

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PHO 685402

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Plumb House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 872 Westfield Street

CITY, TOWN Middletown VICINITY OF Second - Christopher J. Dodd

STATE Connecticut COUNTY Middlesex CODE 007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Peter M. and Laura N. Frenzel

STREET & NUMBER 872 Westfield Street

CITY, TOWN Middletown VICINITY OF STATE Connecticut

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Middletown Land Records, Municipal Building

STREET & NUMBER De Koven Drive

CITY, TOWN Middletown STATE Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Plumb House is located at the northeast corner of Westfield Street and East Street in an outlying, semi-rural section of Middletown, Connecticut, three miles west of the Connecticut River. The surrounding area, formerly farm land, is becoming built up with houses, but they are spaced well apart, and the trees remain. There is no commercial development in the neighborhood.

Set back about 50 feet from both roads, the frame house, on stone foundations, is made up of two sections. The main block, almost square, is 38 feet wide and 33 feet deep. An ell to the east, measuring 40 feet wide by 17 feet deep, forms the second section. The main block was built about 1804, and the one-and-a-half story ell probably about 1740. The front (south) facade of the ell now has a garage door to the east, twin modern windows in the center, and an older door and window next to the main block. A continuous crown molding extends over the door and window. The pitched roof has a recently-added dormer with two windows. In addition to the garage, this section now contains the kitchen.

The ell has been much altered over the years. What the original plan and elevation may have been, and how much of the original fabric remains, are uncertain. In its cellar, however, is a great, square, stone chimney base typical of the kind that was built in Connecticut in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Customarily, chimneys supported by bases of this type were the center element of a house, suggesting that the ell originally was a house in its own right.

The main part of the house has two stories and attic under a high hip roof. Two brick chimneys rise from the roof to left and right halfway back. The siding is clapboard with rose-headed nails, evenly exposed to the weather. At the corners are plain facing boards in lieu of pilasters. Windows are twelve-over-twelve double hung sash. On the front facade the center window is flanked by more space than are the two to left and right. The windows have molded enframements, with flat molded caps at the first floor. At the second floor the tops of the window frames are directly under the dentil course that runs under the eaves.

The front door is approached by a delicate portico whose pitched roof is supported by round columns at the front and by fluted pilasters next to the house. It has a coved ceiling and has a dentil course along the edges of its roof, as often found in Middletown. The front door has six panels and is a Dutch door. Over it is a fanlight with radial leading.

The front door leads to a central hall that runs through the house to a door at the back that is also a Dutch door. There are two rooms on either side of the hall, each with a shallow fireplace. The fireplaces are back-to-back, their flues leading up into the two chimneys. Each fireplace has a simple wood surround composed of plain pilasters with molded caps that support a plain architrave and frieze separated by a narrow molding. The mantel shelf is shallow.

All the doors in the house, both exterior and interior, are in the same six-panelled pattern. The floors are of wide pine boards. The stairway runs up the east wall of the hall. It has three simple oblong balusters per tread and curved step ends. The triangular space under the stairs is filled with panelling. Aside from the doors, this is the only panelling in the house.

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The Plumb House
Middletown, Connecticut

CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

While the ell has undergone many changes since its origin, the principal block of the house has remained much the same, both inside and out. The roof shingles are a replacement, but the rose-headed nails indicate that the clapboards may be original, as are the panelled doors, leaded fanlight, floors, fireplaces, and stairs. The windows, if not original, at least are authentic.

The premises are well maintained, and are used by the owners as their family home.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

The portico is the most elaborate decorative feature of the house, but its round columns have no capitals. Its dentil course, paralleling that under the eaves, and the leaded fanlight are in line with contemporary fashion. The coved ceiling of the portico is a feature often found in Middletown and can be seen in several early 19th century houses standing in the downtown part of the city.

1804 is a late date for the construction of a house such as this one. In metropolitan centers the Greek Revival was already making its appearance. Urban houses still being built at that time in the Federal or Georgian style at least had more baroque elements than the Plumb House. Corner pilasters, elliptical fanlights, intricately leaded sidelights, elaborate porticos with carved capitals and full entablatures, pedimented windows, and so on, were all the order of the day in sophisticated circles and are notably missing here. In 1804 in the outskirts of Middletown, country joiners built in a manner found elsewhere 50 to 75 years earlier. They omitted the decorative detail, but continued the high hip roof from earlier years.

The Plumb House is an important example of early 19th century Georgian architecture that has survived for 175 years without damaging alterations.

6 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/HUMANITARIAN		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1804

BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Plumb

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Plumb House is important in architectural history because it is a remarkably unspoiled late example of country Georgian design. Its simple proportions and relatively plain decorative elements of great integrity are an interesting foil to more elaborate Georgian homes built in urban centers in the same era. The well documented association of the Plumb family with the house for several generations provides a sense of stability and local interest to the history of the house.

Samuel Plumb (or Plum) purchased land in Westfield, as this section of Middletown is called, in 1738 (Middletown Land Records, volume 8, page 286). The supposition is that he built his house, now the kitchen ell, soon thereafter. The stone chimney base in the cellar is consistent with this supposition. His son, James Plumb, is established as the builder of the main house by the probate records of his wife, Elizabeth. Elizabeth died in 1807. Probate records state that appraisers were appointed to assess the value of the assets of her estate except "the house and appurtenances lately built by James Plum." The present day assessor's card in the Middletown Town Hall shows a date of construction for the house of 1804. These indicated dates of the probate records and assessor's card are consistent with the impression derived from visual inspection of the house.

The Plumb family continued to farm the land throughout most of the 19th century. A transfer in 1860 (MLR 91/466) notes that 100 acres went with the house at that time. The property passed out of the hands of the Plumb family in 1881 (MPR 31/198). Thereafter it has had a succession of sympathetic owners during the years that the Westfield area has become a residential neighborhood of the city of Middletown.

When the present owners were asked what feature or characteristic of the house they valued most, the prompt reply was, "The proportions." The size of the rooms, their relationship to one another, and the access from one part of the house to another seem to work exceptionally well. Such observation in 1978 is a fine testimonial to the design capability of country joiners in 1804. The probability is that few conscious design decisions were made in 1804, but rather that the house was constructed in accordance with customs that had built up over the prior century. The result has withstood the test of time with distinction.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the 1804 house is its integrity. No partitions have been moved, no structural changes have been made, no significant interior or exterior alterations of any kind have occurred. The pine floor boards, simple fireplace surrounds, and carved step ends are all in place. The presence in the house of the identical six-panelled doors, without exception, is noteworthy.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"James Plumb House," typescript in files of Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, 9 pp., undated, unsigned.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.7

QUADRANGLE NAME Middletown

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24 000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 69,16,6,0 4,60,36,7,0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is Lot 4A, Map 7, Block 16-1 as described in Middletown Land Records, volume 355, page 128.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom, Consulatatant

May 21, 1978

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Connecticut Historical Commission

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

59 South Prospect Street

203 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Hartford,

Connecticut 06106

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL x

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE September 25, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

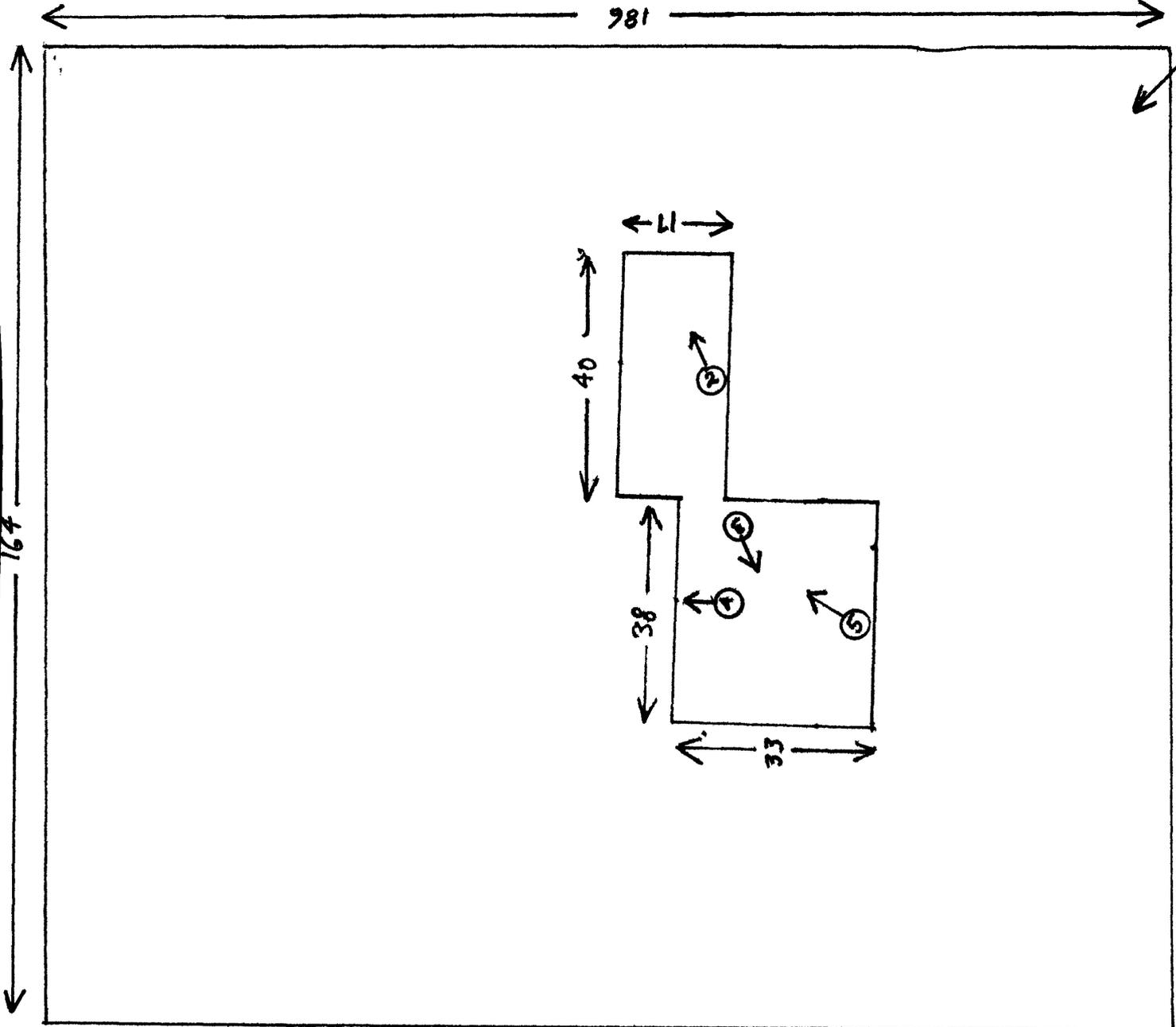
DATE 12.1.78

ATTEST: Mick Van Duzend
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 12/1/78



Plumb House
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WESTFIELD ST.

EAST ST.