National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



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

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1. Nan	ne			
historic (Gridley-Parsons-	Staples Homestead	i	
and/or common				
2. Loc	ation			
street & numbe	r 1554 Farmingt	on Avenue		not for publication
city, town	Farmington	vicinity of	congressional district	6th - Toby Moffet
state Conne	ecticut co	de 09 county	Hartford	code 009
3. Clas	sification			
Category district building(s) structure site object	Ownership X public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered	Status _X_ occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	_X museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other:
4. Owi	ner of Prope	erty		
name	Town of Farmi	ngton		
street & number	r 1 Monteith Dr	ive		
city, town	Farmington	vicinity of	state	Connecticut
5. Loc	ation of Lec	gal Descripti	on	
courthouse, reg	istry of deeds, etc. Far	mington Land Rec	ords, Town Hall	
street & number	, 1 Monteith Dr	ive		
city, town	Farmington		state	Connecticut
	resentation	in Existing	Surveys	
Hille State 1	Register of Hist	oric has this pr	operty been determined a	elegible? yes _x_ no
Place date 1981				ate county local
depository for s	survey records Conne	ecticut Historica	1 Commission	
city, town Ha	artford		state	Connecticut

Condition —— excellent —X good —— fair	deteriorated ruins unexposed	Check one X unaltered altered	Check oneX original site moved date	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Overview

7. Description

The Gridley-Parsons-Staples Homestead is a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -story, 5-bay, gable-roofed, twin-chimney, central-hall, frame house with Doric portico, built c. 1760. (Photograph 1.) A $1\frac{1}{2}$ -story wing to the rear is thought to be an earlier, original house to which the much larger front section was an addition. The first and second stories have approximately 3500 square feet of floor space. On the first floor, the house has four molded chimney pieces of distinction, while the attic with its 10 inch-square, 40 foot-long purlins and 15 foothigh ridge line is an impressive interior space.

Originally, the 300-acre Gridley farm fronted on the Farmington River and ran back in an irregular rectangle to the northeast. The house is on a knoll facing southwest, toward the river, 50 feet back from Farmington Avenue (Route 4), which runs between the house and the river. Surrounding acreage is owned by the Town of Farmington and is the site of the Town Hall and High School. (See site plan.) The Homestead is used as museum rooms of the Farmington Historical Society and as offices. The center of the village of Farmington is $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the southeast and the center of the Unionville section of Farmington is $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles to the northwest. Exterior

The central bay of the 5-bay facade has a Doric portico at the first floor and a tripartite window at the second. The flanking windows are evenly spaced, with 6-over-6 sash. The fluted Doric columns of the portico rise from brownstone piers that flank the brownstone front steps. The columns are without bases, with entasis, and have projecting, square abaci. Corresponding rectangular pilasters flank the doorway. The columns and pilasters support a wide plain architrave and frieze, plain, projecting cornice, and flat roof. Each leaf of the double front doors has six panels. 4-over-4 side lights flank the doorway, beyond the edges of the portico. The tripartite window above has a central 6-over-6 section flanked by 4-over-4 sections that are the same as the sidelights. The mullions are enriched with a raised chevron motif. (Photograph 2.) All the window enframements are pegged at the corners, and are flush with the wall plane. Not even the sills, which are plain, project. The jambs and lintels are beaded.

At the top of the facade the roof projects in a molded cornice supported by modillions. Running below the modillions, where a dentil course often is found, there is a course of alternating, raised, vertical and Y-shaped symbols which perhaps can be described as a variation of a talon molding. Narrow, plain corner boards define the edges of the facade, while at the bottom the visible foundation wall is composed of two courses of brownstone ashlar. The foundation wall breaks out to form the steps and floor of the portico. The siding is narrow clapboards, three inches exposed to the weather, fastened with rose-headed nails. Two tall, well-molded, brick chimneys rise from the high gable roof. The roll asphalt roof covering replaces a former metal roof that was removed in 1980. The metal roof, in turn, probably replaced the original wooden shakes or shingles.

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The right (northeast) side elevation has a single 6-over-6 window in the attic gable, and two more at both the second and first floors, evenly spaced. In addition, there is a panelled door toward the back with a molded surround and cap. Under the cap there is a course of raised vertical lines that resemble one element of the course under the facade cornice modillions.

The rear elevation of the main block has three 6-over-6 windows at the second floor, before the ell starts. (Photograph 3.) At the first floor there are windows under the first two above, and then a central six-panelled rear door with a single side light to the left. There is a small triangular section of exposed, wide, weather boards above the back door, raising the question of whether the entire house has wide weather boards under the clapboards.

The left (northwest) side elevation has the same window articulation as the right side. In the space corresponding to the door there is a window that appears to be added because its enframement has no pegs in the corners, no bead, and the sill projects.

The ell continues as an extension of this side elevation. The ell is much smaller than the front block, 20 x 28 feet compared with 36 x 44 feet. On this elevation, the 36 feet of the front section and the 28 feet of the ell form a continuous 64 foot wall. The clapboards of the front section and the ell are the same, the brownstone foundations are the same, and there is no vertical line of demarcation in either at the juncture of the ell and the house. This elevation of the ell has two 6-over-6 windows whose enframements are the same as the enframements of the windows in the main block. (Photograph 4.)

The rear elevation of the ell has two small 6-over-6 windows in the attic, and one window of the same size as all the others in the house in the first story, on the right.

The third (northeast) elevation of the ell has an open porch, eight feet wide, with square posts and modern flagstone floor that leads up to the central back door of the main block. The roof is flared; the rafters that frame the flare are exposed. The wall of the ell, starting from the main block, has a window, a panelled door, a window, and a glazed door. The sheathing of this wall is wide weather boards. A molded brick chimney, smaller than those on the front, rises from the roof of the ell.

Outbuildings

The only present outbuilding is a shed or small barn of 20th-century origin. It abuts the stone foundations of a former, larger barn. A second, still larger, barn stood further to the rear, built into the upward sloping ground so that both floors were at grade. There is little in the way of

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trees, shrubbery pr gardens surrounding the house.

Interior

The central hall that leads from the front door to the back door is unusually wide, 12 feet, and is the largest room in the house. In addition to the front and back doors, which are wide vertical boards on the inside with long strap hinges, there are three doors on each side wall. Two of them, on each side, lead to the front and back rooms, right and left. On the right side the third door is cut into the wall, flush, leading to a lavatory. On the left wall, the third door leads to the stairs to the second floor. A second door in the rear wall opens into the ell. (See first-floor plan.) The interior doors, with the exception of that to the lavatory, have four raised panels.

of striking interest are the four chimney pieces in the four first-floor rooms. While they are all similar, that in the right front room is most elaborate. The fireplace of brick, with stone hearth, has an opening of 64 x 44 inches. The fireplace surround is molded, with crossettes at the upper corners. Above the molding there is a convex horizontal member. serving as a pulvinated frieze, under a molded mantel shelf 62 inches above the hearth. Fluted pilasters rise against wide vertical boards from the shelf to molded capitals that support a frieze of five vertical beands below further moldings that lead to the cornice. The cornice has a vigorous dentil course, and breaks out over the pilasters. The pilasters are painted green, determined to have been the original color. (Photo 5.) The room has a dado of a single board 19 inches wide, under a molded chair rail that is an extension of the window sills. A similar arrangement exists in all of the first-floor rooms, including the hall. The only ceiling cornices are those that form part of the fireplace over-mantels. The right front room has seven-inch floor boards. Doors flank the chimney piece, originally leading to closets. The one on the left now simply opens onto the wall of the hall lavatory, while on the right the closet has now been opened up to form a passage to the rear right room.

The rear right room fireplace and chimney piece are of similar size and design, but without crossettes or pilasters. Instead, the unique feature is that the lintel moldings of the flanking doors join into the vertical moldings of the chimney piece, creating a single design element that incorporates the doorways with the chimney piece. (Photograph 6.) The exterior door in this room has wide vertical boards and long, strap hinges, like the exterior front and back doors in the hall. The floor boards are 11½ inches wide. These two rooms on the right of the hall are the museum mooms of the Farmington Historical Society, which also has an office on the second floor. The balance of the building is rented as offices.

In the left front room the wide boarding of the overmantel is edged with moldings that go straight up to the cornice. (Photo 10.) The fire box has

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been filled in with brick around an elaborate cast-iron grate from the Victorian era. The window surrounds are molded, as they are in all the first-floor rooms, and two posts, cased and beaded, at the front corners are visible. The other three first-floor rooms have corresponding posts.

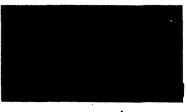
In the left rear room the fireplace opening is smaller, 51 x 35 inches, and shallower, but the vertical boards of the overmantel are just as wide as the others (Photo 11), but have been refinished. In addition to the normal door to the hall, this room has a door to the rear ell, and a door to the stairs. As in the other rooms, the doors are panelled, have "HL"-shaped hinges, and molded surrounds. The baseboards of the first-floor are molded, but vary. Some are two boards thick, both molded at the top, with the front board half the height of the board against the wall.

Before the house was restored in 1976, the central hall was interrupted about two-thirds of the way back by a partition. A short run of four risers rose against the right wall of the hall to a landing in front of that wall, and then returned against the left wall in a run to the second floor. (See First-Floor Plan.) This arrangement was thought to have been installed in the early 20th century, so the partition and stairs were removed. No exidence of any earlier stairway in the hall was uncovered, but Hurlburt' shows earlier stairs rising against the left wall, from front to back, using the same well as the later, early 20th-century stairs. (See Hurlburt Floor Plan.) Such a stairway is normally found in houses of the character and era of the Homestead. As a further complication, the present stairs do not show in Hurlburt, although they are thought to be old, and surely the scheme whereby they come down to a small, square landing a high step above floor level with doors both to the hall and to the left rear room is unexpected. The odds seem to favor the standard arrangement as shown by Hurlburt as being the likely original arrangement, but the evidence is inconclusive.

The 1976 restoration also included removal of then-existing French doors between the two front rooms and the hall. The present doors were installed pursuant to an old photograph taken before the French doors were put in, that showed the earlier arrangement. The present doors between the front rooms and the hall are old, but are not original to the house. Several other doors, particularly on the second floor, while also old, were brought to the house in 1976, and are not original. Otherwise, most of the fabric of the house is thought by the Historical Society to be original. Thile documentation is slim, depending mostly on Hurlburt, there is a strong local tradition that the house has been little altered. The four chimney pieces, for example, appear to be old, with the exception of changes noted for that in the left rear room, and the Historical Society has never heard of any doubt as to their age and authenticity. The changes in the hall and the stairway and the introduction of several interior doors are the chief changes that the Historical Society knows to have occurred.

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On the second floor there are four rooms corresponding to those on the first floor plus a fifth room at the front of the hall. (See Second Floor Plan.) This room is thought not to be original because the wall and doorway separating it from the hall are different from the others on this floor. The corner rooms show continuation of the posts, two to each room, seen on the first floor. There are no fireplaces on the second floor, and no evidence has been uncovered that there ever were fireplaces on this floor. Each room at one time had a hole in its floor to permit some heat to rise from the first floor. On the second floor the doors have four panels that are raised on one side and recessed on the other, instead of being raised on both sides as on the first floor. Also, some doors on the second floor were installed during the 1976 restoration; they are old, but from another building. As on the first floor, the walls and ceilings are plastered. The age of the plaster is unknown, but it is old. The window sash, on both floors, also are old but the large size of the panes in the 6-over-6 configuration suggests that the present sash are not original, although the optical quality of the glass is poor. Perhaps the sash date from some time in the 19th century.

The attic framing consists of common rafters, joined at the ridge line by mortise and tenon with peg, that extend down to the attic floor level, with purlins and braces. There is one purlin on each roof slope that is a single, continuous 10-inch-square timber for the 44-foot width of the house. The purlins are connected by cross braces and supported by four posts, forming a central area in the attic. There are diagonal braces at the ends. The ridge line is perhaps some 15 feet above the floor, the whole creating a large and impressive interior space. The floor boards are wide, and the weather boards above the rafters are wide. (Photograph 7.)

In the cellar, the stone bases of the twin chimneys, about six feet square, are in good shape, with inclined wooden structures to support the hearths. (Photograph 8.) The cellar walls are fieldstone.

The ceiling height of the first floor is nine feet, of the second floor eight feet, and first floor of the wing seven feet.

The rear wing has undergone many changes since it was built. The original configuration and the details of subsequent alterations can be only approximated. At present, about two-thirds of the first floor is a single room, with smaller rooms to the rear. (See First Floor Plan.) There is a post, apparently original, in the middle of each of the long walls, suggesting the possibility of an initial two-room plan. There is no chimney, presently, at the first-floor level. The height of the plaster ceiling is even with the top of the glazing of the windows, indicating that originally the ceiling was higher. The sills of the windows extend as a chair rail over wide-board dados, repeating the scheme found in the main block of the house. The outside door toward the front has the same wide vertical boards and long strap hinges as the exterior doors of the front portion of the house.

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The stairs to the attic lead up to the left, against the rear wall of the main block. The door to the stairs is made of wide vertical boards, with two hearts cut out at the top. The roof is framed by 11 pairs of rafters fastened together at the ridge line by mortise and tenon. In a central position, high up against the ridge line, a remnant of a foot or so of the brick chimney is supported on a wood platform, explaining how the chimney rising from the roof can be visible from the exterior when there is no chimney at first-floor level. Hurlburt states that this chimney, in the attic, had a smoke oven with wooden door, iron rod and hooks.

The stairs from the first floor to the cellar are under the attic stairs, again against the rear wall of the front section of the house. This wall, almost the full width of the ell and $1\frac{1}{2}$ stories high, is an expanse of wide, beaded, vertical boards, and is quite impressive. There is a masonry structure against the rear wall of the cellar that may be what is left of the original stone chimney base. It is 55 inches deep and runs across two-thirds of the rear wall. Due to the fact that it has been pointed up, the original mortar is not visible. The presence of sawn framing above this stone work tends to support the theory that it is a chimney base, as the surrounding framing is hewn. Possibly, the sawn work was installed when the bulk of the stone chimney was removed. There is a 63 x 74-inch brick chimney base in front of the stone chimney base; its mortar is white and sandy. (Photograph 9.) The brick measure 2 x 7 7/8 x 4 inches; they are not glazed. The cellar walls are fieldstone. On the long (northwest) wall there is no vertical line of demarcation at the point where the ell cellar meets the main-section cellar, although there is a good-sized stone at this point that juts out in a manner as might be expected where a new wall meets an older wall.

- The brownstone blocks that support the columns have a lightly chiseled finish while the brownstone blocks of the steps and the house foundations do not. This difference is consistent with the probability that the Greek Revival style portico was added early in the 19th century.
- 2. Mabel Spencer Hurlburt, Gridley-Staples House, Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames in America, 1950.

8. Significance

1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799 1800-1899	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture architecture art commerce communications	community planning conservation conservation economics education engineering exploration/settlement	Iandscape architecture Iaw Iiterature Iiteratury Implication Indication Indic	religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	c. 1760	Builder/Architect		

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion

The Gridley-Parsons-Staples Homestead is a valuable example of 18th-century domestic American architecture. The quality of its interior trim, notably the four elaborate chimney pieces, and the integrity of the fabric in general, with the exception of the hall, are outstanding. Its location, away from the center of Farmington, is also important. While there are a number of significant 18th-century homes in the village center, the Gridley-Parsons-Staples Homestead is the only large, 18th-century house that remains standing in what was known as the town's Northwestern Division, according to the Farmington Historical Society. (Criterion C.)

Architecture

The plan of the house, consisting of central entrance with columned portico and central hall with two rooms on either side separated by twin chimneys, is typical of the Georgian style. Houses of this character became popular in Connecticut beginning about 1750. The construction of the Gridley-Parsons-Staples Homestead was in line with this trend.

The sophisticated finish and details, both on the exterior and interior, set the Homestead apart from many other houses of similar floor plan. Exterior moldings on the cornice, on the tripartite window mullions, and in the enframements of all the windows, together with the panelled exterior doors and the four interior chimney pieces are outstanding in quality and refinement. The chimney pieces, all similar but not identical, are especially interesting. They incorporate molded fireplace surrounds, flanking door enframements, vertical-boarding overmantels and ceiling cornices but with different arrangements and varying degrees of elaboration.

The deep basement and great attic space are consistent with the overall large size and spaciousness associated with the house. The bases of the twin chimneys and the purlins in the roof framing are substantial structural elements that express the integrity of the construction.

While these elements of trim, detailing and construction are intact and have been well preserved over the centuries, the staircase is another matter. The description of the original stairway in the central hall given by Hurlburt, who shows it in the expected position for a house of this plan, states that it had a panelled wall below the steps, as might be expected. There is a lack of information regarding the existing, narrow stairway that rises behind the left wall of the hall not shown by Hurlburt. This may have been an original service stairway, but such stairways usually are located further back in the house. Analysis of the stairways in the

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Homestead is incomplete.

History

The traditional view, as expressed by Hurlburt and reflected in the signs on the house, is that the rear, $1\frac{1}{2}$ -story section was the original house, built by Thomas Gridley in 1732. Hurlburt mentions that the date 1732 was cut in the horizontal boarding forming the wall of the stairs to the attic in this section. Unfortunately, the date cannot now be found. The principal part of the house may have been built in 1792. Hurlburt cites a manuscript history by Samuel Pepper as authority for this date. Pepper, an orphan, was brought up in the house, during the mid-19th century and other dates and facts attributed to his manuscript have generally been found to be reliable, but unfortunately, his manuscript has dropped from sight, making it impossible to know precisely what he said about this house.

A chain of ownership for the house, with references where available, is appended. Research of the 18th-century records is made difficult by the large number of Gridleys that lived in Farmington at the time, and by simultaneous common use of Christian names by various branches of the family. Moreover, probate records of Thomas Gridley, by tradition the original builder, are not at hand. Elnathan was the son of Thomas, but little else is known about him.

A detailed map of the Northwest Division drawn in April 1759, has been preserved, showing that Elnathan Gridley, (1727-1781), owned many parcels, although relating the site of the Homestead to the map is not a precise business. Elnathan Gridley's probate records are at hand. His estate was inventoried at \$\frac{1}{2}500\$, a quite substantial sum. The inventory lists his "dwelling house with kitchen adjoining", suggesting that the Homestead as it now exists was created by Elnathan Gridley prior to his death in 1781. The wealth of Elnathan Gridley is consistent with the fine quality of the house.

The general idea that the rear wing was an original house is difficult to reconcile with presently observable construction features. While the cellar masonry includes what may be the base of an original stone chimney, located in a position that suggests a stone-end structure, any corroborating evidence is missing. Moreover, the fact that the cellar walls, clapboards, and the window enframements of the wing and theprincipal section are all the same, without observable demarcation, leads to the postulate that if the wing is older than the principal section it was substantially re-built by Elnathan Gridley when the house assumed its present form, c. 1760. Accordingly the date c. 1760 is used in the nomination in preference to the traditional 1732 and 1792.

Subsequent owners of the house appear to have been less prominent than Elnathan, although Elijah Omri Gridley, (1802-1862), known as Captain Gridley because he operated a canal boat on the Farmington Canal, prospered from his association with that short-lived transportation artery.

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The early-20th-century installation of the central hall staircase, and its subsequent removal, were the chief structural changes ever to occur in the Homestead. The restoration of the house to its present fine condition was accomplished as a joint venture by the Town and the Historical Society as a Bicentennial project in 1976. The restoration was financed by public subscription.

¹ Farmington Probate Records, volume 2, page 213.

² The Farmington Canal ran from New Haven, Connecticut, to Northampton, Massachusetts. Built in the 1820s and 1830s, it had a short useful life because it was soon out-moded by the railroad.

9. M	ajor Bibliographical	Reference	S
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10. (Geographical Data A	UNLAGE NUI YEK	
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List all sta	ntes and counties for properties overla	pping state or county l	boundaries
state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code
	orm Prepared By		
name/titie	David F. Ransom		
organization			
street & nur	nber 59 South Prospect Stre	et telephon	e 203 566-3005
city or town	Hartford	state	Connecticut
<u>12. S</u>	tate Historic Prese	rvation Offi	cer Certification
The evaluate	ed significance of this property within the sta	ate is:	
·	national state	<u>ę</u> local	
665), I hereb	gnated State Historic Preservation Officer for by nominate this property for inclusion in the b the criteria and procedures set forth by the	National Register and ce	rtify that it has been evaluated
State Histor	ic Preservation Officer signature	in Sann	mh
	ctor, Connecticut Historical Com	mission	date June 22, 1981

Gridley-Parsons-Staples Homestead 1554 Farmington Avenue Farmington, Hartford County, CT

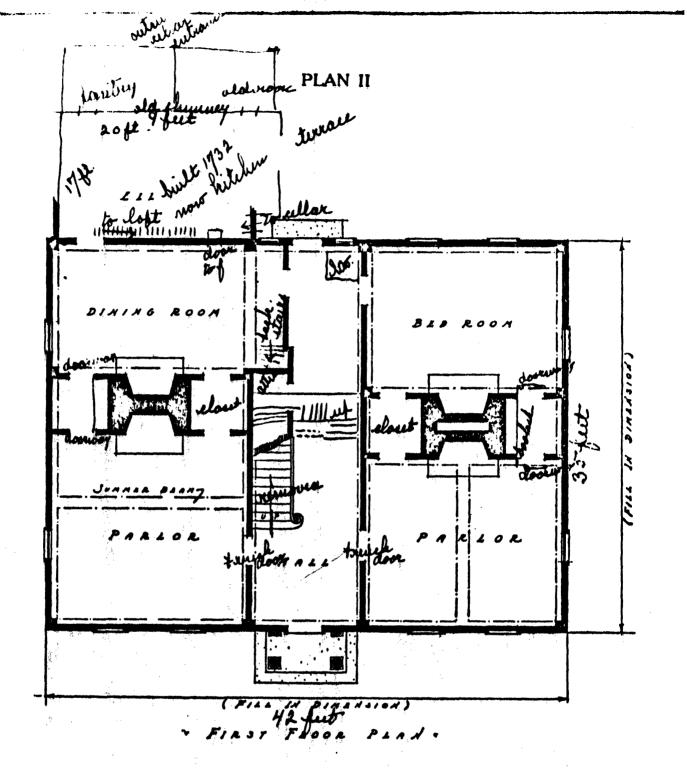
Chain of Ownership

Year	Owner	Reference
1732	Thomas Gridley	Hurlburt
1758	Elnathan Gridley	Hurlburt
1781	Elijah Gridley	Farmington Probate Records 2/208
1822	Elijah O. Gridley	Farmington Probate Records 8/198
1849	Luther T. Parsons	Farmington Land Records 49/490
1878	Nelson J. Tuttle	FLR 62/534
1886	David Henney	FLR 68/240
1900	Elizabeth Henney	FLR 69/512
1902	William H. Parsons	FLR 73/415
1903	W.H., M.H. & J.H. Parsons	FLR 73/470
1912	May H. Parsons	FLR 78/383
1921	E.M. & F.J. Staples	FLR 79/330
1968	R.S. Graham & I.S. Bush	FLR 192/357
1969	Town of Farmington	FLR 193/560

Prepared by:
Betty Coykendall,
Farmington Historical Society

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Fill in Dimensions

Gridley-Parsons-Stapes Homestead 1554 Farmington Avenue Farmington, Hartford Cy., CT

Hurlburt Floor Plan

Gridley-Parsons-Staples Homestead 1554 Farmington Avenue Farmington, Hartford Cy., CT Town HALL Site Plan Photo Key DEINE 3,0 ò 3 ð PARKING ટ્સ 82 H.O.H. Setool