

Commentary on Images for Demolishing the House House to Save It

Peter Johnson Chair, Hanover Historical Commission. 2/6/24

Title page: Architect for the project didn't like the word "Demolishing," so I changed it.

Image of the House - Here it is as seen in 2021, which is when this all started

Sign board on new site: Where we are now - the new site for the house. You might be saying that house in no way looks like a house from 1712, and you're right. That's part of the story I'm going to tell you, as quickly as I can.

Town of Hanover map: population of about 15,000: 1 house from the 17c, many from the 18th and 19th, and some interesting ones from the 20th. Only tool we have is the demolition delay bylaw. We've used it occasionally, with no success until this one.

Map of Main St. showing the original house lot: We first heard the news that the new owner of this property wanted to demolish the house in April of 2021. It had been bought from a family that owned the property for over 20 years and sold for about \$2 million dollars. The patriarch of the family, sold the house, believing it could not be torn down by the new owners because it was historic. He had not verified this - and he was wrong - and later heart-broken to hear that was the new owners' intent.

Closeup map: It's a nearly 29-acre lot, which is very large nowadays in Hanover, 3/4 acre is the min. size for a single-family house. The buildings are clustered at the front, near Main St. As is typical for our Commission, we went on a site visit.

***Facade view of the house:** Here it is again, Main Street on the left - a long, north-south stretch of road in Hanover with many 17th - 20th century houses.

Aerial view: The town owns a drone - this is in many ways a typical-looking Federal-period house in Hanover -- one room deep, two stories high, with a back ell for the kitchen.

Out-buildings: increasingly rare to see in Hanover, this house was on farmed property, and its out-buildings remain from earlier times.

Single out-building: This one is near the old house; piecework making shoes was common in the 19th century in Hanover, especially in the winter months - we call them cobbler shops. This one dates from the late 18th century.

View of the property: Looking toward the rear of the house from about 1/4 way back in the depth of the property. Neighbors all assumed the intent was to develop as a subdivision - more about that later.

Interior view, 1 – 4, + Door 1 and Door 2 Moving through quickly: The house had been owned one by a family for over 20 years - and very well maintained; one of the adult sons of the man who sold the property was a house-builder and had restored some older home in Hanover.

Basement stairs + shot into crawl space + Attic: we looked everywhere

Form B: Phase 2 of the redo of the Town survey had been completed in the fall of '21, so we had good, though incomplete information about the house's history.

The house you see here was built in about 1832 by the Soule family, with mention in the report that an earlier house *might* be embedded in this house.

“Houses of the Revolution” in Hanover: The Form B description in part relies on information from this book written by Barbara Barker. **(Tell who BB was)** What she really meant was houses that were standing during the revolution. Through her research, oral histories she collected, and several other books written about the history of Hanover, she believed that an older house was embed in the 1832 envelop

Back ell: Barbara Barker believed that this earlier house was built by a man named Joseph House. He was said to have been 17 at the time he built it. He worked in the shipyard of the Bailey family. Later in the 18th century, the Bailey family moved into this house. Two of the Baileys, John and one of his sons, were both colonels in the Continental Army and fought in the Revolutionary War. They were at Dorchester Heights, and they later crossed the Delaware with General Washington in December, 1776. They were later cited by Washington for their heroic service in the battle with Hessian troops. Colonel John Bailey returned to Hanover and served many years as one of the town's selectmen.

Grandfather clock: We also learned was that several of John Bailey's other sons, led by John Bailey II, were famous for designing and building clocks

Property map: After deliberations and through the requisite hearings, the Historical Commission decided this house was too important to lose, and by unanimous vote, we imposed Hanover's 1-year-long demolition delay on the property. The demolition delay began in June 2021, and would end in June of 2022. So negotiations began. The owners told us they had no intention of building on the land - they wanted to keep it as open space - but they were not interested in keeping the house, or its outbuildings. We proposed that the owners create a retreat lot: a one-acre parcel at the front of the lot that included the old house and its outbuildings could be carved out of the 28 acres and sold off; they would keep all the rest of the land open.

Cart path: Along the northern edge of the property was an old cart path that could have become a driveway/access point to the remaining land.

No dice: they told us they would just wait out the year-long delay and then demolish the house.

So, conversations, mostly with their attorney, went on the summer of 2021 and into the late fall - we were now halfway through the demo-delay period. One crack; they offered to help pay for moving the house off the lot. In December of 2021, 1) we decided that we still wanted to save that house – and 2, the only way to do so would be to find a way to move it.

So, the search began for what seemed very improbable - finding someone to take this on. We, as a commission, recognized we could not take this one ourselves. We began contacting local contractors and developers who had renovated old houses. I also contacted the folks featured in the HGTV "Houses with History" show.

Masonic Lodge: But it was at a local Masonic Sunday breakfast that our breakthrough came. One of our commission members knew a local man, whose name is David DeGhetto, and at that breakfast she asked him if he might be interested in moving an old house. And he said, "I might be - tell me more..."

Long story short, he and his business partner, Michael Burrey, went to see the house, and quite quickly agreed to take it on.

David and Michael photo: David's on the left - he lives in the adjacent town of Norwell, and he's active in many local land and building preservation organizations. Michael Burrey also lives on the South Shore and is an instructor at the North Bennet Street School in the Preservation Carpentry Program. They have taken on several restoration projects together in the past; this was the second house they decided to move.

Aerial photo of the house, showing the Ell: So Michael and David came out to look at the house, and what Michael quickly discovered after looking in the attic and the cellar was that the original House House, built sometime around 1716, was not just the back ell, but in fact the whole south section of the house from front to back. It had just been refaced - modernized, really in 1832 - so that the new construction and the old house looked very much like a structure built whole in that year. So, the old House House was there, not hiding in plain sight, but discoverable to someone who knew what to look for. What we don't know is whether the House House had itself been picked up and moved (a bit) into the proper position to meld it with the new construction begun in 1832 for David Soule.

Aerial map of a lot in Hanover: in January of 2022, David DeGhetto and I began searching for a suitable new home for the house. That's is, appropriate in size, not too far away, and in a neighborhood of houses consonant with this house. We began searching by using the information we could glean for the state's GIS database - looking at ownership, lot size, wetlands - all of the issues that would have to align to make a good site. We drove the streets with these maps on my iPad, calling owners or knocking on doors, all while the clock was ticking toward the demolition delay deadline.

2 Maps showing Union Street + Close-up of the new lot: This time the breakthrough came, not from our search, but from a conversation with a long-time resident of Hanover who knew of another long-time resident who happened to own a "spare lot. It's a wooded, two-acre piece of land in a neighborhood fairly close by - surrounded by a mix of older and newer houses. David and the owner of the lot were able to come to an agreement, and David bought the lot.

Photo of the lot: Here's a view taken after sitework had already begun, but it gives some sense of the character of the new home for the House House. David had decided that on this site, the old house would be restored, as carefully and completely as possible, and an addition would be added. His intention is to construct a house with a floor plan and modern amenities that people who buy

houses in Hanover would expect. The goal was to compete with the McMansions now being built here in new subdivisions.

There is no town money in the project, BTW. It's my understanding that the company owned formed by David and Michael has the resources to support this project.

The owners of the property on Main Street did contribute what it would have cost them to demolish the old house and outbuildings - about \$40,000, I believe.

They also agreed to hold off demolishing the house at the end of the demolition delay deadline in June, 2022 - There was no way we would have gotten the house and outbuildings off the property - even if we had a "place-holder" lot to store it on - by the end of the demolition delay moratorium.

Map of the journey: Simultaneous with the search for land, David and Michael had been investigating how to move the house. Michael decided it could be moved if it were cut into two pieces, put on two flat-bed trailers and driven slowly along Main Street to the new site on Union Street - a one mile journey. I will just note in passing that they had moved an old house from Massachusetts to Maryland in the past, so they did know what was entailed.

Meeting photo: June 28th, 2022 meeting at Town Hall with all commission and departments that needed to review and approve the move along the two streets, including the Fire department, Police Department, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Planning Board, School Committee, Building and Inspectional Services Department.

By and large everyone was interested and supportive of this curious project - and went away to ponder what had been presented.

Requirements for moving sheets (3) About a month later, David and Michael were presented with these documents by the Town - all the compiled requirements that would need to be satisfied in order to move the house along the two streets: 28 conditions, as well as a very large bond for liability coverage.

So, after considering what would be required of them, in August of 2022, David and Michael decided the only way to accomplish the move would be to dismantle the house entirely and move it to the new site in pieces.

North Bennet Street School Preservation Carpentry class: Here's how that was to be accomplished - students from the North Bennet Street School were hired to dismantle the house, numbering each piece and documenting the deconstruction as the work progressed.

House once again: Here's the House House one more time before disassembly began.

12 Images showing dismantling: The work began in late November, 2022, and was completed in December of that year - perfect weather! Surprises were uncovered, and a piece of the frame dated with dendrochronology.

2 images of the chimney: the 18th century chimney was hoisted as a piece and transported on a flat bed truck to the new site – the largest “piece” moved.

Photo of the new site again - showing one of the small out-buildings many of the pieces are now on site awaiting reassembly.

At this time, an architect was hired along with civil engineers. The lot and house plan were taken through review by the Conservation Commission and the Board of Health (all houses in Hanover have on-sit septic systems) - so much review and many approvals needed. This took months, bringing us into the spring of 2023.

Photo of Michael Burrey: In June of '23, Michael flew to France. He, along with other preservation carpenters from all over the world, had been invited to work on the framing of the great wooden “forest” that shelters the stone vaults of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. So, another reason for a pause in the work on the Union Street site.

Long-shot of the Union Street site: The last section of my story (so far) Now we're in January of 2024 - a site meeting called to discuss how the house will be re-assembled.

Cabin on the Site: to be the site office for now.

Two Images of the meeting: Here are David and Michael with the site work contractors, clerk of the works, and representatives from North Bennet Street School, looking over the foundation plans and plotting out the schedule for work on the site.

Two images of house plans, two of the elevations: I don't expect you to be able to read the plans, but I can tell you the new addition - left side of the screen - is as large as the complete house that was dismantled. The elevation shows that the new addition, while melded with the old house, will be articulated from it by its style (seen on the right side of the screen - vertical siding and an overall composition that refers to the Gothic Revival style rather than the Federalist.)

Foundation pour about to begin: Taken last week - the formwork is now in place - you're looking at what will be the front of the house, which will be perpendicular to the street. The facade of the older House House will face the street.

House as it was (again:) photo taken from about the same place as previous photo.

3 Photos of materials on site: These last images are taken as we move back out of the site up to Union Street - showing some of the pieces of the deconstructed house stored there.

Photo taken from Union Street. So now I'm back outside the site.

House House date board Where we once again see the date board moved to its new home.

Revised Title Page: So that brings you up to date: The North Bennet Street School crew will begin re-erecting the frame on March 11th. (Town drone and a time-lapse camera will record the construction process. It's expected to take 18 - 20 months to complete, when it will be placed on the market for sale.

This project couldn't have happened without the willingness of many people to help; It's taken commitment, expertise, adequate funding, risk-taking, a network of contacts, patience - and some good fortune! Thank you for your attention