

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Whitfield, Henry, House

Other Name/Site Number: Old Stone House; Henry Whitfield State Historical Museum

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 248 Old Whitfield Street

Not for publication: NA

City/Town: Guilford

Vicinity: NA

State: CT County: New Haven Code: 007

Zip Code: 06437

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Category of Property

Private:

Building(s): X

Public-Local:

District:

Public-State: X

Site:

Public-Federal:

Structure:

Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

3

0

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

_structures

_objects

3

0

Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 3

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	DOMESTIC	Sub: single dwelling/secondary structure
		RECREATION AND CULTURE
		Sub: museum
Current:	RECREATION AND CULTURE	Sub: museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: COLONIAL/Postmedieval English:

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Stone
Walls: Stone
Roof: Wood shingle
Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Henry Whitfield House is located on Old Whitfield Street, a few blocks south of the Town Green in the Town of Guilford, Connecticut. Guilford Harbor on Long Island Sound is located almost a mile to the south. The house and its two associated outbuildings are situated on a mostly open lot at the corner of Stone House Lane. The property is only about 20 feet above sea level, with low lying marsh or swamp to the rear. Set well back from the street, the house faces generally west, bordered by a low stone wall on all but the east side; the lot itself is bounded along both streets by c. 1935 stone walls. To the rear of the house is a parking area and a former barn, now serving as an office, and a smaller barn of the same vintage, which is used as garage (see attached site plan). Access to all the buildings is provided by a driveway from Stone House Lane.

The Whitfield House has undergone several transformations. Partially rebuilt in 1868, it was first restored in 1902 by Norman Isham. The present building is the product of restorations in the 1930s by J. Fredrick Kelly, which were aimed at reproducing its original c. 1640 appearance. Constructed with thick battered stone walls and two stories in height, it is composed of a main block with a steeply pitched wood-shingled gabled roof with a gabled rear ell at the southeast corner (Photograph #s 1, 2, 3, 4). A shed-roofed stair tower is located at the inside rear corner of the ell where it is attached to the main house. The facade has three bays with an off-center main door and a second door is found on the south wall of the ell. At either end of the main block are exterior stone chimney stacks with shouldered walls. The one on the north end consists of largely original stonework, as does the lower portion of the west wall, but the south end chimney is totally new construction (Photograph #5). The ell stack, which projects from its rear wall, is partially concealed behind a truncated overhanging gable, sheathed in weatherboard (Photograph #6). Appendages at the rear and north side of the ell, which are depicted in a c. 1840s engraving, have been removed. Window openings, with stone sills and wood lintels, vary in size and contain diamond-paned leaded casements dating from the 1930s. Those at the second floor, which are tucked up under the eaves, include a small angled window which cuts across the southwest corner. Small gabled dormers are found on the main roof (two in front, one in back) and the south slope of the ell roof.

Between 1868 and c. 1930, photographs show the house with a more conventional two-story form, which is attributed to remodeling done following a c. 1865 fire (Exhibit A). The walls were higher and the main block was capped with a conventionally pitched slated gable roof. The exterior walls were stuccoed or whitewashed as they may have been originally. Double-hung, multi-paned wood sash was used throughout until about 1900 when diamond-paned leaded windows were installed in the existing openings of the main block (not the present ones). Although a chimney projected near the south end of the main roof, a stack of three windows occupied the center of the south wall. Among other differences in the fenestration was an additional window at the second floor in the third bay of the facade. The southwest corner window and the dormers were not in evidence.

Except for a brief period in the early twentieth century when the great hall was remodeled

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as an open two-story space by Norman Isham, the simple basic floor plan apparently consisted of the present five rooms: great hall and kitchen on the first floor and the three chambers on the second (Exhibit B).¹ The great hall (33' x 15'), which runs the full length of the main block, has large fireplaces at either end (Photograph #s 7, 8). The one on the north end has a 10' 4" opening with a massive wood lintel and stone cheeks laid horizontally. To the right of this fireplace in the north and east walls are stone niches uncovered in the 1930s restoration. A similar but smaller fireplace is located at the south end. Heavy hewn oak joists tranverse the ceiling, and folding partitions, which drop down to separate the hall into two rooms, are hung between the joists at the middle of the room. Except for part of the east wall, which has vertical board paneling, the walls are whitewashed stone, and the window reveals are splayed. The kitchen fireplace in the ell has a vertically panelled wall and the opening is enframed with a broad bolection moulding, all features added when the ell was completely rebuilt in 1932 (Photograph #9). In keeping with seventeenth-century practice, the firebox contains a long wood sapling instead of an iron crane.

Early twentieth-century postcards reveal that the great hall, which was created by 1902, was two stories in height and elaborately panelled in oak (Exhibits C and D). Multiple recessed fielded panels were used as wainscot and fireplace surrounds and the then-plastered walls were covered with green baize. The mantel and overmantel of the north fireplace extended the full width of that wall and up to the level of the former second floor. Except for its projecting surround, the south fireplace was similarly detailed. However, without a stack or flue, it was purely ornamental and the cornice of the overmantel stopped below the diamond-paned window in that wall. Similar multi-paneled wainscot embellished the walls of the stairwell, then contained within the house rather than in the tower. Open to the great hall on its west side, the Jacobean staircase displayed round-arched panelled newel posts, capped with wooden spheres, and a spindled balustrade and balcony railing.

The present stairwell interior is whitewashed stone and contains small windows in the north and east walls. At the head of the stairs, a short hall sheathed in horizontal beaded-edge boards provides access to the three chambers (Photograph #s 10, 11, 12). Although smaller in scale, the chamber fireplaces are similar to those in the great hall. All have exposed wood lintels and there is a raised hearth in the south chamber, also the location of the corner window (Photograph #10). Two recessed stone niches are located in the fireplace wall of the north chamber (Photograph #11). The interior chamber partitions are generally vertically panelled, while the inside of the exterior walls is whitewashed stone (Photograph #12). The ceiling of the east chamber displays a summer beam which matches that of the kitchen below. The north and south chambers have heavy ceiling joists on the same scale as those in the hall below.

The two c. 1870 outbuildings located to the rear (east) of the house are both wood-frame

¹ For clarity, room designations used in the text are those assigned by Kelly on the 1935 plans used in Exhibit B. They are not necessarily the same as the names in use today. For example, currently the kitchen is called the hall chamber.

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construction. The larger one to the south, a former barn, was converted to a caretaker's house in 1923 by J. F. Kelly (Photograph #13). With its five-bay facade, twin interior chimneys, and central doorway with overlights, it resembles an elongated Georgian Colonial house. To the immediate north is a smaller vertical-boarded barn, once located closer to the ell of the house (Photograph #14). In 1932 it was moved and converted to a garage/toolhouse with indoor privies, also by Kelly.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National

Register Criteria:

A X B ___ C X D ___

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions):

A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria:

A and C

NHL Theme(s):

XXXIII. Historic Preservation

D. Regional Efforts: New England

E. The Emergence of Architectural Interest in
Preservation --

Antiquaries, Architects, and Museums

XVI. Architecture

M. Period Revivals -- Colonial Revival

Areas of Significance:

Historic Preservation/Colonial Revival Movement/Social
History

Period(s) of Significance:

1897 - 1939

Significant Dates:

1902, 1932, 1937

Significant Person(s):

NA

Cultural Affiliation:

NA

Architect/Builder:

Norman M. Isham

J. Frederick Kelly

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**Statement of Significance**

Imbued with symbolism and sanctified by antiquity, the Henry Whitfield House stands today as a significant exemplar of the historic preservation movement in New England from about 1897 through the 1930s. One of the earliest house museums in the region, and perhaps the first owned by a state government there, it also embodies an important stage in the evolution of the Colonial Revival as it emerged from the social, intellectual, and political climate of the late Victorian period. At that time, when the Colonial Revival was as much an assertion of American values by a privileged social class as a search for an indigenous architectural style, women became the caretakers of history. Members of a self-appointed American social elite, they reasserted their English heritage by forming associations and restoring old houses as museums. These museums memorialized a cultural heritage, which, forged and tempered by the biases of their class, glorified domesticity and colonial history and expressed a reverence for English architectural and social traditions, as demonstrated by the first restoration of the Whitfield House, carried out between 1902 and 1904 by Noram M. Isham (1864-1943), and its use as a museum in the early decades of the twentieth century. In its present state, a more academic re-creation dating from the 1930s, the work of J. Frederick Kelly (1888-1947), the Whitfield House exemplifies the thrust of the later Colonial Revival, a period which can be characterized by a more professional and scientific approach to historic restoration. The role of women was increasingly marginalized as male restoration architects emerged to dominate the nascent historic preservation field, returning buildings such as the Whitfield House to their earliest "original" condition.

Historic Preservation and the Colonial Revival Movement**Historical Background**

In the rapidly changing world generated by the Industrial Revolution, Americans looked to the past for reassurance and identity. Nowhere was this more evident than in the New England, where the machine age had so radically transformed the landscape and produced a multicultural society. New England was a leading regional voice in the celebration of nature that informed American Victorian literature. Poems such as John Greenleaf Whittier's "Snowbound," a paean to rural domestic life, epitomized the universal nostalgia for the simplicity of the pre-modern world. A similar theme emerged in the *plein air* painting produced in the region's late nineteenth-century artist colonies. Feminine roles were redefined in an emerging middle class; although domesticity was still a primary virtue, women liberated from the drudgery of the farm had leisure time for the arts, history, and religion. Although few were more than dedicated amateurs, there were exceptions, such as Sarah Orne Jewett, whose rural essays were published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. And it is notable that Mary Cassatt, one of the few American women artists who achieved stature in this period, succeeded with domestic portraiture.

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Historicism was rampant.² Few towns were overlooked in an outpouring of antiquarian local history; regional compilations of commemorative biographies traced the geneology of leading families. Claims to colonial ancestry, often boasting titled English roots, burnished the new wealth of the bourgeoisie. With the founding of the Republic well beyond living memory, it was incumbent on New England, the "cradle of liberty," to construct a Revolutionary heritage, as much fable as fact. School children memorized the verses that commemorated the battles of Concord and Lexington and Paul Revere's ride. On the national level, the deification of George Washington as a cultural icon that commenced with Mason Locke Weems' cherry tree fable soon pervaded nineteenth-century popular culture. Lead by Ann Pamela Cunningham, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association restored Mount Vernon in the 1850s, just the first of many houses valued because of associations (not always substantiated) with the "father of our country."

The architectural community also looked to the past for inspiration.³ With elaborate Victorian styles based on European precedent finding less favor with the public, colonial architecture was a source of new ideas. Few architects then were concerned with history or restoration; houses studied for their intrinsic artistic value, rather than their associations, were recorded in sketches, photographs, and measured drawings. New England was the site of one of the earliest new buildings of the Colonial Revival style, the 1859 Arlington Sreet Church in Boston, designed by Arthur Gilman. After the Civil War other architects began to take a professional interest, as evidenced by Richard Michell Upjohn's 1869 address, "The Colonial Architecture of New York and the New England States," to the third annual convention of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), which was published the following year in *Architectural Review and American Builders' Journal*. By 1876 its editors called for measured drawings for publication and National Academy artists were encouraged to paint old houses in their rural settings. Among the several men who were inspired to design Colonial Revival buildings after trips through New England were Robert Peabody, the designer of the Hemenway Gymnasium at Harvard University in 1878, and Charles Follen McKim, who designed a house for A. C. Taylor at Newport in 1885. Although later he roundly denounced "Colonial wedding cakes," even Frank Lloyd Wright experimented with this style in the house he designed in 1892 for George Blossom in Chicago.

Public interest in colonial architecture and culture was sparked by the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia which included Donald Grant Mitchell's Connecticut Building and a New England Log House, neither of which had any real historical basis. A popular feature of the latter building was its old-time New England kitchen, a concept

² As used here, historicism is narrowly defined as a profound or excessive respect for historical institutions and traditions.

³ The following summary is drawn largely from William B. Rhoads, *The Colonial Revival* (Ph. D. dissertation, Princeton University, Department of Art and Architecture, 1974). His extensively researched and detailed analysis remains the definitive work on the movement. See also Rhoads, *The Colonial Revival* (New York: Garland Press, 1977).

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that originated in charity bazaars held during the Civil War in the North.⁴ But the Colonial Revival was truly launched at the Columbian Exposition in 1893 at Chicago. Although famed for its Beaux-Arts "White City," a major influence on urban design and planning, the exposition's Colonial Revival-style state pavilions also attracted much attention. Some states chose grand recreations of old buildings, such as the John Hancock House, which had been demolished in 1868, or replicas, as in the case of Mount Vernon, for their exhibition halls. Several pavilions presented as representative examples of a state's residential architecture, such as the Connecticut's "farmhouse," were often far grander than the originals.

The Development of House Museums

By the turn of the century, historicism and architectural aesthetics converged in the restoration of house museums, a movement that became a virtual crusade. Although historical societies were still male-dominated and men wrote history, it was the women who were keepers of the flame. As the new secular shrines of the Republic, house museums played an important role in the Americanization movement, which originated in the private sector in the 1890s and became public policy by World War I. During this period European immigration almost doubled, producing widespread social and economic tensions that challenged the social and cultural authority of the establishment. In response, nativistic organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Colonial Dames of America were formed. With membership restricted to women of appropriate Anglo-Saxon ancestry, these groups were devoted to informing the public, particularly the foreign-born, about American ideals and values. The Colonial Dames were the first to utilize this cultural strategy, but the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) joined the cause in 1910.

In some cases the use of restorations to educate and assimilate the immigrant and preserve the social order was made explicit, as it was with the first building acquired by the National Society of the Colonial Dames in America, the Van Cortlandt Mansion in New York City. After it was restored in 1897, settlement house workers brought groups of immigrant mothers there. Settlement houses, the focus of the Americanization movement in large cities in the Northeast, even appeared in small towns.⁵ For example, the House of Seven Gables, made famous by Nathaniel Hawthorne, served as a settlement house in the early 1900s, a vehicle "to interpret America to the foreign-descended factory peoples of Salem."⁶ R. T. H. Halsey, the first curator of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum, which opened in 1924, extolled his exhibition as a way to check "the influx of

⁴ These bazaars were held in the Northern states to fund the wartime Sanitary Commission, a forerunner of the American Red Cross.

⁵ The educational value of architecture *per se* was exemplified by the settlement houses themselves, which were often designed in the Colonial Revival style.

⁶ Cited in William B. Rhoads, "Americanization of Immigrants," *The Colonial Revival in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985), p. 350.

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foreign ideas...[that threatened] the foundations of the Republic." ⁷ Henry Ford, son of an Irish immigrant who held compulsory citizenship and language classes for his workers, bought and restored the Wayside Inn in Massachusetts, an icon already enshrined in American culture by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. This building and his Wayside Boys' School initiated foreigners, especially immigrant school children, into the true pioneer spirit of early American life. As the century progressed, larger scale restoration projects celebrated the American way, particularly Colonial Williamsburg, created by John D. Rockefeller. The best known of the projects promoted by local improvement societies in New England was the recreation of Litchfield, Connecticut, as a quintessential colonial village.

The Whitfield House

The Reverend Henry Whitfield (1592-1657), was born in Greenwich, England, in the county of Kent. He was the second son of Thomas Whitfield, a barrister. Although at Oxford he prepared to follow his father in the law, Whitfield became a minister in 1618 and served for 20 years as vicar of St. Margaret's Church in Ockley in Surrey. Until near the end of his pastorate, Whitfield remained staunchly Church of England. Like many ministers at that time, he was eventually caught up in the Puritan movement because of the persecution by Archbishop William Laud, who came to power in 1628 during the reign of Charles the 1st. Many Puritans emigrated to the New World, including several of Whitfield's friends and contemporaries who settled in Connecticut. Among them were John Davenport, who with Thomas Eaton founded a colony at New Haven, and George Fenwick, the founder of the Saybrook Colony. After resigning his position in 1638, Whitfield emigrated in 1639, leading a group of settlers, which may have included as many as 40 men and their families. As was customary at the time, the men drew up a covenant of mutual devotion and support. Since most of the coast of Connecticut was open to English settlement following the Pequot War of 1635, Whitfield's group had their choice of locations. Soon after landing at New Haven, the settlers moved on to found a plantation at Guilford where land was purchased from the sachem of the Menuncatuck tribe, a woman named Shaumpishuh. It is said that construction started on his house in 1639 before winter set in and it was completed the following spring. By 1650, however, Whitfield made plans to return to England. He died there in 1657 and was buried in Winchester Cathedral.

Interest in the Henry Whitfield House as a symbol of antiquity surfaced early in the nineteenth century and extended well beyond the confines of Connecticut. The "Stone House" was mentioned by the peripetetic preacher Timothy Dwight in his New England travel diaries in 1800 and a view of the house appeared in J. W. Barber's *Connecticut Historical Collections* in 1828. ⁸ In 1839 the *North American Tourist* recommended a visit, noting that the house was then in good repair and expressing the hope that it be "religiously preserved." A steel engraving of the house was reproduced in 1863 in the *Ladies'*

⁷ Cited in Rhoads, "Americanization of Immigrants," p. 349.

⁸ Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York*, Vol. 4 (Cambridge, Massachusetts; Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 361.

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Repository: Devoted to History and Religion, a popular women's magazine distributed throughout the North. Drawn by a tourist with an antiquarian bent, it illustrated his article entitled "The Oldest House in the United States." In the last quarter of the century, Palfrey's *History of New England* of 1860 included plans and views drawn by Ralph D. Smith, a Guilford resident, and the Whitfield House had become such a tourist attraction that souvenirs were produced and sold.⁹ Among them were German-made plates with a view of the house and postcards such as those reproduced here. More remarkable were wooden crosses made from an old beam taken in 1868 when the house was partially rebuilt, which underscores how this kind of tourist attraction was venerated in the nineteenth-century.

Development of the Whitfield Museum

In 1897 the Whitfield House was "rescued" by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in Connecticut, a chapter founded in 1893 shortly after the formation of the national organization. At the time, the property was heavily mortgaged and the much-altered house threatened by demolition. After meeting in Guilford in 1897, the Connecticut chapter was instrumental in arranging the purchase of the Whitfield House by the State of Connecticut for a state museum. Legislation was passed in 1899 and the state took possession in 1900. Only part of the \$8500 purchase price came from a legislative appropriation. Funding also was provided by The Colonial Dames and the Town of Guilford. Although trustees were appointed by the governor, the chapter continued to play a significant role as sponsor until at least 1935.¹⁰ It hired Norman Isham, the original restoration architect in 1897, presented his plans to the trustees in 1901, and provided most of the funds for his program, which began in 1902. The museum, dedicated with appropriate pomp and ceremony, formally opened its doors to visitors in 1904. One of the earliest of its type in the region, it preceded the restoration of the Paul Revere House or the House of Seven Gables in Massachusetts by almost a decade.

Restorations of the Whitfield Museum

Two leading architects involved in the restorations were Norman M. Isham, an architect-historian hired to plan the first, and J. Frederick Kelly, who carried out the later work. The legislature continued to approve an annual maintenance appropriation and in 1923

⁹ Smith's plans also appeared in the *History of Guilford*, published after his death, and in Edward E. Atwater's *History of New Haven to the Present Time* (New York: W. W. Munsell & Co., 1887).

¹⁰ There was some ambiguity between the roles of the trustees and the Colonial Dames, which none of the surviving documentation really clarifies. Although the trustees had the legal authority and responsibility, the museum was "under the auspices of the Connecticut Chapter of the Colonial Dames of America," and remained so until the years just preceding Guilford's Tercentenary," according to *Henry Whitfield House 1639 Guilford, Connecticut*, 1957, p. 9. One can speculate that the Connecticut chapter was not in accord with either the philosophy of the last of Kelly's restorations, in which they apparently did not actively participate, or proposals to place the museum under the Park and Forest Commission of the state, but it is not known why the organization ultimately ended its sponsorship.

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provided \$10,000 to fund the conversion of a large barn on the property to the caretaker's house. This work was designed and supervised by Kelly, who is also credited with moving the smaller barn and restoring it at its present location in 1932. Kelly had already completely rebuilt the ell by 1932 and in 1935 began his major restoration of the rest of the house, which cost \$26,000. Remarkably, except for the architect's fee of \$1200, it was funded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), one of the chief Depression-era programs of the federal government. Even though it was a state building, restoration of a house was quite a departure from the agency's more typical program of construction of public buildings and may be a singular event in the annals of the WPA.

Isham and Kelly, though born almost a generation apart, were members of the new emerging breed of architect-historians, whose interest in history evolved out of their study of colonial buildings. They had similar backgrounds and careers. Neither man had formal architectural training. Isham apprenticed in the office of Alpheus Morse (later Alfred Morse) in Providence, Rhode Island, after completing his undergraduate education at Brown University. Although Kelly's background included travelling fellowships under the aegis of Richard Henry Dana, a visiting lecturer at the Yale School of Architecture during 1908-1916, he had attended Yale's School of Fine Arts. Both men were authors and active members of historical societies, and on occasion, Isham also lectured on architectural history at Brown and the Rhode Island School of Design.

Norman M. Isham was one of the first professionals to be involved with architectural restoration in New England. Establishing his practice in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1892, he developed a national reputation and was elected a fellow of the A. I. A. in 1913. Among his most important commissions were his role as consulting architect (1922-1924) for the Colonial rooms in the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and the later restorations of the MacPheadris-Warner House in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and the Delaware State House. With Albert F. Brown, he authored *Early Rhode Island Houses* and *Early Connecticut Houses: An Historical and Architectural Study*; the latter featured the Whitfield House. J. Frederick Kelly, who was somewhat more narrowly associated with Connecticut, was born in Lowville, New York. He came with his family to Hamden, Connecticut, in order to attend nearby Yale University. The state's leading restoration architect, Kelly maintained a practice in New Haven with his brother Henry, who took over the firm after his death. Though he established himself as a designer in the Colonial Revival style with his New Haven Colony Historical Society Building of 1929, much of Kelly's work consisted of historic restorations, including the Webb House in Wethersfield, Connecticut, owned by the Colonial Dames. He also restored old houses for private ownership that he dismantled and moved to new sites in Connecticut. Kelly's well-known book *Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut* was first published in 1924. One of the founding members of the Walpole Society, an antiquarian organization, Kelly also was active in the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA). A contributor to its quarterly magazine, *Old-Time New England*, in 1934 he headed a SPNEA committee to acquire historic properties, especially those in the "hands of foreigners."

Somewhat dismayed at how little he had to work with after the remodeling of 1868, Isham

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noted in 1897 that "the house that Whitfield built can hardly be said to exist ... save as a shell."¹¹ Although he soon discovered the relatively abundant source material and consulted the Smith plans and views, Isham's version of the original plan was based on, in his words, "tradition, inherent reasonableness, and likeness to old English examples."¹² His perspective cutaway view with the great two-story hall, which appeared in *Early Connecticut Houses*, clearly relied simply on medieval precedent. Indeed, such a configuration allowed him to install the large exhibition hall so desired by the sponsors or trustees, despite any evidence to the contrary. The fireplace in the north chimney at the second floor may have been overlooked, as it was presumably filled in after the c. 1865 fire, but surely Isham was aware of other compelling evidence for a second floor in this space, especially an integral stone ledge, which supported the second-floor joists. However, he took the position that the great hall was part of Whitfield's original plan and that this room was not divided into two floors until at least 1659, perhaps as late as the Revolution.

Kelly's association with the Whitfield House began in 1921, when he did some preliminary investigation of the ell, which was soon followed by conversion of the barn. By 1929 his plans for rebuilding the ell to "original" dimensions were approved by the trustees and the work was completed in 1932. In this reconstruction, Kelly was fully confident that no original work was destroyed since the ell had been totally rebuilt in 1868. His restoration of the main block began with removal of all of Isham's work. When the interior of the exhibition hall was gutted, new physical evidence was uncovered, such as the existence of two fireplace openings in the north stack, both of which had the remains of fire-damaged wood lintels, leading to Kelly's conclusion that this space had always contained two floors. All the information uncovered was recorded in his notebook, now in the museum archives, complete with detailed sketches and measurements.

Because of his meticulous investigations, Kelly found other major points of disagreement with Isham. Among them were the pitch of the roof and the location of the stair tower. With his external stair tower and steeply pitched roof, Kelly's position was clear. In Isham's earlier concept, he had completely discounted an original 60-degree roof pitch (using a cross-section drawing to demonstrate its impossibility) and placed the stair within the house. Furthermore, though Kelly believed there was sufficient physical evidence to restore the corner window on the second floor, Isham thought the window was simply a mistaken idea of Smith's.

There were some areas of agreement between them. Both architects believed that there had been folding partitions in the main room, a concept promoted by various historic owners. It had originated in the idea that the house was used for church meetings in Whitfield's time. The partitions would not be incorporated until the Kelly restoration, perhaps because such an installation was difficult, if not impossible, in Isham's two-story

¹¹ Norman M. Isham and Albert F. Brown, *Early Connecticut Houses* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), p. 113.

¹² Isham, *Early Connecticut Houses*, p. 121.

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exhibition hall. Similarly, they accepted the proposition that the north chimney was matched on the south end, again more on the basis of oral tradition since most of the nineteenth-century views were of the northeast side of the house. In Kelly's report to the trustees in 1933, he attempted to justify this feature by archaeological investigations carried out along the south elevation and part of the west facade. Though Isham had to deal with the existing false chimney cap and tier of windows placed there in the 1860s, he not only knew that Smith's drawings and plans showed no south stack or fireplace, he did not include these features in his "as found" floorplan of 1896. ¹³

The restorations pose an interesting question: how could Isham and Kelly have come to such radically different conclusions when they worked from the same documentary sources and essentially the same physical evidence? While evidently both architects were in accord with the goals of their sponsors/clients, it is clear that they differed on philosophical grounds. Isham came out of the early school of restoration in which aesthetics was the overriding factor; buildings were glorified and "improved" rather than restored. Many interiors of New England house museums still reflect this preservation philosophy in their over elaborate paneling and detailing. Kelly, even with his fine arts education, was much more of a restoration architect, at least as the term applied in the 1930s. But because the house was unique, even Kelly's restoration was somewhat conjectural, and like Isham, he relied heavily on historical English medieval and/or American colonial precedents. Not only were there no other extant stone houses in Connecticut for comparison but also most early seventeenth-century wood-framed examples had not survived. Apparently neither Isham or Kelly was aware of a possible more compelling precedent in the fortified stone houses of Northumberland, England, or the bastiles of the Ulster plantations, which is the opinion of more recent scholars. ¹⁴ As a result, both restorations conceptualized and reinforced long-standing oral traditions, which, through repetition and publication, had become fact. For example, the building's use as a meetinghouse, a tradition since discounted, helped rationalize Isham's decision to create a two-story great hall. Kelly's restoration essentially repudiated Isham, re-emphasizing the defensive aspects of the house, as well as its ancestry, making the museum that much more of a "symbol of the first courageous people that settled on the shore of Long Island Sound." ¹⁵

Interpretation of the Whitfield Museum

The Whitfield House was first interpreted to the public through a series of four editions of a pamphlet printed from 1902 to 1929. Several more appeared just after World War II and most recently in the 1970s. The last, a "historama booklet" with color plates, was

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 118, figure 54.

¹⁴ Anthony Garvan, *Architecture and Town Planning in Connecticut* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p. 43. See also Beverly Anderson, "Foundations: Contributions to the Design Origins of the Henry Whitfield House," typescript (Guilford: Collections of the Henry Whitfield State Historical Museum, 1991).

¹⁵ *The Henry Whitfield House: A State Historical Museum* (Southborough, Massachusetts: Yankee Colour Corporation, 1979) p. 3.

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published in 1979 after administration of the museum was transferred to the Connecticut Historical Commission. Typically the early guidebooks were concerned with the history of the house, its establishment as a museum, and the collections. As expected, the history is characteristically romanticized and anecdotal, emphasizing the various legendary uses of the house as a church, meeting hall, and garrison. Despite considerable architectural description and the use of views and plans, the evolution of the house is not interpreted from an architectural historian's point of view. Obviously none of the authors were prescient enough to address the Colonial Revival as a social or an architectural phenomenon but many clues are provided to the culture climate that produced the house museum.

Although rooms were set aside for special purposes, such as meetings of the Colonial Dames, or for the caretaker's quarters (then in the ell), the exhibition hall created by Isham and some of the rest of the "apartments" were open to public view. As in most house museums of the period, the feminine sphere was emphasized in all but the clearly masculine "... long high room of Whitfield's time." Although as a state museum it became a repository for a diverse collection of Connecticut curiosities, artifacts of pre-industrial domestic skills, such as spinning wheels and looms, also were prominently displayed. In fact, the guidebook of 1908 makes prominent mention of an exhibit on the complete history of the flax industry, and a later one featured weaving patterns of "olden days."

According to the early guidebooks, nothing was lost by gutting the front of the house; the newly installed exhibition hall had "the appearance which Whitfield could, had he wished, have given it." The contrast between its elaborate treatment and the simplicity of the rest of the rooms, clearly not lost on the trustees, presented an opportunity for a short, somewhat convoluted discourse on the social nature of the early commonwealth. It neatly captures the ambiguities inherent in the promotion of democratic principles by an elite group. Although most of the museum expressed "a wonderful equality of condition," the reader is quickly assured that by no means had this meant an end to aristocracy. Indeed, such a "genuine and valuable" colonial class was fostered "among men and women closely akin, of graceful, even courtly bearing," clearly a description of the ancestors of the sponsors and probably most of the trustees. ¹⁶

Not too surprisingly, starting with Whitfield, the aristocratic associations of the various owners, however remote and tenuous, were stressed. While his status as a clergyman added to his luster, Whitfield was clearly not a major figure in the Puritan pantheon that was then evolving. Offered instead to bolster his standing were his associations with and endorsement by divines of greater reknown, such as Cotton Mather, and his friendship with noted English gentlemen. His social position as educated gentry

¹⁶ The same phrasing appeared in the first four editions of the guide, published from 1902 to 1929.

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was made explicit: "We are expressly told that Mr. Whitfield ... was never obliged to labor with hands...."

More difficult for the trustees was the problem of Whitfield as a flawed hero, an inescapable conclusion given the information available to them at the time. There was no question that he left Guilford and returned to England, abandoning his pastoral flock within a relatively short time, and surviving records seemed to indicate that he also left his wife, Dorothy, in Guilford.¹⁷ In early publications, ill health or homesickness was the reason given to gloss over these defections. By 1935, in a pamphlet describing the restoration, a curious phrase (set off from the text by quotes but not cited) refers to "...strong inducements held out for his return to England."¹⁸ Only recently have the official guidebooks recognized the fact that many Puritan gentlemen returned to England during the Counter Migration (though few were clergymen). Indeed there was little reason for the gentry to stay in the relatively primitive New World after Oliver Cromwell came to power at the end of the English Civil War. With Charles I deposed and beheaded, those who returned were able to live comfortably, secure in their persons and land.

Conclusion

In summary, the Whitfield House, as it was restored and interpreted, clearly embodied the complex artistic and cultural climate that produced the historic preservation movement. At the turn of the century, house museums such as this, which arose out of an anti-modern historical consciousness, were imbued with mythic perceptions and traditions that were promoted and authenticated by their restorations. Although the house museum movement can be perceived as an xenophobic expression of a beleaguered social class struggling to survive in a changing world, of special importance is the socially sanctioned role that it played for women. Today, after almost a century of use as a museum, the true legacy of the Old Stone House is recognized. No longer venerated simply for its great age, local historical associations, or unique construction, the Henry Whitfield State Historical Museum is known throughout New England for its highly significant seminal role in the intertwined historic preservation and Colonial Revival movements.

¹⁷ The assumption that Dorothy Whitfield remained in Guilford was based on a civil suit against her as owner of the property after Whitfield's death. However, since she did not actually appear in court and was represented by an attorney, the evidence is not conclusive, and it is now believed that she returned to England with her husband.

¹⁸ Cited in Walter Steiner, "The Henry Whitfield House," in *The Henry Whitfield House in Guilford Connecticut with Plans for Its Restoration* (Published by the Trustees, 1935), p. 10.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

X Previously Listed in the National Register.

___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.

___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # _____

___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

___ State Historic Preservation Office

X Other State Agency : Collections: Henry Whitfield State Historical Museum

___ Federal Agency

___ Local Government

___ University

X Other (Specify Repository): Connecticut State Library

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 9

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting

18 694600 4571030

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property is described in a deed recorded in the Guilford Land Records, Book 56, Page 419, August 20, 1900, being the same property delineated on the attached site map of Lot 14 reproduced from the Guilford Tax Assessor's Map 33.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries encompass all the land and buildings associated with the nominated property during its period of significance.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant

Org.: Cunningham Associates Ltd.

Street/#: 37 Orange Road

City/Town: Middletown

State: Connecticut

ZIP: 06457

Telephone: (860) 347 4072

Date: November 30, 1995

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List of Photographs**Photographer:** Jan Cunningham, Cunningham Associates Ltd.**Date:** 6/95**Negatives on file:** Connecticut Historical Commission

1. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, facade, facing SE
2. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, facade and north elevation, facing SE
3. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, north and west elevations, facing SE
4. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, facade and south elevation, facing NE
5. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, facade and south elevation, facing NE
6. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, rear (east elevation), facing SW
7. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, great hall, facing N
8. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, great hall, facing S
9. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, kitchen in ell, facing E
10. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, south chamber, facing S
11. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, north chamber, facing NE
12. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, north chamber, facing SE
13. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, museum office building, (former barn), facing E
14. WHITFIELD, HENRY, HOUSE, barn/garage, facing E