

CT Trust Resource ID: 2873

HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY – BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

State Historic Preservation Office, DECD, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

*Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

Inventory form modified for the Creative Places - Arts & Letters Project

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common): Caprilands Herb Farm / Simmons, Adelma Grenier, House

Other Name(s) (Historic): Caprilands Herb Farm / Simmons, Adelma Grenier, House

Street Address or Location: 534 Silver Street, Coventry

Town/City: Coventry

Village:

County: Tolland

Designation(s): SR,SRHD,

Owner(s): Estate of Adelma Simmons

Public/Private: Private

Latitude: 41.7886 Longitude: -72.3847

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Domestic: single dwelling; agriculture/subsistence: agricultural outbuildings

Historic Use: Domestic: single dwelling; agriculture/subsistence: agricultural outbuildings

Accessibility to public: No Exterior visible from public road? Yes

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: NA

Style of building: Colonial/Federal Date of Construction: c. 1784-1800

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate) Clapboard

Structural Systems(s): Wood Frame, Post & Beam

Roof(Type): Shed, Gable (Material): Asphalt Shingle

Number of Stories: 2 1/2 Approximate Dimensions:

Structural Condition: Good

Exterior Condition: Good

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: No If yes, explain: NA

Related outbuildings or landscape features: Garden, Shed, Barn

Surrounding Environment: Rural

Interrelationship of building and surroundings: This property was listed on the State Register of Historic Places by virtue of the 1966 CHC survey and by inclusion in a Study Report (1974) for a proposed historic district, both with reference to an 18th-century period of significance. The site gains added significance from its association with the writings of Adelma Grenier Simmons in the mid-20th century. The site is a parcel of 62.06 acres located on the west side of Silver Street north of Love Lane and south of the Boston Turnpike (U.S. Route 44). The property is partially wooded, with several acres of mowed fields and pastures. The Farmhouse and several barns are located along Silver Street at the east edge of the property.

Other notable features of building or site: The main house is a gable-roofed 2 1/2-story center hall Colonial- to early Federal-style house with two interior chimneys. The five-bay entry façade faces east toward Silver Street and has twelve-over-twelve double hung windows with projecting cornices at the heads. A simple entry surround has a five-light transom and projecting cornice. Siding is horizontal clapboards.

Architect: Unknown Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

Structure Significance: The house is identified as an early Federal-type building dating from after 1784 (Coventry Study Committee 1974). Outbuildings include an English barn with shed- and hip-roofed additions, a gable-entry barn, and several smaller outbuildings. Born in Vermont, Mrs. Simmons came to Connecticut with her parents during the Depression, becoming a decorator, buyer and designer for the Albert Steiger Company import-export shops in Massachusetts. The family bought the property, an abandoned farmstead on Silver Street in 1929, making it into a home and gradually transforming it into a cluster of restored 18th-century wooden buildings, where herbs were sold, lectured and read about, viewed and tasted (Sommer 1995).

Adelma Simmons, revered for her vast knowledge of the culinary and medicinal properties of herbs, characteristically dressed in a long cape. She lectured on herbs, autographed books and presided over luncheons at which the public could reserve places (Libov 1987).

Beginning with the publication of 'Herb Gardening in Five Seasons' in 1963, Simmons wrote 35 books and many pamphlets on herbs, including 'Saints in My Garden,' 'The Witches Brew,' 'The Gold Wreath Book' and 'A Merry Christmas Herbal.';Artist/Writer Significance: ;Artist/Writer Work: ;Resource Association:

Sources:

Coventry Assessor's Records & GIS viewer: <http://www.mapgeo.com/crcogct/PropertyRecordCard.ashx?propertyid=09013032-R05200>
Property ID R05200. MBL: 015-0010-0005. 62.06 acres.
Coventry Historic District Study Committee. 1974. A Report of the Historic District Study Committee, Coventry, Connecticut.
Simmons, Adelma Grenier, biography. Wikipedia. Accessed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adelma_Simmons
Historic Barns of Connecticut, Records for 534 Silver Street, Coventry. Accessed at: <http://connecticutbarns.org/find/details/id-13694> and <http://connecticutbarns.org/find/details/id-13703> .
Grimes, William. Obituary: Adelma Grenier Simmons. 12/05/1997. New York Times accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/12/05/nyregion/adelma-grenier-simmons-93-authority-on-herbs-is-dead.html>
Libov, Charlotte. 6/28/1987. Herb Farm Fights to Keep its 'Charm.' New York Times.
Sommer, Mimi G. 7/23/1995. 'Adelma Grenier Simmons: Flavor, Fragrance, Medicine and Magic.' New York Times.

Photographer: Charlotte Hitchcock **Date:** 2009

View: Southeast

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock **Printed On:** December 30, 2015

Threats: Deterioration

Subsequent field evaluations:



East view of 534 Silver Street, Coventry

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ **Site#** _____ **UTM** _____
District ☐ S ☐ NR **If NR, specify:** ☐ Actual ☐ Potential