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Historic and Architectural Resources in Ledyard, Connecticut

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Introduction and General History

Ledyard is located in New London County in southeastern Connecticut. It is part of the second tier of towns above the coast in the region designated as the Eastern Coastal Slope in the statewide comprehensive preservation plan. The town encompasses a 40-square mile area, bounded on the north by the Town of Preston, on the east by the towns of North Stonington and Stonington, on the south by the Town of Groton, and on the west by the Thames River.

Although the Dutch had explored the eastern coast of Connecticut in the early 1600s, European settlement of this area was delayed by the presence of the Pequots, the dominate tribe in the region. They controlled the territory from the Connecticut River east to the Rhode Island border, along with the north shore of Long Island, and enjoyed a trading monopoly with the Dutch. When English traders supplanted the Dutch and began to trade with the other local tribes, disputes between the English and the Pequots finally escalated into full-scale war in 1637. The Pequots were defeated and dispersed, to be assimilated by treaty into other tribes in the region. They continued to return to their original territory and by 1667 a Pequot reservation was established in the northeast corner of what is now Ledyard on the east side of the Thames River.

This area, today the towns of Groton and Ledyard, was originally part of New London, founded after the Pequot War and claimed for a time by both the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies. John Winthrop, Jr., later governor of Connecticut, the son of the famous Puritan John Winthrop, himself governor of Massachusetts, established the first settlement there on the west bank of the Great River, as the Thames was then known. The east side of the river, also part of Winthrop's territory, at first was reserved for the grazing of cattle. Winthrop's plantation grew with the inclusion of a number of settlers from Massachusetts and by 1658 was known officially as New London.

Expansion across and up the Thames was inevitable as land was needed for sons and grandsons of New London proprietors. In the 1650s the east side of the river was laid out for settlement, to become the independant Town of Groton by 1705. Despite the presence of a trading post and several isolated farms by the late 1600s, settlement further inland in North Groton, later to become Ledyard, was generally delayed until the early eighteenth century. By then the threat of Indian attack was a distant memory; settlers were free to take up land even in such remote areas and establish farms that were widely separated from one another.

The struggle for survival on less desirable farmland of the frontier took precedence over communal institutions for almost a generation. With at least 30 percent of Ledyard's land considered too rocky for agricultural purposes, and most of the

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remainder more suitable for pasture than crops, farmers did indeed struggle to provide food and shelter for their families. Although a few settlers had a surplus for market, most were subsistence farmers on large isolated farms where many first lived in one-room houses that were later enlarged as full-size Capes. A few of the wealthier men built larger two-story Colonials. Although the settler families intermarried, they tended to congregate on their original land grants, establishing family enclaves that persisted into the twentieth century, in areas of town that still bear their names.

The North or Second Society of Groton was legally empowered to build a church and hire its own minister in 1725/26. Initially they met in several settlers' homes in rotation in different parts of the parish. By 1729 they had a small meetinghouse located in the geographical center of the parish and a settled minister, the Reverend Ebenezer Punderson. Within four years he resigned to become the leader of an Anglican sect, which built its own church in Ledyard to serve Episcopalians from both Groton and North Groton. Dissension continued to plague the Congregational Church during the Great Awakening. At that time a group of Separatists left the society and built their own meetinghouse in the western part of town. The last colonial minister of the North Society left Ledyard just before the Revolution; the church was more or less abandoned until Congregationalism revived in the 1800s.

The seat of local civil authority remained in Groton proper until Ledyard achieved full autonomy as an incorporated town in 1836. Even though town meetings alternated between the two parishes and officials were elected or appointed from both societies, the North Society had little direct control over its own constituency, as evidenced by the problems in building a strong church society and the presence of many dissident sects. Even prior to dissension in the established church, there were Baptists in North Groton, founders of the first church of this denomination in the colony by 1705 and later, Rogerene Quakers, who came here from New London.

Educational needs were met by schools held in the homes of settlers as early as 1706 under the supervision of the First Society. By 1741 the Second Society met its obligation under colony law to establish schools, the year funds became available from the sale of colony land along the New York border. Because of the dispersed population, four schools had to be built and staffed. As early as 1770 the town was divided into 12 school districts where schools were maintained on a more or less regular basis into the twentieth century.

As was so often the case in a dispersed farming community, there were nascent population centers near sources of transportation and commerce. Notably, there was no residential or commercial development at this time around the Congregational Church. Instead, a few houses and shops were clustered to the north at a major highway crossroads and at the ferry landing on the Thames River, where there was a

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small trading port. A third village was founded on the east side of town by Rogerene Quakers, who eventually had their own meetinghouse, school, and cemetery.

Coastal communities were particularly vulnerable during the Revolution. Near the end of the war, many Ledyard men responded to a major attack by the British on New London and Groton. At Fort Griswold, 28 townsmen died there in the Battle of Groton Heights; most were killed, along with their commander, Colonel William Ledyard, after an honorable surrender had been arranged. Others were severely wounded and/or taken prisoner. Although Colonel Ledyard was a Groton resident, later the Town of Ledyard was named in his honor. At least a dozen homes have survived of the families whose sons and fathers died in the battle. It is estimated that almost 20 percent of the families in Ledyard suffered at least one loss; several lost men from more than one generation.

When the social and economic turmoil generated by the Revolution was finally resolved by the establishment of the federal government, Ledyard was entering a new modern era. Some of the sweeping changes that took place in the coming century, such as the Industrial Revolution, virtually passed it by, but the town was faced with the associated problems of land scarcity and population decline.

The population of Ledyard was about 2000 when the town broke away from Groton in 1836. By 1880 there had been a net loss of about 600, 30 percent, and the population continued to decline to about 1200 by the turn of the century, where it remained until about 1940. Town records attest to the fact that a combination of factors produced the net decline in population over time: a lower birthrate, fewer marriages, but most importantly, emigration.

In 1900 the federal census recorded 212 farms in Ledyard, which would average out to be about 5.6 people per farm. Clearly, existing farms, many dating back to the early 1800s, were supporting the maximum number of people possible. Fewer new farmhouses were built or needed, especially after 1850, since the surplus population was siphoned off to the frontier, as it had been since before the Revolution. Some landless sons found the sea an alternative, shipping out on vessels in the coastal and West Indies trade or the whaling industry.

Some of the farmers who stayed in Ledyard found a ready market for their products in the region's expanding market economy of the first half of the nineteenth century. A few built new farmhouses in this period, generally in the Greek Revival style. Agriculture became increasingly specialized, especially by the late 1800s, with farm produce such as eggs, apples, and strawberries marketed in nearby cities or shipped by rail throughout the Northeast.

Two villages developed in this period. There was major growth in Gales Ferry Village, which soon had its own stores and school. With the maritime expansion of the larger ports of the region, many sea captains made their homes there. Although

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many of the buildings now are gone, a small new village sprang up in Ledyard center, as a commercial and institutional center of town. Its stores and shops provided a local market for farm produce. Town meetings were held in the basement of the new Congregational Church, built in the Greek Revival style in 1843. However, until a separate town hall was built about 1930, town offices were located in the homes of one of the current selectmen or town clerk.

The town changed very little in the first half of the twentieth century. Until World War II, Ledyard's historic landscape appeared much the same as it had been for a hundred years, even though automobiles and mechanized farming equipment had largely replaced horse-drawn vehicles. One indicator of the stability of the population was the fact that education was still carried on in many of the one-room district schoolhouses as late as 1945.

The railroad replaced the Thames River as the primary transportation artery and facilitated the shipment of goods and passenger travel on the east side of the river after the spur line from Norwich was extended to the coast. By the turn of the century, 15 trains, four carrying mail, stopped daily at the Gales Ferry station (no longer standing), bringing newcomers to the village and directly fostering a resort community on the "Bluffs" overlooking the river. The first cottages there were built by the railroad for their employees, soon followed by others built by people from as far as away as New York, who often arrived each summer by train.

There was dramatic growth after World War II. Although the federal government had owned a piece of land in Ledyard at the southwest corner since about 1880, the military presence in the town was remote until the advent of the Cold War. By the 1970s the population had soared to 12,000, largely due to expansion at the submarine base and Electric Boat, both in Groton, putting a great demand on town resources. New schools and more housing were needed. The first consolidated school, built in the center in 1949, met the need only temporarily. By 1970 the school census was 3635, a more than fourfold increase in 30 years, eventually requiring more elementary schools outside the center. One of these was located in the Highlands neighborhood, where more than 300 houses were built between 1959 and 1963, the largest housing development in town. Today Ledyard provides education through grade 12, with a middle school and a high school. The population, which has remained fairly stable in the past 20 years, is presently about 15,000.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

I. Agriculture 1700 - 1930

A. Property Type - Eighteenth-Century Farmsteads

Associated Subtypes:

1. Colonial farmhouses
 - a. Capes
 - b. Two-story Colonials
2. Associated secondary structures

II. Maritime Development 1750 - 1925

A. Property Type - Maritime Historic Districts

Associated Subtypes:

1. Colonial houses
2. Capes
3. Federal-style houses
4. Greek Revival-style houses
5. Italianate-style houses
6. Nineteenth-century vernacular houses
7. Early-twentieth-century vernacular houses
8. Associated secondary structures
9. Associated maritime structures

E - I. Agriculture 1700 - 1930

Ledyard is located in the coastal glacial moraine formed during the last Ice Age, an area with a rugged terrain and relatively poor glacial till soils. The settlers had to exploit to the fullest every available natural resource, even to provide food and shelter. The endless stone walls in Ledyard today are mute testament to the labor involved in just clearing the land for cultivation. Although the hills never reach much more than 350 feet, the rolling terrain, with exposed granite ledges, is interspersed with valleys of small streams and swamps, leaving very little level land for planting. Even swampland was utilized in the colonial period. In the Great Cedar Swamp in the northeastern section, narrow strips of land were laid out to each settler to harvest for fence posts and shingles. A pine swamp inland from Allyn's Point was considered such a valuable source of masts for ships that it was shared by New London and Groton even after the towns separated in 1705. The Thames River was a major resource as a transportation artery which provided access to markets from the 1600s through the 1800s. Standing ruins remain from waterpowered eighteenth-century mills along its coves and inlets and on the banks of interior streams; one nineteenth-century sawmill is still operating on Lee Brook.

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The settlement pattern in Ledyard bore no resemblance to the earlier nucleated villages founded by the settlers' ancestors. Instead, it was widely dispersed, an approach essentially dictated by the terrain and the early large land divisions, but one that tended to militate against the later formation of a cohesive community. A measure of that isolation is still evident today, with some of the early farmsteads still located well off the beaten track at a distance from public highways.

Each farmstead was more or less self sufficient in the eighteenth century, producing its own food and the raw material for clothes. Although there is some evidence that flax was grown for cloth and grain crops such as rye and wheat were cultivated, most land was used for forage crops and pasture. Taking their cue from the Pequots, the settlers also planted orchards and corn. Sheep provided wool, woven in the home, usually in the attic or in an attached shed. Swine and cattle were raised for meat, leather, and dairy products for domestic consumption. By the end of the colonial period, cattle and horses were raised for export in the coastal and West Indies trades.

The main house of these farmsteads was often a small Cape, a form that continued in popularity into the nineteenth century. More than 60 of this type have survived in Ledyard. Less common is the larger gable-roofed farmhouse in a two-story or saltbox form. Although most of the present associated outbuildings are probably later replacements for the original eighteenth-century structures, a number of farmsteads have retained their associated barns, sheds, and corncribs. Several still have stone-walled pens and pentways.

Many of the early farmhouses in Ledyard evolved over time. It is apparent from the architectural evidence that one-room "starter" houses were common, to be enlarged when more space was needed for growing families. Even as late as 1750, some houses were simply one main room, called the "hall," a medieval term, with a sleeping loft above, accessed by a ladder. The cooking fireplace in an end chimney also supplied heat; a few had a cooking hearth in the cellar. Some were initially larger two-room houses, with a full foundation only under the hall. As both of these types expanded, additions were made to the chimney stack to accommodate more flues, including those for fireplaces in the parlor and the kitchen, the baking oven of the latter, and the chambers on the second floor. These new hearths often were built to Rumford proportions, indicating that the additions were made after the Revolution.¹ Most of these houses face south to maximize solar heat in winter, even turning their backs to the road to do so. While this solar orientation was not unusual for very early houses in Connecticut, in Ledyard, the practice was very common and continued into the nineteenth century.

Some Ledyard farmers began to prosper in the first half of the nineteenth century, largely in response to changing economic conditions. Subsistence farming and a

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barter economy began to give way to a market economy. Even though the farm economy of the state was faltering, farmers locally found a special niche where they could prosper, relatively untroubled by the problems facing Connecticut's grain farmers: depleted soil, disease, and competition from Western farms. Ledyard's agriculture had never depended solely on grains, and farmers found a growing market for their dairy and poultry products in Norwich and nearby coastal cities and towns. There was more ready cash generated to buy goods in a number of general stores built at this time. Fewer sons stayed on the farm but the labor shortage was eased by the use of hired labor for the first time. Roads were improved and the rail line was extended from Norwich to Allyn's Point in Ledyard by 1844, making it easier to bring goods to market. In fact, the second quarter of the nineteenth century was especially prosperous because the price of farm produce rose dramatically in response to demand generated by the growth of cities in the Northeast. In Ledyard this prosperity is reflected in a group of quite stylish farmhouses built by mid-century in the Greek Revival and Italianate styles.

There was an even greater degree of agricultural specialization as the century progressed. Pomiculture was revived, with both peaches and apples becoming market crops. One of the major figures in this field was Russell Gallup on the farm established by his grandfather, Deacon Russell Gallup, in 1826, known today as Applewood. By 1900 a descendant, Everett Gallup, was a truck gardener there. The cultivation of strawberries was a major source of income, with as many as 6000 baskets shipped daily by 1900. The production of eggs became an industry, shipped by rail to coastal cities and north to Massachusetts.

The few new farmhouses that were constructed in Ledyard after 1850 are a reliable indication that not all farmers were successful. Although in one case, an exceptional example of the Carpenter Gothic style was built by a newcomer to town on land that had been farmed for generations by members of the Fanning family near the eastern border, most late-nineteenth-century farmhouses were often austere vernacular dwellings, relieved only by the detailing of open Victorian porches.

Only in recent years has development begun to impact on the integrity of the historic agrarian landscape in Ledyard. Although there are still working dairy farms in town which utilize the old houses and outbuildings and some residents carry on farm-related avocations, such as the raising of horses, thereby maintaining the integrity of ancient farmsteads, farmland has been subdivided for residential use. Development rights to three farms have been purchased by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, part of a statewide effort to preserve farmland. The recession of the early 1990s has put a damper on building, but any resurgence in residential construction will continue to erode Ledyard's heritage. Of special concern is the exceptional number of historic farmsteads that are preserved almost in their entirety. These highly significant reminders of the town's agrarian past are worthy of preservation, especially those that have stood for almost three centuries.

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F - I. Associated Property Types - Eighteenth-Century Farmsteads

Description

Eighteenth-century farmsteads, the primary associated property type, are characterized in Ledyard by open fields and pastures, often bordered by dry-laid stone walls and pentways. The associated subtypes include the centerpiece of each farmstead, a simple farmhouse, built either in the one-story Cape or two-story Colonial form, and related outbuildings grouped around the farmyard. The latter subtype includes wood-framed barns, sheds, privies, and corncribs. Stone-lined wells capped with stone or concrete are often found near the house.

Most of the colonial Capes are one story in height with three- or five-bay facades. Some Capes evolved from earlier one-room, end-chimney structures; some were not completed until after the Revolution. The floorplans are similar: commonly up to about 40 feet in length and varying in width from 24 to 32 feet. They have simple gable roofs, with widely spaced rafters and collar beams. None of those examined have a true purlin and principal rafter system, common before 1720. The few that utilize the double-pitched gambrel roof were generally built or enlarged after 1750. Typically, most Capes have very small multi-paned windows in the gables, at the peak and/or the eaves. They display a slightly off-center chimney stack above the ridge, commonly built of brick, but occasionally stone. The foundations are generally quarried granite block or rubble, often with a full cellar only under part of the house. Most early houses of this type have facade windows set right up under the eaves; some display slight overhangs on the gable ends. With few exceptions, the stairway to the second level is located to the rear of the house, although a few examples, especially those where the center chimney stack has been removed or reduced in size, now have a centrally located stairwell at the front door. A special feature of the Ledyard Cape is an ell on one side of the rear elevation, either under an extension of the main roof or with its own shed roof, which average less than 100 square feet in size. Since those that are integral or early construction antedate the period of the summer kitchen, the original purpose of these small rooms is not generally understood. In a few known cases, they served as milk or well rooms.

The two-story, center-chimney house form with a gabled roof is less common in Ledyard. The colonial examples that have survived were built from about 1700 to 1780, but the form persisted well beyond that time, until about 1860. It is possible that some of the early examples also evolved from one- or two-room houses. Also sheathed in clapboard and resting on granite block foundations, these generally more formal houses were often embellished with new doorways in the later Federal and Greek Revival periods. Their floorplans are similar in size to those of the Capes, and almost invariably about 40 feet in length. The stairwell is located in front of

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the stack, rising from what was then known as the "porch," today's front hall, with the rest of the rooms organized around the stack in standard fashion. The windows are larger, with more panes in each sash, although the pane size is similar to those found in the Cape.

In Ledyard, as in all of southern New England, most barns are detached and typically set on dry-laid, quarried granite or rubblestone foundations and have gabled roofs. Some of the early barns utilize large single granite blocks as piers for intermediate support. When the terrain permits, they have two floors with high exposed foundations on one or two sides. They are all built with post-and-beam framing, utilizing standard braced bents, 14 to 16 feet wide, a system of construction common in New England, and are sheathed with vertical siding. Gable-roofed, intersecting additions were added when more space was needed. The smaller associated buildings utilized similar construction and materials. Corncribs are universally set on stone piers instead of a full foundation and are characterized by side walls that slant outwards (from the sill to the plate).

Until the late nineteenth century when agricultural specialization produced large function-specific buildings such as dairy barns, barns were multi-purpose structures, designed and sited to serve the needs of subsistence farmers. Animal stalls were located at grade, inside the stone foundation, with the threshing floor, sometimes with grain bins, and haylofts above. The main floor was sometimes used for shearing sheep. Large doors in the long elevations were placed so that wagons could be driven through the barn. Often their gable ends faced south, turning away from the prevailing winter storms, so that snow did not accumulate in front of the stalls, or in the stone-walled pens at this end. Cupolas for ventilation did not appear until the last half of nineteenth century, sometimes as additions to existing barns. Silos to store fodder were a feature introduced after 1875.

Statement of Significance

Eighteenth-century farmsteads in Ledyard are highly significant historic resources which illustrate the development of Ledyard from settlement through to 1800. Historically, these farmsteads were self-contained isolated entities, widely dispersed throughout the community, a pattern of settlement which was typical for inland towns on the coastal frontier in this period. With their well-preserved farmhouses, associated outbuildings, and stone-walled fields, Ledyard's farmsteads are exceptionally evocative of historic colonial lifeways. Those still located some distance from public roads particularly convey their sense of historic isolation because of the superior integrity of their rural setting, adding to their inherent significance. In addition to their importance as tangible evidence of the early agricultural development in the community, some derive added local significance from their association with prominent settler families who played a leading role in the development of the town well into the twentieth century.

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The buildings associated with these farmsteads are significant representative examples of Connecticut's traditional domestic and farm-related architecture in the eighteenth century. Several farmhouses illustrate the evolution of the colonial house from a one-room, end-chimney structure to a full-sized house of either the Cape or Colonial form, contributing to their significance. Although interior integrity is not required for registration (see below), some farmhouses derive further significance for the integrity of their interior design and materials. Few, if any of the associated outbuildings which stand today actually date from the eighteenth century but they have continued to be rebuilt or repaired over time in the same fashion, often on the same foundation, demonstrating construction techniques and agrarian practices that persisted for more than 200 years in Connecticut.

Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for listing, eighteenth-century farmsteads must retain the historic integrity of their rural setting, defined here to include not only the nucleus of the historic farm, the farmyard and its associated structures, but also the surrounding open and wooded land historically associated with the farmstead. Even though, in some cases, adjacent farmland is no longer cultivated and/or an integral part of the nominated property, it should retain its rural character be free from intrusive modern development. In addition, the farmstead should contain at the minimum a traditional rural farmhouse, of either the Cape or Colonial form, and one or more intact outbuildings. Although stylistic concerns are limited, the farmhouses must retain enough exterior integrity of location, form, setting, and materials to convey their period of construction and their associative qualities. Exterior remodeling or additions should be compatible and not compromise exterior integrity or detract from inherent historic associations. The main block of houses that have evolved from smaller dwellings must have achieved their present form within the period of significance. The outbuildings may be contemporary or of later construction but they must display the siting, form, and construction techniques consistent with eighteenth-century practice.

Nominations were prepared for the following eligible properties and are attached:

Avery Homestead, 20 Avery Hill Road
Chapman, David, Farmstead, 128 Stoddards Wharf Road.
Fanning, Captain Thomas, Farmstead, 1004 Shewville Road
Noyes, William, Farmstead, 340 Gallup Hill Road
Stoddard, Mark, Farmstead, 24 Vinegar Hill Road

The Nathan Lester House, 153 Vinegar Hill Road, the only other property which fulfills the registration requirements, was listed on the National Register in 1972.

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E - II. Maritime Development 1750 - 1925

Access to the Thames River had been important since the 1600s. But settlement there was limited to a trading post and individual farms until a ferry to Montville was authorized by the colonial government in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1736 several men petitioned the colony for the ferry rights, but the question was settled in favor of local residents, Ralph Stoddard, Jr., and his partner, John Hurlbutt. Before the operation could begin, however, a contract, specifying the location and the fares to be charged, had to be approved by the General Court, which was done in 1740. Stoddard died four years later, leaving to his son Wait his half interest in the property: wharf, house, boat, and canoe. By 1759 the ferry privilege and property had been sold to Roger Gale. Although he owned the ferry rights for only four years, his name remains identified with the area even today. A succession of owners are recorded until about 1865, at which time the ferry operation apparently ceased to be profitable. Two of the ferrymen's houses still stand in the village next door to each other on Hurlbutt Road, the 1795 John Allyn, Jr. House and the 1827 William Browning House. Allyn took over in 1774; Browning purchased the ferry rights in 1822 and had a store (no longer extant) at the Upper Wharf.

By 1750 the community consisted of a few houses and a cooper's shop near the Lower Wharf, along with the ferry landing and house at the Upper Wharf. Although the cooper's shop is no longer standing, it is a definite indicator of trade, even at this early date; many goods were shipped in barrels, especially salt-cured beef or fish. Only one house remains from the colonial period. It was built by Benajah Davis about 1750 but was moved from a nearby site and enlarged as a two-story gambrel-roofed house in the nineteenth century.

Gales Ferry, the only maritime village in Ledyard, developed primarily in the nineteenth century and is still largely intact. It encompassed most of the original tract of the ferry owners and became generally self-sustaining. Although the village is primarily residential today, it had its own institutions, including a library, a church, and a schoolhouse, the later two located at some distance from the river at the eastern end of Hurlbutt Road. By mid-century there were several stores, shops, and a post office in the village.

Besides the ferry landing, there was commercial activity at both the Upper and Lower wharves, but none of the buildings remain at those sites. One of the merchants, Daniel Copp, who built his fine Federal-style house just prior to 1800, also had a store on his property, located near the Upper Wharf. The latter burned in 1957 and was replaced by a modern house. In addition to the ferryman's house, one other house was built in the early Federal period: the Thomas Geer House, a gambrel-roofed Cape built in 1796 and sold in 1799 to Alexander Allyn, a mariner in the coastal

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trade. Later commercial development in the village included the 1899 Samuel Brown Store, now converted to a house. It was taken over by Norman and Povey in 1926 and continued to serve as the village general store and post office for 40 years. Another store was located on the property where the circa 1850 Victorian Vernacular Sarah Vincent House now stands at the intersection of Hurlbutt Road and Riverside Place. It was run by her husband, Samuel, until his death. A cabinetmaker's shop was also located here and may be one of the present associated outbuildings.

A significant proportion of the 27 historic houses in both sections of the village were built or lived in by captains or masters of whaling vessels. They probably sailed from Connecticut's major whaling ports, New London, Stonington, or Mystic, during the heyday of the whaling and sealing trade. Although New Bedford, Massachusetts, ranked first in the country, third-ranked New London was the major port in Connecticut for this traffic, accounting for 196 of the 275 vessels engaged in the trade from the three ports of New London County. The trade, which began at New London in 1784, followed by Mystic and Stonington after the War of 1812, and prospered until the Civil War, had generally ceased by 1900.²

One of the first houses near the river associated with a sailing master was a Cape built in 1842 for Captain Abel Bolles. It replaced an earlier house on the site built by another mariner, Captain Ebenezer Miner. Although the house owned by Captain Francis Lester to the south was razed and replaced by one for his sister, Rebecca Bailey, the home of his brother, Captain Austin Lester, is still standing. Austin Lester, a whaling and sealing master, was part owner of several whaling ships; his wealth is reflected in the level of style of his fine Greek Revival-style house, which he built in 1846. Captain Erasmus Rogers, who bought the house in 1867, finally retired there in 1877. Across the street is an Italianate house built about 1875 as a retirement home for Captain Latham Brown, who sailed around the Horn and served with Admiral Farragut during the Civil War.

Many of the Greek Revival houses farther east on Hurlbutt Road also were built or owned by whaling captains or masters. They are gable-to-street pedimented houses with the typical doorways of this style. They include the homes of George A. Bailey, Stephen Perkins, Orlando Bolles, and Ralph Arthur. The latter captain died at Ascension Island in the South Pacific. Another local mariner who died at sea was Albert Hempsted, who built a small Cape for his father in this part of the village.

Later in the nineteenth century Gales Ferry Village became the center for inter-collegiate rowing regattas. Although other Ivy League colleges competed here, the village is primarily identified with the Yale-Harvard Regatta, held generally every year on the Thames starting in 1878 and continuing to the present day. Several houses were the training headquarters for the Yale University rowing crew, including

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the Latham Brown House and the Thomas Geer House. The Geer House, originally a small gambrel-roofed Cape, has a large annex extending towards the river, constructed to house Yale's rowing crews. A large boathouse for the rowing shells, sited along the river below these houses, was built in the early 1900s. A third building, a 1905 cottage to the northwest of the Geer House and closer to the river, which was used for the coaching staff, burned in 1975. Other college crews rented rooms for the season. Harvard University crews traditionally stayed at Charles Stoddard's farm on Long Cove Road to the south of the village and their boathouse is located farther south on the riverbank. For a number of the years, the crews, which arrived by train on the other side of the river at Montville, were ferried across in a rowboat by Gertrude Bolles, the last ferry person in the village. She moved to Gales Ferry after her marriage and lived across the street from the Geer House in the Sarah Vincent House. Bolles also served as the caretaker for the Geer House across the street. The regatta attracted large crowds, reaching 100,000 in 1925, its peak year. The railroads ran observation trains consisting of flatcars, to view the race, first from the other side of the river, and after 1909 on the Gales Ferry side, on the line extended south from Allyn's Point to the coast.

F - II. Associated Property Types - Maritime Historic Districts

Description

The maritime village of Gales Ferry in Ledyard consists of two historic districts which contain collections of houses, former commercial buildings, and associated outbuildings in their original setting. Although the entire historic core of the village is potentially eligible for the National Register for its association with the local historic context, it is effectively divided into two residential neighborhoods by the deep railroad cut established about 1900 and the intrusion of non-contributing buildings. The attached nomination for Gales Ferry Historic District #1 includes the section from the riverbank to the railroad cut (all of Riverside Place and the western end of Hurlbutt Road) and is based on this historic context. (See boundary justification in the attached nomination.) A similar district nomination based on this context is planned for the section farther east on Hurlbutt Road, to be called Gales Ferry Historic District #2.

With few exceptions the houses associated with this village are vernacular structures dating from about 1750 to 1910. They are all woodframe buildings and range in height from one to two stories. Although some of the vernacular dwellings are influenced by period styles, only a few examples display the form and features of the Federal, Greek Revival, or Italianate style.

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Statement of Significance

These historic districts are significant cohesive entities which convey their association with the maritime development of Ledyard from 1750 to 1930. Resources that contribute to the historic character of the districts and convey their association with the historic context include the following subtypes: vernacular dwellings, interspersed with individually significant examples of the major styles of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and associated outbuildings. As a group, their architectural significance is derived from their integrity of setting and enhanced by the similarities of scale, materials, and orientation. Added significance is derived from the good to excellent state of preservation and degree of craftsmanship of this collection.

Registration Requirements

To qualify for registration, the historic districts must be intact entities with levels of integrity that convey their period associations with the maritime development of Ledyard. The districts must have retained their integrity of setting and location and contain a minimum of non-contributing resources. In addition, register requirements for visual and physical continuity must be met. Physical connection to the fostering marine environment of the Thames River is not required but resources within the districts must have had historical dependence on maritime-related activity and/or developmental association with the village during the period of significance. To qualify as contributing resources within a historic district, the property subtypes must retain enough of their original form and materials to convey their period associations. The more stylistically important contributing resources will meet registration requirement because they display or contain the significant features that characterize the Federal, Greek Revival, or Italianate style. Associated outbuildings, either contemporary with the dwellings or built later, must retain their basic form, materials, and historic locational relationship to the primary contributing resource.

G. Geographical Data

The multiple property groups included in this nomination are all located within the corporate boundaries of the Town of Ledyard, Connecticut. They are located on the attached map of the town.

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H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

An intensive townwide survey was carried out in Ledyard in 1991-1992, identifying 140 historic resources from all stages of Ledyard's development from the early 1700s to 1935. Inventoried properties included virtually all known historic resources in Ledyard that have survived and meet National Register criteria for inclusion in a survey. Data was collected in the field and transcribed on standard Connecticut Historical Commission inventory forms.³ Supplemental research on each building and the history of the town was compiled from primary and secondary sources available at the Bill Library in Ledyard, Godfrey Library in Middletown, Connecticut, the offices of the town clerks of Ledyard and Groton, and at the Connecticut State Library.

The inventoried properties were principally associated with two major themes, agriculture and maritime development, thereby establishing the historic contexts for this multiple resource study. These contexts were developed from the 1991-1992 survey, published local and county histories, and standard published works on the development of Connecticut towns, all cited in the bibliography.

A number of property types are associated with these contexts. Because of budgetary and time constraints, only two property types were chosen to be studied at this time: E-I., Eighteenth-Century Farmsteads, and E-II., Maritime Historic Districts. The first of a series of planned nominations, they were selected as most representative and evocative of the historic lifeways of the community. Future nominations will include a study of nineteenth-century farmhouses and a second maritime district, essentially completing the nomination of all National Register eligible property types associated with the contexts developed in this initial multiple property nomination.

The typology of the first significant property type, eighteenth-century farmsteads, was based on three primary criteria: historic function, association, and level of integrity. Their associative value to the broad patterns of agricultural development in the period of significance is identified in the historic context, Agriculture 1700 - 1930. Requirements for integrity were established by a comparative analysis in the field of the condition of all examples of the property type and its associated subtypes. Because of the relative rarity of surviving intact examples of rural farmsteads from this period which have retained their historic rural surroundings, registration requirements were based primarily on integrity of setting and secondarily on structural integrity of form and materials. All examples of this property type not already listed on the National Register that met this defined level of integrity were selected. Dates of construction were obtained from published sources and archival research, and verified in the field by architectural evidence to confirm that at least the main block of domestic buildings was constructed and/or completed within the period of significance.

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Maritime historic districts were identified for nomination study in consultation with the Connecticut Historical Commission and the Ledyard Historic District Commission. They were based on the survey recommendations. District boundaries were established to include the maximum number of surviving contributing resources associated with the historic context, Maritime Development 1750-1925. Registration requirements for contributing buildings within a district were based on standard National Register criteria for level of integrity, with the minimum requirement that they have retained enough of their form and materials to convey their historic associations with the period of significance.

End Notes:

1. American-born Benjamin Thompson (aka Count Rumford) invented a more efficient fireplace in the late 1700s that is characterized by a shallow firebox and a chimney throat which is smaller in cross section than that of the flue. The proportions of the opening were standardized: the ratio of the depth to the width is about one-third.
2. Data cited from Thomas R. Lewis and John E. Harrison, Connecticut: A Geography (Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1986), p. 88.
3. The survey, carried out by the author of this nomination, also provided an unusual opportunity to systematically inspect and document the interiors of more than half of the resources. Materials, finishes, architectural details, framing systems, and floorplans were personally observed and evaluated; measurements were taken of selected features such as fireplace openings. Field notes now on file with the Ledyard Historic District Commission, which include all the interior data collected in the survey, were the basis for the property type description of eighteenth-century farmhouses and the conclusions reached by the author, particularly in regard to the evolution of the Ledyard Cape from a one-room house (F-1; p. 8).

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