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NATIONAL REGISTER

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 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 CHURCH FARM
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 396 Mansfield Road not for publication N/A
city, town Ashford vicinity N/A
state Connecticut code CT county Windham code 015 zip code 06278

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> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
			<u> </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.

[Signature] October 5, 1988
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Connecticut Historical Commission
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.
 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:)

[Signature] 11/17/88
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwellingAgriculture/animal facilityAgriculture/outbuilding

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

FederalColonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stonewalls woodroof woodother brick**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

Church Farm consists of a large hip-roof Federal-style dwelling built in 1821, a large barn built in 1895, and three smaller outbuildings. The buildings are located in a rural setting near the Ashford-Mansfield town line. The property is mostly open land, with meadows bounded by rail fences and fieldstone walls. Part of a farm of several hundred acres, the nominated parcel includes the buildings and 5 acres of adjacent meadow and former orchard extending north of the house. The southern boundary of the nominated parcel is a small pond just south of the house and barn (see sketch map and boundary description).

The 2 1/2-story clapboarded house (Photographs 1 and 2) has a five-bay facade dominated by a central 2-story pedimented portico on paired fluted columns. The portico, added about 1930, reflects the details of the original entrance and second-story Palladian window (Photograph 4) which lie within. The door of six raised panels is flanked by slender fluted pilasters on pedestals supporting a cornice with two sets of dentils and moldings; breaks in the lower courses of the cornice form a keyblock above the entrance's semi-elliptical, radially glazed transom light. The elements of the Palladian window are separated by simple raised moldings, and the whole center bay is set off by fluted pilasters with simple capitals and pedestals; similar pilasters are found at the corners of the building. The building's main cornice is ornamented with modillions. The cornices and pilasters on two south-side entries are similar to those of the main entrance, but in place of the transom there is a panel carved with the outline of a leaded fanlight (Photograph 5). Windows have old 12-over-12 sash and, on the first story, header trim in imitation of splayed lintels. Two brick chimneys emerge from the north-south ridge of the wood-shingled hip roof.

Extending west from the rear of the house is a small 2 1/2-story ell which is believed to be an earlier house, built on the site in 1791. The north wall of the ell was built out at a subsequent date, and about 1890 a second story was added to the extension and the roof rebuilt to a very steep pitch (Photograph 3). Continuing the house still further westward is an old hewn-frame, 1 1/2-story building known as the woodshed; attached to the north side is a small structure which appears to have been a privy.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Church Farm
Ashford, CT

Description (continued):

The house's interior is on the central-hall plan, with a stairway to the second floor running back from the main entry. The stairs (Photograph 9) have square balusters, a molded rail, and scrolled appliques on the exposed side. Original interior woodwork includes a molded chair rail and beaded casings on the structural members throughout. On the second floor, the south part of the house appears to have originally been one open room, with a built-in bench running the length of the south wall (Photograph 10). Later additions to the interior include a corner cupboard of Centennial or Colonial Revival origin, ornate Victorian brass door hardware, and hardwood narrow-board and parquet floors. Taking up most of the west wall of the interior of the ell is a stone fireplace with crane and side oven, above which the wall is finished with recessed panels between molded stiles (Photograph 8). There is a small shallow stone fireplace on the second floor as well. The north part of the second floor of the ell contains small rooms built for servants and a corridor finished with narrow beaded-board wainscoting.

West of the house is the large clapboarded barn (Photograph 6), called the "new barn" since its construction in 1895; it measures 90' long by 40' wide. The principal entrance to the barn is the large central opening on the east gable end (Photograph 8). The barn is surmounted by a cupola with paired rectangular louvers and a steep hip roof. The barn's interior has stanchions, horse-stalls, and small rooms for storing grain and harnesses. Trap doors from the upper-level hay lofts empty directly into feeding stations below. Appended to the north side of the barn is a 1 1/2-story wing containing an opening for one cart or wagon, a workshop, and billiard room finished with beaded wainscoting. At the rear of the barn is a board-sided open shed which appears to have been originally a separate building.

The building count reflects the origin of the woodshed, privy, and rear shed now attached to the barn as separate buildings.

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Agriculture

Period of Significance

1790-1930

Significant Dates

1821

1895

c.1930

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Not known

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

Church Farm is architecturally significant because the house embodies many of the essential characteristics of the Federal style of architecture (Criterion C). Although it is a rural Connecticut farmhouse, it has the hipped-roof form, central-hall plan, and Palladian window derived from the more formal architecture of the period. Its slender pilasters and delicate small-scale detailing epitomize the elegant interpretation of Classical and geometrical forms which was at the heart of the Federal style. One detail is especially noteworthy: the transom panels incised like leaded fanlights (probably originally painted so as to heighten the illusion; Photograph 5). Although the design is thoroughly typical of the period in its use of ellipses and festoons, the panels represent an uncommon survival of vernacular architectural practice. Although the house's facade includes a large Colonial Revival-period portico, added c.1930, the numerous Federal-style details and the original form of the 1821 house are all clearly discernible. Along with the impressive outbuildings and setting, these make Church Farm locally important as one of a handful of architecturally stylish houses of the period.

Church Farm is also significant because it is related to two important chapters in the history of agriculture in eastern Connecticut (Criterion A). The house was associated with both the limited agricultural prosperity of the 1820s and with the gentleman farming of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Historic Context

Given the tremendous migration from the state's farms in the early 19th century, it is somewhat misleading to speak of the 1820s as a time of agricultural prosperity. But for the larger landowners who could take advantage of changing conditions, it was a time when turnpikes and increased trade expanded markets for farm commodities, such as wool and

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ashford Land Records, vol. 20, p. 49 (1822).

Obituary of John W. Church. Willimantic Chronicle, December 17, 1910.

Obituary of Henry E. Church. Hartford Courant, October 28, 1942.

U.S. Census Office. Manuscript census schedules, Windham County, 1850, 1860. Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

Zaring, Dorothy Church. "The Church Farm, Ashford, Connecticut." Typescript, 1987.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approx. 5

UTM References

A |1,8| |7|3|5|0,4,0| |4,6|3,5|7,0,0|
Zone Easting Northing

B |1,8| |7|3,5|0,3,0| |4,6|3,5|5,0,0|
Zone Easting Northing

C |1,8| |7|3,4|9,6,0| |4,6|3,5|5,1,0|

D |1,8| |7|3,4|9,4,0| |4,6|3,5|6,7,0|

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description The boundary starts where the outlet of the pond crosses the road south of the house and then runs west along the brook and pond, then north in a straight line parallel to the rear wall of the barn, at a distance of 50' west of the barn, to a treeline approximately 575' north of the pond, then eastward along the treeline to the intersection of Varga and Mansfield roads, then south along the west edge of the road to the starting point.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification The boundary includes the historic house, barn, and outbuildings, and only enough acreage to give the complex an appropriate setting. The four acres of pasture-like open land north of the house are part of the historic farm of c.200 acres, 160 of which was once open land.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

name/title Bruce Clouette, Senior Historian

organization Historic Resource Consultants

date March 10, 1988

street & number 55 Van Dyke Avenue

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city or town Hartford

state Connecticut zip code 06106

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1 Church Farm
Ashford, CT

Statement of Significance (continued):

dairy products. As a result, the eastern Connecticut countryside is dotted with large, stylish houses from the period. Although less ubiquitous than the vernacular dwellings of the 18th century, these substantial Federal-style houses represent the region's last phase of prosperity (outside of manufacturing villages) until modern times.

The main part of the Church Farm house was built by Zalmon Aspinwall (1769-1844) in 1821; it is believed the house incorporates an earlier dwelling built in 1791 by Robert Snow in the ell. The Aspinwalls were a well-to-do Mansfield Center family, with more than 1,500 acres of land. Zalmon Aspinwall, who was related by marriage to the Snows, also held mortgages on several other Ashford farms. The elaborate (though country-style) Federal detail of the house reflects his exceptional economic status within the rural society, and the second floor ballroom or meetingroom suggests he was a social leader as well. In the 1840s the house came into the hands of Lucinda Aspinwall Church (1807-1876) and her husband John Church (born c.1805). Though he also kept a store on the property, at least for a time, John Church was primarily a farmer, with 135 acres under cultivation in 1850, probably most as pasture and fodder for his 140 sheep, with which he raised wool. He also produced 1,000 pounds of cheese in that year.

In the 1880s the activities of the Church family took on a new direction, and with it came a new role for the farmhouse. John W. Church (1837-1910) in 1885 started a clothing business in Putnam, Connecticut. Taking advantage of a trend toward ready-made clothing, Church expanded with additional stores in Danielson and Willimantic. One of his specialities was guaranteed trousers, for which he promised to pay the customer \$.10 if a button fell off, \$.10 for a tear at the waist, and \$1.00 (or a new pair) if the seat ripped through. Although he lived in Putnam, John W. Church retained Church Farm as the family homestead and country retreat. The clothing business was expanded by his son Henry E. Church (1862-1933), who added a store in Hartford. Church Farm gained new amenities appropriate to the home of a prosperous merchant family. Servant rooms were added to the ell, and in 1895 the large barn (said to be the second largest in Windham County) was built for the family's cows and horses, with a billiard room in the wing. The large Colonial Revival portico, added c.1930 to replace Victorian verandas, completed the house's transformation into a country estate.

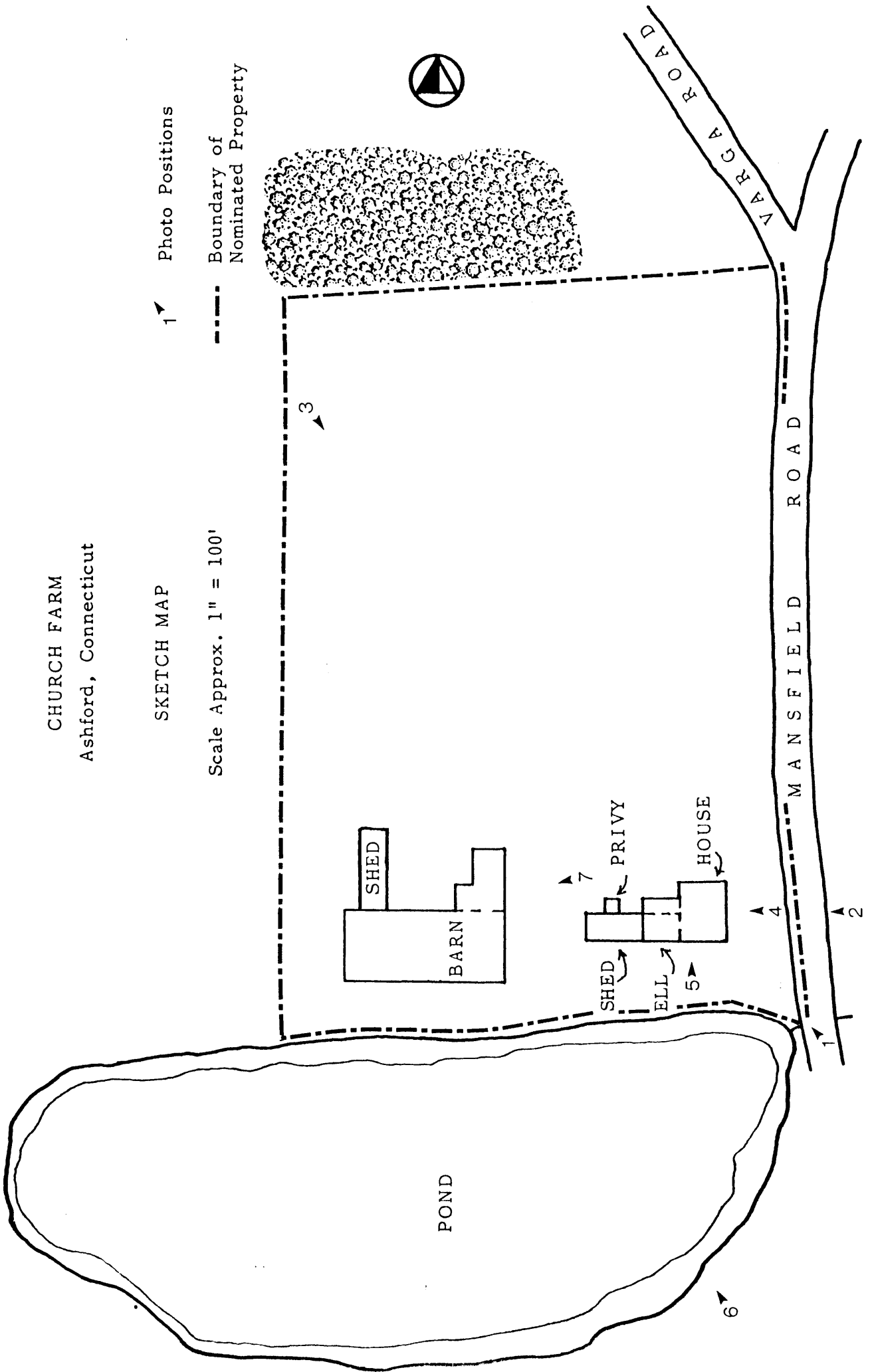
CHURCH FARM
Ashford, Connecticut

SKETCH MAP

Scale Approx. 1" = 100'

1 ↗ Photo Positions

--- Boundary of
Nominated Property



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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs Church Farm
Section number _____ Page 1 Ashford, CT

All photographs:

1. CHURCH FARM
2. Ashford, CT
3. Photo Credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
4. Date of Photographs: September, 1987
5. Negatives filed with the Connecticut Historical Commission, Hartford, CT

View from Mansfield Road, camera facing northwest.
Photograph 1 of 10.

Facade (east elevation) of house, camera facing west.
Photograph 2 of 10.

View from meadow north of house, camera facing southeast.
Photograph 3 of 10.

Detail of main entrance, camera facing west.
Photograph 4 of 10.

Detail of carved panel above side entrance, camera facing north.
Photograph 5 of 10.

Side elevation of barn, camera facing northwest.
Photograph 6 of 10.

East elevation of barn, camera facing west.
Photograph 7 of 10.

Fireplace in ell, camera facing west.
Photograph 8 of 10.

Detail of main stairway, camera facing south.
Photograph 9 of 10.

Detail of bench in south upper room, camera facing southwest.
Photograph 10 of 10.