

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 02000867

Date Listed: 08/23/02

Dorrance Inn
Property Name

Windham
County

CT
State

Rochambeau's Army in Connecticut, 1780-1782 MPS
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

8/23/02
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

8. Statement of Significance: Period of Significance, Significant Date(s)

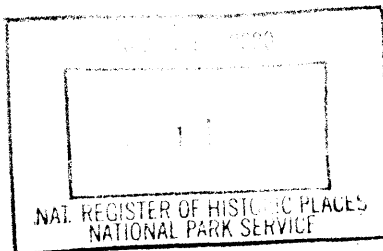
The justified period of significance for this property's association with Rochambeau's march in Connecticut under criterion A is 1780-1782. The significant date c.1722 has been deleted.

This information has been confirmed with John Herzan, National Register Coordinator, CTSHPO, by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without attachment)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**



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**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Dorrance Inn

other names/site number Samuel Dorrance House

2. Location

street & number 748 Plainfield Pike not for publication

city or town Sterling vicinity

state Connecticut code CT county Windham code 015 zip code 06377

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 07/09/02
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

8/23/02

Dorrance Inn (Samuel Dorrance House)
Name of Property

Windham County, CT
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Rochambeau's Army in Connecticut, 1780-1782

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling
COMMERCE: restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Postmedieval English

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT
other BRICK

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

MILITARY

Period of Significance

c. 1722 - 1782

Significant Dates

c. 1722, 1780, 1781, 1782

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Not Known

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Building Survey
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Connecticut Historical Commission,
59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, CT 06106

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Dorrance Inn (Samuel Dorrance House)
Sterling, Windham County, CT
(Rochambeau's Army in Connecticut, 1780-1782
Multiple Property Listing)

Section number 7 Page 1

Description:

The Dorrance Inn, also known as the Samuel Dorrance House, is a 2 1/2-story house in Sterling, Connecticut, believed to date from c.1722 (Photograph 1). The facade, or south elevation, was probably only three bays wide at first, reflecting a plan that consisted of a small front stair hall, a large chimney stack, and a large side room, the so-called "half-house" form. At some undetermined date, an additional room was added to the west to make the facade five bays wide; however, the addition does not extend the full depth of the house, creating an irregular roof line. There is also a two-story ell attached to the rear of the house. A large brick chimney rises above the center of the house. Windows have 6-over-6 sash. Probably around 1840, a few Greek Revival details were added, including sidelights flanking the front door, a pilaster-and-lintel entrance treatment, and pilasters on the house's front corners. The clapboarded exterior is currently hidden under aluminum or vinyl siding.

The house is part of a 168-parcel former farm and is surrounded by open fields and stone walls. A large barn formerly stood to the rear of the house, its location marked by high rubblestone foundation walls. To the east is a large open field, believed to be the site of a French encampment but not yet tested archaeologically (Photograph 2). Other landscape features include granite gateposts at the end of the long walkway leading to the house and short hitching posts with iron rings next to the road (Photograph 3).

The house lies within the Sterling Hill Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

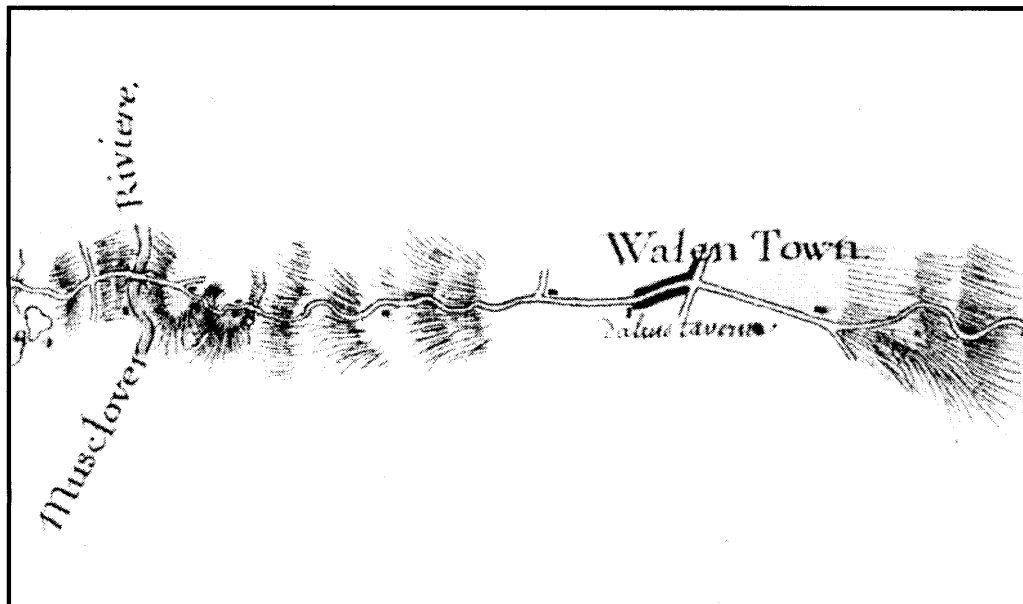
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Portion of the French army's route showing the inn labeled ("Dalens Tavern") at the east end of Sterling Hill village ("Walen Town"), from Rice and Brown, 1772. The excerpt starts near present-day Oneco, at the Moosup ("Musclover") River, and runs westward, so north is at the bottom, east is on the left, etc.



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Significance:

The Dorrance Inn in Sterling is significant for its associations with the march of Count Rochambeau's army through Connecticut to and from their participation in the battle of Yorktown (Criterion A). The French army played a crucial role in securing the American victory at Yorktown, thereby ending the Revolutionary War with a decisive defeat of the British. In addition to the military aspects of the event, the march brought together the French soldiers and their American hosts in a number of social settings, chief among them the various homes and inns along the route where French officers stayed. The encounters at the inn kept by Samuel Dorrance seem to have been particularly memorable, as the house is one of few that is mentioned repeatedly by name in the French sources.

Chastellux described landlord Dorrance as an old man and native of Ireland and admired both his "fine family" and his library "of forty five or fifty volumes mostly of classical authors." Chastellux shared two bottles of wine with Mr. Dorrance, and was obliged to leave most of his possessions with him as well, since his baggage cart had broken down. Accompanying him were two other French officers, Isador Lynch (an Irishman, born in London, serving in the French Army as a brigade major) and Charles-Louis de Secondat, the baron Montesquieu. Despite the baggage mishap, Chastellux reported that "the reading of some English poets, and the conversation with Messrs. Lynch and Montesquieu, and the good people of the house, made me pass the day very agreeably." Chastelleux stayed again at the Dorrance Tavern on the return journey and, according to Selig, Rochambeau and his aides ate their last dinner in Connecticut there. Washington's expense account also contains a reference to paying "Dorrance's, Sterling" a bill for \$720 (in the highly inflated paper currency of period) on March 15, 1781. Washington, along with an entourage of 20 or more, was on his way back from a meeting with Rochambeau in Newport, Rhode Island (Crofut, I, p. 59).

Despite a number of alterations over time, the house retains a substantial amount of its historical appearance, including its characteristic center-chimney form and old (if not original) divided-light sash. Moreover, its setting among open fields and stone walls is exceptional and make it particularly evocative of the period and of the historical event itself, particularly looking east to the field where the French are believed to have camped in early November, 1782.

In addition to local traditions concerning the entertainment of French officers here (as well as other notables such as Washington and Lafayette), there are a number of specific French journal entries that mention the name "Dorrance" in connection with the lodging of French officers. Other houses in the village also have the tradition of French officers staying there, and it is very likely that some or all of these are factual, since they could hardly have all been accommodated in one house.¹ However, the French itinerary is very specific in locating the Dorrance Tavern, which they regarded as the preferred place to stay:

Coming out of the forest you reach Voluntown. Voluntown is a small group of houses, two of which are taverns. Dorrance's Tavern, on the right side of the road as you enter, is the better one; the other, which is on the left on leaving, is called Dexter's. (Rice and Brown, II, p. 22).

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The French called the village Voluntown (also spelled Valentown and Walen Town) because Sterling had not yet been set off as a separate town; it was part of Voluntown until 1794. The route map, an excerpt of which is reproduced in Section 7, also locates the tavern, using the spelling "Dalens," on the north side of the road, on the right as one enters the village from the east.

Notes

1. The identification of this house as a tavern operated by the Dorrance family goes back at least to the 1930s, when the W.P.A.-sponsored Census of Old Buildings inventoried it as the Samuel Dorrance House. However, another house in Sterling Hill, 708 Plainfield Pike, was inventoried in that survey as the John Dorrance House, and it too was said to have accommodated French officers, specifically Chastellux. The location of this building, on the north side of the road at the west end of the village, cannot be squared with the description of the two taverns in the itinerary or the location as shown on the route map. Nevertheless, this was the building pictured as the Dorrance Inn in Terry's *Old Inns of Connecticut* (1937).

Rice and Brown (1972) correctly identify the nominated property as the Dorrance Inn (II, p. 22), but then refer the reader to Terry for a photograph, which is of the John Dorrance House.

An additional contender as the place of entertainment of the French appears in *Sterling in Retrospective* (1976) in the form of "the Old Stagecoach Inn," a turnpike-era inn on the south side of the road that may have had an earlier incarnation. That history also refers to the nominated property as the original Dorrance Inn.

Gladys Mowry, researcher with the Sterling Historical Society (1981), identifies the nominated property as the Samuel Dorrance House, which Chastellux visited, but also allows that French officers stayed at the John Dorrance House at the west end of the village. Selig (1999) identifies the inn visited by Chastellux and Rochambeau as the Samuel Dorrance Inn, but the photograph, address, and date of construction in his report refer to the John Dorrance House.

In summary, the specific description of the location contained in the French army's itinerary and the location as shown on the route map can only be associated with the nominated building. This in no way implies that the other houses were not used for lodging or meals by the French, only that the **documented** visit to the Dorrance Tavern applies to this house.

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Sterling, Windham County, CT
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Bibliography:

Chastellux, François Jean, Marquis de

1968 *Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782*. Tr. by Howard Rice. Two volumes. New York: Arno Press. Originally published in 1787.

Closen, Baron Ludwig von

1958 *The Revolutionary Journal of Baron Ludwig von Closen 1780-1783*. Evelyn A. Acomb, editor and translator. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Clouette, Bruce. Sterling Hill Historic District. National Register of Historic Places inventory/nomination form. Connecticut Historical Commission, 1986.

Mowry, Gladys M. "Dorrance Inn (Byron Young House)," Connecticut Historic Resources Inventory Form, Sterling Historical Society, 1981.

Rice, Howard C., Jr. and Anne S. K. Brown, eds. *The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783*. Two volumes. Princeton, N.J.: Jointly published by Princeton University Press and Brown University Press. Map of Fifth Camp, volume II, plate 31.

The Roads Lead Back to Glory: The History of Sterling, Connecticut. Sterling: Sterling Historical Society, 1982.

Rochambeau, Marshal Count de

1838 *Memoirs of the Marshal Count de Rochambeau . . .* M. W. E. Wright, translator. Paris: Berlin and Company.

Selig, Robert A. *Rochambeau in Connecticut: Tracing his Journey*. Hartford: Connecticut Historical Commission, 1999.

Sterling in Retrospective. Sterling: Sterling Bicentennial Commission, 1976.

Terry, Marian Dickinson (ed.). *Old Inns of Connecticut*. Hartford: Prospect Press, 1937.

Works Progress Administration. Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut. Manuscript, c.1935. Connecticut State Library. John Dorrance House (#7) and Samuel Dorrance House (#8).

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Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary includes the land immediately around the house at 748 Plainfield Pike, part of a 168-acre parcel recorded in the Sterling Assessor records as Map 3828, Block 24, Lot 38 and recorded in the Sterling Land Records, Volume 44, page 328. The nominated portion begins at the southwest corner on Plainfield Pike and runs along Plainfield Pike for 250 feet, with a depth of 400 feet.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary was chosen to provide a reasonable amount of land surrounding the house; the depth was chosen to include the foundation remains of the large barn that formerly stood to the rear of the house. These remains, along with the stone walls, and hitching posts, help to convey the building's origin as a rural dwelling used as a roadside inn.

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Section number Photographs Page 1

All Photographs:

1. Dorrance Inn (Samuel Dorrance House)
2. Sterling, Windham County, CT
3. PAST, Inc. Photo
4. January, 2001
5. Negative filed with PAST, Inc., Storrs, CT

Captions:

South (front) and west (side) elevations, camera facing northeast
Photograph 1 of 3

Field east of house, where the French army encamped on the return march, camera facing east
Photograph 2 of 3

Hitching post in front of house, camera facing northeast
Photograph 3 of 3