

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0685429
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RECEIVED OCT 2 1978
DATE ENTERED 0101 1978

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

Black Horse Tavern

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

SE of Old Saybrook at
175 North Cove Road

CITY, TOWN

Old Saybrook

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

Second - Christopher J. Dodd

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

09

COUNTY

Middlesex

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

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

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

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

John A. Ingersoll, Jr.

STREET & NUMBER

175 North Cove Road

CITY, TOWN

Old Saybrook

STATE

VICINITY OF

CT 06475

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER

302 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Old Saybrook

STATE

CT 06475

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

See continuation sheet.

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT DETERIORATED
 GOOD RUINS
 FAIR UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Black Horse Tavern is located on the north shore of Saybrook Point, a peninsula extending about a mile eastward into the Connecticut River a little less than a mile from the river's mouth. Saybrook Point separates two inlets of the river, the North Cove and the South Cove, and is a mile southeast of the center of the town of Old Saybrook. The Point is currently an area of well maintained, upper middle class homes.

The Black Horse Tavern's 1.3 acre lot is U-shaped and includes about 600 feet of water-front on the inside of the U. The peculiar U shape of the lot is determined on the south by the road, on the east by a town right of way to the water's edge, and on the north by a former railroad embankment across the cove. The railroad spanned the cove with a combination of embankment and trestle. The eastern section of the embankment is part of the Black Horse Tavern property. At the end of the embankment a remaining part of the trestle is used as a dock for small boats.

The tavern, now a private home, is an early 18th century four-bay, clapboarded, frame house of two stories with attic under gable roof. The entrance occupies the second bay from the west, and the center chimney is in a corresponding location, off-center to the west. Windows are eight-over-twelve double hung sash installed as replacements during the 20th century. Within several years after the tavern was constructed, a small, square, one-story addition with its own chimney was built on the southwest corner. Further construction adjoining this addition and the main section of the house was carried out in the 20th century. The building is situated on an incline that allows for an outside door at the rear of the basement, leading to the water's edge.

The main entrance has square columns with molded capitals supporting a plain entablature and a gable roof. A fanlight with radial muntins crowns the doorway. The raking cornices and returns of the porch gable are decorated with dentil blocks, and under the eaves of the main roof is a similar row of mutules. These Federal details may have been added late in the 18th century.

In the basement the stone base, 14 by 14 feet, of the original chimney remains in place, although the chimney above the base was replaced after a fire in and around it during the 1860's. The stairs to the cellar run in front of the chimney, underneath the stairs to the second floor. The steps of the cellar stairs are in stone, enclosed on the sides by masonry walls, indicative of very early work.¹

The front door is thought to be original. It is panelled on the exterior, and has vertical boarding on the interior, with strap hinges of hammered iron. Inside the front door the stairway rises in three runs with winders, to the left. It has turned balusters in a closed string, with half balusters fitted to the newel posts. The stairway continues up to the attic.

As the chimney is off center to the west, the distance from the chimney to the east wall is greater than to the west wall. The room to the east on the first floor is large, running the full depth of the house. In recent years the greater part of the north wall of the room has been replaced with glass for the sake of the view of the water. There are two cased summer beams in this room, two in the corresponding room to the west, and corresponding pairs on the

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" 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. 1712

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John Burrows

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Black Horse Tavern is one of the few remaining early 18th century houses in Connecticut. Because substantially all of the original framing is in place, the house has unusual architectural integrity. Moreover, the history of the development of the site tells the history of Saybrook from the original fort through the years of shipbuilding and trading by sea, through the era of the railroad, to the present affluent residential community.

In the early 1630's two Puritan gentlemen, Lord Say-and-Sele and Lord Brooke, determined that the mouth of the Connecticut River was an auspicious location for their proposed, independent colony. They envisaged construction of a fort for protection from the Indians, to be followed by a settlement of manor houses along the Connecticut River for wealthy and prominent families. The first part of their plan was soon carried out, but the second part was never to be realized.

Construction of the fort was started in 1635. In November of that year John Winthrop, Jr., agent for the proprietors, arrived to oversee completion of the fort on a site just east of where the Black Horse Tavern stands, and to lay out the town. The tavern's site was the scene of engagements between the soldiers of the fort and attacking Indians. By 1644 it became apparent that the manor house development was not likely to occur and Saybrook was sold to Connecticut for 1,600 pounds. Three years later the fort burned.

When Connecticut bought Saybrook in 1644, John Clark, Sr., who had come to Hartford with the original party led by the Rev. Thomas Hooker, moved to Saybrook, and in that year became the first recorded owner of the tavern's site. Many years later, in 1712, he deeded the property to John Burrows (Saybrook Land Records, Volume 2, page 187). The deed refers to land only; no mention is made of a building.

At about this time Saybrook, like other Connecticut River towns, was becoming increasingly active in shipbuilding and coastal and West Indies trade. Slips for shipbuilding were located along the shore of the North Cove adjacent to the site of the tavern. In addition, Cromwell Place (then Fenwick Street) instead of deadending at North Cove Road (then Water Street) as it now does, continued north along the edge of the tavern's site to the water where a commercial wharf, known as Blague's Wharf, was located. Pilings from this wharf are still in place. The town right of way to the wharf along the eastern border of the tavern's site remains in good legal standing, although it is no longer used for a roadway. The combined activity associated with the shipbuilding, the loading and unloading at the wharf, and the traffic along the road made it a logical setting for a tavern, which the land records suggest was built c. 1712.

When Burrows sold the property in 1759 (SLR 7/502) a building is mentioned as being in place. Thus, the conclusion is reached that Burrows, soon after he bought the land from Clark

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.3

QUADRANGLE NAME Old Lyme

QUADRANGLE SCALE _____

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 72,145,0 4,574,000
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B _____
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C _____

D _____

E _____

F _____

G _____

H _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is lot 8 on town map 32 as recorded in SLR 113/528, 531

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

DATE

April 13, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

33 Sunrise Hill Drive

TELEPHONE

203 521-2518

CITY OR TOWN

West Hartford

STATE

CT 06107

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE September 25, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12-1-78

ATTEST: [Signature]
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 12/1/78

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Black Horse Tavern
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CONTINUATION SHEET Existing surveys ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

State Register of Historic Places
January 23, 1967 State
Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Old Houses of Connecticut, Colonial Dames Series
1923 State
Connecticut State Library
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

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The Black Horse Tavern
Old Saybrook, Connecticut

CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

second floor, a total of four pairs of summer beams. The fireplace in the first floor east room is of modest proportions, installed after the 1860's fire. It replaces a nine foot six inch fireplace mentioned in earlier accounts of the tavern. The fireplace wall and the south and east walls are panelled in wood, thought to be original. This room may well have been divided at one time, but by 1876 the present arrangement of one large room was in place.²

The early addition on the southwest corner has a pleasant fireplace and overmantel in its small chimney. The two-story, 20th century construction (after 1923) to the north and west of this room is used for bedrooms and kitchen.

A replica of the original sign of the Black Horse Tavern hangs on the exterior of the east wall of the house. The original sign was acquired several decades ago by Morgan B. Brainard and is part of the collection of tavern signs which he presented to the Connecticut Historical Society, where it is now on view.

1. Kelly, p. 8.
2. Spencer and Rankin, n.p.

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Black Horse Tavern
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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

in 1712, constructed the building. He both operated it as a tavern and lived there. It was he who built the house with its great stone chimney, chestnut framing, stairway of three runs, and paired summer beams that today is an important example of colonial construction. He built the first addition several years later to accommodate his growing family.

Daniel Kirtland acquired the property in 1794. He kept it as an inn for 36 years, catering to a rough clientele of sailors, shipyard workers, and the like--not the town's leading citizens. It may well have been Kirtland who added the Federal portico and cornice trim to bring his house up to date with contemporary architectural styles. His workmanship was first class as the porch and mutules under the eaves have survived in good condition.

Henry Potter, who bought the tavern in 1866, also made changes. He built an addition on the east to serve as a store, bringing to an end the house's function as a tavern. Potter's store addition was still standing in 1915 and may be seen in a photograph taken that year. In his store Potter sold groceries and general merchandise. He also dealt in coal, conveniently delivered by water at nearby Blague's wharf.

A great change occurred for Saybrook and for the Black Horse Tavern in 1871, when the Valley Shore Railroad extended its line to Saybrook Point and on to Fenwick. The tracks were laid on an embankment and trestle (seen in the 1915 photo) built across North Cove, bringing the tracks between the house and the water. The tracks were within 100 feet of the building. The railroad brought an end to shipping by water. Blague's wharf went into decline and the roadway leading to it was eventually discontinued. In time, the railroad itself went into decline. In 1924 service to Saybrook Point and Fenwick came to an end. Shortly thereafter the tracks were torn up.

With the demise of the railroad the commercial character of the Black Horse Tavern's site was ended. The rough and noisy activities of shipbuilding, loading and unloading freight, and passing trains all became things of the past in 1924. Thereupon, the site of the Black Horse Tavern adjacent to the North Cove became a desirable place to live. The desirability of the Black Horse Tavern site and Saybrook Point in general has increased in the ensuing 50 years.

Prominent and wealthy families now live here in well maintained houses along the Connecticut River. The plans of Lord Say-and-Sele and Lord Brooke, after a pause of 300 years, have in a sense been realized.

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Old Saybrook, Connecticut

CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

J. Frederick Kelly, The Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut,
New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963, reprint of Yale University Press, 1924.

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(Privately printed.)

Polly M. Ingersoll, The Black Horse Tavern, and Early Days on Saybrook
Point, 1965. (Unpublished manuscript.)