

CT Trust Resource ID: 3947

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): Langer, Susanne K., House

Other Name(s) (Historic): Langer, Susanne K., House/Barrie House

Street Address or Location: 81 Neck Road, Old Lyme

Town/City: Old Lyme

Village:

County: New London

Designation(s):

Owner(s):

Public/Private: Private

Latitude: 41.3354 Longitude: -72.3377

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Domestic: single dwelling; Secondary outbuilding: barn/studio

Historic Use: Domestic: single dwelling

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

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: NA

Style of building: Colonial: Cape Cod Cottage Date of Construction: 1690

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate) Clapboard, Brick, Fieldstone

Structural Systems(s): Post & Beam, Load bearing masonry

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

Number of Stories: 1 1/2, B Approximate Dimensions: 26' X 36'

Structural Condition: Excellent

Exterior Condition: Excellent

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: Yes If yes, explain: Interior modernization, c. 1960.

Related outbuildings or landscape features: Barn

Surrounding Environment: Residential

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The property is a 2-acre parcel on the east side of Neck Road. The road parallels the Connecticut River, which is to the west, and a steep granite ridge running north-south to the east of the road. A narrow level plateau at the base of the ridge forms the back yard of this property. The house is sited close to the road and banked into the slope. A driveway enters the property at its northwest corner, turns sharply east and south to end at a small barn or shed and parking area north of the house.

Other notable features of building or site:

The house is a gable-roofed center-chimney Cape Cod Cottage type building raised on a brick foundation, measuring 26' x 36', and oriented with its west façade facing the road. The building is banked into the slope with a basement level opening to grade at the street elevation. This has brick walls with three bays. A Dutch door at the center under a shed-roofed hood, is flanked by six-over-six double-hung windows. Above is the five-bay main floor level. The center, formerly an entry door with porch and steps, is now a pair of small six-over-six double-hung windows with high sills. Flanking these are two six-over-six double-hung windows. The eave line has a shallow overhang. The south elevation has a door and a single window at the lower grade; these open to a side yard with a fieldstone retaining wall. The main floor has two bays with six-over-six windows and the attic has a single window. To the east, grade rises to the main floor level elevation. The east side has a shed dormer in the south part of the roof and an attached shed addition across the northern part of the building.

The building layout is a typical three-room hall and parlor plan with a long room across the eastern part of the interior. The north parlor and east room have been opened into a single space. The area west of the chimney, traditionally the location of the porch and stair, has been converted to a bathroom. A stair is now located in the eastern room, leading to the basement and attic levels. A small modern kitchen is in the southeast corner.

The interior of the basement includes a historic kitchen in the south room. Its fireplace has a beehive oven. East of the central chimney mass, a concrete masonry room dates from the early 1960s and was built as a bomb shelter. The northern part of the basement functions as storage and mechanical equipment space.

The attic has two bedrooms to the north and south of the chimney mass. These have exposed post and beam framing and wide board dec

Architect: Unknown Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

The house is a Cape Cod Cottage type building dating from c. 1690, and it is an unusual variant of the type with its banked basement and lower floor living space. It was owned by the Ansel Miller / George Barry (or Barrie) family from before the Civil War until the purchase by Susanne Langer in 1958. The center chimney stack of granite masonry and the scribe-rule framing remain intact, although alterations have occurred. The interior has been opened up by removal of partitions, the entry on the main level removed and replaced by a bath room, and various other modernizations performed during Langer's ownership.

Susanne Langer (1895-1985) was born Susanne Katherina Knauth on the Upper West Side of Manhattan to prosperous German immigrant parents. Her father, a lawyer, played the cello and piano, and she learned to play both instruments. She grew up multi-lingual, speaking German and French. She enrolled at Radcliffe College at the age of 20, receiving her bachelor's degree in 1920; she studied music as well as philosophy. She earned a master's degree in philosophy from Radcliffe in 1924 and a doctorate in 1926. At Radcliffe she studied with philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, who wrote the prefatory note to her first book on philosophy, *The Practice of Philosophy*, published in 1930. She was influenced by him and by Ernst Cassirer, a German philosopher who had been forced into exile by the Nazis (Dryden 2003). In Cambridge Susanne met William L. Langer, a historian and professor at Harvard University and also from a German immigrant family. They married in 1921 and had two sons. They later divorced, in 1942.

Langer taught at several universities and received a research grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, which supported her writing. In 1954 Langer was appointed as Chair of the Philosophy Department at Connecticut College in New London. She received a research grant in 1956 from the Edgar Kaufmann Charitable Trust of Pittsburgh, and for the remainder of her life, she was able to devote herself to writing (Greer 1985).

Her first published book, *The Cruise of the Little Dipper*, and other Fairy Tales published in 1924, was a collection of illustrated fairy tales. Her other books were on philosophical topics. Her 1942 book, *Philosophy in a New Key*, became a popular mass market paperback as well as a staple of college course reading. With the publication in 1953 of *Feeling and Form*, a systematic and comprehensive theory of the arts, Langer achieved widespread recognition in the field of aesthetics (Dryden 2003).

Sources:

Interview with owner Robin Breeding, 1/28/2016, at the site by C. Hitchcock. Town of Old Lyme Assessors Records:

<http://gis.vgisi.com/oldlymect/Parcel.aspx?Pid=1450> and GIS Viewer: <http://www.mapgeo.com/OldLymeCT/#> . Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame: <http://www.cwhf.org/inductees/arts-humanities/susanne-langer/> . Dryden, Donald. 2003. Biographical essay: Susanne K. Langer. published in the Dictionary of Literary Biography: Vol. 270. American Philosophers Before 1950, edited by Philip B. Dematteis and Leemon B. McHenry (Farmington Hills, Michigan: Gale, 2003), pp. 189-199). Greer, William. 1985. 'Susanne K. Langer, Philosopher, Is Dead at 89.' New York Times. Accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/19/nyregion/susanne-k-langer-philosopher-is-dead-at-89.html> /.

Photographer: Charlotte Hitchcock **Date:** 1/29/2016

View: Southeast view

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock **Printed On:** February 3, 2016

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



SW view 81 Neck Rd., Old Lyme

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ Site# _____ UTM _____

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