

Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism
Historic Preservation and Museum Division/State Historic Preservation Office

CONNECTICUT STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating individual properties and districts to the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places (C.G.S. Chapter 184b, Sec. 10-409(2)). See instructions in *How to Complete the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets. Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Long Meadow / Lofting, Hugh & Flora, House

other names/site number Griswold, Washington, Farmstead

2. Location

street & number 62 River Road

city or town Killingworth

☐ vicinity

county Middlesex

zip code 06419

☐ not for publication

3. State Agency Certification

I hereby certify that this nomination ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the documentation standards and criteria for registering properties in the Connecticut Register of Historic Places. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

4. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-state
☐ public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☒ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing

1

buildings

sites

2

structures

objects

3

Total

Property Owner

name Thomas B. Downing, Jr.

address 62 River Road

city Killingworth state code CT

zip code 06419 phone (203) 996-0184

Long Meadow/Lofting, Hugh & Flora, House

Name of Property

Killingworth

Municipality

5. Historic Preservation Council

Approval date _____

Comments _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

SECONDARY structures: agricultural outbuildings

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

SECONDARY structures: agricultural outbuildings

7. Description

Architectural/Archaeological Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival-Italianate (House)

Vernacular (Barns)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: random ashlar, fieldstone;

BRICK

walls

roof ASPHALT: shingles

other WOOD: post and beam frame

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Long Meadow/Lofting, Hugh & Flora, House

Name of Property

Killingworth

Municipality

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable Connecticut Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for State Register listing.)

☒ **1** That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to our history and lives of persons significant in our past; or

☒ **2** That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

☐ **3** That have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Levels of Significance (local, state)

State: Criterion 1

Local: Criterion 2

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

LITERATURE

ARCHITECTURE

Significant Dates

c. 1805: House original construction

c. 1920-1927: Lofting ownership and residence

Significant Person

Lofting, Hugh (1886-1947)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion 3 is marked)

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Long Meadow/Lofting, Hugh & Flora, House

Name of Property

Killingworth

Municipality

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property 8.9

Municipal Map, Block and Lot Number and UTM Coordinate (If possible)

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	<u>35</u>	<u>9</u>
	Map	Block
1	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Eastings
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Eastings	Northings
4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

☐ See continuation sheet

Latitude, longitude: 41.2774419, -72.5538934

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

The boundaries of the nominated property are the legal limits of Map 35, Lot 9, of the Town of Killingworth Assessor's records (Parcel ID 00225100).

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The boundaries encompass the extent of the historic resources at this property associated with writer Hugh Lofting.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Charlotte Hitchcock

organization Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

date 10/08/2014

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Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism
Historic Preservation and Museum Division/State Historic Preservation Office

CONNECTICUT STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM – Continuation Form

Long Meadow/Lofting, Hugh & Flora, House

Name of Property

Killingworth

Municipality

Narrative Description

This property is an early-nineteenth-century farmstead which was re-purposed in the twentieth century by Hugh Lofting, an influential author of children's literature, who lived and wrote at this site in Connecticut. This nomination was prepared as part of the Creative Places – Arts and Letters Project.

This site is located at the northwest corner of the intersection of River Road and Paper Mill Road, in the southwest corner of Killingworth. River Road roughly parallels the Hammonasset River, which runs in a winding course southward toward Long Island Sound. Chatfield Hollow Brook runs south parallel to Paper Mill Road, and along the west edge of this property, to join the river. A Connecticut Blue Trail for hiking, the Chatfield Trail, parallels the brook and crosses the property on its way north to Chatfield Hollow State Park. The site is an 8.9-acre parcel located at the boundary between the river flood plain and hills rising to the east; the property extends north along the west side of Paper Mill Road.

The Hammonasset River forms the town boundary with Madison to the west and south. Scattered historic residential properties are located along River Road, while north along Paper Mill Road is the site of the Deer Lake Scout Reservation (listed on the State Register of Historic Places in the 2014 Agricultural Heritage thematic nomination) at the site of the former Elba Paper Mill. To the south at 234 River Road, Riverdale Farm/Bruno Weiss Farmstead is also listed on the State Register in the Agricultural Heritage group. The town's Evergreen Cemetery is located to the southeast on Green Hill Road. The town center of Killingworth is to the northeast and is reached via Green Hill Road. North of the center, the Chauncy and Jerusha Parmelee Farmstead at 476 Route 81 (Higganum Road) is listed on the State Register in the Agricultural Heritage group, and the Horace and Eunice Parmelee Farm at 465 Route 81 is also individually listed on the State Register. Additional sites in Killingworth which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places are: Oak Lodge (1937) in Chatfield Hollow State Park, the [Ezra and Oliver] Parmelee House (c. 1785) at 4 Beckwith Road, and Emmanuel Church (1803).

The main farmhouse faces south toward the corner intersection. To the north of the house is a carriage barn and further north is an English barn. Beyond the barn, grade slopes abruptly down toward the north and west to the brook and trail. To the west of the carriage barn the foundation of a second barn and stone piers of a former corn crib are still extant. A wood picket fence lines the roadside along the south and east property lines and a low stone wall lines the road at the northern boundary with Paper Mill Road. The area immediately surrounding the buildings is open lawn with a few trees. The northern part of the property is wooded.

Data Table (C – contributing, NC – non-contributing):

Farmhouse	c. 1805	C
Carriage house	Early 20 th c.	C
Barn	Early 19 th c.	C

Farmhouse:

The Farmhouse is a 2 ½-story gable-roofed post and beam framed structure, 23' x 29' with its entry in the south-facing gable facade, in the Greek Revival fashion. The façade is a three-bay side-hall layout with the entry in the west bay, now with a small cantilevered porch roof and stone stoop. The windows are six-over-six double-hung sash and

siding is wood clapboard, recently restored (after removal of vinyl siding) and painted red with white corner board trim. The roof has a relatively shallow pitch and deep overhangs with cornice returns. Additions at the east side, rear, and west side include one-story hip- and shed-roofed extensions of the east rear room (a former kitchen with a granite fireplace and oven) extending approximately 6' out from the main block, and an enclosed rear porch of 10' x 30'.

The grade slopes down toward the west, providing access to the basement at the lower grade level. Although the east and south foundation walls are of random ashlar stone masonry, the west and north sides have brick foundation walls. The area below the first floor addition has two six-over-six double-hung windows and a wood-framed shed addition forming a vestibule with a basement entry door.

A fieldstone retaining wall extends north from the northwest corner of the house, forming a level upper yard outside the back of the house.

The interior retains some historic details including two fireplaces with granite fire boxes and lintels, one having a bake oven with cast iron door. The front stair hall has a nineteenth-century stair and bannister and the floors are of tulip poplar planks. Signs of historical remodeling include two rooms with stretched canvas ceilings and a mid-twentieth-century projecting corner fireplace in the front parlor.

In the attic the timber framing can be seen. A pair of full-length hewn canted purlin plates run longitudinally, supporting the common rafters which are of sawn lumber. In the basement the exposed first floor framing is visible and consists of full log girders and joists, dressed on only the top surface and mortised into the girders. A portion of the basement is said to have been used as a doctor's office, as evidenced by an extant hand-washing sink with foot pedal.

Carriage barn:

This is a salt-box roofed wagon shed or carriage barn, measuring 25' x 30', with its ridge-line oriented north-south. The higher eave-side opens toward the east, with a wide open bay to the north and a narrow closed bay at the south end, with a stable-type window. The structure has a fieldstone foundation, clapboard siding with corner board trim, and a square hip-roofed cupola on the asphalt shingle ridge. A gravel driveway runs from the barn west to Paper Mill Road.

English barn:

This is a 1 1/2-story eave-entry gable-roofed three-bay barn, 30' x 40'. The ridge-line is oriented east-west, and a pair of full-height sliding doors is mounted in the center bay. At the west end a shed-roofed addition encompasses the entire west gable-end and has a pair of hinged doors in the south gable-end. The north eave-side has a smaller sliding door in the center bay and a single six-pane window high in the wall above the door. There are six-pane attic windows in both gable-ends. Siding is vertical boards and roofing is asphalt shingles.

The interior is a typical square rule framed post and beam frame with dropped tie-girts. In each of the four bents, there is a center post below the tie-girt and a pair of queen posts above. These support purlin plates on which common rafters are supported. The frame is of hewn timbers while the rafters are a mix of hewn and sawn lumber, butted at the ridge with no ridge board. The current owner has made repairs to the frame with steel plates and some new material sistered onto the old. Much of the original random board decking remains, overlain with new plywood.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion 1:

The site is regionally significant for its association with children's book author Hugh Lofting, the creator of the character Dr. Dolittle. The house and environment provided the quiet and space for the author to write the popular "Dr. Dolittle" novels during his occupancy from 1920 to 1927, surrounded by his family and pets which allowed him to get into character when he was working. Lofting wrote at least six of his popular novels while living in the house. Lofting's re-use of an old farmstead exemplified the trend of artists in the twentieth century to transplant themselves to old houses in small towns of Connecticut and to contribute to revitalizing communities where the decline of agriculture had led to loss of population.

Artist significance:

Hugh John Lofting (1886-1947) was born in England, to an English father and Irish mother. He came to America in 1902 to study engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and never lived in England again. After several years of work as an engineer in Canada, Africa, and Cuba, he returned to New York with the plan of becoming a writer. He wrote for magazines and married Flora Small (1881-1927) in 1912. Their two children were born in the next three years.

Lofting enlisted in the Irish Guard and served in France during World War I. While serving in the trenches he was saddened by the suffering of horses and mules used in war work, and this inspired him to make up stories which he sent home to his son Colin and daughter Elizabeth, about the fictional Dr. Dolittle (a nickname for Colin). Lofting was injured by shrapnel and discharged from military service by 1919. His wife, Flora saved his letters, with illustrations done on the backs with scraps of charcoal. In 1920 the letters were the basis of Lofting's first children's book, *The Story of Doctor Doolittle*, which was immediately popular. Hugh Lofting's war experience led him toward pacifist views, which influenced the themes in his books, in which the most significant and sympathetic characters are the animals (Killingworth Public Library clipping files).

The family appears to have spent some time recuperating at a private sanitarium in the Catskills of New York State, as the 1920 census records them as residents of the Foord Sanitarium in Wawarsing, Ulster County. Hugh is listed as a writer and head of the household, which included Flora, Elizabeth, and Colin. The Loftings moved to River Road in Killingworth in the early 1920s though they usually referred to the location as Madison (the adjacent town to the west). This rural retreat, which they named "Long Meadow," allowed space for Colin's pony, quiet for writing, and convenient access to the shoreline rail service at Madison. Local lore, passed down orally through neighbors to the current owner (Downing interview 2014), tells that he wrote in the projecting bay window along the east side of the house. He worked at his writing mostly during the night-time hours, and often in costume as Dr. Dolittle. Not surprisingly, the family had numerous pets, including several dogs and a pony (Killingworth Public Library clipping files).

The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle won the Newbery Medal of the American Library Association in 1923 (Newbery). Lofting wrote and illustrated additional Dr. Dolittle stories annually: *Doctor Dolittle's Post Office* (1923), *Doctor Dolittle's Circus* (1924), *Doctor Dolittle's Zoo* (1925), *Doctor Dolittle's Caravan* (1926), *Doctor Dolittle's Garden* (1927), and *Doctor Dolittle in the Moon* (1928).

Flora died in 1927. Hugh Lofting remarried in 1929, but his second wife, Katherine Harrower Peters, died within months. On River Road, Hugh Lofting owned two different houses, 62 River Road, and a subsequently a somewhat larger c. 1761 home at 76 River Road for a few years after 1929.

After a period of mourning and an attempt to terminate the Dr. Dolittle series with *Doctor Dolittle in the Moon*, Lofting married again in 1935, to Josephine Fricker, a Canadian. Their son, Christopher Clement, was born in 1936. The Loftings moved to California, where they lived for the remainder of Lofting's life and he wrote several more novels. Hugh, Katherine, and Josephine are buried in Killingworth's Evergreen Cemetery just south of the 76 River Road house. Many of Lofting's books remain in print, with illustrations by the author or by others (Amazon.com book search).

Criterion 2:

The property is locally significant for the age and character of its early nineteenth-century vernacular Greek Revival-style house and English barn, which are excellent and typical examples of their type and style.

Killingworth has approximately 150 houses built before 1870 (Killingworth Plan of Conservation and Development 2008, 28). Of these at least 20 date from before 1800; these are clustered along the western edge of the town near the Hammonasset River (Chestnut Hill Road and River Road), and along the upland area now served by the north-south Route 81 (WPA Survey 1935; Lundberg 1980). After about 1850 the population declined as farming became increasingly unprofitable. In this context, the early owners who built this house in about 1805 were working at the time of rising population and prosperity for the town of Killingworth. The town's one-room schoolhouses were built c. 1810, with River Road located in the Southwest District.

The farmhouse dates from circa 1805, but appears to have been renovated several times to include the broad overhangs with cornice returns (Greek Revival-style embellishments) and added rear and east side additions. A historic photograph in the owner's collection shows a full-width front porch, a secondary entrance under a small porch along the east side, and a pair of attic windows in the gable. Also shown are two barns to the north of the house. Only one of these remains extant. At its full extent of development the farmstead exemplified the successful small farm of the period, with architectural details representing the vernacular fashions from the early- to mid-1800s – from Greek Revival roof line and windows to early Victorian porch and bays. Recent restoration work has included removal of siding and recovery of original trim.

Evidence from the Beers map of 1874 shows the owner as W.C. Griswold. The 1850-1880 census records show the extended Griswold family. In 1870 Washington Griswold, age 38, a farmer, with his wife Cordelia, 35, and daughter Edith, age 9. Sherman Griswold, age 34, lived adjacent to the east on River Road with his wife Adaline, 23. A daughter Nora was age 7 by the 1880 census. Also living adjacent were parents Nathan Griswold, 70, and Rachel, 66 – in 1850 Washington, Sherman, and three sisters were living with their parents. Apparently the farm was able to support the families of both adult sons. The Griswolds were farmers, though a number of their neighbors worked in the nearby Elba Paper Mill.

In the late 1800s, the area was known as Trioaks, and a proposal was made to set up a post office. Washington Griswold was authorized as postmaster, and the post office was to be run out of his front parlor, opening on July 1, 1890. When it was learned that the mail delivery would have to be carried by postal workers via a detour to Madison (instead of more directly from the Clinton train station by a local Killingworth resident as in the past) the plan was cancelled, and the Trioaks Post Office never actually opened (Lentz 1967). The property is locally significant for the age and character of its early nineteenth-century house and English barn, and their place in the Trioaks community on the border of Killingworth and Madison.

As the home of Hugh Lofting, the site gains regional and national significance as the rural retreat for the popular author to write the “Dr. Dolittle” novels surrounded by family and pets, where the atmosphere of the doctor's setting could be summoned up. The site has a unique significance as the place where Hugh Lofting was able to write his imaginative and now classic books. It exemplifies a trend of artists and writers migrating to small town or rural locations in the twentieth century.

9. Bibliographic References

Connecticut Trust Resource Database. 2015. Records: Site No. 2600. Artist No. 425 (Hugh Lofting).

Photographs and field notes by Charlotte Hitchcock 8/29/2014 and 10/28/2014.

Interviews

Thomas Lentz, Killingworth municipal historian, 8/29/2014, at the Killingworth Historical Society.

Tammy Eustis, Killingworth Public Library, 10/05/2014, at the Library.

Thomas B. Downing, Jr., 10/28/2014, at 62 River Road, Killingworth.

Map resources:

Town of Killingworth Assessor's Records

<http://www.propertyrecordcards.com/SearchMaster.aspx?towncode=070> . Parcel ID: 35-09.

Aerial views from:

<http://maps.google.com/> and <http://www.bing.com/maps/> . Accessed 11/30/2014.

Historical aerial photography and maps accessed at UConn MAGIC:

http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/mash_up/1934.html

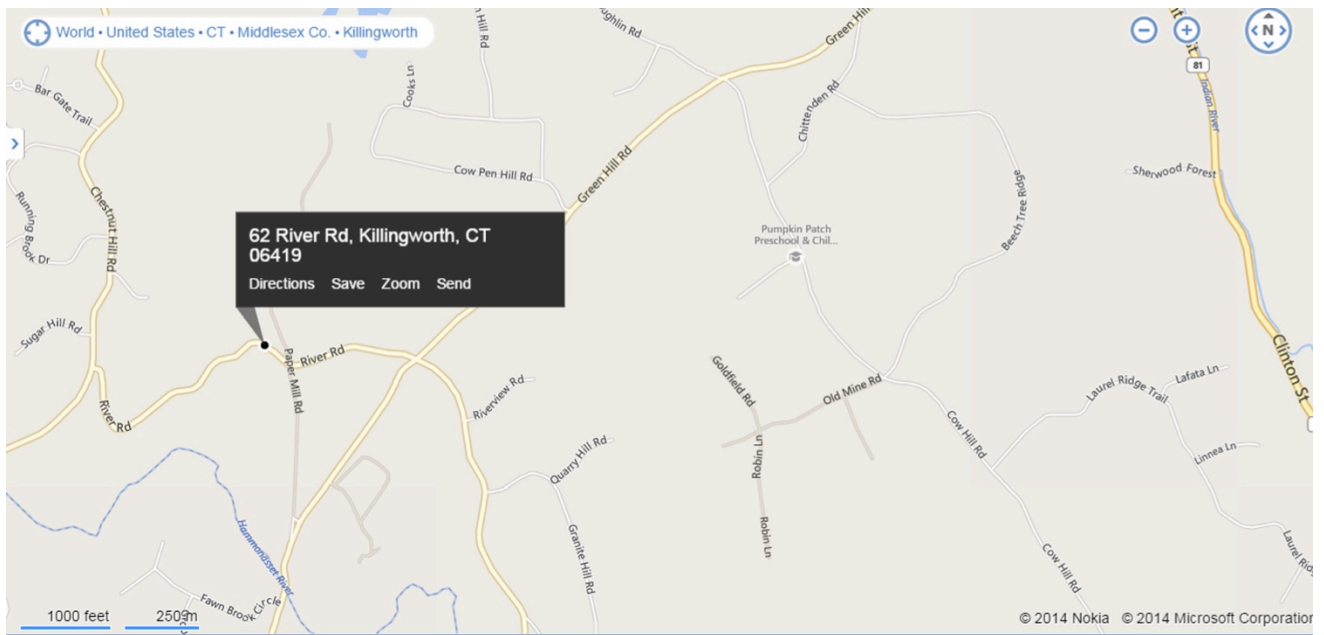
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Print and internet resources:

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1920. *The Story of Doctor Dolittle*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co.
1922. *The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle*, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co.
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- Town of Killingworth. 2008. Plan of Conservation and Development 2008-2018.
- "Welcome to the Wonderful World of Dr. Doolittle." Fan web site. Accessed 11/30/2014.
<http://puddleby.tripod.com/index.html> 1998-2003. Note: this site was edited with cooperation and advice from the author's son Christopher Lofting, who provided illustrations and family photographs.
- U.S. Federal Census, accessed at <http://persi.heritagequestonline.com/hqoweb/library/do/census/search/basic> .



1. Location map of 62 River Road, Killingworth CT. Accessed 10/30/2014 <http://www.bing.com/maps> .



2. South view – aerial “bird’s-eye” map of 62 River Road, Killingworth CT. Accessed 10/30/2014. <http://www.bing.com/maps> .



3. Southwest view of Farmhouse, camera facing north.



4. Southeast view of Farmhouse with the barn at the right rear, camera facing northwest. The addition at the right corner of the house has an angle bay window which according to local lore was where Lofting did his writing.



5. Historic photograph showing the southeast view of the property, camera facing northwest, date unknown. Note the full-width Italianate-style front porch, the smaller porch and secondary door into the east side, and the second barn. Inset is a view of the corn crib, no longer extant. Photograph courtesy of Thomas Downing.



6. Northwest view of the Farmhouse showing the rear porch, brick foundation, and basement entry, camera facing southeast. The foundation of the second barn, now gone, is at the left foreground.



7. Northeast view of Carriage barn with Farmhouse beyond, camera facing south.



8. Southwest view of the Carriage barn with the English barn at left rear, camera facing northeast.



9. Southwest view of the English barn with the foundation posts for the former corn crib in the foreground, camera facing northeast.



10. Southwest view of English barn, camera facing northeast.



11. Northeast view of English barn with Carriage barn and Farmhouse at left rear, camera facing south.



12. Interior view of English barn, camera facing west. Note the hand hewn timber frame with dropped tie-girts, queen post trusses, and purlin plates.



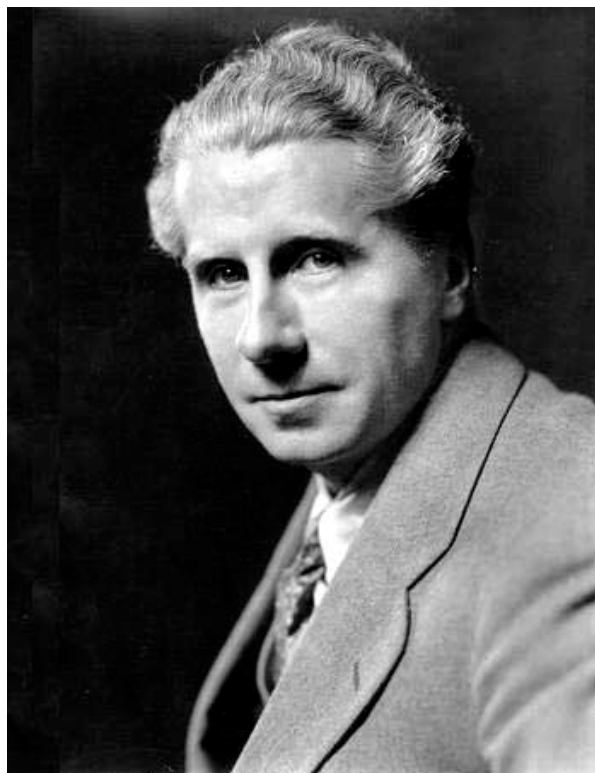
13. Interior view of Farmhouse old kitchen, camera facing southwest.



14. Interior view of Farmhouse attic roof framing, camera facing north.



15. Interior view of Farmhouse stair, camera facing northwest.



16. Photograph of Hugh Lofting, from <http://puddleby.tripod.com/author.html>.



17. Hugh Lofting with his son Colin and pony, at Long Meadow in the 1920s, from a 1967 feature in the *New Haven Register* at the release of the 1967 film version of *Dr. Dolittle*. Collection of the Killingworth Public Library.



18. South view of 76 River Road, the second Lofting home in Killingworth, camera facing northeast.



19. Lofting grave site at Evergreen Cemetery on Green Hill Road, Killingworth, camera facing south. Here are found the graves of Katherine Harrower Lofting (1898-1929), Hugh Lofting (1886-1947) and Josephine Lofting (1908-1966). The cemetery is located directly south of the second Lofting home at 76 River Road, and Lofting could see Katherine's grave from the house.