

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 MAY 28 1982

date entered JUN 28 1982

1. Name

historic (Enoch Kelsey) House

and/or common Enoch Kelsey House

2. Location

street & number 1702 Main Street

N/A— not for publication

city, town Newington

N/A vicinity of

congressional district

First

state Connecticut

code

09

county

Hartford

code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Newington

street & number 131 Cedar Street

city, town Newington

N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk's Office, Newington

street & number 131 Cedar Street

city, town Newington

state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Survey of Historical and Architectural Resources of Newington, Connecticut has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date March, 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Hartford

state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>November 1979</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair.	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Enoch Kelsey House is located adjacent to the south side of a cluster of eighteenth and nineteenth century houses surrounding the Robbins Green about one half mile south of Newington Center. The house stands on a knoll on the east side of Main Street and faces south on the entrance of a new street which will ultimately be developed with suburban tract housing. (photo 2). It was moved to its present site on November 15 and 16, 1979, from a position on the north side of Kelsey Street near the New Britain city line at the southwest corner of Newington. The move of four miles was made to save the house when a highway project required the acquisition of the house's original site. The move was planned at the last minute, the decision to preserve the structure having been made but a short time before demolition was to take place. Strangely, the plans for demolition brought about the discovery of early 19th century wallpaintings and recognition of important architectural and structural features. A new site was arranged and the house has been carefully repositioned to maintain the original southfacing orientation (photo 3). In keeping with the house's date of construction a sandstone retaining wall and flagstone walk were added.

Built probably in 1799, the Kelsey House is a two-and one-half story, flank gable, five-bay, center-entrance structure of the central-chimney type and has a braced, timber frame with vertical planking in place of studding. It stands on a newly constructed concrete foundation; however, the above ground portion of the foundation is constructed of squared sandstone blocks salvaged from the house's original foundation and laid up in the same positions they had occupied before. The exterior is clad in clapboarding whose exposure narrows towards the sill and the roof is covered with wood shingles. The windows are of the twelve-over twelve, doublehung type; the upper-story, front ones butt against the base of a dentil-trimmed main cornice. Of the exterior finish only the main cornice is original. The clapboarding, shingling, windows and front entrance are reproductions based on structural evidence discovered during the course of the restoration project. The original clapboarding had been covered with wood shingles, the early front entrance has been replaced, the windows replaced by ones of smaller dimension--having six-pane upper and single-pane lower sash--built inside the old frames, and the front partly masked by a broad veranda (photo 1). All these changes had taken place early in the twentieth century.

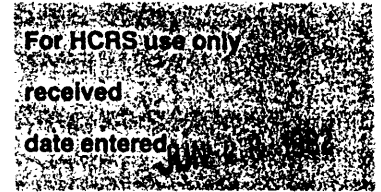
In contrast to the exterior, the interior retains very much of its original trim, including paneled doors, wall paneling, dado, three mantle-pieces, and architrave doorway and window trim. The house is built around a roughly eight-foot square, brick chimney stack which had survived intact except for the replacing of the section above the attic floor and roofline with an inappropriate modern one. This topmost section has now been rebuilt to match more closely the original dimensions.

The small front hall contains the usual tight dogleg staircase with simple square newell and angle posts and balusters. There is also a

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Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames of America, Old Houses of Connecticut, May, 1925, mss., Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, Census of Old Buildings of Connecticut, 1934, mss., Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

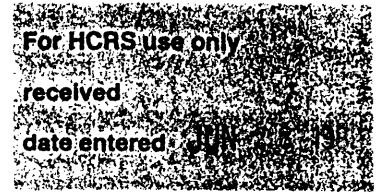
State Register of Historic Places

1982

Connecticut Historical Commission

United States Department of the Interior
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"sparking bench". The southwest front room, the parlor, contains a small fireplace with brownstone -slab jambs, lintel, and hearth and a shelf-topped, transitional Georgian/Federal mantelpiece decorated with a cushion frieze and reeded dentils (photo 10). In the southeast room, the dining room, the fireplace is somewhat larger and again displays brownstone-slab jambs, lintel and hearth. The very plain shelf-topped mantelpiece has an architrave-trim surround. The mantelpiece is flanked on the left by a closet and on the right by a narrow cupboard; the entire wall is crowned by a dentil-trimmed cornice (photo 11). A paneled dado surrounds the room.

The rear half of the house's main section now contains a large kitchen. Structural evidence shows that there was an eightfoot wide room at the west end. It is also possible that the eastern end of the present kitchen area may have been partitioned off into a separate room at one time. A narrow enclosed staircase is located in the kitchen's southeast corner; it appears to have been part of the original construction (photo 12). The kitchen has a five-foot-wide, bricklined fireplace and an adjoining brick, "beehive" oven. The fireplace wall from the doorway east of the fireplace to the doorway to its west is faced with simple, rectangle-patterned paneling (photo 13). The remaining walls are plastered, except that enclosing the stairway which is vertical boarding, and the lower part of the east wall which is horizontal boarding.

The second floor lacks the downstairs fireplaces and decorative woodwork but does possess, like the lower story, architrave doorway and window trim. As in the lower story, the main vertical posts of the frame project into the rooms. This floor contains two large front chambers, each with a narrow closet built against the chimney stack, and three smaller chambers in the back part of the house. One of the rear chambers has an entirely paneled wall. There is an enclosed stairway to the attic directly above the back stairway from the kitchen.

Behind the main body of the house is a one-story, shed-roof, tenfoot wide porch or shed extending the full length of the house. Constructed without any interior partitions, this structure is framed into the house itself and covered in clapboarding; evidently constructed at the same time as the rest of the house.

An interesting feature of the house, discovered when layers of wallpaper were removed, is the remains of early nineteenth-century wall paintings in the southeast and southwest rooms in both stories. The southwest parlor contains four oval landscapes surrounded by rectangular, trompe l'oeil frames and "supported" from painted nails by painted links of chain -- in imitation of paintings hung on the walls. Painted in oil in green and blue tones with traces of reds and browns, the paintings depict landscapes which include rivers, houses, distant cities, sailing ships, trees in and out of foliage, geese in flight, a sleigh and driver,

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and skaters (photos 4, 5, and 6). This room also has a painted geometric frieze (photo 10) and all doors and windows are surrounded by delicate painted borders. The southeast (dining) room has around the north, east, and south walls an elaborate painted frieze consisting of a wide border of flowers and dark leaves, swags with tassels, and a fine fringe (photo 11). The southeast and southwest chambers upstairs contain walls painted by hand, in imitation of wallpaper, with patterns of vines and flowers, and borders against the ceilings and woodwork (photos 7, 8, and 9). Red, blue, black, and ochre paints were used. These painted wall decorations have been termed a rare find.

The preservation and restoration of the murals and other wall paintings have been accorded a high priority. Linda K. Tucker, a professional conservator of artistic and historic works, stabilized the exposed art work, heat-tacking each flake of paint, removing the residual paper and paste, and consolidating loose plaster by injecting adhesive. The cleaned paintings revealed details not seen in over 100 years. Wherever the original paint remained, a chemical was carefully applied to bring back the color. Restrained use of in-painting was used to restore the lost detail.

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c.1799 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

A two-story, flank-gable, center-entrance, central chimney-plan structure built probably in 1799, the Enoch Kelsey House typifies the better class of housing constructed in Newington and central Connecticut at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Few examples of such houses were built in Newington, a rural community which suffered greatly from depopulation after the Revolutionary War; of these, the Kelsey House is one of the best preserved, retaining most of its significant interior woodwork. The house is also notable for its well designed (though badly deteriorated) early nineteenth century wall paintings. These consist of oval landscapes and free-hand representations of vines and flowers painted in imitation of wallpaper designs. They provide a valuable record of taste in a rural Connecticut community.

Enoch Kelsey (1753-1817), for whom the house was erected, was the grandson of John Kellsey (sic), one of the early settlers in the area, who had arrived at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the great-great-grandson of William Kelsey, one of the original settlers of Hartford, Connecticut. A farmer, Enoch Kelsey was also a tinsmith. A small building remembered as the "tin house" once stood across the road from the house's original site and may have been his shop. It may have been that this business provided Kelsey the means to construct a house far in advance of those of most of his neighbors. Enoch's son, David Kelsey, lived in the house until his death in 1858 and the family retained possession of the property until after the Civil War.

Architecturally, the Kelsey House is typical of the turn-of-the century, central Connecticut house by reason of both its plan and form and its detailing. In plan it follows the center-entrance, center-chimney format which had been established as the dominant type in Connecticut's earliest years. Its full-two-story (front and back) height and simple, flank-gable roof had become standard for houses of this type in the third and fourth quarters of the eighteenth century, when the fashions for lean-to and gambrel-roof construction gradually passed. Typical of the times, too, is the conservative decorative scheme in which standard late eighteenth-century features such as architrave-trim doorway and window surrounds and fully paneled fire-place walls predominate. Reference to the then newly arrived Federal style are evident only in a few details, such as the mantelpiece reeding in the parlor (photo 10).

In artistic terms the Kelsey House's painted wall decorations are highly significant. Nina Fletcher Little* examined these walls in

* Mrs. Little is the recognized authority on wall paintings and is the author of American Decorative Wall Painting 1700-1850, New York:1972. She has done much work at Sturbridge, Massachusetts, and at the Folk Art Center at Williamsburg.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Alfred Andrews, Genealogy and Ecclesiastical History of New Britain, Chicago, 1867.
- Antiques and the Arts Weekly, "Early American Wall Paintings," article, Newtown, Connecticut, July 25, 1980.
- Arthur and Hilding Bergerson, Interviews concerning living in the house.

10. Geographical Data

continued

Acreeage of nominated property about 1/3 acre
Quadrangle name Hartford South

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>6</u> <u>8</u> <u>9</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Commencing at a point in the easterly line of Main Street, which point is marked by an iron pin and located 240 ft. north of a merestone set in (see continuation sheet)

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 Robert O. Christensen, Historic Preservation Coordinator

organization Michigan History Division date October 6, 1980

street & number 208 N. Capitol Ave. telephone 517-373-0510

city or town Lansing state Michigan (continuation sheet)

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

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date May 21, 1982

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Entered in the National Register date 6/25/82

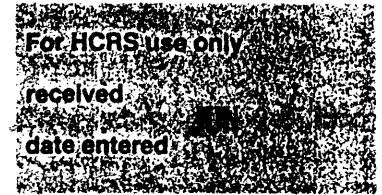
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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April, 1979, and dating them c. 1790-1815, termed them an "especially interesting. . . illustration of the artist's clever use of paint to simulate an elegant interior otherwise obviously unobtainable by the rural owner." and "one of the most important examples of 'deception painting' of the late Federal period that still remains in Connecticut." Linda K. Tucker, a conservator of artistic and historic works, examined the wall paintings in April, 1980. She pronounced the oval wall paintings in the southwest parlor to be a "rare find" designed and executed by an artist of considerable ability. The free-hand painted decorations in imitation of wallpaper found in the two front chambers upstairs are also particularly significant, according to Ms. Tucker, because of the combination of media used -- i.e. water-soluble background colors with red, blue, black and ochre, oil painted borders -- and because the decoration was painted free-hand rather than stencilled. Ms. Tucker states that free-hand decorations in imitation of wallpaper designs are far less common than stencilled ones.

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Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames of America, Old Houses of Connecticut, May, 1925.
Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, Census of Old Buildings of Connecticut, 1934.

Nina Fletcher Little, Interview at Kelsey House, April 30, 1979.

Letter to Elizabeth S. Baxter, May 3, 1979.

Henry Stiles and Sherman Adams, History of Ancient Wethersfield, Vols. 1 and 2, New York, 1904.

Survey of Historical and Architectural Resources of Newington, Connecticut, March.; 979.

Linda K. Tucker, Conservation Examination Report on the Decorated Walls in the Kelsey House, Newington, Connecticut, April 17, 1980.

Town of Newington, Land Records.

Town of Wethersfield, Land Records.

Roger Welles, Early Annals of Newington, Hartford, 1874.

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Continuation sheet 6

Item number 10

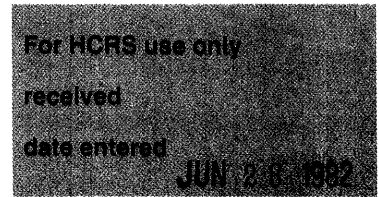
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the easterly line of Main St. and marking the southwesterly corner of land of Gideon R. Wells; thence running easterly along other land of Gideon R. Wells, at an interior angle of 90°, a distance of 60 ft. to an iron pin; thence continuing easterly along other land of Gideon R. Wells on a curve to the left having a radius of 145 ft., a distance of 83.51 ft. to an iron pin; thence running northerly along land of Gideon R. Wells, in a line parallel to the easterly line of Main St., a distance of 110.86 ft. to an iron pin; thence running westerly, along other land of Gideon R. Wells, at an interior angle of 79°20', a distance of 139.21 ft. to an iron pin set in the easterly line of Main St.; thence running southerly along the easterly line of Main St. 10.49 ft. to a merestone; thence continuing southerly along the easterly line of Main St. 99.51 ft. to an iron pin, being the point or place of beginning. Said property is shown on a "MAP SHOWING PROPERTY to be acquired by THE TOWN OF NEWINGTON from GIDEON ROBBINS WELLS MAIN STREET NEWINGTON, CONN. SCALE 1" = 40' NOVEMBER 1979 W.E. PETERS, LAND SURVEYOR," on file in Newington Town Clerk's Office. See 383 Newington Land Records, 220-221.

This property is the entire lot on which the Kelsey House now stands.

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with the cooperation and assistance of
Elizabeth S. Baxter , Town Historian June, 1981
Town of Newington
131 Cedar Street
Newington, Connecticut
666-4661 (home 666-0349)