

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAR 11 1982
DATE ENTERED APR 12 1982

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

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Samuel Parsons House

AND/OR COMMON

Samuel Parsons House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
180 South Main Street

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wallingford

N/A VICINITY OF

Third -

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

09

COUNTY

New Haven

CODE

009

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

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

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED
- N/A

STATUS

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

PRESENT USE

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Wallingford Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER
180 South Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Wallingford

N/A VICINITY OF

Connecticut

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Wallingford Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER
Center Street

CITY, TOWN

Wallingford

Connecticut

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Connecticut Register of Historic Places

DATE
1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN
Hartford

Connecticut

STATE

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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Samuel Parsons House
Wallingford, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET Surveys

ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE 1

Town of Wallingford Architectural and Historic Resources Survey

1979

local

Connecticut Historical Commission

Hartford

Connecticut

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

About 100 years after pioneers from New Haven settled Wallingford, Connecticut in 1670, the Samuel Parsons House was built on the east side of South Main Street, one of the town's first highways. At one time a tavern on the stage coach route to Hartford, the house now serves as the headquarters and museum of the Wallingford Historical Society. The street is lined with shade trees, and most of the houses in the pleasant, residential neighborhood were constructed in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Photograph 1).

The Samuel Parsons House is a 2½-story, 5-bay, central doorway, twin brick chimney, clapboard house on stone foundations, sited a few feet back from the sidewalk behind a wood picket fence with square posts. The second story overhangs the first on four sides, and there is a 19th-century 1-story wing at the southeast corner (Photograph 2). The overhang has a molding that breaks out over the first floor 12-over-12 windows to serve as the lintels, while the facade's three 6-over-6 dormer windows in the lower slope of the gambrel roof have peaked caps. The clapboards have 3½-inches exposed to the weather, and are thought to be original, except for those on the south side. The roof is covered with wood shingles, except for the lower slope in the rear where asphalt shingles are a replacement.

The elaborate central portico appears on stylistic analysis to be somewhat later than the house itself, perhaps being added in the early 19th century. It consists of a low gable roof supported by two square, fluted posts and corresponding pilasters. The molded capital of each post supports a plain architrave and frieze, correctly positioned behind the front edge of the capital, that runs back to the facade, supporting the roof. A flat cornice with shallow modillion blocks projects on three sides of this architrave frieze; its front edge serves as the return of the raking cornice. The raking cornice, above, has a band of reeding under modillion blocks, and a crown molding. The door has two leaves, each with eight panels arranged in alternating pairs of squares and oblongs. The top panels, oblongs, are glazed. There is a half-round blind fanlight over the door. The floor of the front porch is a single piece of brownstone 56 x 84 inches in size, while the foundations of the facade are dressed sandstone blocks, one piece measuring five feet long (Photographs 3 and 4).

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The side (north and south) elevations of the house both have two windows at first-floor, second-floor, and attic levels. The attic windows have small, 4-over-4 sash (Photographs 2, 5 and 6). The rear (east) elevation of the main block at first-floor level has four windows, one of which, second from the north, is smaller than the others, and may be in the location of an earlier back door. There are no windows upstairs in this elevation (Photograph 6).

The one-story, gable-roofed wing at the southeast corner was built in two sections (see floor plans). The first 9½ by 10-foot section, on brown-stone footings, is reached by a door from the main block of the house and by an exterior door in its north wall, and has a 6-over-6 window in its east wall. The second, 14 by 14-foot section has one 12-over-12 window on its east wall, two on the west, and none on the south. There is a small, 4-over-4 window in the west wall, near the main block (Photographs 2 and 6).

On the interior, the first floor of the Samuel Parsons House has a central hall in the front that extends only half the depth of the house, with a room on either side, and there are two rooms in the back. The chimneys, in the middle of the end walls provide fireplaces in each of the four first-story rooms. (See floor plans.)

The central hall has a stairway rising against its north wall, toward the back, in a straight run. It has two turned balusters per tread, moldings on the step ends, a molded hand rail, and turned newel post. The triangular-shaped wall under the stairs is panelled (Photograph 7).

The north front room has a flared corner post, cased and beaded, and has molded chair rail and cornice on all four walls. The ceiling is plaster. The fireplace, in the northeast corner, on an angle, is brick, with stone hearth. There is a cupboard over the fireplace with panelling, and the paneling extends to the floor on the left of the fireplace.

The south front room is similarly arranged. It has a different grouping of cupboard and panelling over its fireplace. There are five such angle fireplace walls in the house, each different from the others. None has a mantel shelf. The south front room has a molded cornice and chair rail, and a dado of two wide boards. In addition, in the southwest corner there is a cupboard with round-arch opening and butterfly-shaped shelves over raised-panel doors (Photograph 8).

The south rear room is the kitchen. It is larger than the front rooms by half of the width of the front hall. The fireplace, larger than the others, is not at an angle, but is flat against the south wall with panelling above and to the left. The present cupboard to the right is thought probably

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to cover an oven because an oven usually is found in this position in a kitchen fireplace (Photograph 9). The panelled door to the left leads to a closet lighted by an exterior window that is positioned behind an angle in the stack (see floor plans). This arrangement maintains exterior symmetry of window placement, but is awkward in terms of lighting the closet.

The north rear room has another angle fireplace with panelling, and has cornice and chair rail. The cornice is plain, not molded, and the fireplace is all brick. Part of the space in this quarter of the house is occupied by a small room against the east wall whose function is uncertain. At one time a steep back stairs rose from this area to the second floor; a patch in the floor above shows where it emerged.

The wing is used as a library, fitted with modern shelving on the inside

The stairs in the front hall rise to a landing one step below the second floor level. The balustrade stops at the landing with a square post. There is a riser from the landing east, in the direction of the flight, and another riser to the right (south). Both risers have the same molding at the front edge of their treads as do all the other steps in the flight.

The second floor of the house, except for the two north rooms, is now a single, open space used as a gallery and museum. The scheme in the floor plan is based, in part, on lines in the floor and, in part, is conjectural. The angle fireplace on the south is still in place. This open space is lighted from the front by the south two dormers. As the front wall of the room is a false, vertical wall, rather than the actual slope of the gambrel, the windows of the dormers, from the interior, are recessed. The spaces in front of the dormers are made into cupboards, with glazed doors.

The north front bedroom is intact, with its small, brick, angle fireplace. In this instance there is a central panel over the fireplace opening with cupboards to right and left. The interior (east and south) walls are 19-inch wide, vertical boards with feathered edges, while the exterior (north and west) walls are covered with 16-inch, flush, horizontal boards.

The north rear room on the second floor has hand-riven lath exposed in the ceiling, and joists that are only partially finished, that is, are sawn on only one side.

Stairs lead from this room up to the attic where the roof framing is visible. There are six pairs of principal rafters framed with mortise-and-tenon joints at their peak into a ridge pole (Photograph 10) and braced by four purlins in each slope. The vertical boards of the roof and the interior

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surface of the clapboards are exposed. There is no plate at floor level because the break in the gambrel roof slopes occurs two feet above floor level. In the framing system, at each juncture of rafter and post there is a diagonal brace that runs from this point toward the center of the house and down through the attic floor, presumably to a girt. The framing of the top of this brace into both a post and a rafter requires two pegged, mortise-and-tenon joints (Photograph 11).

Until the house came into the care of the Historical Society, the cellar floor was dirt. Damp and rot pervaded the cellar and the framing of the first floor to the extent that in the 1960's the framing for the first floor had to be replaced. Steel beams and new joists and flooring were introduced, making the cellar now a single, open space. The stone walls and stone chimney bases remain undisturbed, the chimney bases shaped to conform with the two angle fireplaces on the north and with one angle fireplace and the flat kitchen fireplace on the south.

The plot of the Samuel Parsons House, once at least six acres in size and perhaps larger, now is a more modest size, 112 feet across the front and 182 feet deep. Most of the yard is behind the house, pleasantly planted with grass, a herb garden and some trees.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input 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 c. 1770

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Samuel Parsons House is of more than usual interest among 18th-century houses because it incorporates elements of the Georgian style of architecture in a pre-Revolutionary War structure (Criterion C). Its integrity has been well maintained, and its early date of acquisition for use as a local historical society's headquarters is noteworthy.

The post-and-beam, mortise-and-tenon construction of early American architecture is well illustrated by the Samuel Parsons House, but the usual central chimney with five rooms arranged around it on the first floor is not. Instead of a single central chimney, there are two chimneys, one in each end wall, while the center of the house is occupied by a central hall, with two rooms on either side. This new arrangement was part of the Georgian style of architecture that began to supplant the earlier style about 1750.

The Samuel Parsons House is transitional between the two styles. It has the central hall instead of the central chimney, but the hall extends only half the depth of the house. It has the gambrel roof, more often found in Colonial than in Georgian architecture, and it has an overhang on all four sides, a decided Colonial, not Georgian feature. The location of the two chimneys in the end walls makes possible the angle fireplaces, as contrasted to the more common arrangement of having twin chimneys in the walls between the front and back rooms with fireplaces facing front and back. At the same time, the kitchen fireplace in the Samuel Parsons House is of the shape and size, with bake oven, normally found in a typical Colonial-style house in the back of a massive, central chimney.

The raised panelling of the fireplace walls and the corner cupboard and the wide-boards dado of the south front room are Colonial elements, but they are balanced by Georgian trim. The molding over the windows on the exterior, that breaks out over the windows, is a sophisticated Georgian element that is carried further by the added portico. The details of the portico cornice, including the band of reeding and many modillion blocks, are in the manner of Robert Adam, the late 18th-century, Scottish architect who carried the classical elaboration of the Georgian style to new levels of intricacy and refinement that were unforeseen in early Colonial architecture.

The date of construction associated with the house by the Wallingford Historical Society is 1759, said to be the year arrived at by a search of the

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land records conducted in 1920 by O. H. D. Fowler, a Wallingford lawyer and judge. While study of Fowler's notes confirms that he gives a reasonably complete chain of title, it is to be observed that his notes take the house back to 1767, not 1759, and as is customarily the case, the 18th-century land records give less than perfect assurance that the house referred to is the same one as now exists. Dates of construction associated with the house by others include 1770, which appears on the Wallingford assessor's card. The year 1770 was also the date recorded by the Works Progress Administration 1930's Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut, with a notation by E. D. Keith, its director, that the roof looks later. In the picture attached to this record there is a sign on the house that reads, "Samuel Parsons, 1770." On the Connecticut Historical Commission's 1966 survey form William L. Warren has crossed out a date of 1759 and written in 1770-1783. If built in 1759 the house would be one the earliest to reflect attributes of the Georgian style, but in the absence of compelling evidence for the earlier date, 1770 seems to be a more reasonable and likely date for the year of construction.

The house apparently was built by John Parsons. His son conveyed the property in 1785 to Samuel Parsons who owned it until 1803. There is no explanation of why the house is known by Samuel Parsons' name rather than that of one of the earlier owners. The house later came into the possession of Caleb Thompson whose granddaughter, Fannie Ives Schember, leased it to the Historical Society in 1919. The Historical Society took title to the house in 1932, under the terms of her will.

The wing is thought to have been added about 100 years ago. This date is supported by an 1883 map, now hanging on a wall at the house, that shows the wing in place by that year.

In the early 20th century the structure was a two-family house. The present largely open condition of the second floor resulted when the two-family arrangement was reversed. The absence of some partitions on the second floor and the necessary replacement of the first-floor framing are negatives in terms of the integrity of the house but few 18th-century structures do have complete structural integrity. The few negatives in the case of the Samuel Parsons House are outweighed many times by the original first floor plan, panelling, fireplaces, and trim, the original exterior walls with the unusual combination of overhangs and sophisticated trim, and the roof framing with transverse, diagonal braces.

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While it is not uncommon now in Connecticut for a local historical society to have an 18th-century house as its headquarters and museum, it was uncommon in 1919 when the Wallingford Historical Society took over the Samuel Parsons House. In other nearby communities such acquisition did not occur until much later; for example, the Meriden Historical Society became headquartered in the Moses Andrews House in the mid-1930s, and the Darien Historical Society acquired the Bates-Scholfield House in the mid-1960s. In the absence of a definitive study of the subject, it cannot be said that the Wallingford Historical Society was the first in this respect, but certainly it was one of the first to assume the steadship and enjoy the use of an 18th-century house.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wallingford #34, Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut, Works Progress Administration, 1930s.

O.H.D. Fowler, "The History of the Parsons Home as Recorded in the Wallingford Town Records," Wallingford Historical Society, 1920.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.47

QUADRANGLE NAME Wallingford

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24 000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 682040 4590920

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is described in the Wallingford Land Records, volume 159, page 558.

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, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

November 18, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

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 16, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

 in the
National Register

DATE 4/12/82

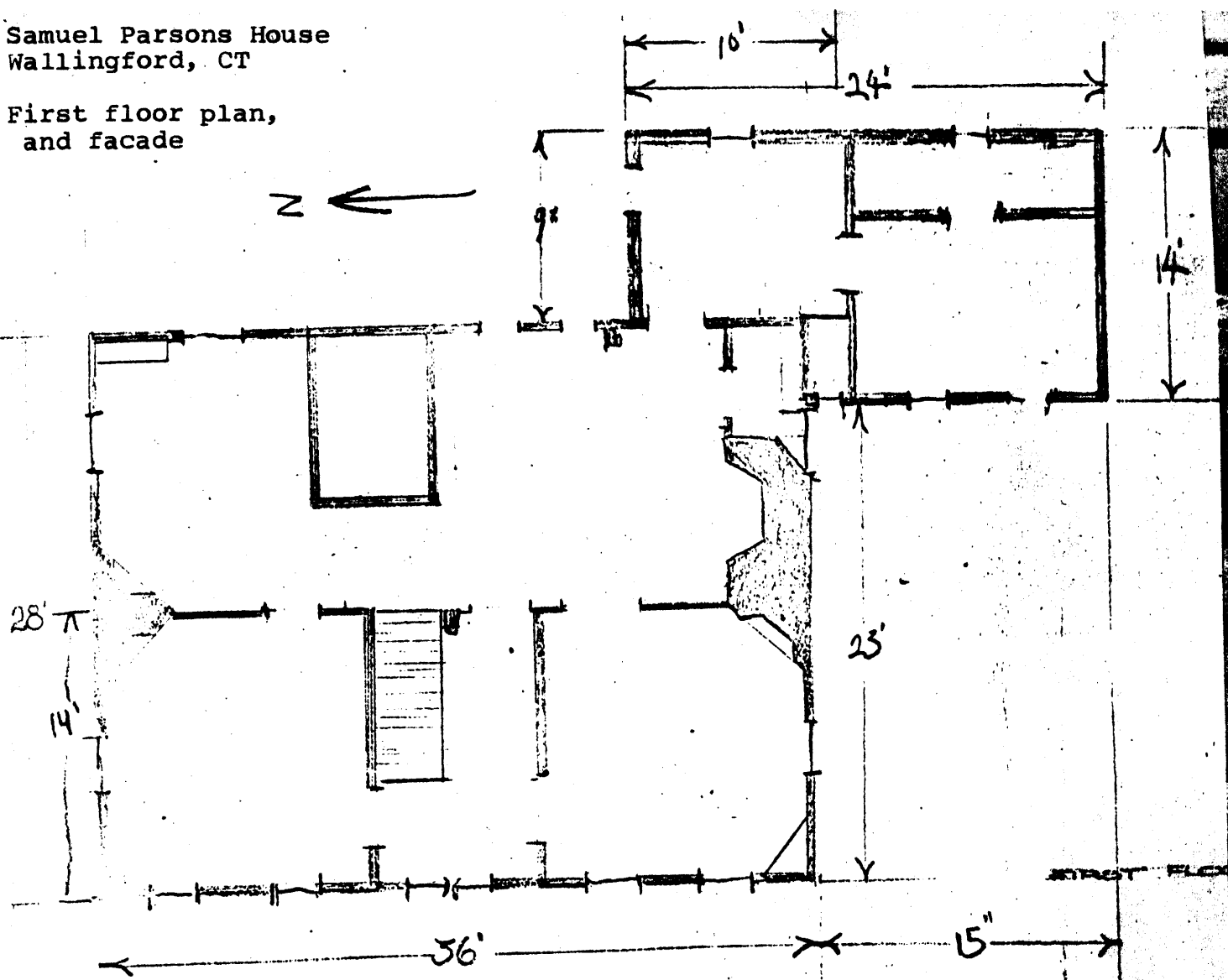
ATTEST:

DATE

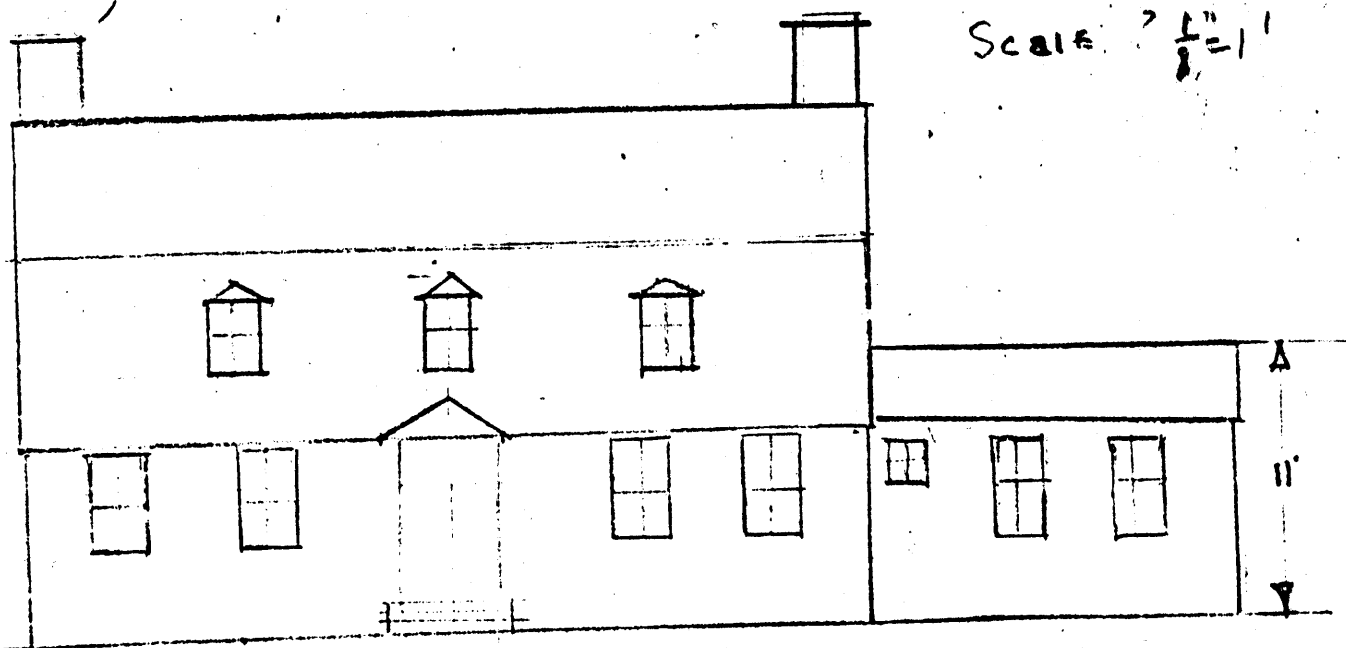
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

Samuel Parsons House
Wallingford, CT

First floor plan,
and facade



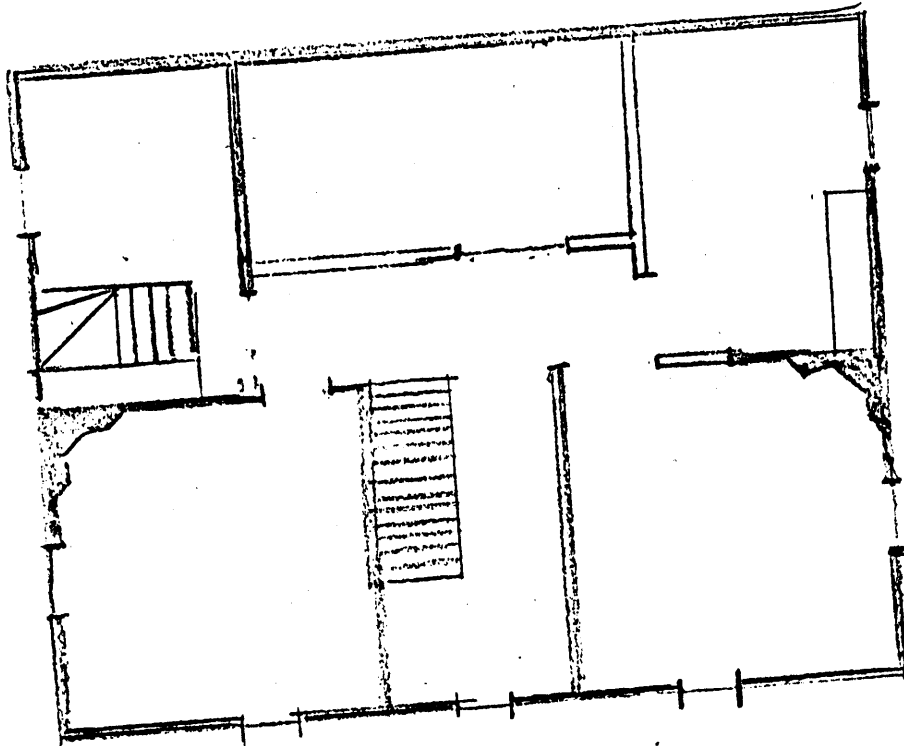
Scale: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'$



Samuel Parsons House
Wallingford, CT

Second floor plan

Z ←



SECOND FLOOR