

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 16 1981

DATE ENTERED MAY 15 1981

**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

Jabez Smith House

AND/OR COMMON

Smith Homestead

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

North Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE CT 09

VICINITY OF 2nd-
CODE

COUNTY New London CODE 011

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC *see section 104/6*
- PRIVATE *Deeded to Town*
- BOTH *Life Use by Owner*
- 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:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Town of Groton

STREET & NUMBER

Poquonock Road

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Groton

VICINITY OF

CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Town Clerk's Office- Groton Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Poquoneck Road

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Groton

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, 59 South Prospect St.

CITY, TOWN

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 Jabez Smith House, a well-maintained 1½-story center-chimney cape with a pitched roof and shallow end-gable overhang, sits well back from North Road (Connecticut Route 117) in Groton, on a large open field, part of what is often termed the Smith Homestead. The present house, c. 1783, stands on the foundations of an earlier house, believed to have been built c. 1663 by Nehemiah Smith, the only son of one of Groton's original landholders, the Reverend Nehemiah Smith.¹ The original house burned about the time of the Revolutionary War and was rebuilt,² in all probability, by the great-grandson of Nehemiah², Jabez Smith. Situated opposite Poquonock Lake (once known as Smith² Lake), the house is one of three modest 18th-century houses in the Poquonock Bridge section of Groton. A cluster of 1960s single-family houses lies south of the house while hilly land rising north and east of the house is undeveloped. Interstate 95 is located three-quarters of a mile north of the Smith House.

The earthen cellar, excavated only at the west end of the house, has sloping walls of small flat fieldstones, roughly laid. The chimney foundations also are of small, flat fieldstones. If the account of the house's construction on the foundations of an earlier house is accurate, then the cellarhole, cellar and chimney foundations may date as early as 1663, when Nehemiah Smith² arrived to farm his father's land. The generally rough finish² of the cellar, not squared-off, though possibly due to erosion, tends to support an earlier construction date than the late 18th-century date suggested by the remaining structural and stylistic evidence. Although the cellar is excavated only under half of the house, the exterior foundations, carefully-laid granite blocks, are continuous and unbroken, circling the entire perimeter of the house.

The house is sheathed with clapboards on the north and west walls and with shingles on the south and east walls, perhaps in consideration of rough weather coming off the coast to the south. The roof is finished with wood shingles and the chimney, placed forward of the ridge, appears to have been rebuilt. The fireplaces throughout the house have 20th-century bricks indicating that at some point in this century, much of the masonry above the cellar was rebuilt. A lean-to originally used as a woodshed occupies the center third of the north wall. It is now the back entry to the house with a door on the east side. Just north of the house stands a frame garage, built c. 1960, which is not unsympathetic to the design of the house though it is a saltbox type with a Georgian cupola. Approximately 100 yards east of the house is an outhouse, also of modern construction but which stands on 18th- or 19th-century foundations. Farther east, at the base of Hazelnut Hill, are the fieldstone foundations, approximately 20' by 30', of a barn, probably built during the 19th century. Several fieldstone walls crisscross the surrounding acreage.

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North and south of the house are overgrown fields. Only 2.4 acres of land immediately surrounding the house are landscaped; this portion alone, referred to in the deed as the Homestead Lot, comprises the nominated area. The remaining property on the east side of North Road consists of open land, once cultivated fields but now grown over with scrub. The once-cultivated fields were part of the Smith farm and, before much of the land was inundated in 1916 by the public watershed, extended across North Road, including extensive acreage there.

The facade of the Smith House, the south wall, is simple and undistinguished; four windows with 6-over-6 sash, flank a plain, 19th-century door with a 2-light transom. Above the door is a metal chimney for the central heating system. Elsewhere on the first floor the original fenestration, with 6-over-6 double-hung sash, remains, though at the northwest corner, a 20th-century window has been added. Two 4-over-4 sash windows occupy the center portions of the end gables; on the west wall these are flanked by two, small, square, 4-paned windows.

The interior of the Smith House follows the traditional central chimney floor plan. The interior detailing is simple and modest. Though the brickwork in the fireplace has been replaced, much of the interior finishing is intact. In the kitchen, wide, horizontal boarding sheaths the north wall, while the other walls are horizontally boarded to the chair-rail and finished above with plaster, which, by its texture, appears old and may be original. The plaster on the ceilings too appears to be old. The hearth mantel is a simple shelf molding. To the east of the kitchen is a small bedroom, while the buttery, to the west, has been divided with a modern bath (entered from the parlor) to the south and a modern kitchen to the north. There is a box staircase in the kitchen.

In the parlor, the fireplace wall is finished with simple panelling and cupboards. There, and in the hall, the posts are cased and beaded: they are only shallowly flared. Plaster on the walls and ceiling of the parlor is of the same texture as that in the kitchen, and undoubtedly dates from the same time. As expected in a house of the late 18th century, there is no indication of summer beams.

The attic is partitioned off into two finished rooms, with plastered walls and ceilings, in the center section. These rooms are lit by the two center windows of each gable (those windows on the east wall remain but are boarded over). Both rooms have fireplaces. The

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remainder of the attic is crawlspace except for a small room under the eaves at the northwest corner. It is unplastered, leaving the rough planks exposed. Narrow strips of bark form battens between the vertical planking. The rafters, which are crudely chamfered, are also exposed and a notch chamfered into one allows the door to swing freely into the tiny room. The chamfered notch indicates that the space was always a separate room, while its roughness suggests it may have been a servant's or hired man's quarters.

There are several batten doors which have a primitive appearance and may have been salvaged from the old house when it burned. The doors on the box staircase, one to the cellar and one to the attic are both two boards wide with horizontal battens. The door from the kitchen to the woodshed is formed by one wide and one narrow board, joined with battens. All the others are 4-panel, 19th-century doors.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Family History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1783

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Smith House is significant because it is the only 18th-century farmhouse remaining in the Poquonock Bridge section, once Groton's major farming area. (Agriculture) Despite 19th- and 20th-century development to the south, the open, rural setting of the Smith House is retained in large measure. Architecturally, the house is a well-maintained and -preserved example of the simple, 1½-story cottages of the late 18th century. (Architecture, Criterion C) Historically, the house is important because it is on the site of one of Groton's earliest settlements and because the land, and later, the house, have been held continuously in the same family since 1652. (Exploration/Settlement, Family History) Further, the Smith family have been active and important citizens in Groton throughout its history. (Criterion B)

The progenitor of the Smith family in Connecticut, the Reverend Nehemiah Smith, arrived in Plymouth in 1638, migrated to Stratford, Connecticut by 1644, and later to New Haven, in 1646. There, in 1646, his only son, Nehemiah, was born, baptized by New Haven's prominent theocrat, John Davenport. In 1652, the Reverend Nehemiah, then living in New London, was granted the land at Poquonock, the Smith Homestead. Though the family genealogy states that the first house was built then (1652), this is contradicted later in the same genealogy when Nehemiah₂ is said to have been the first to live at the family farm, to which² he moved in 1663 at the age of 17. At that point, his father was living at Bean Hill in Norwich, where he remained until his death in 1686. Thus, the first house on the Poquonock site was probably built by the son, Nehemiah Smith, either soon after his arrival in 1663 or at some later date.

The house passed to Nehemiah's son, also Nehemiah, and then to his son, Nathan Smith, born in 1702. While Nathan lived there, "about the time of the Revolutionary War, his house was burned down."² An exact date is not mentioned, but the fire must have occurred at some point between 1775 and 1785. In any case, by that time, Nathan Smith was in his seventies and in all likelihood would have been too old to have built the present house. Further, in 1783, Jabez Smith, Nathan's son, born in 1748, received title to the Homestead Farm; this suggests that Jabez may have built the present house, c. 1783, receiving title as compensation. The house has remained in the Smith family ever since. In 1974, the present owner deeded the house and

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Groton Land Records, Town Clerk's Office, Groton Town Hall,
 Groton CT
 Smith, H. Allen, A GENEALOGICAL HISTORY OF THE DESCENDANTS OF THE
 REVEREND NEHEMIAH SMITH OF NEW LONDON COUNTY, CONNECTICUT, Albany,
 Joel Munsell's Sons, 1889.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.4

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

QUADRANGLE NAME New London Quadrangle

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1: 24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 | 748 | 510 | 45B 210.10

B | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | |

D | | |

E | | |

F | | |

G | | |

H | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Volume 285, page 459, Groton Land Records

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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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 **April 13, 1981**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Allan Byers
 for KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Entered in the
 National Register

DATE **5/15/81**

ATTEST: _____ DATE _____

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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the 2.4 acre Homestead Lot to the Town of Groton, with the provision that the house, lot, grounds, trees, and walls be maintained and preserved in perpetuity as a historic site.³ The owner retains life use of the property.

Architecturally, the house is significant as one of the few 18th century houses left in the Poquonock Bridge section of Groton. South of the Smith House on the Post Road are two similar, 1½-story, 18th-century cottages but they are surrounded by 20th-century commercial structures (convenience food stores and the like), while the integrity of the Smith House is unimpaired. The exterior of the house is little altered and many interior details, such as the panelling and plaster-work are preserved. The attic story, with the tiny unfinished northwest corner room, appears to retain its original finish intact. The corner room is in itself an interesting document of the hired man's place in the 18th-century household. If the cellar hole and foundations do date from the 17th century (and their primitive condition suggests they may), then they provide a strong historical link of the house to its site.

Historically, the Homestead is one of Groton's earliest settlements. The granting of the Homestead land to Nehemiah Smith in 1653 predates by two years the first permanent settlement in Groton by Cary Latham, a Thames River ferryman at Groton Bank in 1655. Groton has always had several nodes of settlement rather than a single cohesive center and Poquonock Bridge and the area extending northward were important agricultural areas for the town; within that area, the Smith Farm was one of the most extensive holdings and remained so until the 20th century. Members of the Smith family were not just farmers; many of them were prominent and active in Groton's history while other descendants of the Reverend Nehemiah Smith assumed important roles elsewhere in southeastern Connecticut. Both Nehemiah₂ and Nehemiah₃ held many public offices in Groton as did Nathan Smith. Jabez₃, probable builder of the present house, was for many years a Deacon of the Second Baptist Church of Groton and, in 1800, a Representative to the General Assembly. His only child, Waity, married a cousin, Denison Smith, and they ran a thriving store at Poquonock Bridge during the 19th century; Denison also ran a linen manufactory. Many of the Smiths are buried at the Smith Lake Cemetery, once located on North Road from the house and moved farther east, above Route 1, when Smith Lake became part of the Groton Reservoir.

1. Smith, H. Allen, A GENEALOGICAL HISTORY OF THE DESCENDANTS OF THE REVEREND NEHEMIAH SMITH OF NEW LONDON COUNTY, CONNECTICUT, Albany, Joel Munsell's Sons, 1889, p. 74.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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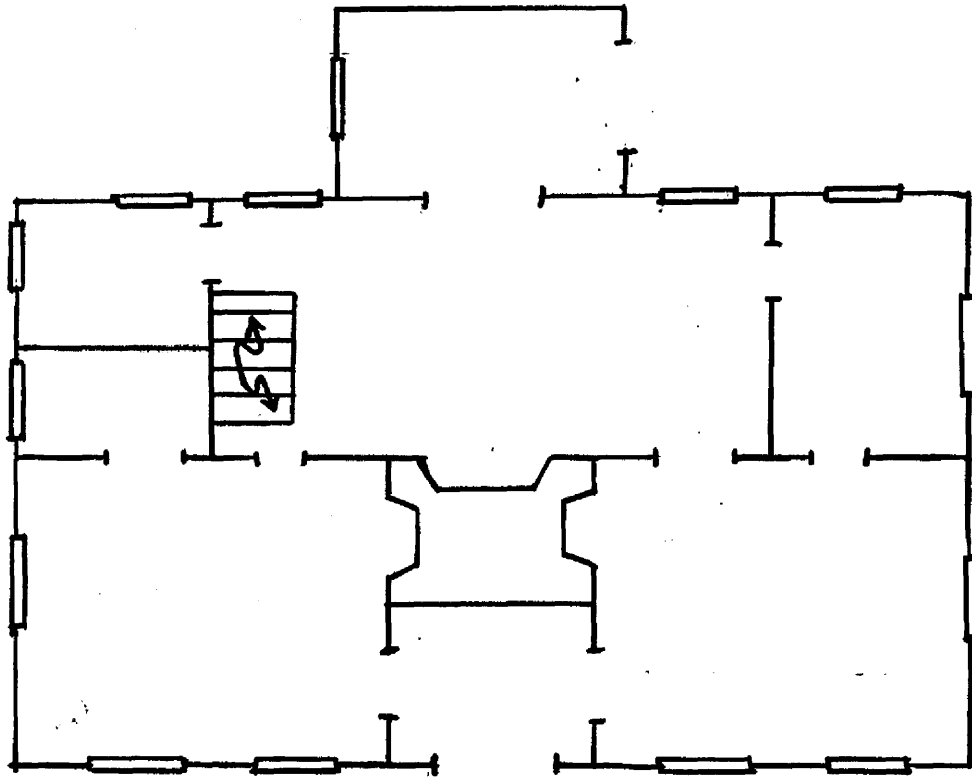
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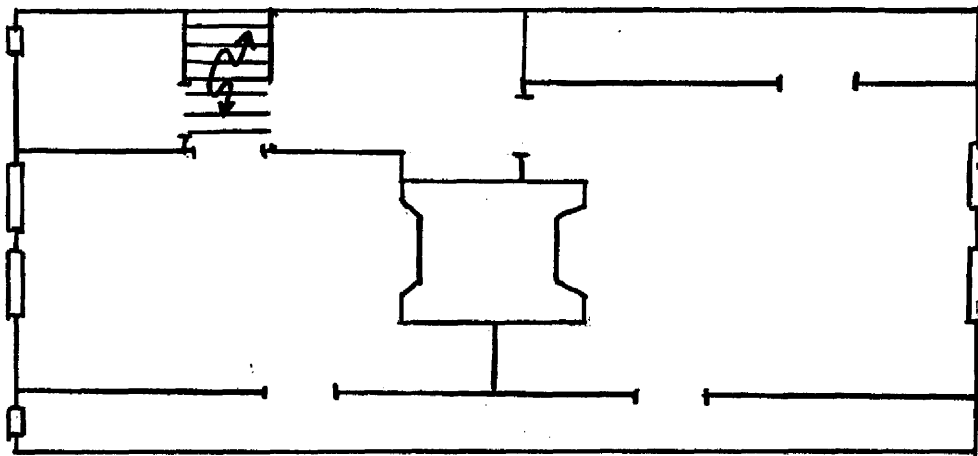
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2. Ibid., p. 76.
 3. Groton Land Records, Volume 285, page 459, Groton Town Hall.



1st Floor Plan



2nd Floor Plan



Smith House
Groton

APR 16 1981

not to scale MAY 15 1981