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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
DOMESTIC/ single dwellingCurrent Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
DOMESTIC/ single dwelling

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL/ Postmedieval English

foundation Sandstone

walls WOOD/weatherboard

roof Shingle

other

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The William Ward, Jr., House, a 1742 Colonial-period house with an integral lean-to, the type commonly called a "salt box," occupies a prominent site part way up the west side of Powder Hill Road in the southwest corner of Middlefield, Connecticut (Photographs #1, 2, 3, 4). The only other building on the half-acre lot is a ca. 1930 garage to the north of the house. Despite its age, it does not contribute to the significance of the property.

Some of the surrounding farm and woodland in this area has been developed in recent years. Although the house still overlooks some open land to the east across the road, there are now several modern houses located there. Two were constructed recently, replacing the barn formerly associated with the house. Downhill to the north are several more post-1940 houses. To the south, above the property, is Dinosaur Park, a former brownstone quarry which displays fossils of dinosaur tracks, and Powder Ridge, a recreational ski area.

The main block and rear ell of this three-bay, post-and-beam framed house (26' x 38') rest on a rough-cut brownstone foundation. Hewn overhangs at the first and second story, gun-stock posts, summer beams (now concealed), and cantilevered attic floor girts are original features of its construction, the latter a rare form in Connecticut.<sup>1</sup> (See attached Exhibit A.) These girts extend out six feet to the rear, providing additional space and headroom under the lean-to roof. Vertical two-inch planking, covered with clapboard, sheathes the frame.

The original first-floor plan remains intact. (See schematic diagram, Exhibit B.) A massive chimney stack (8' x 6') provides flues for three hearths, all on the first floor. Despite the size of the stack, the entry porch is commodious (2.5' x 8'). A typically steep, triple-run staircase rises in front of the stack. The hall and parlor chambers open off the porch, each with its own fireplace and original panelling. (Photographs #5, 6). The kitchen hearth is located in the keeping room which extends across the rear between two small rooms at either corner (Photographs #7, 8). The kitchen hearth displays some unusual features. Most notable of these are the dinosaur track fossils in the brownstone hearthstone. Undoubtedly taken from the nearby quarry, this feature has given the house its local name of "Dinosaur Hearth."<sup>2</sup> Brownstone blocks laid horizontally are used for the cheeks and firebox. Beaded and feathered sheathing laid vertically and horizontally covers the fireplace wall, with the horizontal boards on either side of the opening.

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William Ward, Jr., House, Middlefield, Connecticut

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Twentieth-century alterations and restorations took place between about 1935 and the present. The first was the restoration of the interior supervised by architect William Sibley. This work included opening up the fireplaces and rehangng original passage doors with the original hardware (they had been stored on the property).<sup>3</sup> A shed dormer was installed on the rear roof and a small shed lean-to added on the southwest corner for a bathroom (Photographs #3, 4), both about 1940.<sup>4</sup> In 1973 the dirt floor of the cellar was excavated to install a drainage system and concrete slab, increasing the headroom from five to eight feet.

About 1980, a fire occurred in the south bedroom (hall chamber) which destroyed a portion of the rear roof and the dormer. Repairs were done by the present owner: the dormer was replaced and a new roof with standard rafter construction installed on the entire buildings. The flooring in this room survived, as did the structural framing, including the cantilevered girts.<sup>5</sup>

Other changes by the present owner include the installation of bathrooms on the first and second floor in the northwest corner, leaving the existing parlor chamber partition wall intact. The hall chamber now extends the width of the house. The former bath in the shed was converted to a laundry and a new kitchen installed in the adjacent southwest corner room.

In addition to the changes described above, the present owner has replaced some of the interior window and door trim with similar plain boards, removed part of the wainscot in the hall chamber, and sheetrocked walls and ceilings. A new stock door has replaced the original front door. The clapboards are also a replacement. Most of the window sash remains, however, with eight-over-twelves lights. Due to the age of the house they are probably not original fabric but a historical replacement.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1742-1935  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Multiple  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

William Sibley  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The William Ward, Jr., House, the oldest surviving building of its type in Middlefield, is a well-preserved example of a Colonial-period house with an integral rear ell. It has retained its essential form, structural integrity, and many of its original interior architectural features (Criterion C). It is of local historical importance because of its association with two of Middlefield's prominent settler families.

Architectural Significance

Age alone does not confer distinction on the William Ward, Jr., House; its shape, construction features, and degree of architectural integrity are more significant. Mid-eighteenth-century houses are unusual but not rare in Connecticut. In fact, although the house is prominently displayed on the town seal as the oldest house in town, it is not the only survivor of this vintage. Two other houses were built in Middlefield about the same time.

What does make this house locally unique is its form: the long, sloping rear roof created by the integral ell. Its contemporaries are the more typical type, the two-story gable-roofed colonial-period house with a center chimney. The use of the cantilevered girts to support the roof is a highly unusual construction feature, considered by J. Frederick Kelly, the architectural historian, to be extremely rare.

Changes to the house over time have been minimal, remarkably so in a house of this age. What remains is a house of exceptional structural integrity with a largely original interior layout. With the exception of the rear shed dormer, the characteristic form of the house has remained the same since it was constructed. Even the installation of modern conveniences, such as the kitchen and baths, has had very little impact on the original floor plan. Late nineteenth-century photographs confirm that its appearance then was much the same as it is today. Each successive owner since that time, particularly those after 1935, has respected the original form and plan of the house and preserved the best architectural features, particularly the panelled fireplace walls in each of the three main rooms of the first floor.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Atkins, Thomas. History of Middlefield and Long Hill. Hartford: Lockwood & Brainerd, 1883.  
Beers, J.B. History of Middlesex County, Connecticut. New York, 1884.  
Beers, J.H. Commemorative Biographical Record of Middlesex County. Chicago, 1903.  
Cunningham, Janice P. "From Fathers to Sons: The Emergence of the Modern Family in Rural Connecticut, 1700-1850." May 1979, M.A. Thesis. Wesleyan University, 1979.  
\_\_\_\_\_. The History and Architecture of Middlefield, Connecticut. Middletown, 1981.  
McKeown, Ronald. Personal communication, July 1987 (present owner).

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Greater Middletown, Preservation Trust  
deKoven House, Middletown, Connecticut

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property .5

UTM References

A 

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

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Volume 37; Page 139 Middlefield Land Records, Town Clerk's Office, Middlefield Town Hall

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The property boundary includes the entire town lot of .5 acres, all that remains undivided of the property historically associated with the house.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Janice P. Cunningham, National Register Consultant  
organization Cunningham Associates Ltd. date 7/30/87  
street & number 98 Washington Street telephone (203) 347 4072  
city or town Middletown state Connecticut zip code 06457

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William Ward, Jr., House, Middlefield, Connecticut

Section number   8   Page   2  Historical Background

The history of the William Ward, Jr., House is well documented. It was built on land originally deeded to William Ward 1st, one of the 52 proprietors of Middletown, of which Middlefield was a part until 1852. In 1671 he was granted a 500-acre strip of the land in the westernmost tier of lots, an area known then as the "middle fields," one of several seventeenth-century divisions of land on both sides of the Connecticut River. Although the land passed to the proprietors' descendants through inheritance, no settlement took place in Middlefield until the early 1700s. William the 1st, a wealthy man by colonial standards, was not only land rich, but a weaver by trade. He left extensive acreage to all his sons, with a double portion to Thomas, his first born. In an unusual move he also willed land and half his weaver's tools to his grandson William, Thomas's son, the property where the William Ward, Jr., House is now located. The land passed to William Ward, Jr., the great-grandson of the original proprietor, in 1742, the year he married Martha Bow, followed by a second deed-of-gift in 1746. The latter referred to a house already standing on the first lot, confirming the date of construction.

By his father's will in 1786, James Tappin Ward, the youngest of William's eight living children and the fourth son, inherited 99 acres with the house. James Tappin Ward's inheritance was delayed when the administration of the will was protested by his stepmother; such a challenge was a rare occurrence. It was not until 1808 that the will was finally probated and the land distributed. At that time Sylvester Ward and William Birdsey, a son-in-law, gained title to the heavily mortgaged property. That same year it was quitclaimed to a kinsman, Seth Coe, a descendant of another Middlefield settler. Although it is commonly believed that the property passed out of the Ward family at this juncture, an examination of Seth's relationship to the Wards makes it clear that they were related. Both Seth Coe and James T. Ward had married their cousins--the daughters of Ichabod Miller. When Seth Coe died in 1829, three of his sons had already left Connecticut. Elias, the son at home, inherited the property along with his mother Mary Miller Coe. She retained the customary widow's "third" as her dower right until her death in 1832. Upon Elias's death in 1877, his daughter Amelia inherited, and the house and land remained in the family until 1935.

## Notes:

1. J. Frederick Kelly, Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), pp. 53-55.
2. Other brownstone fossils, so-called "puddle stones," can be found to the rear of the house and are used as pavers.
3. Roger Sherman (previous owner), 1978 pre-selection application.
4. Circa 1940 photographs in possession of the current owner, Ronald McKeown, indicate that these additions/changes were accomplished in the immediate pre-war period.
5. Personal communication, Ronald McKeown, July, 1987.

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88000109 Date Listed: 2/19/88

Ward, William, Jr., House Middlesex CT  
Property Name County State

N/A  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrus  
*for* Signature of the Keeper

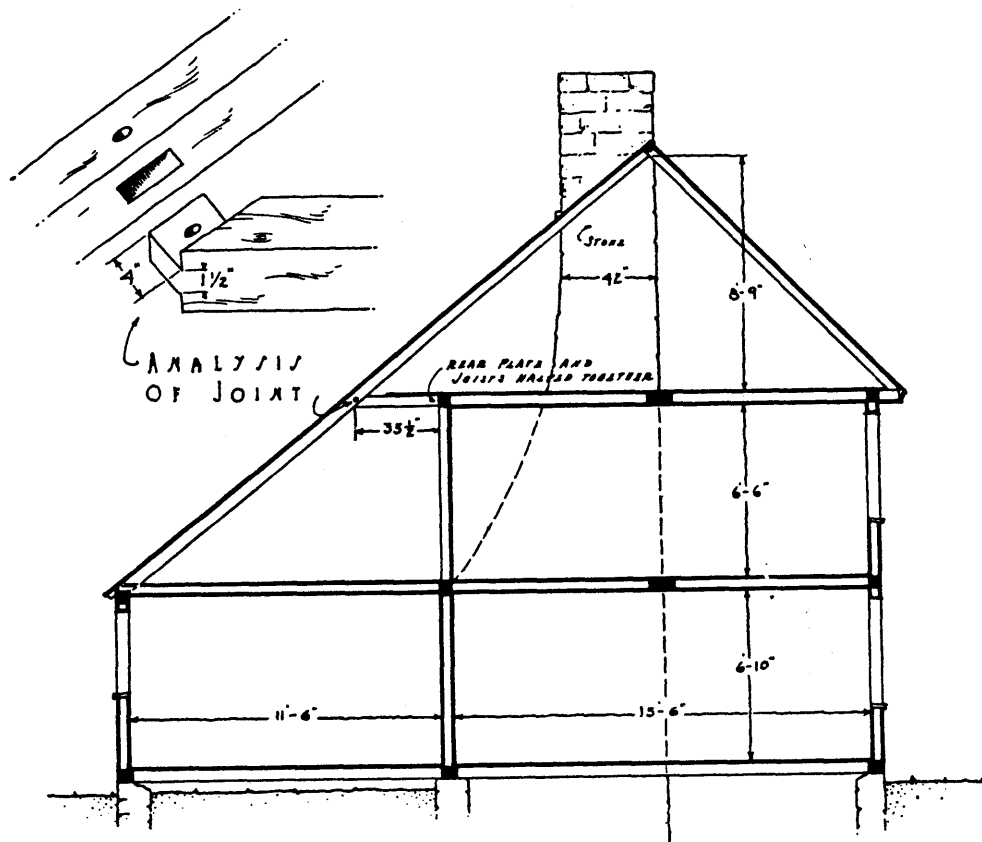
2/19/88  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

"Multiple" is entered erroneously under significant person(s). This blank should only be filled in when criterion B is applicable, as was not the case here.

This information was confirmed with John Herzan, CTSHP, by telephone on the date of listing.

DISTRIBUTION:  
National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



• CROSS SECTION •

✓ FORBES-BARNES HOUSE - EAST HAVEN ✓

FIGURE 65.

Exhibit A: Photocopy Page 56 from J. Frederick Kelly. Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963.)



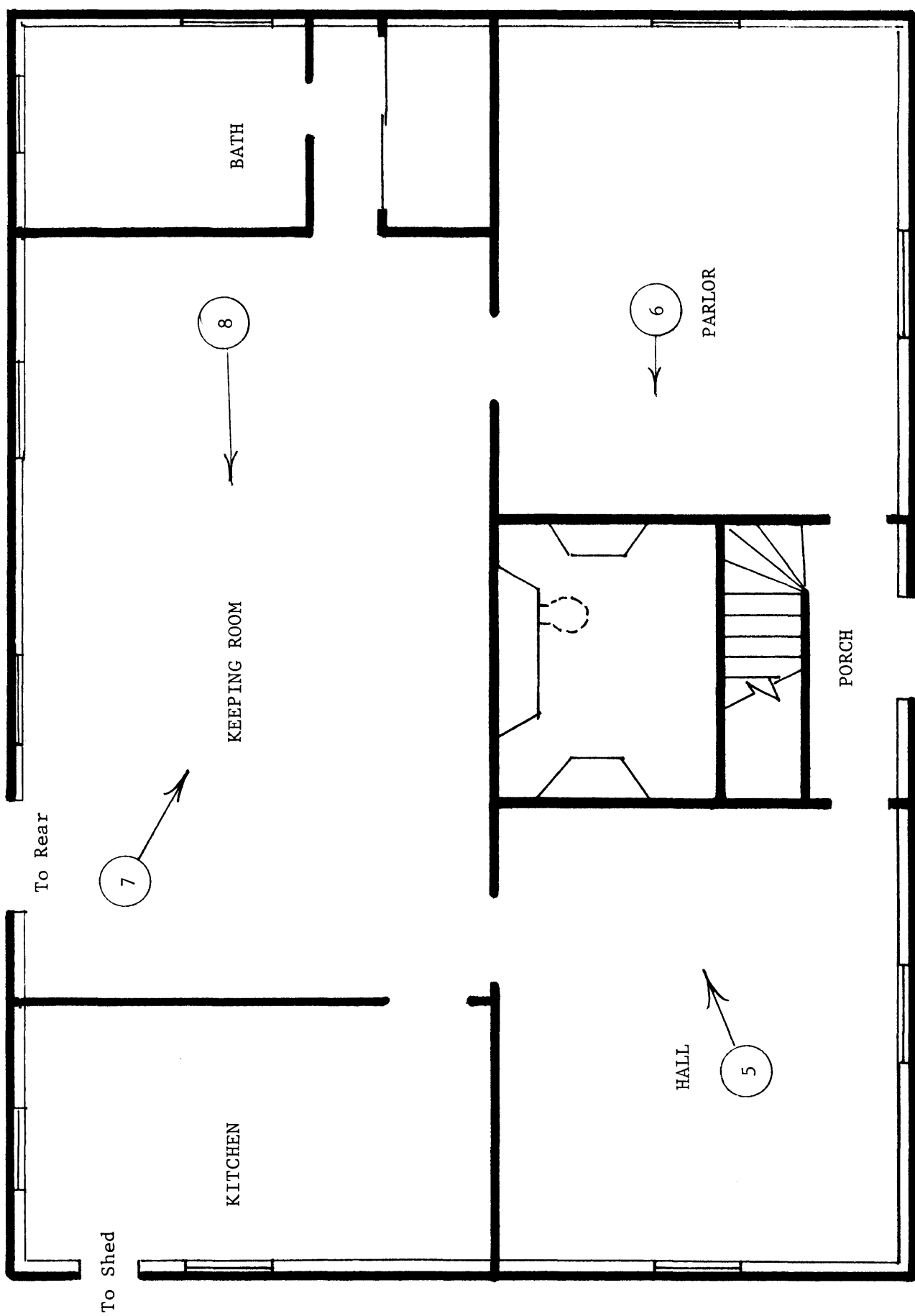


EXHIBIT B: William Ward, Jr. House - 1st Floor Pla

Scale: 1/4" = 1'

Prepared by: Cunningham Associates Ltd.