

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUN 19 1979
DATE ENTERED AUG 22 1979

**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 Thomas Avery House

AND/OR COMMON Smith-Harris House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Society Road

CITY, TOWN East Lyme VICINITY OF Niantic COUNTY New London CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT #2
STATE Connecticut CODE COUNTY New London CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED (temporarily)	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" 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 Town of East Lyme

STREET & NUMBER 108 Pennsylvania Avenue

CITY, TOWN East Lyme VICINITY OF STATE Connecticut 06357

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Office of the Town Clerk, East Lyme Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER 108 Pennsylvania Avenue

CITY, TOWN East Lyme STATE Connecticut 06357

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE State Register of Historic Places

DATE 1979 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut State Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Hartford STATE Connecticut

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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 Thomas Avery House (1845/1846) is located in the Town of East Lyme, north of Niantic Center (See Item #10, Page 2). The house is approximately one-half mile south of Interstate 95 and one-half mile west of Flanders Road (Connecticut Rt. 161), in the small valley plain between the Oswegatchie Hills and Ceaser Mountain. The house is set back from Society Road approximately 500' on a tree-lined gravel drive.

The original farm included at least 140 acres, which was purchased by the Town of East Lyme in 1955. Part of this parcel is currently being used for light industry, and another was utilized as the site of two town schools (see Item #10, Page 2). Approximately 25 acres of undisturbed land to the west of the road leading to the house, and to the north and west of the building, comprises the nominated property. This land provides an important setting for the house, consistent with its historical use as a farm. Moreover, this parcel has intrinsic importance itself because of its continued agricultural use until recent years, and its archeological potential.

There has been residential development in close vicinity, and Route 161 is commercially developed near the I-91 interchange. However, due to its distance from the road, and the undeveloped land immediately surrounding it, the Thomas Avery House maintains a degree of isolation. The East Lyme Junior High School and Lillie B. Haines Elementary School to the east are visually screened by plantings and trees along the drive. An open playing field extending to Robbins Brook is directly east of the house.

Important agricultural artifacts remain on the property. Near the turn-around next to the house is a small frame corn crib, the remains of the stone wall of an ice-house built into a bank of ground, and the foundation of a large barn. An old well under the new porch may yield archeological information; artifacts found on hilly ground to the northwest suggest the presence of additional areas for investigation. An untended orchard on a rise of ground northeast of the house, and stone walls which crisscross the property to the north, suggest early field patterns and land use.

The Thomas Avery house is a good rural example of the vernacular Greek Revival style, and is extremely well-preserved. The house is a two-and-one-half story, rectangular block (23'x45') with a one-story kitchen wing (10' in length). (Photo #1, 3 & 4) The main facade has a pedimented gable. The house rests on a full basement and a foundation of long slabs of local granite. The walls retain original clapboarding, with horizontal flush boarding on the facade. The roof is of cedar shingles, replaced during the recent restoration.

The three-bay wide facade with side entrance displays typical architectural treatment of the period. (Photos #5, 6 & 7) Pilasters at the corner with squared, recessed panels support an entablature with plain architrave and frieze. The deeply projecting pediment of the gable encloses a raised triangular moulding. The square gable window has a geometric pattern of small rectangular lights in wooden muntins. The entrance porch is a replacement, carefully reproduced from an early photograph. The square columns repeat the recessed panels employed on the corner pilasters, and support a heavy, clearly articulated entablature. The six-panelled doorway is framed by sidelights and a transom.

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Thomas Avery House
East Lyme, Connecticut

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The exterior is treated in a simple but confident manner. The entablature is continued on all walls under the heavy cornice. Plain corner-boards define the edges of the wall surfaces. The windows have original, double-hung sash with six-over-six lights; the sash on the rear windows on the second floor have been altered.

Attached to the rear of the building is a one-story kitchen wing with a lean-to, slightly-pitched roof. (Photo #2) At the northwest corner is a small, one-story, open porch with a similar roof, a recent design by the restoration architect, which replaces in part a one-story deteriorated ell (probably 18th century in origin).

The interior has a plan commonly found in a long, side-hall house. (See Item 7, Page 4.) The stairhall opens to a small parlor on the left and a similarly-sized room to the rear. The latter, in turn, connects to a narrow side room to the left, and a kitchen to the rear. The kitchen provides access to a back stairway, back entranceway, and the kitchen-pantry rear wing.

The interior finish work is of uniformly high quality. Although not elaborate, it displays careful craftsmanship, good proportion, and a consistent use of the clear, clean lines and bold mouldings of the Greek Revival style. The stairhall illustrates the use of flat surfaces and crisp lines. (Photo #10) The balusters of the staircase are sleek, narrow at the top and widening to simple turnings at the base. The thin, simple handrail terminates in a curving spiral with a carved snake's head at the newel post. (Photo #11) The front parlor is distinguished by relatively extensive decoration (Photo #8 & 9) All three windows and the door have wide casings with projecting mouldings at the edge, eared at the top. The fireplace is plain, with a simple, projecting mantel. The walls also are plain, with a wide baseboard (11"), plastered walls, and simple cornice moulding. The doors and six-panelled, with lengthened upper panels as on the entrance door.

Elsewhere on the first floor a similar wall treatment is employed; however, the door and window casings have flat mouldings and are not eared. Doors have clearly defined recessed panels. In a few cases, plasterboard replaces the original plaster, removed when electric wiring was installed during the restoration. Additional notable features are original hardware and small, built-in closets.

The two kitchen rooms are exceptional for the survival of early features. In the lean-to kitchen are built-in shelves and a sink. The rear chimney stack has been largely rebuilt to comply with current fire regulation, but accurately reproduces the large bake oven.

The second floor plan is nearly identical to that of the first floor and employs similar finishes. The rear rooms have been converted to quarters for the resident custodians in a sensitive manner. An interesting feature is wide boards with beaded edges dating from the 18th century, reused to finish the stairway to the attic and parts of the attic itself. These may originate from an earlier house which stood on

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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the site, part of which survive in the old ell aforementioned.

The restoration program, begun in 1974, under the direction of Architect Robert Carter, consisted primarily of consolidating original materials. A security and fire-prevention system, and electric hear and wiring have been installed in a relatively unobtrusive manner.

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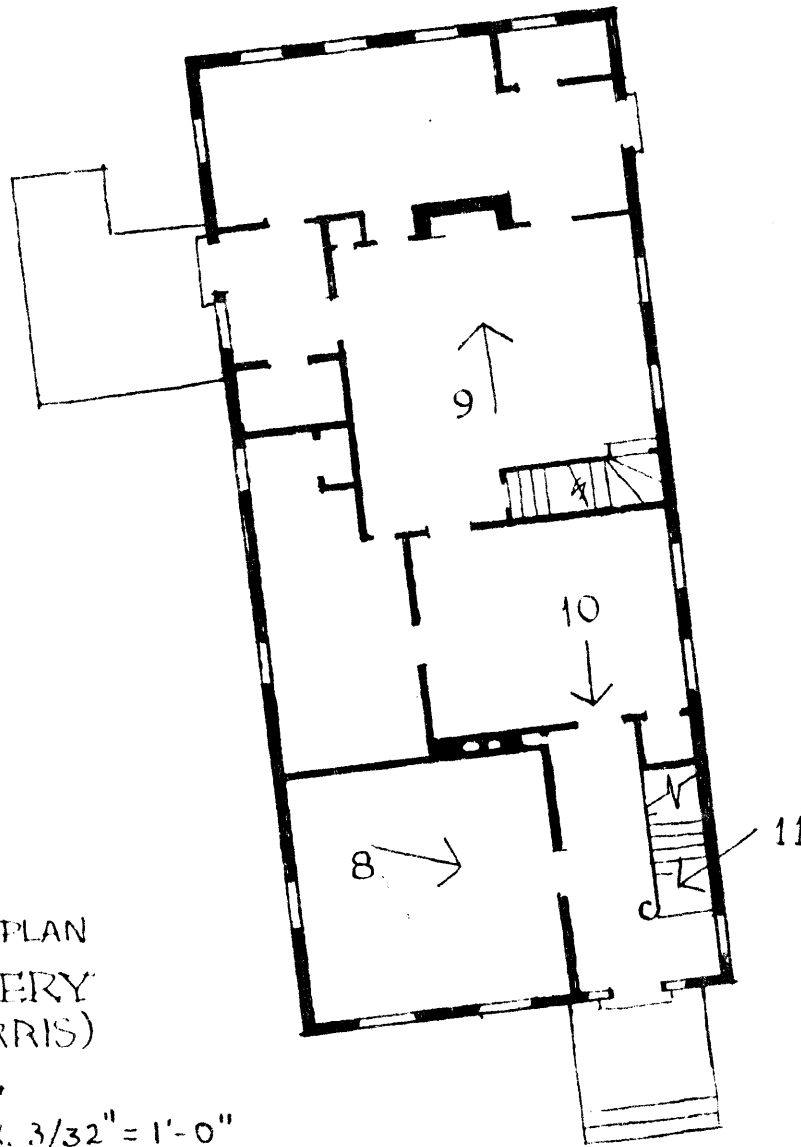
DATE ENTERED

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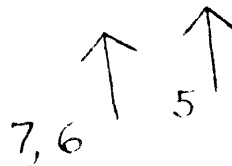
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN
THOMAS AVERY
(SMITH-HARRIS)
HOUSE

scale: approx. $3/32" = 1'-0"$



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 checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Thomas Avery House (commonly known as the Smith-Harris House) is significant (criteria c) because it is a very good and well-preserved example of a Greek Revival style rural house, with distinctive detail. Together with its surroundings, the Avery House is an important illustration of an early settlement and agricultural life in East Lyme.

The Avery House has the temple form, clean, crisp lines, and bold mouldings which characterize the Greek Revival style. Typical also is the pedimented gable with window. Clearly vernacular in design and execution, the house reflects the hand of a master builder comfortable with the aesthetic of the style. Indicative of the relative wealth of its owners, the house is distinguished from similar examples by its solidity of form and decoration. Notable features are the flushboarding of the facade, full Doric entablature, and on the interior, the eared windows and doors of the parlor and finely-turned stairway. Equally important is the nearly intact survival of the kitchen facilities, including sink and built-in shelves.

The house and grounds are also important remnants of a small farming settlement in 18th-19th century East Lyme. The greater part of the present Town of East Lyme was originally the Second or East Ecclesiastical Society of Lyme. The meeting house of the Society was located just southwest of the Avery House and nearby were the parsonage and cemetery.

The Averys were active farmers in the immediate area since at least 1751 when Jonathan Avery (1737-1805) acquired four pieces of land adjoining that "laid out to the Meeting House" from Daniel Smith. A "dwelling house" on this property may have survived in part as the old ell to the Thomas Avery House (removed during the restoration due to its deteriorated condition). Jonathan Avery's son, Abraham (1764-1834) inherited part interest in the farm of his father and consolidated full title from the other heirs between 1856 and 1865. It is likely that Thomas built the now-standing Greek Revival house in 1845 or 1846. A newspaper, The Christian Freeman, dated August 7, 1845, was found behind the plaster in the parlor during restoration work. Moreover, an 1846 deed from Thomas Avery, giving life rights to parts of "my now dwelling house" to his sisters, includes a description of rooms in conformance to the existing plan. In the Land Records of East Lyme is a Quit Claim deed from John Clark of East Lyme (for \$125) to Thomas Avery for "a Dwelling House that I built on said Avery's land in the Town of East Lyme Southerly of the Congregational Meeting House in said Town." It is dated July 20, 1849, and may refer to this house. The location given is not consistent with that of this house; however, this may be an error in transcription.

The farm remained in the Avery family until 1877 when it was sold to William H. Smith. Smith increased the extent of the property as far east as Robbins Brook. In 1921

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lyme Land Records 1719-1839

East Lyme Land Records 1839-1955

Marvin, Althea C., "History of the Niantic Community Church: 250th Anniversary, 1710-1969"

Little, J. David, "Revolutionary Lyme: A Portrait, 1765-1783" (Town of Old Lyme, 1976)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approximately 30

QUADRANGLE NAME Niantic, Connecticut

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 | 732920 | 4580780

B 18 | 732800 | 4580760

C 18 | 732800 | 4581160

D 18 | 732660 | 4581470

E 18 | 732810 | 4581440

F 18 | 733000 | 4581380

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The boundary of the nominated property is shown as a dotted line on the accompanying map entitled: "Site of Smith-Harris House, East Lyme, Conn." and corresponds to the two western-most lots of a survey map titled "Plan indicating land acquired by Town of East Lyme," 10/5/68, on file at the Office of the Town Engineer, East Lyme

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

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Barbara Ann Cleary, Consultant

ORGANIZATION The Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

DATE April 3, 1979

STREET & NUMBER 27 Washington Street

TELEPHONE (203) 346-1646

CITY OR TOWN Middletown

STATE Connecticut

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL x

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 June 12, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

[Signature]
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 8-22-79

ATTEST: [Signature]
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 8/20/79

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Smith transferred title to his brother, Herman W. Smith, and to his nephew, Frank Harris, who sold the house to the Town of East Lyme in 1955. Mr. Harris' and Mr. Smith's windows occupied the house, which is commonly known in the town as the Smith-Harris House, until the 1970s. The house remained without electricity or plumbing until approximately 1970 (when it was minimally equipped with a water-pump hookup to the kitchen sink). Consequently many original interior features are preserved intact.

The land immediately around the house has traditionally been used for small gardens, orchards, animal pens, storage and processing, while the major fields were primarily to the west (now partly used for other purposes). An 1845 deed to Thomas Avery locates a garden to the northeast of the house, another "West Garden" to the northwest of the house, a waggon house, and a cowyard to the southwest (East Lyme Land Records, Vol. 1, p. 466). In the mid-19th century the Averys raised cattle and sold dairy products. The Harrises continued to operate a small-scale dairy and produce farm, and the mid-20th century diary of Frank Harris (owned by the Smith-Harris Commission) documents the farm's use in detail during this period.

Although the farm has now diminished in size, with some land to the north appropriated for Interstate 95 and a piece to the east used for two East Lyme schools, the remaining, undisturbed, grounds preserve early field patterns and outbuildings. Under the direction of the Smith-Harris House Commission, the house has been carefully and thoughtfully restored for use as a museum open to the public. Possible plans for the property include returning the land to its traditional use as a working farm. The well-preserved house, the continued agricultural use of the land since the 18th century, the remains of early outbuildings, and the existence of documents and archeological evidence which indicate historic land use create an excellent opportunity for the interpretation of this Greek Revival farmhouse and historic landscape.

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SITE OF SMITH-HARRIS HOUSE, EAST LYME, CONN.

NO SCALE

