

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

DUCK POND - PART I

GREENHOUSE - PART I

ADAMS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

by

Superintendent Wilhelmina S. Harris
Architect George L. Wrenn
May 1964

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PART I

THE DUCK POND

Adams National Historic Site

Quincy, Massachusetts

Prepared by

Superintendent Wilhelmina S. Harris

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May, 1964

APPROVAL SHEET

RECOMMENDED

Eugene R. DeSilva
Chief, EODC, Acting

Date June 5, 1964

Ronald F. Lee
Regional Director, Northeast Region

Date 6/16/64

APPROVED

Director

Date _____

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1. Administrative Data

- a. The name of the structure is the Duck Pond. It is Structure Number 5 in the Historic Structures Inventory.
- b. The Pond will be used as part of the interpretation of the historic scene. It was a part of the life of the four generations of the Adams family who lived in the Old House in Quincy.
- c. The Master Plan provides as part of the Interpretive Program for visitors that all of the land on the Site be maintained as it was when the Old House was occupied by members of the Adams family. The Duck Pond is part of the historic scene and should be so maintained.
- d. With only a small amount of attention by the maintenance force during the course of the year the Pond will take care of itself and therefore will require little expenditure of money for upkeep.
- e. No cooperative agreements proposed or executed.
- f. It is proposed to establish the natural historic borders of the Duck Pond and to bank them slightly where necessary. The level of the bottom of the Pond will be raised a little in order to reduce the hazard. Underground supply and drainage pipes will be installed in trenches and the ground restored to its former appearance.
- g. It is estimated that the proposed work will cost \$2200.

2. Historical Data

- a. Family tradition, as related by Brooks Adams to Superintendent Harris, tells of a brick retaining wall around the Pond. This wall was not found in the course of archeological investigation.
- b. Excavation for the Pond was first made by John Adams about 1821. In 1850 Charles Francis Adams installed drains in order to reclaim the meadow. A sketch map, drawn by John Quincy Adams, II, in 1872, shows a "Fish Pond" north and slightly east of the house. The area of the Pond was completely inundated by a flood in 1886 and it is possible that the contours of the Pond changed at that time. In Brooks Adams' time ducks were kept on the Pond during the summer and fall. In the 1920's, and presumably prior to that time, the Pond was supplied by surface drainage coming down the hill to the south and southwest of the house, passing west of the house and entering the west end of the Pond. The level of the Pond was regulated by overflow at the northeast corner which fed into Furnace Brook a short distance to the north. The general contours of the land still show where the Pond was fed and drained. At some time after 1927 the natural water supply was cut off when culverts were built to take the surface drainage. Thereafter the Pond filled up in winter and spring and dried out every summer.
- c. There is no known architect or designer.

- d. John Adams had the original excavations for the Pond made.
- e. John, John Quincy, Charles Francis and Brooks Adams, whose ownership of the property comprises the historic period, all owned the Pond.

3. Architectural and Landscape Data

The present natural contours of the land form the border of the Pond when the water is at the proper height except where they have been disturbed at one time or another in recent years. The interruption of the natural water supply by the enclosure of surface drainage in culverts has left the Pond without sufficient supply to maintain itself in dry weather and hence in summer it dries up. The memory of the Superintendent of the outline of the Pond in the 1920's when she lived in the house and the remaining natural contours of the land should be used to establish the proper outline for the restoration and maintenance of the Pond as it was before 1927. No further research or investigation needs to be done except for the continuing attempt to find more photographs of the property during, or shortly after, the historic period.

In order to restore the Pond to and keep it at its level during the historic period it is proposed to let the Pond dry out (The Pond has almost completely dried out as of June 2, 1964), clean it out, restore the historic contours banking it slightly where necessary, install an underground water supply pipe to feed it, and an underground drain to maintain the water at the correct level.

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4. Archeological Data

- a. A preliminary archeological investigation of the Pond was made in October, 1962, and July, 1963, by Regional Archeologist John L. Cotter as related in his report dated July, 1963. The purpose of the investigation was to locate possible remains of a brick wall around the pond. None was found. Traces of possible drains were found.
- b. No further archeological research is necessary because it is not proposed to restore the Pond to an early period of history but rather to its state in 1927 when Brooks Adams died and the Adams Memorial Society took over the house.

Illustration No. 1

View of Duck Pond from south.

Photo: George Cushing 3/24/64

