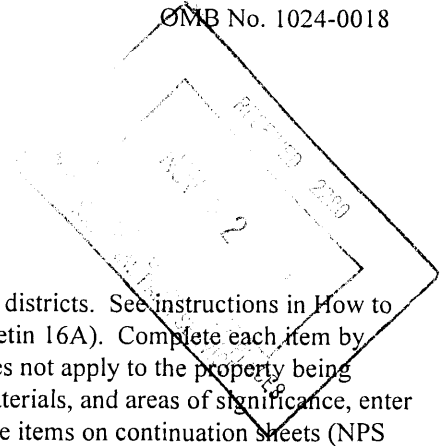


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

11/20/02



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 any 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 Platt, Colonel Asa, House  
other names/site \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 2 Tyler City Road not for publication N/A  
city or town Orange vicinity N/A  
state Connecticut code CT county New Haven code 009 zip code 06477

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.)

 11/20/02  
Signature of certifying official 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 commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

Col. Asa Platt House

Name of Property

New Haven, CT

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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 of the Keeper (Handwritten signature: E. L. ...)

Date of Action

12/31/02

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- X building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC/Federal

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
walls weatherboard
rubblestone
roof shingle
other

Narrative Description

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

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Colonel Asa Platt House, Orange, New Haven County, CT

Section 7 Page 1

The Colonel Asa Platt House is located in the Town of Orange at the southwest corner of Racebrook (State Route 114) and Tyler City roads (Photograph #s 1, 2, 3, 4). Facing northwest from its level 1.8 acre site, the Federal-style house consists of a four-bay, two-story main block (38' x 30), with twin interior brick chimneys, built in 1810, and a rear ell (18' x 26). While both sections rest on a coursed rubblestone foundation capped with three feet of brick, the ell may predate the house by a few years. The enclosed porch (14' x 20) on the west side of the ell was probably added in the early 1900s, its roof dormer and a rear second-story porch about 1940, when the ell was converted to an apartment. A stone well with a wellhouse stands just to the west of the porch (Photograph #4). A gravel driveway along the west side of the house leads to a modern three-bay garage erected in 1981.

The house is sheathed with clapboards framed by narrow paneled corner boards. Roof eaves and cornice returns of the main block feature a continuous modillion course and narrow rake boards that are detailed with moldings. The windows have shouldered casings capped by a molded frieze and projecting cornice on the façade and two-bay end elevations. An original dentil course remains on a first-floor window on the east elevation of the main block. Several windows still contain period six-over-six sash, including those at the southeast rear corner of the main block and in the gables. The rest of the windows are modifications of the two-over-two replacement sash installed about 1900 by the great-grandfather of the present owner. To create the appearance of 12-over-12 divided lights, new removable wood muntins milled to the appropriate profile were added after 1990. The present operable louvered wooden blinds are recent replacements.

The facade features an off-center Federal-style doorway and portico surmounted by a tripartite window (Photograph #5). The portico, which has a shallow gable roof and cornice returns embellished with a modillion course, is supported by square chamfered posts, c. 1870 replacements for the earlier fluted columns, but the original capitals remain in place.<sup>1</sup> Fluted pilasters flank the doorway, which has sidelights and a fanlight with wooden radial muntins. The fanlight surround is incised with a cut-out pattern of diamonds set within ellipses, designed to resemble the lead tracery often found in Federal doorways. The curved diamond shape is repeated in the round paterae on the portico capitals. The tripartite window above consists of a full-sized window flanked by narrow six-over-six sash. Narrow pilasters extend up through the frieze to the cornice and there are small consoles under the sill.

The interior of the main block is laid out with a large formal parlor and office across the front on either side of the hall, and a back parlor, now a dining room, and keeping room across the rear (see plan). Most of the rooms here and on the second floor have original plaster work and flooring. The level of style is set by the arched openings to the staircase and hall (Photograph # 6). These molded arches (one round, the other segmental), with fluted flared keyblocks, spring from the projecting capitals of slim paneled posts. Segmental arches with fluted posts flank the Federal-style fireplace in the parlor; the one on the right frames a built-in display cabinet, with cupboards below; the other opens to the back parlor (Photograph #7). These parlor arches display a greater variety of moldings, including rope molding along the top curve of the arch and a band of diamonds, a scaled-down version of those used on the portico, while the capitals are elaborated with bead molding, attenuated trygylphs, and carved sunburst paterae (Photograph #8). Like all the fireplaces the house, the one in the parlor is built of brick to Rumford proportions, with the characteristic angled cheeks. The Federal surround features a framed center panel on the frieze and sunburst paterae in the capitals of the pilasters, which extend up through the entablature into the mantel board. Parlor windows are framed by pilasters that rise up through the entablature to break the line of the cornices (Photograph #9). Narrow rope molding defines the slightly recessed ellipses in the window bibs, and a repeating diamond band runs along the outside edge of the pilasters. A more conventional Federal

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<sup>1</sup> For a portico of this period and style, it is assumed that the original columns were designed to match the pilasters.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Colonel Asa Platt House, Orange, New Haven County, CT

Section 7 Page 2

fireplace surround is found in the back parlor (Photograph #10). There, the firebox has a simple frame, surmounted by fluted capitals. The cased post in the east corner of this room is the only example in the house. Another oddity is a small cubbyhole with a door, which is located in the wall above the south door; its purpose or age has not been determined.

In the office, another round-arched opening on the right side of the fireplace wall defines the passage to the keeping room (Photograph #11). The more geometric fireplace surround there is detailed with paneled pilasters and large diamond panels in the frieze. Cupboards with paneled doors are found above the mantel and at the same height along the west side of the chimney in the passage, and a molded chair rail runs along the walls.

The traditional keeping-room fireplace, which has an exceptionally large firebox (60" x 44" x 22") and a simple surround, is more Colonial in style (Photograph #12)). A rose granite hearth extends across under the brick beehive oven and ash dump, which are concealed behind a paneled door. Similar doors are used for small cupboards above on either end of the mantel.

On the second floor, the most elaborate fireplace surrounds are found in the front chambers. The one in the east chamber resembles the surround in the parlor below (Photograph #13). Closets and a bathroom now take up the west end of this room, which probably served as a ballroom, a feature often found in the homes of the gentry, or in taverns and inns of the period. The surround in the west chamber has similar elements such as paneled pilasters, but features a center panel with an unusual carved bas-relief of an egg form (Photograph #14). Delicate rope molded swags on either side complete the composition.

The post-and-beam oak frame of the house is hand hewn, a rather late manifestation of this technique, while secondary members, such as rafters and joists, and the sheathing, were milled with an up-and-down saw. The first-floor framing has nominal six-inch joists let into an off-center longitudinal carrying beam (8" x 8"), which runs about nine feet from the rear foundation wall. It is located behind the stone chimney bases, which have wooden outriggers built into the masonry to support the hearths above.

Double plates are used in the attic, with the roof plate set about two feet above the floor. The roof is framed with a purlin-and-rafter system, with braced queen posts. Nominal five-inch rafters (40" o.c.) are half-lapped at the ridge and let into birds mouths at the purlins and plates. A smoke chamber with a wooden door is built into the larger west chimney. The gable peak of the ell is visible from the main attic. In the ell, half logs are used for rafters, but the saw marks on the boards there are the same as those in the house.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

X 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.

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, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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 Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

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

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Colonel Asa Platt House, Orange, New Haven County, CT

Section 8 Page 1

**Statement of Significance**

A sophisticated rendering of the English Adam style as it evolved in the American Federal period, the Colonel Asa Platt House is a stylistic tour de force that is distinguished by an exceptional level of craftsmanship. It has been attributed to David Hoadley (1744-1839), the only contemporary master builder in the region capable of such a highly original interpretation of the Federal style. While well known for his churches in Connecticut, there are few examples of Hoadley's creativity and skill as a residential designer. The comprehensive understanding of Adamesque principles so elegantly displayed in the Platt House can only be compared to Hoadley's design for the 1807 Wheeler-Beecher House in the nearby Town of Bethany, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

**Historical Background**

Colonel Asa Platt (1769- ?) was a fourth generation descendant of Richard Platt of England. His great-grandfather, Joseph Platt (b. 1649) was an early settler of Milford; his grandfather, Gideon (b. 1700), who married Mary Buckingham in 1726, removed to Middlebury. His father, Gideon Platt (d. 1796) married Mehetible Platt, a cousin, in 1756. Colonel Platt married Martha Woodruff in 1791 and they had eight children (two sons and six daughters) before they built this house in 1810. Platt owned considerable property in Milford's North Society, as Orange was first known, including several parcels purchased from the Woodruff family. It is likely that a two-acre parcel purchased from Ichabod Woodruff in 1811, which, as described in the deed, was bordered by highways on the north and east, is the nominated property. Since Platt's sons predeceased him, Enoch in 1829 and Asa in 1832, his estate was left to his twin unmarried daughters, Laura and Lucretia, who were born in 1805. Unable to pay the taxes on the property, they lost the house to the town, and for a time it served as the Milford poorhouse.

William Ell Russell (b. 1810) bought the property from the town in 1847 and it still remains in his family, having passed down through six generations. William Ell was a descendant of Stephen Russell of Woodbridge, who served in the Revolution and moved to Milford after the war. His father, Chauncey Russell (1790-1829), a carpenter and wheelwright, specializing in fabricating waterwheels, married Lucinda Sperry. William E., the first of their five children, was a cordwainer (shoemaker) when he married Susan Parsons (1818-1888) in 1831. By 1860 he was a fairly well-to-do farmer, with real estate valued at \$5000. Since two of his sons, Elford and William C., were butchers and ran the family's wholesale meat and provisions business in New Haven, it is likely that the Russells raised beef cattle. William C. Russell became a wealthy farmer and businessman, and a political leader, who represented New Haven in the state legislature in 1871. A member of the Congregational Church, he also was active in the Masons and the Grange, and served in the state militia.

When he came of age, Edward W. Russell, William's youngest brother, joined the firm. Born in 1852, he married Mary (aka Kitty nee Bishop) in 1872. At the time, the nominated property was just one of four Russell farms in Orange that supplied their city market. By 1880 Edward had inherited this house, which, according to Rockey's history of New Haven, was known as "Platt's Hotel," which may account for the extraordinary level of architectural detailing.<sup>2</sup> As recorded in the federal census that year, Edward's household then included his wife, the first five of their ten children, and his widowed mother. Apparently the Russells became dairy farmers, for in 1890 Edward founded the Tyler City

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<sup>2</sup> Although the colonel's wealth and status were certainly factors, hotels and inns of the period tended to be more elaborate than the average farmhouse, especially in rural areas.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Colonel Asa Platt House, Orange, New Haven County, CT

Section 8 Page 2

Creamery. After Edward's death, the house was occupied by his widow and family members: Daisy, who never married; and Inez Russell Hall, the youngest daughter, and her husband Clarence, grandparents of the present owner. Edward Russell's estate, however, which had been left to all his children, was not formally settled until about 1943. At that time, the surviving heirs quit-claimed their interests to the Halls and the property passed down to their daughter, Marjorie Hall Schenk, and then to her daughter, the present owner.

**Architectural Significance**

The American Federal style (1790-1820) was an adaptation of the Neo-Classical English style as practiced by the Adam brothers. As developed by Robert Adam (1728-1792), Roman classicism was freely expressed, yet characterized by a sure sense of proportion and meticulous attention to detail. Promoted in this country through builder's guides and pattern books (particularly the Asher Benjamin series), the Adam style was reinterpreted and the forms attenuated, exhibiting the increasingly delicate sensibility found in the Platt House. It is evident, however, that the Platt House was not simply a demonstration of a builder's skill at replicating pattern-book designs, which, in less masterful hands, often was carried to excess. Here, in the best Adamesque tradition, there is "a beautiful variety of light moldings, gracefully formed, delicately enriched, arranged with propriety and skill,"<sup>3</sup> which certainly suggests a designer of Hoadley's stature.

Considered the most important master builder of the period, David Hoadley was working in Connecticut long before the practice of architecture became a profession. Although he designed and built United Church on the New Haven Green and several regional country churches, including those in Orange and Milford, the Wheeler-Beecher House in Bethany is one of the few known examples of his residential work. In his later years Hoadley also worked with some of the new architects of the day, most notably Ithiel Town. Their productive collaboration culminated in the Greek Revival-style Samuel Russell House of 1828 in Middletown, now a National Historic Landmark. It also is known that Hoadley, or his firm, was responsible for the casework for another Town commission, the home of Mrs. Eli Whitney in New Haven (no longer extant), which was completed after her husband's death.

The Platt House may afford yet another opportunity to analyze Hoadley's mastery of the Federal style. While finely detailed and nicely proportioned, the entranceway only hints at the elegant refinement of the interior, which like much of the master's work, must be closely studied to be fully appreciated. Major and minor decorative motifs resonate in this fully integrated design. Elliptical forms utilized to such good effect in the doorway are repeated throughout: in the sunbursts of the mantelpieces; in the recessed panels below the parlor windows; in the capitals of the arches; and, in a wholly unexpected manner, in the high relief of the egg form that embellishes the simple mantel frieze in a second-floor chamber. The curved diamond motif boldly established around the arch of the exterior doorway surround, appears again in unexpected places, such as the banding on the window casings in the formal parlor and there, this feature is subtly flattened. This and other understated details, such as the delicate carving of the edges of the mantelpieces, as well as the exceptional quality of the craftsmanship, must be observed at close range.

The crispness of the detailing, so often lost under layers of paint, allows the viewer to fully appreciate the extraordinary level of skill of the carvers and joiners, as well as the dynamic subtlety they brought to their work.<sup>4</sup> For example, the rotation implied by the curving tips of the sunbursts gives yet another dimension to the often static quality of this typical

<sup>3</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780* (Cambridge Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1969), p.25.

<sup>4</sup> The intricacy of the joinery is demonstrated by the fluted keyblocks, one of the few pattern-book elements in the Platt House. In Asher Benjamin's *Country Builder's Assistant*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1800, this type of keyblock called for 12 separate parts.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Colonel Asa Platt House, Orange, New Haven County, CT

Section 8 Page 3

motif. Indeed, without the extraordinary contributions of these master craftsmen, the interior design, however well developed, would lose much of its significance.

Much of the direct evidence for the attribution to Hoadley can be found in the Wheeler-Beecher House. Although not as well preserved as the Platt House, the interior there has retained much of its remarkably similar detailing, especially the elliptical arched openings that display the same fluted keyblocks, rope moldings, and unusual fluted square columns.<sup>5</sup> As in the Platt House, they appear as a double arch in the front hall, and frame cupboards and passageways between rooms. Other similar enrichment includes the edge molding of the mantelpieces and elliptical panels under the windows in the formal parlor. Although both houses rely on colonial massing, it is evident that the master builder was involved in both the design and original construction of the Bethany House, which has a balanced axial design, with the doorway and portico centered in a five-bay façade. Again the pedimented portico is quite similar, even to the elliptical cutouts over the fanlight, but there it is surmounted by a Palladian window, and these elements are more fully integrated into the design of the facade by the use of a defining central roof pediment. While Hoadley's great strength, "his ability to transfigure commonplace forms with a rich variety of elegant ornament" is evident in both these commissions, the extent and nature of his probable role in the Platt House must be clarified.<sup>6</sup> Given its rather *retarditaire* three-quarter colonial form and construction methods, it is more likely that he was called upon to design the portico and embellish the interior of an existing building.

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<sup>5</sup> The interior there has been divided into apartments and some of the original passageways between rooms have been closed off.

<sup>6</sup> Quote from Bruce Clouette, Wheeler-Beecher House National Register Nomination, 1976, p. 8:1.



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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Col. Asa Platt House, New Haven County, CT

Section 9/10 Page 1

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

Benjamin, Asher. *The Country Builder's Assistant*. 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> editions. Greenfield, Massachusetts, 1797, 1798, 1800.

\_\_\_\_\_. *American Builder's Companion*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Boston, 1806.

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The nominated property is identified as parcel 64:2:2 in the Orange Tax Assessor's Records and described in the Orange Land Records in Volume 452, page 138 and Volume 454, page 956.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundaries of the above described parcel encompass the entire homelot historically associated with the Col. Asa Platt House.

Col. Asa Platt House  
Name of Property

New Haven, CT  
County, State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreege of Property 1.8

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>18</u>	<u>666510</u>	<u>4672070</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	<u>666535</u>	<u>4572280</u>	4	_____	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By:**

**Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator**

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant

organization Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC date 4/15/02

street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (860) 347 4072

city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

**Property Owner**

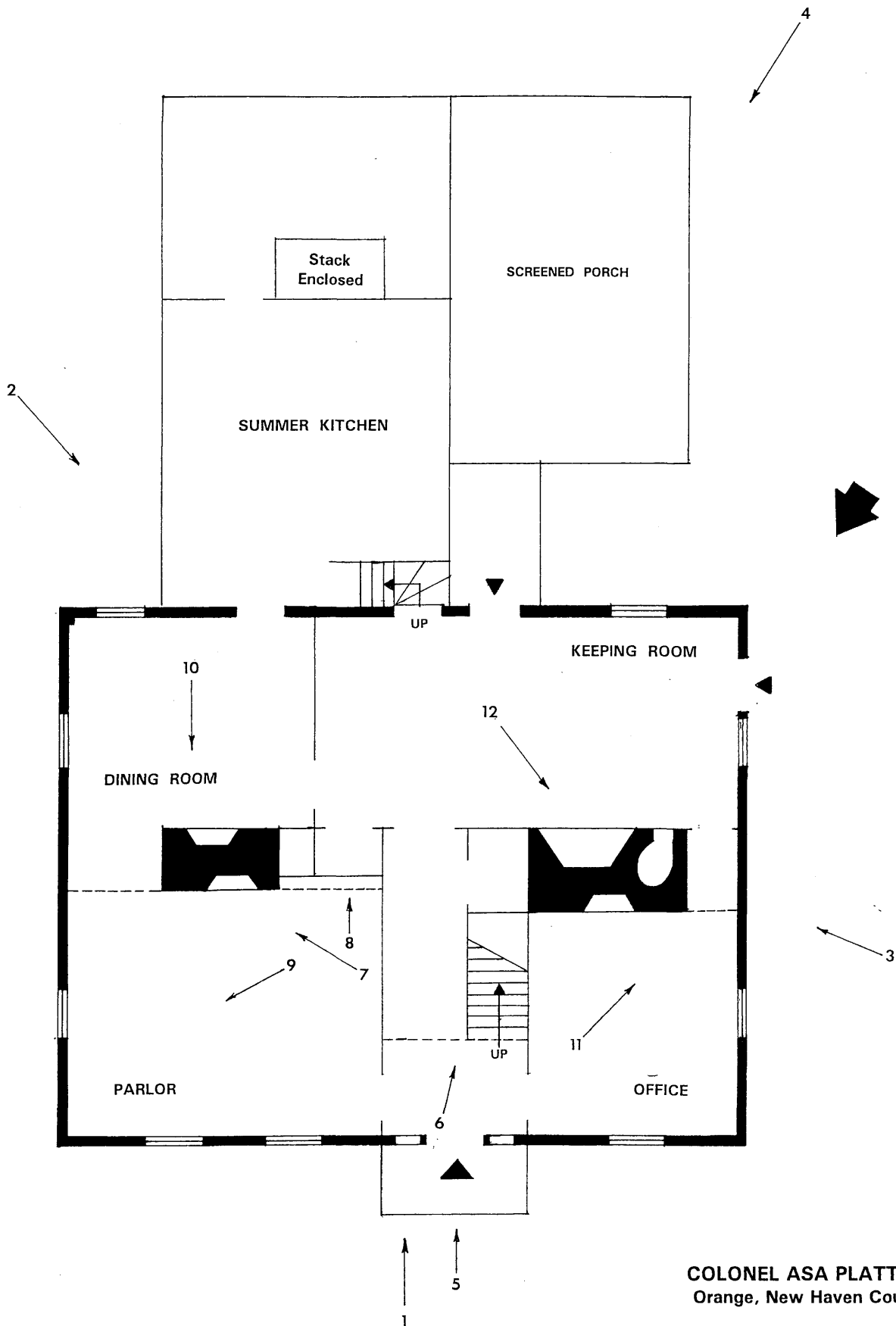
(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Marjorie A. Schenk-Steigauf

street & number 2 Tyler City Road telephone 203 795 9363

city or town Orange state CT zip code 06477

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).



**COLONEL ASA PLATT HOUSE**  
 Orange, New Haven County, CT

**SCHEMATIC FIRST-FLOOR PLAN**

Scale: 1/8" = 1'

Arrows show Photograph Views

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Col. Asa Platt House, New Haven County, CT

Section Photo Page 1

List of Photographs

Photographer: Cunningham Preservation Associates

Negatives on File: Connecticut Historical Commission

Date: 11/01; 4/02

1. Façade, camera facing SE
2. Northeast elevations, camera facing W
3. Southwest elevation, main block, camera facing E
4. Rear elevations, camera facing N
5. Facade portico, camera facing SE
6. Front hallway, camera facing SE
7. Parlor, fireplace wall, camera facing E
8. Detail, recessed parlor shelves, camera facing SE
9. Parlor, facing N
10. Dining room (back parlor), camera facing NW
11. Office fireplace wall, camera facing S
12. Keeping room fireplace wall, camera facing W
13. Parlor chamber fireplace, camera facing SE
14. West chamber fireplace, camera facing SE