



South facade of Steward's House, 2015



Sketch of Cornwall, John Warner Barber, 1835

**Name of Property:** Steward's House, Foreign Mission School  
**City, State:** Cornwall, Connecticut  
**Period of Significance:** 1817-1826  
**NHL Criteria:** 1, Exception 1  
**NHL Theme:** II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements  
 2. Reform movements  
 3. Religious institutions  
 III. Expressing Cultural Values;  
 1. Educational and intellectual currents  
 VIII. Changing Role of the United States in the World Community  
 3. Expansionism and imperialism  
 4. Immigration and emigration policies

**Previous Recognition:** None  
**National Historic Context:** Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Initiative  
 I. Cultural Developments: Indigenous American Populations  
 D. Ethnohistory of Indigenous American Populations  
 5. Becoming Native American  
 c. The Role of Missionaries in Assimilation  
 XXVII. Education  
 H. Special Populations  
 2. Ethnic Populations

- NHL Significance:**
- The Foreign Mission School (FMS) remains the first and last experiment in a domestically located “foreign” mission and represents educational and social politics concerning racial tolerance, Asian and Native American migration, and American identity in the early nineteenth century. The Steward's House was part of a three-building complex that provided an evangelical education for over 100 students from approximately thirty different nations, primarily from Asia, the Pacific Islands, and North America.
  - As a site for regular and informal interactions between students and Cornwall residents,



the Federal-style New England farmhouse (built 1814) served as the steward's family home, the school dining hall, as a boarding house, and a nurse room for sick students.

- The interracial marriages of two FMS students with local white women, one the steward's daughter and the other from an elite family, evoked a substantial public response and brought early nineteenth-century assumptions about race-mixing into the open, providing a context for national conversations on race and religion in the early nineteenth century.
- The internationally renowned school attracted self-paying students and charitable donations, but public pressure resulting from the two interracial marriages caused the school's eventual closure and reflected the precarious position of early American domestic foreign missions for racially diverse students.

**Integrity:**

- The Steward's House maintains a high level of historic integrity with the majority of the vernacular Federal architectural attributes that classify it as a standard Federal style, center-hall farmhouse still extant. Many of its original construction materials are still present and visible on both the exterior and interior.
- When approached along Bolton Hill Road today, the Steward's House conveys its historic integrity despite a series of nineteenth- and twentieth-century additions to the rear of the house, all of which are noncontributing. The noncontributing additions include both one- and two-story sections.
- The Steward's House retains its integrity of setting within historic Cornwall Village. Today, Cornwall Village retains the historic setting depicted in sketches by early nineteenth-century visitors.

**Owner of Property:** Benjamin Gray (private residence)

**Acreage of Property:** 3 acres

**Origins of Nomination:** The property was identified through the Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Initiative. In collaboration with the National Historic Landmarks (NHL) Program, the nomination was written as part of a graduate-level course at Brown University.

**Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:**

- Designation as a National Historic Landmark will highlight the connections between American and Transpacific interactions in early nineteenth-century New England.

**Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** None known.

**Landmarks Committee Comments:**

**Landmarks Committee Recommendation:** Designation. Dr. Chen moved, Dr. Allan seconded; unanimous approval.

**Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 11/13/15):**

Benjamin Silliman Gray Sr., Cornwall, Connecticut (owner)



Gordon M. Ridway, First Selectman, Town of Cornwall, Connecticut

Elizabeth H. Esty, Connecticut 5th District, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC

**Advisory Board Recommendation:**