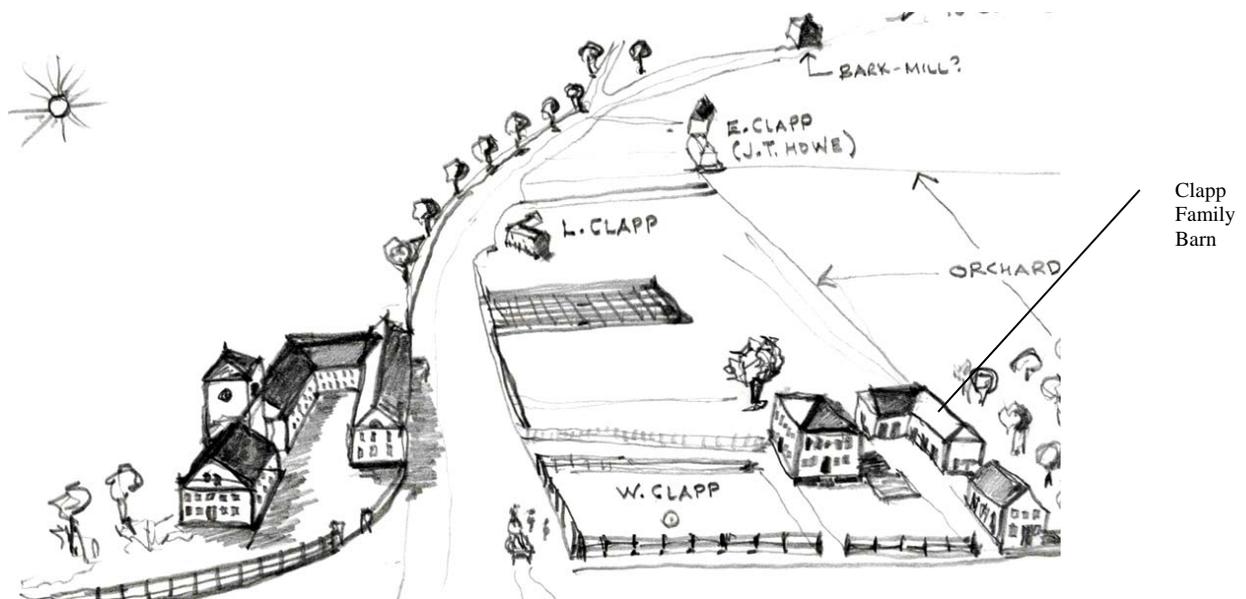


The Farm in the City: Fundraising Case Statement for the Clapp Family Barn

The Dorchester Historical Society has developed a long-term plan in which all the buildings on the Society's headquarters property were analyzed in the context of community visions and architectural programming. One of the overriding concerns for everyone involved was the need to create an effective and sustainable facility stewardship plan. Principles compiled through the community visioning exercises included: 1) to retain and enhance the historic character of the Clapp property, 2) to preserve and showcase the barn and Dorchester's agricultural heritage, 3) to expand educational uses and accessibility of the site, and 4) to better engage with different groups and neighborhoods in Dorchester.

The participants in the planning process clearly identified the need for an enhanced visitor experience through the establishment of a visitor greeting area, better signage, clear pathways, new galleries indoors and out, and new educational features. At the same time, the Society's consultant determined that repairs, alterations and improvements to the physical structures are required to achieve these objectives.

The restoration of the barn is the logical next priority in the plan. The cost is estimated to be \$300,000.



A mid-nineteenth-century view of part of the Clapp farm properties. The tannery buildings are at the left; the Lemuel Clap House is in its original location; there is an outbuilding at the front of the driveway at the William Clapp House that is now gone; the carriage house has not yet been constructed. The Ebenezer Clapp House and the bark mill were then still in existence. The grist mill on the South Bay would be further in the distance, and more pear orchards would be located behind the viewer of the illustration between Boston Street and Dorchester Avenue.

The Clapp Family Barn

The Society's goal is to stabilize the barn structure and save the treasures it houses – the horse stalls, the hay loft, some early 19th century farm implements, the Clapp family horse-drawn trap and many other wonderful examples of our agricultural heritage.

The barn was used to house animals, farm equipment, a carpentry shop, and the fruits of the pear orchards. The restoration of the barn will provide the opportunity for new exhibit galleries to celebrate Dorchester's agricultural history, including barn framing & timber-framing construction techniques, agricultural tools and carriages and sleds, Dorchester geography, topography, and changing coastline, and early industries supportive of an agricultural economy such as milling and tanning.

Description of the Barn

The barn to the north of the William Clapp House at the Dorchester Historical Society is made up of two parts: the main barn and the south shed, both thought to date from ca. 1850. Together they are L-shape in plan, and a similar L-shape footprint is depicted on the site on the 1852 Henry McIntyre map of Dorchester/Boston. Both buildings are timber-framed, and yet they are independently framed. Major timbers in both buildings are hand hewn.

There a few 1860s dates carved into the fabric of the barn on its north side, and a date of September, 1863 was etched into the barn's basement plaster ceiling—suggesting it was installed in that year. There is also an 1865 date carved into the wood spinner-latch of a door on a tack room, suggesting again some modification so the Civil War period. The barn is essentially a 3-bay long detached side-gabled English barn, with a carpenter's shop, wagon aisle, and tack room/animal stalls occupying the three bays from west to east. There is hayloft above the east and west bays and part of the middle bay.

The south ell or shed appears to have been conceived as a 2-bay vehicle storage shed, or early wagon shed. It has a loft overhead that is accessed by an open hatch. A full-story basement lies under the barn and south shed. Unusual features in the barn include a built-in ladder case for preserving and keeping secure one of the fruit tree ladders to important when Clapp's Favorite Pears and other fruits were grown in the nearby orchard.

Historical Context

One of only a few remaining barns in Boston, the Dorchester Historical Society's Clapp family barn stands as a symbol of the town's agricultural heritage. Dorchester's farms supplied Boston's appetites over a long history—perhaps most notably during the occupation of the city by British troops at the start of the Revolutionary War. In the next century several of Dorchester's landed gentlemen joined to form the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. One of them, Marshall Pinckney Wilder, furnished the original plantings for the Boston Public Garden from his personal greenhouse. The Clapp

family's story can be followed from the settlement of Dorchester in 1630 through the centuries from subsistence farming to the development of extensive orchards made up of fruits that were hybridized on the estate. Their barn, then, is a physical artifact from earlier times that serves to evoke history better than words can ever do.

The Dorchester settlement took shape in 1630 when Roger Clap and others arrived in the wilderness. There were no other towns in the area—indeed Boston was not settled until later the same year. The new immigrants faced a territory where everything had to be made new including the roof over their heads. The settlers needed to construct mills to grind the grain that they needed to grow. They had to breed the few animals they brought on the three-month voyage in order to create the herds of livestock necessary for life. The Clapps developed land in the north of Dorchester on either side of Boston Street, the causeway street that led to the Calf Pasture (now South Boston). Over the decades the extended Clapp family farmed their own lands, placed a grist mill on the South Bay powered by the action of the tide, developed a successful leather-tanning business, and later expanded to horticulture and the development of fine pears including the Clap's Favorite.

The Clapps were not alone—their surviving barn serves simply as the remaining symbol that reminds us of all the other families who worked their fields and developed new varieties of edible and ornamental plants. Many well-known varieties were developed in Dorchester, including the Downer cherry; the Andrews pear, Frederick Clapp pear, Harris pear, and the President Wilder strawberry.

Justification

The mission of the Society is to improve the quality of life in Dorchester by collecting, preserving and disseminating Dorchester's history. In the wider context cultural resources reveal every aspect of our country's origins and development - our land, houses, workplaces, roadways, waterways, places of worship, cemeteries, military installations and commercial sites. They are irreplaceable. Historic properties and archaeological resources face many dangers including vandalism, urban sprawl, construction, and farming. We must protect and care for those that remain.

The Clapp Family buildings combined with objects from the past provide a window into our history and culture by connecting people to the past. The story of one family through four centuries provides an opportunity to explore all of Dorchester's recorded history and to contrast the stories of our town's other families. Dorchester has a rich agricultural history whose story can be told in the setting of a restored barn. The act of observing, touching and feeling real artifacts enhances our understanding history, an understanding that cannot be achieved only through text and illustration. Preservation of our historic places and objects ensures that future generations will be able to learn about and understand the history of our world.