

PH0352535

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 7 1977

DATE ENTERED JUL 15 1977

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

HISTORIC



Wheeler-Beecher House

AND/OR COMMON

 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 552 Amity Road

CITY, TOWN

Bethany

STATE

Connecticut

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5th - Ronald A. Sarasin

COUNTY

New Haven

CODE

009

 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 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Conrad Baker

STREET & NUMBER

552 Amity Road

CITY, TOWN

Bethany

VICINITY OF

STATE

CT

 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Bethany Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Town Hall - 512 Amity Road

CITY, TOWN

Bethany

STATE

CT

 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1941

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

Library of Congress

CONTROL

HISTORIAN

URAL HISTORIAN

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory

Review

NEW UNIT CHIEF

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR
 DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Wheeler-Beecher House sits close to a state highway in a wooded rural area of Bethany. The house is surrounded by trees and bushes and is somewhat obscured by them. It is a frame dwelling, 2 1/2 stories tall, with the ridge of its gable roof parallel to the road. A two-story ell original to the house extends from the south rear of the building. Built onto the north side of this ell is a shed-roofed room and extending from the south side there is another low wing. The latter 20th-century addition is nearly invisible from the road. Three brick chimneys rise above the modern-shingled roof, two in the main house and one built into the brick rear wall of the ell, which accommodated the kitchen. The house's original clapboards have been replaced by aluminum ones, but the projection of the trim is sufficient to allay any deleterious effects. The underpinning is of cut brownstone laid as a regular ashlar.

The central bay of the five-bay main facade is the most richly elaborated part of the exterior. The entrance is sheltered by an open-pedimented portico which is supported by two fluted Ionic columns and corresponding pilasters. The former are replacements of square columns which in turn may have replaced original Ionic columns. The portico's soffit is paneled. The entablature of the portico is made up of a frieze with triglyphs, a row of dentils, diminutive block-like cornice brackets, and cornice moldings, including a rope-turning. The six-paneled door is flanked by partial sidelights glazed in a pattern of gracefully curved lead bars. Above the door is a semi-circular fanlight with festoons between the radii and, like the sidelights, applied floral lead ornaments. Concentric with the fanlight is a wooden band of elliptical cut-outs, with a scalloped decoration along the edges. The ellipses have strapwork within them which repeats the geometry of the sidelight leading.

Above the entrance is a Palladian window whose three sections are divided by fluted Ionic pilasters resting upon carved brackets. The capitals are enriched with pearl and egg-and-dart moldings. The round-headed part has muntins in the form of interlacing arches, and above is a molded arch with keystone. The caps to the side parts are made up of a triglyphed frieze and a boldly projecting, dentillated cornice. Above the Palladian window, the roof is brought forward as a flattened gable, suggesting a pediment.

The main cornice echoes on a larger scale the portico cornice; it follows along the lines of the front gable as well as forming a partial return across it. There are narrow-paneled pilasters at the corners of the house. The trim around the windows, which have 12/12 sash, consists of a molded architrave with crossers and a cornice like that on the Palladian window. The cornice over the side entrances is similar but has the shallow brackets like the portico. Despite the introduction of modern sheathing materials the exterior has retained much of its historical appearance. Although some dentils and volutes are missing or damaged, the exterior details, which are of prime importance, are largely intact.

The interior is arranged on the central hall plan. The hallway is open (the stairs are enclosed off to the left) and is divided into thirds by two arched openings. Each molded arch with carved keyblock is supported by two square fluted columns set into the wall. The cornice of the hall is quite elaborate and, like the capitals of the columns and the arches, has a rope-turn molding as one of its elements. Opening off the hall through a reproduced archway is the north front room. The mantel around the small brick fireplace is in the Adam style, with a pair of

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

PREHISTORIC
 1400-1499
 1500-1599
 1600-1699
 1700-1799
 1800-1899
 1900-

ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC
 ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC
 AGRICULTURE
 ARCHITECTURE
 ART
 COMMERCE
 COMMUNICATIONS

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE
 COMMUNITY PLANNING
 CONSERVATION
 ECONOMICS
 EDUCATION
 ENGINEERING
 EXPLORATION
 INDUSTRY
 INVENTION

SPECIFIC DATES 1807 - built.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wheeler-Beecher House is one of the best examples of Federalist style or Federalist architecture in Connecticut. It was designed by David Hoadley, a local builder/architect of the period; he is as well as the more formal United Church of Christ. His ability to transfigure commonplace ornament.

The Wheeler-Beecher House is conventional in style, but the exception is the gable over the Palladian window (as in Canterbury) is declined. The Adam style decorative options, and in some houses, number to the point of clutter. This is partly resulting from its traditional scale of the ornamentation.

The house's finely executed details, beautiful variety of light moldings, are arranged with propriety and skill. The tiny dentils in the portico, side entrance which is narrow and light, floating upon columns. Another nice effect is the arch lights and repeats their leading in the sash. A mark of Hoadley's craftsmanship is the dart carving in the Ionic pilasters of the window caps has been much admired; as a cornice has a molded cornice without the brackets.

The interior also has several notable fluted columns, the arches in the hall, the complete with built-in benches. The woodwork beautiful mantels are interesting because, scheme in the formal rooms is different. garlands, festoons, fluting, ellipses and cornices and mantels. The scale of these details as in the carving on the edges of the mantels embodies the Adam vocabulary: geometric and the portico and Palladian window. The mere inclusion of the typical components of which Hoadley integrated these details into a unified design.

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two

fluted columns on each side. Above each pair is a panel with a carved female figure; in the middle is a panel with a floral carving and between the panels are festooned garlands. The mantelshelf has breaks over the decorative panels. Along the edge of the shelf are carved festoons and below the shelf is a band of fluting. On either side of the fireplace are two large cupboards outlined by arches with moldings similar to those in the hall. The cupboards were originally either alcoves or doorways. The other front room has a mantel nearly as formal but it has single columns and urn carvings. Under the window sills of this room are elliptical panels. Like the north front room, this room has arched recesses (both doorways) flanking the fireplace and an elaborate dentillated cornice.

The back rooms and upstairs chambers are much simpler with plainer cornices and uncarved pilastered mantels. The north back room and chamber above have been greatly modified due to the house's division into apartments. The kitchen in the ell has a large fireplace with oven; there is a smoke chamber in this stack in the attic. In the ell on the second floor and extending into the southeast quarter of the main house was a large ballroom (now partitioned) with matched mantels at each end and a seat, largely intact, built into the wall around the perimeter of the room. The mantels have paneled pilasters above which are carved elliptical paterae. Running above the opening is a band of fluting. The corners of the central panel have fan carvings, and the edge of the mantelshelf is carved with a stylized festoon decoration and a rope-turn molding. The festoons are repeated in the room's complex cornice.

Although the interior has been partitioned into apartments, the formal rooms, including the hallway and ballroom, have retained their important woodwork intact. The elaborate arches, cornices and mantels continue to be the focus of attention.

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three

Little is known of the house's first owner, Darius Beecher, a wealthy man who soon after building the house went West and lost his fortune. From 1844 to the end of the 19th century the dwelling was owned by the Wheeler family. It also served as a kind of social center: its ballroom was used for events and meetings by a local church.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Wheeler-Beecher House

[Sharpe, W.C.] "Interest in
New Haven: Tuttle, New Haven

Oil painting of the house,
possession of the owner

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Dunton, Alice B. Bethany's Old Houses and Community Buildings. Bethany: Bethany Library Association, 1972.

Corwin, Margaret B. "The Wheeler-Speicher House," Colonial Dames No. 1, State Library.

Kelly, J. Frederick. Early Connecticut Architecture, Second Series. New York: William Helburn, Inc., 1931. Measured drawings and photos of details.

_____. Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut. New York: Dover, 1963.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 14

UTM REFERENCES

A	1	8	1	6	7	5	0	0	1	4	5	8	5	0	4	0
ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING										
B																
ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING										
C																
ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING										

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 Clouette, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Connecticut Historical Commission DATE: August 20, 1976

STREET & NUMBER: 59 South Prospect Street TELEPHONE: (203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN: Hartford STATE: CT

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____ STATE X 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 SIGNATURE: [Signature] DATE: 11/28/77

TITLE: SHPO

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE: 11/28/77

ATTEST: [Signature] DATE: 6-20-77