

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED FEB 23 1982

DATE ENTERED MAR 25 1982

**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

Brigham's Tavern

AND/OR COMMON

Brigham's Tavern

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

12 Boston Turnpike

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Coventry

N/A VICINITY OF

2nd

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Connecticut 09

CODE

Tolland

COUNTY

013

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT
 BUILDING(S)
 STRUCTURE
 SITE
 OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC
 PRIVATE

 BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS
 BEING CONSIDERED
 N/A

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

Francis A. and Mary M. Perrotti

STREET & NUMBER

RFD 5 Box 389

CITY, TOWN

Coventry

N/A VICINITY OF

Connecticut

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Coventry Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER

1712 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Coventry

Connecticut

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1981

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

59 South Prospect Street, Hartford CT STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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 Brigham's Tavern in Coventry Connecticut is a capacious, 2-story, central-chimney, clapboarded structure dating from the late 18th century, with two substantial additions, one at the rear and the other along the west end of the house. Set back on a narrow lawn, once the Tavern's driveway, the Tavern faces south directly alongside the old Hartford to Boston Turnpike, now Route 44A. It is located just west of the Willimantic River and the hamlet of Mansfield Depot. The surrounding area is lightly settled and rural in character.

The main, center, section is the largest and probably dates c. 1778. The foundation of the main house exhibits several distinctive and well-crafted features. Particular care was exercised to lay the rough granite underpinning of the facade neatly, as the foundation is exposed as much as 2' above grade in places, due to the sloping site. A wide ledge extending from the foundation forms a paved area before the house; three huge stone slabs comprise the steps up to the entrance. East of the house, set into the slope of the site away from the house is a field stone wall with a squared passageway leading at grade level to the cellar; this unusual tunnel was probably used as a delivery hatch for kegs of liquor served in the Tavern and stored in the cellar.

The facade of the Tavern is 5 bays wide. The windows are grouped closely; the 6-over-6 sash within them are undoubtedly not original as the center window, directly over the door contains the 12-over-12 sash normally found in 18th-century houses. The door to the Tavern is unusually wide and is constructed of six boards hung on 3 long strap-hinges. A 7-light transom and simply molded cornice top the door. What appears to be a shallow end gable overhang is not; the level and raking cornice merely projects sharply from the gable wall which is on the same plane as the wall below. The central brick chimney has been re-built in the 20th century, though it retains its original proportions and is intact below the roof.

Both front and rear walls of the Tavern are sheathed with graduated clapboards, with narrow boards at the sill increasing in width up the wall. The use of graduated clapboards is thought to have been decorative and is said to have been confined exclusively to the facade; hence, the graduated boarding of the rear wall of Brigham's Tavern should be noted as a rare exception.

To the east is an arcaded, 1-story portico connecting with the rear ell. The portico seems to date from the construction of the main house as the unevenly finished hewn posts and flush weather boarding of the lower east wall are consistent with a late 18th-century construction date.

The rear addition, 1½-stories tall, is a saltbox type with a long roofline sloping down to the east. There is some evidence, both physical and historical, to indicate that the ell was the first house

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on the site, built prior to 1725. If this is so, the placement of the house with the long lean-to to the east suggests it was entered from the west (Photo 3). Though the interior has been altered and the original chimney was removed in the 1960s, there is a huge, carefully finished summer beam, with a quarter-round bead, running north and south the length of the ell, providing evidence of the ell's age and original west-facing orientation. The framed outline of paired squares, one of which is a small window, on the north wall, is tantalizingly suggestive of the remnant of a casement window, which would indicate a very early construction date.

The other addition, to the west of the house, was altered in the 19th century when a dormer gable and veranda were added. This west addition is stated by the owner to have been constructed after the main house but several features seem to indicate that it may be contemporaneous with the main house. First, the clapboards extend without a break across the facades of both the main house and addition; though the clapboards probably are not original, their narrowness suggests they have considerable age. Secondly, the door treatment of the two is similar, both having multi-lighted transoms. Further, the angle of the roofline of both house and addition is identical. If they were not built at the same time, great care was taken with the addition's construction so that it would be compatible with the main house.

One last piece of evidence which may confirm that the addition is contemporaneous with the house, or, at least, that it was built shortly after and probably by the same builder, is the unusual framing of the roofs of the house and the addition. Though it is generally held that ridge-poles were used only with a purlin system of roof framing², both the house and addition roofs are framed with ridge-poles and no purlins. This is probably the idiosyncrasy of a certain local builder, who apparently framed both roofs.

The rafters of the main house once had collar beams, as their mortises, still pegged, testify. A set of beams, now part of the ceiling decor of one of the rooms in the addition, and clearly not structurally related to that room, look, by their size and length, curiously like the roof's missing collar beams. Perhaps an earlier owner carefully removed the beams, replacing the pegs, and brought them downstairs to add a note of colonial rusticity.

Over the years, alterations have been made to the interior of the Tavern. In addition to the alterations mentioned in the ell, there have been other changes to the house. The original kitchen of the

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main house has been divided and the hearth walled over. Other fireplace openings have been covered over. Elsewhere, some original wall surfaces have been sheathed over with modern materials and closets have been built into several rooms. The addition has been converted to an apartment and a second apartment, on the first floor, west of the entrance, has recently been completed.

Much of the original fabric is, however, retained. The doors off the entry porch to what were once the public rooms of the Tavern are ornamented with cut-out heart shapes in the jamb, for ventilation. The tap room, to the west, still has a chair rail and panelled wainscoting. The bar, which survived until the 20th century but was subsequently lost, once stood at the far end of the room. The tap-room connects with the addition to the west so that, at one time, with the bar in between, the tap-room was approximately 29' long. On the second floor, at the east side, is a panelled partition which could swing up to form a ballroom or large meeting room for the Tavern. The original hardware for the partition and a chair rail which circles the entire ballroom are still in place, as is simple fireplace panelling. In the right front room downstairs there is also simple panelling on the fireplace wall. There is no evidence of summer beams in any of the rooms, which is consistent with a late 18th-century construction date, but there are shallowly flared posts extant in several rooms, including the tap-room.

The other structure on the property is a c. 1870 barn. It is 3 floors tall, with the third floor suspended from the barn's rafters, in an unusual framing arrangement. Stone foundations east of the barn are those of another barn, blown down in the Hurricane of 1938. That barn was probably a late 18th- or early 19th-century structure.

2. Isham, Norman M., and Brown, Albert F., EARLY CONNECTICUT HOUSES, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1965, p. 231, and Kelly, J. Frederick, EARLY DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF CONNECTICUT, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1963, p. 46.

1. Kelly, J. Frederick, EARLY DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF CONNECTICUT, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1963, p. 84.

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

Criteria A,C

SPECIFIC DATES Unknown BUILDER/ARCHITECT N/A

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Brigham's Tavern is a commodious and well-maintained late 18th-century house. Prominently located along Route 44A in Coventry, the Tavern is historically significant because for many years, from 1778 through the 19th century, it served wayfarers along what was then a major Hartford to Boston turnpike. Among its many guests, George Washington is numbered, even though the first President only breakfasted there.⁵ Though architecturally, it is a simple house of a common 18th-century type, it is also a carefully-crafted house of generous proportions with several unique and unusual features.

The Tavern,, viewed as a whole, is a complex and somewhat confusing artifact reflecting the many changes it has undergone in its long history. Reconstructing that history from the physical evidence and from the bits of historical data that exist on the house, is a somewhat tentative process. The house is composed of three main sections: while the rear ell is certainly older than the main house and addition, the house and addition probably date from the same period, if not the same time. Probable construction dates were deduced from land records, the Brigham genealogy and the physical fabric of the Tavern.

The progenitor of the Brigham family in the area was Elnathan Brigham, born in Marlborough, Massachusetts in 1683, who moved to Coventry in 1717. Apparently a prosperous man who acquired substantial property before his death in 1765, Elnathan was referred to in deeds as being from Mansfield, the town just east of the Tavern. His son, Uriah, born in 1723, was, however, known as Uriah Brigham of Coventry. Uriah acquired 150 acres of land with buildings, fences, orchards, and improvements from Mathias Marsh in 1753. The Willimantic River is cited as a partial boundary, a reference still used today. Marsh had, in turn, purchased the land, with "hous and barn", from Jonathan Weeks of Falmouth, Massachusetts, in 1725.² The rear ell, with its low, lean-to profile and huge summer beam, could date as early as 1725.

Uriah's son, Gershom, born in 1750, was the first tavern-keeper. In May of 1778, he was granted leave "to keep a house of entertainment where he dwells" on the "great road from Hartford to Boston".³ Many of the house's characteristics suggest that Gershom Brigham's house was originally constructed as a tavern. Its location, hard by a busy road, its ample size, and the exposed look of the facade, all seem to fit the commercial, public aspect of the Tavern's operation. The grade-level passage to the cellar, the ventilated doors, and the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brigham, W. I. Tyler, **THE HISTORY OF THE BRIGHAM FAMILY**, New York, The Grafton Press, 1907.
 Crofut, Florence S. Marcy, **GUIDE TO THE HISTORY AND HISTORIC SITES OF CONNECTICUT**, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1937.
 Isham, Norman M., and Brown, Albert F., **EARLY CONNECTICUT HOUSES**, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1965.
 Kelly, J. Frederick, **EARLY DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF CONNECTICUT**, New York, Dover Publications Inc., 1963.
 Peterson, Maude Gridley, **HISTORIC SKETCH OF COVENTRY**, Official Program Bicentennial Week, August 25-31, 1912.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 1 **UTM NOT VERIFIED**
 QUADRANGLE NAME South Coventry Quadrangle QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	7 23 11 00	4 63 01 78 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION **ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**
 Volume 103, page 456, Coventry Land Records

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Sarah Zimmerman, Consultant
 ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission DATE August 1979
 STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street TELEPHONE 203 566-3005
 CITY OR TOWN Hartford STATE CT

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

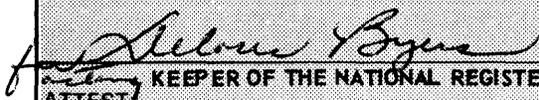
NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

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 February 11, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

 Helene Byers **NATIONAL REGISTER** DATE 3/25/82
 ATTEST: **KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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partitioned ballroom on the second floor are all indications that the house was built as a tavern. Further, the remaining physical evidence makes a late 18th-century construction date likely; thus, the 1778 licensing of the tavern is a plausible construction date.

From the genealogical information and land records, then, it seems that Uriah Brigham was the first to live on the Tavern property, in the rear ell, which he purchased from Mathias Marsh and which was probably the 'hous' referred to in Marsh's 1725 deed. Later, his son, Gershom, built the Tavern at some point prior to its licensing, in 1778. The west addition may have been built at the same time, or shortly thereafter.

Historically, the house is something of a local landmark. On November 9, 1789, after spending the night in Mansfield, President George Washington, on his eastern tour, stopped to breakfast at Brigham's. A stone tablet commemorates the event. Later, the incorporation of the Hartford to Boston Road as the Boston Turnpike in 1797 and its opening in 1808, insured a steady business to Brigham's Tavern.

Architecturally, there are many particularly well-crafted features about the house. The masonry is of a consistently high quality: the underpinning and ledge at the facade are neatly laid and the passageway to the cellar is well-constructed. Both the ledge and passageway are unusual features of the construction, as is the use of graduated clapboards on the facade and rear walls. The interior woodwork is also skillfully executed, though of a standard type. While the swinging partition in the ballroom is not rare in 18th-century taverns, its presence at Brigham's confirms that Gershom Brigham intended his tavern to be as up-to-date as any other. The loss of the tap-room bar is unfortunate as the room is otherwise well-preserved, but few taverns have survived with their bars, so its loss is understandable.

Since the turn of the century, Brigham's has been a private residence. It is pictured and described in Old Inns of Connecticut.⁴

1. Coventry Land Records, Volume 4, page 138.
2. Coventry Land Records, Volume 1, page 304.
3. Crofut, Florence S. Marcy, GUIDE TO THE HISTORY AND HISTORIC SITES OF CONNECTICUT, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1937, p. 792.
4. Terry, Marian Dickinson, OLD INNS OF CONNECTICUT, Hartford, Prospect Press, 1937, pp. 218-220.
5. Fitzpatrick, John, Diaries of George Washington, IV, p.50, Nov. 9, 1789.