

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received FEB 3 1983

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Simeon Smith House

and/or common Byron Avery House

2. Location

street & number West Haven Road N/A not for publication

city, town West Haven N/A vicinity of

state Vermont code 50 county Rutland code 021

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Byron Avery

street & number West Haven Road (Mailing Address: R.F.D., Fair Haven, Vermont 05743)

city, town West Haven N/A vicinity of state Vermont

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Town Clerk, Town of West Haven

street & number N/A (Mailing Address: R.F.D., Fair Haven, Vermont 05743)

city, town West Haven state Vermont

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1977  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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

Oriented to the cardinal points, the Simeon Smith House is a Federal style, clapboarded I-house, two-and-one-half stories in height, with an elaborate entrance surround and roof cornice, and a slate-covered, shallow-pitched gable roof. A gable-roofed wing is attached to the northwest corner of the west gable end, and a shed-roofed, lean-to addition extends almost the full length of the house across the north, rear elevation.

The Simeon Smith House sits on top of a slight embankment on the north side of the West Haven Road, approximately one-and-one-half tenths of a mile west of where the West Haven Road intersects Vermont Route 22A, the area's principal north/south highway. The house backs up on a heavily wooded hill which rises behind it to the north, the trees and brush extending down to and surrounding the house but stopping at the edge of the road. Across the road from the house, to the south, the landscape is a more open, gently rolling farmland which becomes more hilly and wooded as it extends down, and then abruptly descends to the Poultney River and the border with New York State, approximately seven-tenths of a mile away.

The Simeon Smith House measures 42 feet by 22 feet, or five bays across the south, front elevation and two bays across the east gable end. There is only one bay on the right side of the west gable end and one bay on the right side, on the second floor, of the north, rear elevation. The foundation is of rubblestone construction to the sills, and is exposed to its full height on the left side of the east gable end where the ground slopes down to accommodate a plank door. The framing on the first and second floors is braced post-and-beam covered with a narrow clapboard siding, and the slate-covered gable roof is carried on principal rafters set into a ridge pole.

The main entrance to the house is located in the center bay of the south elevation, facing the West Haven Road. The entrance is composed of a single, six-panel door with raised, feather-edged panels, and two, two-pane wide, six-over-six, double-hung sash windows which flank either side of the door but are not supported by bottom panels. The sills and lintels of the two side windows line up with the window fenestration in the bays to either side, but the height of the lintels is slightly higher than that of the entrance door. The door and side windows have separate, but abutting, architrave surrounds, the surround framing the door being detailed with an ovolo molding. The three surrounds are tied together across the top by a continuous dentilated cornice with an ogee hood.

The roof cornice is a full Classical entablature composed of a double fascia architrave, a plain frieze, and dentilated and modillioned cornice. The entablature wraps around the gable ends with a partial return, but only the entablature's dentilated and modillioned cornice continues up the rake of the eaves. The entablature is visually supported at the corners of the house by narrow cornerboards which, in turn, rest on a narrow water table, or sill board.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

*All of the windows have mid-nineteenth century, two-over-two, double hung sash and operable, louvered wood shutters. The two windows on the first floor to the right of the entrance on the south elevation and the two windows on the first floor on the east gable end are covered by bright aluminum, combination storm and screen window units.*

*The wing on the northwest corner of the west gable end of the house measures 18 by 26 feet, is one and one-half stories in height, sits on a rubblestone foundation, is of wood frame construction with clapboard siding, and has a slate covered gable roof with a plain boxed cornice and gable end returns. The ridge of the roof is parallel to that on the I-House and is crowned at the center by a square, brick chimney stack. The fenestration is irregular and consists of: on the south elevation, a pair of two-over-two, double hung sash on the right side below two, three-over-two, fixed sash, and a plank door between two, one-over-one, double hung sash on the left side below three, tall, narrow, two-over-eight casements; on the west gable end, two, tall, narrow, diamond paned casements, one on top of the other, on the right side, and one, two-over-two, fixed sash in the center of the gable peak; and on the north elevation, a Tudor arched, glass and aluminum frame greenhouse on the right side, which measures 10 by 16 feet and sits on a concrete knee wall, and a pair of two-over-two, double hung sash on the left side.*

*The shed roofed, lean-to addition across the north elevation of the house measures 8 by 36 feet, is one story in height, sits on a rubblestone foundation, is of wood frame construction with wide novelty siding, and has an asphalt shingle roof with exposed rafter tails. The fenestration is irregular and consists of: on the north elevation, three, four-over-three, fixed sash on the right side, a novelty sided, sliding shed door hung on an overhead track in the center, and one, two-over-two, double hung sash on the left side; and on the east end, one, two-over-two, double hung sash.*

*Originally, the Simeon Smith House was a free-standing I-House with a two and one-half story, gable roofed ell attached, slightly off center to the east, to the north, rear elevation. The fenestration on the west gable end was two bays wide and matched that on the east gable end. The original ell was severely damaged in a fire in the mid-nineteenth century, demolished and rebuilt. The rebuilt ell was one and one-half stories in height and was later moved around and attached to the west gable end of the house, to become the present wing. The present shed roofed, lean-to addition across the north elevation of the house was built in the 1920's.*

*Originally, the interior of the house, on the first floor, was laid out with two large rooms, each 17 by 22 feet, at either end on either side of an 8 by 22 foot, center entrance hall. Both rooms and the back of the hall have been cut up into smaller spaces. A large ballroom, 22 by 32 feet, takes up four-fifths of the second floor at the east end of the house. Two small rooms, each 10 by 11 feet, are located, one in each corner, at the west end.*

(continued on Continuation Sheet 7-2)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

The ballroom, which is elaborately detailed and is the architectural focal point of the interior, originally was reached by a stairway located in the original, two and one-half story ell. After the ell was destroyed in a fire, a new stairway was built directly in front of the fireplace which is located in the center of the north wall of the ballroom. That stairway was later removed and replaced by the present stairway which comes up from the center entrance hall through the floor in the center of the ballroom.

The ballroom is laid out with four windows along the south wall, a fireplace on the opposite north wall, a pair of windows on the east wall, and a pair of four panel, raised panel doors at the other end of the room on the west wall. The doors open into the two small rooms which are located at that end of the house on the second floor. A square chimney stack projects into the room on the east wall between the windows, and a plain, corner post and double rail railing fences off the stairway where it comes up through the middle of the floor.

The ballroom ceiling is detailed with a quarter circle cove which springs from a dentilated and modillioned ceiling cornice. The top edge of the cove, where it meets the flat of the ceiling, is defined by a torus molding.

The fireplace projects slightly into the room, the projection carrying up through and breaking the line of the ceiling cornice and cove. The fireplace consists of a mantle and over-mantle which are mounted on the face of the projection and do not wrap around the sides. The mantle is composed of an architrave surround with ovolo molding which frames the fireplace opening, and a pair of fluted Doric pilasters with base, astragal and capital which support a mantle entablature detailed with triglyphs, metopes, mutules and guttae. The over-mantle is a flat wall panel framed by a matching architrave surround which is shouldered at the four corners. The chimney stack and fireplace box have been removed.

On either side of the fireplace, a double fascia architrave surround with ovolo molding frame what were, originally, two doorways which opened into the original ell. The doors have been removed and the openings have been covered over with pieces of plain wallboard.

All of the windows are deeply recessed into the walls which are framed out to one and one half feet to accommodate window shutters. The shutters are recessed into the jambs which flare out into the room and extend down below the sill to the floor. A window seat, in the form of a shelf, has been built into each window recess halfway between the sill and the floor. The top of the window falls just below the ceiling cornice, the cornice actually resting on the window casing.

(continued on Continuation Sheet 7-3)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 3

*The architrave surrounds which frame the windows and the two doors on the west wall are identical to the surrounds which frame the closed up door openings on either side of the fireplace. The ballroom floor is laid with eight inch wide boards and is detailed at the walls with an ovolo molded mopboard. A chair rail with fascia and ovolo molded cap is set low on the wall near the floor and is interrupted at each door and window opening.*

# 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 type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input 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** 1798-1800 **Builder/Architect** William Sprats

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Simeon Smith House is significant as an outstanding example of late eighteenth century Federal style architecture, and as the attributed work of Williams Sprats, a renowned late eighteenth century carpenter, builder and architectural designer from Litchfield, Connecticut.

William Sprats' life and work have been extensively researched by architectural historian, William Lamson Warren. Although only one building in Vermont, the Georgia Meetinghouse, has been documented as being Sprats' work, he is thought to have designed and built a number of houses in the St. Albans area, to the north of Georgia, and in the area around Fair Haven, Vermont, about one hundred miles to the south. From about 1797 or 1798, Sprats was a resident of Hampton, New York, on the other side of the Poultney River below Fair Haven. He later moved to West Haven, Vermont where he died in 1810. He is buried in the now abandoned Carver Falls Cemetery in West Haven, next to the grave of Simeon Smith, one of his Vermont patrons. On Sprats' tombstone is the inscription: "Wm. Sprats/died/June 24, 1810/in the 53 year/of his age."

Simeon Smith was a wealthy businessman, entrepreneur and speculator from Sharon, Connecticut, who may have been forced, due to some indiscreet business ventures, to leave Connecticut and seek refuge, and anonymity, in the relatively undeveloped "wilderness" of Vermont. He resettled in Fair Haven, Vermont in 1787.

Smith purchased an extensive tract of land in the northwest part of the town, overlooking the Poultney River, and built an elegant new house for himself in 1789. In 1792, the town split into two separate towns, Fair Haven and West Haven, leaving Smith's property in the latter. The design of this house, which is still standing but which was remodeled almost beyond recognition in the 1930's, is attributed to Sprats. However, in 1789, Sprats was living and working in the Litchfield, Connecticut area, and did not move north until 1796, at the earliest.

While the exact relationship between Smith and Sprats is not known, it is possible that Smith, wishing to re-establish himself in as comfortable surroundings as he had enjoyed in Connecticut, hired Sprats, either directly or indirectly through a friend or business associate living in Connecticut who would have known of Sprats' work, to design his new house. Sprats was becoming a well known designer in the Litchfield area through the loyal patronage of several wealthy residents. Even though Sprats almost always worked on the buildings he designed, in this instance, he may have done nothing more than supply Smith with a set of plans to be carried out by local Fair Haven craftsmen. If, on the other hand, he did come to Vermont for a brief time to

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Adams, Andrew. History of the Town of Fair Haven, Vermont. Fair Haven, Vermont. 1870. Pp. 62-63.

(continued on Continuation Sheet 9-1)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property One Acre

Quadrangle name Benson Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>18</u>	<u>637</u>	<u>1410</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>6810</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing				
C							D			
E							F			
G							H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Simeon Smith House occupies the center of a one-acre site which abuts the north side of the traveled right-of-way of the West Haven Road. The deed to the property is recorded in Book 23 on Page 224, dated 5 February 1966, of the West Haven Land Records. (Continued)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Courtney Fisher, Preservation Planner and Architectural Historian

organization N/A date 15 November 1982

street & number P.O. Box 575 telephone 802-496-2452

city or town Moretown state Vermont

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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 William B. Pinney date January 28, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

J. Ableson Byer Entered in the National Register date 3/3/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

*work on Smith's house, the opportunity would have introduced him to the area and might have influenced his later move.*

*Having settled in Hampton, New York across the Poultney River from West Haven, and from Simeon Smith, Sprats was again hired by Smith in 1798 to design, and presumably build, a second house, more a summer house for his wife Catherine where she could entertain their frequent guests and numerous friends. This house, the Simeon Smith House which is herein being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, may have been Sprats' first commission after his move north, and undoubtedly helped to establish his reputation as an architectural designer, and builder, in Vermont. A third house, built for Smith's nephew Dan, is located nearby and is also attributed to Sprats. The Dan Smith House<sub>2</sub> dates from 1804.*

*Smith established himself as a member of West Haven's landed gentry but was also very public spirited. Before West Haven split off as a separate town, he was a selectman of Fair Haven from 1789 to 1791. He was a Representative to the Vermont General Assembly in 1789, 1792 and 1797; an assistant judge for Rutland County in 1789; a Delegate to the Bennington Convention for Vermont statehood in 1791; and a probate judge for West Haven in 1792. Born in 1734, Smith died on February 27, 1804. His wife Catherine remarried to a Christopher Minot, a close friend of Smith's, in 1807. She died in 1833.*

*William Sprats was born William Pretchell in 1757 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Trained as an architect, he was conscripted into the British army to fight in the American colonies, where he was captured and taken prisoner by the American revolutionaries. While a prisoner, he was quartered at Litchfield, Connecticut, the locale where he later settled following the war. Before finally being exchanged by the Americans for prisoners being held by the British, Pretchell changed his name to Sprats.*

*Following the war, Sprats did not return to Scotland but remained in the United States. In 1782 he married his first wife, Elizabeth Seelye, and received one acre of land as a dowry in Milton, Connecticut, about five miles west of Litchfield. He remained in the Litchfield area until about 1797 when he moved north, working for a short time in western Massachusetts, and finally settling in Hampton, New York. His first wife died in 1800 and he remarried to a Martha Waterhouse who died in 1807. A third wife, Phoebe Sprats, is listed in his will.*

*Sprats fathered thirteen children. Most of the sons followed in their father's profession as carpenters, builders and architectural designers. While several members of the family remained in the area around Fair Haven, Vermont, the majority emigrated to Michigan.*

*The scope of Sprats' work in Vermont is vitually undocumented compared to his earlier work in Connecticut. The Georgia Meetinghouse, which Sprats designed and built in*

(continued on Continuation Sheet 8-2)



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

1801-1802, unfortunately was destroyed in a fire in 1952. While undergoing a partial restoration in the 1930's, however, a piece of paper was discovered in the original pulpit which had been in storage and was being reinstalled. On the paper was inscribed: "To the memory of the/Joiners who built this building/William Sprats, master builder/Timothy W. Osburn/John Hart. Seymour Egleste(n)/Horace Hart. Seymour Jeffrey/Nearing/Georgia Sept 5th 1802". This document is preserved in the Georgia town offices.

From 1782 until his departure north in 1797, William Sprats is credited with having designed and built a large number of elegant houses, and several public buildings, in the Connecticut towns of Litchfield, Farmington, East Haddam and Colchester. His work may also have extended to New Milford, Wethersfield and Waterbury. Two of his houses, the 1794 Julius Deming House, "The Lindens", in Litchfield, and the 1795 Epaphroditus Champion House in East Haddam, represent the culmination of high style Georgian architecture in New England. The Litchfield County Courthouse, which the wealthy and influential Julius Deming, a Litchfield merchant and entrepreneur, hired Sprats to design in 1796, was as refined in the quality of its design as the church architecture of Charles Bulfinch which it emulated. The courthouse was remodeled in 1819 and 1830, and burned in 1886.

The design for the Litchfield County Courthouse, because of its similarity to the 1793 design by Charles Bulfinch for a church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, the same basic design which Asher Benjamin published in his 1797 builder's guide, The Country Builder's Assistant, also shows that Sprats was familiar with the work of both Bulfinch and Benjamin, and every bit their equal. Sprats' multiple abilities as a carpenter, builder and architectural designer point out that he was indeed talented. Sprats almost always worked on the buildings which he designed, and apparently worked with a group of skilled craftsmen in what amounted to a relatively permanent work crew. If this is in fact so, he may have been one of the first, large scale "contractors" in New England, in the modern definition of the word.

Sprats seems to have been the right person in the right place at the right time. There was a building boom, following the revolutionary war, throughout what had been the American colonies. New England's wealthy merchants, while not exactly a privileged class in the European sense of the phrase, were extremely influential in matters of politics, finance and commerce. More importantly, they were also the arbiters of public taste in almost everything, including architecture. Conscious of their special status within society, the houses which they built for themselves, as well as the public buildings which they had built for the communities in which they lived, represented the most fashionable styles and the finest craftsmanship of the day.

For those merchants who settled and established themselves inland, away from the more prosperous coastal communities, there was a special emphasis placed on being as up to date as their counterparts on the coast. This attitude meant finding builders who were

(continued on Continuation Sheet 8-3)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

*also qualified designers, and who had the ability to transform what otherwise might have been nothing more than a clumsily assembled collection of architectural details selected from whatever builder's guides were currently available into an elegantly integrated whole.*

*William Sprats, a trained architect, albeit a "British" one, was a rare commodity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He would have had little trouble providing the new, post-revolutionary "merchant class" with just exactly what it was looking for. Through his own talents, and through the patronage of such men as Julius Deming, Sprats' success as a carpenter, builder and architectural designer was assured.*

*Footnotes:*

- 1. This house is presently (1982) owned by Gerald Henkel, West Haven, Vermont. The building's UTM Reference is: 18/636920/4832600.*
- 2. This house is presently (1982) owned by Heman Stannard, West Haven, Vermont. The building's UTM Reference is: 18/637280/4831680.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

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Hemenway, Abby. Vermont Historical Gazetteer, a Magazine Embracing a History of Each Town - Civil, Ecclesiastical, Biographical and Military. Burlington, Vermont. 1871. Vol. III.

Warren, William Lamson. "William Sprats and His Civil and Ecclesiastical Architecture, Part I". Old Time New England, the Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities; Boston, Massachusetts. Vol. XLIV, No. 3; January-March, 1954; pp. 64-78.

Warren, William Lamson. "William Sprats and His Civil and Ecclesiastical Architecture, Part II". Old Time New England, the Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities; Boston, Massachusetts. Vol. XLIV, No. 4; April-June, 1954; pp. 103-114.

Warren, William Lamson. "The Domestic Architecture of William Sprats and Other Litchfield Joiners". Old Time New England, the Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities; Boston, Massachusetts. Vol. XLVI, No. 2; October-December, 1955; pp. 36-51.

Warren, William Lamson. "William Sprats, Master Joiner - Connecticut's Federalist Architect". Connecticut Antiquarian, the Journal of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society of Connecticut; Hartford, Connecticut. Vol. IX, No. 2; December, 1957; pp. 11-21.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet 1

Item number 10

Page 1

---

*The one-acre site containing the house measures approximately two hundred feet by two hundred feet. While an additional fifteen to twenty unsurveyed acres are associated with the property, only the one-acre site on which the house is actually located is being nominated. The one-acre site is sufficient to convey the environmental context of the landscape surrounding the house. The remaining land, most of which is located behind the house, to the north, roughly in the shape of a truncated trapezoid, is a wooded hill, the greater part of which is not visually associated with either the house or the house's frontage on the West Haven Road.*