

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name _____
other names/site number Bush-Holley House

2. Location

street & number 39 Strickland Road NA not for publication
city, town Greenwich (Cos Cob) NA vicinity
state Connecticut code CT county Fairfield code 001 zip code 06807

3. Classification

| Ownership of Property | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | 4 | 1 buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input type="checkbox"/> district | | sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site | | structures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> structure | | objects |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | 4 | 1 Total |

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 4

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. 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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/
DOMESTIC/hotel
OTHER/art colony
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL/Postmedieval English/Dutch Colonial

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation granite

walls weatherboard

roof wood shingle

other vertical siding (outbuildings)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Bush-Holley House is located in the Strickland Road Historic District in Cos Cob, a residential village in Greenwich, Connecticut. It sits on an elevated site facing east overlooking the estuary of the Mianus River at the head of Cos Cob Harbor (Photograph #s 1, 2). The nominated property consists of five buildings of which four are contributing: the house built about 1730; two wood-frame barns dating from the late nineteenth century (Photograph #3), a former nineteenth-century privy; and a modern office and archives building which serves as the headquarters of the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich (Exhibit A). Although the latter building was constructed in 1987, it replicates the scale and form of a New England barn.

The partially open site is landscaped with lawns, mature trees, flower beds, and shrubs and is bounded by a narrow band of woods on the south, west, and north. The nearby houses to the west and the house to the south, which served as a post office for the community and is now owned by the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich, are contemporaneous with the Bush-Holley House and are in the historic district. The Mianus River Bridge of Interstate 95, which passes to the east of the house, parallels the railroad bridge built in the early twentieth century and occupies an area where formerly nineteenth-century warehouses, a tidal dam, and until 1899, a tidal grinding mill were located.

The house consists of three separate buildings which were joined together in the eighteenth century (Exhibit B). The original main block on the north was built on its present site about 1730 as a two-story five-bay I house with a lean-to. It rests on a granite foundation and displays a deep overhang in the north gable (Photograph #4). The two-story addition on the south end, joined to the main block by 1790 but separated by a wide hall, may have been a former outbuilding on the property (Photograph #5). It was moved from its original location about 1790 and first served as a office with bedrooms on the second floor. The outside entrance at the east end of the connecting hall, which has a heavy two-part Dutch door with a five-light transom and narrow windows for sidelights, appears to date from when the two buildings were joined. A two-story porch extends across the entire facade of these two buildings. The rear wing, another outbuilding, possibly a former slave quarters, was moved about the same time and attached to the main block as a new kitchen, known as the "long room" in early probate inventories (Photograph #6). Various materials are used for exterior sheathing, including the original beaded-edge clapboard on the north end and upper level of the facade of the main block. The rear wing displays rusticated horizontal siding. The rest of the building was sided with replacement pine clapboards in 1958.

The most notable original interior features are the exceptional painted and

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D Applicable NHL Criteria 1, 2, 4

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

NHL THEME XXIV, E. European Influence, 1876-1920

1890 - 1920

1. American Impressionism, 1876-1920

NHL THEME XXIV, H. The 20th Century, 2. Art Colonies

1890 - 1920

NHL THEME XVI, X. Vernacular Architecture

c.1730-1901

c.1730, c.1790,

c.1850, 1901

ART (National Register listing)

Cultural Affiliation

ARCHITECTURE (National Register listing)

N/A

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Various, see text.

Watland and Hopping, Architects - 1958
restoration

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Bush-Holley House is nationally significant for its long association with the development of American Impressionism between 1890 and 1920. This major art movement, which has become identified with Connecticut, was centered at the Bush-Holley House, the focus of one of the first summer art colonies in the United States. Although other Connecticut sites, including the homes of individual artists and the colony at Old Lyme, are also associated with American Impressionism, only the Bush-Holley House played such a significant and pivotal role. Not only was it the home of the first colony, preceding Old Lyme by a decade, but it remained a continuous forum for the dissemination and exchange of ideas and artistic techniques from the advent of American Impressionism to its decline in the post-World War I period. Through its distinguished teachers, the colony spawned a second generation of Impressionist painters, including one who carried on the artistic tradition of the Bush-Holley House in the twentieth century.

Many of the leaders of the Impressionist movement including the founders and members of The Ten American Painters (John Twachtman, Childe Hassam, J. Alden Weir, Theodore Robinson, and others), gathered at the Bush-Holley House to teach and paint. Students and teachers alike boarded there during both summer and winter in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; several made their permanent homes in the area. The Cos Cob Art Colony, as it came to be known, continued to flourish under the leadership of Elmer Livingston MacRae, a painter and sculptor who first came to Cos Cob as an art student of Twachtman. He and his wife, the former Constant Holley, continued to run the Bush-Holley House as a gathering place for artists and writers until his death.

The Bush-Holley House is architecturally significant for several periods of its building history. Although it is a well-preserved and unusual example of Dutch colonial architecture which evolved in several stages in the eighteenth century, because of its association with American Impressionism, its primary architectural significance is derived from its exceptional integrity as a boarding house and teaching center for the Cos Cob Art Colony. This direct and immediate association is further manifested in the numerous Impressionist works of art which depict the house and its surroundings during its period of historic artistic significance, many of which are in the permanent collections of major American museums.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

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 # CT-279
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Town of Greenwich Historical Society
Joseph F. Hirshhorn Foundation

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .7

UTM References

A

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|------|---|---|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 8 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

B

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

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| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

D

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is described in the Town of Greenwich Land Records, Vol. 580, page 251.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all the remaining property (land and buildings) associated with the period of historical significance, 1890 - 1920.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant
organization Cunningham Associates Ltd. date 8/27/90
street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (203) 347 4072
city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

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feather-grained fireplace walls in the south parlour and parlour chamber above which appear to date from the eighteenth century, probably about 1760. They both display hand-planed fielded panelling, a double-panelled chimney breast, ceiling cornices, and full-height reeded pilasters with multiple capitals (Photographs #7). Each has an unusual rounded brick firebox which is considered to be typical of Dutch construction. The north front room on the first floor displays a classic Adamesque or Federal-style fireplace surround dating from about 1820 (Photograph #8). The fireback there has a herringbone pattern of brick. There is no fireplace above in the room known as the north chamber which was often used as an artist's bedroom/studio during the art colony era of the house.¹ Instead, the inside wall of this room is panelled. The fireplace flues are incorporated in a large center chimney stack of stone which is supported by a brick barrel vault in the basement (Photograph #9). Under the rear roof of the upper floor is a long storage room known as a lantry; a circa 1900 dormer was removed from the roof there in 1958-59. The triple-run staircase in front of the large chimney stack of the main block displays square newels and turned balusters. The plastered stairwell ceiling is rounded in a gentle curve. The front room of the south addition, which served at various times as an office or a bedroom, is one the few unplastered rooms. It is sheathed with vertical boards which retain sections of wallpaper which has been dated to the eighteenth century.

Several changes were made to the house during the period that it served as a boarding house for the artists' colony. The second-floor facade porch was added and windows opening onto the porches were replaced with taller double-hung sash. In what is now the curator's apartment on the second floor of the rear wing, a dormer and a second-floor bathroom were added about 1901, at the time the only bathroom in the house. The wide hall that joins the two main sections was remodeled to include the installation of a straight-run staircase at the rear (Photograph #10). To add light and space to the boarding house dining room in the original kitchen, a small shed-roofed bay with double-hung windows was added to the west wall, also about 1901.

In 1958, soon after the property was acquired by the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich, a restoration and maintenance program was carried out under the direction of the firm of Watland and Hopping, Architects, of New York City. Deteriorated fabric, such as the roofing and portions of the clapboarding, was replaced and the main chimney stack rebuilt from the attic floor. A few minor interior Victorian features were removed and replaced with neo-Colonial details, but most of the original architectural features remain intact.

Features restored or remodelled in 1958 include the surrounds of both kitchen fireplaces. The fireplace in the original kitchen, which had been blocked in, probably to receive the flue of a woodstove, was uncovered and a new surround was installed in 1958 (Photograph #11). It consists of a simple framing molding around the opening with a mantel above. Similarly, the surround of the fireplace was replaced in the rear kitchen; it had been modified earlier for use with a cook stove. The main doorway of the saltbox was also remodeled. The original four-panelled double-leaf entrance doors,

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which were moved to the second floor when the porch there was added, were reinstalled at this entrance. The Georgian-style surround with a flat pediment, pulvinated frieze, and fluted pilasters was designed by the restoration architects. It is not known if this feature has any historical basis, but its degree of detail is typical of the neo-colonializing of the 1950s.

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Historical Background

The 30-year heyday of the Cos Cob Art Colony was a period of rapid change in the American art world. It was a period that saw the rise and decline of Impressionism, the introduction of social realism and modern abstract painting, and the disestablishment of American art. The hegemony of the National Academy of Design and its offshoot, the Society of American Artists, was undermined as artists began to band together in small societies and hold group shows. By the end of this period, the former exhibition system of prize competitions had given way to a more commercial approach: artists had begun to deal directly with dealers at many of the new art galleries that sprang up in major cities, particularly in New York, to exhibit the work of individual artists. Seasonal art colonies were founded in the seaboard of the Northeast; because of its proximity to New York and the variety and beauty of its landscape, two of the more influential colonies were in Connecticut, at Cos Cob by 1890 under the leadership of Twatchman, followed by the one at Old Lyme in 1901 founded by Henry Ward Ranger, a leading figure of the American Barbizon School. The art colonies afforded not only students, primarily from the Art Students League in New York City, but also their teachers, some of the leading artists of the day, the opportunity to paint and exchange ideas in the collegial manner of the European atelier. Many local art associations grew out of these colonies, including the Society of Greenwich Artists, founded by several second-generation Impressionists.

During this period, Impressionism moved from the avant garde into the mainstream of American painting. Although French Impressionism had been introduced in the United States by the 1880s and the plein-air painting of the Barbizon School was becoming an influence in American painting, it was not until the late nineteenth century that the first group of American painters began to experiment with Impressionist techniques. American Impressionism was not simply a later derivative of French Impressionism, however, despite its similarities of technique and palette. Not only did it depict a uniquely American landscape, but as espoused by Twatchman, it was based on more abstract design principles. Although American art began to take new directions by the early twentieth century, Impressionism was not preempted by the social realism of the Ash Can School as espoused by the Eight (named in parody of The Ten), but by the more revolutionary modernists who first exhibited in the United States at the Armory Show of 1913. Although the show was planned by MacRae and other artists to display a wide range of current trends in American and European painting, it has become identified with the work of more extreme modernists such as DuChamp, Picasso, and Matisse. American Post-Impressionism, which relied more on the decorative quality of a flat picture plane rather than the earlier Impressionist principles of spatial design and luminescence, continued as a minor influence for almost another decade. As it fell out of favor with the public, many artists, like MacRae, turned to the decorative arts in order to make a living in the 1920s and 30s.

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Section number 8 Page 3The Artists of Cos Cob

John H. Twachtman, J. Alden Weir, and Childe Hassam, members of the first generation of American Impressionists, were the key figures associated with the Cos Cob Art Colony. John Twachtman (1853-1902), credited with introducing Impressionism to American painting, first came to Cos Cob in 1888.² Like many of his fellow artists in this period, he had studied in Europe. After returning to New York in 1878, Twachtman was recognized as a leader of the progressive art community and continued to paint in the realistic alla prima style that he studied in Munich. Following a brief period when his style was influenced by a trip in Holland, Twachtman began to paint in the French style, with an emphasis on abstract design and a lighter palette. By 1889, when he was teaching in Newport, one of the first plein air classes in the United States, his Impressionist style had matured. After securing a faculty position at the Art Students League, he began teaching in the summer at the Bush-Holley House in Cos Cob, the first classes in Impressionist theory and technique in the United States.³ Classes were held in the barn studio and on the porch of the house. Although Twachtman had purchased a house in Greenwich, he often boarded at the Bush-Holley House for extended periods; many of his paintings and pastels were based on winter scenes of the house and the small fishing and shipping port nearby, some painted from the porches of the house which faced the harbor and Long Island Sound. Among these were several painted in the winter of 1901: From the Holley House and View from the Holley House, Winter. Except for one year when he took his students to Norwich, Twachtman held classes every year at the Bush-Holley house until 1899, sharing the teaching in some years with J. Alden Weir. Among his students were Charles Ebert, Ernest Lawson, and Elmer MacRae.

J. Alden Weir (1852-1915), another recognized leader of American Impressionism and a member of the Cos Cob Art Colony, was studying in Paris when the French Impressionism made its debut in 1874. Academically trained, Weir's initial reaction to their works was one of distaste. By 1893, however, in a joint exhibit with Twachtman at the American Art Galleries in New York, held concurrently with an exhibit of the French painters Monet and Besnard, he displayed more than twenty Impressionist paintings.⁴ Like Twachtman, he taught at the Bush-Holley House and also bought a year-round home and farm in Connecticut, in Ridgefield. He painted local scenes both in the country at Weir Farm and at Cos Cob.

Childe Hassam (1859-1935) was another distinguished artist at Cos Cob. Although he is often identified with the Old Lyme Art Colony, painting there between 1903 and 1907 and continuing to exhibit with this group until 1912, he was associated with the Cos Cob Art Colony periodically between 1894 and 1923. A number of his paintings and etchings were executed when he stayed at the Bush-Holley House for extended periods. They depict some of the rooms, as well as exterior scenes of the houses and its environs, including Morning Light, painted in 1914 in the north chamber, and several on the porch, such as Morning Oriole in 1902. The facade of the house is shown in The Holley Farm and the harbor and railroad bridge in The Millpond, both painted in 1902. Among his numerous etchings of 1915 that display architectural features of the house is The White Kimono, which utilizes the Federal-style fireplace of the north parlour as a background.⁵

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The influence of Twachtman, Weir, and Hassam extended well beyond the art colony at Cos Cob. Their leadership in the larger art world is underscored by their role as founders in 1897 of the association known as The Ten American Painters. Although the group was opposed to the conservatism of the established leadership of the American art world, The Ten were not revolutionaries or committed to promoting one artistic style. All but one of the group had been exposed to French Impressionism in France and most were landscape painters, but The Ten represented a great diversity of style and technique; one of them, Lawson, went on to be one of the social realists. Impressionism itself was no longer a radical art form but in the mainstream of American painting. Although Twachtman, considered a radical Impressionist because of the extreme abstraction of his work, recognized that American Impressionists were in danger of becoming mannered and formulaic, for the group the larger issue was one of esthetics. Beauty and good taste as their guiding principles extended to the display of their paintings in exhibitions. The Ten continued to exhibit in New York as a group until 1918 at the Montross Galleries, among others. Their carefully staged exhibits where small numbers of artworks were displayed at eye level against compatible neutral backgrounds were a radical departure from prevailing exhibition practice of the time. After his death in 1902, Twachtman's place in the group was taken by William Merritt Chase.

Among the lesser known American Impressionist painters of the period who participated in the informally structured life of the Cos Cob Colony at the Bush-Holley House were Theodore Robinson, Charles Ebert, Leonard Ochtman, and Kerr Eby. Because of his direct association with Monet as a student, Robinson was able to pass along French Impressionist techniques to his friends Twachtman and Weir during the several periods he stayed in Greenwich in the 1890s, including a summer at the Bush-Holley House in 1894. The three artists were also interested in Japanese printmaking, a major influence in their work, as it had been for the earlier French painters. Ebert, a pupil of Twachtman at the Bush-Holley House, married a fellow student and settled in Greenwich. Ochtman came to Cos Cob in 1891 and lived in a house in the neighboring village of Mianus in Greenwich until his death in 1935, one of the longest permanent associations of any artist with the area. Together with MacRae, he founded the Society of Greenwich Artists. Kerr Eby, another student, was primarily an etcher; he loaned the facilities of his print studios in a nearby waterfront warehouse to Hassam for the etchings he produced in 1915.

The last major figure associated with the Bush-Holley House was Elmer Livingston MacRae (1875-1953), one of the leading Impressionists of the second generation. Were it not for MacRae, the fledgling art colony at Cos Cob would have foundered with Twachtman's premature death in 1902. From the time of his marriage in 1900, MacRae directed his considerable artistic and organizational abilities to maintaining the Bush-Holley House as a retreat for artists and writers and promoting the cause of art. Among the literary figures who stayed at the Bush-Holley House in this period were Lincoln Steffens and Willa Cather. Although he continued to paint at Cos Cob for most of his life, MacRae remained very active in the New York art world. His one-man shows at the Bush-Holley House, beginning in 1908, were reviewed by New York critics. He was a founding member of the Pastellist Society in 1911, a group that included older well-established artists, such as Weir and Thomas Dewing, as well as George Bellows,

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William Glackens, and Ernest Lawson, the latter three members of the Eight. The first show of the Pastellists, held at the Folsom Galleries in New York, was well-received by the critics with MacRae singled out for critical praise. As a founder and treasurer of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, MacRae was also a principal organizer of the Armory Show produced by this group in 1913.⁶

In its present configuration, plan, form, and materials, the Bush-Holley House today appears much as it did in the early 1900s during the period when it was used as a boarding house for the art colony. Changes to the house since that time have been minor and generally confined to the new surrounds of the kitchen fireplaces and the main entrance. Because of this integrity, the Bush-Holley House was featured in conjunction with a retrospective of MacRae's work at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich in the fall of 1990 by a special installation sponsored by the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich. Curated by Kathleen Eagan, Registrar of Historic Hudson Valley, the Bush-Holley House was furnished as it was during the years that the art colony flourished in the early twentieth century. Room arrangements were based on artworks and photographs of the house during this period.

End Notes:

1. The 1988 National Register nomination for this site is in error in noting a fireplace in this room both in the text and in the schematic floor plans.
2. Deborah Chotner et al, John Twachtman: Connecticut Landscapes, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), p. 13.
3. Holger Cahill and Alfred Barr, Jr., eds., Art in America: A Complete Survey (New York: Halycon House, 1939), p. 87. For the limited role of the Art Students League see Susan G. Larkin, "The Cos Cob Clapboard School" in Connecticut and American Impressionism, p. 90. Although many early-twentieth-century artists studied at the Art Students League and several leading Impressionists taught there, the school cannot be identified with any one painting style. Not only was its association with American Impressionism peripheral, but its academically structured classes afforded a limited opportunity to influence student's style, e. g., Preparatory Antique, the drawing class required of all students and taught by Twachtman.
4. Kathleen A. Pyne in Chotner et al, John Twatchman, p. 49.
5. Hassam's stays at the house are documented in the correspondence of Constant Holley in the archives of the Town of Greenwich Historical Society and from the dates of his paintings and etchings at the site.
6. MacRae's extensive personal records, donated to the Joseph F. Hirshhorn Foundation after his death, reveal the extent of the artist's role in the preparation of the exhibit. These records were the basis for Milton W. Brown's The Story of the Armory Show.

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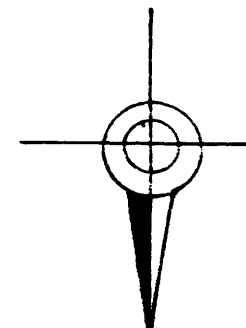
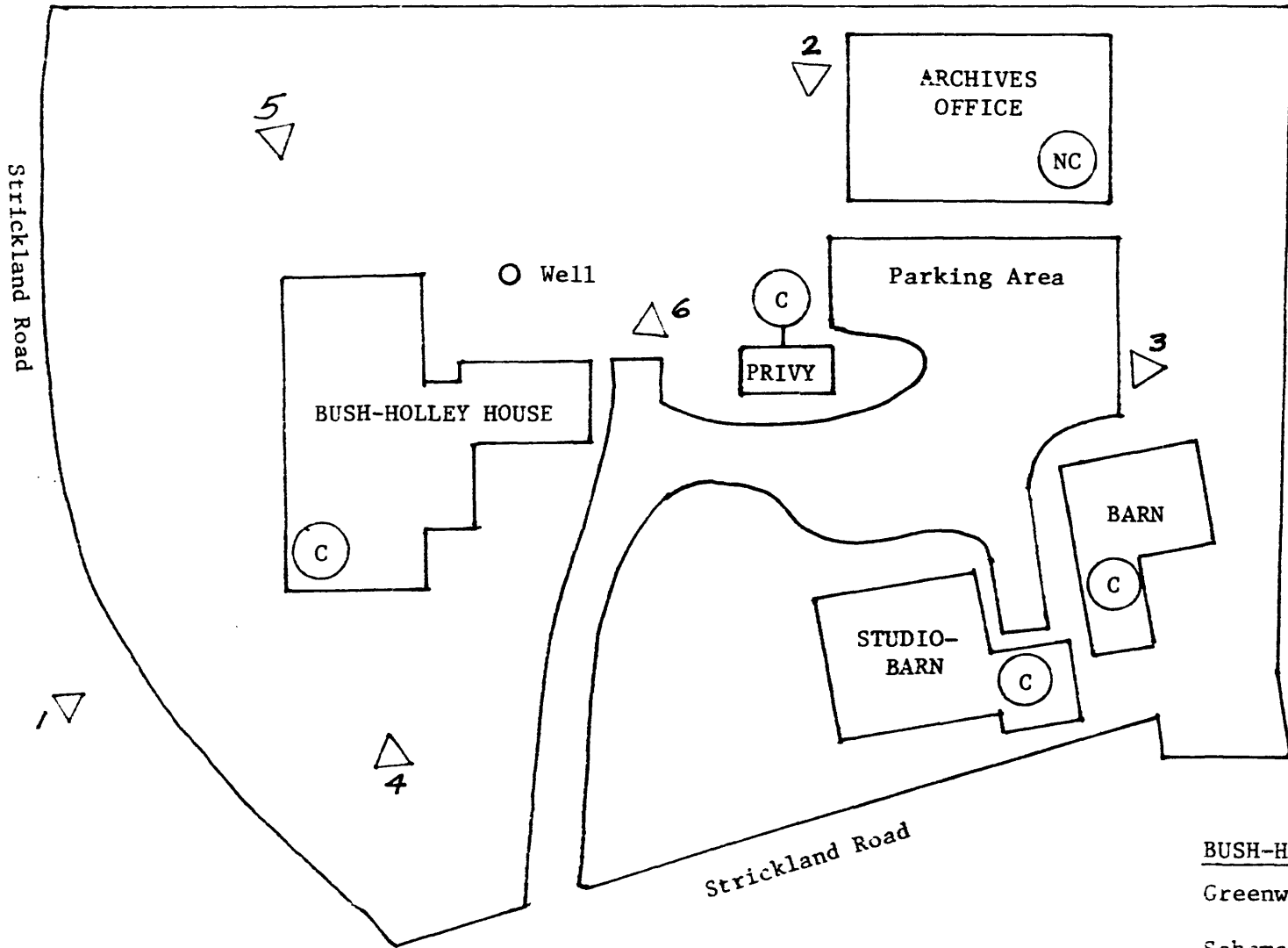
Sellin, David. Americans in Brittany and Normandy: 1860-1910. Phoenix Art Museum, 1982.

_____. "Childe Hassam, Un Impressionniste Americain à Pont Aven, 1897,"
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BUSH-HOLLEY HOUSE

Greenwich, Connecticut

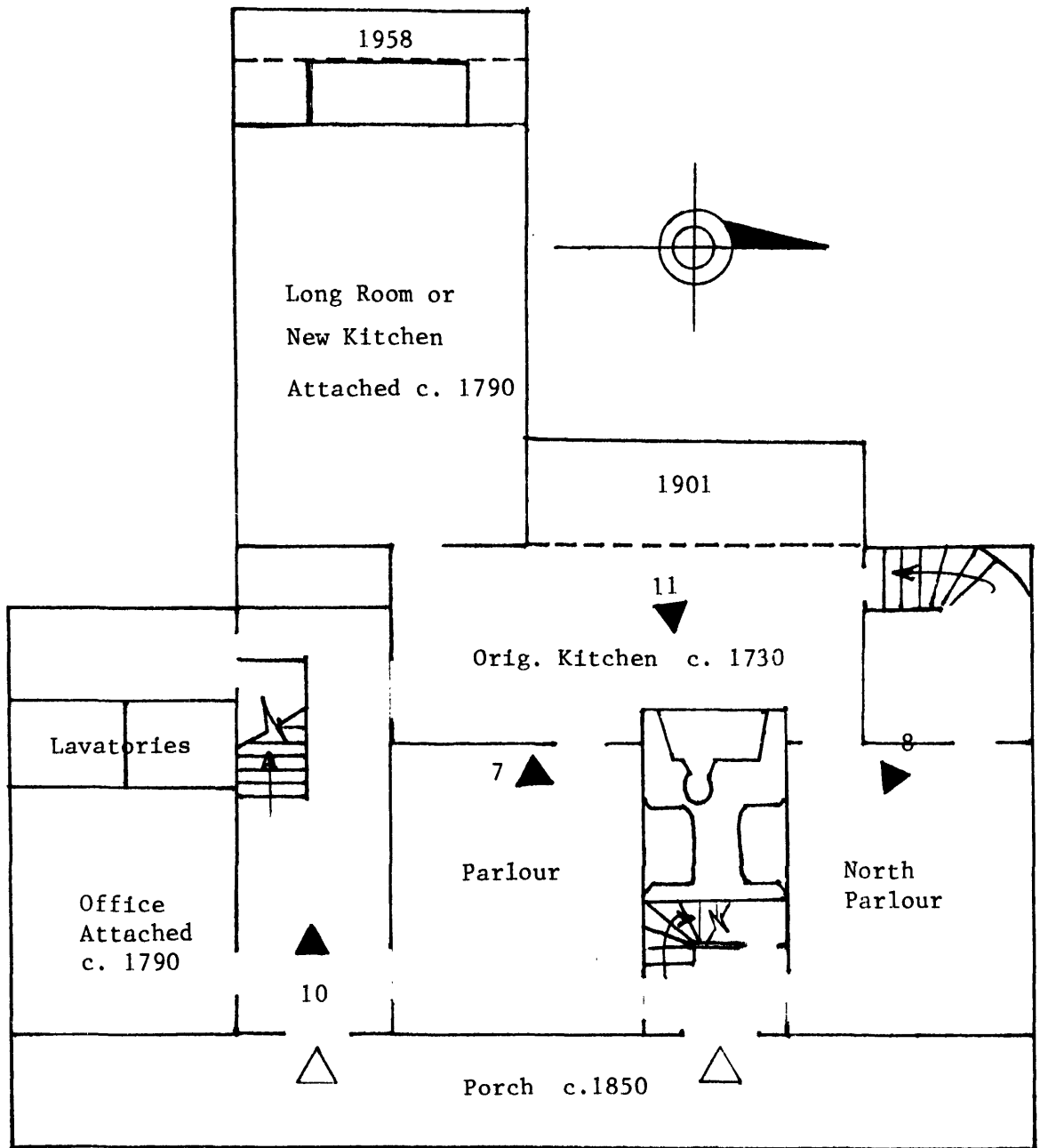
Schematic Site Plan with Photo Views

C Contributing

NC Non-contributing

Prepared by Cunningham Associates Ltd.
8/90

EXHIBIT A



SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM BUSH-HOLLEY HOUSE

First floor plan with photograph views

Cunningham Associates

8/90

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Section number Photos Page 1List of PhotographsProperty: Bush-Holley House, Greenwich, Connecticut
Photographer: Janice P. Cunningham, Cunningham Associates Ltd.
Date: June, 1990.

| Photo # | View | Facing |
|---------|--|-----------|
| 1. | Facade and north elevation | southwest |
| 2. | Rear of house (R); Privy (L) | north |
| 3. | Barns (barn studio on R) | north |
| 4. | North elevation | southeast |
| 5. | South elevation of south addition | northwest |
| 6. | West addition | northeast |
| 7. | Fireplace wall in parlour | north |
| 8. | North front room | southeast |
| 9. | Barrel vault of chimney base | northeast |
| 10. | Hall between main block and south addition | west |
| 11. | Restored fireplace in original kitchen | northeast |