

VI. ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Many significant surprises presented themselves when the TBFPA began its renovation of the interior of the farmhouse. As the first stage in renovation is often destruction, after the same steps as an archaeologists digging in the ground, the TBFPA began with the removal of the new to expose the old. When the facade of a homogenous interior finish was taken away, a cacophony of stories from the history of the house called out. New wood, old wood, renovation, dilapidation, so much variety that at first it seems overwhelming, a jumble of changes in the house's architecture. A fireplace emerged from behind a much more modern stove (**Figure 22**). Roughly finished logs with the bark still clinging to them used as floor joists (**Figure 23**). Most much, hand hon corner posts, with characteristics dating them to the seventeenth century, reused as floor beams (**Figure 24**). Soon it was like being inside of an M.C. Escher painting- floors were now walls and walls were floors, a roof was now a top plate and a top plate was now a sill. It soon became clearer what we were dealing with, and with the help of Dave Wheelock , noted archaeologist and house whisperer who has the unique skill to see seventeenth century architectural ghosts where other don't, we were all soon seeing ghosts. Not ghosts of long-lost loves or Civil War soldiers, but the ghost of Richard Taylor.

The working theory is that when Revolutionary War veteran Samuel Taylor returned to Yarmouth and married Lucretia Taylor, he took apart the family homestead that had been built by his progenitor Richard Taylor ca. 1640 and reused much of it in his own house. Richard's house was located on the knoll adjacent to the extant barn and Samuel built his house further to the north on the north side of that knoll. Why he chose this location is not known. Local lore tells that Richard's house burned and that Samuel Taylor was so poor upon returning from the War that he lived the rest of his life rich in virtue but poor in coin. It is possible that there was a fire in the old homestead. One of the plates that was later used as a sill had evidence of burning on it, but the remainder do not show any evidence of burning. This may be the result of course of people not using burned timbers for house construction and only using the unburned wood. This may be one of the reasons that Samuel built a new house, the older, and larger, house had been damaged by fire and it as easier to build a smaller house than to repair the larger one, and this could relate directly to cost. In November 2011 I presented the findings from our 2011 field season at a public lecture at the Yarmouthport Public Library. The event was well-attended and I rambled on for an hour or so speculating about our findings. One of the points I brought up was that we believed that Samuel had used the old family homestead for his own home and that I speculated that this was because he was economically challenged or wanted to quickly erect a structure without all of the prep work necessary when starting your house strait from the forest. A keen-witted member of the audience raised her hand and asked if we could tell where the lumber for the house had come from. I explained that we believed that the lumber for the original house had been cut locally and that Samuel's house was constructed from the old lumber. I wasn't sure what her point was, but then she explained it- Cape Cod was eventually deforested. The trees we see today are mere saplings in the history of Cape Cod. We get a glimpse of the bare Cape Cod landscape that Samuel Taylor and his progeny would have seen in the earliest known photograph of the Taylor Bray Farm (taken ca. 1870).

When Samuel Taylor, either out of a desire for a new start with his new wife, out of necessity because the old family place burned, or out of a combination of both, built the extant house, he could not have afforded to start from scratch. Importing lumber to be used for the construction of a new house would have been cost prohibitive in the late eighteenth century for anyone but the really well-off, and while



Figure 22. Center Ell hearth before and after renovation stripping



Figure 23. Bark covered floor joists in the North Ell



Figure 24. Seventeenth century architectural elements

Samuel may not have been dirt poor, we was definitely far from well-off. A returning soldier from the Revolutionary War who had to petition the new government to get the pension promised him for his service, if he returned to a home that had burned in his absence, or if he had a desire to built something new for his bride, he definitely did not poses the means to start from scratch.

Figure 25 shows the timbers discussed in the following section. Beginning in the parlor, a gunstock post was found directly south of the fireplace (**Figures 26 and 27**). The gunstock portion of the post now faces down but a large pocket for the seating of the second story clamp is present on the same side as the gunstock. This indicates that the house that it came from was two stories tall. The pocket is 11" long and 2" wide. Whitewash is present on the lower half of the post indicating that the lower story of the house was whitewashed but the upper chamber was not. The floor joists in the parlor are of pitch pine and probably were created by Samuel Taylor and are not reused. They have been bored out with spoon bit from a rat-tail auger, a tool that was used well into the eighteenth century. They measure 8 3/4" x 8 1/2" squared. The sills in the parlor have two stud pockets on one of them, indicating a possible doorway located 14' 21/2" from the end of the sill and measuring 2'9" wide. This doorway would have been in the original house. The front sill possibly has an early pocket on it on the side of the beam flipped over. The beam is whitewashed and chambered possibly pitch pine. This sill may have originally been a top plate.

One post in the kitchen flooring was previously identified as possibly being from a meetinghouse due to its size (**Figure 28**). This timber is located on the north side of the hearth and runs parallel with the north side. It is another gunstock post, this time with the gunstock placed sideways facing the north. The timber measures 10 x 10" and is pit sawn on one side, possibly indicating it was originally over 20" wide. Nail holes from lathing or sheathing were present on the sawn side. The remaining sides are carefully hand-hewn. Red paint is present and the lower half of it is chambered and painted with red milk paint, indicating it came from a room originally painted red. The total length of the timber is 14'4". A second gunstock post is located on the east side of the hearth buried beneath the flooring. This gunstock has a 11 1/2" long brace pocket. Running north to south as a top plate along the eastern side of the kitchen (between the kitchen and the rooms to the east, is a possible top plate with a full chamfer on two sides, rough on one side and finer on the other. Joist pockets on this plate are 30" apart center to center and the entire beam is 22'5" long. An original old beam, possibly a joist, is located in the kitchen, being used as a floor joist for the attic. This beam runs north to south and measures 5 x 61/2" squared. Along the walls of the kitchen are former floor joists that have been made into wall studs. These joists are whitewashed on three sides, indicating they were joists for supporting a second story floor in the whitewashed lower room. A rafter from the attic of the original house has been made into a top plate spanning the north wall of the kitchen and pantry. This rafter has a falling brace present with spacing of 29" between purlin pockets. The pockets are 2" deep and the entire beam is 21" long, giving the roof a 12 pitch. Finally, in the kitchen, the chimney was made of recycled seventeenth century bricks, which also could have come from Richard's house.

In the former bathroom was another gunstock post having been reused as a floor joist (**Figure 29**). This post has a brace hole that is 11" long with chamfering on the bottom ends of the brace. This beam measures 8 1/2" x 7'2". On the north side of the bathroom, the top plate appears to be a tie beam with a rising brace that may have possibly come from an outbuilding. Used as a floor joist is what has become known as the "ship timber". This beam bears a gunstock on one end and is relatively thin. This timber

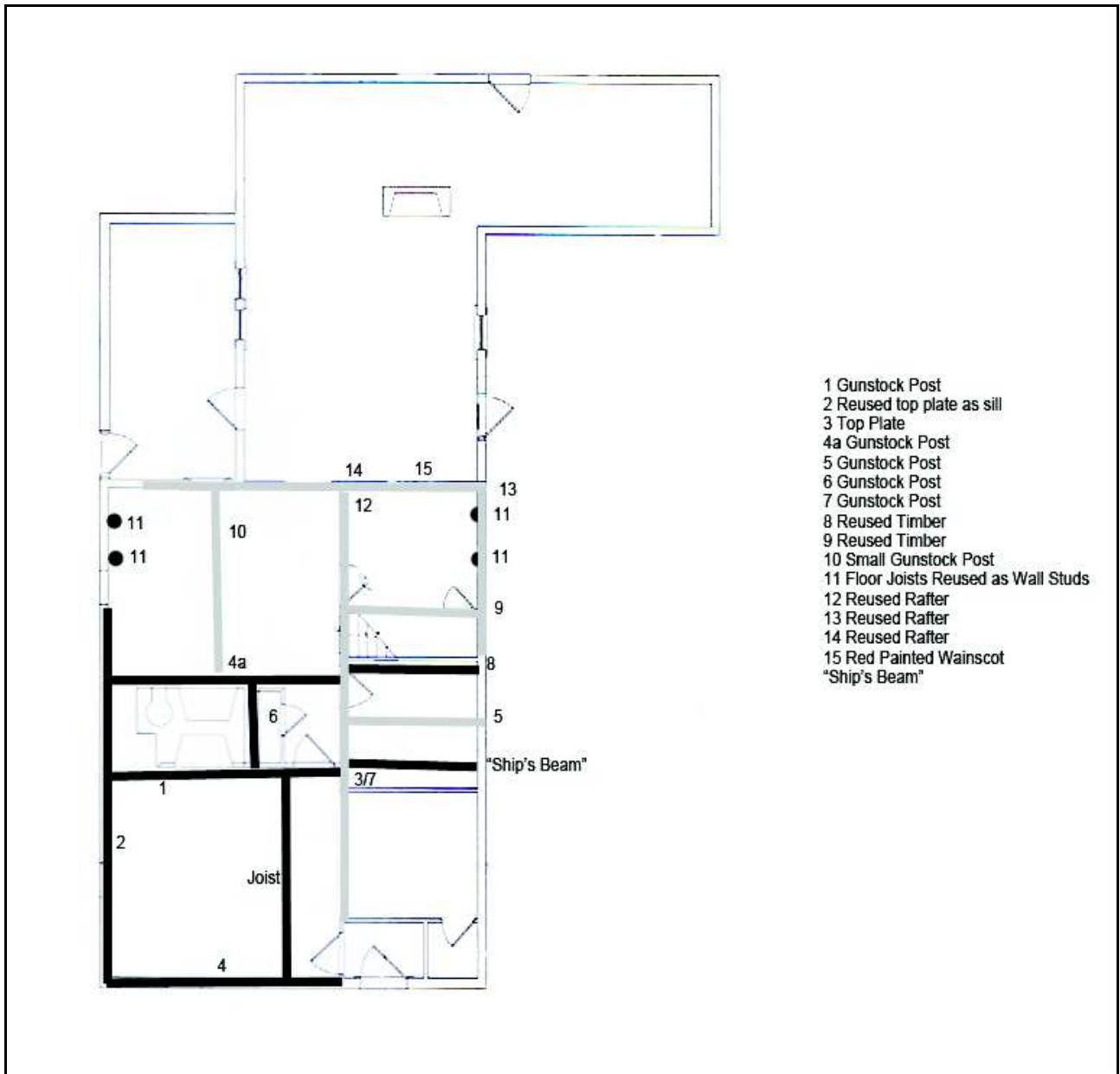


Figure 25. Reused timber locations discussed in test (black are first floor timbers, gray are second floor timbers)



Figure 26. Gunstock post in parlor



Figure 27. Location of Gunstock post in Parlor

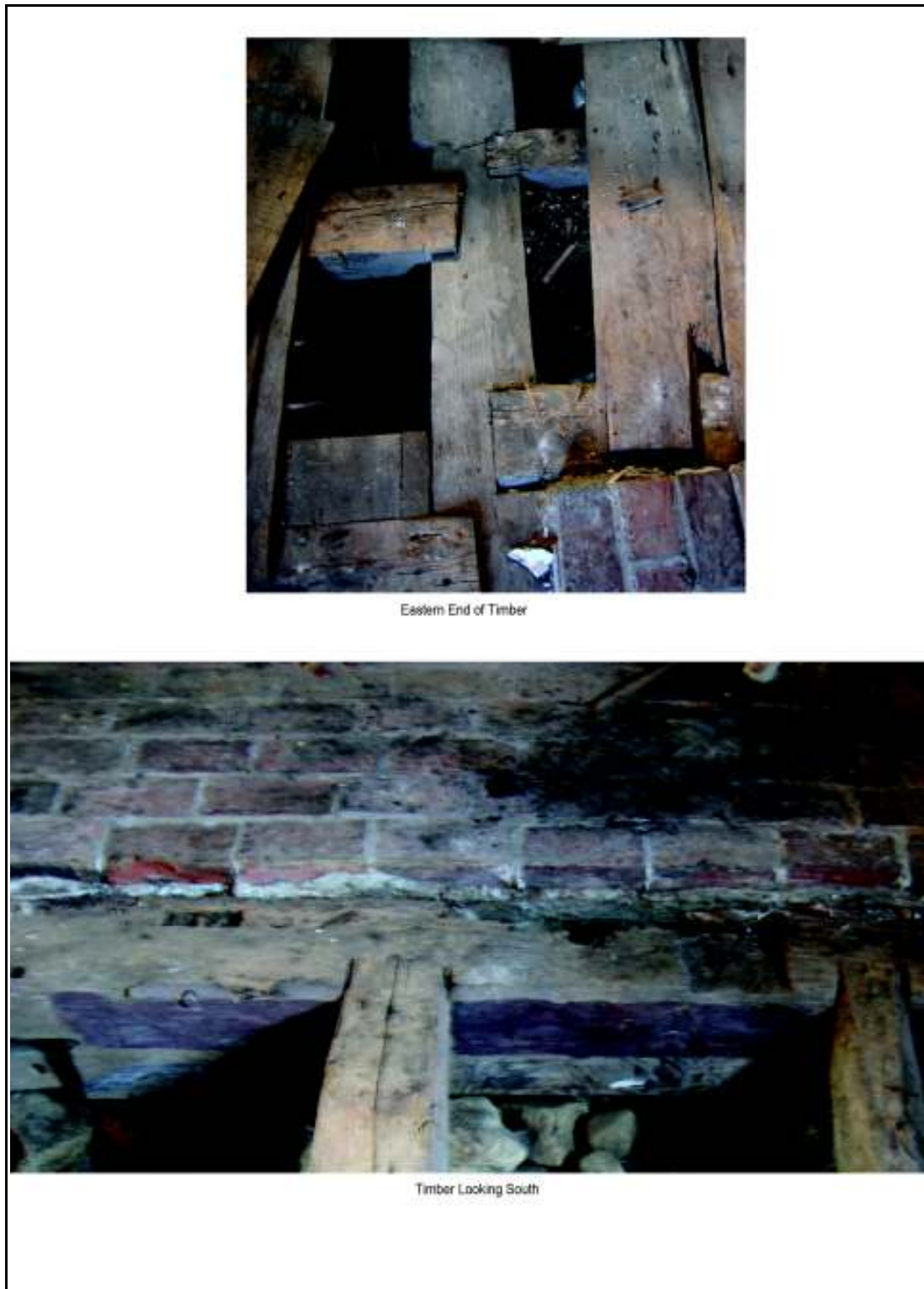


Figure 28. Gunstock post in Kitchen



Figure 29. "Ship's Timber" in former bathroom used as joist

as a II and a III inscribed on the back side and a black painted rounded gunstock with whitewash on the remainder of the timber. It is pit sawn with a 1 1/4- 1 3/8" wide complex mortise on the top. This beam was used to fasten a post to the tie-beam end to form the bents, and then to tie the bents by means of the front and back top plates to make the house frame. A very similar tie beam was identified in one corner of the 1670 Hawkins House in Connecticut. A second rafter runs between the pantry and the bathroom on the east wall. The purlin pockets on this rafter are 3" long.

The sheathing boards in the pantry appear to be water sawn but may date from the seventeenth to eighteenth century. A top plate with a lug dovetail joint is present between the pantry and the kitchen. This beam is 17'5" long with a nice mortise on the top and a hole for the peg. This appears to be a mortise that would fit into the teasel tenon on a gunstock post. The exterior boards on the pantry are bead boards with nice beaded edges and red milk paint (**Figure 30**). They were originally used inside of the house, possibly in the parlor or hall. The board range from 25 to 29" wide. On the exterior of the house, once the shingles and tar paper were removed, several red milk painted boards were also identified.

Several roof boards in the attic are whitewashed and bear ghost images of the joists (**Figure 31**), possibly those that are in the kitchen, on them. The roof rafters all appear to be more modern than the later eighteenth century.

The beams identified within the walls of the Samuel Taylor house give us a good picture of Richard's house. The house was two stories high, probably a typical hall and parlor design with a centrally placed fireplace. The lower hall was probably painted red with red wainscoting on the walls. The hall would have been the formal room of the house, the one into which guests were received. The parlor was probably whitewashed with chamfered edged beams, fancy but not as fancy as the hall. The parlor was a multi-purpose room, used for sleeping at night and for activities during the day. This is hypothesized to have been the layout of the house when it was taken down. The original Richard Taylor house may have been much different. A 1639 record in the Plymouth Colony records gives us a unique glimpse into early Yarmouth architecture:

“MEMORAND That Mr Thomas Starr of Duxborrow doth acknowledg that for and in consideracon of the sume of tenn pound£ sterl fiue pounds whereof is in hand payd & the other fiue pounds is to be payd the xxvth of March next by Mr Andrew Hellot of Plymouth Hath freely & absolutely bargained and sould unto the said Andrew Hellot One frame of a house wth a chymney to be set up and thatched in Yarmouth in the place appoynted and seaventeene acres of vpland in two divisions and twelue acres of Marsh £ meadow vnto the said house and meadsteed belonging in Yarmouth aforesaid wth all and singuler thapp'tenc£ therevnto belonging and all his right title £ interrest of £ into the same wth every Appurtenance there of To haue & to hold the said house & meadsteed seaventeene acres of vpland and twelue acres of Marsh & meadow wth all and singuler appurtenances there vnto belonging vnto the said Andrew Hellot his heires and assignes forever to the onely pper vse and behoofe of the said Andrew Hellott his heires & Assignes forever

The frame of the said house is to be made & set up wth a chymney and to be thached studded and latched (daubing excepted) by Willm Chase who was agreed wthall and payd for the doing thereof by the Id Thomas Starr before the bargaine was made wth Mr Hellot as aforesd and so assigned ou to



Figure 30. Red milk painted wainscotting boards on north side of Pantry



Figure 31. Whitewashed boards in attic

him.” (Plymouth Colony Records deeds p. 60)

Starr's house was to be a framed house with a chimney. The roof was to be thatched and the walls would be daubed (a mixture of clay, straw, sand, and dung). This house may have been similar to Richard Taylor's- thatched roof, that was eventually replaced with boards, daubed walls, that were eventually added on to to create a hall and parlor house, and a hewn frame, which was the common type at the time.