

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Stephen T. Mather House

AND/OR COMMON  
The Mather Homestead

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 19 Stephen Mather Road

CITY, TOWN Darien VICINITY OF fifth

STATE Connecticut CODE 09 COUNTY Fairfield CODE 001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Bertha Mather McPherson

STREET & NUMBER 19 Stephen Mather Road

CITY, TOWN Darien VICINITY OF STATE Connecticut

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Darien Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN Darien STATE Connecticut

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey (17 photographs, 9 data sheets)

DATE July 24, 1967 XX FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN Washington STATE District of Columbia

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mather became the sole owner of the Mather Homestead in 1906. He only summered there in the following years, but he regarded the house, built during the American Revolution by his great grandfather, Deacon Joseph Moses Mather, as his real home. When erected in 1778, the house was a two-story frame building, with a gabled roof. There were two rooms in front on the first floor and a large kitchen behind them with a small room on either side of the kitchen, while on the second floor there were two rooms in front and a long unfinished chamber behind them. By the time Stephen Mather had become the house's owner, the long back room on the second floor had been divided into two bedrooms and a bath.

Mather made several changes in the house after 1906, the most important ones occurring in 1927 under the direction of architect Thomas Harlan Ellett. In that year he built a one-story porch on the west and a large two-story wing, approximately 40 by 20 feet, on the rear of the building which enlarged the total area of the house by about seventy-five per cent. A new front porch with a pedimented portico was also added in 1927. At the same time, shingles were substituted for the clapboard on the sides of the house, and new small nine-over-six lights replaced the larger nineteenth century two-over-two panes in the windows.

Today, the building's interior reflects both the spirit of its builder and the builder's great grandson. The dining room and parlor, both in the front of the house, have been little changed since 1778, as their corner cupboards, fireplaces, paneling and low doorways attest. In the dining room is a handsome highboy and in the parlor a grandfather's clock, both of which have been part of the house's furnishings since the eighteenth century. Just behind these two rooms is the living room, which Mather made over from the old kitchen in 1927. The former kitchen's huge fireplace dominates the room, which has its old, hand-hewn ceiling beams exposed. The stairway to the second floor and the front two bedrooms also retain their eighteenth century character, with original paneling, fireplaces and floorboards extant. When the old kitchen was turned into a living room, a new kitchen was placed in the rear wing. This wing also contains a sitting room on the first floor, as well as three bedrooms on the second floor. Mather laid out the sunken garden just west of the house and he erected a gardener's cottage and a barn in back of the main residence.

The present owner, Stephen Mather's daughter, built a guest house on the foundation of the gardener's cottage in 1936, and added another story over the porch on the west side of the house. In 1961 they put in a patio between the garden and the house and in 1969 they replaced the old white cyprus shingles with clapboards. Otherwise, the Mather Homestead is essentially the same as when Mather died in 1930.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1778, 1906-30

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Few of the millions of visitors who annually enjoy America's national parks probably realize the debt they owe to Stephen Tying Mather. Mather, more than any other single individual, created the National Park System and made it the organization that now serves America so well. When Mather became an assistant to the Secretary of the Interior in 1915, the United States owned only fourteen parks and eighteen national monuments, all of them were administered either by army officers or political appointees. When Mather retired in 1929, he left a professionally-administered, progressive National Park Service that included twenty national parks and thirty-two national monuments. More importantly, Mather had laid a sound basis for the future enlargement and development of a national park movement in the United States.

Built as a typical Connecticut farm house of the later eighteenth century by Deacon Joseph Mather, the house has remained in the Mather family and contains many original fittings and furnishings. Stephen Tying Mather became the sole owner of the Mather Homestead in 1906 and, while he only summered there in the following years until 1930, he always regarded it as his real home.

### Biography

Mather, although of New England stock, was born in California on July 4, 1867. His father's business success enabled him to attend the private Boys' High School in San Francisco and the University of California. He received his degree in 1887, and worked as a reporter for the New York Sun until 1893 when he left to work for the Pacific Coast Borax Company.

First located in New York, in 1894 Mather moved to Chicago and organized a distribution center for the company. While continuing to work for Pacific Coast Borax, in 1898 Mather supported a friend in forming another borax company. In 1903 Mather suffered a nervous breakdown and during his illness his employer withheld his salary. Mather resigned from this firm in 1904 and became an active partner in his friend's concern. Their borax company flourished in succeeding years, and Mather acquired a modest fortune by 1914, at the age of forty-seven.

His success allowed him to develop widespread interest in a variety of projects. Mather had married Jane Thacker Floy in 1893 and in 1904 they travelled to Europe. This trip rekindled an old interest in nature, since while abroad he was impressed with the availability of parkland. He became conscious of the need to improve travel conditions in America so that more citizens could enjoy their natural heritage. After that trip his interest in America's

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Albright, Horace M. "Mather, Maker of National Parks" Survey LXIV (Apr.-Sept. 1930).  
 Shankland, Robert. Steve Mather of the National Parks (New York, 1951).  
 Yard, Robert Sterling, "Stephen Tying Mather," in Dictionary of American Biography,  
 vol xii (New York, 1943).  
 Historic American Buildings Survey report, July 1967.  
 Interview with Bertha Mather McPherson by Blanche H. Schroer, August 19, 1974.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 28.5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	6,2,8	0,8,0	4,5	5,2	4,7,0	B	1,8	6,2,8	3,0,0	4,5	5,2	0,7,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C	1,8	6,2,7	9,6,0	4,5	5,1	9,1,0	D	1,8	6,2,7	7,2,0	4,5	5,2	4,3,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Mather Homestead was built in the extreme northeast corner of the township of Darien, the land lying partly in that township, partly in Norwalk and partly in New Canaan.. Supposedly it was hoped that by erecting the house so far from the Old King's Highway and Long Island Sound, it would not be disturbed by Tory raiders during the Revolutionary War.

The McPhersons currently own about 33.5 acres. In 1905 Stephen Mather inherited 17.8 (con)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project; S. Sydney Bradford 1963

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Landmark

Designated: 11/27/63.

TITLE

DATE

Boundary Certified:

11-19-76

Chief, Dist. & date

Arch. Surveys

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

Boundary Reirmed:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Acting Director, OAHIP date



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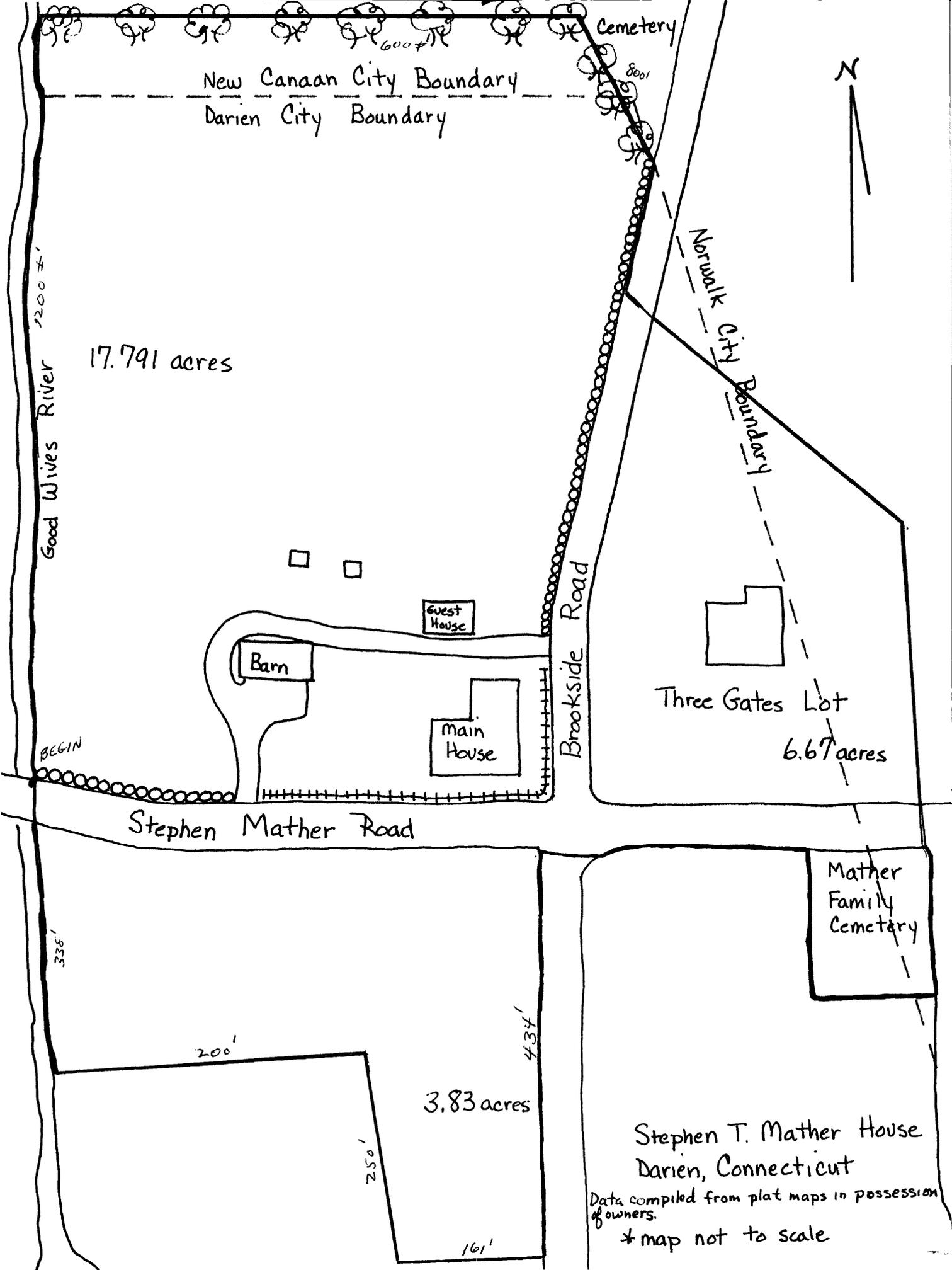
Stephen T. Mather  
CONTINUATION SHEET House ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

acres in the northwest section where the main house is located and a 3.83 acres section south of what is now called Stephen Mather Road. In 1929 he bought 6.67 acres on the east side of Brookside Road. The present owners call that section the Three Gates Lot and they have constructed a house there which they rent. On the south side of Stephen Mather Road from Three Gates Lot, is a 3.4 acre section that the McPhersons purchased in 1939. Stephen Mather did not own this southeast section, but adjacent to it on the east is the Mather Family Cemetery, part of the Homestead and where Stephen Mather is buried. The national historic landmark includes the three parcels of land which Stephen Mather owned, plus the family cemetery.

As indicated on the accompanying sketchmap, the landmark boundary on the west, beginning at the point where Good Wives River crosses Stephen Mather Road, runs north along the east bank of the stream for about 1200 feet, then east along a fence and a row of large trees for about 600 feet, then southeasterly for about 800 feet to Brookside Road, then along a stone wall on the west side of Brookside Road then southeast across the road to enclose the Three Gates Lot, then south, crossing Stephen Mather Road and enclosing the Mather Family Cemetery, then west along the south side of the Stephen Mather Road across Brookside Road and down the west side of that road for 434 feet, then west 161 feet, then north 250 feet, then west again 200 feet to the east bank of Good Wives River, then north along the bank of the stream 338 feet to the beginning point at Stephen Mather Road.

The guest house and the house on the Three Gates Lot were constructed by the present owners, are non-historic and do not contribute to the national significance of the property.

\* The boundary of the family cemetery is defined by a wall or fence clearly identifiable.



New Canaan City Boundary  
 Darien City Boundary

Cemetery

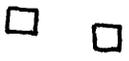


Good Wives River 1200 ±'

17.791 acres

Norwalk City Boundary

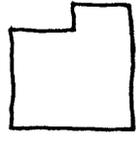
Brookside Road



Guest House

Barn

Main House



Three Gates Lot  
 6.67 acres

BEGIN

Stephen Mather Road

Mather Family Cemetery

335'

200'

3.83 acres

434'

250'

161'

Stephen T. Mather House  
 Darien, Connecticut

Data compiled from plat maps in possession of owners.

\*map not to scale

