

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JAN 28 1982
DATE ENTERED FEB 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 Allis-Bushnell House

AND/OR COMMON
Madison Historical Society

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 853 Boston Post Road

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN Madison

___ VICINITY OF 3rd

STATE Connecticut

CODE 09

COUNTY New Haven

CODE 009

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input 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	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input 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 Madison Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER 853 Boston Post Road - P.O. Box 17

CITY, TOWN Madison

___ VICINITY OF

STATE CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Madison Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER Meetinghouse Lane

CITY, TOWN Madison

STATE CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE State Register of Historic Places

DATE 1981 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Hartford

STATE CT

7 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 Allis-Bushnell House, home of the Madison Historical Society, sits close to the street in a densely settled neighborhood of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century houses. It was built around 1785 as a 1½-story house with a steep gable roof, but about 1815, a second story was added by raising up the front part of the roof. Evidence for the original roof may be seen in the attic, where sheathing boards in the gables show the old pitch. The result is a house with a shallow pitch in front and a steep roof to the rear, giving almost a "saltbox" appearance. Moreover, the second story shows an overhang of 4 to 6 inches, the result of constructing it on top of the original front plate.¹ The house was enlarged again about 1860, when the original five bays were extended with a two-bay addition built to the east. Although it matches the roofline of the earlier part, this addition lacks the second-story overhang and has large window openings. The considerable projection of the roof over the gables also probably dates from the middle of the nineteenth century. To the rear of the house, off the west rear room, is a small attached milk house with thick stone walls. Other additions to the rear are modern and include a central dormer built out from the roof and a two-story wing added to the east rear. In the yard behind the house are two out buildings, an old corn crib moved from a nearby farm and a long narrow frame shed that was part of the property in the 1800s and is now used for storing exhibits. Plantings around the house include two small trees between the sidewalk and the street, lilacs on the west side near the house, flower beds along the foundation, and two rather formal trimmed shrubs flanking the entrance steps.

The exterior of the house is clapboarded. The central entrance has a simple, wide board frame edged with a raised molding. The panelled door is not original. The second-story window above the entrance is a three-part arrangement of rectangular openings reminiscent of a Palladian window. Windows have old glass in twelve-over-twelve and nine-over-twelve sash, which appears to be old if not original. The foundation of the old part is of roughly shaped stone blocks, whereas that of the nineteenth-century extension is brick. Two brick chimneys emerge from just behind the ridge of the wood-shingled roof, slightly inward from the ends of the old house.

The interior is laid out on the central hall plan, with wide openings to the parlor on either side. The stairs are a straight flight with a simply molded rail and plain balusters. The kitchen area to the rear has now been opened up as one large room but was undoubtedly two rooms originally. All four fireplaces are set diagonally and are small, shallow, and constructed of stone blocks. The west parlor has raised panelling on the diagonal fireplace wall with a heavy bolection molding around the opening. There are two parallel beams of unequal size which protrude from the ceiling. The east parlor has a similar fireplace treatment, but no visible beams. In addition, there is a panelled dado around the east room. Both front rooms have raised moldings around the door openings, beaded casings on framing members, and similar corner cupboards. The cupboards are two-part, having a round-arched opening above fitted with three shelves and a rectangular lower section, both of which have raised-panel doors. The rear fireplaces are old, but the associated woodwork does not appear to be original: raised panelling flanking the east and fluted pilasters around the west fireplace. The latter is larger and has a bake oven built into the back wall. The nineteenth-century first-floor rooms and the rooms upstairs are much plainer (part of the garret is unfinished) and these are used for exhibitons, some fitted with glass cases. In general the floors are not original, though the west chamber has old wide-board flooring. The balloon-framed extension contains two large rooms connected by an open archway on the first floor and chambers above.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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Note to Description:

¹The rather archaic appearance created by the raising of the roof led early authors to suppose this house was the 1739 house of the first Nathaniel Allis to settle in the area. The documentary evidence is particularly unequivocal in pointing to a 1785-1789 date, however, as is much of the architectural evidence - the central hall plan, the small size of the fireplaces, and the end chimney foundations, which appear to be integral with the underpinning itself.

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1785-1789 - built BUILDER/ARCHITECT Aaron Blatchley, builder

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Allis-Bushnell House is significant because it was the birthplace and later the home of Cornelius S. Bushnell, one of Madison's most famous sons, and a key figure in the development of ironclad warships during the Civil War (Criterion B). The house is also of architectural interest (Criterion C), as it preserves a number of typical 18th-century interior elements, as well as offering some rather rare and unusual features.

Cornelius S. Bushnell (1824-1896) was born in this house and lived there until the age of 15, when he shipped out on a coastal schooner. This experience must have been of some benefit when he returned to enter the marine hardware business with his brother. He also established a small shipyard in Fair Haven. Around 1858 he bought up the bankrupt New Haven and New London Railroad, which he made a success partly by securing postal contracts in Washington, D.C. That same year, 1858, he inherited this house from his father. Although he continued to live in New Haven, he made frequent trips to the family homestead in Madison and was always present at important town occasions.

After the outbreak of war, Bushnell began developing a design for an ironclad, screw-propelled warship. He decided to consult naval engineer John Ericsson, who showed him a model of an iron gunboat. Ericsson had been unable to sell the idea to the Government, probably because an earlier demonstration of his had resulted in an explosion which killed two Cabinet officers. Bushnell quickly saw the superiority of Ericsson's design and made arrangements to see Lincoln through Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, another Connecticut man. At the same time, he formed a partnership with John Griswold and John Winslow, friends of Secretary of State Seward, to raise money for the ship. Lincoln approved a prototype to be tested at the expense of the private investors. The Monitor was completed in record time and went on to defeat the Confederate ironclad Virginia (or Merrimac) on March 9, 1862. As a result, Ericsson's reputation was rehabilitated, the investors were paid for the Monitor, and Bushnell's Fair Haven shipyard received an order for eight more Monitor-type ships, as well as several contracts for other vessels. Although Bushnell prospered from his association with Ericsson (even naming a son for the engineer), his later career was more spotty, with some great successes and even more dismal failures. Among the more notable of his activities was his instrumental role in promoting the Union Pacific Railroad, serving as a director and lobbying for special favors from Washington. A small station in Nebraska was named for him.

The example of the Monitor and later Union gunships influenced navies throughout the world to develop ironclad ships, one of two great technological advances in naval weaponry of the 19th-century, the other being steam propulsion. Bushnell's contribution to the development of iron warships was more than just money: it was recognizing someone else's good idea and more importantly, knowing the people in power. Bushnell was an American type: ready to risk money (and not only his own),

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bushnell, George E. Bushnell Family Geneology. Nashville, 1945.
- Hopkins, Mary C. "Ellis House, Madison." Colonial Dames Ms., 1911, State Library.
- Jones, Virgil C. The Civil War At Sea. 3 Vols. New York: Holt, Rinehart Winston, 1960.
- Mason, H.F. Randolph. Historic Houses of Connecticut Open to the Public. Chester: Pequot Press, 1973.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1

QUADRANGLE NAME Clinton

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24 000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,8 | 7,0,1 | 6,4,0 | 4,5 | 7,2 | 3,4,0

B | | | | |

 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | |

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The entire property at 853 Boston Post Road is included; Madison Land Records reference Volume 38, page 190.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Bruce Clouette, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

September 12, 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 January 21, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Entered in the
National Register

DATE

2/25/82

Delores Byers
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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looking for new ideas and ventures, and eager to get Government help to insure success, whether it be postal contracts, orders for Navy ships, or special favors for the western railroads. Bushnell is an important figure both for his own accomplishments and as a representative of the 19th-century speculator-businessman. As his birthplace, childhood home, and second home during his active career, the Allis-Bushnell House is an appropriate memorial to Madison's most prominent citizen.

The house was built by Aaron Blatchley sometime between 1785 and 1789, probably after 1787. It is doubtful that Blatchley ever lived there, as he built a nearly identical house nearby which was his homestead from 1785 to 1799. That house, at the corner of Scotland Road, is still standing (though the interior is greatly changed), and has the same triangular chimney foundations and other masonry, cupboards, central hall plan, entrance treatment, and steep roof pitch. The unusually steep pitch is found in many 18th-century houses in Guilford, Madison and Clinton and appears to be a local building custom. The house now known as the Allis-Bushnell House was almost immediately divided into two properties, and four different people owned all or half the house before Nathaniel Allis bought the place in 1793. Because Nathaniel and his daughter Rebecca Anderson lived in the house for more than thirty years, it became known as the Allis House. Nathaniel Allis was a farmer of modest means who supplemented his farming with fishing; the inventory of his estate mentions a codfish line, an oyster rake, and "forty pounds of old junk." In 1825 the house came into the hands of Nathan Bushnell, father of Cornelius, who oddly enough had been living in the other house built by Aaron Blatchley.

Architecturally, the house is a curious mixture of old and new. The central hall plan and unusual diagonal fireplace placement seems quite up-to-date for 1785. At the same time, the plank sheathing, oven in the back of the fireplace, and bolection molding around the fireplace openings are elements usually (perhaps mistakenly) associated with earlier construction. The presence of visible beams in only the one room is another anomaly. Architectural historian Abbott Cummings felt that the house was not inconsistent with the 1785 date, but that it looked **more** like something from the 1760s.¹ Since the date of the house is quite firmly established (early deeds refer to it as "built by Aaron Blatchley"), the stylistic oddities become important. They show the wide range of techniques and customs from which the 18th-century builder could choose, and in this way, the house extends our knowledge of 18th-century building practices. Houses which defy the usual generalizations are useful in pointing out the persistence of tradition long after new ways were common.

The Allis-Bushnell house is also important because of the large amount of material preserved intact. The panelling, dado, and other woodwork, the four unusual diagonal fireplaces, and the two corner cupboards are all original features worthy of study and preservation. The panelling and cupboards are quite simple and straightforward, with no Classical elements or pretensions to

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elegance, yet they are in no sense crude or rustic. For a modest house, the
woodwork provides a refined yet simple living environment. The exterior of the
house has seen more alterations, but even the raising of the roof is not without
interest, as this modification shows one way that early builders could
reconfigure a house, even though this avenue of enlargement was not frequently
used.

¹Notes in the files of the Madison Historical Society