

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

1063

NOV 24 2000

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bryan, Roderick, House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

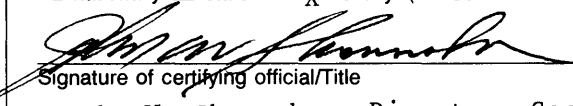
street & number 867 Linkfield Road  not for publication

city or town Watertown  vicinity

state Connecticut code CT county Litchfield code 005 zip code 06795

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

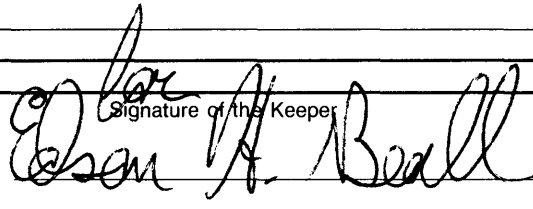
 October 27, 2000  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission  
 State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
  - determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
  - determined not eligible for the National Register.
  - removed from the National Register.
  - other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

 12/28/00  
 Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Roderick Bryan House  
Name of Property

Litchfield, CT  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC/Federal

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**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation rubblestone

walls weatherboard

roof asphalt shingle

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Roderick Bryan House, Watertown, Litchfield County, Connecticut

Section number 7 Page 1

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The Roderick Bryan House is located in northeastern Watertown at the corner of Linkfield and Bryan roads about three miles from the town center. Facing almost due west from the east side of the road, it consists of an c. 1820 Cape Cod with a center chimney and added rear ell. There is an attached woodshed and barn at the rear (Photograph #s 1, 2). Bryan Road divides the nominated property, which includes the 1.7-acre house lot on the north and a 1.3-acre parcel to the south, the latter once the site of two associated barns.

The Bryan House has the typical five-bay façade and high plate of Capes in this period. The Federal Revival-style door surround, which was installed in the mid-1940s, consists of narrow double pilasters flanking four-pane sidelights, surmounted by a shallow capped pediment. It replaced a simple more Colonial style doorway with a transom. The original paneled door with diagonal boarding on the reverse was rehung in the doorway at the southeast corner of the house, the traditional location of the so-called "funeral door." Another similar doorway on the south elevation provides access to the keeping room.

The 12-over-12 double-hung sash, paired on the façade, also are found at the first floor of the end elevations. At the second floor, nine-over-six sash are flanked by small fixed six-pane windows, the characteristic fenestration pattern of the Cape style (Photograph #s 3, 4). Louvered openings have replaced the small sash at the peak. Windows and doors are framed with rather narrow plain boards set almost flush with the clapboard siding.

There have been some changes to the rear elevation (Photograph #5). The bay window is a modern addition and the gabled dormer with its six-over-six sash may have been added at the same time as the ell. The rear door matches the rest of the exterior doors.

The ell is joined to the woodshed by a gabled connector, which serves as a passageway between the buildings. The clapboarded rear wall of the shed is fitted with a series of six-over-nine windows, while the north side is sheathed with vertical boards and now has two garage doors. There are new windows in the gambrel-roofed barn at the rear and an attached greenhouse on its south wall.

The floor plan, finishes, and framing are typical for an early nineteenth-century high-plate Cape. Three rooms are arranged around the center chimney stack, with hall and parlor on either side and the keeping room across the rear (Exhibit B). A small room behind the staircase at the north end provides the only access to the second floor. The doorway to the added kitchen ell is next to the stairs, which are enclosed by a partition of vertical beaded-edge boards. Horizontal wainscot is used on the fireplace wall there. The rest of the walls and ceilings are plastered and corner posts are cased. Four-panel passage doors, which have beaded stiles and plain panels, are found throughout the first floor; those on the second floor are the board-and-batten type.

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Roderick Bryan House, Watertown, Litchfield County, Connecticut

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Another set of cased posts is visible on the second floor. Located approximately seven feet in from the exterior walls, these posts extend into the attic. There, the use of a ridge beam, rather than half-lapped joints, is unusual and more consistent with later work. Sawn rafters (5" x 5" ), 39 inches on center, are let into the beam, which is triangular in section, seven inches on a side. The identical framing system is used in the woodshed, which confirms that it probably was built at the same time.

The stone chimney base in the cellar (8'6" x 7'3" ) has a carriage of heavy wooden outriggers and planking to support the hearths of the three fireplaces on the first floor. The parlor fireplace has a brick firebox and a sandstone lintel (36" x 28" x 10" ; Photograph #6). Above the simple picture frame surround, which matches the door and window casing, a heavy bed mold supports the mantel shelf. A full-height paneled door is located to the left and a chair rail extends around the room. A similar larger fireplace is found in the hall (46" x 33" x 19" ), where the same enframingent is executed in natural pine, like all the trim and doors in this room (Photograph #7). There are double cupboards on the right.

The keeping room fireplace has a stone firebox with a granite lintel (80" x 48" x 29" ; Photograph #8). The unusual, only partially recessed beehive oven in the left corner has its own lintel. Natural pine casework in this room includes the beaded-edge boards around the fireplace opening and over the mantel.

Four chambers open off the center hallway that runs the length of the second floor. The one in the northeast corner, which has a sloping ceiling and a short kneewall across the north side, is typical (Photograph #9). The small windows, more commonly used to light storage spaces under the eaves, here are located in the chambers.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

**Significant Dates**

c. 1820

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Watertown Historical Society

Roderick Bryan House  
Name of Property

Litchfield, CT  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 3

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

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

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant

organization Cunningham Preservation Associatea date 1/15/00

street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (860) 347 4072

city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Ruth K. Getsinger

street & number 867 Linkfield Road telephone (860) 274 8412

city or town Watertown state CT zip code 06795

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Roderick Bryan House, Watertown, Litchfield County, Connecticut

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**Statement of Significance**

The Roderick Bryan House, which remained in the family for 90 years, is a distinctive, well-preserved vernacular expression of a Cape Cod-style house, enhanced by the integrity of its historic setting. Demonstrating how the traditional colonial Cape form was interpreted by local Watertown carpenter/builders in the early nineteenth century, it has a fine original interior, which is distinguished by superior craftsmanship and several non-traditional features.

**Historical Background**

Watertown, once the Westbury parish of Waterbury, was incorporated as a separate town in 1780. The center grew in the post-Revolutionary period and by the mid-nineteenth century there was considerable industrial development in town. Outlying farms continued to flourish. Among those scattered along the old village highway with the eponymous name of Linkfield Road was that of Roderick Bryan (1795-1872). He had built his house on family land by 1820, when the federal census confirms that Bryan was the head of his own household.<sup>1</sup> Roderick, the youngest son of John and Abigail Treat Bryan, did not own the land until 1830, when it was deeded over to him by his mother (WLR 15:169). By then his household included his wife, two children, and an older woman, probably his mother-in-law, since his widowed mother still lived just up the road on the other side.

Apparently the Bryan family land on Linkfield Road was purchased from John Merriman in 1807. At that time Merriam owned a 70-acre farm there, which he divided and sold in two parcels on the same day: 30 acres with buildings to John and the rest to Abigail. John Bryan (1745-1815) was one of three sons of Nathan Bryan (aka Bryant or Brian) of Mew Milford. Born in Milford, he was a descendant of Alexander Bryan, the first of the family in the New World, who had emigrated from England in the late seventeenth century.

When Abigail Bryan died in 1842 at age 90, Roderick, the executor of her estate, received the Great Bible and, along with his brothers John and Samuel (deceased), inherited all the real estate; the three married daughters received the furniture. The surviving heirs quitclaimed their interests in the property to Roderick between 1842 and 1843.

Bryan was recorded as a farmer in the federal census up through 1870. By then his property had doubled in value and he employed a hired hand and a domestic servant. One source references his house as the old Brian [sic] Tavern.<sup>2</sup> Such a function would

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier date of 1795 ascribed to the house is inconsistent with the documentary record or architectural evidence.

<sup>2</sup> Russell H. Pope, Sr., "History of Watertown Schools," 1979.

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Roderick Bryan House, Watertown, Litchfield County, Connecticut

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account for the extra door in the south elevation that leads directly into the keeping room. When Roderick died in 1872, his son and sole heir Edward B. (1819-1910), who was established on his own farm across the street, inherited the homestead and several other parcels of land. The inventory of the estate also included several cows, a horse and buggy waggon [sic], and a sleigh. In 1910 Edward's estate of 86 acres was inherited by his son Burton, who, like several other family members, had removed to Waterbury (WLR 40:94). That same day, Burton transferred the entire property for one dollar to Edwin Peck, who had taken care of his aging parents. Edwin may have been the son of the Charles W. Peck, who was a servant in Edward's household in 1900. The property passed down to Edwin's son Irving Peck in 1944, and in 1948 the present house lot was sold to the husband of the present owner (WLR 100:450).

**Architectural Significance**

Surrounded by open fields and shaded by mature trees, the Roderick Bryan House is a self-contained historical oasis, a step back in time to an earlier day when Linkfield Road was sparsely settled. Although some modern residential development has taken place in the neighborhood, the well-preserved house and its immediate historic landscape still convey a distinct sense of time and place.

The Bryan House has considerable architectural significance as a demonstration of the vernacular evolution of the traditional Colonial Cape, a form introduced into Connecticut in the 1740s. An inexpensive house to build, it persisted in rural areas well into the nineteenth century. While a Cape was often built by the owners, in this case it is known that carpenters were hired and boarded in the neighborhood during construction. Including the cutting and hauling of timbers from the woods, it took a year to build and cost only \$150. According to a history of the Linkfield District School (which once stood across the intersection), Roderick and his new wife Orvile, whom he married about 1818, lived in an old house across the road, possibly the old Gilette House, while they waited for their new place to be finished.<sup>3</sup>

As is the case with most vernacular architecture, the carpenters relied on traditional forms and building techniques but interpreted them in new ways. While the first-floor plan is quite traditional--the same plan was used in the mid-1700s--changes were made to make the house more functional. One of the most obvious is the higher roof plate so characteristic of later Capes, which allows for more usable space on the second floor. However, as the persistence of the overhang in two-story colonials demonstrates, the retention of non-functional features, such as the typical small end-elevation windows, is characteristic of the Connecticut vernacular. Once used to light eave storage space, in the Bryan House these windows were not discarded, or even made full size, but simply relocated inside the upstairs chambers. On the other hand, framing the roof with a ridge beam, as was done here, was an advanced building technique not commonly

<sup>3</sup> "Linkfield School" (typescript), n.d.



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Roderick Bryan House, Watertown, Litchfield County, Connecticut

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employed at that time, especially in rural areas. In fact, the old method of half-lapped rafters at the ridge often persisted right through the nineteenth century.

The interior of the Bryan House is notably conservative in style. While by 1820, some Federal influence might be expected, the original casework is more typical of the late Colonial period. The integrity of the interior spaces and finishes is exceptional. The only changes took place in 1948 when indoor plumbing and electricity was introduced for the first time, and a modern kitchen installed in the ell. The original fireplace surrounds and mantelpieces are in excellent condition. That the pine woodwork in the hall and keeping room has its original finish is particularly noteworthy. In fact, there is no evidence that it ever was painted. The consistency of the moldings and trim throughout suggests that the facade windows were replaced at a relatively early date.

One of the more interesting and perhaps unique features of the Bryan House is the idiosyncratic construction and location of the beehive oven in the keeping room fireplace. Whether it is an integral part of the firebox or added later is not readily apparent. In either case, it represents an unusual departure from common early nineteenth-century practice, in which ovens were usually placed to the front beside the fireplace opening.

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Roderick Bryan House, Watertown, Litchfield County, Connecticut

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**9. Major Bibliographic References**

Anderson, Joseph, D.D., ed. *The Town and City of Waterbury, Connecticut: From the Aboriginal Period to the Year Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-Five*. New Haven: Price & Lee Company, 1896.

Clark, Richard. *Map of the Town of Watertown*. Philadelphia, 1853.

Federal Census, MSS. 1790, 1820, 1830, 1850, 1870, 1900.

Klamkin, Marian. *Watertown: Then and Now*. Derby: Bacon Printing, 1976.

Watertown Land Records (WLR).

Watertown Map of 1859.

Watertown Historical Society. " #1 Linkfield School." Typescript, n.d. Smith,  
\_\_\_\_\_. Smith, Edward R. " Watertown's Early Families." (2 notebooks, 1993).

**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The nominated property is described in Watertown Land Records, volume 100, page 450, being the same property identified on the Watertown Tax Assessor's Map 22 as lot 26-5 and on Map 29 as lot 30-3.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundaries encompass all the remaining land and buildings associated with the nominated property.

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Roderick Bryan House, Watertown, Litchfield County, Connecticut

Section number Photo Page 1

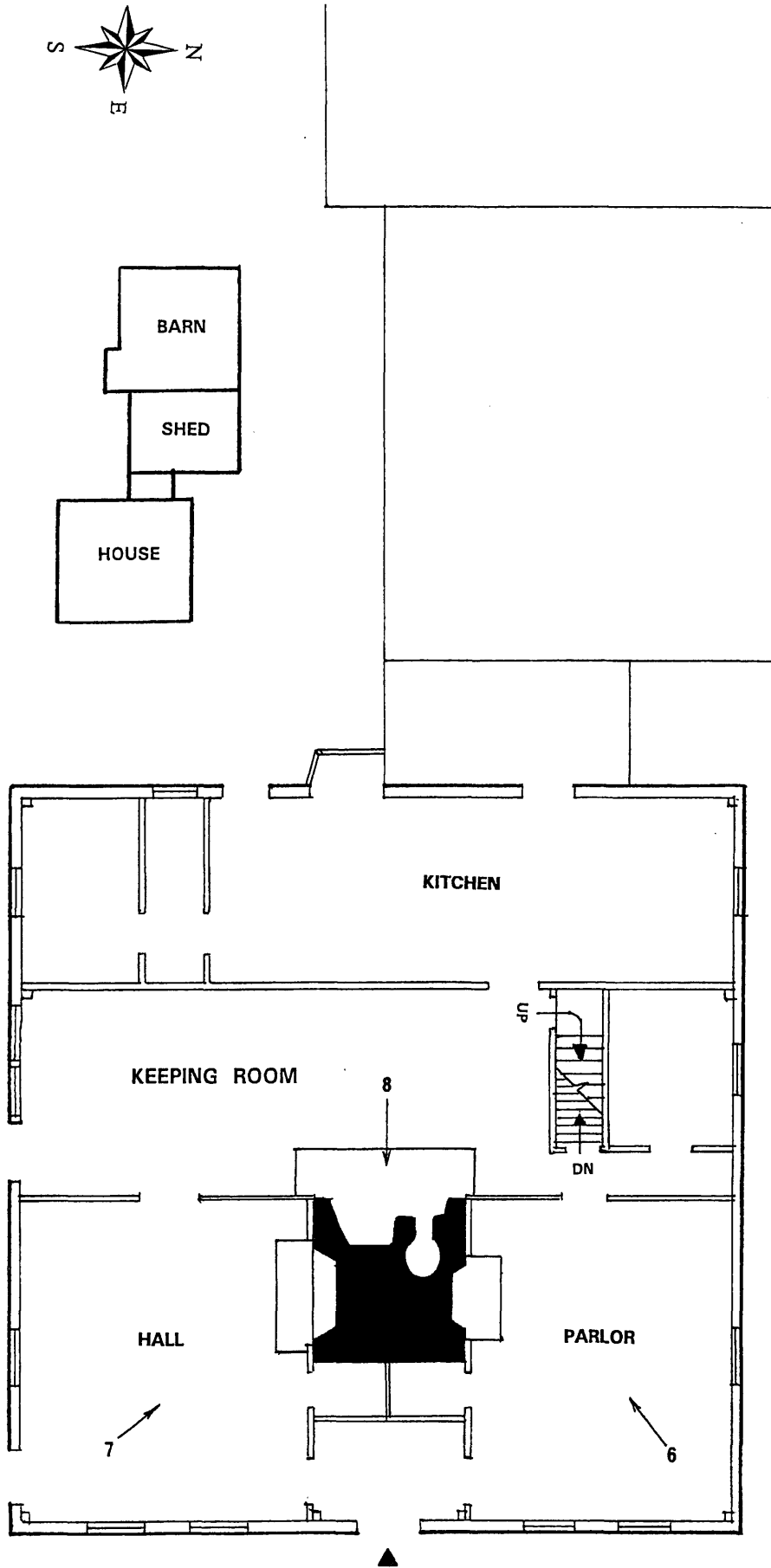
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**List of Photographs**

Photographer: Cunningham Preservation Associates

Date: 5/99 Negatives on File: Connecticut Historical Commission

1. Façade, facing NW
2. Woodshed & barn, facing SW
3. North elevation, facing S
4. South elevation, facing NE
5. Rear elevation house & south side woodshed, facing NE
6. Parlor fireplace, facing SW
7. Hall fireplace, facing NW
8. Keeping room fireplace, facing E
9. Parlor chamber, facing N



**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**

**Roderick Bryan House  
Watertown, Litchfield County, CT**

**Scale: 1/8" = 1'**

**Numbered arrows: interior photo views.**