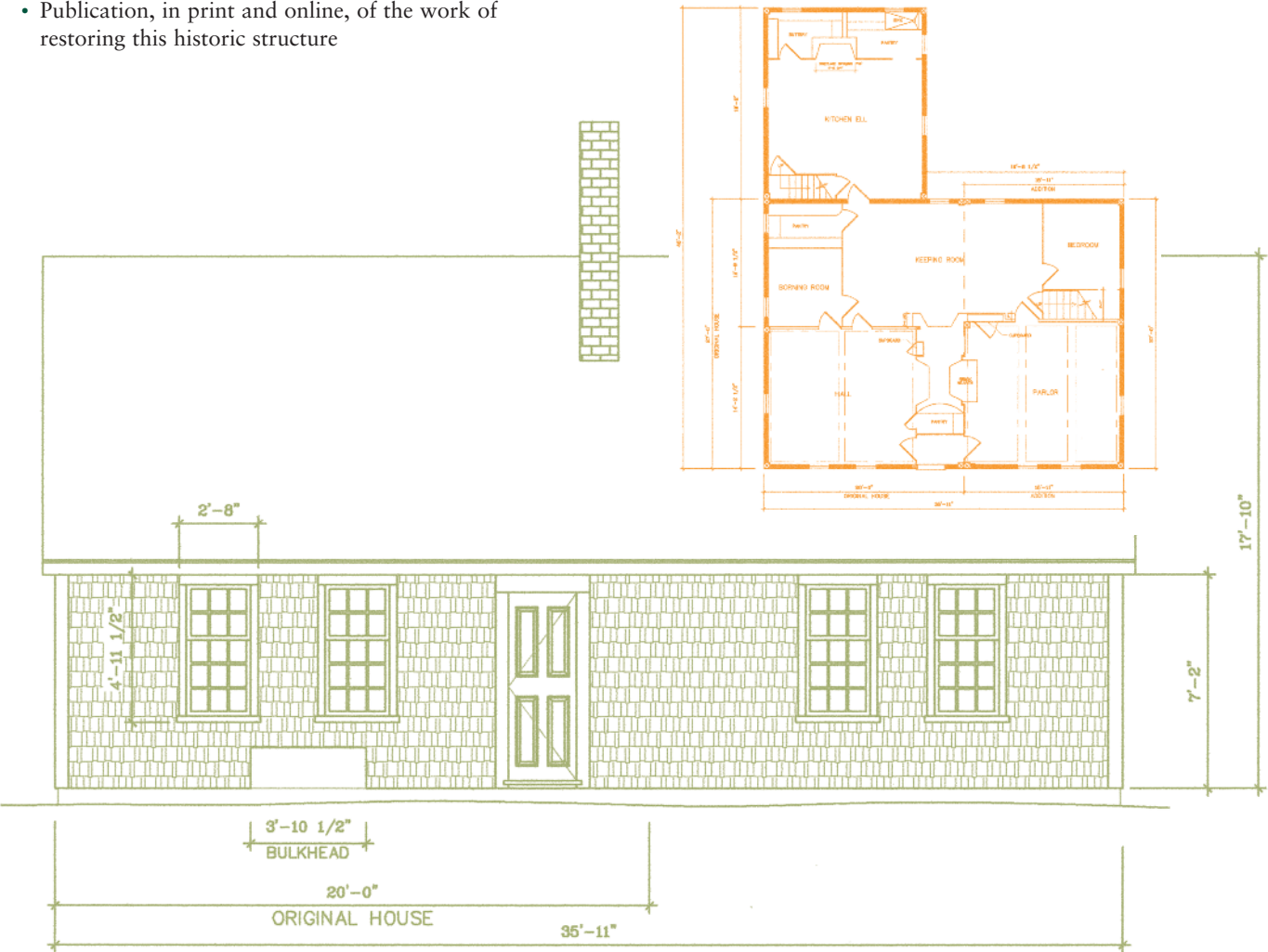


Plans for Use

Once the Hancock-Mitchell House has been restored, Sheriff's Meadow Foundation will launch a program intended to use the house in a manner that is educational, community-spirited and in keeping with the remote nature of the house and its surroundings. Plans include:

- Educational programs for local schools
- Involvement of local youth in the restoration and maintenance of the house and the grounds
- Support for historic research associated with the house and the land
- Publication, in print and online, of the work of restoring this historic structure

- Docent-led tours on a scheduled basis
- Programs and tours of the Chilmark Historical Commission
- The creation of a kitchen garden
- Links to the paths at Quansoo Farm
- Strong cooperation with other island charitable organizations for appropriate uses of the house
- Periodic Sheriff's Meadow Foundation meetings and programs



www.sheriffsmeadow.org



Conserving the natural, beautiful, rural landscape and character of Martha's Vineyard for present and future generations.

Please send me information on the following:

- ☐ The restoration of the Hancock-Mitchell House
- ☐ Giving to Sheriff's Meadow Foundation
- ☐ The history of the Hancock-Mitchell House

☐ I am pleased to make a gift for the restoration of the Hancock-Mitchell House of:

\$5,000 ___ \$1,000 ___ \$750 ___ \$500 ___
\$250 ___ \$100 ___ \$50 ___ Other _____

☐ I would like to discuss making a gift or a pledge.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Sheriff's Meadow Foundation
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Vineyard Haven, MA 02568

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info@sheriffsmeadow.org

Founded by Henry Beetle Hough and Elizabeth Bowie Hough in 1959.

www.sheriffsmeadow.org



A VINEYARD LAND TRUST

Cover photo: Nina Bramhall

Hancock-Mitchell House

The Hancock-Mitchell House at *Quansoo Farm*



Standing upon the sweeping outwash plain of Quansoo, the Hancock-Mitchell House is considered the second-oldest or the oldest house on Martha's Vineyard. A classic, Cape Cod style home, the Hancock-Mitchell house is found on Sheriff's Meadow Foundation's Quansoo Farm property in Chilmark. The oldest portion of the house was built in the 17th Century. In this oldest section, the walls notably are made of wattle and daub – a mixture of mud and straw that is packed around wooden rungs. The wattle and daub walls place the house among the very few such “first-period” structures still standing in the United States.

Fewer still houses, though, can match the beauty of the landscape that surrounds the Hancock-Mitchell House. The house stands amid spreading fields of hay and meadows of little bluestem. The plains stretch to the marshes, and to the waters of Black Point Pond, and to the dunes of the Atlantic Ocean beach just beyond. On most days, one hears the sound of the ocean surf. Remarkably, the landscape around the Hancock-Mitchell House has changed little in the centuries since the house was built. The house itself has become a part of this landscape, a place both bucolic and wild.

Sheriff's Meadow Foundation intends to restore the Hancock-Mitchell House and to establish an appropriate program of use for the restored house and its grounds. We can only accomplish this goal with the support of our donors. We encourage you to learn about the Hancock-Mitchell house, and to support our work with a contribution or a pledge.

A Brief History

A home for many years to the Hancock family and to the Mitchell family, the Hancock-Mitchell House has played a role in the history of Martha's Vineyard and has enjoyed a history of its own. Much research on the history of this house has been conducted by historians Henry Scott, Jonathan Scott, and Linsey Lee and by the archaeologist Richard Burt, and the recent assessment work of Brian Cooper has illuminated even more of this history.

While the house was built in the 17th century, it is not yet clear whether the house was built upon its current site or built elsewhere and moved to Quansoo at a later time. Some have theorized that the house may have been a meetinghouse used by the missionary Mayhews, while others have doubted that theory. At some time in the 18th Century, the house came into the ownership of the Hancock family. Signatures of various Hancock family members are found on doors and boards throughout the house.

When Sophronia Hancock married West Mitchell, the house came into the Mitchell family. The Mitchell family continued to own the house until it was purchased by Florence B. “Flipper” Harris. After this purchase, the Mitchells continued to live in the house on a seasonal basis until 2000. Mrs. Harris bought the house and 150 acres of land surrounding it, and ultimately donated all of this land, including the house, to Sheriff's Meadow Foundation.



Some Features of the House

The original, 17th-century part of the Hancock-Mitchell House is a 3/4 Cape that is 20 feet wide and 27 feet deep. The house faces south. In the 18th century, an addition was added to the east. This addition measures 16 feet by 27 feet. Finally, in the late 19th century, a 20 foot by 16 foot ell was added to the rear. Hand-hewn studs make up the frame of the house. These studs were numbered, mortised into sills and mortised into plates or girts above.

One reason the house still stands, even when faced with centuries of hurricanes and gales, is that the walls feature hurricane braces. The hurricane braces are boards that run diagonally across sections of the wall. The braces are mortised into studs and mortised into girts and rafter plates. In the oldest section of the house, the walls still contain wattle and daub. Inside the house, some of the timbers are exposed, while others are encased. Some timber edges bear “lamb's tongue” chamfers, a decorative effect used in the 17th century and early 18th century. Some portions of the house contain pit-sawn boards.

Inside the house, one finds plastered walls and various kinds of decorations. The plaster was made from a mixture of crushed oyster shells and horse hair. Some walls, such as those in the Boring Room, are inscribed with intricate carvings of ships. Other walls, such as those in the attic, bear drawings of lotus-flowers, drawings which a child might have made with a compass. In the Pantry, old bottles and canning jars line the curving shelves. Some jars, still sealed after many years, contain perfectly preserved tomatoes and peaches.



Plans for restoration

Sheriff's Meadow Foundation intends to completely restore the Hancock-Mitchell House to a condition that is historically accurate and appropriate. We will base the restoration of the house on the assessment conducted by Brian Cooper of Early New England Restorations. During the restoration process, we will engage in a parallel effort to list the house on the National Register of Historic Places.

We will hire Mr. Cooper to lead the restoration effort and we will use local experts in the building trades as well. In the restoration process, we will replace rotten sills, restore the timbers, repair the structure, address insect damage, adjust the drainage, replace modern windows with reproduction, antique-style windows, and more. We will take care to highlight and expose noteworthy features, such as the wattle and daub walls, where appropriate.

We plan to engage the public in the restoration process and to make use of the resources offered by Sheriff's Meadow Foundation's conservation lands. For example, we can saw new sills from white oak trees growing upon Sheriff's Meadow properties, split shingles from cedars growing on our lands, make plaster from oyster shells, use the same Quansoo earth to patch gaps in the wattle and daub walls.

Sheriff's Meadow will document every aspect of the restoration process. Along the way, we will work closely with other organizations, such as the Martha's Vineyard Preservation Trust, the Martha's Vineyard Museum, and the Chilmark Historical Commission. The result will be a restored house and landscape of national significance.

Photography: Alison Shaw and Kelley Hickey