

PH0010731

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Connecticut	
COUNTY: Middlesex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 70-9-06-0001	DATE 9/10

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Seth Wetmore House

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Oak Hill (historic), Sam Green House

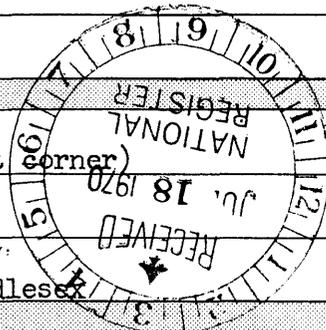
**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Intersection Route 66 and Camp Road (Northwest corner)

CITY OR TOWN:  
Middletown

STATE: Connecticut

CODE: 06 COUNTY: Middlesex CODE: 007



**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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 type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" 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:  
Sam Green

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Meriden Road (Route 66)

CITY OR TOWN:  
Middletown

STATE:  
Connecticut

CODE:  
06

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
\_\_\_\_\_

CITY OR TOWN:  
Middletown

STATE:  
Connecticut

CODE:  
06

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Connecticut Historic Structures and Landmarks Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1966  
 Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Connecticut Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
75 Elm Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Hartford

STATE:  
Connecticut

CODE:  
06

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
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

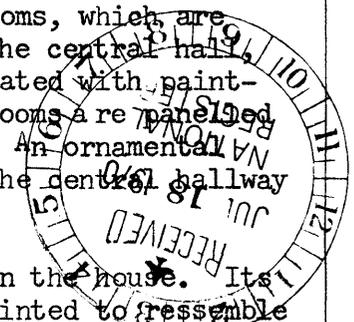
The house has two and one half stories and is of the two chimney type, four rooms to a floor with a hallway crossing the house from front to back leaving two rooms and a chimney on either side. Thus there are eight rooms to the main house plus an additional room obtained by partitioning off part of the second story. Although the house has a pleasant situation on a hill slope over looking Middletown and the Connecticut River Valley, noise from the traffic on Route 66 which passes the house on one side is an intrusion which lowers the quality of the present environment.

The original building had a gambrel roof, which has now been replaced by a gable roof with the addition of dormers with casement windows. Of the windows which are with one exception of two sashes of twelve lights each, two still retain their original frame with pediments. The window over the front door is shorter than the others, and the space between it and the door is filled with an elaborate Connecticut Valley broken scroll pediment which is a replacement for the missing original. The door frame has fluted pilasters with pedestals, above the necks of the pilasters are carved rosettes (Jacobean roses). The house has a leanto behind the southwest portion and has two ells of later date and only limited interest.

The front hall extends at its full width right through to the back or garden door, and contains the main staircase on the left. The newel post is excellent, consisting of reverse whorls, one within the other, set on a more than ample base, elaborately carved. These stairs go straight up to a square landing where they half turn (i.e. a right angle) to the right one step below the level of the second story hall. The rear of the upper hall is partitioned off on the line of the rear of the landing, making a room to which access is obtained by a door opening into the northwest chamber. Throughout the house the framing is cased and shows in corner posts in all the rooms and in the posts in the north and south walls. The summers in the four front rooms run north and south, and with their casing show three or four inches below the ceiling. There are no summers in the four back rooms, which are but little more than half as deep as those in front. The central hall stairway and three of the first floor rooms are wainscoted with painted panelling, and the fireplace ends in all the eight rooms are painted in whole or in part, all this panelling being painted. An ornamental cornice is found in about half the rooms, and that of the central hallway on the second floor is very large.

The northeast ground floor room is the most elaborate in the house. Its pine panelled walls, cornice and its summer beam are painted to resemble cedar graining in a rich shade of cedar rose with stripes of deep maple-yellow for contrast, while the fluted pilasters which flank the fireplace are marbled in grayish-green with olive green veining and the moulding which surrounds the fireplace opening is painted a still darker green. On the panel over the fireplace is painted a landscape framed in a bold moulding which shows an Italian scene with classic ruin in the foreground.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Connecticut	
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FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	
70.9.06.0001	9/10	

(Number all entries)

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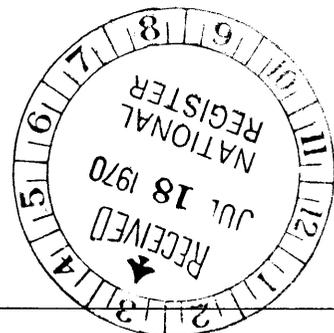
Description: The Seth Wetmore House

The whole is painted in the manner of Claude Lorraine. The fireplace jambs although apparently of brick, are in reality of a large sandstone each, chiselled to imitate courses of brick, and the same is the case in the southeast and northwest rooms. To the left of the fireplace is a beautiful set in cupboard of three shelves flanked by fluted pilasters. Above all is a fine shell top and below a double door closet. The shell top is painted to resemble a sunrise with successive color changes to effect the transformation of the deep orange hue at its center to deep olive at its outer edge. The only window seats in the house are at the two front windows in this room. At these windows the inside panelled shutters fold into the wall. Shutters like these, at the north window of this room, and at all three windows of the southeast room, fold against the wall. None of the other rooms have window shutters.

The southeast first floor room is less elaborate, the panelling being lower and the corner cupboard much simpler. The cellar bulkhead is under the south window of this room. The rear rooms on the first floor have simply wall cupboards set in panelling. The brick oven is in the southwest first floor room, which was accordingly the original kitchen.

The original connections between the front and back rooms were the passageways between the chimneys and the north and south exterior walls. By the removal of doors and partitions, three of these passageways have become part of their respective rear rooms, that on the north side of the second floor alone remaining as a closet. The front rooms are as stated elsewhere, much larger than the rear rooms, the back walls being but little forward of the middle of the house. Accordingly almost the whole bulk of the chimneys and passageways is in the back of the house, and although some changes have occurred in spaces which were formerly occupied by the oven, closets, etc. these spaces have never been incorporated with the rooms.

<sup>1</sup>This description is taken for the most part directly from the December 1914 Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, for the house has not been altered in any notable way since that time. Some interpolations of fact and description have been made in paragraphs one and two and in the description of the northeast room, some details of which were taken from Nina Fletcher Little's book, American Decorative Wall Painting.



**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

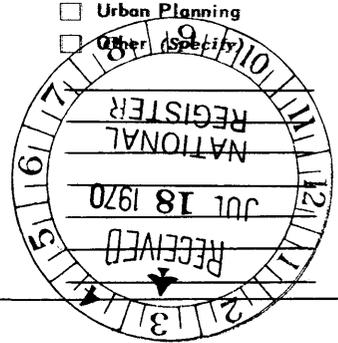
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1742

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |  |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input 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 checked="" 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   | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |  |
| <input checked="" 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 Wetmore house has both architectural and historical significance. Its historical significance is tied to the history of the Wetmore family. Mrs. Wetmore was sister to Jonathan Edwards, who along with Timothy Dwight spent college vacations at the Wetmore house. Judge Wetmore was a prominent citizen of Middletown. Pierpont Edwards and Aaron Burr who were also relatives of the family studied law with the judge. During the nineteenth century the family participated in the movement for abolition of slavery. Family tradition has it that the house was one of the stops in the underground railroad. Records and photographs exist to show an adopted slave child, Cassiopeia, who was purchased, freed, and raised by the family. The present owner, an architectural historian at Wesleyan University, believes that the area which exists behind certain paneled walls in the house was used to conceal negroes who were hiding in the house.

However, although the family history of the Wetmore's is an intriguing one the primary merit of the house lies in its interior: the northeast room is, according to Nina Fletcher Little, unique in its preservation of eighteenth century decoration. The shell cupboard is the only original example of its kind and has been copied in restorations elsewhere. The mural is a puzzle with respect to its origins. Mrs. Little attributes the original inspiration to imported wall paper designs:

Although obviously based on a foreign source, after the manner of Claude Lorrain, the architectural details are not accurate, and a certain naïveté of manner leads one to suspect the hand of an American provincial decorator rather than that of a foreign-trained artist. Wallpaper designs which included Roman ruins were brought out in England by Jackson of Battersea about 1750, and such a source, rather than a more obvious derivation, may have been the inspiration for panels such as this.

(American Decorative Wall Painting, p. 55)

However, family tradition claims they were executed by an itinerant Italian painter who visited this country shortly before the revolution. Another possibility is that one of the French army officers imprisoned in Middletown after their capture in the French and Indian war was the painter.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities  
(December, 1914), pp. 7-11.

Nina Fletcher Little, American Decorative Wall Painting 1700 - 1850.  
Sturbridge, Mass. 1952, pp. 9, 10, 55 and 58.

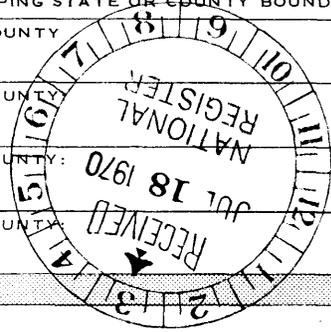
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	41	33	09
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	72	41	19
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than 1/2 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Constance Luyster, Administrative Trainee**

ORGANIZATION: **Connecticut Historical Commission**      DATE: **May 18, 1970**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**75 Elm Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Hartford**      STATE: **Connecticut**      CODE: **0280**

**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  
Title: Connecticut Historical Commission

Date: May 31, 1970

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

*[Signature]*  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: SEP 10 1970

ATTEST:  
*[Signature]*  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: AUG 19 1970

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(Continuation Sheet)

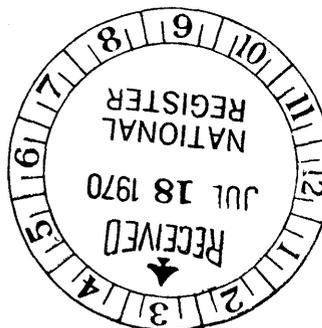
STATE Connecticut	
COUNTY Middlesex	
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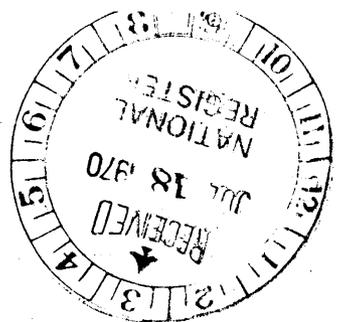
(Number all entries)

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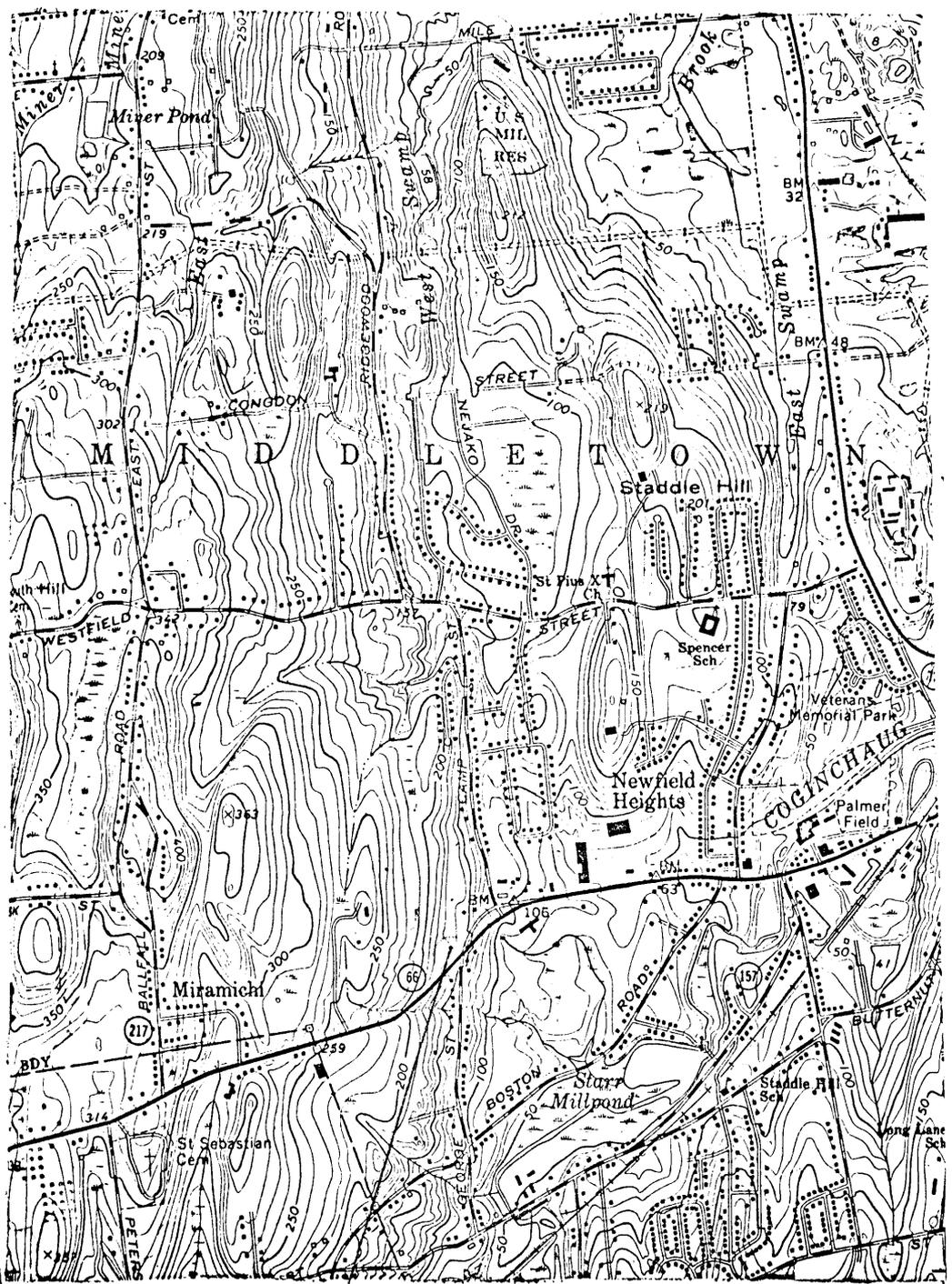
Statement of Significance: The Seth Wetmore House

Despite the fact that the origins of the mural are unknown the combination of painted paneling, murals, and the inset cabinet with shell top, make this one room unique. Mr. Green said that at a recent appraisal the estimated value was given at \$100,000, but that because he didn't wish to pay for the cost of insuring the room for that amount that the estimated value that the appraiser finally gave him was \$65,000. The rest of the house, as the description suggests is remarkable in its own right although not the single example of its kind.





41° 35' 00"



41° 32' 30"

72° 42' 30"

72° 40' 30"

Seth Wetmore House  
Latitude 41° 33' 09"  
Longitude 72° 41' 19"