

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received JUL 20 1987

date entered OCT - 6 1987

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

1. Name

historic Meadowlands

and or common The Darien Community Association House

2. Location

street & number 274 Middlesex Road NA not for publication

city, town Darien NA vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 007

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Community Center

4. Owner of Property

name The Darien Community Association

street & number 274 Middlesex Road

city, town Darien NA vicinity of state CT

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Darien Town Hall

street & number 2 Renshaw Road

city, town Darien state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1987  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state CT

SEP 28 1987

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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

Meadowlands is a large late Georgian Colonial Revival house located in the suburban community of Darien in Fairfield County, Connecticut. The building, now converted to use as a community center, is on a large 10-acre estate on the south side of Middlesex Road in a residential neighborhood, approximately one mile from the center of town. The estate consists of the main house (1929-1932), a landscape architect-designed formal garden (1929-1932), a greenhouse (c1930), and a pump house (c1930), all of which elements contribute to the architectural significance of the complex. The main house is set back considerably from the road. Meadowland's boundary is treelined, as is its elliptical driveway. The front of the house is sheltered by heavy border plantings. Although the estate was originally part of a much larger 60-acre parcel, part of which was developed with later 20th-century houses, the dense plantings surrounding the house and intact gardens serve to preserve the building's original private estate feeling. French doors at the rear of the house open onto well-preserved formal gardens. The grounds immediately surrounding the house, designed by landscape architect Ellen Shipman, serve both to soften the building's severity and to provide an easy transition to the surrounding natural landscape. (See Illustration #1 for plan and site location of the gardens and Photograph 2 for partial view of the gardens.)

Built on part of the foundation of the Frank Green house (1875), a Queen-Anne style residence, Meadowlands is a two-and-one-half-story, symmetrical Colonial Revival composition dating from an entirely new construction undertaking by James H. Stark from 1929 - 1932. The building survives with a high level of interior and exterior integrity with regards to this 1929-1932 campaign executed by architect Donald G. Tarpley. With the exception of a modern addition to the east and south (Photograph 3), which was built and is used as a meeting room by the Community Association (noted by hatching on Illustration #1), the house remains as designed by Tarpley. The addition was constructed of concrete block and its surface material was molded to resemble the clapboard of the main house. It was built behind a brick garden wall, visible on the facade elevation to the east, which hides the transition between the house and the modern addition (Photograph 4). A fire escape was added to the west elevation (Photograph 5).

Meadowlands was built on part of the masonry foundation of the 1875 Queen Anne residence of which all but the foundation was demolished. Constructed of wood, the building is surfaced in clapboards. Architectural design elements were derived from late Georgian sources, and can best be described as an extremely restrained use of classical motifs. Fenestration is regular, symmetrical, and survives intact. Single and paired six over six double-hung window units are generally topped by projecting horizontal cornices, as are the rear doors of the house. The second floor is capped by a parapet that is composed of panels with alternating vase-like turned balusters. Arched dormers project through the slate mansard roof on both front and rear elevations.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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Darien, CT

Section number 6 Page 1

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Historic and Architectural Survey of Darien, CT

1982

Local

Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, CT

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National Park Service

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The centrally located main entrance (Photograph 1) is topped by a transom with lead glazing forming a fanlight motif. It is sheltered by a one-bay flat-roofed Tuscan portico with a simple frieze band with triglyph ornamentation supported by columns.

The rear (south) elevation (Photograph 2) is dominated by identically massed side wings, which form the boundaries of a terrace. The formal gardens are reached by three French doors topped with horizontal projecting cornices which are flanked by full-length shutters. The southernmost wing has paired French doors like those of the recessed wing, but the ground floor of the easternmost wing is a screened porch which is supported by fluted Doric columns.

The interior of Meadowlands was designed to create a formal plan with well-defined rooms. The house was designed to accommodate entertaining on a lavish scale, with large formal rooms on the ground floor and eight second-floor bedrooms with private baths (see Illustration #2, floor plan of first floor). The children and servants lived in the attic story. The entry opens to a large foyer from which both the public and private quarters could be reached. To the right of the entry is the staircase (Photograph 6) which leads to the private family spaces, and behind this staircase is a powder room for guests. Immediately opposite the front door is the entry to the large living room, which has fire places on either side (Photograph 7) and three French doors opening onto the rear terrace. From the living room, to the east, is a small door leading to the library, and to the west is the dining room (Photograph 8), which extends out into the rear wing. Beyond it is a dining porch. Immediately to the left of the entry hall is a hall leading to the kitchen area and a coat room for children. A private stair leads from the childrens' coat room to their quarters on the third floor. The modern addition is reached from the dining room.

In the building's current use, the children's coat room has been converted to a men's room, the second floor bedrooms to offices and meetingrooms, and the third floor to an apartment for the caretaker.

The house has retained its simple Colonial Revival mantelpieces, the most notable of which is the Adamesque one in the dining room (Photograph 8).

## 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 checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–1932	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1929–32

Builder/Architect: Donald G. Tarpley

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Landscape Architect: Ellen Biddle Shipman

### Statement of Significance

Built in 1929–32, Meadowlands, the Darien Community Association building, is significant as an excellent early-20th-century interpretation of the late Georgian Revival style (Criterion C). Designed by local architect Donald G. Tarpley, the house is a radical reaction to an earlier Queen Anne-style house, demolished for this construction, and illustrates changing taste in stylistic preferences for residential architecture. This all-encompassing "transformation"<sup>1</sup> reflects prevailing rejection of late-19th-century aggressive eclecticism, the general classicizing trend in American architecture, and increasing upper-class interest in more conservative styles. The severity of form created a more imposing type of ostentation that referred to a pre-industrial era of class stability. The gardens, designed by nationally prominent landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman, are well-preserved examples of small formal garden design in the 1920s.

### Historical Significance

Meadowlands, as it is seen today, is the result of an extreme transformation whose final form reflects the changing taste and attitudes of Americans during the first three decades of this century. The house constructed for Frank Green, a locally prominent businessman, was a vast asymmetrically massed Queen Anne house, with hipped roof, eyebrow dormers, and arched entries. Built in 1875, it was decidedly modern and reflected the most advanced taste of the period, representing the energy and diversity of the era in three-dimensional form. The house was illustrated in an 1892 publication.<sup>2</sup> Following Green's death in 1911, his daughter, Mary E. Green, retained the house until 1915, when it was purchased by Charles Davenport Lockwood, a Stamford banker and attorney. By the time Lockwood sold the property in 1929 to James H. Stark, the house had already undergone significant alterations. The arched entries were trabeated and porches were filled in. Every attempt was made to reduce the variety and asymmetry of the house<sup>3</sup>. Stark, a retired banker and broker from New York City, purchased the house as a summer home and immediately began forming plans for its complete transformation which resulted in the construction of a new house, ultimately utilizing only the foundation of the original building. Although one cannot determine the exact reasons for Stark's decision to build himself a new house, the form of the new house indicates that he followed stylistic trends that began in the last decades of the 19th century and were virtually codified by the late 1920s. Following the success of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, America embarked on a great classicizing trend and the exuberance of the 1870s and 1880s was abandoned for more conservative architectural expressions. After World War I, this trend continued. In 1921 L.V. LeMoyné wrote that the period between 1825 and 1875 "was what might be called the intermediate period of indifferent work. Architecture was at an

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 6.4

Quadrangle name South Norwalk Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	8	6	2	7	3	7	5	4	5	4	8	3	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Steven Bedford and Nora Lucas, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Preservation Computer Services date February 1987

street & number 306 Beach Avenue telephone (914) 698 5440

city or town Mamaroneck state New York, 10543

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

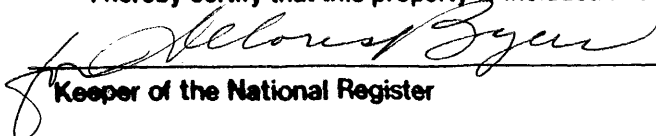
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date July 17, 1987

### For NPS use only

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

 date 10-6-87  
Keeper of the National Register

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

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
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exceedingly low ebb. Almost no homes of any consequence were built. They were usually frame, very ornate and trivial."<sup>4</sup> Augusta Owen Patterson, architectural editor of Town And Country, wrote in 1924: "In Queen Anne we thought we were doing something fun, while we were only making architectural mud pie."<sup>5</sup> Colonial Revival styles, inspired by stylistic modes popular before 1840, were offered as the proper styles for all types of construction from public buildings to automobile service stations and, logically, for a more-conservative population. These modes were described as a "fine expression of dignity, truth and domestic virtue. For a gentleman of taste, for a lady of discernment, the colonial is the only fitting environment."<sup>6</sup> British and American derivatives were considered equally applicable and "the basic British idea of a substantial practical house with large comfortable rooms can be adapted for elaborate and stately entertaining."<sup>7</sup> The elite of Stark's period were very conservative and considered the era of the Queen Anne style's popularity a socially chaotic time of threatening destabilization.<sup>8</sup> Given this prevailing sentiment, it is no surprise that the house was destroyed in favor of one in the late Georgian Revival mode. Stark used the house for eleven years until his wife's death in 1941. He then loaned the house to the United Service Organization for use as a recreation center by men from the Noroton Naval Training Center. Following Stark's death in 1945, the house was purchased by Mylert Armstrong, who sold it and seven acres to its current owners, the Darien Community Association, for use as a private community center.

Architectural Significance

Stark chose Donald G. Tarpley, a local architect noted for transforming nineteenth-century residences into classically designed compositions, to perform the work. Tarpley must have been considered well-qualified for this undertaking because he was writing a book on renovations that included a 16-page chapter on the problems of Queen Anne houses (i.e., dark, over-decorated, interiors with non-functional plans) and offered solutions for them that were inevitably clad in Colonial Revival-style decoration.<sup>9</sup> In three years Tarpley produced a house with a strong, severe street facade, a simple yet forceful entry, and a calm rear facade with Doric-columned porches, all in correct academic late Georgian Revival style. The main entrance included a smaller entry for the children that led directly to the third floor. The interior plan was typical of country houses of the period. A large entry hall mediated between the exterior and the more private rooms such as the study, dining, and living rooms. The upper rooms were laid out in an extremely logical manner off a central corridor. Thus the severity of the architecture reflects the nation's conservative taste and Tarpley's design is an excellent interpretation of the late Georgian Colonial Revival style.

(See Continuation Sheet 2)

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The only softening element in this severe and formal composition was the garden design by Ellen Shipman. Shipman, who trained under Charles Platt, was considered to be one of the foremost landscape architects of the 1920s and 1930s. Shipman produced master plans for Lake Shore Boulevard in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, Bronx Botanical Gardens, and Duke University. She also produced gardens for several major estates on Long Island. Her design for the Stark house was a typical approach to the problem of accommodating a strongly architectonic house design into the landscape. A simple oval drive was sheltered at the entry by heavy planting that softens the building's severity. The formality of the plan of the rear garden serves to mediate between the house and the more natural greensward beyond. Today the gardens are still in a remarkable state of preservation. The quality of the design is of the typical high standard maintained by Shipman and is based on an elemental formal simplicity that is softened by the rustic border design. The addition by the Darien Community Association is unobtrusive and sympathetic in scale to the original house.

**Notes**

1. "Transformation" was the word Tarpley used in an article documenting his work on Meadowlands. The original house before its transformation is depicted in "The Complete Transformation of an Ungainly House," House And Garden, v.64, pp 46-6 (August, 1933).
2. Gillespie, E.W. Picturesque Stamford. Stamford: Gillespie, 1892. pp 62-3.
3. The original house before its transformation is depicted in "The Complete Transformation of an Ungainly House," House And Garden, v.64, pp 46-6 (August, 1933).
4. LeMoyné, L.V. Country Residences in Europe and America. New York: Putnam, 1921, unpaginated.
5. Patterson, A.O. American Country Homes of Today. New York: Macmillan, 1924, p. 24.
6. Saylor, H.H. Architectural Styles for Country Houses. New York: Robert McBride, 1919, p. 8, 10.
7. Patterson, op. cit. p. 84.
8. This theory has been well established by such scholars as Kenneth Ames, William Butler, and Beverly Seaton. For a full discussion, see Alexrod, A, Ed. The Colonial Revival in America. Winterthur, Norton: New York 1985.
9. Eberlein, H., and Tarpley, D.G. Remodeling and Adapting the Small House. Lippincott; Philadelphia, 1933, pp. 87-103 "Victorian and Post-Victorian Possibilities."



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Bibliography

Alexrod, A, Ed. The Colonial Revival in America. Winterthur, Norton: New York 1985.

"The Complete transformation of an Ungainly House," House And Garden, v.64, pp 46-6 (August, 1933).

Eberlein, H. and Tarpley, D.G. Remodeling and Adapting the Small House. Lippencott; Philadelphia, 1933.

Gillespie, E.W. Picturesque Stamford. Stamford: Gillespie, 1892.

LeMoyné, L.V Country Residences in Europe and America. New York: Putnam, 1921.

Patterson, A.O. American Country Homes of Today. New York: Macmillian, 1924.

Saylor, H.H. Architectural Styles for Country Houses. New York: Robert McBride, 1919.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## Description

The legal description of the Meadowlands property may be found in Volume 141 Page 304 of the Darien Land Records, located at the Town Clerk's office at 2 Renshaw Road in Darien, and is also depicted by the map labeled Illustration #1.

## Justification

Its current boundary is all that remains of the original 60 acre estate but encompasses the estate's most significant elements, the house and formal gardens and is large enough to maintain the building's private setting.