

PROPOSED HISTORIC PROPERTY DESIGNATION  
STUDY REPORT FOR 39 CROSS HIGHWAY  
JANUARY 2019



Town of Westport  
Historic District Commission  
Local Historic Property Study Committee

Study Report Prepared by  
Tod Bryant, Heritage Resources  
Bob Weingarten, Historic District Commission

## Description

### Setting

The house faces southeast and it is set back approximately 100 feet from Cross Highway on a 1.02 acre parcel. The lot is bordered by mature trees on its north, east and west sides. There are mature shrubs and trees on the east and west sides of the façade and a mature shrub near the center of the east elevation. There is a patio and swimming pool to the north of the house. There is an unused stone well and a stone foundation wall to the east of the house.

Cross Highway is a residential street that runs northeast approximately four miles from Clinton Avenue in the south to Redding Road at its northern terminus. It is lined on both sides with large homes surrounded by mature trees (Figure 1). There are thirteen houses built in the nineteenth century in the area around this house. They include: the home of first black family (1808, Henry Monroe) to own a house in Westport and the Wakeman Town Farm built in 1890. There are also houses built by members of prominent Westport families, including three houses built by the Meeker family, Andrew Godfrey, Ebenezer Ogden, Nevada Hitchcock, Eliphalet Sturges and Edward Partrick. One of the initial eight Westport District Schools, called Cross Highway District School built in 1868, is also nearby. Some these significant homes are:

150 Compo Road North, corner lot bounded on Cross Highway, adjacent house on west is 24 Cross Highway:

"The colonial house was built by Capt. Phineas Chapman for his son, Major Albert Chapman ca. 1779 on the occasion of his marriage to Lydia Ketchum."<sup>1</sup>

69 Cross Highway: Known as Hockanum, the house was originally built in c.1762 by Ephraim Burr. The original home burned and the existing house was built in c.1850 by Morris Ketchum.

93 Cross Highway: *"built by Eliphalet Sturges circa 1764 as a two-story, four room farmhouse in the Georgian style without a leanto. It was remodeled to its current saltbox form by the well-known artist George Hand Wright in the early 20th century."*<sup>2</sup>

188 Cross Highway: *"The house built for Samuel Meeker ca. 1728 is significant for its plan, construction, association with the raid on Danbury undertaken during the Revolutionary War"*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mary E. McCahon, "150 Compo Road North," Connecticut Historic Resources Inventory form, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Mary E. McCahon, "93 Cross Highway." Connecticut Historic Resources Inventory form, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Mary E. McCahon, "188 Cross Highway." Connecticut Historic Resources Inventory form, 1988.

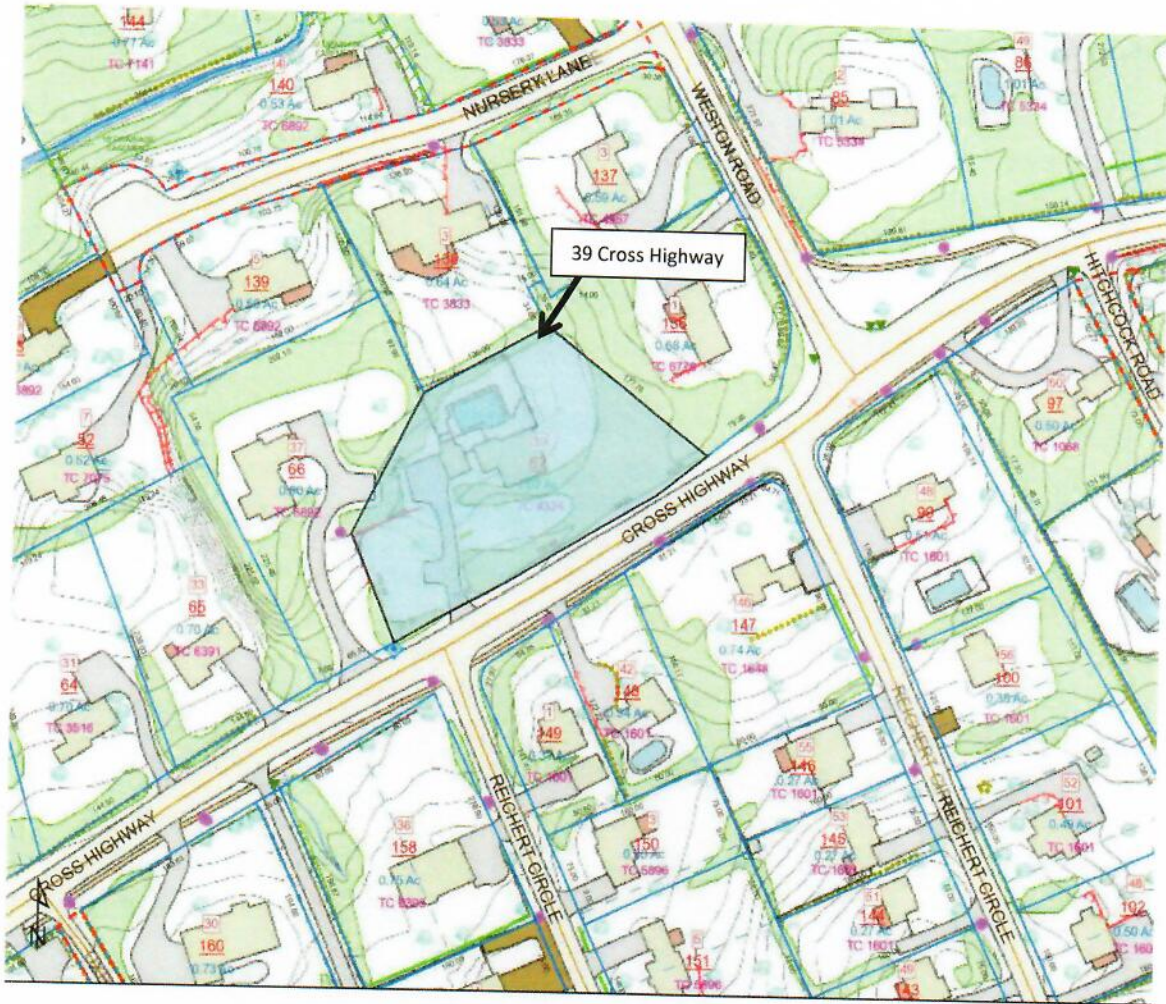


Figure 1. Location of 39 Cross Highway

## Architectural Description

This is an Italianate house with 3,463 square feet of living area built in 1878 by Charles Chapman. It consists of a two story main block with a two story west wing and two twentieth century additions, including a garage, attached to its west elevation. The walls are covered with painted clapboard and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. It is a side gable house with a small centered gable on the façade of the main block and overhanging eaves. The house sits on a exposed rubble stone foundation. A one story porch with a flat roof supported by square wood columns and a flagstone floor runs the width of the façade of the main block. It wraps around the west elevation, where it connects to the west wing (Photos 1 and 2). The main entrance is centered on the facade and protected by the porch. It has a wooden door with inset panels and sidelights. The doorway is surmounted by a pedimented architrave supported by pilasters. There are two-over-two double hung windows with pedimented architraves and working wood shutters to the east and west of the main entrance (Photo 3).

A doorway with a pedimented architrave is on the west elevation at the juncture of the main block and the west addition. There is a single two-over-two double hung window with a pedimented architrave and one working wood shutter on its south side to the south of this entrance. A twelve light door with a pedimented architrave and working wood shutters is centered on the second story of the façade. It is surmounted by a decorative canopy. There are two-over-two double hung windows with pedimented architraves and working wood shutters to the east and west of this window. A single, small two-over-two double hung window with a pedimented architrave is on the west elevation near the cornice of the roof of the addition. A smaller version of the same window is centered in the gable (Photos 1- 4). Two corbeled brick chimneys flank the gable at the peak of the roof (Photos 1, 2, 5 and 6).

The two story west wing has a raised basement and it sits on an exposed brick foundation. It has two fixed one-over-one windows on the façade of the basement and two fixed single light windows on its west elevation. There is a single two-over-two double hung window with a pedimented architrave and working wood shutters on the façade of the first story of this addition and a single two-over-two double hung window above it at the cornice. A smaller version of the same window is centered in the gable. There is a corbeled brick chimney near the west end of the roof of this addition (Photos 1, 2, 5 and 6).

The roof line steps down on the addition on the west elevation of this wing. It has a below grade entrance on its façade with French doors behind a brick arch. A large window with a pedimented architrave and a fixed, twelve light center section flanked by operating eight light casements is centered on the first story. There is a small, fixed, single light window with a pedimented architrave in a dormer above this window. A segmental arched window with a keystone is centered in the gable of the west elevation of the dormer (Photos 1, 2 and 4).

The garage is attached to the west elevation of this block. It has an entrance with a pedimented architrave on its east end and a six-over-six double hung window with a pedimented architrave near its west end. There is a flat cornice above these elements and a louvered, octagonal vent in the gable. The west elevation of the garage has two roll-up garage doors on the first story and a dormer with an arched double two-over-two casement window. There is a shed with a shed roof on the north elevation of the garage. There is an entrance on its west elevation.

The east elevation of the main block has a single two-over-two double hung window with a pedimented architrave and working wood shutters (one of the shutters is missing) near the façade on the first story and a pair of two-over-two double hung windows with pedimented architraves without shutters near its north elevation. There are two double hung windows with pedimented architraves and working wood shutters (shutters on the north window are missing) on the second story and a single, similar window with missing shutters in the gable (Photo 7).

### Integrity

The house at 39 Cross Highway has a very high degree of architectural integrity. Its design, massing and most decorative elements are unchanged since construction, except for sympathetic additions.

## Historical Significance

This house is located on land that was part of the 1670/71 land grant of "Long Lotts" on which the area was first settled. By the eighteenth century, Cross Highway had been established as a major road through the area and farm families began to build their homes near it. The Chapman family was one of the most prominent among them. The original Chapman home at this location was built c.1742 by Captain Phineas Chapman (1716-1782). His grandson, Charles Chapman (1814-1878), built the existing house in 1878, after the first building burned. The name, "C. Chapman" is identified with a house at this location on the 1868 Beers map (Figure 2).

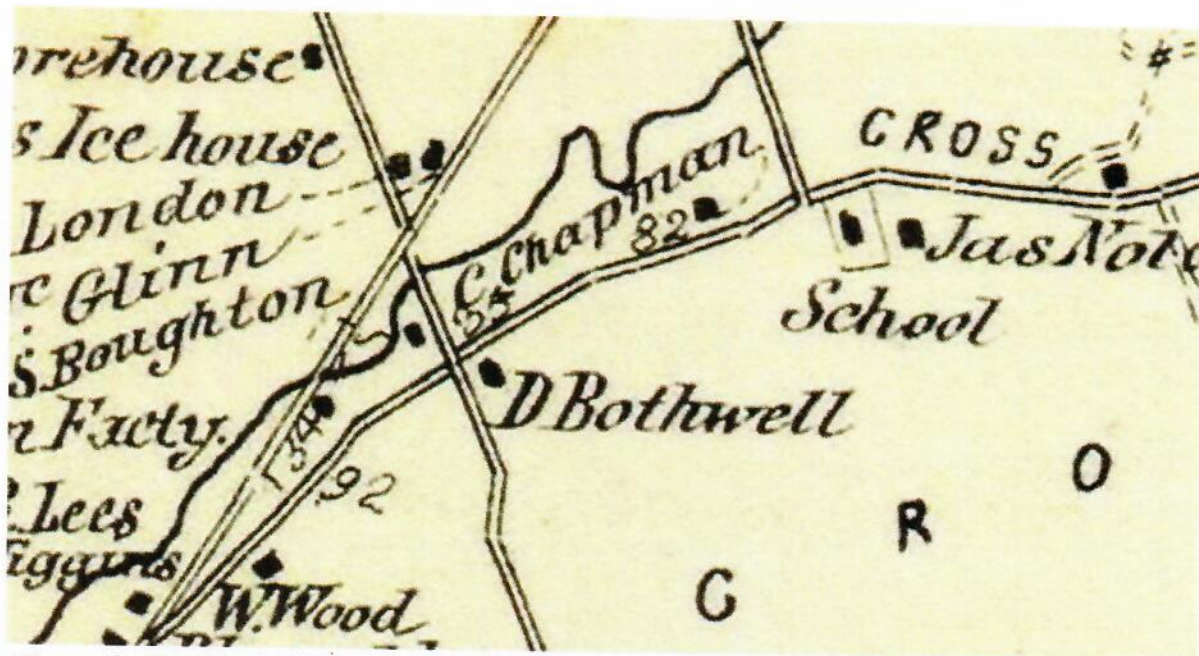


Figure 2. Detail of 1868 map showing location of a house on Cross Highway associated with C. Chapman. (David Rumsey Map Collection)

### Chapman Family

The Chapman family settled the lot on which 39 Cross Highway stands and other homes in the area. The family is well known for their participation in the creation of civic and church doctrine, participation in the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War and early development of Westport's farming industry.

The area known as Green's Farms was first settled in 1648 by the "Bankside Farmers" and called Machamux. In 1711 the local residents petitioned the colony of Fairfield to create a parish with rights to local government. The Machamux and Compo residents request was based on the travel difficulty and time required to attend church and government meetings in Fairfield. Fairfield agreed and the West Fairfield Parish was created in 1711. A church was organized in 1711 and its building completed in 1714. While the church was being constructed, the congregants hired and ordained Reverend Daniel Chapman (1688/9-1741) their first minister. He was the son of a

minister who followed his father into the clergy after graduating from Yale in 1707 and he served the community for 26 years. The church had ecclesiastic and civil authority over the people residing in the West Fairfield Parish. The church authority included tax collection, law and order authority. These activities continued until 1842 when West Fairfield Parish, was officially annexed into Westport. The parish clergy therefore had considerable influence on everyday life in the parish.

Members of the Chapman family were involved in the Revolutionary War and were locally considered heroes. Galen Murray, son of the current owner, states in his history of the family that, "...in 1777 the British landed at Compo Beach to burn Danbury. They marched down Cross Highway. Phineas, his brother Dennis, and son Daniel were taken prisoners. They were taken first to Ridgefield, and then imprisoned in NYC'S sugar houses. Daniel died in prison. In 1777 Captain Phineas health was broken in prison and he died five years later."<sup>4</sup>

Other distinguished Chapman family members, included Westport's first physician, Joseph Chapman (1745-1806) and they also participated in farming, milling and trucking industries. The family tradition of giving to the community continued until the last of the Chapman owned the property. They owned and lived in this house and its predecessor for over 180 years, between the middle of the eighteenth century until the early twentieth century. The last member of the family to live there was Laura Chapman (1855-1927), who died in 1927. The Neighborhood Nature Club, where she had been a former president, erected a bronze plaque on a large stone on Cross Highway and Weston Road with the inscription of In Loving memory of Laura E. A. Chapman in 1930.

### **Architectural Significance**

This house was built in 1878 to replace an eighteenth century Chapman family home on the same site that burned in 1877. It is in the centered gable form of the Italianate style, which was very popular at that time. The style began in England as a reaction the austerity of the classical styles of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The style took two basic forms, both of which were inspired by Italian Renaissance architecture. The side gable with small centered gable form of this house and the more formal villa style that usually included a square tower. In the United States, the style followed the rural designs of the Picturesque movement. This house is an excellent example of an architectural style that was characteristic of its era.

One of the earliest versions of this form appears in Andrew Jackson Downing's 1851 pattern book, *The Architecture of Country Houses: Including Designs for Cottages, and Farm-Houses and Villas, With Remarks on Interiors, Furniture, and the best Modes of Warming and Ventilating*. The first design in this book, "Symmetrical Bracketed Cottage" is a side gable house with a small gable in the center of the façade and twin corbelled chimneys on the roof. This design is for a rather modest one story home, but later in the book he reveals more

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<sup>4</sup> Galen Murray, "Captain Phineas Chapman House," unpublished monograph, 2018.

elaborate two story versions that more closely relate to 39 Cross Highway. Design XXIV, A Country House in the Pointed Style, for example, is very similar to the house on Cross Highway with its full-width front porch. Later in the nineteenth century, many pattern books and periodicals published plans for similar homes.

### **Conclusion**

The house at 39 Cross Highway is significant for the family history of the Chapman family, as well as its architectural style and integrity.

### **Current Status**

The property is currently owned by Deborah Howland Murray.

### **Bibliography**

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-- "63 Cross Highway." Connecticut Historic Resources Inventory form, 1988.

-- "93 Cross Highway." Connecticut Historic Resources Inventory form, 1988.

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## Letter of Request

Leahy, Carol

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**From:** Deborah Howland-Murray <debhowlandmurray@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 20, 2018 8:57 AM  
**To:** Leahy, Carol  
**Subject:** 39 Cross Highway

Dear Carol,

It was a pleasure to speak with you on Tuesday. Thanks for lending clarity to the Historic District Commission's work. It has helped me decide to begin the process of having my property at 39 Cross Highway, Westport, designated as a local historic landmark property.

As you know, the house is currently on the market. I would appreciate expediting the process wherever possible, so that hopefully at the time of sale the house will have the protections offered by this designation.

Sincerely,

Deborah Howland-Murray  
Owner

Ordinance

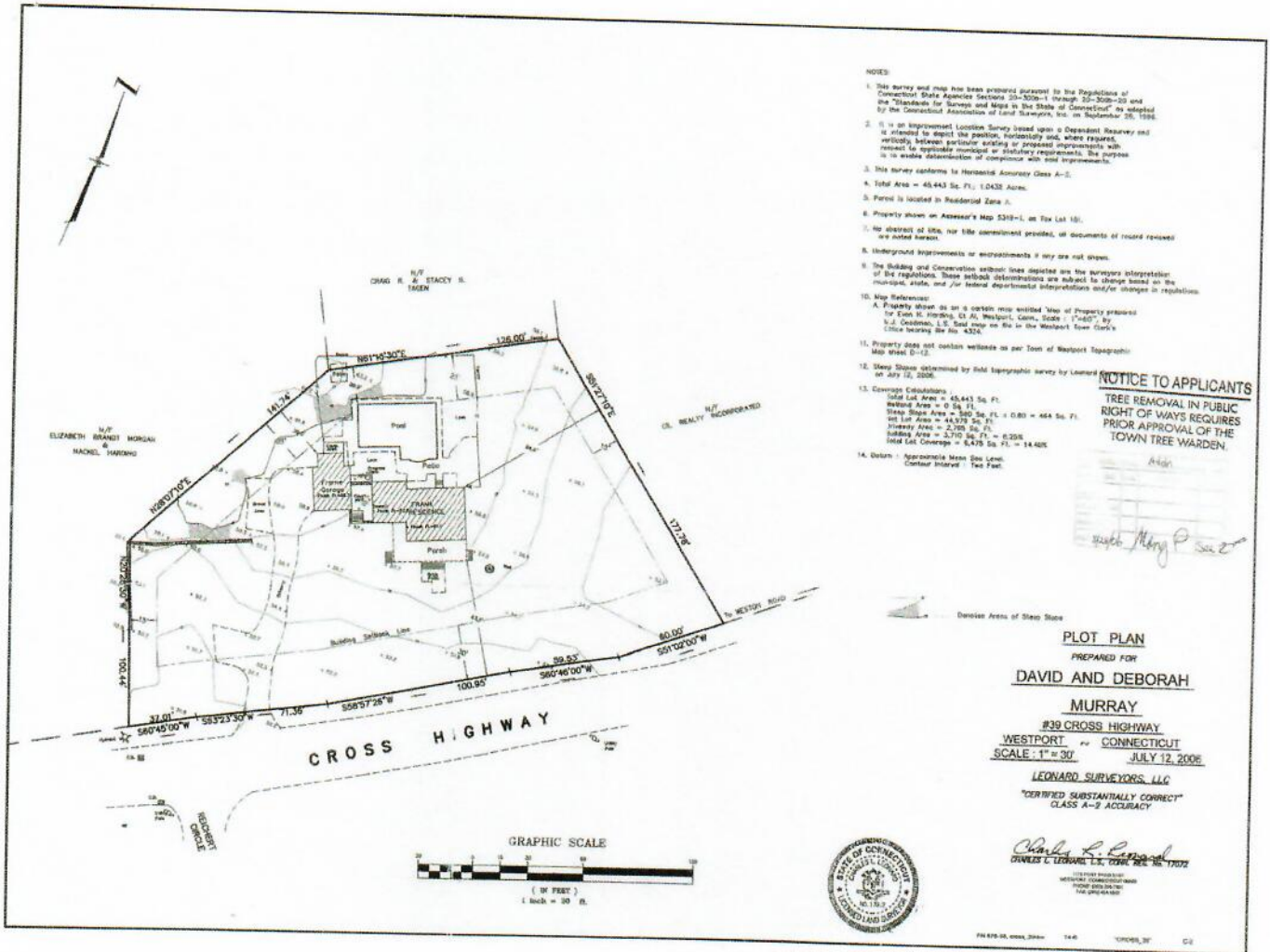
**ARTICLE II**

**SPECIFIC HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND LANDMARKS**

**38-24.-Historic landmark properties**

(21) The property and all buildings at 39 Cross Highway, to be known as the Chapman-Northrup House, situated in the Town of Westport, County of Fairfield and State of Connecticut, in quantity 1.0432 acres, and being shown on a certain map entitled "Plot Plan Prepared For David and Deborah Murray, #39 Cross Highway, Connecticut, Scale: 1"= 30', July 12, 2006, Leonard Surveyors, LLC" on file in the Westport Town Clerk's Office as Map No. 10402.

# Map of the Property



## Photographs



Photo 1. 39 Cross Highway, view north showing facade.



Photo 2. 39 Cross Highway, view northeast showing west elevation and part of facade.



Photo 3. 39 Cross Highway, view north showing main entrance and first story facade windows.



Photo 4. 39 Cross Highway, view north showing detail of facade gable.



Photo 5. 39 Cross Highway, view north showing west side of facade.

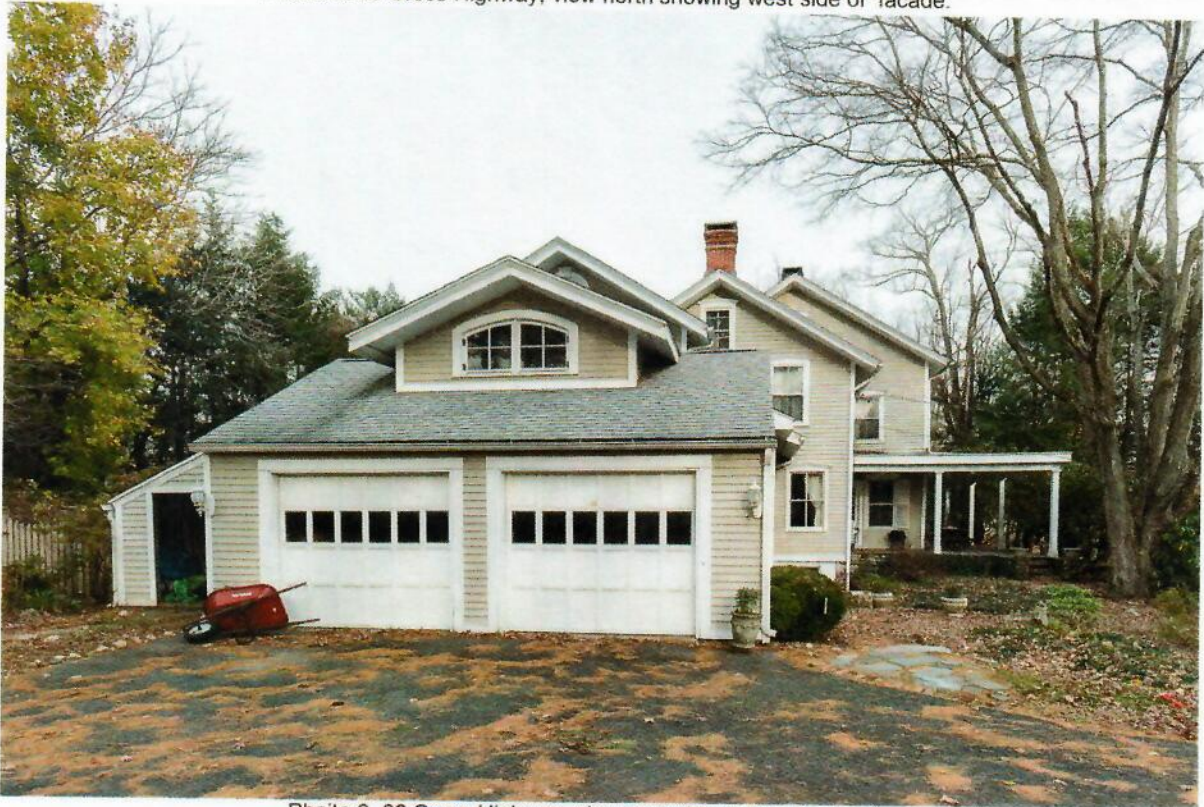


Photo 6. 39 Cross Highway, view east showing west elevation.



Photo 7. 39 Cross Highway, view west showing east elevation.