

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 18). 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 Booth, Nathan B., House
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 6080 Main Street not for publication
city, town Stratford vicinity
state CT code CT county Fairfield code 001 zip code 06497

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>3</u>	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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] 2/26/92
Signature of certifying official Director, Connecticut Historical Commission Date

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] 4-17-92

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Federal/Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation rubble stone

walls clapboard

roof asphalt shingle

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Nathan B. Booth House is prominently sited on the main road which bisects Putney, a semi-rural section of the Town of Stratford. Putney is located about three miles north of the town center, on the west bank of the Housatonic River. The Booth House was built c. 1843 in the transitional Federal-Greek Revival style. The house underwent minor alterations at three different times; a two-story frame wing was added to the rear in the mid-nineteenth century, a wraparound porch, summerhouse, and wellhouse were added at the turn of the century, and in the early 1940s the window sashes were replaced, and a bay window was added along with some built-in shelves and a rear screened porch.

The house, built as a farmhouse, retains its original setting on a rise on the east side of Main Street. (Photograph 13) A large frame barn built in the mid-nineteenth century and enlarged at the turn of the century, and a turn-of-the-century summerhouse are located behind the house, the summerhouse commanding a view of the river. (Photographs 2, 3, 4, 13) Although the farm originally comprised several hundred acres, the homestead parcel on the east side of the road consisted of about 14 acres. A recent subdivision has reduced the size of the house lot to about an acre, but this subdivision has preserved the setting along with the farmhouse surrounded by its main outbuildings.

The gable end of the two-story frame house faces the road. The three-bay facade is sheltered by a turn-of-the-century porch which wraps around the northeast elevation. (Photographs 1, 2, 13) The main entry boasts a panelled door flanked by sidelights and surmounted by a transom. The first-floor windows are enhanced by panels below the sill. The double window in the gable peak dates from the c. 1940 remodelling. The porch posts have been replaced within the past ten years by pairs of square upright members.

The southwest elevation is four bays wide with an attached gable-roofed wellhouse near the rear. The wellhouse has circular designs punched out of the bargeboard, giving it a charming lacey effect. Lattice panels form the upper portion of the wellhouse, which is sheathed in clapboards below. The northeast elevation is enhanced by a three-sided one-story bay window added c. 1940. (Photograph 2) The rear elevation has a two-story hipped roof addition dating c. 1860. A one-story screened porch with a shed roof and a stone foundation was added to the c.1860 addition during the c. 1940 renovation. (Photograph 3)

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

Period of Significance
c. 1843, c. 1860; c. 1900
e. 1940

Significant Dates
same as
period of
significance

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Nathan B. Booth

Architect/Builder

N/A

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

Significance

The Nathan B. Booth House is significant as a vernacular example of the transition between the Federal and Greek Revival styles. The style, materials, and construction techniques used are typical of early nineteenth-century residential construction. The house is the only one in Putney of this period which was built with the gable end facing the street and a side-hall plan. The house/barn/wellhouse/summerhouse complex is an important survival of a rural farmhouse with its major outbuildings and setting still intact.

Architectural Significance

The Nathan B. Booth House is representative of the type of vernacular farmhouse commonly built in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. It combines progressive ideas in agricultural planning and architectural style with more traditional forms and construction techniques. Transitional in style, the house is neither wholly Federal nor Greek Revival. The post-and-beam construction of the house links it firmly to an earlier period in the technology of structural systems.

The combination of traditional and progressive influences makes for an interesting and lively interpretation of what one early nineteenth-century farmer considered indispensable for his comfort and social standing and the efficient operation of his household and farm.

The siting of the Booth House reflects contemporary "progressive" ideas in farm planning. These theories, spread by widely read farm journals, advocated several changes in agricultural planning: the location of the farmhouse near to the lands being farmed (and away from village centers, which was a common practice in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England); the construction of the farmhouse on a slightly hilly spot; and the placement of the farmhouse and outbuildings so as to maximize the efficient operation of the farm. Nathan B. Booth's farmstead incorporated all these ideas.¹ Like most farmers of the period, Booth utilized a common vernacular house form, but the details of its construction and ornamentation are expressive of a certain naiveté concerning high-style architecture as well as a determination to express the pretensions of a prosperous farmer.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

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 less than 1 acre

UTM References

A

1	8
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6	5	8	3	9	0
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4	5	6	6	8	2	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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 Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Stratford Land Records, Volume 724, page 649

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is part of the lot which has traditionally been termed "the house lot" of the Nathan B. Booth House.

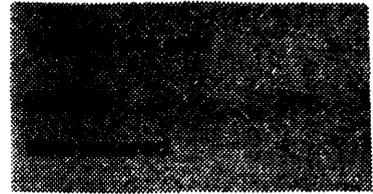
See continuation sheet

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

name/title Kate Ohno
 organization Preservation Consultant date 1991
 street & number 81 Pond Hill Road telephone (203) 234-2848
 city or town North Haven state CT zip code 06473

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The house is post-and-beam construction. This is evident in the unfinished section of the attic under the eaves. The foundation is rubble stone. On the interior the house follows a side-hall plan (Figure 1); the main stair rises from the front hall in a graceful curve. (Photograph 5) The balusters are round in section and the handrail is walnut. The doors and windows in the front hall and the parlor are enhanced by bold moldings with faceted corner blocks. (Photographs 6, 7) A broad opening separates the hall from the parlor. The parlor windows have a panelled detail under the sill. The fireplace surround is relatively simple, but it is enriched by a handsome Gothic Revival arched opening. Behind the parlor is the dining room. This room was extended c. 1940 by the addition of the bay window. (Photograph 9) The alcove formed by the bay has built-in shelves contemporary with the window. Behind the stair hall is the room which originally served as the kitchen. The fireplace follows a simple design and boasts an oven concealed in a cupboard with a two-panel door. (Photograph 10) The original room was enlarged in the 1940s by removing a partition between the 1860s addition and the main block. At the same time built-in bookshelves were added to the room. (Photograph 11) Both the dining room and former kitchen have narrow door and window surrounds with graceful moldings. The present kitchen, two other small rooms, and a hall are located in the 1860s wing behind the dining room. The kitchen finishes date from the 1940s renovation. On the second floor an L-shaped hall gives access to the bedrooms. The window and door surrounds are similar to those in the rooms at the rear of the first floor. A variety of raised panel doors are used in the house, still hung in their original locations. Several doors have H & L hinges. (Photograph 12)

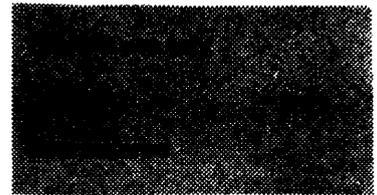
The attic was partially finished in the 1940s, but the original wide board floors and framing members are visible.

The large barn appears to have been built in sections. The oldest section, and the one nearest the house, boasts a ventilating tower with a hipped roof and finial. A large two-story turn-of-the-century addition was put on the rear, as well as a variety of shed-roof wings of various sizes. The barn is sheathed in flush vertical boards, and modern overhead doors have been added to the newest section. A turn-of-the-century summerhouse is located at the rear of the property on a knoll overlooking the river. The pyramidal roof is supported by square posts with lamb's tongue chamfers. The balustrade is formed by square members in a cross pattern. The wood-shingle roof is new and replicates an earlier wood-shingle roof discovered under a deteriorated modern roof. (Photograph 4)

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The orientation of the temple-form house with its gable end to the street is typical of both the Federal and Greek Revival styles, but the cornice treatment more closely resembles that used in the Federal period. However, the bolder forms and heavier moldings of the entry are expressive of a sensibility to the contemporary trend toward the Greek Revival style. The exterior of the house is relatively plain, yet the entry and the treatment of the first-floor windows with panels below the sills announce the ambitions of a gentleman farmer.

These ambitions are more dramatically articulated in the formal areas on the interior, particularly in the the front parlor and hall. Here the exuberance of the boldly molded window and door surrounds provides contrast with the relatively simple lines of the Gothic Revival parlor mantel. The door and window surrounds are out of proportion to the size of the rooms, but this is not immediately obvious since the high ceilings and large windows keep the moldings from overwhelming the space. The curved main stair is a very unusual feature in a house of this period and scale, and the detailing is of an unusually high quality.

The house is also a good example of the way in which residences grow and change over time; the c. 1860 addition to the rear, the addition of the wraparound porch (c.1900), and the c. 1940 renovations changed the original plan little, yet enriched, as well as altered, the character of the house. The property is also interesting from the standpoint of the preservation of a number of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century outbuildings: the large barn (c. 1860 with an addition c. 1900), a testament to the long-term agricultural use of the property; the wellhouse (c. 1990), a rare survival; and the charming summerhouse (c. 1900). A formal garden, once part of the larger acreage the Booth family owned, still exists on an adjacent parcel.

History

Nathan Birdseye Booth (1818-1894) was a descendant of both Richard Booth (c.1607-c.1688), one of the early settlers of Stratford, and the Reverend Nathan Birdseye (1714-1818), a Congregational minister and one of the leading citizens of Stratford in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Nathan B. Booth was a farmer, and he spent his whole life on the family farm in Putney. The land records indicate that this land had been owned by the Booth family since the eighteenth century. His house was built on land owned by his father, Abijah L. Booth (1777-1855), and in 1843 the elder Booth deeded his son two acres, including "the new house."²

Census records indicate that Booth was a prosperous farmer, with a personal estate and real estate valued highly in comparison to his neighbors in rural Putney.³ According to a mid-nineteenth-century map of Stratford, a butter manufacturing facility was located immediately south of Booth's residence.⁴ This type of agricultural industry foreshadowed the trend of cooperative farming ventures, moved the production of goods which had been traditionally produced in the farmhouse kitchen by the women of the farm family physically out of the farmhouse, and provided produce and refined agricultural products for nearby cities. The buttery, while it is unclear whether it stood on Nathan Booth's land or a neighboring parcel, certainly belonged to a member of the Booth family. The land where it stood was bounded on the north by Booth's land and on the south by property owned by other members of the Booth family. The growth of Bridgeport

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received
date entered

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during this period heralded a time of prosperity for farmers in Putney like Booth who had easy access to the river for transportation of their goods. The first settlers of Putney arrived in the eighteenth century, but it was not until the second quarter of the nineteenth century that the community experienced a real increase in growth and prosperity. This is evidenced by the existing housing stock, including the Booth House. During the same period Putney Chapel was built just south of the Booth House.⁵

In addition to being a farmer, Nathan B. Booth may also have been involved in the oyster industry, which grew tremendously in the late nineteenth century. Land records indicate that Booth owned land on Knell's Island, a marshy area on the Housatonic River used as a dump for the oyster shells which were employed to seed the oyster beds. The land records also document Booth's concern in several speculative ventures in the mid-nineteenth century. It seems that finally he overextended himself financially and was forced to sell his residence and the homestead parcel to the Bridgeport Savings Bank in 1877. Booth moved to his childhood home, located immediately south of the house he and his family had occupied since the early 1840s.⁶

The farm changed hands several times over the next seventy years, but no one family owned it for very long. In the early twentieth century it was briefly owned by William R. Wilder, a New York lawyer, who used the house as a summer retreat. He named the property "The Birches" after the mature birch trees still standing. It was purchased in 1940 by Berkley Parmelee, a local doctor, and his wife Grace. The Parmelee family owned the house for nearly fifty years.⁷

Endnotes

¹Sally McMurry, Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 62-3.

²Donald L. Jacobus, comp., The Genealogy of the Booth Family (Pleasant Hill, Mo.: by Eden C. Booth, 1952), p. 1. See also William Howard Wilcoxson, History of Stratford, CT 1639-1939 (Stratford: The Stratford Tercentenary Commission, 1939), p. 483; Rev. Samuel Orcutt, A History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport Connecticut (2 vols., Fairfield: Fairfield County Historical Society, 1886), II, 1184, and the Town of Stratford Land Records.

³U.S. Population Census, 1850, 1860, and 1870.

⁴Beers Atlas (1867).

⁵William Howard Wilcoxson, History of Stratford, Connecticut 1639-1939, (Stratford: The Stratford Tercentenary Commission, 1939), p. 422.

⁶Town of Stratford Land Records.

⁷Ibid. See also Bridgeport Post, April 20, 1925, p. 1, obituary of William R. Wilder.

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Beers Atlas, 1867.

Bridgeport Post (Bridgeport), April 20, 1925.

Jacobus, Donald L., comp., The Genealogy of the Booth Family,
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the City of Bridgeport Connecticut, 2 vols., Fairfield,
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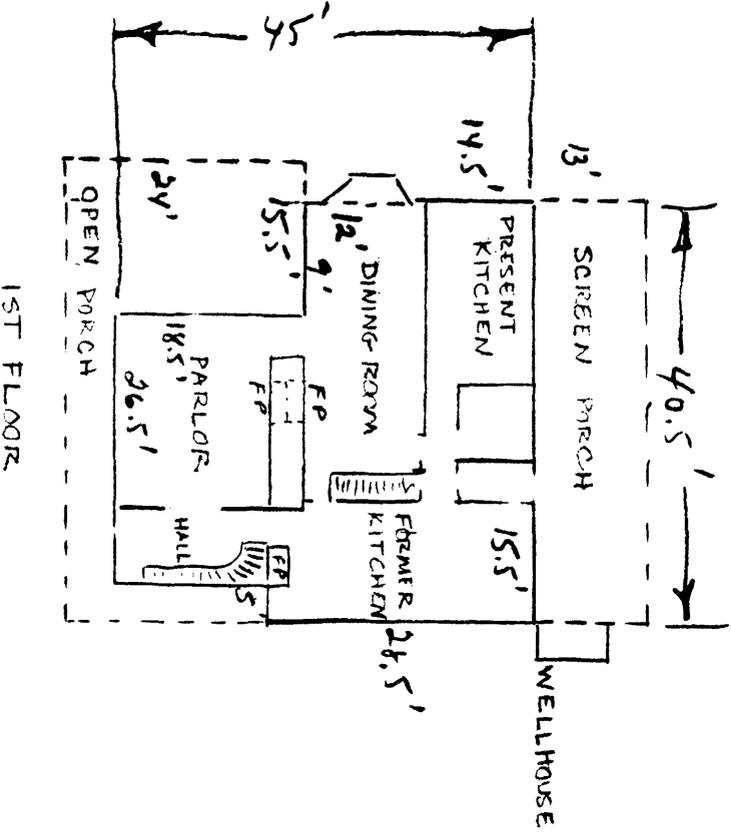
Town of Stratford Land Records.

U. S. Population Census, 1850, 1860, and 1870.

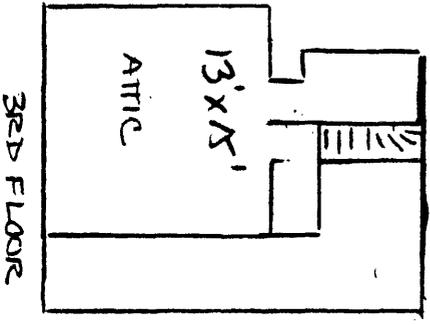
Wilcoxson, William Howard, History of Stratford, CT 1639-1939,
Stratford: The Stratford Tercentenary Commission, 1939.

FIGURE 1

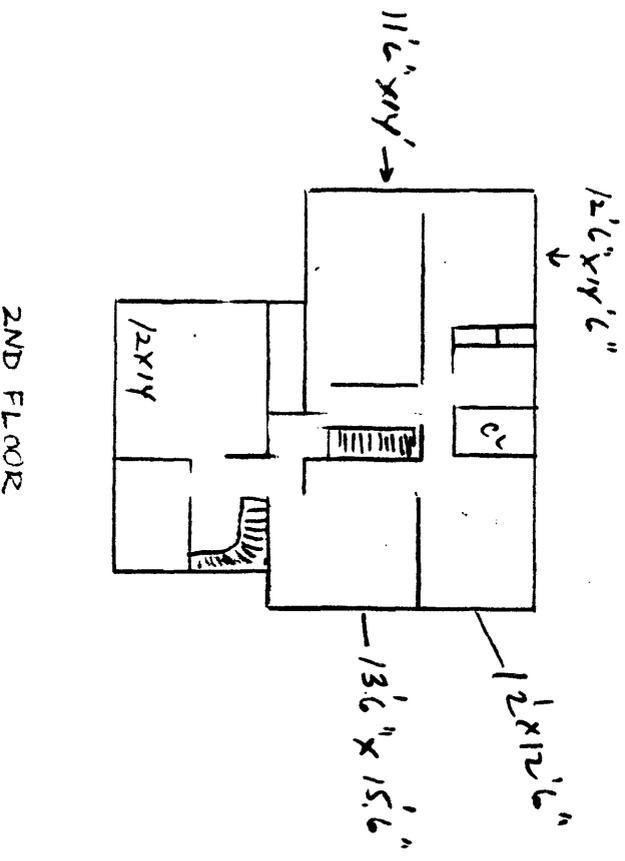
Nathan B. Booth House
 6080 Main Street
 Stratford, CT
 1"=18'



1ST FLOOR



3RD FLOOR



2ND FLOOR