

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bushnell, Benjamin, Farm  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 52 Ingham Hill Road  not for publication  
city, town Essex  vicinity  
state Connecticut code CT county Middlesex code 007 zip code 06426

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>5</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

John W. Shannahan 4/6/90  
Signature of certifying official John W. Shannahan, State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

Entered in the  
National Register

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Alana Byers 5/6/90

John W. Shannahan Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure  
AGRICULTURE/processing/storage/animal facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure  
AGRICULTURAL/ storage/animal facility

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL/Postmedieval English;  
EARLY REPUBLIC/ Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation granite  
walls weatherboard  
roof wood shingle  
other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Benjamin Bushnell Farm is located in Essex on the west side of Ingham Hill Road near the Saybrook line (Photograph #1). It is a complex of five contributing buildings: a circa 1790 Colonial/Federal-style farmhouse with additions; an L-shaped barn/shed with a silo; a small c. 1880 cranberry house; and two small outbuildings, a corncrib and a woodshed. Ponds to the north and west of the house were created by the damming of Tiffany Brook in the 1930s, flooding the cranberry bogs on the property that were cultivated in the last half of the nineteenth century. (Photograph #2). There are mature trees framing the house on the streetside and to the rear, with open fields to the south.

The original clapboarded main block of the Bushnell House is a five-bay post-and-beam structure on a granite foundation with a ridge-to-street, wood-shingled gable roof. A brick center chimney rises above the ridge. A course of dentils and modillions runs under the eaves of the facade and the attenuated cornice returns of the end elevations. The main entrance has a double-leaf panelled door set within a Federal-style surround of oak (Photograph #3). Modillions and dentils enrich the cornice of the entablature and the necking of the reeded pilasters is ornamented with shallow incised rosettes. Although the 12-over-12 double-hung sash found throughout the main block have an eighteenth-century muntin profile, they are probably twentieth-century replacements, part of a restoration of the house which took place in the 1930s.

Additions to the main block over time include a nineteenth-century summer kitchen at the northwest corner (Photograph #4). It was enlarged several times achieving its present size by the 1930s. A small greenhouse was added to the rear of this addition in 1985. The sunporch on the south end of the main block dates from about 1930. In 1989 a garage addition was constructed on the north side, joined to the summer kitchen by a narrow passageway and held back from the plane of the facade of the house.

Behind the house slightly to the northwest is a gable-roofed, weather-boarded nineteenth-century barn with extensions on the south and east side (Photograph #s 1, 5). Post-and-beam bent construction and original materials are found throughout; the southern section may be part of the original Bushnell barn.<sup>1</sup> Behind the barn to the northwest is an attached silo, utilizing the typical construction methods of the nineteenth century: vertical boards banded together at regular intervals with

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Benjamin Bushnell Farm, Essex, Connecticut

Section number   7   Page   2  

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steel hoops, capped by a conical metal roof. At the southwest corner of the barn is an attached garage. A corncrib set on wooden piers, a woodshed, and the "cranberry house" further west complete the complex. The latter building, used to process and store cranberries in the nineteenth century, has been converted for residential use (Photograph # 6).<sup>2</sup>

The interior of the main block has a standard mid-eighteenth-century Colonial floor plan. The only change in this plan was the removal about 1930 of the partition wall between the kitchen and the hall (the front room on the south side) (Photograph #7). The two original staircases remain: the triple-run staircase rising from the "porch," or entrance hall, in front of the chimney stack, which has a cherry wood baluster with chamfered newels, and the rear straight-run staircase, with a similar newel and a partially open string, along the north wall of the kitchen (Photograph #8). Wide horizontal boards form the wainscot of the hall and kitchen, a feature which is a hold-over from the Colonial period. The large kitchen hearth has a granite lintel and coursed stone cheeks with the oven recessed in the front wall on the left, a common location for this feature in the Connecticut River valley houses at least after 1750 and certainly by the end of the Revolution (Photograph #9). The door to the cellar is set to the right of the hall fireplace, the same location used in an earlier Bushnell House in Saybrook.<sup>3</sup>

There are several indicators of the Federal-period influence on the main block of the house. The corner posts are less massive than those found in houses of the Colonial period and have edge-beaded casing. The hall and parlor fireplaces have simple wood surrounds, as might be expected in a farmhouse, but are definitely Federal in style (Photograph #s 10, 7). They display high entablatures and narrow flanking pilasters.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

<b>Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)</b>	<b>Period of Significance</b>	<b>Significant Dates</b>
<u>ARCHITECTURE</u>	<u>1794 - c. 1880</u>	
_____	_____	_____
_____		
_____		
_____	<b>Cultural Affiliation</b>	
_____	<u>N/A</u>	
_____	_____	
<b>Significant Person</b>	<b>Architect/Builder</b>	
<u>N/A</u>	<u>unknown</u>	
_____	_____	

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Benjamin Bushnell Farm is architecturally significant as a well-preserved farm complex which embodies almost a century of agrarian architectural development (1794-c.1880). In addition to the house itself, which is a superior representative example of rural residential architecture of the early Federal period, the property has added significance because of its well-preserved barns and silo and the late-nineteenth-century agricultural artifact, the cranberry house. The farm has local historical importance for its association with Bushnell family and with William P. Sisson, the nineteenth-century owner who was responsible for the development of the cranberry industry in this area.

Architectural Significance

Although there are many late examples of the Colonial house form, especially in the more rural areas of Connecticut, few have survived that have the level of architectural integrity found in the Bushnell house, or are so representative of the farmhouses of the post-Revolutionary period. The application of Federal-style detailing to a classic five-bay Colonial house is typical of vernacular architecture in this period, made possible by the proliferation of style books and the skill of Yankee joiners. The fine doorway is a case in point. With a nicely proportioned, almost delicate surround, a design most assuredly derived from Asher Benjamin, or one of his imitators, it is distinguished by the quality of its joinery and carving. The only other exterior detail that establishes the date and style of the house is the dentil course under the eaves, again a typical manifestation of Federal-style farmhouses.

Restraint is also shown in the interior detailing. To a degree, this simplicity was simply an indicator of the relative wealth of the owner. However, Connecticut farmers, who were noted for their preference for the "plain style" in the early eighteenth century, often resisted embellishing their houses well into the nineteenth century, leaving such ostentation to the merchant class.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bushnell, George E. Bushnell Family Genealogy. Nashville, Tennessee, 1945.  
County Atlas of Middlesex County. New York: F.W. Beers and Company. 1874.  
Deep River Land Records.  
Essex Land Records.  
Federal Census of the United States. 1850, 1860, 1870.  
Saybrook Land Records.  
Walling, H. F. Map of Middlesex County. New York: H & CT Smith and Company, 1859.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Personal files of Herbert & Sharon Clark.

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property 11

UTM References

A 18 | 715870 | 4578580  
 Zone Easting Northing

C 18 | 715870 | 4578210

B 18 | 715940 | 4578620  
 Zone Easting Northing

D 18 | 715770 | 4578380

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is described in the Essex Land Records, Vol. 69, page 329, located in the Town Ckerk's Office of the Essex Town Hall.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes all the land and buildings still associated with the Benjamin Bushnell Farm.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant, Reviewed by John Herzan, Natioanl  
 organization Cunningham Associates Ltd. date 12/12/89 Register Coordinator  
 street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (203) 347 4072  
 city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Benjamin Bushnell Farm, Essex, Connecticut

Section number 8 Page 2

The complex of barns, with the attached silo, embodies construction techniques from the early to the late nineteenth century. Like the house, it evolved over time and successfully incorporates modern additions. Care was taken not to disturb the original form or fabric of the barns when the twentieth-century garage was added at the rear of these buildings.

The last building in the complex, the cranberry house, is a unique survival. While other examples may be located in Connecticut and have not been identified as such, this building is a site-specific agricultural artifact of some interest which focuses attention on a minor but uncommon farm industry. Although wild cranberries were harvested by the colonists, this is one of the few known instances of the nineteenth-century cultivation of this resource in Connecticut.

Historical Background

The Bushnell family came from Sussex, England, to Salem in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635. By 1660, after a brief stay in Guilford, the family had moved to Saybrook. Lemuel Bushnell (1707-1808), a descendant, owned the land where the Bushnell Farm is located, deeding 35 acres with a house to his grandson, Benjamin in 1794, about the time of his marriage to Amanda -----, his first wife (n.d.)<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Bushnell (1766-1855) was the son of Daniel Bushnell (1741-1821) and Tabitha Bull (1740-1804). The house remained in the Bushnell family until 1879, last owned by a son-in-law, Richard P. Williams, who had married Louisa Bushnell (Benjamin's daughter by his first wife) in 1818. The property was sold to William Sisson (1819-1904) in 1879 and remained in that family until 1914. The presumed builder of the c. 1880 cranberry house, Sisson had already been leasing other acreage along Ingham Hill Road and may have leased the Bushnell Farm from the Williams family prior to the purchase. In his obituary he is credited with being a pioneer in the cranberry business "which gave employment to a large number every fall." According to the Essex land records, Sisson also leased some of his bog land to others.

## End Notes:

1. Machine-headed slit nails recovered by the author during the re-roofing of this section indicate a date between 1790 and about 1840.
2. The use of this building was obtained from the present owner, Herbert T. Clark III, 1989. He received this information from a Sisson descendant.
3. J. Frederick Kelly, Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), p. 7.
4. The wording in this deed, "Dwelling House and Barn...belonging unto him the said Benjamin Bushnell" makes it clear that these buildings were built by or for Benjamin on his grandfather's land and acknowledges his prior ownership (Essex Land Records 11:284). The 1794 date of the deed is consistent with the type of construction and the Federal-style detailing of the house.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Benjamin Bushnell Farm, Essex, Connecticut

Section number Photos Page 1

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List of Photographs

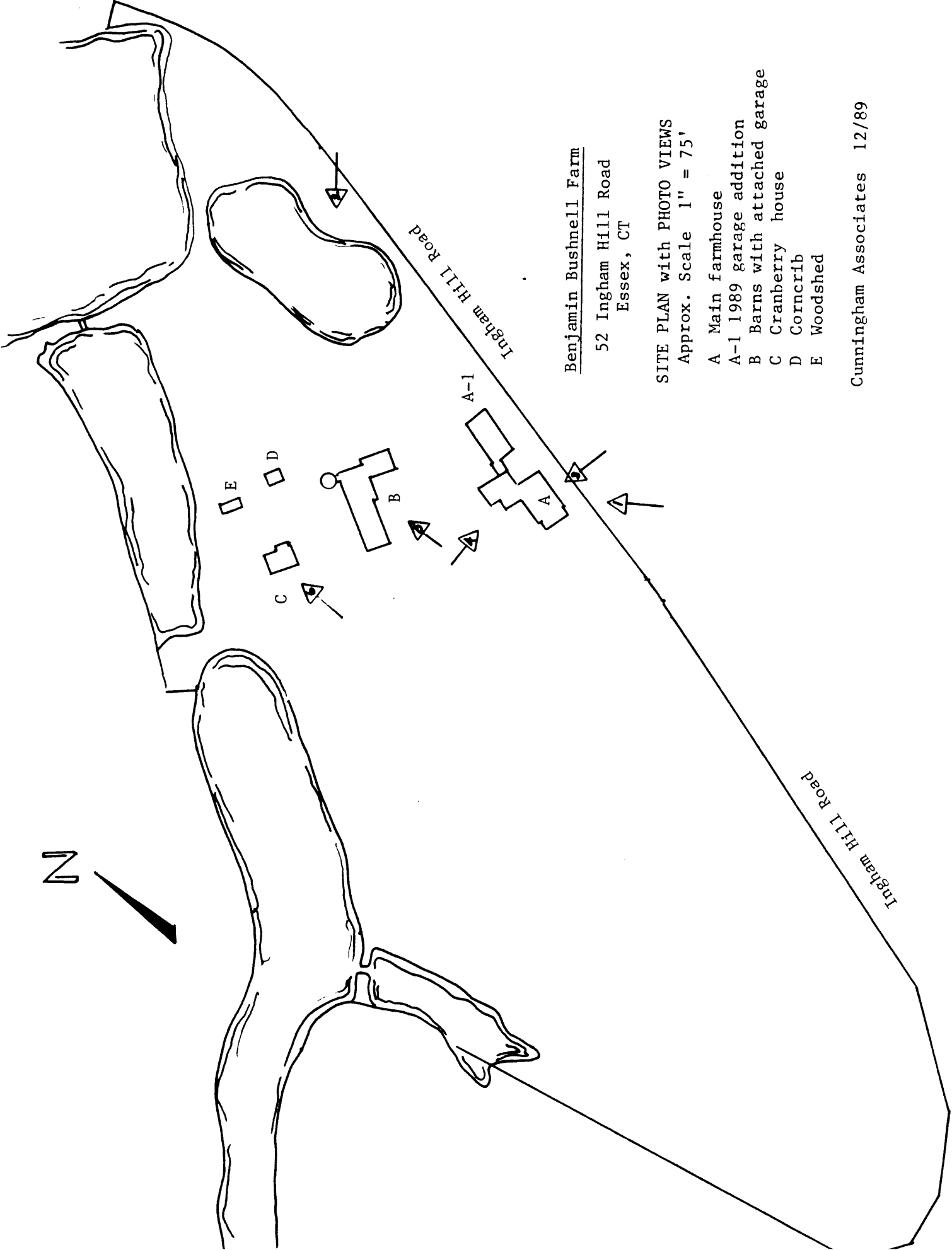
Property: Benjamin Bushnell Farm, Essex, Connecticut

Photographer: Cunningham Associates Ltd.

Date: 11/89

Negatives on file: Connecticut Historical Commission

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Facade and south elevation - farmhouse<br>Facing: NW                       | 2. Outbuildings and pond from road<br>Facing: SW |
| 3. Farmhouse doorway<br>Facing: W   | 4. Rear elevation - farmhouse<br>Facing: E       |
| 5. Barns<br>Facing: NW  | 6. Cranberry House<br>Facing: NW                 |
| 7. Farmhouse - hall and kitchen<br>(Note missing wall between.)<br>Facing: NW | 8. Farmhouse - front staircase<br>Facing: SW     |
| 9. Farmhouse - kitchen fireplace<br>Facing: E                                 | 10. Farmhouse - parlor fireplace<br>Facing: SW   |



Benjamin Bushnell Farm  
 52 Ingham Hill Road  
 Essex, CT

SITE PLAN with PHOTO VIEWS  
 Approx. Scale 1" = 75'

- A Main farmhouse
- A-1 1989 garage addition
- B Barns with attached garage
- C Cranberry house
- D Corncrib
- E Woodshed

Cunningham Associates 12/89