

The following is the final report of the history of the house at 216 Old Westport Road, Dartmouth. Revision April 2019

Research conducted 2016/2019 by Daniel Socha with substantial help from Richard Gifford who made the early connections on the Gifford side.

Earliest conformation = 1747 William Gifford's homestead

The following summary is the result of dedicated research consisting of developing resident families' genealogies; reading over 200 land deeds of possible owners; following numerous false leads, making many trips to Taunton and New Bedford land registries; researching wills and old photos; and cross referencing all information with a second source if possible. The completed research was greatly aided by Richard Gifford, a local historian. This research updates the previous MCAS data and survey done by Boston Architecture students. This house has the original foundation since the 1700's.

(Follow the Bold)

The earliest records show the original property was sold to **Matthew Wing** from **Joseph Lander** in 1715. It was in the Wing family until 1725 when sold to **Jeremiah Gifford**.

Chain of title for **William Gifford homestead**, with additions (year/grantee/other info): 1712 Joseph Landers 132 acres and 52 rods by measure, qualified for 100 acres in the 800 acre division, from Dartmouth Proprietors. Land "on north side of ye way that leads from the mills to Sisson's" (i.e. from Smith Mills to the Head of Westport). Proprietors Records, vol. A p. 130.

1724 Matthew Wing 100 acres **plus house**, plus a 1/4 share in the future divisions.

BCD (Bristol County Deeds)(NB) vol. 2 p. 462.

1725 Jeremiah Gifford 100 acres with **house**, plus adjoining 100 acres in the 400 division and adjoining 77 acres and 100 rods in the 300 division. [These are qualified acreages, so actual acreage is larger]. Parcels on north side of "ye Countree Road." Conveyed by Benjamin and Joseph Wing, sons of Matthew, deceased.

BCD v. 5 p. 80. (Deed 1733-1753 V 4-5 Image 363)

1743 **Jeremiah Gifford to Joseph Gifford** 73 acres on South part of Jeremiah Gifford homestead. BCD v. 5 p. 81. (This would put Jeremiah's homestead north of our property on the land now part of the target shopping center)

1747 **Joseph Gifford to William Gifford** Same property, 73 acres, includes "housing and buildings." Plus 1 acre that was formerly part of Joseph Sherman homestead, adjoining (I don't see a deed into Joseph G for this piece). BCD v. 6 p. 465.

1761 Elizabeth Gifford 24 acres from Jeremiah Gifford in the south part of Jeremiah homestead, adjoining William homestead. BCD vol. 12 p. 328.

1769 Indenture **Division of homestead of William Gifford**, who died intestate. Widow Elizabeth receives 10 acres and part of house. **Son Gideon and daughter Hannah Shepard** receive remainder, plus right to pass through Elizabeth's portion to access the Country Road. BCD vol. 13, p. 404.

1769 **Gideon Gifford** Quitclaim from Hannah Shepard conveying her interest in the William Gifford homestead, 64 acres. BCD v. 11 p. 287

1779 Gideon Gifford 15 acres from Abiel Gifford. Elizabeth Gifford property abuts to south (this was part of a portion of the homestead previously conveyed by Jeremiah to son Peleg, then by Peleg to his son Abiel). BCD v. 11 p. 289

1791 Gideon Gifford 22.5 acres from Elizabeth Gifford at "ye corner of the roads" [intersection of Cross and Old Westport Roads or Chase and Old Westport?] BCD v. 11 p. 330.

After his mother died (the year is unknown, and there is no probate) the size of Gideon's property should be about 110.5 acres, consisting of the 74 acres of his father's homestead plus 22.5 acres from his mother plus 15 acres from Abiel. I note that Joseph Gifford in 1847 sold the land for the District 8 school house to the Town of Dartmouth, and this may mark the west boundary of the original farm. In the 1850 census Joseph Gifford is next to Patrick Potter, and he (or widow Eliza) may have occupied the house marked J. Gifford on maps of the 1850s to the east of Patrick at the NW corner of Chase & Old Westport.

This property was in the Gifford family until 1829. In 1829 **Joseph Gifford his wife Abthia Gifford** and his sister **Hannah Gifford** sold a 43 Acre farm (this current property) to **Patrick Potter**. Abthia Gifford was formerly Abthia Potter, Patrick's Aunt. According to the deed they had the property "seized in fee". Meaning they inherited it. ..NB registry Book 198 P 375.

The date the house was built is not clear. There was a house on the property when sold to Jeremiah Gifford, and again when he sold a 75-acre part to his son Joseph who in turn sold it to his brother William in 1747. Our house derives from William's descendants which was William's homestead. Therefore, the earliest we can document the house as a homestead is William Gifford, circa 1747 although it's probably older.

It was the **Potter** property from 1829 until 1941 when it was sold to **Bradford Smith** by Patrick's grandson **Charles Potter**. Patrick Potter confirmed in his will of 1862 that this was already established as the Potter Homestead.

Patrick Potter bought seven adjacent wood lots. The property went from the original eastern line on Old Westport Road to Cross Road, then North across Rt. 6, then east to a point, then South back to Old Westport Road making 95+ acres and including in part the current Target store and shopping center.

After much research it is established that Patrick Potter bought three farms in Dartmouth, all about the same size (40 + acres). The farm he bought from Washington Tripp in 1854, he sold to Hiram King a year later for \$100 profit. In his will of 1862, he left his homestead farm and the farm he bought from Jabez Barker to his grandchildren. The farm he bought from Joseph, Abthia and Hannah Gifford in 1829 was his homestead farm.

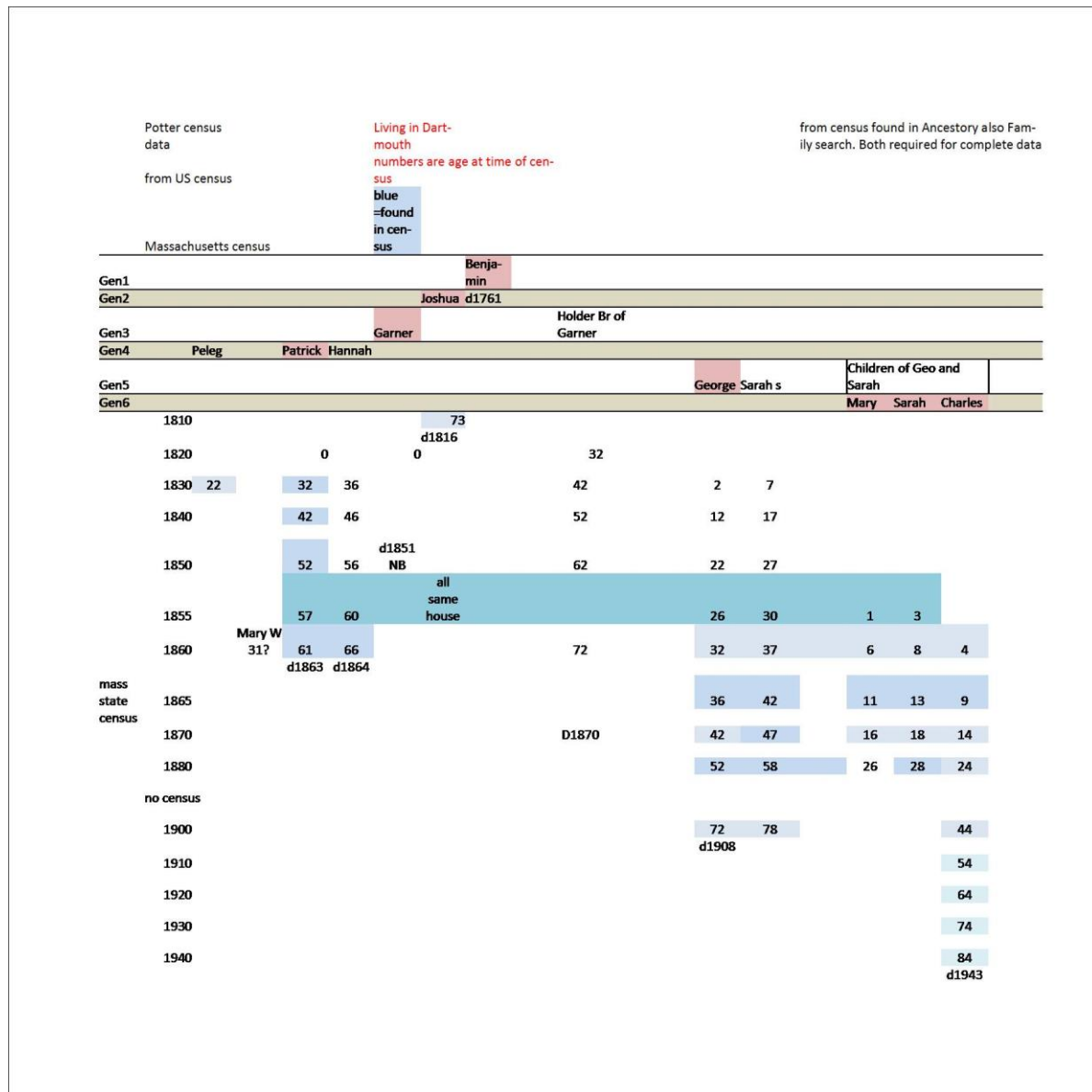
The greatest find of this project is the photo of this house taken in the mid to late 1800's. The photo was in the New Bedford Whaling Museum photo archives. It is mislabeled as the Mott homestead. (A separate research project was conducted to prove it). Upon close inspection it is beyond doubt this is the 216 Old Westport Road house. Everything matches including the barn and shed foundation locations and the house foundation stones.

The photo tells a story well beyond the photo itself. The photo is labeled as an albumen print. Albumen prints were made between 1855 - 1895, roughly dating the photo.

In my original high-resolution copy (23mb size), you can see three children in the front door. Two boys and a girl all about 9 or 10 yrs old. To the left is a women going into the shed, an older man bending down to meet a young girl about 3 yrs. old. Also, there is a small boy also about 2 or 3 yrs old.



There are two parts to this photo, the house itself, and the people in it. Let's start with the people. It is established that the Potters owned this land from before, and until well after the 40-year window of the photo. But, are these people in the photo Potters? To find the answer, I added a third piece of information: US census data. I researched several data years to see what Potters lived in Dartmouth, overlaid that information with the known Potters, their names and ages at each census year, to create a matrix to match against the people in the photo. I also took into consideration two assumptions and a question. Assumption 1- Not all the people in the photo live there. (maybe friends or relatives visiting). Assumption 2 - Not all the people living there are in the photo. And question, who is taking the picture?



I cannot confirm these are the Potters. I could not fit most of the known Potters from the census into the ages of the people in the photo during the 40 year period. The logical conclusion at this point is the people in the photo may be tenant farmers. Farms are a source of income. If the owner does not want, or can't farm, they may lease the farm and live somewhere else. Further confirmation came from the 1900 census. The 1900 census is the first one to include street names. In 1900, there were only eight families on Old Westport Road. None were Potters, although Potters still owned the land. Charles Potter, the grandson of Patrick Potter lived on their other farm on Chase road. George Potter, Patrick's son was living in a rented house on Fall River Road.

None of the families in the 1900 census living on Old Westport Road matched the photo, but since the photo window is 40 + years old, it is reasonable that the kids grew up and moved away, or the family moved.

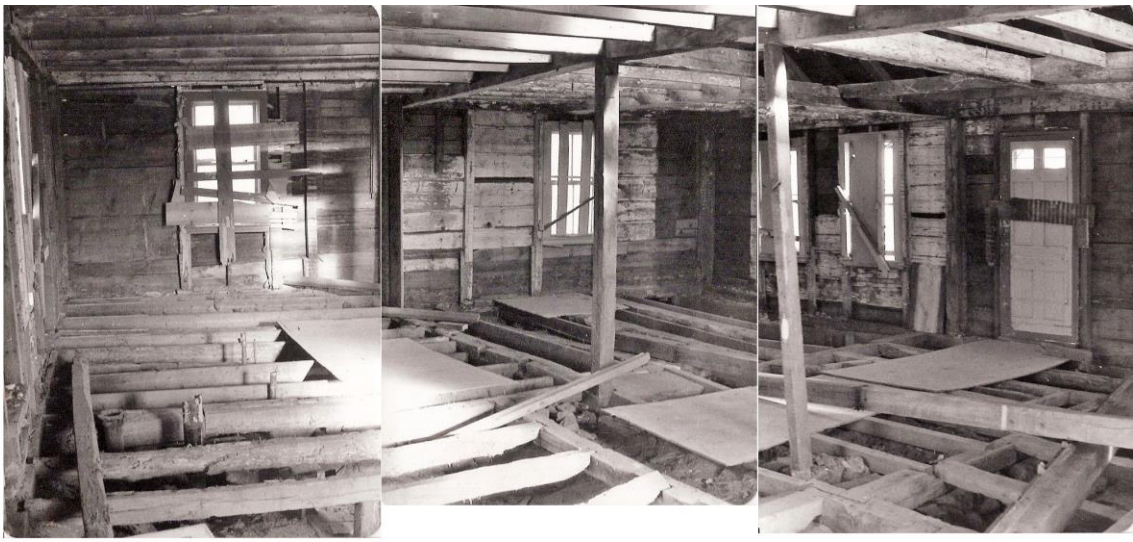
Who the people in the photo are, is still a mystery.

Now the house itself. The house style is a typical first period house style with a standard 3 fireplace, center chimney layout. It has a large fireplace toward the back in the keeping room, with smaller fireplaces in each of the side rooms. The caption in the photo says the center chimney is removed. You can see two smaller chimneys in place for each of the side fireplaces. If this photo was taken in the mid to late 1800's and the center chimney is already gone, a reasonable assumption is the house is at least 100 years older than the photo. Since the construction is clearly first period, another reasonable assumption is this is a early 1700's house.

Jump to 1979. The owner of the land and house, Victor Palumbo had to do a full restoration as the house was clearly a tear down candidate. I am grateful for his insight and effort to do such a great restoration job.

This photo is the house at the start of the restoration project. Note, by this time, 100 years after the last photo, only one of the two chimneys had remained from before.





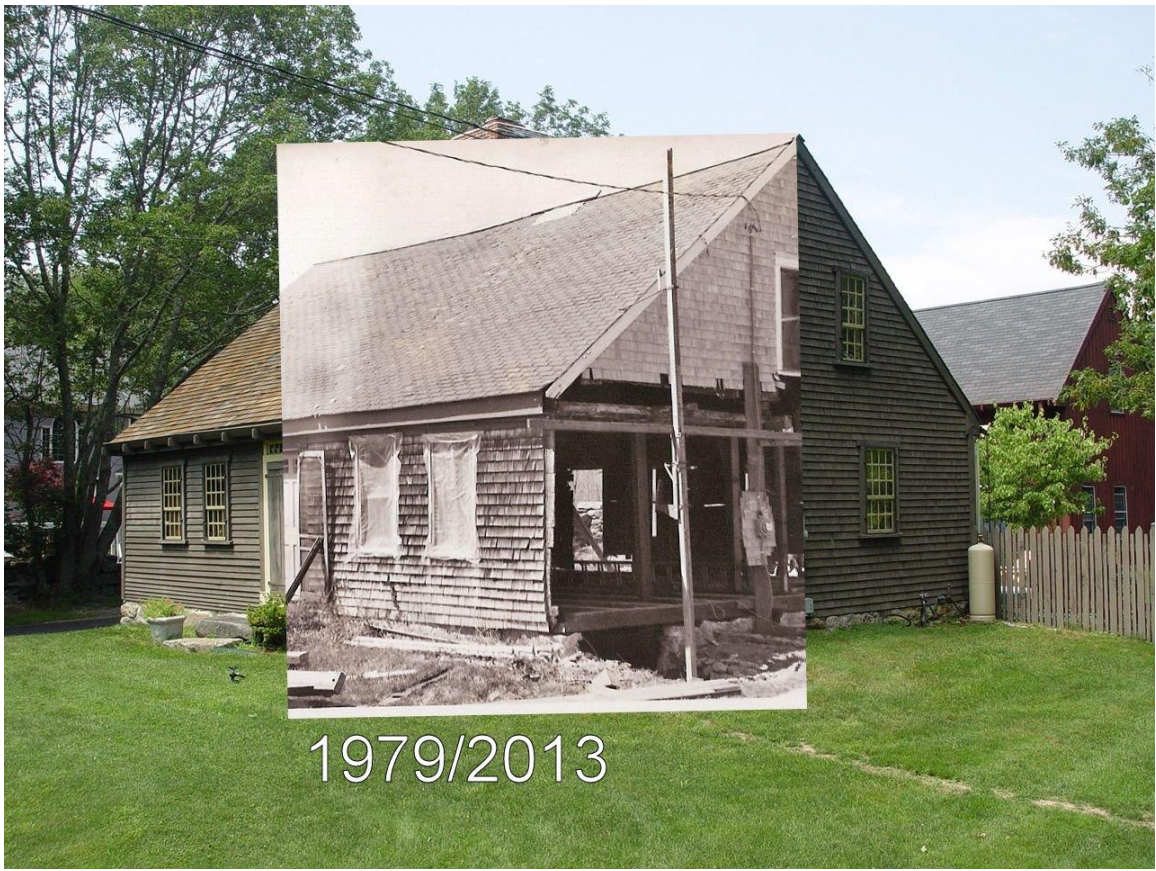
A sequence of three pictures were taken showing the east half of the house in the 1979 restoration.

Sadly, the house was neglected since it's 1979 restoration. When we bought it, there was two feet of water in the cellar. When it rained outside, it rained inside. While it wasn't a restoration to the 1979 level, we still had to do a substantial restoration.

Two pictures from 1998 when my wife, Susan and I bought the house



Below - Ghost of the past.



The house in 2013





Chain of ownership

DATE GRANTOR GRANTEE BOOK/PAGE Note

1715 Joseph Landers to Mathew Wing Landers to Wing grantee 1721-1725, V14
image 8.jpg Proprietors records Vol. A P 130

Mathew Wing Sons Benjamin and Joseph Wing Interstate

1725 Benjamin and Joseph Wing to Jeremiah Gifford

1743 Jeremiah Gifford to his son Joseph Gifford BCD v. 5 p. 81 75 Acres

1747 Joseph Gifford to William Gifford BCD v. 6 p. 465 75 Acres

1769 William Gifford to Hannah Gifford (1769) 1795 73-486 Seized in fee, deed
Nov. 1769, 30 Acres, house rights, Gideon Gifford to William G to Elizabeth., Gideon
and Hannah 13 - 404 better image than 73-486
Elizabeth Gifford/mother

1824 Gideon Gifford to Joseph and Hanna Gifford Seized in fee

1829 Joseph & Hannah Gifford to Patrick Potter 198/375 A 198/375 B

1862 Patrick Potter to Charles Potter Will of 1862 page 2

1941 Charles Potter to Bradford Smith 837/81
Bradford Smith to Birtha Smith inherited
1977 Bertha Smith to Victor Palumbo 1751/695
1977 Victor Palumbo to Raymond Torpey 1752/462
1998 Raymond Torpey to Susan Mcconvill/Socha

Foundation comparison

First image Circa 1865, second bottom image 2013. Note left front corner stones.



