### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Building Name (Common)** Derrin House / First Company Governor's Horse Guards Barn  
**Building Name (Historic)** Derrin House / First Company Governor's Horse Guards Barn  
**Street Address or Location** 232-249 West Avon Road (Route 167)  
**Town/City** Avon  
**Village** West Avon  
**County** Hartford  
**Owner(s)** State of Connecticut, leased to Avon Historical Society, Inc. (see page 2)  
**Public**  
**Private**  

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

**Present Use:** Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling  
**Historic Use:** Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling  
**Accessibility to public:** Exterior visible from public road?  
- **Yes**  
- **No**  
**Interior accessible?**  
- **Yes**  
- **No**  
*If yes, explain*  
**Interior accessible?**  
- **Yes**  
- **No**  
*If yes, explain*  
**Style of building** New England bank barn, Vernacular style  
**Date of Construction** c.1880, 1954  

### Material(s)

- **Clapboard**  
- **Asbestos Siding**  
- **Brick**  
- **Wood Shingle**  
- **Asphalt Siding**  
- **Fieldstone**  
- **Board & Batten**  
- **Stucco**  
- **Cobblestone**  
- **Aluminum Siding**  
- **Concrete (Type cast in place)**  
- **Cut Stone (Type)**  
- **Other Vertical wood siding**  

### Structural System

- **Wood Frame**  
- **Post & Beam**  
- **Balloon**  
- **Load bearing masonry**  
- **Structural iron or steel**  
- **Other Square rule framing**  

### Roof

- **Gable**  
- **Flat**  
- **Mansard**  
- **Monitor**  
- **Sawtooth**  
- **Gambrel**  
- **Shed**  
- **Hip**  
- **Round**  
- **Other**  

### Material for Roofing

- **Wood Shingle**  
- **Roll Asphalt**  
- **Tin**  
- **Slate**  
- **Asphalt Shingle**  
- **Built up**  
- **Tile**  
- **Other**  

### Number of Stories

**1 1/2, B**  
**Approximate Dimensions** 30' x 40', additions  

### Structural Condition

- **Excellent**  
- **Good**  
- **Fair**  
- **Deteriorated**  

### Exterior Condition

- **Excellent**  
- **Good**  
- **Fair**  
- **Deteriorated**  

### Location Integrity

- **On original site**  
- **Moved**  
*When?*  

### Alterations

- **Yes**  
- **No**  
*If yes, explain*  
Alterations and additions in 1954 for use by Horse Guards.  

### FOR OFFICE USE

**Town #**  
**Site #**  
**UTM**  
**District**  
- **S**  
- **NR**  
*If NR, Specify:*  
- **Actual**  
- **Potential**
PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT’D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

- [✓] Barn
- [ ] Shed
- [ ] Garage
- [ ] Carriage House
- [ ] Shop
- [✓] Garden

- Other landscape features or buildings: **Fencing for horse paddocks**

Surrounding Environment:

- [✓] Open land
- [✓] Woodland
- [✓] Residential
- [ ] Commercial
- [ ] Industrial
- [ ] Rural
- [ ] High building density
- [✓] Scattered buildings visible from site

- Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

- Other notable features of building or site *(Interior and/or Exterior)*

See continuation sheet.

Architect ___________________________ Builder ___________________________

- Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

- Sources:


See continuation sheet.

Photographer ___________________________ Date 2011, 4/03/2014

View ___________________________ Negative on File CTHP

Name ___________________________ Date 4/4/2014

Organization Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517

- Subsequent field evaluations:

  - Latitude, Longitude:
    - Barn: 41.801843, -72.86131
    - Derrin House: 41.800767, -72.861616

  Threats to the building or site:

- [✓] None known
- [ ] Highways
- [ ] Vandalism
- [ ] Developers
- [ ] Renewal
- [ ] Private
- [✓] Deterioration
- [ ] Zoning
- [ ] Other ___________________________
- [ ] Explanation ___________________________
• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

West Avon Road runs generally north-south, connecting West Main Street (Route US 44/202) to the north with the village center of West Avon to the south. The Old Horse Guard barn, at 232 West Avon Road, sits on an 83-acre property on the east side of the road, owned by the State of Connecticut, Department of the Military (280 Arch Road and 190 West Avon Road). The barn with .38 acre is leased to the Avon Historical Society. The Derrin house is on a 1-acre parcel on the west side of the road, identified by the Town of Avon Assessor as 249 West Avon Road, and also leased from the Department of the Military (under the address 247 West Avon Road). Surrounding the Derrin House and extending west is a 105-acre State-owned parcel, the Horse Guard State Park Scenic Reserve, with a trail to the high point. Hikers and equestrians can gain access to the trail from the Derrin House south side yard. The barn is located approximately 300 feet north of the house and on the opposite side of the road; an open field area along the road permits walking between the two buildings.

The barn site is bordered on all sides by wooden fences painted white and much of the site is open pasture. The First Company Governor’s Horse Guard operates out of a new barn on Arch Road and the Guard’s horses graze in the pastures. The Derrin House site has a drive entering south of the house, and open mowed areas to the south, west and north. A low gable-roofed structure near the south wall covers an old dry-well cesspool.

The Derrin House is a 1 ½-story center-chimney post and beam framed structure sited with its ridge-line oriented east-west perpendicular to the road. The main block is 24’ x 44’ and has a raised plate configuration. A massive center chimney foundation can be seen in the basement below the main block. There are entries on both the south eave-side, under a 1-story porch roof, and east gable-end. Extending west is a 13’ x 16’ 1-story ell which appears to be the oldest part of the structure; it has no cellar. The rear ell has two twelve-over-twelve double-hung windows in the south eave-side. A one-bay wagon shed extends further west and opens toward the south; formerly this extended further. The main block has a one-story shed addition projecting south and aligning with the porch. This has two two-over-two double-hung windows. Under the porch roof, a door enters the east side of the addition while another door in the south wall enters the main block. This is flanked by two two-over-two double-hung windows under the roof and a third to the right (east). A gable dormer above has two similar windows.

The main block has a full cellar and the cut-stone block foundation is visible above grade (fieldstone masonry below grade). The east gable-end has a door, with a lintel and cornice, to the south (left) and two two-over-two windows to the center and right. Two similar windows are in the upper level. The north side of the main block has five irregularly-space windows, four of which are similar and one is modern. In the attic there are three three-pane horizontal windows below the eave-line, breaking a simple wide-board architrave. The west gable-end has one double-hung window and a twelve-pane sash in the attic, with the attached gable roof of the east wing at the center.

Siding is wood clapboards with a modest amount of decorative trim including some beaded corner boards and cornice molding on the rakes. Examination of the trim and foundation are keys to conjecture regarding the sequence of construction. The foundation is local red sandstone blocks and fieldstone; roofing is wood shingles.

The neighborhood surrounding the State-owned land is primarily residential, with subdivisions of single-family homes dating from the 20th century, along with some historic homes on the older routes such as West Avon Road, Lovely Street, and Old Farms Road. Scattered commercial and recreational properties are intermixed. To the north, West Main Street (US 44-202) is a major through route with commercial development. Nearby historic resources include the Avon Center Historic District located to the northeast along US Route 44 and Old Farms Road; Pine Grove Historic District in West Avon, located to the south; and Avon Old Farms School at 500 Old Farms Road. A site in Avon that is also included in the current thematic nomination of Agricultural Heritage resources is the Jesse Sanford Farmstead/Oakwood Farm at 613 Lovely Street.
• Other notable features of building or site (Interior and/or Exterior):

**Architectural description:**

Inventory of structures (C – contributing, NC – non-contributing):

- Derrin house  c. 1766, 1810  C
- Horse guard barn   c. 1880, 1954  C

Barn:

This is a 1 ½-story three-bay, gable-roofed New England bank barn. The main gable-end faces west and the ridge-line is oriented east-west, perpendicular to West Avon Road. The main block is 30’ x 40’ and a 1-story gable-roofed wing extends east from the east end at the basement level, extending the area of the ground level stables.

Exterior:

The main entry is centered on the west gable-end. Set within this opening is a modern overhead door which has replaced the original exterior-hung sliding doors. Located at the south corner is a pass-through door opening (boarded shut). In the gable attic is a louvered vent. Siding on this side is vertical aluminum panels with a batten effect; some of the siding has been removed to reveal the original vertical wood flush-board siding.

The grade drops along the south eave-side of the barn, revealing a full basement level. A fieldstone foundation wall runs for approximately 10-15 feet, as the grade slopes down. The remainder of the basement level has a frame exterior wall, sheathed with asphalt shingle siding in 2011 but subsequently removed for repairs. At the basement level there was formerly a door opening near the east corner, with a shed-roofed hood, and two windows toward the left. At the main level there were two un-matching stable windows in the rightmost bay and vertical aluminum panel siding. This material has been removed for the repairs. The south-facing pitch of the roof has asphalt shingle siding in deteriorated condition. Centered on the ridge-line of the roof is a large metal ventilator.

Attached to the east gable-end of the barn, encompassing the south half of the basement level of this side, and extending 44’ to the east is a 1-story gable-roofed stable addition built with horse stalls in 1954. Above the addition, in the gable attic of the east gable-end of the main barn is a louvered vent. A small shed-roofed addition encompasses the north half of the basement level of the east gable-end, and extends to the east. These additions are in a deteriorated state.

On the west eave-side of the stable addition is a set of six stable window openings. An overhead door is on the east gable-end. Along the north side are four windows. A doorway opening is found on the east side of the shed addition, and a double window with trim is on the north side. A double window with trim is located in the basement level on the east corner of the north eave-side of the main barn. The main level of the north side has vertical aluminum panel siding; the remainder has asphalt shingle siding, some removed revealing wood lap siding.

Attached to the north eave-side of the main barn is a gable-roofed 1-story milk room structure with its ridge-line east-west; this has asphalt and metal siding and asphalt roofing and is used as an office space. On the east side of this gable-roof addition is a small shed extension, formerly a well house and currently the electrical room, recently repaired with new vertical metal panel siding. Grade rises toward the west along this side of the barn to meet the road elevation.

Interior:

The interior of the main block is a three-bay square rule post and beam frame of circular sawn timbers and with full-width dropped tie-girts. Framing uses a combination of pegged mortise and tenon joinery and some nailed braces. Below the tie-girts, two posts in each bent form a three-aisle layout; the center aisle aligns with the gable-end doorway as is typical in a New England barn layout. Above the tie-girts are queen posts which originally supported a continuous upper tie-girt upon which purlin plates are carried. The upper tie-girt has been truncated, with its center section removed to allow for a hay track, destabilizing the supports for the purlin plates. Some effort to remedy this has been made with added diagonal braces. The interior is slightly asymmetrical, with the south purlin plate resting directly above the queen post, while the north purlin plate is carried by a cantilevered portion of the tie-girt that
extends beyond the queen post and has a diagonal brace to the post. Rafters are sawn dimension lumber with uniformly-spaced sawn decking. Old wood shingles are visible through the gaps. The west, north, and east walls are intact. The south wall has been removed for repairs and a row of full-height shoring installed several feet inboard of the exterior south wall.

The basement level has a concrete floor and has been laid out as horse stalls, with a longitudinal aisle serving two rows of stalls. Along the north wall a narrower aisle serves a series of storage areas; one six-pane hopper stable window, typical of c. 1900 dairy stables, remains in the north wall. The main level floor is supported by lateral (north-south) girders in the plane of each structural bent, and longitudinal (east-west) floor joists. The original structure appears to have had one or more supporting posts near the mid-span of each girder, as empty mortises are visible. These were replaced in 1954 by three steel I-section posts places to form the aisles for the horse stalls. The west wall is a mortared fieldstone retaining wall which also extends along the north and south walls for roughly a third of the barn’s length.

The ground level stable addition to the east has clear-span roof framing of wood rafters with collar ties, and is in a partially collapsed condition. The wood-framed walls sit on a poured concrete foundation. The interior has been whitewashed in the past.

- Historical or Architectural importance:

Applicable Connecticut State Register Criteria:
1. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
2. Embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

The site that includes both the Derrin House and the Old Horse Guard Barn is significant for its history of ownership by the First Company Governor’s Horse Guard since 1954, with alterations made by the Horse Guard, and for the previous history as the Derrin family farmstead (of at least the western part of the site), and for its history as a gentleman equestrian farm with sulky racing in the early 1900s. The house and barn are typical examples of their types and periods.

**Historical background:**

The First Company Governor’s Horse Guard was organized in 1778 and chartered by the Legislature in 1788, headquartered in Hartford. It was chartered as the Governor’s Independent Volunteer Troup of Horse Guards with the purpose of escorting the Governor. During the years of the dual capital at Hartford and New Haven, the Guard escorted the Governor between the two cities. After 1911, the Troop became part of the Connecticut National Guard. In 1946, the unit joined the CT State Militia. Today, as part of the Department of the Military, it provides a ceremonial presence at public events.

The property on West Avon Road and Arch Road was purchased in 1954 by the Horse Guard and at that time included the 100-plus acres on the west side, the Derrin House; and the 87 acres on the east side, with the New England bank barn. The east addition to the barn was built at that time, and the barn accommodated 39 horses. In the mid-1960s the State of Connecticut Department of the Military took over ownership. The Horse Guard utilized the barn until a new barn was built in 1995, accessed from Arch Road. The Avon Historical Society has leased the Derrin House since 1996 and the old Horse Guard barn since 2011, with the intention of completing the barn restoration.

Tracing the earlier history of the site, the Horse Guard organization purchased the site, including the acreage east and west of West Avon Road, from an owner named Maxon, who had a sulky racing track on the property. The following chain of ownership in the 20th century is from Town of Avon records: Maxon acquired the property from Backes in 1926; Backes acquired it from Palmatier in 1912; Palmatier acquired it from Collinsville Savings Society in 1904.

Looking back 150 years earlier, the Derrin (alt. Darrin or Darren) family ownership of the farmhouse appears to date from 1766 when a deed recorded a land sale to Lucy and Stephen Derrin – the Derrins are also buried in a nearby cemetery. They may have built a small one-room house, the oldest and rear part of the extant building.
Subsequent building campaigns added the front block, apparently in two stages with full cellar and center chimney, and expanded the upper floor level. The 1868 Baker and Tilden Atlas of Hartford County’s map of Avon shows three Derrin families on the west side of the road. A.G. Derrin lived the furthest north, with D.D. Derrin and J.H. Derrin to the south. The census of 1870 shows Ammi G. Derrin, age 60, wife Sarah, age 48, and six children ranging from 22 down to 6, plus a laborer. Also shown in the census record is Dan D. Derrin, 57, with Mary, 31, and children Elizabeth and Winfield, 10 and 7.

The transition from Derrin ownership to the Collinsville Savings Society at the turn of the 20th century remains unclear. It is inferred that the bank had foreclosed. However, Derrin family members as well as subsequent property owners have left traces in the Federal Census records. Warner Palmatier, a 58-year-old farmer, is listed in the 1900 census with wife Sara and son John (born in Wisconsin). William J. Backes, 40, a civil engineer for a railroad company, had moved from West Hartford (1910 census) to Avon (1920 census), with wife Elsie and their children. Fay I. Maxon is listed in the 1930 census as a veterinarian, age 47, born in New York State. His wife Florence, 42, was also from New York. In the 1920 census they were in West Hartford, so they appear to have moved to Avon when they purchased the West Avon Road property in 1926.

After 1904 the main parcels had passed out of Derrin family ownership; however Winfield Derrin was still in Avon in 1910 with his wife Hattie and one daughter. In the 1930 census, Lizzie C. Derrin, age 69, and her brother Winifred [sic – probably Winfield], age 66, are listed as farmers, living one house away from Fay and Florence Maxon, who had by that time acquired the acreage on both sides of the road. Articles attributable to Maxon are still found in the barn, including a sulky and several crates labeled with his name.

Following acquisition by the Horse Guard, the house was a caretaker residence until the early 1990s. Then it sat vacant until the Avon Historical Society took control and began restoration as a museum. Restoration activities have established a sequence of construction through evidence such as foundation details, types of wood lath in the walls, and trim details.

Architectural significance:

The farmhouse is a valuable example of the additive construction of a modest 18th- and 19th-century farmstead dwelling. The barn is a typical example of its type, the late 19th-century New England bank barn with its three-bay layout a direct descendant of the older English barn type. It appears to have been a dairy barn with cows in the lower level, hay stored above, and the milk room to the north, most likely at the late-19th- and early 20th-century time period. It may have been built by members of the Derrin family, or by a subsequent owner such as Warner Palmatier. The barn has unique significance for its reuse as equestrian stables for the First Company Governor’s Horse Guard from 1954 until 1995. Its basement-level stables and upper level loft are representative of period construction with sawn timbers forming a post and beam frame. The Milk room attached at the north side also represents the evolution of dairy farming in the early 1900s. The surrounding landscape remains as a cultural artifact of an earlier time in a community that has been heavily developed with single-family residential neighborhoods over the last fifty years.
• Sources (continuation):

Photographs and field notes by Charlotte Hitchcock 4/03/2014; additional photographs by Avon Historical Society. Interview with Len Tolisano 4/03/2014, at the site. Historical and deed research by the Avon Historical Society.

Map resources:


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


UTM coordinates: http://itouchmap.com/latlong.html

Print and internet resources:


2. South aerial “bird’s-eye” view of 232-249 West Avon Road, Avon CT accessed 4/05/2014. The Derrin house is at the lower (south) of the image and the Horse Guard barn is at the top (north).

4. Southwest view of the Derrin house with Horse guard barn at left rear, camera facing northeast. Note the 1 ½-story main block and the older 1-story block to the west (left).
5. Southeast view of Derrin house, camera facing northwest.

7. Interior framing of Derrin house at northwest corner of wagon shed, camera facing northwest.

8. Interior view of Derrin house borning room with fireplace, camera facing southeast.

10. West view of Old Horse Guard barn in 2011, camera facing east.
11. Northwest view of Old Horse Guard barn in 2014, camera facing southeast. Note the former Milk room at left; used as an office in recent years.

12. Southwest view of Old Horse Guard barn in 2011, camera facing northwest.

15. Interior detail view of barn framing at east gable-end wall, camera facing southeast. Note circular sawn timber and post and beam framing.

16. Interior detail view of barn framing at north eave-side wall, camera facing northeast. Note the scarf joint in the rafter plate, pegged and nailed connections, and the vent duct leading from the stable level below to the ventilator at the roof.
17. Interior view of basement level, camera facing northeast, showing typical lateral girder, longitudinal floor joists above, and steel I-section posts installed in 1954.

18. Interior view of basement level, camera facing north, showing typical lateral girder, longitudinal floor joists above, open mortise indicating former post location, and steel I-section posts.
19. Interior view of basement level, camera facing northwest, showing extant stable window and stone retaining wall near the northwest corner.

20. Interior view of basement level, camera facing southeast, showing stall detail at southeast corner of main barn.
21. Interior view of basement level, camera facing southeast, showing the stable addition constructed in 1954.

22. South view of Old Horse Guard barn in 2012, camera facing north, showing shored south wall.
23. Detail of 1868 Baker and Tilden map of Avon, showing the three Derrin family sites, courtesy of Avon Historical Society.