

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Springbank

other names/site Pilgrim, Thomas, House

2. Location


street & number 69 Neck Road not for publication N/A

city or town Old Lyme vicinity N/A

state Connecticut code CT county New London code 011 zip code 06371

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally . (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 07 / 05 / 01  
Signature of certifying official Date  
John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission  
Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

Springbank  
Name of Property

New London, CT  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
 removed from the National Register.  
other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Jon*  
Signature of the Keeper  
Edson H. Beall

Date of Action  
8-17-01

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)  
count.)

private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	_____ sites
<u>2</u>	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>5</u>	<u>1</u> Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure.  
LANDSCAPE/residential garden/structure

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure  
LANDSCAPE/residential garden/structure

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY/Greek Revival (vernacular).  
20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
foundation Granite  
walls Brick  
roof Wood shingle  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**  
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Springbank, Old Lyme, New London County, CT

Section 7 Page 1

**Description**

The house and garden at Springbank are situated on the east side of Neck Road, the main thoroughfare in Old Lyme along the east bank of the Connecticut River (see schematic site plan). Accessed by a curving driveway, the house was erected in 1844 and remodeled and enlarged in the early twentieth century (Photograph #s 1, 2, 3, 4). Built into a hillside, it has several entrances at grade, with the main entrance at the second level on the south side. Existing stone walls border the sides of the narrow lot, which extends 400 feet up hill almost to the ridgeline, and a high cut-stone wall runs along the road. They also define the formal garden terraces located north of the house and the edge of naturalized landscape on the slope to the east. A modern garage is located northwest of the house at the end of the driveway (Photograph #5). Contributing outbuildings and structures include a guesthouse (c. 1945) above the terraced gardens to the northeast, a wellhouse on the south lawn (the well itself dates from the 1840s), and a brick and wood pergola on the property line at the north end of the formal garden (Photograph #s 6, 7).

The house consists of the original 1844 two-story gable-roofed main block (19' x 24') with a projecting wing on the north side and several late Colonial Revival additions (see floor plans). The brick wing, which dates from the early twentieth century, once contained a garage at grade. The small hipped-roof bay on its west elevation and a small extension at the rear, both of brick, are later c. 1940 additions. The pitch of the main gable roof and the replacement six-over-six sash reflect the influence of the Greek Revival period, but the house exhibits no other indicators of this style. The windows of the main block, which have rough-dressed granite lintels and sills from a local quarry, were replicated on the wing. Granite is also used for the watertable and exposed foundation. Rake boards under the eaves of the main block that cover the outside corners of the lintels were part of the Colonial Revival remodeling in the late 1930s.

Numerous other changes took place during that remodeling. Among them are the enclosed front entryway with its bell-cast profile metal roof, and the dormers on the main roof. The c. 1936 one-story extension to the rear of the main block, which enlarged the living room by 12 feet, has a large south-facing bay window and a flat roof with a balustrade (Photograph #3). Access to the roof terrace is through a doorway bay at the second-floor rear, which has a French door flanked by windows (Photograph #4).

The present dining room on the first floor of the main block, which contains a c. 1844 fireplace with stone cheeks and lintel and a brick firebox, may have been a shop or the original kitchen (Photograph #s 8, 9). When this room was first restored after a fire in the 1960s, some of the passage doors were salvaged, but the pine paneling, and beam casings date from that period.

Although the rest of the interior is plainly detailed, the expanded living room contains a Colonial Revival-style fireplace on the east wall (Photograph #10). The surround features classical swags and urns, with a centered fan in relief. The arched openings in the opposite wall, which frame shelves and closets, were installed by the present owners in 1997 (Photograph #11). The cased ceiling beam marks the end of the original main block. A French door on the north side of the room affords a view of the formal garden (Photograph #12).

Designed in 1936 and revised in 1945, the garden plan was the work of landscape architect Marian Cruger Coffin.<sup>1</sup> The centerpiece of the landscape is the formal garden north of the house, laid out along a principal north-south axis from the living room doorway to the pergola on the north property line (see site plan). A secondary axis extends from a wing window to steps in the naturalized garden above the house. These axes cross at the center of the large circular brick terrace at the juncture of the house and the wing. The rectangular lawn panel along the principal axis is defined by clipped boxwood edging. Pruned in a rounded-diamond shape, their circular centers are accented by conical Alberta spruce topiaries and mounded boxwood (Photograph #s 7, 13). The pergola, which is supported on brick posts, has a flagstone floor and a partial rear wall of pierced brick with a grilled opening in the center. The secondary parallel axes of the formal garden also display patterned sculptured boxwood (Photograph #s 14, 15). On the

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<sup>1</sup> Copies of the landscape plans (reduced for the exhibits referenced later in this nomination), from design development to final revisions, were obtained from Winterthur Gardens Library, Wilmington, Delaware, the chief repository of Coffin's work and correspondence.

(8-86)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET****Springbank, Old Lyme, New London County, CT****Section 7 Page 2**

west side are interlocking boxwood parterres which are flanked on the west by three large native dogwoods. The raised terrace to the east has a double line of serpentine hedging, a background for perennial borders. At the rear of this terrace, steps lead up through a stone wall to one of the two informal paths through the wooded slope, which is set off from the formal garden by a rhododendron border (recently pruned back). The other path starts from the rear of the south lawn, also the location of a mature weeping cherry tree. Other plant material consists mainly of several varieties of rhododendron and azalea, and mountain laurel along the boundaries of the formal garden, or used as foundation planting at the front of the house.<sup>2</sup> Pines, cedars, and native dogwoods are massed in several locations, for example, the foot of the driveway entrance, and there are several individual trees along the west side of the driveway.

The existing plans for the garden help date some of the Colonial Revival features of the house, as well as other construction on the site. The first plan, drawn in February 1936, had a terrace in the space now occupied by the living room extension. However, that feature was on place, or in process, when the plan was revised in April of that year. At that time, the main entryway had not been enclosed and the garage wing had not been extended to the rear or converted to living space. Restoration architect Robert I. Carter was responsible for these later renovations and may have designed the new living room. Other changes since c. 1940 include the expansion or replacement of an existing toolhouse for the present guesthouse, and the construction of the present garage on what was designated on the landscape plan as a small apple orchard. Whether the orchard was planted is not known, since there were outbuildings, a carport and a shed, at this location at the time the garage was built.

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the original plant list with botanical names has not survived, so only the common names found on the 1936 site plan are used in this description.

Springbank  
Name of Property

New London, CT  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
SOCIAL HISTORY

**Period of Significance**

1928 -1950

**Significant Dates**

1936, 1945

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Marian Cruger Coffin

Robert I. Carter

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
 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  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Winterthur Gardens Library,  
Delaware

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Springbank, Old Lyme, New London County, CT**

**Section 8 Page 1**

**Statement of Significance**

Designed by Marian Cruger Coffin (1876-1957), one of the leading women landscape architects of the early twentieth century, the grounds at Springbank are an exceptionally well-preserved and documented expression of the smaller residential landscapes that were her specialty in the later half of her distinguished career. Although she rose to prominence in the 1920s as a designer of major country estates, most notably Winterthur, the Henry Francis du Pont residence in Delaware, with these suburban gardens, Coffin made professional landscape design, once the exclusive province of the wealthy, available to a wider audience. As can be demonstrated, the garden at Springbank relied on the same design principles that Coffin espoused throughout her career and popularized through her publications. Historically, the transformation of this modest house to a Colonial Revival residence with landscaped grounds after 1928 illustrates how the remodeling of historic properties by members of the leisure class played a significant role in pre-war suburban development, a process that often restructured the social and economic composition of many Connecticut's towns.

**Historical Background and Significance**

Old Lyme is one of seven towns spawned by the Saybrook Colony, which encompassed land on both sides of the Connecticut River estuary. Granted to several English lords and gentlemen by King James I in 1632, the colony was first settled by John Winthrop, Jr., with a fort at Saybrook on the west bank by 1637. Matthew Griswold of Windsor, who came to Saybrook several years later and eventually settled on the east side of the river, is generally credited as the founder of Lyme. In 1648, when the colony was "quartered," Lyme became the Black Hall Quarter, and separated from the rest of the colony in 1667. The southern part officially became the Town of Old Lyme in 1857.

While the nineteenth century brought an increase in commercial fishing and quarrying, and there was some shipbuilding, Old Lyme remained a farming community well into the 1900s. Although shoals at the mouth of the Connecticut precluded the development of a major port, wharves and landings were established along the river in the Neck, a narrow rocky peninsula bounded by the Lieutenant River on the east. Many residents in the Neck were mechanics, masons, and fishermen. By 1852 the Shoreline Railroad ran along the coast, completing a direct route between New York and Boston. The station in Old Lyme was located at the foot of the Neck, where the Lieutenant River empties into the Connecticut. Trains were ferried across the Connecticut until a railroad bridge was built in 1870, making Old Lyme even more accessible to the outside world. Summer visitors, who began to arrive in Old Lyme by the late 1800s, included several well-known painters such as Childe Hassam, who made their home there. An artists' colony associated with the Florence Griswold House evolved into the Lyme Art Association in 1914. Other newcomers to town included urban dwellers or retirees who purchased older homes along the river and the coast and often remodeled them for seasonal or year-round use.

The house now known as Springbank was built in the Neck in 1844 by Thomas Pilgrim, who was listed in the census of 1850 as a mechanic. Pilgrim, who bought the four acres of land there in July of 1844, also was the owner of a landing at the river. Apparently Pilgrim never planned on living in the house, since he built a new stone dwelling for himself just to the north, and sold off one acre with a "new brick dwelling" in March of 1845 to Gad Baldwin of Brooklyn, Connecticut. Baldwin, in turn, sold the property in April the following year. Still referenced as a "new dwelling," it was purchased with a mortgage by another mechanic, Valentine Miller, probably the first to occupy the nominated property. Valentine died of consumption in 1861 and the house passed down to his son, Charles (1842-1907), a shad fisherman. The association of the house with working-class families ended in 1928, when his widow, Maria Brockway Miller, sold the property. From this point forward, the house was owned by well-to-do newcomers to the community who made significant changes, remodeling the house and grounds to meet their needs and tastes. The first of the new class of owners, Katherine Talcott of New York City, probably added the garage wing and may have begun to landscape the grounds. The widow of painter Allen Butler Talcott, a member of the Old Lyme artist colony until his premature death in 1905,<sup>3</sup> Katherine

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<sup>3</sup> One of A. B. Talcott's landscapes, "Redwing," is part of the American impressionist collection at the Metropolitan Museum. He is represented locally by door panel paintings in the dining room at the Florence Griswold House in Old Lyme.

(8-86)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET****Springbank, Old Lyme, New London County, CT****Section 8 Page 2**

was the founder of the Old Saybrook Garden Club and a member of the Garden Club of America, one of the beneficiaries of her \$600,000 estate.

A(rthur) Clement Wild (1875-1950) and his wife Gertrude bought the property as a retirement home in 1935. Born in Leeds, England, Wild came to the United States with his family in 1891. After graduating from Haverford College, he received a degree in law from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Before his retirement at age 60, Wild was a senior partner in Townley, Wild, Campbell & Clark, a Chicago law firm. Wild lived here until his death in 1950, leaving a modest estate (\$35,000) to his widow Gertrude, who died in 1958, left the property to her niece, Louise Jacobson, but designated that the bulk of her estate valued at \$563,000 be used to establish a scholarship fund at Haverford College in memory of her husband. The property changed hands several more times until it was purchased by the present owner in 1994.

Robert I. Carter (1908-1981), the architect retained by the Wilds to remodel the house, moved to Old Lyme in 1957 and had his office in Essex. A graduate of Pratt Institute in 1933, he did his postgraduate work at New York University. A historical architect who specialized in the restoration of old houses in Connecticut, Carter is best known for his restoration of the Amos Bull House, now the offices of the Connecticut Historical Commission, and the 1968 restoration of the masonry of the Old State House, also in Hartford.

**Landscape Significance**

Marian Cruger Coffin's career spanned several stages in the development of American landscape architecture. The field that she entered in the early 1900s was just coming of age as a profession. The great wealth generated by the Industrial Revolution had produced several generations of multi-millionaires who built extravagant country houses which called for equally lavish landscaped grounds, often based on European models. The picturesque landscapes of the nineteenth century had given way to the more formal classical designs inspired by the Italians and the French, which were eminently suitable for country estates of the Gilded Age, and adaptable to various residential architectural styles. Before the country-estate era ended, Coffin had worked on some 50 estate gardens for members of America's wealthiest families, including the Vanderbilts, Fields, Fricks, and du Ponts, and also found clients among the newly rich bourgeoisie. By the 1930s, the market crash of 1929 and the new federal tax burdens had taken their toll; few could afford the costly and elaborate high-maintenance gardens they once had expected Coffin and other landscape architects to design. While many practices went out of business in this period, Coffin survived by turning to the design of smaller residential gardens and by seeking out institutional clients. Among them were New York Botanical Gardens, Connecticut College for Women, the University of Delaware, and Hopkins Grammar School.

Coffin was raised by her widowed mother, mainly in Geneva, New York, where they prevailed upon the hospitality of uncle John Church, who had moved to this resort community on Seneca Lake after the ancestral estate on the Genesee was sold. Although not wealthy, Coffin had a distinguished family heritage (Churches were descendants of the Schuylers of New York and the Sillimans and Trumbulls of Connecticut). This impeccable social standing was a decided advantage in pursuing her career. Extensive family connections with members of the upper class, most notably with Henry Francis du Pont, a lifelong friend and mentor, led to many prestigious commissions.

Coffin received her training in landscape architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1901-1904), where she studied under Guy Lowell, the Beaux Arts-trained architect who designed the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. MIT was one of the few places where professional training was available in this field, but few women were accepted as degree candidates. Having received little previous formal education, Coffin was tutored to be accepted and completed the course work as a special student, one of two women in landscape architecture in the graduating class of 500, only to find that established firms were unwilling to employ her.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Nancy Fleming, *Money, Manure, & Maintenance: ingredients for successful gardens of Marian Coffin...* (Weston, Massachusetts:1995), p. 8.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Springbank, Old Lyme, New London County, CT

Section 8 Page 3

After returning from one of her many trips to Europe to study the gardens there, Coffin set up her own office in New York City in 1904. According to her biographers, Coffin made a point of employing female apprentices, hoping to offset what she perceived as persistent discrimination in the field. Among them was Clara Stimson Coffey (1894-1982), who became a well-known architect in her own right and remained a friend and professional associate for many years. Actively pursuing her professional credentials, Coffin was accepted as a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) in 1906, and elected a Fellow in 1918. She also participated on a regular basis in the annual ASLA exhibits held at the Arden Galleries in New York City and exhibited at the New York Architectural League. Coffin's reputation as a landscape architect was established in 1912 when her design for the Edward Sprague residence in Flushing, New York, was published in *Country Life in America*, the first of more than 20 such articles about her work that appeared in architectural journals and garden magazines. After World War I, when the firm relocated to 860 Lexington Avenue, Coffin hired architect James Steiner, who designed many of the structures for her major landscape commissions.

A brief sampling of her estate commissions demonstrates Coffin's exceptional stylistic range. For Childs Frick, son of the steel magnate, she designed a formal garden at Clayton, his estate on Long Island (Roslyn, New York) to complement the Georgian Revival mansion designed in 1895 by Ogden Codman, Jr. (now the Nassau County Museum of Art). Her two commissions for Henry Francis du Pont were the landscape design for Chesterton, his Southampton, Long Island, summer house, and the re-design of the formal gardens at Winterthur, his palatial estate museum in Delaware, which had been in the family since 1839. An active collaboration with du Pont, a noted horticulturist, the project evolved over four years (1928-1932). Considered by Coffin to be her most important work, the Winterthur design consisted of the complex of driveways, pathways, terrace gardens, reflecting pools, and other structures surrounding the mansion. For the gardens at Gibraltar, another du Pont estate in Delaware owned by the Sharp branch of the family, she created a Beaux Arts-style terraced garden on the east slope and developed an English-style park in front of the house. At the Sharps' winter estate in Boca Grande, Florida, Coffin demonstrated her versatility by turning to the Alhambra for her inspiration, designing elegant gardens to complement the Moorish-style house.

By 1933 Coffin had moved to New Haven to a home that she purchased in 1927. Connecticut was familiar territory. She had already designed the gardens for The Oaks, Edgar Bassick's estate in Bridgeport, which received the Gold Medal of the Architectural League in 1930, perhaps the first of more than 40 of her residential gardens in the state (see continuation sheet for list of commissions). As the Depression deepened, Coffin gave up her New York office and moved the practice to her home. Although she took in boarders to augment her income, often students at Yale, Coffin managed to maintain her customary life style, complete with a chauffeur and other servants, and often entertained members of the artistic and academic community in New Haven and at Wendover, her summer place at Watch Hill, Rhode Island. She continued to write on garden theory for the general public, most notably *Trees and Shrubs for Landscape Effects* in 1940, considered to be the only published source that details her theories of landscape design. Encouraged by Henry du Pont, she returned to the estate field after World War II and took on several commissions. The largest was the design of the formal garden at Mount Cuba, the estate of Pamela C. and Lamot du Pont Copeland in Wilmington, Delaware. It featured a swimming pool in the shape of a Maltese cross, and a round garden with seasonal borders. Her revisions to the existing landscape by Thomas Sears included azalea borders for the South Terrace, and the creation of an allée nearby.

In 1948 Coffin returned to Geneva, her girlhood home, to receive an honorary doctorate from Hobart College. In recognizing her lifetime achievements in landscape architecture, the perceptive citation read in part, "[she] was an artist whose medium is the living earth—one for whom art and life are never separate, but mutually renewed..."<sup>5</sup> Two years before her death in 1957 at age 80, Coffin returned to Winterthur to help design the famous Sun Dial Garden there, which replaced the outdoor games court. Photographs of her original setting for this space, along with other views at Winterthur, were included in a memorial exhibit of Coffin's work held at Hobart College in 1958.

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<sup>5</sup> Warren Huntington Smith, "Memoir of Marian Coffin" in *Gardens Designed by Marian Cruger Coffin...*, 1978, p. 1.



(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Springbank, Old Lyme, New London County, CT

Section 8 Page 4

Springbank embodies much of the landscape design theory espoused by Coffin throughout her long and distinguished career. Essentially an estate landscape in miniature, it conveys the same sense of privilege and gracious outdoor living that characterized her major commissions.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the development of Springbank exemplified what Coffin called the "Seeing Eye," the ability to visualize the inherent landscape possibilities in even small residential lots. An Edwardian classicist to the core, she favored controlled symmetry, sculptural plantings, and flower borders defined by low-clipped hedges or other edging, all the elements found here in Old Lyme.

As the Springbank gardens evolved, changes were made by the designer, and later owners replaced or added a few shrubs, but the major elements shown in Coffin's first studies for the project remain in place: the suggestion of an allee, the pergola, stepped terraces, and naturalized woodland, all firmly developed around a major axis aligned with the living room doorway (Exhibits A and B). The ability to so successfully compress and scale these elements to the site and yet retain a sense of openness, is perhaps the essence of her genius. While the pergola is a key focal point, its pierced wall allows a glimpse of the space beyond, a device Coffin often employed, believing that gardens should suggest unseen or borrowed vistas, a very Japanese landscape concept. In a similar fashion, the curved sloping woodland paths have no definite terminus, thus creating an air of mystery.

For Coffin, her landscapes were always works in progress. She revisited the Springbank design in 1945 to replace the flower beds that once flanked the center lawn of the formal garden with the more dominant sculptural borders found there today, creating a stronger axial design. Of the three sketches for the new boxwood borders, which use traditional parterre designs in an abstract manner, the present diamond pattern most closely resembles Scheme #2 (Exhibit C).

That Springbank has endured virtually unchanged is largely due to its strong spatial organization, a quality that Coffin believed was the backbone of a beautiful garden. As landscape architect Rudy J. Favretti has pointed out, Coffin was a master at relating scale and proportion to structure and site, this garden being a prime example.<sup>7</sup> Combined with her ability to adapt the garden over time to changing needs and conditions, as was done in the 1936 and 1945 revisions, these factors enabled Springbank to endure through a succession of owners for over 50 years. Largely due to the strength and dominance of its ground plan, this garden reads boldly in each and every season, an effect enhanced by its three-dimensional quality. A carefully chosen palette of plants provides additional seasonal interest through their form, leaf texture, and performance of bloom.

According to Coffin authority Valencia Libby, such spatial divisions and parallel axes are typical of her best work. The separation of the formal garden space into outdoor rooms by hedging, especially the use of a "secret garden," the parterre on the west, is typically Coffin, a concept found on a much grander scale at Clayton, the Frick estate. More subtle was the original design of the terrace as a Maltese cross, another characteristic element used to good effect in other commissions, such as Mount Cuba.

Albeit a minor note in Coffin's lifework, Springbank is nonetheless significant as a remarkably complete expression of the esthetic sensibility and design philosophy that consistently informed her talent. It is clearly the work of a dedicated professional, one with exceptional artistic ability, qualities honed in a lifetime devoted to designing gardens, large and small. Always taking her inspiration from the site, the *genus loci*, as she called it, Coffin designed with a sure hand even in this small suburban setting, applying the same intuitive sense of appropriateness and commitment to an overall coherent scheme that enriched her major commissions. A number of factors contributed to her success, but it was this inherent design sense that elevated Coffin from the ranks of competent, less dedicated practitioners. Coffin's major contributions to American landscape are well known, but it was these less celebrated, often anonymous gardens like Springbank that truly raised the practice of landscape architecture to a more universal art form...an equally important part of her legacy.

<sup>6</sup> It is not known who named the property, but Springbank is the name used on the official list of Coffin's commissions (see continuation sheet).

<sup>7</sup> The author is indebted to Mr. Favretti for his professional review of the first draft of the nomination. See Rudy J. Favretti, personal communication, February 26, 2001, for the opinions expressed in this paragraph.

Springbank  
Name of Property

New London, CT  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 1

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>18</u>	<u>722780</u>	<u>4578780</u>	3	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>  </u>	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	4	<u>  </u>	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>

       See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By:**

**Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator**

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant

organization Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC date 1/15/01

street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (860) 347 4072

city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Janet Bagg  
street & number 69 Neck Road telephone (860) 434 0040  
city or town Old Lyme state CT zip code 06371

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

(8-86)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Springbank, Old Lyme, New London, Fairfield County, CT

Section 9/10 Page 1**9. Major Bibliographic References**

- Coffin, Marian Cruger. *Trees and Shrubs for Landscape Effects*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. Title Search of Pilgrim House. Typescript, 1999.
- Sclare, Lisa and Donald. *Beaux-Arts Estates*. New York: Viking Press, 1980.
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- Wave-Hill, New York. Archives. Coffin, Marian Cruger, 1876-1957.
- Winterthur Museum and Gardens, Wilmington, Delaware. Winterthur Library and Archives. Marian Cruger Coffin Collection.

**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The nominated property is described in the Old Lyme Land Records in Volume 219, Page 112.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundaries encompass the entire designed historic landscape associated with the property since 1936, and they are coterminous with the historic property boundaries established for the one-acre lot in 1845.

(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Springbank, Old Lyme, New London, Fairfield County, CT

List of Marian Coffin's Commissions in Connecticut

COMMISSIONS BY  
LOCATION

Following the location of commission is  
the client's last name, first name, estate  
name, and the date where known.

CONNECTICUT

Bridgeport

Bassick, Edgar W., *The Oaks*, 1927-1945  
Cable, Raymond  
Godfrey, Jonathan, <1927

Canaan

Byers, Edward G., *By-Wood*, 1945

East River

Hotchkiss, Stuart H.

Essex

English, Robert, 1946

Goshen

Cunningham, Macklin  
*Barton Lawton Farm*, 1941

Greenwich

Edgar, Dr. J. Clifton, <1920  
Henderson, Thomas B.G.  
*Khakum Wood*, 1945  
Montgomery, Robert, 1945  
Noble, Robert, *Three Oaks*, 1930's  
Simmons, J., 1926

Guilford

Swan, Judge Thomas, <1940

Hamden

Whitney, Susan B. & Marian, 1932

Meriden

Fox, George, 1942

Mt. Carmel

Davis, Louis, 1943

New Haven

Bushnell, Winthrop, 1935-1937  
Coffin, Marian C., 1927-1957  
Coffin, William Sloan  
Dana, Arnold, 1932  
Dann, Olive L., 1937  
Day, Clive, 1943  
Faculty Club, Mrs. C.P. Rollins, 1933-1938  
Galpin, Henry, 1930  
Hooker, Elizabeth, 1927-1951  
Hopkins Grammar School  
Houghton, R.M.  
Sargent, Richard  
Whitney, Emily & Marian

New London

Connecticut College, 1940

Norfolk

Dyer, George J., *Birchwood*, 1920-1921  
Farnum, Elizabeth E., 1910  
Farmellee, Henry F., 1923

Old Lyme

Wild, Clement, *Springbank*, 1945

Ridgefield

Lynch, John H.  
Maynard, Louise, 1914

Salisbury

Milliken, 1945  
Whitridge, Dr. Arnold, 1927

Simsbury

Ensign, Joseph

Sound Beach

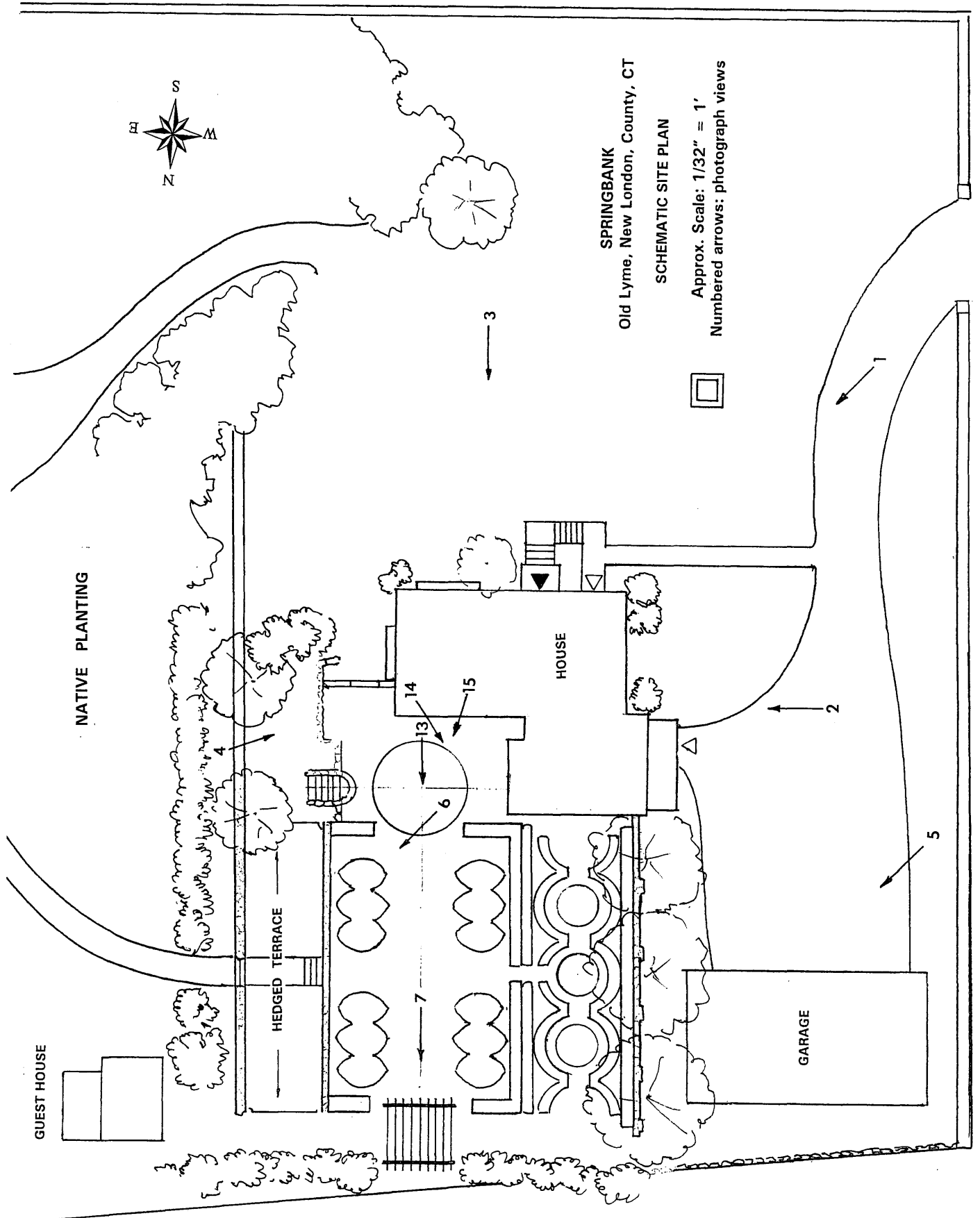
Tod, J. Kennedy, 1918-1920

Wallingford

Farnum, George Bronson  
*High Meadow Farm*, 1945

Waterford

Harkness, Edward S., *Eolia*, 1949



SPRINGBANK  
Old Lyme, New London, County, CT

SCHEMATIC SITE PLAN

Approx. Scale: 1/32" = 1'

Numbered arrows: photograph views

NATIVE PLANTING

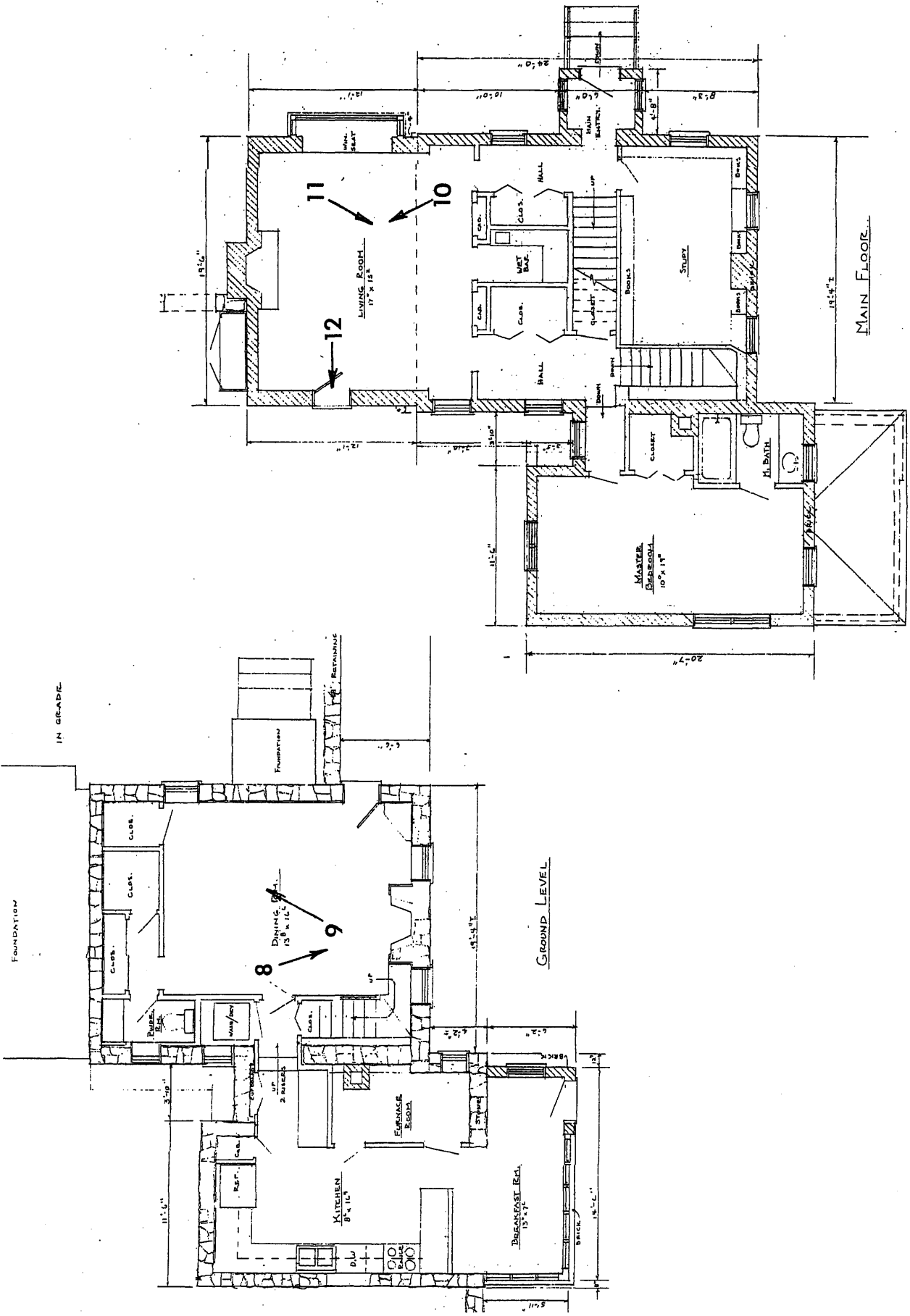
GUEST HOUSE

HEDGED TERRACE

HOUSE

GARAGE

NECK ROAD



**SPRINGBANK**  
 Old Lyme, New London, County, CT

**FLOOR PLANS**

Numbered arrows: interior photo views

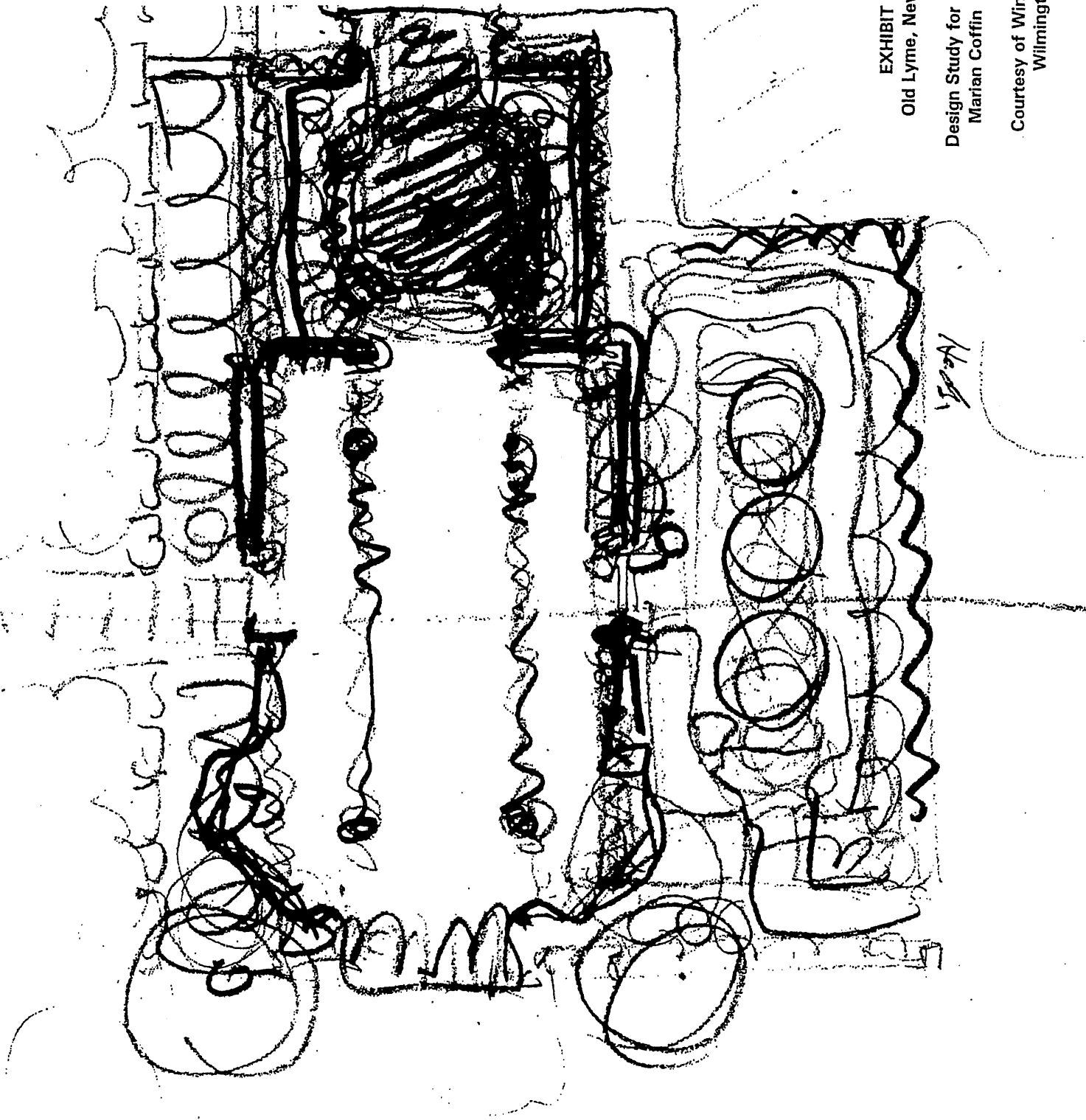


EXHIBIT A: SPRINGBANK

Old Lyme, New London, County, CT

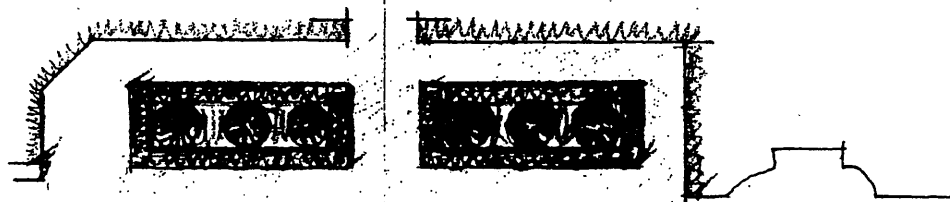
Design Study for Gardens - February 1936  
Marian Coffin Landscape Arch't N.Y.

Courtesy of Winterthur Gardens Library  
Wilmington, Delaware





SCHEME #3



SCHEME #2



SCHEME #1

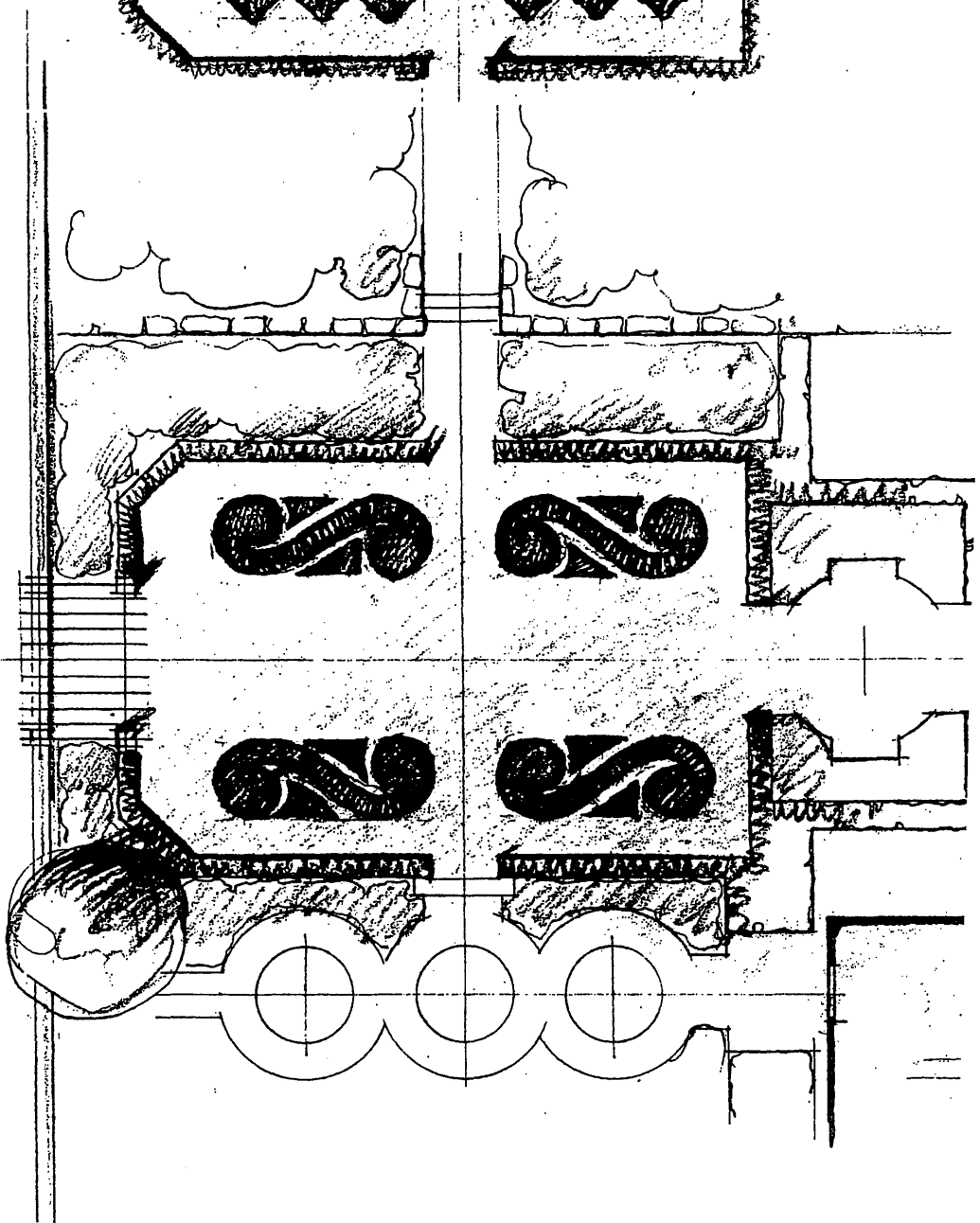


EXHIBIT C: SPRINGBANK  
Old Lyme, New London, County, CT

"Proposed Garden Revision" - January 4, 1945  
Marian Coffin Landscape Arch't N.Y.

Courtesy of Winterthur Gardens Library  
Wilmington, Delaware

(8-86)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Springbank, Old Lyme, New London County, CT**

**Section: Photo Page 1**

**List of Photographs**

Photographer: Cunningham Preservation Associates

Date: 11/00 Negatives on File: Connecticut Historical Commission

1. General view of house, camera facing NE
2. West elevation, camera facing E
3. Façade, camera facing N
4. Rear elevation, camera facing W
5. Garage, camera facing NE
6. Guesthouse, camera facing NE
7. Pergola, camera facing N
8. Dining room fireplace, camera facing SW
9. Dining room, camera facing SE
10. Living room, camera facing NE
11. Living room, camera facing NW
12. View of formal garden from living room, camera facing N
13. Formal garden, camera facing N
14. Formal garden from above, camera facing NW
15. Formal garden from above, camera facing NE