

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0668354

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 5 1978
DATE ENTERED	MAR 5 1979

# 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

John Knap House

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

984 Stillwater Road

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Stamford

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

Fourth - Stewart B. McKinney

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

COUNTY

Fairfield

CODE

01

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

### CATEGORY

- \_\_\_ DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_ STRUCTURE
- \_\_\_ SITE
- \_\_\_ OBJECT

### OWNERSHIP

- \_\_\_ PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- \_\_\_ BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- \_\_\_ IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

### STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- \_\_\_ YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ NO

### PRESENT USE

- \_\_\_ AGRICULTURE
- \_\_\_ COMMERCIAL
- \_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL
- \_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_ GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_ MILITARY
- \_\_\_ MUSEUM
- \_\_\_ PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_ RELIGIOUS
- \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_ OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Virginia T. Davis

STREET & NUMBER

984 Stillwater Road

CITY, TOWN

Stamford

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Connecticut 06902

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Municipal Building

STREET & NUMBER

429 Atlantic Street

CITY, TOWN

Stamford

STATE

Connecticut 06901

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Works Progress Administration Census of Old Buildings

DATE

1930s

\_\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut State Library

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

Connecticut 06103

# 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
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Knap House is located in west central Stamford, Connecticut, on the west side of Stillwater Road half way between the Merritt Parkway and the Connecticut Turnpike, two miles from each. Set back approximately 30 feet from the road where it curves to the west, the house faces south on a three-quarters of an acre site of uneven ground. Despite its urban neighborhood the house has a pastoral setting. It is separated from the street by a great stone wall four feet high and two and one-half feet wide capped by flat stones up to six feet long. Similar walls run across the back yard. In the side yard is an old, open, stone well. Several tall trees both front and back and a thick hedge across the front serve to insulate the house from the sights and sounds of the city.

The plan of the Knap House of only two rooms on each floor with chimney in the center is the same as that of the Older Bushnell House in Old Saybrook, Connecticut, shown in Figure 3 by J. Frederick Kelly, in his definitive study of early domestic architecture in Connecticut. Kelly's diagram shows one window on each side of the front door which is the same arrangement as found at the Knap House.

The east end of the house faces the street, and the front facade faces south. In the center of the facade is the doorway with a four light transom. There is one twelve-over-eight window on each side of the doorway at ground floor level. At the second floor level are three evenly spaced windows. The windows are 19th century replacements.

The west gable has an 18 inch overhang at the attic level. This is the only overhang in the house. The west end of the house also has a window in the attic and at the second floor level (off center to the south), and a ground floor door.

The rear (north) facade has a modern one story addition with low pitched roof which serves the same purpose as a colonial lean-to in that it houses the kitchen. Above it are four windows, the two in the center having been added recently.

The east end of the house has a window in the attic gable and two windows at each of the first and second floor levels, symmetrically placed.

The exterior sheathing of the house is clapboards, authentically replaced in mid-20th century. They are made of red cedar, have five inches exposed to the weather and are without beading or taper. On the front the clapboards are unpainted and on the other three sides they are painted a dark blue/grey.

The stone chimney rises from the center of the composition shingled roof, and has a stone molding just below its top. Roof framing includes rafters fitted together at the ridge line by use of mortise and tenon with peg; there is no ridge pole.

An old barn is on the premises. Thought to be more than 200 years old, it is in good condition.

The fieldstone foundations measure 22 feet 6 inches by 40 feet 10 inches. The chimney, of the same stone, at its base measures 11 feet by 11 feet 6 inches. There is a cellar under the east room only. First floor joists visible in the cellar are undressed timbers.

During 20th century restoration three of the sills and one or

(continued)

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 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 1705

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John Knap

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The significance of the Knap House derives from the well documented, early date of its construction (1705), and from the high percentage of original fabric which remains in the house. It has been well maintained throughout its history and has not been altered. It is a classic example of a center chimney house without lean-to and is of museum quality.

In tracing the origins of the house, there is a clean line in the land records back to when Samuel Knap was the owner. The 1781 Erskine map at the New-York Historical Society shows his name at the curve in the road where the house is located, confirming his ownership in that year. Probate records show that Samuel Knap purchased the house in 1765 from the estate of his father, Lt. John Knap, who was the son of the builder, Capt. John Knap. Study of the land records of adjoining properties reveals that Capt. John Knap marked trees along the boundaries of his property with the initials J K. These initials are cut in the stone of the chimney of the house, in the front just above the roof line.

Acquisition of the first parcel of land for the Knap farm was recorded 28 February 1698.<sup>2</sup> Additional purchases were made up to 1710. The presence of the house is indicated by a 2 April 1712 reference to it in the description of a property across the street which is said to be a certain distance from a road intersection and across from "ye dwelling house and barn of John Knap."<sup>3</sup> The intersection is still there and when measured off the point is found to be opposite the house. These records demonstrate that the house was built not before 1698 and not after 1712. The mid point between these two limits is 1705, and this year is assigned as the date of the origin of the house.

The first Knap to come to Stamford was Nicholas Knap who arrived in 1648 as a member of the second Wethersfield group. (The first group from Wethersfield, who founded Stamford, arrived in 1641.) His grandson was Captain John Knap who built the house. The builder was a captain in the militia, a farmer, and also a surveyor and fence viewer for the town. The Knap family occupied the house until 1835 and the property was a working farm until 1924.

An idiosyncrasy in the early history of the house was discovered during 20th century restoration. When the framing of the second floor of the east end, facing the street, was uncovered it was found to provide for a larger opening than a normal window. The supposition is that this opening was for goods being hoisted to the second floor for storage, the room serving as a small warehouse. The absence of a fireplace in the upstairs east room supports this theory.

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

J. Frederick Kelly, The Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963 (reprint of work first published by Yale University Press in 1924).

Stamford Land Records, various entries.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.78

UTM REFERENCES

A | 18 | 621195 | 4548030 |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 C | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 D | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property occupies lot B on Stamford map 50-29 and is roughly 235 by 145 feet in size.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom

ORGANIZATION

DATE

17 October 1977

STREET & NUMBER

33 Sunrise Hill Drive

TELEPHONE

203 521-2518

CITY OR TOWN

West Hartford

STATE

Connecticut

# 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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*John W. Stevenson*

TITLE DIRECTOR, CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION

DATE

5/1/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF SCHELOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

*W. M. ...*

DATE

3/5/79

ATTEST: Bill ...  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

March 5, 1979

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John Knap House

**CONTINUATION SHEET** Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

two feet of the bases of the front posts were replaced due to the deteriorated condition of the originals; otherwise all framing is original. All eight posts are flared or "gunstock" in shape, with beaded casing.

On the first floor are two stone fireplaces. In the east room the opening measures ten feet two inches wide by five feet four inches high, and has a bake oven in the back wall. The lintel is a huge timber. There is no mantel. This room has a summer beam. It is 18 inches in width.

In the west room the fireplace opening originally measured nine feet ten inches wide by four feet eight inches high but was partially filled in and made smaller during the 19th century. The original bolection molding is in place, however, and it is immense, measuring ten inches in width and 4 3/4 inches in maximum projection. In addition, this fireplace wall has fine, original pine paneling. The centers of the panels are raised to the same height as the stiles and rails, which have beaded edges.

Original stone steps run from first floor to the cellar along the front of the chimney, an arrangement "indicative of very early work," according to Kelly.<sup>2</sup> Above them the stairway from the first to the second floors, which is a replacement of the original, runs from right to left in front of the chimney wall.

Upstairs there is a fireplace only in the west room and this room has walls and ceiling of wide boards fastened with rose headed nails and believed to be original. Such a ceiling is quite unusual; customarily the structural members were left exposed. The floors in both rooms upstairs and in front of the stairs at ground level are original.

The John Knap House is in an excellent state of repair and is impeccably maintained as a private residence.

1. J. Frederick Kelly, Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut, p. 7.
2. Ibid., p. 8.

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Knap, John, House  
Stamford, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Addendum

During the centuries that the John Knap House remained in the Knap family (1705-1924) few changes were made. Fenestration on the front (south) facade appears never to have been changed. On the east facade (toward the street) the second floor goods door (see main body of Description) was replaced with the present two windows somewhere along the line. In like fashion, there were no windows originally on the west end of the house at second floor level. On the back of the house (north facade) there was a small back porch of undetermined nature mentioned in the land records as early as the 18th century. By the 19th century it had developed into a milk shed.

In 1925 the new owner installed the first bathroom. During this period of ownership a two story porch was added on the west end, and French doors were cut in to provide access to it at both first and second stories. The porch has been removed but the doors remain. Several interior partitions and alterations were introduced from 1925 to 1955 that have subsequently been reversed. At this time the milk shed was made into a laundry. Also, the wall in front of the stairs was removed.

During the years 1955/1965 the milk shed/laundry was further developed into a kitchen. The stairs were restored with new balusters. The house was rewired. The two, small, bathroom windows on the north side were cut in. It was at this time that the new clapboards and sections of sills and posts (see main body of Description) were installed as replacements of deteriorated fabric, in each case duplicating the originals in size, shape, and contour. The wide clapboards covering the west end second floor and the west one-third of the north side (over the kitchen -- see photo) were not replaced at this time and are thought themselves perhaps to be earlier replacements of the original clapboards. The floors of the two downstairs rooms were replaced using old, wide boards from another structure.

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John Knap House

**CONTINUATION SHEET** Significance      ITEM NUMBER 8      PAGE 1

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The John Knap House is considered by the Stamford Historical Society to be the second oldest house in Stamford. Since its construction the house has undergone remarkably few changes, and exists today as a rare example of turn-of-the-18th-century architecture.

1. Stamford Land Records, Book G, page 415.
2. Ibid., Book A, page 309.
3. Ibid., Book C, page 419.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance      ITEM NUMBER 8      PAGE 2

Addendum

The remarkable integrity of the John Knap House results largely from the more than 200 year span of ownership by the Knap family during which little was done to the house. Its survival at all in the midst of a good sized city is unusual, and its survival with all original framing intact is especially noteworthy. In addition to the timbers of the framing, the stone chimney from its square base to its molded top, with fireplaces, also survives as do the flooring in front of the stairs on the first floor, the raised paneling of the west first floor room, the entire second story flooring, the wall sheathing and ceiling boards of the west chamber, and the beaded casing of the posts. The pastoral site with rugged stone walls and big trees is equally surprising and valuable, especially considering the urban location.

It is the presence of wide, one inch, oak (or chestnut) vertical sheathing without interruption under the clapboards that suggests the second floor west wall has never had fenestration, except for the 1920s French doors, and interruption in such sheathing on the east wall that suggests the early presence of the second floor goods door. The absence of any change in the fenestration of the main facade since 1705 adds to the importance of the house. On the interior the floor plan remains unchanged, except for the addition of bathrooms. The present kitchen results from continuation in the development of a porch/milk shed/laundry that had its start perhaps 200 years ago.