

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name
other name/s Wheeler, Ephraim, House

2. Location

street & number 470 Whippoorwill Lane
city, town Stratford
state CT code CT county 001 code zip code 06497

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private (checked)
Category of Property: building(s) (checked)
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 2, Noncontributing 1, Total 3

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: Director, Connecticut Historical Commission
Date: 02/26/92

In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
entered in the National Register (checked)
determined eligible for the National Register
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper: Guy M. Lapsley
Date of Action: 4/17/92

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/SINGLE FAMILY

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/SINGLE FAMILY

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation fieldstone

walls shingle

roof asphalt shingle

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Ephraim Wheeler House is a large, Colonial residence built in the mid-eighteenth century for a descendant of one of the first settlers of Stratford. The Wheeler House is located in Putney, a rural neighborhood located on the west bank of the Housatonic River about three miles north of the village center. Set on a rise fronting on Whippoorwill Lane, the house faces southeast toward the open meadows of a large golf course. Despite the construction of twentieth-century suburban houses in the vicinity of the house, the setting reflects the rural character of Putney, due in part to the large lots and the preservation of so much open land in the form of the golf course.

The Wheeler House is post-and-beam construction, two rooms deep, and is sheathed in shingles (Photographs 1 & 2). Three additions have been made to the house since its construction; a small two-story early nineteenth-century ell on the rear elevation, a one-story screen porch on the west elevation was added c. 1940, and a one-and-a-half-story frame wing was added to the east elevation in the mid-1980s. The east wing is set far back from the level of the facade.

The facade of the main block is five bays wide surmounted by a gable roof (Photograph 1). The stacks of the interior end chimneys are brick and were parged above the roof line in the twentieth century. The central entrance bay is sheltered by a gabled stoop built in the 1970s. The six-panel door is flanked by side-lights. The window surrounds are simple with distinctive caps on the lintels. Six-over-six double hung sash windows are used throughout the main block except for the pairs of casement windows in the gable ends. The east wing, like the main block, has a gable roof. A shed-roof dormer illuminates the upper story and large multi-pane modern windows are used on the facade. A small porch with a simple rail of square balusters is located under the main roof of the addition on the east end. The rubble stone foundation is exposed as the grade drops away on the east side of the house.

The rear elevation is broken up by the asymmetrical placement of the nineteenth-century ell. A one-story shed roof porch shelters most of the facade of the main block. The east wing addition has a gable-roof dormer with sliding doors opening onto a shallow deck. A small porch is located under the main roof on the first floor. Modern windows are used throughout on the rear except on the second story of the main block.

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Ephraim Wheeler House, Stratford, CT

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The west elevation is sheltered on the first floor by a flat-roofed one-story screen porch. A balustrade enhances the roof of the porch. On the east elevation a small gable-roofed wing, probably dating from the nineteenth-century houses an attached tool shed. On the east wing a three-sided bay window is used in the gable peak. Other window and doors utilize multi-paned lights.

On the interior the house follows a center-hall plan with corner fireplaces in the two front rooms and in the rear west room (Figure 1). A handsomely detailed stair rises from the hall. The handrail is molded, but the newel post and balusters are square in section. Raised panelling is used to sheath the wall dividing the stair run from the hall (Photograph 3). The wall in which the entrance is set is sheathed in flush tongue-and-groove boards (Photograph 4). Two molded door surrounds frame the entrances on either side of the hall to the front rooms, and a simpler door surround frames the entrance to the kitchen at the end of the passage. Throughout the house raised panel doors are hung in their original locations, many with eighteenth-century hardware (Photographs 3, 5, 7, 9). The two front rooms have particularly fine finishes; the exposed structural elements' casings are beaded, and window and door surrounds and baseboards are nicely molded (Photographs 5, 6). Both front rooms have unusual corner fireplaces; raised panelling extends from around the fireplace to the molded cornice. A shallow mantel shelf is supported by a molded bracket. Above the mantel shelf there are built-in cupboards in the fireplace wall. Throughout the house, much of the wide-plank flooring has survived.

In the rear of the house, the kitchen has seen the greatest degree of alteration. The west corner fireplace has lost its original surround, and now consists of a plain plastered wall with a modern mantel shelf. Apparently no fireplace existed on the east end of the room. The exposed structural members are visible in the ceiling, and a modern kitchen with an opening into the new east wing is located on the east end of the room. Upstairs the original finishes are well preserved. The stair to the attic is sheathed in flush tongue-and-groove boards (Photograph 7). A corner fireplace with a crisply molded surround is located in the front west room (Photograph 8), while built-in cupboards sheathed in flush boards are found in the rear west room. The window and door surrounds are similar to those in the front rooms on the first floor.

When the farm was subdivided in the 1950s most of the farm buildings were removed or were sold off with other parcels. Only a small nineteenth-century shed remains to suggest the building's original use as a farmhouse. A large modern frame garage and an in-ground pool are located behind the house. Remnants of a dry-laid stone wall, typical of a farm property of this period, are to be found in front of the house.

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Ephraim Wheeler House, Stratford, CT

Section number 8 Page 1History

Ephraim Wheeler (1723-c.1804) was the son of Nathan (1680/81-c.1766) and Elizabeth Beach Wheeler, and a descendant of one of the seventeenth-century settlers of Stratford.<sup>1</sup> Sarah Wilcoxson married Ephraim Wheeler in 1743, and tradition maintains that he built his house on Whippoorwill Lane in Putney in the same year.<sup>2</sup> In 1749 his father deeded him land and a dwelling house that Ephraim was occupying at the time of the execution of the deed.<sup>3</sup> Little is known about Ephraim Wheeler except that he seems to have been a prosperous farmer. In 1777 Ephraim Wheeler deeded half his house to his third son, Samuel (1757-c.1816).<sup>4</sup>

Samuel Wheeler, the captain of a coaster sloop, married his first wife in 1776. He went on to become involved in a variety of business ventures; purchasing at the close of the Revolutionary War the mill complex on the Housatonic south of Putney which had been established in the seventeenth century. By the early 1790s the complex included grist, bolting, and tanning mills. Wheeler had a large family and family tradition maintains that his sons farmed Wheeler's holdings and ran the milling operations while Captain Wheeler pursued his mercantile ventures.<sup>5</sup>

In the late 1820s the ownership of the house passed to Captain Wheeler's son, Everett Wheeler (1796-1878). Everett Wheeler, like his father, was a farmer who extended his activities to local affairs as well as the fisheries in the Housatonic River. Upon his death, the farm and homestead (comprising 26 acres) passed to his son, Henry G. Wheeler (1827-1913). Henry G. Wheeler was also interested in both farming and the fisheries. He was active in local politics, serving on the school board. In addition, he was a pioneer in the local ice industry, establishing the first ice plant in Stratford. Henry F. Wheeler, his son, was the last of the Wheeler family to own the house, but after his father's death the house was sold out of the family. The complex continued to be a working farm until the mid-1950s when it was subdivided.<sup>6</sup>

Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Rev. Samuel Orcutt, A History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport Connecticut (2 vols., Fairfield: Fairfield County Historical Society, 1886), II, 1123, 1334. See also Albert Gallatin Wheeler, The Genealogical and Encyclopedic History of the Wheeler Family in America (2 vols., Boston, MA: American College of Genealogy, 1914), I, 414-15, and William R. Cutter et al. eds., Genealogical and Family History of the State of Connecticut (5 vols., New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), III, 1625, hereinafter cited as Cutter, Family History of Connecticut.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., see also William Howard Wilcoxson, History of Stratford, Connecticut 1639-1939 (Stratford: Stratford Tercentenary Commission, 1939) p.374.

<sup>3</sup>Stratford Land Records.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., see also Cutter, Family History of Connecticut, III, 1625.

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Continuation Sheet**

Ephraim Wheeler House , Stratford, CT

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Cutter, William R. et al. eds., Genealogical and Family History of the State of Connecticut, 5 vols., New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911.

Orcutt, Rev. Samuel, A History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport Connecticut, 2 vols., Fairfield: Fairfield County Historical Society, 1886.

Stratford Land Records.

Stratford Probate Records.

Wheeler, Albert Gallatin, The Genealogical and Encyclopedic History of the Wheeler Family in America, 2 vols., Boston, MA: American College of Genealogy, 1914.

Wilcoxson, William Howard, History of Stratford, Connecticut 1639-1939, Stratford: Stratford Tercentenary Commission, 1939.

**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  
c. 1749-c. 1820

Significant Dates  
N/A

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
unknown

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

The Ephraim Wheeler House is a well preserved example of an eighteenth-century farmhouse in the rural farming community of Putney. Its unusual plan, incorporating interior end chimneys, corner fireplaces, and a center-hall plan makes this house unique in Stratford. The construction of the house, and its materials are typical of this period. The farmhouse, with its central position as the core of the homestead, is also significant since its ownership for more than one hundred and fifty years reflects the importance of farming as an occupation for a branch of one of the oldest and most influential families in Stratford, the Wheelers.

Architectural Significance

The Wheeler House is an important link in understanding the architectural development of Putney. This small agricultural community, located north of the village center, was one of the last areas in Stratford to be settled. Incomplete surveys and a failure of the town proprietors to divide the land until the second quarter of the eighteenth century left the land sparsely settled except for a few isolated farms and the seventeenth-century mill complex on the Housatonic which was later acquired by the Wheeler family. All of the surviving eighteenth-century houses of this size in Putney have center chimneys, so the presence of interior end chimneys with corner fireplaces and a center-hall plan is unique in the neighborhood. This combination of features is rarely found in surviving houses of the period in the state. Houses of this size built during the first quarter of the nineteenth century in Stratford do sometimes have interior end chimneys, but no other house in the town combines this feature with corner fireplaces.

The house has been little changed over the years except for the additions noted. In the cases of the nineteenth-century rear ell, the c. 1940 porch, and the modern stoop these additions are small. All the additions exhibit good workmanship and the design and materials do not detract from the oldest part of the house. On the interior, the house retains its original plan, and the finishes are original, in good condition, and are representative of the solid craftsmanship of the period. The extensive use of raised panelling in the house reflects the popularity of the Georgian style, even among farmers in small agricultural communities.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property approx. 1 acre

UTM References

A 

1	8	65	7	9	00	45	6	63	6	0
Zone		Easting			Northing					

B 

Zone		Easting			Northing					

C 

Zone		Easting			Northing					

D 

Zone		Easting			Northing					

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Stratford Land Records Vol. 460, p. 195

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

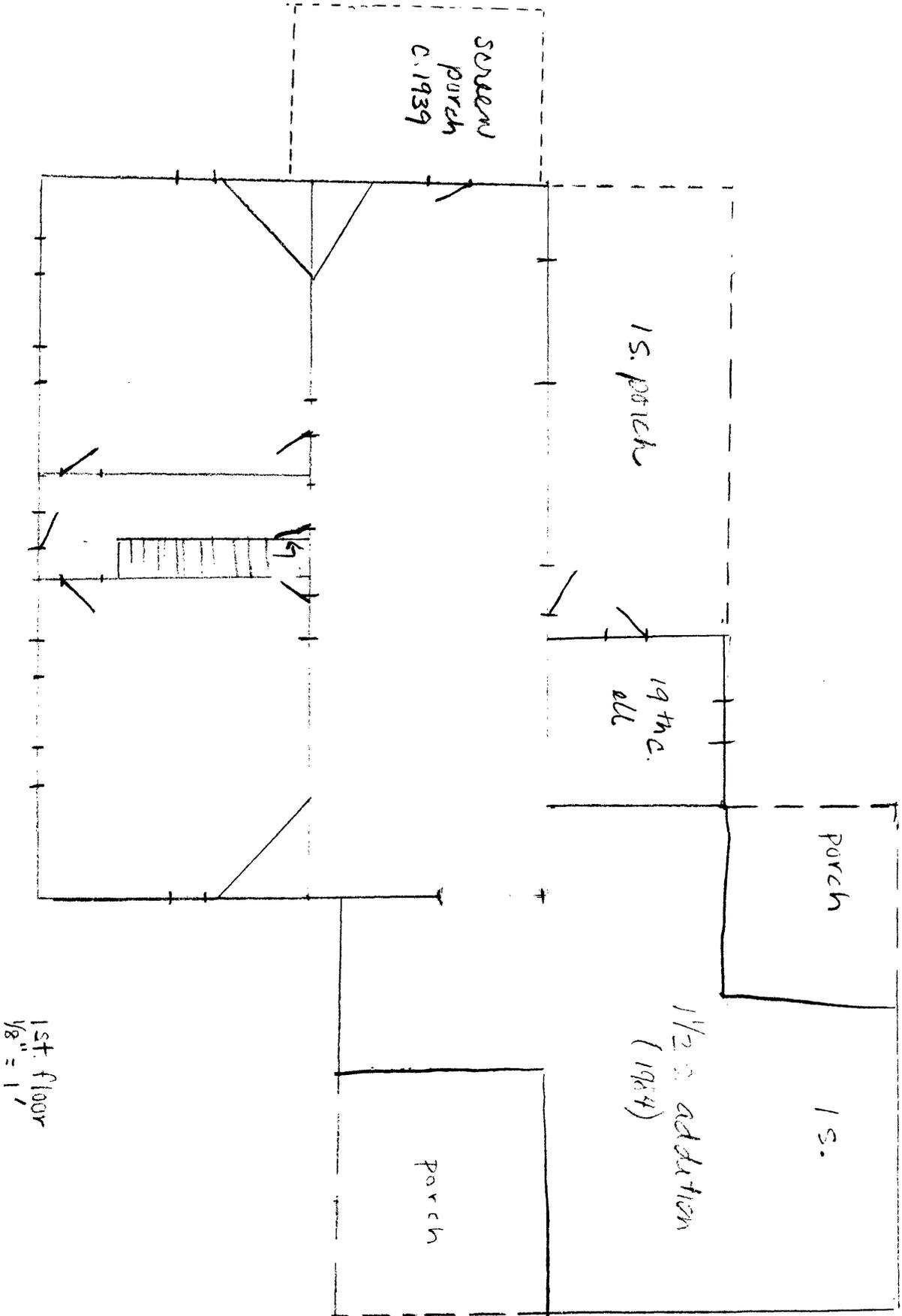
This is a portion of the lot historically associated with the Wheeler Homestead.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By** Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

name/title Kate Ohno  
organization Preservation Consultant date \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number 81 Pond Hill Road telephone (203) 234-2848  
city or town North Haven state CT zip code 06473

Rosebrook



Whippoorwill Lane

Ephraim Wecker House  
 470 Whippoorwill Lane  
 Stratford, CT