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Cultural Landscape Report

Adams National Historic Site

Quincy, Massachusetts

Illustrated Site Chronology

Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

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January 12, 1998

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Adams National Historic Site

From: Director, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation

Subject: Transmittal of Cultural Landscape Report for Adams National Historic Site

I am pleased to enclose a copy of *Cultural Landscape Report: Illustrated Site Chronology for Adams National Historic Site.* The report is the result of historical research of the cultural landscape, reflecting a century-and-a-half of Adams family ownership and management. As agreed in discussions with you and your staff, the document presents illustrations integrated with a narrative site chronology, a format that provides an accessible summary of the site's history.

The report was completed by Katharine Lacy, Historical Landscape Architect with the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation; the editing and design were produced with Beth McKinney of Graphic Design and Shary Page Berg with Goody Clancy & Associates. We have published this report as part of the Olmsted Center's Cultural Landscape Publication Series. At part of the series, the Government Printing Office has printed and distributed copies of this report to 500 libraries across the country.

We are sending 100 copies of the report for the Adams National Historic Site under separate cover. As required by NPS-28, the Cultural Resource Management Guidelines, we have also transmitted copies to the attached list of offices. If you have any comments or questions, please contact me at the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation (617) 566-1689 x 267.

It has been a pleasure working with you and your staff on this report. We look forward to future collaborations on your cultural landscape.

Nora

Nora Mitchell

Enclosure

cc with enclosure:

Chief Historian, History Division, WASO
Chief, Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes, WASO
Associate Director, Cultural Resources and Stewardship and Partnership Program
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Cultural Landscape Report

Adams National Historic Site

Quincy, Massachusetts

Illustrated Site Chronology

by

Katharine Lacy

Historical Landscape Architect

National Park Service

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PUBLICATION NO. 13

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This report is part of the Cultural Landscape Publication Series produced by the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. This series includes a variety of publications designed to provide information and guidance on landscape preservation to managers and other preservation professionals. The series editor is Nora J. Mitchell.

The Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation promotes the stewardship of significant landscapes through research, planning and sustainable preservation maintenance. Based at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, the center perpetuates the tradition of the Olmsted firms and Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.'s lifelong commitment to people, parks and public spaces.

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Cover: Photograph of Old House from the Southwest, 1928. Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

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FROM THE AUTHOR

I would like to thank Nora Mitchell, Director, as well as Lauren Meier and Margaret Coffin of the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation for reviewing drafts of this report. I am also grateful to the staff at the Adams National Historic Site, particularly Marianne Peak, Superintendent, Caroline Keinath, Chief of Interpretation, and Judy McAllister, Curator, for their patience, support and assistance with this project. Thanks are also due to the staff at the Quincy Historical Society and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities for the use of their archives and for assistance with additional research. The text was prepared by the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. Design, editing and production of the report was accomplished by Beth McKinney Graphic Design and Shary Page Berg with Goody Clancy & Associates. Finally, I am indebted to the authors of the many fine reports from which the information in this Cultural Landscape Report was drawn. While credit is fully owed to them for thorough and accurate research, all errors are certainly my own.

—*Katharine Lacy*

BACKGROUND

The cultural landscape at the Adams Old House has long been recognized as a significant historic resource. Over the past half century several reports have been written which address the history of the Old House, portions of the grounds, and individual features and structures within the park boundaries. Additionally, there is a substantial collection of historic photographs and images of the grounds at the Adams Old House available at the park and other locations. However, there was no single document which comprehensively addressed the evolution of this significant landscape. Consequently, in the planning phases of this project, staff from Adams NHS and the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation determined that to the fullest extent possible research should done using existing secondary sources available at the park and Boston Support Office Library, with primary research limited to the study and interpretation of pertinent graphic images. The intent of this effort was to provide a thorough review of the substantive body of existing material, while culling out any information pertaining to the evolution of the landscape.

Rather than prepare a narrative site history, it was decided that an annotated, illustrated chronology would be more efficient to prepare and would serve as a more versatile tool for park staff, including interpreters, curators, groundskeepers and managers. A graphic designer was hired to develop a format and guidelines for this new type of document. This Illustrated Site Chronology for the Adams Old House is the first document of its type in the Olmsted Center's Cultural Landscape Series. It should prove both useful and informative to all who have an interest in the landscape at the Old House.

Introduction

The Adams National Historic Site in Quincy, Massachusetts, was established on December 9, 1946 through a generous gift from the Adams family to the people of the United States. The park was specifically created to celebrate the memory of the four generations of Adamses who occupied the site from 1787-1927 and their significant contributions to politics, literature and the development of the nation. At the same time, the Adamses recognized the opportunity presented by the property to teach the public about the everyday life of an American family over a period of nearly a century and a half. Because the site was occupied by the same family for so long, it reflects an accumulation of changing attitudes towards a home and its grounds. Consequently, the deed establishing the site specified that no changes should be made to the Old House—its contents, dependencies or grounds—which should be maintained as they were at the end of Brooks Adams' lifetime in 1927.

Since the park's establishment, efforts have been made to document the Old House, its major outbuildings and tremendous museum collection. However, there was no single document which comprehensively addressed the evolution of the landscape as a whole. This Cultural Landscape Report: Illustrated Site Chronology is intended to address that need by tracing the evolution of the landscape at the Old House from its development as farmland in the 17th century, through its ownership by four generations of the Adams family, to its establishment as a National Historic Site. Further, as required by NPS policies, it is intended that this document will serve as the basis for a Cultural Landscape Treatment Plan, and for developing a strategy for the on-going maintenance of this important resource.

As this document illustrates, each of the Adamses had a unique relationship to the grounds and left his or her distinguishing mark on the landscape of the Old House. At the same time, events beyond the control of the Adams family, including the growth of the City of Quincy, have had an equally important impact on the evolution of this site. The spacious grounds of the Adams Old House, once surrounded by the family's extensive farmland, now stand out as a tranquil enclave surrounded by busy thoroughfares and urban development. The approach taken by each generation of Adamses towards this property reflected its broader ideals about the appropriate appearance and treatment of landscapes in general—even those far beyond their own stone walls. While some generations had a greater impact than others, significant landscape features, such as walls, an orchard, trees, a pond or a single rose, remain from each period in the site's history. Over time, efforts to categorize the landscape at the Old House as reflecting a single period have never succeeded. Instead, as envisioned by the Adamses in their gift, the grounds at the Old House provide a unique opportunity to learn about nearly 150 years of changing attitudes towards the landscape.

Early Development and Vassall/Borland Period 1625–1787

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This portion of the site chronology for the Adams Old House property covers the period from its inclusion as part of Quincy's earliest land grants through its ownership by the Vassall family from 1730-1787.[1]

The earliest European settlement of Quincy, albeit temporary, occurred in 1625 when Captain Wollaston arrived in Quincy Bay from an unknown port in England. It appears that Wollaston, about whom little is known, was not seeking to settle the region and left the area following the establishment of a trading post. However, a portion of his company remained in the area and the Wollastons were later recorded as residents of Braintree.[2]

In 1634, the Mount Wollaston region, which included Braintree and what would become Quincy, Holbrook and Randolph, was annexed by the City of Boston in an effort to provide additional room for the establishment of large estates. The earliest land grants, including 600 or more acres, were made to Boston residents Edmund Quincy, Atherton Houghton, John Wilson and William Coddington; later allotments were based on a formula of 4 acres per family member. The current site of the Adams National Historic Site was included within the great Quincy-Coddington Grant of 1635.

A commercial center was developed in 1640 in the area that is now Quincy Center, which was included within the bounds of the newly established First Parish of Braintree. A meeting house near the intersection of Hancock Street and the Town Brook was built in 1640 and a second one was built by 1666. By 1640 a town burial ground had also been established at Hancock Cemetery, across from what was then the Training Field and is now the site of the First Parish Church. The town's first school house, built in the 1650s, was adjacent to the meeting house, and a tavern was located on the west side of Hancock Street.

Native trails, delineated by the end of the 17th century, served as the town's primary inland transportation routes. Settlement along these early routes consisted primarily of farmsteads, of which the John Quincy Adams Birthplace (1663) and the John Adams Birthplace (1681) are two extant examples. The Beale and Adams sites were later developed along the most significant transportation route, the Boston-Plymouth Highway, which crossed the Furnace and Town Brooks. Now designated Adams, Hancock, School and Franklin Streets, this road served as the primary link between Boston and the coastal communities to the south.

In 1708 Braintree was divided into the North Precinct (now Quincy) and the South Precinct (now Braintree, Holbrook and Randolph). Though technically part of the same town, each precinct had separate churches and meeting houses; the northern portion also became more closely associated with Boston. In 1792 the North Precinct of Braintree was incorporated into the Town of Quincy.

During the 17th and 18th centuries Quincy was essentially a rural village. Families of wealth and refinement, including the Quincys, Hancocks, Cranches, Adamses and Beales, had year-round or summer estates in the town and were closely linked through social and political connections. Though it was not until the 19th century that Quincy experienced true industrial development, farming, iron extraction, quarrying, shipbuilding and whaling were

pursued on a small scale, and a town gristmill and a few small tanneries were located on the Town Brook by 1700. The area near the intersection of Blacks Creek, Furnace Brook and Adams Street was a popular location for most of Quincy's 18th and 19th century estates. The Vassall Mansion (Adams Old House, 1732) and Josiah Quincy House (1770) were two of the earliest estates built in this area.

As detailed in the following chronology, the parcel of land which would later be the site of the Adams Old House passed through a series of owners from the time that it was included in the Coddington Grant of 1635 until its acquisition by John Adams in 1787. During the 1600s and early 1700s it appears that the land was used primarily for farmland. Records from 1717 regarding the sale of the property are the earliest to indicate the presence of a dwelling on the site. From 1730 until 1787 the property was owned by Major Leonard Vassall, a prosperous merchant from Boston.

Under the ownership of the Vassall/Borland family, the landscape immediately around the Old House evolved from what appears to have been a simple farmyard to the grounds of a prosperous residential estate. Indeed, many of the fundamental characteristics of the landscape at the Old House were established during the Vassall ownership. The Vassall Mansion was constructed in its current location by 1732 (perhaps incorporating portions of a house built as early as 1717). The Old Road to Boston (later Adams Street) existed by the end of the 17th century, forming the southern boundary of the site and thus establishing the relationship of the house and the road. By 1737, Leonard Vassall's will describes the property as including a garden and orchard, revealing that the location of the formal garden was to the west of the house, and confirming that the orchard was to the north. At the western end of the garden stood a summer house, which apparently fell into ruin soon after the Adamses acquired the property.[3] When John Adams purchased the Old House property in 1787 the deed of sale also lists a barn, which appears to have stood east of the house, and a complex outbuilding to the north made up of three distinct sections, including a wash house, woodshed and office room.

It is difficult to determine what constituted the Old House property in the period prior to 1787. Deeds of sale for the property prior to its acquisition by the Adamses in 1787 describe it as including a house lot of 6 to 12 acres with associated farmland of 45 to 70 acres extending north over Furnace Brook and south across Adams Street to what is now Presidents Hill. At the time that John Adams purchased the property in 1787 the house lot was approximately 7.5 acres, with an additional 68 acres of farmland. A survey prepared in 1849 claims to show part of the land purchased by John Adams, but does not show the full extent of the property (fig. 14).

Still less is known about the appearance of the associated farmland or any specific changes wrought on this outlying land prior to its ownership by the Adamses. A conjectural period plan showing conditions on the site in 1787 (fig. 2) suggests that the land north of the house included fields and a meadow. A journal entry by John Adams in 1769, prior to his purchase of the property, noted that the land south of Adams Street, known as Stony Field Hill, was planted with corn and fruit. Aside from these few kernels of information, knowledge of the extent and appearance of outlying lands associated with the Old House is limited and further study is certainly warranted.

SITE CHRONOLOGY UP TO 1787

1639–41

A large portion of the Coddington property was purchased by a Boston merchant named William Tyng, who divided the property into two farms.[4]

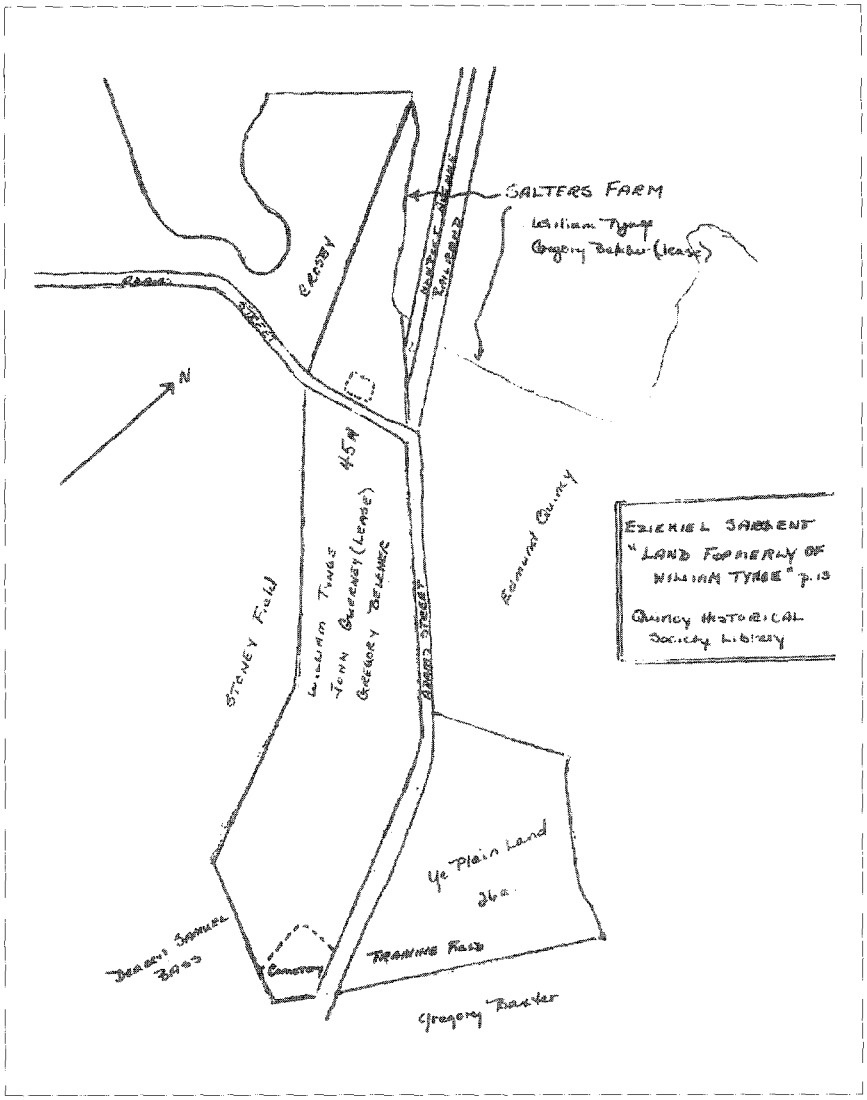


FIGURE 1
Originally part of the Coddington-Quincy Grant of 1635, this land is now in the center of the City of Quincy. The northernmost 10 acres of this farm (shown here as Salter's farm) became Nathaniel Spear's homestead in the early 1700s and subsequently passed to Leonard Vassall. The dashed rectangle illustrates the approximate location of the Old House. Drawing prepared by Ezekial Sargent, 1957.

WILLIAM TYNG'S 45-ACRE FARM, BRAINTREE, MASSACHUSETTS, 1649.

1640	Mount Wollaston was incorporated as a town under the name of Braintree.
1647	William Tyng leased a section of 45 acres to John Gurney for ten years. According to the records left by Ezekiel Sargent of Quincy, the northern portion of the Gurney farm was later the site of the Adams property.[5]
1653	William Tyng died January 10. The inventory of his estate lists "45 acres of land, upland and marsh in the possession of John Gurney."[6]
1657	Gurney continued to lease the farm from Tyng's daughters, Bethia and Mercy until 1662.[7]
1662–1710	There is no available documentation of ownership of the Old House property during this period. Gurney moved away from Braintree and apparently abandoned the farm since the inventory taken at his death showed no land holdings.[8]
1710	The property on which the Adams Old House was later located was listed in the ownership of Nathaniel Spear, a cooper of Braintree.
1717	Nathaniel Spear sold to Thomas Crosby, also of Braintree, several tracts of land including the Old House property: "one being the Homestead containing about ten acres be it more or less through which the country road runs." This property included a dwelling house, barn and corn house.[9] Parts of this dwelling house may be hidden inside the present Adams mansion.[10]
1719	Thomas Crosby added one acre on the eastern boundary of the property and five acres on the northern boundary.[11]
1727	Major Leonard Vassall (who would later purchase the Old House property) bought a city lot on Seven-Starr Lane (now Summer Street) in Boston and built a substantial frame house.
1730	Thomas Crosby, an innkeeper,[12] sold the 10-acre Old House tract to Leonard Vassall, Esq., a sugar planter from Jamaica who was living in Boston at that time. Vassall's deed described the land north of the road as including 11.5 acres, and the parcel south of the road as including 5.5 acres.[13]

1731	The date commonly assigned to the construction of the Vassall mansion (Adams Old House), because it was in this year that Vassall was granted his petition to the Town Selectmen for moving the Country Road further from his house. No architect has yet been identified as having designed the house. However, the house bears a strong resemblance to the Vassall House on Summer Street in Boston.[14] It is not known exactly how much time Vassall spent at his house in Braintree. Vassall continued to own his house in Boston, along with numerous other tracts of property in Braintree, until his death in 1737.
1733	Vassall's first wife, Ruth Gale, died in Boston.
1734	Leonard Vassall married again to Phoebe Penhallow Gross.
1737	Leonard Vassall died. His will left to his wife, Phoebe, the "use, possession and improvement of my dwelling house, orchard and gardens in Braintree . . . consisting of 60 acres"[15] on the condition that she remain an Episcopalian and never remarry. According to Henry Adams, the Vassall's food was prepared in a separate building behind the house, which also provided quarters for the slaves. However, the Vassall will provides no record of this or any other outbuilding on the property.
1738	Phoebe Vassall married Dr. Thomas Graves of Charlestown. By remarrying, Phoebe lost title to the Braintree estate and it passed to her daughter, Anna, in trust until she married.
1749	On February 20 Anna Vassall married John Borland and inherited the house. The document transferring the property lists it as including a house with 93 acres of land and servants Pompey and Vidalia.[16] Little is known about the Borland period at the Old House.
c.1750	A small, 3-story wing was added to the north of the Old House.
c.1760	The kitchen at the Old House was expanded.
1761	A statement of taxable property for the estate of John Borland of Braintree lists the house and garden, with 8 acres of pasture and 20 acres of grass, and other property rented out.[17]
1765	The Borlands purchased the Apthorp House on Brattle Street in Cambridge and put the house in Quincy up for rent. During the revolutionary period the Borlands identified themselves as English Loyalists.

1769 August: "Stonyfield Hill, (the name at the time for Presidents Hill) covered with corn and fruits."

1775 John Borland died. With the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, Anna Borland fled to England.[18] At that time the Borlands Braintree property was in the possession of John Heyward, who claimed to be a tenant by agreement with John Borland.[19] The house was also used as temporary quarters for refugees fleeing from the British in Boston.[20]

June 21: The first public resolve relating to absentee properties in Massachusetts was passed by the Provincial Assembly giving the Committees of Correspondence of Safety the authority to take possession and improve estates abandoned by Loyalists within their towns.

1776 The Committees for Correspondence for each town were authorized to lease absentee estates.

1777 The Massachusetts State Legislature made further provisions for an agent to administer each abandoned Loyalist estate and give an accounting to the Probate Court.

1778 The Vassall mansion was leased to Colonel Stephen Miller.

1779 The Vassall mansion was leased to Gaius Thayer who departed unexpectedly during the year. Concerned with the condition of the unattended Braintree house, the local Committee of Correspondence and Town Selectmen took an inventory of the property and advertised a public sale. That same year, Richard Cranch, John Adams's brother in-law and a representative from the legislature in Braintree, was appointed agent for the estate of John Borland. Cranch's inventory of the estate included "A dwelling house, outhouses, stables, garden and farm situate (sic) in Brantry (sic) containing about 45 acres of pasture, tillage mow and plowland."[21]

1780 April 28: A public auction was held to lease the Borland estate. An advertisement for the auction in the *Boston Independent Chronicle* listed the Borland property as:

> *A very genteel dwelling house, barn and coach house with garden, planted with a great variety of fruit trees, an orchard and about 40 acres of land lately belonging to John Borland, Esq. deceased. This agreeable seat is pleasantly situated in the Town of Braintree about ten miles from Boston, on the great Road to Plymouth.*[22]

1780-82

The Old House property was leased by Edward Church, who had recently purchased the adjacent property where the Beale estate is now located.

1783

At the end of the Revolutionary War, Anna Borland returned to Boston and recovered her Braintree estate.

November: The Old House property was sold by Anna's son, John Vassall Borland, to Royall Tyler, a Braintree lawyer, for $1,000.[23] Tyler was at that time courting the only daughter of John and Abigail Adams—Abigail, known as Nabby. There is no deed recorded for the Borland sale to Royall Tyler since the Borlands apparently did not have clear title to the house themselves. Further, Tyler did not actually occupy the estate which was at that time being leased again by Gaius Thayer.

December 27: Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John about Tyler's purchase of the Borland property:

> *Mrs. Borland since her return to America has sold her House and Farm in this town. Mr. Tyler has made the purchase at £1,000 lawful money. The estate chiefly came by her, none of it was ever confiscated; it is considered in Town as a good bargain. There is about 108 in the whole, 50 of which is fine wood land the garden contains the best collection of fruit in town.*[24]

1784–86

Gaius Thayer remained in the house for another two years, and Tyler was unable to move in. In a letter to John Adams, written August 27, Royall Tyler explained his complex ownership arrangement:

> *This estate is at present encumbered by a mortgage and lease from the Commonwealth, but the legislature is about passing an act, enabling the Absentees to take possession of their estates by paying the Consideration for the Mortgage to the lessees. Thayer, the present Occupier, under the Commonwealth Lease and Mortgages, is will to receive and Borland to pay this, so that I expect to be in actual possession immediately. Mr. Thayer, sensible of this, permits me now to enter for the purpose of repairing.*[25]

1786

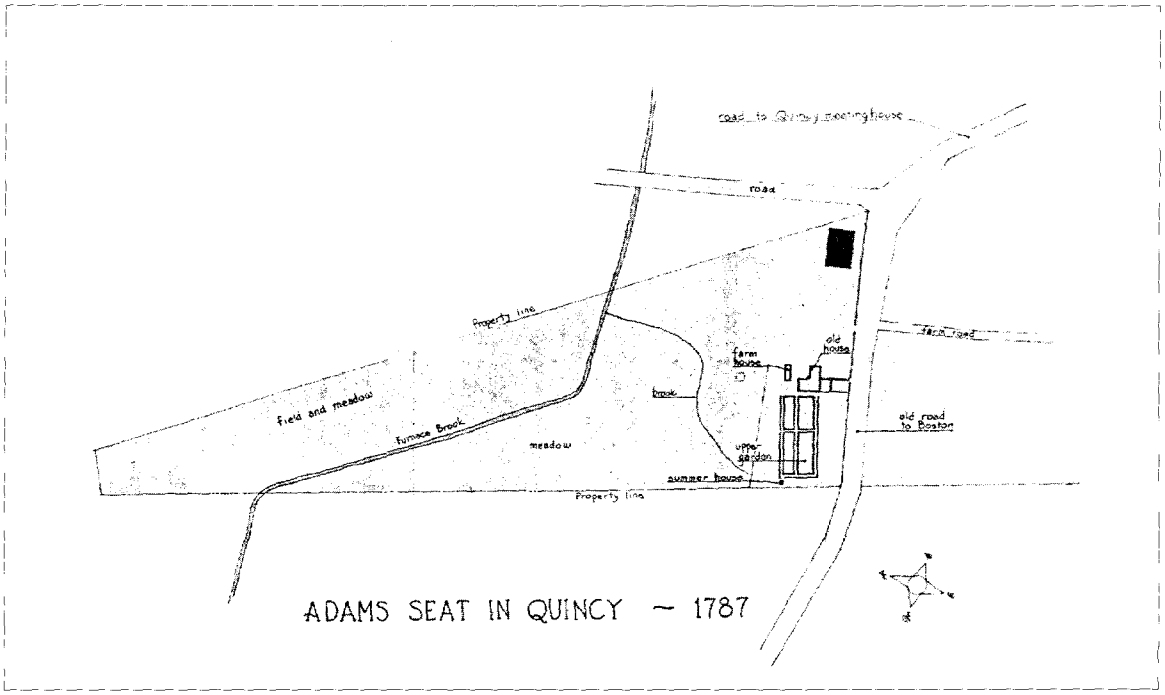
Royall Tyler occupied the Old House. During his brief residence he attempted to make some improvements to the house, which had apparently been abused by previous tenants.[26] Records indicate that Tyler spent £100 on materials and repairs before abandoning the property. Tyler also erected a frame building behind the house for an office, and a windmill, the location of which is unknown.[27] These projects caused him to go into debt.

September 28: Mary Cranch wrote to Abigail Adams:

> *. . . you would be supriz'd (sic) to hear how much he owes to laborers in this Town above £200 I am told—besides this your brother said this day that his farm is mortgag'd (sic) for 600 more—if this is true he cannot hold out long at the rate he lives.*[28]

1787

In the spring of 1787 Royall Tyler forfeited the farm back to the Borlands, to whom he still owed 600 pounds, and moved to New York to become a playwright.



"ADAMS SEAT IN QUINCY" 1787.

FIGURE 2

Schematic period plan represents a conjectural view of the property at the time of its transfer from the Vassalls to the Adamses. Shows relative locations of the Old House, farm house, upper garden, summer house, field and meadow areas, Furnace Brook and the road to Boston (later Adams Street). Drawing prepared in 1966.

John Adams Period
1787-1826

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This portion of the site chronology traces the changes made to the property under the ownership of John and Abigail Adams.

The Old House, as it came to be known, was first acquired by the Adams family in 1787. At that time John and Abigail Adams were preparing to return to Quincy after many years abroad in diplomatic posts. In April of that year, Abigail's sister, Mary Cranch, wrote to John and Abigail notifying them that the former Borland estate was for sale, urging them to buy it. Both John and Abigail were well acquainted with the property, having lived for many years not far from the Borland place in the salt box cottage at Penn's Hill, adjacent to the birthplace of John Adams. The Vassall-Borland estate, including a house, gardens and farm, would provide the Adamses a home with appropriate space and style for a family of their means. With the assistance of Abigail's uncle, Cotton Tufts, the Adamses purchased the Vassall-Borland property from their post in London for £600 on September 26, 1787. In the spring of 1788 they sailed home, arriving in Boston in mid-June.

Research indicates that at the time of purchase the Old House was a three-story frame building with brick-end chimney walls and a gambrel roof. The 1787 property deed also lists a barn to the east of the house. In addition, there was a complex outbuilding, called the outhouse, which measured 54 feet long and consisted of three distinct sections. The wash house occupied the western end next to the garden, the woodshed took up the center section and an office room occupied the section at the east end. There was a clothes yard near the wash house.

A large formal garden, located on the west side of the house, consisted of three rectangular beds filled with a variety of fruit trees, including apple, pear, plum, peach and grape vines, which were interspersed with cowslip, daffey and columbine.[29] The beds were surrounded by gravel paths and lined with boxwood hedges. A summer house, which fell into ruin soon after the Adamses acquired the property, stood at the western end of the garden.[30]

Initially, both John and Abigail found themselves somewhat disappointed at the size and appearance of their new home. Shortly after their arrival in Braintree, Abigail wrote to her daughter Abigail (Mrs. William Stephens Smith):

> *But we have come to a house not half repaired, and I own myself most sadly disappointed. In height and breadth, it feels like a wren's house. Ever since I came, we have had such a swarm of carpenters, masons, farmers, as have almost distracted me—everything all at once with miserable assistance.*[31]

Six months after their arrival in Braintree, John Adams provided a friend in England with a somewhat more upbeat report:

> *I found my estate, in consequence of total neglect and inattention on my part for 14 years, was falling to decay and in so much disorder that as to require my whole attention to repair it. I have a great mind to essay a description of it. It is not large, in the first place. It is but the farm of a patriot. But there are in it two or three spots from whence are to be seen the most beautiful prospects in the world.*[32]

With characteristic vigor, John and Abigail wrought significant change on both the house and the surrounding grounds during the first years of their ownership. Many of the earlier projects undertaken during the Adams' first decade in the house focused on improving the grounds for farming, including clearing and draining the meadow north of the house, establishing a large vegetable garden, and constructing a corn crib on the east lawn. A visitor to Braintree in 1788 noted: "At that time, forgetful of his books and royal courts, Mr. Adams was devoting himself to his farm."[33] Each day hired men from the surrounding towns would work the land. By the end of his first year in residence, John had a sizable herd of cattle. In all likelihood this herd grazed the larger expanse of the property, located on the south side of what is now Adams Street.

In 1789 John Adams began an eight-year term as the first vice president of the United States. While spending a considerable amount of time at the Capitol (in Philadelphia and then New York) John returned to Quincy as frequently as possible. Indeed, they briefly considered putting John's brother, Peter Adams, in charge of the farm so that Abigail could join John while he was away on business. However, Peter claimed that it was too difficult to please John, so Abigail remained in charge of the maintenance and improvement of the property.[34]

During John Adams's term as president (1797-1801) the Adamses undertook a series of more visible and dramatic changes, including: the replacement of the Borland barn with a new barn and stable; the renovation of the old farmhouse to house John Adams's library among other things; and the construction of a cider house, woodshed and barn to the east of the house. With the completion of the various farm buildings, the area to the east of the house served as a barnyard bounded by the woodshed, corncrib and cider barn on the north, and the barn and stable to the south. Also during this period the Old House was nearly doubled in size through the construction of the spacious east wing with a new entry and extensive alterations in the western or kitchen ell.

Following President Adams's defeat in his bid for re-election he returned to Quincy as a permanent resident. Between 1801 and his death in 1826 few major changes occurred on the Old House grounds, and no new structures were built. One exception was the construction, around 1821, of the pond in the meadow north of the house. However, throughout this period the Adamses continued to work on and expand their farming operation as well as the gardens immediately around the house.

John Adams actively acquired more land, both contiguous to the Old House lot, across Adams Street on what is now Presidents Hill to the south, and in other parts of Quincy. In 1799 John Adams's "homeplace" was assessed as including 8.5 acres to the north of the road and 99 acres to the south. Unfortunately, no clear map exists showing the Adams' holdings in the immediate vicinity of the Old House. While at the time this property was used for farming, it would come to represent for the Adamses a sizable investment in real estate. A few months prior to John Adams's death in 1826 the road that would later be called Presidents Lane was constructed through the portion of the property south of Adams Street, thus opening up this area for future development.

Compared with Jefferson's Monticello, or Washington's Mount Vernon, the Adams property was truly humble in size and appearance. Both Jefferson, and to a slightly lesser degree, Washington, had been influenced by European garden design, and referred to English gardening "experts" such as Loudon, Whately and Langely in the development of their Virginia estates. John Adams on the other hand was little impressed by the English landscape school.[35] While on a tour of English country seats with Thomas Jefferson in April 1786, John Adams wrote, "It will be long, I hope, before ridings, parks, pleasure grounds, gardens and ornamented farms grow so much in fashion in America." He was further dismayed by the prevalence of absentee gentlemen farmers in Britain and on the continent; much to his chagrin his own circumstances would later require that he join their ranks.

John Adams's passion for farming was very much in line with the sentiment prevalent among the Founding Fathers that the independent farmer personified the true republican. As one historian noted, "In acquiring country residences, the wealthy governing elite advertised its adherence to 'rural' qualities: to moderation, simplicity and stability . . ."[36] However, Adams's love of farming was more than just a passing interest; he purchased the farm in Braintree because he truly intended to farm. As a young man he had prepared a small book called "A Commonplace Book of Agriculture" in which he set down a long list of forest and fruit trees, berry bushes, cereal grains, vegetables, grasses, weeds, poultry and farm utensils.[37] He was a charter member of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, founded in 1792, and he served as president of that group from 1805 to 1813.[38] Throughout his political career his ambition was tempered by a longing for the pastoral life: "Let me have my farm, my family, and my Goose Quil, and all the Honours and Offices this world can bestow may go to those who deserve them better."[39]

John Adams's conservative approach to the development of his Braintree farm most likely was not feigned modesty, but instead a deeply traditional approach to the landscape routed in the values of 18th century New England. Despite his world-wide travels, John Adams was very much a product of his upbringing in a small town south of Boston. A 20th century historian described the Quincy of John Adams's era:

> *Wealth and population increased slowly. With vessels of the same build, they fished the familiar seas; with similar utensils, they cultivated the same fields. Dwelling in houses built on the identical plan, they preserved the old domestic and social customs. The outer world made itself little felt in the remote village community, and the village community in no way influenced the outer world. The Quincy of 1830 was the Old Braintree of 1640, a little more thickly settled and a little more prosperous.*[40]

While the aesthetics of English and European garden design were adopted by prosperous and influential Americans in many parts of the country, the Adamses stuck tightly to traditional New England standards of spatial beauty, whereby "A beautiful farm was a farm with a well-designed and well-built house and barn, tight fences, carefully tilled fields, pruned orchards, and a well-managed woodlot, all crisply clear of any wilderness interruption."[41] And, in fact, with its enclosed front yard, herb and flower gardens close to the house and vegetable gardens and orchards to the rear, the Old House landscape at the end of John Adams's lifetime had many characteristics of a garden from the earlier colonial era. John Adams regarded shade trees as dangerous and cumbersome; consequently there were few trees on the grounds during his time. Indeed, many years after John Adams' death Charles Francis Adams wrote in his diary that "the old gentleman inherited from the settlers his hostility to the forest which abounded in the early colony."[42] In summary, though John and Abigail Adams can be credited with having brought about significant change to the landscape at the Old House, their general approach was decidedly more traditional than innovative.

SITE CHRONOLOGY: 1787-1826

1787

John Adams and his family were living in London, where he was serving as the American Ambassador to the Court of Saint James. By that time the family was preparing to return to the United States, to reside in their cottage at the foot of Penn's Hill in Braintree. John and Abigail first considered purchasing the Borland/Vassall property at the urging of Abigail's sister, Mary Cranch, and her husband Richard.

April 22: Mary Cranch wrote to Abigail Adams, "You cannot crowd your sons into a little bed by the side of yours now. If you will never enlarge it you had better buy Mr. Borland's or build one."[43]

September 26: The Adamses purchased the Old House property for £600 with the assistance of Abigail's uncle, Cotton Tufts. The property included a 7.5-acre house lot along the north side of the Boston to Plymouth Road, with 11 acres more to the north and a fairly extensive parcel of farmland to the south of the Boston to Plymouth Road.[44] The deed for the property, signed by Leonard Vassall Borland, described the house lot:

> *Being the same on which the house, barn, and other buildings are containing about seven acres, beginning at the Westerly Corner of the Garden from thence easterly on the Road leading from Boston to Plymouth. . . .*[45]

June 30: Cotton Tufts, overseeing repairs to the Old House, wrote to Abigail that the house had been "much abused by bad tenants."[46]

1788

April 20: John Quincy Adams, recently graduated from Harvard College, visited his parents' future home, and was apparently not taken with it:

> *I went down to view the house, which they are repairing for my father. I was not perfectly pleased with it, but it now appears in a very unfavorable light. They are obliged to make the most necessary repairs very hastily, expecting my father in a few weeks. I am in hopes that after my parents return this place will be more lively and agreeable to me than it is at present. I think I shall never make it the standing place of my residence, but I shall wish to pass much of my time here. . . .*[47]

June: John, Abigail and their family returned to Boston, where they were received with public honors, and proceeded to their new home in Braintree.

1788

July 7: Abigail wrote to her daughter, Abigail (Mrs. William Smith), about her disappointment with the condition of the house.

October 10: Abigail wrote to Mary Cranch referring to her new house as a "wren's nest" and the garden as a "wilderness."[48]

December 3: John Adams wrote to Thomas Brand Hollis about the vast repairs the house required with a rather proud description of it.

1789

John Adams began his term as Vice President of the United States, and the family moved to New York in April.

May 31: Correspondence from Abigail noted that trying to replant the boxwood was "like digging up so many trees with large roots," indicating that it was already quite old by that time. Abigail also made note of "little grass plots before the door."[49]

1790

October 10: Abigail Adams wrote to Mary Cranch asking that she send some fruit from the Old House garden (St. Germain pears and Russet apples) to them in New York.[22]

December 6: The Adamses moved to the new Capitol in Philadelphia.

1791

April 18: Abigail Adams wrote from Philadelphia to her sister Mary Cranch "I will thank you to attend a little to my garden, have some sallid sown and whatever you think proper."[51]

October: In a letter to Abigail, Mary Cranch made what is the earliest known reference to the wash house, saying "upon the wash house we shall put a lock."[52]

1792

February: The North Precinct of Braintree was incorporated as the Town of Quincy. At that time the town had a population of 900 people, made up of less than 200 families.

1793

A corn crib, the first new building to be constructed on the grounds by the Adamses, was erected north of the mansion and east of the old farmhouse. Constructed of wood and placed in line with the farmhouse on the east lawn, the primary function of this structure was to store corn.[53]

1794

John Adams's diary mentioned hired men "hoeing potatoes in the lower garden."[54] This garden, which under John Quincy Adams and Charles Francis Adams would become a full vegetable garden, was sited in a location north of the drying yard, and south of the current site of the greenhouse. A wall ran along the north side of the garden and may have extended further.

1796

John Adams was elected for one term as President; John and Abigail were the first residents of the White House in Washington, D.C.

July 7: In a letter, Abigail asked her sister to get slips from the quince tree set out at the Old House.[55]

July 27: John Adams spoke of his men carting earth to fill "the hollow in the cowyard," referring to the area east of the house. Another enclosure stood between the stable and the house and was referred to as the paddock.[56]

August 19: John Adams wrote of clearing the large meadow north of the lower garden meadow for a cornfield. Using five men and up to ten yoke of oxen ploughing each day, it took five days to accomplish. John Adams noted:

> *It is astonishing that such a meadow could have lain so long in such a state. Brakes, hassock grass, Cranberry vines, Poke or Skunk cabbage, Button bushes, alder bushes, old stumps and Roots, Rocks, turtles, Eels, Frogs were the chief things to be found in it. But I presume that it may be made to produce Indian and English Grain, and English grass, especially herdsgrass in abundance. At least the Beauty of the meadow and the sweetness of it and the air over it will be improved.*[57]

Once the meadow was broken up, corn was planted. The field was sometimes referred to as the meadow cornfield. However, this area appears to have had persistent drainage problems, and some years the corn ran the risk of rotting.[58] Associated with the cornfield was a compost pile located below the lower garden wall.

September 7: John Adams hired a man to widen the brook for him; in his diary on September 7 he noted, "Stetson, widening the Brook to 7 feet at 9d. Pr. Rod and a dinner."[59]

1797

The Adamses began planning the construction of a new barn.

June: Abigail wrote of her interest in using the barn of Captain Benjamin Beale, next door, as a model.[60] She also expressed interest in building two barns, rather than one.

June 27: In a letter to Abigail Adams, Mary Cranch mentioned a "rosebush under your window."[61] Historian Skeen speculates that this is a reference to the white York Rose.

July 26: John Quincy Adams married Louisa Catherine Johnson.

October 5: The clothesyard is first mentioned in a letter to Mary Cranch.[62]

1798

The Adams Mansion property was assessed at a value of $6,280. By this time the central core of the Adams property included 8.5 acres north of the road and 99 acres to the south. The portion of the property north of Plymouth Road was listed as containing:

1 dwelling house, 2 stories, wood, 29' x 47'
1 wood house, 2 stories, wood, 15' x 54'
1 barn, 28' by 66'
1 corn barn, 18' x 30'

Across the Plymouth Road were 99 more acres with:

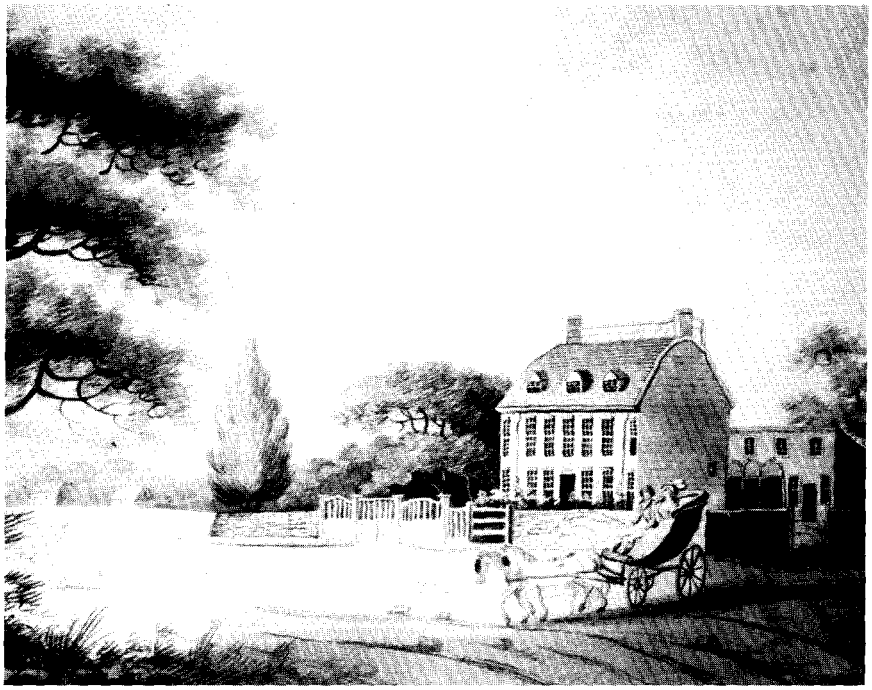
1 barn, 25' x 30'
1 barn, 20' x 25'

At that time, John Adams is recorded as owning sixteen other properties along with the "core area" of the Old House property, two of which may have been adjacent to the central portion of the property and five of which had tenant houses.[63]

December 14: John Adams wrote to Abigail that he wanted a plain barn, in line with the front of the Old House:

> *The barn must not be a monument of foppery. I should be content to have it 16–foot post. But if it is though advisable I suppose we can get . . . new posts long enough for 20 feet. I protest against two buildings—and all expensive ornament.*[64]

FIGURE 3
The earliest known illustration of John Adams's estate. Attached to the back of the original is a note written by Charles Francis Adams: "This is a representation of the Mansion at Braintree as it was when conveyed in September 1787 by Leonard Vassall Borland to John Adams. It seems to have been taken by E. Malcolm of New York in the year 1798, just before the great addition was made on the east end and the stable and barn were erected by John Adams, then president. The southern portico was also added. The eastern portico was added by me, and the barn was removed in 1846 by reason of the laying out of the railway. The stable was removed because of the laying out of the highway in 1873."



"BRAINTREE" BY E. MALCOLM, NEW YORK, MARCH 1798.

1797–99

The old farmhouse behind the mansion was renovated and enlarged from two rooms to four, with a new peaked roof and two new chimneys. The house included a farm kitchen, dairy and quarters for the tenant farmer. The northeast room in the enlarged building was constructed to serve as a library. Special shelves were constructed to house the President's collection, and the room served as his presidential office during the last three summers of his term.[65]

1799

The old Borland barn was taken down and a new barn and stable were located east of the house facing Plymouth Road. The building closest to the house was the stable, which measured 40.5' x 48' on Eaton's survey. The dimensions of the barn are unknown as it was removed prior to the 1849 survey.[66] Various views of the stable and barn indicate that they were similar in height and overall structure, although the stable had three doors while the barn had only one door and a hayloft.

With the conversion of the old woodshed into a farm kitchen, a new woodshed was erected immediately to the east of the farmhouse. Because wood was used extensively for heat and cooking, the woodshed was located as close to the house as possible.[67]

1797-99

A cider house and barn were built. According to historian Skeen, the exact location of this cider house and barn has not been determined. However, it appears likely that the cider house and barn occupied the one unmarked building which appears on the 1826 Eaton survey of the Adams estate to the east of the woodshed. In this drawing the building measured 56' x 20.5'. The shape of the building is shown as rectangular in some drawings and L-shaped in others. This building was demolished in the 1870s with the construction of Newport Avenue through the Adams property.

With the completion of the various farm buildings, the area to the east of the house came to serve as a farmyard, bounded by the woodshed, corncrib and cider barn on the north, and the barn and stable to the south. This area appears to have been covered with grass, for both John Adams and John Quincy Adams mention the grass being mowed there.[68] Behind the barn was a fenced enclosure thought to have been the cowyard.

November 13: Abigail Adams wrote to Cotton Tufts "the President hopes you will not omit to have eight or nine barrels of good late made cider, put up in the cellar for his own particular use."[69]

1800

During President Adams's term in office the Old House was nearly doubled in size with the construction of a spacious east wing. The new wing featured an entry, wide floor, a hallway and a long room on the ground floor, a similar arrangement on the second floor, and bedrooms on the third floor. Extensive alterations in the western/kitchen ell were also undertaken.

With the addition of the east wing the side fence was moved to the end of the new addition, enlarging the front yard. At some point after 1800, one or more horsechestnut trees were planted between the two front gates. John Quincy Adams's diaries mention of some other trees in the yard, including "althea trees before the Eastern door of the house" and plum trees.[70]

April 26: Abigail wrote to her sister "Do not let my flowers be neglected. Pray if you can, get me some stursion seed, double Larkspur, and Marble perue."[71]

1801

John Adams returned to the Old House as a permanent resident after his defeat in a run for a second term as president. At this time he focused his attention on farming the Old House property. Crops included corn, hay, potatoes and beans. Vegetables, herbs and fruit were included inside the boxwood hedge.

1801

May 8: Abigail wrote to Katharine Johnson:

> *The Beauties which my garden unfolds to my view from the window at which I now write tempt me to forget the past, and rejoice in the full bloom of the pear, the Apple, the plumb (sic) and peach, and the rich luxuriance of the grass plots, interspersed with the cowslip and daffy, and Callombine, (sic) all unite to awaken the most pleasing sensations.*[72]

July 21: John Adams wrote to his son, Thomas Boylston Adams, "the crops of hay have been abundant; upon this spot, where eight years ago we cut scarcely six tons, we now have thirty."[73] It is unclear whether this hay was grown on the portion of the Adams property to the north or south of Adams Street.

1809

John Quincy Adams was appointed minister to Russia.

1817–25

John Quincy Adams served as President Monroe's Secretary of State.

1818

Abigail Adams died of typhoid fever.

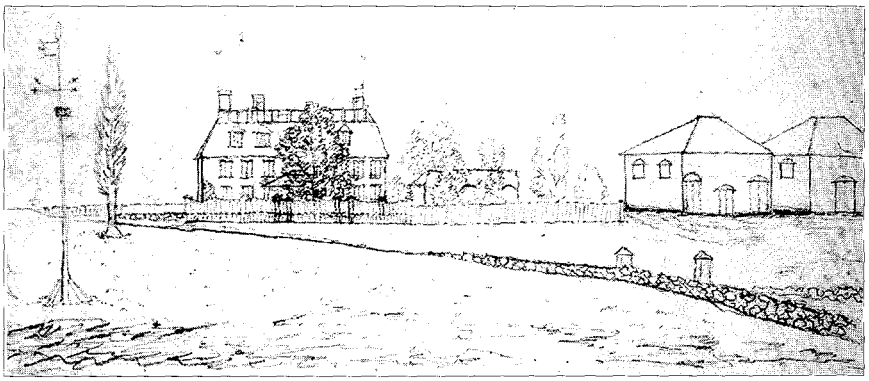
1820–21

The pond in the meadow was first dug by John Adams and was partially fed by water from Blacks Creek.

August 15: A description of a visit by West Point cadets to the home of John Adams mentions a field opposite the house and a grass lawn shaded by horsechestnuts in front of the house.[74]

October 19: John Adams noted, "a pond in my lower garden, which I had lately made from several never-failing springs, was filled with water. . ."[75] The pond helped to extinguish a fire at the Old House that year.

FIGURE 4
Drawn from a point on the south side of what would later be known as Adams Street, this sketch may provide the earliest view of the barn and stable constructed by John Adams c.1800. A single tree, nearly as tall as the house stands in the front yard, however; no such tree appears in the Malcolm view of 1798.

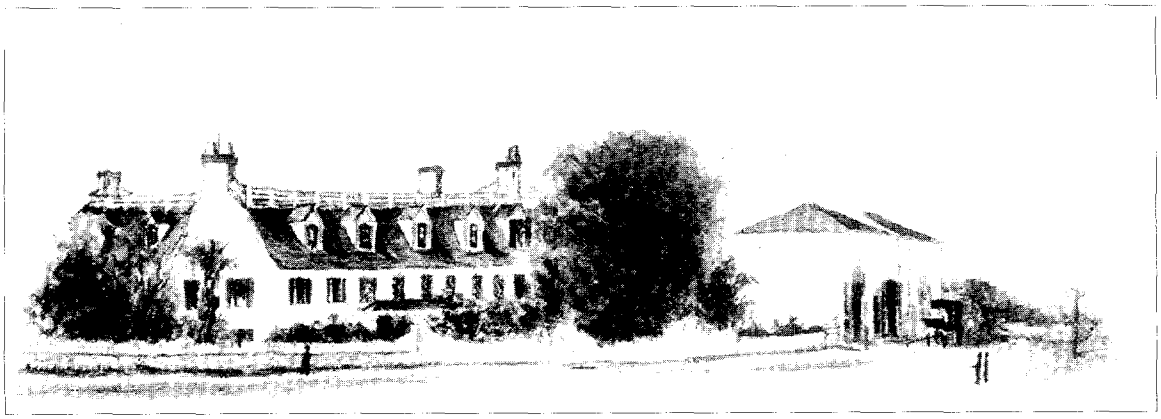


"SKETCH OF THE MANSION" BY ABIGAIL SMITH ADAMS, 1820.

1822

Spring: John Adams conveyed to the Town of Quincy seven tracts of Adams land. The intent of this gift was provide the town with sufficient revenue and stone (two of the plots had quarries on them) to construct a Stone Temple and a school. The Temple and School Fund was established on June 22, 1822.

October 10: The pond apparently dried up. John Adams wrote to his grandson that "We have been obliged to dig ditches in it six-feet-deep to come at any water."[76]



"SEAT OF HON. JOHN ADAMS" BY GEORGE WASHINGTON BEALE, 1820-1829.

FIGURE 5
The Old House and the two new barns appear particularly large in this image. Note the large tree in the front yard, which appears in the Abigail Smith Adams sketch (fig. 4).

1825

John Quincy Adams was elected President of the United States.

Spring: Journalist Anne Newport Royall described the home of John Adams:

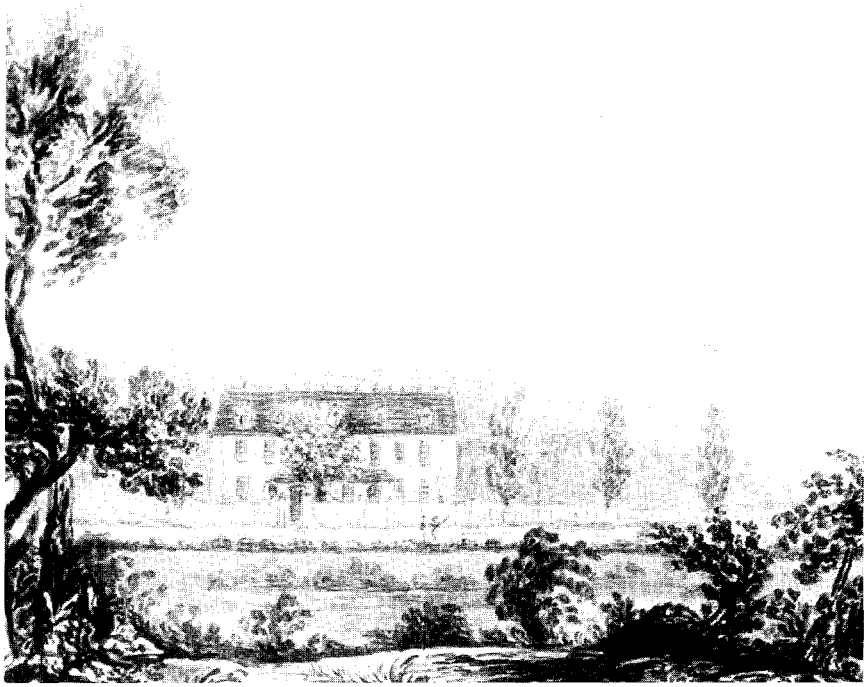
> *Mr. A. does not live exactly in the town, but a little to the right, about 200 yards from the road on this side of Quincy. He lives on a farm, which is kept in fine order and fitted out with barns, stables and carriage houses.*[77]

1826

April 10: The date given for the completion of the construction of Presidents Lane through the Adams property south of Adams Street.

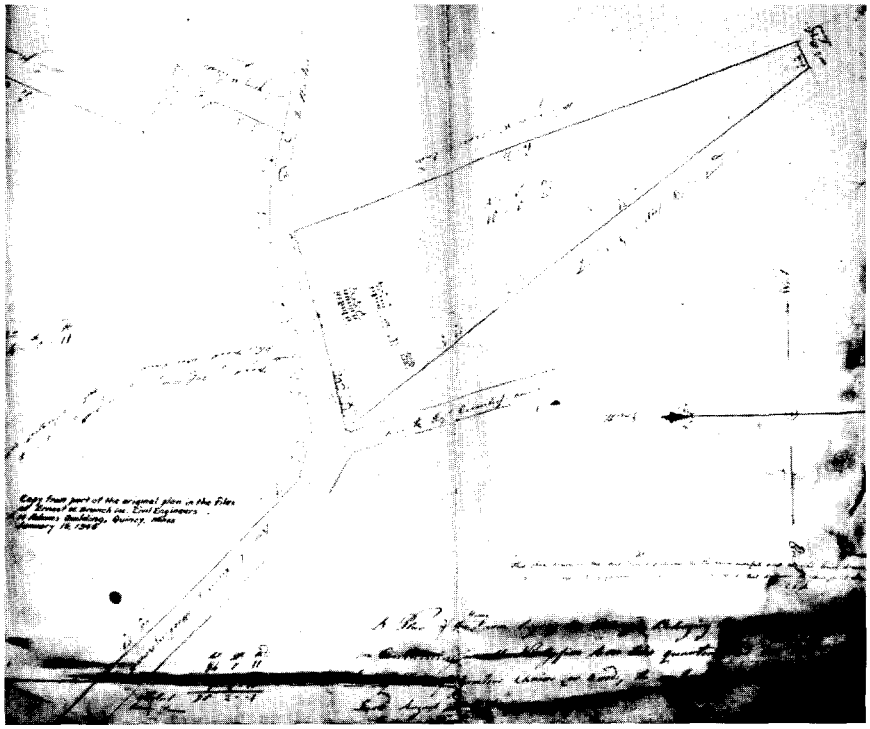
July 4: John Adams died at the age of 91.

FIGURE 6
Drawn from Presidents Hill, this image shows the land north of Adams Street as wild and overgrown, and the area north of the Adams house as open and undeveloped far into the distance. Quincy Bay and what may be Squantum are visible in the distance. The front of the house is marked by a white picket fence and a tall tree, and three deciduous trees mark the southern boundary of the east lawn.



"RESIDENCE OF JOHN ADAMS AND JOHN QUINCY ADAMS" BY ELIZA SUSAN QUINCY, 1823.

FIGURE 7
This survey was made following John Adams's death. All of the buildings, except the house and farmhouse, were built by John Adams while he held public office. The main house faces the Old Road to Boston. Enclosures, perhaps picket fences, appear to form a forecourt or front yard. The garden is to the southeast. Historian Skeen identified the buildings north of the house, from right to left, as farmhouse, woodshed, corn crib and cider barn. This plan notes that President's Lane, on the south side of Adams Street, had been laid out on April 10, 1826.



"PLAN OF THE ADAMS PLACE" BY MATTHEW WORTHINGTON, SURVEYOR, 1826.

John Quincy Adams Period
1826–1848

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Following the death of John Adams the Old House property passed to his son, John Quincy Adams (JQA), who was one year into his term as President of the United States. Because JQA was unable to take occupancy at that time, the property was rented to his brother, Thomas Boylston Adams, for the next three years. After completing his term of office, JQA and his wife, Louisa Catherine, adopted the Quincy property as their summer residence and stayed there regularly until his death in 1848.

JQA loved the Old House as his family home, but he was too engrossed in politics to give it much attention. Consequently, the period of his ownership was marked by little change. Indeed, in 1832, with the election of JQA as a member of the House of Representatives from Plymouth, the management of the estate was officially turned over to his son, Charles Francis Adams. In fact, relatively little construction occurred in this period. The wooden fence in front of the house was replaced by a new fence with square, granite posts. The east wing of the Old House was connected to the main portion with the addition of a two-story passageway and a back entry was added on. Finally, under the management Charles Francis, a stone wall was constructed around the boundaries of the Old House property.

Despite the relatively few building projects which occurred, the overall character and appearance of the Old House grounds changed considerably during JQA's tenure. The construction of the Old Colony Railroad Line through Quincy sliced a strip of land off of the east side of the property, forcing the removal of the old barn built by John Adams in 1799. This property reduction eventually prompted redesign of the entire site by Charles Francis. The newly constructed tracks presented a bleak prospect, as Charles Francis noted in 1845, ". . . the railroad takes away all of the rural appearance which this place once had, and gives it the vulgar look of a mere place of passing traffic. A sort of stage highway."[78]

A more important influence to the changing character of the property was JQA's evolving interest in tree cultivation—the Old House grounds provided the site for many of his horticultural endeavors. He planted a wide variety of trees including willow oaks, sweet gum, catalpa, honey locust, beech, chestnut, cherry, apple, ash, beech, buttonwood and others. As a result, one of the greatest impacts that JQA had on the Old House property was to transform it from relatively open space to well-planted and shady grounds.

JQA's interest in the natural sciences was well known to the rest of the Adams family. He recorded his horticultural experiments and observations compulsively, revealing an almost obsessive interest in the subject. He conducted experimental tree plantations at varying locations, including the site of the old summer house at the western end of the garden, the northwest corner of the garden itself, and the "Seminary," located in the grassy lawn area west of the house. A visitor to the Old House in 1854 (shortly after JQA's death) commented:

> *Most of the trees were raised by John Quincy Adams from the seeds, which he was in the habit of picking up in his wanderings. In this way he was an enthusiast in regard to all trees of the forest, differing in this respect from his father, who, as an agriculturist, was more inclined to cut down trees than to propagate them.*[79]

JQA's interest in horticulture was very much in line with a growing national interest in horticulture and botany that characterized the first half of the 19th century.[80] By the 1820s, arboreta and active horticultural societies had been established in several major cities including Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Periodicals originally aimed at farmers expanded their focus at this time to appeal to gardeners as well. The growing interest in plant material during this period reflected at least two quite distinct notions pervasive in American culture at that time. The first was a sense of pride, rooted in nationalism, in the wide variety of plant material in America, particularly the vast potential presented by new types of plants not yet codified by European scientists. The second concept, closely linked to the budding Romantic movement in the United States, was that horticulture and gardening, like natural scenery and fresh air, had a positive influence on the human character.[81]

According to historian Skeen, JQA regretted that his interest in trees had developed so late in life. Following his discovery of arboriculture and horticulture he devoted much his time at Quincy planting seeds and recording his observations. Indeed, he adopted a personal motto from Tacitus: "He plants trees for future generations," and he designed a seal with an oak leaf and acorn emblem.[82] JQA's thorough records and observations provide a wealth of information about the Old House's landscape that has not yet been fully researched. More importantly, JQA's extensive plantings were significant in laying the groundwork for the eventual transformation of the site by Charles Francis Adams from a relatively simple farm to a more refined, landscaped estate.

SITE CHRONOLOGY, 1826-1848

1826

July 4: With his father's death in 1826, JQA inherited the Adams mansion and approximately 90 acres of land. At this time, JQA was residing in the White House and the Adams house was occupied by Thomas Boylston Adams, who continued to rent the property until 1829.

July 13: JQA diary: "The charm which has always made this house to me an abode of enchantment is dissolved; and yet my attachment to it, and to the whole region round, is stronger than I ever felt it before."[83]

JQA set out his first experimental tree plantation in the foundation of the old summer house located at the west end of the garden. The seedling garden included shagbark hickory, walnut, oak, horse chestnut, peach, plum and apricot. Four years later he reported the presence of chestnut oak, horse chestnut, elm, peach, plum, shellbark, catalpa and willow growing in his informal nursery.[84]

July 23: JQA diary: "althea trees before the Eastern door of the house. . . ." [85]

1827

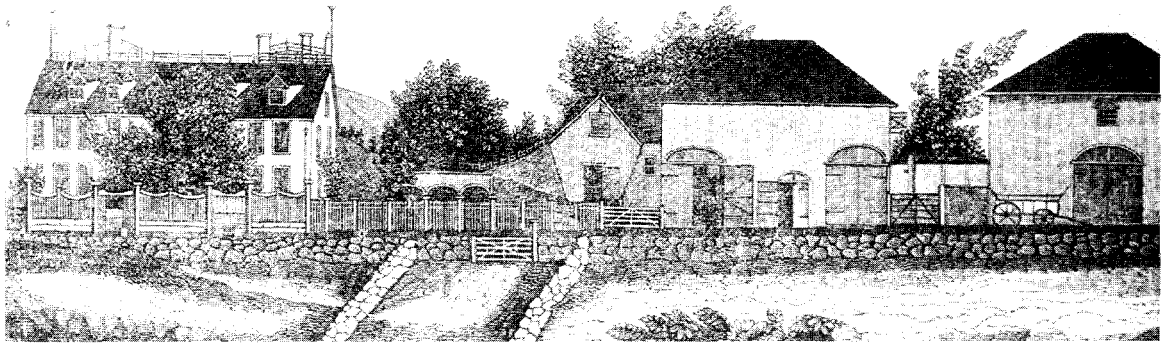
August 12: JQA recorded constructing four small wooden tubs and planting five tamarind stones and eight pear seeds in the first tub.[86]

October 3: JQA diary: "I have laid off a small strip of land from the northwest corner of the garden for a nursery of trees. It has been fenced off, and a gate has been opened into it from the garden. This afternoon I planted in it 20 rows of acorns, English and black and white oaks, beechplum and cherry stones, apple and pear seeds, whole peaches and apples, and horse chestnuts, also 10 Pennsylvania walnuts. . ."[87] This nursery was in the same area where Brooks Adams later had a rose garden, and where the York Rose stands today.[88]

1828

April 5: Charles Francis noted the planting of "Spanish chestnuts belonging to my father. We put down between 40 and 50 of them . . . and 2 cherries."[89]

April 15: Charles Francis noted the planting of one row of "40 English Oaks, 53 Elms of the third year growth . . . in the enclosure next to the house called the clothes yard sowed some shell backs and pecan nuts as an experiment."



"THE ADAMS SEAT IN QUINCY" BY MRS. G.W. WHITNEY, 1828.

FIGURE 8
This drawing shows the horse chestnuts in front of the house and several shade trees behind the farm house and wood shed. Note the new front gate and extended front wall. In the left corner is a tall wrought-iron weather vane, which was later installed on top of the stone library. Presidents Lane, lined with two stone walls, appears on the south side of Adams Street.

1828

April 15: CFA diary referred to a clothes yard located next to the house.

December 3: JQA was defeated by Thomas Jefferson in the presidential election.

1829

Spring: Thomas Boylston Adams's family moved out of the Old House and JQA took up residence.

April 18: Charles Francis Adams came to inspect the property after his uncle had moved out and noted that "the mansion looked melancholy and ill-used and sad."[90]

June 1: Charles Francis noted that "the sight of the old house and its condition made me sick. I felt disgusted at its extremely dismal condition."[91]

Summer: Charles Francis and his brother, John, resided with their father, JQA, in Quincy, while their mother, Louisa Catherine, remained in Washington.

October 30: Charles Francis wrote to his mother that his father "was rebuilding his kitchen in a modern and improved style."[92] The kitchen was extensively modernized and altered during this year.[93]

1830

April 13: Charles Francis noted the clearing of rosebushes for his father.[94]

July 23: A list of plants recorded by JQA included hyssop, mint, rue, sage and tansy.[95]

August 14: JQA wrote in his memoirs:

> *'He plants trees,' says Statius in his Synephebi, 'for the benefit of another century'; for what purpose, if the next century were not something to him? The diligent husbandman, then, shall plant trees upon which his own eyes shall never see a berry; and shall not a great man plant laws, institutions a commonwealth? I have had my share in planting laws and institutions according to the measure of my ability and opportunities. I would willingly have had more. My leisure is not imposed on me by the will of higher powers, to which I willingly submit, and I plant trees for the benefit of the next age, and of which my own eyes will never behold a berry. To raise forest trees requires the concurrence of two generations; and even of my lately planted nuts, seeds and stones, I may never taste the fruit.*[96]

August 31: JQA planted a catalpa in the orchard.[97]

Fall: JQA ordered and paid for extensive repairs to the house, including a new roof.

September 22: Charles Francis purchased fruit trees from the nursery of Mr. Warren.[98]

November 30: JQA was elected a member of the House of Representatives from his native district of Plymouth.

December 25: JQA found that he had to replace both the side and front fences. In a letter to Charles Francis, John Quincy noted that, upon the suggestion of his neighbor Benjamin Beale, he agreed to install stone posts with square granite caps for the front gate.[99]

December 29: Charles Francis, who was overseeing the work for his father, approved the idea of the stone fence, noting that the new fence would make "a permanent improvement in respect to the externals of the old house."[100]

1831

Charles Francis had the four large 14-inch square granite posts installed in the front gate to replace the wooden posts which had rotted. Afterwards he added the six hitching posts. He retained the low curbing of field stone between the posts and the wall along the south side of the formal garden and placed a rough picket-type fence on top of it.[101]

September 14: A letter prepared by William H. Seward, future Governor of New York, contains the following brief description of the Adams property:

> *Nothing I have seen is so beautiful as the environs of Boston. This place is distant from the city ten miles and very rural in its appearance. The mansion house . . . is a plain, two-story building, about 60 feet long, with a few venerable trees before it, and two doors of entrance in front.*[102]

1832

Charles Francis had the insides of the Old House painted and redecorated in 1832.[103]

February 27: John Quincy appointed Charles Francis as superintendent of all affairs in Quincy. John Quincy paid his son a wage of five percent of all receipts spent each quarter.[104] From this point until John Quincy's death in 1848 the maintenance of the Old House was a joint effort of the two men.

April 24: CFA diary:

> *I think this year and the last have done a good deal in the way of improving the old mansion. It looks more like a Gentleman's place. It has been done at some expense but on the whole pretty economically. The distribution of the money has been fully made up by the added value to the place. It had been so suffered to fall into neglect that in a few years nothing would have answered but a complete repair, which would have been equivalent to a new house.*[105]

July 10: Charles Francis wrote of "making a poor attempt to reset some of the box" in the formal garden.[106]

1833

June 17: Charles Francis referenced the "old Saint Michaels pear tree in the center of the garden."[107]

1833

May 3: JQA noted, "The Barn was removed from the Hill opposite to the House and set up in the yard, near the two others."[108] This relocated barn may have been one of the two small barns that were listed on the south side of the street in John Adams's 1789 tax evaluation. However, by 1849 this barn was not listed in Eaton's survey, so it appears to have been in this location for only a short time. There is no account of what happened to it. [109]

JQA's garden book from this year included a list of seedling trees and plants including "althea, apple, ash, beech, blackberry, chestnut, cherry, currant, elm, locust, maple, nectarine, oak, peach, pear, plum, raspberry, strawberry, thimbleberry, walnut, horse chestnut, buttonwood, vine, nettle."[110] However, it is unclear whether all of these trees grew to full size and were set out.

1834

JQA laid out an area called "the Seminary" for his seedling trees in the grassy yard area to the east of the house and enclosed by the woodshed, corncrib, cider barn and stable. This area consisted of eight rows of eight rings, four feet in diameter, filled with manure and soft dirt. Each of these rings was planted with a variety of seeds, including peach and plum stone, acorns and walnuts. The rows ran parallel to Adams Street.[111]

July 29: JQA planted dwarf fruit trees.[112]

1835

JQA laid out a border of flowers along the east side of the house where some flowers were already growing. However, this bed was removed when the porch was added to the east side of the house in 1852.

August 24: JQA diary: "I cannot bring myself to take much interest in flowers because they pass off and perish leaving nothing behind—but as the trees are now seemingly as evanescent as the petal of a rose, and which 100 years from now will bear delicious fruit or afford a shelter and a shade of after ages of men, these yield me delight."[113]

May 17: JQA diary: "peach and pear trees in the patch fronting my chamber window." [114]

June 24: JQA diary: "I have six cherry trees well laden with fruit, of which the birds have already taken a large portion."[115]

June 25: JQA diary: "We had this day a tart from cherries of our garden and a dish of very good strawberries, the first ripe. . . ."[116]

1836

JQA built a two-story north passage to connect the east wing with the old part of the house and a back entry that no longer exists. The north passage connected the kitchen ell with the east wing without walking through all of the other rooms in the house. This portico was later removed by Brooks Adams.

Charles Francis began to plan a new house on Presidents Hill, about a quarter mile from the Old House.

FIGURE 9
This image shows the house with farm buildings arranged around an open work yard. Adams Street appears to be entirely unpaved. The area to the north of the house extends to open fields divided by fences; a few large homes appear in the distance. Note that a porch has been added to the front of the house.

"A VIEW OF THE RESIDENCE OF LATE PRESIDENT ADAMS AT QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS" BY SARAH APTHORP, 1837.

1837

July 20: JQA attempted to open up the pond again. He wrote, "French began the clearing out of the ditch from the pond North of the House to the Brook."[117]

Charles Francis built a new house on Presidents Hill.

1839

June 1: JQA diary: "apricot tree in the center of the garden."[118]

June 1: JQA set out a "red flowering maple" in his nursery.[119]

1839

August 31: An issue of Niles National Register entitled "A Distinguished Horticulturalist" noted:

> *The public labors of ex-president Adams give the public some idea of the variety of his pursuits and studies—but a visit to his residence only can show how the venerable ex-president spends his leisure . . . The orchard proper and garden contain some descriptions of fruit no where else to be found in the country . . . new descriptions of apples, pears, etc. have been introduced by grafting.*[120]

1841	Horticulturist Andrew Jackson Downing visited the Adams family and presented them with a copy of his recent work, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, with a personal dedication to John Quincy.
	May 17: JQA diary: "plum tree near the southwest corner of our house."[121]
1841–45	Charles Francis surrounded the property boundaries and both sides of Presidents Lane with a stone wall. [122]
1843	June 23: JQA diary refers to a tool shed on the north side of the garden.[123]
	August 15: JQA diary: "My garden has been this year so much neglected that we have not the common vegetables, peas and beans, carrots and beets, but must purchase them."[124]
	August 15: JQA diary notes that the Althea trees in front of the eastern door of the house will have to be removed.
	October 19: JQA diary notes John Kirk taking down the fence between the garden and the orchard.[125]
1844	The Old Colony Line was built through Quincy, slicing off a strip of land on the eastern side of the Adams property for a right-of-way. This left approximately 14 acres in the Old House site.
	July 29: JQA diary notes that the track was located within ten feet of the large barn built by John Adams in 1799, putting it in danger of being set on fire.[126]
	September 7: JQA noted planting fruit trees in his garden.[127]
	December 4: The Adamses received $6, 090.45 for land taken for the construction of the Old Colony Line.[128]
1844–45	Architect Alexander Jackson Davis, at Charles Francis's request, visits Quincy to look at house sites including the Mount Wollaston property.
1845	June 30: JQA's notes indicate a mulberry by the western window and "Two young mazzard (cherry trees) in front of our western window."[129]
	July 28: JQA diary refers to a mulberry shading the cherry tree at the kitchen garden gate.[130]

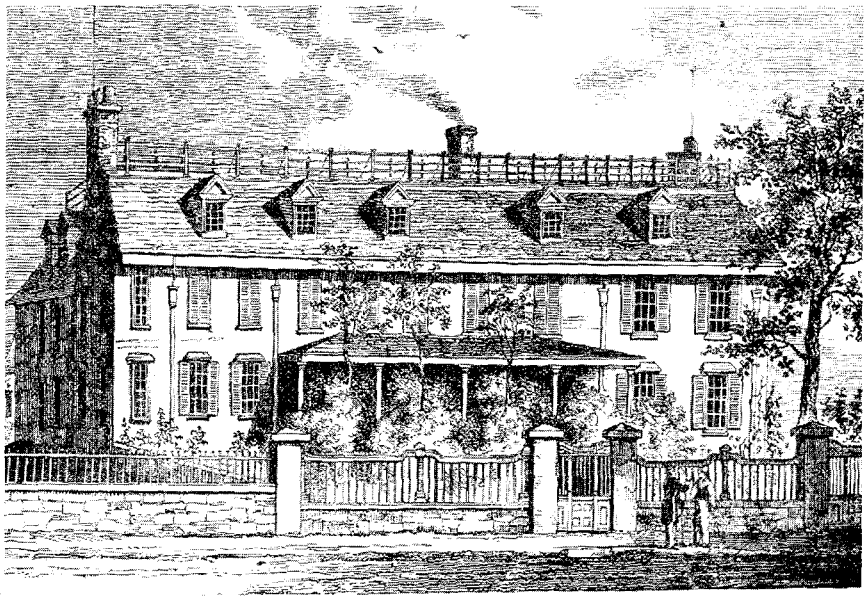
1845 September 26: Charles Francis noted in his diary that the intrusion of the railroad into the property disrupted its rural appearance.

1846 April 7: The Old Colony agreed that the large barn built by John Adams in 1799 was in danger by the relocated track and would pay damages for its demolition.

April 14: Charles Francis recorded that the old barn was sold at auction.[137]

1848 February 23: JQA died in Washington.

FIGURE 10
The front of the property is enclosed by a low stone wall topped by a picket fence. A low wall extends from this front wall to the northwest corner of the house. The front of the house is filled with brushy vegetation, marked by several tall trees, one to the right of the gate.



"RESIDENCE OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS" WOODCUT, ARTIST UNKNOWN, 1846.

Charles Francis Adams Period
1848–1886

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Following the death of John Quincy Adams in 1849 the Old House was inherited by his son, Charles Francis Adams. Charles Francis had spent a considerable amount of time at the Old House as a child during summer visits and with his grandparents while his parents were abroad. Charles Francis graduated from Harvard College in 1825 and entered into the practice of law a few years later.

In 1829, Charles Francis Adams married Abigail Brown Brooks, the daughter of Boston millionaire Peter Chardon Brooks. Initially, the couple lived in Boston and passed each summer in Quincy. In 1832, John Quincy, engrossed with his affairs in Washington, appointed Charles Francis as agent for the estate. In 1837 Charles and Abigail moved their family from Boston to a new house five minutes from the Old House on Presidents Hill. In 1840 Charles Francis was elected to the Massachusetts Legislature, serving three years in the House and two years in the Senate.

Following the death of his father, Charles Francis moved into the mansion. According to historian Helen Nelson, Charles Francis took over the Quincy property with a determination to improve it.[132] Passages in Charles's diary indicate that he felt that the burden and expense of the house was so great that it would be better to simply tear it down. However, he decided to improve the estate in case his mother wanted to move back from Washington, D.C. With the death of his father-in-law, Charles Francis and his wife inherited a great deal of money. This allowed them the luxury of properly maintaining both their home in Boston and their Quincy estate.[133]

Aided by his wife's money, Charles Francis undertook a program of gradual but extensive repairs, "so necessary to the well being of the establishment and to its preservation for the future."[134] As soon as he moved into the house, Charles Francis had it painted grey with green shutters and white trim. The garden wall was rebuilt, the barn was repaired and several older sheds were torn down. Running water was brought into the house, and later, in 1861, gas pipes were installed. Repairs were made to the paneled room and the east wing of the house. A large portico was added to the east side of the house, and the front portico was replaced. On the surrounding grounds, Charles Francis hoped to restore the estate to a productive farm, like his grandfather had run. Around 1850 he attempted to install a drainage system in the meadow. In 1851 he reported that he was breaking up the lower meadow to plant turnips.

Although dutiful about improving the Old House and its grounds, Charles Francis was not without regrets about the cost of the effort. In 1852 he wrote:

> *The quantity of labor and expense that is called for to bring these places into condition is at last wearing me out. . . . Certainly estates in the country can be of little or no value to their possessors. They may be an accumulating fund to a later generation. None of my children could afford to hold mine.*[135]

After the age of 50, Charles Francis Adams' political career took off, resulting in an interruption in his attention to the Old House property. In 1858 he was nominated for the United States Congress, where he served until 1860. In 1861, Charles Francis was appointed Ambassador to Great Britain by President

Abraham Lincoln and he remained in that post for the next seven years. Upon his return, he found the house in good shape, noting that "The Old House looked much as it did; the trees all around have grown so that the whole aspect of the scene is more elegant and cultivated than before."[136] However, they soon found that the Old House did not provide enough space for their household, and lacked a level of style to which they had become accustomed. Charles Francis's son, Henry, thought that the renovation plans were misguided, noting in 1869 that "They are trying to make their house habitable, but I never was in such a wretched old trap, for it hasn't even the merit of being well-built."[137]

In light of this, Charles Francis embarked on an ambitious program of improvements for the estate. In the next several years he implemented a series of changes that transformed the character of the property from a country farm to a Victorian estate. The multi-purpose farmhouse behind the Old House was demolished, and a kitchen ell and service quarters were added to the rear of the house. Architect Edward Cabot Clark was hired to design a stone library to house the family papers, which was constructed on the edge of the garden a few steps from the northwest corner of the house. With the construction of the library the vegetable portion of the garden was removed; from that time on the garden was entirely devoted to flowers. Apparently, the shift from vegetables to flowers was intentional, reflecting Abigail Brooks Adams's great interest in flowers.

In the midst of all of these changes Charles Francis was called to Geneva to serve as a member of the Geneva Arbitration Tribunal to settle the Alabama Claims (1871-72). While in Europe, Charles Francis received notice that his already diminished property was to be further reduced through the construction of Newport Avenue to the east. Consequently, upon his return, various farm buildings located along the eastern boundary of the property were removed and replaced with a stone carriage house and stable. Associated with this effort, a decorative granite wall was built marking the property boundary along Newport Avenue and Adams Street, and a greenhouse was built on the north side of the property.

In addition to the renovations and construction of new buildings, Charles Francis continued his father's planting of trees around the estate and he purchased many seedlings locally. Charles Francis knew a variety of nurserymen and regularly attended meetings of the Horticultural Society. Indeed, Henry A.S. Dearborn, a nurseryman and first president of the Horticultural Society, was a close friend of Charles Francis.

In transforming the Old House property into a gentleman's farm, Charles Francis followed a trend among the wealthy and influential which persisted through the 19th century. For families who already owned farmland, this transformation made sense particularly in light of the decline of small-scale farming in the eastern United States. Competition with the large midwestern farms, development pressure and pollution all worked together to prevent New England farms from realizing any reasonable profit. The growing popularity of country living was also a response to the growth of cities and their increasingly crowded and dirty conditions. By the middle of the 19th century an active social reform movement emphasized the benefits of rural settings as an antidote to city living, capable of healing physical and—more importantly—spiritual ailments.

The establishment of country seats by prominent families such as the Adamses was widespread. In 1851, the editor of the *American Agriculturalist* reported, "Within the past 12 years the number of country houses for gentlemen on the banks of the Hudson river has greatly increased, and the style of them has undergone an entire change."[138] On Long Island, the estate of William Floyd, signer of the Declaration of Independence, ceased to be farmed by 1880 and was used by his descendants as a summer home and hunting ground. Closer to Quincy and the Old House, Senator Daniel Webster purchased a modest country farm in Marshfield, Massachusetts in

1841 and similarly transformed it into a gentleman's seat through the construction of new outbuildings, a library, gardens and a decorative pond.[139]

Two of the leading proponents of the establishment of country seats were the architect Alexander Jackson Davis and the horticulturist Andrew Jackson Downing. In his seminal 1837 publication *Rural Residences*, Davis avidly promoted the new taste for picturesque suburban villas. Downing, author of *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America* (1841) and *Cottage Residences; or a Series of Designs for Rural Cottages and Cottage Villas and their Gardens and Grounds* (1844), enhanced the notions put forth by Davis by providing advice on the laying out of country seats. Downing was a distinguished horticulturist who designed several estates on the Hudson River and was an outspoken advocate for the creation of public parks.

As defined by Davis, Downing and others, the model country seat had various typical characteristics, many of which were adopted by Charles Francis in his work on the Old House property. These included the use of windows, piazzas and porches to provide abundant natural light, and the use of exterior paints in soft neutral tones such as grey or fawn. The grounds ideally included flower gardens, a greenhouse, a hobby farm and a wide variety of plant material.[140]

Although Charles Francis never actually hired Andrew Jackson Davis, he corresponded with the architect extensively about the possibility of constructing a new family home in Mount Wollaston, and in 1845 Davis came to Quincy for a site visit and consultation. Likewise, Charles Francis had ties with the noted horticulturist Andrew Jackson Downing who visited the Old House in 1841 and 1845. Although the relationship is unclear, it appears that both Davis's and Downing's ideas may have influenced Charles Francis's transformation of the Old House grounds.[141]

Charles Francis did not enjoy the confusion, delays and cost of all of his work, and he was anxious about the uncertain future of a country seat located in the increasingly populous City of Quincy. The second half of the 19th century in Quincy was characterized by considerable industrial growth and the beginnings of suburban development. Between 1840 and 1890 the population more than tripled, reaching 16,726 by 1890. The Old Colony Railroad provided increasingly regular service from Boston to Plymouth, cutting right through the east side of the Adams property. When the work was done in 1873 Charles Francis wished that he had built his house and library at Mount Wollaston after all.[142] He wondered who would take care of the place after he died, and noted that "An ancestral mansion in this country is an absurdity."[143] When the transformation of the estate was complete Charles Francis declared that no further changes should occur. Remarkably, despite a reduction in the overall size of the Adams property, what remains of the Old House landscape today largely reflects what was there at the end of Charles Francis's lifetime.

SITE CHRONOLOGY, 1848-1886

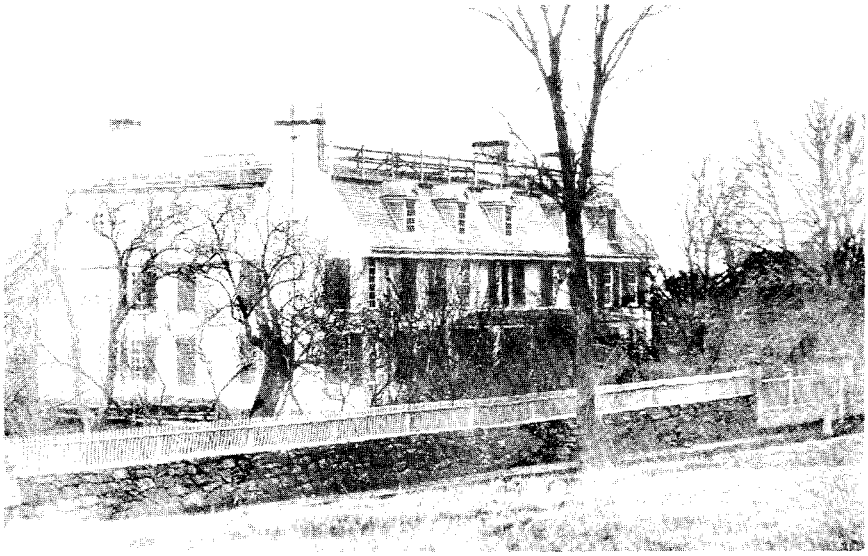
1848

Within the Old House itself, a force pump and system of running water were installed and kitchen facilities were greatly improved. The mahogany parlor was "restored," and the rotted floor joists in the East Wing were replaced.

1849

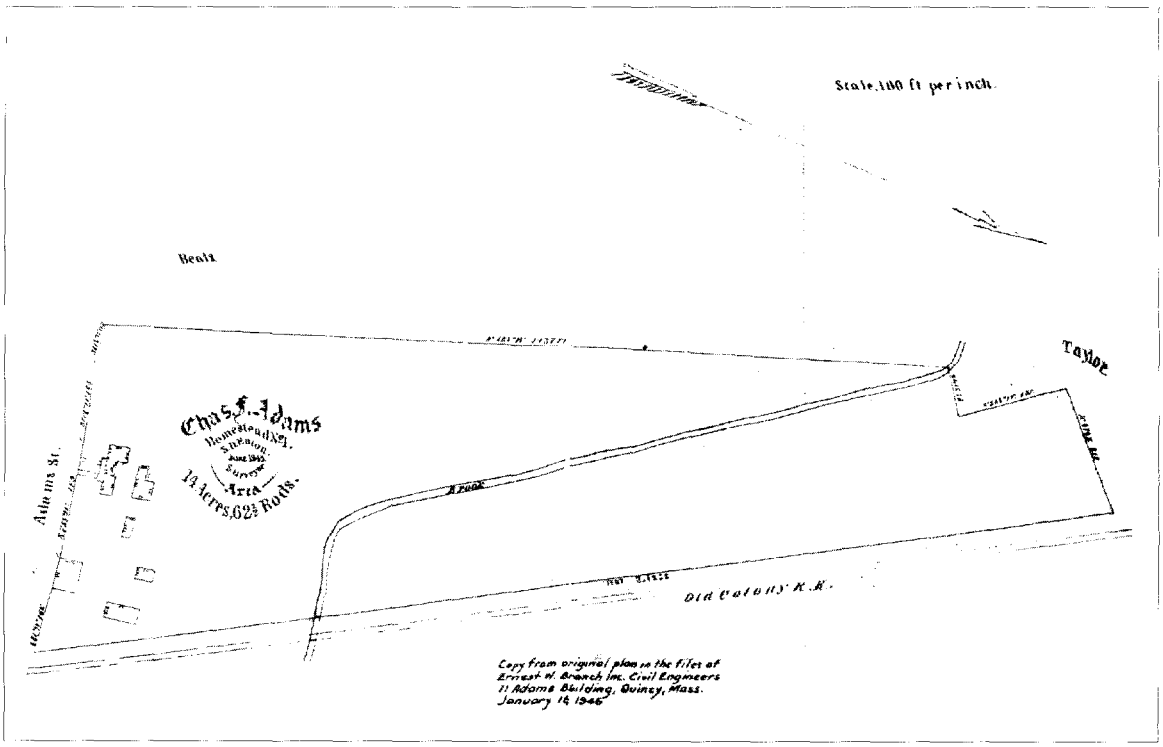
May 21: Charles Francis moved his family into the Old House.

According to Brooks Adams, Charles Francis planted two or three elm trees in front of the house. "Mr. Adams thought that elms in front of the house were particularly well suited and he liked them trimmed high so that they would not interfere with the view of the house."[144]



"DAGUERREOTYPE OF OLD HOUSE" BY MR. WHIPPLE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1849.

FIGURE 11
One of the earliest (if not the earliest) photographs of Old House, taken from across Adams Street, slightly to the southwest of the front of the house. The front yard is planted with several trees. Other trees are shown lining the front wall on the street side of the garden. As in earlier images, the front wall is still constructed with a stone base topped with a low picket fence. The hitching posts are clearly visible in front of the front gate. The low wall extending from the southwest corner of the house to the front wall appears to be standing. The windmill shown in earlier images as standing southeast of the house is not visible.



PLAN OF CHARLES FRANCES ADAMS'S HOMESTEAD. SURVEYED BY S.D. EATON, JUNE 1849.

FIGURE 12

This plan shows the entire 14+-acre Adams lot including all of the farm buildings to the north and east. Each building is marked with its exact dimension, as are all of the lot boundaries. Of interest is the absence of the barn, which formerly sat adjacent to the stable but was removed in 1846 with the construction of the Old Colony Line. This plan shows the full extent of the land to the north of the Old House, as well as the route of the Furnace Brook prior to its realignment.

1850s

Charles Francis may have added a barn or shed onto the old cider house in the 1850s, making it L-shaped.[145]

1850

August 22: CFA diary: "I am making cross drains after the fashion pointed out in the English books, with great doubt whether they will do."[146]

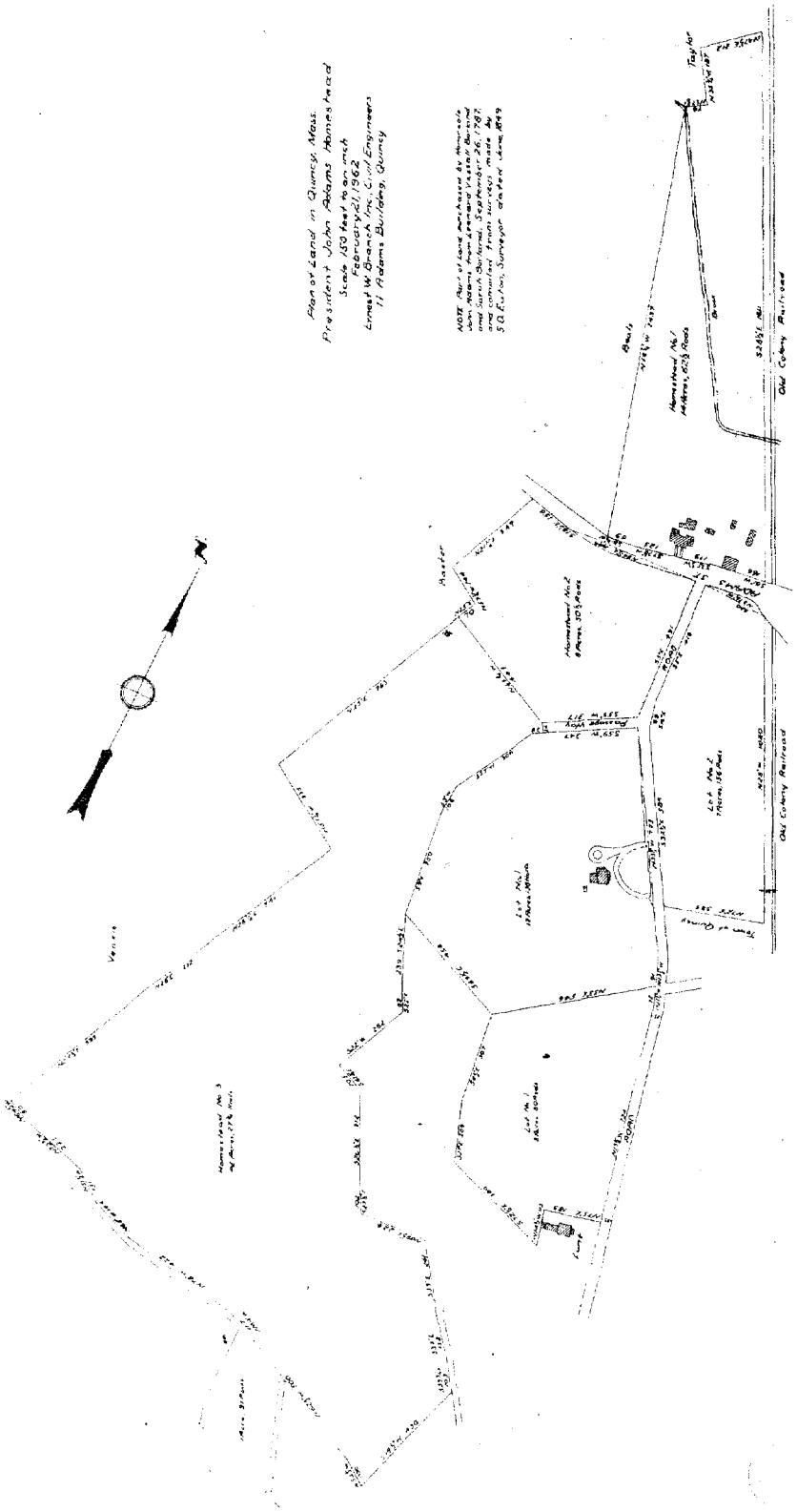
September 10: Charles Francis restored a well which had been filled up for many years. [147]

1851

June 24: Charles Francis reclaimed the meadow below the house, broke it up for planting and sowed a field of turnips.[148]

Historian Skeen speculates that the tool shed was removed prior to this date.[149]

FIGURE 13
A portion of the Eaton Survey of 1849 showing the extent of the Adams holdings associated with the Old House at the time of John Quincy Adams's death. Redrawn by Ernest Branch in 1962.



A PORTION OF THE EATON SURVEY OF 1849.

"VIEW IN OILS" BY FRANKENSTEIN, 1849.

FIGURE 14
This painting of the Adams Old House was executed from a point slightly east of the house. What may be the young elm trees planted by Charles Francis around 1849 are shown planted in a row parallel to the front wall east of the front gate. The front wall and hitching posts are prominently featured.

1852

February 3: Charles Francis observed that the floors in the entry and long room were in bad condition and had to be removed.[150]

Spring: A porch was added to the east side of the house, forcing the removal of an old flower bed. The rings of plants that made up John Quincy Adam's "seminary" had been removed and replaced with a smooth lawn by this time.[151]

July 3: Charles Francis's financial records reveal the sale of an old fence, possibly the one that enclosed the eastern side of the front yard and was removed when the east portico was added.[152]

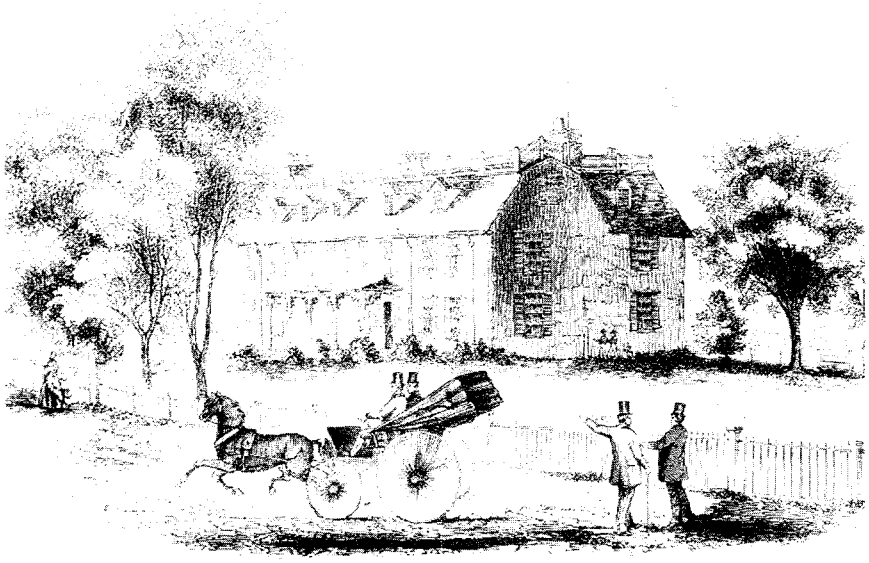
August 8: Abigail Brooks Adams wrote to Charles Francis noting the condition of the lawn:

> *Our lawn by the new portico has not been so green this summer. The rain . . . has done wonders. . . . The mushrooms are so thick by the house that the ground by the back fence is white, and I am sure that there are enough for as big a dish as we ever had.*[153]

1854

Charles Francis had a small barn erected along the southeast corner property line, parallel to the Old Colony Railroad Line. This structure was built presumably to replace the barn which was removed with the construction of the Old Colony Line.[154]

FIGURE 15
A view of the Adams house from the east. Note the low picket fence extending from the northeast corner of the house and what appears to be a lightning rod affixed to the east side. The front yard and east lawn appear fairly open. The east portico is not shown, indicating that the picture may have been drawn originally earlier than 1852.



"VIEW OF THE ADAMS MANSION AT QUINCY" ENGRAVING BY MALLORY, 1852.

1855

Homes of American Statesmen includes the following description of the grounds at the Adams Old House:

> *The garden lies on the north, contiguous to the house, and connects with a lawn, narrow in front of the house but widening considerably in front of it. The whole is enclosed on the roadside by a solid wall of Quincy granite some six feet high. It embraces an ornamental and kitchen garden, the former occupying the side near the road and the latter extending by the side and beyond the kitchen and offices to an open meadow and orchard. The principal walk is through the ornamental portion of the garden, parallel with the road, and terminates at a border of thrifty forest trees, disposed, as they should be, without any regard to order. From the above-mentioned another strikes out at a right angle, and skirts the border of the trees 'till (sic) it disappears in the expanse of meadow. Most of the trees were raised by John Quincy Adams from the seeds, which he was in the habit of picking up in his wanderings. The most particular interest attaches to a shagbark, which he planted more than 50 years ago. It stands near the angle of the two alleys. In this tree he took particular satisfaction.*[155]

1855

The same article also contains a description of the fence along Adams Street as it looked in the 19th century: "a low stone wall, surmounted by a light wooden fence of an obsolete fashion, with two gates in the same style, leading to the two front doors."[156]

1859

February 14: Charles Frances placed a large order with a plant nursery, Messrs William Urquart and Sons. Dundee, Scotland:

1000 Scotch firs	at 4s
1000 Beech	at 8s
1000 Larch	at 12s
1000 Pinaster	at 10s
3000 Norway Spruce	at 2.6
2000 Austrian Pine	at 3.6
3000 Larch 2 yrs	at 2.6
200 Pinus Cembra	at 2.6
100 Cephalonia	at 12.6
200 Loinici	at 3.6

He noted in the order: "This will do for an experiment. If it succeeds tolerably as I am laying out an Estate, I may need a good many more another season." The order was delivered in May of 1859.

1861–68

An extended break in the improvements to the estate occurred between 1861 and 1868, during which time Charles Francis served as ambassador to the Court of Saint James.

1865

Tax Valuation Records for the property of Charles Francis Adams listed the following possessions: plates, carriages and furnishings, along with 43 cows, 5 horses, 6 oxen, 5 pigs. Property listed included:[157]

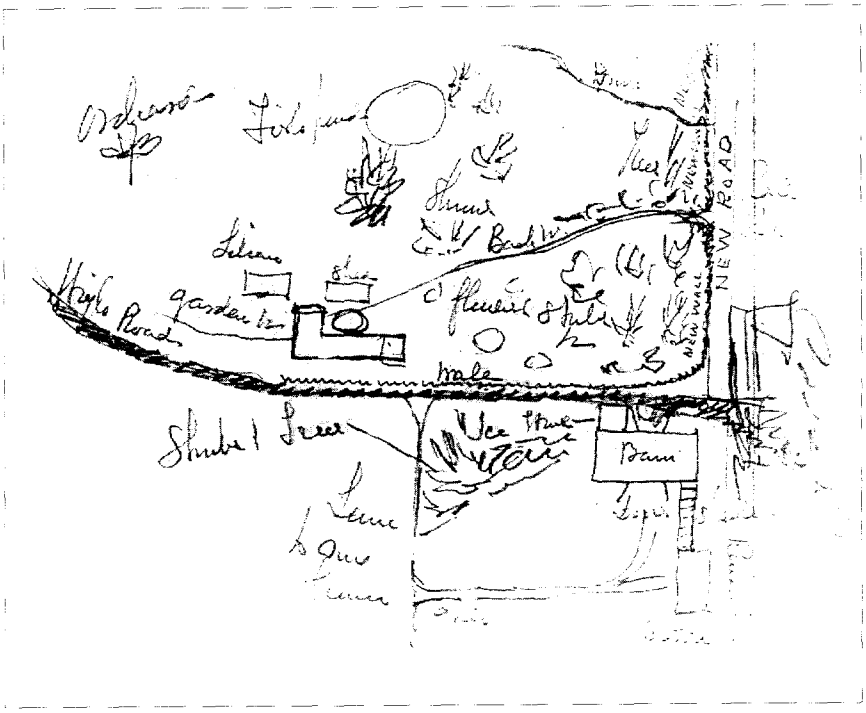
Buildings	Value	Land	Value
Home Place	$5000	65 acres with same	$14000
Farm House	$1500	36 Acres Salt Marsh	$3000
2 Barns	$100	360 acres woodland	$11000
Other Buildings	$200		
House on Hill	$7000	17 acres land with same	$7000
House at Mt. Wollaston	$7000	397 acres Wollaston Farm	$35000
2 Barns	$3500	10 acres—Bob Spear	$8000

1868

July 9: Upon his return to Quincy, Charles Francis noted the property as appearing more elegant and cultivated than before.

November 26: An article appeared in the *Cincinnati Commercial* describing the Adams's homestead: "Its front is shaded by noble old elms, and the little plat beneath is tastefully laid out as a flower garden."[158]

FIGURE 16
Concept for the reorganization of the Old House grounds in light of the proposed construction of Newport Avenue along the site's eastern boundary. It proposes to place a new barn and ice house on Adams land south of Adams Street, which did not happen. This plan also proposes the construction of a new wall along the site's eastern boundary.



"CHANGES RECOMMENDED FOR THE OLD HOUSE GROUNDS"
BY JOHN QUINCY ADAMS II, 1865.

1869

Spring: Charles Francis hired the architect Edward Cabot to draw up plans for a large addition beyond the kitchen and to design the new Stone Library. Initially, a site for the library was proposed behind the Old House in the approximate location of the old farmhouse. Because a well already occupied this location, a site was selected in the corner of the old garden, reducing its size.[159]

April 6: The wash house and chimney (attached to the farmhouse) were removed to make room for the construction of the servants wing on the house.[160]

Summer: The new servants wing on the north side of the house was completed. This structure included a laundry room, two maids rooms, a bathroom, a hall and cellar.

1869

September 6: A well pump in the orchard was restored to increase water supply.[161]

September 23: The old farmhouse was sold at auction and removed from the premises.[162] Its removal opened a view of the meadow north of the house.

October 13: The cellar hole left from the farmhouse was filled.[163]

October 14: Work on the library foundation began.[164]

1870

Charles Francis replaced the wooden fence mounted atop the front entry wall with a new wooden fence of lattice construction.[165]

April: Construction on the stone library resumed.[166]

September: The stone library was completed.[167] It measured 38' x 25', and was constructed with stone and brick walls, and a slate roof. The vegetable portion of the garden was removed, and from that time on the garden was entirely devoted to flowers.[168] It seems likely that at this time the low wall extending from the southwest corner of the house to the front entry wall, setting off the garden, was removed.

1871

September 6: Charles Francis noted in his diary that he planted trees on the slope behind the house, and maples and tupelos in the meadow.[169]

October: Charles Francis received notice of a possible land taking of 50 additional feet along the railroad bed for the development of a new road (Newport Avenue). The taking would require the removal of the ice house, cider house and barn.

November 14: Charles Francis was abruptly called away to Geneva to settle the Alabama Claims.

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE FRONT OF THE OLD HOUSE, 1870.

FIGURE 17
Charles Francis's new lattice-work fence and entry gates are clearly visible, as is the new east portico. The elm trees in front of the house are quite large. The Beale House is visible through the woods in the distance. The stone boundary wall appears higher than in earlier images.

1871 December 18: John Quincy Adams II wrote to his father that he was going to have the ice house refilled since the County Commissioner had made no decision about when the new road would be built.[170]

1872 June: A plan was completed by the County Engineer's Office, Norfolk County Courthouse, showing the proposed taking of a 50-foot strip of land from the eastern boundary of the Adams property for the construction of Newport Avenue.

November: Charles Francis and his family returned from Geneva.

1873 January–February: Charles Francis met with the architectural firm of Cummings and Sears to discuss the design of a new structure providing stables for horses, cows and goats, a carriage room, hay loft and quarters for the coachman. The purpose of this building was to replace the buildings slated for removal in association with the construction of Newport Avenue (the farmhouse, cider-house, corn crib, barn and ice house).

April 28: Ground was broken for the carriage house.[171]

April 30: CFA diary: "The antiquated cider-house is no more. Who would know this place as my old grandfather's which I lived in 55 years ago, one of a large family of inmates."[172]

August 4: Grading was undertaken around the carriage house site, probably for a driveway, and a well was dug for the stable.[173] As built, the driveway entered from Newport Avenue along the south side of the carriage house and curved around to its main entrance, where the carriages were stored. Another entrance was also constructed which lead from Newport Avenue directly to the back door of the house. South of the driveway the ground was leveled off for a lawn which extended east and north to the new boundary.

1873 September 22: Charles Francis's earliest reference to the greenhouse, which is presumed to have been built this year: "the fruit is gone, and a greenhouse erected which furnishes flowers that cost more than they are worth winter or summer."[174] It is unclear whether the current greenhouse is the same structure because historical images of the structure look markedly different from its current appearance. However, if the greenhouse has been replaced, it appears that the original location has been retained.[175]

November 6: The old woodshed was relocated from the northern corner of the Old House to the eastern boundary of the property.[176]

November: The ice house and corn crib were removed from their location along the eastern boundary of the Adams property to make way for the construction of Newport Avenue.[177]

1874

January 1: The new stable was ready for its tenants.[178] As built, the carriage house was a two-story, U-shaped structure measuring 95' x 50'. The stone walls were interlaced with brick strips and the roof was clad with different-colored slates. A cupola and weather vane crowned the top of the building. The stable and coachman's quarters each occupied a wing, with the carriage room between them. Apparently for many years a corral for cows and goats stood next to the north side of the building.

January 1: Charles Francis noted in his diary his plans to remove the barn that he had erected in 1854 along the eastern boundary of the property and fill in front of the boundary wall.[179] The front boundary wall was extended east from the house to the corner of the lot and north along Newport Avenue to the woodshed.[180]

April 13: The old stable facing Adams Street had been removed.[181]

1879

August 4: New York Times article entitled *Charles Francis Adams, A Great American Statesman*, mentioned a "well-kept gravel walk and tall hedges of carefully-clipped boxwood" in the garden, but made no reference to flowers.[182]

1880s

Charles Francis planted a variety of trees on the east lawn.[183]

The Adams Family Trust was established to subdivide and sell Adams land south of Adams Street on Presidents Hill.

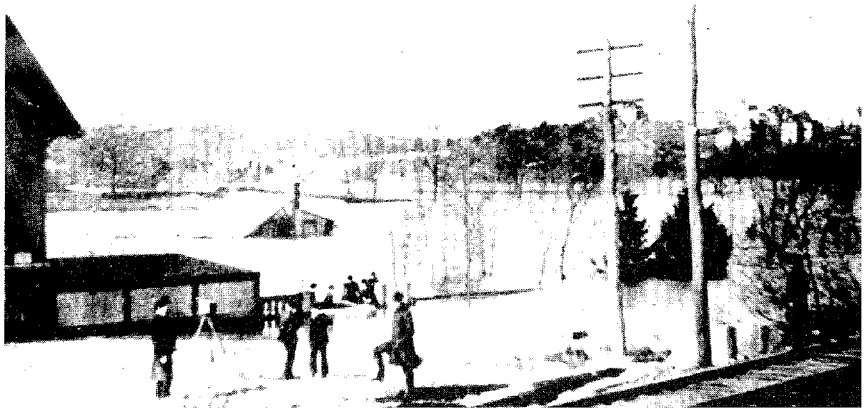
FIGURE 18
Taken from a point across Adams Street, this photograph provides a clear view of the latticed front entry gate installed by Charles Francis Adams. The elm trees on the south side of Adams Street appear to be banded.

PHOTOGRAPH OF ADAMS MANSION, C.1880.

FIGURE 19
View of the Adams Old House and garden from the southwest. This image provides one of the earliest views of the servants wing, added in 1869-70. Boxwood hedges and lilac bushes are clearly shown.

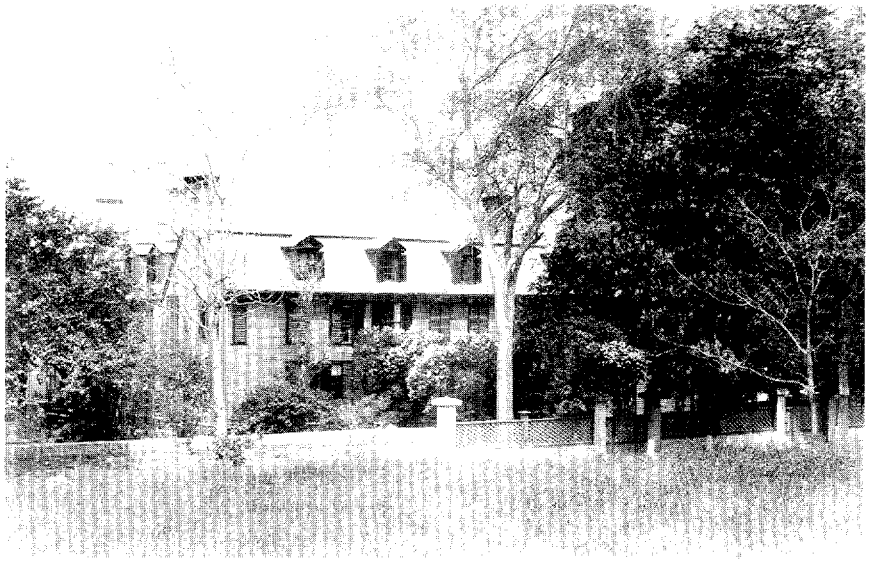
PHOTOGRAPH OF OLD HOUSE, BY BALDWIN COOLIDGE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1882.

FIGURE 20
Although shown in a state of complete inundation, this image provides one of the few views of the back (northern) portion of the property prior to its development.



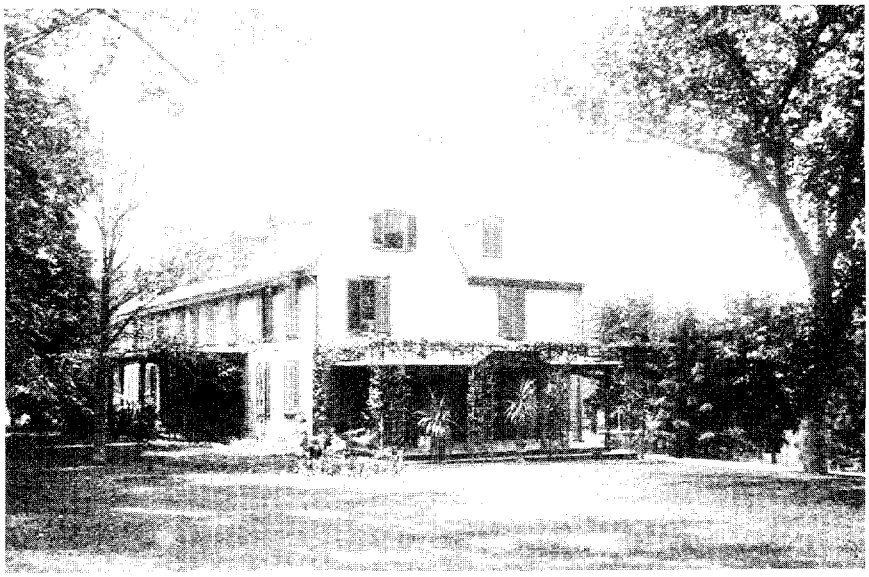
VIEW OF THE FLOOD OF 1886.

FIGURE 21
Shows front yard with elm trees and lilacs in full bloom.



VIEW OF OLD HOUSE TAKEN FROM A FIELD ACROSS ADAMS STREET, 1887.

FIGURE 22
Shows the portico and east lawn as developed by Charles Francis. The front lawn is well shaded by relatively mature trees. A flower bed lines the front of the house, and a small circular bed is located at the southwest corner of the house. Some of the orchard trees and a large spruce tree are visible behind the house, as are the pump and the clothesyard.



PHOTOGRAPH OF OLD HOUSE TAKEN FROM SOUTHWEST CORNER OF PROPERTY, 1889.

1886 November 21: Charles Francis Adams died.

1889 June 6: Abigail Brooks Adams died.

Brooks Adams Period
1891–1927

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Following the death of Charles Francis Adams his heirs conveyed their inheritance to a legal entity called the "Adams Real Estate Trust," and reserved the right of use to Abigail until her death in 1889. The heirs of Charles Francis Adams included John Quincy Adams II (1833-1894), Charles Francis Adams II (1835-1915), Henry Adams (1838-1918), and Brooks Adams (1848-1927). All of the heirs spent varying amounts of time at the Old House, but Brooks was the only one to have lived there permanently. Brooks moved to the Old House with his parents in 1849 and lived there and in Boston as a child. Following his marriage to Evelyn Davis in 1889 he used the Old House as a summer home for three years. In 1891 he formally took over management of the property, which he maintained until his death in 1927.

Brooks Adams attended Harvard College and spent one year at Harvard Law School before accompanying his father, Charles Francis, to Geneva to serve as his secretary during the Alabama Claims arbitration. Upon his return, Brooks briefly practiced law, but he soon abandoned that to focus his energy on historical research. He published several books and lectured at Boston University Law School. Towards the end of his life he spent a great deal of time traveling abroad. Brooks Adams had an ardent interest in American history and studied American silver, furniture and portraits. When in Quincy, he frequently visited local historic sites.

Like his father, Brooks inherited a deep sentiment for the family seat and great interest in its preservation. When he took over the management of the Old House after his marriage he found it quite run down. Rather than introducing any new improvements, Brooks aimed to preserve and maintain the property. He clearly saw the potential of turning the house into a museum and began planning for the appropriate care of the house and its furnishings. In 1906 he wrote to his brother Henry:

> *of its kind, representing what it does, the first century of the republic, the home of three generations of New England gentlemen, I know of nothing to equal it here or anywhere. It is complete, unique and charming.*[184]

Brooks focused on repairs to the Old House and wrought few changes on the surrounding landscape. He repaired the ceilings in two rooms, repainted the exterior of the house, removed the east portico and repaired the front porch. His few efforts to modernize included the installation of central heating and a gas stove in the kitchen. Brooks basically attempted to maintain the grounds and garden as left by his parents. However, he did establish the rose garden west of the library where he also installed Abigail's York Rose on a trellis. His wife, Evelyn, transplanted ferns from the Blue Hills Reservation and installed candy grass along the front piazza. The greatest alteration to occur on the grounds during the Brooks Adams period was the replacement of the old wooden fence in front of the house with a brick wall and large front gates topped by wooden urns. Volume Nine of the *Furnishings Report* for the Adams NHS contains a lengthy reminiscence by Wilhelmina Harris about Brooks Adams' attitude towards the gardens and grounds. This section of the Harris report, while providing few specific dates regarding the evolution of the grounds, provides a strong sense of the character and appearance of the site at the end of Brooks's tenure.

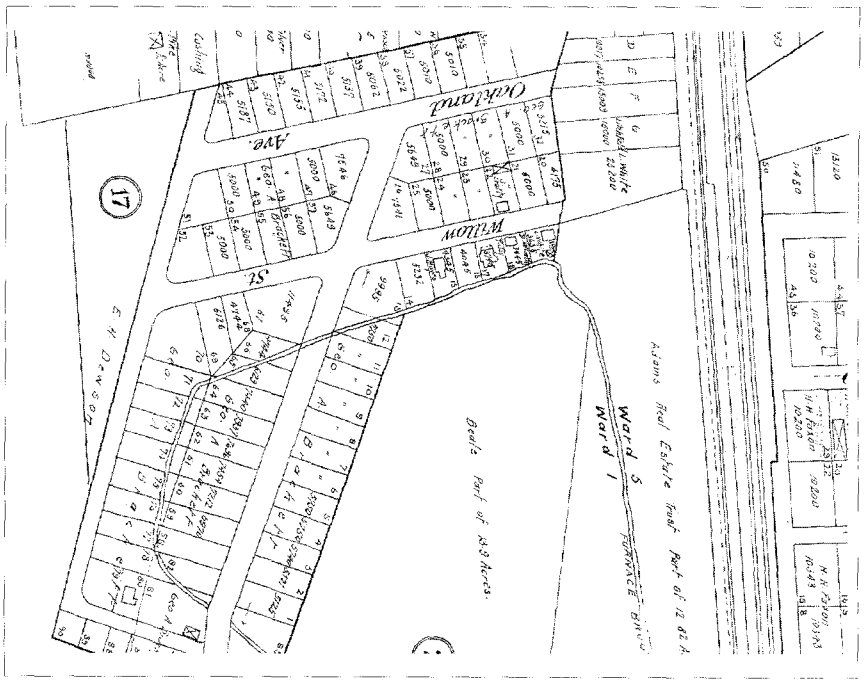
Despite Brooks's conservative approach, the Adams property experienced major change in the 1920s, wrought largely by the construction of the Furnace Brook Parkway, which passed directly through the middle of the property. With the completion of the road in the early 1920s, the sweeping expanse of open, gently sloped land north of the orchard was lopped off, effectively cutting the estate in half. The Furnace Brook itself was realigned, so that rather than extending northward through the center of the Adams property, it passed east-west adjacent and just to the south of the new parkway. Grading for the parkway resulted in the creation of a depressed roadbed running between the northern and southern portions of the Adams property. This divide was accentuated by tree planting along both sides of the parkway which cut off any visual link which may have existed between the two portions of the property.

More importantly, the decades following World War I brought fundamental changes to the overall character and appearance of the City of Quincy. The first decades of the 20th century were characterized by the accelerated transformation of Quincy's landscape from farms to residential subdivisions. By 1888, the Town of Quincy had officially become the City of Quincy. Subdivision activity and building construction took place throughout the city, but was most heavily concentrated in the area between Quincy Center and Dorchester. Maps of the area from this period show the neighboring Beale and Adams estates becoming more and more of a spatial anomaly, a large open area surrounded by an expanding network of small, single-family residential lots and houses. The subdivisions of Wollaston Heights (to the east and north of the Beale property) and Presidents Hill (land formerly owned by the Adams family across Adams Street from the Adams and Beale properties) continued to grow, providing homes for affluent Boston commuters and successful Quincy businessmen.[185] To the south and west of the city, growth was largely linked to the still-expanding granite industry and included the development of concentrated workers housing and granite-related industrial buildings. Stimulated by naval contracts during World War I, shipbuilding surpassed granite excavation to become the city's largest industry, attracting thousands of new employees. Enhanced transportation and employment opportunities led to an unprecedented population expansion and associated building boom in the 1920s.

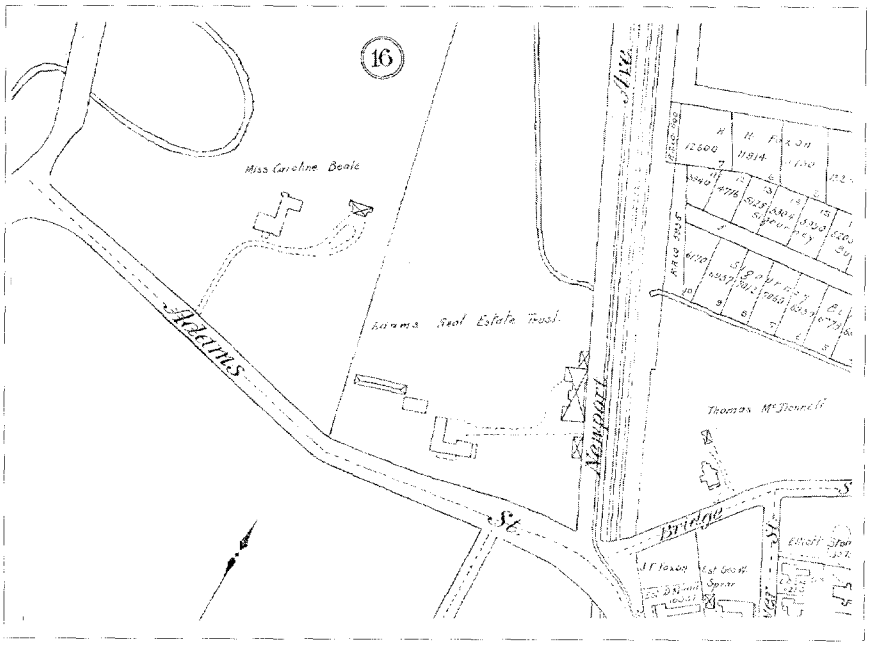
Brooks deeply regretted the impact of the Furnace Brook Parkway and the changing nature of Quincy itself. He was concerned with the future of the Old House, and he made efforts to make permanent arrangements for its preservation. Apparently, in 1921, a member of the curatorial staff of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts came out to discuss the possibility of the museum caring for the estate, but an arrangement was not worked out. In the brief article written by Wilhelmina Harris in 1969 entitled "The Brooks Adams I Knew," Mrs. Harris states that around 1920 Brooks Adams began to worry about what would happen to the Old House when he died. Eventually, however, he decided to leave the fate of the Old House up to the next generation, saying "I will fret no longer about the Old House, the library and garden; my family has always met its responsibilities."[186]

SITE CHRONOLOGY: 1891-1927

FIGURE 23
These maps of the Adams estate and surrounding properties are of particular interest as they show many changes that occurred in the late 19th century, including the new carriage house and library, and development of Newport Avenue running along the east side of the property. Note the subdivision of the northern-most portion of the Adams property and the continued development of the northern portion of the Beale estate.



MAP DETAIL: NORTHERN PORTION OF THE ADAMS ESTATE AND SURROUNDING PROPERTIES, 1897.



MAP DETAIL: SOUTHERN PORTION OF THE ADAMS ESTATE AND SURROUNDING PROPERTIES, 1897.

1890 Abigail Adams' York rose was transferred to its current location, the north side of the garden near the historic boxwood hedge, because it was sunnier.[187]

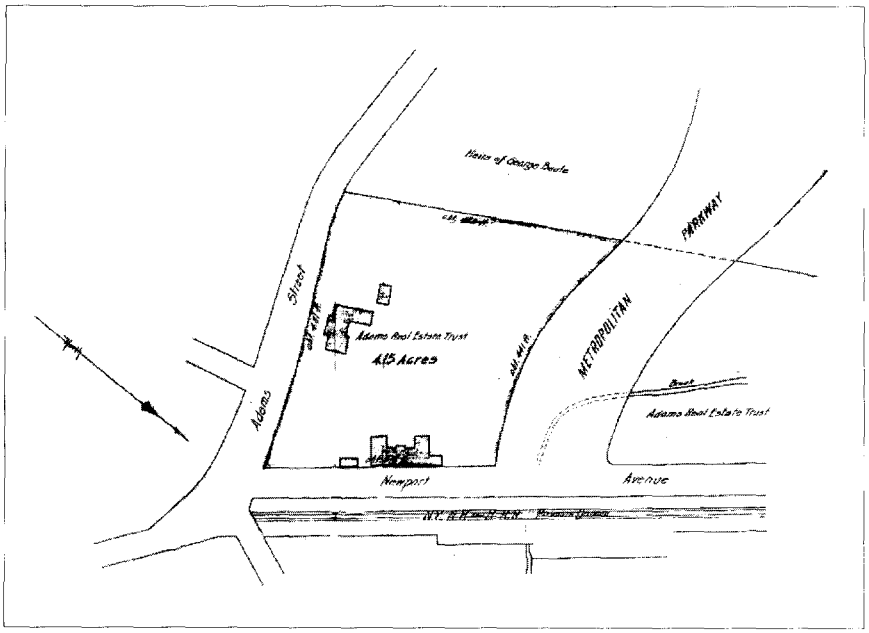
1901 A band of land through the center of the Adams property was taken by the Metropolitan District Commission for the construction of Furnace Brook Parkway.

1903 May 21: The Adams Real Estate Trust granted to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts about 1.5 acres of land (Plot 5) at the north end of the tract for the development of the Furnace Brook Parkway.[188]

FIGURE 24

ADAMS GARDEN AND LIBRARY, 1903.

FIGURE 25
Shows the proposed route of the Furnace Brook Parkway (called Metropolitan Parkway) and the resultant division of the Adams property into two distinct lots. The southern lot, where the house is located measures 4.15 acres.



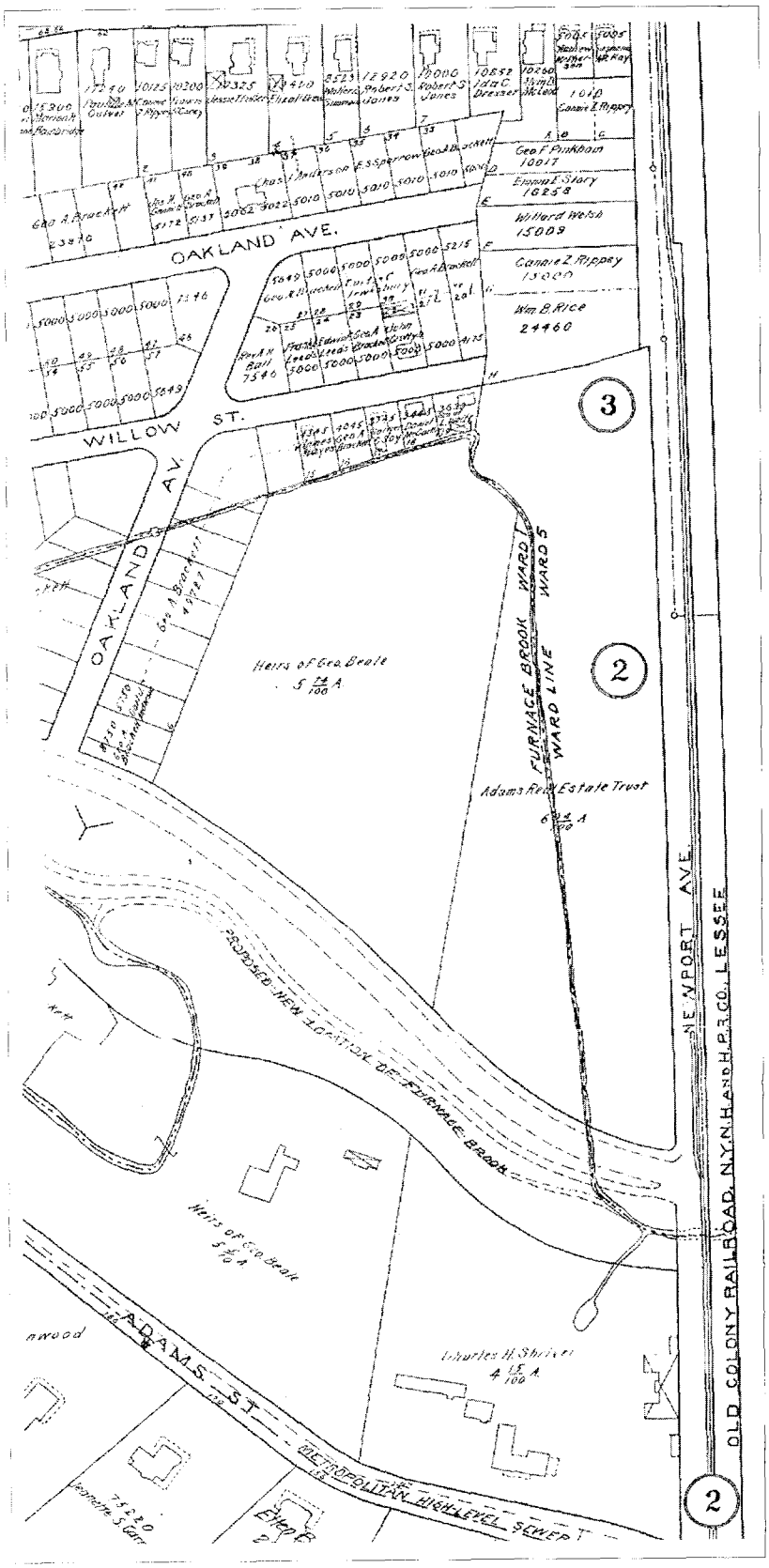
PLAN OF LAND IN THE CITY OF QUINCY, 1905.

1906

Brooks Adams replaced front gates and fence with a new brick wall and wooden gates topped with decorative urns.[189]

April 15: Brooks Adams wrote to his brother Henry, "We have now got the house painted, and the porch restored with the old flags which I found all complete where they have been buried. The gates and walls are complete with the vines and shrubs, and the garden—we flatter ourselves—is prettier than the garden of Mme. de Sevigne at Vitre."[190]

FIGURE 26
Shows the proposed new route of the Furnace Brook Parkway, including the proposed rerouting of the Furnace Brook.



ATLAS OF THE CITY OF QUINCY, COMPILED BY EARNEST W. BRANCH, 1907.

FIGURE 27
Orchard and laundry yard are visible in the distance.

"OLD HOUSE, EAST LAWN, EARLY SPRING" 1915.

1916

Brooks Adams built a two-car garage below the carriage house. Apparently, he felt that automobiles presented the risk of fire and would not allow them in the carriage house. The garage was a one-room structure 27' x 23', constructed of fireproof cement block walls with a concrete roof and a slate roof. A short drive connected the garage with the street.[193]

FIGURE 28
Shows a wooden gate or wall on the east side of the building and wooden coverings over the boxwood hedge. Elm trees in the background appear to be in poor health. Photo retouched to enhance quality.

VIEW OF THE LIBRARY IN WINTER, 1920.

1920	The east portico of the Old House was removed.
1921	The Old House was painted.
	A member of the curatorial staff of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts came out to discuss the possibility of the museum caring for the estate, but an arrangement was not worked out.
1923	A portion of a City of Quincy Tax Map, dated 1923, shows the proposed route of the Furnace Brook Parkway passing through the middle of the Adams property just north of the orchard. However, at this point the approximately seven back acres of the property are still shown as undeveloped.
1924	Quincy Assessor's Office assessed the buildings at the Old House site at $14,500; the land at $36,150 for a total value of $50,650. The area was measured as 180,774 square feet.[192]
	According to Quincy assessors records, the portion of the Adams property north of Furnace Brook Parkway was subdivided into smaller lots by this time.[193]
1924–25	Candy grass was planted in front of front wall.[194]
1927	Brooks Adams died.
	It appears that the portion of the Furnace Brook Parkway cutting through the Adams and Beale properties was fully completed around 1927. The southern portion of the Adams property measured 4.15 acres; the northern portion 6.94 acres. An article in the Quincy Patriot Ledger announced that streetlights were being installed along the Parkway at that time.[195]
1927	The city assessed the buildings at the Old House at $15,000 and the land at $45,000 for a total value of $60,000.[196] These figures mark a slight increase in value since 1925.

Adams Memorial Society Period
1927–1946

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Following the death of Brooks Adams in 1927, the Adams Memorial Society was created to ensure the care of the Old House as a "museum and shrine" to the Adams family.[197] The purpose of the organization was

> *"to acquire the house together with any and all land and buildings appurtenant to the house or in the immediate vicinity thereof, and to restore, preserve and maintain said premises when so acquired or any additions thereto or improvements thereon as a place of historic and public interest and as an educational exhibit and not for profit, and with the purpose of fostering civic virtue and patriotism."*[198]

An agreement was made with the City of Quincy that taxes would be remitted if the public was admitted, and the Old House was opened to visitors on a limited basis in the summer of 1927.

Aside from a brief exception in the 1940s, no member of the Adams family lived at the Old House during this period, though Henry Adams II maintained an active interest in the site. During much of this period the estate was cared for by a handyman named Francis McCormick and a gardener named Martin Hyland.

There is relatively little documentation, either graphic or written, about the condition of the Old House landscape during the 1920s and early 1930s. The limited number of photographs from this period show the grounds as somewhat neglected and overgrown. In fact, the Adams Memorial Society made few repairs to the house or grounds, as admission fees contributed little to cover the cost of maintenance.

In 1936 the Historic American Building Survey of the Works Progress Administration prepared measured drawings of the buildings and grounds at the Old House site. The plan of the garden includes the name and location of all vegetation, providing a wealth of information about the conditions of the grounds at that time.

Throughout this period Quincy continued to change and grow, which, in turn, had an impact on the nature of the area immediately surrounding the Old House. The portion of the property to the north of Furnace Brook Parkway was sold and subdivided for development, as was the remaining portion of the Adams property at the foot of Presidents Hill.

SITE CHRONOLOGY: 1927-1946

FIGURES 29-32
Includes views of the west facade of the house and the Stone Library. These images show the garden as very overgrown during the Adams Memorial Society period.

FOUR BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE GARDEN AT THE OLD HOUSE, C.1920S.

FIGURE 33
This view shows the appearance of the house following the removal of the eastern portico (1920), and with the house painted white.

PHOTOGRAPH OF OLD HOUSE WITHOUT EASTERN PORTICO, A.F. SHURROCKS PHOTOGRAPHY CO., 1928.

FIGURE 34
From the southwest. Shows, though not clearly, the new front gate and brick wall.

PHOTOGRAPH OF OLD HOUSE FROM THE SOUTHWEST, A.F. SHURROCKS PHOTOGRAPHY CO., 1928.

FIGURE 35
A view of the garden and the western facade of the Adams mansion. The garden appears overgrown and obscures the view of the boxwood shrubs. Vines cover the side of the house and the library.

"A WALK IN THE FLOWER GARDEN, ADAMS MANSION, QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS." 1928.

1930

The portion of the Adams property north of Furnace Brook Parkway was sold and subdivided for development.[199]

The remaining portion of the Adams property located on the south side of Adams Street at the foot of Presidents Hill was sold to Mr. Persey Xerxia, who built the brick house immediately across from the Adams NHS.[200]

1935

The City of Quincy assessed the buildings at $13,000 and the land at $37,000 for a total value of $50,650. This marks a decrease in the value of the property since 1927. The property's area was measured as 177,763 square feet, which also marks a slight decrease in size. [201]

1938

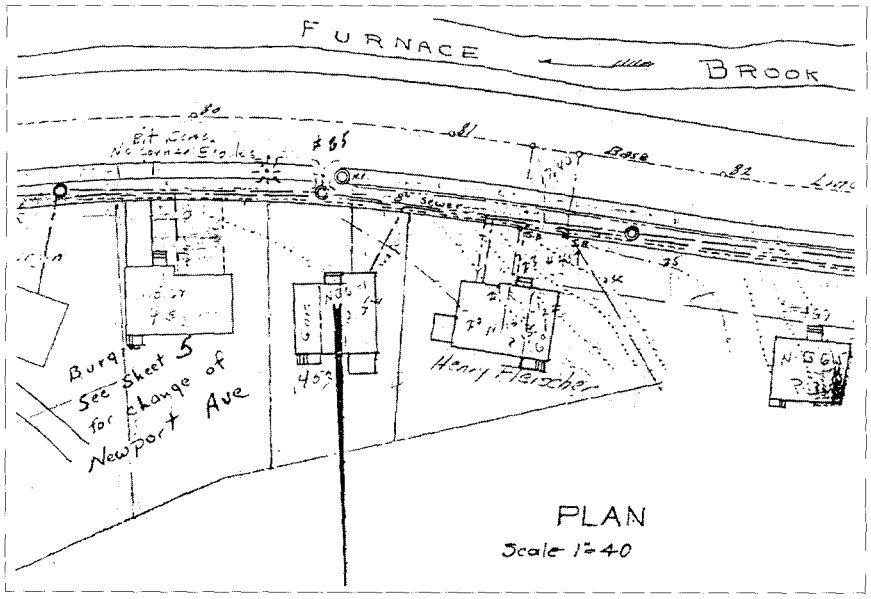
Several trees were lost in the 1938 hurricane, including three oaks and one American white beech planted by the Adams Memorial Society.

1940s

For a brief period during World War II, the Old House was occupied by John Quincy Adams, a distant relative who was an architect with a civilian job at the Fore River Shipyard in Quincy. However, owing to a shortage of funds and the lack of a permanent resident, the house suffered from neglect.[202]

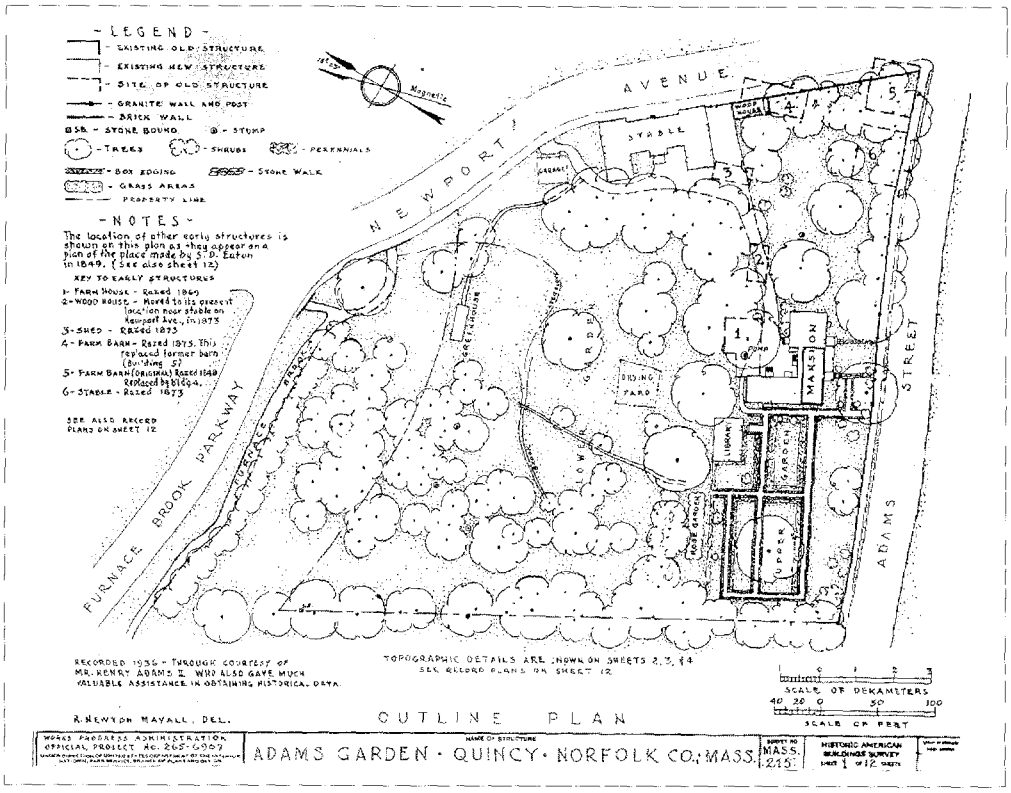
FIGURE 36

Shows the earliest of many new houses fronting on the north side of the newly constructed Furnace Brook Parkway in what was formerly the outlying portions of the Adams and Beale estates. By 1940, what was once the northern portion of the Adams estate was divided into numerous small residential lots, effectively completing the infill of this small portion of Quincy.



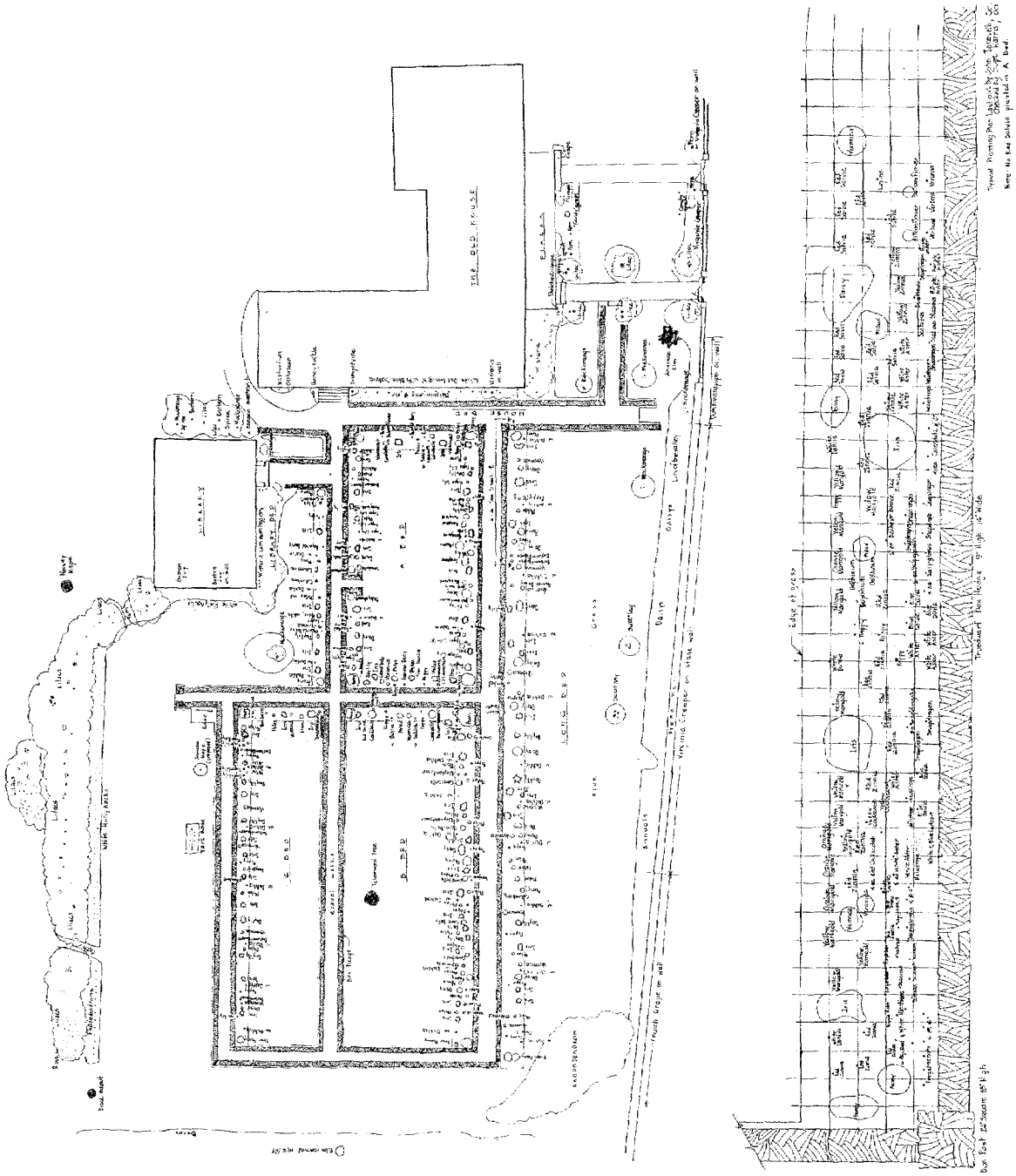
A PORTION OF THE PLAN OF FURNACE BROOK PARKWAY, C. 1945.

FIGURE 37



HABS DRAWING OF ADAMS SITE, 1936.

FIGURE 38



DRAWING OF ADAMS FLOWER GARDEN,
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY 1941.

National Park Service Period 1946 to Present

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF CHANGES

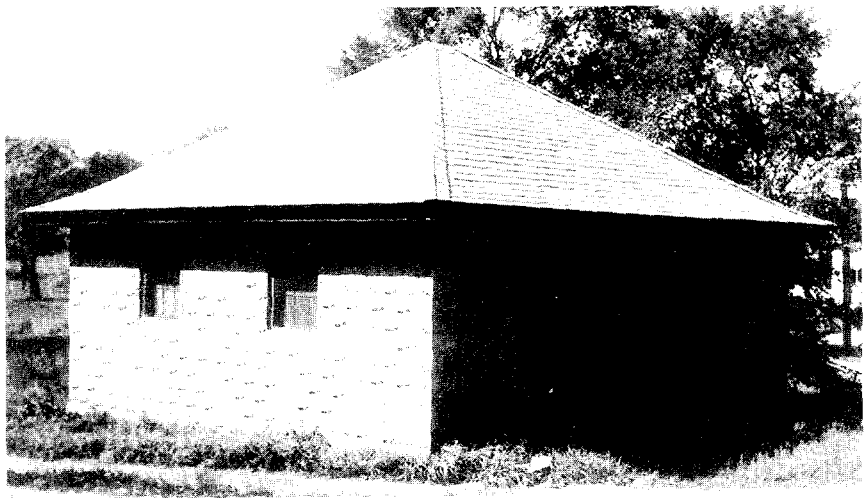
Near the end of World War II, Congressman Wigglesworth of Massachusetts contacted Director Newton B. Drury of the National Park Service to indicate that the Adams family was interested in deeding the Old House property to the United States government to be maintained as a national museum. Despite the distraction of the ongoing war, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes requested the approval of President Franklin D. Roosevelt for the acquisition, which was granted on March 7, 1945. On September 23, 1946 the deed of transfer was signed by the Memorial Society, and recorded at the Norfolk County seat in Dedham, Massachusetts. On December 9 the Secretary of the Interior officially designated the 4.6–acre property as the Adams Mansion National Historic Site. The deed specified that the historic site will "perpetuate the memory of the four generations of the Adams family who occupied the Old House from 1788-1927."

Since acquisition of the site, the goal of the National Park Service has been to maintain it as it had been left by the Adamses at the end of Brooks Adams' lifetime (1927). This goal was specified in the deed of gift which conveyed the site from the Adams Memorial Society to the U.S. Government. That goal notwithstanding, a certain amount of change has occurred on the site owing to practical concerns and management goals. One of the more notable changes has been the expansion of the site with the acquisition of a small parcel of land adjacent to Furnace Brook Parkway and a portion of the former Beale Estate. These acquisitions were intended to protect the character of the site and the surrounding area. Aside from these new acquisitions, changes at the site have been minimal and have focused on the protection of historic fabric.

SITE CHRONOLOGY: 1946 TO PRESENT

1946	September 23: The Old House, garden, library and other buildings with 4.06 acres of land was donated by the Adams family to the United States Government.
	December 9: The federal government accepted the gift from the Adams family and designated the site as the Adams Mansion National Historic Site.
1946	Photographer Abbey Rowe documented the old house using black and white photographs. Set includes approximately 24 black-and-white photos of the grounds and the surrounding area.
1947	Spring: Raymond Corey was appointed custodian of the Adams site.
	The Old House was painted grey at the request of the Adams family.
1948	May 3: Wilhelmina Harris was appointed site manager.

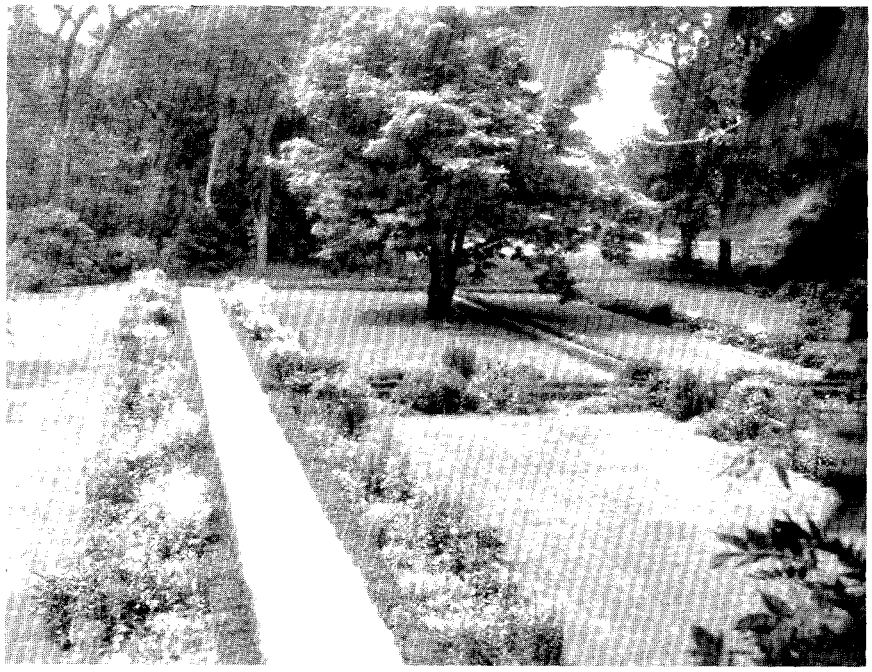
FIGURE 39
Built in 1916, this structure was entirely constructed of fireproof materials: cement floor, cinderblock walls and slate roof.



BROOKS ADAMS'S GARAGE, 1947.

1946–66	Fourteen trees were replaced and the duck pond was restored.
1950	November 26: Wilhelmina Harris was appointed superintendent of the Adams National Historic Site.
1951	Garage built by Brooks Adams was demolished.[203]
1952	An order of November 26, 1952 by the Acting Secretary of the Interior, designated an additional parcel of .72 acres as part of the Adams National Historical Site. This land was donated by the Metropolitan District Commission.

FIGURE 40
Shows garden as very neat, in sharp contrast to the earlier photos supposed to be from the Adams Memorial period.



TWO PHOTOGRAPHS OF ADAMS GARDEN, 1959.

1959	The Old Colony Line, running along the east side of the property, closed.
1960s	Legislation was introduced in Congress to add the 3.68-acre Beale property and a 1.4–acre parcel south of Adams Street which was at one time part of the Adams property to the Adams National Historic Site.[204]
1971	September: MBTA completed Red Line to Quincy Center, using the tracks of the Old Colony Line. As constructed, the new rapid transit line ran along a depressed track bed immediately parallel to Newport Avenue and adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Adams National Historic Site before entering into an underpass terminating at the Quincy Center T-stop.[205]
1972	An act of April 11, 1972 (86 Stat 120) authorized the boundary of the Adams National Historic Site to be expanded to include the neighboring Beale Estate (3.68 acres).

Description of Existing Conditions 1996

The following is a description of the condition and appearance of the landscape at the Adams National Historic Site as documented in the summer of 1996. Refer to the 1927 Period Plan on p. 68 and the 1996 Existing Conditions Plan on p. 69 to aid in locating the features addressed in this section.

The Adams National Historic Site is located just west of Quincy Center and bounded by Adams Street to the south, Newport Avenue to the east, Furnace Brook Parkway to the north and a private residence to the west. A solid, three-foot-high, dressed stone wall with granite coping surrounds the south and east sides of the property from Adams Street to the Furnace Brook Parkway. This wall steps up at grade changes and is broken at five locations by square, granite pillars with pyramidal caps. Near the entrance, this wall is topped with a wire trellis supporting a mass of Virginia creeper.

At the main entrance to the site on Adams Street the wall changes from dressed stone to a four-foot brick panel. Also marking the entrance are six tapered, hexagonal granite hitching posts set into the grass strip between the sidewalk and Adams Street. Leading into the site are two six-paneled, wooden gates with decorative spindles on top and bracketed with 14-inch square granite pillars topped with wooden caps and urns. Passing through the gates and down a single step, two parallel flagstone paths pass through the small, enclosed front yard to the covered piazza which marks the front of the Old House. A small square of lawn lies between the two paths. The path to the west is lined by three lilac bushes on each side. Both the inside of the front wall and the outer edge of the front piazza are lined with a low border of Virginia creeper, fern and candy grass.

The Old House itself is a two-story, gambrel-roofed, brick structure sided with painted clapboards. This somewhat idiosyncratic structure has been added onto numerous times. It features five front dormer windows and a two-story ell addition on the western side. The long front piazza has a flat roof held up by slender columns and faced with a narrow trellis planted with riverbank grape. (For more detailed information about the structure and interior plan of the Old House, consult the *Historic Structures Report.*)

A narrow, stone-dust path lined with a low boxwood hedge leads from the front yard to the formal garden to the west of the Old House. The garden consists of four rectangular beds, each defined with a stone dust path bounded by low boxwood hedges. Three of the beds are lined with flower borders of mixed annuals and perennials. The fourth bed contains an enormous old yellowwood tree with horizontal branches extending out across the western half of the garden. At the center of each bed is a flat panel of clipped grass. Walking the length of the garden provides the opportunity to look back at the large wisteria vine and smaller honeysuckle vine growing up the western facade of the Old House and the bed of delphiniums planted along the base of the house. Along the northern side of the garden is a rectangular rose bed, which includes Abigail's York Rose on a small trellis. This rose bed is bounded to its north by a lilac hedge and a black walnut tree, which effectively encloses the garden by blocking all views to the north.

In the northeast corner of the formal garden, immediately adjacent to the northwest corner of the

Old House, is the library. This one-story, side gabled, stone structure features brick quoins, French doors on the south, west and north sides, and a skylight on the north slope of the roof. The entry is marked by massive stone brackets. Mature ivy and wisteria vines cover the south and west facades.

To the east of the Old House in the southeast corner of the site is a large expanse of lawn planted with mature deciduous trees including American elm, red oak, European beech, Norway maple and horsechestnut. A small cluster of lilac and mockorange bushes planted around the northwest corner of the house serve as an understory for these graceful canopy trees. Known as the "east lawn," this area is enclosed by the stone boundary wall along the Adams Street and Newport Avenue sides and slopes gently down to the north and west.

Along the eastern edge of the site the boundary wall is broken by two structures fronting directly onto Newport Avenue: the large, granite carriage house and a small, one-story shed. The carriage house is a two-story Victorian Gothic structure built in a U-shaped plan, with a slate roof and central, spired tower. The simple, one-story shed is clad with cedar shingles and has a front wall with three doorways marked with blind arches. A narrow asphalt service drive leads into the site from Newport Avenue, passes between the carriage house and shed and extends to the northeast corner of the Old House. Another narrow service drive provides access to the site from a point just north of the carriage house and leads to the informal parking area surrounding it. A small cluster of black cherry trees along the western side of the carriage house serve to partially screen from view the parking area and service drive.

To the north of the Old House the property slopes down to the Furnace Brook and Furnace Brook Parkway. Closer to the house at the top of the hill, the lawn is planted with mature deciduous trees, including Norway maple, sycamore maple, Scotch elm and European beech. The eastern portion of the hillside then extends down in open lawn, marked only by a well, now backfilled for safety purposes, located at the northeast corner of the servant's ell and a drying yard made with nine posts set in a square.

At the bottom of the hill is a shallow, kidney-shaped duck pond with a gravel base and a boxed wooden culvert at the northern end. Throughout the year the exact dimensions of the pond change with the water level. Just to the west of the pond is a simple greenhouse, measuring 30' x 11' with a painted concrete base and glass top supported by a wooden frame. Adjacent to and associated with the greenhouse is a rectangular planting bed containing nursery plants for the garden.

The western portion of the back lawn is planted in an orchard which includes a wide variety of apple, peach, pear, plum, quince, cherry and walnut trees in an informal arrangement. In the spring the orchard is a sea of blue and yellow as thousands of spring bulbs come into bloom. Throughout the spring and summer the grasses in the orchard are left to grow tall since historically they would have been grown and cut for hay.

The northern boundary of the site is marked by the Furnace Brook, which runs through a narrow concrete channel at depths ranging from two to four feet. Running along this boundary is a relatively dense planting of shrubs and trees including forsythia, dogwood, honeysuckle and sycamore which screens the adjacent Furnace Brook Parkway from view.

Cutting through the middle of the park along what used to be the western boundary of the Adams property is an extensive line of trees including maple, oak and black cherry. This planting of trees marks the location of the boundary between the Beale and Adams properties and provides an effective visual screen between the two historically distinct portions of the park.

THE BEALE ESTATE

The western portion of the Adams National Historic Site is occupied by a portion of the former Beale estate. Though currently included within the boundary of the NHS its history and evolution is distinct from that of the Adams property. Indeed, the primary justification for expanding the boundary of the Adams NHS to include the Beale estate was to provide an appropriate visual buffer from adjacent development. Consequently, the following description is somewhat cursory in nature. For more information on the history and evolution of the Beale property, refer to the *Cultural Landscape Report for the Beale House* (Hohmann and Lacy, 1994).

Like the Adams Old House, the main entrance to the Beale Estate is from Adams Street. The front boundary of the property is marked by a 28–inch–high stone wall with quarried granite coping and granite, obelisk-shaped pillars. Near the entrance to the site there is a ten-foot opening in the boundary wall, which then changes to a three-foot-high iron fence with one-inch iron bars placed six inches on center. The front boundary is also marked by an informal border of ash, oak, black cherry and maple with an understory of euonymous and yew.

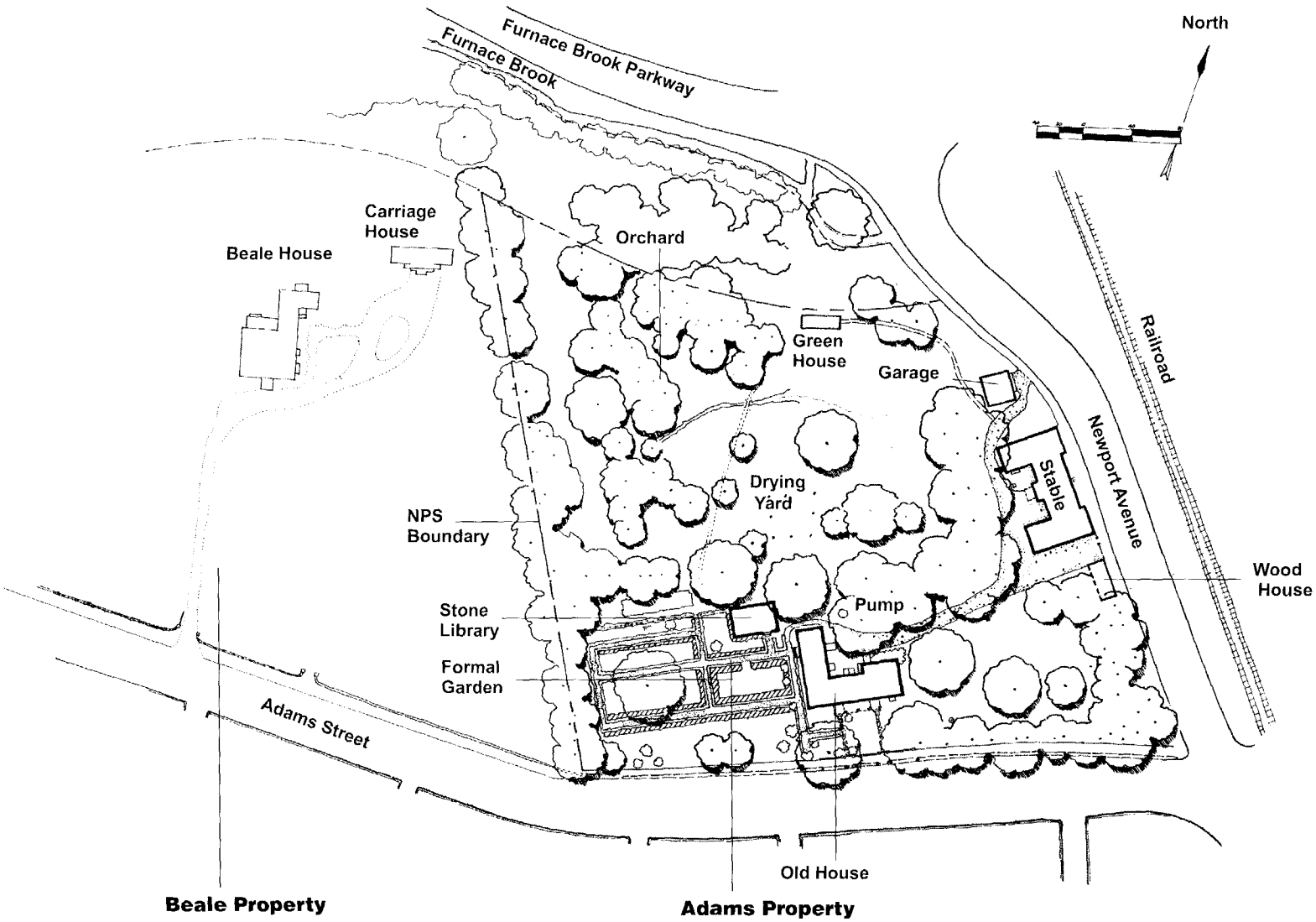
A long, graveled entry drive leads through the front of the Beale property to the front of the house. The house is obscured from the road by several large shade trees including a large linden and tulip tree. Only one elm remains of the row of American elms that historically lined the driveway. To the east of the entry drive is a large, open lawn which extends to the historic edge of the Adams property. To the west the ground slopes gradually down to the Furnace Brook, which is no longer channelized at this point.

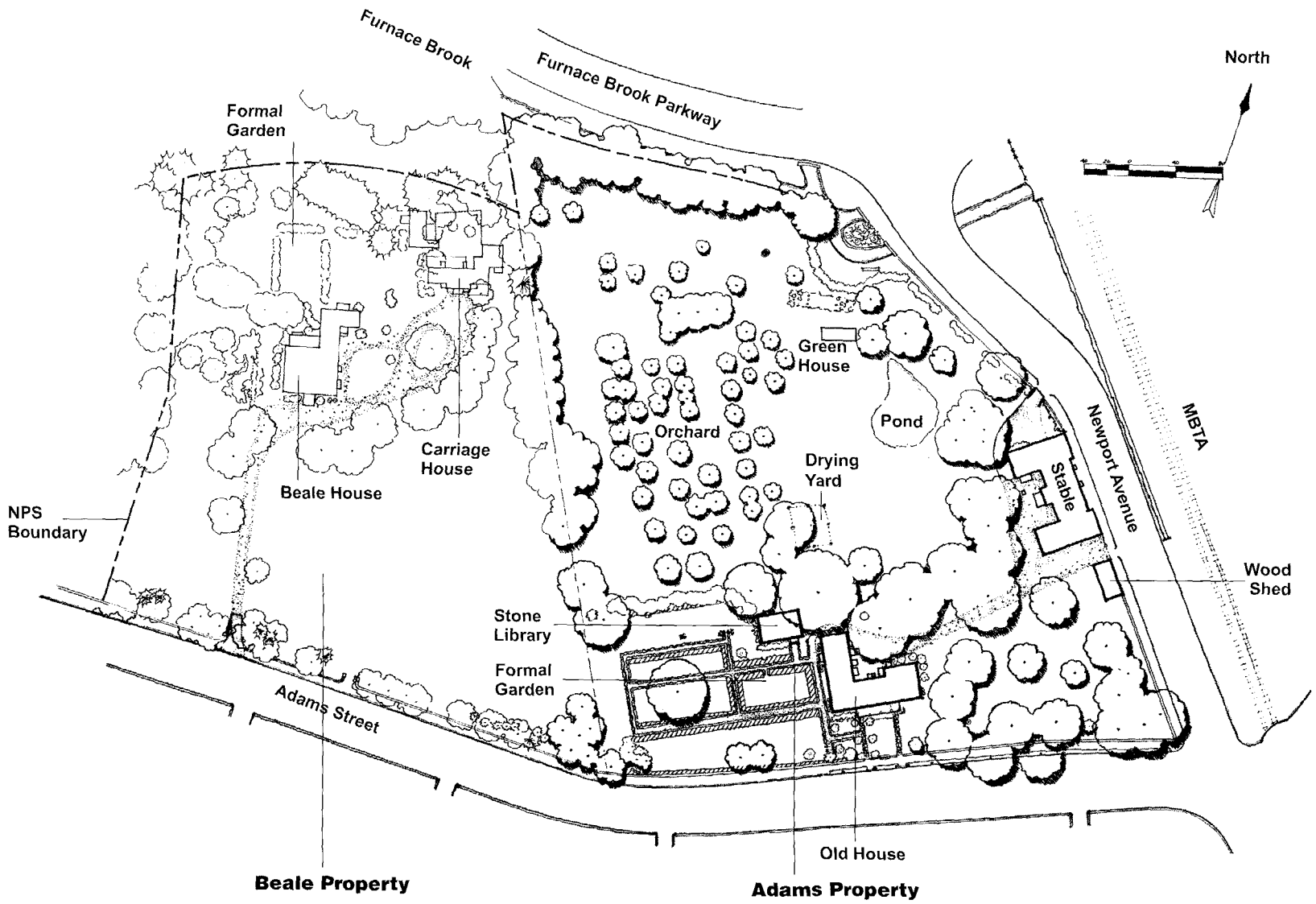
The Beale house itself is a three-story, Adams-style house with a hipped roof with cupola and balustrade at the roof line. The front entrance features an Ionic, columned triangular pedimented entry, and a small ell extends off the north of the house. Foundation plantings along the south and west facades of the house include yew, boxwood, lilacs and Japanese holly.

To the west of the Beale house is a small path leading back to the garden. The path is lined with overgrown yews and lilacs. To the west, the land slopes sharply down to the Furnace Brook.

To the east of the house the driveway extends into a circular turn-around centered by an aging butternut tree and fronting on a small carriage house. This two-story, Greek-Revival, wood-frame structure has a gable end and triangular pediment centered over the former stable door, and flanking one-story, hipped roof wings. A low picket fence surrounds a diminutive front yard planted with a large maple tree. To the rear of the carriage house is an enclosed service yard planted with grass and featuring a small picnic table. Extending out from the northwest corner of the carriage house is a double row of Scotch pines, which screen both the sound and sight of the nearby Furnace Brook Parkway. Between the row of pines and the house are several clusters of shrubs including roses, quince and wild raspberries.

To the rear of the Beale house is a very overgrown formal garden consisting of a tall, privet hedge surrounding the scraggly remains of a flower garden. Within the garden are the remnants of cultivated plantings including rhododendrons, azaleas, day-lilies and phlox, as well as an assortment of weeds, grasses, brambles and poison ivy. A rusted sundial sits in the center of the garden. The garden is shaded on the west side by a tall horsechestnut tree, which has been the nesting site for red-tailed hawk for several years. To the northeast of the formal garden through a small clump of spruce trees is a large, open expanse of lawn enclosed with evergreen trees. Currently owned by the Metropolitan District Commission, this was once part of the Beale property.


North
Furnace Brook Parkway
Furnace Brook
Carriage House
Beale House
Orchard
Green House
Garage
Railroad
Newport Avenue
Stable
Drying Yard
NPS Boundary
Wood House
Pump
Stone Library
Formal Garden
Adams Street
Old House
Beale Property
Adams Property


Furnace Brook
Furnace Brook Parkway
North
Formal Garden
Green House
Pond
Orchard
Drying Yard
Carriage House
Beale House
NPS Boundary
Stable
Newport Avenue
MBTA
Wood Shed
Stone Library
Formal Garden
Adams Street
Old House
Beale Property
Adams Property

End Notes

1 Historical information on Quincy is adapted from the *National Register Nomination for the Quincy Multiple Resource Area*, 1989.

2 William Churchill Edwards, *Historic Quincy, Massachusetts* (Quincy, MA: 1955, privately printed).

3 Helen Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings Shown on Historic Base Map of the Adams National Historic Site.* (An unpublished report prepared for the National Park Service, Adams National Historic Site, 1965): 4

4 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, State House, Boston, MA. Cited in Wilhelmina Harris, *Furnishings Report for the Old House, Adams National Historic Site*, Vol. 9, (1966-68): 815.

5 Helen L. Nelson, *Historical Research Report: The Structural History of the Old House, Adams National Historic Site, Quincy, Massachusetts* (An unpublished report prepared for the National Park Service, Adams National Historic Site, 1963): 2.

6 Suffolk County Probate Records, State House, Boston, Massachusetts, Libro 2, Folio 98. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 2.

7 Suffolk County Registry, Libro 4, Folio 5. Cited in *Nelson, Structural History of the Old House,* 1963, p. 2.

8 Ezekiel Sargent MSS Collection, Quincy Historical Society, "Quincy Centre" p. 26. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 2.

9 Suffolk County Registry, Libro 44, Folio 128. (Cited in Peterson, Charles, *Historic Structures Report, Part I: The Adams Mansion, Adams National Historic Site.* 1963, 8.)

10 Charles E. Peterson, *Historic Structures Report for the Adams Mansion.* National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. 1963, 41.

11 Suffolk County Registry, Libro 44, Folio 128 and Folio 155. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 3.

12 Apparently Thomas Crosby owned an inn in the vicinity of the bend of Adams Street near what is now the Eventide Home. Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 9, p. 816.

13 Suffolk County Registry, Libro 44, Folio 131. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 3.

14 Peterson, *Historic Structures Report,* p. 43.

15 Last Will and Testament of Leonard Vassall, 24 June 1737. Cited in Peterson, *Historic Structures Report*, p. 11.

16 Papers of Temple, Nelson, Lloyd, Vassall and Borland Families, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 5.

17 John Borland, MS, Massachusetts Historical Society, misc. bound volumes. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 6.

18 James H. Stark, *The Loyalists of Massachusetts and the other side for the American Revolution.*, (Boston, 1910): 251. Cited in Nelson, *Historic Research Report,* p. 7.

19 Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 1.

20 Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House*, p. 1.

21 Inventory, Estate of John Borland, Suffolk County Probate, 78:202. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House*, p. 3.

22 *Boston Independent Chronicle*, 20 April 1780. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House*, p. 5.

23 Harris, *Historic Furnishings Report,* Vol 9, p. 818.

24 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, 27 December 1783, APM #362. Cited in Nelson, *Historic Research Report,* p. 7.

25 Royall Tyler to John Adams, Braintree, 27 August 1784, APM #363. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House*, p. 8.

[26] Cotton Tufts to Abigail Adams, Boston, 30 June 1787, APM #370. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 8.

[27] Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 9, p. 819.

[28] Mary Cranch to Abigail Adams, Braintree, 28 September 1786, APM #368. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* Chapter II, 8.

[29] Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 9, 820.

[30] Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 4.

[31] Abigail Adams to Mrs. William Smith, Braintree, 7 July 1788. Cited in L.H. Butterfield, Marc Freidlaender, Wendell D. Garrett, ed. *The Adamses at Home: Accounts by Visitors to the old House in Quincy.* (Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1970): 10.

[32] John Adams to Thomas Brand Hollis, Braintree, 3 December 1788. Cited in Butterfield et. al., ed. p. 11.

[33] Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville. *New Travels in the United States of America,* 1788, translated by Mara Soceanu Vamos and Durand Echeverria, edited by Durand Echeverria, (Cambridge, 1964): 101-103. Cited in Butterfield, et. al., p. 12.

[34] Paul Nagel, *Descent from Glory: Four Generations of the John Adams Family,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983): 47.

[35] Ann Leighton, *American Gardens of the Nineteenth Century,* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987): 147.

[36] John Stilgoe, *Borderlands: Origins of the American Suburbs,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988): 95.

[37] Adams Papers, I:88, 89. Cited in Peterson, *Historic Structures Report,* p. 66.

[38] Alice G.B. Lockwood, Ed., *Gardens of Colony and State,* Vol. 1 (New York, 1931): 50.

[39] Nagel, p. 16.

[40] William Churchill Edwards, *Historic Quincy, Massachusetts.* (City of Quincy, 1957): 63.

[41] Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1850-1845,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982): 206.

[42] CFA Diary, 25 September 1880. Cited in Peterson, *Historic Structures Report,* Part I, p. 68.

[43] Mary Cranch to Abigail Adams, Braintree, 23 September 1787, APM #370. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 1.

[44] Acreage from Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 9, p. 819.

[45] Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, Boston, MA, 161:123. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 3.

[46] Tufts to Abigail Adams, Boston, 30 June 1787. Reel 370. Cited in Peterson, *Historic Structures Report,* p. 17.

[47] John Quincy Adams Diary, 20 April 1788, APM #15. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 5.

[48] Abigail Adams (AA) to Mary Cranch, 10 October 1790. Stewart Mitchell, *New Letters of Abigail Adams, 1788-1801,* (Boston, 1947): 60. From Peterson, *Historic Structures Report,* p. 20.

[49] AA to JA, Braintree, 31 May 1789, APM #372. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 50.

[50] AA to Mary Cranch, New York, 10 October 1790, New Letters, p. 61. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 57.)

[51] AA to Mary Cranch, 18 April 1791. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 59.

[52] Mary Cranch to AA, Braintree, October 1791, APM #375. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 9.

[53] Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 9, p. 821.

[54] JA Diary, Butterfield, 3:234, 27 July 1796. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 71.

[55] AA Diary, Butterfield, 3:234, 27 January and July 1796. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 71.

[56] Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 68.

[57] JA Diary, 19 August 1796. Butterfield, 3:242. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 72.

[58] JA Diary, 29 August 1796, Butterfield, 3:245. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings*, p. 72.

[59] JA Diary, 7 September 1796, Butterfield, 3: 246. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 74.

[60] AA to C. Tufts, 14 June 1797, APM #383. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings*, 31.

[61] Mary Cranch to AA, Quincy, June 1797, APM #348. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 50.

[62] Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 9, p. 828.

[63] Peterson, *Historic Structures Report,* p. 20.

[64] JA to AA, Philadelphia, 14 December 1798, APM, #392. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 31.

[65] Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 20-23.

[66] Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 33.

[67] The woodshed, which was moved to its current location next to the carriage house in 1869, is the only one of John Adams's farm buildings to survive on the grounds.

[68] Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings, p.* 68.

[69] AA to C. Tufts 13 November, 1799, APM #369. From Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 28.

[70] Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 1, p. 119.

[71] AA to Mary Cranch, 26 April, 1800, *New Letters,* p. 248-9. From Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 59.

[72] AA to Mrs. Catherine Johnson, Quincy, 8 May 1801, APM #400. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 59.

[73] AA to Thomas Boylston Adams, 21 July 1801. Reel 401. Cited in Peterson, *Historic Structures Report*, p. 21.

[74] From Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past,* (Boston, 1926): 77-79.

[75] JA to Francis Jackson, Quincy, 19 October 1821, APM #124. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 74.

[76] JA to G.W. Adams, Quincy, 10 October 1822. APM #124. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 74.

[77] Royall, Ann Newport. *Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the United States.* New Haven, 1826, p. 347-349. Cited in Butterfield, et al, ed. 32.

[78] CFA Diary, 26 September 1845. Cited in Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 9, 834.

[79] David Lee Child, *Homes of American Statesmen,* (New York, 1854): 319-323. Cited in Butterfield, ed. p. 48.

[80] One of the greatest proponents of the nineteenth century horticultural movement was Andrew Jackson Downing, a nurseryman and landscape architect from Newburgh, New York. The author of *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America* (1841) and *Cottage Residences; or, a Series of Designs for Rural Cottages and Cottage Villas* (1844), Downing believed strongly that horticulture and gardening had the potential to cure America of its moral failings. Horticulture, explained Downing, "has the incalculable advantage of fostering only the purest feelings, and refining rather than hardening the heart." Although the extent or exact nature of their relationship is not known, it is known that Downing visited the Old House in 1841 and 1845, and presented John Quincy Adams with a personally inscribed copy of *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* in 1841.

[81] See Tamara P. Thornton, "Horticulture and American Character." In Walter Punch, ed. *Keeping Eden: A History of Gardening in America,* (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 1992).

[82] Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 63.

[83] John Quincy Adams Diary, Quincy, July 13, 1826, APM #38. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House*, p. 1.

[84] Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 62.

[85] JQA Diary, 23 July 1826, APM #38. Cited in *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 52.

[86] Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol 1, p. 34.

[87] JQA Diary, 3 October 1827, APM #40. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 63.

[88] Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p.63.

[89] CFA Diary, 5 April 1828. Cited in Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 9, p. 827.

[90] CFA to Louisa Catherine Adams (LCA), Boston, 18 April 1829. APM #491. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 2.

[91] CFA to LCA, Boston, 1 June 1829. APM #491. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 2.

[92] CFA to LCA, Quincy, 30 October 1829. APM #491. Cited in Nelson, *Structural History of the Old House,* p. 4.

[93] Nelson, *Historic Research Report,* p. 4.

[94] CFA Diary, Quincy, 13 April 1831, APM #60. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 52.

[95] JQA Diary, Quincy, 23 July, 1830, APM #49. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* #49.

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[106] CFA Diary, 10 July 1832, APM #61. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 61.

[107] JQA Diary, 17 June 1833, APM #42. Cited in Skeen, *Documentary Narrative of Buildings,* p. 60.

[108] From Harris, *Furnishings Report,* Vol. 9, p. 833.

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