UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The William Tully House is located on the north shore of Saybrook Point, a peninsula that extends about a mile eastward into the Connecticut River one mile north of the river's mouth. Saybrook Point separates two inlets of the river, the North Cove and the South Cove, and is a mile southeast of the center of the town of Old Saybrook. The point is currently an area of well maintained, gracious homes.

The plot of the William Tully House is 190 feet wide, in the east-west direction, on the north side of North Cove Road. The house faces south. Behind the house, at the northwest corner of the plot, there is a wharf, no longer operational, about 20 feet wide and 200 feet long, that has been part of the property since the house was built, c. 1750.

The house is a 2¹/₂-story, gable-roofed, four-bay, central chimney, central doorway, clapboard, Colonial structure on stone foundations with a woodshingled roof (Photograph 1). The main block is 36 feet wide by 24 feet deep A 15 by 15 foot wing was added at the northeast corner perhaps a hundred years ago, and there is a 9 by 15 foot porch in front of the wing. A second, added, 28-foot wide porch is on the back of the house, overlooking the wharf and the cove.

The chief decorative element of the facade is the entrance surround in 2nd bay from the east (Photograph 3). Pilasters with stepped profiles and with rosettes for capitals flank the doorway, supporting an entablature that includes a pulvinated frieze and dentil course and that breaks out over the pilasters and in the center. Three oblong lights on each side and eight square transom lights separate the surround from the door, which has two, long, vertical, recessed panels. Above, a delicate dentil course runs under the eaves cornice. The windows are 6-over-9 double-hung sash, 58 inches tall on the first floor and 48 inches tall on the second. The added wing has two gabled dormers. The house is protected from the street by a white, wood picket fence.

The north (rear) elevation has the 28-foot porch at first floor level and three windows in the second floor (Photograph 2). The porch has square posts and a railing of square spindles under a nearly flat shed roof. As the ground slopes down from the road to the water, the rear basement wall is exposed. It has a central door, at grade, that is 38 inches wide. While the facade of the house is covered with wood clapboards, the rear and side elevations have vinyl clapboard siding, carefully applied to avoid damaging the trim. As none of the windows have moldings, the problem is minimal.

The wharf is solidly built of cobblestones (Photograph 5), as contrasted to a pier constructed of planking supported by pilings. The wharf has an ell to the east at its far end, but this feature like all other elements of the wharf gradually is deteriorating and losing its definition to the steady wear of the sea. The wharf's appearance is more impressive in the winter when the cobblestone structure is visible, after the summer growth of weeds



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William Tully House Old Saybrook, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

has disappeared. The configuration of the land suggests that there was a driveway from the street west of the house down to the wharf in the past.

The first floor plan of the house consists of a large room on either side of the chimney, a small entrance hall in front of the chimney, and a small space behind the chimney. The entrance hall has a semi-elliptical stairway, rising from left to right (Photograph 6). The profile of the curve is formed by the sequence of a straight riser, four winders, a straight riser four winders, a straight riser, four winders, and a straight riser. The wall in front of the chimney is coved to conform to the curve of the stairway. There are two square spindles per tread, open string, a round handrail, and a turned newel post. The doors from the entrance hall to the principal rooms have 1-over-1 raised panels on one side and recessed panels on the other.

In the west room, the living room, the fireplace wall is panelled and the 37 by 46-inch fireplace opening is surrounded by a bolection molding (Photograph 7). The room has a chair rail, and two cased summer beams that are molded at the ceiling and beaded at their lower edges. One summer beam runs from the west girt to the chimney girt in the conventional manner, while the second, further toward the back, may mark the location of a former partition. The room is now a single space from the front wall to the back wall, but it may originally have been a large room in the front and a small room in the back. French doors now open onto the porch overlooking the cove.

The east room, now the dining room, was the kitchen. It, too, is now a single, open space, the partition that formed a small room towards the back having been removed. To the right of the fireplace there is a cupboard in the panelled wall thought once to have been the location of steep stairs to the second story. Lines in the floor above support this analysis. The walls of this room are formed by vertical, feather-edged boards. Some horizontal feather-edged boards on the east wall at the north end are consistent with the thought that the space once was two rooms. A second summer beam is in place at about where the partition would have been, as in the west room. French doors open from this room to the porch. The present-day kitchen is in the wing to the east.

Behind the chimney there is a space that probably once was a small room. The house overall is fairly shallow, only 24 feet deep, providing only seven feet of space behind the chimney. Only seven feet deep, there was not enough room for a kitchen in this conventional location behind the chimney. In the five-room plan of this house the three rear rooms were smaller than usual. The central rear room could not be the kitchen, and this function was fulfilled by the east room. The small space behind the chimney is now an ell to the living room, the partition between the two, assuming it once existed,

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William Tully House Old Saybrook, CT

FHR-8-300A

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having been removed long ago. The fireplace in the back wall of the chimney is small, and has a classical round arch (Photograph 8). The back stairway rises in two steep runs with closed strings in the northeast corner of this space.

On the second floor, the west bedroom is the more elaborate. It has a molded chair rail, and floor boards up to 16 inches wide. Over the two front windows, which interrupt the chair rail, there are oblong, recessed panels between the top of the window and the ceiling. The side windows start above the chair rail, and do not have panels above. Many of the panes in these windows have poor optical quality, indicating age. The fireplace mantel has bold diamonds and rectangles formed by a beaded or rope molding (Photograph 9). The same molding is repeated in the top panels in a cupboard door to the left of the fireplace, in the door to the hall, and in the door to the back of the house. There is a summer beam in this room, and in the front the plate is not visible.

The east front room has a fireplace, but the trim is simpler throughout, and there is no summer. The front plate is visible, however, as it is in the hall at the top of the front stairs. There are two small bedrooms and a bath across the back of the house, and an additional bedroom over the kitchen in the wing.

The attic is framed with principal rafters pegged together at the peak without ridge pole. There are no purlins or braces. The siding at the east end is horizontal boards 20 inches wide, apparently original, while at the west end both the studs and boards have a new look. There is a monitor in the south slope of the roof, east of the chimney.

There are no cellar stairs in the original block of the house. Access to the basement is through the door facing the wharf. The massive nine-footsquare stone base of the chimney (Photograph 10) has a fireplace at the east end and a tall arched opening in the west end. The purpose of the arched opening is uncertain; it is bricked up; but it may once have been a fireplace. The 36" by 48" fireplace in the 2ast side of the chimney base has an oven at the top front left, the only oven to be identified thus far in the house. The cellar has a dirt floor.

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SPECIFIC DATES C. 1750

BUILDER/ARCHITECT William Tully

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The William Tully House is a good example of Colonial architecture, with the added interest of its associated wharf (Criterion C). Moreover, an incident of violence connected with the Revolutionary War occurred at the house (Criterion A), and a member of the Tully family, Dr. William Tully, was an early leader of the Connecticut medical profession (Criterion B).

The various elements of typical Colonial style are well represented in the house. Hewn timbers for post-and-beam, mortise-and-tenon construction, flared corner posts, central chimney rising from a massive stone base, panelled fireplace walls, and roof framing of rafters without ridgepole all are present. In addition, the bolection molding of the west first floor room and the rope moldings of the chamber above, along with the doorway with rosettes and entablature that breaks out over the fluted pilasters, add an important level of decorative embellishment.

The floor plan of the house is unusual, because it is so shallow, and gives rise to questions and speculations for which firm answers are not available. There is the possibility that the house initially was a oneroom structure. The space for a steep stairs, almost a ladder, next to the fireplace in the east room suggests that the east room and chimney were built first. This theory is confirmed by the visibility of the front plate in the east chamber and upper hall, but not in the west chamber. The cellar fireplace, which has the house's only bake oven, may be an indication of the need to utilize the lower space in a small house. The greater elaboration of the trim in the west first floor room and chamber are consistent with a later timing, perhaps along with the entrance, for their construction, as is the closer spacing of the facade windows on this side of the house.

Unfortunately, nothing can be found in the attic framing to support the postulate set forth in the foregoing paragraph, but there is the possibility that the entire present roof was constructed when the house was enlarged. Similarly, analysis of the cellar is unproductive because the inside walls of the foundations have been covered with smooth concrete, preventing any attempt at identifying a joint when the cellar may have been extended.

The depth of the house may have been determined by the site. The road was there before the house. The amount of level ground between the road and the water was limited. Perhaps the house is shallow simply because making it deeper would have meant projection of the mass from the sloping ground in an unacceptable manner. Whatever the cause or explanation, the seven-foot space behind the chimney with its small, half-round fireplace opening and FHR-8-300A (11/78) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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steep, closed string stairs is one of the more interesting spaces in 18th-century Connecticut houses.

The house is described in earlier reports as originally having shingled siding, an unusual feature. The shingles are referred to in the Colonial Dames book on the house at the State Library, written by Anna D. Sheffield. In the leaves of the book there is a letter written by Sheffield in which she says, "According to Mr. Kelly (the house) has unusual features...cellar fireplace, original covering of shingles...." Presumably, Mr. Kelly was J. Frederick Kelly, architect, who was one of the first to study 17th- and 18thcentury Connecticut structures carefully and thoroughly. Unfortunately, no evidence of early shingle siding can be found. The clapboards on the west wall, first story, were removed within the past decade, and a determined search was made for some indication that shingles had been the original wall covering, without success. Along the same line, the east wall or gable end of the attic is wide boards, apparently original. These boards show no nails or nail holes for shingles.

The street on which the house stands, North Cove Road, leads out to the eastern tip of Saybrook Point where Fort Fenwick was built in 1635. Although the fort burned in 1647, its location established the center of activity. and the street is a very old street. One hundred years after the burning of the fort, a prominent landowner by the name of William Tully died, and the settlement of his estate led to the construction of the William Tully House. The father of the first William Tully, John Tully, arrived in Saybrook as a child in 1647. He grew up to become a teacher of arithmetic, navagation, and astronomy. He used his knowledge to write and publish almanacs in which he discoursed upon the natural causes of snow, rain, and hail, and touched upon the subject of earthquakes. One of his almanacs was published by Benjamin Harris at the London Coffee House in 1693, another in Boston in 1702 after his death.² The land holdings of his son, the first William Tully, were divided by his heirs in 1745,³ the land on the cove going to his son, the second William Tully. The next documentary reference to the property is in the Revolutionary War incident, and it is therefore presumed that the second William Tully built the house soon after he came into possession of the land. This line of reasoning leads to the date of c. 1750 for construction of the house.

The Revolutionary War incident occurred at the house on August 8, 1779. The sequence of events started when Middletown Tories brought goods down the Connecticut River to sell to the British. They were apprehended and the contraband was stored in the cellar of the Tully House under the care of the third William Tully, then about 21 years old. On the night of Sunday, August 8, eight Tories from Middletown landed nearby, approached the house, and de(11/78) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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manded return of the goods. In response, young William Tully fired his musket, killing two, charged with his bayonet, and escaped to summon help. The Tories withdrew.⁴ The incident infers the existence of the wharf by 1779 for handling the contraband cargo, and suggests that the house and the wharf were a common enterprise from the first. Storage of the goods in the cellar is not unexpected considering the wide cellar door at grade at the head of the wharf.

The fourth William Tully was the doctor. Born in the house in 1785, he graduated from Yale College in 1806, and was licensed to practice medicine in 1810. He practiced in several Connecticut towns and in Albany, New York, before returning to New Haven in 1829 to occupy a chair at the Yale Medical School. He published numerous papers, and was characterized in the <u>Pro-</u><u>ceedings of the Connecticut State Medical Association, 1860</u> as "the most learned and scientific physician of New England" during his lifetime.

When William Tully, M.D., moved to Middletown in 1816 he sold the Saybrook Point property for \$2,000.⁵¹ The deed is of interest because it conveys, in addition to the house and land, "three-fourths parts of the wharf adjoining, and store standing thereon." At that time the neighborhood was commercial, North Cove Road was known as Water Street, and there were several wharves on the street that show in an 1853 topographical survey, copy attached. Only the Tully wharf survives. It still has the ell shape at the end, as shown by the 1853 survey, which also shows that this was the location of the store referred to in the 1816 deed.

At a later date, but sometime before 1903, the house was used as "A Vacation Home for Working Girls."⁶ No details are at hand as to date, sponsoring organization, number of girls, or length of stay, and efforts to turn up such information thus far have been unproductive. A supporting artifact is thoughtto exist in the attic in the form of a wooden towel rack that suggests the attic was used as a dormitory for the "working girls."

The name Hartsease or Heartsease has been associated with the house for an undetermined length of time and without documented explanation. Speculation runs along the line that the flower whose Elizabethan name is hartsease once grew profusely in the yard, or that the use of the house as a summer refuge from the city for working girls justified the name Heartsease.

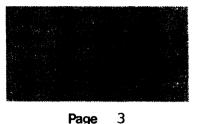
The long history of the William Tully House is better documented than most. Its date of origin and association with a Revolutionary War incident and with an early leader of the Connecticut medical profession are quite clear While its possible construction as a one-room house is conjectural, and its use in the summer by urban working girls only mentioned rather than described,

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United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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William Tully House, Old Saybrook, CT Continuation sheet Significance Item number 8



its sturdy Colonial construction and relationship to the contemporary cobblestone wharf are a solid presence in the community and a reminder of early commercial life on Water Street before it became North Cove Road.

Over its long history, each change that has occurred has upgraded the house. Possibly a one-room structure in the beginning, it was soon enlarged with an addition to the west. The handsome doorway and delicate, well-proportioned moldings of the west second-story bedroom may have been added early in the 19th century, giving the house a new elegance. Perhaps the oval stairway dates from this time. At the end of the 19th century, when the wharf ceased to be used and the railroad was active, the house lost its commercial association, as did the street in general. With the addition of the kitchen wing to the north, the house in the 20th century has become one of a number of scrupulously maintained homes in an expensive neighborhood, still enjoying its original fine location adjoining the cove.

1. Kelly, p. 84, states, "The use of shingles as wall covering of early houses is unusual, except in the towns of Milford, Stratford, and the surrounding locality,...." but the staff of the Connecticut Historical Commission holds that the use of shingles in coastal areas was not uncommon.

2. "Historical Society's Missing Link," p. 51. This article is based on a study of the Tully family history by Arthur R. Belyea, historian of the Old Saybrook Historical Society.

3. Deep River Land Records, volume 6, page 339, August 19, 1745. The original Town of Saybrook has split into several towns. The original core of the town changed its name to Deep River. Accordingly, early land records for the entire town are at Deep River.

4. <u>History of Middlesex County, Connecticut</u>, p. 468. The incident was also recorded by William Tully in his diary, which survives. A further account of the incident is given in <u>Connecticut</u>, <u>A Guide to Its Roads</u>, <u>Lore</u>, <u>and People</u>, p. 291, as follows: "When eight Tories forced an entrance, Tully aimed his flintlock and fired. The ball passed though the first man, but the second man in line dropped dead. As the first man reached for a chest of tea, he too fell dead. The rest of the raiding party fled in terror. Tully was credited with a victory in which the British sustained 25 per cent causities while the local force was unscathed."

5. DRLR 22/138, June 17, 1816.

6. This is the caption under a picture of the house appearing in an article written by M. Louise Green entitled "Old Saybrook Sketches" in <u>New England Magazine</u>, 28:1, p. 96. There is no reference to the house in the text. A similar brief statement is repeated by Mabel Cassine Holman in <u>Old Saybrook Stories</u>, Connecticut State Library, 1949, p. 38. See continuation sheet.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

William Tully House Old Saybrook, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

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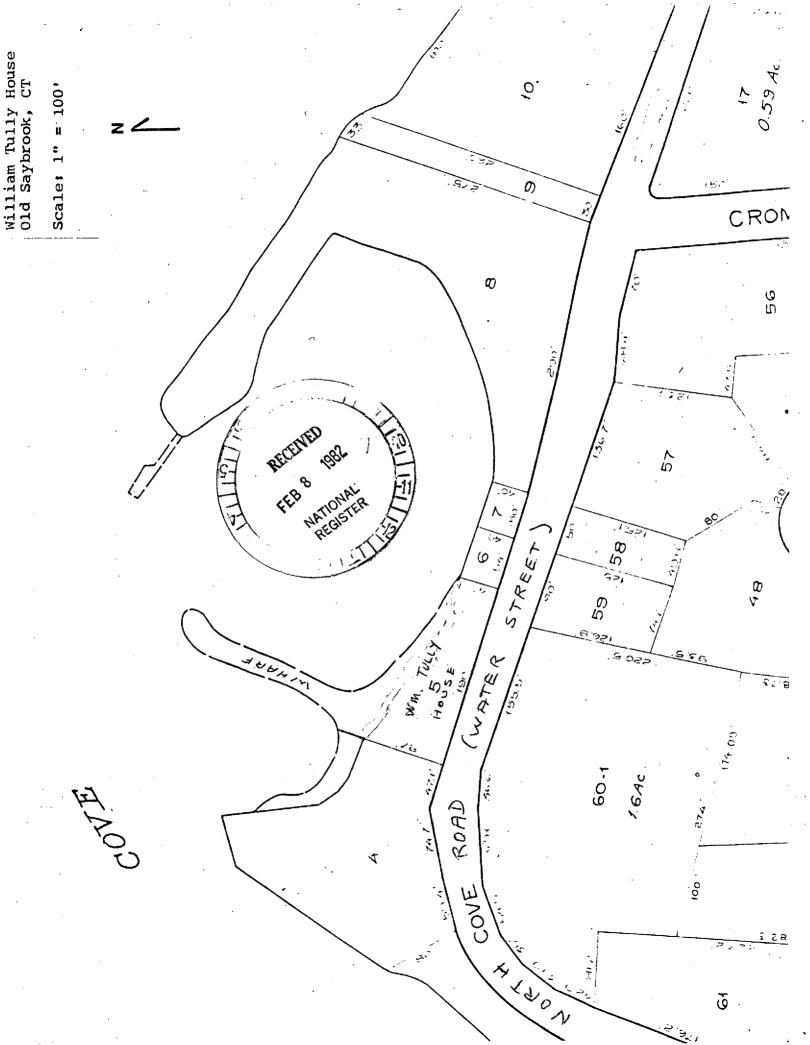
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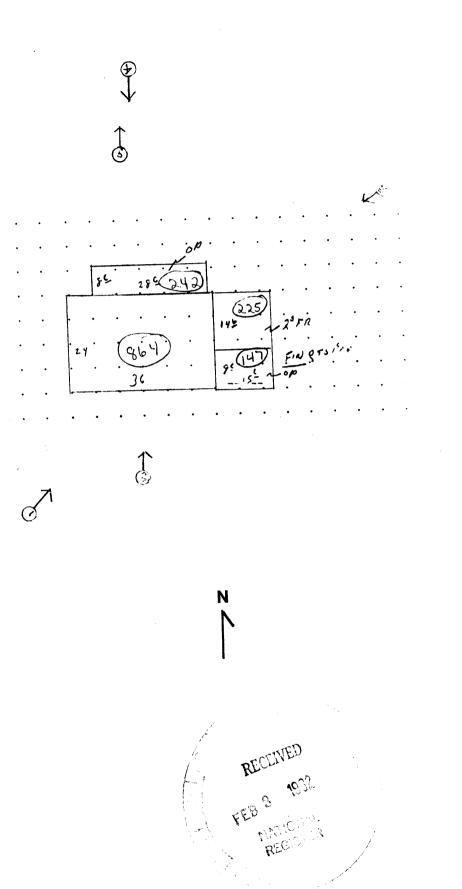
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