

**HISTORIC RESOURCES**

**BUILDING AND STRUCTURES**

Please send completed form to: Stacey Vairo, National Register and State Register Coordinator,  
State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development,  
One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford CT 06103

\* Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Building Name (Common) Davidson Farmstead / Minnow Brook Farm Record No. 4981  
 Building Name (Historic) Davidson, Samuel Gilbert, Farmstead / Minnow Brook Farm  
 Street Address or Location 539 Litchfield Turnpike  
 Town/City Bethany Village \_\_\_\_\_ County New Haven  
 Owner(s) Dawn & Jordan Stark, 539 Litchfield Turnpike, Bethany CT 06524  Public  Private

**PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Present Use: Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling  
 Historic Use: Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling  
 Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road?  Yes  No  
 Interior accessible?  Yes  No If yes, explain \_\_\_\_\_  
 Style of building Carriage, New England, Connected; Vernacular style Date of Construction c.1885, 19th c.

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- |  |  |   |                                       |  |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard             | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Brick  | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone            | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone  | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type <u>Random ashlar</u> ) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>Vertical wood siding</u> |                                       |  |

**Structural System**

- Wood Frame  Post & Beam  Balloon  Load bearing masonry  Structural iron or steel  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Roof (Type)**

- Gable  Flat  Mansard  Monitor  Sawtooth  
 Gambrel  Shed  Hip  Round  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**(Material)**

- Wood Shingle  Roll Asphalt  Tin  Slate  Asphalt Shingle  
 Built up  Tile  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Stories: 2, 1 1/2 Approximate Dimensions Carriage barn: 25' x 48'; Cow barn: 16' x 60'

Structural Condition:  Excellent  Good  Fair  Deteriorated

Exterior Condition:  Excellent  Good  Fair  Deteriorated

Location Integrity:  On original site  Moved When? \_\_\_\_\_

Alterations?  Yes  No If yes, explain: Carriage barn re-used as work space.

**FOR OFFICE USE:** Town # \_\_\_\_\_ Site # \_\_\_\_\_ UTM \_\_\_\_\_

District:  S  NR If NR, Specify:  Actual  Potential

**PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT'D)**

**Related outbuildings or landscape features:**

- Barn     Shed     Garage     Carriage House     Shop     Garden
- Other landscape features or buildings: Site spans intersection of two roads

**Surrounding Environment:**

- Open land     Woodland     Residential     Commercial     Industrial     Rural
- High building density     Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

See continuation sheet.

• Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*)

See continuation sheet.

Architect \_\_\_\_\_ Builder 1882 House: Thomas H. Brooks, Joiner

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:

Cunningham, Janice, Connecticut's Agricultural Heritage: an Architectural and Historical Overview, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation & State Historic Preservation Office, 2012.

See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock Date 12/08/2012

View Multiple Views Negative on File CTHP

Name Charlotte Hitchcock Date 12/27/2012

Organization Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude:  
41.428335, -72.976612

**Threats to the building or site:**

- None known     Highways     Vandalism     Developers     Renewal     Private
- Deterioration     Zoning     Other \_\_\_\_\_     Explanation \_\_\_\_\_

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The property is located on both sides of the intersection of Carrington Road and Litchfield Turnpike in Bethany. South of the site, Litchfield Turnpike runs northward out of New Haven through Woodbridge, passing several lakes, which are water supply reservoirs owned by the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority. Carrington Road, also a north-south road, originally intersected Litchfield Turnpike here at an oblique angle, with Litchfield Turnpike angling northwest to join Amity Road and extending toward Litchfield (historically known as the Straits Turnpike and a toll road from 1797 to c. 1821). This was a locally important intersection, called Davidson's Corner. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, c. 1954, the X-shaped intersection was redesigned to give priority to Route 69, which now runs along the east side of the barns following Litchfield Turnpike from the south and Carrington Road from here northward toward Waterbury. The path of the old roadway can still be seen in an aerial view.

The primary village centers of Bethany were historically located along Amity Road (Route 63) which runs roughly parallel to the west, along a ridge top. The Congregational and Episcopal Churches are located on Amity Road near the northern edge of the town, with the Christ Episcopal Church carriage shed listed on the State Register of Historic Places. The c. 1807 Wheeler-Beecher House, on Amity Road slightly north of the two churches, is also a National Register-listed property. Farmsteads in Bethany that are also included in this thematic State Register listing are: the Russell Homestead, 20 Round Hill Road; Clover Nook Farm, 50 Fairwood Road; the Abram Carrington Farmstead (Cherry Tree Farm), 144 Bethmour Road; the Doolittle Farm at 329 Downs Road; RoJo Farm, 312 Litchfield Turnpike; and the Bishop-Tuttle-Megin Farmstead, 163 Carrington Road. The last two of these are located nearby, less than a mile south of this property.

At 539 Litchfield Turnpike, Barn I (the Carriage barn), is on the east side of the original road intersection (but west of the relocated portion of Route 69), facing west toward the Farmhouse. Barn II is to the south and oriented perpendicular to Barn I.

The Farmhouse is located on the west side of the intersection, facing east toward the Carriage barn. The main east block is a 2 ½-story gable-roofed vernacular Italianate/Victorian structure, 24' x 30', with its ridge-line oriented roughly east-west. The front of the house is the gable-end facing east toward the intersection of the two roads. The east gable-end is a three-bay façade, reflecting a side-hall layout, with the main entry in the right (north) bay and two-over-two double-hung windows in the other two bays and in all three on the second floor. In the attic is a pair of arched double-hung windows. The entry is through a flat-roofed single-bay porch with square posts and bracketed eave cornices. Toward the rear of the house the plan widens with symmetrical projecting wings; where a typical Victorian house would have a cross-gable roof, here the main roof pitch continues, sweeping down over the extensions. The southern rooms are two parlors connected by tall pocket doors; interior trim is impeccably-preserved Victorian millwork with original hardware. An angle bay window on the south side extends the rear parlor. A unique feature is a counter-balanced trap door in the front hallway accessing a stair to the cellar below.

The roof has deep overhangs and deep cornice returns on the east façade. The original siding was wood clapboards, which have been covered by white-painted asbestos shingle siding at the first floor and green diamond-patterned asphalt shingling at the second floor level. The windows retain the original cornices at the heads. The foundation is random ashlar stone masonry in a colorful mix of stone including local basalt and schist. The roof is asphalt shingles.

Attached at the west end of the house is a lower 16' x 20' 2-story structure which is an older dwelling pre-dating the grander addition at the front. This block, with its ridge-line oriented east-west aligned with the main building, has a 1-story shed-roofed porch along its south side and a 1-story bedroom addition to the north, known as the Borning Room.

Connected to the older rear structure and extending southward is Barn III, a 15' x 42' 2-story gable-roofed block. Its northern section has been incorporated into the residence, while the southern part is an outbuilding. Attached to this is a long narrow southward extension, a 1-story 8' x 38' attached shed with a gable roof. The roofs of Barn III and the shed extension are oriented north-south, perpendicular to the residential structures.

The grade slopes up toward the west behind the buildings. The area was cleared farmland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but has reverted to second-growth woodlands with scattered houses including a mix of historic farm structures and 20<sup>th</sup>-century suburban-type housing.

- Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*):

### Architectural description:

Inventory of structures (C – contributing, NC – non-contributing):

Farmhouse	1882-83	C
Carriage barn I	c. 1885	C
Barn II – Cow barn	19 <sup>th</sup> c.	C
Barn III – Connected barn	19 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> c.	C

### Barn I – Carriage barn:

This is a 2 ½-story gable-roofed structure, 25' x 48', with its ridge-line oriented northwest-southeast parallel to the original course of Litchfield Turnpike. For the purpose of clarity, the ridge will be considered as north-south; the main entrance is an arched opening in the center of three bays of the west eave-side which faces across Carrington Road toward the Farmhouse.

### Exterior:

The left (north) bay is the narrowest, containing an enclosed room. The west side has in its north bay a pair of hinged doors accessing the interior, presumably a work space.

The center is the carriage bay, with a wide elliptical-arched opening and a hay door above. The bay is 18 feet wide, has overhead joists spaced closely at approximately 12" on center, to support heavy loading. Local tradition holds that the barn was used for blacksmithing; the strong upper structure could have supported hoisting equipment, or there could have been equipment for the Davidson Telephone Exchange (see below).

The right (south) bay is also wide. On the exterior there is a six-over-six double-hung window lighting a corridor area. The space has stalls for four horses plus a stair to the upper level. This area is elaborately fitted out, with tongue and groove paneled walls, stall partitions, built-in mangers with grain chutes from above, and a walkway at the south wall accessing the manger from the head end of the animals and providing light to the horses via two double-hung windows.

The south gable-end has two six-over-six double-hung windows on both the ground and second floors, with a large hinged hay door between the upper windows and two smaller hinged doors in the attic above. At the eave-level there is a siding divide with a saw-tooth decoration and a simple belt course molding.

The east eave-side has a six-over-six double-hung window lighting the aisle at the tail end of the stalls, a pass-through door also accessing the stall area, and two six-pane stable windows lighting the carriage bay plus a hay door above.

The north gable end resembles the south in its fenestration and trim but has no hay door. An attic window is at the peak.

Siding is vertical flush-boards painted red. Windows have beveled lintel trim and sills but no side casings. The foundation is tightly-constructed of random ashlar masonry; it appears to be local stone such as basalt or schist. The roof has overhangs and sloped soffits, and is covered in asphalt shingles.

### Interior:

The interior reveals a post and beam frame of sawn lumber, mostly circular-sawn. There are iron bolts extending diagonally from the plates down to the major cross-girders in the second floor. These can be seen in the upper level, and the end fasteners are exposed in the ceiling of the ground floor. The roof is framed with sawn dimension

lumber spanning from the plates to the ridge where there are small collar-tie braces close to the peak. The upper floor is thus a large unobstructed open space stabilized primarily by the iron braces, with multiple hay doors opening to three sides. The interior wall surfaces also have some unusual closely-spaced vertical slats secured to the timber framing. The purpose of these is unknown.

**Barn II – Cow barn:**

This is a long narrow 1 1/2-story structure, 16' x 60', with a gable roof oriented perpendicular to Barn I. The long north eave-side has three widely-spaced six-pane stable windows, and a small attic window above each under the eaves. There are two hay doors between the windows at the upper level. The west gable-end has a large doorway with hinged doors that are partially collapsed. There is a pair of hinged hay doors above and a three-pane attic window. The south eave-side has several pass-through doors and a large opening near the left (west) end with steel factory sash. The east gable-end has a single window in the attic gable. Siding is vertical boards in deteriorated condition, with battens on the south side only. The foundation is a mix of mortared and un-mortared fieldstone. The roof is asphalt shingles.

The interior appears to have been built in several phases. The central frame is a three-bay post and beam frame of sawn timbers. The remains of whitewash indicate use as a dairy stable. The floor is wood planks over a shallow crawl space. Sliding barn doors at the outer face of the west end of this frame suggest that an extension westward was a later addition. Similarly, the east end appears to have been extended by one bay. The western bay has the factory sash window facing south, and there are some remnants of stone slabs, evidence of the later use as a stone cutting and sculpture workshop (see below).

**Barn III – Attached barn/shed:**

The barn or shed attached to the rear portion of the main house is a gable-roofed 2-story block, 15' x 42', with its ridge-line oriented north-south, perpendicular to that of the house. The east eave-side has four three-pane second-floor windows, evenly-spaced. Below these the structure appears to be divided into three sections – the rightmost is attached to the oldest part of the house and has been incorporated as finished space; it has three six-over-six double-hung windows with beveled head trim. A chimney projecting above the roof indicates the extent of the finished space. Toward the left (south) is a similar double-hung window and a pass-through door with a four-pane light in its upper part. The remainder of the block at the left (south) end has a pair of hinged doors flanked by similar windows; the interior of this is unfinished.

The west gable-end has a double-hung window in the attic; the ground floor has a narrow attached 1-story shed, 8' x 38', flush with the east face of the larger shed. The east and west eave-sides each have four four-pane windows evenly-spaced, and the east side has a pass-through door off-center toward the left (south). The west side of the 2-story structure has two small irregularly placed window openings. The north side is offset beyond the house wall and has a back entry door into the finished space.

The sheds are sided in flush-board vertical siding painted white with dark-painted sash and doors. Roofing is asphalt shingles. Throughout the property, original hardware is extant on most doors, consisting of iron strap hinges and U-shaped rolling door hardware.

**• Historical or Architectural importance:**

Applicable Connecticut State Register Criteria:

1. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
2. Embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

The site is particularly significant because of the Tuttle-Davidson family history including the early Davidson Telephone Exchange and the Old Elm Tea Room, and because of the quality and number of preserved buildings – the substantially intact late 19<sup>th</sup>-century connected farmhouse and barn, and the matching period carriage barn. The buildings preserve much of the historic setting of a significant crossroads.

---

**Historical background:**

This property was acquired in 1807 by James Seymour Tuttle (died September 23, 1855, aged 71) and, according to his great-great-granddaughter, Mrs. Marion Davidson Munsell, the old part of the house was built in 1812. James was “a blacksmith by trade but was especially famous as an axe maker. For fifty years he supplied axes to a number of about fifteen hundred for people from Litchfield to New Haven .... He also specialized in hoes, plows, draw shaves, and peels.”

On February 14, 1880, James's grandson, Samuel Gilbert Davidson, bought the property from the estate of Seymour Tuttle, and in 1882-83 had an addition built in front of the old house by Thomas H. Brooks, a joiner. This is said to have been copied from the Jerome Downs house, Ro-Jo Farm on Litchfield Turnpike, which was also built by Brooks. Samuel (died January 28, 1923, aged 86) served as Selectman and Health Officer for many years.

On March 1, 1924, Samuel's son, Tyler D. Davidson, inherited the property. He had been the proprietor of the Davidson Telephone Exchange System of Bethany. Five lines were installed between 1898 and 1903, and, though phones were installed free, the rental was \$12 per year. This system continued until 1907, when the Southern New England Telephone Company took it over. Tyler Davidson served as First Selectman, Secretary of the School Committee, and Trial Justice of the Town Court. He died September 13, 1952, aged 80.

In the early 1930s the old wing was converted into “The Old Elm Tea Room,” so named for the big elm in front of the house planted by S. G. Davidson seventy-five years earlier and traditionally a “mammoth haven” for orioles. The large main room downstairs with its big fireplace (once a buttry, kitchen, and dining room) was added to by converting a downstairs bedroom into a second tea room. Upstairs is a “singing room, with an arched low ceiling, curved for better acoustics” because of singing classes held by women of the family.” An old melodeon, used to lead the singers, was later transformed into a dressing table. This room, also, had a fireplace with cupboards built beside it.

Tyler’s daughters, Marion Davidson Munsell and Flora M. Davidson, inherited the property on January 12, 1954, and when they sold it in June 21, 1957 to Peter and Ellen Horbick , it had been in one family for one hundred and fifty years (Bunton).

James Seymour Tuttle had a daughter, Eliza, who married Samuel Davidson. Their son Samuel Gilbert Davidson married Sarah Jane Green. Their son was Tyler Davidson, and his daughters were Marion and Flora. At one time, the farm consisted of 100 acres, but is now reduced to four. During the 1930s period of the Old Elm Tea Room, summer help lived in the upper floor of Barn III.

The Horbicks lived in the house until 2006; Dawn and Jordan Stark purchased the property from them. Peter Horbick (1921-2008) was a locally well-known stone worker and sculptor who made gravestones and monuments in addition to sculpture. He used the barns as a workshop; remnants of stone remain in and around Barn II. Jordan Stark is a leather worker, and uses the Carriage barn as his workplace.

The Bethany Historical Society has in its collection a Tyler Davidson journal, which has provided documentation of the family history including descriptive material regarding the construction of the new house addition in 1882-83. There was previously a third barn; Peter Horbick used barn wood to built cabinets in the house kitchen.

**Architectural significance:**

The site with all its extant structures is significant both because of the Tuttle-Davidson family history and because of the quality and number of preserved resources. Historically, Samuel Gilbert Davidson was a prominent citizen involved in local civic affairs and prosperous enough to build a new house, modernizing the appearance of the farm by concealing the older small house behind the new. Tyler Davidson was also locally prominent, both in political affairs and as the entrepreneur who started and operated the local telephone company from the 1890s until 1907. The location at a crossroads likely facilitated the various business activities such as blacksmithing, telephone exchange, and the tea room. These activities evidently coexisted with farming activities, as the extant cow barn and other structures indicate ongoing agriculture. The history of the place and the physical resources as evidence, are

---

important to local history. The subsequent ownership by artist and stone carver Peter Horbick added another locally prominent figure to the site's history.

The Carriage barn is a particularly fine example of its type, both well-constructed with attention to detail, and preserved with minimal alterations. It appears likely that the Carriage barn is contemporary with the house, although further research might clarify the functions of the building, whether used for blacksmithing, and by whom, or as part of the telephone business. The existence of connected barns attached to the residential building is rare in this part of New England and adds an additional level of significance. Examination of the c. 1900 photograph reveals that the configuration of Barn III has changed over the years; further research might complete its story.

• Sources (*continuation*):

Photographs and field notes by Melissa Antonelli 1/16/2008, Charlotte Hitchcock 12/08/2012.

Interview with Dawn Stark, 12/08/2012, at the site;

public lecture by Dawn Stark for the Bethany Historical Society, 11/19/2012.

**Map resources:**

Town of Bethany Assessor's Records, Parcel ID: 123/20, 123/21

Aerial views from:

<http://maps.google.com/> and <http://www.bing.com/maps/> accessed 12/26/2012.

Historical aerial photography and maps accessed at UConn MAGIC:

[http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/mash\\_up/1934.html](http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/mash_up/1934.html)

[http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/historical\\_maps\\_connecticut\\_towns.html](http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/historical_maps_connecticut_towns.html) .

USGS Historical Maps accessed 6/22/2012 at <http://historical.mytopo.com/> .

UTM coordinates: <http://itouchmap.com/latlong.html> .

**Print and internet resources:**

Archives of the Bethany Historical Society, research by Dawn Stark.

Barnett, Joni, The Barns of Bethany, Bethany Historical Society, video, 1996.

Bunton, Alice Bice, Bethany's Old Houses and Community Buildings, Bethany Library Association, 1972.

Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, Historic Barns of Connecticut Resource Inventory, 2010,

<http://www.connecticutbarns.org/4981>, /4986 .

Cunningham, Janice, Connecticut's Agricultural Heritage: an Architectural and Historical Overview, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation & State Historic Preservation Office, 2012.

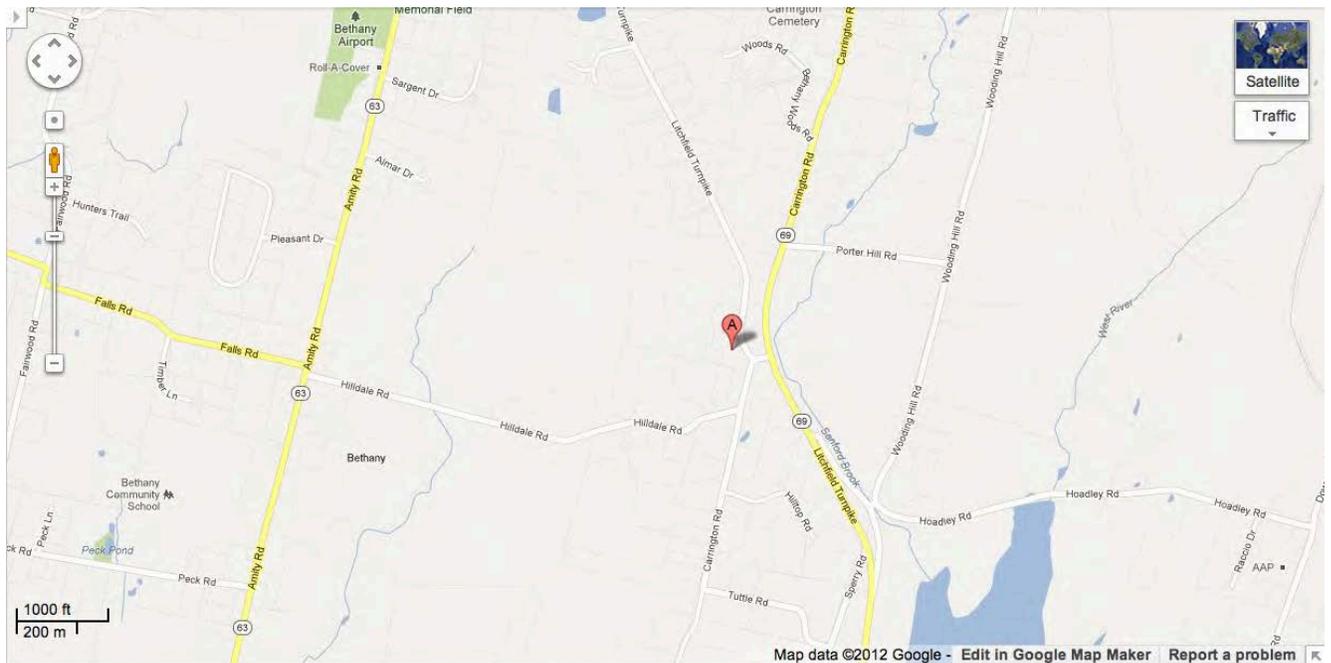
Horbick, Peter, Sr. Obituary, [Obitsforlife.com](http://Obitsforlife.com).

Kurumi: Connecticut Roads web site: <http://www.kurumi.com/roads/ct/ct69.html> .

Sexton, James, PhD; Survey Narrative of the Connecticut Barn, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, Hamden, CT, 2005, <http://www.connecticutbarns.org/history>.

U.S. Federal Census, accessed at <http://persi.heritagequestonline.com/hqoweb/library/do/census/search/basic>

Visser, Thomas D., Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings, University Press of New England, 1997, 213 pages.



1. Location map of 539 Litchfield Turnpike, Bethany CT – from <http://maps.google.com/> accessed 12/26/2012.



2. South view – aerial “bird’s-eye” map of 539 Litchfield Turnpike, Bethany CT – <http://www.bing.com/maps> accessed 12/26/2012.



3. Parcel map of 539 Litchfield Turnpike, Bethany CT – base image from Google Maps.



4. Detail Site Plan showing contributing resources – base image from Bing Maps.



5. Southeast view of Farmhouse (right) and Barn III (left), camera facing north.



6. Northwest view of the Farmhouse, camera facing southeast. The Borning Room addition is in foreground, the c. 1812 house is to its right, and the 1882 house is to the left rear (taller). Barn III is the white shed attached at the right. Barn I and Barn II are red barns beyond at rear across Carrington Road.



7. Northeast view of the Farmhouse, camera facing southwest.



8. Southwest view of Barn I, camera facing northeast.



9. Northwest view of Barn I, camera facing southeast. Barn II is at left rear.



10. East eave-side of Barn I, camera facing northwest. Note the cut stone foundation.



11. Interior view of Barn I ground floor center bay interior, showing sliding door leading to north bay; camera facing north. Note the closely-spaced joists above the center bay.



12. Interior view of Barn I ground floor center bay interior, showing pulls on sliding door leading to north bay; camera facing north.



13. Interior view of Barn I ground floor south bay interior bent, showing framing detail, camera facing northeast.



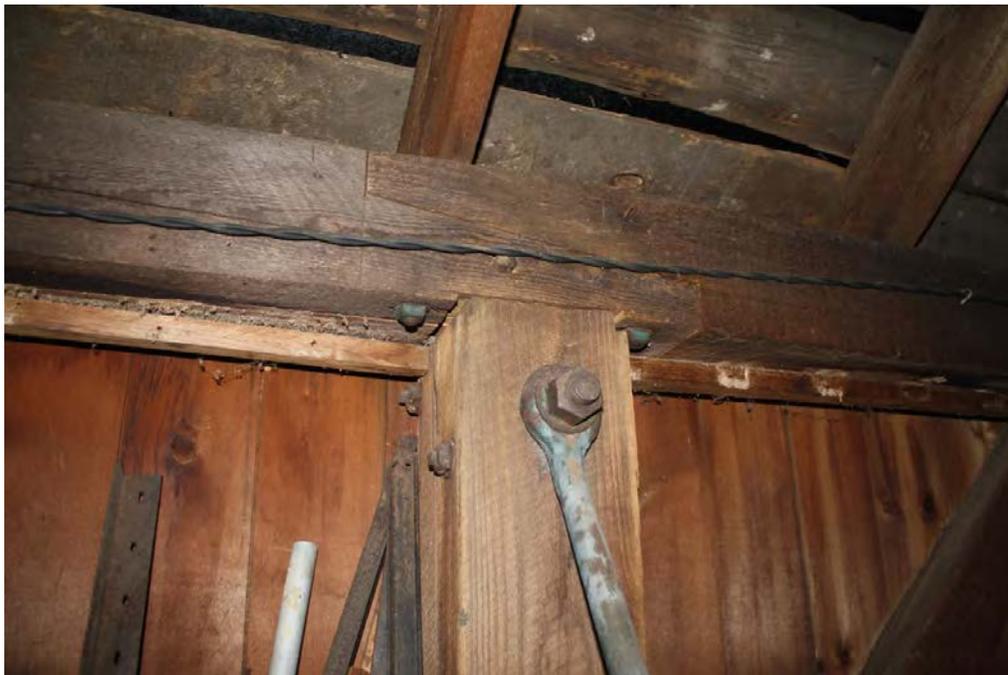
14. Interior view of Barn I ground floor south bay, showing typical horse stall with manger, camera facing south.



15. Interior view of Barn I second floor level, camera facing north.



16. Interior view of Barn I second floor level west wall, showing at left the hay door above the arched entrance, at right a typical iron brace, and at center vertical slats lining the wall; camera facing west.



17. Interior detail view of Barn I second floor level east wall, showing a scarf joint in the plate and iron brace connection, camera facing east.



18. Northeast view of Barn II, camera facing southwest.



19. Northwest view of Barn II, camera facing southeast.



20. Southwest view of Barn II, camera facing northeast.



21. Interior view of Barn II ground floor south wall, camera facing south. At right is the stair to the loft.



22. Interior view in loft level of Barn II, camera facing east. Note pegged post and beam frame with sawn rafters.



23. East eave-side of Barn III, camera facing south.



24. South view of Barn III with west side of 1-story wing in foreground, camera facing north.



25. Historical east view of the Davidson House c. 1900 by George Levi Wooding. The family on the porch with Tyler Davison at left and S. G. Davidson seated (Bunton). The shed at left rear is smaller than at present.



26. Historical aerial photograph, 1934 – image from UConn MAGIC: <http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/> .