

## Historical Spotlight

### The Abisha Smith House, 21 Park Road



*Photo Courtesy of the  
Haddam Historical Society*

The Abisha Smith House, a 1-1/2 story Colonial Cape-style building, faces southwest on Park Road. This road was formerly part of the Middlesex Turnpike, before Saybrook Road was built to the east. Clapboarded and presenting a three-bay façade toward the street, it has a steeply-pitched, wood-shingled gable roof. A stone chimney rises from the center of the house and eight-over-twelve sash are found on the front and sides and six-over-nine on the rear. Locally known as "the Flatiron House," a reference to its use as a lodging place for the workers of the nearby granite quarry, it has long been held to be one of the oldest structures in the town. However, both the title search and the architectural evidence coincide with the 1790 date given by the Federal Writer's Project of the Work Progress Administration in the 1930's. This later date for a house of this style is not unusual in Haddam or other rural villages in Connecticut. The Cape-style house form was used from about 1720 until well into the nineteenth century.

Although little information is available about the builder, Abisha Smith, land records clearly show that he built this house on a plot of land known as "the Neck Lot" (HMLR 9:527, 12:109). In June of 1790, Joseph and Hannah Smith (brother and sister) received from Smith Clark a piece of land on the northeast side of the Country Road. In 1796 Joseph sold to his brother Abisha the same piece "descended to us from our sister Hannah Smith, dec'd, where the said Abisha's Dwelling House now stands." After Abisha died in 1842, the house and four acres were included in Samuel Arnold's estate, and as late as 1878 the piece is referred to as the "Abisha Smith Homelot." During the period when quarrying was most profitable, the house was owned by Isaac Arnold, a wealthy quarry owner and businessman. S. Harris Warner and Charles W. Warner owned it from 1897 until 1929, probably using it to house their workers from the sawmill on Mill Creek further south.

This well-preserved Cape-style house played a valuable role in the history of this area through its association with the quarry industry.

--Janice P. Cunningham and Elizabeth A. Warner, "The Abisha Smith House". *Portrait of a River Town*. Canton : Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, Inc., 96.



*Photos Courtesy of Cheryl Czuba*