

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

STATE:
COUNTY:
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: Peak House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
347 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN: Medfield

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 10th Massachusetts

STATE: Massachusetts

CODE: 02052

COUNTY: Norfolk

CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Medfield Historical Society (Incorporated 1891)

STREET AND NUMBER: c/o Mr. Paul Hurd, President, 3 Westview Road

CITY OR TOWN: Medfield

STATE: Massachusetts

CODE: 02052

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Registry of Deeds, Norfolk County

STREET AND NUMBER: 650 High Street

CITY OR TOWN: Dedham

STATE: Massachusetts

CODE: 02026

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Peak House is a typical 17th-century cottage of one-room plan, one and one-half stories in height. Its most unusual and salient feature is its exceptionally steep pitched roof, the highest pitch on record in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts* for a 17th-century house. In addition to the first floor and that of the original loft area the collar beams of the roof have been floored over as well to provide an attic in the roof. There is a full cellar under the structure. The house is 24 feet long, 14 feet 10 inches wide, 10 feet from the ground to the eaves, and 12 feet from the eaves to the top of the roof. The four exterior walls and the roof are covered with wooden shingles. The eight window openings are furnished with restored casement sash, having diamond-shaped panes set in lead. The batten door at the front (southern) side of the house is also a restoration feature and is characteristic of 17th-century doors having vertical boards on the exterior and horizontal boards on the interior.

On the first floor there is a small entry with an enclosed staircase leading to the second floor. The large main room contains three windows. Behind the fireplace wall there is a small room with one window. A door in this small room opens to the cellar stairs.

The cellar has a dirt floor and walls of fieldstone set with lime and mortar. In the northeast corner under the stairway there is a section laid dry (without mortar) which may very well represent the original condition. In the center there is a stone and brick arch of the 18th century which supports the modern (restored) fireplace and chimney. (See supplementary photograph #1)

The second floor contains one large room with a window in each end, and the exposed tapering chimney stack. A steep, open, ladder-like set of stairs leads to the third or attic story which has a small, diamond-paned leaded window at each end.

The frame of the house is exposed throughout, as will appear in the supplementary photographs referred to below.

All the interior walls of the first and second stories are sheathed with horizontal boards, those at the west end of the house being original and nicely molded. Early if not original sheathing is apparent also on the southeast wall of the stairwell. (See supplementary photos #2 and #3)

The four story-and-one-half corner posts are shouldered or flaired, having a "gunstock" profile. (Supplementary photos #2, #3, and #4)

The central summer beam is nicely chamfered, and the joists which are framed into it and which form the support of the floor of the second story appear to have been cut by an early up and down saw mill. (Supplementary photo #5) A saw mill was built in Medfield in 1673 as we are informed by Tilden's History of Medfield, page 75. The first and second floors are laid with wide boards in double layers.

* Reference - A. L. Cummings.

(Continued)

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7. Description, continued

The frame of the roof is exposed and noteworthy for the sophistication of its jointing system: the rafters are bridle-jointed at their apex (See Photo #6); mortise and tenon joints are used for those collar beams which are footed in the end girts (serving as tie beams) and which, therefore, resist compression; while dovetail tenons (see Photo #7) are used for those collars which are housed in rafters bird-mouthed over the plate and which therefore, lacking a tie-beam, are in tension.

B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion Phi-	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	losophy	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Human-	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	itarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ARCHITECTURE

The architectural significance of the Peak House is noteworthy on several counts.

(1) The one-room, story and one-half cottage, as we have said, is characteristic of the 17th century. In the early years of settlement it was probably one of the commoner forms of settler's cottage. In most cases, however, these first houses have been added to or in other respects so altered through the years that we have literally no more than this single survivor of a generic type once common.

(2) Having said that it was characteristic, we must proceed at once to describe certain features or conditions which, in light of our current knowledge of 17th century architecture, reveal it as quite unusual.

(a) There is no immediate evidence surviving in the physical fabric of the building to suggest the location of an original 17th century chimney. The house, in other words, lacks any evidence of the normal arrangement of a chimney bay at one end of the one-room house. Some slight structural evidence discovered at the time the house was restored in 1924 might indicate that a chimney had been located on the front (southern) wall of the house, but until this fact has been verified, the house must be considered to partake of some planning convention of which we have little direct knowledge at the present.

(b) As noted earlier, the pitch of its roof is the highest on record in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the 17th century, reflecting a post-Medieval English tradition, but with no other apparent practical reason.

(c) So far as Abbott L. Cummings, who compiled section 7 (Description); and section 8 (Significance, Architecture) is aware, this house has the earliest known example of a roof form which may subsequently turn out to be of innovational significance in New England, consisting entirely of principal rafters without purlins. No immediate English precedent for such a roof form is known, and it would appear that it is a development of the communities inland from the coast of Massachusetts towards the end of the 17th century.

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(Number all entries) 8. Architecture, Continued

(3) The house was very thoroughly restored in 1924 with the advice of William Sumner Appleton, Correspondence Secretary of the Society of the Preservation of New England Antiquities. His expert knowledge was drawn upon continually in the evaluation of evidence, and a complete photographic and documentary record of the restoration which he made at that time is on file in the SPNEA Library. The house, then, takes its place among those very well authenticated restorations in New England in the early 20th century, which is owed almost entirely to the wisdom and forethought of Mr. Appleton in recognizing the kinds of questions which might be asked by a later generation.

(4) The restoration of 1924 does not appear to have altered the basic framework of the house, as evidenced by the following:

(a) A comparison of the interior photographs taken in 1924 * just as the restoration began, with those made in 1970 **, shows that virtually no basic structural changes had been made in the interval. (The following, however, were removed in 1924; lath, plaster, and wallpaper, two outside doors on the north and east walls of the first floor, and interior partitions on the second floor.)

(b) John Warner Barber's drawing of "Ancient House in Medfield", made in 1839, shows the batten door; four windows, west and south, and the chimney in the exact positions of today. Also, Barber's description of the arrangement of the first floor space corresponds to that now existing, except that a change in the relative size of the two rooms is evident from paint marks and from the distance between the summer beams and the partition.

(c) The location of the chimney and fireplace, recreated in the 1924 restoration, was determined by the masonry arch in the cellar, shown in both the 1924 and the 1970 photos. The small brick chimney inside the arch is not in the 1924 picture, and was apparently added during the restoration, probably to permit a small furnace to be added. (See chimney report of Barbara Leighton)

(d) Further details of the restoration given in the minutes of the Medfield Historical Society for October 5, 1925 show that considerable care was exercised regarding authenticity in necessary replacements; e.g.,

The fireplace was put back with old hand-made bricks from Millis.
Oven - Upper door from Millis poor-house.

Lower door from Clark Tavern (next door to Peak House).

Where the original timbers needed replacing, exact reproductions were made.

"The window frames and eight original panes of glass had been preserved, and with the aid of Mr. Appleton of the Boston Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities had been carefully copied and leaded for the windows."

* In files of SPNEA, 141 Cambridge Street, Boston

** In files of Medfield Historical Society, 6 Pleasant Street, Medfield

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8. SIGNIFICANCE - EDUCATION

The Peak House is an important museum of early colonial living for the following reasons:

- (A) The architectural details summarized above in 7 (Description), and in 8 (Architecture) illustrate early colonial construction methods.
- (B) The position of the house (facing south) shows the wisdom of the early settlers in taking advantage of solar heat.
- (C) The display of early cooking utensils (including iron pots and kettles, spiders, tin reflector meat roaster and similar biscuit baker, toaster, ladles, skimmer and iron peel) demonstrates all phases of colonial cooking. (All these utensils are in good condition and have been used very recently for cooking in the fireplace. The oven in the chimney works, and bread has been baked in it.)
- (D) The hatchel, carders, large wool spinning wheel, clock yarn winder and tape loom all illustrate the process of cloth-making before the Industrial Revolution.
- (E) The grain sickle, harness maker's vise, cheese basket, wooden curd-breaker, tin candle mold, foot warmer, and watchman's rattle all represent facets of our forefathers' way of life.

GUIDED TOURS are conducted by the Medfield Historical Society from May through October for school pupils (kindergarten through senior high), and adult groups. Emphasis on the various phases of colonial life listed above varies according to the age and interests of the group.

PEAK HOUSE IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC on Sunday afternoons from two to five, during July and August; and on other special occasions.

DEMONSTRATIONS of weaving and wool-spinning are presented on specified days.

THERE IS NO ADMISSION CHARGE, but contributions are appreciated.

THE VISITORS NUMBER SEVERAL HUNDRED EACH YEAR.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE - POLITICAL

The Clark family to which the Peak House belonged from 1677 until about 1817 or 1818 played an active role in Medfield town affairs for three generations:

Benjamin, (1644-1724), first owner of the Peak House, was a Selectman during 17 years of the period 1685 to 1712.

Seth, (1687 to 1756) was Town Treasurer in 1737, and Selectman for five years.

Seth, (1714 to 1805) "one of the most influential men in town" (Tilden, p. 350) served four years in the 1760's as a Selectman.

In addition, the Clarks participated in the government of the Province of Massachusetts Bay in both the 17th and 18th centuries:

Benjamin was Representative to the General Court in 1699.

Seth, junior, was Representative in 1765 and 1768, and delegate to the Provincial Congress in 1775, thus participating in the historic critical decisions of the stirring years preceding the break with England.

8. SIGNIFICANCE - SOCIAL

Despite its age, small size, and a minimum of "modern conveniences", the Peak House was lived in until the early twentieth century with a certain degree of comfort and dignity.

A photograph owned by the Medfield Historical Society shows the second floor attractively furnished in Victorian style when a young artist, John Francis, and his bride lived there as tenants in the 1880's. In another photo, of the turn of the century, the house is surrounded by a neat lawn and flower beds.

Mrs. Edna Newell Huebener, who has lived at 368 Main Street since her early childhood, used to play with the Dow children whose parents were tenants in the Peak House at the turn of the century. Mrs. Huebener remembers a stove and sink on the first floor, but no fireplace. (Photographs taken in October 1924, when the restoration was just starting, confirm Mrs. Huebener's recollections concerning the latter point.)

(Continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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8. Social, Continued

Mr. Frederick Mason Smith, the last individual owner of the Peak House, devoted it to a purpose well suited to its long history. A carriage painter by trade, he used the house as a workshop where he did beautiful work redecorating antique chairs, and reverse painting on mirrors.

It was his appreciation of the charm and historic importance of the Peak house that led him to deed it to the Medfield Historical Society in 1970, with the proviso that it should never be mortgaged, and that if the Society should not be able to maintain it, it should be deeded to an organization devoted to preserving New England Antiquities.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES: (Continued on sheet following.)
 Town of Medfield - Records (Land Grants & Town Meetings), Vol. I 1649-1742
 in Selectmen's Office, 459 Main Street, Medfield, MA
 Massachusetts Archives - Vol. V - Printed edition of 1854
 State House, Boston, Massachusetts
 Registry of Probate - Suffolk County, Court House, Pemberton Square, Boston
 Registry of Deeds - " " " " " " " "
 Registry of Deeds - Norfolk County Registry, Dedham, Massachusetts
 Registry of Probate - " " " " " " " "
 Hill, Don Gleason & Record of Births, at Dedham Historical Society, Dedham, MA
 (cont'd)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Tel. No.
 Laura H. Smith, Vice Chairman - Medfield Historical Commission (617-359-8865)
 402 Main Street, Medfield, MA 02052

ORGANIZATION: DATE
 Historical Commission (Town of Medfield) March 1975

STREET AND NUMBER:
 Town House, 459 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN: STATE CODE
 Medfield, Massachusetts 02052

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES, Continued.

PRIMARY SOURCES:

- Hill, Don Gleason - Record of Marriages and Deaths and Intentions of Marriage in the Town of Dedham, 1635-1846, printed at office of Dedham Transcript, Dedham, Mass. 1886,
-at Dedham Historical Society, Dedham, Massachusetts.
- Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities, Vital Records of Medfield, Mass. to 1850, Boston, 1903, at Medfield Historical Society, 6 Pleasant Street, Medfield, Massachusetts.
- Barber, John Warner - New England Antiquities, Worcester, Mass. 1839 (Dorr Howland & Co.)
- Photographs of Peak House taken in 1924 (just as restoration was starting)
-Complete file - Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities, 141 Cambridge Street, Boston, Mass.
-Partial set - Medfield Historical Society, 6 Pleasant St. Medfield, Mass.
- Leighton, Barbara - Chimney Report, July, 1974, at Medfield Historical Society 6 Pleasant Street, Medfield, Mass.
- Appleton, William Sumner - Annual Report to Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities for 1924, at 141 Cambridge St., Boston.
- Cummings, Abbott Lowell - Notes on visits to Peak House - July 25, 1974 and October 21, 1974, at 141 Cambridge Street, Boston.
- United States Department of Interior, Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations - Branch of Plans and Design.
2 Blueprints of Peak House -Historic Buildings Survey #2-77
2 Photos - by Arthur C. Haskell, October 1934 - Library of Congress numbers 34907-1-1 & 34907-1-2

SECONDARY SOURCES:

(at Medfield Historical Society, 6 Pleasant Street, Medfield, Mass.)

- Tilden, William S. - History of Medfield, Boston 1887 - George Ellis Company
Medfield Historical Society - Minutes of October 5, 1925, Volume III, Page 69

GENERAL BACKGROUND:

- Cummings, Abbott Lowell - Early New England Architecture, Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, Massachusetts 1958
- Encyclopedia Britannica - edition 1966 (Articles - "Architecture")
- Oxford Dictionary - 3rd edition revised with addenda, 1955