

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Connecticut	
COUNTY: New London	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 70.10.06.0020	DATE 10/6/70

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Thomas Lee House  
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Southeast corner intersection Conn 156 with Giant's Neck Rd.  
CITY OR TOWN:  
East Lyme  
STATE: Connecticut CODE: 06333 COUNTY: New London CODE: 011

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
East Lyme Historical Society  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
CITY OR TOWN:  
East Lyme STATE: Connecticut CODE: 06

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Town Hall  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
CITY OR TOWN:  
East Lyme STATE: Connecticut CODE: 06

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: (1) NPS  
Connecticut Historic Structures and Landmarks Survey  
DATE OF SURVEY: (2) 1967  Federal  State  County  Local  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: (1) Connecticut State Library  
(2) Connecticut Historical Commission  
STREET AND NUMBER: (1) 90 Washington Street  
(2) 75 Elm Street  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Hartford (1 & 2) STATE: Connecticut CODE: 06

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Thomas Lee House is a seventeenth century saltbox which was restored in 1914 by Norman Isham and is now maintained by the East Lyme historical society. As it stands today it is picturesque and weatherbeaten. The outside clapboards are riven oak and unpainted and have been colored by the salt winds of the sea for over fifty years since their restoration. The building has a five bay facade with a central door which is off center none the less because the window openings are located towards the northwestern end and away from the older section of the building.

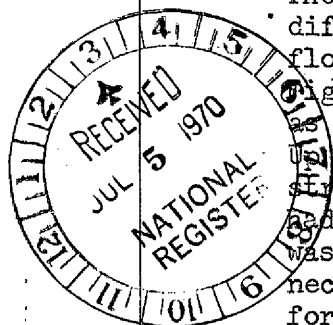
The most interesting aspect of this building is the way it shows the evolution of a colonial house from a one room building to a house which has a floor plan typical of most colonial houses. Originally the plan of the house was a single room facing south with a great stone chimney at the western end. The stairs to the second floor were at this stage on the southwest corner in front of the chimney stack. Later another room was added on the opposite side of the chimney which thus became enclosed, and finally a leanto was built across the entire rear of the house.

Therefore this house, as it exists today, embodies three different stages in the growth of the house plan. The first-floor plan of the Lee house, as it now stands, is shown in figure 10. After its plan had arrived at the two-room stage, shown by B, Figure I, the house underwent a great change. Up to that time it had faced the south; but owing to the construction of a new road about a hundred feet to the north, what had formerly been the rear became the front, and a leanto was built across the south side. This modification of course necessitated a reconstruction of the chimney in the space formerly devoted to the stairs; whereupon the resulting arrangement became what it is today. The lean-to of this house, it will be noted is built across what was originally the front.<sup>1</sup>

One of the other interesting architectural features of the Lee house is the cellar stair which probably dates from a remodeling of the house in 1725. The steps are formed of solid logs, cut in triangular section, and nailed on two sloping stringers. This has always been thought to be an early type, but is found not infrequently in eastern Connecticut, in houses of varying dates. Mr. Isham believed that the cellar was not original, probably because it had no summer beam as in the earliest cellars are apt to have.

The west end of the house, with its separate framing, presents some puzzles, since the paneling must have been a still later elaboration. Mr. Isham guesses that it and the plaster walls date from perhaps 1735. They are typical eighteenth century panels, two deep, with panels also covering the wide soffit of the chimney girt. They might have been found at any time in the eighteenth century, but the four flute

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Description of the Thomas Lee House:

are the earliest form of fluted pilasters known. It would seem, however, that the framing, with its square heavy summers, its unequal girts, and kneed corner-posts, are earlier and were never intended to be cased.

The most unusual relic in the house is a casement found in the south wall of the west chamber--one of two found in place in Connecticut. It is one of the evidences that the west half was built to face south, since windows were not commonly built in rear walls. The frame is of oak, rabbeted into the oak studs, and nineteen inches square, interior measurement, with delicate early mouldings facing inward into the room. The visitor will notice that there is no evidence of other light into this chamber, though in all probability a similar casement was placed in the west end. The east chamber was apparently, from gains in the studs, lighted in the same inadequate way.

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, F.J. Early Domestic Architecture in Connecticut, New York: Dover Publications, 1963, p. 11.



**3. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |  |  |                                       |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century            |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) c. 1660 - 1735

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

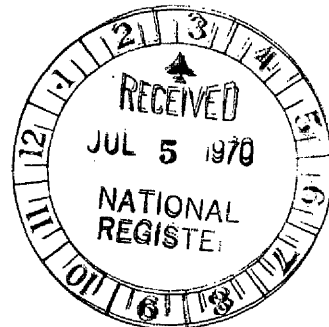
- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lee house is one of the most valuable early houses in Connecticut because it dates back to the seventeenth century and because it embodies sufficient architectural evidence to show its evolution from an original one room plan to its present form.<sup>2</sup> It is also significant as a monument to a notable family of ancient Lyme. It was built by Ensign Thomas Lee who inherited a large fortune in lands from his father Thomas Lee first. At least one descendant of Ensign Thomas Lee participated in the Revolutionary War: in 1776 his great-grandson Captain Ezra Lee operated David Bushnell's American Turtle, the first submarine boat in New York Harbor.

Sources disagree about the date of the original building: it is given as either 1660 (Crofut and The American Guide Series), or 1664 (Kelly and The Connecticut Guide). At present the building is maintained as a colonial museum by the East Lyme Historical Society. Exhibits include old china, pewterware, and kitchen utensils.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Isham begins his account of the house by saying "An examination of the interior shows that the old dwelling is of extraordinary interest. In fact, I have seldom seen a house which, from an archaeological point of view, is more interesting."



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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Connecticut: ... Guide to its Roads, Towns, and People. American Guide Series. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1938.

Crofut, F.S.. Guide to the History and the Historic Sites of Connecticut. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1937.

Holly, J.F. The Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963.

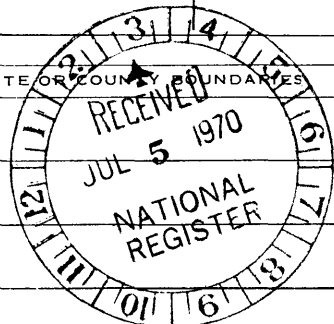
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		41 19 03	72 14 20	
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Constance Lyster, Administrative Trainee

ORGANIZATION: Connecticut Historical Commission DATE: March 26, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER:  
75 Elm Street

CITY OR TOWN: Hartford STATE: Connecticut CODE: 06

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: [Signature]  
State Liaison Officer and Chairman  
Connecticut Historical Commission  
Date: March 26, 1970

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
OCT 6 1970

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

[Signature]  
Keeper of The National Register  
AUG 20 1970

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Stages in the Evolution of the Thomas Lee House as Shown in the Floor Plan

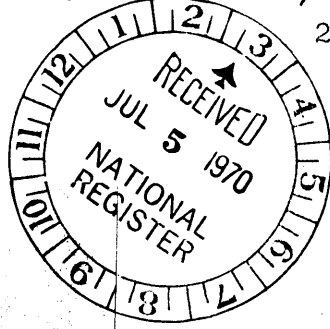
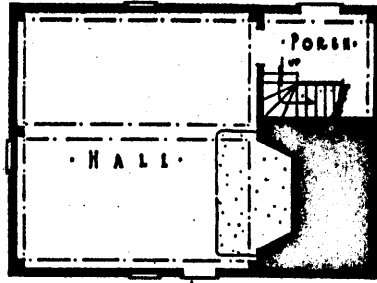
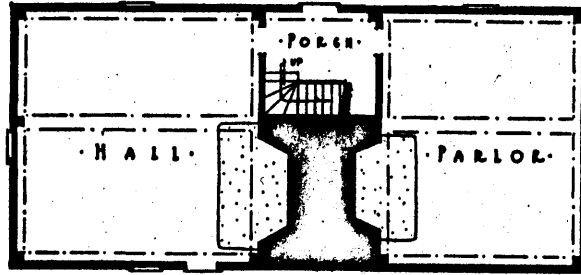


Figure 10

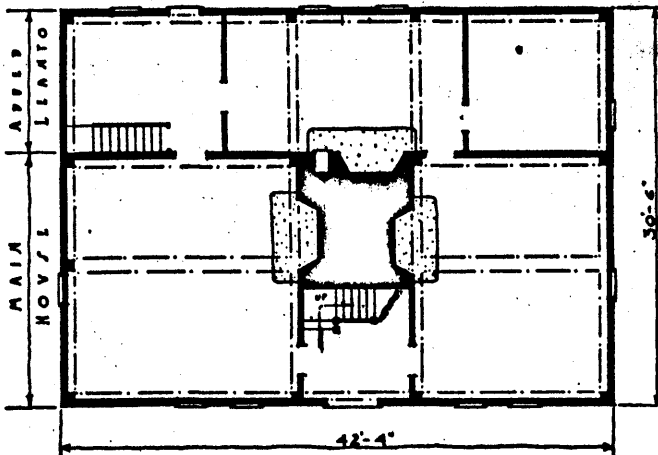


FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
FIRST STAGE

Figure I (B)



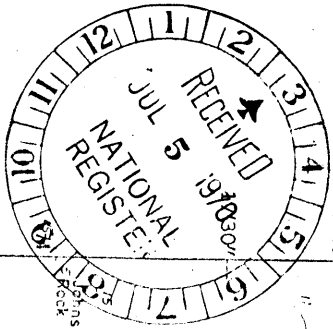
FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
SECOND STAGE



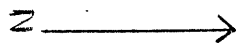
THOMAS LEE HOUSE - EAST LYAL  
FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
FINAL STAGE



From J.F. Kelly's Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963, p. 6 and p.12.



Thomas Lee House  
Latitude 41° 19' 03"  
Longitude 72° 14' 20"



OLD LYME 5.3 MI.  
SOUND VIEW 2.7 MI.  
6566 IV SE (OLD LYME)

NEW HAVEN 3  
0.5 MI. TO INTERCHANGE



N I