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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JAN 18 1977  
DATE ENTERED AUG 29 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

NAME

HISTORIC **Seth Seelye House**

AND/OR COMMON

Bethel Public Library

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

199 Greenwood Avenue

CITY TOWN

Bethel

STATE

Connecticut

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESS SHALL STRIKE

5th - Donald A. Segrain

Fairfield

CODE

03

COUNTY

STATE

001

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PRIVATE

FEE SIMPLE

EASE

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

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

SCHOOL

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Town of Bethel

STREET & NUMBER

Town Hall - Library Place

CITY TOWN

Bethel

STATE

00

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Bethel Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Library Place

CITY TOWN

Bethel

STATE

CT

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1975

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

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## DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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

The Seth Seelye House occupies a spacious corner lot in the downtown area of Bethel, Connecticut. The house is considerably set back from Bethel's main thoroughfare, and the property is pleasantly landscaped. Built in 1842 in the Greek Revival style, the 2½ story frame house has its gable end facing the principal street. The gable is treated as a pediment and is brought forward, forming a portico supported by four rather slender fluted Doric columns which have square capitals. The narrow architrave and frieze are plain and the cornice molded but not pronounced. Unlike the rest of the house, which is clapboarded, the tympanum is flush-sided. The columns rise directly from the top of three entrance steps constructed from large slabs of stone. Running across the rear and projecting one room to the east is a two-story, flat-roofed wing, of separate but 19th-century construction, judging from the break in the underpinning. Beyond this is a larger two-story addition built for the town library. Clapboarded, with the ridge of its gable roof set orthogonally to the older part, this modern wing is compatible in style and is set far enough back so as not to intrude upon the scale and proportion of the older structure.

The main facade is divided by the columns into three unequal bays, the rightmost and largest of which is the main entrance. The six-panel door is surrounded by a transom and sidelights, the latter placed above recessed panels. The whole is enframed by a plain pilaster-and-entablature treatment. Windows, which have 6/6 sash, shutters, and plain frames, are paired, one to a story, in the other two bays of the main facade and one above the entranceway. Evenly spaced along the frieze above are three low rectangular openings for the attic story. These set up a strange tension, because they are symmetrically placed whereas the columns follow the uneven spacing of the windows below. One of the most interesting exterior features is the glazing of the transom, sidelights, and rectangular window in the tympanum. In addition to the muntins which divide the windows into rectangular panes, there are muntins paralleling the slope of the opening which run a few inches from the edge and intersect at the corners.

The side facades are composed of unevenly spaced groups of two regular windows and a corresponding small frieze window. On the east side the spacing is one group, then three, the latter including a trapezoid side entrance in the extreme rear. The west facade features two groups, a space, and then two single groups. The difference undoubtedly reflects the floor plan, now largely obliterated, which has the hall and stairs to the extreme right along the east wall.

To accommodate its present function as a library and exhibit area, the interior has been greatly altered. Most of the small fireplaces were enclosed, downstairs partitions removed, ceilings replaced, and wallpaper replaced by painted walls. Remaining detail suggests the interior was plainly finished. The front room windows and the entrance are surrounded by a typical architrave-and-block design, and the fireplace treatment consisted of very plain pilasters, entablature and mantel. Upstairs, windows and doors have only simple molded frames.

## SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF	
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ART
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVESTMENT

SPECIFIC DATES 1842 - built

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the Seth Seelye House is its fine example of Greek Revival architecture, and its association with one of Danbury's leading families. The house is one of the Greek Revival Houses patterned after the one built by Tomlinson in Middletown, and these houses represent a traditional house form. In the main, the gable toward the street, and the two-story portico. The rectangular door were typical solutions to the problem of the house form. Although without, the house recalls the traditional form.

The setting of the house is a fine example of the Greek Revival style. The lawn surrounding the house is landscaped with trees and shrubs. At the same time, the house is located in a prominent location in Bethel: nearby are the railroad station, an older commercial block, and an elementary school. The house is a fine example of a library and a historical society, and its impact is heightened by the contrast.

The Seelye family was involved in the area, and also owned the property. The family participated in financial and social activities for several years. Seth Seelye, who died in 1842, was the owner in the section which became the town. His house reflects his high standing and his role as a president of Bethel and Arden.

<sup>1</sup> Bethel was not set off from Danbury until 1842.

## SIGNIFICANCE

**CHECK ONE**

**CHECK ONE**

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**IF KNOWN: PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

...ous corner lot in the downtown area of ...reably set back from Bethel's main ...ly landscaped. Built in 1842 in the ...use has its gable end facing the ...e a pediment and is brought forward, ... slender fluted Doric columns which have ...d frieze are plain and the cornice ...t of the house, which is clapboarded, ...rise directly from the top of three ...s of stone. Running across the rear and ...story, flat-roofed wing, of separate but ...e break in the underpinning. Beyond ...for the town library. Clapboarded, with ...ly to the older part, this modern wing ...ugh back so as not to intrude upon the ...e.

...urns into three unequal bays, the ...n entrance. The six-panel door is ...e latter placed above recessed panels. ...and-entablature treatment. Windows, ...frames, are paired, one to a story, in ...one above the entranceway. Evenly spaced ...angular openings for the attic story. ...ey are symmetrically placed whereas the ...windows below. One of the most ...ing of the transept, sidelights, and ...dition to the runtings which divide the ...runtings paralleling the shape of the ...age and intersect at the corners.

...venly spaced groups of two regular windows ...On the east side the spacing is one group, ...ted side entranceway in the extreme rear. ...ce, and then two single groups. The ...plan, now largely obliterated, which has ...along the east wall.

...a library and exhibit area, the interior ...fireplaces were enclosed, downstairs ...wallpaper replaced by painted walls. ...plainly finished. The front room windows ...all architrave-and-block design, and the ...plasters, entablature and mantel. ...e solid frames.

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"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<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"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1842 - built

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The significance of the Seth Seelye House is found in its value as an example of Greek Revival architecture, its advantageous setting, and its association with one of Danbury's<sup>1</sup> leading families. The Seelye House falls in between those Greek Revival Houses patterned directly after temples, such as the Russell House by Town in Middletown, and those which merely appended Greek ornament onto the traditional house form. In the Seelye House the temple effect is achieved by facing the gable toward the street, adding fluted-wood pilasters to suggest a pediment and a two-story portico. The rectangular lights in the pediment, pilasters and around the door were typical solutions to the problem of providing light and living space within the temple form. Although it is quite plainly executed, both inside and without, the house recalls the quiet formality of its classical predecessors.

The setting of the house is important in that near the stately facade, the lawn surrounding the house is a well and well-planned lawn with the white trees and shrubs. At the same time, the house is located in the middle of the Bethel; nearby are the railroad station, a small mercantile store, the town hall, an older commercial block, and an optical store. In the Seelye House, the well-placed library and a historical society, is a highly desirable place whose architectural impact is heightened by the contrast with its busy surroundings.

The Seelye family was involved in the hat manufacturing business. Like nearly everyone in the area, and also owned a great deal of real estate. Later, the family participated in financial enterprises, including stores, a bank and several banks. Seth Seelye, who died in 1899 at the age of 74, was a banker and owner in the section which became Bethel and had a prosperous grocery business. His house reflects his high standing in the community. Later Seelyes, two of whom became presidents of Smith and Amherst Colleges, gave the house to the town.

<sup>1</sup> Bethel was not set off from Danbury until 1856.

## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gallagher, Edward J. History of Bethel, Connecticut. New Haven: Technical Planning Associates, 1959.

Hill, Susan B. (comp.). History of Danbury, Connecticut, 1634-1896. New York: Burr Printing House, 1896.

A History of Bethel, 1759-1976. Bethel: Bethel Historical Society, 1976.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	5	3,2	6,2,0	4,5	8,0	9,6,0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		EASTING		ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			
C								D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Bruce Cluett, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE 25 May 1976

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE (203) 845-3005

CITY/TOWN Hartford, Ct

STATE Ct

## 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 89-663), 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'S SIGNATURE

TITLE

SHPO

DATE

May 3, 1976

RECORDS SECTION

WHERE IT APPLIES THE PROPERTY SHOULD BE CLASSIFIED AS:

CLASSIFICATION