

10-23
(June 1941)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ABIGAIL SMITH ADAMS
----- NATIONAL PARK

FILE NO. 0-36

ABIGAIL SMITH ADAMS

PROPOSED NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES

ABIGAIL SMITH ADAMS

IMPORTANT

This file constitutes a part of the official records of the National Park Service and should not be separated or papers withdrawn without express authority of the official in charge.

All Files should be returned promptly to the File Room. Officials and employees will be held responsible for failure to observe these rules, which are necessary to protect the integrity of the official records.

NEWTON B. DRURY,
Director.

C O P Y

FEDERAL PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
Region I
24 School Street
Boston 8, Massachusetts

July 23, 1945

In reply please refer to
R-I;LMR;Mass;-19052

Joseph A. Locke, Esq.
15 State Street
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Locke:

In your recent telephone conversation with Laurence M. Ring of this office, you asked that we write you a letter summarizing the negotiations for the disposal of the Abigail Adams House now forming part of our War Housing Project WESSACUSETT HILL (Mass-19052), North Weymouth.

Our first record shows that the proposed project site was inspected by our Project Planning Department in the spring of 1941, and a recommendation made to me May 21, 1941 that the structure in question be turned over to the Town of Weymouth and that the remaining buildings be demolished.

Our representatives met with members of the Board of Selectmen and of the Weymouth Historical Society in July and August 1941. These discussions were tentative as there was still a possibility that the project would not be built.

The project was constructed the following summer, after which negotiations were reopened leading to the decision of the Board of Selectmen on August 23, 1943, to decline to accept the property on any basis. During this period we were also advised by the Weymouth Historical Society that the Society had no funds for the reconstruction and maintenance of the building and would be unable to participate in its preservation.

Before proceeding with the demolition of the building, we checked again with persons who might be interested in preserving it as an historic shrine and were put in contact with The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Mr. Philip W. Bourne of this office held various conversations with Mr. William S. Appleton, President of that Society, which talks led to Mr. Ring's discussion with you in the spring of 1944 concerning the language of a deed by which the premises might be conveyed by the Government to the Society. We were prepared to transfer the building itself for a nominal consideration, provided it would be put in a safe and presentable condition, and so maintained, while operated by the Society directly or through tenants, as a place of historical interest. Lot lines were surveyed allowing for a 75-foot frontage on Bridge Street and a depth of 70 feet. Our appraisal of the land shows a value of \$1500. Upon a transfer of the land, we would be obliged to secure substantially that sum both because of our own regulations and those of the Surplus Property Board. In view of the cost of the land and the policy of the Society of taking only a fee simple interest in sites of historical shrines, Mr. Ring suggested that your Society consider the acceptance of the structure for a nominal consideration and its removal to another location. In this last connection, you will recall that the original Adams House stood in the Weymouth Heights section and that the portion of the House which we are discussing was moved to the Bridge Street location some time after the death of Abigail Adams.

- 2 -

This matter has come to a head again because of the necessity for rather immediate action looking either to the removal, reconstruction or demolition of the building. As you know, the House has not been in a reasonable state of repair for some time. We have been unable to reopen it for occupancy as our minimum war housing standards would require replacement of supporting members, reflooring, replastering, installation of a plumbing system, extension of electric wiring, and quite extensive remodeling, redecoration, and interior and exterior painting. We also find considerable difficulty in protecting the House while it is unoccupied.

In view of the entire situation, we would ask that you give the matter final consideration and let us know at your very earliest convenience what action the Society feels it can take. We will, of course, give you our full cooperation and trust that through our combined efforts the disposition of the structure will be properly and speedily effected.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) Sumner K. Wiley

Director, Region I

COPY

FEDERAL PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY

Region I
24 School Street
Boston 8, Massachusetts

September 7, 1945

In reply please refer to
R-I: LMR: Mass-19052

Joseph A. Locke, Esq.
15 State Street
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Locke:

The condition of the Abigail Adams House at WESSAGUSETT HILL (Mass-19052), North Weymouth, requires that we bring to a head the negotiations for its removal.

Our letter to you of July 23, 1945, outlines the situation in fairly full detail. We must ask you to review the matter again at this time and to let us have the decision of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities during the coming week. If you are no longer interested in acquiring the structure, we will expect to proceed with its demolition right after the middle of the month.

Sincerely yours,

s/ Summer K. Wiley

Director, Region I

COPY

SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES, INC., 1910
Harrison Gray Otis House
141 Cambridge Street, Boston 14, Massachusetts

September 27, 1945.

Superintendent Ronalds
Morristown National Historic Site
Morristown, New Jersey

Dear Superintendent

What can you tell me concerning the following proposition: It so happens that the Federal Public Housing Authority owns a setup of some kind down at North Weymouth, if I remember the location correctly. This Authority is in the charge of Mr. Sumner K. Wiley, Regional Director, Region I, 24 School Street, Boston 8, and the whole matter appears in their records as file No. R-I;LMR;Mass-19052. It happens that this project of theirs numbers among its buildings a small story and a half gambrel roof cottage, which was the birthplace of Abigail Smith, later Mrs. John Adams. She was, of course, a very famous woman, and as Abigail Adams, and mistress of the White House, established her reputation as one of the most satisfactory ladies of the White House we have ever had, a brilliant woman in fact. Although only the daughter of a country clergyman, she held her own in all the circles to which her husband's wide spread interests and public career called him. The cottage was moved from its original site of perhaps a mile away many years ago, and now lacks its chimney. It isn't anything much to look at, but nevertheless it is the birthplace of Abigail Smith Adams. The Housing Project plans disposing of the building, and has offered it to our Society, should we want it, but it is for removal from the present site, unless we choose to buy the site for \$1500, which we don't choose to do.

Should we accept the offer of the house we would have to take it down for transportation, and re-erection at some other point, and we have only two places where it would be in any way appropriate. The first of these is in Quincy, where we have land enough in connection with the Colonel Josiah Quincy House to hold this cottage, too, but here we haven't so much as one red cent available to meet the costs. On the other hand in the town of Norwell, perhaps twenty miles away, we have not only plenty of land, but also money enough to finance the demolition and transportation of the building, and perhaps to make a beginning of again setting up the house. However, Abigail Smith Adams had nothing to do with Norwell, whereas the Adams family was of course, the great family of Quincy. However, if worse comes to worst we shall accept the gift of the house, transporting the timbers to Norwell. It occurs to me, however, that there are three other possibilities which should first of all be exhausted. In the first place, since it belongs now to the Federal Government is there any essential necessity for the government to give it up? In other words, why can't this building be transferred to the Interior Department for such future use as that Department may decide to be best, doubtless in the hands of whatever bureau has charge of the National Historic Sites, of which this would seem to me to be decidedly one.

Another possibility which I propose taking up immediately, is to interest the Adams family, through Mr. Charles Francis Adams, in order to find out whether or not they would take the slightest interest in securing the house for re-erection on the lot of land in connection with the Adams mansion at Quincy. It would seem to be most appropriate there, but the Adams family wishes, I believe, to get rid of what they have, rather than to add to it.

A third possibility is that the Society of Colonial Dames might wish to secure this house for re-erection on their own grounds in Quincy, beside the Dorothy "Q"

- 2 -

House. A possible complication there, is the fact that they have that site and building through some arrangement with the Metropolitan Park Commission, so that there might be a great deal of red tape to be gone through, and much time to be lost before anything could be done. Enclosed you are being sent a copy of two letters sent our attorney Mr. Locke, which are being sent to you since they throw a little light on the situation. I tried to get you on the telephone yesterday in order to save time, but found you were away, and trust you will be back when this reaches you by air mail. Hoping you can think up some means for saving the house, I remain

Cordially yours,

(Sgd.) W. Sumner Appleton

Corresponding Secretary

P. S. I forgot to mention that on Monday Mr. F. C. Brown and I go with Mr. Bourne of the Housing Authority, and our own superintendent of construction and his assistant to North Weymouth in order to see the house. I shall make up my mind on the strength of their findings as to whether or not we are willing to offer to take the house, in case no better solution is found, but hope you will be able to think up something much better yourself.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
MORRISTOWN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY

October 16, 1945.

Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region One:

Attached are copies of letters sent to me by Mr. W. Sumner Appleton of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities regarding the birthplace of Abigail Adams.

In answering Mr. Appleton I wrote: "As long as the house has been removed from its original site, I can see no reason why it should not be moved again. After all, Quincy wasn't Mrs. Adams' birthplace either so under the circumstances why would not the saving of the house at Norwell do just as well?"

Saturday Mr. Appleton telephoned about the house. He stated that the Adamses had turned down his suggestion that the house be placed on the grounds of the Adams Mansion at Quincy. I told him that frankly I thought it would be a mistake, and that it was better for the Society to save the house by removing it to Norwell. However, you know how hard it is to explain to people that the Federal Government is not a single entity. Mr. Appleton cannot understand why if the house is already in Federal hands it should not be given to us for administration and indicated that he might telephone the Massachusetts senator to ask him to request this. He urged that I take up the subject with you. I am sure that you will agree that we do not want the house, and would appreciate a brief memorandum stating that we could not take it, together with some expression of how much you approve of the S.P.N.E.A.'s saving the building by removing it to its property at Norwell. I tried to explain that we had no funds with which we could care for the house even though the Society would pay for its removal. If you agree, I could send a copy of your memorandum to Mr. Appleton.

Mr. Appleton is the gentleman who arranged for the transfer to the Service of the Richard Derby House at Salem Maritime National Historic Site. Mr. Frank C. Brown, formerly with the H.A.B.S., is Mr. Appleton's assistant.

(SGD) Francis S. Ronalds

Francis S. Ronalds,
Coordinating Superintendent.

C O P Y

SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES

Harrison Gray Otis House
141 Cambridge Street
Boston 14, Massachusetts

October 17, 1945.

Mr. Francis S. Ronalds,
Coordinating Superintendent,
National Park Service,
Morristown, New Jersey.

Dear Mr. Ronalds:

Thanks for your letter of October 11th. I have given up all hope of interesting the Federal Government in the preservation of the Abigail Adams birthplace, and have also given up the Adams family. Accordingly, we shall notify the housing people that we are ready to take the house off their hands, and presently, we shall have it down in Assinippi.

I shall be glad to hear from you when that New York banquet or dinner is to take place, and only hope the crowd attending it wont be too large.

I note that Mrs. Crowninshield has got ahead of me and seen your national historic park and the museum before I got down there. However, sometime before I am much older, I shall hope to beable to take the trip myself. And do tell me, if not too much trouble, whereabouts in Pennsylvania is the Landis family outdoor, or barn, museum? Doubtless you know all about this. It is so adequately and attractively pictured in the last number of the Chronicle of the Early American Industries Assn.

The best of good luck to you.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) W. Summer Appleton

Corresponding Secretary.

OCT 25 1945

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
REGION ONE
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA



Name	Date
<i>Drummond</i>	OCT 24 1945
<i>Johnson</i>	10/23
<i>Ratner</i>	10-25
<i>Winters</i>	10/22
<i>Porter</i>	<i>over</i>

October 19, 1945.

*0.36
First Letter*

MEMORANDUM for the Superintendent,
Morristown National Historical Park.

I have your memorandum of October 16 informing us of your correspondence with Mr. W. Sumner Appleton of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities regarding the birthplace of Abigail Adams, who was the wife of President John Adams.

I believe it to be a very fine activity of the Society to follow up their interest in this house and to do something to preserve the building. The interests of the National Park Service are concerned principally with the life and history of the Presidents in this respect. It has not been considered advisable so far for us to extend our activities to other members of the families unless those other members had a direct activity in connection with national affairs and as separate individuals. We are quite sure that presenting the life of any President includes the proper proportion of family relationships to do justice to his wives.

It would seem quite in order for some of the local New England organizations to preserve the birthplaces of Presidents' wives or other family members who had a close influence and relationship to those communities. We are quite interested in what the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities may succeed in accomplishing with the Abigail Smith Adams House.

(Sgd) THOMAS J. ALLEN

Thomas J. Allen,
Regional Director.

cc: Director, with copy Supt. Ronalds' memorandum of Oct. 16 and enclosures.



OCT 25 1945

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
MORRISTOWN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
OCT 24 1945

Name	Date
<i>John H. 10/24</i>	<i>10-24</i>
<i>Factor Reno</i>	
<i>File</i>	

October 22, 1945.

Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region One:

Reference is made to my memorandum of October 16 enclosing correspondence with Mr. W. Summer Appleton of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities regarding the birthplace of Abigail Adams.

Your memorandum of October 19, together with a letter from Mr. Appleton of October 17, arrived this morning. Attached is a copy of Mr. Appleton's letter which, as you can see, ends the matter. I am sorry to have bothered you with this, but inasmuch as I believed I had been unsuccessful in convincing Mr. Appleton that the Society should take the house, I thought it best to bring the correspondence to your attention.

It would have been very foolish to have had the house erected on the grounds of the Adams Mansion at Quincy. However, I am sure that you will be glad to learn that the house itself has been saved and will be under the auspices of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

(S) Francis S. Ronalds

Francis S. Ronalds,
Coordinating Superintendent.

CC: The Director

OCT 25 1945

QUINCY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



The Business Center of the South Shore

18 WASHINGTON STREET, QUINCY 69, MASSACHUSETTS

June 8, 1946

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
RECEIVED
JUN 11 1946
CHIEF CLERK'S

Name	Date
John Adams	6/11
W.C. Kahan	6-12
Dorothy P. [unclear]	[unclear]

Mr. Hillory A. Tolson,
Acting Director
National Park Service
Chicago 54, Illinois

Dear Sir:

I believe you are familiar with the fact that the Adams Mansion in Quincy is about to be taken over by your department.

Abigail Adams, mother of John Quincy Adams, was born in Weymouth. The house in which she was born is now boarded up and is gradually being ruined. This house is now owned by the Government because it is adjacent to a housing project which has just recently been erected. We have contacted the proper authorities here and have received permission to move it so that it can be properly preserved and set up as the historic shrine it deserves to be.

The Adams mansion in Quincy which will be your property, has plenty of available land on which the Abigail Adams house can be located. Bringing these two pieces of property on to the single piece of land would preserve the dilapidated Abigail Adams house and add significant value to the Adams Mansion as a shrine.

I would like to know about the possibility of moving this property the short distance from Weymouth to Quincy and of preserving it in connection with the Adams Mansion. I suggest that this matter be expedited so that the Abigail Adams house not continue to be abused.

Sincerely,

QUINCY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

John Grossman
John Grossman

Porter
Kahler

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

ADDRESS ONLY
THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

54

June 14, 1946.

Mr. John Grossman,
Quincy Chamber of Commerce,
18 Washington Street,
Quincy 69, Massachusetts.

Dear Mr. Grossman:

Thank you for your letter of June 8 regarding the historic house in Weymouth, Massachusetts, in which Abigail Adams, mother of President John Quincy Adams, was born.

It has been our impression that the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities was interested in this house and planned to remove it to a new site in order that it might be properly preserved. We sincerely hope that the Society or some other local group will be able to do this because it would be contrary to National Park Service policy to remove the building and re-erect it on the grounds of the Adams Mansion in Quincy, expected to be transferred in the near future to the National Park Service for administration as a national historic site. In the administration of historical areas entrusted to its care, the National Park Service seeks to preserve each historical area unimpaired in its original historical aspect. This policy precludes the erection of even an historic house within the grounds of the Adams Mansion if the house in question is not a part of the original historic scene.

We believe that the above-mentioned policy is a sound one to which the Service should adhere strictly, but trust that the Quincy Chamber of Commerce and other interested organizations in Massachusetts will be able to preserve the birthplace of the famous Abigail Adams by removing it to another and more appropriate site.

Sincerely yours,
(SGD) HILLORY A. TOLSON

Hillory A. Tolson,
Acting Director.



cc: Regional Director, Region One (2) (with a copy of
✓ Mr. Demaray,
✓ Mr. Vint,
✓ Mr. Kahler,
Mr. John Grossman's letter of 6/8.

QUINCY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



The Business Center of the South Shore

18 WASHINGTON STREET, QUINCY 69, MASSACHUSETTS

RECEIVED
JAN - 8 1947
CLERK'S OFFICE

Name	Date
John Grossman	1/8/47
Robert F. Barker	
Wm. R. F. Lee	
John Grossman	
John Grossman	
John Grossman	
John Grossman	
John Grossman	
John Grossman	

December 27, 1946

~~Mr. Herbert Evison~~
Chief of Information
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Washington 25, D.C.

Chicago

Dear Sir:

In the adjacent town of Weymouth we find a house which formerly was the home of Abigail Adams, who held the distinction of being the only woman in the country to be wife of one president and mother of another. The little house is a typical house of the times.

Unfortunately, no special care has been given the house. Lately, vandals have accomplished more than their real share of destruction. The property is now owned by the government because it is directly adjacent to a new housing project. The authorities are anxious to be rid of the house because it is unsightly at the present time.

I understand that it is your division that has, only recently, acquired the Adams Mansion in Quincy.

The Publicity Committee, of this Chamber of Commerce, feels that without excessive expense this house can be moved onto the spacious area which you have just acquired in Quincy, and that, because the Adams family was a single family, there is a very distinct relationship between the two properties.

We mentioned this thought some time ago in the local newspapers. From all sides came words of commendation for the thought. Those who care about the past, and restoring some of the gracious parts of it, certainly agree that this is a fine idea.

We shall appreciate your giving the thought your earliest attention.

Sincerely,

"John" Grossman,
Publicity Director.

JG/lac

JAN 8 1946

OFFICERS and DIRECTORS: President, CARL R. SHEPPARD, 1st Vice-President, JOSEPH B. GROSSMAN, 2nd Vice-President FRED E. BERGFORS, Treasurer, GEORGE H. BONSALE. EDWARD F. BARKER, PHILIP K. BARKER, C. RODGERS BURGIN, WILLIAM H. COLLINS, JOSEPH A. CROWLEY, HERBERT E. CURTIS, MATTHEW CUSHING, GEORGE A. DALEY, JR., JOHN DUANE, ROBERT E. FOY, JR., WILLIAM B. FRETZ, EDWARD C. GEEHR, WILLIAM W. GRIEVES, HARRY H. KERR, EDWARD L. MITCHELL, FORREST I. NEAL, GEORGE W. PERRY, CHARLES A. ROSS, CHESTER J. WEEDEN. STAFF: Executive Secretary, RUSSELL W. FREY, Assistant Secretary, RALPH F. MACKENDRICK, Assistant Secretary, RAY F. MITCHELL.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Post
Kahler
Pitt
JAN 14 1947

ADDRESS ONLY
THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

January 13, 1947.

Mr. John Grossman,
Quincy Chamber of Commerce,
18 Washington Street,
Quincy 69, Massachusetts.

Dear Mr. Grossman:

Mr. Herbert Evison has called our attention to your letter of December 27, written to him in Washington D. C., suggesting that the Abigail Adams house in Weymouth, Massachusetts, be removed and re-erected on the grounds of the Adams Mansion National Historic Site in Quincy.

As Acting Director Hillory A. Tolson stated in his letter of June 14, 1946, regarding this proposal, it would be contrary to National Park Service policy to remove the house and re-erect it on the grounds of the Adams Mansion National Historic Site because the Service seeks to preserve each historical area unimpaired in its original historical aspect. We fully appreciate the historical significance of the Abigail Adams house and sincerely hope that some means of preserving it at Weymouth may be found by state or local patriotic groups. An historic house loses much of its character and identity when removed to another site, though, of course, circumstances may sometimes render such a removal absolutely necessary.

At the time of Mr. Tolson's letter, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities had expressed interest in saving the Abigail Adams house. We trust that the Society is still interested in the project and that it may succeed.

We regret that it does not appear desirable to depart from established National Park Service policy and practice in this instance, but trust that other more appropriate means of preserving this historic structure may be found.

Sincerely yours,

(SGD) J. D. COFFMAN

John D. Coffman,
Acting Director.

cc: Regional Director, Region One (2) (with a copy of Mr. Grossman's
letter of 12/27/46.
Mr. Demaray,
Mr. Vint,
Mr. Kahler,

