



Bucklin Farm

Morgan Hill Road
New London, New Hampshire



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Introduction

The property known today as Bucklin Farm comprises 110 acres of farm, pasture, and woodland in the north-west section of New London, New Hampshire, near Morgan Hill.¹ It has recently passed out of the Bucklin family after more than a century of ownership. Before its division among Bucklin descendants, the holdings had grown to about 600 acres—the majority of which was assembled between 1920 and 1940 by Walter Stanley Bucklin (1880–1965) and by his wife, Helen Messenger Cobb (1886–1978). This land included the 19th century homestead farms of Adam Davis, Sylvanus Sargent, Joseph Battles, and George Putney.

Walter Bucklin's two sons were born within six months of each other. Charles M. Bucklin (1920–1995) was Helen's son; Benjamin L. Bucklin (1919–1991) was the son of Effie Langley, a housekeeper from Wilmot. After the death of Effie's husband in 1926, Benjamin Langley joined the Bucklins, and he is listed as "son" on the 1930 census of the Bucklin household in Brookline, Massachusetts.² Soon thereafter Benjamin took the Bucklin surname. The boys grew up together, graduating from Milton Academy and attending Harvard.³

Their inheritance in New London was settled after Walter's death in 1965.⁴ Some lots went to Charles, some to Benjamin, and others were jointly held. Although Benjamin and his wife, Joan Sullivan (1928–2011), moved to New London in 1971, five more years passed before the brick farmhouse was deeded to Benjamin.

After Benjamin's death in 1991 and Joan's in 2011, the property was offered for sale. Its contents—household furniture, artwork, books, musical instruments, farm equipment, and personal items—were auctioned under a tent in the front yard, with Bucklin family members bidding against the general public and antiques dealers for heirlooms.

¹ The farmhouse stands at 43°25'52.9" north latitude and 71°59'34.5" west longitude.

² According to the 1930 U.S. Federal Census, the Bucklin household at 45 Cottage Street included Walter and Helen, Charles and Benjamin, and a staff of seven domestic servants, all but one women.

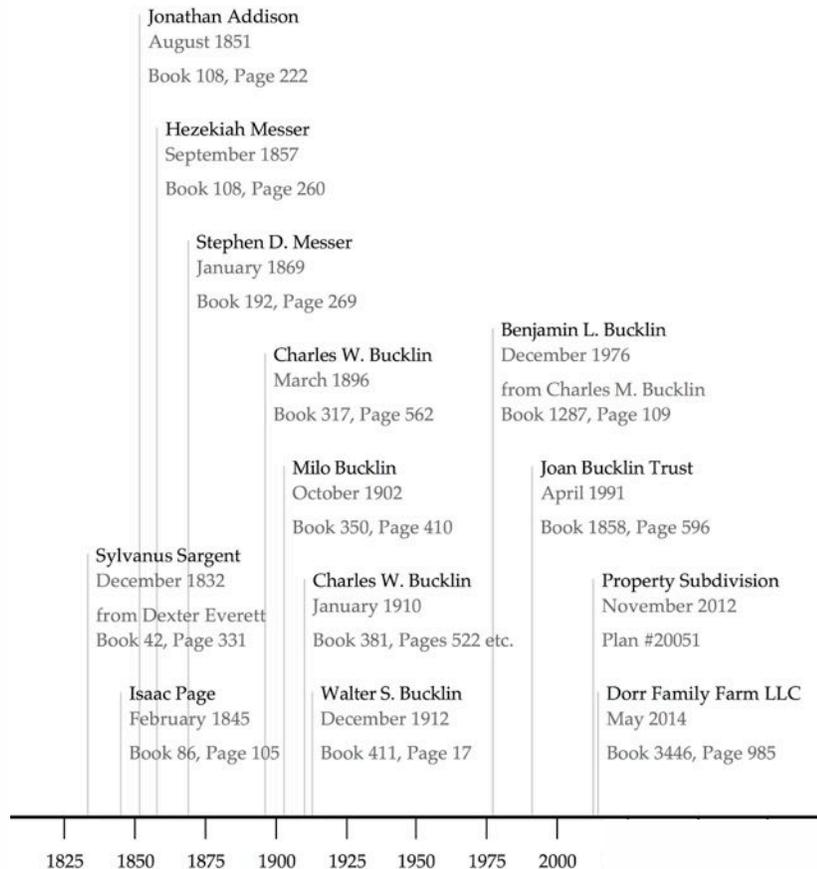
³ At Harvard they parted. Charles graduated in 1942 and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Benjamin matriculated with the class but may have graduated later; he joined the U.S. Army. After the war, Charles returned to Harvard Business School and went into advertising, while Benjamin became a certified public accountant.

⁴ Complicating the division of this property, Walter Bucklin had borrowed nearly \$28,000 from his wife's trust fund in the 1930s and still owed over \$21,000 at the time of his death. The loan was overlooked by executors and in 1967 prompted Charles W. Bucklin's unsuccessful legal challenge to the settlement of his father's estate. See "BUCKLIN vs. THE NATIONAL SHAWMUT BANK OF BOSTON, 355 Mass. 338." Accessed September 2, 2014. <http://masscases.com/cases/sjc/355/355mass338.html>.

In 2012, the real estate was surveyed and divided into two lots. In May, 2014, the Dorr Family Farm LLC purchased the 15-acre parcel (Lot 1) of farmland, hayfield, and buildings, and the Bucklin Timber Farm LLC purchased the 95-acre parcel (Lot 2) of woodland.⁵ Both legal entities are controlled by the same family.

Figure 1.

Deed timeline for the farmstead property. Merrimack County Registry of Deeds.



⁵ For lot plans, see Merrimack County Registry of Deeds (MCRD), Plan No. 20051. Hereafter, all deed references are in the form MCRD book number : page number.

Historical Significance

The Bucklin Farm holds local historical significance for architectural and cultural reasons:

- (1) the original Sylvanus Sargent farmhouse was the only brick residence in New London and likely remains the only example of load-bearing brick;⁶
- (2) the bricks were manufactured at the site and set in place by Sylvanus Sargent himself;
- (3) the center-chimney brick house is “exceedingly rare” in New Hampshire;⁷
- (4) the layout of the Hezekiah Messer farmstead illustrates the mid-1800s evolution of the connected farm, in which dwelling house and barn were connected by a multi-purpose ell;
- (5) the early 20th century alterations by Walter and Helen Bucklin reflect the conversion of vacant and underutilized farms into productive country estates, helping stem the economic decline of rural areas.⁸

In this last regard, Bucklin Farm is a good example of a gentleman’s farm. The insertion of an enclosed porch, breezeway, trunk room, and automobile garage between the dwelling and barn symbolizes the greater distance at which farm activities were held, and it shows the property’s new value as a leisure destination.

⁶ An article in the *NH Argus & Spectator* (Sept. 11, 1908) mentions that Charles A. Moore, Colby Academy class of 1862, was unable to find the “old brick shop” in which he had boarded; the building had been demolished and the house of A. J. Davis stood in its place. Deed research suggests this was just off of Main Street. If the “old brick shop” was no longer used for commercial purposes in 1862, it may have been built during the time of Sylvanus Sargent’s brick-making in New London. Clearly the building was not considered worthy of retention or renovation by the early 1901, when A. J. Davis purchased the property from Herman Adams. See MCRD 345:298.

⁷ According to former State Architectural Historian Jim Garvin: “Center-chimney brick houses are exceedingly rare in New Hampshire. The general practice with brick dwellings (and other heated brick structures) was to incorporate the chimneys into the exterior walls. Reversion to a plan more suited to a timber-framed dwelling appears only occasionally. The only directly comparable house that I can recall (though I have never been inside) is the brick Otis House on Wednesday Hill Road in Lee, N. H. Another brick house that retains the general principle of a central heating and cooking source, yet substitutes a grouping of four smaller chimneys for the central chimney, is the Benjamin Rowe House in Gilford, N. H.”

⁸ In an 1897 magazine article entitled “New Hampshire’s Opportunity,” Governor Frank Rollins invoked this image: “Do you not remember it – the old farm back among the hills, with its rambling buildings, its well sweep casting its long shadows, the row of stiff poplar trees, the lilacs and the willows?” See *New England Magazine*, Vol. 16, page 542.

Unlike its 19th century predecessor, the farm was professionally managed by a resident caretaker.⁹ In some cases, wealthy owners expressed their interest in the farming by testing experimental crops, employing new agricultural methods, or importing and breeding livestock. The Bucklins chose dairy farming. These farms were not a source of income but rather a means of preserving a pastoral landscape for the enjoyment of their owners and guests.

⁹ The first of Walter Bucklin's farm managers was named Archie Fitzpatrick, originally from Boston. He purchased his own acreage from George Ingalls (MCRD 465:76) and Helen Bucklin (MCRD 463:50), both in 1923. In 1938, he purchased another property from Victor Smith on Little Sunapee Road (MCRD 548:235), now the residence of John MacKenna.

Property History

Charles W. Bucklin (1838–1919) ventured back to New Hampshire around 1890. Born into a farming family in Enfield, New Hampshire, Bucklin moved first to Jersey City and then to New York City, where he became a dealer in leather for boots and shoes, according to the 1880 census. In 1875 he married Frances (Fannie) Lydia Stanley, also of New Hampshire. They had three children: Charles Jr., Edith M. and Walter S.¹⁰ In 1892, Charles W. Bucklin, then 53, purchased the Adam Davis Farm from Augusta Davis, the daughter of its late owners. The expanded, two-story house of 1808 stands at the corner of Little Sunapee Road (Route 114) and Morgan Hill Road.¹¹ Augusta Davis reserved for herself the right to dwell in the east front room and adjoining sleeping room, with access to running water and firewood storage, for a period of five years.¹² How long she remained is not known, but the 1900 census shows Augusta Davis boarding at the neighboring farm of Alfred Jay Messer.

In 1894, Charles W. Bucklin bought property from Asa Pillsbury and others that extended his holdings down to the shore of Little Sunapee Lake.¹³ In 1896, he purchased the 56-acre farm of Stephen Dexter Messer (1831–1919), unmarried son of Hezekiah Messer.¹⁴ Stephen D. Messer retained the right to live in the house, rent free, for one year.¹⁵ After brief employment as a machinist in Manchester in the early 1850s, Stephen D. Messer lived on the farm with his parents and sister for much of his adult life; in 1869 he took ownership

¹⁰ Charles Jr. had attended Colby Academy in 1894 as a non-enrolled student. He died in 1899 and was interred at the Montcalm cemetery in Enfield.

¹¹ A photograph shows that in the late 1890s, the house at “Bucklin’s Corner” had cross gable, which was not on the original structure and has since been removed. It may have been damaged by fire at the unoccupied house in 1937. This followed a fire weeks earlier at another Bucklin house undergoing renovation. In 1940, investigators identified the arsonist, son of Newport’s fire chief. See *The Speaker*, Vol. 6, No. 3; March 1940.

¹² Bucklin purchased this property in two pieces, one directly from Augusta (MCRD 304:78) and one from Alfred J. Messer, a neighbor to whom she had sold the house earlier that same year (MCRD 297:448). The provisions for her continued residence were carried from the Messer to Bucklin deeds, but Messer reserved for himself half of Augusta’s water drawing rights from a well and nearby spring.

¹³ For Pillsbury to Bucklin, see MCRD 312:198

¹⁴ Hezekiah Messer was farming in Danbury when he married Sophronia Sargent of New London in 1818. Sophronia and Sylvanus Sargent were first cousins. Stephen D. Messer was called “Dexter” earlier in his life, and returned to that name later. In town records, his middle initial is always used to differentiate him from another Stephen Messer, farming near Pleasant Lake.

¹⁵ Stephen D. Messer may have been in some financial distress because he had already mortgaged the property to Amos Whipple for \$500; he received \$900 from Bucklin, and Whipple’s loan was discharged. For Messer to Bucklin, see MCRD 317:562.

contingent on his continued care for both the farm and his parents.¹⁶ Census records show that the farm generated some income in 1870 and 1880, and that there were never more than four members of the household.¹⁷ By 1900, Charles W. Bucklin was renting the former Messer Farm to his younger brother, Milo Bucklin (1849–1909), while Stephen D. Messer boarded nearby at Baxter Gay's.¹⁸

In 1902, Charles W. Bucklin divested much of his property in New London, selling the Messer Farm to Milo; other property, including the Davis Farm, he sold to A. J. Kidder.¹⁹ Divorced from Calista Goss of Concord in 1894, Milo Bucklin remarried two years later.²⁰ His second wife, Josie Prescott of Elkins, died in 1904 at just 27 years of age. Milo Bucklin was a farmer and blacksmith, and while he may have worked at the farm, a notation on his death record says that he resided at Colby Mill Village for seven years (i.e. from 1902 to 1909).²¹

After Milo's relations relinquished their interest in the farm through a series of quitclaims, the property reverted to Charles's ownership in 1910. In 1912, he deeded it to his son, Walter S. Bucklin, who became an insurance and bank president whose primary residence was in Brookline, Massachusetts.²² Walter would later reacquire some of the same land his father had sold in the early

¹⁶ The farm, wagon, sleigh, implements, and personal affects were deeded to Stephen with the proviso that he care for his parents to the end, seeing that they received a proper burial and gravestone. Only after his mother's death in 1884 was Stephen released from his obligation and free to sell the homestead. After his father's death, Stephen hired farm labor, according to census reports. For Hezekiah to Stephen D., see MCRD 192:269.

¹⁷ Stephen D. Messer's only sister was ten years older and also never married. Harriet Messer witnessed the 1869 property agreement between Hezekiah and Stephen, and she appears on the 1860 and 1870 census of the Hezekiah Messer household. She died in 1871.

¹⁸ Given that Charles W. Bucklin never lived at the Stephen D. Messer farm, he may have purchased it for his brother's use. See U.S. Federal Census for 1900; this is the only census in which the Bucklins lived in New London; all subsequent returns were from Massachusetts, most often Brookline. In 1910, the 79 year-old Stephen D. Messer was still boarding at Baxter Gay's; he died in New London (or Boscawen, sources vary) in 1919.

¹⁹ See MCRD 351:124. In 1904, Charles W. Bucklin sold a remaining piece to Shepard & Gould; see MCRD 352:66.

²⁰ Calista Goss was the widow of another Bucklin brother, Alonzo. See Squires, *Mirror to America*, page 359; also Lord, *History of New London*, pages 576–577.

²¹ The "Colby Mill Village" location is an anachronism of sorts; the area was called Scythe Factory Village, or Scytheville, from 1835 to 1896, when it was renamed Elkins. The Colby Mill designation would have been applicable in the 1820s—before any semblance of a village had formed.

²² Walter S. Bucklin was a founder and president of Liberty Mutual Insurance before serving as president of National Shawmut Bank of Boston from 1923 to 1952. For Charles W. Bucklin to Walter S. Bucklin in 1912, see MCRD 411:17.

1900s, and his wife added still more property in 1938 by purchasing the old Putney and Battles farms.²³

Walter and Helen Bucklin had a penchant for antiquities, and in 1937 they hired Sidney T. Strickland, a Boston architect, to help with a new project. (Strickland had worked for the Bucklins on their earlier renovations to the Sargent-Messer farmstead.) In 1937, they moved the former Penacook House tavern from Boscawen to the meadow across the road from the brick farmhouse.²⁴ Nearing completion, the renovated tavern burned on November 6. It was replaced in 1938 by a plank house removed from Alexandria.²⁵ Helen Bucklin furnished the house in part with acquisitions from the former Shaker community at Enfield.²⁶

The early deed history of the Bucklin Farm is murky as the land includes portions of four original lots, numbered 93, 94, 108, and 109. The original 1773 proprietor of Lot 93, in which the house is located, was Jonas Minot of Concord, Massachusetts.²⁷ The John Adams family may have been its first local owner, with Solomon Adams selling a 50-acre lot to his son-in-law Ebenezer Sargent in 1810; Hezekiah Adams later sold Sargent another lot (with a house) in 1837. Sargent's son, the brick-maker Sylvanus, constructed the brick house

²³ See MCRD 563:177–179.

²⁴ Sidney Strickland had worked on the farmhouse at Messer Farm, perhaps before 1930, but the date and extent of the work is undocumented. Most of the architect's records were lost to a barn fire at his barn in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Bucklin-Strickland connection persisted as Charles M. Bucklin hired Charles Strickland in 1967 to renovate the 1938 Alexandria House done by their fathers. Plans for this 1967 work are held in the Strickland Collection at the Fine Arts Department of the Boston Public Library.

For more on the Penacook House (Bonney Tavern), see Dorothy Mansfield Vaughan, "The Old Bonney Tavern, Boscawen, New Hampshire, 1787-1937," *Old-Time New England* 31 (1940-41): 57-61.

²⁵ The plank house type, so called because its walls are built of thick, structural planks rather than studs or other framing members, is a rarity in New London. This house, still standing, became the summer residence of Charles M. Bucklin.

²⁶ The story that Helen purchased items directly from the Shaker sisters may be incorrect. Enfield's North Family disbanded in 1913, and the eight remaining Church Family sisters sold their property in 1917 and joined other Shaker communities, also dwindling. Enfield's La Salette missionaries are credited with stripping the former Shaker village of its furnishings and built-in cabinetry for sale to the collecting public.

²⁷ Minot was the motivating force behind the 1773 granting of the Alexandria Addition, incorporated as New London in 1779. Working for the Masonian Proprietors in Portsmouth, he canvassed their earlier township grants to determine which had failed to meet their original terms. Rather than declare the existing grantees of Alexandria in default, the Masonian Proprietors added Minot to the group and included the Alexandria Addition as compensation; the Alexandria Addition itself had been granted in 1753 but attracted no settlers. Minot was allotted the largest share of the Alexandria Addition. The western extent of the larger Bucklin property lies along the Patent Line, bounding the Masonian lands by tracing an arc sixty miles inland from the outlets of the Merrimack and Piscataqua.

now standing around 1830.²⁸ The actual construction date might be two or three years later, since he took ownership of the property in December, 1832.²⁹ With three oxen and four sheep in 1832, Sargent's assets were limited and perhaps short-lived; he had no taxable assets in 1840, according to the town clerk's records.³⁰ He soon moved to Franklin, Enfield, and then Danbury, where he remained for all but the final years of his long life.

²⁸ A notation in the New London Town Archives (NLTA) files says that this Adams house was moved to a new location, perhaps across the road, after the brick house was completed. Also, the property transfers specifically exclude the actual North District schoolhouse from the deed. The schoolhouse was removed sometime after 1890 and may have been incorporated into the Hambley residence on Camp Sunapee Road. See letter, Hambley to Moreland, NLTA files.

²⁹ For Dexter Everett to Sylvanus Sargent, see MCRD 42:33.

³⁰ Oxen are normally kept and worked in pairs, so the odd number is unusual. Perhaps Sargent employed a single oxen for tempering clay in his brick-making operation. A pair of oxen would certainly be required for hauling raw materials, firewood, and finished bricks.

The Farmstead

Sylvanus Thayer Sargent (1805–1901) was 25 years old when he built the brick house. He pursued brick-making until he turned 40.³¹ If his aim was to promote the building of brick houses, and thereby enlarge his trade, he enjoyed no success. This house stood as the only brick building in New London until 1870, and it likely remains the only load-bearing brick residence today.

A single 1890s photograph (Figure 2) provides the only evidence yet discovered of the farmstead's appearance around the time that Charles W. Bucklin purchased it from Stephen D. Messer in 1896.³² Subsequent changes may be found by investigation of the standing structure, but what happened between 1832 and 1896, we will probably never know with certainty. Census and tax records offer intermittent snapshots of the farm's size and output, which may correlate with the type and size of buildings required to support the activity.



Figure 2.

The Stephen D. Messer farmstead as it appeared in the 1890s.

Sylvanus Sargent's brickyard competed with farming for his resources and especially his time. Brick-making is a laborious and seasonal affair, concentrated between last and first frosts. Depending on the scale of his business, he might have little time for tending crops or cutting hay. The brick-firing operation also consumed large amounts of fuel—firewood, which he would cut, split, and stack during the winter months. Sylvanus Sargent needed a barn to shelter and feed his oxen, but he might have continued using his father's barn nearby. In any event, the size and number of farmstead buildings was probably small during Sargent's habitation.

³¹ A *Granite Monthly* obituary written by his brother indicates that Sargent moved to Franklin in 1845 and did not return to New London. See *Granite Monthly*, May, 1901 (Vol. 30, No. 5); page 320. Supporting this account is an 1851 deed for the sale of 45 acres within Lot 129 to Ebenezer Putney on which Sargent had changed his occupation to "yeoman." (See MCRD 105:462. A century later Helen C. Bucklin owned the entirety of Lot 129.) In the 1880 census, at the age of 75, Sylvanus gave his occupation as "farmer and brick mason," so perhaps he had continued with masonry, if not brick making, all along.

³² The undated photograph is held in the collection of the New London Town Archives.

Isaac Page arrived with twenty sheep in 1845. Although the animals required only basic shelter, their winter hay and grains must have been kept in a more weathertight structure. Page's flock declined to seven sheep by the time he sold the property in 1851 to Jonathan Addison, a neighbor who probably never lived in the brick house. Addison moved to Springfield and sold the farmstead in 1857.

Hezekiah Messer ran a highly diversified farm, with apples, dairy products, grains, timber and firewood, beef and pork, and potatoes among his products. By 1880, Stephen D. Messer added poultry to the mix, but he also reduced the dairy to a single cow, which must still have exceeded his own needs. Each of these agricultural products required specialized space and equipment for growing, harvesting, processing, and storing. Sometimes the space was purpose-built, other times adapted from an earlier use. We know too that Hezekiah deeded a "gig-wagon" and "single sleigh" to his son as part of their 1869 agreement; those personal vehicles also required storage in a carriage shed.



Figure 3.
Messer farmstead
model showing the
arrangement of
connected buildings.

There is no record of Milo Bucklin's farming activities, but his nephew Walter Bucklin invested in the dairy, making an extensive rearrangement that entailed moving the barn to a new location, adding a lean-to for cows, and building a separate milk house in compliance with state sanitation regulations.

With this arc of agricultural history, a personal history can be blended. At about 750 square feet of living space, the original brick farmhouse is rather small. In a different time and place, with different owners, the house might have been outgrown and enlarged much earlier, but census data shows that the number of household members was equally small.

Taken at the end of the Messer period, the archival photograph (Figure 2) shows three of the basic elements of the familiar connected farm plan: house, ell, and barn.³³ Within the farmstead's building timeline, only the date of the brick house is nearly certain. Statistical and empirical evidence of northern New

³³ A smaller house was sometimes present, as in the saying "big house, little house, back house, barn" sequence, but often the "little house" was omitted.

England building practices suggest that the ell and present barn may have been added later.

I. Dwelling House

Built at a time when side-hall, gable-front houses were becoming a popular farmhouse type, this house represents an earlier vernacular form, nearly devoid of ornament. It is categorized as a center-chimney Cape, two rooms wide and two deep, and measures 34' along its central door facade and 25' across the gable ends. The parlor was on the side closest to the road, and its kitchen was on the opposite side of the chimney. To the rear today is a bathroom and a stairway to the attic space, now enlarged by two gable dormers in front and a raised roof in the rear.

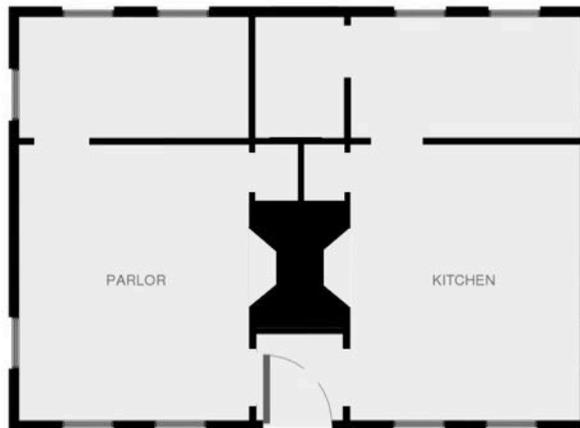


Figure 4.
Conjectural plan of
original farmhouse,
before connecting ell.

During the Sargent-Messer period, the first floor space at the rear might have been used as a bedroom or pantry, and a now-exposed overhead beam marks a likely partition from the kitchen. The parlor might also have been used as a bedroom, as was common practice.³⁴ (In recent years, maybe longer, it has been a bedroom.) With a window in either gable, there may have been finished bedrooms upstairs as well, though the functional area was limited by headroom under the low, pitched roof. Nevertheless, the house (and ell) probably offered adequate accommodations for Hezekiah and Sophronia Messer and two of their adult children.

The predominant building materials are brick and mortar. The house is organized around its central chimney, standing on a flat arch built of brick piers topped by granite slabs. The area enclosed by the cellar chimney arch was

³⁴ See page 36 in Hubka, Thomas C. *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of New England*. 20th Anniversary Edition edition. Hanover, N.H.: UPNE, 2004.

typically used for food storage, at least from the 1840s, and it now has shelving and an entry door, both dating from the early 20th century.

The foundation stones are consistent in color and composition with those of the area and were probably quarried locally. Above the mortared stone foundation are set a series of split granite blocks, measuring 12" x 12" and 54" in length, weighing about 900 pounds apiece. On the inside face, this underpinning bears marks of the flat chisel, a granite-splitting technique that faded from use around 1830 in favor of the plug-and-feather method.³⁵ On the facade, the ring of foundation stones is broken by two basement windows on either side of the doorway; only here do granite lintels bridge the window openings.

Rising above the granite are load-bearing walls of brick, doubled up (i.e. approximately 8" thick), with recessed door and window frames under flat brick arches. There were no granite lintels, as often appeared in more expensive homes, and only the door has a granite sill.

The finished bricks are 7½" to 7¾" in length, 2" in height, and 3½" in depth. These dimensions are consistent with bricks used on other houses of the period and smaller than the standard later adopted by the National Brickmakers' Association in 1899.³⁶ The clay for the bricks was reportedly dug on Sargent property behind the North District schoolhouse in Lot 108, and the bricks were formed, dried, and fired at the house site.³⁷ Variation in the surface color from light to dark reflects the range of temperatures within the kiln. On a more expensive residence these bricks might have been sorted by color and placed deliberately to create a surface pattern, or avoided in favor of a more uniform appearance. Here it seems they were used without regard to color. The house required about 17,000 bricks for its exterior walls, a number which could have been made with a single kiln firing.³⁸

³⁵ See page 45 in Garvin, James L. *A Building History of Northern New England*. Lebanon: UPNE, 2002.

³⁶ See page 53 in McKee, Harley J. *Introduction to Early American Masonry: Stone, Brick, Mortar, and Plaster*. First edition. Washington: The Preservation Press, 1980.

³⁷ See Lord, *History of New London*, page 382. Although Lord's account is otherwise unsupported, it may have been common knowledge at the time. The presence of clay has been noted during more recent excavations of the area.

³⁸ Given the short season between frosts, Sylvanus Sargent probably spent most of the early summer digging clay and forming bricks, perhaps 1,000 per day, but by mid-August he would have stopped in order to allow the final batch to dry for at least six weeks before constructing the kiln. Once built of dried bricks, the kiln was fired for a week, always tended, and then it cooled for another two weeks before dismantling. The fired bricks were then sorted by durability. All of this labor-intensive activity coincides perfectly with the agricultural season and therefore implies that Sylvanus Sargent had little time for farming his land. See "Making, Baking, and Laying Bricks: The Colonial Williamsburg Official History & Citizenship Site." Accessed September 1, 2014. <http://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Winter05-06/bricks.cfm>.

The lime mortar binding the bricks together contains a white sand, whose source might also be traced locally with more research. The mortar lines are thick enough to accommodate a wide variation in the brick dimensions.

The brick bonding of six stretcher courses followed by one of headers is a common pattern, but the somewhat haphazard use of closers (partial bricks) in order to maintain the desired spacing suggests that the house was built by an unpracticed mason. This evidence supports the notion that the house was constructed using local materials and labor—obtained where masonry experience was strictly limited to chimneys and fireplaces.³⁹



Figure 5.

Sylvanus Sargent house, west gable. Locations of brick closers marked. The new section at the upper left is a veneer.

Probably in the 1920s, the house roof was raised in the rear and extended in the front, above the chimney. The rear section appears to be the original material simply disconnected from the original wall, raised vertically about five feet, and reattached to new framing. In order to keep the original pitch, the roof was extended in front using new materials but old techniques (i.e. purlins and vertical roof boards). Through a ceiling portal the original ridgepole is still visible at the upper edge of the chimney penetration. Blown-in insulation now

³⁹ The nearest masonry structure was the 1832 Nathan Jones house, of split stone, quarried and constructed on Jones Hill in Wilmot. In 1866, the New London Scythe Company rebuilt its wooden Forge Shop using granite quarried on King Hill. Neither structure survives. The second brick building erected in New London was Colby Academy's dormitory and classroom building of 1872, an imposing, multi-towered structure in the Second Empire style; it burned in 1892 and sat in ruins until the present Colgate Hall was built in 1912. Just one other 19th century brickyard is mentioned in the *History of New London*; it belonged to Sylvanus's cousin, Stephen Sargent and was located on Pleasant Street. See Lord, *History of New London*, page 488.

obstructs the view of most framing members, but at the transition point there is a clear contrast between the older, vertically-sawn boards and the newer, circular-sawn boards (Figure 6). The east gable has been converted to clapboards above the first floor, and the expanded area on the west gable was infilled with brick veneer, probably with bricks from the opposite gable. At the rear, the entire second floor is clapboarded and a new exterior chimney has been built for a furnace. The enlarged roof is covered in wood shingles as it was originally. A copper ice belt has since been added above the eaves and first appears in photographs taken around 1950.

Figure 6.

Old meets new at the transition point between the 1830s ridge and the 1920s roof extension.



The window units are typical of the 1830s, with counterbalanced 6/6 sashes. The individual panes measure about 8" x 11" — most are considered original. Sash frames are through-morticed and pegged at the corners. The muntin profiles, now largely obscured by paint, are also typical of the 1830s.⁴⁰

The expanded second story has nine windows, seven of which were not in the original layout. A number of these must have been salvaged from elsewhere. Closer examination might help identify the new or relocated windows, presumably installed only in the newly-erected wall sections. All of the double-hung windows have aluminum, triple-track storms mounted on the exterior.

Some of the interior details and furnishings of this house, including the fireplace surround, exposed framing, staircase balustrade, and door hardware, may have been altered or imported by the Bucklins. The interior doors are flat-paneled, and probably original, but at least two rim latches have been replaced by brass,

⁴⁰ See "Muntin Profiles | Historic Preservation Education Foundation." Accessed August 31, 2014. <http://hpef.us/historic-windows/windows-through-time/muntin-profiles>.

wishbone-spring latches, with privacy bolts, dating from the mid- to late-1700s.⁴¹

The front entry door, of six flat panels, hangs by crude strap hinges on pintles driven through the casing and into the frame.⁴² The nature of the metalwork, utility without artistry, is consistent with the many vernacular aspects of this house. If original, these hinges may have been the handiwork of Sylvanus Sargent or simply taken from some lesser structure at the time of construction. The corner-beaded door casing and four-light transom also appear original, with muntins matching the other first floor windows. The transom glazing shows the concentric-pattern of crown glass.⁴³

In the basement, the heating, plumbing, and electrical systems show multiple upgrades, with some older components abandoned in place; these systems were observed but not recorded in detail during the site visit.

⁴¹ See "Three Centuries of Door Hardware." Accessed August 31, 2014. <http://www.legacyvintage.com/articles/centuryhardware.html>. These latches are historically significant in their own right, because they reflect one of the many alterations undertaken by the Bucklins to backdate their 1830s house to the colonial period.

⁴² According to Jim Garvin: "By this period, strap hinges had generally been replaced by butt hinges for hanging all doors, including exterior doors. The use of crude strap hinges is interesting. Depending on physical evidence, this could reflect another of the Bucklins' attempts to backdate the house."

⁴³ See "The History of Window Glass Manufacture." Accessed August 31, 2014. <http://www.sashwindowslondon.org.uk/info/history-of-glass-manufacture.html>.

II. Connecting Ell

The ell joining the house with the barn was much altered by the renovations of the 1920s. In order to expand living space for the Bucklin family and its household staff, the ell was widened on both sides and perhaps lengthened at the east end. A poured concrete foundation now supports the structure, but sections of 19th century construction may still be seen at both the basement and attic levels.



Figure 7.

Brick veneer on the enlarged ell, with five dormers above; the new enclosed porch with flat roof appears to the right.

The current ell measures 30' x 50'. Although the original dimensions are unknown, the typical size for such a structure was 16' x 30'.⁴⁴ If accurate, then a 4'-wide corridor was added to the front (south), creating a passageway from the dining room to the great room, bypassing the kitchen, and another 10' addition was made at the rear (north), part of an enlarged, modern kitchen; above this were added bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs.⁴⁵

At the ell's east end, twenty feet may have been added to create a living room with access to the enclosed porch beyond. But it's more likely that the original ell was built with additional bays and therefore longer than thirty feet; the 1890s photograph suggests that the length of the ell exceeded that of the brick house by ten feet or more. Measurements taken in the basement might resolve the question.

⁴⁴ See pages 48–52 in Hubka, Thomas C. *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of New England*. 20th Anniversary Edition. Hanover, N.H.: UPNE, 2004.

⁴⁵ Inspection of the flooring, seen from the basement, shows the front hallway addition of about 4 feet; the expansion to the rear was evident but not measured during the site visit. The area below the living room, if accessible, was left unexplored.

The living room presents a Colonial Revival style of exposed heavy timbers, some intentionally distressed and stained to appear old, others with authentic hewing marks and patina, perhaps original. The fireplace surround was probably taken from another property, as were the church pew panels used as wainscoting along the west side of the room.

At the north end, about ten feet from the exterior wall, the pattern of exposed beams running the length of the room changes to more closely-spaced second-floor joists perpendicular to the other beams. The new pattern probably demarcates the room's expansion at that end.

Also at the north end of the room is an atypical 9/6 window, probably the same one that appears on the ell's south facade in the 1890s photograph. All other windows in this room and along the new hallway are 6/6, matching the house in general appearance. On the exterior, the north elevation is clapboarded while the ell's south facade is now covered by a brick veneer to mimic the house. An incongruous entry door with a fanlight is squeezed into its diminished height.

The original ell may have dated from Hezekiah Messer's ownership, beginning in 1857. The 1890s photograph shows a sliding carriage shed door farthest from the house and a second story dormer closest to the house, indicating a possible living space for Stephen D. Messer. The image shows no chimney, but it may have been hidden by trees (to the right of the dormer). A chimney would have greatly expanded the ell's functionality. A privy, workroom, and woodshed may have been incorporated—all standard features after 1850.

III. Principal Barn

The date of the New England style (gable entry) barn, measuring 36' x 48', is unknown. Its design and construction would have been somewhat advanced for the 1830s, but the date is not beyond possibility. The simplified framing of the bents combines hewn 8" x 8" posts, beams and major rafters, with lesser sawn bracing. The twelve bays (3 x 4) are each nearly 12' square, displaying a regularity that became more common around mid-century with new farming practices and the invention of labor-saving devices. Utilizing standardized bays, hay lofts were easily built and dismantled in stages re-using lumber of uniform dimensions; animal stalls and equipment storage could be similarly rearranged on the ground level as needs changed.



Figure 8.

Simplified framing diagram of the barn, before dairy lean-to addition.

During the Bucklins' renovation of the house, the barn was moved onto a new foundation farther north-east of the residence, and a 14' x 48' lean-to was added to the north side in order to accommodate cow pens for the dairy. The three bays along the east end were enclosed on the first story, and this 12' x 36' area was equipped as a milking parlor. Four bays in the south-west corner, nearest the house, was similarly walled off and outfitted with box stalls for horses. One bay at the north-west corner was excavated to a depth of three feet, with concrete floor and concrete walls poured up to the level of the barn floor, creating a convenient ice-house within the barn.⁴⁶ The barn floor is now concrete. Facing the asphalt parking area, within the second bay (between the horse stalls and

⁴⁶ Less common than a stand-alone ice house, this idea was offered in plan books of the day. For example, see pages 151–152 in *Barn Plans and Outbuildings*. Orange Judd Company, 1893.

the milking parlor), a modern overhead door with automatic opener has been installed, replacing two large sliding doors of the earlier Bucklin renovation.

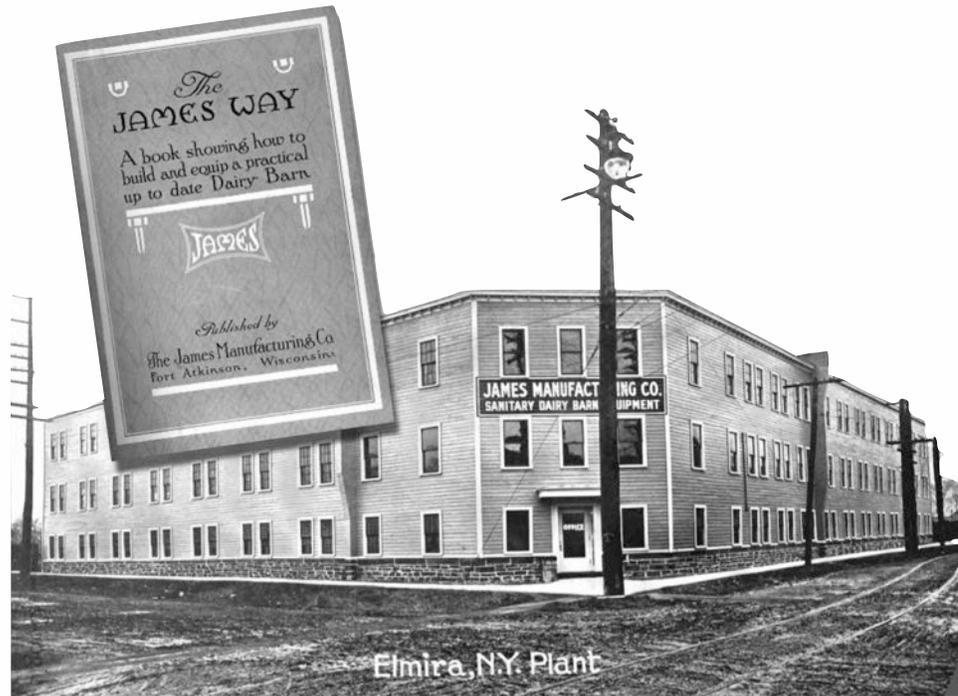


Figure 9.

The James Way dairy equipment book of 1917 included this image of its factory in Elmira, New York.

Much of the layout and equipment used in the dairy is described and illustrated in the instructional book/catalog of the James Manufacturing Co.⁴⁷ This specialized equipment includes the overhead track of a litter carrier, which conveyed manure from the dairy into an adjacent outbuilding, where the manure may have been stored or transported elsewhere until it could be spread on the fields. The manure barn also has a partitioned space with a calf pen, with a floor made of cork bricks set in concrete, also described in the James Way book.

The dates of the Bucklin dairy operation remain undetermined, but there are two data points. First, a Guernsey Association register lists Bucklin Farm in its 1922 edition.⁴⁸ Whether the barn had been renovated by this time is unknown. Second, a National Dairy Association certificate found on the site is dated November, 1938, and states that the herd consisted of six cows, which produced 355 pounds of butterfat.

⁴⁷ The company is now called Jamesway Farm Equipment and has been relocated to St. Francois-Xavier, Quebec. For products used in the Bucklin barn, see *The James Way: A Book Showing How to Build and Equip a Practical Up to Date Dairy Barn*. James Manufacturing Co., 1917.

⁴⁸ See page 458 in *Guernsey Breeders' Journal*. Vol. 22. American Guernsey Association, 1922.

IV. Outbuildings

Although at least two outbuildings appear in the 1890s photograph, a brief look at the six detached structures now on the property did not show any dating from that period, nor do any match the shed designs that appear in the image. A closer inspection might prove otherwise, but it's likely that these impermanent structures were not considered worth preserving during the extensive renovation of the 1920s, and they were simply replaced by a new set of small barns and sheds built for new purposes.

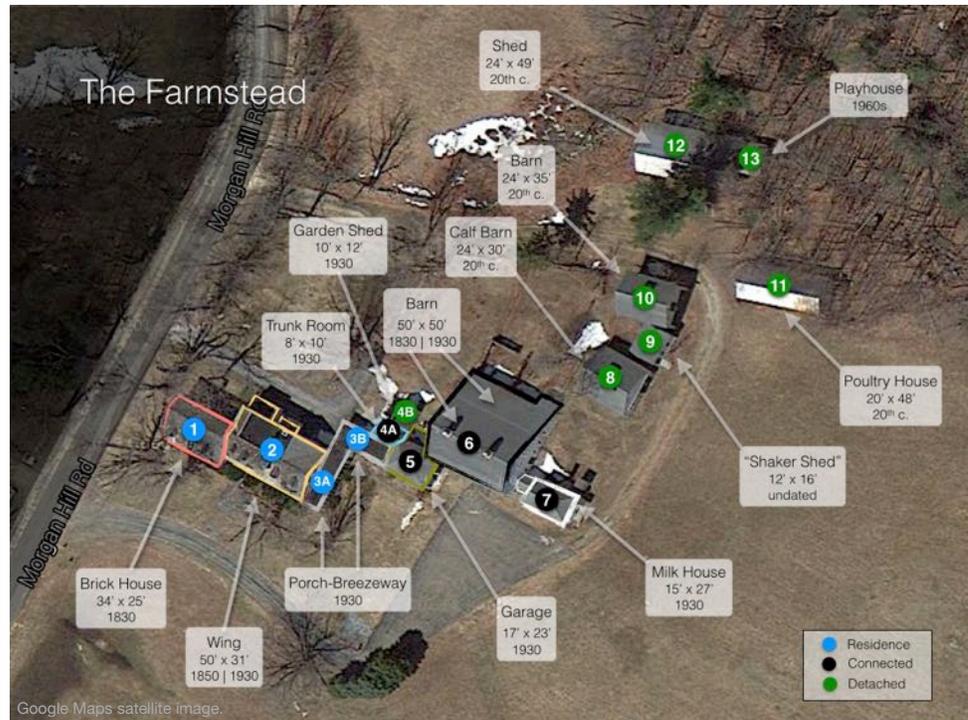


Figure 10.
Bucklin Farm complex.
Functional components
and outbuildings
labeled with
approximate
construction dates.

Bibliography

The research of agricultural properties in the mid-19th century is facilitated by the detailed agricultural data collected for the U. S. Census between 1850 and 1880. With the 1890 census destroyed and no farm-level returns thereafter, that research trail ends abruptly.

For the Bucklin Farm, we have collected data from which inferences can be made, nothing more. Even the full extent of Walter and Helen Bucklin's alterations to the property remains unclear and undocumented. In addition to sources cited in the preceding footnotes, the following books and articles may be helpful references for understanding certain features of the property and for planning its future preservation.

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