UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE IN		W TO COMPLETE NAT	<i>TIONAL REGISTER FOR</i> CABLE SECTIONS	MS
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AND/OR COMMON	Sloan-Raymond-H	'itch House		
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House, now the museum of the Wilton Historical Society, is an 18th-century frame dwelling located on the main road through Wilton, Connecticut. The house sits on a small corner lot, behind which is a large low-rise office building of contemporary design. Plantings are informal and include two or three shade trees and shrubs along the low stone wall which runs along the periphery of the lot. Other than one small shed, there are no outbuildings.

The house consists of a large 21/2-story gable-roofed part, with its 5-bay facade facing Danbury Road, and a smaller 2-story ell to the rear. The main part is dated c.1760-1780 and has relatively light framing members (8x9" straight posts) and no visible summer beams. The facade or east side has a central entranceway installed in the 1930s, a Georgian motif with fluted pilasters, rosettes and a complex series of cornice moldings. The door is large with crossbuck lower panels. The original door was a smaller, simpler 8-panel door; it was moved to the south side and enframed with a pilastered treatment similar to that of the main entrance. Windows have old twelve-over-twelve sash with much old glass; the muntins are 14" wide and the panes are mounted close to the outside. The exterior is covered with beaded clapboards of graduated exposure; though somewhat tapered, these are rabbetted on the lower edge to effect an overlap. Some of these clapboards are deteriorated and others have already been replaced, but the greater part of the exterior is still covered with this old siding. The roof is now cedar-shingled with no overhang and a slight return at the gable ends; in the 19th century it had been redone with severe gable end overhangs and tin roofing. The large central chimney is of fieldstone, like the underpinning; in the cellar are visible three niches built into the stack foundation. Above the roofline the chimney is of brick and has a simple shoulder along the top and a modern cap.

The ell is thought to be older than the main house, but so much of the structure has been replaced or is hidden from view that it is difficult to judge. The ell is post-and-beam framed as two rooms, with a large hewn beam demarcating the two bays visible on the first floor interior. There is a brick chimney at the west or rear end of the ell. The two-story addition has been given a lean-to with the extension of the roof over a modern addition to the north wall. Other modifications include a small shed-roofed addition to the ell's rear wall, a porch across the south side, and dormers along the north slope of the roof.

The interior appearance is a blend of many original features alongside of elements from subsequent restorations. The porch or hall immediately within the front entrance is nearly all original. The stairway takes two turns and has a simple rail supported on slender turned balusters, generally three per stair. The sides of the treads have applied scroll cut-outs and the wall surface below is covered with raised panels. To the right is the north front room, notable chiefly because of its corner cupboard. The cupboard has an upper part, rectangular in shape, outlined by simple moldings and fitted with curved shelves. Below is a single door of two panels. Alterations to the room include the exposing of plates and girts, probably originally cased, and the addition of a dado made of a single board featheredged both top and bottom. The south front room is distinguished for panelling. The panelled fireplace wall features a bolection molding around the opening of the brick fireplace, above which is a single large panel. The topmost of the three-tier arrangment is a row of very small panels, and above them is a cornice of moderate depth; some of the moldings are carried around the room. The room has no added dado, but in the southwest corner an elaborate corner cupboard was installed: it has pilasters, rosettes, a carved keyblock, and a shell-carved soffit. It was added in the 1970s.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House Wilton, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER	6	PAGE 1
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Surveys:

The house is a one-structure local historic district

Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House Historic District

1970- Local

Records with Connecticut Historical Commission Hartford, CT

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Sloan-Raymond-Fitch	House				
Wilton, CT CONTINUATION SHEE	т	ITEM NUMBER	7	PAGE	2

Description (continued):

The kitchen contains a huge stone fireplace with two ovens built into the back wall. A dentillated mantelshelf and vertical featheredged boarding have been added to this room. The south chamber upstairs has a panelled fireplace wall, bolection molding, and cornice similar to the room below, but the north chamber merely has one wall of featheredged boards, probably not original. There are both exposed and cased structural members on the second story. Throughout the main house are old wide-board floors: those in the south hall are chestnut or oak whereas those in the rooms are hard pine. The back rooms and the ell have been done over for purposes of adapting the house as a museum. A restroom and gift shop occupy the small back rooms, and the ell has been opened up as one large room with office space in the "lean-to" part. There is more featheredged boarding added there, but older material includes oak floor boards of moderate width and on the æcond floor, a very simple country-Federal mantel surrounding the fireplace.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

SPECIFIC DAT		BUILDER/ARCH	HITECT Unknown	
1800-1899 1900-	COMMERCE COMMUNICATIONS	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT INDUSTRY INVENTION	PHILOSOPHY POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	TRANSPORTATION OTHER (SPECIFY)
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PERIOD	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CF COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION

The Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House has long been regarded as one of Wilton's pre-eminent 18th-century houses, and it has considerable importance for those interested in Connecticut's early domestic architecture. Although many of its features are the product of restoration, most represent genuine historical material which typifies 18th-century building customs (Criterion C). Moreover, several elements, particularly the siding and early sash, are quite rare and make the house an exceptional historic resource.

The house is typical of dwellings built in the latter part of the 18th century.¹ It has the standard gable roof, central chimney, five-bay form which was ubiquitous in the period. The framing is lighter than most earlier houses, with little or no flare to the posts, no visible summers, and generally reduced dimensions of members. The interior has two well-preserved panelled walls with the roll moldings which served to set off the fireplaces before mantelshelves became the custom. The porch or front hallway is also representative of the period, with its panelled wall surfaces, slender turned balusters, and simple scroll work along the sides of the stairs (though the grouping of the balusters in threes is odd). Other intact early features which illustrate 18th-century building practice include the several rooms with wide-board floors, the stone stack with its niches, the large kitchen fireplace with two ovens in the back wall, and the later country-Federal mantel in the ell.

The beaded and graduated clapboards are especially worthy of note, since the greater part of the exterior is covered with this early siding usually known only through remnants. Eighteenth-century siding materials were more diverse than is sometimes thought and included shiplapped flush boards, shingles, planed and beaded weatherboards, and the familiar clapboard. The siding of the Sloan House is somewhat of a cross between clapboards and weatherboards in that the boards are both slightly tapered in thickness and rabetted to aid the overlap. Similarly, it is rare to find the wide-muntined 18th-century sash . Usually early houses have had their sash replaced with the narrower early 19th-century sash or else have modern reproduction windows.

The house was restored in the 1930s according to the tastes of the time. In general, the decisions made then tended to be overly stylish and ornamental, inflating the status level which the house represents. Examples are the entrances and the kitchen mantel; a similar criticism can be made of the elaborate corner cupboard. At the same time, some things were done too primitively: the exposed beams, or the feather-edged dado in the front room. The architectural integrity is compromised to a degree by the heavy hand of restoration: when viewing the facade, for example, one's eye is drawn to the elaborate pilastered doorway, appropriate to well-to-do Connecticut Valley homes, but a poor replacement for the modest transomed entrance which formerly graced the house. Nevertheless, the obvious changes to the house should not blind the observer to the significant

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Adams, Mary E. "The Sloan House." Typescript, Wilton Historical Society, 1972. Overand, Mrs. Edward et al. The Colonial and Revolutionary Homes of Wilton, Norwalk, Westport, Darien and Vicinity. Pr. priv., Norwalk, 1901.

Wilton Historical Society. Eighteenth-Century Dwellings in Wilton. Wilton, 1976.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA	IPPE POT MEN		
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NAME/TITLE Bruce Clouette	, Consultant		
		DATE	:
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Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House Wilton, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER	8	PAGE	3
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Significance (continued):

genuine material which remains. Indeed, the overly sophisticated restorations are really no different than any other alteration or modernization except that they create a greater visual impact.

Alexander Sloan built the first house on this site in 1732, but the impecunious weaver owned the house for only a few years before selling it to the Elmer family.² The main part of the present house was built by Clapp Raymond some time after 1757, perhaps incorporating the earlier house as part of the ell. Local opinion is that the ell is an earlier structure, and while it certainly is of hewn post-and-beam construction, little of the original fabric can be seen, either because it is concealed or because of alteration. Clapp Raymond was a militia captain and a prominent man in civic affairs, but the house has few traces of affluence. The north room's cupboard, for example, is entirely plain, with not a hint of an arch or pilsters. Similarly, the front stairs' scrollwork, while showing an awareness of more formal interiors, is far less intricate or delicate than many contemporary examples. In the 19th century the house was owned by the Fitch family.

Joseph Platt Fitch was a merchant and a locally prominent person who was largely responsible for arranging for the passage of the railroad through Wilton. His children and grandchildren occupied the house until 1936. At that time, the house came into the possession of Philip Van Wyck, who with Wilton architect Nelson Breed, designed and carried out the several changes noted herein, including the new entrance.

Overand (1901) gives the date as 1780 and attributes it to Raymond, but Adams (1972) while making no definite statement inclines toward an earlier date, perhaps the 1730's. The Wilton Historical Society in their pamphlet simply says after 1757.

²Sloan's social status from <u>Eighteenth</u> <u>Century</u> <u>Dwellings</u> in <u>Wilton</u> (Wilton: Wilton Historical Society, 1976), 48.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Page 1 Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House Wilton, Fairfield County, Connecticut

The Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House, formerly located at 249 Danbury Road in Wilton, Connecticut, was relocated to a new site nearby in 2001 as a result of highway improvements that could not avoid its old location. These Continuation Sheets provide updated information that takes into account the move and the new location.

2. Location

224 Danbury Road Wilton, Fairfield County, CT 06897

7. Description

In 2001, the house was moved from its original location to a site nearby but on the opposite side of Danbury Road. Because the house now faces westward, directional indicators in the original description (north, east, etc.) need to be reversed. Otherwise, only minor changes occurred to the physical fabric of the house itself:

- When the house settled on its new foundation, several plaster walls cracked and needed to be re-plastered and re-wallpapered.
- The studs in the front wall were found to be severely deteriorated, so portions of the wall needed to be reconstructed.
- A small amount of structural steel was added to supplement the first-floor support system.

The house's new site is approximately .3 miles south of its former site, near the intersection of Danbury Road (U.S. Route 7) and Deerfield Road. The Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House shares a large corner lot, 224 Danbury Road, with the c.1735 Betts-Sturges-Blackmar House, a 2 1/2-story gable-roofed clapboarded house with a center chimney and a symmetrical three-bay facade. In between the two colonial-period houses is a 19th-century board-sided barn that was also relocated to the site. Along with connecting structures that join the buildings together, the houses and barn form the Wilton Heritage Museum, a history center with changing exhibit space, period rooms, curatorial facilities, a library, and offices for the Wilton Historical Society.

Two features from its former location join the Sloan-Raymond-Fitch house at its new site: a fieldstone wall in front of and along the north side of the house, and a small well house in the side yard. The property also includes, at the rear of the lot, two previously relocated buildings, a small blacksmith shop and a barn.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Page 2 Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House Wilton, Fairfield County, Connecticut

During the move, a date was discovered incised into one of the chimney stones that had not been noticed before: 1772. This falls within the date-of-construction range estimated at the time the house was nominated (1760-1780), and probably represents the year the house was built.

8. Statement of Significance

Significant Date: 1772

Criteria Consideration: **B** - removed from its original location

Narrative Statement of Significance:

The Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House is no longer on its original site. However, its significance is primarily derived from its architectural value (Criteria Consideration B): its five-bay form, clapboard exterior, divided-light sash, raised paneling, fireplaces, and front stairway detail are all key characteristics of the vernacular architecture of colonial New England. All of these defining features were unaffected by the move, and other important features, including the niches built into the chimney base and the upper part of the center chimney, were faithfully recreated at the new location. The only outbuilding, a small well house, was relocated to the new site, and the low stone wall that stood in front of the house has a counterpart at the new location that is similar in appearance.

10. Geographical Information

Acreage: unchanged (.2 acres)

UTM Reference: 18.632040.4560650

Boundary Description:

The nominated property lies at the northwest corner of the parcel known as 224 Danbury Road, recorded in the Wilton Land Records in Volume 859, page 20. The boundary includes 90 feet of frontage along Danbury Road and 110 feet along the parcel's north side line. The south boundary runs between the ell of the Sloan-Raymond-Fitch house and the recently built connecting structure that links it to the rest of the museum complex (see Site Plan).

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Page 3 Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House Wilton, Fairfield County, Connecticut

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the portion of the setting that directly relates to the Sloan-Raymond-Fitch house, including the fieldstone wall in front of the house and the small well house to the north, both of which were also on the small lot that was the house's original setting. It excludes the rest of the museum complex, which is made up of both historic buildings and modern construction, because it is not directly related to the Sloan-Raymond-Fitch house.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Page 4 Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House Wilton, Fairfield County, Connecticut

Photographs of the property on its new site:

Photograph information:

- 1. Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House
- 2. Wilton, Fairfield County, CT
- 3. PAST, Inc. Photo
- 4. September 2002
- 5. Negatives filed with PAST, Inc., Storrs, Connecticut 06268

Captions:

- 1. Overview of house in its new setting, showing Sloan-Raymond-Fitch House on left, connecting structures and relocated barn in center, and Betts-Sturges-Blackmar House on right, camera facing northeast.
- 2. Close-up of facade (west elevation), camera facing northeast.
- 3. Close-up of facade, camera facing southeast.
- 4. Rear of house, showing south elevation of ell, camera facing northwest
- 5. Rear of house and north elevation of ell, camera facing southwest.
- 6. Interior, north front room, camera facing east.
- 7. Interior, south front room, camera facing north.
- 8. Interior, kitchen fireplace, camera facing southwest.
- 9. Detail of structural steel in cellar added to support first-floor joists.
- 10. Interior, cellar, reconstructed chimney base on right, rear (east) cellar wall on left, bulkhead door in background, camera facing south.

