

The Jabez Howland House: A Time Line

Throughout history also known as Caughtaugh-canteist, Strawberry Hill, The Garden Spot, Carver House and Watson's Hill

1665/7 Jacob Mitchell granted a deed for land and builds a house; he married in 1666.

1669 Jacob received a deed of gift from his father, Experience Mitchell, for land in Dartmouth on November 5, 1669, and sold the house and land to Jabez Howland, son of John and Elizabeth Howland.

1680 (Jan. 10) Jabez Howland sells the house to Elkanah Watson (Plymouth Registry of Deeds, Old Colony Records, V. 4, pg. 393)

“.....house and land called by the name Garden Spot.....”

Also of note: At the end of the deed after Jabez Howland's signature:

“Elizabeth Howland senior yielded up her free right also in the house and land mentioned..” followed by:

“Bethyah Howland wife of Jabez Howland above mentioned gave her free consent to this deed the 15th of January 1680 before mee William Bradford Assistant.”

This shows our ancestress Elizabeth Tilley Howland had an interest in the house and lived there.

The *Howland Quarterly* lists the following ownership, but does not list the sources:

(Editor's Note – Since at times only portions of the lot were sold, it seems like there are discrepancies when there really aren't; other sources include John Howland, A Mayflower Pilgrim, 1926; Descendants of Edward Small of New England, 1910)

1680 Jabez Howland moved to Bristol, RI, sold to Elkanah Watson, who sold to his son John Watson, who sold to Stephen Churchill in 1707. Churchill sold a portion to Ephriam Little in 1716. Benjamin Churchill was the owner in 1775 and sold a portion to



This stereoscopic image is the earliest known photo of Howland house, circa 1880-1890.

Joseph Thomas and another to Ephraim Spooner in 1784. Around 1790-2, Thomas sold to Nathaniel Carver whose family stayed in the house until 1867, then sold to Joseph E. Sherman (one record has James Sherman), who sold to Barnabas H. Holmes, who gave it to his daughter, Miss. Helen R. Holmes of Washington D.C.
Miss Holmes is whom the PJHS purchased the house from in 1912.

1911 In the July issue of the *Howland Homestead* (precursor to the *Howland Quarterly*, this being Vol. 1, No. 1) there was an article about purchasing the Jabez Howland House and an appeal.....and mentions that the Annual Meeting will be at the Samoset House and then they will visit “the old Howland House”. Below are some excerpts from the appeals:

“.....Famous old Howland House on Sandwich Street, Plymouth,....is of historic interest as one of the oldest houses in America.....Unless it is purchased it may be torn down, as have been other old Plymouth houses....” “.....no house in Plymouth is more nearly associated with the Pilgrims than this one.”

“This appeal to save this venerable house, which should be sacred to all the descendants.....is made in confidence that a cordial and prompt response will save this dwelling....” “.....the owner offers to sell it to the Society for \$2,000, which is considered a very reasonable sum. We wish to restore and furnish the house to the style of the olden days...open the fire place...and light a fire once more upon the long silent hearth.....
“Here once a year, the scattered Howland Descendants may meet and recall the scenes of long ago.

To do this, \$5,000 is needed.....\$2,000 for the property, \$1,000 for repairs, and \$2,000 to be placed in a fund, the income from which will assure the preservation forever of this historic dwelling....”

Another appeal for a future purchase:

“.....only twenty feet from the house, is a livery stable, which stands on part of the original Howland lot. It greatly increases the danger of fire and should be removed..... the owner offers to sell it to the Society....for a reasonable sum....it could be torn down, and a beautiful lawn graded and set with old-fashioned shrubs and flowers....As soon as the deed of the house is in the possession of the Society, the next work must be to restore the house to the style of the Colonial days and then remove the stable.”



These two postcards of Howland House were made around 1900-1908. Notice the building to the left of the house. That is part of the old stable and barn that the Society purchased and removed in the 1920's.





This postcard is post marked July 1914 showing the 1913 restoration.

1912 (February 15) The “old Howland House” was purchased by “The Society of the Descendants of Pilgrim John Howland, of the ship “Mayflower” (original name of the Society) and it was announced to the Society in the April 1912, Vol. 1, No. 3, *Howland Homestead*.

1913 The January 1913, Vol. 2, No. 1, issue of *The Howland Homestead* records another appeal for funds to purchase the old stable:

“If the old stable which so seriously menaces the safety of the Homestead should take fire some night, our dear old house would soon be a heap of ashes. Will you not try to interest every Howland Descendant you can reach to try to help a few of us who are working earnestly—to raise the sum that is needed....The opportunity is ours today.”

And:

“The preservation of the old house at Plymouth is far from being assured. Although the deed to the old house is in the possession of the Society, the house itself is in a very precarious condition, constantly menaced by fire and gradually going to decay. The sum of \$5,000 should at once be raised....”

And:

“It is expected that the work of restoring the house will begin in April, and a full account of the restoration of the house.....will be completed so that the house may be open for inspection at the Annual Meeting of the Society on September 4, 1913.”

1913 The April 1913, Vol. 2, No. 2 *Howland Homestead* was the last issue of this publication. It puts out another appeal and show photos of the house before any restoration begins. It also has photos of the livery stable. (See photos at top of page.)

1923 The old stable and barn were purchased (Recorded in the 1926 PJHS book and histories in several *Quarterlies*)



In 1923, the barn and stable were purchased and removed, ridding the house of a menace.

1924 The August 16, 1924 meeting was held at the Samoset House and it was announced that “The grounds around the old Howland House were greatly improved and beautified by grading the lawn, planting over a hundred shrubs (donated by one of our kind friends, Mrs. Edward Watson of Plymouth), building rough stone entrances at the driveway, and an appropriate fence, etc. [Not listed in this account, but a Flag pole was installed.]

These improvements elicited praise from the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, which took expression in the form of a letter. The message follows: “The Publicity Committee of the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce wishes to express its appreciation to the Howland Descendants for their fine work in improving the grounds about the Howland House, on Sandwich Street. The work that has been done is a tremendous improvement to that part of town as well as to the famous old house itself.”

Also noted was that in 1924 they had 600 visitors and in 1925 over 1350 visitors showing the “increasing interest in that sacred memorial to our ancestors.”

1925 At the August 15 meeting, the Constitution and By-laws were revised. Addition: “.....to retain possession of and keep in good condition, the properties known as the “Howland House” at Plymouth, Mass., and “Rocky Nook,” located at Kingston, Massachusetts...”

Also in this year, the trade mark for “Howland House” was registered.



This postcard is circa 1924-1930. The building to the right is the Miles property which was purchased and removed in the early 1930's.

1933 The Miles property adjoining Howland House was purchased and the building removed.

1936 Initial plans were begun for the restoration of the House to the “period of its

erection” at the Annual Meeting. Brigadier General Charles R. Howland was appointed as the Chairman of the Restoration Committee. Sidney T. Strickland, A.I.A., of Boston and Plymouth was engaged to draw reconstruction plans. [1936 was the year the *Howland Quarterly* began.]

1938 The January *Quarterly* featured an appeal for the reconstruction of the house: “In order to restore the old house to its original condition, both as regards the exterior and interior, our Society is asking the members to raise the necessary amount to accomplish this reconstruction. From the plans of the architects (who are authorities on old houses) the cost of the restoration of the Howland House as it was in 1667, amounts to \$7,500. At present \$2,925 has been pledged. . . . in amounts of \$5 to \$500. . . .” In the April 1938 *Quarterly* it was announced that \$3,485 had been raised in pledges.

1941 Work began on the restoration in the Fall of 1940. An update was provided in the January *Quarterly* from Sidney Strickland: “With the exception of one or two plates, which have been exposed to moisture on the outside walls, we found the entire frame of the 1st and 2nd floor East to be in its original state, and for the most part sound. The old chimney was in bad shape, and we have proceeded with added care in working around the base of it.

One most important item came to light in this work however. We found, thrown down upon the dirt, just under the old stairs which had settled badly, the original Fire Place Lintel from the East room. Although it was badly decayed, it gave us the exact dimensions and detail so that we can duplicate the same in our present alterations. We also found the location of the original entrance door, through the mortis cut upon one of the posts in the stair wall. Also through similar mortis cuts in the 2nd floor and attic framing we have found the exact location of the stair opening and also the chimney opening, thus making it possible to reconstruct the chimney as it originally existed.

We feel greatly encouraged. With the old brick on hand, and with so much of the original frame, ceilings, etc. intact, we can recreate the east room and the bed room above, exactly as they were lived in by Jabez, and seen and enjoyed by John and Elizabeth Howland. I really believe that this House (when restored) will become the most perfect reminder of the Pilgrim Fathers in Plymouth.”

Cash and pledges are now up to \$4,821.

From the July *Quarterly* it was announced that the rededication of the restored House will take place at the August 30 Annual Meeting. It talked about the importance of this event, not only for our Society but for Plymouth and the people of Massachusetts. There was also an update from Sidney Strickland: “The roof, which since 1667 had been raised three times, has been entirely reframed and boarded in, also re-shingled. The old oak frame work has been rehabilitated through the replacement of several very weak members. The window frames and doorway (probably built around 1850) have been replaced as of 1667.

The modern red shingles were removed and clapboards, stained in a beautiful weathered brown, similar to those of 274 years ago, now cover the exterior of the house. The chimney reconstructed dominates the whole edifice. Through the generosity of one of our members (Mrs. John Parker Hill of Philadelphia) 2000 old hand-made bricks were used for the chimney and fireplaces. Several of the original bricks were also found and used.

In order to maintain the early character of the plastering our architect gathered up old shells from both the Jabez and John Howland site at Rocky Nook, and will be mixed in with the plaster.

In describing the appearance of the restored Howland House, Mr. Strickland writes: “Simple of line, and crowned by a massive chimney, the exterior shows a marked contrast to our later date homes, with the small windows and large clapboarded wall areas. Within, although the old timbers and whitewashed walls cannot talk, nevertheless it will, I believe, present a dignified and clear picture of the rooms familiar to John, Elizabeth and other members of their family.”

THE JABEZ HOWLAND HOUSE REDEDICATION, AUGUST 30, 1941

Below: original language and spelling from the October 1941 Howland Quarterly.

Restored and Rededicated, An Historic Event

Although we had the largest attendance of members in the history of our Society at the REDEDICATION of the now famous old Howland House in Plymouth, we will give to those unable to be present a complete account of this historic event.

Members and their families, guests and friends gathered on the terrace back of the house at 11 o'clock Saturday morning, August 30.

Mr. William Howland, President of The Pilgrim John Howland Society, welcomed those assembled and stated that the purpose of this meeting was to rededicate this HOWLAND HOUSE and requested Rev. Carl Knudsen, minister of the Church of the Pilgrimage in Plymouth, to invoke the blessing of God on this undertaking.

INVOCATION

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our Shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.

Thou, O God, art our dwelling place in all generations—from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God. Of old Thou didst lead Thy children through the wilderness. Thou wast to them a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Thou wast their strength in weakness, their comfort in sorrow, their song in the night.

We lift up our hearts to Thee in praise and gratitude for the great heroes of the spirit who have made glorious the long history of mankind, men who cared more for honor than for wealth, men who prized integrity more than security, men who braved the perils of land and sea that the light of freedom and faith might forever shine in the darkness.

We invoke Thy special presence as we gather to rededicate this memorial to Thy great servants of old.

We thank Thee for their lives of brave adventure, for their lofty idealism, for their noble self-sacrifice, for their devotion to their God.

Grant us the presence of their spirit in this historic hour. Sanctify this house in our minds and hearts. Make us to feel the mystic strength of these heroic souls who met

within these walls, and to sense the reality of their faith that would not shrink though pressed by every foe.

Grant that to every one of us this may be an hour of momentous reconsecration to the cause of freedom, of character and of faith for which our forefathers gave their all.

As this house of Pilgrim memory is rededicated may we be rededicated in spirit and in truth to the Pilgrim's God.

And may Thine be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

President Howland then traced the history of this House, including former changes in the House, and the decision of the Society (which had obtained title to the house and the estate of which it is a part.) He then called upon Mr. Sidney T. Strickland, A.I.A., of Boston and Plymouth, who as architect and reconstructor had remodelled the House, to state the problem of reconstruction.

Mr. Strickland told us of his problem: as an architect, to trace back to the original structure of the building; and as architect-constructor, of the new problem presented by discovery of poor condition of the foundation of the building; of the near crushing collapse of the huge chimney; of the necessity—for true return to early type—of using clapboards; of the discovery under the building of relics sacred to us; of strengthening the foundation and readjustment of the building in detail. His description was clear, concise and pleasing.

President Howland thanked Mr. Strickland. He then introduced Colonel Stoddard, the Governor General of the National Society of Mayflower Descendants (and also a member of the Pilgrim John Howland Society) as the principal guest speaker.

In an eloquent oration, Colonel Stoddard, addressing the descendants in a masterly manner the following ideas: the pleasure in being present; the rededication of ourselves that preceded the restoration of the Howland House; the marvelous restoration of the House was not to meet the demand of "curiosity", No! it had and has another purpose; it expresses visably the trend away from the "Middle Ages" condition abroad, away from that cold blooded attitude that used imprisonment, confiscation, and banishment against non-conformist attitude to a state established church; a trend toward a self-formed congregation to read the Bible and worship God according to the dictates of conscience, as at Scrooby, and after persecution, as at Amsterdam, and then Leydon, where to the glory of God and man's right to individually worship, they sacrificed all ideas of worldly profit, and even accepted jobs in which they could save their faith; – a trend to a new world in which many, many died in the first winter of 1620-21, but a world in which they could freely worship God, and with such satisfaction that when offered free passage on the Mayflower back to the former home if they would conform to the state established church, not one turned back, and all with faith in God, faced the future, in which there was no persecution by them on religious grounds, in which future they in their sacred compact dedicated Liberty and Freedom to the new world America, and in which world the CORNER-STONE was and still is the Compact, and for the perpetuation of which world they raised large families, who effectively carried the principles of the compact to our Constitution; the Mayflower Society supports the Howland Society in saving these sacred houses that were used by the Pilgrims, and through the agency of this House, we are "in touch" with the Pilgrim Fathers; we are opposed to the present trend of business to tear down these ancient and sacred houses; the middle class is on the way out; but we must make our stand to save such ancient and sacred pilgrim havens; our answer to the outside fighting again, is "Mutual Love, Tolerance, Freedom, Liberty, all based on trust

in God;” I congratulate you on this lesson to America in not abandoning trust in God, while arming to preserve here that which is right and only that which is right, and my dear cousins, the rededication of this House at this time is the visible evidence of preservation of that faith in GOD which preserved our Pilgrim Fathers.

Mr. Howland thanked Colonel Stoddard for his clear and eloquent statement of exactly what the rededication of this House means, and requested Reverend Knudsen to conduct the Rededicatory Litany, and to pronounce the Benediction.

Rev. Knudsen: TO PERPETUATE AND TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF PILGRIM JOHN HOWLAND AND ELIZABETH, HIS WIFE, AND JABEZ HIS SON

Assembly: We re-dedicate this house.

Rev. Knudsen: WITH A PRAYER THAT IT MAY BE DEFFENDED FROM FIRE AND STORM AND EARTHQUAKE AND ALL MANNER OF CALAMITY.

Assembly: We re-dedicate this house.

Rev. Knudsen: THAT THE INTEGRITY AND BEAUTY OF PILGRIM HOME LIFE MAY BE CHERISHED IN THESE DAYS.

Assemble: We re-dedicate this house.

Rev. Knudsen: THAT THE PILGRIMS MORAL COURAGE, AND DEVOTION TO FREEDOM AND WORHSIP OF THE ALMIGHTY AND ALL LOVING GOD MAY BE MEMORIALIZED AND EMULATED FOR ALL GENERATIONS TO COME.

Assembly: We re-dedicate this house.



BENEDICTION

And now may the God of our Fathers lead us through the wilderness of our own generation. May He vouchsafe unto us a portion of their courage and their heroism. May the eternal God make us faithful keepers of the light that cannot fail – that spiritual liberty, freedom and faith may triumph in our time. AMEN.



Top: Linen postcard, circa 1950-1960.

Left: This postcard is copyrighted 1964.