

Excerpts from James Garvin's House Inventory Form submitted to the NH Division of Historical Resources dated August 4, 2021. Note: citations are removed for brevity.

James S. Rogers (1885-1946)

As depicted in James Rogers' own description of the Coolidge Estate and its management, quoted above, Rogers' role as manager of the property, applying the practices of professional forestry, represented a major chapter in the conservation and preservation history of Sandwich. Rogers' work as a trained forester, engineer, and land manager defines the principal period of significance of the Rogers home under Criterion A as the period of Rogers' occupancy, which extended from 1913 to Rogers' death in 1946, although that period of significance has been extended to 1971 (the arbitrary 50-year cutoff date for National Register listing) to include part of the period when the property was occupied by another prominent local family, the Michaels.

James Smith Rogers was born in Newbury, Massachusetts in 1885. His forebears were professional people, among them doctors and ministers. Rogers received his early education at the prestigious Governor Dummer Academy in nearby Byfield, then attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Following his graduation from MIT, Rogers entered the Harvard Forestry School, where he became acquainted with Joseph Randolph Coolidge VII (1887-1936) and graduated with the class of 1912. In December 1910, Coolidge established a partnership with classmates Rogers and Philip P. Brooks (Dartmouth 1910), naming the firm Coolidge, Brooks and Rogers and, upon graduating, opening offices at 89 State Street in Boston and in Sandwich. Rogers temporarily halted his classwork at Harvard to take immediate charge of the earliest work of the partnership.

Rogers moved to Sandwich in 1913 with his new wife, the former Ida Louise Rand (1883-1939), and took up residence in the house at 645 Holderness Road, where the couple lived until their respective deaths. Ida Rogers kept a diary from 1911 through 1917, revealing details of life in the house and the couple's increasingly deep involvement with people and social life in Sandwich. Among other things, the diary reveals the Rogers' arrival at the house on September 24, 1913, the provision of eight cords of firewood for winter heat and ice for refrigeration, and James Rogers' use of the house as a drafting room in drawing maps of the Coolidge Estate.⁸ Cumulatively, these diary records portray the Rogers House both as the site of a family life that reached out into the Sandwich community and as a nerve-center for the surveillance, maintenance, and improvement of the sprawling Coolidge holdings of lands, waters, and structures of many kinds.

Rogers continued to manage the estate throughout his life while maintaining his broader activity in the firm of Coolidge, Brooks and Rogers, which specialized in the manufacture of lumber by portable sawmills. He became deeply embedded in the community of Sandwich, serving on the board of selectmen during the 1920s and 1930s; on the trustees of trust funds, the Town Forest Committee, and the local school district; and in many local organizations including the local Masonic lodge; his wife, Ida, was similarly active with local groups.

During World War II, Rogers served as an air raid warden, using his shop to make wooden

shovels for moving incendiary explosives that might be dropped on the village. His obituary in 1946 described Rogers as “a man of sterling integrity; everyone respected him and had the greatest confidence in his judgment.”

Monroe and Bernice Michael

After the deaths of Ida Rogers in 1939 and of James in 1946, the Rogers House became the property of Monroe and Bernice Michael, who assumed roles in the community similar to those of James and Ida Rogers and are affectionately remembered by Sandwich residents of the current generation. Monroe (“Mike”) Michael (1916-2010), a native of New York City, moved to Sandwich after his father’s death and joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), working in New England and as far west as Colorado. Michael served in the European Campaign as a soldier in the 825th Tank Destroyer Battalion during World War II. In 1948, he married Bernice and operated an express company with a brother, living in the Rogers House (more recently known in the Sandwich area as the Michael Farmhouse) for over sixty years and raising a family there. He worked at the Sandwich village store for over thirty years, becoming a fixture in the social life of the community.

Bernice (“Bunny”) Michael (1914-2018) was born in Manchester, N. H., and earned a four-year degree in teaching from the Keene Normal School (now Keene State College) in 1935. Upon graduating, she moved to Sandwich to teach home economics at the Quimby School, followed by brief service as the town librarian and by thirty-five years of employment in the Sandwich Post Office, including service as postmaster, until her retirement. Like Ida Rogers before her, Bunny was active in many Sandwich organizations, including Eastern Star, the Grange, the Sandwich Historical Society, and the Community Church, becoming one of the community’s best-known figures and dying at the age of 104 in 2018.