

CT Trust Resource ID: 4160

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): Champion, General Epaphroditus, HouseOther Name(s) (Historic): Champion, General Epaphroditus, House/ Gould, Northam Robinson, HouseStreet Address or Location: 5 Landing Hill Road, East HaddamTown/City: East Haddam Village:County: MiddlesexDesignation(s): LHD, NRHD, SRHDOwner(s): GERACI, E PHILLIPPublic/Private: PrivateLatitude: 41.4640 Longitude: -72.4644

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Domestic: single dwellingHistoric Use: Domestic: single dwellingAccessibility to public: No Exterior visible from public road? YesInterior accessible? If yes, explain: NAStyle of building: Georgian/Federal Date of Construction: 1794Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate) Clapboard, Cut StoneStructural Systems(s): Post & BeamRoof(Type): Hip (Material): Asphalt ShingleNumber of Stories: 2 1/2 Approximate Dimensions: 36' x 43', additionsStructural Condition: ExcellentExterior Condition: ExcellentLocational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NAAlterations?: No If yes, explain: NARelated outbuildings or landscape features: ShedSurrounding Environment: Residential

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The site is a .66-acre parcel located on the west side of Landing Hill Road overlooking the Connecticut River on the west. The site slopes up toward the north and the building sits on a terrace formed by substantial granite block retaining walls. Below to the southwest is the Haddam Landing with the historic ferry crossing of the Connecticut River. The house is a contributing resource in the East Haddam Historic District, a National Register and Local district.

Other notable features of building or site:

This is 'one of the finest examples of late-Georgian domestic architecture in New England. 2 stories, frame, hip roof, clapboards. Decorative features: fine balustrade around roof's front edge; wooden blocks suggest quoins at corners; entrances on south and east sides have porticos consisting of fluted Ionic columns supporting triangular pediments with modillions and dentil courses; and elaborate window surrounds with crossettes and flat hoods (Figs. 7 and 19).

Note: there is an unusual double privy to the south whose exterior details are similar to those of the main house' (Keiner 1983, Section 7).

Architect: William Sprats Builder/Maker: William Sprats

Historical or Architectural importance:

With the coming of peace in 1783 and the reestablishment of commercial and industrial prosperity, new buildings in new styles were constructed. The most important was the General Epaphroditus Champion House, No.4, a late-Georgian mansion built in 1794. One of the finest examples of its type in New England, this residence was designed and built by William Sprats, a Scots master carpenter who had been a Revolutionary War prisoner. Declining to return to his native country after the war, Sprats married and settled down near Litchfield where he came to the notice of several prominent men, including Julius Deming, the town's wealthiest merchant. For Deming, Sprats designed and built 'The Lindens' in 1793; and in 1795, Deming's patronage enabled him to win the commission to build the new Litchfield Courthouse. Epaphroditus Champion was Julius Deming's brother-in-law; and this connection undoubtedly explains why Sprats was chosen to build the General's new house. For Champion, Sprats spared little effort. The house cost \$10,000, a huge sum at that time, and was built on terraces constructed of granite hauled from across the river. A large, 2-story frame structure, Sprats embellished the house with quoins, a carefully-

worked balustrade around the edges of the hip roof, pedimented porticos over both the south and east entrances, and elaborate window surrounds. The interior is equally noteworthy, with a number of rooms having finely-detailed panelling, cornices, and fireplace mantels and surrounds (Keiner 1983, NR Section 8).

In 1940 [Northam 'Tod' Gould] purchased the General Epaphroditus Champion house in East Haddam, which was built in 1794. The myth that the Goulds were wealthy arose from the rumor that the sale price was an outrageous 75,000 dollars. In fact the property sold for 7,500 dollars, which included the Counting House at the foot of Landing Hill. In the words of Tod's son Bryant: 'I remember the excitement of exploring the house which had stood empty for twelve years. It was the most romantic place I had ever seen. Considering the house had been closed so long it was in remarkably good condition' (Gould web site). Tod applied his considerable knowledge of Early American architecture and his skills as a designer in the restoration of the historic structure. Except for new bathrooms, a modern heating plant, and interior painting, very little work was needed to make the house liveable. The only major change was to convert a former kitchen to a dining room and to make a large pantry into a kitchen. ... Tod removed the ceiling [of the dining room] to expose the original beams and replicated their original blue color.

Northam 'Tod' Robinson Gould (1893-1963) was born in Brooklyn, New York. His parents were Lucien Henry Gould, a business man, and Florence Robinson Gould, a native of England and former school teacher. Called by the nickname 'Tod,' Northam Gould grew up in Brooklyn. He attended the Pratt Institute, the Cleveland Art School, and the Art Students League, where he was taught by Frank Dumond and Robert Henri. He and his wife, Eleanor, lived in her home town in West Virginia for a decade and then moved to Connecticut. They lived in the area of Middletown and East Hampton for some years, and Gould became known as a portrait and landscape painter.

During the 1930s the Goulds were the directors of the Central Connecticut Center for the Arts, a summer school and gallery for painting, sculpture, and theater, held in Marlborough (see entry). In 1940 Gould purchased and restored the 1794 General Epaphroditus Champion house in East Haddam.

Sources:

Central Connecticut Art Center. Descriptive brochure accessed at the Haddam Historical Society Harold Barbour archives.

Champion, Epaphroditus, House. 2009. Historic Buildings of Connecticut. Accessed at: <http://historicbuildingsct.com/?p=1487>

Gould, Northam Robinson biography. Accessed at: <http://www.blgould.com/nrgould1.html>

Keiner, Hal. 1983. East Haddam National Register Historic District Nomination, No. 83001273. National Park Service. Note: also a Local Historic District accessed at <http://lhdct.org/district/list/east-haddam-historic-district>.

Photographer: Painting by Northam Gould Date: 1940s

View: Southeast view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock Printed On: May 9, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



5 Landing Hill Rd., Champion House (Gould painting)

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ Site# _____ UTM _____

District ☐S ☐NR If NR, specify: ☐Actual ☐ Potential