

PH0010758

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| STATE: Connecticut | |
| COUNTY: New London | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER 70.12.09.0044 | DATE 12/29/70 |

1. NAME

COMMON:
Leffingwell Inn

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
348 Washington St.

CITY OR TOWN:
Norwichtown



STATE: Connecticut CODE: 06 COUNTY: New London CODE: 011

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY (Check One) | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object | <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both | Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate) | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____ |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
The Society of the Founders of Norwich Connecticut, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Norwich STATE: Connecticut CODE: 06

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Norwich STATE: Connecticut CODE: 06

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: (1) Historic American Buildings Survey
(2) Connecticut Historic Structures and Landmarks Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: (1) 1960 (2) 1966 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: (1) Library of Congress
(2) Connecticut Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER: (1) Art Division
(2) 75 Elm Street

CITY OR TOWN: (1) Washington 25, D.C. STATE: (2) Connecticut CODE: 06
(2) Hartford

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------------|--|---|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One) | | | | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
| | Restored (Check One) | | | (Check One) | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Altered | <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved | <input type="checkbox"/> Original Site | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The structure consists of three successive stages in construction over a period of a century. In its final stage it has the ell-shaped appearance to two saltbox houses joined together on their rear corners so that it has two fronts and two ends. Each saltbox has, of course, a long, sloping roof to its rear, the two slopes meeting in a trough that depends to the southwest. The house is actually almost square, full height at the north and east sides, only one story high at the southwest. The hall running through to the west from the east door is utterly plain, with no stair, since the mid-century stair on the north is the only one in the house. The two great rooms on either side of this hall are unusually long, each having two summer beams, and fine fireplace walls of paneling backing up against the hall. These two chimneys pass straight up through the second story chambers, which reproduce the two rooms below; but they join together in the attic, and pass through the roof as one chimney. In the attic, the evidence seems unmistakable that the east section is the earlier house, in spite of tradition that the other side was the original. One indication of this would seem to be the frame of a facade gable --the only one in the state except for the Antiquarian Society's Hempsted House.

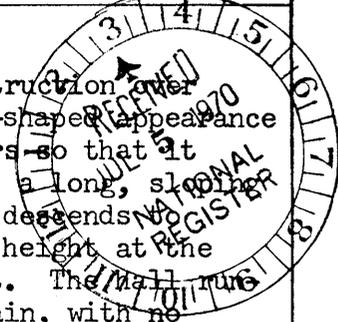
Perhaps the above sketchy description indicates the strange way in which the features of the house are scrambled, the 17th century remains existing all in the cellar, the magnificent 18th century northeast room, and the east attic. Meanwhile, the work of Bēnajah (1726 - 1756) and Christopher Leffingwell (1756 - 1810) is found throughout; and to decipher the evolution with any certainty would require both great knowledge and some ingenuity. No house in the state, probably, has evolved with greater complexity.

Some of the notable features of the inn include the following:

The Tavern Room: This is the oldest part of the building. It was built by Stephen Backus in 1675 and is located in the northeast corner. This original structure was of the one room plan. Its dimensions are 18 x 22 feet. In the 1760's Christopher Leffingwell, the then owner, redecorated the room adding panel work on all four sides. These paneled walls were placed over a foot inside the structure of the Backus house to clear the raised sill.

The Entrance Hall: This area on the south side of the tavern room is the first addition to the original one room structure. This was put on before 1724. When this had been done the house assumed the form of a typical house of the period, one room deep with a central stair porch and a great central chimney.

The Windows: An unusual feature of the house is that it has intact most of the original sash put in about 1720 and replacing the casement windows of the Backus House. These are the 7 x 9 inch glass which is larger than the 6 x 8 inch glass more commonly found. Muntins vary from 1 - 1 1/4 inches in width, typical of the early 18th century. Of all the rooms in the house



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(Number all entries)

2

Present and Original Physical Appearance
Leffingwell Inn

only the parlour has later sash and somewhat later frames.

South Parlour: This like the entrance hall was part of the first addition to the house, which was almost certainly a separate structure moved up and over on top of the original Backus house. The red colored paneling (c. 1750) is the oldest paneling in the house.

The Kitchen: This room and the north parlour belong to the third stage of construction. The kitchen is at the northwest corner of the house in the combined leanto behind two legs of the house. It had at different times four fireplaces at four different locations in the room. In the restoration the oldest cooking fireplace was restored and a later cooking fireplace in the west wall was retained.

The North Parlour: This room which is part of the third stage (c. 1730 - 1765) contains paneling and shutters which had been installed in other parts of the house. The fireplaces in this room have been either restored or replaced with parts or wholes taken from other early houses in Norwich.

Cellar Kitchen: At the bottom of the stairs to the cellar is an old basement kitchen with its fireplace and ovens.

1675 Bedroom: 18th century work has been removed in this bedroom to reveal the austere 17th century original. Evident is a large opening for a casement window and vertical boarding on the walls.

Child's Bedroom: This is an interesting small room in which may be seen the plate of the Backus house frame.



3. SIGNIFICANCE

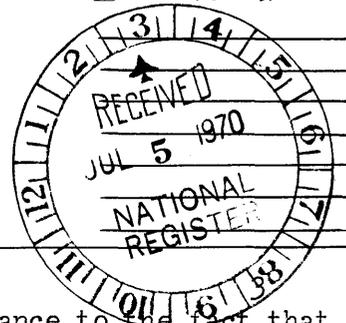
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1675

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Leffingwell Inn owes its architectural importance to the fact that the present building is built around some of the best seventeenth century remains left in Connecticut. The structure is an interesting example of the evolution of a notable house in the hands of a notable family.

Stephen Backus built the original house about 1675. In 1700 he sold the house and property to Ensign Thomas Leffingwell who was granted in 1701 permission "to keep a publicque house of entertainment for strangers". About 1715 he added to the inn by moving up a separate structure and fastening it on to the Backus house.

Thomas Leffingwell married Mary Bushnell and they had nine children. Mary was a nurse and when her husband died, she allotted some of the rooms for care of the sick of the community. When Mary died, the house was deeded to their son, Benajah Leffingwell. Benajah married Joanna Christopher and they had thirteen children, one of whom, Colonel Christopher, inherited the Inn after the death of his father.

Colonel Christopher Leffingwell was an illustrious and ambitious member of the community, a pioneer in many fields. He probably continued to keep tavern, among his other pursuits, but he had an imagination and pioneering spirit that led him to become one of our earliest tycoons. With a neighbor named Bliss, he introduced paper-making to Connecticut. This in turn made newspapers in the Colony a practical reality. He also ventured upon a stocking factory (when men as well as women, wore them) using machines that turned out thousands of stockings a year, as well as gloves and purses.

After the revolution, Colonel Leffingwell built a row of shops for his enterprises, an early instance of block building of a commercial nature, which stood until burned about a hundred years later. One of the shops was long a school. A fulling mill, dye-house, chocolate mill and grist mill were among his other enterprises, and an early pottery near Bean Hill.

From the first he was Norwich's first citizen, the one to whom the first news of Lexington and Concord was addressed, and to whom the Huntingtons and Trumbulls applied for supplies when troops were called into action. He seems throughout the War to have had special avenues of information,

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Marion K. O'Keefe and Catherine Smith Doroshevitch, Norwich Historic Homes and Families. Published in cooperation with the Society of the Founders of Norwich (Stonington, Ct.: The Pequot Press, Inc.), 1967.

Elmer D. Keith, "The Leffingwell Inn in Norwich," Bulletin of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society (December, 1956).

The Leffingwell Inn, a pamphlet published by the Society of the Founders of Norwich, Connecticut, Inc., 1960.

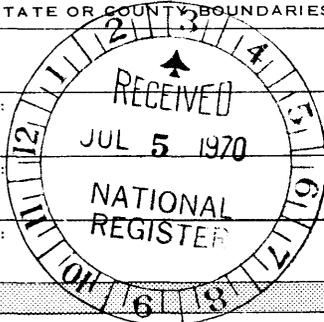
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY | | | | O R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES | | | | |
|--|----------|---------|-----------|---------|---|---------|-----------|---------|---------|
| CORNER | LATITUDE | | LONGITUDE | | LATITUDE | | LONGITUDE | | |
| | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds |
| NW | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " |
| NE | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " |
| SE | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " | 41 | 32 | 32 |
| SW | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " | 72 | 05 | 17 |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2

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

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|---------|------|
| | | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| | | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| | | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| | | | |



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Constance Luyster, Administrative Trainee

ORGANIZATION: **Connecticut Historical Commission** DATE: **May 19, 1970**

STREET AND NUMBER:
75 Elm Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Hartford** STATE: **Connecticut** CODE: **06**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: *[Signature]*
State Liaison Officer and Chairman
of Connecticut Historical Commission

Date: May 19, 1970

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

DEC 29 1970

Date: _____

ATTEST:
[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

NOV 27 1970

Date: _____

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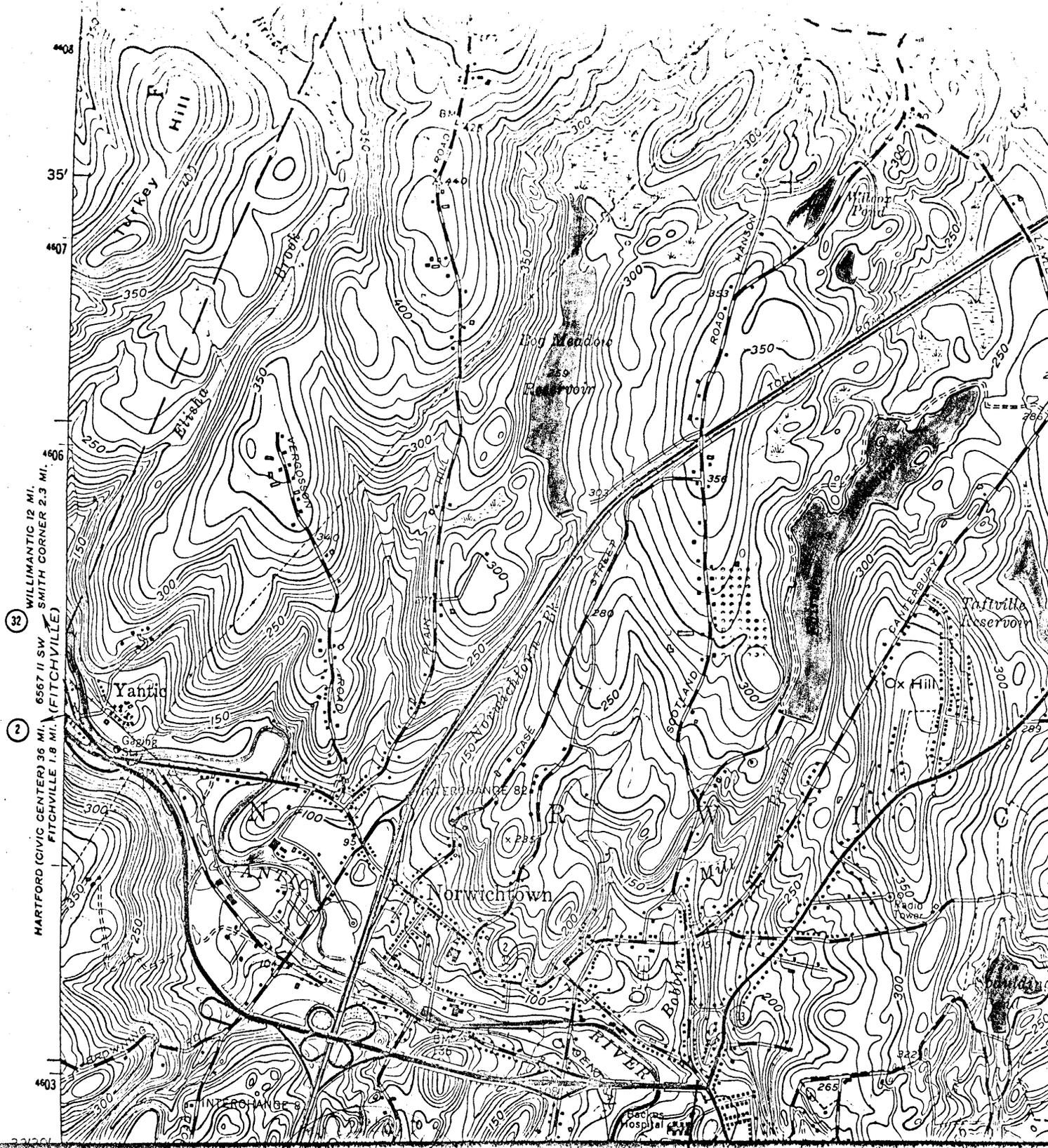
4

Significance of the Leffingwell Inn

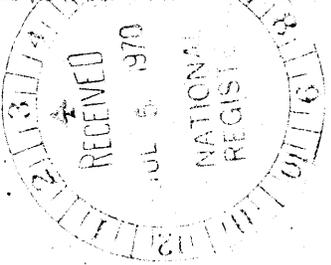
and to have had an imagination and foresight that brought Washington to him at one juncture, when the British troops appeared likely to have split our army in two. No one, perhaps, in Connecticut took a more strategic part in the War albeit always as a private citizen.

Thus the inn has an historical significance because it brings into sharp focus the setting in which our ancestors deliberated on the momentous problems of their day and formulated the political philosophy which produced the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution, and the Constitution. Christopher Leffingwell was a member of the Committee of Correspondence, which was a principal medium through which these ideas were promulgated, exchanged and brought to fruition. Samuel Huntington, a Norwich resident, was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and Norwich, which at the time was one of the twelve largest cities in the entire thirteen colonies, contributed mightily to the ideological and economic leadership of that era which marked the "Birth of a Nation."





(2) HARTFORD (CIVIC CENTER) 36 MI. 6567 II SW FITCHVILLE 1.8 MI. (FITCHVILLE)
 (32) WILLIMANTIC 12 MI. SMITH CORNER 2.3 MI. (FITCHVILLE)



Latitude $41^{\circ} 32' 32''$
 Longitude $72^{\circ} 05' 17''$
 The Leffingwell Inn