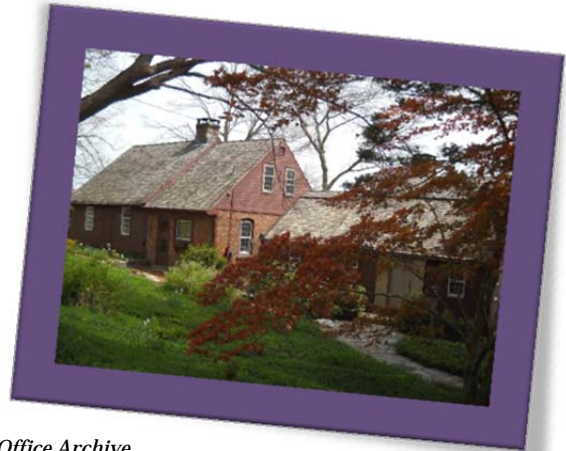


Haddam Assessor's Office Historical Spotlight

The Increase Brainerd House 29 Spencer Road



Photos Courtesy of the Haddam Assessor's Office Archive

Alterations and additions over a period of 225 years have produced a house on the southeast side of Spencer Road with an unusual and complex history. The original section of the building, erected about 1755 and located at the east end, is a small, three-bay house with a steeply-pitched, wood-shingled, ridge-to-street gable roof. It is supported by a lime-mortared rubble foundation. This is a very primitive house which has had extensive alterations, including the replacement of the chimney stack, the addition of new and old timbers, and the installation of a seventeenth-century staircase from another building.

Also, the windows vary in size and shape, suggesting that some of them came from other old buildings. A 1920s photograph indicates that the mismatched facade windows were already installed at that time. The left-hand window may be original but the one to the right of the door is a later addition, suggesting the possibility that there was no window in this location originally. This would be consistent with the placement and size of the original stone chimney stack.

Based on this evidence and the unusual end-chimney configuration of the original section of the house, so rare in Connecticut that no documented examples are known to exist, it can be speculated that the building may originally have functioned as a shop of some kind, rather than as a dwelling. Any evidence of a forge, however, would have been lost when the stack was rebuilt in its present smaller configuration. A two-bay brick addition to the west of the main block was added about 1930. The westernmost end features a 1-½ story, gambrel-roofed addition, added by the present owner in 1972, which predates the original structure by fifty years. It was moved to this site from Chester, Connecticut, and is connected to the rest of the house by a modern ell.

Increase Brainerd (1733/4-1785) erected the original building about 1755 on land belonging to his father Joseph. Joseph's father Elijah was the son of a proprietor, and was among the first to distribute land to his sons in the Candlewood Hill and Brainerd Hill districts. Increase married Hepzibah Spencer in 1762 and had two children. He died intestate and insolvent. To satisfy his creditors, his heirs had to sell the property, and William Clark bought the house and land for a meager 36 pounds. Upon his death in 1830 the house passed to Edwin Harvey, who held the mortgage. Various members of the Spencer and Bailey families occupied the house during the following thirty years. In 1924, Damiano Monica purchased the house and was responsible for many of the alterations and additions, including the brick ell. He sold the house in 1939 to Patrick and Elizabeth Doyle, who owned the house until 1968.

Although the architectural integrity of the first building on the property has been somewhat compromised, this house is still notable. It demonstrates, in its evolution over time, the changing needs of its various owners.

--Janice P. Cunningham and Elizabeth A. Warner, "The Increase Brainerd House". *Portrait of a River Town*. Canton : Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, Inc., 188.

