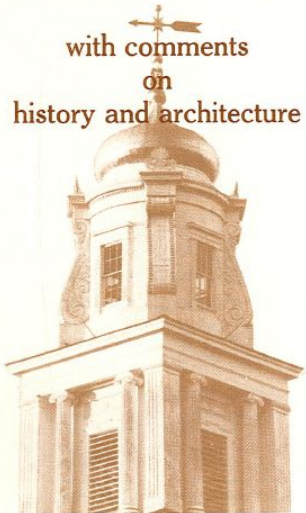
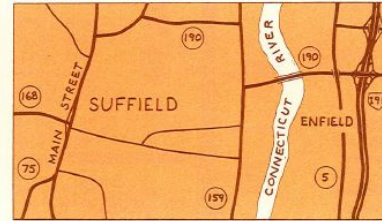


A TOUR  
ON MAIN STREET

SUFFIELD  
CONNECTICUT



The Antiquarian & Landmarks Society  
The Suffield Historical Society



Suffield, Connecticut

The enclosed map and the notes surrounding it  
are intended to help visitors enjoy a tour  
of a beautiful old New England town.

A full circle will cover one and a half miles in a  
brisk half hour or a comfortable hour's stroll.

Any part is sure to be rewarding.

**THE HATHEWAY HOUSE**

55 South Main Street  
(203) 668-0055 / 247-8996  
Open mid-May to mid-Oct.  
Wed., Sat., Sun., 1-4 pm.  
Also Thurs. & Fri. in July & Aug.

**THE KING HOUSE MUSEUM**

232 South Main Street  
(203) 668-5256 / 668-7256  
Open May - Sept.  
Wed. & Sat., 1-4 pm.

Funded by a grant from the  
North Central Connecticut  
Tobacco Valley  
Convention & Visitors District

Lester Smith, map  
Ann Grochmal, research  
Produced by the Antiquarian & Landmarks Society

**THE TOWN** - Suffield's colonial history began when Col. John Pyncheon of Springfield bought land from the Indians. In 1670 he and the first proprietors met here at Stony Brook to plan the settlement. Mills along the brook, fishing in the Connecticut River, and good farming in the rich valley soil led to growing prosperity. Tobacco, especially, was a profitable crop.

In 1810 the first cigar factory in the country opened in West Suffield, and cigar-making soon spread throughout town. Entrepreneurs, following the tradition of "Yankee peddling," distributed the product widely. Fortunes made in tobacco are reflected in the grand houses along Main Street and elsewhere in town.

**MAIN STREET** - First called "High Street," this highway was laid out in 1670 and has served as the center of town activity ever since.

In 1671 land in the center was set aside for common use—for grazing, the meetinghouse, as well as a school. The Common was converted to the Town Green that survives today, designed in 1858 by Suffield architect Henry A. Sykes.

Redevelopment caused drastic changes in the late 1960s when stores, apartments, and offices facing the Green by the old Town Hall were torn down to make way for bank buildings, a new library, a shopping center, and parking lots.



Stores and Town Hall, about 1938.

The Main Street Historic District, established in 1963 to control change, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as are the Hatheway and King Houses individually. Suffield's "streetscape" includes a variety of well-preserved old buildings, trees planted in the 19th century, as well as sidewalks and other improvements installed by the Village of Suffield, a local borough from 1893 to 1958.

### ARCHITECTURAL NOTES

As you take *A Tour On Main Street*, you may feel inspired by the rich vocabulary of architecture and ornamental detail, from the classical articulation of the Baptist Church belfry to the rusti-



cated fence posts in front of the Hatheway House, prototypes of which may be found in builders' handbooks of the day. Even if you were to look only at Suffield's windows, a history of New



England architecture unfolds. For instance, with colonial houses, windows are symmetrical, and on the second floor, they are right up under the eaves. In the higher style Georgian houses, windows may receive Roman detailing. Later, in Federal houses, windows around doorways are often delineated with leaded ornament, and above there may be a three-part Palladian window lighting the upstairs hallway. Attic and barn windows have their own distinctive, sometimes peculiar, parameters of style. Of course rules are made to be broken, and as time goes on, the size of windows increases, and even the number of windows may multiply until in some modern buildings whole walls have become glass, as may



be seen in the new public library building. Despite the diversity of detail, there is unity here. The homes along the broad, tree-lined street contribute to what gives Suffield its conspicuous communality: similar building materials, the texture of clapboards and shingles and shutters, color, harmonious landscaping, a language of scale and proportion found in many New England streetscapes, here translated in a way unique to Suffield.



**The King House Museum** is a well-executed example of a large Center Chimney Colonial house. Since 1960 it has been open as the museum of the Suffield Historical Society.

Dr. Alexander King (1737-1802) built the house in 1764 on land next door to his childhood home. King was a physician, farmer, and prominent citizen, serving for many years as Selectman and Town Clerk, as well as representing Suffield in the state assembly.

Samuel Reid Spencer restored the house during his ownership, 1910-1960.



**The Hatheway House**, named for the family that lived here the longest, is the earliest example of the Federal style in the Connecticut River Valley and is regarded as one of New England's most important architectural landmarks. The main structure was built about 1761, but extensively expanded after the Revolution by land speculator and merchant, Oliver Phelps.

The expansion included a three-story wing to the north, magnificently decorated in 1795 with brightly colored French wallpapers. This wing contains the earliest documented work by architect Asher Benjamin, with woodwork signed by Thomas Hayden, an accomplished housewright of Windsor, Conn.

The house passed to the Antiquarian & Landmarks Society in 1962.



**SUFFIELD ACADEMY**, a private secondary school, began in 1833 as the Connecticut Baptist Literary Institution. Fuller Hall, #189, the school's administrative center, was built in 1873 as the "Ladies' Building" and was extensively remodeled in 1953. Brewster Hall (to north, off map) was built in 1960. The oldest school building of the Academy, the 1854 Memorial Building, #161, was remodeled in 1950.

#119. 1899 - Sidney Kent Legare Memorial Library was acquired by the Academy in 1972. It was built as the town's library in the Beaux Arts design of architect Daniel Burnham. The decorative finials were borrowed from Greek Revival style "antefixes," examples of which may be seen high on the Baptist Church bellry directly across the street.

#99 to #103. 1793 - Built by Joseph Howard for Timothy Swan, this Georgian house now holds several apartments. Swan was a prominent early American composer.

#81. 1869 - The **FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH** was designed by architect John Mead in Romanesque style. (Mead designed a number of important buildings in the Hartford area and 40 to 50 churches in Connecticut.) A tall spire, which blew down in the 1938 hurricane, once extended the southern tower. The Colonial Revival parsonage next door at #63 was built in 1908.

The **OLD BURYING GROUND** behind the First Church contains gravestones dating to the 17th century. (Entrance on Mountain Road.)

#33 to #41. 1930 - This simple brick building now holds four apartments.

**MOUNTAIN ROAD** became part of the Hartland Turnpike in 1810, leading over West Suffield Mountain into Granby. It was called Depot Street for many years after a railroad terminal was built in 1870.

#34. c.1940 - There has been a gas station on this corner since the early days of automobiles.

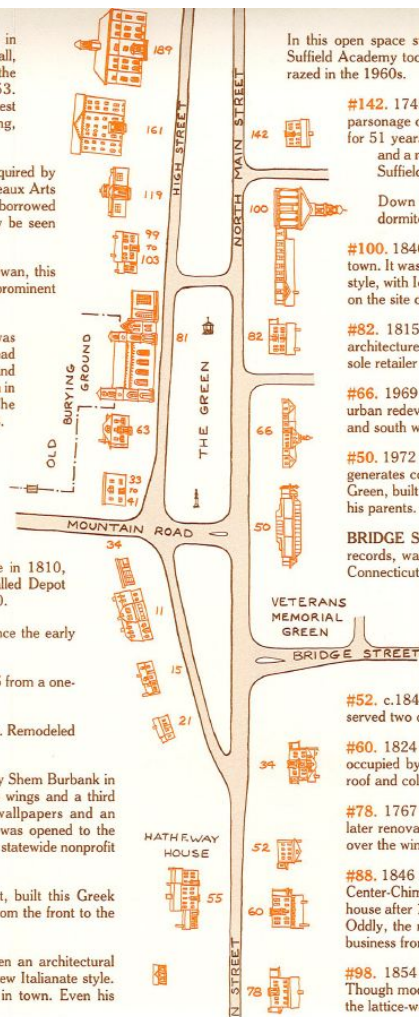
#11. c.1940 - This commercial building was converted in 1985 from a one-story auto showroom and garage.

#15. & #21. - These two small houses were built for other uses. Remodeled in recent decades, they serve as comfortable homes.

#55. 1761 & 1795 - The **HATHEWAY HOUSE** was built by Shem Burbank in Georgian style. After the Revolution Oliver Phelps added two wings and a third floor with gambrel roof. Inside are original 18th century wallpapers and an outstanding collection of period furniture. In 1971 the house was opened to the public as a museum of the Antiquarian & Landmarks Society, a statewide nonprofit historical group.

#87. c.1842 - Neland Loomis, a Suffield tobacco merchant, built this Greek Revival house for his two sisters. Later, the door was moved from the front to the side.

#145. 1850 - Neland Loomis's son Byron seems to have been an architectural pioneer in Suffield when he erected this grand mansion in the new Italianate style. Also a tobacco man, Byron was one of the wealthiest men in town. Even his Victorian barn, with its wonderful weathervane, is impressive.



In this open space stood the Suffield Hotel, operated from 1866 until Prohibition, when Suffield Academy took it over for a faculty residence. The hotel and two other houses were razed in the 1960s.

#142. 1742 - The earliest house on the tour, the **GAY MANSE** was built as the parsonage of the Rev. Ebenezer Gay, who served the First Congregational Church for 51 years. This Center-Chimney Colonial, with its Connecticut Valley doorway and a number of other elegant refinements, now serves as a faculty residence of Suffield Academy.

Down the lane next to the church are four Academy buildings used as dormitories. The road also leads to some of the school's athletic fields.

#100. 1840 - The **SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH** is the oldest church building in town. It was designed by Suffield's noted architect Henry A. Sykes in Greek Revival style, with Ionic columns and gilded dome. Additions were made in 1953 and 1959 on the site of the old parsonage.

#82. 1815, possibly earlier - Harvey Bissell's house is an example of Federal architecture, though its stained glass is Victorian. In 1846 Bissell was listed as the sole retailer of wine and liquor in town.

#66. 1969 - The new Suffield Savings Bank was the first building in the town's urban redevelopment program, on the same site as its original 1869 office. North and south wings were added in 1980. The style is Colonial Revival.

#50. 1972 - The new Kent Memorial Library, in a boldly contemporary style, still generates controversy in town. The library began in 1899 in a building across the Green, built through the generosity of Suffield native Sidney Kent as a memorial to his parents.

**BRIDGE STREET**, or "the Road to Feather Street" as it was called in early records, was laid out in 1678. It acquired its present name because it led to the Connecticut River bridge erected in 1808.

#34. 1899 - Charles L. Spencer built this elaborate house after razing the old Austin Tavern and moving a remnant of it to Bridge Street (now #105 Bridge Street). Originally a porch wrapped around three sides of this house, and there were ornamented roof railings.

#52. c.1840 - Built in Greek Revival style by Dr. Asaph Bissell, this house has served two other doctors as well.

#60. 1824 - Built by Charles Shepard in the Federal style, this house was later occupied by generations of Fullers, a prominent Suffield family. The balustraded roof and colonaded veranda are attractive features.

#78. 1767 - Moses Rowe built this Center-Chimney Colonial house, which was later renovated with corner boards and a major insert to raise the roof. A cornice over the windows was also added. The rear ell is modern.

#88. 1846 - Dr. Aretus Rising's house was built in the then old-fashioned style of a Center-Chimney Colonial. It was probably John Wells Loomis who modernized the house after 1854 by replacing the center chimney with a hallway and two chimneys. Oddly, the new south chimney starts at the attic floor. Loomis operated his cigar business from a huge warehouse at the rear, now gone.

#98. 1854 - Dr. Rising built this Italianate house next door to his first house. Though modest in its frontal appearance, it is in fact a commodious dwelling. Note the lattice-work columns.

#155. 1795 - Joseph Howard built this Georgian house for Timothy Phelps. The elaborate classical details, the portico with fluted Ionic columns and the Palladian window above, may have been added after Capt. Phelps returned from the War of 1812 and became prosperous in the tanning trade.

#161. 1787 - Except for the added rear ell, the house of Elihu Kent appears to have changed very little since it was built. Picket fences such as the one here were once common along Main Street.

#169. 1912 - When Charles Kurvin inherited the Kent house, he chose to construct this up-to-date dwelling next door. Its variety of texture, color, and porches are more common to the late 19th than the early 20th century, however.

#173 to #179. 1918 - Built as a store with apartments upstairs, this was the home of Paczosa's Variety Store for many years. It replaces an earlier commercial building that burned about 1912.

#183 to #197. c.1850 & 1870 - Neland Loomis built these four houses for his tobacco workers. Once known collectively as "Baghdad," the houses each contain two apartments. Behind the stylish Greek Revival pair on the street are later houses of a simpler, vernacular design.

#217. 1869 - Late for its Greek Revival style, this house was built for Newton Stoughton Pomeroy. In the 20th century, Ben Sobinski operated a blacksmith shop in the building at the rear. The house was recently converted to apartments.

#221. c.1800 - Elihu Kent lived here after selling his property at #161. In the 1930s, a small barn was attached to the house to form the north ell.

#225 & #227. 1820 - At Hezekiah Spencer's Greek Revival house, delicate lacing of leaded glass surround the front entrance and the elliptical fanlight under the gable. During this century, the house was occupied by Mrs. Annie Mearkle, a poet who wrote under the name of Angela Marco.

#249. c.1865 - I. Luther Spencer built this house next door to his father's in modified Italianate style, with veranda, full-length windows, carved brackets, and decorative grillwork. "Lute" Spencer introduced cotton hull ashes as tobacco fertilizer, giving new life to the local tobacco-growing industry.

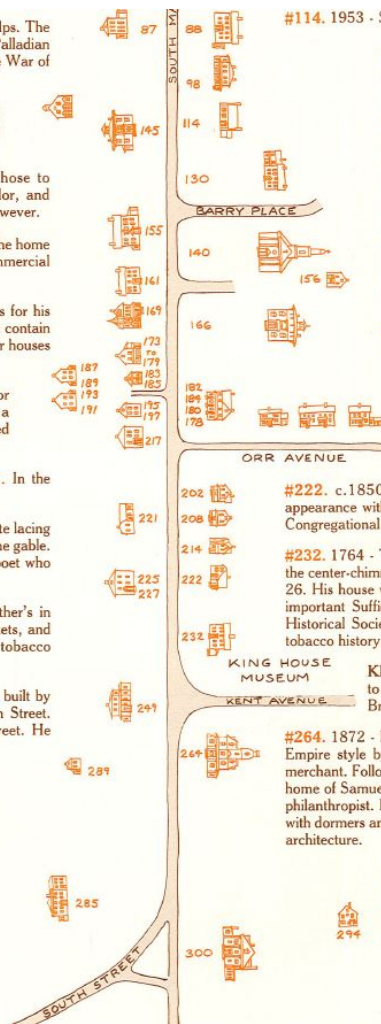
#285 & #289. 1795 - David Tod's fine hip-roof mansion, designed and built by Joseph Howard, was originally located several rods south, facing South Street. About 1880 Martin Sheldon moved it and turned it to face Main Street. He also removed the rear ell to make a separate house at #289.

## A TOUR ON MAIN STREET SUFFIELD, CONNECTICUT

KEYED TO HOUSE NUMBERS

0 50 100 150 200

A SCALE OF YARDS



#114. 1953 - SNET put in this Georgian Revival telephone switching center.

#130. 1814 - Daniel Norton built at least part of this Georgian style house in 1814, and his son D.W. Norton completed it later. The Norton family lived here for over a century. The barn behind the house has interesting windows and cupola.

BARRY PLACE, the newest street in Suffield Center, was built in 1984. It serves 13 new homes.

#140. 1952 - ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH is this congregation's second sanctuary. In 1912 a group of Suffield's Polish residents purchased the Italianate mansion at #166, built in 1860 by tobacco baron John Wells Loomis for his son, and this today serves as the church rectory. It has boldly carved brackets with drop finials and "egg and dart" moldings. A warehouse in back of the house, no longer standing, served as the first church. The smaller house at the rear, #156, is St. Joseph's convent.

#178 - #184. c.1910 - These apartments were erected by Paul Los, originally with stores on the first floor.

ORR AVENUE leads to three houses built as tenements in 1912 by Samuel Orr.

#202, #208, & #214. These houses were built early in this century. For some time #202 housed a store, but all are now residences.

#222. c.1850 - Ephriam West built this house, but it acquired its present appearance with the installation of decorative accessories removed from the First Congregational Church during renovations following the 1938 hurricane.

#232. 1764 - The KING HOUSE MUSEUM was built by Dr. Alexander King on the center-chimney floor plan. King served as Selectman for 30 years and Clerk for 26. His house was restored by Samuel Reid Spencer, a descendant of an old and important Suffield family. In 1960 Mr. Spencer gave the house to the Suffield Historical Society, and it is now a museum of local furniture, memorabilia, and tobacco history.

KENT AVENUE is one of the earliest roads in Suffield. As "the Road to the Mill" in 1678, it led to Col. John Pynchon's sawmill on Stony Brook.

#264. 1872 - Henry P. Kent built this imposing mansion, designed in the Second Empire style by Suffield architect John Mead. Kent was a prominent tobacco merchant. Following the Kent occupancy, the mansion was for almost 60 years the home of Samuel Reid Spencer, prominent merchant, public servant, historian, and philanthropist. Its bay windows, cornice brackets, full front veranda, mansard roof with dormers and cupola rising above make this house a prime example of Victorian architecture.

#294 & #300. 1902 - The main house of this estate was built in Colonial Revival style by Hugh Mead Alcorn, longtime Connecticut State's Attorney. The building was enlarged by his son Robert Hayden Alcorn, an author. The house in the rear was adapted from one of the estate's barns.