

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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JUN 10 1993

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 Wheeler, Adin, House; Wheeler, Theodore F., Wheelwright Shop
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 125 Quaker Farms Road NA not for publication
city, town Southbury (Southford) NA vicinity
state Connecticut code CT county New Haven code 009 zip code 06488

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>3</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>3</u>	<u>0</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] June 10, 1993
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] 7/29/93
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwellingAGRICULTURE/animal facilityCOMMERCE/specialty store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL/Post medieval English

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stonewalls weatherboardroof asphalt shinglesother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Adin Wheeler House and Theodore F. Wheeler Wheelwright Shop are associated buildings located in the eastern part of the Town of Southbury, just south of the village center of Southford. They are sited together on the same property on the southeast side of Quaker Farms Road. The main block of the house sits on fairly level ground but the rest of the lot slopes away from the road. The wheelwright shop and an associated barn are located alongside each other to the south and below the grade of the house. To the rear of the property, Eight Mile Brook forms the border with the Town of Oxford. Downstream to the southeast is Southford Falls State Park, which contains the sites of early industries historically associated with this property.

The house consists of a late eighteenth-century Georgian-plan Cape and several later additions: a circa 1840 rear kitchen ell and a circa 1870 two-story south wing (Photograph #s 1, 2, 3). The five-bay facade is sheltered by a wide porch overhang which has a bellcast profile, an extension of the front slope of the main gable roof.¹ The porch presently has Italianate-style posts which are replacements for earlier supports. Most of the windows contain multi-pane double-hung sash: 12-over-12 on the first floor and 12-over-8 on the second floor. They are twentieth-century replacements for earlier Victorian sash with larger panes and may resemble the original configuration. There are two six-pane windows in the gable peaks. The fenestration pattern of the end elevations is unusual. Instead of the first-floor windows being placed in line with those on the second floor, a standard Cape configuration, they are more widely spaced, a change that is due to the Georgian floor plan.

It is clear from the framing and interior finishes that the floor plan of the main block of the Wheeler House is original. It has the four-room plan and center hall of the Georgian; twin interior chimneys provide flues for back-to-back fireplaces. The first floor framing plan consists of girts on either side of the hall joined to the sills of the end walls by shorter longitudinal beams on either side of the stacks. These beams support the floor joists as well as the outriggers under the hearths.

All the fireplace walls are panelled in a nearly identical pattern in the Georgian manner with fielded panelling (Photograph #s 4, 5). Four-panelled, almost full-height doors are found on either side in each panelled wall, concealing cupboards and shelving. The fireplace wall in the south rear, the largest of the four rooms, has a larger expanse of exposed masonry framed by a molded architrave. It is possible that a former bake oven is concealed here and that this room was the original kitchen of the house. This base of this stack is also larger than its northside counterpart, although it is framed below in

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the cellar in a similar manner. Most of the passage doors are the original four-panel type, with panels that are raised on one side and slightly recessed on the reverse. The second-floor finishes are less formal and hand-planed vertical boards are used for sheathing in the hall. They contrast with the less finished horizontal boarding of the interior of the enclosed straight-run staircase, which rises on the left side of the center hall.

The later kitchen ell still contains the face of the fireplace and the bake oven, the latter with a cast-iron door, and its wood surround and mantel (Photograph #6). The masonry behind this fireplace was removed, possibly when the stairs in this section to the lower level were moved. The trim in the ell is consistent with the Greek Revival period, suggesting the date of construction. The south wing incorporates a former office and tavern on the first floor and a nineteenth-century laundry room below at grade. The original shelves, cupboards, and vault remain in what was the town selectman's office in the late nineteenth century.

The Theodore F. Wheeler Wheelwright Shop occupied the rear of the two outbuildings on the property in the late nineteenth century. It may have been constructed for this purpose about 1870 by Wheeler (Photograph #7). A barn-like structure, the shop contains the remains of a brick forge with its stack. Although now there is a shed-roofed addition along the southeast side, as originally constructed the shop was a gable-roofed building and rectangular in plan (approximately 16' x 30'). There is a sliding door in the front gable elevation that faces toward the house. The walls are sheathed with vertical boards over a standard braced-bent frame; similar construction is found in the later addition, which has its own sliding door.

Only part of the shop was directly utilized for the wheelwright trade. The freestanding forge is located in the northwest corner, just inside and to the right of the door (Photograph #8). A small window there provided illumination. Constructed of soft, apparently hand-made brick, the forge is set upon an elevated brick base set back several feet from both shop walls, with the bellows to its rear. Part of the back face of the forge is crumbling but the majority of the structure remains, including the small square stack which penetrates the roof. Small wrought tools associated with the operation still hang on the side of the stack. The large bellows lie in a horizontal position facing the opening of the firebox of the forge. Directly above the bellows is a wooden superstructure. Although the connecting belting is no longer extant, the timbers supported shafts for several wheels which transmitted power to operate the bellows and a grinding wheel (still in place), probably initiated by a foot pedal. Nearby related equipment includes block-and-tackle hoists. The ownership of the forge is confirmed by a label on the bellows with the name, "Theodore F. Wheeler."

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1. This style of porch, often popularly attributed to Dutch influence, is an uncommon but not rare occurrence in Connecticut. This example is, however, the only survivor in Southbury. The Enos Candee House, a similar Cape of slightly earlier vintage (with a center chimney plan and Georgian panelling), once stood to the south in what is now Southford Falls State Park but it was demolished in 1965. The rest of the Wheeler House framing is typically English, which is consistent with known settlement patterns and the cultural regions recently developed by Martyn J. Bowden and presented in a paper at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Connecticut History in November, 1992. His map of culturally predicted housing types indicates that Southbury, as expected, was influenced by the cultural traditions of the southeast of England and East Anglia. There is no evidence here of the Dutch framing techniques which appear elsewhere in Connecticut in lower Fairfield County.

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
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

c. 1790 - c. 1870
c. 1870 - c. 1900

Significant Dates

c. 1790
c. 1870

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

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

The Adin Wheeler House and the associated Theodore F. Wheeler Wheelwright Shop are individually significant representative building types. The Wheeler House has local significance as an exceptional example of a Georgian Cape which is distinguished by fine craftsmanship, an unusual plan, and an almost perfect state of preservation. The Wheeler Wheelwright Shop, a very rare survivor of its type in the state, is remarkably well-preserved. Few known wheelwright shops remain in Connecticut and fewer still have retained their forges and associated equipment. Because the property has been continuously associated with the Wheeler family for two centuries, its history is exceptionally well-documented and many related artifacts have been preserved in situ in both the house and shop, adding to their significance. In addition to its early relationship with the development of industry at Southford Falls, the property has particular local importance for its later historic association with Theodore F. Wheeler. An entrepreneur with many skills, including the trade of wheelwright, he was also a first selectman of Southbury in the late nineteenth century and maintained his office in the wing of the house.

Architectural Significance

Much of the significance of this house is derived from its Georgian plan. Rarely found in rural vernacular architecture of this period, especially in the Cape form, the center-hall plan was usually reserved for two-story houses built in more urban settings, often for the wealthy merchant class. It was an advance in architectural design that signified a change in social patterns, especially in the post-Revolutionary period when there was a greater premium on privacy and individualism, expressed in many facets of daily life. The center-chimney house and its attendant communal living style, however, commonly persisted in the countryside well into the nineteenth century as the basic plan of even the more formal Federal and Greek Revival styles.¹

To some degree there is a contradiction between the relatively plain exterior of the house and the level of style of its interior finishes. The panelling is exceptionally well-crafted, and were it not for the use of wrought finish nails and the fact that most of its hardware is original, it might be attributed to a Colonial Revival remodeling. A surprising feature is the modest treatment of the center hall and the enclosure of the

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Barbour Collection of Connecticut Vital Records.
Beers, F. W. Atlas of New Haven County: The Town of Southbury. New York: Beers & Co., 1868.
Cothren, William F. History of Ancient Woodbury from the First Indian Deed in 1659 to 1871. 3 vols. Waterbury: Bronson Brothers, 1854, 1872; Woodbury: Cothren, 1879.
Smith, H. & C.T. Map of New Haven County, Connecticut, 1856.
Southbury: Townwide Architectural Survey (intensive level). Connecticut Historical Commission, 1990-1991 (compiled by Mary McCahon).

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:

Research files - John F. Dwyer (owner)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is described in the Southbury Land Records in Book 172, Page 482.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated property include all the land and buildings still associated with the Adin Wheeler House and the Theodore F. Wheeler Wheelwright Shop.

See continuation sheet

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

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant
organization Cunningham Associates Ltd. date 11/30/92
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stairs, which in a Georgian house might be expected to have some minimal detailing such as an open balustrade with a decorative newel. The fact that all four fireplace walls in the original house are panelled is also unusual. Even in more sophisticated houses of this style, the Georgian mantelpiece often stands against a plastered wall, which at most might be embellished with wainscot.

The rarity and significance of the Theodore F. Wheeler Wheelwright Shop is without question. While blacksmith shops still function, some recreated as part of living museums, there are few truly historic buildings devoted to small-scale industry and commerce that have survived, especially with this degree of integrity. Once a common sight along Connecticut's roadways, as the era of blacksmith and wheelwright passed, shops such as this were often demolished when they had outlived their useful life. If not torn down, they suffered from neglect and lack of maintenance, and eventually disappeared. Surviving shops were converted to other uses, either used simply for storage or as auxilliary barns; as a result forges were dismantled and tools scattered. In fact, although there is some indication that this building continued to be used into the automobile era as a mechanic's garage, fortunately the forge remains undisturbed.

What is quite remarkable about the Theodore F. Wheelwright Shop is the number of tools and fixtures that remain. It appears essentially as it did when Wheeler hung up his tools and leather apron for the last time. The survival of the forge and bellows in place, along with the power system, is particularly important because they remain in original relative positions, lending insight into the process of forging for the wheelwright trade. Although the belting is no longer extant, enough of these undisturbed original artifacts remain to reconstruct the mechanics of the operation.

Historical Background

Southford Falls was recognized as a prime site for waterpower development at least as early as 1742 and continued to be an industrial site with varying degrees of success until 1923.² Its long history illustrates the classic path of the American Industrial Revolution in rural Connecticut. Family-based ownership was the norm and throughout much of its history locally available raw material was processed.

Supplied by the 272-acre Quassapaug Pond to the north and with a drop of 92 feet, its waterpower potential was first harnessed for a grist- and sawmill on the east side of the stream by Abel Holbrook (1701-1757) and his son, Nathaniel (b. 1728). The Holbrook family continued the operation until 1776, when it was sold to Obadiah Wheeler and Ebenezer Smith. By the 1790s the mills were owned by Obadiah's son, Adin Wheeler (1743-1823), and Dr. Enos Candee (1744-1820) and they had built their neighboring Capes on the highway (now Quaker Farms Road). In typical fashion their business partnership was cemented by marriage; Adin was married to Enos' sister Mehitable, just one of several intermarriages between these families.

Wheeler and Candee continued to run the sawmill but, like many early industrialists, tried their hand at textile manufacturing in order to capitalize on the embargo of British woolens that preceded the War of 1812. Although a dam was built to provide power to the west side of the brook by 1805, and by 1812 they had a clothiers' shop, fulling

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mill, and carding shop there, their partially mechanized venture was shortlived. As was the case with the most of the entrepreneurs in this field, their business began to fail when British goods were dumped on the American market below cost after the war. Candee died insolvent and the business finally ended with the death of Adin Wheeler in 1823.

Although the Wheeler House passed undivided to Adin's widow, Mehitable, and two daughters, Lois Wheeler and Clarissa Thompson, to settle Adin's estate they were forced to sell the mill property. Daniel Abbott, who bought the sawmill site in 1837, also established a flour and feed mill, essentially a commercial grist mill. In 1834, after the death of their mother, the daughters sold Samuel Candee (1789-1865), a cousin, two-thirds of the homestead, where he was already living at the time, and by 1844 the remaining third was in his possession.

More modern manufacturing took place at the falls by mid-century. In 1849 Abbott started the paper mill which became the major manufacturing activity there. Raw material was still supplied locally; straw pulp was used to produce board and paper. Although the site changed hands several times and new buildings were added and at least one destroyed by fire, the falls continued to be the site of paper manufacturing until 1923. That year, the mill, then owned by the Diamond Match company, burned to the ground. The area was taken over by the state in the 1930s. The Candee House was demolished; only the standing ruins of mill foundations and water systems remain today in Southford Falls State Park.

Theodore F. Wheeler (1840-1922), Adin Wheeler's great-grandson, married his cousin, Martha Candee, Samuel's daughter, about 1860. He is responsible for the large wing to the ell, which was a town office and tap room. Fixtures in the house and shop are a testament to the variety of his interests, which were chronicled in his journals (in possession of the family). In addition to his duties as first selectman, Wheeler was a butcher, a peddler, and a feed and grain dealer. The forge, of course, was utilized in his trade as wheelwright but he owned a cider mill and distillery as well, along with a mill on Jeremy Brook (1327 Jeremy Swamp Road). In the early twentieth century, the house passed to his daughter, Ella Stevens, and then to his granddaughter, Theresa Stevens Kane. The present owners, who include a seventh-generation descendant of Adin Wheeler, bought the property in 1984 from Theodore's great-granddaughter, Martha Vowinkle, who had subdivided the land historically associated with the house.

1. Even with the center-hall plan, privacy was still an issue in the commonly large households of the day. Large families, composed of blood relatives and those related by marriage, unrelated boarders, and servants lived in this house through most of the nineteenth century. For example, according to the census of 1830, the household included five servants (slaves and free Blacks) in addition to seven family members.

2. The author wishes to acknowledge the contribution of John Dwyer, one of the present owners, to this nomination. Although the interpretation is the author's, the industrial history is based on his extensive primary research which also clarified some of the associated family history.