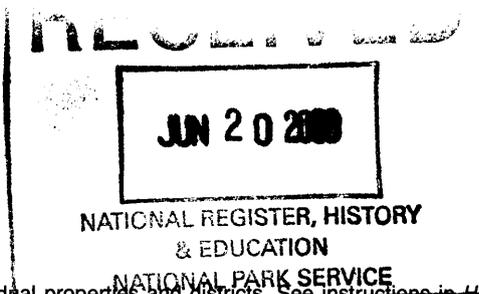


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



817

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 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 \_\_\_\_\_

other names/site number Perkins-Bill House

2. Location

street & number 1040 Long Cove Road  not for publication

city or town Gales Ferry (Ledyard)  vicinity

state Connecticut code CT county New London code 011 zip code 06335

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.)

John W. Shannahan June 13, 2000  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission  
State of 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 certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson A. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 7/20/00

Perkins-Bill House  
Name of Property

New London, CT  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling secondary structure

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL/Postmedieval English

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls wood shingle

roof wood shingle

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

MILITARY

**Period of Significance**

c. 1775 - 1792

**Significant Dates**

September 6, 1781

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**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:

\_\_\_\_\_

Perkins-Bill House  
Name of Property

New London, CT  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 3.6

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	8
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7	4	3	3	9	0
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4	5	8	7	0	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

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 Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant

organization Cunningham Preservation Associates date 11/1/99

street & number 37 Orange Road telephone 860 347 4072

city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

#### Property Owner

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

name Bonde & Monique Johnson

street & number 1040 Long Cove Road telephone 860 464 8472

city or town Gales Ferry state CT zip code 06335

**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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

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Continuation Sheet**

Perkins-Bill House, Gales Ferry (Ledyard), New London County, Connecticut

Section number 7 Page 1

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The Perkins-Bill House, a c. 1775 gambrel-roofed Colonial Cape, is located on the north side of Long Cove Road, just west of State Route 12 (Photograph #1). The house, which faces southeast, and its associated gable-roofed barn, now used as a garage, are built into the side of a hill and situated quite close to the road (Photograph #s 2, 3). Beyond the house to the northwest is the foundation of a similar bank barn (see Exhibit A for site plan). Stone retaining walls running parallel to the road terrace the steep slope of the 3.6-acre site: one alongside the roadway; another an extension of the exposed brick foundation of the end elevation; and the last directly behind the house. A waterpowered sawmill once stood across from the house on Flat Brook, which flows along the south side of the road to Long Cove on the Thames River a half mile to the west (Figure #1).

The house consists of a center chimney main block (38' x 30'), with a small recessed gambrelled wing on the northeast end (9' x 16'), added in the 1940s (Photograph #s 3, 4). The wing has an enclosed entryway (8' x 4') with a shed dormer above. Another dormer on the rear of the wing extends all the way across the rear elevation (Photograph #5). At the rear northwest corner, the foundation of a former rear ell (10' x 10') has been capped with concrete and now serves as a patio.

The five-bay façade has paired 12-over-12 windows on either side of the front door, which has a five-light transom. There are three gabled dormers in the front slope of the roof. The outside two have six-over-nine sash, the one in the middle, a c. 1900 addition, six-over-six. End elevations still display typical four-pane eave windows and six-over-nine sash at the second floor.

With three major rooms arranged around a massive central chimney, the floor plan is typical for its period (Exhibit B). All the walls are plastered, with cased posts visible in the corners. Most of the doors have four fielded panels and there are chair rails in the front rooms. The entryway displays horizontal board wainscot and paneled cupboards against the chimney wall. A partition was removed about 1900 in the keeping room at the rear, so the small room on the south end is now part of this space. At the other end, an early twentieth-century staircase has replaced the original stairs to the second floor. Some of the space for the present kitchen was taken from the room behind it; the rest was converted to a bathroom.

Construction throughout is post-and-beam. All the oak framing members, planking, and boards are sawn rather than hewn, undoubtedly at the up-and-down saw at the nearby mill. The rubblestone foundation walls, which have a two-foot cap of granite block, return five feet on the southeast corner to a wide doorway. The

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Perkins-Bill House, Gales Ferry (Ledyard), New London County, Connecticut

Section number 7 Page 2

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door there, which is hung by wrought-iron strap hinges, was made from doubled beaded-edge boards. The rest of the foundation on this elevation is brick and contains three 8-over-8 windows. This end of the cellar may have been a summer kitchen or shop, since there is a fireplace in the south face of the large stone chimney base (10' x 9'); the opening is now filled in. Support for the hearths above is provided by a timber outrigger on one side and stone corbelling on the other.

Purlins, roof boards, and planking in the attic display the same saw marks. The end walls there are sheathed with up to two-foot wide horizontal planks and the roof boards are almost as wide. Rafters (4'x4') are half-lapped and pegged at the ridge. Since the attic joists serve as braces, there are no collar boards.

Although they vary in size, all the fireplaces on the first floor have a stone firebox composed of granite block. Single stones are used for the vertical cheeks and lintels, which is typical for Ledyard in this period. The surround of the hall fireplace is trimmed with a simple molding around the opening (38" x 31" x 18" ) and edged with the same back-bed molding found on the door and window casings (Photograph #7). There is a suggestion of the Federal style in the tall frieze and the capitals on either side that support the narrow mantel shelf. The crown molding at the ceiling here is not found in any other room.

The surround of the parlor fireplace (36" x 29.5" x 16" ), which has a full architrave and narrow flanking pilasters, may date from the later Federal period (Photograph #6). A narrow band of Greek fretwork runs under the mantel shelf, and applied scalloping accentuates the lower portion of the frieze.

The keeping room fireplace is quite large (56.5" x 42.5" x 21" ), with a brick beehive oven on the right and a plain pine-board surround (Photograph #8). The stonework around the oven, which has a separate lintel, might suggest a later date for this section. The single nine-foot hearthstone, however, suggests it was original construction. The brick interior of the oven, which is oval in plan and quite deep (40" ), angles back to the left.

The only fireplace on the second floor is in the parlor chamber (Photograph #9). Plain boards trim the brick firebox and stone lintel and there is a tall double cupboard with paneled doors on the left. Across the room, on either side of the front dormer, paneled doors provide access to the space under the eaves.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Perkins-Bill House, Gales Ferry (Ledyard), New London County, Connecticut

Section number 8 Page 1**Statement of Significance**

The Perkins-Bill House, one of the best-preserved representative examples of the Cape Cod style in Ledyard, derives much of its significance from its historical association with the Battle of Groton Heights, which took place on September 6, 1781, during the British invasion of New London and Groton. At least 28 local men lost their lives defending Fort Griswold and many more were wounded and/or taken prisoner. Of the dozen homes in Ledyard associated with this event, the Perkins-Bill House is especially notable for its direct connection with three of the fort's defenders, Solomon Perkins, his son, Solomon, Jr., and Benjamin Bill, Jr.

**Historical Background and Significance**

A true daughter town, several stages removed from the settlement of the original parent community, Ledyard was originally part of New London, an independent colony and seaport in the mid-seventeenth century, founded after the 1637 Pequot War. John Winthrop, Jr., son of the famous Puritan and later governor of Connecticut, established the first settlement there on the west bank of the Great River, as the Thames was then known, and the east side was reserved for the grazing of cattle. Winthrop's plantation grew with the inclusion of a number of settlers from Massachusetts and by 1658 officially was known as New London. Expansion across and up the Thames was inevitable as land was needed for sons and grandsons of the New London proprietors. In the 1650s New London's land on the east side of the river was laid out for settlement, to become the independent Town of Groton by 1705. Despite the presence of a trading post and several isolated farms in North Groton in the late 1600s, settlement of this area, which later became the Town of Ledyard, did not begin in earnest until the early eighteenth century. Coves and inlets along the bank of the Thames, formed by smaller tributary streams, became the site of colonial mills, including the sawmill on Flat Brook once associated with the Perkins-Bill House. Although the hills never reach much more than 350 feet, the rolling terrain, with exposed granite ledges, was more suitable for pasturage and forage crops. When the Revolution began, North Groton was still a dispersed community with isolated farmsteads scattered over 40 square miles.

Coastal Connecticut really bore the brunt of the Revolution. The British fleet, which controlled Long Island Sound in the early years of the war, destroyed several communities on the western coast. Long Island was occupied by British forces; civilian loyalists based there raided Connecticut towns almost at will. As the war dragged on, town committees were hard pressed to meet the constant

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation Sheet**

Perkins-Bill House, Gales Ferry (Ledyard), New London County, Connecticut

Section number 8 Page 2

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demands for men to serve as coast guards and in state militia regiments and still fill quotas for the regular Continental Army. Food supplies for both the active militia and civilians were low; the state itself was bankrupt. Although privateering was officially sanctioned, illicit trade with Long Island and the smuggling of British goods by privateers flourished, eventually drawing suspicion up to the highest levels of the state. The people began to distrust their leaders as well as each other, especially in places like North Groton that had a substantial Anglican population.

With the Continental Army and the French fleet closing in on General Charles Cornwallis in Virginia; an attack in the North was expected as a diversionary move to pressure General George Washington into dividing his forces. The recent capture of prize ships by privateers out of New London, including the brig *Hannah* valued at 80,000 pounds, almost invited retaliation there. The British attack, led by the traitor Benedict Arnold, finally came in September 1781, but the population was so demoralized that few towns in the region responded to the alarm.

Since the British landing was delayed by an offshore wind, the two-shot alarm call for militia reinforcements was sounded six hours before the battle, giving Colonel William Ledyard time to gather his troops, evacuate women and children, and send prize ships to safer moorings up river. Although another shot had been fired by the British to cause confusion (three shots were used to announce a prize ship entering the harbor), Ledyard had already taken the precaution of sending messengers to area militia with orders to assemble at Fort Griswold on the heights above the east side of the river. The garrison at Fort Trumbull, which guarded the New London side, was withdrawn to reinforce the troops gathering at Fort Griswold. When the battle was joined on September 6, only the local militia and volunteers from North Groton and Groton had come to their aid.

Although Ledyard's men there finally numbered about 150, the defenders were badly outnumbered and easily overrun by British forces. Colonel Ledyard and many of his men were killed by the British after an honorable surrender had been arranged; the town was named in his honor in 1836. Among the defenders were Solomon Perkins, Sr., a militia captain, and his son Solomon, Jr., who was living in the house at the time of the battle. Although young Solomon survived unscathed, his brother Simeon died in battle, and their father was wounded. Benjamin Bill, Jr., another wounded militiaman, bought the property shortly after the war.

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Perkins-Bill House, Gales Ferry (Ledyard), New London County, Connecticut

Section number 8 Page 3**The Perkins-Bill House**

The first land transaction to mention a dwelling on the property was a deed of sale in 1779 to Solomon Perkins and his son, Solomon, Jr. (Groton Land Records [GLR] 8:181). The grantors, John and Sarah Jones, who had bought the property with the sawmill in 1773 (GLR 1:190), built the house sometime between these dates, at least by 1775. The Perkinses continued to own the property jointly; Solomon Senior ran the mill while his son occupied the house.

The war had left many in debt and Solomon Perkins, Sr., was no exception. With construction at a virtual standstill during the war, Perkins had had no income from the mill. His war wounds may have kept him from work as a miller. In any event, in 1783 the tax assessor listed the mill in "poor order," indicating that it was shut down. By then Perkins was deeply in debt, having borrowed against the property. Although the Perkins family continued to be listed as abutting property owners for many years, Solomon, Sr., lost this property in a forced sale to Thomas Mallinson, his chief creditor, on July 12, 1783 (GLR 10:37). Mallinson sold the house and mill, with a right of way along the "cart path" (now Long Cove Road), to Benjamin Bill, Jr., that same day (GLR 10:161).

Benjamin Bill (1763-1795), the fifth-generation descendant of Philip Bill, a New London proprietor, owned the property for only nine years. The life of a miller apparently had little appeal, for as soon as the maritime trade recovered in the 1790s, Bill became a mariner. In 1791 he had married Amy Bolles (1769-1861), daughter of Moses Bolles of Gales Ferry, a nearby riverport. That same year, Bill, having commissioned a friend to collect his war pension for 12 months, presumably on behalf of his wife, set out on an extended voyage. Shortly after his return in 1792, Bill sold the entire property with the house and mill to Ichabod Stoddard, a neighbor, and he and wife moved in with his father-in-law (GLR 12:24). Bill was lost at sea in 1795; Amy remarried in 1803. Her new husband, Jonathon Stoddard, may have been related to Ichabod, but the actual relationship is not known.

The family's genealogy is sketchy and the chain of title is not clear, but the property remained in the Stoddard family for many years. Probate records indicate that the mill privilege was once jointly owned by Ichabod's son, Asa, and Elisha Stoddard, perhaps his nephew. Like all the Stoddards associated with the property, these men were listed as farmers rather than millers in the federal censuses and apparently none of them ever occupied the house, which was a rental property for most of the nineteenth century. Since probate inventories indicate that the sawmill remained active, possibly the mill privilege was leased by

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National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
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Perkins-Bill House, Gales Ferry (Ledyard), New London County, Connecticut

Section number 8 Page 4

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others or itinerant sawyers hired in season. In 1844 Elisha A. Stoddard's inventory included over \$6000 worth of lumber, including black oak planks (Ledyard Probate Records [LPR] 1:54-55). Asa Stoddard, who was identified with the mill on the map of 1854, lived in another house farther up Long Cove Road. When Asa's estate was distributed in 1859, his half of the sawmill privilege, then worth \$2300, went to his youngest son, Charles H. Stoddard. The other half was held by Eunice, Elisha's widow, who was guardian of her minor children. They included Ralph S. Stoddard, who received the other half of the mill and the house when he came into his majority.

Ralph Stoddard, who lived in another house to the north, left most of his property to the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, with life use to his widow, Mary. If the society disposed of the property, as it did in 1874, the widow was to receive all "leases and rents" (Ledyard Land Records [LLR] 3:537). The house lot went to Lyman Richards, who had lived there at least since 1870, when he was listed in the census. The Richards' association continued for many years. When the estate of Fred O. Richards was probated in 1933, the property included the house and mill, with dam "sight" [sic] and water privilege. It remained in the family until 1945, when the parcel was again divided and the house lot sold by Richards' daughter, Evelyn Richards Lawson (LLR 13:550). After changing hands several times, it was purchased by the present owners in 1997.

**Architectural Significance**

According to the architectural survey of the town conducted in 1995, the Perkins-Bill House is one of the best preserved of the more than 60 Cape Cods built in Ledyard between 1740 and 1840. The unusual popularity of this house type in Ledyard can be attributed to several factors. Poorer farmers there favored the simple gable-roofed Cape because it was cheaper to build than a two-story house. The Cape frame could be raised by just a few people, perhaps only the farmer and his sons, a great advantage to families living on isolated farmsteads. More headroom and living space on the second floor, as well as an attic, could be created with a double-pitched gambrel roof, but the Perkins-Bill House is one of the few in Ledyard to use that form.

The Perkins-Bill House has many characteristic Cape features, such as small windows in the eaves of the end elevations. Its conventional colonial floor plan is arranged around a center chimney, but like most local Capes, the stairs are located at the rear of the house. It originally was built with a small rear ell,

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Perkins-Bill House, Gales Ferry (Ledyard), New London County, Connecticut

Section number 8 Page 5

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which in Ledyard was located either under an extension of the main roof or had its own shed roof. Often early or original construction and antedating the period of the summer kitchen ell, these small unheated rooms had an original purpose, which is not generally understood. In a few known cases they served as milk rooms, well rooms, or wood sheds.

The Perkins-Bill House possesses considerable integrity. Most of the exterior additions to the house over time have been limited to the less visible elevations. The added center façade dormer reproduces the form of the originals. The interior, which has retained all of its finishes and woodwork, is distinguished by well-crafted fireplaces, all fine examples of a local building tradition. Practically every house in Ledyard built after 1760 has the same large granite-block fireboxes. While not elaborate, the detailing of the fireplace surrounds in the hall and parlor is nicely executed and fully in keeping with the level of style of the house (Photograph #s 6, 7).

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Perkins-Bill House, Gales Ferry (Ledyard), New London County, Connecticut

Section number 9/10 Page 1

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Avery, Rev, John. *History of the Town of Ledyard 1650-1900.*

Norwich, Connecticut: Noyes & Davis, 1901.

Buel, Richard, Jr. *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War.* Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1980.

Cunningham, Janice P. *Historical and Architectural Survey of the Town of Ledyard.* Ledyard Planning Department, Ledyard Historical Society, and the Connecticut Historical Commission, 1995.

Federal Census of the United States, MSS, 1800, 1810, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1900, 1910.

Map of Ledyard, 1854, 1868.

Smith, Carolyn and Helen Vergason. *September 6, 1781: North Groton's Story.* New London, Connecticut: A. Printing Co., 1984.

Stark, Charles R. *Groton, Conn. 1705-1905.* Stonington, Connecticut: The Palmer Press, 1922.

**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The nominated property is described in the Ledyard Land Records, Volume 266, Page 577.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundaries encompass the buildings and a considerable portion of the land associated with the property during its period of significance.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Perkins-Bill House, Ledyard, New London County, Connecticut

Section number Photo Page 1

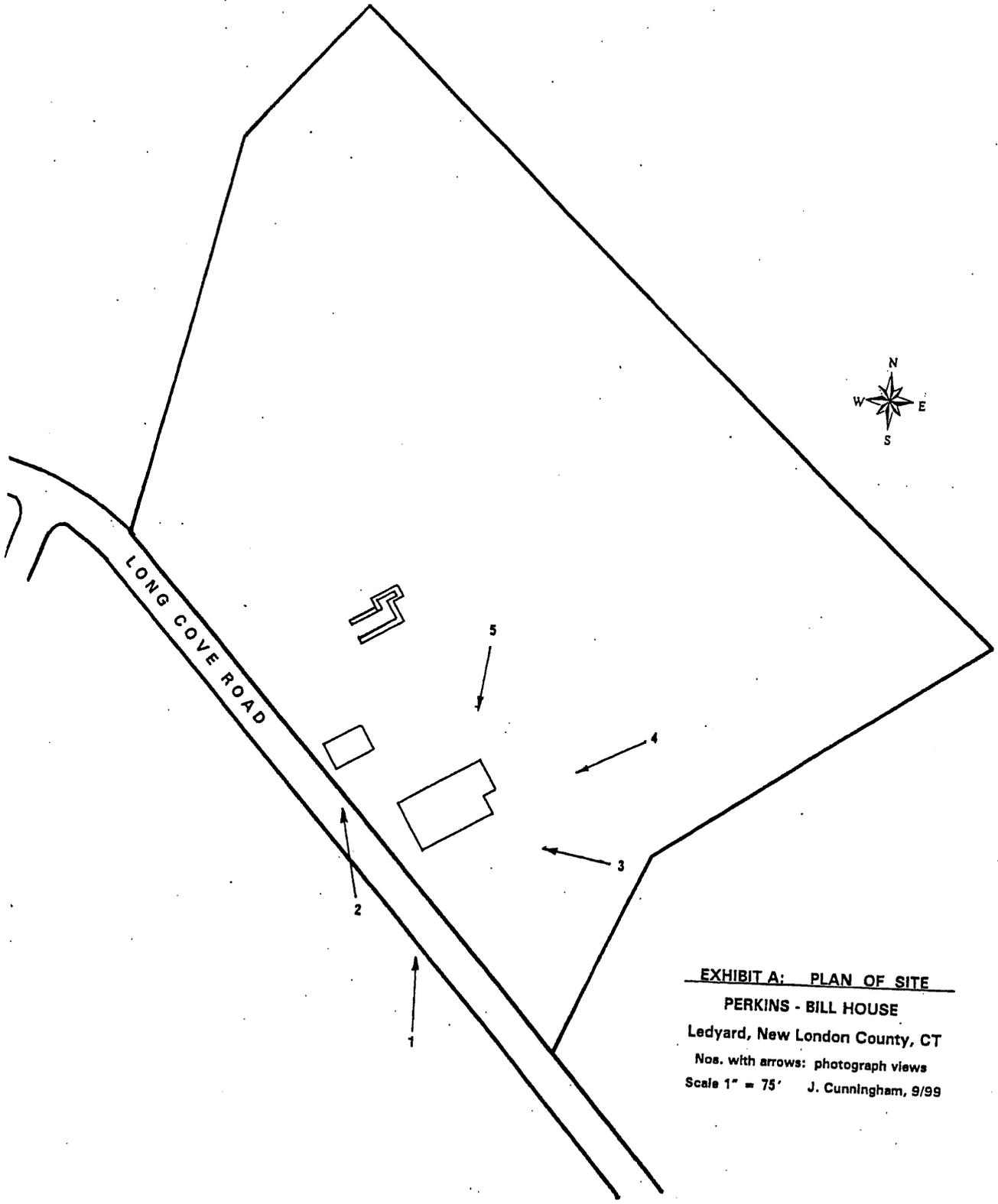
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**List of Photographs**

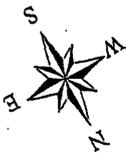
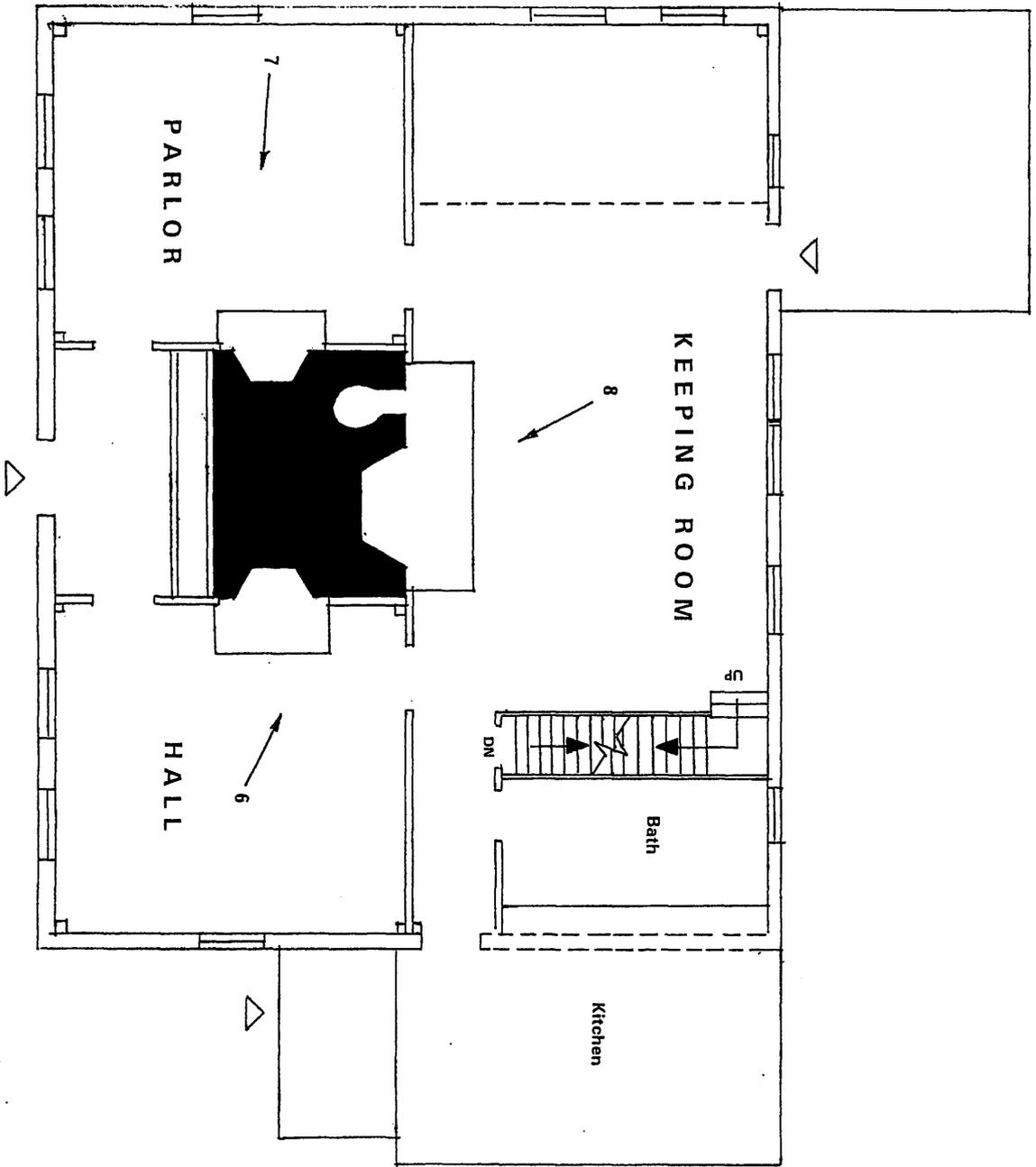
Photographer: Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC

Date: 4/99 Negatives on file: Connecticut Historical Commission

1. Facade and left elevation, facing N
2. Barn/garage, facing N
3. Façade and wing, facing NW
4. Right elevation, facing SW
5. Rear elevation, facing S
6. Hall fireplace, facing NW
7. Parlor fireplace, facing NE
8. Keeping Room fireplace, facing SW
9. Parlor chamber fireplace, facing N



**EXHIBIT A: PLAN OF SITE**  
**PERKINS - BILL HOUSE**  
Ledyard, New London County, CT  
Nos. with arrows: photograph views  
Scale 1" = 75' J. Cunningham, 9/99



**EXHIBIT B: FIRST FLOOR PLAN**

**PERKINS - BILL HOUSE**

Ledyard, New London County, CT

Nos. with arrows: photograph views

Approximate Scale: 1/8" = 1'

Jan Cunningham

9/99

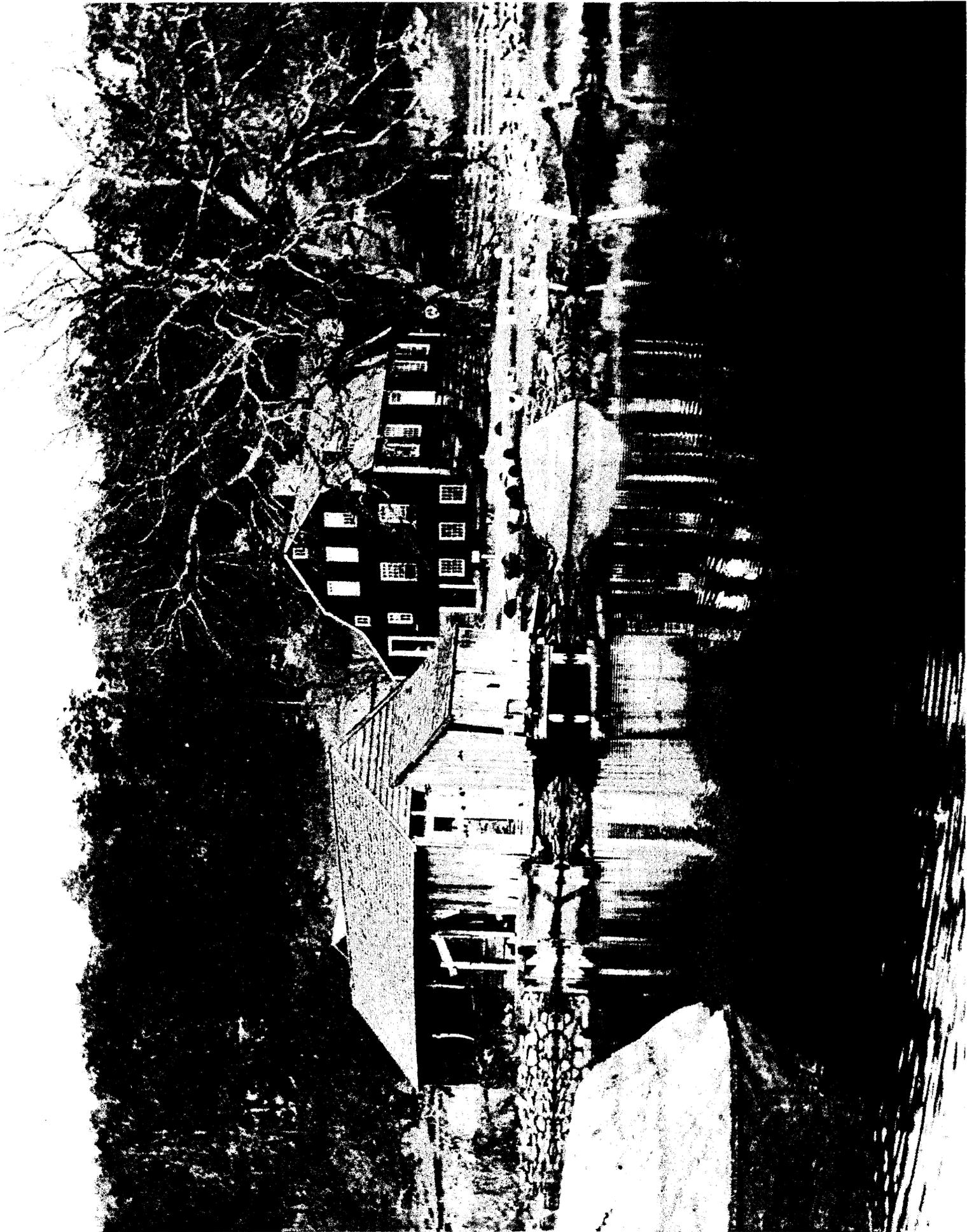


Figure #1: Perkins-Bill House & Sawmill, c. 1900 (courtesy of owner)