

## Background Information on Nathan Gould and the Gould House

### 1. The Life of Nathan Gould

Nathan Gould was the first child of Simeon Gould, originally from New Ipswich, NH, and Rhoda Lane from Bedford, NH, who were married on February 12, 1789. Nathan was born on December 7, 1790 in Stoddard. He died in Marlow at the home of his daughter, Cynthia, and son-in-law, John Q. Jones in 1879. Other children of Simeon and Rhoda were Isaiah (the author of the *History of Stoddard Cheshire County, N.H. From the Time of its Incorporation in 1774 to 1854*, who was born in Stoddard on July 16, 1793 and who died in Keene in 1858), Rhoda (1795-1872), Louisa (1800-1887), and twins Stephen (1803-1872) and Elizabeth (Betsy, who died in infancy, age 21 days).

Simeon (April 17, 1761-July 21, 1816) came to Stoddard from New Ipswich, NH, when he was young. Simeon's ancestors can be dated to Thomas Gould, who settled in Charlestown MA prior to 1640. It is not certain when Simeon arrived in Stoddard. He was not listed as among those who paid the first tax assessment in 1784. It is likely that he came to Stoddard sometime between 1784 and 1797, when he appears on the Town records as a Selectman. He settled on the 4th lot in the 8th range. This is land about .25 miles north of NH Rte 9, and to the west of the Daniel Upton House and to the east of the present-day Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway. "When he [Simeon] was young and worked chopping and clearing it for a few years and would walk to New Ipswich in the forenoon and do a half days work at mowing in the afternoon" (from Nathan Gould manuscript).

According to Isaiah Gould's History, "Simeon was a soldier of the Revolution who afterwards lived in town" (p. 60). No further details are provided as to his military service. He would have been 15 to 16 years old at the time of the battles of Concord & Lexington and Bunker Hill, an age not unusual for a soldier of this period. In later years, a large company of Stoddard's Revolutionary Soldiers was paraded on the common (by present-day Dow Cemetery), composed entirely of soldiers of the Revolution. "No company has been collected on the occasion, whose discipline and tactics were equal to it. Col. Nathaniel Evens, was martial, Capt. John Barker, commanded, Ebenezer Blake was Lieutenant, and Oliver Boutwell, Ensign, Simeon Gould, Martial of the music." (I. Gould History, p. 60).

Simeon was a Stoddard Selectmen from 1797 to 1801 and again from 1804 to 1811. He was Town Clerk from 1798 for four years and then again in 1803 for nine years. Nathan writes in his manuscript that "although he [his father, Simeon] lived among quarrelling and contending neighbors he managed to steer clear of any difficulty or trouble with any of them".

Simeon lived in the same house on lot 5, range 8 from the time he built it until 1816. In that year, his house burnt. The house was re-built, though in a different location on the property. In the same year of Simeon's death in 1816, Isaiah married and began to live on the property until 1855, when it was sold to Manley McClure.

Little is known of Nathan's early life, though it is assumed that he received a basic education provided by the town. From the quality of Nathan's manuscript, it appears that he had a good grasp of reading and writing. Nathan mentions in his notes that at about six years of age, he became lame due to a wound on his knee, with the knee partly stiff through life. At an early age he had an inclination for mechanical work and would try to make something in imitation in wood of almost everything he saw.

Like his father, Nathan also appears to have been active in town affairs, primarily those related to education. Nathan mentions in his notes that he made good proficiency in school and became a school teacher and followed teaching several winters [when it was not possible to farm]. From Isaiah Gould's History, p. 26: "The inhabitants took measures, early to provide some person to look after their schools, but we find no school committees appointed till 1812, since then a variety of modes have been adopted for that purpose. ... The committee of 1815 was Rev. Isaac Robinson, L. Thompson, and Nathan Gould." Based on internet records ([www.nh.searchroots.com/.../History\\_Stoddard\\_NH.txt](http://www.nh.searchroots.com/.../History_Stoddard_NH.txt)), Nathan was also Stoddard's postmaster from 1861 to 1863.

Nathan married Zilpha Corey (1798-July 13, 1874), also of Stoddard, on December 23, 1817, at the age of 27. Nathan and Zilpha had four children, though only Cynthia survived their father and mother. Cynthia (1821-April 8, 1908) married John Q. Jones of Marlow on December 31, 1848. Jones was a carpenter, who represented Marlow in the State Legislature on several occasions. The only child of Cynthia and John Jones was Elgin A. Jones (1852-?), who was a

graduate of Dartmouth College and a noted surveyor in the Marlow-Stoddard area. Elgin was Nathan's Gould's grandson. It is interesting to note that Elgin's name appears on many of Charles Peirce's maps of Stoddard of 1902-1952 as the cartographic source for his maps.

Nathan's oldest child was Alonzo (September 1818-May 20, 1870), who worked with his father in the wood shop. After a time, Alonzo moved to Gardner and Fitchburg to work in the chair-making business. According to records, Alonzo fought in the Civil War. Of his other children, Rhoda (May 13, 1822-May 1844), a school teacher, died at 22 years old, and Calista Maria (April 21, 1831-April 16, 1835), died young of "canker rash".

Shortly before his marriage, Nathan purchased some land (about 50 acres) [likely in 1815], from Oliver Boutwell, who owned a farm adjoining Colonel Evens property, on the Old Keene Road, about .75 miles south of the Parker House (present-day Butterfield House), past the Isaac Robertson house and just south of Robinson Brook. He built a house, shop, and barn on this land and lived there for 17 years.

Nathan and his wife appear to have farmed their land to provide many basic necessities, like most of their fellow early settlers of the Town, especially while they lived on their farm on the Old Keene Road. Owing to his disability from his youth, it appears that Nathan's primary source of income was work in his "shop at sleighs, wagons, and furniture, also worked at carpentry and painting" (from Peirce's notes). In Nathan's own manuscript notes, he states that he worked at more than 100 houses in town as joiner (finish) work. Isaiah Gould's History, p. 57, also mentioned that Nathan [along with Isaiah] was engaged in making oxen yokes: "Several others are engaged in the business and probably in the course of the year 1854 as many as seven thousand oxen yokes will be disposed of at Boston. Those engaged are Nathan Gould, Gardner Towne, Edwin Jenkins, Heman Jenkins, Edwin R. Locke and some others." "For 24 years, he [Nathan] made ox yokes to the number of 7 or 8,000 and sent then to markets in various parts of the country, sometimes nearly 2,000 miles" (Nathan Gould manuscript notes).

It appears that Nathan became relatively successful due to his various wood-working jobs. He is known to have employed assistants; for a time, his son Alonzo, and his nephew, Stephan. Likely to be closer to his clients and to additional commercial opportunities, Nathan purchased a building lot in the new, expanding village setting in the early 1830s and built his new home there in 1833. Nathan and his family left their now abandoned farm on the Old Keene Road that same year.

He "moved" or disassembled his house and transported it to the center of Stoddard village. Lumber, especially a house's large support beams, was expensive in terms of time required to finish the pieces of wood into usable construction material. As was often done, Nathan re-used this wood in the construction of his new house in the town center. There is some question if Nathan moved his house intact or disassembled the house and moved it in large pieces to re-use on his new site next to the present day Town Hall. Isaiah Gould mentions in his History that "Nathan Gould who built on it and lived several years, he **took the buildings down and moved them** to the middle of the town." (Gould History, p. 97). Nathan, in his own manuscript notes, mentions that he "moved his buildings on it" to his new location in the town center. In any event, his house in the town center was greatly expanded beyond the relatively humble original house of 1815.

In 1836, Nathan gave land for free use on the southeast corner of his property for the construction of a congregational church. In 1838 the denomination was re-aligned to Universalism. In 1841 the Town purchased the use of the lower floor for a town hall. the church to enable them to build a brick church there later in the 1830s. In 1841, the Town purchased the lower floor of the church for use as a town hall. In the 1850s, the rear wall of the building began to collapse due to soil subsidence. Despite efforts to repair the wall, it collapsed and the building was demolished. Nathan deeded the property to the Town in 1866 to build a new town hall. The town hall was completed in 1868.

Nathan lived in his house in the center of Stoddard village for about the next 40 years, where he continued his wood-working business until he was 84 years old. On July 13, 1874, Nathan's wife died. This appears to have been a devastating event for him as he writes about this at length in his manuscript notes. He writes that "he was very fortunate in the choice of a companion for a wife. She proved though life to be a faithful, industrious, economical, and prudent partner ... She has month after month after our children left us, do the work in the house, tended a hog, milked the cows, and tended the cattle in the barn while I worked or was confined with sickness or lameness". At the age of 84, Nathan "retired from work" in December 1874 to live with his daughter and her husband in Marlow. Nathan died in Marlow in

1879 at the age of 89 years old. He, his wife, and some of their children are buried in the old section of the Dow Cemetery, halfway down the stone wall separating the new and old sections of the cemetery.

## **2. The Nathan Gould House in the Town Center**

The Gould House was built in the new town center of Stoddard in 1833. Nathan Gould originally built a farmhouse in 1815 on the Old Keene Road, some distance from the current village. He bought a building lot in the new village setting in the early 1830s and built his new home there in 1833. Historical records indicate that Gould “rebuilt” his farmhouse to make his village home. He dismantled the farmhouse and used the wood and timbers to build his new house in the village.

Nathan Gould’s village retirement home has remained a residence since its construction more than 175 years ago. Gould’s house was never the site of a significant historical event or the home of a famous person, but it has been, and remains, an essential element of the historic character of Stoddard Center.

Stoddard Center village moved, like so many of its counterparts across New Hampshire, for a second and final time in the 1830s. The village was slowly relocated from a nearby hill to a more commercially desirable location near new and busier highways. The 1833 Gould House is an important element in illustrating this historical development, and an important element of the historical village that remains today.

The first home in the new village location was built in 1831. Almost two dozen additional homes, businesses and institutional buildings were constructed there over the next 1½ decades and a new town hall was built in 1868. Sixteen of those buildings survive today and very few additional structures have been built since the 1860s.

The Gould House is a perfect example of the trend from farming to village living, and then to the role of the bedroom community in saving dying New Hampshire hill towns. Nathan Gould literally reconstructed his 1815 farmhouse into a new residential dwelling in the developing village center in 1833. Other farmers soon left the agricultural life behind, but most of them abandoned their farms and left the town entirely. As the hill farms died and poor transportation systems and an emerging global economy destroyed Stoddard’s limited industry, the population of the town decreased by more than 90% in the century between the 1820s and the 1920s. Many of the surviving historic homes in Stoddard were saved decades later by an improved form of transportation – the automobile. For more than 40 years the Gould House has been the home of families who were able to live here because they could commute to nearby towns and cities (Keene, Peterborough, Hillsborough) which offered employment. Stoddard became a bedroom community and the population of the town has increased by 300% during those years.

As a result, Stoddard Center today is an architectural time capsule. Each surviving original structure is integral to the history of the village. Few of the buildings are individually significant in an architectural or historical sense, but each is essential to the overall story of Stoddard history. Each structure adds to the whole picture illustrating the town’s cultural, commercial, governmental, religious, and social history. The loss of any one of these structure would damage the historical character and integrity of the village.

### **Architectural Description:**

The Gould House is a 2½ story Greek Revival residential dwelling. It is a post and beam structure built with its gable end to the street. It is situated in Stoddard’s center village, a grouping of approximately 20 dwellings and institutional buildings situated along Stoddard’s main street (NH Route 123N). The Gould House is located on the north side of the street and is situated between another residence and the Stoddard Town Hall, which is listed on the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places.

The house has a concrete basement. The building was raised and a full basement built under it approximately 20 years ago. The house is a square building with an ell on the back (north) side. With gable end to the street, the building has a main entrance door centered in the gable end of the house. The front door is original, as are the lock and other door hardware. The side and transom lights around the door survive, most with original glass. There are also elaborate door surrounds and a larger decorative enframingent.

The center entrance is offset by four evenly-spaced windows on the first floor, three on the second floor above and a single window centered in the third ½ story. The post and beam structure is clad with clapboards and has an asphalt shingle roof. A historic secondary entry door is centered in the west wall of the house. The structure also retains its original center chimney and typical Greek Revival wide gable trim and returns. All of the windows in the house have been replaced in the last 12 years.

The first floor of the interior of the house is a mixture of old and new features. There are six rooms on the first floor, three rooms on the second floor, and one large bedroom in the attic. The front four rooms (two on the first floor and two above on the second floor) and the boring room are mostly original. The front four rooms retain their original plaster walls, doors, fireplaces, and mopboards. As mentioned above, the center chimney is still in place. There is a large brick fireplace in the dining room with wood panel surrounds. The mantel, itself has been replaced, however. The fireplace in the living room is also original with detailed original carved wood surrounds and original mantel. The boring room, located behind the current dining room, retains its original horizontal plank walls. The original narrow, steep, curving stairs inside the front door have been removed.

The remainder of the house has been significantly renovated, with several alterations. The ell at the back of the house has been reconfigured into one large room. The kitchen has been completely renovated and modernized. Furthermore, the second floor space to the rear of the two front bedrooms has been reconfigured into a master suite, corridors, closets, and bathrooms. The attic space has been renovated and refurbished as a single bedroom with two skylights and the large center chimney as the centerpiece of the room.

In conclusion, the Greek Revival Gould House retains much of its original exterior appearance and architectural features, with the exception of the replacement windows. The house has been raised and a full poured concrete basement placed under it. The interior of the house has been significantly altered and modernized, with the exception of the boring room, the two front (south) rooms on the first floor, the two front rooms on the second floor, and the center chimney.

#### State Historic Register Criteria Statement of Significance:

The Gould House is historically significant for several reasons. It is a fine example of Greek Revival architecture, it is the work of a known local craftsman and it is an essential architectural element in a 19<sup>th</sup> century integrated historical neighborhood. Furthermore, the structure illustrates the transformation of a typical New Hampshire hill town from family farm to settled village to bedroom community.

The Gould House retains its Greek Revival architectural details as described in #43. It also retains approximately one-half of its original interior woodwork, plaster walls, fireplaces, and other historical details. All of this work was completed by Stoddard country carpenter and cabinetmaker Nathan Gould, who was the original resident of the house. Gould built or worked on more than 100 local homes during his career, which spanned approximately 40 years between 1810 and 1850. Gould was also a miller, carriage and sleigh maker, and a cabinetmaker who crafted furniture for the local market.

This property is an integral component in the almost unaltered 19<sup>th</sup> century village of Stoddard Center. The village consists of almost 20 mid-19<sup>th</sup> century structures. All of these buildings add to the historical character of the village. This is especially true of the Gould House because of its Greek Revival details and its location at the center of the village adjacent to the Stoddard Town Hall. The preservation of all of these structures is important to the history and character of the village.

Finally, this structure illustrates the typical historical development of a New Hampshire hill town. The house was originally built by Nathan Gould as his farmhouse on the busy Keene Road in 1815. Gould moved the house to the new village of Stoddard Center in 1833. At that time he renovated the home into a stylish Greek Revival village residence. Cabinetmaker Gould completed the decorative woodwork inside and outside his home. He also shifted his focus from farming to milling, operating a yoke factory that turned out thousands of ox yokes for the Boston market.

The Gould family remained in the house until mid-century. By that time the population of the town of Stoddard was declining. The decline continued until 1930 when the population reached a low of 113 people. Many of the houses in

the town were simply abandoned and eventually collapsed. Several of the houses in the village fell into disrepair. Transportation developments eventually saved many of the old homes that survived, including the Gould House. The arrival of the railroad brought summer residents to the village and then the development of the automobile brought year-round commuting residents, many of whom wanted to live in and preserve the old homes that they found in the historic village, the Gould House among them. For more than 40 years the house has been inhabited by individuals who traveled to work in other towns. During that time portions of the Gould House were modernized while the best historic elements of the home were retained by recent owners, illustrating the transformation from 19<sup>th</sup> century residence to bedroom community home.

In conclusion, the Gould House illustrates the Greek Revival architectural style, is an example of the work of an identified prolific New Hampshire builder, and is an essential element of a 19<sup>th</sup> century New Hampshire village. It also offers a detailed illustration of the transformation of a typical New Hampshire hill town from 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural settlement, to settled village, to small industrial center, to 21<sup>st</sup> century bedroom community.

#### Statement of Integrity:

The Gould House conveys its significance in a somewhat unusual manner. The house was originally constructed in 1815 and moved in 1833. The original post and beam construction from the date it was built as a farmhouse survives, but the house was altered to display the Greek Revival style popular in the 1830s when it became a village home. The builder of the house, Nathan Gould, retained the details of his home that pleased him and added the Greek Revival elements popular at the time. The Greek Revival form, shape and details on the exterior of the house remain.

Approximately one-half of the interior of the house retains the architectural details of the period from 1815 to 1835. However, the renovation of the remainder of the house also serves to convey its historical story. The house survived because Stoddard became a typical New Hampshire bedroom community for families that could commute to and work in larger communities nearby. The modernization of a portion of the structure is typical of that completed on countless homes as they were renovated for modern living.

The home fits its setting perfectly. It is located in the center of the village and surrounded by buildings of similar date and style. The entire village was, in fact, bypassed and unaltered by the progress that affected so many other towns. It is truly a village of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century homes and institutional buildings, of which the Gould House is an essential element. The materials, workmanship and feeling of the home are typical of the period and illustrate the craftsmanship of the homeowner, Nathan Gould, who was a prolific carpenter and cabinetmaker.

#### Boundary Discussion:

The building is on its original lot, excepting a small parcel (0.28 acres) to the east that was deeded to the town for construction of the Stoddard Town Hall in the 1860s and a tiny strip of land to the northeast that was purchased by the town in the last two decades. The building and its lot are integral to the history of the Stoddard Town Hall, which was recently added to the State of New Hampshire Inventory of Registered Historic Places.

### 3. References

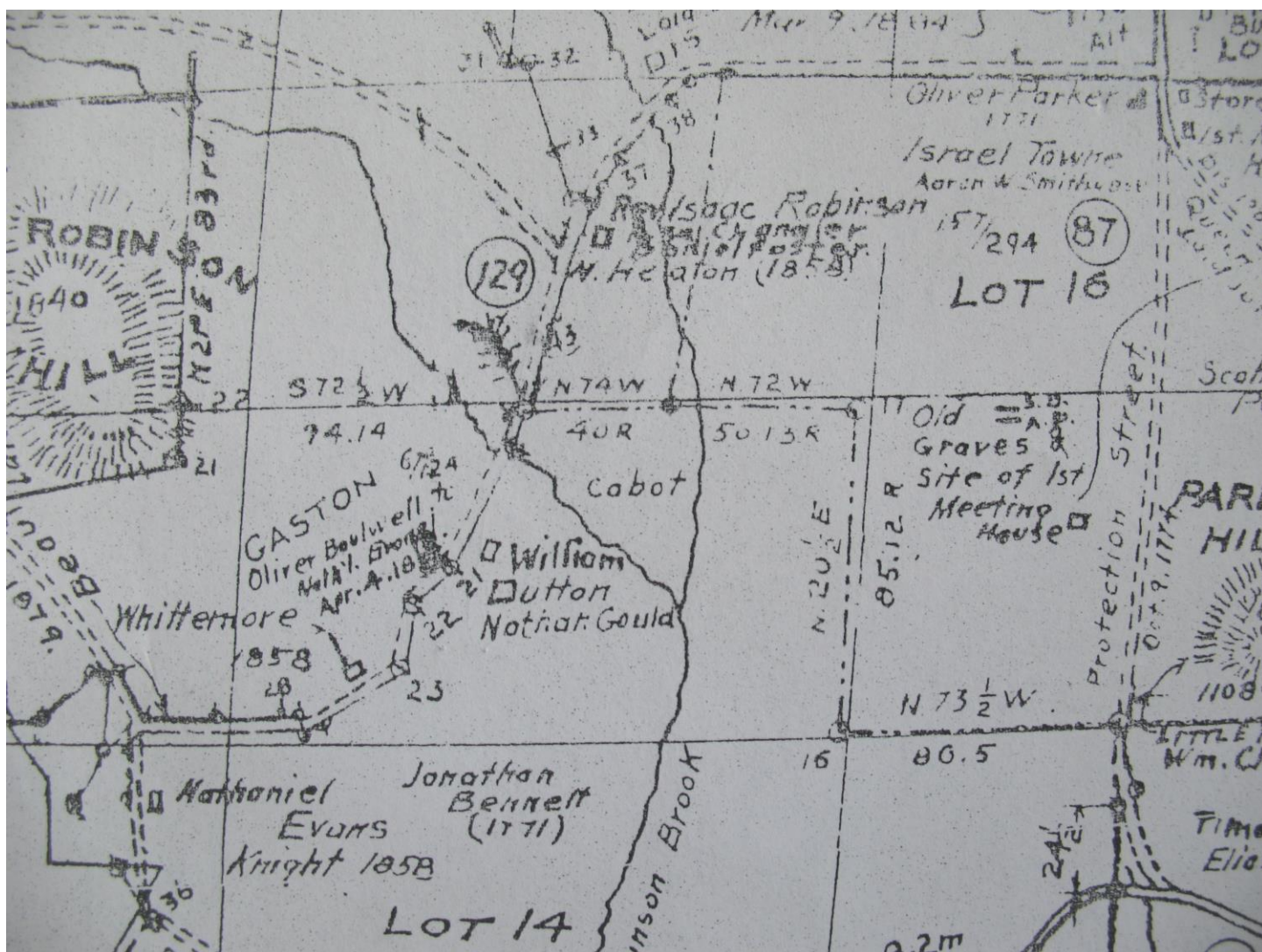
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Location [at center] of the Original Nathan Gould House (1815-1833) on the Old Keene Road

From: MAP OF THE TOWN OF STODDARD, N.H. DRAWN BY CHARLES L. PEIRCE. FROM SURVEY RECORDS OF MR. ELGIN A. JONES AND FROM ACTUAL MEASUREMENTS AND EXPLORING FROM 1902 TO 1952.

**Compiled by:**

Alan Rumrill

Richard & Penny Betz

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