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A CLASS C HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT FOR
THE MANSFIELD HOUSE AT SAUGUS IRON
WORKS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

BY: W. GLEN GRAY

MARCH 1972

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FOR THE
MANSFIELD HOUSE
AT
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Historic Structures Report

8/21

3/23
Fran B P
Chair Aug

May I have your
thoughts? If we
can do one of it now,
can do no before Nov.
G & P do not expect
one else until next
one 267

The report will still have to be
devised by OAHHP. But - can for
tearing it down. B 3/23

H30

Boston Group
Post Office Box 160
Concord, Massachusetts 01742

March 17, 1972

Memorandum

To: Director, Northeast Region
From: General Superintendent, Boston Group
Subject: Historic Structures Report, Mansfield House, Saugus Iron Works

As requested by Mr. Mattes in his memorandum of January 25, we enclose a Class C Historic Structures Report for the Mansfield House prepared by Park Manager Gray.

Mr. Gray concludes that the original portion of the house was probably built between 1800 and 1816. Historical Architect Carroll reached this same conclusion from an examination in 1969 of the structure and remains of the opinion that no portion of the house pre-dates this period.

The sufficiency of the historical and architectural research performed by Messrs. Gray and Carroll must now be left to the judgment of the experts. However, we should appreciate an early decision as to whether additional research is necessary or whether we may propose to dispose of the structure for the compelling reasons given in the Master Plan and Mr. Gray's report.

(SGD) HERBERT OLSEN

Herbert Olsen

Enclosure

cc: Director, DSC w/enclosure
Park Manager, SAIR

INTRODUCTION

Just outside the visitor's entrance to the Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site stands a two and one-half story frame structure called the Mansfield house. The purpose of this abbreviated Historic Structures Report is to attempt, within reasonable bounds, to determine the date this house was built. Because of the time limit involved in the preparation of this report and the doubtful historical significance of the structure, a Class C investigation was initiated.

W. Glen Gray
Park Manager

March, 1972

A. BACKGROUND

The Mansfield house dominates the southern approach to the park and is one of the first things a visitor sees as he enters the park. There are numerous reasons for wanting this structure removed. It is not historically significant, either to the park or to the general community. It completely blocks any view of the front of the Ironmaster's house. Present plans call for a portion of a new parking area to utilize the present site of the house. The Mansfield house, as it now stands, is a form of visual pollution - it is a definite eyesore.

The most compelling reason, however, for wanting this structure removed is that it is a definite fire hazard to the Ironmaster's house. Only forty-five feet separate these two structures. Several years ago, the park was told by the Town of Saugus Fire Inspector that if a fire broke out in the abandoned Mansfield house, the Ironmaster's house would be in danger. Given the right conditions of a fairly strong wind and a major blaze, the Ironmaster's house would be difficult to save. The areas of Saugus and adjacent Wakefield have been plagued during the past year with a rash of fires in abandoned buildings. It is by no means unlikely that a fire could be started in the Mansfield house. Due to its setting, a blaze could get a good start before it was discovered.

The Ironmaster's house is of prime historical importance. It is the oldest European house in the National Park System and one of the oldest houses in New England. Built about 1646 for the second ironmaster, Richard Leader, the house is too important, both historically and architecturally, to allow it to be needlessly endangered.

Both the Master Plan for the park, approved in May 1968, and the Interpretive Prospectus, approved in June 1970, call for the removal of the Mansfield house. With this aim in mind, a Report of Survey, No 5444N10001, dated April 7, 1971 was submitted for approval. This report recommended that the Park dispose of the house. It would have been advertised for sale and removal, but because of its condition and prior experience of local efforts in attempting to move similar buildings, the recommendation meant, in effect, the destruction of the house. On December 20, 1971, the recommendation was rejected by the Director. Although architectural evidence indicated a date of 1800 to 1815, some local tradition pointed to a date as early as 1720. It was felt, therefore, that additional research was needed to more accurately determine the structure's age.

The research was complicated by a number of factors, some common to all research in old records but some unique to this particular study. As in many such searches, records were found incomplete or in obvious error. Early deed descriptions were often vague.

Grantee and grantor indexes, especially prior to 1830, did not usually indicate the town involved. One of the most perplexing problems encountered was the multiplicity of given names in the Mansfield family.¹ Since early records usually referred to only the first and last names, it was impossible, with certainty, to sort out the various family members involved with the early history of the house.

Added to the multiplicity of names was the fact that during the early 1820's the Mansfields owned and occupied at least three houses, all either on or adjacent to what is now the Historic Site. To confuse matters more, one of the houses was divided into two separate properties. Each half of this house was owned and occupied by separate families, each being a Mansfield. To top everything off is a story that has come down through the family. According to tradition, on at least one occasion houses were swapped between Mansfields without any record being made of the transaction.

Aiding the research was the fact that the house was owned, with one minor exception, by the Mansfield family from the early 1800's until 1949 when the house was sold to the First Iron Works Association. This continuity in ownership and occupancy was helpful since on several occasions all of the surrounding properties, including the Ironmaster's house, were part of transactions involving large tracts of land.²

Because of the limited nature of this report, no attempt was made to provide data on any additions or alterations to the original building. However, limited photographic information concerning these additions is mentioned under the architectural section. Likewise, no detailed information was gathered on the individual people who lived in the house. Suffice it to say that they were all members of the Mansfield family.

Certainly, if the decision is made to retain the house, a more thorough examination of the records will be necessary to determine the construction and alteration history of the house.

B. HISTORY

The Mansfield family has long been prominent in Lynn and Saugus history. As early as the 1640's the family had settled in Lynn. By 1647, Robert Mansfield, a direct ancestor of the family that was to occupy the Mansfield house, was sworn in as a constable in that town. By the early 1700's, a branch of the family had moved to Saugus Center and acquired the Ironmaster's house. From that time until 1961, the Mansfield family owned and/or occupied first the Ironmaster's house and later the Mansfield house.³ The family today refers to the Ironmaster's house as their "Mansfield house" since that house was the first family home in the area and was occupied by the family for over a century. The house that is the subject of this report is the "new house" to the family.

The chain of owners of the present Mansfield house can be clearly, if not always easily, traced back to a deed in 1825.⁴ Going back through the records the house is first referred to as the "new house" in 1869. The next mention of the house was when Timothy Davis deeded the "new house" to Amos Mansfield in 1825. No earlier references to either a "new house" or any other structure that could be identified as the house can be found in the deed books.⁵

Timothy Davis was the husband of Sarah Mansfield, daughter of the Thomas Mansfield who died in 1821. In his will, Thomas left to

his daughters, Mary and Sarah, "my new house" along with other property.⁶ Mary Mansfield married Amos Mansfield. It is likely that Mary's husband is the same Amos that received the title to the house in 1825.⁷ Why Timothy and Sarah Davis apparently had the title to the entire house is not clear. It is possible that the "new house" and other properties left to Mary and Sarah were divided between them. To add to the confusion is the fact that Amos lived in the house that was deeded to him in 1825.⁸ However, the question as to who actually lived in or owned the house does not seem to be important to the purpose of this report. Suffice it to say that we know that the "new house" was in existence in 1821.

At this point, in 1821, the records become less than satisfactory. From his will, we know that in 1821 Thomas Mansfield owned $2\frac{1}{2}$ houses. The half of a house was probably the Ironmaster's house which had been split up into two properties. This half of a house was left to Thomas's widow, Hannah.⁹ The other two houses were left to Mary and Sarah. In 1816, the tax records show that Thomas owned $2\frac{1}{2}$ houses, presumably the same $2\frac{1}{2}$ he bequeathed five years later.¹⁰

In 1805, Thomas's father, Thomas, died without leaving a will. The inventory of his real estate listed "a dwelling house," but the inventory of his personal property included only items in the western part of the house.¹¹ Whether this discrepancy meant that the dwelling house listed in the inventory was, in fact, only a half of a house, or that Thomas owned the entire house

but only lived in the western part is not known.

The above information is all the records tell us. A check of all deeds involving any Thomas Mansfield failed to turn up any reference that could be associated with the Mansfield house.

Turning to the probate records was equally fruitless. Tax records prior to 1816 are non-existent, having been lost in a fire.

Lacking solid information, several assumptions had to be made.

Thomas most likely inherited his father's property in 1805.

Sometime before 1816, he increased his holdings to two and one-half houses. One of these must have been the "new house" mentioned in his will, written in 1821. With available historical information, we can only say that the Mansfield house was most likely built between 1805 and 1816. These dates agree with what Mrs. Leona

Mansfield Cutter remembers about the house. Mrs. Cutter was born in the "new house" over 80 years ago. She said that according to what the family said, the house was built in the early 1800's.¹²

A thorough and time consuming search of the records involving the Ironmaster's house and several other properties might clear up some questions concerning the properties Thomas Mansfield owned in 1821. It is unlikely, however, that additional information will be turned up on the "new house".

Some mention must be made in this report of the small building to the rear, or west, of the Mansfield house. No historical evidence was found which could be identified with this structure.

Numerous references to barns and/or sheds are made in various deeds, but there is no way to identify which buildings are being mentioned. The structure has been used as a garage for many years, but in the past had been used as a living area. At one time, the building was smaller and it is possible that it was built as a house. With the problems encountered during the research for the Mansfield house and the Ironmaster's house, it is very doubtful if any documentary evidence can be found concerning this small structure. If the building is disposed of, a brief architectural study should be made for the record.

C. ARCHITECTURAL EVIDENCE

As part of a detailed examination of the buildings at Saugus Iron Works, historical architect Orville W. Carroll examined the Mansfield house in the fall of 1969. The narrative portion of his report is here quoted in its entirety.¹³

ARCHITECTURAL REPORT ON THE MANSFIELD HOUSE

On November 3, 1969, I inspected the Mansfield House at Saugus Ironworks NHS. The flat rear portion, presently covered with the original tin roofing is in very poor condition and should be covered over with roll asphalt roofing immediately to preserve the structure until a final decision is made as to its disposition. Basically the structure is sound. In poor condition are the window sash, blinds, and porch floor framework. The exterior woodwork needs painting.

I inspected the external features of the house to determine the approximate age of the structure. The house was built in at least two periods; the front part which is the older of the two sections dates approximately between 1800 and 1815, while the rear two story portion dates from around 1860. The one story ell off to the west seems to be an early 1900 addition.

Evidence found in the house suggesting the approximate date of construction, 1800-1815, are as follows: "Norfolk" thumb latches; three-knuckle cast iron hinges; four panel doors w/early machine made nails (smaller than 8d) used to nail on interior molding; hand made nails (larger than 6d) used for nailing studs to rafter; hand rived wall and ceiling lath; hand made bricks measuring 2" x 4" x 8"; a brick arch in the cellar supporting a central chimney; hand hewn timbers (all pine construction) used in the cellar and house framework (posts, summers, rafters, girts, and sills).

When the rear two story portion of the house was added in ca. 1860, it appears that the old house was remodeled on the exterior. The original sash and exterior doors were replaced as well as the old clapboards, and

corner boards, and cornice. New granite underpinning replaced the field stone foundation above ground level. Existing evidence on the interior of the rear portion to suggest its ca. 1860 date are as follows; circular sawn lumber, for example, 2" x 7" floor joists placed 16" on center; grained woodwork of the period; wainscot composed of shortvertical, beaded, T & G boards; four panel doors with molded panels both sides, morticed locks with ceramic knobs and split leaf hinges. The window sash are now 2 over 2 lights, double hung with window weights and probably replaced the earlier 8" x 10" glass, 6 over 6 light sash (two original 3 over 6, 8" x 10" glass sash remain in each gable end of the early house).

As stated previously, the structure of the house is sound. If the decision is made not to keep the house (at least the 1800-1815 section) then we should make an effort to save this portion by advertising for its removal to another site under private ownership. It becomes part of the overall picture of preservation of which the National Park Service is now responsible.

From the above report it can be seen that the architectural evidence confirms the historical evidence in placing the construction of the original four room house in the early 1800's.

For the purpose of this report, it was not felt necessary to pinpoint the date of construction for the later additions to the house. However, photographic evidence does provide some dates between which the additions were built. A photograph in the possession of Mrs. Leona Mansfield Cutter, Saugus, MA, shows the Mansfield house before the rear part of the house was added. A pencil notation on the rear of the photograph states that the view was taken in 1880. By identifying several family members, Mrs. Cutter believes that the date of the photograph had to be near 1880.

A second early photograph of the house was found in the Park's collection. The view is westward from the east bank of the Saugus River. Information with the Park's copy states that the copy was taken from a photograph taken by Nathan Hawkes, undated, but not later than 1907. Although the view is from a distance, it is clear that both the rear two story and the rear one story additions have been built.

A series of photographs taken of the Ironmaster's house during the 1915 restoration project are on file at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. The Park has copies. These photographs show the rear of the Mansfield house and the small structure behind it. Disregarding the conditions of the buildings, they were basically the same in 1915 as they are today.

D. SUMMARY

If a conclusion as to the age of the Mansfield house had to be based solely on the historical evidence presented in this report, additional research, of an extensive nature, would have to be carried out, particularly on the Mansfield house abutters.

Because of the recurring given names and the proximity of at least three Mansfield owned houses, no unequivocal dates can be given for the construction of the house. The historical evidence, however, gives strong support to the architectural findings. With the two together, it is felt that we can say, within reasonable bounds, that the Mansfield house was built between 1805 and 1816.

The house is not related at all to the ironworks' story and its significance to the Ironmaster's house is purely one of family association.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

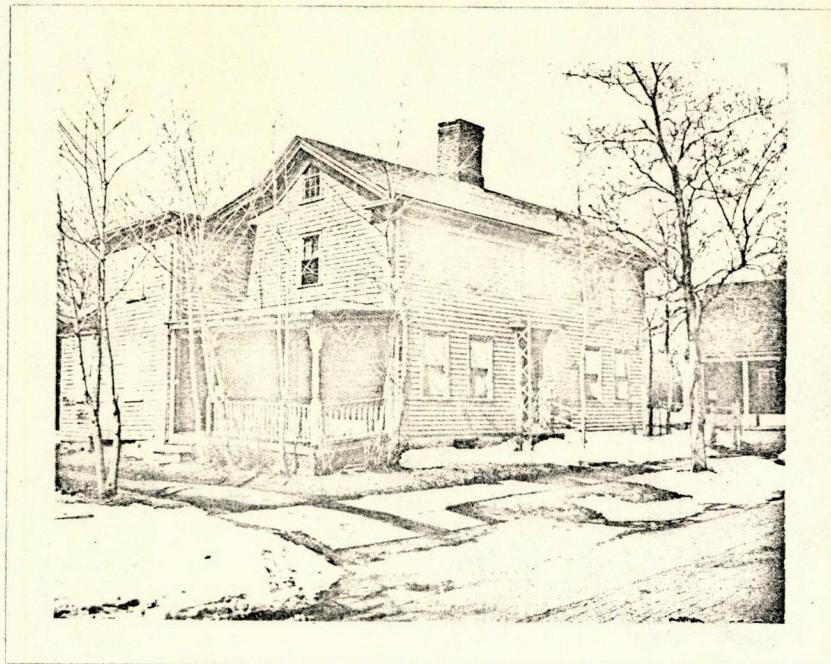
Most of the information in this report came from the ESSEX COUNTY DEEDS and the ESSEX COUNTY PROBATE RECORDS, all located in the Registry Building, Salem, Massachusetts. Several interviews were held with Mrs. Amos Cutter and, through her, Mrs. Leona Mansfield Cutter, both of Saugus. These two women both lived in the Mansfield house and Mrs. Leona Cutter was born there over eighty years ago. Mr. Abbott Lowell Cummings, Director, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, provided some valuable information on his research into the history of the Ironmaster's house.

The Saugus Public Library, the Lynn Public Library, and the library at the Essex Institute, Salem were all checked, particularly for any maps which might show the area during the early 1800's. None were found that were of sufficient detail to help in this project. Saugus Tax Records, located in the Town Hall, were checked for the years 1816 to 1825. Several years were missing but enough were located to provide the needed information concerning property holdings during the period in question. Lynn tax records for the period prior to 1820 had been lost in a fire according to city officials. Finally, THE HISTORY OF LYNN by Alonzo Lewis and James Newhall (Boston, 1865) proved to be of some help with the Mansfield family but no help on the house.

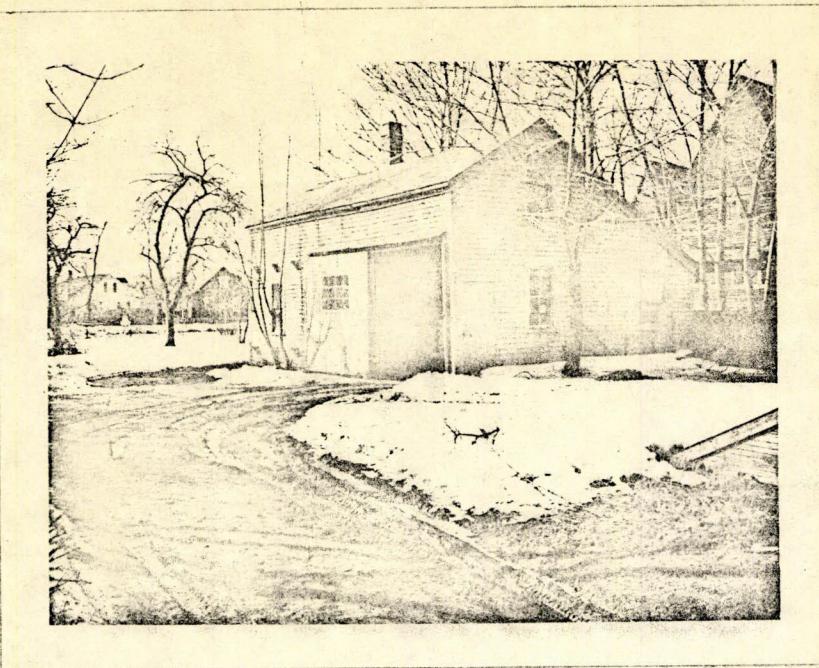
FOOTNOTES

1. During the early 1800's there were four Mansfields named "Thomas", all of them involved with the Mansfield house in some manner. Also, on several occasions, a father and son having the same first name would have wives with the same first name. For example, Mary Mansfield, the daughter of Thomas Mansfield, married her cousin Amos. Their son Amos, married a girl named Mary. Thus father and son were both named Amos and mother and daughter-in-law were both named Mary.
2. In 1909, a title transfer of the Scott property involved 19 distinct parcels of land consisting of over thirty tracts and numerous structures. All of the Mansfield house abutters, including the Ironmaster's house, were involved in this transaction. On several earlier occasions, transactions involving large tracts of land and buildings cloud the records. Abbott Lowell Cummings, Director of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities has done extensive research into the history of the Ironmaster's house. He said that because of the large tracts of land encountered, it was the most complicated title search he had ever undertaken.
3. The family probably moved out of the Ironmaster's house during the late 1820's. The Mansfield house was occupied by the family from the time it was built until 1961, when Roland L. Mansfield, who held a life tenancy in the house, died. Since 1961, the house has been vacant.
4. A complete record of the owners and all deed references is on file at Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site.
5. Abbott Lowell Cummings (see note 2) confirmed that the earliest reference that he had found was 1825.
6. Will of Thomas Mansfield, Essex County Probate Records, Docket 17668; died July 17, 1821.
7. There is room for doubt because of the confusion of first names. (see note 1)
8. See Essex County Deed Book 279, page 131; Timothy Davis to Amos Mansfield. For some reason, this Deed was made out in 1825 but not recorded until 1833.
9. It is possible that Thomas's son, Thomas, lived in the other half of the house.

10. Saugus Tax Records, 1816 - Saugus was established in 1815. Earlier tax records would be filed in Lynn. Unfortunately, records for the early 1800's were lost in a fire.
11. Inventory of Thomas Mansfield, Essex County Probate Records Docket 17667.
12. Interview with Mrs. Amos Cutter, daughter-in-law of Mrs. Leona M. Cutter, February 9, 1972.
13. See NPS memorandum dated Nov. 20, 1969. Architect Carroll, Minute Man N.H.P. to T. Crellin, Chief, Office of History and Historic Architecture, WSC. File D24 (SAIR)



View northwest showing the Mansfield house.
The south porch and the rear addition were
added after 1880. The entrance to the Park
is at the right of the picture.



View northwest showing the small structure to the rear of the Mansfield house. The Iron-master's house can be seen to the right of the picture.