Form No. 10-300 REV. (9/77)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED FEB 23 1982
DATE ENTERED APR 1 1982

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Steamboat Dock Site

AND/OR COMMON
Steamboat Dock

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Main Street — N/A _NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Essex — N/A VICINITY OF — CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2nd -

STATE
Connecticut — CODE 09 — COUNTY Middlesex — CODE 007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
_DISTRICT	_PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	_AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM planne
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	_UNOCCUPIED	_COMMERCIAL	_PARK
_STRUCTURE	_BOTH	_WORK IN PROGRESS	_EDUCATIONAL	_PRIVATE RESIDENCE
X SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	_ENTERTAINMENT	_RELIGIOUS
_OBJECT	_IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	_GOVERNMENT	_SCIENTIFIC
	_BEING CONSIDERED	_YES: UNRESTRICTED	_INDUSTRIAL	_TRANSPORTATION
	N/A	_NO	_MILITARY	_OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
The Connecticut River Foundation at Steamboat Dock

STREET & NUMBER
Main Street

CITY, TOWN
Essex — N/A VICINITY OF — STATE Connecticut

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Essex Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER
West Avenue

CITY, TOWN
Essex — STATE Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
State Register of Historic Places

DATE
1981 — _FEDERAL X STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN
Hartford — STATE Connecticut

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	X MOVED DATE 1948 (Hayden Chandlery)
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

When steamboats plied the Connecticut River, their stop in Essex was at the eastern tip of Main Street, a location important to Essex maritime history since the mid-17th century. The Essex dockhouse for steamboats, the last of its kind on the Connecticut River, still stands today on this site, together with a second, smaller building, the Hayden Chandlery (Photograph 1).

The Essex steamboat dockhouse, built in 1878, is a three-story, oblong, clapboard structure without basement. Its gable roof is covered with wood shingles. There is a central cupola in the roof and a second-story bracketed balcony facing the river. The cupola and the balcony are the structure's only exterior architectural embellishments.

There are three bays in the river facade facing east, and in the rear elevation facing west, and five bays in the long, north and south side elevations, at first- and second-story levels. Each of the gable ends has paired windows in the third floor and a smaller, attic window above. The windows are 2-over-2 double-hung sash. On the river facade there are central double doors at the first floor, and a central, single door opening onto the balcony at the second floor. In the south elevation large double doors, suitable for a warehouse, occupy the second and third bays of the first floor and a single, partially glazed door is between the third and fourth bays, while on the rear elevation the only first-floor aperture is a double door. All doors and windows have been replaced during the present restoration, with the exception of the windows in the cupola. (Photographs 2, 3, 4, and 5)

The square cupola has simple pilasters with molded capitals at its corners, and has a 2-over-2 window in each face. Everything about the cupola, including the pilasters, the sash, and the interior framing, appears to date from 1878.

Inside the building the original framing is exposed. On the first and third floors, there are two rows of five square wood posts, chamfered, with lamb's tongue stops (Photograph 6). The first floor has original, caulked, heavy plank flooring, in random widths. On the second floor the posts are iron, and the flooring is of better quality (Photograph 7). In the attic the pegged, mortise-and-tenon framing is apparent. The heavy construction is clearly defined at the point where post, purlin, collar beam, and wind brace come together (Photograph 8).

As the dockhouse was constructed before elevators were in common use, goods were moved vertically by a hoist, through trap doors in the floors. The two-leaf trap doors are still in place and operable. When closed they appear to be a section of the floor (photograph 7), and when opened present the opportunity to move goods from the first to third floors (Photograph 10). Worn, half-round rope guides for the hoist are still in place.

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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The second structure on the site, the Hayden Chandlery, was moved from across the street to its present location in 1948. This 2-story, gable-roofed, rectangular, clapboard building has been altered and rebuilt from time to time, but its 3-bay, Georgian style facade retains several of its original characteristics. The central entrance has double doors flanked by pilasters under a gabled pediment. The semi-elliptical window with radial muntins above the doors is repeated in the roof gable-end pediment on a larger scale and with interlacing tracery. The raking cornices of the gable-end pediment have dentil courses. The large windows of many small panes are not original.

The west elevation of the Chandlery has a second-story, three-sided bay toward the front that is supported by a framework with points akin to cusps. The side door is two-thirds of the way back, with a short flight of steps to a landing in front of the door, and a gabled roof over the door. Five 12-over-12 windows occupy the rest of the wall. (Photograph 9) In the east elevation the first-story fenestration and second-story fenestration are similar. Toward the front there is a picture window flanked by casements, then two 12-over-12 windows. An eight-pane window separates the 12-over-12 windows in the second floor. At basement level the grade falls off rapidly, permitting two overhead garage doors toward the front and a conventional door toward the back in the cinder block wall on the east. The north elevation has an exterior brick chimney, flanked by 12-over-12 windows at first and second floors.

On the interior of the Chandlery, the floor plans of the first and second floors are the same, consisting of three rooms running the width of the building, in sequence. There is a simple flight of stairs, a straight run across the building, up from the side door. On the first floor the rooms are used as display space and offices for the Connecticut River Foundation, while the second floor is an apartment. In the front room of the second floor the roof framing is exposed. The sawn 4"x4" rafters on three-foot centers are fastened at the ridge line by mortise and tenon and peg, without ridge pole. Low collar beams are nailed into place. Flooring is 3" pine on the first floor, 4" on the second. There are a number of four-panelled doors, some with moldings, throughout the building that appear to be older than the present floor plan. The interior enframement of the front entrance consists of grooved boards, with circles at the upper corners. Above the enframement, narrow, vertical, beaded boards cover the wall around the semi-elliptical window. These elements appear to be original, as do the corner posts and girts of the building.

In the autumn of 1980, an external, wooden stair structure has been built on the north wall of the Dockhouse, slightly east of center. This means of egress was necessary to the planned use of the upper floor for educational purposes.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	X TRANSPORTATION	
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1878 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Criteria

The Essex steamboat dock site is significant because of the centuries of Connecticut maritime history associated with this location (Criterion A), and because the dockhouse itself is one of the few remaining architectural artifacts of the era when steamboats were of major importance to Essex and other towns on the Connecticut River (Criterion C).

The Site

The land on the eastern point of the Essex Main Street peninsula, on which the dockhouse stands, was part of the extensive holdings of the Lay family, as noted in the Saybrook Land Records, volume 1, page 1,[1] from the middle of the 17th century. As early as 1656, Robert Lay with the ketch DILIGENCE was engaged in the West Indies trade from Lay's Wharf on this site.

Shipbuilding soon became an important industry in Essex. The eastern point of the Main Street peninsula was a fine location for the purpose. Many ships were built here in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. For example, Connecticut's first warship in the Revolutionary War, the OLIVER CROMWELL was built just across the street from the dockhouse site on what is now the lawn of the Dauntless Club, then one of the most important shipyards in Connecticut.

The Lay family participated in the activity and continued to own their land on the north side of Main Street, without selling any. They did give to the town the land for Main Street, and they did lease parts of their holdings for various purposes. Ezra L'Hommedieu, a ship carver by trade, was working in a leased shop that stood about where the Hayden Chandlery now stands when, in 1809, he invented and patented the double-twist augur. His invention revolutionized the boring tool industry and, by introducing increased efficiency, had a substantial impact on the shipbuilding industry.

Another important event occurred on April 8, 1814 when a party of marines from the British fleet in Long Island Sound landed at the tip of the peninsula, now the steamboat dock site, and temporarily took possession of the town. While they spared the buildings, 28 vessels moored in the harbor were burned. Connecticut newspapers reported this event as the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED
UTM NOT VERIFIED

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.78

1 : 24000

QUADRANGLE NAME Essex

QUADRANGLE SCALE

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	718780	4580820
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is described in the Essex Land Records, volume 7,. page 125.

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

David F. Ransom — May 29, 1980

ORGANIZATION — DATE

Architectural historian

STREET & NUMBER — TELEPHONE

33 Sunrise Hill Drive — 203 521-2518

CITY OR TOWN — STATE

West Hartford — Connecticut

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X 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 Director, Connecticut Historical Commission — DATE February 11, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

William H. Brayman — DATE 4.1.82

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: by Patrick Andrus — DATE 4/1/82

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

GPO 921-803

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worst disaster to befall the United States since the beginning of the war.[2]

Captain Timothy Starkey and William S. Hayden in 1812 became leaseholders of a section of the Lay property that included the steamboat dock site, and actually purchased it in 1820.[3] They established a marine railway there, and conducted one of the largest shipyards in Connecticut. After Hayden's death in 1849, title passed by inheritance to his wife. Their daughter married Elias F. Parmelee, and the firm of Redfield and Parmelee operated a shipyard on the northern section of the present site where in 1851 they built and launched the largest vessel ever built on the Connecticut River, the MIDDLESEX, of 1424 tons register.

Steamboat service started on the Connecticut River in 1823 with trips twice a week between Essex and Hartford. The following year the Connecticut River Steamboat Co. began operations from Hartford to New York with the OLIVER ELLSWORTH. The steamboat landing at Essex was at a wharf adjacent to and just south of the present site. A dock was built there in 1845. Some 33 years later, in 1878, when better facilities were needed, William H. Parmelee, son of Elias F. Parmelee, built a new steamboat dock and the existing dockhouse on the present site, which then was still owned by his grandmother, Mrs. William S. Hayden, who lived until 1888.

Steamboat service continued on the Connecticut River until 1931. On October 31, 1931, the MIDDLETOWN made her last run from Hartford to New York. When the MIDDLETOWN left Essex she was boarded by a large crowd of local people for the symbolic and emotional final trip down river to Sayrbook Point.

Title to the steamboat dock property descended to William H. Parmelee who owned it at the time of his death in 1933. His estate sold the steamboat dock site, and it passed through several hands until being acquired by the Connecticut River Foundation in 1974.

The Dockhouse

When William H. Parmelee built the dockhouse in 1878, its eastern end extended into the river, supported on pilings, with a broad dock in front of it, as shown in an 1881 view (Figure 11). This view shows the balcony, cupola, and twin chimneys in place. The cupola remains, a remnant of the front chimney can be seen in the attic, and the rear chimney has been re-built on the exterior of the rear wall. The balcony was reconstructed in 1979. The heavy, chamfered wooden posts and the pegged, mortise-and-tenon framing are of interest as an example of traditional building methods still in use in a commercial building after the Civil War, when the balloon frame was coming into common use for residential structures.

Parmelee kept meticulous records, that are now part of the Connecticut River Foundation Collection, of the number of passengers arriving and departing on each boat, and, at greater length, of each freight shipment and the charges to be collected for it. In addition, he operated a store, apparently a general store, in the west end of the building. The Parmelee family lived in an apartment on the second floor, above the store. Parmelee was a prominent citizen of the town, serving at various times as selectman, assessor, and treasurer. He was also president of the Essex Savings Bank.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the function of the steamboat dock was not limited to serving the steamboats. In addition, it was a general-purpose commercial dock and warehouse. Coal and lumber, for example, were unloaded and stored on the premises. The combination of the service to the steamboats, the store, and general warehouse and commercial activity made the steamboat dock a nerve center in the town's daily life.

After the sale of the dockhouse site by the Parmelee estate, it was put to various commercial uses. For years it was a marine hardware store and service center with gas pumps for boats. The Black Swan Tea Room occupied part of the second floor. There was a roller skating rink in the building for a time. When the Essex Yacht Club was formed, it was a tenant at the steamboat dock in 1934-36, the first two years of its existence.

In 1951 physical changes in the wharf were made as a result of flood damage. The dockhouse was pulled back to the west so that it now rests entirely on land, and the wharf was rebuilt on a smaller scale. Many of the 20th-century changes have now been reversed by the Connecticut River Foundation, although the iron posts on the second floor, installed when this area was used as a restaurant, remain.

Work on the dockhouse by the foundation continues. When completed, the ground floor will house a reception area, temporary exhibits, and a room for lectures and programs. On the second floor will be the Foundation's administrative offices and a permanent exhibit of "Life at the River's Edge" consisting of models, paintings, dioramas, photographs, and other artifacts from the Foundation's collection. A conservation work area, curatorial office, and Trustees' meeting room will occupy the third floor.

The Hayden Chandlery

The Hayden Chandlery was built in 1813 at a location diagonally across the street on the southwest corner of Main Street and Novelty Lane as the chandlery and general store of Captain Richard Hayden (1772-1886), a prominent member of the famous Essex shipbuilding family. In 1804 he

built the schooner SNAKE IN THE GRASS which he took to New York and sold, a procedure that he followed with several more ships. In 1813 he built his masterpiece, the privateer BLACK PRINCE, pierced for 20 guns, but she never saw service. The BLACK PRINCE was a casualty of the British raid of April 8, 1814. After the war, while in New York for the purpose of recouping his fortunes, Richard Hayden died there under mysterious circumstances in 1816.

The chandlery appears in the 1881 view (Figure 11) where it is seen to be in the front yard of a house, in fact, almost abutting the house. The accompanying legend identifies the chandlery as "John Halliday & Co., Drugs, Medicines." At various times it also served as a plumbing shop and ice cream store. A turn-of-the-century photo shows the structure with a one-story Greek Revival style front porch the width of the building. The porch has four square columns with molded capitals and a parapet, suggesting a usable second-story porch level. The three-sided bay with 2-over-2 sash is in place on the side, but with strut supports in lieu of the present more ornate arrangement, and the hood over the side door is a simple sloping shed roof instead of the present gable roof.

When the chandlery was moved across the street in 1948 the steamboat dock site and the Novelty Lane corner were under common ownership. The move opened up the front yard of the 18th-century Novelty Lane house to good advantage, as may be seen today. The chandlery, at its new location, was remodelled into two apartments. It was at this time that the large shop windows were fitted with muntins and glazing and 12-over-12 windows were added in the side elevations for the present "colonial" appearance.

The Hayden Chandlery will be converted into a secure, fire-proof repository for the Foundation's archives, chief among which will be the important library of the eminent maritime historian, Thomas A. Stevens, whose research has provided most of the information for this nomination. With the Stevens Library the Connecticut River Foundation will be the major archival resource for research on Connecticut River history.

1.
Essex was part of the Town of Saybrook until 1854.

2.
Stevens' fn. 6 cites the (New London) Connecticut Gazette, April 13, 1814 (Middletown) Middlesex Gasette, April 14, 1814.

3.
Saybrook Land Records, 19/56, 20/11

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Steamboat Dock Site, Essex, CT

The Deep River New Era, November 17, 1933

Saybrook Land Records, 1/1, 19/56, 20/11.

Thomas A. Stevens, Connecticut River Master Mariners, Essex: The Connecticut River Foundation at Steamboat Dock, 1979.

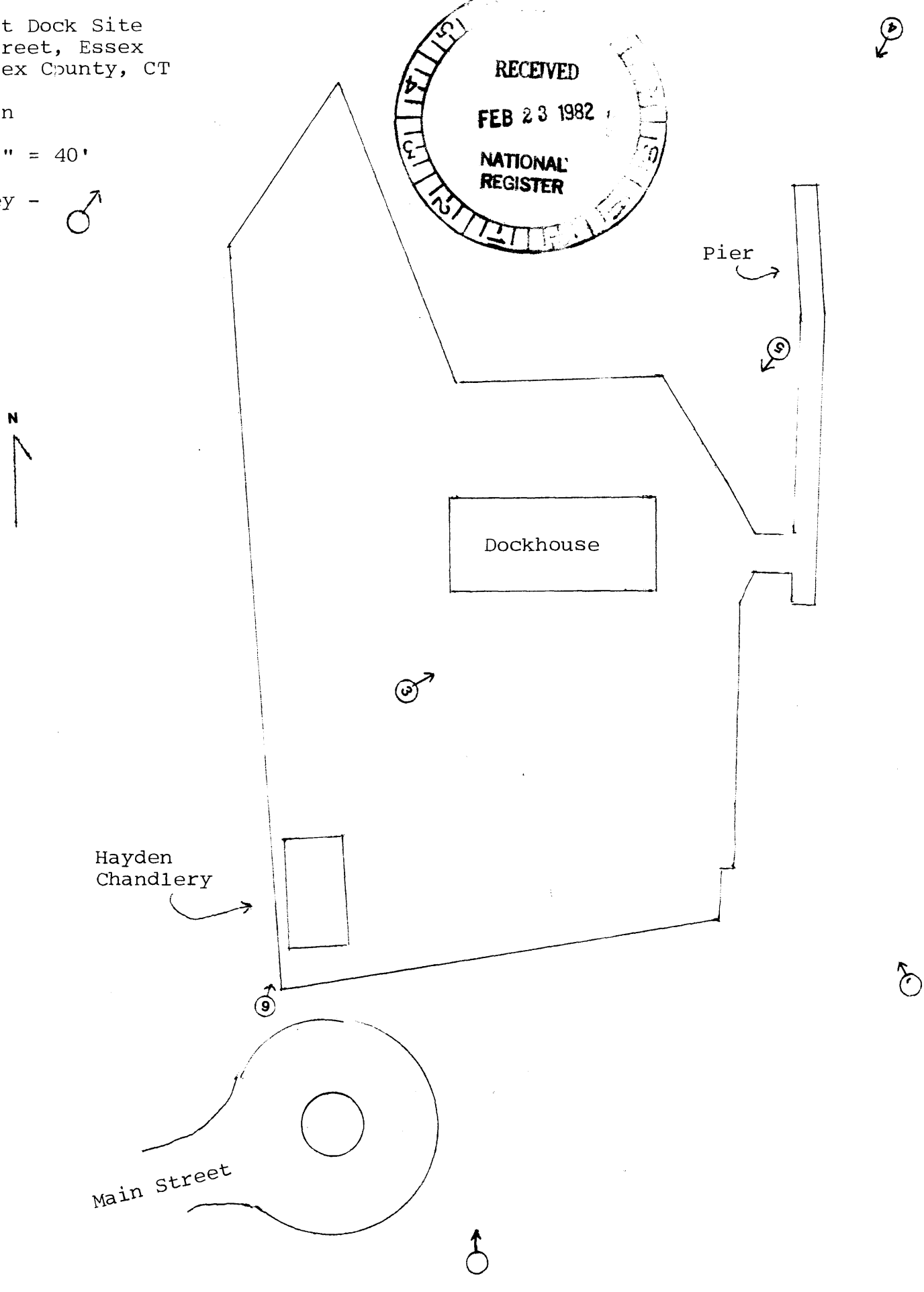
Thomas A. Stevens, "The Connecticut River Steamboat Dock at Essex, Connecticut," n.d., published without footnotes as "A History of the Steamboat Dock" in the (Old Lyme) Gazette, April 10, 1975.

View of Essex, Boston: O. H. Bailey & Co., 1881.

Steamboat Dock Site
Main Street, Essex
Middlesex County, CT

Site plan

Scale: 1" = 40'

Photo key -

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