

PH0677434

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 20 1979

MAY 22 1979

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

The Cove Island Houses

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Foot of Cove Road and Weed Avenue  
Cove Island Park

CITY, TOWN

Stamford

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fourth - Stewart B. McKinney

STATE

Connecticut

VICINITY OF

CODE

COUNTY

Fairfield

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

City of Stamford

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Stamford

VICINITY OF

STATE

Connecticut 06901

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Municipal Building

STREET & NUMBER

429 Atlantic Street

CITY, TOWN

Stamford

STATE

Connecticut 06901

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1978

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

STATE

59 So. Prospect St., Hartford, Connecticut

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>C/1835</u>

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

The structure known locally as the Cove Island Houses consists of an early 19th-century, five-bay, gambrel-roofed, 2½-story house in the Georgian style, with a wing that formerly was a separate, older house. The uniformity of the stone foundations under the entire structure, and the history of the industrial development of the island, suggest that at the time the Georgian house was built the older, smaller house was moved to its present site to become part of the new structure. The disparity in the age and appearance of the two sections of the structure had led to use of the plural term in local custom to refer to the combined structure, and the local practice is followed in this nomination.

The Cove Island Houses are located in the northeast corner of Cove Island, in Stamford, Connecticut. Cove Island is a part of the 86-acre Cove Island Park in southeastern Stamford, where the Noroton River flows into Long Island Sound. The houses now serve as offices for the Stamford Department of Parks and Natural Resources. Only this structure and the land immediately surrounding it are the subject of this nomination. The balance of the island is open space devoted to park land, beaches, playground, and picnic area, with a handful of utilitarian structures such as a beach house, facilities building, storage barn, and security building. On the western edge of the island there is a dam across the Noroton River dating from the 18th century when a grist mill was first built on the island. On the island's eastern edge there is a ship channel, now used as a marina for pleasure craft, that was built to provide access for ocean-going vessels to an adjoining 19th-century factory.

The larger, Georgian portion of the Cove Island Houses is the western section. Its front facade, facing south toward the Sound, has a low, central pediment over a frieze of triglyphs. The cornice and raking cornices of the pediment have modillion blocks. In the face of the pediment there is a central fanlight with keystone, flanked by molded triangular panels. The fanlight with keystone is repeated over the front door. The doorway is flanked by simple pilasters. A front porch with square posts extends across the front of the house. Three brownstone steps, 96 inches long in one piece, lead up to the porch. The windows are twelve-over-twelve double hung sash evenly spaced, with the exception of the two windows at second-floor level on the east. These two are close together, obviously altered from their original position. The front porch also is probably not original. On the other hand, the pediment and doorway, tied together by their common use of fanlights with keystones, probably are original features. The presence of a similar keystone in an arch in the central hall strengthens this hypothesis.

The porch that extends across the rear facade does appear to be original. Three of its four posts are round, mounted on high pedestals. The wall of the house under the porch is flush boarding. The six-panel door of the elaborate rear doorway is flanked by two pilasters on each side. Each pair of pilasters is divided by sidelights of four-over-four sash. The rear porch is approached

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1791, 1835

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The structure known as the Cove Island Houses is significant because of the ages of its components, because of the quality of the architecture in the Georgian portion, and because it is the last surviving building associated with the important 18th- and 19th-century industrial activity that flourished on Cove Island. The Cove Island Houses have integrity of location, setting, and association and embody the distinctive characteristics of their period.

The ages of the two components of the Cove Island Houses have been determined in part by visual analysis and in part by research. The research has been done by Jeanne Majdalany and it serves as the basis for her new book, The History of the Cove in Stamford, Conn. While she has found considerable detail about many aspects of the Cove, exact information on the origins of the Cove Island Houses has not come to hand.

The general line of development is clear. In early Stamford history, the island was an animal pound, because stray animals could be confined here without the need to build fences. Then, in 1791 John Fitch bought property on the island and was authorized to build a dam across the mouth of the Noroton River, one end of the dam being on the island. A dam still occupies this position. Later that year John W. Holly bought land on the island near the dam, and built a grist mill and a house. That house is thought to be the older wing of the Cove Island Houses. The absence of a central chimney and the presence of the three dormers are consistent with this date. Contemporary maps show that the house originally was located closer to the water, not on the present site.

Holly, in association with various partners, prospered in the mill business. A second mill was built on the west side of the island. The manufacture of dye-wood extracts, for medicinal purposes was begun. The "mansion house" was built. It was known to exist by 1835, but how much earlier it was constructed is undetermined. One explanation for its large size, with the older structure moved into place as a wing, is that eleven people lived in Holly's household.

The Georgian style of the house is late for any time between 1810 and 1835, but Stamford was an out-of-the-way town and was likely to be laggard in following new architectural styles. The pediment and front and rear doorways are well proportioned and have good detail. The cornice with modillion blocks, the

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Stamford Land Records, various entries.

Jeanne Majdalany, The History of the Cove in Stamford Conn., Stamford: The Stamford Historical Society, Inc., 1978.

Stamford Advocate, 9 March 1889, 19 February 1919.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one.

QUADRANGLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_ QUADRANGLE SCALE \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	6 2 6 0 8 0	4 5 4 5 0 5 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Cove Island Houses are bounded on the south and west by paved driveways about 20 feet from the houses and on the north and east by imaginary lines 20 feet from the houses.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom

ORGANIZATION

DATE

16 October 1977

STREET & NUMBER

33 Sunrise Hill Drive

TELEPHONE

203-521-2518

CITY OR TOWN

West Hartford

STATE

Connecticut 06107

# 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

March 13, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

5/22/79

ATTEST

CHEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

5/23/79

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Cove Island Houses  
Stamford, Ct.

**CONTINUATION SHEET** Description                      ITEM NUMBER 7                      PAGE 1

by brownstone steps similar to those in front.

The west facade of the house has two windows at each floor. The four windows as a group are placed toward the front of the house instead of in the center of the end wall, for reasons that are not apparent. A chimney with molded cap rises from the center of the west wall. A second chimney with similar silhouette is located one-quarter of the way in from the east wall. The shingle siding of the house, and the shutters are modern.

On the interior a wide central hall runs from the front entrance to the rear doorway. It is divided into two sections by a round arch that has a key-stone similar to the keystones in the fanlights over the front door and in the roof pediment. The arch springs from fluted pilasters. The stairway rises against the east wall in the back of the hall. It has three thin, square balusters per tread, carved step ends, and a molded handrail.

There are two rooms on either side of the hall. The front room on the west side has a fireplace surround embellished in the elegant, neo-classic manner of Robert Adam, the late 18th-century, Scottish architect. Veined marble separates the firebox from the mantel's rope molding. Panelled pilasters with foliate pendants support a frieze of puttae, swags, birds, and human figures under a dentil course and beaded mantel shelf. Further Adamesque decorative effect is provided by the enframing of the door leading to the hall. It has panelled pilasters on high pedestals (suggesting a common designer with the back porch posts) leading up to oval rosettes and an elaborate molded entablature.

The front room on the east side of the hall has a cast-iron fireplace surround, gun metal grey in color. Round, attached columns on panelled bases with Ionic capitals support a panelled frieze that breaks out in the center and over the columns. The mantel shelf is plain. The iron section around the firebox is separated from the rest of the mantelpiece by a band of stone facing. In the east wall of this room there is a round-arched opening, now filled in, that did lead to the older wing, and there is a 28 by 44 inch oval window with curved muntins.

A hall and four bedrooms occupy the second floor. They have original floors and doors. The front room on the west has a hearth of 8 by 8 inch bricks. The front room on the east has been altered into a modern office. The alterations included re-positioning the two front windows closer together, as has been noted.

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**CONTINUATION SHEET** Description                      ITEM NUMBER 7                      PAGE 2

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The foundations of the house are fieldstone. The cellar under both the Georgian portion and the older wing appears to have been built at one time. This observation leads to the belief that when the Georgian section was built, the older house was at the same time moved to the site and made into a wing.

Chief feature of the front facade of the wing is three gabled dormers. The present dormers are replacements, but the framing for them is part of the original framing for the roof. The roof slope continues below and in front of the dormers over a front section of the house that is in part a porch. The arched opening from the east front room of the Georgian section (now filled in) leads to this porch. On the exterior of the wing vertical boarding is visible under the present shingled sheathing. On the interior it is possible to see hand-split lathe fastened with hand-wrought nails and covered with plaster, then an additional layer of sawn lathe and new plaster.

Interior room arrangement has been changed from time to time, making it difficult to determine the original floor plan. There is no indication of a central chimney. The wing does have a narrow ell to the north (rear) that has no cellar, suggesting that it is a later addition. Its upstairs room has windows with double recessed jambs, unusually high chair rail and window sills, and what appears to be an original wood fireplace surround that has a frieze with shaped ends.

The Georgian section of the Cove Island Houses is used for offices and is properly maintained. The older wing is used for storage at the present time and is in need of maintenance.

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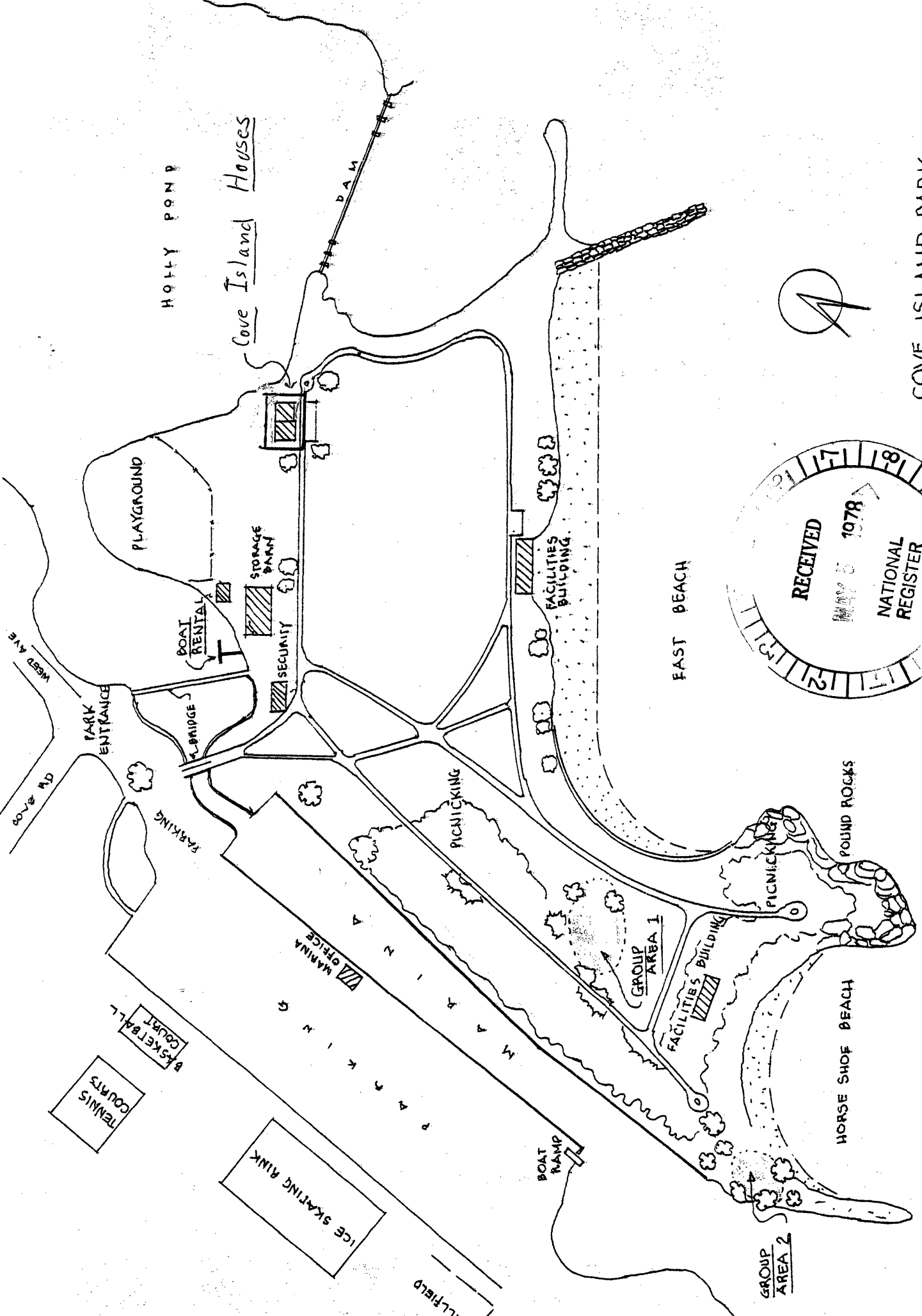
Cove Island Houses  
Stamford, Ct.

**CONTINUATION SHEET**    Significance    ITEM NUMBER 8    PAGE 1

panelled triangles flanking the upper fanlight, the keystones of the fanlights and interior arch, and the Adamesque interior detail are consistent with one another and are of good quality. The suggestion has been put forward that all this detail might have been added in late 19th century as an expression of the Georgian Revival, but the possibility is unlikely on economic grounds. The financial strength of the mills began to decline in the late 19th century; it is doubtful that the money and interest for introducing elaborate detail were at hand in the late 19th/early 20th centuries. The Georgian house is more likely to be the expression of the early growth and prosperity of the mill enterprise than of its decline.

The mills, under the name of Stamford Manufacturing Co., did continue to grow and prosper after the 1830s when control shifted from the Holly interests to a group headed by Henry J. Sanford. The mill on the eastern edge of the island ceased to operate while the mill on the western edge was enlarged many times over into a plant for manufacturing dyestuffs, licorice paste, and allied products using raw materials from overseas. A fine picture of the Stamford Manufacturing Co., that once employed 300 people, hangs in the hall of the Cove Island Homes, showing a group of buildings clustered in a U shape around the ship canal (now the marina) with flag flying and smoke pouring from the chimney stacks. A series of fires in 1894, 1919, and 1926 destroyed the factory buildings. There is now little indication of the vigorous industrial activity that once took place at Cove Island. Only the Cove Island Houses remain in place, the older wing marking the late 18th-century grist mill phase, and the Georgian section declarative of the growth and prosperity associated with development of more sophisticated products.

The integrity of location, setting, and association stems from the industrial history of Cove Island. The grist mills developed into a world-wide dyestuffs business of substantial proportions that rose and fell over a period of 100 years. Only the handsome Georgian house and its earlier wing survive as reminders of the 19th-century mills and wharves.



COVE ISLAND PARK  
STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT

