

## Suffield Walking Tour

### North Main Street West Side

#### **#257 Charles F. Loomis House - Italianate Villa (1862)**

The Italianate Villa was built for Charles F. Loomis (1827-1902) who belonged to the Loomis family, made rich from their tobacco industry. The Italianate Villa style was popular in San Francisco and New York. The house's two main distinguishing features are the prominent tower, which was called a *campanile* (an Italian church bell tower), and its asymmetrical design. It has lovely detail upon detail which includes the arched front door with fanlight window and sidelights. The small first-floor porch only wraps around the tower portion of the house giving the house a vertical thrust. If one looks closely, the house displays decorative half timbering, painted white. Half timbering was used on Tudor houses in which structural studs, crossbeams and braces were exposed on the outside.

#### **#281 Thaddeus Leavitt Jr. House - Federal (1800)**

It is probable that Thaddeus Leavitt Sr. (1750-1813) built this ornate house for his son, Thaddeus Leavitt Jr. (1778-1828) who was only 21 at the time. Thaddeus Jr. and his bride, Jemima Loomis (1779-1846), moved in shortly after the house was built. They raised four children. Junior became a wealthy merchant like his father and was known as the Colonel, a title he probably acquired while serving in the town militia.

Three grandsons of Thaddeus and Jemima achieved fame: William Morris Hunt (1824-1879) was a prominent painter in Boston, Leavitt Hunt (1831-1907) was a photographer who took some of the earliest known photographs of the Middle East, and Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895) was a leading American architect, particularly well-known for designing Gilded Age mansions, including The Breakers in Newport.

The house is remarkably similar to the Gay Mansion at #222 North Main Street, a few houses south across the street. The porches in the rear of the Leavitt house and the bay window on the south side were probably added in the mid-nineteenth century. A portion of the house, built in 1870, was moved to #39 Marbern Drive.

#### **#331 Thaddeus Leavitt Sr. House – Georgian Center Chimney (1773)**

In 1773, Thaddeus Leavitt Sr. (1750-1813) married Elizabeth King (1751-1826) and moved into this house. They had two children, also named Thaddeus and Elizabeth. The house although plainer than his son's house just down the street at #281 North Main Street, was still an impressive house for its time. Leavitt was known as the Squire. He was a wealthy merchant, a town official, and a shipowner of trading ships which traveled the Atlantic, including to the West Indies and Spain. He was an investor in Connecticut's Western Reserve lands, invented an improved cotton gin and was a part of the commission which resolved the border dispute between Connecticut and Massachusetts. The compromise negotiated by the commission let Massachusetts keep land west of the Congamond Lakes while Connecticut retained the land east of the Lakes. The border line formed by the compromise is called the Southwick Jog.

### **#357 Vernacular (1882)**

This home is an example of vernacular architecture. It is a building not distinguished by any specific architectural style, made from locally available construction materials and built by local craftsmen.

### **#541 Consider Williston Saddle Shop (1776)**

Consider Williston (1739-1794), a lieutenant in the Revolutionary War, was a skilled leatherworker who made saddles, bags, stirrups and equestrian gear which he sold here. The house is noted for its extra wide boards. Extra wide boards such as the ones in this house have been called Kings Board or Kings Lumber and were cut from tall trees reserved for the king's navy to build ship masts and booms. It is thought that American colonialists found to have used Kings Board for their personal use could be fined. Since this shop was built at the time of the Revolutionary War, we assume no such fine was collected.