

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED JAN 20 1982
DATE ENTERED MAR 2 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 Abel H. Fish House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Corner of Buckley Hill Road and Rathbun Hill Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN

Salem

VICINITY OF

2nd

STATE

Connecticut

CODE
09

COUNTY
New London

CODE
011

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME William G. & Marjorie A. Moore

STREET & NUMBER
280 King Street

CITY, TOWN

Armonk

VICINITY OF

STATE

NY 10504

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Salem Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER Town Office Building, Rte. 85 RFD 3

CITY, TOWN

Colchester

STATE

CT 06415

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1980

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

___EXCELLENT
GOOD
___FAIR

___DETERIORATED
___RUINS
___UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

___UNALTERED
ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
___MOVED DATE_____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Surrounded by acres of open fields, stone walls and woodlands, the Abel H. Fish House sits far back from the road in a rural area of Salem, Connecticut. A long driveway, formerly a country lane, leads up to the house, but the main facade is on the south side away from the road, looking out over the fields and woods. The house is 2½ stories high, dates from the 1830s, and is Greek Revival in inspiration. It is of post-and-beam construction and has a clapboarded exterior. The main facade is four bays wide with the entrance offset to the west. The panelled door is surrounded by sidelights and a transom, with the whole enclosed by plain pilasters supporting a simple entablature. The lintel over the doorway is an accurate restoration of the original, which had left a visible outline. There are plain corner pilasters, a full entablature encircling the building, and on the west gable end, facing the driveway, a full return of the cornice and a triangular window lighting the attic. Windows have plain frames and their original six-over-six sash. The brick central chimney was rebuilt from the attic up and is somewhat reduced in proportion from the typical stack of the period. The underpinning is fieldstone below grade with granite blocks above.

Appended to the east end of the house is a separately-framed 1½-story wing with two small rooms. The wing appears somewhat older than the main house: its hewn ridgepiece and plank walls suggest a date of about 1800; the main house has walls formed with studs and sawn roof rafters simply butted together. The south wall of the wing has been partly recessed to form a porch and there is a picture window lighting one room. Like the main house, the wing has a wood-shingled roof and a tall brick stack partly re-built. Attached is a modern breezeway leading to a garage. The only outbuilding is directly south of the house, a small barn of uncertain age. It has a rubble foundation, board siding, and a shed-roofed addition to the south.

Because of the placement of the entrance, the plan of the main house is somewhat unusual. There is a stair hall just within the entrance, a small room to the left, a large room with fireplace to the right, a parlor in the northwest corner, and another small room in the northeast corner, the latter now partitioned to form a pantry adjacent to the wing. The wing contains the kitchen and another small room behind the stack. Throughout the main house are the original oak floors of medium-width boards, beaded casings around the posts, wall-papered plaster walls and plaster ceilings, and four-panel doors. In the two large first-floor rooms and the hall, the door and window openings are surrounded by heavy molded frames with crossets in the upper corners. In addition, the parlor windows and the sidelights in the hall have sunken panels beneath the sills. There are five small stone-and-brick fireplaces, including two in the chambers above, and each has a rather plain mantel. The parlor mantel (around a fireplace still closed off) is a pilaster-and-lintel design recalling the main entrance treatment, and the others are simple frames with molded shelves. The large southeast room has a cupboard built into one side of the mantel with a single panel balancing it on the other side. The kitchen fireplace is large than the others; it has a very wide stone lintel and a separate bake oven covered by a cast-iron door. One of the kitchen walls shows remains of a dado of wide horizontal boards. In the rear room of the wing is a stone hearth built out to accommodate a very large iron vat. The most striking interior feature, however, is the curving hall stairway, an open stringer with the ends of the risers covered by a single board bent around the quarter-turn of the stairway. There seems never to have been a rail, but there are simple square newel posts and a plain railing at the top of the stairs. The posts are nearly identical replacements for the originals, which were recently discovered in the attic.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Abel H. Fish House
Salem, CT

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About nine acres of the open fields surrounding the house and barn were included in the nominated property, though the extent of land under the same ownership is much larger. The nominated rectangle is necessary if the land immediately surrounding the house and barn is to border on a public road. The amount of frontage, 650', is reasonable if the clearly demarcated fields are to be treated as units. Moreover, it is necessary to include some farm land to provide context for the buildings. The nominated nine acres provide an agricultural setting for the structures without including excessive acreage and without isolating the property from the public way.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/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 c. 1835

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Abel H. Fish House is significant because it typifies the style and workmanship of the rural vernacular architecture of early 19th-century Connecticut. It is a representative example of a Greek Revival farmhouse (Criterion C), and it is in a good state of preservation, with most of its original material intact. Although it was not the house of a wealthy person, it contains some notable, refined interior elements, and the house has a few features such as the stairway which are of interest because of their rarity.

From 1830 through the 1860s, the Greek Revival was the most common source for the architecture of rural Connecticut. A few houses were elaborate, with columns and temple-like porticoes, but the greater number were simple, boxy houses, made Classical with corner pilasters, a returned cornice, and a pilaster-and-lintel entrance treatment. The Fish House is one of these. In its form and its appropriate materials - clapboards, original sash, the wood-shingled roof - the Abel Fish House embodies the typical 1830s farmhouse. The triangular gable window is somewhat more uncommon, but it nevertheless is often found in houses of the period. More frequent was the use of a simple oblong opening, or the builder may have carried over the semi-elliptical (and un-Greek) shape favored in the Federal period. The triangular light was a better solution for illuminating the attic, however, since it emphasized the pediment shape of the gable, giving that facade greater strength. Except for its rebuilt stacks, part of the entrance frame, and the remodelled south wall of the wing, the Fish House retains all of its early appearance, including those features which are most typical of the genre.

The interior is similarly well-preserved and contains many elements which are representative of the country Greek Revival style. Many interior features, such as the kitchen dado, the cased posts, and the four-panel doors, are little changed from 18th-century interiors. The oak floor boards are not as wide as the great planks found in early houses, yet they differ from the narrow matched boards of the later 19th century. The boldness of the door and window moldings is central to the Greek Revival taste and a contrast with the delicate, small-scale detail favored in the earlier, Federal period. Although the mantels are all very simple, the house is saved from starkness by the crosssetted door and window frames and by the panelled areas beneath the window sills in the hall and parlor. These details add a sense of refinement to an otherwise simple interior. They show that the builder was aware of decorative motifs commonly found in the more formal houses of the period, and that he was able to adapt some of them for the best rooms of this house. In many ways, the Abel Fish House is the 1830s equivalent of the 18th-century saltbox, a plain functional dwelling with some exceptionally good woodwork in one or two rooms.

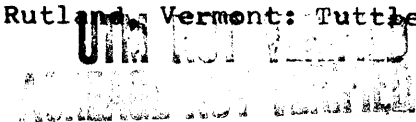
Two features are quite uncommon. One is the boiler built into the back of the kitchen stack. Probably used for making soap, the iron pot and stone hearth holding

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Fish, Lester W. The Fish Family in England and America. Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing Company, Inc., 1948.

Salem Land Records, Vol. I, p. 458.

U.S. Census Office. Schedules of the Censuses of Agriculture, 1850, 1860, New London County, Connecticut. MS, State Library, Hartford.



10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 9.4

QUADRANGLE NAME Fitchville

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24 000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 729540 4601020
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is part of Lot 6 as shown on Salem Assessor's Map 15. The fields on either side of the driveway are included for a frontage of 650' on Buckley Hill Road at a depth of 630', sufficient to include house and barn.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Bruce Clouette, Partner

ORGANIZATION Historic Resource Consultants

DATE September 25, 1979

STREET & NUMBER P.O. Box 141

TELEPHONE (203) 423-8903

CITY OR TOWN Windham

STATE CT

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 January 13, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
	DATE <u>3.2.82</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE
ATTEST:	DATE
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION	

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it are rarely found, either because they were never common or else because they fell victim to renovation. The other unusual feature is the circular stairway. It has been suggested that the entrance was first on the west gable end (the more usual arrangement, given the form and orientation of the house) and that the spiralling staircase was installed when the entrance was moved to the south side. Whether original or not, the stairs as well as the interior of the hallway appear to be early work, and it is unlikely that much time elapsed between the building of the house and the staircase, if indeed such a change took place. Like the parlor woodwork, the stairs make this house somewhat out of the ordinary.

Abel H. Fish (1789-1870) was a farmer of rather modest means. He bought this tract of 165 acres, known as the Bulkeley farm, in 1826. Although his family was from Groton, Connecticut, another related branch of the Fish family had lived in this immediate vicinity since the 18th century. Fish ran a diversified farm, raising potatoes and dairy products for market. In addition to the usual half dozen each of cows, pigs, and draft animals, he had about 40 or 45 sheep and thus sold a considerable amount of wool. He was called Deacon Abel Fish, and though church records have not been found to confirm it, he was probably a Baptist leader in Salem or nearby Colchester.¹ Although it is not known precisely what year he built the house, probably incorporating an earlier structure into the kitchen wing, the house reflects well Fish's middling social status. It has none of the elegance or pretensions to wealth such as a large landowner or country merchant might afford, yet neither is it rustic or lacking in decorative woodwork.

¹Abel was the brother of Horatio Nelson Fish, a sea-captain and a prominent Baptist leader in Groton.