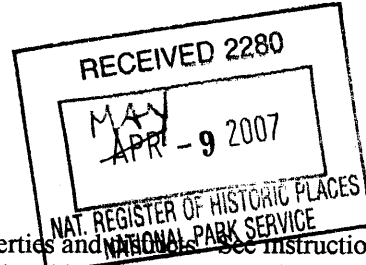


058

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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 15A). 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

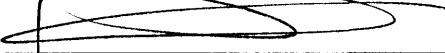
historic name Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater
other names/site number The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center and Theatre

2. Location

street & number 300 Main Street not for publication N/A
city or town Old Saybrook vicinity N/A
state Connecticut code CT county Middlesex code 007 zip code 06475

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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


Karen Senich, Acting Executive Director, Date 5.3.07
Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism

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

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 Keeper Patrick Andrus Date of Action 6/21/2007

Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Name of related multiple property listing _____ Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: GOVERNMENT/town hall

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH-CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation cast concrete

roof slate

walls brick

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

Former Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

Section 7 Page 1

The former Town Hall and Theater was built 1910-1911 in the Colonial Revival Style to house municipal offices and to provide a theater for dramatic and musical presentations as well as an auditorium for community gatherings. The imposing two-story red brick structure was constructed in the downtown business district on Main Street. On the Main Street elevation a raised brick plaza divides the structure from the street; a white picket fence marks the division between the sidewalk and the plaza (Photograph #1). On the plaza on the south side of the building is "The Town Crier," a square frame structure with a copper hipped roof and glazed doors on each face intended to hold notices.

The hipped slate roof of the former Town Hall and Theater (installed in 1989 to replace the original slate roof) caps a three-bay façade with a monumental pedimented entrance portico supported by two pairs of two-story tall Doric columns. A limestone frieze is located above the second-story windows. The structure rests on a cast-concrete raised basement designed to mimic limestone ashlar, and a broad stair leads to the centrally located entrance. The modern double doors of the entrance are surmounted by a fanlight transom marked by a keystone arch. The doors are flanked by two elliptical windows set off by keystones (Photograph #2). The building is eight bays deep with four broad two-story tall arched windows set in shallow recessed bays framed by square brick pilasters set on limestone plinths. These windows, located in the center of the building, illuminate the auditorium of the theater within. Like the entrance, the tall windows have fanlight transoms and keystones. On the south elevation near the rear of the building is a single-story hipped roof vault that was added in the 1960s (Photograph #3). The walls are windowless and the vault is built out of the same cast concrete as the raised basement. The rear elevation has a door leading to an iron fire escape on the south side of the first floor and the symmetrical scheme is completed by two blind windows (Photograph #4). On the second floor there is a blind window above the first floor door and two other windows set above the blind windows below. An entrance to the raised basement is at ground level. All the windows on the first and second floors, except for those otherwise described above, are eight-over-eight double hung sash windows with limestone sills and central keystones. The raised basement also has eight-over-eight double hung sash windows. These windows are modern replacements.

The monumental entrance leads to a reception room with a coved ceiling. On the north end of the room is a curved wall with a ticket window (Photograph #5) and a door into the ticket office. On the south end of the room is the entrance to the stairs to the balcony. A double set of modern doors leads to what was once the auditorium of the theater. This area was renovated in the 1950s for town offices and interior partitions were built on a new frame that left the proscenium arch, balcony, and original interior partitions intact. The top of the molded proscenium arch is visible from the balcony level (Photograph #6) and a set of stairs is located to either side of the stage. The stage was also adapted for use by the town, but it was not partitioned. The stairs to the balcony are original, and the newel posts and balusters have been preserved, although the staircase has been enclosed. The balcony structure remains intact (Photograph #7), and some of the original seats are stored in the building, although they are no longer in place. The balcony rail is likewise still in place, but it was cut in one small area to allow access to the storage space created by flooring over the frame of the 1950s offices located below.

In the early days of the town hall the raised basement was used for town offices. At first the need for office space was limited, and space was divided into a jail cell (in the northeast corner) and several meeting rooms, one large and one somewhat smaller. Now the space has been reconfigured to form a center hall that stretches from the front to the rear of the building. Vaults were located in the center of the building, and the hall narrows next to the vaults. Two vaults were located under the stage and the part of the auditorium nearest the stage. These vaults until recently served the town clerk's office, located in the southwest corner of the building; a newer vault leading off this office extends off the rear corner of the building (Photograph #3). Two smaller vaults are located under the portico, near the stairway leading to grade. Originally there was a green room and a toilet room under the southwest end of the stage. The

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Former Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

Section 7

Page 2

remains of the toilet room and part of a staircase leading to the stage still survive in the corner of what was until recently the town clerk's office. Modern partitions on the north side of the hall separated spaces for the fire marshal, economic development office, tax assessor, emergency management coordinator, registrar of voters, boiler room, and a restroom. On the south side near the front of the building is the internal stair connecting to the first floor, the tax collector's office, and an office for the assessor's staff.

Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

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)

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

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

C 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.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1910-1935

Significant Dates

N/A

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a 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.

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

William L. Roe, Jr., builder

James Sweeney, architect

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

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Old Saybrook Historical Society

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

Section 8 Page 1

The former Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater was the first building built and owned by the town for municipal purposes. It housed town government offices for nearly 100 years, from 1911 until 2004, as well a theater/meeting hall. The building was designed by New London architect James Sweeney, and is a fine example of the Colonial Revival Style. The combination town hall-theater was a common configuration at the turn of the century, but few municipal buildings were constructed with such broad-based community support or with such an emphasis on the role of the arts in civic improvement. The Town Hall structure is currently being renovated to return it to one of its primary original uses, that of a theater. Its name has been changed to commemorate the town's most well known thespian, Katharine Hepburn. This renovation is simplified by the fact that very few major changes have been made to the building during its eighty-odd-year history.

Historical Background

The former Old Saybrook Town Hall was built in 1910-1911; it was the first permanent publicly-owned town hall. Prior to the dedication of the building in May, 1911, the municipality had leased space in which to store the town records and hold meetings. The idea for a new town hall was Joseph A. Cone's. Cone (1868-1918) was Old Saybrook's Benjamin Franklin--a local printer, poet, and writer, he was best known for his humorous pieces. The acquisition of the land and construction of the building was truly a community effort, and year-round inhabitants joined forces with summer residents to achieve a common goal. The creative spark for the project was provided by the Old Saybrook Musical and Dramatic Club. On December 5, 1905, Cone called a meeting at his home, and the Club was founded. Its sole purpose was to provide "a building suitable for town and social purposes." The group incorporated on November 1, 1906, and those named in the official documents besides Cone were Benjamin H. Chalker, Irwin Granniss, Calvin C. Fairbank, John S. Dickinson, and Frank S. Pratt. The organization's first aim was to purchase a lot for the town hall they intended to see built. The Club gave plays and concerts, and hosted suppers, and on January 8, 1908, purchased a convenient parcel adjacent to the graded school. At the June 8, 1909, meeting of the Club it was unanimously voted to turn the organization's property and money raised for the purpose of constructing a town hall over to the Town on condition that the Town, at its October annual meeting, should appropriate the remainder of the money necessary for the erection the building. That Town Meeting resolved to accept the lot and the Club's donation and immediately appropriated \$5,000 for the construction, appointing a building committee consisting of the selectmen and two others nominated by the selectmen. Members of the building committee were prohibited from receiving any remuneration for their services. In early December another town meeting was held where the plans and specifications furnished by architect James Sweeney were discussed and "after a long deliberation" approved. The building committee included Judge Charles S. Gates, John S. Dickinson, and Selectmen W. H. Smith, Benjamin H. Chalker, and Alfred D.W. Chalker. The Old Saybrook Musical and Dramatic Club conveyed the land to the town on December 14, 1909. On April 10 of the following year the construction contract was awarded to William L. Roe, Jr. of New London, and probably construction was well underway by year end, although the structure wasn't dedicated until the end of May, 1911. Construction costs had exceeded estimates, and the expenses, initially expected not to exceed \$12,000, topped \$16,000. Upon completion the structure was hailed as a "substantial and artistic piece of architecture". The Club, which had contributed the land and \$1,332.50, and its founder, Joseph Cone, received great praise, and the building committee was lauded for noble and conscientious attention to their duties. The local paper also reported that a committee had canvassed the entire town for subscriptions to the building fund. This effort raised over \$3, 000. The largest single gift was from the former governor of the state, U.S. Senator Morgan G. Bulkeley, which the Thomas C. Acton family, owners of a grocery business in Old Saybrook, matched with separate donations.¹

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

Section 8 Page 2

The first production to be staged in the new building was the drama "Wedding Bells," presented by the Ivoryton Dramatic Club for the benefit of the Old Saybrook Dramatic and Musical Club. The Old Saybrook organization held their monthly meetings in the selectmen's rooms in the new building and the group continued to donate money and items for the new building, including a piano, stage furnishings, and amenities for the dressing rooms. Quite naturally the hall was also put into service for other uses: high school graduation exercises were held there, and in April, 1912, local high school students were showcased in a production of "The Mishaps of Minerva". A live orchestra (Dickinson's) provided music for the production and a dance that was held after the play. The Club continued to host a series of entertainments at town hall. One example was an elaborate themed dance and buffet held on Thanksgiving night in 1914. Called the "Cotton Ball" the evening featured Platts' Orchestra, and the performance of an original song "Dancing at the Cotton Ball". Cotton balls "made a fairyland of the stage" and the organizing committee all wore black cotton dresses trimmed in white, and white shoes, stockings, and gloves. Their hair was powdered, "which gave an unusual effect". The Club, dedicated to community support, continued in existence until April 24, 1935, when the remainder of its funds were transferred to the town to pay for improvements to the stage in town hall after a sum was donated for a grandstand at the baseball field.²

The project to construct a town hall was truly a home-grown effort. It was spearheaded by the town's leading citizens. The building committee included William H. Smith (1843-1930), who came to Old Saybrook in 1874 where he established a plumbing business. He represented Old Saybrook in the General Assembly in 1902, and was in attendance at the State's Constitutional Convention. He also served on the Middlesex County Board of Commissioners for fifteen years and for eight years as a deputy sheriff. Also prominent in local politics was Judge Charles S. Gates (1861-1937). Gates spent many years of his career in the town hall of which he had helped to oversee the building. At one point he was both town clerk and clerk of the probate court. Gates came to Old Saybrook as a boy and his first job was as teacher in the Oyster River School district there. He later was a railway clerk, and in 1901 was elected judge of the probate court, a position he held for 30 years despite his lack of formal legal training. Judge Gates was deeply committed to public service, and was active in every improvement scheme. He represented the town in the General Assembly in 1917 and 1919, and for 30 years was chairman of the local school board and during World War I was a member of the draft board. The officers of the Old Saybrook Musical and Dramatic Society also included William R. Bushnell (1866-1939), the organization's treasurer in 1914, another public-spirited citizen of town, who served in the General Assembly. Vice-President John A. Ayer (1875-1928) was postmaster and a leading merchant in town.³

Although the town hall auditorium was seldom used after 1935 for theatrical purposes, the functions of the municipality continued to be centralized in the building until 2004. In the basement office space replaced the original meeting rooms, and the auditorium was subdivided in the 1950s into more offices under the administration of First Selectman Robert Sadler. Both Sadler and his brother Joseph were building contractors, which may account for the skill in which a framework for the new offices was built, leaving the original auditorium preserved behind the new partitions. A new records vault was added to the building in the 1960s. The building remained in use as town hall until the newly renovated former school building adjacent replaced the earlier town hall in 2004.

Architectural Significance

Great pride was evident in early accounts of the building; the auditorium "lighted by huge arched windows" accommodated 316 people; there were boxes on either side of the stage and a balcony with room for 92 more people. The walls were "a dazzling white" set off by dark wood trim. The stage sets, furnished along with the curtains by

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

Section 8 Page 3

L.H. Graham, offered three different backgrounds. In the basement there was a large room that was to be used for meetings and banquets, and where it was hoped that district court might be held. A smaller "club room" and kitchen were adjacent. Dressing rooms and a boiler room were situated below the stage, while in the front of the building was a strong "lock-up for delinquent citizens and sojourners" and a records vault. The structure was illuminated by electric lights, a big innovation, since the original plans had called for gaslight. It also had the latest in steam heating plants, and was of fireproof construction.⁴

The architect was James Sweeney (1870-1919) of New London. Sweeney was trained in New York City, and after moving to New London he was employed by architects George Cole and Edward Everett. He soon established his own practice and had a number of important commissions in his adoptive city; he designed the New London Municipal Building, St. Mary's Convent and Parochial School, the Union Bank & Trust Company Building, and many residences. In Old Saybrook Sweeney also produced plans, which he donated, for the 1915 remodeling of the Siloam Masonic Lodge. William L. Roe, Jr. of New London was the general contractor. E.A. Dibble and George H. Gates both provided excavating services, W.H. Smith was the plumbing contractor, W. L. Whitney was the electrical contractor, and Brown Brothers installed the heating plant. Victor Safe & Lock Company supplied the vault doors, George LePlante was in charge of painting and decorating, and J.R. Clancy provided furnishings for the stage.⁵

The building is in a remarkably good state of preservation, and little changed from its original configuration despite nearly 100 years of continuous use as a town hall. Despite the installation in the auditorium space of a frame on which interior partitions were hung, the original plan of the structure is still evident, and no original interior walls on the main floor have been destroyed. The original stair to the balcony, and handsomely designed original woodwork are still in place, although the original doors to the main entrance and the auditorium have been replaced. The proscenium arch and original stairs to the stage also remain in place. The building is in its original setting and it maintains an important presence on Main Street in the heart of town.

¹ *New Era* (Deep River), June 11, Dec. 10, 1909; May 26, 1911; April 28, 1918; *Annual Report... of the Town of Old Saybrook* 1910, 1911, 1912; Land Records of the Town of Old Saybrook, Vol. 3, p. 350. Thomas C. Acton was one of Old Saybrook's most active philanthropists. He was the son of Thomas C. Acton, Sr., a New York City banker who summered in Old Saybrook, and was the Commissioner of Police of New York City during the Civil War Draft Riots. Morgan Gardner Bulkeley owned property in the Borough of Fenwick, a section of Old Saybrook that was popular with summer residents.

² *New Era* (Deep River), May 26, June 16, 1911; April 19, June 14, 1912; Oct. 13, Nov. 14, 1914; "Town Hall," unpublished manuscript in the files of the Old Saybrook Town Clerk.

³ *New Era* (Deep River), Oct. 30, 1914; July 22, 1928; April 4, 1930; July 12, 1937; June 4, 1939.

⁴ *Ibid.*, May 26, 1911; *Annual Report... of the Town of Old Saybrook* 1912, pp. 31-6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-6; Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (reprint 1970; Los Angeles, 1956).

Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreeage of Property approximately 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

X 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
=====

name/title Kate M. Ohno

organization _____ date August, 2006

street & number 81 Pond Hill Rd. telephone (203) 234-2848

city or town North Haven state CT zip code 06473

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Property Owner:

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

name Town of Old Saybrook

street & number 302 Main Street telephone _____

city or town Old Saybrook state CT zip code 06475

=====
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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Former Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County, CT

Section 10 **Page 1**

UTMs

Quadrangle : Essex, Connecticut

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
18	718860	4574100

Boundary Description

As described in Vol. 3, p. 350 of the Old Saybrook Land Records.

Boundary Justification

This is the lot historically associated with the Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater.

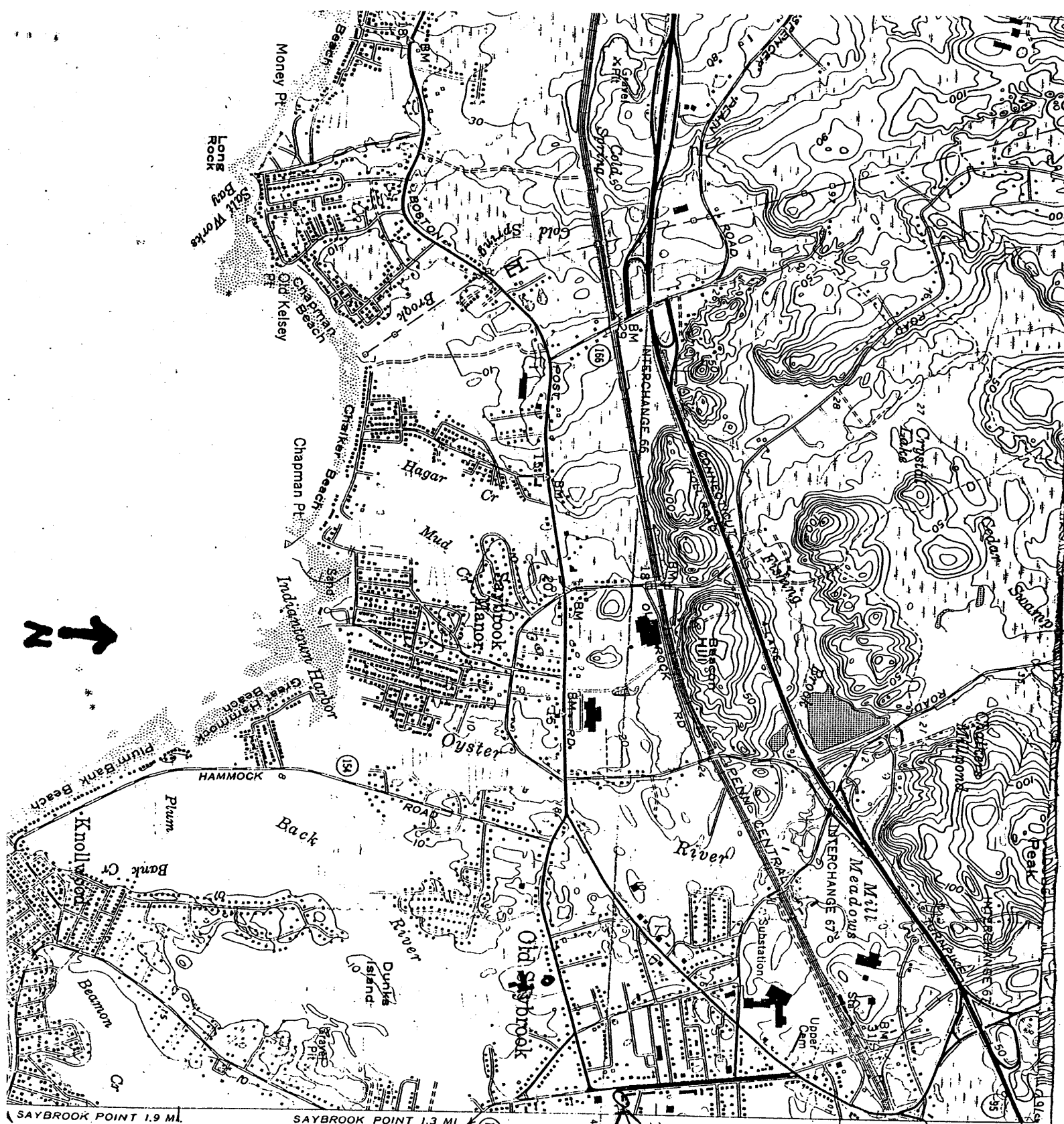
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Old Saybrook Town Hall and Theater, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County

Section Photography Page

Photograph #1	Front Elevation
Photograph #2	Main Staircase
Photograph # 3	South Elevation
Photograph #4	Rear Elevation
Photograph #5	Ticket Window
Photograph #6	View from Balcony Showing Top of Proscenium Arch
Photograph #7	Balcony



SAYBROOK POINT 1.9 MI.

SAYBROOK POINT 1.3 MI.

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Former Town Hall and Theater
300 Main Street
Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06457

4574

17/301

1.3 MI. TO INTERSTATE 95
NEW LONDON 18 MI.