



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The attached property, the Eells-Stow House, in New Haven County, Connecticut, reference number 77001407, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper of the National Register on 06/17/1977, as evidenced by FEDERAL REGISTER/WEEKLY LIST notice of Tuesday, February 6, 1979, Part II, Vol. 44, No. 26, page 7442. The attached nomination form is a copy of the original documentation provided to the Keeper at the time of listing.

  
Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

2/12/2009  
Date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FILE COPY

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**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 **Bells-Stow House**

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER **34 High Street**

CITY, TOWN

**Milford**

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

**3d - Robert N. Giaino**

STATE

**Connecticut**

CODE

**09**

COUNTY

**New Haven**

CODE

**009**

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: _____

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME **Milford Historical Society**

STREET & NUMBER **34 High Street**

CITY, TOWN

**Milford**

VICINITY OF

STATE

**CT**

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **Milford City Clerk**

STREET & NUMBER **River Street - City Hall**

CITY, TOWN

**Milford**

STATE

**CT**

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE **Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources**

DATE **1975**  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS **Connecticut Historical Commission**

CITY, TOWN

**Hartford**

STATE

**CT**

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Not far from the waterfront in Milford is the Eells-Stow House. With shrubs and bushes planted close to the house, its open lot resembles those of its neighbors in this residential neighborhood. The house itself, part of which dates from the end of the 17th century, is a 2½ story, gable-roofed frame dwelling. The plan consists of a large south room and a smaller room across the entrance hall. To the rear is a lean-to, probably added around the middle of the 18th-century, and on the south rear, a two-story ell, built in 1880 over the lean-to and over a smaller ell, perhaps a summer kitchen. The underpinning is of fieldstone and there is no cellar. Clapboards of some age cover the exterior, but there are also remains of earlier sidings, including lath and plaster and shiplapped flush boards. The roof has wood shingles, but because of the rather small purlins in the roof framing, it has been suggested that the house may originally have been thatched.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the irregular floor plan, the main facade is uneven, with the door set right of center. There are two pair of windows to the left and one to the right. These windows have simple frames and 6/6 sash, and like the plain transomed doorway, appear to be early 19th-century work. The most prominent exterior features are the wide framed overhang at the gables and the plaster cove under the jutting cornice in the front. The latter is a restoration based on fragmentary remains.

In the interior can be seen some elements of the house framing. The sills originally projected into the front rooms, but after a fire in 1910 the floor was raised. In the smaller north room, framed without a summer, can be seen a girt of great depth, a shouldered corner post, and in one area, samples of the studs and diagonals. The wall between this room and the lean-to behind it is built of fieldstone into which is set a small, shallow fireplace. Until recently there was a chimney above. The lean-to has a kitchen fireplace with oven, plaster walls, plain woodwork (partially restored by Kelly), including a dado of horizontal boards up to the windows, and slightly flaring posts. The south room in front has a typical Adam-style mantel and structural members are encased and have beaded edges. The corner post shows evidence of having once been shouldered but later trimmed off. The chamber above has a shouldered post like the one in the north room.

Between the two front rooms is a hall with vertical board walls which show signs of having been salvaged from another building. Of great notoriety are the stairs, in two flights with a dog-leg turn. The heaviness of the turned balusters have caused many to date these as early 18th-century, but the restoration director at the historical society thinks that they are later, salvage, and probably installed at the time that the work in the south room was done, around 1820. Underneath the hall is the foundation for a central stack which predated the present chimney arrangement of two stacks, between the lean-to and each front room. The ell is now used as the residence of the museum's custodian.

Although the house has undergone considerable evolution, it retains its early appearance, especially from the front, an effect augmented by the informal landscaping. Its use as a museum has allowed the exposure of structural members, as well as an opportunity to compare material from three centuries.

<sup>1</sup>The suggestion of thatch-poles is introduced by J. Frederick Kelly, The Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut (New York: Dover reprint of 1924 ed., 1963), p. 49. Since the roof may postdate the house, it seems doubtful that thatch was actually used, despite the architectural vestige.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Eells-Stow house is one of the most interesting houses in Connecticut. As a 17th-century building, the house commands a degree of respect due to its age alone. Moreover, it presents to those interested in domestic architecture a series of mysteries regarding the dating of the various parts.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of argument over the sequence of construction one should not lose sight of the intrinsic merit of the house as a piece of historic architecture. In its present form the building exhibits a fairly coherent design, and many features show the peculiarities which distinguish the earlier building traditions from the work done in the middle of the 18th century. The shouldered posts and remarkably large girts and diagonals which are exposed in the north room typify the heavy framing of the 17th century. The marked overhang at the gable and the sharp projection of the cornice seem more extreme than in later work, and the plastered cove contributes to the early appearance. These details, some of which probably date from about 1720, are the more interesting in that later 18th-century material is represented by the framing and woodwork in the lean-to and the 19th century in the beaded casing of beams and the Federalist mantel.

The house was built sometime between 1679 and 1689 by Samuel Eells, a local magistrate. The most illustrious owners were Captain Stephen Stow and Freebeve Baldwin Stow. Together they nursed Revolutionary war prisoners who had contracted smallpox, until Captain Stow himself died of the disease. The architectural value of this house is complemented by its important associations with the American Revolution.

<sup>1</sup>Part of the problem is that at no time has all the house's fabric been exposed to investigators so theories have been based on partial evidence. Isham and Brown (1900) argued that the south room was built first with an end chimney, with the north room an early addition. Kelly, on the other hand, theorized that the whole house was built at once (except the 1880 ell), implying that the lack of roof patching indicated the chimney placement was original. Raney claimed that siding nail-holes showed the lean-to to be an addition, while at the same time introducing the evidence that the rear upper plate was all of a piece! Raney also cited the lighter framing of the north end as evidence of the addition, but from the revelation of the heavy girts, as well as the shouldered posts found in both parts, it seems incorrect to claim much dissimilarity.

More recent investigation by the historical society has found the central stack foundation; apparently enough (perhaps all) of the roof was replaced to prevent detection. Against the evidence of the rear plate (which would indicate that that the whole front was constructed as a unit) is evidence of plaster lath on the exterior of the south portion only, implying the north was an addition and also that there was considerable rebuilding of the upper parts. Perhaps further research will resolve these points.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Interview with Mr. Cable, Milford Historical Society restoration director, June 1976

Federal Writers Project, History of Milford, Connecticut, 1639-1939. Bridgeport: Milford Tercentenary Committee, 1939.

Isham, Norman M. and Albert F. Brown, Early Connecticut Houses. Providence: Preston & Rounds, 1900.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	662820	4564670
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Bruce Clouette, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE 23 May 1976

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

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 SHPO

DATE 12/19/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER	PAGE
Eells-Stow House	9	

Kelly, J.F. Connecticut's Old Houses, A Handbook and Guide (Stonington: Pequot Press, 1963; reprint of Tercentenary Booklet, 1935).

Raney, C.P. The Eells-Stow House, Colonial Dames Ms., Conn. State Library, 1940.

Stowe, Nathan. Sixty Year's Recollection of Milford. Milford: Village Improvement Association, 1917.