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Innkeeper, Norwich, Connecticut 1704-1724

Thomas Leffingwell was born, probably at Saybrook, Connecticut 27 August 1649 and died at Norwich 5 March 1724, the son of Lt. Thomas Leffingwell, Sr. He married at Norwich, Connecticut in September 1672 Mary Bushnell, born in January 1654 and died at Norwich 2 December 1745, daughter of Richard and Mary (Marvyn) Bushnell.<sup>2</sup>

In April 1700 Stephen Backus, 2d, of Norwich sold the Backus homelot on which he had built a home in 1675 to Sergeant (later Ensign) Thomas Leffingwell, who moved there and in July of 1701 was granted liberty by the town "to keep a publique house of entertainment of strangers".<sup>4</sup> Only the leading men of communities were then given the coveted innkeeper's license.<sup>3</sup> The inn was also one of the places where ammunition was kept for emergencies.<sup>2</sup> The house was subsequently enlarged to suit the requirements of a tavern, and was known for many years, far and wide, as the "Leffingwell Inn".<sup>4</sup>

Ensign Thomas was also a merchant, and from the wording of some of the deeds of neighboring property, his warehouse stood just beyond the inn. The shop and inn must have prospered and the Ensign's revenues increased yearly until his death in 1724, when he left an estate of £9,793 9s 11d, considered a large estate at that time.<sup>4</sup> Probably no other estate in town was that large.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas' son, Benajah (1693 - 1756) took over operation of the inn on his father's death<sup>2</sup>. Both inn and store continued to thrive,

with inventory showing the tavern well provided to accommodate many more guests than in his father's day.<sup>4</sup> At Benajah's death, his son Christopher (1734 - 1810) received the house and home-lot, and enlarged the holdings.<sup>4</sup>

The Leffingwell Inn still stands in Norwich and is maintained as a museum by The Society of the Founders of Norwich, Connecticut, Incorporated.<sup>2</sup> Its architectural importance is due to the fact that the present building is around some of the best remains left from the seventeenth century. The structure is an interesting example of the evolution of a notable house, in the hands of a notable family. The original building of 1675 was added to in 1701 and 1715, and then enlarged considerably in 1760 by Col. Christopher Leffingwell.

James R. Hanna

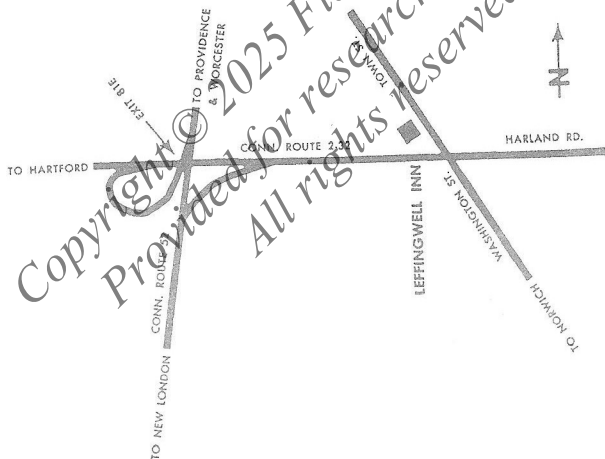
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5. Saybrook VRs (CT VR, Barbour Collection 1924) 76.
6. Norwich VRs (CT VR:1659-1848) Part 1 p.10, 28.



LEFFINGWELL INN



from brochure: Society of the Founders of Norwich