

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCERS use only

received APR 26 1982

date entered JUN 1 1982

**1. Name**

historic Oliver Wight House

and/or common "The Lodge"

**2. Location**

street & number Main Street U.S. (Route #20) N/A not for publication

city, town Sturbridge N/A vicinity of congressional district 2nd

state Mass. code 025 county Worcester code 027

**3. Classification**

| Category                                        | Ownership                                   | Status                                              | Present Use                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input type="checkbox"/> public             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <input type="checkbox"/> both               | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress           | <input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                   | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <u>N/A</u> in process                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific         |
|                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered   | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted          | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation     |
|                                                 |                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> no                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:               |

**4. Owner of Property**

name Sturbridge Corporation

street & number Main Street

city, town Sturbridge N/A vicinity of state Massachusetts 01566

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds, Worcester County Court House

street & number 2 Main Street

city, town Worcester, state Massachusetts 01608

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Inventory of the Historic Assets of the Commonwealth #511 has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
date 15 sheets, 1936; 1937/5 photos, 1937 ☒ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission Library of Congress

city, town Boston; Washington state Mass.; District of Columbia

## 7. Description

Oliver Wight House, Main Street U.S. (Route #20), Sturbridge

### 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 Oliver Wight House, c. 1789, is a timber-framed 2 1/2 story dwelling of high style, late Georgian design. The structure retains much of its original appearance and stand on its original site west of Sturbridge Center (NR - 11/9/77). However, its setting has changed drastically during this century, and all of its outbuildings have been lost. It now stands amidst the commercial congestion of Route 20, and serves as the focal point of the neo-colonial style Old Sturbridge Village Motor Lodge. Despite these disruptive factors, the motel complex is attractively landscaped, and its units were sympathetically sited to minimize encroachment upon the original building. The Wight House is set well back from Route 20 with a broad expanse of trimmed lawn and a few young fruit trees providing a buffer. Additionally, a row of mature maples lines one side of the drive leading from the highway.

The freestanding structure has a square, central hall plan with twin interior chimneys rising through an unusual, steep, gable on hip roof. It stands on its original foundation which is dry-laid field stone, fragmentarily parged with clay, and capped with dressed granite at grade level. The cellar is excavated only beneath the rear (east) half of the house, with a crawl space beneath the front. The house is sheathed with clapboards which appear to be largely original, or early replacements, and are fastened with large-headed wrought nails. Trim consists of a wide, molded water table, beaded cornerboards and a modillion cornice with a row of fine dentils. Windows contain 12/12 double hung sash which may be original, and are set in simple frames; at the first story they have projecting caps, while at the second, they are set into the cornice. Reproductions of period fixed lower shutters (based on surviving originals) were installed during the course of a Museum directed restoration in the early 1950s. The building is roofed in wood shingles.

The facade (west) displays the customary 5 bay, 9 window configuration of the two story eighteenth century house. Typically, it is focused on a handsome center entry which is reached by two, dressed granite doorsteps. The entry consists of two fluted pilasters with Doric capitals which support an unornamented frieze and a triangular pediment. Both flat and raking cornices of the pediment are embellished with modillion blocks similar in scale and profile to those of the cornice. This composition enframes a six pane transom and a large nine panel door which has its smallest panels at the middle. This door is a reproduction of the original which, although in an advanced state of deterioration, survives in Museum storage; the spade-end, Suffolk type latch is original. On this elevation the roof is pierced by two shed roof dormers, positioned beneath the chimney stacks, which appear to be original.

The north elevation is nearly identical to the facade and is differentiated mainly by the roof, which reveals the gable configuration of its upper slope. The only other variation is in the entry, which is slightly narrower than that of the facade and contains a five, rather than a six, pane transom. The south elevation follows the same format except that the entablature above the door is handled with a pulvinated frieze surmounted by a dentil course and capped by a flat modillion cornice. This entry is reached by two stone steps, while the northern one is provided only with a single step.

The rear (east) elevation is clearly the back of the house. Fenestration is not symmetrical, as it is on the other three sides, and the doorway lacks the classically derived embellishments exhibited elsewhere. There is a transom of five lights and a simple drip cap above it. Like the other doors, the back door is a nine panel door. Window arrangement in the

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

east wall of the northeast chamber has been altered; a door intruded into a former window aperture provided access from the main house to a now missing nineteenth century ell. Roof dormers repeat the pattern of the front (west) slope of the hipped roof and the chimneys are somewhat more prominent on this side because of their placement on the east side of the roof ridge.

Interior:

Inside, a broad hallway runs west to east to a point midway back on the building and just even with the end of the stair run. There, a wing wall juts out beneath the stairs and a doorway through it permits access to the rear hall. Both front and rear doors are in direct line with one another. The hallway is trimmed with a crown-moulded cornice, wainscot of raised, field paneling, and a moulded chair rail.

The open string stair ascends in a straight run of nine risers along the north wall to a landing at which it turns a right angle and continues for an additional five risers to a second landing. At this level, there is a single additional step, at the east and west sides of the landing, to gain the level of the second floor. The balustrade is comprised of square newells, with simply moulded and mitered caps, a somewhat massive but simply moulded handrail of nearly square section, and a pair of square balusters per each stair. Stair ends are embellished with simple s-curved cutouts and the stair soffit and enclosed cellar way beneath the stair run is finished with field panels. Stairs, flooring, wainscot, cornice and plaster walls are wholly original.

It is the plaster walls, with their dramatic landscape murals, that are the most visually compelling feature of the entrance hall. Executed in distemper, and in a limited and nearly monochromatic palette, the motifs are characteristic of the work of the itinerant artist Rufus Porter (1792-1884) and may safely be attributed to him on the basis of style, design motifs, and coloration. The fanciful and stylized flora which figure prominently in the compositions are especially typical of Porter's repertoire. On the north wall the hypothetical landscape includes a side-wheel steamboat "Victory" plying a becalmed body of water, an island with two small houses, a two-masted sailing ship, and close by the stair run, a square, hipped roofed Federal style "mansion" with sidelights and fanlight transom. In the background are mountains, one of which is topped by an hexagonal tower and billowing clouds. An effort is made by the artist to heighten the viewer's perception of depth by the placement of large scale stylized trees and plant material directly on the picture plane. On the opposite (south) wall of the hallway, the imaginary landscape includes a large square hipped-roofed structure in the Federal style with a lantern atop the roof and flanked by connected wings, which appears to be an institutional building (such as a hospital) of the period.

At landscape center, a windmill crowns a hillock, and, at the left, is the most familiar scene: a New England country landscape including an orchard, three farmhouses, and some fields under cultivation. Again, large scale plants dramatically dominating the foreground contribute to a sense of receding planes within the composition.

## 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/         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering                       | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899            | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry                          | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation  |
|                                               |                                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention                         |                                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

**Specific dates** 1789 **Builder/Architect** Oliver Wight

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Oliver Wight House possesses integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship as well as associations with the settlement of eighteenth century Sturbridge. It is an excellent and well preserved example of high style, late Georgian design, particularly the Worcester County type which features gable on hip or hip on hip roofs. Additionally, its hallway exhibits extensive murals attributed to Rufus Porter. Thus, the Wight House meets criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places.

The house was built c. 1789 by Oliver Wight (1753-1837), one of three brothers who built homes during the final decades of the eighteenth century in that portion of Sturbridge which became known as Wightville in the nineteenth century. The home of one brother, Alpheus Wight, also survives, but in a much altered condition; that of a third brother, David, burned c. 1929.

Oliver Wight was a cabinet maker by trade. An oil portrait of him, painted about 1790 (collections of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum, Williamsburg, Va.) depicts an apparently successful and self-satisfied young man, dressed most stylishly in the costume of the period, and holding a walking stick. In the early nineteenth century the house was sold to Ebenezer Howard who kept a hotel there, but it was returned to the Wight family in 1863 when it was purchased by George Wight. It remained in the Wight family until 1936 when it was purchased by Albert B. Wells for Old Sturbridge Village.

The Oliver Wight House is an outstanding local example of high style Georgian architecture, and one which preserves almost all elements of its original design. It is a 2 1/2 story timber frame house with a nearly square, central hall plan. Single, interior chimneys rise through a gable on hip roof, a complex, double form which is a hallmark of high style Georgian design in the region. This basic form is enriched by a modillion cornice, heavily capped windows, and richly detailed entries on three elevations. These exterior embellishments are matched on the interior by elaborate murals in the front hall attributed to Rufus Porter. Another uncommon design feature, of which only two examples are known in the immediate geographic area, was the arrangement of the second floor plan to accommodate a ballroom across the front of the house. This large space could then be subdivided by movable or swinging partitions. The Nichols House (c. 1785), demolished for the widening of I-86, had such a multi-purpose room as did the General Salem Towne House (1796) in neighboring Charlton, Mass. (the Towne House is now relocated as an exhibition building in Old Sturbridge Village). Although not unique in the Central Massachusetts region, the Wight house is one of a handful exhibiting this pretention of form and detail.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

UTM NOT VERIFIED  
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

See Continuation Sheet - Item No. 9, page 1

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1

Quadrangle name Southbridge

Quadrangle scale 1:25000

UMT References

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Bounded on the north by U.S. Route 20 at a distance of 197' from the house. Bounded on the south by the circular driveway of the Old Sturbridge Village Motor Lodge complex at a distance of 16' from the house. Bounded on the west by Cedar Brook and the Tantasquis Fordway at a

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| N/A   |      |        |      |

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|       |      |        |      |

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Candace Jenkins, Registration Director, with John O. Curtis, Director, Curatorial Dept., Old Sturbridge Village

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission

date March 1982

street & number 294 Washington Street

(617) 727-8470  
telephone

city or town Sturbridge,

Massachusetts 01566  
state

## 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Patricia L. Wasilowski

title Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission

date 4/2/82

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 6/1/82

for Sturbridge Village  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

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Page 1

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

OLIVER WIGHT HOUSE, 1789  
Sturbridge, Ma.

Black, Mary and Lipman, Jean  
American Folk Painting  
New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1966

Davis, George  
A Historical Sketch of Sturbridge and Southbridge  
West Brookfield, Mass., O.S. Cooke & Co., 1856

Groce, George C. and Wallace, David H.  
Dictionary of Artist in America 1564-1860  
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Catalog of Measured Drawings and Photographs of the Survey in the  
Library of Congress, March 1941  
Washington; U.S. Gov't Printing Office, 1941, p. 180

Leaflets of the Quinebaug Historical Society: Devoted to the Local  
History of Southbridge, Sturbridge, Dudley and Charlton  
Southbridge, Mass.: Southbridge Herald Office, 1901-1905

Sturbridge Bicentennial Souvenir Program 1938  
Old Sturbridge Village Research Library

Vital Records of Sturbridge, Mass. to the Year 1850  
Boston, Mass.: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1906

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 10

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distance of 205' from the building. Bounded on the east by the adjoining land, of the Old Sturbridge Village Motor Lodge Complex at a distance of 27' from the building. Also refer to attached engineering plan.

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## EVALUATION / RETURN SHEET

Property: Wight, Oliver, House  
State, County: MA, Worcester  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Working No. 128/82-1276  
Fed. Reg. Date: FEB 1 1983  
Date Due: 5/27/82 - 6-12-82  
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 6/1/82  
☐ RETURN  
☐ REJECT

- \_\_\_\_ resubmission  
\_\_\_\_ nomination by person or local government  
\_\_\_\_ owner objection  
\_\_\_\_ appeal

Entered in the  
National Register

photos ☒  
maps ☒

Substantive Review: \_\_\_\_ sample \_\_\_\_ request \_\_\_\_ appeal \_\_\_\_ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom. / Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

### 1. Name

### 2. Location

### 3. Classification

|          |                    |            |             |
|----------|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Category | Ownership          | Status     | Present Use |
|          | Public Acquisition | Accessible |             |

### 4. Owner of Property

### 5. Location of Legal Description

### 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_ no

### 7. Description

|                |                   |                |                       |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Condition      |                   | Check one      | Check one             |
| ____ excellent | ____ deteriorated | ____ unaltered | ____ original site    |
| ____ good      | ____ ruins        | ____ altered   | ____ moved date _____ |
| ____ fair      | ____ unspoiled    |                |                       |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- \_\_\_\_ summary paragraph  
\_\_\_\_ completeness  
\_\_\_\_ clarity  
\_\_\_\_ alterations/integrity  
\_\_\_\_ dates  
\_\_\_\_ boundary selection

## **8. Significance**

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Area of Significance—Check and justify below \_\_\_\_\_

Specific dates \_\_\_\_\_ Builder/Architect \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- \_\_\_\_\_ summary paragraph
- \_\_\_\_\_ completeness
- \_\_\_\_\_ clarity
- \_\_\_\_\_ applicable criteria
- \_\_\_\_\_ justification of areas checked
- \_\_\_\_\_ relating significance to the resource
- \_\_\_\_\_ context
- \_\_\_\_\_ relationship of integrity to significance
- \_\_\_\_\_ justification of exception
- \_\_\_\_\_ other

## **9. Major Bibliographical References**

## **10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UNIT References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

## **11. Form Prepared By**

## **12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_\_ national \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

## **13. Other**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Maps
- \_\_\_\_\_ Photographs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: 202 272-35

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



B-20105

Oliver Wight House, ca. 1789

Sturbridge, Massachusetts

Photographed by Henry E. Peach 24 June 1981

Negative on file at Old Sturbridge Village.

Camera facing south; north elevation of Wight House. Units of Old Sturbridge Village motor lodge in background.

Photo No. B-20105

#10F4

B20105  
June 1981

REPRODUCTION OF THIS PHOTO  
MUST CARRY THE CREDIT LINE:  
OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE PHOTO  
BY HENRY E. PEACH



B-20103

Oliver Wight House, ca. 1789

Sturbridge, Massachusetts

Photographed by Henry E. Peach, 24 June 1981

Negative on file at Old Sturbridge Village

Camera facing east; view of front (west)  
elevation.

Photo No. B-20103

#2 of 4

B20103  
June 1981

REPRODUCTION OF THIS PHOTO  
MUST CARRY THE CREDIT LINE:  
OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE PHOTO  
BY HENRY E. PEACH



Rufus Porter - Wall painting Oliver Wight House

B 10156  
March 1973

NORTH SIDE

B-10156

Oliver Wight House, Ca. 1789

Sturbridge, Massachusetts

Photographed by OSV staff photographer in  
March, 1973. Negative on file at Old Stur-  
bridge Village.

Camera facing north; view of mural painting  
attributed to Rufus Porter on north side of  
hall.

Photo No. B-10156

#3 of 4

OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE PHOTO



B-20111

Oliver Wight House, Ca. 1789

Sturbridge, Massachusetts

Photographed by Henry E. Peach 24 June 1981

Negative on file at Old Sturbridge Village.

Camera facing west; view of paneled chimney wall and kitchen fireplace, south-east corner room, first floor.

Photo No. B-20111

#4 OF 4

B20111  
June 1981

REPRODUCTION OF THIS PHOTO  
MUST CARRY THE CREDIT LINE:  
OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE PHOTO  
BY HENRY E. PEACH

SOUTHBRIDGE QUADRANGLE  
MASSACHUSETTS-CONNECTICUT  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

UTM Reference:  
18/740630/4666040



Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Area covered by dashed light-blue pattern is subject to controlled inundation  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979

1967  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
AMS 6568 II SE—SERIES V81



MASSACHUSETTS  
HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
Office of the Secretary of State

294 Washington Street  
Boston, Massachusetts  
02108  
617-727-8470

MICHAEL JOSEPH CONNOLLY  
Secretary of State

April 22, 1982

Ms. Carol Shull, Acting Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243



Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

Boston - Adams Nervine Asylum (state)  
Boyalston - Keyes - Dakin House (local)  
Grafton - Willard House and Clock Museum (state)  
Hatfield - The Old Mill Site Historical District (local)  
Holden - Rogers House (local)  
Needham - Tolman - Gay House (local)  
Newton - Slade - Hovey House (local) owner objects  
Sturbridge - Oliver Wight House (state)  
Upton - Knowlton Hat Factory (local)  
Weston - Isaac Hobbs House (local)

All have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination forms.

Sincerely,

*Candace Jenkins*

Candace Jenkins  
Registration Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

CJ/amf