

CT Trust Resource ID: 2122

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): Flanders Nature Center and Land Trust

Other Name(s) (Historic): Van Vleck Farm & Nature Sanctuary/Van Vleck Farm

Street Address or Location: 596-644 Flanders Road, Woodbury

Town/City: Woodbury

Village:

County: Litchfield

Designation(s): SR

Owner(s): Flanders Nature Center and Land Trust

Public/Private: Private

Latitude: 41.6000 Longitude: -73.2065

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Nature Center and agriculture

Historic Use: Residential property, agriculture, recreation

Accessibility to public: Yes Exterior visible from public road? Yes

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: During business hours, the office building and some other buildings are open to the public.

Style of building: Cape style Date of Construction: 1786, 1840, 1929

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

Structural Systems(s): Wood Frame

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

Number of Stories: 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: Barn, Shed, studio, sugar house, trail house

Surrounding Environment: Open Land, Open Land, Open Land

Interrelationship of building and surroundings: The Van Vleck House (1786) is situated on the northeast corner of the intersection of Flanders Road and Church Hill Road, facing west and set behind stone walls. Alongside the house (to the east) is a small saltbox studio (1929). To the north across a long meadow, situated close to Flanders Road, is a barn complex (c. 1790). To the south of the Van Vleck House, across Church Hill Road, and sitting close to Flanders Road is the South Farm House (1840). Directly to the east of this house is an English style barn (c. 1840). Further to the east, off Church Hill Road and set within the woodland is the sugar house (c. 2002). To the north of the sugar house, across the street (Church Hill Road) is the Trail House (1964).

Other notable features of building or site: As noted by Anne E. Westerman and Arthur S. Milnor in the Van Vleck Farm State Register Nomination form written in 2014, 'Built by Thomas Judson in 1786 and purchased by the Van Vlecks in 1926, it is a center chimney Cape style house with a lean-to and long ell added to the rear. According to Jan Cunningham in Architectural Resources Survey completed in 1991, the - features that confirm its late eighteenth-century attribution are the double plate which adds more headroom to the attic level, and the grouping of the façade windows in pairs. - She continues, - From the slight double pitch of the lean-to, it is apparent that [the house] was built in two sections. The main block was constructed with a double plate with a slight overhang across the façade; the overhang extends over both end elevations. - In Cunningham's view it is exceptionally well preserved and it is - one of the best examples of post-Revolutionary domestic architecture in Woodbury' (Westerman and Milnor 2014, 4).

Architect: Unknown Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

As noted by Anne E. Westerman and Arthur S. Milnor in the Van Vleck Farm State Register Nomination form written in 2014, 'Natalie Van Vleck (1901-1981) was born in New York City. Her mother was a member of the Macy family and her father traced his lineage to the Dutch settlers. She attended the exclusive Brearley School in New York City, and took art classes with Agnes Richmond at the Art Students League. After high school she decided not to attend college, but chose instead to study full-time at the Art Students League. There she came under the tutelage of Robert Henri, the leader of the so-called Ashcan School. Henri directed his students toward a more personal approach to painting. Later still at the League she studied with Max Weber who inspired the cubist and abstract elements in the work that Natalie produced during

the 1920s. In 1922 she traveled to Spain, Capri and Naples to paint. This began her annual odyssey over several years to pursue art abroad. Her favorite sites included French Polynesia, Guadeloupe and Martinique. With a very strong work ethic that endured throughout her career, Natalie worked in other media as well. Returning to New York after her travels she established a studio and gallery to sell elaborately-detailed and hand-colored frames, mirrors, screens and much more. Marc Chabot (curator at the Flanders Nature Center and Land Trust) notes that her – art encompassed three styles: cubist and abstract influenced painting; regionalist landscapes of the Connecticut countryside and tropical locales; and arts and crafts.'

In the 1930s, Natalie's predominant technique had changed from cubism to a regionalist, precisionist style with hard-edged forms and rounded volumes, evoking a machine-age esthetic. Her Connecticut subjects were rural landscapes. In 1932, Natalie mounted a one-woman show of her paintings of Polynesia and the Connecticut countryside at the Brownell-Lambertson Galleries in New York City, to very mixed reviews. Although she may have been discouraged by the lack of unanimous praise and by the competition from a well-known society portrait artist cousin with the same name, Natalie was not desirous of public fame nor commercial success in the art world. A rugged individualist, Natalie had a well-developed sense of self. Just as she did not conform to any one school in her artistic style, she also did not conform to feminine sensibilities, cutting her hair short and preferring men's clothing. She painted and created for her own satisfaction' (Westerman and Milnor 2014, 7).

Sources:

Westerman, Anne E. and Milnor, Arthur S.; Van Vleck Farm State Register of Historic Places Nomination; Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, 2014.

Wardle, Marian; American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945; Brigham Young University, 2005.

Photographer: _____ **Date:** _____

View: _____

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Form completed by: Kristen Nietering **Printed On:** January 5, 2016

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations: _____



Flanders Nature Center, Church Hill Rd., Woodbury

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ **Site#** _____ **UTM** _____

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