

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## DATA SHEET

PHO183067

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 19 1975

DATE ENTERED

AUG 6 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Hatheway House

AND/OR COMMON

Hatheway - Phelps - Burbank House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

55 South Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Suffield

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
6th-Anthony Moffett

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

09

COUNTY

Hartford

CODE

003

**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"/> 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 type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</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

Antiquarian and Landmarks Society, Inc. of Connecticut

STREET &amp; NUMBER

394 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

VICINITY OF

STATE

Connecticut

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Town Hall

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Suffield

STATE

Connecticut

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1959

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Set back from tree-lined South Main Street in Suffield, the Hatheway House is but one of many handsome eighteenth and nineteenth century homes in the town. However, one cannot help being particularly impressed by the sophistication of this late Georgian style home.

A sprawling, white clapboard home, it includes a two and a half story center section built about 1762, a two and a half story north wing added in 1795 and a one and a half story south wing, an early eighteenth century structure, moved to its present site in 1762. The center section was originally built as a fairly plain, five bay, gable roofed, Georgian home. However, a one story pedimented portico supported by doric columns now surrounds the entry and windows are headed with dentil cornices. Quoins embellish the corners of the central part of the house, and a gambrel roof has replaced the original gable. Under the eaves a modillion cornice heightens the sophistication of the facade.

The interior of the original house was built on a central chimney plan, having two large rooms on both the first and second floors. Fine Georgian panelling decorates the fireplace walls of each of these four rooms. A long kitchen, accessible through doors in each of the large first floor rooms, extends along the back of the house.

To the north of this center section is a three bay, two and a half story wing also covered by a gambrel roof. A magnificent Greek revival doorway surrounded by a broken pediment with modillion cornice and engaged ionic columns is the southernmost of the three bays. A fanlight and sidelights further enhance its beauty. From the center section of the house one may enter this wing through the kitchen. (In 1795 the old kitchen was used as a hallway and another kitchen built. This older kitchen has recently been restored.) Since the entrance to the wing is off-center, a hallway runs along the south side of the two rooms on each floor. These rooms were decorated by Oliver Phelps in 1795 and still sport Louis XVI style wallpaper handblocked in 1788 by Reveillon. Beautiful wainscoting and dentil cornices complement the French wallpaper and the Adamesque treatment of the fireplace mantels add further charm to these rooms. All the interior decoration in the north wing is original with the exception of the decor in the Federal room, the larger of the first floor rooms. Much of the original room is at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware and the Hatheway House room has been restored with exact reproductions.

The southern wing is a one and a half story addition with a

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saltbox style roof, which extends to cover a front porch. Inside it is very plain having simple wide board floors and twenty four-paned windows.

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The following outbuildings are associated with the Hatheway House and are immediately adjacent to it:

Carriage house and stable, southwest of the house - This small frame structure presents three open bays to the street. The bays are flanked by pilasters and surmounted by a raised wooden roll moulding, capped with a mock keystone. A small pediment in the eave line is opened by a semi-circular light treated similarly to the stall openings. Centered in the gable end is a circular light with spoke and wheel muntins.

Coach house, northwest of the house - This frame structure is of more recent construction than the smaller carriage house and stable to the south, but it reiterates that outbuilding in form and ornamentation. The coach house presents a sharper and higher appearance, however.

Barn, north of coach house - The barn is a long frame structure in two sections, built in the mid-19th century. The barn is plain with four large doors in the front facade and numerous other small doors and windows.

The size of the Hatheway House property is three acres.

## 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Interior decoration
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1762, additions in 1795      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      unknown, Asher Benjamin--north entry

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built sometime between 1735 and 1762, by Abraham Burbank, the Hatheway House has undergone many changes that distinguish it from the numerous eighteenth and nineteenth century houses on Main Street in Suffield, Connecticut. When Abraham Burbank's son, Shem, sold the house to Oliver Phelps in 1788 it was a plain, gable-roofed Georgian home. While Phelps owned the house additions were made and interior and exterior decorations added to make the house a suitable home for a wealthy, sophisticated man.

Oliver Phelps was born in 1749 in Poquonock, a town just south of Suffield. He was apprenticed at an early age to a Suffield merchant with whom he lived until 1771 when he left to become a merchant and tavern keeper in Granville, Massachusetts. Speculation fever was running high throughout the country at that time and Phelps soon became a large landholder. During the Revolution he was present at the Lexington alarm and served for sometime as Deputy Commissary of the Colonial Army and Superintendent of Purchases, for which he received a letter of commendation from General Washington.

Back in Granville, Oliver Phelps married and had a son and a daughter. From 1778 to 1787 he served a Town Clerk and Selectman, and from 1779 to 1780 was a representative to the General Court and delegate to the Constitutional Convention of Massachusetts.

In 1787 Phelps and Judge Nathaniel Gorham of Charleston, Massachusetts Became involved in the purchase of large parcels of land in Genesee County, New York. Together they bought six million acres and Phelps acted as general agent, responsible for boundaries and the pre-emptive line, which was set by him, authorities of New York and the Indians.

In 1788 he moved to Suffield where he opened a land office and purchased the Hatheway House. The next year he also opened land offices in Canandaigua, New York. When, in 1795, Connecticut's 'Western Reserve' opened, Phelps again purchased large parcels of land. In addition, he owned land in the Penobscot area of Maine, in the Georgia Land Company and in the area which is now West Virginia. It is said that he was the largest landholder in North America at this time.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Anonymous, "The Phelps-Hatheway House in Suffield", Connecticut Antiquarian. Bulletin of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society, July, 1962, Vol. XIV, No. 1.

see continuation sheet

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 10

UTM OK

HL

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1 8      6 9 4 4 7 0      5  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C |  
D |

B |      4 6 5 0 0 0 0  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Christine B. Brockmeyer, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

March 15, 1975.

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

59 South Prospect Street

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford,

STATE

Connecticut

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER DATE APRIL 23, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

8/6/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

AUG 4 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Between 1792 and 1795 he was instrumental in the establishment of the Hartford National Bank and Trust Company and severed as one of its directors.

A worsening national economy forced Phelps in 1802 to move from Suffield to Canandaigua where he was closer to his land holdings. While in Canandaigua he built a grist mill, provided endowment for an academy and was appointed first judge of Ontario County. From 1803 to 1805 he served as a Representative to Congress. He died in 1809 and was buried in Canandaigua.

That a man of such outstanding merit would have had sophisticated tastes is not surprising, nor is it surprising to see them reflected in the Hatheway House. Exterior features such as quoining, a modillion cornice, fanlight, sidelights and a white picket fence indicate great wealth and concern for architectural trends of the late eighteenth century. The interior has been treated in the same manner, for its Reveillon wallpaper and Adamesque decoration are of the most stylish eighteenth century furnishings.

Such an exemplary house must have been quite impressive to a young architect, such as Asher Benjamin, who was hired to design the north wing entryway. Benjamin later became one of New England's most prominent architects.

As a museum open from May to October, the Hatheway House is certain to impress visitors to it. Not only is it illustrative of elegant eighteenth century architecture, but it is testimony to the wealth and personal tastes of one of America's early pioneers.

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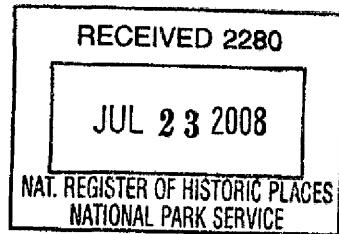
Clark, Delphina L.H., "Who Designed Oliver Phelps' Ell?", Connecticut Antiquarian. Bulletin of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society, June 1970, Vol. XXII, Nov. 1.

Anonymous article, Connecticut Antiquarian. Bulletin of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society, December, 1968, Vol. XX, No. 2.

Leibundguth, Arthur W., Director of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society, untitled paper. see National Register Nomination Form prepared by Susan B. Bixby, August 29, 1973.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name HATHEWAY HOUSE (Amendment)

other names/site number Hatheway-Phelps-Burbank House

**2. Location**

street & number 55 South Main Street  not for publication

city or town Suffield  vicinity

state Connecticut code CT county Hartford code 003 zip code 06078

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Executive Director /SHPO

8.28.08

Signature of certifying official>Title

Date

Ct Commission on Culture + Tourism - Historic Preservation + Museum Division  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

8.20.08

Signature of certifying official>Title

Date

Ct Commission on Culture + Tourism - Historic Preservation + Museum Division  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- 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): Accept additional documentation

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

9/5/2008

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number        Page 1

**Hatheway House (Amendment)**  
**Suffield, Hartford County, CT**

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This amendment supplies information that supports a recommendation that the Hatheway House in Suffield, Connecticut, be considered nationally significant. At the time the nomination was written (March 1975), Jack Quinan's definitive listing of the projects and buildings of Asher Benjamin was not available, so the significance of Benjamin's contributions to the 1794-1795 alterations of the Hatheway House, his first known architectural work, was not fully appreciated. Similarly, scholarly studies of American wallpaper by Catherine Lynn and Richard Nylander had not yet been published. Now, however, the rarity of the house's preserving in place four rooms of original 18<sup>th</sup>-century wallpaper is better understood.

**Description:**

The gambrel-roofed north wing of the house (Photograph 1), added in 1794-1795, features a finely detailed entrance, quoins, elaborate cornices, and four rooms retaining high-style woodwork and original block-printed French wallpaper. The entrance (Photograph 2) has the doorway flanked by unfluted Ionic columns, the capitals of which are set against the wall. The columns support a pedimented cornice with modillions and a pulvinated frieze that extends over both the doorway's semicircular fanlight and its sidelights. The wallpapers are the product of the Parisian manufactory of Jean Baptiste Réveillon, which after 1791 was operated by his successors, Pierre Jacquemart and Eugène Bénard.

It appears that several modifications to the main part of the house were made at the same time as the construction of the north wing, including quoins, window cornices, and a portico for the house's main entry.

The hall immediately within the north entrance (Photographs 3 and 4) has a dado of raised panels, post casings treated as engaged columns on pedestals, a cornice with modillions, raised-panel doors, and doorframe moldings that form crossets at the upper corners. An elaborate arabesque paper covers the walls between the dado and the room's cornice; wide borders of Grecian urns and Neo-Classical figures appear at the top and bottom, with a narrow guilloche outlining architectural elements (Photograph 5). The basic motif of the paper is a fanciful domed pavilion, within which is one of four different Neo-Classical figures (Photograph 6). Birds, flowers, mythological beasts, festoons, and bands of angels fill nearly all the off-white ground. The predominant colors are green, blue, and red, with the urns and Neo-Classical figures in the borders rendered in black and orange (Photograph 7-9). The paper is continued up the stairs to the second floor hall.

The hall's paneled dado, engaged columns, cornice, and doorway moldings are carried into the northeast (front) parlor, with the addition of entablatures with reeded friezes over the doorways (Photograph 10). The fireplace in this room is outlined in marble, with a pilastered mantel ornamented with urn and festoon decorations (Photograph 11). The room's wallpaper is an

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**Suffield, Hartford County, CT**

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arabesque in which an urn alternates in a half-drop pattern with a basket of flowers, with the two connected by a curving vine-and-flower design (Photograph 12). Borders of roses appear at the top and bottom, with a narrower floral border outlining the room's architectural elements.

The northeast chamber's woodwork includes a recessed-panel dado, a cornice with dentils, and a simple pilastered mantel (Photograph 13). In this room's paper, putti support a large urn above a pastoral scene, alternating in a half-drop pattern with a Neo-Classical landscape within a cartouche, again with floral festoons connecting the two motifs (Photograph 14). The wallpaper borders are the same as those in the parlor below.

The northwest or rear chamber, which is the larger of the two second-floor rooms, has a cornice with dentils, post casings treated as engaged columns, and a mantel with urn and festoon decorations (Photographs 15 and 16). The room is papered below the chair rail, instead of having the paneled dado found in the other rooms. The paper repeats three elements both horizontally and vertically: an elaborate vessel filled with flowers, a dancing female figure, and an ornament that appears to be a gorget decorated with beads, festoons and a putto. The elements are connected by festoons, flowers, birds, and floral crowns, and wide floral borders appear at the top and bottom of the papered areas, with a narrower border outlining architectural elements (Photograph 17).

The distinctive woodwork and wallpaper in a fifth room, the northwest or rear parlor (Figure 1, below), was removed from the house and installed in the Winterthur Museum in Delaware. Close reproductions of both wallpaper and woodwork were installed in their place.

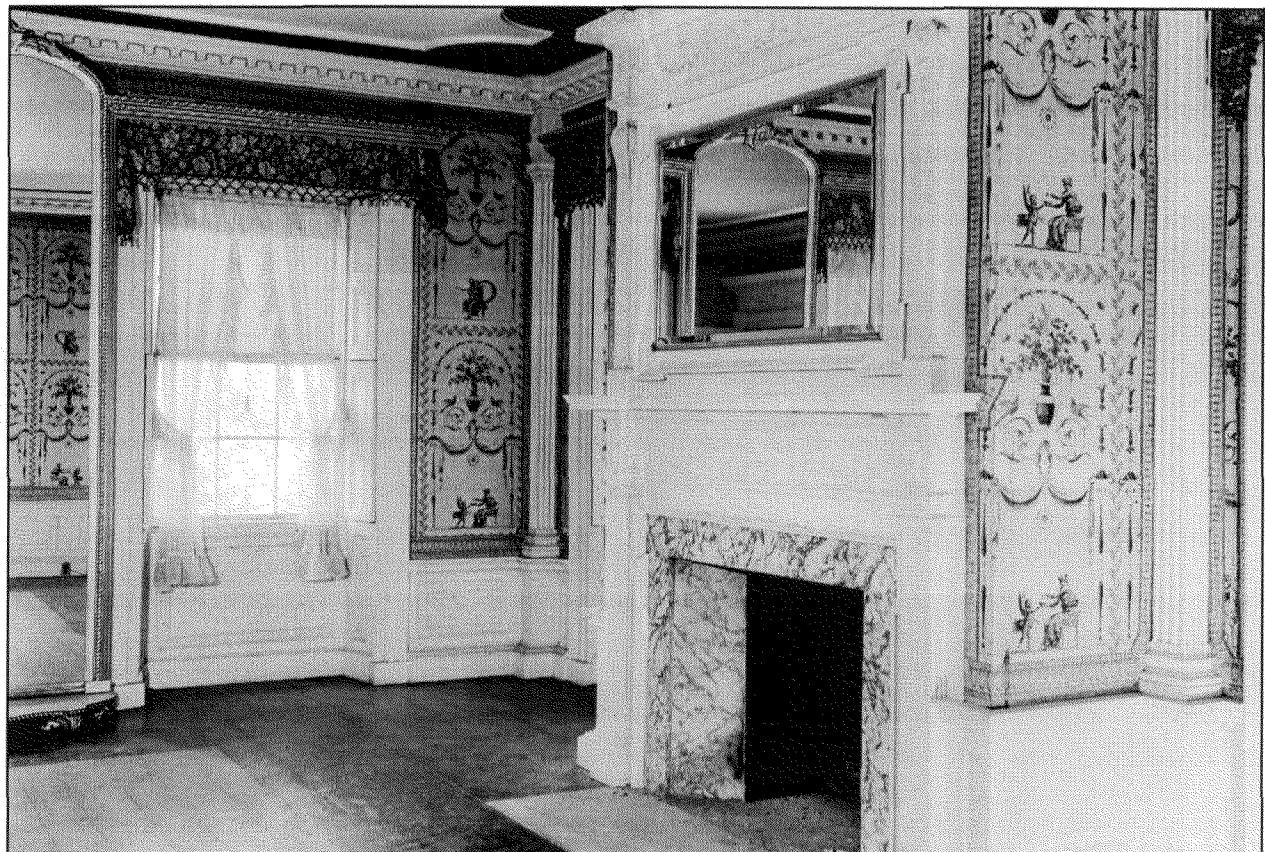
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National Park Service

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**Hatheway House (Amendment)  
Suffield, Hartford County, CT**

**Figure 1:** Northwest (rear) parlor of Hatheway House, HABS photograph by Robert J. Kelley, 1958, HABS CT-240, before removal to the Winterthur Museum.



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**Hatheway House (Amendment)**  
**Suffield, Hartford County, CT**

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**Statement of Significance:**

In addition to its other notable attributes, the Hatheway House in Suffield has architectural significance (Criterion C) because 1) the 1794-1795 modifications of the house were in part the work of Asher Benjamin, acknowledged as one of the most influential architects of the early republic; and 2) the house's north wing preserves intact four rooms of imported French wallpaper in a setting of exceptionally elaborate Georgian woodwork, creating an interior almost unparalleled in surviving houses of the period.

**Asher Benjamin, Architect**

The 1794-1795 modifications were in part the work of the young Asher Benjamin (1773-1845), destined to become one of the period's most influential architects. Benjamin's participation is documented by two entries, both signed in his own hand, in the account book of Oliver Phelps, the house's then-owner; one on November 25, 1794 "on account" and another on February 26, 1795 specifically for "11 dollars in full payment for two Ionic Capitals" (quoted in Tomlinson, pp. 26-27). Benjamin would have been about 21 years old at the time. Benjamin was born in Hartland, Connecticut, where he grew up with his mother and step-father, Elishama Porter, a local farmer. It is not known with whom he apprenticed to learn the trade of house carpenter. He probably was living in Suffield at the time the work was done on the Hatheway House, but not long thereafter, as he next worked on the new State House in Hartford, where he built what he claimed was the first spiral staircase in New England (since removed and later re-created), and in 1796 and 1797 he built several houses in the vicinity of Northampton, Massachusetts; in a letter of 1802 he enumerated these houses as having been designed and built "since I left Suffield" (quoted in Howe, p. 16). The Hatheway House's entry columns and whatever else Benjamin worked on in the 1794-1795 modifications thus represent the architect's earliest known work.<sup>1</sup>

Asher Benjamin went on to design and build houses, churches, and other buildings in southern Vermont, New Haven, Connecticut, western Massachusetts, and Boston. His great influence, however, derives from his many handbooks written for American architects and builders. Starting with *The Country Builder's Assistant* in 1797, Benjamin went on to issue *The American Builder's Companion* ((1806), *The Practical House Carpenter* (1830), *The Practice of Architecture* (1833), and *The Builder's Guide* (1838), in all, seven books that went through a total of 46 editions. These popularized first the Federal Style and then the Greek Revival Style throughout the country, providing house carpenters with both practical advice and plates that illustrated ideals to which they

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<sup>1</sup>The columns appear as the first entry in Quinan's definitive chronological list of projects and buildings by Asher Benjamin: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 38, no. 3 (October 1979), 253.

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**Suffield, Hartford County, CT**

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could strive. On a more substantive level, Benjamin is credited with creating a self-consciously American approach to Classicism, one that stressed practicality, working with wood, the freedom to alter Classical orders within the limits of proportion and harmony, and an overall simplicity and restraint. In *Greek Revival Architecture in America*, Talbot Hamlin wrote that Asher Benjamin

more than any other person is responsible for the character we call roughly Late Colonial; his moldings, his doors and windows, and his mantels and cornices decorate or at least inspire the decoration of numberless houses up and down the New England coast and in the New England river valleys. The widespread distribution of the Benjamin books, which were popular enough to demand frequent reprintings, accomplished a standardization of this style that had a strong influence down to the Civil War (pp. 94-95).

Thirty-five years later, the architectural historian Jack Quinan echoed Hamlin's judgment, noting that Benjamin surpassed all other architectural writers in volume and influence (p. 244). Suffield's Hatheway House preserves the earliest known glimpse of that uniquely American architectural genius.

**Wallpaper as an Important Element in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century American Interiors**

After the American Revolution, French papers displaced English papers in popularity among the nation's merchant and planter elites, with arabesque designs such as those in the Hatheway House among the most popular. Although wallpaper was used extensively in the homes of the wealthy, today the practice is mostly known through travelers' accounts, contemporary illustrations, museum rooms constructed from original materials (such as those removed from the Hatheway House's northwest parlor), and remnants preserved in museum collections. Actual complete rooms of original wallpaper preserved in place are extremely rare. In her definitive study of American wallpaper, Catherine Lynn states that

the best examples of the period's use of Réveillon-style wallpapers in America survive in the Phelps-Hatheway House in Suffield, Connecticut. . . . In their astonishingly fine state of preservation, these papers are remarkable not only as elegant examples of late eighteenth-century French design and craftsmanship but also as masterpieces of refinement in stylish hanging of patterning with borders to complement an architectural setting (Lynn 1980, pp. 90-91).

The Hatheway House provides the majority of 18<sup>th</sup>-century illustrations for that volume, as well as figuring prominently in other works on early American wallpaper. The only other examples in

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**Hatheway House (Amendment)**  
**Suffield, Hartford County, CT**

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Lynn's book of complete rooms of 18<sup>th</sup>-century wallpaper in the United States are the English wallpapers in the Jeremiah Lee House in Marblehead, Massachusetts, and the Joseph Webb House in Wethersfield, Connecticut (both National Historic Landmarks).

The genre of these papers is called *arabesque* not because of any Middle Eastern influence but rather as a term connoting their fanciful and dense ornamentation; the term was in contemporary use and appears in the letters of Thomas Jefferson. The source for Réveillon's designs was Roman Classicism as mediated through the interior decorative painting of Renaissance artists such as Raphael (de Bruignac 1994, p. 78). French papers such as these dominated the American market in the final decades of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century and also inspired the efforts of the fledgling domestic wallpaper industry (Nylander 1994, pp. 120-121).

The Hatheway House demonstrates as few others can the architectural effect of wallpapered walls. The rooms are much more visually arresting than those with plain painted walls; the eye can hardly stay still investigating the plethora of intricate designs. At the same time, the papers do not diminish the impact of the rooms' fine cornices, engaged columns, dados, mantels, and other woodwork. The arrangement of the paper respects the woodwork elements, emphasizing the area below the chair rail with a consistent pattern, treating the overmantel area as a discrete arrangement, and outlining the major woodwork elements with a special border. The papers also serve to indicate the relative importance of the rooms. As the most public room, the hall has the most intricate designs, the most variation, the least repetition, and the widest, most decorative borders. The larger northwest parlor, since removed to Winterthur, was the next most elaborate, followed by the northeast parlor, the southwest chamber, and the northeast chamber. In all, the Hatheway House offers the observer an experience of a late 18<sup>th</sup>-century interior that is altogether different from the expected white-painted woodwork and single-color plaster walls.

The Hatheway House's north wing ranks as one of New England's finest late Georgian interiors outside of Boston, Newport, and other coastal centers of wealth and cosmopolitan taste. In addition its outstanding wallpaper, the interior's paneled dados, crosset-shaped outlining of the window and door moldings, treatment of corner posts as engaged columns, and modillioned cornices show an exceptional attention to detail; no opportunity to include Classically-detailed woodwork appears to have been overlooked. The fireplace treatments, especially those in the two parlors, rival what could be found in coastal cities, with their urn, floral, and festoon applied carvings and marble-outlined fireboxes. But the woodwork and wallpaper should not be considered as separate, independent elements. They complement each other, together they show that the house's owner sought to display a high level of taste, and neither would be as impressive without the other.

Oliver Phelps (1749-1809), under whose ownership the Hatheway House's north wing was built, had both the means and the knowledge to obtain the best the country could offer in expanding

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and furnishing his house. In the final decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Phelps had become the nation's largest individual landowner by investing in land in western New York and Ohio.<sup>2</sup> His accounts indicate that he patronized Boston and New York City cabinetmakers, and he purchased some of the interior's most distinctive elements, such as the marble fireplace jambs and wallpapers, in New York. For the interior woodwork, Phelps had the services of three men—Thomas Hayden, Ashbel King, and Asher Benjamin—who were the most advanced and innovative house builder-architects working in the Connecticut River Valley at that time (Hosley, p. 117). Phelps himself was familiar enough with English architectural books that he recommended as a model for the house's front fence a design published by Batty Langley. The combination of Phelps's wealth and taste and the architectural talents of Hayden, King, and Benjamin created

the first fully developed neoclassical environment in the Connecticut Valley. Even if the four major rooms and enormous entry hall did not retain all of their original neoclassical-style wallpapers made in the Reveillon factory in Paris, the application of cast plaster swags, kylix, putti, and delicate medallions on every surface mark this wing as an architectural highpoint in American neoclassicism during the early national period (Hosley, pp. 117-18).

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<sup>2</sup>William H. Siles, "A Vision of Wealth: Speculators and Settlers in the Genesee Country of New York, 1788-1800 (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1978), cited in Hosley, p. 115.

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**Property Owner:**

Antiquarian and Landmarks Society, Inc.  
255 Main Street  
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860-247-8996

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**All Photographs:**

1. Hatheway House
2. Suffield, Hartford County, CT
3. B. Clouette Photo
4. Photograph 2: February 2008; Photographs 11 and 16: April 2008; all others: September 2007
5. Digital photographs (.tifs) submitted to NPS; prints prepared on Hewlett-Packard HP Premium™ paper and Vivera™ inks

**Captions:**

- 1: Hatheway House, east elevation, north wing (1795) containing original wallpapers on right, camera facing southwest.
- 2: Detail of entrance to north wing (1795), camera facing southwest.
- 3: Stair hall in north wing, first floor, camera facing west.
- 4: Stair hall, second floor, camera facing west.
- 5: Wallpaper in stair hall, first floor, south wall, camera facing south.
- 6: Close-up of stair hall wallpaper's pavilion motif.
- 7: One of several different Classical figure panels used in the borders of the stair hall.
- 8: Another of several different Classical figure panels used in the borders of the stair hall.
- 9: One of two different Grecian pottery panels used in the border of the stair hall.
- 10: Northeast parlor, camera facing southwest.
- 11: Detail of fireplace, northeast parlor, camera facing north.
- 12: Close-up of wallpaper over mantel, northeast parlor, camera facing north.
- 13: Northeast chamber, camera facing northwest.
- 14: Close-up of wallpaper in northeast chamber, above mantel, camera facing north.

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- 15: Northwest chamber, camera facing northwest.
- 16: Detail of mantel, northwest chamber, camera facing northeast.
- 17: Close-up of northwest chamber wallpaper, above fireplace mantel, camera facing north.