

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0685.321

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUL 2 1978  
DATE ENTERED JAN 17 1979

**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 Thomas Darling House and Tavern

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 1907 Litchfield Turnpike

CITY, TOWN Woodbridge VICINITY OF 3rd - Robert N. Giaimo

STATE Connecticut CODE 09 COUNTY New Haven CODE 009

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Town of Woodbridge

STREET & NUMBER 11 Meetinghouse Lane

CITY, TOWN Woodbridge VICINITY OF STATE CT

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Woodbridge Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER 11 Meetinghouse Lane

CITY, TOWN Woodbridge STATE CT

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

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

The Thomas Darling House and Tavern is a 1½ story gambrel-roofed frame dwelling built around 1765. The building is perched on a small, partly terraced knoll and faces south, with its ridge line perpendicular to the present course of the highway. An early picket fence, probably before 1830, borders the long drive and continues across the front of the house. Located in a rural part of Woodbridge, the house is surrounded by about 25 acres of open meadow land, on both sides of the road. The remainder of the farm is now woodland, extending eastward to West Rock Ridge. The nominated property represents the size of the farm as last owned by the Darling descendents and purchased by the town as a single conservation tract. A local historical society plans to operate the house as a museum.

The south or main facade has the usual central entrance with a pair of windows on either side. The entrance consists of a set of double doors each of four raised panels, above which is a corresponding row of rectangular lights arranged in two groups of three. Around the whole is a rather plain molded frame. The cornice is made up of a series of cove and cyma moldings and is over a foot in depth. Above the doorway and each of the windows it forms a shallow break, creating a molded cap for each of these openings. Spaced along the lower slope of the asphalt-shingled roof are three gable-roofed dormers; a pediment effect is achieved with moldings along the rake and across the face of the shallow gables. Two brick chimneys emerge from behind the ridge line a few feet from the ends of the house. The west stack has been rebuilt. The exterior of the house is now covered with clapboards, but originally it had horizontal boards about 16" wide which were carved to resemble four clapboards; a specimen of this unusual siding can still be seen in the barn. The 12/12 sash is mostly modern, modeled on original windows still in place on the east side.

In addition to the formal entrance on the south, there are two panelled Dutch doors on the west side, one to the kitchen and one to the parlor. This is the facade most visible from the road, and it is considerably more elaborate than the other side facade. The windows and doorways have molded caps, and the cornice moldings are carried up the rake on this side. A Victorian porch with elaborately carved posts runs the width of the house, and is a replacement for an earlier, plainer porch. Despite this addition, and the use of modern roofing and siding materials, the exterior retains its historical integrity: the form of the house is clearly visible, and the important exterior details - the main entrance, the cornice, and the window caps - are all in place.

At the rear of the house are the caretaker's quarters, a 1½ story 19th-century ell. At right angles with the ell are two small barns or sheds built about 1900. Other dependencies include three small frame structures to the east of the house, one of which looks like a former outhouse. On the other side of the road are two sheds and the most important outbuilding, a steep-roofed barn with an attached cart-shed on the south side and a lean-to on the north. Above the tall doors on the south side is a row of small lights. Although no definite age has been established for the barn, it is believed to date back well into the 19th century. The barn and nearby fields provide an appropriate setting for the house, recalling its historical function as a farmhouse and as a rest stop for cattle drivers.

The interior of the house is well-preserved with most of the woodwork intact. The central hallway runs two-thirds of the way back where double panelled doors lead to the kitchen and a small back room. The flight of stairs on the left has delicately turned newel posts and balusters, a cherry handrail, and scroll-cut

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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decoration applied to the sides of the steps. The area below is panelled, as is the wall above the double doorway. The molded chair rail parallels the handrail on the wall next to the stairs. The hall has an elaborate cornice, a series of cyma, cove and bead moldings. As throughout the house, there are no framing members visible along the plastered ceilings, which are 9'3" high on the first floor and 7'6" on the second.

The front rooms to either side of the hallway are similar, with molded chair rails, simple cyma cornice moldings and unusual fireplace walls. In each room, the wall is panelled only two-thirds of the way up; above the opening, which is surrounded by a roll molding, is a single row of panels and above that, a narrow molded shelf. The fireplace in the east room has a dozen blue and white tiles depicting religious themes set above the opening. The west room is somewhat more formal, with a dado of large raised panels beneath the chair rail. A transomed door in the west room leads first to a small pantry area and then to the kitchen, whose chief featute is a brick fireplace with oven 9'9" wide. The opening is surrounded by a roll molding and there is a mantelshelf which extends only part way across. When uncovered, this fireplace was found to contain a number of old iron utensils, including kettles, a skillet, grills, and hooks. In this room there is a simple dado of beaded horizontal boards.

Unlike the main floor, the second floor retains its original wide-board floors, some of oak and some pine. The east chamber is the most elaborate, with molded chair rail and frames around the windows and dormers, and a fireplace above which is a set of panelling reaching to the ceiling. The whole fireplace group is set off from the rest of the wall by a cove molding. The room cornice forms breaks above this fireplace group and also above the window jambs, creating the appearance of capitals. The west room opposite is quite plain except for two panels above the closed-off fireplace, and the back rooms are plainer still, with only the simplest of mantels. In the attic is a brick smoke chamber, now disconnected from the west stack.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
___1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1765

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Thomas Darling House and Tavern is an important resource for the study of domestic architecture and local history. Although built and occupied mostly as a residence, it played an interesting role as a drovers' stopover on an early turnpike. The building's significance is increased by the unusual circumstances of its preservation: the site had until 1973 been continuously occupied by direct descendants of Thomas Darling. The family had saved a wide variety of artifacts from earlier generations, including clothing, account books, cooking implements, and furniture. This material, now owned by the Amity & Woodbridge Historical Society, documents the everyday life of the Darling family, thereby offering an opportunity to better understand the social context of the architectural remains.

The house is a well-preserved example of a later 18th-century home built by a person of social prominence but of uncertain financial standing. It is neither large nor elaborate, but shows a concern for form and detail which mark it as an upper-class residence. The exterior trim - the window caps, the dormer moldings, and especially the breaks in the main cornice over the front windows and double-door entrance - is quite refined. The generous ceiling height on the first floor has been attributed to the first owner's large stature, but it seems equally expressive of his social standing. The central hall plan is used, and its opportunity for greater formality is evident in the hallway, with its fine flight of stairs, panelling, heavy cornice, and double doors. The rooms opening off the hall are somewhat plainer, though hardly austere, with restrained panelling on the fireplace walls and less elaborate cornices. The southeast chamber, like the rooms below, has only a partially panelled wall, but it continues the attention to detail in the molded frames around the dormer openings and in the use of breaks in the room cornice to accent certain features. The limited panelling in the west front chamber, the other chambers' starkness, and the rusticity of the kitchen's beaded boards illustrate the variation in interior finishing typical of the period: the best woodwork is found in the most public rooms, or in the case of chambers, those occupied by the most important people. The architectural significance of the Thomas Darling House is not only due to the large amount of historic material in place, but also lies in the relationship among the features and the way they express the social station of the owner.

Thomas Darling (1719-1789) was a New Haven merchant, a member of the colonial elite. He is believed to have moved the short distance to Woodbridge around 1765. Well educated, he was the author of a religious pamphlet and for a while, an instructor in Yale College. He served as judge of the county court and as a deputy to the Assembly. Although a Tory, he avoided controversy during the Revolution. He was apparently not very successful in business and died insolvent. In his will, he provided for the gradual emancipation of his four slaves.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Dexter, Franklin Bowditch. Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College  
New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1885. Vol. I.
- Kelly, Henry S. "Darling Tavern." Colonial Dames Ms., State Library, Hartford, CT.
- Terry, Marion (ed.). Old Inns of Connecticut. Hartford: Prospect Press, 1937.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 146

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	6,6,9	1,7,0	4,5	8,1	1,9,0	B	1,8	6,6,9	4,4,0	4,5	8,1	1,7,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			
C	1,8	6,6,9	3,0,0	4,5	8,0	3,0,0	D	1,8	6,6,8	8,8,0	4,5	8,0	3,9,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

continued

The property includes all of the land and buildings shown as 1907 and 1910 Litchfield Turnpike on Woodbridge Assessor's Map 1430. The property was purchased for conservation purposes by the town in 1967 and constitutes a unified tract.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Bruce Clouette, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

May 1, 1978

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:

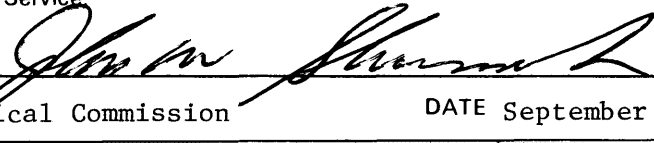
NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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 September 26, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: 

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 1-17-79  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 1/15/79

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The house's second owner, Thomas, Jr. (1752-1815), operated a tavern and inn to accomodate cattle drivers and other travellers using the Straits Turnpike which passed by the house. The site was especially well-suited, with plenty of pasture and water available, and it was near enough to New Haven that drovers could reach the next day's market early, with the cattle not too tired. Darling himself owned stock in the Straits Company which in 1797 was granted a franchise to build an improved road between Litchfield and New Haven; with a better road, farmers were able to get their products not only to New Haven, but to New York and other coastal points. As a drovers' inn, the Darling House represents the importance of internal improvements in creating wider access to markets, the beginning of regional economies.

Agriculture played an important role in the history of this property and the Darling Family. Thomas Darling, in addition to his mercantile activity in New Haven, farmed over 100 acres, described mostly as meadows and pastures, although the exact outline of the farm cannot be determined. By 1815, however, the farm had nearly the same outline as the nominated property, and is specifically described as extending from the Turnpike all the way to the top of West Rock. Today, the land is probably more wooded than it was then, but even in 1815, when Thomas, Jr.'s estate was inventoried, more than a third of his real estate (by value) was woods. The barn, sheds, and other outbuildings associated with the Darling house today recall the fact that this house was the center of a working farm, even when its owners had other interests as well. The land surrounding the buildings is an important part of the house's agricultural heritage: the twenty-five or so acres that are still open and mown, and the remainder of the parcel, which closely approximates the boundary of the historical farm.

The Darling family continued to be socially prominent in the nineteenth century, though more on the local level. Thomas Jr. was a selectman and magistrate, and as late as the 1890's, Thomas IV was elected to represent Woodbridge in the Legislature.

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- E: 18/668880/4580530
- F: 18/668660/4580560
- G: 18/668640/4580460
- H: 18/668600/4580440
- I: 18/668440/4580620
- J: 18/668380/4580940
- K: 18/668560/4581020
- L: 18/668740/4580940
- M: 18/668800/4581150