

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY #

Name, Location, Ownership

1. Historic name John Page Barn
2. District or area: Well established farming community
3. Street and number 245 Meeting House Road
4. City or town Gilmanton
5. County Belknap
6. Current owner Gilmanton Conservation Commission

Function or Use

7. Current use(s) Agriculture: barn & farm; Social: meeting hall; Recreation & Culture: museum, outdoor recreation; Landscape: Conservation area & Forest _____
8. Historic use(s) Agriculture – barn & farming

Architectural Information

9. Style English gable style
10. Architect/builder Unknown
11. Source John Porter
12. Construction date circa 1880-1890
13. Source John Porter
14. Alterations, with dates N/A
15. Moved? No ☐ _____

Exterior Features

16. Foundation Fieldstone
17. Cladding Wood shingle
18. Roof material Asphalt replaced 2021
19. Chimney material N/A
20. Type of roof Gable A-frame w/common rafters & Horizontal roof boards.
21. Chimney location N/A
22. Number of stories Single w/3 ground level stables & upper level haylofts on both sides

23. Entry location Multiple main entries
24. Windows Mixed
Replacement? Possibly - date: unknown

Site Features

25. Setting: Agricultural/farm, rural local road _____
26. Outbuildings None
27. Landscape features Cleared open fields; foundation; mature trees; pond; stone walls; wood lot
28. Acreage 41.03 acres

PLEASE STAPLE A 4-INCH BY 6-INCH
PHOTOGRAPH IN THIS SPACE.

PHOTOS SHOULD BE PRINTED ON PHOTO
PAPER.

IT IS OKAY TO TURN PHOTOGRAPHS ON THEIR
SIDES SO THAT THEY FIT IN THIS SPACE

35. Photo #1 Direction: Northwest
36. Date: May 2021 _____
37. Reference (file name or frame#): _____

29. Tax map/parcel # 419-027 35.46 A & 419-030 5.7 A
30. State Plane Feet (NAD83) attached
31. USGS quadrangle and scale: USGS 7.5' quad for Gilmanton Iron Works, which is 1:24,000 scale.

Form prepared by

32. Name(s) Paula L. Gilman & Barry Christensen
33. Organization Gilmanton Conservation Commission
34. Date of survey February 28, 2022

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY #

39. LOCATION MAP:

The location map should show where the property is in relation to major roads within the town. You may replace this page with two full-sized (8.5"x11") maps if preferred.

40. PROPERTY MAP:

The property map should show the ENTIRE surveyed parcel, with lot line/boundary and all buildings and structures. The property map may also include the photo key. You may replace this page with two full-sized (8.5"x11") maps if preferred.

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY

41. Historical Background and Role in the Town or City's Development:

According to Rev. Daniel Lancaster's 1845 *History of Gilmanton* (pages 291-292), "There were in Gilmanton, in 1840 men engaged in agriculture 523, in commerce 8, in manufactures and trades 92, in navigation 1 in the learned professions 20. There were 1,273 tons of hemp and flax produced." Rev. Lancaster goes on to say: "Gilmanton is one of the best farming towns in the State, as will appear by a comparison of its products."

An 1860 map of Gilmanton indicates the presence of two buildings, one on either side of Meeting House Road owned by W.N. Swain. The building on the barn side of the road is most likely the house that burned. The barn sits adjacent to a small pond which was used for retting the flax that was grown on this farm in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Further research for deeds of prior owners would need to be done to accurately document the dates of flax production. In 1957 Mr. & Mrs. John S. Page owned the farm. Tragically, in 1958, the house caught fire and burned to the ground claiming the life of Mrs. Page. To this day the foundation has not been disturbed and is intact making this an Archaeological resource according to James Garvin.

Last owner prior to the Meeting House Pond Conservation Easement was the late George Twigg, III who used the barn for storage. January 16, 2014 Meeting House Pond Conservation Area along with 3 other tracts of land is preserved. After nearly a year of complex document preparation and review by Federal, State, and local agencies, the Gilmanton Land Trust and conservation partner, Five Rivers Conservation Trust, announced that the four tracts of land which were the focus of the "Gilmanton's Greatest Views - For Everyone, Forever!" campaign have now been permanently protected.

August 28, 2021 the Gilmanton Conservation Commission, Gilmanton Land Trust and Gilmanton Historical Society held a special, yet bittersweet dedication occasion for the barn. We were all shocked and saddened by the accidental death of Gilmanton resident, conservationist, preservationist, friend and neighbor Tom Howe on January 26, 2021. Tom worked diligently in preserving this parcel, in addition to many others not only in Gilmanton, but state and nationally. The barn is now known as the Tom Howe Barn. There is a sign on the roadside of the barn and a brass plaque in the interior in his honor.

42. Applicable NHDHR Historic Contexts (please list names from appendix C):

Agriculture: 519. Flax and linen production, 1650-present.

This author reached out to Megan Rupnick from NHDHR to inquire about information pertaining flax production in Gilmanton during this time period. Megan's response is as follows:

"I have looked through our historic context files and do not see anything specifically on Flax and Linen production. Clearly it's in important context that has been identified; unfortunately being on the list of contexts does not mean we necessarily have specific information on that context. It has just been identified as a theme in New Hampshire's history. However, I will double check that we do not have anything and check with other DHR staff too. Sorry I could not be of more help. But if I will let you know if uncover anything here. Thanks, Megan"

43. Architectural Description and Comparative Evaluation:

The barn is of English gable style and measures 40 feet by 36 feet. Framing and construction details would place the construction of this building in the late 1800s (1880-1890). This was confirmed by John Porter when he visited the property in 2020. The barn appears to be a later replacement for an earlier and perhaps larger barn on the same property as indicated by a long line of what appear to be remains of a stone foundation on the road side of barn. Exterior features are a fieldstone foundation and cladding of wood shingle. The roof was replaced with architectural asphalt shingles in summer 2021 due to significant loss of shingles. Barn is single story with 3 ground level stables, upstairs hay lofts on both sides and there is no chimney.

There are multiple entries into the barn as indicated by double doors on the front with 2 small doors on either side of these double doors. The rear of the barn also has double doors. Windows are mixed. **Front double doors** have 2 small windows with 2 over 2 panes. **The right side of barn (closest to retting pond)** 1 window appears to be double hung with 6 over 6 in hayloft area and a smaller window above it that is 2 over 2 panes. **Rear of barn has double back doors** that have 1 window each with 3 over 3 and one very small window to the left of these doors that consists of 4 small horizontal panes. **The left side of barn (roadside)** has on first floor 2 windows that are not same size, but both windows have 3

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY

over 3 panes. Above these windows there are twin windows that are not consistent with age of barn and appear to be of aluminum construction, but this needs closer examination which requires a tall ladder. Above these twin windows is a much smaller window in the eave and this is 2 over 2. Interior features consist of 3 separate stables on the roadside of the barn while the remainder of the barn is open and supported by original beams. There are no outbuildings on this parcel. The current exterior condition of the barn is in need of restoration. This is due to neglect, lack of use and weather conditions. There are window panes missing; deterioration of doors both tops and bottoms; bowing of one of the front large doors and no means of truly securing barn. The foundation needs further support, perhaps by adding more fieldstones to the existing stone foundation to keep building level. The interior of the barn is good condition. The roof no longer leaks as in the summer of 2021 it was replaced with architectural asphalt roofing due to excessive damage to the roof and significant loss of shingles.

Comparative Evaluation with other local barns is difficult. Directly across Meeting House Road from existing John Page barn was a similar barn and house owned and built by Eliphalet Gilman approximately 1770. Eliphalet Gilman was a house joiner. Unfortunately the barn was torn down years ago and no photos available. The original house still stands. The barn located on adjacent abutting property formerly owned by Jotham Gilman was built in late 1700's and the first Congregational meetings were held here. In 1830 Lewis. Ward Gilman purchased the farm and this became known as the Gilmanton Poor Farm. The current Foss Family Farm barn is located directly across the street from Jotham Gilman's former farm. However this is relatively new as the original barn was also torn down.

44. National or State Register Criteria Statement of Significance:

Perhaps the greatest significance of the barn is that it sits adjacent to a small pond which was used for retting the flax that was grown on this farm in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only example of a flax retting pond remaining in New Hampshire. Because of its later date of construction, it is unlikely the barn would have been used in the process of flax growing - which went out of favor in the early 1800s.

45. Period of Significance:

Criteria A: According to retired State Architectural Historian, James Garvin, in a letter sent to the Gilmanton Land Trust: "The production of linen fiber and woven cloth was central to New Hampshire's agricultural economy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Introduced by the first English settlers, the production of linen was greatly increased and enhanced by the arrival of Scotch-Irish immigrants beginning around 1720. This skilled and labor-intensive industry, based upon the farms of New Hampshire, remained a dominant part of rural life and economy until it was swept away by the advent of water-powered cotton mills after 1820."

Criteria D: In the summer of 2012 Jon Hall, whose home is across the street from the barn and home is most likely the one indicated in the 1860 map of Gilmanton, was the first to propose the purpose of the mysterious stone platform adjacent to the barn. John alerted members of the Gilmanton Land Trust who in turn invited members from the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources to visit this recently discovered pond in Gilmanton that may have been used for retting flax two centuries ago. *It may be the only surviving site of its kind in New Hampshire.* Retting is a key part of flax production. It utilizes water to soften and partially rot plant material, making it easier to separate the flax plant's linen fibers from its woody tissues. After harvesting, bundles of dried flax stalks are left to dry so the flaxseed can be threshed out. Next the bundles are submerged in water. A pond of standing water will work, but the resulting odor can be overwhelming. A more desirable alternative is to use a location with constantly running water, such as a pond fed by a stream. The pond site includes a slightly submerged stone platform about fifteen feet wide, extending forty feet in length from one side of the pond to the other. The flax bundles would have been laid on the platform to prevent them from touching the muddy bottom of the pond during the retting process.

46. Statement of Integrity

Location: Barn is located adjacent to a rare, one of a kind retting pond – perhaps the only remaining one in the State originally owned by Levi Swain around 1829. The barn and conserved area abuts a farm that was formerly owned by Jotham Gilman and subsequently by Lewis W. Gilman. In 1830 under Lewis W. Gilman's ownership, this became the Town Poor Farm. Directly across Meeting House Road from the former Poor Farm is another large parcel of conserved Gilmanton farmland known as Foss Family Farm & Forest. As indicated above, across Meeting House Road from the John Page barn is a small original antique cape, currently owned by Jon Hall and built by Eliphalet Gilman around 1770. It is noted on the 1860's reproduction map of Gilmanton.

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY

Design: The barn itself is of English gable style design approximately dates to 1880 – 1890.

Setting: The barn and the Meeting House Pond Conservation Area is one of the most scenic and historic conservation properties in Gilmanton. The conserved barn and associated landscape is located on a town-maintained gravel road in a sparsely settled, traditional, rural farming area still referred to as Lower Gilmanton. Lower Gilmanton was the first village in Gilmanton which was settled in December 1761. The barn setting has a beautiful, expansive hayfield, the retting pond, and hardwood forest with trails. Along the trails there are remnants of antique farm implements and equipment. In addition, the forest and field has frontage on the 26 acre Meeting House Pond which is surrounded by conservation land and restricted conservation access. Thus the public is able to access the pond for recreation and fishing via the trail system. The hayfields on this parcel have historically been hayed and continue to be hayed by a local farmer and his daughter. Together they hay the fields with horse drawn equipment and only spread manure as fertilizer. Another local farmer taps the maple trees on the smaller parcel which is separated from the larger parcel by Meeting House Road that runs between the two parcels.

Materials: Wood shingle, fieldstone foundation & asphalt roof consistent with late 1800's construction.

Workmanship: Although the barn itself being constructed during the late 1800's after flax production ceased, the adjacent retting pond is physical evidence this property was once involved in flax production approximately 2 centuries ago.

Feeling: The barn, retting pond and hayfields feel sacred in that it virtually has not changed in centuries. When walking the fields, forest, along the shores of Meeting House Pond and the retting pond there is a sense of peace where one can reflect on things past. There are no commercial buildings in the area and along with the town-maintained gravel road, one can imagine what it was like in centuries past. The only noise is the wind in the trees and hayfield and bird songs. If you stop, listen and imagine, one can literally breathe in the scents of the past.

Association: The retting pond was an extraordinary discovery and very much a part of Gilmanton's agricultural history. As stated in Lancaster's *1845 History of Gilmanton*, in 1840 Gilmanton produced a combined 1,273 tons of flax and hemp.

47. Boundary Discussion:

A. The parcel's northern boundary is defined by Meeting House Pond. To the east and south this parcel is bounded by Meeting House Road. The remainder of the parcel is bounded by original stone walls. The smaller parcel to the southwest of the barn is bounded on the north by Meeting House Road while the remainder of this parcel is bounded by original stone walls.

B. The current property consists of two parcels that are bisected by Meeting House Road a town-maintained gravel road. Total acreage is 41.03 for both parcels. TAX MAP #: 00419 LOT#: 027000 consists of 35.46 acres and it is this larger parcel the barn is sited. TAX MAP #: 000419 LOT#: 030000 consists of 5.57 acres and is on the opposite side of Meeting House Road.

We estimate that the entire property has an historical connection to the barn despite there not being the original barn when flax retting was done here. The barn is a solid reminder of late 19th century or early 20th farming/agriculture and the property should include both tax parcels. This is due to the fact the rare retting pond is adjacent to the barn, the large and smaller fields are both currently hayed and have been hayed as far back anyone can recall. We could not find any

Applicable NHDHR Historic Contexts under Agriculture: 519 – Flax and linen production, 1650 to present, however, the fact remains the rare retting pond is here and we know from Rev. Lancaster's *The History of Gilmanton 1845*, "there were 1,273 tons of hemp and flax produced."

CONTINUATION PAGE

DOE Review Date: 3/9/2022 Date Received: 3/2/2022 Final DOE Approved: Yes Property Name: John Page Barn
Area: Address: 245 Meeting House Road Town: Gilmanton County: Belknap Reviewed For: SR DOE Program(s): State
Register Determination of Eligibility: State Register eligible, individually Integrity: Partial Level: Criteria: A: Yes B:

C: D: E: Areas of Significance(s): Agriculture Period of Significance: 1820 to 1957 Boundary: Additional information is needed. Statement of Significance: The John Page Barn is eligible for the NH State Register for its association with Gilmanton's agricultural past, particularly the production of flax and linen. Its agricultural significance is reflected in the landscape, including the cleared fields, small barn, stone walls, foundations, retting pond, and other agricultural elements. To list the property to the NH State Register additionally research would be needed on the ownership history, historical use, and historical boundaries of the property. Comments: **Follow Up: Notify appropriate parties New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources Determination of Eligibility (DOE) Inventory #: GLM0041**

Ownership History: Our deed research team went to considerable efforts to trace the deeds back from 12/23/2013 when the property was acquired by the Gilmanton Land Trust, all the way back to 5/20/1727, date Gilmanton was incorporated and Charter signed by Governor John Wentworth. There have been multiple owners, and multiple boundary changes due to properties being divided because of death, will, sale, and new and discontinued roads. See attached Excel spreadsheet done by Jon Hall and approved by Megan Ripnik. The Lots and Ranges are taken from the original map drawn between March 1731 & 1732 by Edward Gilman and Barthelomew Thing. **Ownership summary: Eliphalet Gilman (About 1769 -1785), The Swain Family (1785-1868), The Cook/Merrill/Potter Families(1868-1882), The Ayers Family (1882-1926), Edwin Ham (1926-1936), John Page (1936-1971), George Twigg et al/George Twigg (1971-2013).**

Original Boundary: The 2 parcels we are now speaking of were not originally separated by Meeting House Road as we now know it. The original road began at Smith Meeting House and went between barn parcel and neighbor on opposite side of road (originally Eliphalet Gilman's residence) and it ended there. When Old Province Road was planned in 1763 it was the first "farm to market" road in NH. It was planned to divert crops from being shipped down the Connecticut River from the Haverhill area, then called "Little Coos", and instead have them brought to the Durham area. (Wikipedia). On February 25, 1779 the 'original' Meeting House Road was created from Eliphalet Gilman's house on what was once a Range Road in a straight line up a steep hill to Province Road, thus connecting Province Road with Smith Meeting House Road. This road – referred to as Edgerly Road was discontinued March 18, 1893 (Town of Gilmanton Discontinued Roads) and in its place the road cut through the barn parcel via what was formerly an old woods road. This accounts for the small parcel of 5.57 acres being separated from the larger parcel of 35.46 acres thus creating the current Meeting House Road.

Historical Agricultural uses:

As part of the Charter of Gilmanton it was stated *"the said term of three years shall be allowed the proprietors after the expiration of the warr for the performance of aforesaid conditions – rendering and paying therefor to uss our heirs and successors, or such officer or officers shall be appointed to receive the same, the annual quit-rent or acknowledgement of one pound of flax in the said town on the last Thursday in March, yearly forever, (if demanded)- reserving also unto uss, our heirs, and successors all the mast trees growing on said land according to acts of Parliament in that case made and provided"*. Page 19 *Lancaster's History of Gilmanton 1845* (spelling is exactly as printed in Lancaster's).

Daniel S. Ayers and others nearby bought the Creamery Company in Gilmanton Corners to process milk from his herd to diversify the market. When Edwin Ham took over the area it was already set up for cattle, but he went into beef. It has been stated that either the house on our barn parcel or the house across Meeting House Road and formerly Eliphalet Gilman's house was used to house Mr. Ham's herdsman.

Flax was among the first plants brought to North America with European colonization and settlement. The knowledge and skills to grow and process flax was once commonplace in these agricultural communities. All that changed in the 1880s, when industrialization and cheap cotton (subsidized by slavery) led to a precipitous decline in flax production. Knowledge and skills concerning flax and linen became rare as the crop itself was no longer planted.

<https://www.newenglandflaxandlinen.org/>

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY #

The flax/linen phase in N.H. was most likely between 1730 and 1820. With the introduction of Merino sheep the switch was made to wool. The agricultural census data we have doesn't go back that far. The agricultural progression here may have been flax, wool, dairy, beef and replacement heifers which is what John Page raised when he owned the farm.

48. Bibliography and/or References:

1. **Lancaster**, Rev. Daniel. Lancaster's *1845 History of Gilmanton (pages 291-292)*. Printed by Alfred Prescott in Gilmanton 1845.
2. **Garvin**, James retired State of New Hampshire Historian.
3. **Porter**, John, UNH Extension specialist, professor, emeritus and author. (Author John Porter writes from the vantage point of one who grew up on a dairy farm, working every day in 1850s barns.) He spent his career working as a Cooperative Extension Educator, helping people retrofit old barns and build new ones to meet the changing demands of agriculture.
4. **Hall, Jon**, local historian and contributor to Gilman history.
5. **Deed research team in addition to Jon Hall are all residents of Gilmanton: Anne Onion, Lori Baldwin & Pat Hill**
6. **Wikipedia**
7. **Town of Gilmanton Discontinue Roads records**
8. **New England Flax & Linen website - <https://www.newenglandflaxandlinen.org/>**

Surveyor's Evaluation:

NR listed: individual _____
within district _____

Integrity: yes _____
no _____

NR eligible: individual _____
within district _____
not eligible _____
more info needed _____

NR Criteria: A _____
B _____
C _____
D _____
E _____

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY #

INDIVIDUAL INVENTORY FORM

NHDHR INVENTORY #

PHOTO KEY IS LOCATED ON PAGE_____

I, the undersigned, confirm that the photos in this inventory form have not been digitally manipulated and that they conform to the standards set forth in the NHDHR Photo Policy. These photos were printed at the following commercial printer OR were printed using the following printer, ink, and paper: _____.
(Color photos must be professionally printed.)
The negatives or digital files are housed at/with: _____.

SIGNED:

FOR STATE REGISTER LISTING ONLY!

If this inventory form is being submitted for consideration of New Hampshire State Register listing, have you included:

____ a photo CD with digital images included in the nomination (does not apply if film photography was used)

Register Contact Information sheet



NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

State of New Hampshire, Department of Cultural Resources
19 Pillsbury Street, Concord, NH 03301-3570
TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964
www.nh.gov/nhdhr

603-271-3483
603-271-3558
FAX 603-271-3433
preservation@dcr.nh.gov

27 June 2011

Mr. Thomas A. Howe, Board Member
Gilmanton Land Trust
38 Perkins Rd.
Gilmanton Iron Works, New Hampshire, 03837

Re: Flax retting pond on Twigg land, Gilmanton, NH

Dear Mr. Howe:

I am writing in support of efforts by the Gilmanton Land Trust to protect a portion of the former Swain farm, a 35-acre parcel of land on Meetinghouse Road, in Gilmanton, now owned by George W. Twigg, III.

The conservation values of this land are well known to the Gilmanton Land Trust and well documented. In addition to these values, however, the parcel contains features of cultural significance, relating this land to the broader social and economic history of New Hampshire. The presence of such resources strengthens the obligation to preserve this land and enriches the potential for its interpretation and public enjoyment.

The tract includes a small pond that has been identified by local historian Jonathan J. Hall as a flax retting pond. This pond has the highly unusual feature of a slightly submerged stone platform about fifteen feet in width, extending some forty feet in length from one side of the pond to the other. Such a platform would have been used for the retting of flax plants, the first step in converting flax to linen fibers. Retting was accomplished by soaking the uprooted flax plants under water for a period of days. This is the only retting pond that I know of in New Hampshire.

The production of linen fiber and woven cloth was central to New Hampshire's agricultural economy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Introduced by the first English settlers, the production of linen was greatly increased and enhanced by the arrival of Scotch-Irish immigrants beginning around 1720. New Hampshire became known throughout the greater Atlantic community for the quality of its fine linen cloth as well as for coarser fabric used to clothe slaves in the West Indies. This skilled and labor-intensive industry, based upon the farms and the people of New Hampshire, remained a dominant part of our life and economy until it was swept away by the advent of water-powered cotton mills after 1820.

The presence of this rare feature on the Gilmanton parcel gives this land a still deeper significance, augmenting its recognized conservation values with a range of connections to the broader history of New Hampshire and New England.



Sincerely,

James L. Garvin
James L. Garvin
State Architectural Historian