

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

FEB 7 1983

date entered

1. Name

historic Isaac Lawrence House

and/or common Lawrence Tavern

2. Location

street & number Elm Street

N/A not for publication

city, town

~~North Canaan~~ ~~Canaan~~
vicinity of

congressional district

6th

state Connecticut

code 09

county

Litchfield

code 005

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 commercial educational entertainment government industrial military museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other:

4. Owner of Property

name Molly Lyles

street & number Elm Street

city, town

North Canaan vicinity of Canaan

state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. North Canaan Town Clerk

street & number

Town Hall - Pease Street

city, town

North Canaan (Canaan)

state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of
Historic Placeshas this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982

 federal state county local

depository for survey records

Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town

Hartford

state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Isaac Lawrance House is located on Elm Street in a residential area on the outskirts of the village of Canaan, Connecticut.¹ The house (Photos 1 and 2) sits back about 50 feet from the road and is surrounded by more than six acres of lawn and meadows, with the Blackberry River forming the southern boundary of the parcel. In addition to the house, there is an old frame barn and a small, modern shed located in the rear.

The house was built in 1751 and is 2 1/2 stories tall, with the ridge of its gable roof set parallel to the street. The five-bay facade is symmetric and the central entrance is sheltered by an enclosed, gable-roofed porch (Photo 3). The doorway is outlined by a series of molded boards and is lighted by sidelights glazed with very small panes. The roof of the porch is treated as a Classical pediment, with mutules, tryglyphs along the frieze, and a partial cornice return; there are simple pilasters at the corners. The house rests on a fieldstone foundation, and the exterior is clapboarded. Windows are fitted with twelve-over-twelve reproduction sash. A large central chimney of brick rises above the asphalt-shingled roof. About 1800, the front slope of the roof was raised up by laying a second set of rafters on top of the first: this allowed the creation of a Classical entablature, with projecting cornice moldings, a partial return at the gables, dentils, and a simple frieze and architrave. To the rear of the house is a two-story ell built as a one-story addition, probably about 1800, and raised to its present height in 1884. There is also a two-story partially enclosed porch at the southwest rear. An 1884 veranda on the south side of the house has been removed.

In front of the entrance is a remarkable doorstep (Photo 4), 7 1/2 by 11 feet, inscribed with the words, "Isaac Lawrance / Came here June 2 1738 / This House Built / 1751 / ISAAC LAWRENCE died Dec 2 1793 / Lydia Hewit his wife died Nov 11 1767 aged 60," followed by a list of the Lawrances' children. The first two lines, the house's date, and the geneological information are each in a slightly different script and may have been carved at different times.

The interior of the house is well-preserved and contains a wealth of interesting historic features. Immediately within the front entrance is a small room (Photo 5) with walls, ceilings, and the side of the stairway completely covered with arrangements of raised panels. There is no apparent discontinuity between that part of this room within the main house and that contained within the entrance porch. The stairs have the typical 18th-century configuration, placed against the far wall, with two turns, but the simple square balusters and newels and molded rail appear to date from the period 1800-1825.

On the opposite side of the central stack, at the rear of the house, is the kitchen (Photo 6), with its large stone fireplace and brick beehive oven on the right. There are large raised panels over the molded mantelshelf and a paneled door concealing the oven. Structural members are enclosed with beaded casings, and running along the walls is a dado formed by two tiers of small square panels.

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Isaac Lawrance House (Lawrence Tavern)
North Canaan, CT

Description (continued):

The north front room or parlor (Photo 7) continues the theme of extensive paneling, with the underside of the summer's casing decorated with alternating square and oblong shapes. Only half of the fireplace wall is paneled, however, with the center portion plastered to form a backdrop for a Federal-style mantel. The mantel has pilasters, a frieze with a large central tablet, and fluting below the molded shelf. The stone fireplace protrudes somewhat into the room; the outside face of the side and lintel stones is dressed with a series of parallel grooves. In the northeast corner is a corner cupboard with a crossbuck-paneled lower door and a glass upper part of three round-headed openings. The interior is fitted with complexly curved shelves. The parlor has a sort of cornice formed by moldings placed under the plate and girt casings and small crown moldings against the ceiling.

The south part of the first floor has been opened up into one large room: it was formerly the tap room of the tavern which was once kept in the house and had a bar running across the middle of the room. Its walls are covered with feather-edged boards placed vertically, and the exposed joists running into the cased summer have beaded edges. This room shows its original wide-board floor. The rear part of this room has been redone (in yellow pine) to resemble the original features found in the front part.

The second-floor plan follows that of the first. The south room is open from the front of the house to the back and was once a ballroom (Photo 8). The plaster ceiling is raised up about halfway up the rafters, creating a vaulted effect. Walls are covered with vertical feather-edged boards, and like the other rooms upstairs, the original wide-board floor is visible. A simple bench is built into the sides of the room. On the north wall is a gallery with a railing similar to that of the main stairway; access to the gallery is through the attic. The chamber over the kitchen (Photo 9) has a similar feather-edged wall surface and beaded casings for the widely flaring corner posts. The north chamber is somewhat more formal, with plaster walls, a chair rail, and moldings beneath the plates and girts. Like the ballroom, it has a small fireplace with a simply molded frame surrounding it.

Throughout the house are the original paneled doors, many with old latches and some on strap hinges (Photos 5 and 7). Especially notable are the paired three-panel doors which connect the kitchen and south room downstairs and the back chamber and ball room upstairs (Photos 6 and 9).

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Isaac Lawrence House (Lawrence Tavern)
North Canaan, CT

Description (continued):

The older barn (Photo 10) is clapboarded and rests on a fieldstone foundation. The present opening on the north gable end probably dates from the time of its use as a carriagehouse and stable around 1890. Behind the late 19th-century interior sheathing, however, one can discern hewn post-and-beam framing, suggesting that at least some of the barn's fabric dates to the mid 19th century or earlier.

The area immediately south of the house was the site of an archeological excavation in 1979 and 1980. The land here is divided into two fluvial terraces, the one nearer the river less than a meter above the river's surface and the one further from the river about 3.5 meters above the water's flow. A series of eight two-meter squares was excavated along the line of a proposed (and now completed) sewer line, running perpendicular to the bank of the river (and to the contour of the terraces). Units in both terraces yielded extensive and varied collections of artifacts. Ceramics, glass, nails, and butchered animal bones were found in the upper terrace below a recent sod layer, generally within 60 centimeters of the surface. Dateable items indicate dates of 1750-1850 for these deposits. In contrast, artifacts from the lower terrace date from the period 1850-1900. In addition to glass and ceramics, material recovered from the lower terrace included pieces of brass lamp parts and a bone toothbrush. Additional testing indicated that the coherent, largely undisturbed stratigraphy found in the excavated units extended at least 20 meters in either direction from the centerline of the sewer. A detailed site plan, profile, and discussion of artifacts is in the report cited in the bibliography.

¹The village of Canaan, a local place name and post office designation, is not in the incorporated town of Canaan, but rather, the town of North Canaan. Until 1858 the area was one large town, the town of Canaan, but in that year the northern part (with the largest village) was set off and named North Canaan, while the southern part retained the old name.

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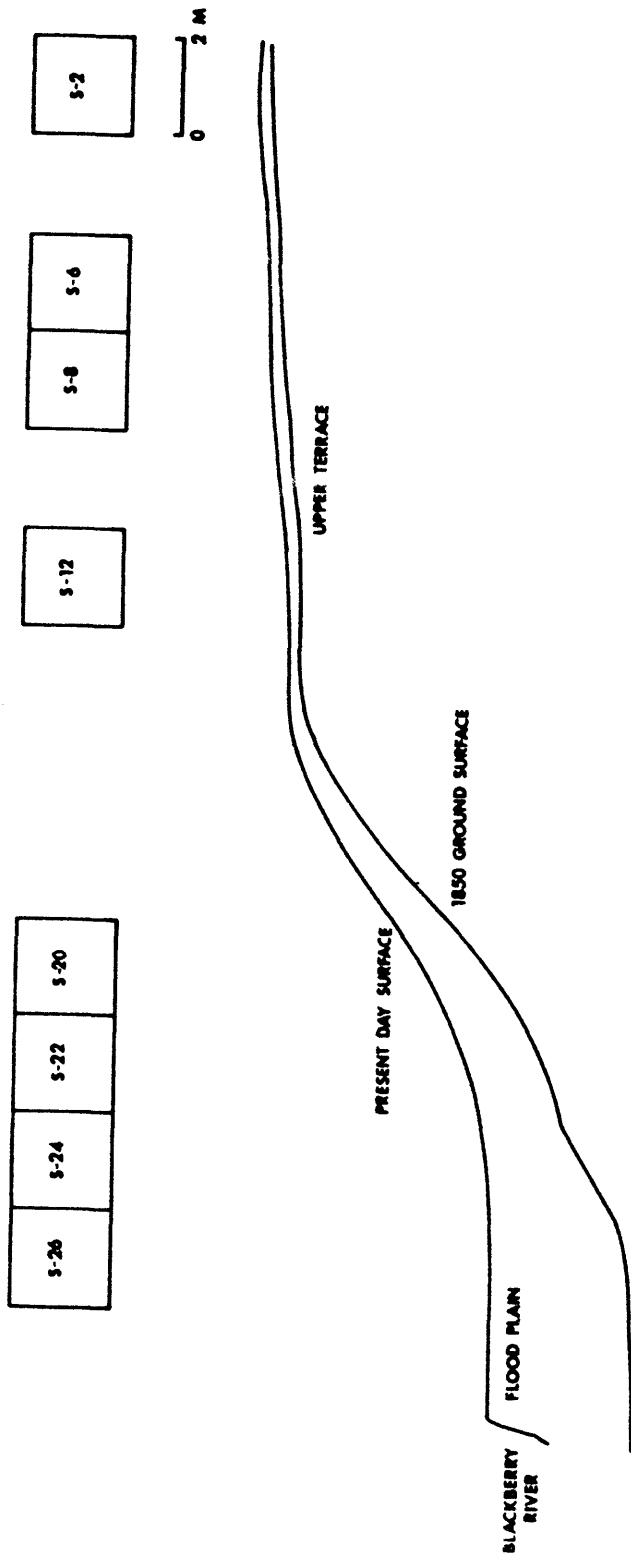
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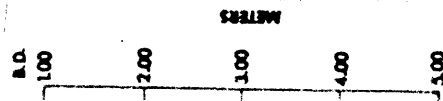
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Topographic cross-section and excavation grid at the Lawrence Tavern. Note the difference in elevation between the contemporary ground surface and that of the mid-nineteenth century. The rock feature, used as a landmark in landscaping, was discovered in unit S-22.



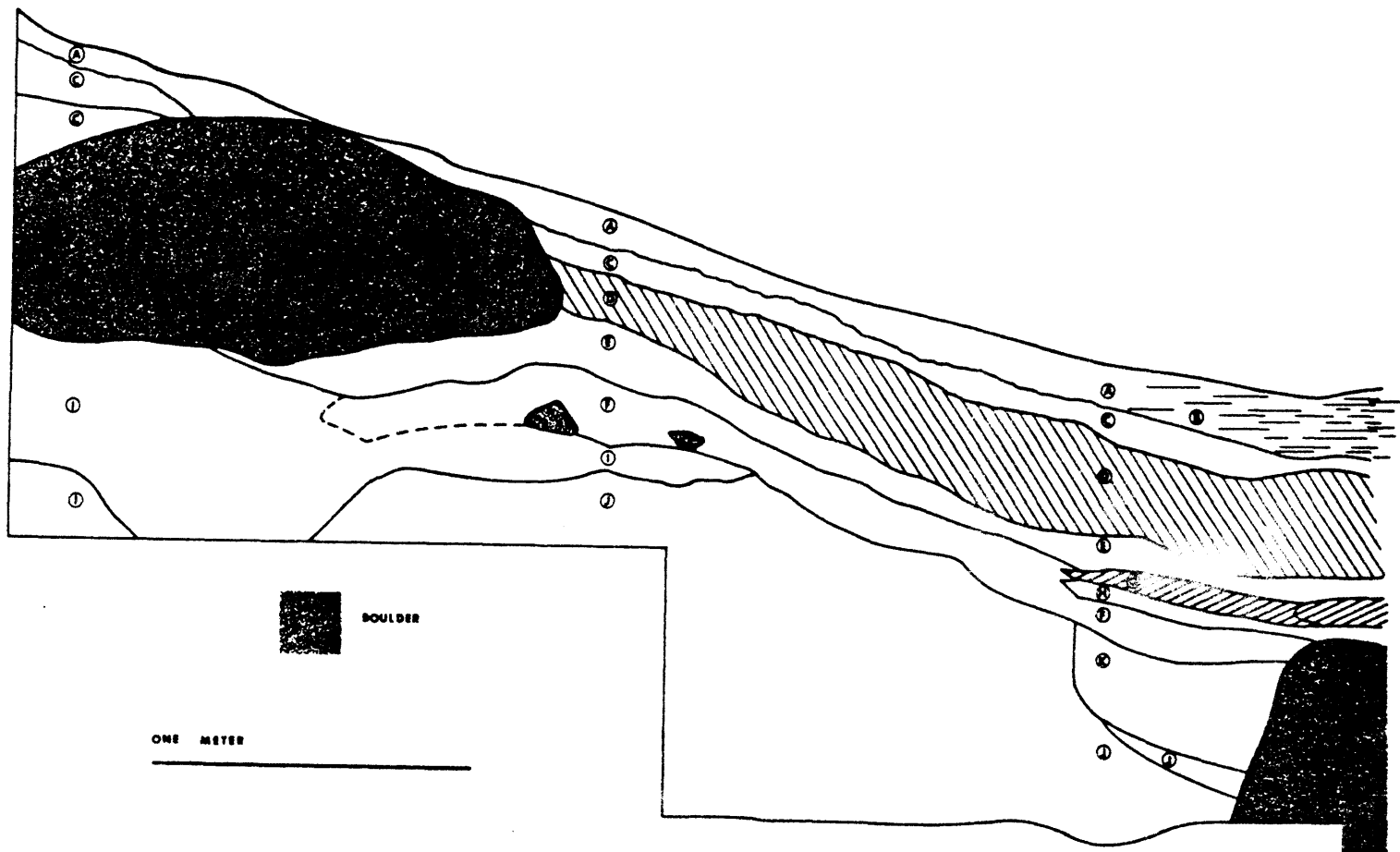
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East Wall Profile between S-18, W-0 and S-26, W-0, northern half.



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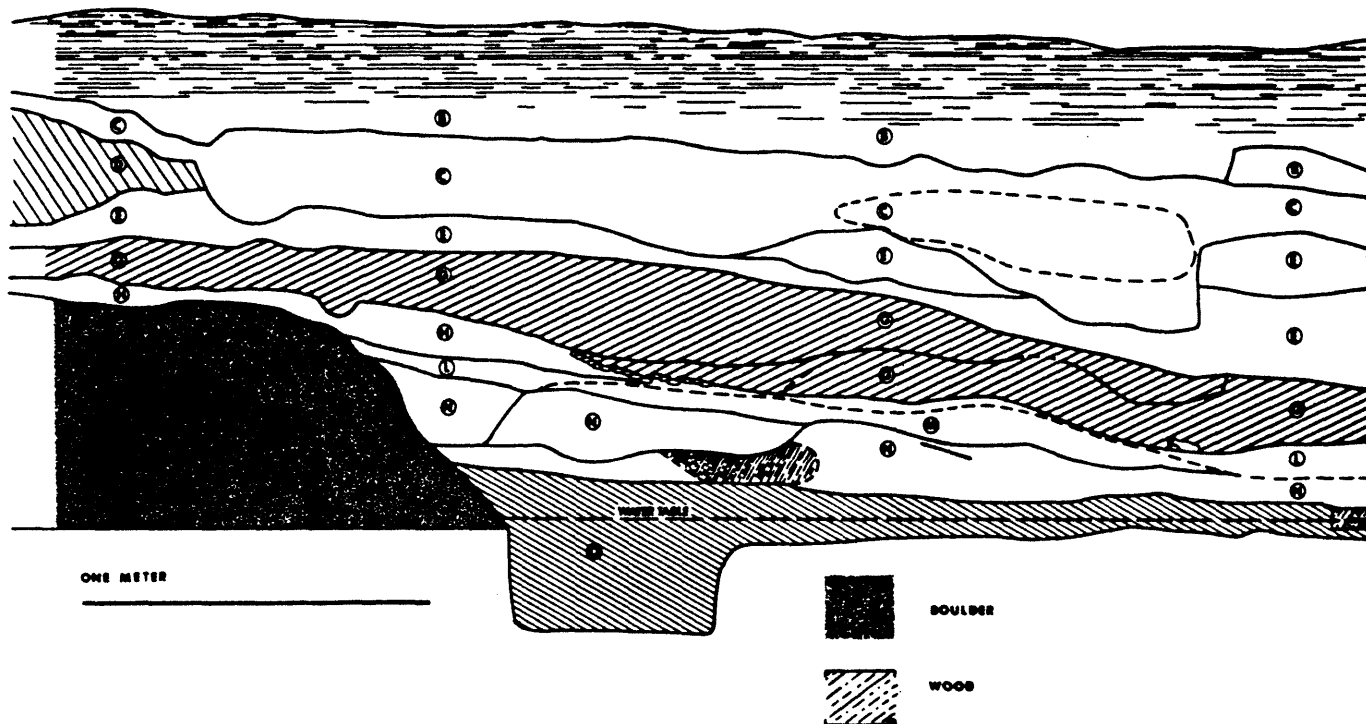
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East Wall Profile between S-18, W-0 and S-26, W-0, southern half.



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KEY FOR STRATIGRAPHIC DIAGRAM

- A. Sod layer, brown sand and silt.
- B. Sod layer, gray-brown sandy silt. Note the micro-layers, each of which represents an episode of flooding.
- C. Historic fill, orange coarse sand and pebbles. Covers midden layers on floodplain.
- D. Landscape feature, angular rocks in a black sandy matrix.
- E. Sandy silts of varying colors between black and gray-brown.
- F. Brown sands and silts; a few pebbles.
- G. Historic midden: coal ash layer, 1870-1900.
- H. Brown sands and silts.
- I. Brown sands and silts, original terrace structure.
- J. Waterlogged sediments (gleys) at bottom of terrace.
- K. Brown sands and silts.
- L. Orange sand, devoid of artifacts.
- M. Layer of plaster.
- N. Brown sands and silts, some cobbles. Contains artifacts.
- O. Brown sands and silts, intermixed with ash. Contains artifacts, ca. 1850 A.D.

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 checked="" 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/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
Criteria A, C & D		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) local history

Specific dates 1751 - built
c. 1800 - altered **Builder/Architect** N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Isaac Lawrance House, known also as the Lawrence Tavern, is an outstanding historic site, with historical, architectural, and archeological significance. It was built by one of the first settlers of the town, and for years, served as a tavern and local meeting place. Later, it was an inn catering to travel on the turnpike road. It was subsequently used as part of a school, and finally returned to its residential use in the late 19th century. In such ways, the building mirrors the historical development of Canaan (Criterion A). The house is important architecturally because it illustrates building customs of the 18th and early 19th centuries (Criterion C). Among its many well-preserved features are some, such as the doorstep and the vestibule, which are uncommon departures from the norm. Finally, the property has significance as an archeological site (Criterion D). Only a small part has been excavated, yet its potential has already been demonstrated. The site's integrity, its long historical occupation, and its proximity to a developing village have made it an essential part of an interpretative framework which seeks to illuminate the evolution of modern society in northwestern Connecticut. The objects unearthed - glass, nails, bones, etc. - show how life became more complex as time went on.

The house is in many ways typical of Connecticut houses of the mid 18th century. It has the usual clapboarded exterior, five-bay facade, and central chimney plan. The heaviness of the post-and-beam framing is evident everywhere, as posts, girts, plates and summers protrude into the rooms. The south rooms and rear chamber illustrate the type of interior finish which preceded the advent of plastering: feather-edged boards covering the walls, with decorative beads planed along the edges of the exposed joists. In contrast, the walls of the hallway, north front room, and kitchen are typical of the more finished appearance made possible by paneling. While the form of the Lawrance House's paneling is the most common - - raised panels set in molded stiles and rails - - the extent of paneling is impressive, particularly the fully paneled walls and ceilings in the hallway, the kitchen dado, and the underside of the parlor summer, all places where builders usually employed simpler, less decorative surfaces. Although one may find paneled interiors in this area which seem to date at least as far back as the construction of the Lawrance House, 1751, the extent and arrangement seem to this author more likely to indicate a date of 1770 or 1780.

Other notable features are from the period 1800-1825. The Federal-style mantel in the parlor is representative of the type of fireplace treatment common in that period. The dentillated cornice and Classical elements applied to the entrance porch would also seem to be Federal in inspiration. These details, when added to the extensive amount of original interior features, such as the wide-board floors, the many doors (most of the three-panel design (Photo 9) characteristic of

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Eddy, Mrs. F.C. "The Lawrence House, Canaan, Connecticut." Manuscript, 1913, Colonial Dames collection, State Library, Hartford.
 Handsman, Russel G. "Early Capitalism and the Center Village of Canaan, Connecticut: A Study of Transformations and Separations," Artifacts, IX (1981), 1-20.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 6.5
 Quadrangle name Ashley Falls Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>63 8 60 0</u> Easting	<u>4 6 53 4 90</u> Northing	B	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
E	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	F	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification
 The nominated property is shown as Parcel 14 on North Canaan Assessor's Map 15. The 6.5 acres represents the present extent of the property as reduced by surrounding residential development.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bruce Clouette, partner, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator
 organization Historic Resource Consultants date July 25, 1982
 street & number 103 Mansfield Hollow Road telephone (203) 423-8903
 city or town Mansfield Center state Connecticut

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature] date January 31, 1983
 title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

For HCRS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
 Entered in the National Register date 3/10/83
 Keeper of the National Register [Signature] date
 Attest: _____ date
 Chief of Registration

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Significance (continued):

northwestern Connecticut), the paneling, the feather-edged boards, and the beam casings, constitute an amount of historic fabric which is far from the ordinary.

The entrance porch or vestibule is a more atypical feature, yet for that very reason, it attracts one's attention. There is another example in Canaan a short distance up the Blackberry River, and at least one similar porch on Main Street in Glastonbury. Although it may not be as old as 1751, it would seem to be at least as old as the paneled interior. (The exterior ornament probably dates from after 1800 and is related to the cornice and roof changes). It is surprising that more houses do not have vestibules like this: perhaps only tavernkeepers like Lawrence needed the extra space and convenience to accommodate the flow of patrons.

The doorstep, of course, is one of the site's great curiosities. Nathaniel Hawthorne remarked on its oddity when he visited Canaan in 1838, and it continues to fascinate visitors today. The stone combines the functions of personal journal, building cornerstone, and family record into one impressive monument. This writer can think of nothing even remotely comparable. Yet the Lawrence stone can be interpreted as an outstanding example of the 18th-century practice of adding a personal mark to a building. Dates formed from burnt bricks or on beam anchors are known, as are initials carved on walls, hearthstones, and doorsteps.

Isaac Lawrence came to the area in 1738 from Plainfield, where his family had been among the first settlers of that town in the early 1700s. At the time of his arrival in Canaan, the town was just being divided into lots, and Lawrence was one of the original settlers. He became a fairly prominent citizen and was a captain in the local militia. As early as 1756 he kept a tavern in part of this house, and many meetings of local citizens were held there. Lawrence was a farmer as well as a tavernkeeper, and ran a farm of some 60 acres. In addition to the usual field crops and hay, he raised a small flock of sheep. He seems to have been something of a horse fancier: he called one plot of ground near the house the Stallion Pasture, and in his will he disposed of specific horses with unusual attention. His library contained several histories as well as the standard Bible and psalmbooks. He died in 1793 but his son and grandson continued to run the farm and tavern. Business was undoubtedly improved in the years after 1800, as traffic built up on the Litchfield turnpike and nearby Hartford-Albany road.

The house has remained in the ownership of descendants of Isaac Lawrence. In the middle of the 19th century it served as a school conducted by Rev. Lewis Reid, and at another time, as part of a boarding school run by Sarah Adams. In 1884 it became a private residence again, and has remained one to this day.

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Significance (continued):

The analysis of the archeological evidence has yielded much important information. The Lawrence Tavern site is being interpreted as part of a larger framework which uses different types of settlements in northwestern Connecticut to study the processes associated with modernization. The tavern site is a key component of this comparative research for three reasons: it has been shown to be relatively undisturbed; it has a history of occupation extending from the first years of European settlement through the important years of change in the 19th century; and it is located on the outskirts of a village which became an important railroad junction and commercial center, one of the important settlement types termed an "urban village."² The artifacts recovered from the site offer evidence of the increased specialization and differentiation associated with many aspects of life in urbanizing societies. The key finding was a distinct difference in the distribution of artifacts in the two middens: a much greater diversity of material was found in the later deposit.

Although the architectural and archeological components of the site have been treated separately, they are in fact complementary and closely related. Indeed, the house itself may be interpreted as an artifact which illuminates changes in life in rural Connecticut. The extensive paneling, for example, suggests a quantitative change in the material well-being of the house's inhabitants around 1780, whereas the interior and exterior modifications which occurred after 1800 show both a quantitative and a qualitative change: the Classical details along the cornice and the entrance porch indicate a consciousness of style, a sign of cosmopolitanism made possible by better communication and transportation. In the 18th century, the Lawrance House had been a farm, private residence, and tavern all at once, but the conversion of two rooms into a ball room suggests that in the 19th century, the structure's entertainment function was growing in importance, and the interior space more specialized as a result. Because of the removal of Victorian elements, the architectural record is less suggestive for the latter part of the 19th century. Here the archeological evidence steps in, showing the cessation of farming about 1850 and the house's participation in "urban village" development, culminating in its single-function use as a residence in the late 19th century. The significance of the Isaac Lawrance House as a historic resource lies in the extent and quality of both its architectural and its archeological aspects.

¹Isaac Lawrance consistently spelled his name with the "a," though later generations used the more conventional spelling.

²Douglas R. McManis, Colonial New England, A Historical Geography (New York, 1975).

DATE 12/21/84

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Lathrop, Elise. Early American Inns and Taverns. New York: Robert
McBride, 1926.

Isaac Lawrance Estate, 1784, State Library, Hartford.

Lyles, James A. "Lawrence Tavern in Canaan," Antiques, XCV (March,
1969), 400-403.

Works Progress Administration, Census of Old Buildings, North Canaan
Folder, no. 10. State Library, Hartford.

Historical Maps:

Map of Canaan, manuscript, c.1790, North Canaan Town Clerk.

Map of Samuel Forbes' property, Canaan, manuscript, c.1820, copy
at State Library, Hartford. Original in priv. coll.

Fagan, L. Map of the Town of Canaan, Litchfield County, Connecticut.
Philadelphia: Richard Clark, 1853.

County Atlas of Litchfield, Connecticut. New York: F.W. Beers & Co., 1874.