New Hampshire
Property Documentation Report

Margeson Estate

Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge

NHDHR No. 722

Prepared By:

Paula Sagerman
Historic Preservation Consultant
P.O. Box 365
Brattleboro, VT 05302
802-345-1092
pj.sage@live.com

Prepared For:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Hadley, Massachusetts

New Hampshire Division for Historical Resources
Concord, New Hampshire

August 7, 2014
New Hampshire Property Documentation Report
Margeson Estate: House and Caretaker’s Cottage
Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge

NHDHR No. 722

Location: Newington, Rockingham County, New Hampshire
UTM Coordinates:
A: 19 348637 4771140    B: 19 348861 4771138
C: 19 348860 4771000    D: 19 348570 4771000

Property Owner: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035

Present Use: Vacant/National Wildlife Refuge

Significance: The Margeson Estate is listed in the National Register of Historic Places
and both the Margeson House and Caretaker’s Cottage are historic
resources. The House is significant for its architecture, as it “embodies the
essential characteristics of the colonial revival style, and therefore
exemplifies both the period of its construction and a stylistic preference of
its locale at that period.” The House is also significant as an “example of
a country summer home at a period when the construction of such homes
was fashionable for those who could afford them and was of great
economic significance in the depressed economy of rural New England.”
The Caretaker’s Cottage is significant as an intact outbuilding of the
summer estate.

Introduction

This Property Documentation Report addresses the 1894 Margeson House and related 1920s
Caretaker’s Cottage, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The
buildings are the only remaining structures from the former private summer retreat known as the
Richman Margeson Estate, which is now part of the 1,103-acre Great Bay National Wildlife
Refuge (Refuge) in Newington, New Hampshire. The Refuge was created in 1992 and is owned
by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). It provides habitat for migratory birds and
other wildlife, including New Hampshire's greatest concentration of wintering bald eagles and
black ducks, and several state-listed rare and endangered species. The buildings are being
removed as they have been long-vacant with no potential use, and their removal will help
eliminate human disturbance to the refuge lands, a critical habitat area. The buildings have also
been an attractive nuisance, suffering from vandalism and creating a safety liability to the
USFWS.

Pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic
Preservation Act, the USFWS is required to take into account the effects of federal undertakings
on properties included in or eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. As the buildings are owned by a federal agency and are eligible for the NRHP, the demolition of the historic structures is an adverse effect. The Section 106 consultation between the USFWS and the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR has resulted in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the two agencies. This Property Documentation Report is being produced as a treatment stipulation of the MOA. It was produced by 36 CFR 61-qualified Architectural Historian Paula Sagerman, a Historic Preservation Consultant in Brattleboro, Vermont.

The report includes a historical background, description and statement of significance of the resources, as well as a bibliography, large-format archival photographs and negatives, measured drawings of the exteriors of the buildings, a USGS topo map, and a site map with photo key. Copies of the report will be distributed to the NHDHR, the USFWS, the Newington Historical Society, and the Langdon Public Library of Newington.

**Historical Background**

The Margeson House was constructed in 1894 as a summer retreat for Richman and Isabella Margeson of Boston Highlands, Massachusetts. Richman Margeson was a furniture merchant with stores in his hometown as well as Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Although the Margesons acquired an existing farmstead to create their summer estate, there were either no extant structures or they chose to remove them and build from anew. As the estate also functioned as a gentleman’s farm with livestock, other buildings constructed for the Margesons included a large barn, carriage house, a well house, and sheds.

Mr. Margeson died in 1898 and in 1906, the property was sold to steel executive Edwin Hawkridge of Malden, Massachusetts. Edwin and his family, including wife Ella and children Winnie, Emma and Leslie, also used the estate as a summer retreat and by 1911 considered it their primary residence, although they maintained a home in Boston. They expanded the land holdings of the property and named it Sunset Hill Farm, where they bred Shetland ponies.

Edwin Hawkridge died in 1914, and Ella and her daughters continued to live in the house until about 1920, when Ella and Emma moved to Brookline, Massachusetts, and Winifred moved to another estate in Newington. The house was used by the Hawkridges as a summer residence for the next fifteen years, which probably prompted the need for a new caretaker’s residence in the 1920s. In 1935, Emma moved back to the estate with her husband Ralph Loomis. Ella Hawkridge died in 1940 and the Loomises were conveyed ownership of the property. They raised Great Pyrenees dogs and had sheep and cows.

Emma Loomis died in 1948, and in 1952, while Ralph was still living in the house, the property was taken by eminent domain by the U.S. Air Force to become part of the Pease Air Force Base. The Margeson House then served as an officers’ club. The base closed in 1991 and a section of the Air Force property, including the Margeson Estate, became part of the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge in 1992. The Margeson House was vacated afterwards, and the Caretaker’s Cottage was occupied by refuge staff until about 2005.
Description

Setting

The Margeson Estate is located in a remote area adjacent to the shore of the Great Bay and near the Woodman Point peninsula, within the conserved lands of the refuge. The Margeson House and Caretaker’s Cottage lie about 500 feet apart within a long north-south stretch of open fields that are bordered to the east and west by mature forest lands. An aging paved driveway loops around the Margeson House and leads north toward Arboretum Drive, the Refuge’s access road. A mid twentieth century building constructed for the Pease Air Force Base sits about 200’ north of the Caretaker’s Cottage, and also fronts the driveway. A gate at the north end of the driveway prevents public vehicular access to the site.

Margeson House

Exterior

This 1894 wood-framed Colonial Revival house has a 2 ½ story 40’-6” x 30’-9” symmetrical main block, a 1 ½ story 16’ x 27’ rear ell, and a centered front porch with an attached porte cochere. The structure has a mortared fieldstone foundation, clapboard siding, a hipped asphalt shingle roof with boxed cornices, and dormers at each roof slope. Architectural trim of the main block includes fluted corner pilasters supporting a tall frieze and denticulated cornice at both the main block and front and side dormers, and window casings with denticulated caps. The fenestration is generally regularly-spaced six-over-one wood windows, with two-over-one windows in the main block’s dormers. The front entryway contains a paneled wood door with a large four-pane light and single-pane sidelights. The front porch and porte-cochere have mortared cobblestone piers supporting clusters of four Ionic columns, and egg and dart bed molds at the cornice. The exterior is in fair to good condition, with missing mortar at the foundation, peeling paint, areas of siding and trim rot due to a partially missing gutter system and leakage at the eaves, deteriorated, broken and missing windows, and a racked and rotting rear porch.

Interior

The house has a symmetrical floor plan, with a full length center hallway at the first and second stories that contains an open winder staircase at the rear. There are full-length rooms on both the north and south sides of the first story hallway, and the south room is accessed by large openings off the hallway. On the second story, there are four corner rooms with bathrooms in between the rooms on each side of the hallway. The attic is also finished, with four bedrooms and the house’s only historic bathroom. The first story has wood floors except for the dining room, which has vinyl tiles. The second story has asphalt tile flooring. Most of the walls and ceilings in the house are finished in gypsum board or acoustical ceiling tiles, except for the attic, which retains the original plaster finishes. Architectural woodwork includes the original complex molded door and window casings, molded baseboards, the open staircase with turned newel posts and balusters, and four-panel wood doors. The interior is in fair condition. After many years of deferred maintenance, the roof was replaced in 1995, but the damage caused by leaking water to the flooring and finishes of all three stories has not been addressed, and there is
pervasive mold throughout the building.

Construction Chronology
The house was constructed in 1894 and used as a private single family dwelling from then until 1952. From the late 1950s to the 1980s the house was owned by the Air Force as part of the Pease Air Force Base and during this time was first used as a guest house and then as a sportsmen’s club. It has been vacant since the late 1980s. Over the years, as a result of the various uses and owners, there have been considerable alterations to the building dating to the 1910s, late 1950s, and 1960s.

The house originally had a smaller front porch and different dormers, no porte cochere, two rooms at the south side of the first story with typical doorways and corner fireplaces sharing a chimney, and a fireplace centered on the north wall of the first story hallway. In the 1910s, the front porch and dormers were replaced with the extant ones, the extant porte cochere was added, a pantry room was added to the gable end wall of the ell, and the porch at the rear ell was added. The porch was expanded at some point to wrap around both side elevations, and the attic bathroom appears to date to the 1910s.

The floor plan and interior finishes of the house were altered about 1956, after the Air Force acquired the property and converted it to guest quarters for officers. All three fireplaces were removed and replaced with a sole fireplace centered on the south wall of the north room. The wall between the two first story south rooms was removed, as well as most of the wall between these rooms and the hallway, leaving two large openings. The front door, wood flooring at the first and second stories, linoleum floors, gypsum walls and ceilings and false wood paneling date to this time as well. The exterior doorway from the ell to the rear porch was moved to the location of a window, and the kitchen and first and second story bathrooms were remodeled. The wrap-around porches at the side elevations of the main block were removed in 1965. Since then, work has been limited to exterior painting and repairs, and the replacement of the roof in 1995. While under the ownership of the Air Force, a barn, carriage barn, a guest house and a well house were removed from the property.

Caretaker’s Cottage

Exterior
The one-story c. 1920s 1,338 square foot wood-framed Caretaker’s Cottage has an irregular asymmetrical footprint, a fieldstone foundation and brick underpinning (except at the east wall, which has a poured concrete foundation), clapboard siding, a hipped asphalt-shingle roof with boxed cornices and built-in wood gutters, a large exterior brick chimney at the front, a small hipped hood at the front entry, hipped-roof dormers at the south and east roof slopes, and a shed-roofed porch at the right half of the south elevation, which has a plywood half-wall and vertical window openings. There are paired and individual replacement six-over-six wood windows. The front entry contains a paneled wood door with a four-paned upper light.

The building is in good condition. There is poor drainage at the building perimeter, causing water seepage into the basement, sill rot, and related insect damage. The brick underpinning
corners are falling apart, with detached bricks, and the area around the chimney is leaking. The wood gutters are leaking at the joints and have areas of rot, causing additional damage to the exterior wood elements. The water and moisture infiltration has caused a pervasive mold odor throughout the building.

**Interior**
The front entry leads directly into the kitchen, and there are two hallways leading to a living room, three bedrooms, and a bathroom. The basement and attic are unfinished. The kitchen and bathroom have vinyl tile flooring, and the rest of the first story has random-width pine flooring. There are plaster walls and ceilings, flat-stock window and door casings, molded baseboards, hollow-core veneer doors, and a Colonial Revival wood mantel at the living room fireplace.

**Construction Chronology**
The exact construction date of the building is unknown but has been estimated to be the 1920s. The historic use of the building is also unknown, but it is likely that it was a caretaker’s residence when the property was a private estate. From the 1950s to the 1980s it was probably used it as quarters for military personnel. From 1992 to 2002 it was occupied by Service staff, and has been vacant since.

The building is generally historically intact. The porch is probably an addition. At some point between 1955 and 1982, the two original three-panel exterior wood doors were replaced with the extant paneled and glazed doors, and the two-panel interior wood doors were replaced with the extant hollow-core veneer doors. An asphalt-shingle roof was replaced in 1995 with the extant roof, and all of the original six-over-six wood windows were replaced in 1999 with the extant windows.

**Statement of Significance**

The Margeson Estate is individually listed on the NRHP and both the Margeson House and Caretaker’s Cottage are historic resources. According to the NRHP nomination, the main house is significant under Criterion C for its architectural characteristics, as it “embodies the essential characteristics of the colonial revival style, and therefore exemplifies both the period of its construction and a stylistic preference of its locale at that period.” The house is also significant under Criterion A as an “example of a country summer home at a period when the construction of such homes was fashionable for those who could afford them and was of great economic significance in the depressed economy of rural New England.”

The Margeson House also depicts the trend of the conversion of farmsteads to summer estates in New Hampshire during the late nineteenth century. This is when the Great Bay region, which at the time was a bucolic agricultural area on a scenic expansive estuary, became popular for summer getaways. In Newington, the house is a rare example of the Colonial Revival Style as well as the sole surviving example of a grand summer estate house. The Caretaker’s Cottage is significant as an intact outbuilding of the summer estate.
Bibliography


Partial USGS Portsmouth Quad
Red arrow points to Margeson House
Yellow arrow points to Caretaker’s Cottage
Margeson House - First Floor Plan and Photo Key

Margeson House - Second Floor Plan and Photo Key
Margeson House - Third Floor Plan and Photo Key

Caretaker’s Cottage – Floor Plan and Photo Key
Margeson Estate Photos
Margeson 1 – Main context looking SW
Margeson 4 – Main exterior allee
Margeson 5 – Main exterior looking NE
Margeson 6 – Main exterior looking SE
Margeson 7 – Main exterior looking SW
Margeson 8 – Main exterior looking W
Margeson 9 – Main exterior looking W
Margeson 10 – Main exterior cor detail
Margeson 11 – Main interior porch
Margeson 12 – Main interior porte cochere
Margeson 14 – Main interior 1st floor
Margeson 15 – Main interior 1st floor
Margeson 16 – Main interior 1st floor
Margeson 18 – Main interior 1st fl
Margeson 19 – Main interior 1st floor
Margeson 20 – Main interior 1st floor
Margeson 21 – Main interior 2nd floor
Margeson 22 – Main interior 2nd floor
Margeson 23 – Main interior 2nd floor
Margeson 25 – Main interior attic
Margeson 26 – Main interior attic
Margeson 27 – Caretakers context looking S
Margeson 28 – Caretakers context looking NE
Margeson 30 – Caretakers exterior looking NE
Margeson 32 – Caretakers exterior looking NW
Margeson 34 – Caretakers exterior detail
Margeson 35 – Caretakers exterior detail
Margeson 38 – Caretakers interior
Margeson 39 – Caretakers interior
Margeson Estate-
Main House &
Caretaker’s Cottage
Building Schematics
New Hampshire Property Documentation Report  
No. 722

Margeson Estate  
Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge  
Newington, Rockingham County

Index to Drawings

1. Margeson House – Historic Floor Plans/1956 Demolition Plans
2. Margeson House – Existing Conditions First Floor Plan
3. Margeson House – Existing Conditions Second Floor Plan
4. Margeson House – Existing Conditions Third Floor Plan
5. Margeson House – Elevations
6. Caretaker’s Cottage – Floor Plan
7. Caretaker’s Cottage – Elevations
8. Caretaker’s Cottage – Elevations