

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received MAR 31 1982

date entered APR 29 1982

1. Name

historic Sage-Kirby House

and/or common The Kirby House

2. Location

street & number 93 Shunpike Road

N/A not for publication

city, town Cromwell

N/A vicinity of

congressional district Second

state Connecticut

code 09

county Middlesex

code 007

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Elizabeth C. Bingham

street & number 93 Shunpike Road

city, town Cromwell

N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cromwell Town Hall, Office of the Town Clerk

street & number 5 West Street

city, town Cromwell

state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places (A)
The History and Architecture of Cromwell (B) has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1975 (A); 1980 (B) federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Hartford

state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Sage-Kirby House, built between 1811 and 1815, is the finest example of brick Federal style architecture remaining in the town of Cromwell, Connecticut. Restored to its approximate original exterior and interior appearance by its present owner Elizabeth C. Bingham and her late husband following their purchase of the property in 1953, the house faces east from the southwestern corner of Shunpike and Evergreen Roads. It is set back approximately fifty feet from each street on a heavily shaded lot which slopes gradually upward toward the north and west.

The Sage-Kirby House is constructed of load bearing brick with interior post-and-beam framing. It features a nine window front elevation symmetrically arranged into five bays, a 2½ story ridge-to-street gable roof configuration, and a two-room deep central-chimney plan (see photo #1). The structure's central-chimney plan is a late holdover from the local eighteenth-century building tradition, and the Sage-Kirby House is the only remaining Cromwell residence of its type in which it appears.

The building's exterior walls are laid in common bond with king closers.¹ These walls rise from a sub-grade foundation of coursed brownstone rubble and are tied together longitudinally and transversely by iron tie rods with scrolled end-plates (see photos #1, #2, #5). With the exception of the front and rear doorways and the northernmost window in the first story of the rear elevation, all of the building's first story wall openings feature gauged-brick flat arches; the second story window openings in the gable ends also have gauged-brick flat arches (see photos #1, #2, #5, #6). Framed by a single course of brick headers, the front entryway features a fanlight transom set above three-panel double-leaf doors (see photo #3). The paired nine-over-nine pane gable windows are topped by decorative fan louvers (see photo #4). The front and rear main cornices, which are formed by the projecting second story plates, are elaborated with simple crown moldings and narrow fascia boards; the gable rakes are treated in a similar manner (see photos #1, #2, #4, #5). Except for the gable windows, all of the building's windows display twelve-over-twelve pane sash (see photos #1, #2, #5, #6).

Modifications to the structure's original exterior include the replacement of the original single gable windows with the present paired gable windows in 1953. The wooden fan louvers above these windows were also installed in 1953. The bricks which were removed from the upper portion of each gable end were used to repair various parts of the lower portion of the exterior walls. The present chimney stack replaced the original after it was severely damaged by a hurricane in 1938. The dimensions of the present stack are roughly equal to those of the original chimney. The building's present twelve-over-twelve window sash are reproductions based on a single twelve-pane sash discovered in the small, single-story frame shed/garage which stands near the current western boundary of the property approximately fifty feet from the northwestern corner of the house. The placement of the southernmost three window openings on the first story of the rear elevation is original; however, the second window in from the south may have been converted at one time to an interior doorway into a 1½ story kitchen wing which had been added in the mid-nineteenth century. This wing, the outlines of which still remain faintly visible, was replaced between 1944 and 1953 by the two-story open veranda which (See continuation sheet)

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Description (continued)

was removed during the building's 1953 restoration. A visible discontinuity in the brick wall along the south side of the rear elevation's central second-story window indicates where a doorway to the second story of this veranda had once been incorporated. This doorway was sealed in 1953, the same year that the present first story rear entryway was added next to the original rear doorway; the original doorway was converted to a window shortly thereafter (see photo #5).

In the interior, the principal framing members, most of which are original, remain visible in the basement. Regularly spaced, three-by-ten inch longitudinal floor joists resting on transverse six-by-eight inch beams are supported by six-by-eight inch posts. Due to deterioration, some of the original structural members were either replaced or reinforced during the building's 1953 restoration. The original smoke oven, which is located in the north side of the central-chimney stack's brownstone rubble base, was sealed when modifications were made to the building's central heating system flue in 1953. The height of the entire basement level has been increased by excavation work undertaken in the mid-1950s; an eight-by-sixteen inch band of poured-concrete reinforcement now runs the length of each foundation wall's footings.

The first and second stories of the Sage-Kirby House retain their original two-room deep, central-chimney floor plan. The pine floorboards throughout the second story and attic are original; the maple floorboards found throughout the first story are reproductions, matching the original pine floorboards in length, width and placement. Like the flooring, most of the hardware and other features in the individual first and second story rooms are either original or reproductions of the originals based on evidence uncovered during the 1953 restoration process.

With the exception of the lighting fixtures and a single pane of glass in the fan-light transom over the front door, all the features found in the first-floor front-entry hall are original. These features include the triple-run staircase and its balustrade, a small closet beneath the staircase, a small cupboard above the first landing of the staircase, all of the doors and hardware, and the plaster on the walls. The interior side of the front doors and the face of the wall cupboard door above the staircase landing are embellished by original, decorative feather graining (see photos #7, #8).

In the south front parlor, the original trim moldings, doors, wall plaster and fireplace on the fireplace wall remain intact. The fireplace features brownstone cheeks, lintel and hearth embellished by a fine Federal style mantelpiece (see photo #9). The original plaster is also intact on the rear wall of this room; the plaster on the ceiling and the room's two exterior walls has been replaced, although the wooden trim molding on these walls is original.

The majority of the detail features in the original kitchen, which is now used as a rear central parlor, are reproductions based on deteriorated original features or features found consistently throughout other rooms in the house during the 1953

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restoration process. These reproduced features include all of the panelling along the fireplace wall. The fine Federal style mantelpiece, the design of which is based on the mantelpieces found in the northern and southern first floor parlors, frames the room's original fireplace, which features a dressed brownstone hearth and lintel, and brick cheeks. The plaster on the remaining three walls of this room has been restored. This original kitchen area is the only room in the house which displays visible summer beams. These beams are presently sheathed with pine casings finished in a manner similar to the pine panelling along the fireplace wall.

The original kitchen area is flanked on its southern and northern ends by small rooms approximately eight-by-twelve feet in size. The room on the southern end is relatively plain; all of its walls have been replastered. The "bournig room" on the northern end, which was converted for use as a small kitchen by the present owner in 1953, is now separated from the original kitchen by an enclosed second-story stair hallway incorporated in that same year.

Currently used as a formal dining room, the north front parlor retains all of its original features along its plastered fireplace wall. Like the south front parlor, these features include a fireplace with brownstone cheeks, lintel and hearth, and a mantelpiece with Federal style pilasters. This wall also has a small, original recessed cupboard. The doors, trim moldings and all of the hardware except for that found on the doorway leading into the original kitchen area are also original. Like the rest of the rooms on the first floor, the plaster on the exterior walls of this room has been restored.

The plaster on the ceilings of all the first floor rooms dates from 1953. When the original ceiling plaster was removed due to excessive deterioration, the building's most unusual original feature was uncovered. Pine needle insulation had originally been incorporated in the cavity between the first floor ceiling and the second story floorboards. Due to its highly flammable nature, this material was not replaced.

On the second story, all of the plaster on the walls and ceiling of the north front chamber is original. Like the front first-story rooms, the original fixtures of this room's fireplace wall remain intact. These include trim moldings, doors, hardware, and a small fireplace with a brownstone lintel and brick cheeks and hearth. The bricks of the hearth, originally laid in without mortar, were reset with mortar in 1953 to reduce the potential fire hazard posed by this fixture's use. Like the rest of the rooms on this story, the window casings in the north front chamber do not have any bordering trim molding; there is no evidence that such moldings had been applied when the house was constructed. The fireplace wall of the south front second-story chamber is arranged in mirror image to the fireplace wall in the north front chamber. The south chamber also features a small fireplace

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Description (continued)

with its original brownstone lintel and brick cheeks and hearth. Like the hearth in the north front chamber, the bricks of this hearth were also originally laid without mortar, and were reset in mortar in 1953. The plaster, hardware and trim moldings along both the fireplace and rear (west) walls of this chamber are original; the plaster on the ceiling and two exterior walls was applied in 1953.

The large central room in the rear of the second story retains its original plaster on its ceiling and eastern wall. This room does not have a fireplace, nor is there any evidence which suggests that it might have originally. Approximately the same size as the original kitchen area on the first floor directly below, this room is also flanked to the north and south by small rooms approximately eight-by-twelve feet in size. The room on the south side features restored plaster walls; the room on the north side was converted into a modern bathroom in 1953.

The attic framing system of the Sage-Kirby House is original. Like many local houses of its period, this system is comprised of evenly spaced, two-by-three inch, vertically sawn rafters resting at mid-slope on continuous six-by-eight inch purlins. These purlins are supported by symmetrically placed six-by-eight inch posts braced by diagonal two-by-three inch members. The original roof sheathing was replaced during the first half of the twentieth century by the present double-bead, tongue-and-groove boards.

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 type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	erected between 1811 and 1815	Builder/Architect	unknown
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Built between 1811 and 1815, the Sage-Kirby House is significant for its associations with the historical pattern of development of the central portion of the town of Cromwell, Connecticut (Criterion A). An unusually well-preserved early-nineteenth century farmhouse restored to its approximate original appearance, it is also significant as one of only four remaining brick Federal style residences in the town, and the only one of those four which retains the eighteenth-century central-chimney plan (Criterion C).

Prior to its incorporation as a separate town by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1851, the town of Cromwell formed what was known as the "Upper Houses" or "North Society" of Middletown. During the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the lower Main Street and Upper Houses Riverport National Register District areas of Cromwell flourished briefly as a small commercial center for Connecticut River trade; in the second half of the nineteenth century, small manufacturing enterprises began to develop in these same areas. However, like most of the outlying towns which had originally formed part of Middletown, the vast majority of Cromwell's land continued to be utilized for agricultural purposes, and the principal occupation of a high proportion of her population continued to be farming throughout the nineteenth century.²

The Sage-Kirby House is located in central Cromwell. Prior to 1734, most of the central portion of Cromwell remained undeveloped; the area formed the North Commons of Middletown, three of the nine square miles of land reserved when the first two major land divisions were made on the western side of the Connecticut River by Middletown's Proprietors in 1671 and 1673.³ The growing population of Middletown's North Society and the subsequent need for more available farmland eventually led to the division of the land in the North Commons among the Proprietors of the North Society in 1734. While much of the usable land began to be actively farmed soon after its division, only a few widely scattered dwellings are known to have been erected within these three square miles of land prior to the last quarter of the eighteenth century. At that time, sons and grandsons of local farmers, many of whom were descendants of those Proprietors who had shared in the original division of the North Commons, began to build homes and settle as well as farm in this area. This developmental trend continued gradually through the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Built between 1811 and 1815 for a descendant of one of the North Society's original Proprietors, the Sage-Kirby House is the earliest remaining architectural reference to the agricultural and social patterns of development in the area which originally formed the Middletown North Commons.

The Sage-Kirby House was originally erected for Ebenezer Sage (1790-1848), a descendant of David Sage, one of the earliest and most prominent settlers in Middletown's North Society. Ebenezer Sage acquired the lot at "Long Hill" where this house presently stands, along with sixteen acres of surrounding land, from his (see continuation sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.52

Quadrangle name Middletown

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8	6	9	3	5	8	4	6	0	9	0	2
Zone		Easting				Northing						

B

Zone		Easting				Northing						

C

Zone		Easting				Northing						

D

Zone		Easting				Northing						

E

Zone		Easting				Northing						

F

Zone		Easting				Northing						

G

Zone		Easting				Northing						

H

Zone		Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title J. Paul Loether

organization The Greater Middletown Preservation Trust date 8-31-1981

street & number 27 Washington Street telephone 203 346-1646

city or town Middletown state Connecticut

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

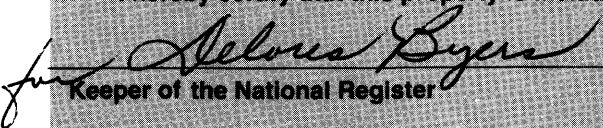
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date March 11, 1982

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
Entered in the
National Register

date 4/29/82


Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Significance (continued)

father Solomon Sage in 1811. Within the following ten years, Ebenezer had acquired an additional forty-four acres of abutting farmland to the south and west of this property as an heir to his father's estate.⁴ Sage operated a farm on the sixty acres of land, raising livestock and cultivating hay, grain, and small amounts of produce.

On February 18, 1829, Ebenezer Sage sold the house and the sixty acre farm to Isaac Hubbard, another local farmer. Like Sage, Hubbard was a descendant of one of Middletown's original fifty-two Proprietors, George Hubbard, who had settled in Middletown proper in 1650. Isaac Hubbard continued to farm the property until 1835, when he sold it along with "the dwelling house, barn, and other buildings" to another prominent farmer, Samuel Kirby (1771-1849). A descendant of John Kirby, who had settled in the area which now forms the Upper Houses Riverport National Register District in the early 1660s, Samuel Kirby retained the property until his death in 1849. At that time his son Phillip inherited the farm. Sold to Patrick Caffrey, an Irish immigrant farmer, in 1875, the property continued to be actively farmed. Referred to as the "Kirby Place" throughout the remainder of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the property remained in the Caffrey family until 1944, when it was purchased by Ernest Erdman.

Prior to its purchase and conversion into a double dwelling by Erdman, the Sage-Kirby House and its surrounding sixty acres of land retained their traditional agricultural associations. The house and the 0.52 acre of land which forms the building's present lot were sold to its current owner Elizabeth C. Bingham and her late husband in 1953. Since that time both the exterior and the interior of the house have been restored to their approximate original appearance.

An architectural and historical survey of the town of Cromwell conducted by the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust in 1979-1980 located only three other extant brick Federal style residences in the town. These are: the Elisha L. Sage House (509 Main Street), the William Hand House (348 Main Street), and the Captain Russell McKee House (37 River Road). Of this group, the Sage-Kirby House is particularly important architecturally, not only as the finest and best-preserved example of the local Federal style executed in brick, but also as the only one of the four brick Federal style residences remaining in Cromwell which retains the earlier eighteenth-century central-chimney plan.⁵

Although the construction of nearby Connecticut Route 9 to the west, and the construction of several modern housing developments approximately one-half of a mile to the south, southwest, and southeast have intruded somewhat on the character of the landscape surrounding the Sage-Kirby House, the fact that much of the land abutting the house's present lot to the south and west and along the north side of Evergreen Road to the north remains undeveloped helps to preserve much of the property's historic site. This is highly significant in light of the fact that the Sage Kirby house remains an isolated example of the early agricultural and social development of this portion of Cromwell.

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Notes

1. Descriptive terminology for masonry is derived from Harley J. McKee, Introduction to Early American Masonry. (National Trust for Historic Preservation and Columbia University, 1973).
2. For this and a more detailed account of the social and economic development of Cromwell, Connecticut, see Judith Johnson and William Tabor, The History and Architecture of Cromwell. (Middletown, Connecticut: The Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, 1980).
3. see Middletown, Connecticut; Middletown Municipal Building. "Middletown Town Votes and Proprietors Records, vol. 3" and also J. Paul Loether, "A Partial Reconstruction of the Original Middletown Land Divisions." (Copy on file at the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, Middletown, Connecticut).
4. see Middletown, Connecticut; Middletown Municipal Building. Middletown Land Records, vol. 42, p. 327 and vol. 58, p. 83.
5. see Johnson and Tabor, The History and Architecture of Cromwell.

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Major Bibliographical References

Primary Sources

Cromwell Land Records. Cromwell, Connecticut: Cromwell Town Hall, Office of the Town Clerk.

Middletown Land Records. Middletown, Connecticut: Middletown Municipal Building, Office of the Town Clerk.

Middletown Probate Records. Middletown, Connecticut: Middletown Probate Court.

Middletown Town Votes and Proprietors Records. Middletown Connecticut: Middletown Municipal Building, Office of the Town Clerk.

Middletown Vital Records. Middletown, Connecticut: Middletown Municipal Building, Health Department.

Secondary Sources

Adams, Charles Collard. Middletown Upper Houses. New York: The Grafton Press, 1908.

Commemorative Biographical Record of Middlesex County. Chicago: J.H. Beers, 1903.

History of Middlesex County, Connecticut. New York, J.B. Beers & Co., 1884.

Johnson, Judith and Tabor, William. The History and Architecture of Cromwell. Middletown, Connecticut. The Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, 1980.

Sage, Elisha L. The Descendants of David Sage. Middletown, Connecticut: Pelton & King, 1878.

Maps

Topographical Map of Middletown, Connecticut and its Environs Surveyed and Delineated by Students of the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy. Middletown, Connecticut: 1826.

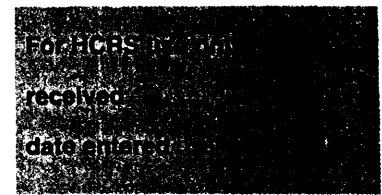
Map of Middlesex County from Surveys Under the Direction of H.F. Walling, Surveyor, New Haven. New York: 1859.

Atlas of Middlesex County, Connecticut. New York: F.W. Beers, 1874.

"A Partial Reconstruction of the Original Middletown Land Divisions". Unpublished research map by J. Paul Loether; copy on file at the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, Middletown, Connecticut.

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Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The Sage-Kirby House was erected between 1811 and 1815 on a sixteen acre lot bounded to the north by Evergreen Road and to the west by Shunpike Road. The original sixteen acre lot was expanded to sixty acres when Ebenezer Sage acquired forty-four additional acres of abutting land to the south and west from his father's estate about 1820. This sixty acre parcel remained intact prior to its subdivision by Ernest J. and Marie B. Erdman in 1953. At that time, 0.275 acres of land on the southwest corner of Evergreen and Shunpike Roads and the Sage-Kirby House standing on this reduced parcel were sold to Harold J. and Elizabeth C. Bingham. The remainder of the land traditionally associated with the Sage-Kirby House was further subdivided and sold. A portion of the original acreage was purchased by the State of Connecticut as the site for a portion of Connecticut Route 9.

The current dimensions of the site of the Sage-Kirby House are as follows: north by Evergreen Road for 146.15 feet, west by Shunpike Road for 150 feet, south by land now or formerly of Ernest J. and Marie B. Erdman for 153.9 feet, and west by land now or formerly of Ernest J. and Marie B. Erdman for 150 feet. This is the site to be included in this nomination. (see Middletown Land Records, 46:313).