

Vermont House

Cat.#: 4.12

Formerly known as the Slocumbe House or the Lane House. See also Pierce Shed.

Structure's history:

The Lane House (after some of its inhabitants) or the Slocumbe House (after its first inhabitants and its maker) was discovered unused on a farmer's land in a state of disrepair in 1947. It was located in East Shelburne, Vt. It was purchased in October of that year. Dismantling began in early 1948. Materials were marked and put into storage. Much of the building was deteriorating and the original structure and fireplaces are all that were moved. The museum plans were not far enough along to place the building on the grounds.

Reconstruction did not begin until 1950. At this time the exterior clapboards of the building were replaced with stones from the Shelburne Falls gristmill. It was Electra Havemeyer Webb's feeling that the use of stones was common to early Vermont architecture. The stone design of the building as it was being reconstructed was based on the appearance of the Soule's farmhouse in Alburg. The front door, frame and windows were all copied from the farmhouse. In October of 1950, the Pierce Sheds from the Pierce House in Portsmouth, NH were dismantled and brought to the museum where they were reconstructed as an addition to the Vermont House (see also Pierce Shed entry). Exterior reconstruction was finished in 1951. F.S. Lanou was bidding to install heating in 1951.

The frame of the house and the floors were from the original Lane/Slocumbe house. The kitchen fireplace also had been original to that structure. The feather edged paneling in the kitchen came from Myron Holmes, a supplier in Connecticut. Holmes also provided the cathedral paneling in the parlor, based on drawings by Duncan Munro. As Dennis Fiori wrote, "this has always been of suspicion", because after seeing Munro's drawings, Holmes provided the museum with alleged antique paneling of perfect dimensions. Bob Francis made bolection molding and panels for over the mantel.

Most of the paneling for the recessed windows was new. The hall paneling was also new. The hall fireplace was built by museum staff, based on a design favored by Electra Havemeyer Webb. The Hill family, of Tilton, NH, gave the museum paneling which may have been used in the dining room and which was dismantled and used throughout the house. In a letter dated December of 1952, Lewis Wiggins wrote that the Vermont House interior would be on the list for 1952-53 winter work. Janis Mengis was to work on a panel (possibly the wallpaper panel). The molding, door and door framed are a mixture of old and new materials.

Originally the dining room and parlor extended the length of the house. During reconstruction, the dining room was shortened to add to the kitchen and a study was built off the parlor. Detailed notes in the Reconstruction folder in the Vermont House Building Files describe Electra Havemeyer Webb's wishes for interior preparation.

Use history:

The Vermont House was opened to the public in 1953. Electra Havemeyer Webb imagined it as the home of a wealthy sea captain. This premise serves to unify the interior exhibit, which contains fine American furniture and decorative European accessories. The Pierce Shed entry discusses the shed use. French handpainted wallpaper was installed in the dining room. It may have come from the Webb's home in Westbury (see questions). In 1986, this wallpaper received conservation treatment.

Questions:

Where did the wallpaper that is installed in the Vermont House dining room come from? A photograph of what appears to be the wallpaper in its original site is credited to a photographer from Westbury, L.I. Celia Oliver thinks it came out of the dining room at Westbury. A note from Rick Kerschner in the Vermont House object files, dated June 29th, 1990, says that a woman named Mary Kramer, who had been a friend of Electra Havemeyer Webb's, owns the other half of the wallpaper. I could not find a catalog record for the wallpaper.

Sources:

Minutes of Trustees and Members Annual Reports

Building and Object files

Building Photographs

Museum Publications: *A Guide to the Collections*, *A Pictorial History of the Shelburne Museum*, *The Story of the Shelburne Museum*

Electra Havemeyer Webb papers

Photographs:

Mostly black and white photographs documenting the process of creating the structure that is now the Vermont House. Many of the buildings, or pieces of buildings that went into the creation of this structure are represented. There are exterior and interior shots of the Lane House. There are photographs of houses in Alburg that served as models for the Vermont House stone work. Photographs document the dismantling of the Pierce Sheds. There are photographs showing the paneling from the W.B. Hills house being removed. A single 8 X 10 photographic print shows the dining room wallpaper in another site. There are exterior and interior photographs of construction and of general views of the building.

Quantity:

100 photonegatives 4 X 5 inches or smaller

145 photographic prints : some color 4 X 5 inches or smaller

65 photographic prints 8 X 10 inches or smaller

Organization:

The Vermont House photographs are organized into the following sub-series:

A. Lane House, exterior,

B. Houses in Alburg,

C. Pierce Sheds, Original Site/Dismantling,

D. Exterior, Construction,

E. Exterior, general,

F. Lane House, interior,
G. Interior, Construction,
H. Paneling from W.B. Hills House,
I. Wallpaper in Original Site?
J. Interior, general.

Photographers:

McAllister, L. L.
Corey, Herb
Mengis, Einars
Royce, Edmund
Munro, Duncan
McQuaid, Louis
Taylor and Dull
Callahan, Bob

Selene Colburn
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