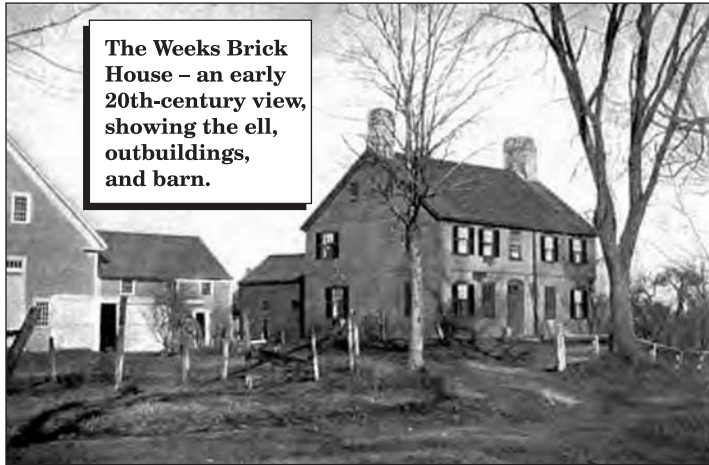


# The Weeks Brick House & Gardens

1710 HISTORIC HOUSE • GARDENS • TRAILS • CONSERVATION LAND  
Weeks Ave. • Off Rte. 33 • Greenland, New Hampshire, USA • [www.WeeksBrickHouse.org](http://www.WeeksBrickHouse.org)

## EXTERIOR & INTERIOR HOUSE TOUR

The Weeks Brick House in Greenland, N.H., built c. 1710 by Samuel Weeks (1670-1746), is among the earliest brick houses in New England, and has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1975. The house, which has not only endured the years, but also survived earthquakes and a fire, was built on the family farmstead established by Leonard Weeks (1633-1707), father of Samuel. An early settler of Greenland, Leonard Weeks was granted land in what was then part of Portsmouth, N.H., beginning in 1656. Over the years the farmstead grew to a maximum of 100 acres, with considerable land also on the south side of the present Rte. 33. To see how the house is situated, refer to the map on the Weeks Brick House general information sheet.

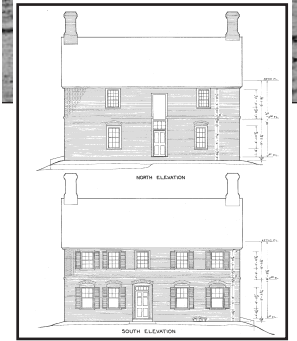


The Weeks Brick House – an early 20th-century view, showing the ell, outbuildings, and barn.

This guided tour of the Weeks Brick House is based on material from four sources: (1) the Weeks Brick House plans and photographs from the 1935 *Historic American Buildings Survey* (Library of Congress), (2) Dr. Neill DePaoli's book, *Three-and-One-Half Centuries in Greenland: The Weeks Brick House Farm of Greenland, New Hampshire* (2003), and (3) a 1995 article in the *Weeks Brick House Newsletter* entitled "Growing Up in an Old Brick House: Remembrances of Thornton Weeks, Jr.", and (4) the research of tour presenter R.W. Bacon, museum professional and creator of interpretive materials and guide training manuals for Historic New England (SPNEA).

Although the house was built about 1710 and is on the National Register of Historic Places, it has been lived in almost continuously to the present, even since its 1975 acquisition by the non-profit Descendants of Leonard Weeks in America. As such, since the very beginning the house evolved with the times, its succession of Weeks family owners adapting the house to meet changing needs. Therefore, in a house tour today, there is relatively little to

At right is a 1935 photo from the Historic American Building Survey, a WPA project. Below right is a measured drawing from the survey. Below is a recent photo of the house.



see in the way of 18th-century features inside the house. In contrast, there is plenty to be gleaned by looking at the exterior of the house – the starting point for this tour. Inside, the nooks and crannies of the basement and attic reveal the 17th-century "bones" of the house, while select rooms in the living area show more recent changes.

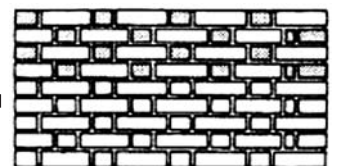
(**Note:** Please respect tenant privacy. Inside the house, only selected areas are part of this guided tour.)

### I. The Exterior (Tour begins at the front of the house.)

**A. Why a brick house?** In the late-17th and early-18th century, the threat of Indian attack was always present, and it is *plausible conjecture* that Samuel Weeks elected to build with brick for security. Another theory is that the brick house was a commitment to permanence in the face of uncertainty. An equally likely motivation may have been a desire to exhibit his wealth. A locally-held belief is that the house was built of native bricks fired on the site, but this is unproven. The decorative Flemish bond pattern on the front of the house, with its dark fire-glazed headers exposed to the most intense heat, is still noticeable. On the sides and back, the English running bond was used.

#### Flemish Bond Pattern

The decorative Flemish bond seen on the front of the Weeks Brick House was used in many of New England's earliest brick structures. An English running bond was used on the sides and back of the house. Evidence points to a limestone mortar rather than mortar of seashell lime.



At right is one of the nine 5"x7" photos taken by L.C. Durette in 1935 for the WPA Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The survey also included six 18"x24" measured drawings by 'delineator' Dorinda Hinckley.



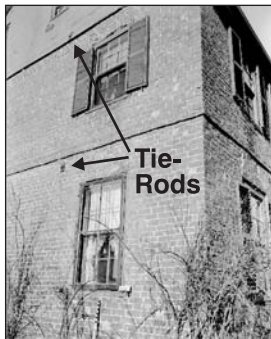
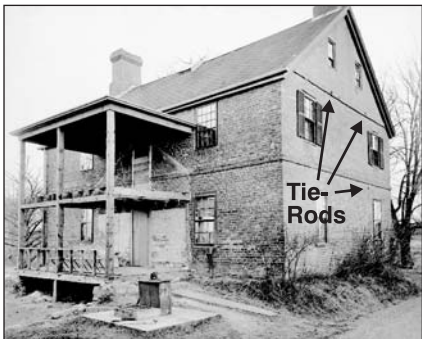
At left is a contemporary photo of the southwest-facing corner of the Weeks Brick House. (This photo and other recent photos by R.W. Bacon.)



The 2½-story house measures 41' 10½" wide x 28' 10" deep. The brick walls are 16" thick, tapering from five courses of interlocked brick at the base to two courses in the attic. The timbers supporting the upper floors are oak, 12" x 14". The sleepers are about 10" in diameter. In its earliest period, the house was heated by four massive fireplaces off of two large end chimneys. From the measured drawings and observation, the first floor, second floor, and attic floor were timber-framed, with the ends of the carrying beams set into pockets in the enclosing brick structure.

Early 20th-century photographs show the Weeks Brick House parged with a stucco-type plaster. Thornton "Skip" Weeks, Jr. (1921-1998), head of the last Weeks household to live in the house, believed that it was applied after the 1755 earthquake. Stucco was always falling off when Thornton, Jr. was growing up, especially on the east side, he recalled.

**B. Not one, but two earthquakes.** The Weeks Brick House survived an earthquake unharmed in 1727, but on November 18, 1755 the earthquake that reportedly toppled 1500 chimneys in the Boston, Mass. area, cracked some giant interior beams and bowed and cracked both gable-end



The HABS photos above show the tie-rods added after the earthquake of 1755. The photo above left shows the two-story back porch added after the ell was torn down in the mid-1930s, and before the 1938 fire. The outline of the ell is still visible. The above right photo shows the tie-rods holding the bowed-out brick wall at the east end of the house.

walls of the brick house. Scientists today estimate the 1755 earthquake would have registered 6.0 on the Richter scale. The epicenter was near Hampton, N.H., and damage was reported from Boston to Portland, Maine. In the aftermath of the quake, iron tie-rods were run through the house and connected to secure the brick walls against any future earthquakes. The bowed walls are still visible today.

**C. Outbuildings.** At some point in the early life of the brick house, a one-and-one-half story wood-framed "ell" was added to the rear. The outline of the roof is still visible on the back of the house today. This was essentially an extension of the main house, and provided a connection to the outbuildings (... and outhouse), as well as living space for seasonally-hired farmhands. The will of Samuel Weeks indicates there were several outbuildings by 1746 – the beginning of a complex of connected barns and storage sheds that would keep on growing into the 20th century. The largest barn in Samuel's time was about 50' northwest of the brick house. Ensuing generations expanded the apple orchards and cider production, and a large cider house was built behind the house. In the mid-19th century a new barn was built, measuring 41' x 55'. Its design followed the trend of the time, with its door at the gable end. Connecting this new barn to the house were a 21' x 18' shed, a 48' x 28' multi-purpose building, a carriage shed, and a horse tie-up.

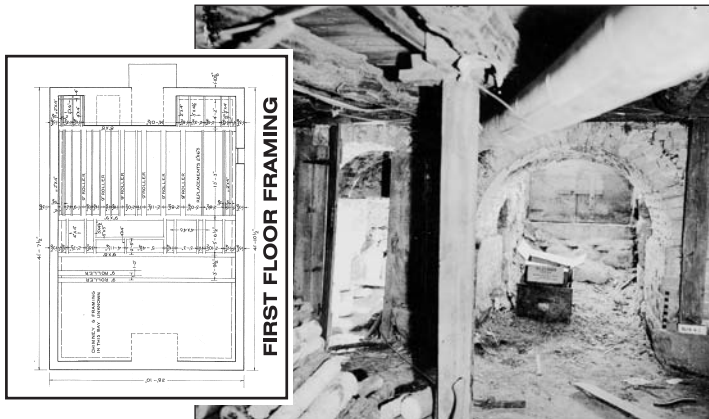
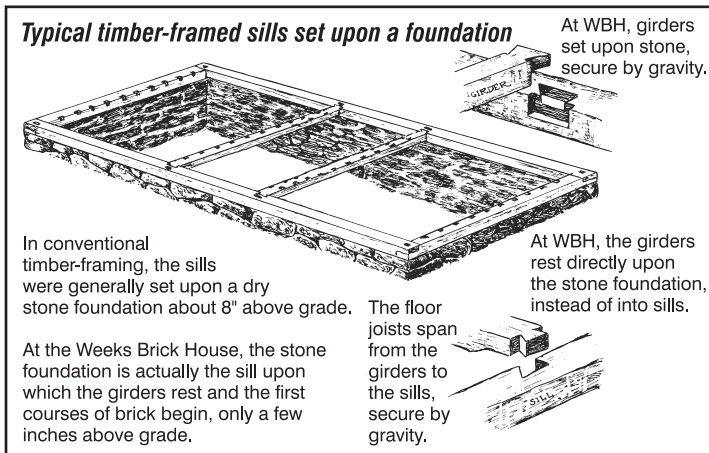
By the early 20th century the farm had shifted its focus to dairy farming, and the barn could accommodate 25 cows. Thornton Weeks, Jr. recalled the progression of attached buildings as they were in the 1930s: From the brick house, one passed into the ell, which was its own self-contained living area. The ell had a kitchen at the back, which was also was the "milk room." After the ell came the outhouse, then the woodshed, the carriage barn-garage, a 4-horse stable, and finally the barn with tie-up for 25 cows. Beyond the barn were a wagon shed and chicken house. In the barn was an engine room, the source of power to pump well water and run the saw to cut cordwood. The ell connecting all the buildings to the main house was torn down and replaced with a two-story back porch about 1930.

**1938 fire.** On March 4, 1938 a fire that started in the barn consumed all the outbuildings. (The fire was the last of several in the town set that winter by a 14-year-old boy who confessed to his arson spree.) Fortunately, since the ell was torn down a few years earlier, the outbuildings no longer connected to the brick house. However the new back porch was destroyed, and there was considerable damage to the roof and attic of the main house that is still visible today.

## II. The Interior

The interior of the house evolved along with changing technology and the changing norms of domestic life. By the early 19th century, the massive fireplaces for heating had given way to three smaller, more efficient fireplaces, as well as four stoves. These changes were to keep up with the newest discoveries in heat exchange and flue design. Another cast-iron stove was added in 1850. For descriptions of the house in its last years as a farm, the recollections of Thornton Weeks, Jr. on our web site are the best source.

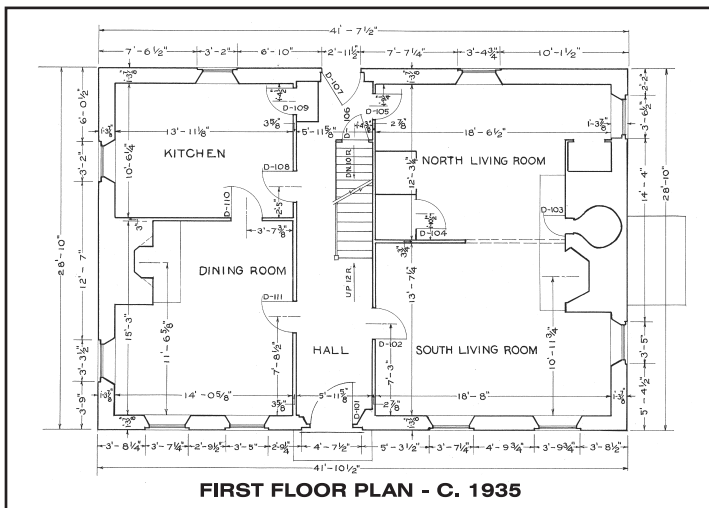




Above right is the c. 1935 HABS photo of the basement, showing the archway to the bulkhead at the east end of the house.

**A. The basement.** Visible in the basement are the north-to-south girders that rest on the robust stone foundation, and the east-to-west bark-covered floor joists. Notable in the basement is the double-arch supporting the fireplace and chimney structure at the east end of the house. The basement also reveals the many adaptations of new systems over the years as technology advanced.

**B. First floor great room.** When Thornton's family lived there, the great room was two rooms, each with its own fireplace. In the late 1930s, when the family redecorated, the partition came down, and by removing two fireplaces,



the original one was exposed. It was in disrepair and a mason was hired to fix it. It is important to note that the fireplace as seen today is not an original form, but rather a fanciful Colonial Revival recreation. The only original brick is at the rear of the set-kettle. It is likely that the enclosed steel I-beam, running east-to-west, was added at this time.

Thornton Weeks, Sr. was a painter at the Navy yard, and for many years the floors were painted battleship gray. Thornton Jr. also remembers problems with beach sand filtering up through the floorboards, because at one time the floors were cleaned with sand.

In the 1995 article in the *Weeks Brick House Newsletter*, Thornton Weeks, Jr. recalled that under the window sill in the back wall was a drysink where water drained out to the backyard. Also in the 1995 article, it was noted that preservation consultant John Leeke saved samples of old lath, plaster, and wallpaper.

The house was heated with a one-pipe wood furnace. The heat came through a big square register in the first floor; its location now in evidence at the foot of the stairs. It was not the most efficient heating – Thornton Jr. recalled “freezing to death” on the second floor.

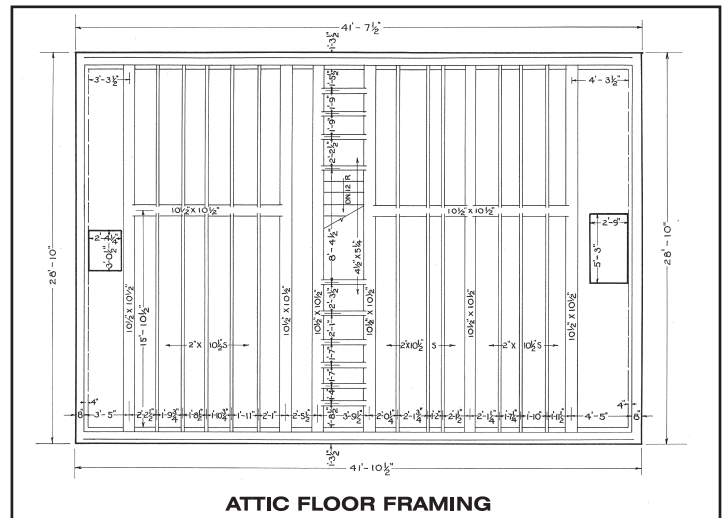
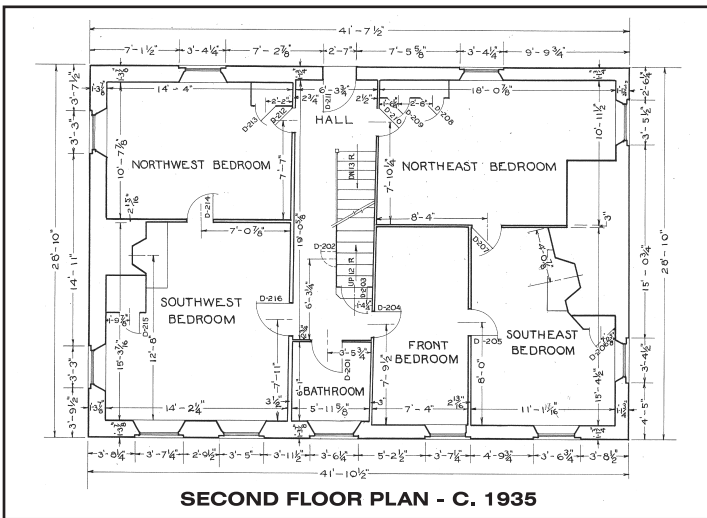
**C. First floor layout.** When Thornton Weeks, Jr. was growing up, there was no running water in the Brick House. (Water was pumped from one of three wells to the barn ... and to the ell.) The community kitchen was in the ell with its water pumped into the sink from one of the wells. Much later the house was hooked up to city water as a solution to the unreliable wells. Toilet facilities were a 3-holer in one of the connecting outbuildings. His parents used the north side of the house, and his grandparents the south side. Each had a dining room at the back of the house and a living room at the front.

Regarding bedrooms: After the new highway (now Rte. 33) was built, Thornton Jr.'s parents moved to a bedroom in the back of the house in summer because of the noise. Thornton Jr. recalled that if his father had not intervened,



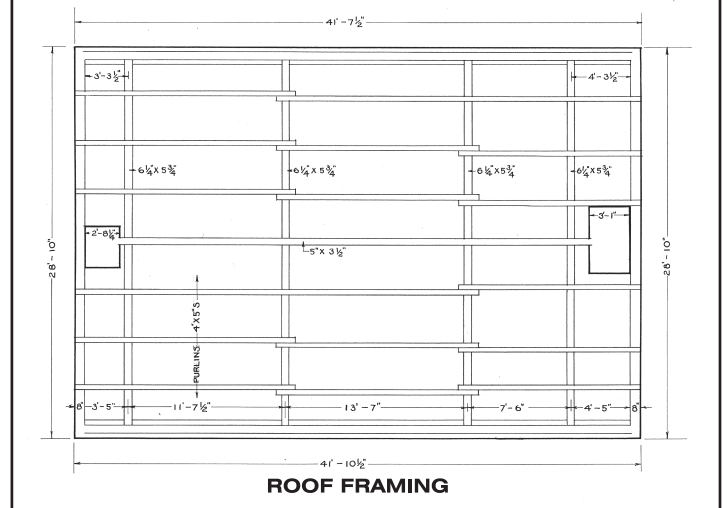
At left is a HABS photo of the great room, showing two fireplaces c. 1935. Below right is a contemporary photo of the “restored” fireplace in the great room, a Colonial Revival recreation. Below left is the set-kettle with some original brick at the rear.



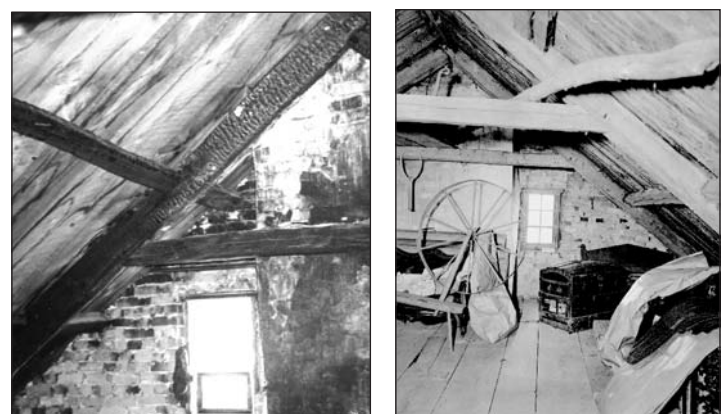


the present highway would have passed right along their front lawn. The isolating effect of the highway was one of the reasons that Thornton Jr. and his wife, Myra, eventually sold the Weeks Brick House in 1968.

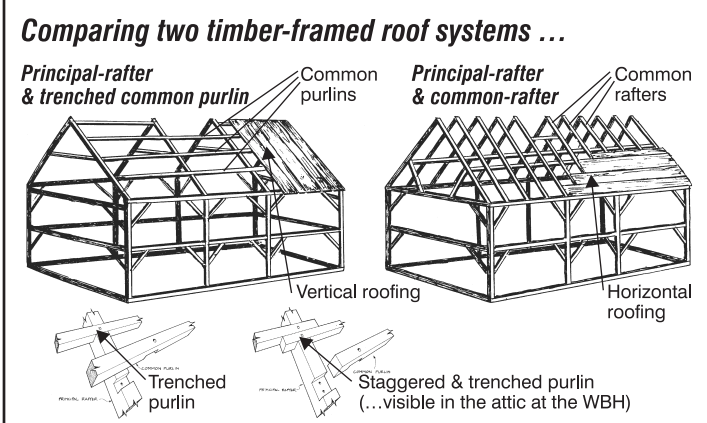
**D. Attic & roof framing.** In this region in the early 18th century, there were two types of roof framing. The Weeks Brick House attic framing plan indicates the “principal rafter / trenched common-purlin” approach. For a time in the 17th century this was the predominant method of roof framing in the region, but it gave way in the 18th century to the more robust “principal rafter / common-rafter” method. The common-purlin approach, with just a few widely-spaced principal rafters, each pair sitting on the top-plate directly over posts and reinforced by a collar-beam, with roofing boards nailed vertically, is a more lightweight system. The trenched purlins provide lateral stability, but in some cases they eventually snapped under heavy snow loads. Often long timbers running the length of the house were used. At the Weeks Brick House, shorter purlins are staggered. The “principal rafter / common purlin” approach to attic framing was all-but-abandoned by the middle of the 18th century (except for barns) in favor of the rafter-to-plate system.



Visible in the attic are other examples of both the wood joinery and the brick masonry that has held the Weeks Brick House together for three centuries – through two earthquakes. Also visible are the charred beams left from the 1938 fire that consumed the barn and outbuildings.



Above right is the HABs photo of the attic. Note the trenched purlin and vertical roofing boards. Above left is a recent photo that shows the charred rafter from the 1938 fire.



The climb from the basement to the attic on a hot summer day brings us to the last stop on our tour of the Weeks Brick House. As such, this tour meets its goal of being a semantic variant, at least, of a “breathtaking experience.” For further information about the Weeks Brick House & Gardens, visit our web site at [www.WeeksBrickHouse.org](http://www.WeeksBrickHouse.org).

– R.W. Bacon  
Summer 2009