

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Connecticut</b>	
COUNTY: <b>New London</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Monte Cristo Cottage**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Eugene O'Neill House**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**325 Pequot Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**New London**

STATE: **Connecticut**      CODE:      COUNTY: **New London**      CODE:     

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____
		Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. White**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**325 Pequot Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN: **New London**      STATE: **Connecticut**      CODE:     

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**New London City Hall**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**State Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **New London**      STATE: **Connecticut**      CODE:     

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**None**

DATE OF SURVEY:       Federal       State       County       Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:      STATE:      CODE:     

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

(Check One)

CONDITION

Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated     Ruins     Unexposed

(Check One)

(Check One)

Altered     Unaltered

Moved     Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The "Monte Cristo Cottage" is a two-story, wood frame structure with clapboard siding and a three bay front. The gable end of its roof faces the street, and its cornice extends across most of the face of the building, giving the effect of a pediment. A single-story wooden porch extends across the front, and a part of the north side, of the cottage. The porch's shed roof is equipped with a gable at its blunt northeastern corner, where a long flight of entrance steps extends into the yard. Above the porch on the north side of the cottage is a single-story tower with a pyramidal roof. On the south side of the house, a single-story wing with a hip roof provides a sun room.

The early history of the "Monte Cristo Cottage" is obscure. According to one source, it was purchased in 1886 by Eugene O'Neill's father, James, who rebuilt and expanded it in the late 1890's.<sup>1</sup> According to another, it was "put together, with additions, renovations and other alterations, from several buildings already on the site--a combination store-and-dwelling and an abandoned schoolhouse."<sup>2</sup> It appears that James O'Neill owned the property for some time before he began living there, but the exact date that the family moved in is unclear. The cottage was, however, their principal home during Eugene's childhood and early manhood.<sup>3</sup>

A photograph of the cottage taken in 1937<sup>4</sup> shows that its style was transitional between the stick and Queen Anne styles. Portions of the house have since been removed, partly as a result of the hurricane of 1938. A small enclosed porch on the second floor front is now reduced to an open balcony. The section of the first floor porch which was attached to the south side of the house is gone. The wooden posts which supported the southern wing have been replaced by a concrete garage faced with glass brick. A small single-story section at the rear of the northern side of the cottage has been removed. The shutters, and the small turned finial which topped the tower roof are gone. The "school house annex," which, according to one source, was attached to the rear of the house,<sup>5</sup> is not extant. The gray paint of O'Neill's time has been changed to yellow with green trim.

Entrance to the cottage is through a side hall which leads toward the stairway. The heavy, brown-stained bannister, like the woodwork and parquet floors throughout the ground floor, is original. On the ornate newel are carved the initials "MC," cut by Eugene O'Neill in contempt for his father's perennial appearance in the trite but profitable Monte Cristo. To the south of the hall is the living room, which contains a heavy wooden mantle. Behind the living room, the dining room is accessible through a wide doorway. Its

1. Gelb, p. 52
2. Sheaffer, p. 48
3. Ibid, pp. 20 and 48
4. Ibid, p. 52
5. Ibid, p. 48

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Continued

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

c 1888-1919

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Eugene O'Neill is held by many critics to be the central figure in the coming of age of American drama.<sup>1</sup> O'Neill alone, among that generation of writers which included Hemingway and Lewis, succeeded in making of the American stage a vehicle of mature artistic expression. His was the achievement which ultimately proved the outstanding contribution toward a new dimension of realism and the attainment of great tragedy within the American theater. As one writer has observed: "Before O'Neill, the U.S. had theater; after O'Neill it had drama."<sup>2</sup>

"Monte Cristo Cottage" was "the nearest thing to a home" that the family of Eugene O'Neill ever had.<sup>3</sup> As a child, O'Neill traveled in the winter with his actor father. He spent most of the summers of his first twenty-one years at this New London cottage, which was named for the play of which his father was the perennial star. In addition, he lived here for parts of the years 1911-1914. It was here that he probably wrote his first two plays, A Wife for Life and The Web, and certainly several others, including most of his first performed work, Bound East for Cardiff.<sup>4</sup> Of this play, O'Neill said: "In it can be seen, or felt, the germ of the spirit ... of all my more important future work."<sup>5</sup>

The house itself inspired the setting for two of O'Neill's later dramas, Ah, Wilderness! and Long Day's Journey into Night. The second of these, perhaps the playwright's most famous and greatest work, is overtly autobiographical. It depicts the dilemma of the O'Neill family, beset by drug addiction, alcoholism, guilt and recrimination. This situation contained not only material for a specific drama, but was the origin of the playwright's tragic view of life.<sup>6</sup> Despite its alterations, "Monte Cristo Cottage" continues to illustrate the background which formed the personality of the man most often considered to be American's greatest dramatist.

1. US in Lit., p. 1237; Gould, p. 77.
2. Time, quoted in Sheaffer, p. 481.
3. Sheaffer, p. 20.
4. Ibid, pp. 226, 264, 278. According to Gelb, pp. 231, 250, the first two plays were written elsewhere. Sheaffer is the later and probably more authoritative source.
5. Gelb, p. 250.
6. Sheaffer, p. 4.

Continued

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Bowen, Crosswell, The Curse of the Misbegotten, New York: McGraw Hill, 1959  
 Gelb, Arthur and Barbara, O'Neill, New York: Harper & Brothers 1960 (especially pp. 52, 231, 250, 260).  
 Gould, Jean, Modern American Playwrights, New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1966 (p. 77).  
 Krutch, Joseph W., The American Drama Since 1918, New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1957.  
 O'Neill, Eugene, Long Days Journey Into Night, New Haven: Yale Press, 1956.  
 Sheaffer, Louis, O'Neill, Sone and Playwright, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968 (especially pp. 4, 20, 48, 52, 226, 264, 278, 481)  
 Spiller, Robert E., et al, Literary History of the United States, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1960. (especially p. 1237).

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES										
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			N	LATITUDE			W	LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	41	19	55	°	'	"	72	05	47
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"									
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"									

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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

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

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Edmund Preston, Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service**      DATE: **March 22, 1971**

STREET AND NUMBER: **801 - 19th Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington**      STATE: **D.C.**      CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

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

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/>      State <input type="checkbox"/>      Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____  <i>Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____  <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. Description: (1) (Continued) Monte Cristo Cottage - Eugene O'Neill House

shallow bay window as added by the present owner, replacing a single window and door. To the south of the living room is the sun room, apparently unchanged except for new paneling on its small wall space. None of the furnishings of the cottage date from the period of O'Neill's occupancy. The second floor of the cottage contains three bedrooms.

Although the "Monte Cristo Cottage" has undergone substantial changes since the time that O'Neill lived there, these have been primarily matters of subtraction. The cottage retains its essential integrity. The interior is especially evocative of O'Neill's personality, and suggests the setting of his masterpiece, A Long Day's Journey into Night.

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8. Significance: (1) (continued) Monte Cristo Cottage - Eugene O'Neill House

Biography.

Eugene O'Neill was born in New York City in 1888. His father, James, was a successful actor, and as a child Eugene toured with his family in the winter, while summering in New London, Connecticut. The O'Neill's family life was filled with grief and antagonism which sprang from many sources but centered around the drug addiction of his mother. As he approached manhood, O'Neill rebelled against this situation, directing his revolt intellectually against his Catholic upbringing and personally against his father. After a wasted year at Princeton, a brief marriage, and a stint of clerical employment, he entered a period in which he shipped as a sailor and frequented various waterfront dives, notably "Jimmy the Priest's" in New York. O'Neill then worked for some months as a reporter for the New London Telegraph, but discovered that he had contracted tuberculosis. In December 1912, he entered a sanitarium, where he made his decision to become a playwright. Upon his release in the spring, he returned to New London and wrote several plays, including most of Bound East for Cardiff. During the school year 1913-1914, he attended George Pierce Baker's playwriting course at Harvard. His visit to Provincetown, Massachusetts in the summer of 1916 coincided with the formation of an important experimental group, the Provincetown Players. Their production of Bound East...launched O'Neill's career as a performed playwright.

Until 1924, O'Neill continued to live at least part of each year at Provincetown, although the Players transferred their main efforts to Greenwich Village, where they produced several of his plays. The Emperor Jones, which opened in November 1920, made both O'Neill and the Players nationally famous. The same year, O'Neill's full length drama, Beyond the Horizon, was performed on Broadway. It became a great critical and popular success, and introduced a new vein of tragic realism to the American stage,<sup>7</sup> a vein which O'Neill later exploited in such plays as Desire under the Elms.

But realism was only one aspect of these works and of O'Neill's talent. The Hairy Ape (1922) showed a tendency toward expressionism, involving an attempt to depict events as they appear to a participant rather than to a detached observer.<sup>8</sup> The Great God Brown (1925) was innovative in its complex symbolism and use of masks to represent the characters' external selves.<sup>9</sup> His next major work, Strange Interlude, showed O'Neill's tendency toward unusual length, but abandoned non-realistic devices, except for long soliloquies in which the characters of this psychological drama reveal their unspoken attitudes.<sup>10</sup>

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- 7. Gelb, p. 409.
  - 8. Spiller, p. 1241.
  - 9. Ibid., p. 1245
  - 10. Ibid., p. 1245

(continued)

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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(Number all entries)

8. Significance: (2) continued Monte Crisco Cottage - Eugene O'Neill House

Mourning Becomes Electra, which recasts the events of AEschylus' trilogy in terms of the period of the American Civil War, has been called "the best tragedy in English which the present century has produced."<sup>11</sup>

O'Neill had married Agnes Boulton in 1918, but in 1929 he left for Europe with the actress Carlotta Monterey, whom he married the following year. While abroad he wrote most of Mourning Becomes Electra. On his return in 1931, he lived in or near New York until his departure in the spring of the next year for Sea Island, Georgia, where he built a house called "Casa Genotta." Here he wrote Days Without End and Ah, Wilderness! By 1936, the O'Neills were disillusioned with their Georgia retreat, and moved to the West Coast. They were staying in Seattle in November when O'Neill received word that he had won the Nobel Prize. The following year, he built Tao House in Danville, California, which was the site of the dramatist's last productive period. Here he wrote The Iceman Cometh, Long Day's Journey Into Night, and A Moon for the Misbegotten. In 1943, the O'Neills experienced difficulty in maintaining Tao House due to their ill health and the wartime shortage of domestic help, and moved to San Francisco. After the end of the Second World War, they returned to the East, settling first in New York and later in Massachusetts. In 1945, The Iceman Cometh opened on Broadway, the first O'Neill play to be seen there since 1934. During these last years O'Neill was prevented from writing by a deterioration of his physical condition, particularly by an uncontrollable shaking of his hands. He died in Boston in November 1953.

The decade of the fifties saw the New York openings of three important O'Neill plays, Long Day's Journey..., A Moon for the Misbegotten, and A Touch of the Poet. The first of these, based on the playwright's tortured family life in New London, was published in 1956 and "immediately recognized as a masterpiece in the United States and abroad."<sup>12</sup> Although O'Neill's reputation had suffered a decline in the thirties and forties, his posthumous plays returned him to the high esteem which he now enjoys. In the twenties he had associated himself with the birth of the modern stage in this country, and had given the movement a stature without which it might have failed. When the playwright's whole contribution had been evaluated, it became clear that he had been alone among his contemporaries in his sustained pursuit of the goal of great tragedy and in his uncompromising artistry.<sup>13</sup> These qualities made him the man most often considered to be America's outstanding dramatist.<sup>14</sup>

11. Krutch, p. 120.

12. Gelb, p. 4.

13. Krutch, p. 120; Gould, p. 771

14. Gould, p. 77; US in Lit., p. 1249