

THE FARMHOUSE ON ROUTE 41

History, character, and practical notes for a future steward

This is not a conventional list of features. It is an introduction to a house that grew with the lives around it -- a working New England farmhouse shaped by two families across roughly 120 years.

Prepared for Steve Anderson and prospective buyers

An Invitation to Look Closely

Older houses ask something different of us. They reward curiosity. A low doorway, a change in floorboards, or a sealed passage may seem peculiar at first. Look more closely, and each becomes evidence of how people built, adapted, worked, and cared for a place over time.

This farmhouse is especially rich in those details. Sam and May Ward built it in 1906 and expanded it as their needs changed. The present family purchased the farm in 1948 and has cared for it for nearly 80 years. Only those two families have lived here.

Some parts of the house feel immediately familiar. Others reflect older New England building practices: a granite-block foundation, a partial earth-floor basement, an old cistern, a former barn that became a sunroom, and a two-seat privy preserved inside a closet. None of these details needs to be hidden. They are part of what makes the house authentic.

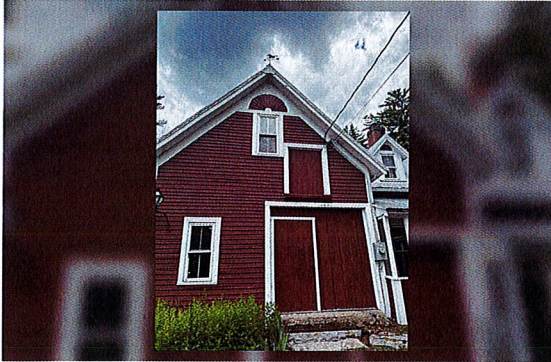
The following pages pair photographs with the stories and practical information behind them. They are intended to help a prospective buyer understand not only what the house contains, but why it is the way it is.

What You Will Find Here

- The land and its much older history
- The ways the farm supported the Madison community
- The porch, sunroom, barn, pool room, and older passages
- The granite foundation, earth-floor basement, drainage, septic, and roof
- Small choices and traditions that give the house its character



The Land and Its History



A House Built Into the History of Madison

Sam Ward built the farmhouse with his wife, May, in 1906. It was the first house built on Route 41. The road itself followed an older path around Silver Lake, first used by Indigenous people and later by settlers. When the second family purchased the farm in 1948, Route 41 was still a dirt road.

Only two families have lived here across roughly 120 years: the Wards and the present family, who have cared for the farm for nearly 80 years. That continuity gives the house an uncommon sense of place. Its additions, doors, changes in floor level, and unexpected passages show how a working farmhouse grew over time rather than appearing all at once.



Why Sam Chose This Land

Sam had his choice of sites along Route 41. He chose this location for its dependable water table and rich, workable soil. Unlike much of the surrounding land, the site was not covered with large boulders. The soil has remained productive, and the farm well has provided a steady and reliable source of water.

A natural spring also lies on the property about 100 yards south of the former railroad crossing, where the railroad crossed Route 41. Sam built a granite enclosure around it. The spring has remained trouble-free and has required virtually no maintenance.



Water Access to Deer River and Silver Lake

Across Route 41, the farm includes additional property extending to Deer River. This gives the property a practical and unusually direct connection to the water.

Kayaks and canoes can be stored near the river and launched there with little effort. From the entry point, a short paddle passes beneath the railroad trestle and opens into Silver Lake.



A Farmhouse That Served the Community

Soon after building the house, Sam reached an arrangement with the Town of Madison to shelter travelers who arrived in Silver Lake without a place to stay. They were commonly called “tramps” at the time. The railroad brought people into the village, and the farmhouse became one place where the community could offer practical help.

Local historical research suggests that some of these travelers may have been Abenaki. That part of the story deserves careful wording, but it adds to a broader truth: this was never only a private residence. The farm also supported the surrounding community.

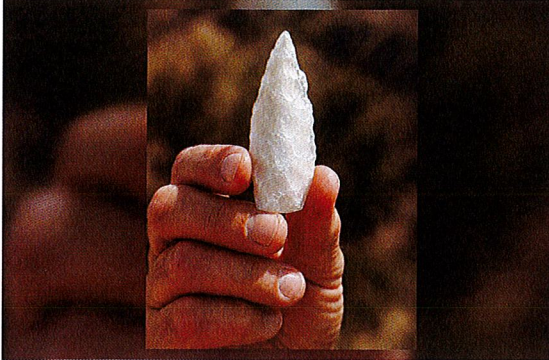


The Sandpit and the Land Beneath the Power Lines

Behind the house, beneath the power lines, is the former sandpit. Unlike many utility corridors, this land is included in the farmhouse deed and forms part of the parcel.

After Sam died, May Ward arranged for the Town of Madison to remove sand for road projects and winter

sanding. In return, the arrangement helped her pay the property taxes. The old pit has since grown over, but its shape remains visible. The property extends to the top of the sandpit.



Evidence of a Much Older History

About 15 years ago, utility workers digging near the sandpit uncovered Indigenous artifacts, including an arrowhead made from an almost translucent stone. The arrowhead was examined and authenticated by the University of New Hampshire. The family retains both the artifact and its documentation.

The discovery confirms that people used this land long before the farmhouse was built. Together with the old path that became Route 41, it places the farm within a history that reaches back far beyond the two families who have lived here.

Outside the House



The Granite Steps

The granite porch steps were selected by the owner's father. When they arrived, he was drawn to the rough, textured underside and chose to install that surface facing upward.

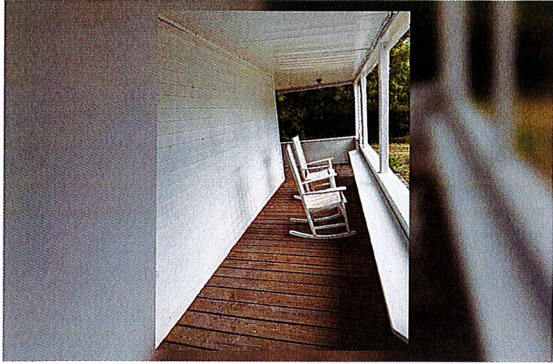
The opposite face is smooth and flat, like a conventional granite step. A future owner could turn the stones over for a more traditional appearance. The choice is a small example of how this house has always made room for both usefulness and personality.



The Beech Tree and the Woodland Path

The beech tree was planted in 1940 and has brought pleasure for generations. Even after more than 80 years, it continues to grow and will become still larger with time.

Nearby, a natural path runs parallel to the field just before the old sandpit. It has existed for at least the 80 years the present family has known the farm. It is a quiet place for a walk, a child's exploration, or a picnic beneath the trees. For the past five or six years, a family of wild turkeys has also made this area its home.



The Porch

The red door opens into the kitchen and serves as the main porch entrance. About 10 feet to the right, a white door marks an earlier chapter in the house, when the living room was added to the original structure. The white door still works, although it has been sealed for everyday use. It could be reopened as a second entrance.

Family meals often took place on this porch. Years ago, removable black-painted screens covered the openings during mosquito and black-fly season. Much of the original hardware remains, and a handyman could build replacement screens. A grate in the porch floor provides a place to stamp snow from boots. Beneath it is a small hook where the family traditionally kept a spare key.

Rooms That Reveal the Farm



The Sunroom: From Barn to Favorite Room

The sunroom began as the farm's workshop and part of the original barn. The Wards kept a milk cow and brought her through the large white door on the left. At the time, a ramp stood where the stairs are now. The flooring still reflects the room's earlier working life.

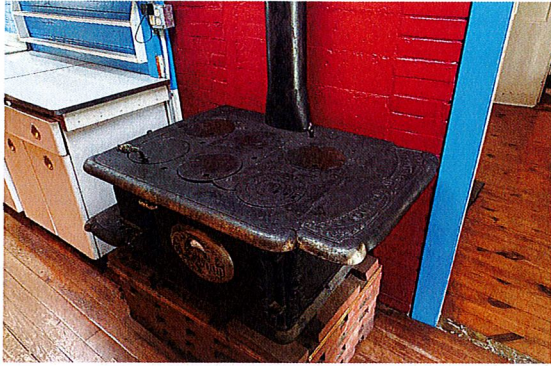
The space later became what many consider the best room in the house. Large windows bring in light and open the room to the yard. A wet bar makes morning coffee convenient, and the propane stove keeps the room warm in winter. After the stove is turned on, its blower takes a minute or two to engage.



The Bedroom Off the Sunroom

This bedroom was also once part of the barn and began as an unheated outbuilding.

Its closet contains one of the house's most unexpected historic features. On the left is a wooden bench. Lift the top, and you will find a historic two-seat privy built into the structure. Sam and May Ward used it before a modern septic system was established. It has been cleaned and unused for many decades, but it remains a vivid reminder of the home's age and authenticity.



The Glenwood Stove, Fireplace, and 1950s Ingenuity

The Glenwood stove served the farmhouse for many decades. It and the fireplace are not currently operational because the chimney was relined to create a direct connection to the furnace. Restoring either would require qualified chimney work.

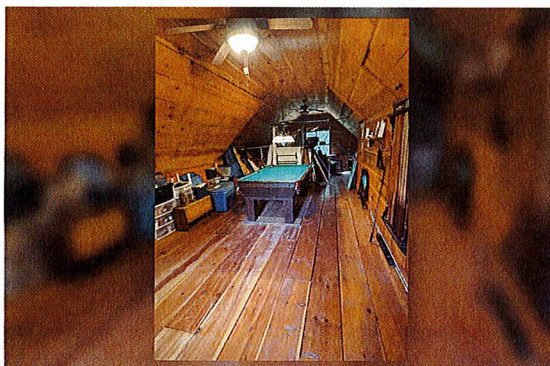
An ingenious heating system from the 1950s remains in place. A metal jacket surrounds the fireplace in the living room, with openings near the upper left and right. Behind the Glenwood stove in the kitchen, a switch operates a fan housed in a red box. When a fire was burning, the fan moved captured heat into the living room rather than allowing all of it to escape up the chimney.



The Room Off the Living Room

The large room just off the living room includes a floor-to-ceiling bookcase and three closets, giving it unusual storage.

The center closet is newer than the other two. Behind it is the original hallway leading to the red stairs and the oldest portion of the farmhouse. The passage was enclosed because storage was more useful at the time, but the original hallway was not damaged. A future owner could restore it by removing the screwed-in backing and reopen the original route through the house.



The Pool Room at the Top of the Barn

The pool room occupies the second floor of the original barn. A small door near the insulated hatch reveals the old ladder once used to reach this upper space.

Today, the room can also be entered through the first bedroom on the right at the top of the stairs. A second,

hidden entrance connects through the back of the upstairs bathroom.

The room has been fully insulated. A Monitor kerosene heater stands in the far-right corner, although it has not been needed during winter for at least five years. The pool table came from Harvard University in 1948, when Harvard replaced the tables in its student union.



The Upstairs Bedroom and the Oldest Part of the House

The bedroom to the left at the top of the stairs was once two smaller rooms. The former dividing line remains visible in a slight wall projection and in the change of direction in the floorboards. Combining the rooms created a bedroom of a more contemporary size.

A small door leads into the oldest section of the farmhouse. You duck slightly and step up as you pass through it, making the transition feel like stepping into an earlier period of the house. Sam expanded the farmhouse throughout his life as the family's needs changed. The upstairs has electric baseboard heat, and the far room overlooking the road has tall windows that reach nearly from floor to ceiling. When the leaves are down, there is a view toward Silver Lake.

Understanding the Structure and Systems

The Earth-Floor Basement and Granite Foundation

Like many traditional New England farmhouses, this house has a partial earth-floor basement. Roughly half remains earth, while a concrete slab covers a little more than half and supports a later workshop.

The granite foundation blocks are visible near the furnace room. Sam hauled the stone by oxen from a quarry about 3 miles away. Several smaller rooms with doors help manage heat and cold in winter. A sump pump sits at the lowest point of the slab near the southwest corner. It is rarely needed but provides a modern backup during periods of unusually high groundwater.

How the Basement Manages Water

Some moisture is a normal feature of an older farmhouse with an earth floor and a granite-block foundation. During heavy rain or saturated conditions, small amounts of water may enter between the stones.

Beneath the older basement is a roughly 1,000-gallon former cistern. It has been pumped and cleaned and no longer serves as the home's septic tank. Incidental groundwater has historically moved toward this area and then toward the former leach-field route. If silt restricts that path and water reaches the slab, the sump pump provides a second means of control. The arrangement combines an old New England solution with modern backup equipment.

The active septic system is separate and much newer. Its two access covers are visible behind the house. It was designed to support a four-bedroom, two-bath home.



The Corrugated Steel Roof

The farmhouse has a heavy-gauge corrugated steel roof that has served the property well for many years. Small areas have occasionally required patching, but repairs are straightforward and have restored the roof effectively.

The roof is repainted as needed with readily available metal-roof paint. It was last painted about 10 years ago.



A Horse Above the Farm

The horse weathervane at the roof peak is closely tied to the farm's history. Sam Ward also worked as a handyman for the poet E. E. Cummings at nearby Joy Farm on Silver Lake. The weathervane was a gift from Cummings to Sam and has stood proudly over the farmhouse ever since.