

## Suffield Walking Tour

### South Main Street West Side

#### **#55 Phelps-Hatheway House- Center Chimney Georgian (1761), Federal addition (1795)**

The original house was built for Shem Burbank (1736-1800). Although the exterior had no decorative trim, it was still considered a house for a wealthy man. When the elaborate north addition was added in 1795 by Oliver Phelps (1749-1809), the owner of the house after Burbank, he added a lot of exterior decorative trim including quoins (masonry blocks added to the corners which were more decorative than structural), plus an especially fine doorway. Phelps also replaced the gabled roof with a gambrel one. For the construction of the addition, he sought the services of Thomas Hayden (1745-1817) of Windsor, who in turn entrusted 21-year-old Asher Benjamin (1773-1845) to design its entry. Benjamin would rise to become an influential architect of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An indication of the quality of the work done in the Oliver Phelps addition is that the entire dining room, fireplace and all, was removed to the Winterthur Museum and replaced with a duplicate.

Shem Burbank, the original owner, was educated at Yale. He was probably a merchant and farmer. He lived here with his wife and nine children. Due to the unstable economy, he became bankrupt and sold the house to Oliver Phelps in 1788.

Phelps was wealthy, one of the country's largest land owners as a land speculator in Connecticut's Western Reserve. He exuberantly displayed his wealth with Parisian hand-blocked wallpapers (still on the walls!) carpets and interior and exterior ornate architectural features. He was forced into bankruptcy as his land speculation failed for various reasons including inaccurate land surveys and a downward spiraling economy. He left his magnificent house in 1802.

Asahel Hatheway (1739-1828) purchased the property in the early 1800s. The Hatheway family owned the house for more than a century. They built the long bank barn located on the property (although the original barn burnt down, it was exactly rebuilt). The barn has two levels: hay, grains and vehicles were stored on the upper level while the lower-level housed livestock and/or manure. The Hatheways owned oxen and probably other cattle.

Sumner Fuller who admired the property from his mother's house across the street bought it in 1912 but he died shortly afterward. Emma Fuller, his mother, carefully preserved the property, using it as a summer house until her heirs donated it to the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society (now Connecticut Landmarks) in 1956. The house is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Tours of the House are available on the second Sunday of the month from May to October.



Oliver Phelps

### **#145 Byron Loomis House – Italianate (circa 1850)**

Byron Loomis (1831-1896) was born into a wealthy tobacco merchant family who shipped rolled tobacco all over the country. Byron was perhaps the wealthiest of his family. Symmetrically formed, the house features a low sloping roof with overhanging eaves, a heavy two-story front porch, and a belvedere with stained glass windows which commands a fine view. The house is sided entirely with flush boards which means that boards are laid with no overlap which were smoothed with stucco. Behind the house is a large ornate bank barn with a cupola.



### **#155 Timothy Phelps House - Federal (1795)**

This is an elaborate house built by Joseph Howard (1736-1810), a skilled cabinetmaker and woodworker. It is symmetrical with a gabled roof but it also features a stunning tripartite window over the main entry door, a portico with Ionic columns, ornamental moldings above the windows and other classical elements denoting wealth and comfort. Timothy Phelps (1761-1836) who gained his wealth in the tannery business, lived here with Elizabeth Phelps Loomis (1762-1845), his wife, and three children. Phelps opposed the War of 1812 as many New England Federalists did because they felt it was unnecessary and only promoted James Madison's political interests. They believed it would jeopardize commerce, particularly the maritime trade. They also feared that a war would lead to an invasion into Canada. When Phelps was commissioned initially to serve, he refused but he later accepted the commission and became a captain.

### **#161 Elihu Kent Jr. House – Georgian (1787)**

Elihu Kent (1733-1814), the father of Elihu Kent, Jr. (1757-1813), led a militia of 59 Suffield men to Lexington in April 1775, the day after British soldiers and colonists clashed at the start of the Revolutionary War. Elihu, Jr. aged 16, marched with his father that day. Elihu, Jr. continued to fight in the war until he was captured in 1776 during the Battle of Long Island and confined in the Rhineland Sugar House, a notorious prison where many died. Upon his return to Suffield, he married Elizabeth Fitch (1761-1850) in 1780, and became a farmer and tavernkeeper. Elihu lived here with his wife and four children until 1793 when he moved to a smaller house at 221 South Main Street.

### **#169 Charles Kurvin House - Victorian (Queen Anne style) (1912)**

Despite inheriting the next door Elihu Kent Jr. House, Charles Kurvin (1883-1942) desired a more modern house and built this one, leaving the Kent house vacant for 50 years. Kurvin also added the carriage house associated with the Kent house to this new house. The Kurvin house like most Queen Anne buildings, has a steep roof, an asymmetrical front façade, an expansive porch with decorative wood trim and a polygonal front corner tower with a conical roof.

**#217-219 Newton Stoughton Pomeroy House - Greek Revival (1869)**

In 1864, Newton Stoughton Pomeroy (1832-?) was one of several Connecticut agents sent to recruit men for the Union Army in the rebel states. He was a tobacco merchant and farmer. He was also a member of the Connecticut House of Representatives in 1883 and served as First Selectman for two terms beginning in 1899. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Ben Sobinski operated a blacksmith shop in the building at the rear.

**#225-227 Hezekiah Spencer House - Greek Revival (1820)**

Hezekiah Spencer's (1795-1873) fine house has a delicate lacing of leaded glass which surrounds the front entrance and the fanlight under the gable. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the house was occupied by Mrs. Annie Mearkle, a poet who wrote under the name of Angela Marco.

**#249 Israel Luther (Lute) Spencer House - Italianate (1865)**

"Lute" (1833-1897) was a prominent tobacco dealer, known for wearing his tall hat around town. He built this house next door to his father. The house has a veranda, full-length windows, carved brackets (structural supports) and decorative grillwork. Lute introduced cotton hull ashes as tobacco fertilizer giving new life to the local tobacco-growing industry.



Driver is probably "Lute" in a tall hat.



### **#285 David Tod House - Greek Revival (circa 1773-1795)**

This hip roof mansion, designed and built by Joseph Howard (1736-1810), originally faced South Street. David Tod (1746-1827), was born in Scotland but came to Suffield in the mid-1700s. He married Suffield native Rachel Kent (1750-1798) in 1773. As the proprietor of the Middle Iron Works in Suffield, he became a wealthy man. His daughter, Isabella Tod Stewart was the grandmother of Isabella Stewart Gardner. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is in Boston.

A later owner, Martin Sheldon (1826-1917) moved the house around 1880 to its present location which faces South Main Street. His daughter, Lola Hughes Sheldon Armour (1869-1953), married J.Ogden Armour (1863-1927), the meatpacking magnate in Chicago, who was the inspiration for one of the meatpacking plant owners in Upton Sinclair's classic novel, *The Jungle*. After her husband's death, Lola built an opulent house in Lake Forest, Illinois called Suffield House. Lola and J. Ogden's daughter Lolita married and divorced the co-founder of United Airlines.

### **#391 Samuel Hatheway House - Central Chimney with two gabled dormers (1720-1740)**

Samuel Hatheway (1690-1765) moved to Suffield in 1719 from Taunton, Massachusetts. He married Sarah Rowe/Roe (1696-?). Together they raised eight children. At the time of his death, he was a wealthy man with interests in iron mills in Suffield, Willimantic and New Milford. He also held town offices including as a selectman. Although the rear of the house has expanded many times over the years, its original structure is much the same. It is one of the oldest houses in Suffield. At the time of its construction, Suffield was still part of Massachusetts. The changeover to Connecticut occurred in 1749. Samuel's youngest son, Asahel purchased the Phelps-Hatheway House from the State when Oliver Phelps became bankrupt.