

ON-SITE: Why is the Cadman-White-Handy House named the “Cadman-White-Handy House”?

Standard(s)/Unit Goal(s) to be addressed in this lesson:

H/SS.3.12 Explain how objects or artifacts of everyday life in the past tell us how ordinary people lived and how everyday life has changed.

NOMENCLATURE

Nomenclature is the process and structure of choosing names for things. It is a very old word first used in the early 17th century. It derives from the combination of two Latin words: *nomen*, which means to name, and *clatura*, which means to call or to summon. This word refers to the information that is provided to when naming a building. This information includes the date that the building was built, any special construction methods used, and most importantly, the people who lived there. All of these descriptors can comprise the name of a building.

So, how do we determine what the name should be? First, we conduct research to find out who was originally responsible for its creation. Sometimes this is the person who paid for the building to be constructed, and this person can be discovered by studying historic maps and deeds. , which are important tools in this research. Other useful sources such as tax records, wills, and street directories can fill in missing links in the basic information.

From researching deed records, we know that the land on which the earliest section of the Handy House was built was owned by George Cadman. He had the house built for his daughter Elizabeth and her husband William White. Elizabeth was the only child of George Cadman and Hannah Hathaway Cadman, who were married sometime between 1683 and 1685.

How do know the land belonged to George Cadman? Because his 1718 will tells us that he bequeathed the land where Elizabeth and her husband William White lived to them upon his death:

“To “my loveing daughter Elizabeth White & to her Husband William White all the upland & meadow that is laid out where they now live with two acres & fifty Rods of Sedg flat Lying in acoxset river at the Shiprock flat & one hundred & five acres of land in the four hundred acre devition as it is laid out & quallified & one quarter of an acre of Seder Swomp all the ab[ovesd] land meadow & Ceder Swomp is ... within the Township of [Dart]mouth afre Sd [Farther I Give ... to] my Sd daughter Elisabeth

& her Husband William White the one half of my last dev[i]tion of land the above Sd land meadow & Ceder Swomp given to my Sd daughter Elisabeth White & her Husband William White to be & remain to them dureing ... their naturall Lives and after their deceas the Homsted farm where the Sd William White low liveth I Give to my Granson William White.”

- The White family lived in the house for close to 80 years, eventually enlarging it into a handsome Georgian style home.
- By 1800, the Handy family had purchased the home and enlarged it even more to what you see today. The Handys lived there until 1911 when the home was purchased by a man named Abbott Smith who never really lived in the house.
- In 1937, Eleanor and Louis Tripp purchased the home, painstakingly restoring it to its original form, and preserving it until Mrs. Tripp passed away in 2003.

Because the Cadmans built the house and the Whites expanded it for the first time, the house is known by their names The Handy family makes up the third name because they added the third, and final, major expansion of the house that you see today. All three families contributed significantly to the building that you see today and lived there over many decades each.

So, based on that, you may ask, “Well, why isn’t *Tripp* also part of the name?” After all, they were responsible for the historic preservation of the house and also lived there for many decades. Well, you would be right! But, unfortunately, there really must be a limit to how long a historic building name is. As it stands today, nobody really calls the house by its proper name of the *Cadman-White-Handy House*. Most people refer to it by its so-called nickname, the *Handy House*, which is what we can call it, but, let’s not forget that its proper name is the Cadman-White-Handy House.