

Anthony Birthplace Auctioned

August 6, 2006

By: Jessica Willis, Berkshire Eagle

ADAMS - The sprawling farmhouse at 67 East Road could be just another North County fixer-upper, but what separates this property from countless other run-down gems is the very famous women's rights activist who was born in one of the front rooms on the ground floor. Yesterday morning, with little fanfare, the birthplace of Susan B. Anthony was quickly auctioned off to Carol Crossed of Rochester, N.Y., for \$164,500.

The auction was held by JJ Manning Auctioneers, a Cape Cod-based company, and took place in the back yard of the property. Seven bidders and a handful of onlookers were in attendance.

"This house has a sense of history," Cecily Abram, a Maryland resident who visits the Berkshires once a year, said. She laughed when asked if she intended to place a bid.

Yesterday's sale is another chapter in the property's struggle to find an identity as either a historic landmark destination or as a private home. It has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1985.

Susan B. Anthony lived on the property for only the first six years of her life, from 1820 to 1826.

Her home in Rochester, N.Y., where she lived from 1866 until her death in 1906, was purchased to create a museum in 1945. In 2002, the Susan B. Anthony house received a \$300,000 matching grant through Save America's Treasures.

In 1998, Anthony's four-bedroom, 2-bathroom birthplace in Adams was purchased for about \$100,000 by Linda and James McConchie of Lincoln. Linda McConchie is a former executive director of the Freedom Trail Foundation in Boston. The McConchies had tried, unsuccessfully, to make the property into a museum.

Lorraine Robinson, chairman of the nonprofit Foundation to Preserve the Birthplace of Susan B. Anthony, recently attempted to find a buyer for the property, but to no avail. Similarly, the town of Adams also was unable to contribute financially to the house's restoration.

The actual auction lasted barely one minute and was led by Jerome J. Manning, the CFO/president of JJ Manning Auctioneers. After stressing that the transaction was an "absolute auction," meaning that the house and the half acre it stood on would belong to the last and highest bidder regardless of price, "as is, with all faults." Shortly after 11 a.m., he began his rapid-fire patter. Bidding started at \$300,000 and was quickly reduced to the uncontested bid of \$164,500.

"Come on, folks, that's no price for it," Manning called, standing on the steps of the back porch. "Do I hear \$175,000? One seventy, anyone?" No one responded. "Susan's turning over in her grave," he quipped.

"It went for a little bit more than we thought it would," Manning said after the auction. The house and land had been assessed for \$151,000 in 2005.