.
3. Masonry foundation (c. 1840); exterior granite slabs, original windows, interior dressed stone and brickwork.
4. Original barn
5. Street-side entry and central hall; paired storm doors, double glazed entry doors, interior woodwork (c. 1900) including wainscot, stair, newel, rail and balusters, ceiling and light fixtures on ground and upper level.
6. Principal ground floor rooms of the original house (c. 1840); doors and pediments, interior trim, built-in cabinetry, radiators and period light fixtures.
7. Second floor bedrooms (c. 1900); Trim, doors and hardware, varied wood species of flooring, period light fixtures, radiators, closets and surviving linoleum rugs.

### Very Important

1. Interiors of rooms in the ell; kitchen interior (c. 1945), upper room interiors, (c. 1900), period wallpaper, floor register, bathroom fixtures, built-in cabinets.
2. Barn interior features; hatches, stalls, privy, original barn window sash.

### Worthy of Preservation

1. Door-yard well (capped)
2. Overgrown brick front walkway
3. Attic spaces revealing the periods of construction
4. Small horse barn/tack room (c. 1945)

At the same time, there are a handful of features of less significance that may be considered for removal/replacement:

1. Concrete apron around the original house—this light slab, about three feet wide is virtually gone. It is a 20<sup>th</sup> century addition likely to control weeds and roof run off.
2. Plywood roof deck—over the door yard porch. Again, a later (post 1945) addition to extend the width of the roof. Deteriorated decking and framing require replacement.
3. 3-tab roof shingles—largely removed in the storm, require replacement-in-kind.



1

## Existing Conditions/Physical Description

This walk-through will proceed from the bottom up and conclude with an exterior assessment. Photos are keyed to the plans.

### ***Basement Level***

The original house basement (closest to Whittier Highway) is accessed either from an exterior door under the north porch or from a central stairway. The original foundation of dressed fieldstone appears sound. The floor is a light concrete slab that has largely failed with the exception of the pads for the new boiler and former furnace. The basement was solid and dry without evidence of significant water penetration.



2

In some locations, brick masonry that was added as a finish facing near the top of the foundation has started to come away. It seems likely that the brickwork is contemporary with the c. 1900 modifications. This is because the piers stiffening the main floor, supported on fieldstones, are very similar to the piers supporting the south porch. Brick was also used in the second basement under the kitchen, and likewise appears solid.

In any event, the brick piers are only part of what appears to be an extended 19<sup>th</sup> century effort to shore up the sagging floor above. In addition, there are (earlier?) timber columns and more modern steel columns arranged in a line about mid-span of the floor beams, visible in the southeast corner room. Where exposed, the beams were tested with an awl and appeared solid. Sills were not accessed.



3

An oil tank is in a separate enclosure in the southwest corner. Fill pipes are immediately outside. This served a boiler near the center of the basement that supplied steam to radiators throughout the original portion of the house.

The electrical entrance is at the southwest corner, served by an overhead line from across the street. A 60 amp service with fuse boxes is located on the outside of the tank enclosure. Both Romex and older armored cable branch wiring are evident, as is typical for this era.



5

Water and sewer connections are not located here, but are found in the smaller basement under the kitchen.



4

The basement windows are unusually broad, and are the only older sash in the house until you reach the attic.

A salvaged door leads from this basement to the exterior under the north porch. A curving masonry passageway leads to the north side of the house. The raised platform on the north porch was apparently created to provide headroom here.



6

The crawlspace under the north porch reveals that the older porch (visible in period photographs) is still there. Mr. French's c.1900 porch is about twice the width, and simply covered over the old, concealing it with more solid latticework. Again, we see simple foundations consisting of medium-sized stones.

The space under the south porch is not accessible, but the brick piers are visible through the slats below the deck.



7

The crawlspace between the two basements is visible though openings cut through the foundation for plumbing runs. Of note here are the very large split granite stones that form the south wall of the space. The brick that partitions off the second basement to the east is visible from the "back". This gives the appearance that the smaller basement was dug and lined with brickwork sometime in the French era when the yard well and the barn privy were abandoned.

The smaller basement has a similar concrete floor, though in better condition. It houses the water heater and well pressure tank, both relatively new. The only waste stack in the house runs down the north side of the back chimney on each floor, and exits through the foundation to a septic system to the northeast.

The remaining spaces under the barns are not accessible, but from the exterior we can see that the foundations are a combination of split granite,

fieldstones and brick. Though in places it initially appears to have pushed outward, the fitting of the stones suggests that this was the way the foundation was built.



8



9



10

### Ground Level

The center front entrance from the street is up three wood risers from a barely visible brick walkway. This walkway broadens out toward the house in a "T" shape, which indicates the footprint of the former entry portico. Along the west and south sides of the house a broken concrete apron extends out roughly three feet from the granite foundation.



11



12



13

The original clapboard siding has been covered or replaced by transite (asbestos cement) shingles which are in reasonable condition (see plan for extent). Painted wood trim remains and is well preserved, typically. There are several locations where the lower several inches of vertical trim has been replaced due to deterioration. The small stair leading to the north porch has a small area of rot due to the overhead porch roof needing replacement.

All windows at this level of the house have been replaced with vinyl units, which are in good condition.

Exterior entry light fixtures are "modern" (contemporary with the siding) and have outlived their useful lifespan.



14



The principal ground-floor rooms of the main house are in good condition. The floors in these four rooms all slope slightly downward toward the center of the house (where we see the old reinforcing piers below). The floor surfaces are in good condition. Different species of wood were used from room to room as shown on the plan.

Much of the original c. 1840 interior trim remains, particularly the moldings and shallow pediments over the doors, though a bit racked by the subsiding floor. Three of the four rooms have had wallpaper applied, while the smaller southeast room has

beadboard wainscot and ceiling, as does the entry hall, all in good condition. There is evidence of minor water staining on the wall in the southwest corner of the southwest room, however this does not occur in the room above, suggesting that this is not an ongoing roof problem. Elsewhere on this floor, staining is likely the result of a leaking radiator.

Steam radiators remain in this part of the house, as indicated, as well as exposed lines to feed the upstairs. These could be re-used in place. The locations of earlier wood stoves are evident in the front two rooms.



The NE, NW, and SW rooms all have beaverboard (wood fiberboard) ceilings with battens applied. Given what we know from the Garvin report, the absence of plaster ceilings in any room on this level may be a result of the process of raising the roof (and ceilings?) and inserting a new second floor.

The entry hall has sustained some recent damage to the stair balusters and the newel post, but missing pieces have been retained for repair and re-installation. This turned and carved wooden balustrade is a prominent feature of the entry.



The north side porch floor has a noticeable pitch downward to the north, though some of this may be attributed to design and some to the simple foundation. As mentioned, the street entry area has some deteriorated wood, but the remainder is serviceable and largely in original condition. The insect screening is well preserved. The roll roofing on the low-pitched roof has failed.



19

The south side porch requires maintenance and repair. We know the westerly portion of this “L” shaped porch was created when the rooms above were extended around 1900. It appears that when built it had a colonnade of three equal bays facing east. The inadequate design of the footings (supporting brick piers under these built-up columns) has allowed this roughly six-foot extension of the house to subside a few inches. This can be seen on this level and above. It is clear that the original foundation wall running north-south is sound—it aligns with the highpoint of the floors. Between the sinking toward the center of the house and the subsidence of the porch, there is a slight north-south ridge running through the structure.



20

The wood columns themselves preserve some nice detail with chamfered corners and applied cornice. There is a bit of railing also surviving to the south. The three steps leading down to the door-yard have all but rotted away; the detailing and strange dimensions of these steps with very high risers may indicate that they were added as a D.I.Y. project at some point later in the house’s history, likely in the Taylor era.



21



22

The northerly leg of the “L” is a little more mysterious. The two posts here are solid and detailed in a similar manner to the larger three to the west. There are also mortised brackets that are contemporary and in good shape. The roof deck here is later plywood, and it appears the roof framing is also more modern and has been extended to carry the roof farther out into the yard (this is visible where the last rafter meets the barn). The framing has failed and has been temporarily propped up with a timber near the kitchen door. The fact that the porch deck has to jog to avoid intersecting with the barn window to the east indicates that this part was modified from the original, and that the barn predates the porch. The trim at the edge of the floor deck in this narrow offset is also different from the adjoining. One hypothesis is that at one point the two solid posts held up a smaller roof that simply covered the steps up into the kitchen, and this was later tied in to the 3-bay porch. The strip flooring which runs lengthwise on both legs of the porch does meet in a mitered joint at the inside corner, which indicates that the two surfaces currently in place were likely put down together.



23



24

In the ell portion of the house, the westerly room most recently functioned as a dining room, adjacent to the kitchen to the east. It is over a crawlspace. This room has a taped drywall ceiling that has water damage in the NE corner. The trim in this part of the house is simpler than in the front original portion, but matches the floor above. A mechanical doorbell is mounted to the north porch door, indicating it was used as an entrance at some time.

Two doors connect to the kitchen in an arrangement that would have been more workable in the days of stand-alone stove, sink etc. More recent wood cabinets and counters line the north and west sides of the room. A small stove ties into the ell chimney. The checkerboard-patterned floor appears to be vinyl asbestos tile (VAT), albeit in good condition.



25

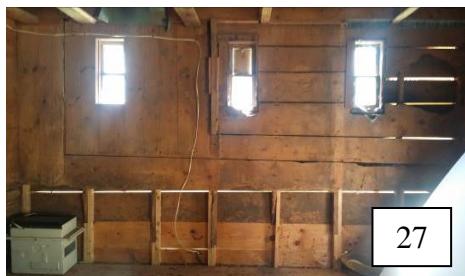
From the kitchen, one stair leads down to a cellar beneath, and a second short flight of five risers descends to the barn level. The exterior door is aligned with the porch posts and steps. It formerly had a wooden storm door or shutter that is now in storage on site.

Entering the barn from the house there is a small back hallway with storage shelves. To the north is the former privy which has been decommissioned—the bench seat removed and the space beneath returned to crawlspace under the barn. It is not clear how this crawlspace was formerly accessed for maintenance. Our structural engineer investigated the crawlspace from this access point, and found typical dry-stone footings which require adjustment/reinforcement to support the frame above. The smaller size and arrangement of the barn suggest it was an in-town carriage barn rather than cow-barn.



26

The south gable-end room of the barn has a fir floor that has swelled and buckled due to moisture. Double doors open out into the yard down a short concrete ramp, and another pair lead into the former workshop to the north. Overhead at the west end of the ante-room is a hatch for loading hay. A small gate opens to a stair leading up to the barn loft and on up to the rear bedrooms of the house, convenient before the installation of indoor plumbing.



27

The exterior walls of the workshop are mostly taken up with horizontal windows. Vinyl siding on the east end of the room has been installed on the exterior to span over some older openings. It appears that a stove of some kind once stood here. The fir floor in this room is in better condition than the adjacent ante-room.

Finally, to the east is an addition to the barn that appears to be of newer construction—2x4 framing and plywood. This room functioned as a stable; remnants of tack are still hanging and wear from the horse(s) is visible on the walls. The door returning to the barn is an interesting example of salvaged material (see Garvin report).

### ***Second Floor Level***

Moving up to the barn loft we can see where the construction of the horse stall addition has caused some problems in the older barn. The roof of the addition was built over the existing barn, supported on the old barn roof and subjecting it to some additional roof loading. In addition, the barn frame has been modified in this area by the removal of some knee braces that were inconveniently low (mortises indicate their former position). The resulting roof deflection is visible in the photo (28) at right.

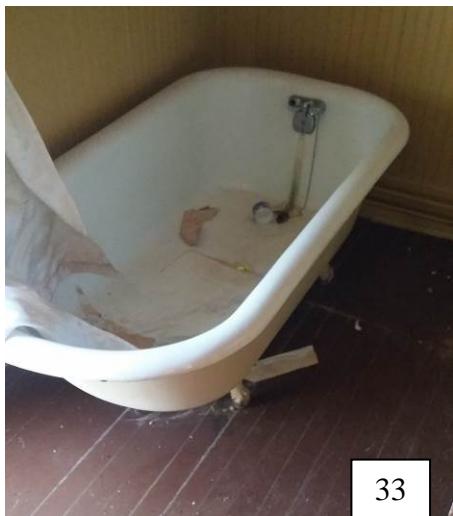
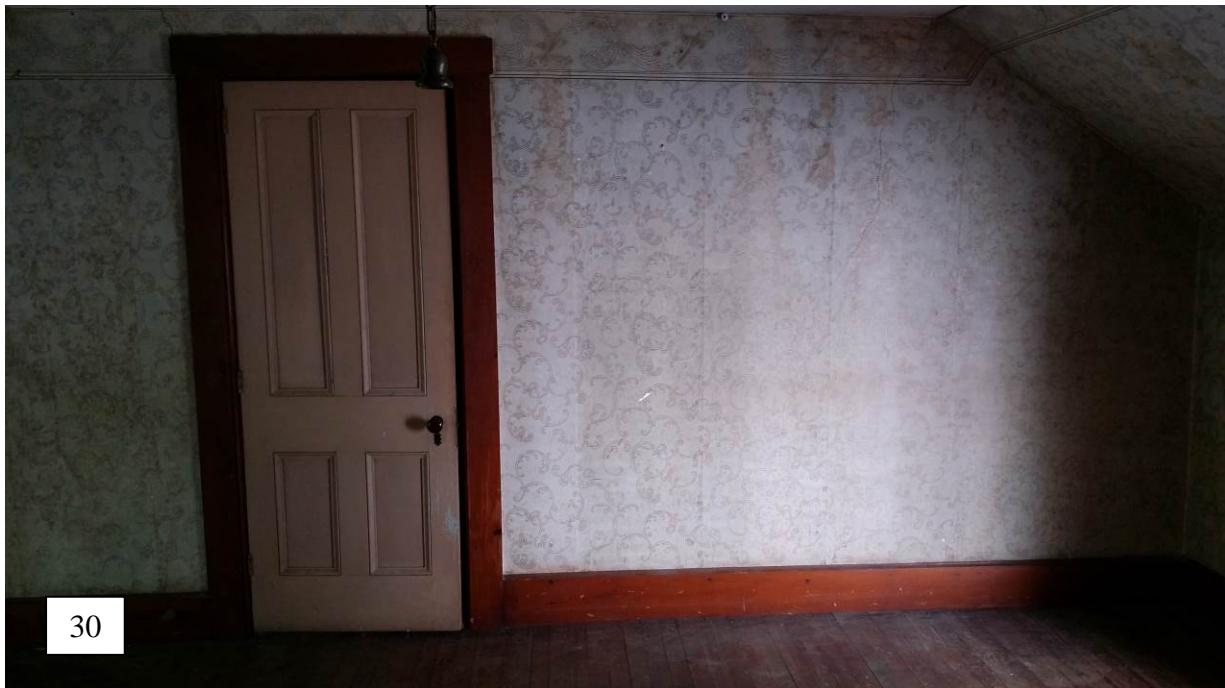


29

Also of note are the iron rods suspending the loft floor from framing above. They may have allowed the removal of some columns that would have interrupted the workshop space below. More evidence of the barn frame movement is seen where the NW post near the stair enclosure has pulled away from the roof beam above, perhaps as a result of the recent wind storm (March 2017). To the east is a single room one step up above the horse stall. The loft and roof are lightly built, with only 2x4 rafters and plywood sheathing.



28



From the barn loft a small enclosed stair rises up to access a door at the rear to the second floor of the house. This rear bedroom is directly over the kitchen and retains the floor register that provided heat. As with the other rooms upstairs in the ell, there is reduced headroom toward the eaves. The attic space above is accessible from the barn.

Windows at the second level are quite low to the floor throughout the house, and would require tempered glass if built today. As downstairs, the original windows have been replaced with vinyl units, in good condition.

To the west of this rear room is an interconnecting room with access to the main house and the bathroom to the north. Both of these upper rooms appeared to be in good condition without signs of weather damage.



The bathroom was another post-1900 improvement, though the appearance of the current fixtures suggest it may have been even more recent. The bath is served by the main house steam radiation system. It also provides access to the main attic.



34

A small built-in cabinet at the west end of the bathroom matches the detailing of the hutch and over-stair cabinet in the downstairs first floor. This small bit of storage is built in to an extension of the room that overlaps the front main house. This jog is also visible in the entry to the north porch from the house.

The attic stair that starts in this bathroom is another c. 1900 addition, as it is outside the footprint of the original house before the eastward extension.

At east end of the stair hall in the main house there is more confirmation that the south porch below is subsiding. Door frames here above the porch are racked in the opposite direction from those inside the footprint of the original house (see photos 35 on the ground level and 36 above the porch—both looking north).

The stair hall floor initially rises to the west and then slopes downward toward the top of the stairs. This effect is also seen in the SW upstairs bedroom.

The railing and trim are in very good condition on the upper floor with more elaborate turning and carving as seen in the entry below. Ceilings here are plaster. The walls are solid and undamaged.



35



36

The four corner bedrooms are in relatively good shape, with important elements such as early lighting fixtures still in place. The floors show signs of having had linoleum or other area rugs in place for a long time, which protected the wood. In locations where floor registers were replaced with steam radiators, floor patches are visible. These floors likely date to the c.1900 insertion of the second floor.



37



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Most of the bedroom closets retain their linoleum rugs, some with borders designed to fit the space exactly. This is an important glimpse of the original c. 1900 condition, unchanged.



42



43



Remembering that the second floor rooms are nearly sixty years newer than the rooms below, these spaces are in good condition and retain many of the original fixtures.



43



44

### Attic Level

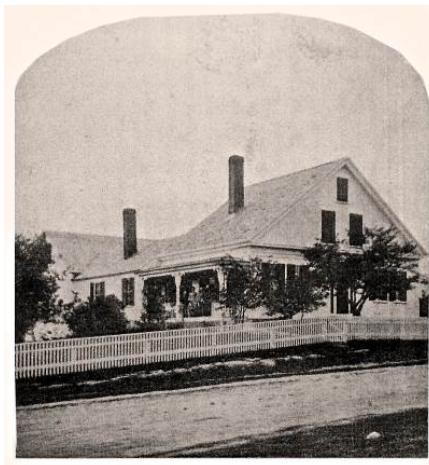
The east end of the main house attic clearly shows the roof extension toward the east. Roof framing for this last six feet goes from timber frames with vertical sheathing supported on hewn purlins to horizontal sheathing supported on sawn rafters that extend the full roof slope.



45



46



The roof structure has three evenly spaced collar ties (please refer to Garvin report). It appears to be in good condition, better than the barn, and not damaged from the wind storm. In some areas, the flooring appears to be put together from salvaged boards, and does not extend completely under the eave on the south side. The southerly of the two house chimneys terminates just below the roof sheathing. While the removal must have been done after the conversion to steam heat, the exact date is not known.

There is evidence in the wall framing, just below the peak on the west side, of the central window that appears in the stereograph taken prior to 1900.



47



48

### ***Exterior and Roof***

Beginning at the SW corner of the house: The south facing slope of the main house roof is shingled with three-tab asphalt and has a steel snow belt at the eave. The condition is poor. Decorative trim at the roof edge appears solid, but needs painting. Cornerboards have been retained in painted wood while siding has been covered with transite shingles.

At the overhead electrical entrance, the weatherhead is in need of upgrade (along with probable new electrical service).



Original wood clapboards beneath are visible in a few spots, but their overall condition cannot be determined. Often we have seen wood siding covered simply to avoid painting costs. The granite foundation along the south side also appears sound from the exterior. Of the two horizontal cellar windows, the westerly one has been boarded over at the oil fill pipe, but the sash is still visible on the inside. The vinyl replacement windows are historically

inappropriate to the house, but appear to be in good working order. The concrete "housekeeping" apron along this side has crumbled due to age and weather.

As mentioned, the south porch has subsided, taking the floor above with it and so requires shoring up and a rebuild of the simple footings. The low-pitch porch roofing outside of the kitchen has failed from age, and the more modern framing has also given way. Railings that used to flank the steps are largely gone. Note the shoring post at center of the photo at right.

The shingle roof above on the second floor is in better condition, *where remaining*. The accompanying plans give a letter grade to the roof conditions on various surfaces, but a piecemeal approach to replacement would not be economical in the longer run nor is it recommended. The kitchen chimney has open mortar joints visible from the ground—likely both chimneys need attention.





The barn roof is in marginally better condition than the adjacent house roof. Exterior trim and siding are in need of routine maintenance, but are not badly decayed. Recent spot repairs/replacement have occurred where painted wood is close to the soil. Original windows remain in the barn.



Along the east end of the barn and beyond (see plan), the transite shingles are replaced with more recent vinyl clapboards. The vinyl appears to be applied directly over the wood substrate—in fact in two locations it spans over former openings.

There is a capped stone (dug) well in the door yard approximately 24 feet south of the SE corner of the barn (refer to plan). It may be the source of domestic water; the modern well, if any, was not located.



The north and east side of the barn show additional roof damage from the storm. The single pane glazing is intact, though operation of the sash was not checked. The barn as a whole is typical, unconditioned space, which should be a consideration for suitable uses in the future.





58

The north side of the house and ell are largely obscured by overgrown shrubs. The roof condition of the ell is consistent with the opposite side (i.e. poor), but the sheltered location prevented the shingles from being stripped off in the March 2017 storm.



59

The basement entrance is behind the bushes. The crawlspace under the porch is not secured from unwanted visitors. If there was a door of some type at this location, it is gone.



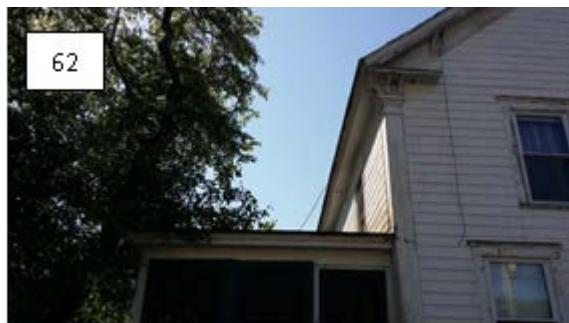
61



60

The north side porch has moved due to inadequate support, though not as dramatically as on the south side (note leaning lattice work at right). The roll roofing has failed on the low-pitched roof as well. However, it is a simple construction and appears to be relatively easy to repair.

The house roof above has lost nearly all of its shingles. Decorative brackets, trim and other roof details appear to be intact and are significant contributors to the character of the building.



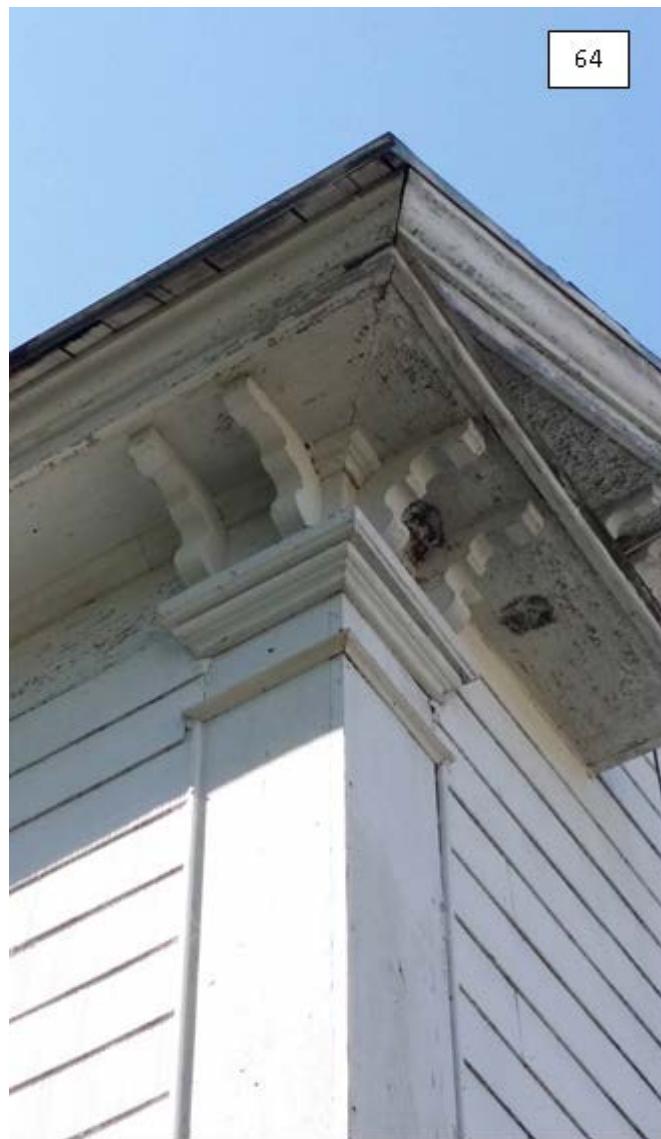
62

The NW corner at the front of the house is exposed to the most extreme weather, and the fact that the flat porch roof and the house roof above also drain to this point has combined to make this a damp area. The problem appears to be localized. The cause is curable, and restoration-in-kind would not be burdensome.



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At the roof elevation, much of the weathering is minor and recoverable with reasonably standard maintenance. The photo at right shows that much of the character-defining architectural detail is well preserved.



64



65

In general, the exterior conditions merit a new roof, some materials testing, some judicious replacement of deteriorated parts and pieces, and a lot of scraping, filling and painting. These are typical conditions found in a building of any age with deferred maintenance; the building is well within reach of (and well worthy of) successful preservation.

## Recommendations

The French-Taylor house is a prominent feature of Moultonborough Village and a meaningful piece of the town's history, and of the history of the state. Verifying that the citizens of Moultonborough have the will to preserve a piece of their heritage as embodied in this house is the logical foundation to any physical effort to follow. Will is not limitless, of course, so part of this report's role is to help establish the level of financial commitment to be expected.

Clearly, the French-Taylor House needs some attention due to deferred maintenance. The challenge to moving ahead always seems to come down to the question of where to begin, where to stop and where to put finite resources. Adopting the approach of looking at the house as an ailing relative, let's look at the next steps as a kind of medical triage.

1. Assessment: Is the condition life-threatening?
2. Laying the groundwork: What is a prerequisite to doing any work at all?
3. Stabilizing the patient: What threatens further damage to the building in the near term?
4. Prioritizing: What are the major deficiencies going forward?
5. Pause to re-assess.

*Is the condition life threatening?* No. While at first glance the building may appear to be in trouble, mainly due to the extensive roof patching and the internal settling, the Taylor-French House is in better shape than many other historic structures we have seen revived in the past. This house is a long way from "beyond repair." No part is collapsing or extensively decayed. That said, there may be long road to recovery, depending on future uses. Antiquated building systems will need to be replaced. The electrical service is inadequate; heating may or may not be salvageable. These are typical conditions expected with the rehabilitation of a building of this age.

*What are the prerequisites to starting work?* The Town had a Phase I Environmental Assessment completed in June of 2017. These findings need to be addressed before commencement of work. Secondly, a measured set of plans would be needed to quantify the work to be done and to facilitate bidding.

*What are the short-term threats?* If nothing else, roof replacement will have the greatest impact in protecting the "investment" while further plans are being clarified. The temporary covering done in March of 2017 seems to be doing its job, but it is only temporary.

Securing the building from intrusion (animal or human) is a smaller effort with nearly the same benefit in terms of fire, mischief or infestation. Boarding up crawlspace access should be non-controversial. Boarding window or door openings in view of Whittier Highway is more sensitive, and in fact making the house look vacant may be counter-productive.

It appears that power is already cut-off with the meter removed. Heating and plumbing lines should be checked for water, especially if we are facing another winter of vacancy, since evidence of earlier leaks is present.

Pruning overgrown shrubs would be easy and has the benefit of opening up visual access and future access to workers while also drying out the north side of the building a bit.

*What are the priorities going forward? (see standards on page 6).* Ideally, items 1-4 could be done concurrently, since work in one area can affect another.

1. Fix the roof. Re-shingling in-kind with asphalt shingles (30-year, 3-tab) over a complete layer of new ice and water shield would go the furthest to protecting the house. Low-pitched roofs over the two porches would benefit from modern membrane roofing, fully adhered. However, it is not recommended to re-roof the two areas until the underlying problems are solved: the poor framing of the south porch roof and the apparent displacement of the superimposed barn roof where the horse barn was added. Care should be taken to remove and replace the glass and metal lightning rods.
2. Stabilize the barn. As Team Engineering reports, the barn has the greatest deficiencies and is likely to be damaged first by winter snow loading. Their report identifies two basic problems: inadequate foundation support and undersized roof framing—the latter exacerbated by the fact that the loft is partially hung from the roof. Securing separated connections in the barn and restoring removed framing members is straightforward. The future use of the barn (which is an important piece of historic fabric of the site) is so far undetermined. Access to this area should be restricted until repairs are undertaken.
3. Restoring the house frame closer to plumb and level would be a prudent first step—certainly before tackling any finishes or doors or other aspects that would be affected by re-shaping the house. Jacking certain sagging areas as indicated in the plans is not a huge deal, provided it is undertaken slowly and prudently to protect existing finishes. More involved is the solution for inadequate ground support, namely the brick porch piers and the subsiding footings in the main house basement. Fortunately, neither of these locations has a high impact to the exterior historic fabric; corrective work would be concealed below grade or behind existing lattice. Temporary shoring and hand excavation is tedious and probably the most costly aspect of this work.
4. Repair chimneys. Loose brick need to be attended to before any brick loss. Pointing is a relatively minor bit of maintenance, though attention to the original mortar type and color is important. Temporarily capping the chimneys may also be a prudent step if a long period of vacancy is anticipated.
5. Pause to re-assess. Work following on this list is not as time sensitive, and may be affected by the intended re-use of the building. One would not want to spend time restoring a door that may not need to be operable in the final plan, for example. A comprehensive planning process to prepare for and evaluate possible uses for the building should be undertaken before going much further with the repair process. Informed decisions can then be made. Scheduling of building system replacement would move up if the intended use warranted it, or be put off if not. Much depends on which spaces are to be used or mothballed for further use.
6. Replace decayed wood exterior details in-kind. This is especially important around steps. Handrails are also important here. There is evidence they existed, though what

they looked like is not so clear. Barn windows also need attention, as do house basement windows. Apply the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines in dealing with partial or wholesale replacement. These are not onerous, but steer the way to appropriate (sometimes easier) decisions that clarify what is original and what is not.

7. Prep and repaint exterior. A decision should be made about the final state of the siding before this is started. This step may follow item 8 below, if that is undertaken. More forensic investigation is needed around the building to determine what may lie beneath the transite shingles. Depending on what is found, the Town may elect to keep the siding in place (depending on the hazardous materials recommendation). This would preserve the walls of the house for some future project. Or we may find clapboards beneath, ready for prep and paint. That would be ideal. An approach to enhancing the building's insulation should also be undertaken at this time. Exterior access to the wall cavities would seem to be the path of least resistance. Decisions need to be made over which portions of the building will be conditioned for year-round use and which will be allowed to get cold in the winter.
8. Remove and replace/restore clapboard siding.
9. Replace electrical service and branch wiring where substandard. Care will be needed to avoid damage to sensitive areas. Likely a 200 amp service would be sufficient, depending on intended use.
10. Repair boiler and steam lines or re-purpose radiators to a hot water system.
11. Confirm that septic system is compliant. This may be through town records or some sub surface investigation.
12. Confirm that domestic water source is compliant.
13. Repair interior finishes and features. This would include the main entry doors, the main stair balusters. Should follow electrical/plumbing work if possible. Barn floor work may be included here. Some period wallpaper should be researched and protected where important. Again, apply the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines.
14. Address basement floor deterioration. By this point, new footings will have been placed in the west basement. A new concrete slab would clean up the space and aid in providing dry useful storage.
15. Develop a site plan to accommodate anticipated parking for convenience and minimal impact. This may be done any time after the future uses are determined, as with item 16 below.
16. Develop a strategy for accessibility, if the new use involves a public accommodation. The building is too small to require a lift to the second floor (and there are some historic dispensations), but provisions for 1. Parking, 2. A safe path to the primary entrance and 3. Access into the building should be solved, in that order.

This is by necessity an overview of the steps to get the building from where it is to restored usefulness, and defining that usefulness will have a large impact on the decision process.

## Project Budget

Item	Element	Notes	Low Est.	High Est.
1. Fix the Roof			13,200	16,400
	Strip existing	Preserve lightning rods		
	New ice & wtr. shld.	100% coverage		
	New 3-tab shingles	Approx. 48 sq.		
	New snow belt	Galv. steel to match		
2. Stabilize Barn			45,000	75,000
	Roof reinforcement	Added rafters, missing knees		
	Foundation repair	Concrete footing replacement.		
	Added loft support	Remove load on roof		
3. Restore Frame			25,000	34,000
	Concrete footings	9 @ porches, 4 @ basement		
	Jacking, shoring	House floor		
	Sill allowance	Replacement in kind		
4. Repair Chimneys			800	1,400
	Loose brick	Match mortar type		
5. Subtotal		"mothball" cost: 84,000 to 130,800		0
6. Repair/replace			2,500	5,500
ext. trim	Steps & missing rails	P.T. where painted		
	Running trim	Scarf joint, P.T. replacement		
	Repair barn windows			
7. Repair/replace			12,000	65,500
siding	Repair exist claps	Unknown scope		
	New cement bd.	All exteriors @ \$8/sf		
	Disposal			
8. Paint exterior			1,900	15,000
	Running trim	May be trim only, or new pre-painted or existing siding.		
	Clapboards			
9. Electrical			25,000	35,000
	New 200 amp service			
	Replace branch wiring	Armored cable		
	Re-install fixtures			
	New fixtures	Exterior @ porches, entries		
10. Heating system			11,000	20,000
	Replace boiler	New steam system		
	Re-use radiators			
	Fuel source	Retain oil		
11. Septic system		Maint., investigation, or replacement	500	12,000
12. Domestic water		Confirm well condition	0	5,000
13. Interior fin carp.			3,000	7,500
	Re-install balusters			
	Door repair	Re-hang 6 doors		
	Door glazing	Front entry		
14. Basement			15,000	20,000
	Replace floor slabs			
	Remove ext. apron	Failed concrete		
	Remove inv. shrubs	\$1250 quote		
15. Site amenities			0	24,000
	Parking	8 paved spaces		
	Signage			

16. Accessibility				
	Ramp access	To kitchen	1500	5000
<i>Anticipated Range</i>			156,400	341,300

The budget reflects a reasonably high level of uncertainty due to several factors:

- The extent of deterioration or condition of systems is not always visible.
- The design of various structural remedies has not been fully determined.
- The work required spans several trades, and those subcontractors have not weighed in.
- The building has not been accurately measured.
- The scope of remediation has not been defined (no line item for this).
- The future use of the building is not defined.
- The current construction climate is volatile and prices have been escalating.
- The degree to which we can count on local volunteer effort is not known.
- Owner choices (e.g. siding replacement type) have not been made.

Each of these is an action item that should be checked off in short order if we are serious about getting the most out of the building. Delay will decrease the value of this public asset, and delay will also cause the target to recede as prices go up. We also know that this is not a million-dollar project, or even a half-million dollar project, and we can put that fear aside.

There are some unknowns, as noted above. Nonetheless, we can conclude that items requiring immediate attention make up roughly half the cost of completing the job, assuming a low intensity use going forward. Stopping mid-way will cost more, and should be avoided, from a construction efficiency, financial efficiency or building utility point of view.

The French-Taylor House exhibits typical problems one would expect from a building of this age. Most of the immediate challenges can be solved with some carpentry and concrete work, well within reach of knowledgeable builders in the area. The barn could readily be made serviceable at a basic level by a timber framer familiar with barn foundation and joinery work. If the community rallies behind this project, we could beat the budget through volunteer or pro bono efforts. This is a worthwhile effort that will be appreciated by future generations of Moultonborough residents.

The French-Taylor House is a town-owned historic building that is eligible for the NH State Register of Historic Places, and this determination of its historical and architectural significance should be a matter of community pride. Also, any work performed on the house should be at a level of workmanship that adheres to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (see pages 5-6). This is not an onerous restriction, as is often misunderstood, but instead consistent with good building practices.

This existing conditions report can point the way to a rational decision process, and is intended to assist the Town as it moves toward a community input process to determine future uses for the property. Once appropriate potential uses for the buildings are identified, a detailed Re-use or Feasibility Study is the next step to assess and advance those options.

The National Park Service provides Preservation Briefs that offer guidance on preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings.

The following is a list of Preservation Briefs relevant to this project:

- 2 - Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Buildings
- 4 - Roofing for Historic Buildings
- 8 - Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings: The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Historic Wood Frame Buildings
- 10 - Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork
- 16 - The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors
- 18 - Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings -- Identifying Character-Defining Elements
- 20 - The Preservation of Historic Barns
- 21 - Repairing Historic Flat Plaster -- Walls and Ceilings
- 31 - Mothballing Historic Buildings
- 45 - Preserving Historic Wooden Porches
- 47 - Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings
- 50 - Lightning Protection for Historic Buildings

The National Park Service Preservation Briefs are available online at:

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm>