

D Chronology

1. Chronology

Although already outlined, the chronology of the Reed Homestead can here be outlined in tabulated form for ease of use. Evidence will be described under Section E, Physical Evolution.

1789	-	First use of site by Captain Timothy Fessenden, Tanner.
c.1800	-	Purchase of tanning business by John Jewett.
1808 or 09-	-	Purchase of site (and house?) by Oliver Reed of Westford (7/25/1779-4/13/1839).
1809	-	Probable construction of homestead. Marriage of Oliver Reed to Letty Wilson Reed (born 4/14/1788), then 21 years of age.
1814	-	Birth of James Wilson Reed (16 Nov.).
1816	-	Birth of Catherine Fletcher Reed (23 Oct), later wife of Aca Daby of Harvard. No children.
1819	-	Death of James Wilson Reed, age 4, on 19 September.
	-	Birth of James Oliver Reed on Oct. 16.

1821 - Birth of Hannah Reed, who eventually married Willard Crosby and had two daughters, Letty and Kitty. When Letty died at age 10, Hannah hanged herself at the homestead. Hannah's birthday was Sept. 10.

1825 - Birth of Harriet Reed on Oct. 18. She was to remain a spinster and inherit the house.

1830-35 - Rufus Porter at homestead.

1836 - James Oliver Reed goes to sea, never to return. After the death of his father, he will take his share of the inheritance and marry Caroline Rebecca Hildreth. They lived in Mason and had two children, James Oliver Reed, Jr. and Harriet Caroline Reed, who bought the homestead from her aunt Caroline's estate in 1910.

1839 - Death of Oliver Reed. His wife, Letty, remains at homestead as widow.

? - Death of Lettie Wilson Reed. Only Harriet remains in homestead.

? - Death of Catherine Fletcher Reed in nearby Harvard. With no family nearby, Harriet Reed moves to Mason to live with her brother James and his daughter Harriet Caroline Reed.

1081

and in 1910 Mrs. Harriet Caroline Reed Strout buys  
newly-constructed homestead from her aunts' estate, as  
well as some contents. She adds porch  
and bay window to kitchen. To use  
first-floor bedroom, she adds closet  
in former hall.

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1918-20 - Fire destroys outbuildings beyond  
summer kitchen. New shed rebuilt with  
two-car garage, one horse stall and a  
privy. She bought Model T, but did  
not drive herself. Asked various men  
to drive her.

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1921 - House electrified.

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1928-9 - New bath installed in former pantry by  
Harriet's grandson, E. Hildreth  
Proctor. New pantry built into corner  
of summer kitchen to compensate.

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1942 - Death of Harriet Reed Strout. Her  
daughter Letty Strout Proctor inherits  
homestead, and uses it as a summer  
home, with sons Hildreth and Robert.

1973

1982 - House sold to Townsend Historical  
Society, with large part of contents.

1985

- Work done to house, as follows:

1. Bay window of 1910 removed.

2. Summer kitchen floor structure  
and sills replaced.

3. Fascia at rear roof edge  
replaced.

4. Decayed floor members under first floor replaced.
5. Cellar converted to crawl space with concrete floor.
6. Termite control.
7. Repointing of chimney hearths.
8. Relaying of chimney above roofline.
9. Installation of clay flue for keepingroom fireplace.
10. Repointing of chimney and hearth foundations.
11. New foundation for Summer Kitchen, with stone facing.
12. Closing of all flues except that from keepingroom with masonry.
13. Add new timbers to strengthen first floor and install new subfloor.
14. Patch trim at former bay window, summer kitchen, etc...
15. New wood shingle roof.
16. New pair of windows to replace bay.
17. Relocation of electrical panel, and lighting of crawl space.

1986	- New picket fence at front of house.
1987	- House exterior repainted according to SPNEA report.
	- New heating system installed in house and vault.

2. Documentation

While the Townsend Historical Society is making some efforts to trace and collect new documentary sources as they occupy their new office and archive in the Ell, very little has come to light as yet. Fortunately, as will be made obvious by Section E, the house speaks pretty much for itself. Again, we must stress that it is only in this century that the house has become newsworthy because of its great murals and unspoiled character: during the last century it was just a well-to-do, small-town house.

Our first and most important document, of which a copy is enclosed, is a map whose legend reads, "Map of Land belonging to Letty Reed and Heirs, Townsend Harbor, Surveyed by James Thompson Groton, Acquired in 1809." Such a legend, of course, would only be appropriate after Oliver Reed's death in 1839 and, since the map shows the railroad cutting across the Reed land ("411 feet, whole length, railroad, one rod wide. Figure 6/10 Acre"), the map must have been drawn after 1848, the date of its construction. Equally obviously, it was drawn before Letty's death and before 1900, when the main road changed names from County Road to State Road.

The principal value of this map is that it shows the location of all outbuildings owned by the Reeds. These are divided from the homestead by a dotted line marked, "Widows' thirds west of this line." In other words, the outbuildings were at this time the children's inheritance, and all have now disappeared. Closest to the house stood an "L"-shaped arrangement of two barns and a shed, all attached, forming a barnyard to the southwest. Another