Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

STATE: Connecticut
COUNTY: Hartford
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER | DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Smith Sisters House
AND/OR HISTORIC: Kimberly Mansion

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 1625 Main Street
CITY OR TOWN: Glastonbury
STATE: Connecticut | CODE: | COUNTY: Hartford | CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☒ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☒ Private ☐ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☒ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☐ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☒ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☐ Park	☐ Transportation	☐ Comments
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☒ Private Residence	☐ Other *(Specify)*	
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious		
☐ Entertainment	☐ Museum	☐ Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Wesley Miller Brown
STREET AND NUMBER: 1625 Main Street
CITY OR TOWN: Glastonbury | STATE: Connecticut | CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the Glastonbury Town Clerk
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: Glastonbury | STATE: Connecticut | CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: None
DATE OF SURVEY: ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: | STATE: | CODE:

STATE: | COUNTY: | FOR NPS USE ONLY ENTRY NUMBER DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☒ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)		(Check One)			
	☒ Altered	☐ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Kimberly Mansion was built during the first third of the 18th century by Eleazer Kimberly, a political figure of some note in the early annals of the Connecticut Colony. It is a tall, five-bay, wooden structure with bevel siding and floor-to-ceiling triple-hung windows in front. When Zephaniah Smith purchased it in 1790, it had a simple rectangular floor plan with a large central fireplace and four downstairs rooms, including two front parlors. Smith constructed the small left-hand addition with 9 over 9 windows, its own fireplace and a separate entrance, which served as his law office until he retired in the 1830s.

When Lucy Stone visited Kimberly Mansion in 1875, she described it as "a large two-story house, painted white, with green shutters ... shaded by fine old elms." The shutters are now gone, as is the central chimney, and both the original staircase and its 19th-century replacement. On the other hand, several components such as the front porch--which had been removed and incorporated into an art studio built for Laurilla Smith across the street--were subsequently reinstalled in their original location by the family which owned Kimberly Mansion between 1884 and 1950. The only major alteration in the exterior lineament since the days of Abby and Julia Smith is the addition of a rear ell with a shed porch, dating from around 1904. Interior changes include the removal of the central fireplace and one left-rear wall downstairs, though the north and south parlors remain as originally partitioned. There are now a total of six rooms downstairs and five on the second floor, in addition to an attic spacious enough to accommodate 12 over 12 windows in the gables.

For a wooden structure which has been in continuous use as a residence for at least 250 years, Kimberly Mansion is remarkably well preserved. So is the surrounding vista: Some of the "fine old elms" Lucy Stone noted are still growing in the yard, and the property line still runs, as originally, all the way west to the Connecticut River. A plaque placed near the street by the Service Club of Glastonbury in 1967 commemorates the activities of the "talented Smith sisters," and the facade of the house in the background has been only slightly altered in the century since Abby and Julia made their historic stand there.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Pre-Columbian	☐ 16th Century	☒ 18th Century	☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century	☐ 17th Century	☐ 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)* 1790-1884

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Aboriginal	☐ Education	☐ Political	☐ Urban Planning
☐ Prehistoric	☐ Engineering	☐ Religion/Philosophy	☐ Other *(Specify)*
☐ Historic	☐ Industry	☐ Science	
☐ Agriculture	☐ Invention	☐ Sculpture	
☐ Architecture	☐ Landscape Architecture	☒ Social/Humanitarian	
☐ Art	☐ Literature	☐ Theater	
☐ Commerce	☐ Military	☐ Transportation	
☐ Communications	☐ Music		
☐ Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Abby and Julia Smith are perhaps the most undeservedly neglected figures in the history of 19th-century feminism. Each lived virtually her whole life at Kimberly Mansion, a large early 18th-century farmhouse in Glastonbury, Connecticut. Although both had been deeply involved in antebellum reform movements, abolitionism especially, it was not until the 1870s that they attracted nationwide--even international--publicity, for their stand on woman's rights. Having inherited the single most valuable piece of property in town, they found themselves subject to brazen discrimination by the local tax collector. Of course they were politically powerless, being deprived of the vote, as were all women. Likening the power the townsmen wielded over them to that of the "Southern slavemasters," the sisters entered a resounding protest against "taxation without representation," and announced that they would never again pay taxes until conceded a voice in the disposition of their money.

Following the tax collector's confiscation of their prize cows, the editor of the Springfield Republican "recognized in an amusing local incident implications of national importance." His running account of the saga of the Smith sisters was quickly spotted by other editors and soon they were receiving major coverage in newspapers across the country, as well as in national magazines. This kept up for more than 2 years, until, after several court appeals and a whole series of colorful confrontations, the sisters secured a legal decision against the tax collector.

They did not, obviously, win the franchise. Yet the episode in which they were the principals resulted in an unprecedented amount of sympathetic publicity for the cause of woman's rights. One feminist declared that "Abby Smith and her cows are marching on like John Brown's soul." Another predicted that their home would become a citadel to "the great principle of the consent of the governed." This has not yet come about, yet, as historians penetrate the feminist movement ever more thoroughly, it is certain that Abby and Julia Smith will eventually be considered among its most significant figures. Their home, which Lucy Stone regarded as standing on "holy ground," looks virtually the same as it did a century ago, except for the addition of a rear ell, and the removal of its shutters and central chimney. It is a private

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chapin, Alonzo, History of Hartford (Hartford, 1853).

Glastonbury From Its First Settlement (Glastonbury, 1935).

Speare, Elizabeth G., "Abby, Julia, and the Cows," American Heritage, VIII (June 1957), pp. 54-57+.

Smith, Julia, E., ed., Abby Smith and Her Cows (Hartford, 1877).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY

CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "
NE	° ' "	° ' "
SE	° ' "	° ' "
SW	° ' "	° ' "

OR

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES

LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
41°	41'	22"	72°	36'	26 "

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 3 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Robert C. Post, Survey Historian

ORGANIZATION: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service

DATE: 8/15/73

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington

STATE: D.C.

CODE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

_____

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

_____

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

15

GPO 901-087

residence not open to the public, although the present owner is striving to accomplish an authentic restoration.

Biography

Although they happened to make their home in Glastonbury, Connecticut, Hannah and Zephaniah Smith and their five daughters "would have been an outstanding family in any society in any era."[1] Hannah was an amateur astronomer, mathematician, poet, and philologist; Zephaniah was a "scholar, linguist, and mechanical genius," a Yale graduate who became a Sandemanian preacher, quit the ministry in the wake of a doctrinal controversy, kept store in Eastbury while studying law, then returned to his native Glastonbury in 1790 to practice that profession for 40 years.

Smith bought a farm once owned by Eleazer Kimberly, an early Secretary of the Connecticut Colony, and it was in the old Kimberly Mansion that his daughters were born and lived out most of their lives. Each possessed "an incredible legacy of talent" in her own right, and only one ever married--at the age of 87--"perhaps ... because of a pact made in early youth, perhaps because few suitors could have measured up to their formidable requirements."[2] Hancy was a mechanic and inventor, Laurilla an artist, Cyrinthia a poet. Like their mother, all were political activists, but two especially so--Julia and Abby, the youngest, born in 1792 and 1797 respectively.

Julia, the more intellectual of the two, was a classicist who taught at the Emma Willard School in Troy for a time, and then spent years translating the Bible from original Greek, Hebrew, and Latin sources, finally publishing her "literal and exact translation" in 1876, an intriguing if sometimes totally unintelligible version of the Scriptures. Abby's forte was more as an orator; she complemented Julia well, and both threw themselves wholeheartedly into the cause of Abolition. With their mother, they circulated an anti-slavery petition among the women of Glastonbury, obtained 40 signatures, and sent it to John Quincy Adams to present to Congress. Historians often suggest that this was the first petition to receive such a hearing. The sisters also distributed the Charter Oak

[1]Marjorie G. McNulty, Glastonbury: From Settlement to Suburb (Glastonbury, 1970), p. 64.

[2]Elizabeth G. Speare, "Abby, Julia, and the Cows," American Heritage, VIII June 1957), p. 54.

(Continued)

zealously, and when William Lloyd Garrison had difficulty in gaining access to a pulpit in Hartford, they invited him to speak from a stump in their front yard.

The other antebellum reform causes in which Abby and Julia involved themselves were legion, but the one for which they remain most noteworthy they did not take up until the early 1870s, when their parents were long since dead, as were all their sisters, and they themselves were 81 and 76. As joint legatees of the Kimberly Farm, the most valuable piece of property in town, the sisters had had several minor disagreements with the Glastonbury tax collector. Then, in November 1873, this official informed them that the assessed valuation of their farm had been upped--nothing exceptional in and of itself, except it turned out that the property of two Glastonbury widows had been similarly reassessed while no male resident had had his taxes increased at all. The sisters filed a formal complaint charging discrimination, but got nowhere. Then, Abby requested permission to address a meeting of the town council, which, perhaps somewhat to her surprise, was granted. On November 5, accompanied by Julia, she delivered a memorable address in which she declared:

> "The motto of our government is 'Proclaim liberty to all inhabitants of the land,' and here, where liberty is so highly extolled and glorified by every man in it, one-half of the inhabitants are not put under her laws, but are ruled over by the other half, who can ... take ... all they possess. How is Liberty pleased with such worship?"[3]

The Southern slavemaster, Abby contended, "possessed the same power that you have to rule over us," whereas all she and her sister asked was "not to rule over [the townsmen] ... but to be on an equality with them." Here, no less, was a resounding echo of the century-old protest against taxation without representation. The sisters intended simply to pay no taxes whatsoever until they were conceded some voice in the disposition of their money. Two months later, the tax collector (an individual named George C. Andrews who doubled as the town constable), attached seven of

[3]"Speech of Miss Abby H. Smith," from the Hartford Courant, in Julia E. Smith, ed., Abby Smith and Her Cows, with a Report of the Law Case Decided Contrary to Law (Hartford, 1877), p. 10.

[4]Speare, loc. cit., pp. 55-56.

8. Significance (page 3) Kimberly Mansion

the Smith sisters' Alderney cows for taxes amounting to $101.39 and led them off to auction. Although the sisters bought four of them back, they were obliged to let the others go. It was the editor of the Springfield [Massachusetts] Republican "who first recognized in an amusing local incident implications of national importance."[4] He ran a series of reports on the unfolding saga of the Smith sisters, one of which concluded so:

> "We are heartily glad that the Misses Smith have taken this position. It brings into sharper relief the injustice of denying women the right to vote than any number of speeches on woman suffrage in the abstract. That these women, paying into the town treasury more money every year than any man in the place, should have absolutely no voice in the disposition of that money simply because they are women, is a state of things so utterly opposed to every sentiment of fair-play, that we are glad the men of Glastonbury--and of every other New England town--are thus practically confronted with the inherent absurdity and injustice of their attitude."[5]

On another occasion, the Republican declared that the Smith sisters stood for the principles of Americanism "as did the citizens who ripped open the tea chests in Boston Harbor, or the farmers who leveled their muskets at Concord." The sisters had meanwhile taken their case to court, and the editor of the Republican opened an "Abby Smith Defense Fund." Almost overnight, the sisters became famous across the land. Harper's Weekly dubbed Abby "Sam Adams redivivus." In the Woman's Journal, Lucy Stone presented a running account of the sisters' contest with "the successors of George III." A Chicago Tribune correspondent called their crusade "the most telling blow that has been given for woman's freedom."

In February 1874, the sisters accepted the first of many invitations to address a suffrage convention, this one in Worcester. In April, Abby asked to address the town council once again, but was denied. Undaunted, she delivered her oration from the bed of an oxcart on the town square. All this, of course, kept her and Julia continually in the news. In June, the tax collector confiscated 15 acres of the sisters' land worth some $2,000, evaded their efforts to bid on it themselves, and auctioned

[4]Speare, loc. cit., pp. 55-56.

[5]Quoted in Julia E. Smith, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

(Continued)

8. Significance (page 4) Kimberly Mansion

it to a covetous neighbor for $78.35. Now, they had solid grounds for legal action, since the collector had clearly violated a law which made it incumbent to take movable property for back taxes before real estate. They won the initial decision, but a plea in the Hartford Court of Common Pleas led to a reversal. Abby and Julia prepared their own appeal. Litigation dragged on for fully 2 years, the case becoming a cause celebre even in England and on the Continent. The sisters toured and spoke widely, eventually making an appearance before the United States Senate. Finally, in June 1876, they were awarded the verdict.

They had not won the right to vote, but their property was never again disturbed--and the attention they attracted to the cause of woman's rights was literally invaluable. One writer has suggested that:

> "Among the grimly purposeful suffrage tracts this little episode must have sparkled like a jewel, and Abby's pithy letters [to various newspapers and periodicals], heartening of course to the vast voteless sisterhood, must also have reached many a masculine ear ordinarily deaf to masculine harangues."[6]

Isabella Beecher Hooker was no doubt premature in her declaration that "Abby Smith and her cows are marching on like John Brown's soul, "since more than 40 years were to elapse before the principle for which the sisters fought came to fruition. Yet, historians have clearly failed to pay sufficient attention to their role in the woman's rights movement. It was a large role, because they undoubtedly garnered more favorable publicity for that cause than most of their more famous and more frequently chronicled sisters. Lucy Stone once wrote about Kimberly Mansion that,

> "Here, some day, as to Bunker Hill now, will come men and women who are reverent of the great principle of the consent of the governed, who respect courage and fidelity to principle, and who will hold at its true value, the part which these sisters have taken in solving the meaning of a representative government."[7]

[6]Speare, loc. cit., p. 96.

[7]"Visit to the Sisters Smith," Woman's Journal, July 10, 1875.

(Continued)

GPO 921-724

8. Significance (page 5) Kimberly Mansion

Although Lucy Stone thought of the spot where it stood as "holy ground," Kimberly Mansion scarcely rivals Bunker Hill as yet. Perhaps, however, when social historians begin to cast light on the many neglected figures and episodes of the feminist movement, Glastonbury, Kimberly Mansion, and Abby and Julia Smith will come to be regarded as worthy of the same attention as, say, Seneca Falls, the Wesleyan Chapel, and Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.