

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED MAR 31 1982

DATE ENTERED APR 29 1982

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Deacon John Davenport House

AND/OR COMMON

Deacon John Davenport House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

129 Davenport Ridge Road

CITY, TOWN

Stamford N/A VICINITY OF

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

4th -

STATE

CT

CODE

09

COUNTY

Fairfield

CODE

001

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED
- N/A

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

James V. Lester

STREET & NUMBER

129 Davenport Ridge Road

CITY, TOWN

Stamford N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Stamford Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

179 Atlantic Street (P.O. Box 891)

CITY, TOWN

Stamford

STATE

CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT DETERIORATED
 GOOD RUINS
 FAIR UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Deacon John Davenport House, built about 1775, is a 1½-story, "saltbox" shaped structure. Located in the area of Stamford, Connecticut known as North Stamford, the house faces west on Davenport Ridge Road which makes a sweeping curve around its north side. Davenport Ridge Road then continues past a small open field east of the house, which is included with this property, to its junction with Thornridge Drive. This road forms the property's eastern boundary and leads past several outbuildings described below. Fig. 1 illustrates the relationship of the roads and buildings. Taken near the junction of the two thoroughfares, and showing the view south, Davenport Ridge Road appears in the foreground with the house to the right and the field and outbuildings to the left (Thornridge Drive is just out of view to the extreme left). As the name Davenport Ridge Road implies, the house is built on high ground, about 360' above sea level, affording pleasant vistas to the south.

The exterior of this house reveals a number of modifications. The fieldstone foundation of the original dwelling measures 36' 9" across the main facade, and is 33' 8" deep. The lean-to towards the rear appears to be integral rather than an addition. On the north side there is a small ell with a gable roof now housing the kitchen, built in the early nineteenth century. To the rear (east) are more modern changes. First, a 2-story ell was added in the 1930s or 40s; and, in the 1950s, another, larger 2-story structure, with a balcony and porch along its southern elevation, was joined to the rear of the earlier addition (Fig. 2).

The main facade of the eighteenth-century structure is plain and symmetrical (fig. 3). The five-bay main front has a simple, central entrance, consisting of a plainly molded doorframe, a six-panel door which appears original, and an interesting five-light transom with leaded glazing bars (probably an early nineteenth-century modification). The four first-floor windows are paired and are filled with 9-over-6 sash (the sash in the two northern windows is original, that in the southern windows are replacements). The corner boards are thin and plain, and the main cornice has only a narrow overhang and is finished with a simple bed molding. The roof is pierced with three evenly spaced dormers which have pedimented roofs and flush boarded sides. It is extremely difficult to determine their age. These dormers have eighteenth-century 6-over-6 sash and perhaps they are original, although their general appearance and scale would argue for attributing them to a later period. Above the dormers at the center of the gable roof is a well-proportioned stone chimney.

The other elevations are unremarkable. All exterior walls are covered by modern clapboards and the roofs have new wood shingles. The fenestration is varied with a number of new windows having been added in the original section of the house. The large addition

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built in the 1950s has its own stone chimney on the north side of the roof. In general, the house's exterior is in excellent condition and the additions are well integrated with the original structure.

The interior of the house is a contrast between original fabric and modern interpretations of eighteenth-century styles. The interior plan of the 1775 structure is typical. The central main entrance opens into a small porch with doors on either side leading into front parlors. The stairway that was surely there originally has been removed. Across the back of the house is the original kitchen with a stairway to the second floor in the southwest corner. The modern kitchen opens out from this room's north wall. The upstairs arrangement mirrors the lower rooms. Above the parlors are two bedrooms with a bathroom between over the porch, while above the old kitchen is a long hall with a second bathroom and a small bedroom in the south-east and northeast corners respectively.

The attic is shallow and is framed with common rafters. The basement is unexceptional. Many girts and floor joists have been replaced, and a cement floor has been installed.

From the original kitchen a wide set of stairs lead down into the first of the two modern additions. This consists of two large rooms, one upstairs and one downstairs. The larger, more modern addition has a large room below and two bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs.

There are a number of interesting decorative features in the original dwelling. Of particular note is the panelling along the southern wall of the northwest parlor (Fig. 4). This is representative of the standard type of mid-eighteenth century woodwork, and consists of large thin panels of white pine with bevelled edges which are sunk into the grooves of rails and stiles finished with a quarter-round bead. The finish of this woodwork is superb, an example of the panelling which J. Frederick Kelly valued so highly:

The coloring of this old pine woodwork, where it has been fortunate enough to escape the application of paint, is always very beautiful. Through years of exposure to air, light, and smoke from wood fires, it has taken on a rich mellow tone of russet brown and a satin-like sheen--an eloquent plea for leaving this material in its natural condition, for white pine, thus softened and enriched by age, is infinitely finer than it could possibly be under any garb of stain or paint.¹

Moreover, this panelled wall was further enriched by the addition

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of certain Federal-style features about 1820. First, more elaborate door moldings were added over the old frames (Fig. 4). But, of greatest importance was the addition of a new mantelpiece (Fig. 5), a remarkable and exuberant piece of "country Federal" with narrow pilasters supporting a frieze of geometric shapes and finished by a mantel shelf built up of elaborate moldings.

After this wonderful wall of woodwork, the rest of the interior decoration appears somewhat ordinary. The entrance porch contains some good panelling similar to the northwest parlor; but the woodwork of the southwest parlor is completely modern, the work of a former owner in the 1940s or 50s. He also made some changes in the old kitchen, adding some bevel-and-bead vertical boarding that he removed from a nearby house. Indeed, he was such a careful craftsman that it is difficult to determine original work from old-but-added work. The fireplace in this kitchen, it should be noted, is quite large, measuring 7'-4" across by 4' 6" high.

In contrast to the rooms in the original structure, the rooms in the modern additions reflect the twentieth-century neo-Georgian or "Williamsburg" style. This is particularly noticeable in details such as window surrounds and fireplace mantels which, while displaying a high level of craftsmanship, are nevertheless quite unlike their simpler counterparts in the earlier rooms.

There are three major outbuildings on this property. They lie to the southeast of the main house and are partially screened from view by trees. The first is a small, one-story cottage, apparently built in the late nineteenth century. It has a small brick chimney and aluminum siding. Next is a small clapboarded barn with a cupola on the roof. Finally, a large, frame garage-carriage house is located near Thornridge Drive. Its exterior walls are covered with wood shingles.

The property is very well maintained. All buildings are in excellent condition and are nicely landscaped with a variety of trees and shrubs.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Local History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES **1775 - built**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT **Deacon John Davenport**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Deacon John Davenport House possesses two areas of significance. First, the house is an interesting example of late eighteenth century domestic architecture (Criterion C). Second, the house is connected with a very prominent Connecticut family whose members made their mark in a variety of professions (Criterion B).

The architectural significance of this dwelling rests on its intriguing mixture of seemingly contradictory elements. That is, this house, built in 1775, embodies a number of "carryovers" from the first half of the century and combines them with a number of more "up-to-date" late Georgian features. For example, the saltbox shape of the house is very traditional. This is not to say that 1½-story dwellings were not constructed throughout the eighteenth century; but, by 1775, most moderately wealthy men, such as the builder of this house, were generally putting up 2½-story residences, many of them of the central hall type.¹ Another carryover is the kitchen fireplace. It is very large; but, more importantly, it has the bake oven built into the rear wall (Fig. 6). This is an extremely traditional practice; for, as David Hart has noted, usually by the "...mid-18th century...the oven had moved out to one of the fireplace jambs."²

However, there are also a number of elements in this house that clearly date from the second half of the eighteenth century. One of the most obvious is the relatively small dimensions of the frame's cornerposts and the very noticeable absence of any "flare" at the top (Fig. 7). Another example of a "modern" element is the smooth plaster ceilings of both parlors and upper bedrooms which completely hide the summer beams from view.

In sum, the Deacon John Davenport House is architecturally significant because it so freely mixes early and late eighteenth century features, thereby demonstrating both the desire to change with the times and the powerful force of traditional building practices.

This house is also significant because of its association with the Davenport family. Rev. John Davenport, the only grandson of one of the original promoters of Yale College, removed to Stamford in 1693, where he was called to be the town's minister. In partial payment for his services, Davenport was given a large area of upland north of the town in 1706. This land afterwards became known as

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Davenport, Amzi Benedict. A Supplement to the History and Genealogy of the Davenport Family.... Stamford, CT: Privately Printed, 1876.

Davenport, Robert. "Information of the Davenport Family in Connection with the Deacon John Davenport House." (Typescript), 1977.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.84

QUADRANGLE NAME Pound Ridge, N.Y. - Conn.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 | 623 | 640 | 4,515,315,10

B | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | |

D | | |

E | | |

F | | |

G | | |

H | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is Lot 1, Block 382 as shown on Stamford Assessor's Map 362.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Hal Keiner, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission DATE June 18, 1979

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN Hartford STATE CT

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL X

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



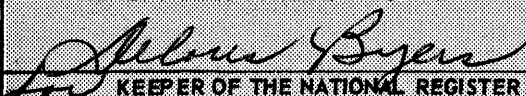
TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE March 11, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

entered in the
National Register


KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 4/29/82

ATTEST:
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

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Davenport Ridge. There, the family settled and multiplied, building a number of homes. Of these structures, the Deacon John Davenport House is the only one still standing.

A number of prominent eighteenth-century Davenports grew up on the ridge or maintained close ties to the farms there. The most famous was Col. Abraham Davenport (1715 or 16 - 1789), third son of Rev. John Davenport. A Yale graduate, he served as selectman for Stamford for many years and was the town's representative to the General Assembly for thirty sessions. A member of Trumbull's Council of Safety during the Revolution, he organized the care of sick and wounded Connecticut soldiers, boarding many of them in his houses in Stamford until they were well enough to return to their homes.³ Another interesting figure was Abraham's brother James (1716 or 17 to 1757). Also a Yale graduate, James Davenport was a thoroughgoing Evangelical who travelled with Whitefield on his tour of New York and New Jersey in 1740. An excellent preacher in his own right, he quickly aroused displeasure among New England's "Old Light" ministers; and, on a preaching tour of Boston in 1742, he was imprisoned for a short time. He eventually settled in New Jersey where he died at the age of thirty-nine.⁴ Finally, Abraham's son John Davenport (1752-1830) served as a major in the Continental Army, became a friend of Lafayette (who paid a celebrated visit to Stamford after the War), and from 1799 until 1817 was a member of the U. S. House of Representatives.⁵

Deacon John Davenport, the builder of this house, was not as prominent as these more illustrious uncles and cousins; but, nevertheless, he was a significant man in local affairs. According to the family geneologist:

Dea. John Davenport [was] born at Davenport Ridge, Stamford, May 24, 1749. Mr. Davenport was both carpenter and farmer--cultivating the lands of his native Ridge, and erecting dwellings....He was one of the early members of the Congregational Church of North Stamford, of which he was chosen deacon, May 8, 1796, and continued in that office till his death, February 6, 1820.⁶

After Deacon John's death, the house remained in the hands of his descendents until 1972. For a number of years it was an adjunct to a large Victorian mansion that has since been torn down. This residence was built by Amzi Benedict Davenport (1817-1897) whose youth was spent in the Deacon John Davenport House and who became

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a renowned developer of Long Island real estate.⁷ Finally, according to the research of a family descendent, there were a number of other notable Davenports who were raised in this house, including:

James Augustus Davenport (1818-1855) builder of the New York Crystal Palace, Charles Francis Davenport (1841-1889) member of the New York Stock Exchange, John Isaacs Davenport (1843-1903) fighter against election fraud in New York City, James Pierpont Davenport (1856-1929) first judge of the 5th District Court (New York City), William Edwards Davenport (1862-1944) founder of the New York Italian Settlement Home, Charles Benedict Davenport (1864-1944) geneticist, Francis Gardiner Davenport (1870-1927) historian, Benjamin Butler Davenport (1871-1958) actor, Judge Charles Davenport Lockwood (1877-1949), Pierpont Davenport (1888-1958) banker, Millia Crotty Davenport (1895-), costume designer.⁸

Footnotes:

¹J. Frederick Kelly, The Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), pp. 16-17.

²David M. Hart, "How to Date a House," Yankee, August, 1976, p. 130.

³Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College..., I (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1885), pp. 444-445.

⁴Ibid., pp. 446-447.

⁵Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College..., III (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1892), pp. 376-377.

⁶Amzi Benedict Davenport, A Supplement to the History and Genealogy of the Davenport Family..., (Stamford, CT: privately printed, 1876), p. 239.

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⁷Robert Davenport, "Information on the Davenport family in connection with the Deacon John Davenport House," typescript, 1977.

⁸Ibid.

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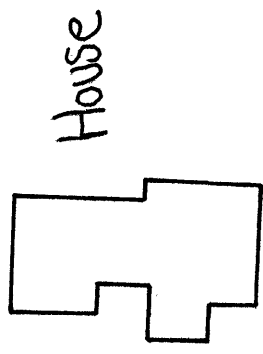
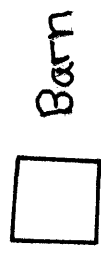
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Dexter, Franklin Bowditch. Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of
Yale College with Annals of the College History. 6 Vols. New
York: Henry Holt & Co., 1885-1912.

Thornridge Drive



Davenport Ridge Road



DEACON JOHN DAVENPORT
HOUSE
Stamford, CT