

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: Nason, Thomas Willoughby and Margaret Warren, House

other names/site number: _____

2. Location

street & number: 282 Joshuatown Road

city or town: Lyme

County: New London

Zip code: 06371

☐ vicinity

☐ not for publication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

structures

objects

1

Total

Property Owner

name Roger W. Parkman

address 282 Joshuatown Road

city Lyme state code CT

zip code 06371 phone (203) 676-1061

Nason House

Name of Property

Lyme

Municipality

5. Historic Preservation Council

Approval date _____

Comments

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural/Archaeological Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival / Cape Cod Cottage

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: fieldstone

walls WOOD: clapboard

BRICK: chimney

roof WOOD SHINGLE

other WOOD: frame

Narrative Description

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Nason House

Name of Property

Lyme

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)

ART
ARCHITECTURE

Significant Dates

c. 1938: House construction

Significant Person

Nason, Thomas Willoughby (1889-1971)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion 3 is marked)

Architect/Builder

Pfeiffer, Alberta Raffl (1899-1994)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Nason House

Name of Property

Lyme

Municipality

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3

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

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	<u>10</u>		<u>13</u>		
	Map	Block	Lot		
1	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>	3	<u>Zone</u> <u>Easting</u> <u>Northing</u>
2	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>	4	<u>Zone</u> <u>Easting</u> <u>Northing</u>

☐ See continuation sheet

Latitude, longitude: 41.397788, -72.390685

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 10, Lot 13, per the Town of Lyme Assessor's records.

Boundary Justification

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

The boundaries encompass the extent of the historic resources associated with the artist Thomas Willoughby Nason. The parcel formerly included a 3.48-acre parcel (Map 10, Lot 12) to the west, which has been subdivided and sold separately. The smaller parcel currently associated with the house includes the significant features associated with the nomination.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title:	<u>Charlotte Hitchcock</u>	Date:	<u>7/24/2014</u>
organization:	<u>Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation</u>	Telephone:	<u>(203) 562-6312</u>
street & number:	<u>940 Whitney Avenue</u>	State:	<u>CT</u>
city or town:	<u>Hamden</u>	Zip code:	<u>06517</u>

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

CONNECTICUT STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM – Continuation Form

Nason House

Name of Property

Lyme

Municipality

Narrative Description

This property is a mid-twentieth-century residential resource associated with the life and work of an influential individual, Thomas Willoughby Nason, an artist working in Connecticut. This nomination was prepared as part of the Creative Places – Arts and Letters Project.

The Town of Lyme is located north of Old Lyme along the east bank of the Connecticut River. Joshuatown Road runs along the high ground east of the river from the town center at Hamburg and the Hamburg Bridge Historic District northward to the village of Hadlyme with its Hadlyme Ferry Historic District (both on the National Register of Historic Places). The Nason house is located at the crest of Shippee (or Shippy) Hill, roughly half way between Hamburg and Hadlyme. At this location, the road swings toward the north. This 3-acre site on the west side of the road slopes down toward where Selden Creek joins the Connecticut River. A 3.48-acre lot to the west has a driveway extending along the southern property line, and the two parcels appear to have been subdivided. The immediate area is wooded, with mostly second-growth forests. Large residential parcels with single-family homes line Joshuatown Road along with protected conservation land – The Nature Conservancy and Lyme Land Conservation Trust's Selden Creek Preserve is a short distance to the north.

The Nason House is located close to the road behind a narrow garden. A garage is to the north of the house, accessed from a drive and parking area between the house and garage.

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

House	1938	C
Garage	Late 20 th c.	NC

House:

The house is a 1 ½-story Cape Cod type house, 30' x 30' with a steeply-pitched side gable roof (Photos 5-8). The east elevation is the front facing the road. This is a four-bay façade with an entry door at the left (south) corner and three eight-over-twelve double-hung windows to the right. A large brick chimney emerges from the ridge off-center toward the south, indicating a layout of the Colonial half-house type. A 12' x 19' 1-story ell is attached to the south gable-end, set back flush with the west wall.

The grade slopes down toward the rear. The basement level, banked into the slope, opens to grade on the west and contains the artist's studio (Photo 9). The foundation is a mix of brick and fieldstone masonry walls, with fieldstone retaining walls forming terraces to the north and south of the building. The west elevation has areas of expansive glazing, including a bank of three windows lighting the basement-level studio, and on the main floor a projecting dining bay with angled bay windows at the center of the west side. The interior was not accessible at the time of documentation.

The building has narrow clapboard siding stained dark brown with white window sash. The roof is wood shingles.

Garage:

The two-car garage (Photo 10) is a one-story gable-roofed structure with its gable toward the road. A pair of hinged wooden doors with chamfered corners in the south side open to a turn-around area between the garage and house. A square nine-pane window is off center in the east gable. Siding is dark-stained clapboards and roofing is wood shingles, matching the house.

Statement of Significance

Criterion 1:

This property derives its primary significance for its associations with regionally prominent artist Thomas Willoughby Nason. Nason became well known for his finely detailed images which brought the medium of wood engraving into popularity. He created limited edition illustrated books as well as individual art prints. His representational style allied him with the Regionalist style of art in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Nason's choice of this location exemplifies the trend of artists in the twentieth century to migrate to small towns and rural areas in Connecticut, where they established living and working spaces and revitalized areas of declining population.

Thomas Willoughby Nason (1889-1971) was born in Dracut, Massachusetts, one of five children of a congregational clergyman. Two other siblings were in the arts, including painter Gertrude Nason (1890-1968). Following high school, Thomas, who had learned Spanish, worked as secretary to Albert C. Burrage, a Boston lawyer with mining investments in South America and the American west. Thomas met his future wife, Margaret Warren, in Redlands, California while employed by Burrage. He then served in France during World War I, and married Margaret in 1919. Continuing in Burrage's office, the Nasons moved into an apartment at 63 River Street in Boston on the edge of Beacon Hill. Thomas began to pursue an interest in prints, collecting reproductions and prints from Boston shops. He began to learn engraving with help from a friend, Percy Grassby, and from library books. His interest turned from woodcuts (using the flat grain of the wood) to wood engraving (using end-grain wood blocks and the engraving tool, the burin).

By 1923 Nason was beginning to be known for his prints. When his employer died in 1931, he and Margaret decided he was ready to become a full-time artist, and they moved to a secluded site in Lyme, Connecticut (Price 1993), where they made their permanent home.

The property at 282 Joshuatown Road previously was the site of a c. 1740 gambrel-roofed house which had been dismantled in the early 1900s. The Nasons found the place with only the center chimney and fire boxes standing, while exploring with Thomas's sister Gertrude Nason, an artist who summered in Lyme with her husband William Howard Donahue, also an artist. Thomas and Margaret purchased their land in 1931 in the midst of the Great Depression (Price 1993). The Nasons lived here through the rest of their lives, though they expressed regrets at the pace of modernization over the years as their road was paved and new homes began to appear among the woodlands (Price 1993).

The house at 282 Joshuatown Road, Lyme, is significant as the home with basement level studio where Nason lived and worked from the completion of construction in 1938 until his death in 1971. The house, built partially by Nason himself, reflects his personality and style both by its location in a remote rural landscape, and by the design of the house to resemble the first period farmhouses of the area. Thomas and Margaret Nason lived in the kind of landscape that was the subject of Thomas's art. He became well known for his finely detailed images which portrayed a rather dark view of a world where the agricultural landscape was decaying and disappearing.

Although Thomas Willoughby Nason was a quiet and solitary worker, the traditional wood engraving technique and representational subject matter of his work place him in the art movement known as Regionalism. Developing in parallel with the modern movement artists who were bringing abstract art and surrealism (with origins in Europe) into the public eye, Regionalists focused on subjects in the United States. They tended either to look at the lives of working people in cities, leading to the social realism that was expressed in much WPA artwork, or to be inspired by images of the decline of rural America. During the Depression years especially, artists portrayed the world immediately around them. Nason was allied with this latter group, as many of his meticulously detailed and somber images show decaying New England barns or farmsteads (Burdan 2009).

Nason's earliest works portrayed odd and hidden corners of Boston. Later many of his images showed old farms of New England as they were abandoned during the Depression years. He worked in a small format and created finely detailed images using the technique of wood engraving. The Smithsonian American Art Museum owns a sizeable collection of Nason's prints including, to name just a few, *A New England Scene* from 1932, *Amston Pond* of 1947, and *Vermont Barns* of 1949.

Thomas Nason participated in a revival of wood engraving which corresponded with the private press movement in the 1930s. Joseph Blumenthal's Spiral Press from 1926 to the 1960s produced beautiful printed editions including the poetry of Robert Frost, for which Nason was commissioned to engrave illustrations. Nason also illustrated an

edition of Thoreau's *Walden*. He continued with fine art prints, as well as illustrations and more commercial work such as book plates and architectural prints for universities and historical societies (Smithsonian).

Criterion 2:

The property is significant at the local level as an outstanding example of Colonial and Cape Cod Cottage revival-style architecture. The house was designed by local architect Alberta Pfeiffer and built in 1938, partially by Nason himself, on the foundation of an earlier house from the eighteenth century.

The siting and appearance of the house as seen from the public road, recapture the ambiance of the original style with a low single-story facade, small multi-pane windows, wood shingled roof, and a cottage garden with stone wall along the road-side. Seen from the private rear garden, the use of stone walls for a picturesque landscape and the more expansive fenestration, reflect twentieth-century preferences. The two aspects combine to make this an outstanding, though modest, example of an early twentieth-century revival movement.

The Colonial Revival became a dominant style for residential design in the first half of the twentieth century, initially sparked by the enthusiasm for the nation's Centennial of 1876. Emulating the building traditions of the Colonial period and early Republic but commonly using modern construction technology, Colonial Revival designs featured loose interpretations of early American design by some architects and more historically correct renditions by others, resulting in an eclectic stylistic range (McAlester 1984, 325-6).

Nason helped with construction, and the couple moved in during 1938. Thomas Nason built a number of furnishings. Not an exact copy of the original house, the Nason house was traditional in design and came to look as if it belonged in its setting. Aerial photography of the area from the Fairchild survey of 1934 shows the area more open and less wooded than it is today.

The house was designed with help of friends and architect/artists Alberta and Homer Pfeiffer.

Alberta Raffl Pfeiffer had a residential practice in Lyme beginning in 1933 and was an early female member of the American Institute of Architects (Gane 1956). After working at firms in Chicago and New York City, where she was involved in the design of estates and country homes for wealthy clients, she moved to Lyme with her husband and opened a solo practice. There she did design work on more than 100 homes in the area and served on numerous community boards including the Lyme Planning and Zoning Board, Connecticut Society of Craftsmen, and Connecticut Mental Health Association (*Hartford Courant* 1994).

Homer Pfeiffer taught architecture at Yale University and was also a craft artist. The Pfeiffers lived in Lyme on a historic farmstead, the Mitchell Farm on Mitchell Hill Road, where Alberta renovated the eighteenth-century house with Colonial Revival-style features and additions.

Bibliographic References

Connecticut Trust Resource Database. 2015. Records: Site No. 2361. Artist No. 356 (Thomas W. Nason).
Photographs and field notes by Charlotte Hitchcock, 7/18/2014. Telephone interview with Roger Parkman, 8/14/2014.

Map resources:

Town of Lyme Assessor's records and maps Parcel ID: Map 10/13.

Aerial views from: <http://maps.google.com/> and <http://www.bing.com/maps/> accessed 8/14/2014.

Historical aerial photography and maps accessed at UConn MAGIC:

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

http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/historical_maps_connecticut_towns.html .

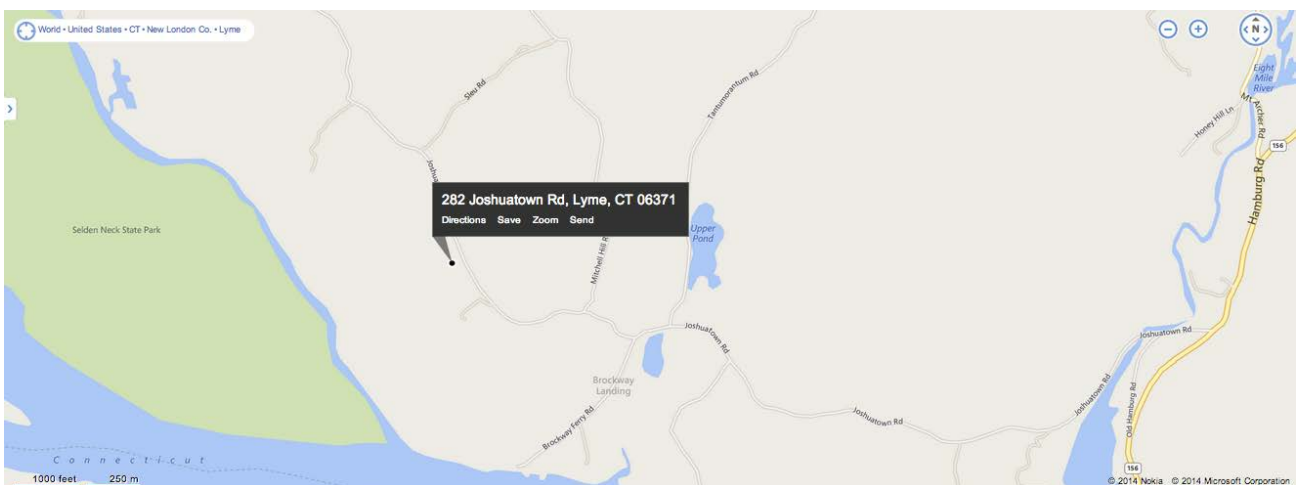
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- U.S. Federal Census, accessed at <http://persi.heritagequestonline.com/hqoweb/library/do/census/search/basic>



1. Location map of 282 Joshuatown Road, Lyme CT – from <http://www.bing.com/maps> accessed 8/14/2014.



2. East view – aerial “bird’s-eye” map of 282 Joshuatown Road, Lyme CT – <http://www.bing.com/maps> accessed 8/14/2014.



3. North view – aerial “bird’s-eye” map of 282 Joshuatown Road, Lyme CT – <http://www.bing.com/maps> accessed 8/18/2014.



4. Parcel map of 282 Joshuatown Road, Lyme CT – detail of Map 10 from Town of Lyme Assessor's records.



5. Southeast view of house, camera facing northwest.



6. East view of house, camera facing west.



7. Northeast view of house, camera facing southwest.



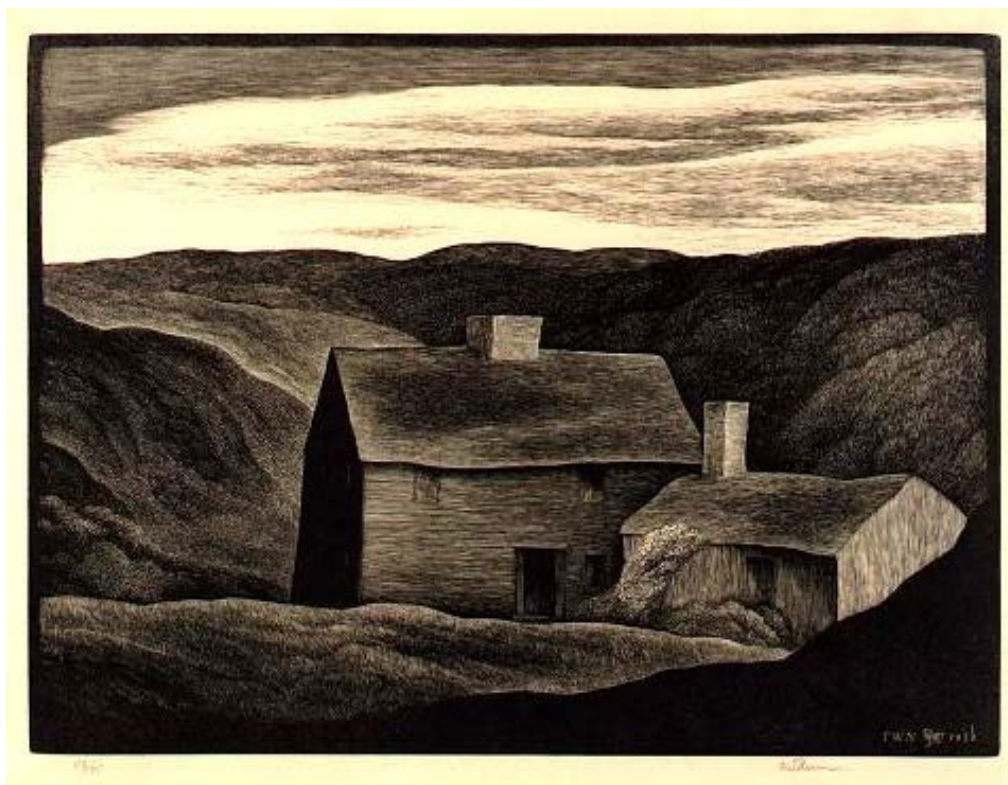
8. East detail view of house, camera facing northwest.



9. Southwest view of house, camera facing northeast. Thomas W. Nason had a studio space in the banked basement level which opens to grade at the west side. The bay window and three-panel window group are typical of how Alberta Pfeiffer's designs brought more light into the spaces than the historical models from which she worked.



10. Southeast view of garage, camera facing northwest.



11. *A New England Scene*, by Thomas Willoughby Nason. Smithsonian Institution Collection Search Center. Accessed 8/19/2014 at http://ids.si.edu/ids/deliveryService?max=500&id=http://americanart.si.edu/images/1979/1979.98.180_1a.jpg.



12. *Amston Pond*, 1947, by Thomas Willoughby Nason. Smithsonian Institution Collection Search Center. Accessed 11/18/2015 at http://collections.si.edu/search/tag/tagDoc.htm?recordID=saam_1966.64.34 .



13. *Vermont Barns*, 1949, by Thomas Willoughby Nason. Smithsonian Institution Collection Search Center. Accessed 11/18/2015 at. Accessed at <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=18195> .