



WESTPORTSM

Historic District Commission

Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Avenue
Westport, CT 06880
Westportct.gov
Telephone (203) 341-1184

To: Michelle Perillie, Director of Planning and Zoning
Planning and Zoning Commission Members

From: Historic District Commission

Date: October 15, 2024

Re: Draft Study Report for Proposed 216 Hillspoint Road Local Historic Property

In June 2024 a request by property the owners was submitted to the Historic District Commission (HDC) proposing the establishment of the of a Local Historic Property Designation. At its June 11, 2024, meeting, the Historic District Commission unanimously supported the proposed designation and hired a consultant to prepare the study report and begin the designation process.

At its September 10, 2024, public hearing, Daryn Reyman-Lock, Ph.D., Sawdust and Strata, presented the 216 Hillspoint Road Local Historic Property Draft Study Report, which was unanimously approved by the HDC. The Commission supports this designation for the following reasons:

- The property owners initiated the local district designation.
- This property dating from the 19th century, is one of the earliest examples of a Federal house utilizing the basic colonial-era design of an evenly-spaced five bay facade set on a side-gabled frame with a central hall-and-chimney plan.
- The property was part of one earliest developments in the Compo area and is associated with the foundation of the grist mill. It retained its agricultural and industrial links until the early 20th century when it joined the many other homesteads being subdivided as Westport changed from an agricultural community to a suburban community.

The draft study report is submitted to you for your comments and/or recommendations in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes section 7-147(q). This report has also submitted to the State Historic Preservation Council for their review. According to the statute, comments must be returned to the Historic District Commission within 65 days of the transmittal date.

Upon your request, Chairwoman Grayson Braun will present the report to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Please notify us of the meeting date and contact the HDC office with any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

cc: Jennifer Tooker, First Selectwoman
Jeffrey Wieser, RTM Moderator
Nick Bamonte, Assistant Town Attorney
Jeff Dunkerton, Town Clerk
Pete Ratkiewich, Director of Public Works
Amanda Trianovich, Deputy P&Z Director
David & Ellen Van Dorsten, Homeowners



**Study Report for Proposed Historic Property Designation at
216 Hillspoint Road, Westport, CT
September 2024**

Prepared by
Daryn Reyman-Lock, Ph.D.
Sawdust & Strata

Statement of Significance

The house now known as 216 Hillspoint Road is a two-story, Federal-style residence originally built by Nathaniel Scribner c. 1793. The plaque on the front of the house states that it was built ca. 1795 and remodeled in 2008 by the current owners. The house was remodeled in 2008 by the current owners to include a large addition on the north, but this is set back from the plane of the original house and is also designed to be lower than the original, thus maintaining the distinction between the old and new while following the same basic design as the original.

While there are several houses dating from the 19th century found along Hillspoint Road, this is one of the earliest examples of a Federal house utilizing the basic colonial-era design of an evenly-spaced five bay facade set on a side-gabled frame with a central hall-and-chimney plan.

Setting

The house faces east on the western side of Hillspoint Road. It is situated on a 0.45-acre parcel that rises slightly from the street level. The rear of the property is an open lawn, but the perimeter is lined by shrubs, trees and a gate that marks the entrance. These elements block a clear view of the property from Hillspoint Road. The surrounding area is characterized by dense development consisting of housing stock dating mainly from the first half of the 20th century. Many of the houses have been significantly modified making a house of this age in this area, unusual.

Architectural Description

The main block is a two-story, five-bay vernacular Federal-style house with a central chimney and side-gable roof. The ridge of the gabled roof is arranged in a north-south direction with a tall central brick chimney. There is an overhang of the cedar shingled roof at the eaves, which are boxed and at the rake, which is lined by a band of molded trim with returns at the gable ends. The facade (eastern elevation) of the original house is five bays wide and arranged around a central entrance. Windows are six-over-six double-hung sash with narrow trim, slight projecting cornices and slim, projecting sills and are covered by modern storm windows. The central entrance is reached by a set of fieldstone steps capped by bluestone leading to a stone stoop. The entrance is flanked by three-quarter height sidelights composed of three lights each. These are each, in turn, flanked by pilasters with cushioned capitals and bases. These support a projecting entablature and cornice above set above the six paneled door that is covered by a modern glass storm door. The side elevations have regularly spaced openings with a pair of windows located high in each gable end.

The addition on the north elevation of the house includes a two-story, three bay, gable-roofed addition that is set back from the main block of the house on the north elevation. This is connected to the main block by a slightly shorter connector that is also two stories in height. The addition rests on a basement level garage that has a single, wide bay. The design of this addition mimics that of the main house in the choice of siding, trim, and windows. A paved driveway leads to the garage and is lined on the southern side by a fieldstone retaining wall that includes a second stairway leading to an entrance in the connector. This is shielded by a shed-roofed overhang. Retaining walls line the southern side of the property as well to accommodate the rise from the road to the level of the house.

The house is clad in wood single siding and rests on an elevated fieldstone and poured concrete foundation.

Historic Significance

Until Westport's incorporation in 1835, the area in which this house is situated belonged to the Town of Fairfield. In 1703, the Town of Fairfield established an agreement with John Whitney to establish a mill at a pond which was fed by two creeks: Gallup Gap Creek and Compo Creek. Unfortunately, Whitney never seems to have built any mill¹ and two years later, on April 18, 1705, the Town of Fairfield entered into a new agreement with a man named Thomas Oakly.² Like his predecessor, Oakly did not build a mill, but rather in September of that same year, transferred his rights to John Cable.³ Interestingly, the deed for this transfer was not recorded on the land records until much later.⁴ Regardless, the 1728 deed that does record Oakly's transfer to Cable does mention a mill positioned on Compo Creek.⁵ Mr. Cable does appear to not only have built a mill, but also a dwelling nearby. He retained ownership until his death, after which a relative, possibly his son, – George Cable - sold both the mill and the house to Nathaniel Scribner.⁶

Nathaniel was born to Mathew and Martha (Smith) Scribner on December 23, 1743, in Norwalk, Connecticut.⁷ He married Phebe Kellogg – a woman whose grandchildren remembered her as strong-minded with superb math skills⁸ - around 1765 - and soon thereafter purchased a farm in Kent's Parish in Putnam County, New York. On March 15, 1776, Nathaniel enlisted in the Connecticut Volunteers as a lieutenant, and within a few months, had been promoted to the rank of Captain.⁹ On June 28, 1778, Nathaniel was wounded at the Battle of Monmouth¹⁰ when a musket ball entered his wrist and exited his arm by the elbow, rendering his arm useless.¹¹ Despite his disability, he remained an officer and was stationed with his company on "Neutral Ground" near his home until the end of the war.¹²

When the war ended, Nathaniel returned home. However, the loss of the use of his arm made it impossible to support his family as a farmer. As a result, he sold his property in New York, moved to

¹ Elizabeth V. H. Banks. *This is Fairfield: 1639-1940* (New Haven, CT: Walker-Rackliff Company, 1960), 181.

² Fairfield Land Records book 2, page 160.

³ George Penfield Jennings. *Greens Farms, Connecticut, the old West Parish of Fairfield* (Greens Farms, CT: Congregational Society of Greens Farms, 1933), 53.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Fairfield Land Records book 4, page 253.

⁶ Fairfield Land Records book 26, page 106.

⁷ Timothy Hopkins. *The Kelloggs in the Old World and the New* (San Francisco, CA: Sunset Press and Photo Engraving Co., 1903), 163.

⁸ Anne Caudill, Amanda Dick, Pamela Peters. *The Scribner House of New Albany: A Bicentennial Commemoration* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), np.

⁹ George Washington Schuyler. *Colonial New York: Philip Schuyler and His Family* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885), 443.

¹⁰ Caudill, *The Scribner House*, np.

¹¹ Hopkins, *The Kelloggs*, 163.

¹² Schuyler, *Colonial New York*, 443.

Norwalk, and built a tidewater flouring mill around 1790. It was a property he ultimately sold¹³ to purchase several pieces of land, including several acres of saltmarsh, at Compo between 1793 and 1794.¹⁴ It was on this property that he established a large tide mill and constructed a house for himself.¹⁵ That house is the current 216 Hillspoint Road, the main block of which does stylistically fit a late-18th century construction. Interestingly, several sources record the mill burning at the end of the 18th century and as none of the deeds record a mill being transferred to Scribner, the parcels of land that he purchased had the same boundaries as the earlier deeds and encompassed surrounding properties. It is possible that Scribner rebuilt the mill after it burned.¹⁶

Scribner's mill was a successful enterprise, so much so that he and his brothers, Ebenezer and James, decided to build another mill in Milford. Unfortunately, Nathaniel's success in Fairfield was not to be duplicated. The mill in Milford was a failure; because of mistakes made by the millwright, the mill did not operate properly, and the venture caused the financial ruin of all three Scribner brothers. Knowing that he could be imprisoned, Nathaniel hid until his creditors could be satisfied.¹⁷ However, to remain out of debtor's prison, his mill and dwelling house in Compo were foreclosed.¹⁸ Sheriff Nathan Betts seized the properties and sold them to Daniel Sherwood on September 13, 1799.¹⁹ Nathaniel died just nine days before the transfer to Sherwood in Louisville, Georgia where he had gone on business to purchase horses; he was remembered as generous and kind.²⁰

Daniel Sherwood reportedly rebuilt the tide mill from locally harvested lumber after it burned and, when he did so, improved upon its design by incorporating a new breakwater and sluice gates.²¹ Likewise, the Sherwoods closed Gallup Gap Creek to create Compo Pond; while the exact date of this change is unknown, it reportedly occurred before the incorporation of Westport in 1835.²² Sherwood's tide mill specialized in grinding kiln-dried corn. The mill eventually had a coopeage where the barrels to pack the ground corn were built. These corn-filled barrels would be shipped to the West Indies in packet ships and coasting vessels that could dock and load their cargo directly at the mill.²³

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Fairfield Land Records book 27, pages 261-264.

¹⁵ Schuyler, *Colonial New York*, 443.

¹⁶ No specifics were found to really elucidate the circumstances of the mill or really establish the date at which this happened. The source simply indicates that the tide mill burned at the end of the 18th century and that Daniel Sherwood rebuilt the mill. Sherwood does not gain control of the mill or the land until 1798, but it is possible that the mill burned more than once during the 18th century and Sherwood was responsible for a later rebuilding as well (more discussion below). See Jennings, *Greens Farms*, 56.

¹⁷ Schuyler, *Colonial New York*, 443.

¹⁸ Fairfield Land Records book 27, pages 594-600. It should be noted that Nathaniel's son, Eliphalet, had interests in the mill and when it foreclosed, he moved to Port au Prince, Haiti and sought his fortunes there; he became a successful merchant. See Philip Hasheider. *The Kellogg Family of Sauk County, Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin, 1997), 41.

¹⁹ Fairfield Land Records book 28, page 296.

²⁰ Hopkins, *The Kelloggs*, 163.

²¹ Jennings, *Greens Farms*, 56; see also Wakefield Dort, *Westport in Connecticut's History* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin, 1935), 41.

²² Jennings, *Greens Farms*, 56

²³ Ibid.

Daniel Sherwood Jr. was born June 8, 1761²⁴ and married Catherine Burr on March 21, 1787.²⁵ He never lived in the home at 216 Hillspoint Road; instead, he lived with his wife in a house he built on what is now Sherwood Island. His son, Ebenezer Burr Sherwood took over the mill and house in 1828,²⁶ although it is clear from the deed that Ebenezer was already living in the house; the deed for the transfer was recorded on the land records ten days before his father's death.²⁷ Ebenezer transferred his interests in the mill to Daniel and Henry Burr Sherwood by 1855,²⁸ but maintained the house and worked its surrounding lands.²⁹

Ebenezer Burr Sherwood was born on June 31, 1788, and married Eleanor Andrews (1786-1873). The couple had two sons, Ebenezer (?-1852), and Francis 2nd.

Francis Sherwood 2nd was born in 1830, most likely in the house now known as 216 Hillspoint Road. After his father passed on May 10, 1860, he assumed control of the farm. According to the 1870 non-population schedule, Francis had 21 acres of farmland which produced 125 bush. of wheat in the winter, eight tons of hay, 30 bush. of Indian corn, 200 bush. of Irish potatoes, and 300 pounds of butter. In addition, he owned one horse, three milk cows, two working oxen, and two pigs. He married a woman named Georgiana³⁰ who was born in November 1844 and had one son, Harry Francis, who was born on November 19, 1878.³¹

Unfortunately, on August 9, 1879, Francis fell from a pear tree; the fall left him paralyzed from the neck down and newspapers wrote that "his recovery" was "doubtful."³² Soon after his fall, he made a will which left his property, including his house and barn, to his wife until his son, Harry, turned 21 years old.³³ Francis passed away a little less than a month later.³⁴

In 1880, Georgianna is listed as living with her son, her aunt Lizzie Hurlbutt, and Patrick Bulkley, an Irish immigrant who worked as a farm hand.³⁵ By 1900, Harry had married Irene Brown and they lived in the house with Harry's mother.³⁶ He worked the farm and little else could be found; in 1903, there was a fire

²⁴ Ancestry.com. *Connecticut, U.S., Town Birth Records, pre-1870 (Barbour Collection)* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006.

²⁵ Frederic W. Bailey. *Early Connecticut Marriages as Found on Ancient Church Records Prior to 1800* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1997), 162.

²⁶ Fairfield Land Records book 41, page 117.

²⁷ Ancestry.com. *Connecticut, U.S., Deaths and Burials Index, 1650-1934* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

²⁸ Westport Land Records book 7, page 721

²⁹ Westport Land Records book 7, page 721.

³⁰ Georgiana's name is sometimes spelled with two ns.

³¹ Westport Vital Records.

³² "Untitled," *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, Conn.), 13 Aug. 1879.

³³ Westport Probate Records. p. 478-479.

³⁴ U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedule, 1880. He died on September 5. The cause of death was listed as a spinal injury.

³⁵ Federal Census Record, 1880. The census lists Georgianna as Francis, probably an error as he was her husband.

³⁶ Federal Census Record, 1900.

on the property resulting in the loss of a large barn and 25 tons of hay.³⁷ Harry's marriage ended by the time the 1910 census was collected and, the following year, Georgianna died.³⁸ Harry remarried around 1915. His new wife, Hattie Florence Youngs, lived with him until her death in 1927. They had no children.³⁹

In 1913, the Compo Cove Park Association, Inc. established an agreement with Harry that he would supply clean and pure water for use in the residences of members on the association.⁴⁰ Henry had been leasing parcels of land to numerous people beginning in the first decade of the 20th century and continuing through the 1920s. These leases were for five-year periods and included language that the lessee was responsible for all taxes on "any building erected on the premises."⁴¹

After Hattie died, Harry quit claimed his lands in Compo to Norwalk Shores Realty Company and its president, Fred Giorchino.⁴² Norwalk Shores Realty Co. subdivided the lands and established several new roads in the area.⁴³ The first lot to be sold in the new development came with restrictions; it could not host businesses, cattle or livestock, chickens, or people of African-descent.⁴⁴ The house at 216 Hillspoint Road, however, was sold with its land, and two other parcels to the south in 1936 to Helen L. Morse; there were no restrictions.⁴⁵

Morse sold to Lyman Hitchcock and his wife, G. Mary, in 1947.⁴⁶ Six years later, the Hitchcocks transferred the property to Ditzza and Reginald Underhill, who retained ownership of the property until 1990.⁴⁷ The current owners have since lived in the home.⁴⁸

³⁷ "Large Barn Burned," *The Journal*, 28 Sep. 1903.

³⁸ Westport Land Records book 31, page 447.

³⁹ "Mrs. Hattie F. Sherwood." *The Bridgeport Telegram* (Bridgeport, Conn.), 26 Jan. 1927.

⁴⁰ Westport Land Records book 31, page 54.

⁴¹ For examples see Westport Land Records book 31, page 249, and book 49, pages 128-129, 133.

⁴² Westport Land Records book 47, pages 320-321, 341-346, 285, 272, 268-269, 261, 251, 242, and 235 as examples. See also book 47, page 292 and the mortgage recorded in book 49, page 159.

⁴³ Town Clerk Map 545A and B.

⁴⁴ "Untitled." *The Bridgeport Telegram* (Bridgeport, Conn.), 13 Oct. 1927. See also Westport Land Records Book 49, page 170 as an example.

⁴⁵ Westport Land Records book 65, page 213.

⁴⁶ Westport Land Records book 84, page 361.

⁴⁷ Westport Land Records book 115, page 344.

⁴⁸ Westport Land Records book 1050, page 294.

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"Untitled." *The Bridgeport Telegram* (Bridgeport, Conn.), 13 Oct. 1927.

"Untitled," *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, Conn.), 13 Aug. 1879.

U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedule, 1880.

Westport Town Records.

Photographs



View of property from the north corner of Hillspoint and Old Mill Road, view facing northwest



View of home from the sidewalk, view southwest



Detail of front door and eastern facade, view west



Southern elevation, view northwest



Southern elevation, view north

Maps and Figures



Town of Westport GIS Map



Google Earth Image of 216 Hillspoint Road, Westport.



1856 Clark Map of Fairfield County



1867 Beers Map of Westport



1934 Aerial Photograph



1970 Aerial Photograph

Proposed Ordinance

Article II

Specific Historic Districts and Landmarks

38-30 Historic Landmark Properties

The property and buildings at 216 Hillspoint Road, to be known as the Nathaniel Scribner House, situated in the Town of Westport, County of Fairfield and State of Connecticut being shown and designated as Lots 213, 214 and 215 on a certain map entitled "Compo Hills Westport Conn. 1927, Owned and Developed by The Norwalk Shores Realty Co., Inc." dated December 20, 1927, prepared by P. B. Deilus, which map is on file in the Westport Town Clerk's office as Map No. 545A.