**Kenniston Farm**  
Record No. 2249

**Bradford, John and Cornelia / Kenniston, Ernest and Elizabeth, Farmstead**

**25 Bunker Hill Road (CT Route 4)**

**Cornwall**

**Litchfield**

**Edward Kenniston, 25 Bunker Hill Road, Cornwall CT 06754**

**Present Use:** Agricultural/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling

**Historic Use:** Agricultural/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling

**Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):**

- □ Clapboard
- □ Asbestos Siding
- □ Brick
- □ Wood Shingle
- □ Asphalt Siding
- ✔ Fieldstone
- □ Board & Batten
- □ Stucco
- □ Cobblestone
- □ Aluminum Siding
- ✔ Concrete (Type ______________)
- □ Cut Stone (Type ______________)
- ✔ Other: **Vertical/horizontal wood siding**

**Structural System:**

- ✔ Wood Frame
- ✔ Post & Beam
- □ Balloon
- □ Load bearing masonry
- □ Structural iron or steel
- □ Other ______________

**Roof (Type):**

- ✔ Gable
- □ Flat
- □ Mansard
- □ Monitor
- □ Sawtooth
- □ Gambrel
- □ Shed
- □ Hip
- □ Round
- □ Other ______________

**Material:**

- □ Wood Shingle
- □ Roll Asphalt
- □ Tin
- □ Slate
- ✔ Asphalt Shingle
- □ Built up
- □ Tile
- □ Other ______________

**Number of Stories:** 1 1/2, B

**Approximate Dimensions:** 30' x 50' plus 30' x 24' north wing, other 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: ____________________________

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**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: Stone walls, brook, cupola, silo

Surrounding Environment:

- ✔ Open land
- ✔ Woodland
- ✔ Residential
- □ Commercial
- □ Industrial
- ✔ Rural
- □ High building density
- ✔ Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

See continuation sheet.

• 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 Charlotte Hitchcock

Date 9/25/2012

View Multiple Views

Negative on File CTHP

Name Charlotte Hitchcock

Date 10/05/2012

Organization Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude:

41.845948, -73.307964

Threats to the building or site:

- ✔ None known
- □ Highways
- □ Vandalism
- □ Developers
- □ Renewal
- □ Private
- □ Deterioration
- □ Zoning
- □ Other
- □ Explanation
• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The farmstead is located on the south side of Bunker Hill Road (Route 4) which enters Cornwall from Goshen to the east. The road crosses Bunker Hill in Mohawk State Forest; descends westward down a steep hill, into the valley of Birdseye Brook, and passes by the Kenniston Farmstead at 25 Bunker Hill Road. To the west the road intersects with Cemetery Hill Road which Route 4 follows south into Cornwall Village. The farmstead sits on a knoll between Birdseye Brook to the west and a small tributary stream that crosses the Kenniston pasture east of the barn. For the purpose of description, the road will be assumed as running east-west.

A short distance to the west along the Mohawk Trail (a former route of the Appalachian Trail) north of its Route 4 crossing, the Red Mountain Shelter is registered on the National Register of Historic Places. Another nearby historic site is the Major John Sedgewick House at 52 Hautboy Hill Road, roughly five miles north of this site. The Cream Hill Agricultural School, a mid-19th-century pioneering institution to train farmers in scientific methods of agriculture, is also listed on the National Register and is located four miles to the northwest. Additional Cornwall farmsteads and barns are included in this thematic nomination to the State Register. These include 7 Pine Street in Cornwall Village, 332 Kent Road (US Route 7) and 99 Warren Hill Road in Cornwall Bridge, and 12 and 22 Popple Swamp Road.

The barn is to the east of the associated farmhouse. The ridge-line of the house is oriented north-south perpendicular to the road. The c. 1860 house is a 2 ½-story gable-roofed vernacular structure, 24’ x 28’, with a porch addition on the west side. The historical main entry is in the north gable-end facing the road. The house has a three-bay side-hall layout with the entry door in the right (west) bay. The attic gable has a full pediment and a small horizontal attic window, features of a vernacular Greek Revival character. Vinyl siding has obscured any entry details; in 2000 when an inventory form was completed, there was a full-width porch across the north front, subsequently removed. Windows are six-over-six double-hung. The north front entry is not used; currently the entrance is through a 1-story shed addition at the southwest corner. The house has a stone foundation and asphalt shingle roofing.

An unpaved driveway runs south from the road, between the barn and house, and leads to the sheds and pastures beyond. To the southwest of the farmhouse and barn are two open-sided wagon sheds (Sheds II and III) of pole barn construction. To the southwest and south of the barn complex is an expanse of open pasture and hay fields. The farm comprises 155 acres used for pasture and hay. The area surround the site is active agriculture, open space, scattered residential and woodland.

• Other notable features of building or site (Interior and/or Exterior):

Architectural description:

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

- House: c. 1860  C
- Main barn: c. 1900  C
- North barn: 19th c.  C
- Shed I – Wagon sheds: c. 1900  C
- Addition I: c. 1965  C
- Silo: c. 1960  C
- Shed II: c. 1965  C
- Shed III: c. 1965  C
Barn – Main Barn, North Barn, Shed I, Addition I:

This is a 1 ½-story gable-roofed three-bay English bank barn; the main block is 30’ x 50’. The main entry is in the west eave-side facing toward the farmhouse and sheds, and the ridge-line of the barn runs approximately north-south, perpendicular to the road. Attached at the north end is the North Barn and attached to its north end is Shed I. Attached at the south end is Addition I, a stable extension. At the east side is a concrete Silo.

Exterior:

The main entry is a pair of X-braced, exterior sliding doors in the middle of three bays in the northwest eave-facade of the main barn. The grade along the west side is at the mid-height of the basement, allowing basement stable windows to be exposed. The entry to the upper loft level is accessed by a steep concrete ramp. Grade declines slightly from west to east, revealing the full basement level on the east and south sides.

In the west eave-side on each side of the center entry base, are four six-pane stable windows lighting the basement level. The upper walls of the end bays are blank.

The north gable-end of the barn is encompassed at the ground (basement) level by a lower 1 ½-story gable- and shed-roofed attached wing (North Barn) extending to the north, 34’ x 24’. This appears to be an addition, but a portion of the structure is the oldest on the site. The east and west sides of this North Barn are flush with the eave sides of the main barn. The west eave-side has its eave-line at approximately five feet above grade, with a row of three stable-type windows. The milk room and cooler functions are housed in the west part of this structure, which appears to be an addition under a shed roof that slopes up to meet the gable pitch of the older block to the east. A brick chimney projects through the roof in this area. In the north gable-end of this section, a pass-through door near the right (west) corner provides access into the milk room. To the left, a door leads into a central hallway extending south to the main stable area.

Extending to the north from the left (west) half of the north gable-end, is a gable-roofed wagon shed addition with two open bays in the west eave-side and a gable-roofed wall dormer above that has a hay door. Further toward the north, an extension contains a garage with a pair of sliding doors on a hooded overhead track. The north gable-end of this addition is blank, and its east eave-side has four small stable-type windows irregularly placed and a door at the left (south) corner.

The east eave-side of the North Barn has a sliding barn door located near the right (north) corner. The door has a small window inset.

At the northeast corner of the main barn, a concrete silo is located, separated from the barn by a short connecting shed. The silo is of the precast stacked ring construction type, with a cast-in-place concrete dome roof and an enclosed chute along the inner face.

The east eave-side of the main barn has a single six-pane window high up on the main level and a series of six-pane windows in the basement level with a sliding door between the two rightmost windows and a strip of five towards the left.

The south gable-end of the main barn is blank except for a vent just beneath the apex of the roof and Addition I, a gable-roofed addition with a shed-roofed extension to the east. This pole-barn-style addition encompasses most of the south gable-end of the main barn.

The barn complex has vertical wood siding on the eave-sides and in the gable attic, the rest of the gable-ends are horizontal wood lap siding; portions of the North Barn have composition shingle siding. The barn is painted red, faded at the high attic gables. Centered atop the ridge of the roof is a gable-roofed cupola aligned with the main roof ridge. The cupola has louvered vents in all four sides. The roof has projecting overhangs and is covered with asphalt shingles.
Interior:

The interior of the main barn’s upper loft level is a three-bay timber frame constructed of circular-sawn timbers, in a rather light-weight design minimizing the use of materials. The bents have two interior posts and dropped tie-girts. The posts continue vertically to the roof and support longitudinal purlin plates. The tie girts are not continuous but made in three pieces which are butted against the vertical posts and secured with long lapped plank splices on both sides of the bent. The splicing members are secured with bolts. The purlin plates are in three sections, spliced with a lapped joint over the posts. There were originally horizontal tie beams connecting the posts just below the roof level, but these were sawed off to install a hay track, and nailed diagonal plank braces have been installed to brace the upper part of the posts. Most of the joints are through-bolted, though some angle braces have pegged mortise and tenon joints. Rafters are sawn dimension lumber and are in two parts, lapped where they rest on the purlin plates and meeting at a ridge-board at the peak. The roof deck is of random-width planks laid horizontally across the rafters, and later covered by plywood on the exterior.

The floor is wood planks. Four hatches are arranged in the floor with shafts leading from the lower level to doors in the loft level which allow pitching hay down to the manger area along the outer walls of the stable.

The basement stable level is constructed with a low concrete wall rising about 30 inches above the concrete slab floor. Above this are heavy timber posts along the east exterior wall, a fieldstone retaining wall up to the high window sills at the west wall, and two lines of steel columns running longitudinally supporting girders the length of the barn. One of these girders is a steel I-beam while the other is built up of multiple two-inch planks. The length-wise girders are placed below a traditional wood girder system divided into the three bays that can be seen at the loft level. It appears possible that the stone west wall and an older floor girder system were re-used, laid upon a new steel column and girder system to create the desired dairy stable layout at the basement level. Heavy timber circular-sawn floor joists span between the east-west girders. The length of the barn accommodates two rows of cows facing outward, with mangers along the outside and manure cleaning system at the center. The early-20th-century metal stanchions are still in place. Along the east wall a third row of spaces consists of fenced metal stalls for calves.

A doorway at the northeast corner, now boarded up, leads to the silo. An addition at the south is open to the main basement and now has a free-stall area for beef cattle. A door in the east wall leads out to pasture, as does a large opening in the south wall of the addition.

At the north end of the stable area, a doorway leads to a corridor that traverses the North Barn. The milk room area is to the left (west) and includes a plastered milk room with sinks and a walk-in cooler space. To the right off the corridor, through a pass-through door, is a two-bay structure, 24’ square, of heavy hand-hewn beams, pegged mortise and tenon joinery, and some rounded pole joists overhead supporting an upper loft level. A sliding door in the northeast corner leads out to pasture and another door in the north wall exits into the north wagon shed. Along the south wall are the remains of wood cow stanchions. A sloping grain bin has been constructed within the area adjacent to the corridor, with access doors for measuring the grain in place in the corridor. The concrete floor slab in this area has the inscribed date “1945.” The structure in this area appears to substantially pre-date the main barn, as indicated by the hand-hewn construction details.

The northern wagon sheds and the south Addition I are constructed of sawn dimension lumber with some heavy timber members as supporting girders and the rest balloon-framed.
• Historical or Architectural importance:

Applicable Connecticut State Register Criterion:
   2. Embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

This farm is particularly significant because of its prominent gateway site at the foot of the hill where Cornwall is entered from the east. It is an intact example of the classic traditional dairy farm with an English bank barn with ground level dairy stable below a hay loft. It appears much the same as it did in the 1960s at the peak of dairy farming in Connecticut. The farm remains in family ownership after 60 years, and preserves a locally important agricultural landscape.

Historical background:

The farm occupies a long-settled site in Cornwall. In the eighteenth century Ketchel Bell (d. 1786) bought a house and farm near here from Nathaniel Jewell and then built a large two-story house near/on the site of Jewell’s previous habitation, which may have been this site (Rossano).

Later 19th-century occupants were John Bradford and J.S. Johnson. J. Bradford is identified on the 1854 Clark map of Cornwall, with S. Johnson living on the north side of the road. J. S. Johnson is shown on the map of Cornwall in the 1874 Beers Atlas of Litchfield County; S. Johnson remains on the north side across the road.

John Bradford (b. 1801 or 1802) and his wife Cornelia (b. 1823) had two daughters, Sarah and Hattie, age 19 and 10, listed in the census records for 1860. Benjamin Bradford lived with them and worked on the farm, but at age 42 (b. 1818) his relationship is unclear. By 1870 the daughters had moved out and another daughter Mary (b. 1840 or 1843) was in the household. Later records for 1880 show Cornelia as head of the household and Mary living with her, but perhaps not in the old homestead.

The Kenniston family purchased the farmstead in 1952. Ernest H. Kenniston (1925-1999) had moved from Pennsylvania to work for his aunt, Evelyn Bennett, who had a farm in the area of the present Mohawk Ski Area. Following service in the U.S. Army, Ernest married Elizabeth Mae Thompson (1930-2012) in 1950. They acquired the farm in 1952, and continued their dairy operation through the 1970s into the early 1980s. As their son Ed remembers, bulk milk was picked up by the CMTA (Connecticut Milk Producers Association) and taken to be processed in New Britain.

In addition to raising two sons, Edward (Ed) and Donald, Elizabeth worked at the Iron Bank, for some years as branch manager, and at the Marvelwood School. Ed and his wife Geralyn live nearby and Ed works the farm, with beef cattle and hay. His daughter Jennifer currently lives in the farmhouse with her children.

Architectural significance:

The barn structure appears to be of early 20th-century or c. 1900 construction. The use of concrete foundation walls, circular-sawn timbers, and steel beams reflects a degree of modern construction practice, with structural members engineered to minimize the use of materials. The Main barn, North barn, and north Wagon shed likely date from the Bradford family period. The southern Addition I and Silo were added by the Kennistons.

This farm is particularly significant because it occupies such a prominently visible gateway site at the foot of the hill where Cornwall is entered from the east, and because it is an intact example of the classic traditional dairy farm. It appears much the same as it did in the 1960s at the peak of dairy farming in Connecticut. It gains added significance from its status as a working farm which preserves the land use and landscape of agriculture. The farm remains in family ownership after 60 years, which enhances its significance.
Sources (continuation):

Interview with Ed Kenniston, 9/25/2012, at the site.

Map resources:

Town of Cornwall Assessor's Records, Parcel ID: 52/505.

Aerial views from:

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
Beers Atlas of Litchfield County, 1874

USGS Historical Maps accessed 6/22/2012 at http://historical.mytopo.com/

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

Print and internet resources:


Clouette, Bruce, Cream Hill Agricultural School National Register Nomination No. 76001986, National Park Service, 1976 (Note: the school building was moved to the Connecticut Antique Machinery Association site in Kent in 1994 and re-assembled for use as exhibit space, http://ctamachinery.com).

Connecticut State Library online: iconn.org or http://www.cslib.org/iconnsitemap/staff/SiteIndex.aspx#directories


5. Southwest view of the farmhouse, camera facing northeast, barns at right.

6. Northeast view of Shed III, camera facing southwest. The two sheds were built with pole barn construction in the 1960s by FFA (Future Farmers of America) groups from Housatonic Region 1 High School.

8. East context view of the farmstead, camera facing west. Shed II is at the far left rear. The main barn includes, left to right, Addition I, the Main Barn, Silo, North Barn, and Shed I (Wagon sheds). The farmhouse is visible over the roof of Shed I.
9. West view of the Main Barn, camera facing east, showing the ramp up to the loft level and basement windows lighting the cow stable in the basement.

10. West view of the North Barn and Shed I (Wagon shed), camera facing east. At right front is the milk room area.
11. West view of the Main Barn, camera facing northeast. Addition I is at right, North Barn and Shed I at far left.

12. North view of the Main Barn, camera facing south. Shed I (Wagon shed) is at left, North Barn beyond, Main barn at rear, Silo visible behind North Barn.
13. East view of the Main Barn, camera facing west; includes, left to right, Addition I, the Main Barn, Silo, North Barn, and Shed I (Wagon sheds).

14. Southeast view of the Main Barn, camera facing northwest. Addition I is in the foreground, Main Barn and Silo at right rear.
15. Interior view of the Main Barn loft level, camera facing northeast.
16. Interior view of the Main Barn loft level, camera facing southwest.

17. Interior view of the Main Barn south side of the center bay, camera facing south, showing the hay hatch to the stable area below.
18. Interior view of the basement stable area, camera facing southwest. Note steel girder, stanchions, stone wall at center bay (ramp located at exterior) flanked by stable windows.

19. Interior view of the basement stable area, camera facing east, showing a cart constructed by Ernest Kenniston to move grain from the grain chutes to the feeding areas.
20. Interior view of the North Barn corridor, looking south to the basement stable area. Note grain chutes on left.

21. Interior view of the milk room, camera facing southeast.
22. Interior view of the North Barn, camera facing east. Note hand-hewn timber construction, wood stanchions.

23. South view of farmstead from hay field, camera facing north.

24. East view of farmstead from Bunker Hill Road, camera facing southwest.