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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

This file was accessed on: Monday, July 29, 2019 at 11:48 AM
**Form A - Area**

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
80 Boylston Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

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<td>Concord</td>
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**Town:** Weston  
**Place or Neighborhood:**  
**Name of Area:** Church Street/Coburn Area  
**Present use:** residential

**Construction Dates or Period:**  
ca. 1726-1902

**Overall condition:**  
good to excellent

**Major Intrusions & Alterations:**  
none

**Acreage:** approximately 60 acres  
**Recorded by:** Pamela W. Fox  
**Organization:** Weston Historical Commission  
**Date:** June 15, 1994

**Photo Roll:** 1  
**Photo Film No.:** see data sheet  
**Sketch Map:** (see attached sheet)
Architectural Description

The Church Street/Coburn Area is one important area in Weston where the rural landscape has been prominently preserved. Church Street is a main connecting road between North Avenue (Route 117) and Weston Center. (See also adjacent Kendal Green Area). The view along Church Street of the irregularly massed, red-painted Coburn Barn from across acres of meadow may be the best-loved vista in the town. When seen from upper Church Street, the barn and ca. 1726 white clapboard Whittemore House are the only structures visible for a radius of more than 180 degrees. The area contains only four houses, along with the large barn and several smaller outbuildings, on a total of over 60 acres of pristine land. The houses date between about 1726 and 1902 and are frame, clapboard examples from the Colonial, Greek Revival, Mansard and Colonial Revival periods. The ca. 1726 house is one of the earliest and most intact examples in Weston, and the Mansard cottage is one of only three Weston examples of this type. The Coburn Barn, one of the largest in Weston, is the most prominently sited and best known of the town’s remaining barns. Stone walls, both historic and of more recent construction, run through the area.

The topography of the area enhances its natural beauty. To the west is Pigeon Hill, rising behind the Coburn Barn at the western edge of the area. On the north side of Church Street is 44 acres of conservation land, of which about 30 acres is included within the boundaries of this area form. The conservation land includes meadow and also the stream bed of Stony Brook, which meanders through the area at its eastern edge. Along the stream are groves of deciduous trees marking the wettest portions of the land. On the south side of Church Street, the houses at #179 and #171 are set back from the street and overlook the conservation land from their positions on the rise of a small hill. The house at #171 is set on over 23 acres of land which includes five small ponds which are over the hill and cannot be seen from Church Street. At the southeast corner of the area, the ca. 1726 farmhouse is sited at the bend in the road across from the Coburn Barn facing south overlooking more than four acres of open fields.

Historical Narrative

The Church Street/Coburn Area is the best-preserved example in Weston of a rural family farming enclave in which family members were economically interdependent. For many generations beginning in the early 19th century and continuing until World War I, members of the Coburn family farmed this area and cooperated in seasonal tasks such as plowing fields, taking produce to market, driving cattle to summer pastures, and procuring coal and ice. Although the Coburns were not the first family to live in this area, Jonas Coburn purchased his 122 acre farm at the turn of the 19th century, and all subsequent buildings were built by family members. The character of the area has been shaped by the family, which continues to live here to the present day. The Coburns have also been prominent in Weston business and civic affairs. One member of the family, Arthur L. Coburn, served as president of the Hook & Hastings Co. organ factory from 1916 to 1931.

Bibliography and/or References


Recommended as a National Register District: yes (see attached sheet)
The Jeremiah Whittemore House (ca. 1726, 153 Church Street, Map #3, MHC 13) is one of the oldest houses in Weston and is very significant because of its age, intact condition, and prominent location in a picturesque rural setting. The 2 1/2 story, 5 X 1 bay clapboard house faces south, and the front entrance faces the fields behind the house rather than the street. This entrance is marked by a pedimented entrance porch extending out about 12' from the facade and supported by late 19th century turned posts. The house has a large central chimney and 8/12 windows on the first floor and 8/8 on the second, with shutters. To the northeast is a one-story attached barn once used as a wagon shed, with vehicle entrance on the south side. One former owner of the house, the first Arthur L. Coburn, felt that there was deed evidence to suggest that the house pre-dated 1726. His research indicated that the house originally had a lean-to roof over a rear kitchen, and that, in 1830, the roof at the back of the house was changed to the present 2 1/2 story ell. The rear of the house has an irregular form and fenestration pattern which adds to its picturesque character.

The Coburn Barn at 154 Church Street (1841, Map #2, MHC 12) would be considered by many to be the most important barn in Weston because of its size, visually interesting configuration, and prominent location. The massive, irregularly-massed clapboard structure is located directly across from the Whittemore House. The barn consists of three parts: a large 2 1/2 story central section, sited with gable end to the street, and two smaller, two-story side gable sections on either side. Atop the central section is a large hipped cupola with weather vane. Vehicle entrances are located on both ends of the center section and on the side sections as well. The arched doorway on the street side of the center section is particularly notable for its wide arched double doors constructed with diagonal boarding and heavy iron hinges. Windows are irregularly placed and generally consist of single sash 6,8 or 12 panes, with some 6/6.

The Edward Coburn House at 171 Church Street (1841, Map #4, MHC 10) was built the same year as the Coburn Barn and is Greek Revival in style. The visual importance of the house stems not only from its architecture but also from its site atop a low hill overlooking the Coburn meadow. The 2 1/2 story, side gable, clapboard house is missing the one-story, hip-roofed porch which originally extended across the front. Three comparable examples remain in Weston of five-bay Greek Revival houses with full front porches; these are located at 39 Crescent Street, 137 Wellesley Street, and 178 Boston Post Road. Although the porch has been removed at #171, the house retains many fine Greek Revival exterior details including the sidelights, paneled corner pilasters, and wide entablature. The house has 6/6 windows and two interior chimneys behind the ridge on the main block and another on the large four-bay rear ell. Two bay windows are located on the south gable end.

Behind the Edward Coburn House are three outbuildings, the most notable of which is a 1 1/2 story, front gable barn with one-story shed attached on the north side (Map #5). The vehicle entrance with sliding door is on the gable end of the clapboard structure. The other outbuildings are a one-story garage which appears to be of recent vintage and a one-story, shed-roofed vehicle storage shed.

The next house to be built in the area, at 179 Church Street (Map #6, MHC 11) is a 1 1/2 story Mansard cottage, one of only three examples of this housing type in Weston. The clapboard
structure has a 2 X 2 bay main block with wing. The entrance door is located offset left, sheltered by an Italianate-style shaped hood, and a bay window is located offset right. Above the door is a single dormer and above the bay window, a double dormer.

The last house to be built in the Church Street / Coburn Area is the small two-story clapboard Colonial Revival Coburn Cottage at 154 Church Street (1902, Map #1, MHC '12). The 3 X 1 bay side gable house has a simple entrance shelter and a one-bay rear ell. Windows are 6/6 on the first floor and half that size on the second story. The house is set back from the street and is dwarfed by the large Coburn Barn next door.

**Historical Narrative (continued)**

The Jeremiah Whittemore House (ca.1726, 153 Church Street, Map #3, MHC 13) is significant historically because of its history of ownership by only two families, including nearly 200 years of ownership by the Coburn family. Three generations of Whittemores lived here between 1726 and 1801, including Jeremiah, his son Capt. Isaac Whittemore, who served in the Revolutionary War, and Isaac's son Aaron. In 1801, the house and property was sold to Jonas Coburn for $4,400, and it has been owned by the Coburn family ever since. The 1801 purchase included 120 acres extending almost to the center of town and westward as far as today's Fairview and Pinecroft Roads. Jonas's son, Isaac (1811-1879), and grandson, Arthur Leslie Coburn (1860-1931), owned the house in successive generations, followed by Arthur Coburn's daughter Anne Cutter Coburn. The Coburn Barn directly across the street at 154 Church Street (Map #2, MHC 12) dates from 1841.

Until 1875, the Coburn family were all farmers, and even after that members of the family earned their living from the land. They are described in *Once Upon a Pung* as "a closely knit family of many cousins and brothers (who) enjoyed a system of communal living which was somewhat unique, pooling their resources, and operating as a unit. Different families took turns carting milk, fruit and vegetables to Faneuil Hall in Boston and every spring the job of driving young heifers to pasture in Stow would be undertaken by members of different families. Coal requirements for the winter were specified in advance, and a wholesale order would be placed through Hook and Hastings Organ Factory-- Mrs. Hastings being one of the family. Ice was cut in a pond....and stored under layers of sawdust in a commonly owned icehouse. In winter, driveways were plowed by those who had horses and those who had none would make up for this service in some way or other." The family cranberry bog was located near Hastings Station. This way of life continued until World War I.

The second Coburn house in the Church Street/Coburn Area was the Edward Coburn House at 171 Church Street (1841, Map #4, MHC 10). Edward Coburn was reportedly the town's first wholesale butcher. He also served as State Representative in 1875 and Town Selectman for 18 years between 1855 and 1881. Behind the house are five ponds; and in early times, a windmill
pumped water from these ponds to a high hill behind the house, where a pipe carried water by gravity into a cellar tank from which it was pumped into the kitchen. The present stable was reportedly preceded by two larger barns, the first built in 1841 (destroyed by fire 1889) and its successor, which burned in 1955.

Edward Coburn built the house at 179 Church Street (1863, Map #6, MHC 11) for Mr. Frant(? Hall, who rented it for many years. Mr. Hall owned and operated a shoddy mill (no longer extant) alongside the road at Stony Brook. The house was subsequently owned and occupied by Albert E. Coburn, second son of Edward, on whose death it was leased to an employee at the organ factory. In 1922 it was purchased by Raymond Coburn, grandson of Edward Coburn, who lived there for many years.

In 1897, Arthur Leslie Coburn, grandson of Jonas Coburn and owner of the family homestead at 153 Church Street, gave up farming and joined the Hook and Hastings organ manufacturing company. He served first as Secretary of the Corporation and Superintendent and, after the death of owner Francis H. Hastings in 1916, as president. The nationally known company, located nearby at North Avenue and Viles Street, manufactured organs for churches all over the country (see Kendal Green Area Form). Arthur Leslie Coburn was one of eight children; his siblings included Anna Cutter Coburn (1853-1950), who was married to Francis Hastings.

Arthur Coburn was married to Helen Haines, and the couple had three children: Anne Cutter (b.1900), Arthur Leslie (b.1903) and Mary Chapman (b.1908). He built his own house nearby on Webster Road (since destroyed) in 1902. Between 1902 and 1935, when his widow and daughter moved back in, the house at 153 Church Street was occupied by tenants. Coburn built the Coburn Cottage at 154 Church Street (Map #1, MHC 12) in 1902 for his hired man and family. All farming operations ceased in the 1920's but the buildings were maintained and the estate retained its rural appearance.

Part of the Coburn land on the north side of Church Street was used for the Weston Golf Club, organized in 1894 and continuing in this location until 1917. The clubhouse was several hundred yards behind the Coburn Barn, reached by a driveway from Church Street. In 1974, the Coburn meadow was given to the Town of Weston as conservation land.

Bibliography and/or References
4. Coburn files, Weston Historical Commission, including historical materials and photographs of 153 Church Street and family members
5. Descendants of Arthur Leslie Coburn, compiled by Anne Cutter Coburn, 1977 (copy at Weston Historical Society) includes house history of #153 and genealogical information
6. See MHC forms for deed records on each house.
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Sketch Map #1

Church Street/Coburn Area
Weston, MA

Town of Weston Assessors Map

scale: 0 50 100 150 200
Sketch Map #2

Church Street/Coburn Area
Weston, MA

Numbers Correspond to Area
Data Sheet

Circled buildings have MHC
Form B
The Church Street/Coburn Area is one important area in Weston where the rural landscape has been prominently preserved. The area contains only four houses, dating between 1726 and 1902, along with a large barn and several smaller outbuildings on over 60 acres of pristine land. The houses are all associated with a single rural farm family which is particularly notable because of the degree of economic interdependence evidenced by its members. The family -- the Coburns -- has shaped Weston history from the early 18th century to the present day. The area includes one of Weston's earliest and finest Colonial houses and the town's most prominently located and visually distinctive 19th century barn. As an area which embodies the town's agricultural roots and the displays the distinctive characteristics of the 18th century rural landscape, retaining integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, the Church Street/Coburn Area meets Criteria A and C of the National Register at the local level.
COBURN BARN, 154 CHURCH ST, LOOKING N
(12-93)

171 CHURCH ST, LOOKING S
(12-93)

153 CHURCH ST, LOOKING N
(12-93)
17A CHURCH ST, LOOKING SE
(12-93)
MHC OPINION: ELIGIBILITY FOR NATIONAL REGISTER

Date Received: 2/17/98  Date Due:  Date Reviewed: 3/4/98

Type: __Individual  x_District (Attach map indicating boundaries)

Name: Church St. - Coburn Area  Inventory Form: WSN.D

Address:  Requested by: LHC

Action: x_Honor  _ITC  __Grant  _R & C  _Other:

Agency:  Staff in charge of Review: BF

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

Eligible  x_Eligible
Eligible, also in district  _Ineligible
Eligible only in district  _More information needed
Ineligible  __Ineligible
More information needed

CRITERIA:  x_A  _B  x_C  _D

LEVEL:  x_Local  _State  __National

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE by Michael Steinitz

MHC staff previously (1984) found properties within the Church St - Coburn Area (Area D) eligible as part of a potential district. More recent inventory documentation (1994) supports this opinion. The Church St - Coburn Area is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at the local level as the best preserved historic agricultural district landscape in Weston. The area has strong associations with multiple generations of the Coburn family, active farmers here from ca. 1800 through the early 20th century. Well-preserved residential and agricultural buildings and open farm fields (now town conservation land) represent a remarkably intact assemblage of a 19th century rural historic landscape. The area also has historical connections with the adjacent Kendal Green Area (Area C), especially given the links of the Coburn family with the Hook and Hastings Organ Company; the area may thus also be eligible for listing on the National Register as part of a larger district. An MHC site visit to assess boundaries should occur prior the initiation of a nomination.