

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED MAR 25 1982

DATE ENTERED APR 27 1982

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Bacon Academy

AND/OR COMMON

Bacon Academy

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER South Main Street

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Colchester N/A VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
2nd -

STATE

CT CODE 09

COUNTY New London CODE 011

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Bacon Academy Board of Trustees

STREET & NUMBER

N/A

CITY, TOWN

Colchester N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Colchester Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

10 Norwich Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Colchester

STATE

CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located in Colchester, Connecticut, this property consists of two separate buildings. The larger and more historically significant of the two is the original academy, a three-story, brick structure, completed in 1803. The second building, Day Hall, in appearance a small frame chapel, was built as a church hall in 1858. It was acquired by the trustees of the academy in 1929, and was used for high school purposes until the new Bacon Academy was built in 1962.

Standing side-by-side on South Main Street, these two buildings are an integral part of Colchester's town center. Only a few feet to the south of the academy is the town firehouse, while on the other side of Day Hall stands the Congregational church. Across South Main Street from the front door of the main building, Academy Street runs eastward, with the town green to the north and the town hall and various commercial buildings to the south. In contrast to the bustle passing in front of the buildings, the rear windows look out over the old town burying ground.

Both the academy building and Day Hall are currently used for school purposes. Leased for a nominal sum from the Bacon Trustees by the Colchester Board of Education, the first floor of the academy houses the offices of the superintendent of schools (its upper floors are either vacant or are used for storage), while Day Hall accommodates a kindergarten on its main floor with the trustees' offices and a conference room below.

The academy building is a severely plain, three-story, Federal style structure. Seventy feet long by thirty-four feet wide, with a small one-story ell to the rear (built to house the school's lavatories in the early twentieth century), the building is constructed of bricks (Flemish bond) which were produced on a local farm for the purpose.¹ The foundation is random fieldstone with a facing of dressed granite blocks. The hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles; and there are two brick chimneys on its east side about eighteen feet or so from either corner (two matching chimneys on the western side of the roof have been removed), while two sheet metal ventilator enclosures are visible behind the roof's upper ridge. Attached to the rear wall of the building are two iron fire escapes.

The building has few exterior decorative features. The cornice is plainly molded with a dentil course below. The fenestration is symmetrical. Around the central doorway of the main facade are twenty-six windows arranged in nine bays (with a slight gap, to accommodate the chimneys between the third and fourth and seventh and eighth bay). The sash is 6-over-6 (and appears original throughout) with granite lintels and sills. There are two important Victorian additions dating from about 1890. First, above the plain fanlight of the main entrance, there is an arched doorhood supported by large, incised consoles. Second, in the center of the roof is a large, eight-sided cupola

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with arched openings covered by louvers, small paired cornice brackets, and a finial. It is very important to note that this cupola was built over the original open bell tower (illustrated in a print of Colchester published shortly after the academy was opened)²; and much of this original structure is preserved underneath. Thus, if it ever were decided to return the building to its original form, these remains would be a valuable guide to duplicating the dimensions of the first bell tower. The bell here is also significant. It is almost one hundred and fifty years old, and is inscribed: "For Ward Bartholemew Brainard. Doolittle Fecit. 1830." Finally, the building's paint scheme is most complementary: the walls are cream with foundation, door and window trim, and cornices colored deep chocolate-brown.

The building's interior is utilitarian but is not without some interest. The plan is basically that of two large rooms on each floor with doorways opening out into a central hallway and stairwell. The chimneys which ran up the east and west walls of each room provided the necessary flues for iron stoves at either end (as evidenced by the thimble caps now partially hidden under layers of paint), while the large windows furnished excellent natural light. Most of the rooms still have elderly, built-in blackboards; and the lower parts of the outer walls are wainscoted with wide horizontal boards with beaded edges. The floors are narrow oak, apparently laid in the early twentieth century; and the ceilings are hidden by modern acoustical tiles.

Above the third floor classrooms is a shallow-roofed attic which gives access through a trap door to the cupola. There are two large king-post trusses at either end of the main ridge which help support the roof framing and the ceiling below.

The basement also reveals something about the building's construction. Divided into halves, there is a large basement summer beam in each, running lengthwise between the sills, supported at intervals by large posts set on shaped stone pedestals. From these summers, floor joists run at right angles to the sills, spanning a distance of about fifteen feet. This system has recently been supplemented by the insertion of steel I-beams under the joists between the summer and the sills. The cellar also contains a very old coal furnace which is no longer used, the building being heated with electricity.

Day Hall is a frame structure built in a vaguely Italianate style. Essentially an open-ceilinged, one-room structure, the building also has a basement floor and a T-shaped addition across the

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back (c. 1928) containing a fireproof stairway. The exterior is covered with vertical flush boards and the steeply pitched gable roof is asphalt shingled. The building's decorative details include: scalloped molding below the cornice, large paired brackets under the raking and level eaves, segmental-arched window openings throughout with large 16-over-16 sash on the sides and 6-over-6 sash on either side and above (paired) the central main entrance. The plain door-frame surrounds modern double fire doors with an arched transom light above (now filled in). Over the door is an arched hoodmold supported by large consoles with drops.

The interior consists of a large upper auditorium with a gallery at the east end and a stage at the west end. Below, on the basement level, there are several offices and meeting rooms.

Footnotes:

¹Alumni Beacon (Privately printed, 1953), p. 21.

²This print, from Barber's Historical Collections, is reproduced in Israel Foote Leemis, "Bacon Academy: Its Founder - And Some Account of Its Service," The Connecticut Quarterly, II (No. 2, 1896), p. 124.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Original building, 1803
Day Hall, 1858 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bacon Academy possesses three areas of significance. First, both the original academy building and Day Hall are structures of architectural merit (Criterion C). Second, the history of the school over the past 176 years reflects changing ideas and social attitudes about education (Criterion A). Finally, Bacon Academy is associated with the lives of several individuals important in state and national history (Criterion B).

The academy building is a fine example of a utilitarian structure with Federal stylistic details. In spite of its excellent proportions, the exterior of the building appears unnecessarily plain on first view. Yet, there are subtle details here which a more careful inspection will appreciate. These include: the arched transom light over the door, the stone sills and flared lintels of the windows, the dentilated cornice, and the hipped roof with its slender brick chimneys. The only jarring note here is the Victorian cupola; but, from the remaining evidence of the old bell tower it encloses, one can imagine the delicate proportions of the original and its harmony with the rest of the structure. Also of interest is Day Hall which is a good example of a modest, mid-Victorian public building embodying a number of Italianate decorative elements such as segmental arched windows and prominent brackets under the eaves.

The history of Bacon Academy is but one chapter of the overall history of secondary education in Connecticut. The origin of this institution was the estate of Pierpont Bacon, a prosperous Colchester farmer (and slaveowner) who, dying childless in 1800, left most of his land and other property, amounting to over \$35,000, to the inhabitants of the First Society of Colchester to support and maintain a school.¹ Elementary education being provided for by the town's local school districts, it was decided by the trustees of Bacon's request (who were confirmed by the General Assembly) to found a proprietary academy mainly to prepare young men for college, but which also offered local boys the chance to gain an advanced knowledge of English and mathematics to enable them to directly enter commercial careers.

Bacon Academy was not unique; for in other eastern Connecticut towns such as Windham, Norwich, Plainfield, and Woodstock similar secondary schools were organized in the last years of the eighteenth

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alumni Beacon: 1803-1953. Privately printed, 1953.

Loomis, Israel Foote. "Bacon Academy: Its Founder - And Some Account of Its Service." The Connecticut Quarterly, I (No. 2, 1896), pp. 120-139.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .4

QUADRANGLE NAME Colchester, CT

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 1722360 4605640

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is described on Colchester Assessor's card 2R.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Hal Keiner, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE May 20, 1979

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN Hartford

STATE CT

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE March 8, 1982

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Entered in the National Register

DATE 4/27/82

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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and the first years of the nineteenth centuries. Some of these institutions continue to this day, others have withered away, but each one's history is different and is the product of many intertwined events and personalities. In briefly sketching the history of Bacon Academy, this larger context should not be forgotten.

The new Bacon Academy, constructed at a cost of \$7,000, opened its doors to its initial students in 1803. The school was fortunate to have as its first principal, John Adams, a Yale graduate, who within two months had attracted 206 students to the school including 63 from other towns.³ Adams put the school on a firm footing but left in 1810 to take up the principal's office at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, where he remained for the next twenty-three years establishing his reputation as an American "Dr. Arnold" (the legendary headmaster of Rugby School in England).⁴ Following Adams' departure, the school stagnated; but under the leadership of Charles Pomeroy Otis, principal from 1827 to 1837, its fortunes reached an early peak. Indeed, during the last year of Otis' tenure, the academy was attended by 425 boys, 137 of whom came from other Connecticut towns, and 32 more from other states.⁵ This latter group included a number of sons of Southern plantation owners, sent north to be prepared for college. Because Colchester was a small town, it was difficult to accommodate this influx of boys from far away; and only because nearly every family who lived near the town green took boarders, was sufficient space found.⁶

In the years after Otis' resignation, Bacon Academy entered a period of slow decline. Even the incorporation of a "Female High School" in 1842⁷ and financial and curriculum reforms in the early 1850s do not appear to have reversed this trend.⁸ The root of the problem was that the trustees and principals throughout most of the nineteenth century wanted to transform the academy into an independent private school with a rigorously "classical" course of study which would attract out of town students in large numbers, while serving the needs of town only as an afterthought. In short, Bacon Academy wished to follow in the footsteps of such schools as Phillips Academy and Deerfield Academy.

By 1890, it was clear that this vision would never succeed; and the trustees and their principals gradually restructured the academy to serve as a privately endowed High School for the town of Colchester, emphasizing a more balanced curriculum of college preparatory, commercial, and general courses of study for all the town's students. Symbolic, perhaps, of this new direction was that when the

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small chapel to the north of the academy came into the trustees' possession in 1928, the basement floor was remodelled for the teaching of home economics.⁹

For the first 136 years of its existence, the income from the trust's endowment (Bacon's bequest had been supplemented over the years by numerous gifts) was sufficient to meet the school's expenses; but, after 1939, the town began to contribute tax money to support the school, marking the beginning of the end of the trustees' sole control over the school's affairs. In 1962 a new high school was built which retains the name Bacon Academy. Although this school continues to receive the income of the trust, this money today represents only a tiny percentage of Bacon Academy's total budget.

Bacon Academy was attended by a number of men who went on to historically important careers in politics, business and education. It is only possible here to list the most prominent.¹⁰

1. Stephen F. Austin: founder of the colony of Americans in that part of Mexico which later became the state of Texas.
2. Lyman Trumbull: governor of Illinois and, afterwards, senator. A great friend and supporter of Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War.
3. Morrison Waite: chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, 1874-1888.
4. Edwin Denison Morgan: governor and U. S. senator from New York.
5. William Larrabee: governor of Iowa.
6. William A. Buckingham: governor of Connecticut.
7. Morgan Bulkeley: governor of Connecticut.
8. Eliphalet Bulkeley: organizer and first president of the Aetna Life Insurance Company.
9. Park Benjamin: editor and poet.
10. Isaac Edwin Crary: Michigan's first U. S. representative and a founder of the University of Michigan.
11. James T. Champlin: an early president of Colby College.

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12. Edwin B. Cragin: an eminent surgeon and Colchester benefactor.

Footnotes:

¹On Pierpont Bacon and his will, see, Alumni Beacon (Privately printed, 1953), p. 21; and Israel Foote Loomis, "Bacon Academy: Its Founder - And Some Account of Its Service," The Connecticut Quarterly, II (No. 2, 1896), pp. 121-125.

²The exact figure was \$7,059.37. See, Beacon, p. 23.

³Benjamin Tinkham Marshall, ed., A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut, I (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1922), p. 255.

⁴Beacon, pp. 27-28; and Loomis, "Bacon Academy," p. 127.

⁵Marshall, New London, p. 255.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Beacon, p. 33.

⁸On the problems of 1840 through 1890, see, Beacon, pp. 26-27 and 35-36.

⁹Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 36-42; and Loomis, "Bacon Academy," pp. 132-139.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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Marshall, Benjamin Tinkham, ed. A Modern History of New London
County, Connecticut. Vol. I. New York: Lewis Historical
Publishing Company, 1922.

Trustees of Bacon Academy. Minutes and Records. Trustees Room,
Day Hall, Bacon Academy. Available only by permission.