

Suffield Walking Tour

North Main Street East Side and one Mapleton Avenue house

#50 Kent Memorial Library – Modern (1972)

Boldly contemporary, the library created a lot of controversy when it was built as some people did not think its construction did not fit the character of the district. William Platner (1919-2006) designed the building using a concrete frame faced with pink stone and white painted brick above which surrounds a central garden court. The flat concrete roof overhangs the exterior courtyards. The interior is on five floor levels connected by gradual ramps. The building had no inside stairs or elevator until a new entrance was added in 2019.

#82 Harvey Bissell House – Federal (circa 1816)

The house features ornate elements that were seen in upscale homes of the day. Those elements include the lintels over the windows, quoins (structural or aesthetic masonry blocks at the corners), and an elaborate doorway with a leaded fanlight surmounted by a second floor Palladian window. The stained glass was probably a Victorian addition.

The Bissells were a prominent family from Windsor. Harvey was the first to come to Suffield. The deed of 1815 mentioned no house on the property but the next year he married Arabella Jerusha Leavitt (1793-1850), so possibly the house was built in 1816 for his bride. The couple had six children, one of whom died young. Bissell was a wealthy storekeeper. In 1846, he is listed as the town's only retailer of wine and liquor. He and his family moved to Hartford, Vermont. Today the house is known as Suffield Commons with luxury condominiums for seniors.



Front entrance to the Harvey Bissell House

#100 The Second Baptist Church - Greek Revival (1840)

The Second Baptist Church of Suffield was established in 1805 by members of the First Baptist Church in West Suffield. In 1805, they petitioned to create a second Baptist church in the center of Suffield. By 1840, the members collected funds to hire Suffield architect Henry Sykes (1810-1860) who erected this stunning Greek Revival church, replacing an earlier wooden structure. Sykes also designed buildings in Springfield, Greenfield and Amherst Massachusetts. Amherst College gave Sykes honorary M.A. in 1854 for work he did at the college. His largest works in Suffield were the fourth rendition of the First Congregational Church and this church which is the oldest church building in town. The Greek Revival architecture is typical for New England churches of the era, with a symmetrical front facade, a columned portico (in this case colossal Ionic columns), and a multi-stage steeple above it.

#142 Gay Manse - Center Chimney Colonial (1741)

The house served as the parsonage for Ebenezer Gay, Sr. who was the minister of the First Congregational Church for 51 years. The house has elegant refinements and an exquisite Connecticut Valley doorway, a style that appeared on houses of the wealthy. These doorways are characterized by heavily ornamented scrolls and pediments, hand-carved rosettes, and moldings, making the doorways an artform by themselves. Gay Manse is now a faculty residence for Suffield Academy.



Gay Manse Doorway

#222 The Gay Mansion – Georgian (1795)

Ebenezer King was a very wealthy man, with a net worth of reportedly over \$100,000 (nearly \$2.5 million today), and his wealth is reflected in this mansion with its two porticoed doorways and two Palladian windows. The doorways resemble the Phelps Hatheway doorway built it is believed by Asher Benjamin (1773-1845) for Oliver Phelps (1740-1809). Around the same time that this house was built, King was an investor in the Suffield, Cuyahoga, & Big Beaver Land Company. This company, comprised of a number of other Suffield men including Oliver Phelps, owned entire townships in the Western (or Connecticut) Reserve, a section of northern Ohio then claimed by Connecticut. Unfortunately for King, he eventually lost most of his money. In 1811, King sold the house to William Gay (1767-1844), the son of Ebenezer Gay, Sr. (1718-1796) who was the Congregationalist minister. William was a prominent lawyer and postmaster of Suffield, who ran the post office from his house. The house came to be known as the Gay Mansion and remained in the possession of the Gay family until 1916. The house is now the official residence of the headmaster of Suffield Academy

#236, 252, 266, 272, 310, 380, 388, Queen Anne Victorian houses

Features which may be displayed on Queen Anne houses:

- Abundance of decorative elements.
- Steeply pitched roof with irregular shape.
- Cross gables.
- Asymmetrical facade.
- Large partial or full width porch.
- Round or polygonal corner tower.
- Decorative spindle work on porches and gable trim.
- Bay windows.



#252

#272

#380

#388

#318 Queen Anne Victorian (1890) with historic barn

Until the 1830s, the horses used for riding and driving carriages were often kept in the main barn along with the other farm animals. By the 1850s, some New England farmers built separate horse stables and carriage houses. Combined horse stable and carriage houses became common in the latter part of the nineteenth century. These buildings are distinguished by their large hinged doors, few windows, and proximity to the house.

#332 Second Empire (1850)

The key decorative details of Second Empire houses include iron cresting on the roof, heavily bracketed cornices, quoins, and balustrades. The American version of this style have a simple box shape and are symmetrical. The general effect is monumental and ornate.

#394 Dutch Colonial Revival (1925)

The Dutch colonial was an early American house originating in the 1600s. They were built where there were Dutch settlers such as in the Hudson Valley area, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania and parts of Connecticut. The most recognizable feature of Dutch colonial houses are their gambrel roofs, which give them a barn-like appearance. The houses are also symmetrical with a centered front entrance and dormer windows. The design was out of favor for several decades but became popular again in the late 19th century and the early 20th century.

#436 The Milo Milton Owen House - Greek Revival (circa 1834)

Milo Milton Owen (1811-1886) probably had the house built for his bride, Abigail Martha Alderman (1815-1885), whom he married in 1839. The home stands out for its perfect proportions, entry detailing, and the large 20th century porch.

#480 Aldenheim - Georgian (1794)

Dr. Howard Alden (1760-1841), who had this house built, moved to Suffield from Ashfield, Mass., at the age of 27. He was related to Pilgrim John Alden whom Longfellow made famous in the *Courtship of Miles Standish*. Shortly after coming to town, Dr. Alden became sick with typhoid fever. His nurse was Rhoda Willison (1768-1863) whom he married upon his recovery. Dr. Alden and Dr. Oliver Pease (1760-1843) practiced medicine together. Alden wrote about Canine Madness (rabies) in the October 1797 issue of the *Connecticut Medical Society's Proceedings*. Dr. Alden died in 1841, leaving twelve children. Later on, the house was owned by the Pease family.

#532 Federal (Circa 1825)

This is the only red brick Federal house in the Historic Main Street District.

#309 Mapleton Avenue (Fuller's Corner) (1795)

This was originally built as a center chimney house by master carpenter Eliphalet King (1743-1821). King also built the King House Museum. This house and the King House Museum have a similar corner cupboard. Further additions over the years incorporated other styles into the building. A round-headed window in the west gable is in the style of the Romanesque Revival of the 19th century. The long porch on the east side of the house reflects the 20th century Colonial Revival style with a gable roof and a triangular pediment supported by round columns. The front door on first glance has elements of the classical Federal/Georgian style with a triangle pediment and columns but the brackets supporting the columns are C-shaped, an Italianate element.