

Interpretive Panel #4: The Farmhouse, Woodchuck Lodge Draft by John E. Lutz, 10-16-21

Woodchuck Lodge

In 1860, Curtis Burroughs, one of John's older brothers, was deeded the John Follett farm on the eastern end of the homestead by his father, who had purchased it in 1836. Curtis tore down the existing house and built a new, larger four-bedroom farmhouse on the site in 1861/62. Brother John said, "A snug old house was there already, but he concluded to build a larger and more convenient dwelling."

A generation later, the fourth child of Curtis and his wife Ann Eliza, John C., with his wife Blanche Tyler Burroughs (who were first cousins once removed) rented this farmhouse to their Uncle John, the literary naturalist. This was during the summers from 1911 to 1920. Burroughs had spent some time with friends there starting in 1908. He was compelled to name the place "Woodchuck Lodge" by the countless woodchucks and their tunneled holes that were scattered throughout the nearby farm fields. The name seemed an apt one to him for his seasonal sanctuary on the old homestead.

Burroughs recalled, "The house that Curtis built had latterly been inhabited by various poor families and was a good deal dilapidated. I've laid new floors in the lower rooms, patched the broken plastering, built a woodshed, and put an ample rustic piazza on the front, and with my own hands I've made a considerable amount of furniture."

The rental agreement between nephew and uncle called for a small annual fee of \$25.00. It also included plowing a garden plot, delivering two loads of manure for a garden, and dropping off a load of poles and tree limbs for firewood for cooking and heating.

John Burroughs wrote fruitfully in the adjoining haybarn overlooking a field where he cut hay as a young boy and in his "bush camp" constructed in the orchard overlooking Woodchuck Lodge.

The garage was built in 1919-20 to house the Ford Model T car offered to Burroughs by his friend, Henry Ford. The original garage collapsed from heavy snow in the late 1990s. It was rebuilt from native hemlock cut in the neighboring town of Prattsville. Burroughs's original choice of garage roof material was tar paper. In 2021, the garage was re-purposed as a visitor area and cedar shakes were added for extra protection.

Note: Quotes from Johnson, Clifton, *John Burroughs Talks*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1922, page 274, 276-277.