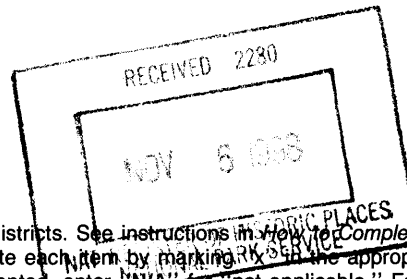


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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 or 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 Timothy Lester Farmstead

other names/site number Garrison House

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheet. not for publication

city or town Griswold vicinity

state Connecticut code CT county New London code 011 zip code 06351

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 October 23, 1998
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 commenting 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 H. Beall
Signature of the keeper

Date of Action
12-4-98

Timothy Lester Farmstead
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	
7	0	buildings
1	0	sites
		structures
		objects
		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
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/outbuildings/
agricultural field

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/secondary structure
COMMERCE/shop and storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

POSTMEDIEVAL ENGLISH/Colonial

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation rubblestone
walls weatherboard
plank
roof wood shingle/asphalt
other

Narrative Description

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

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Timothy Lester Farmstead, Griswold, New London County, Connecticut

Section number 2 Page 1

2. Location and Property Owners

1 Crary Road

Robert J. Lionetti, P.O. Box 307, Jewett City, CT 06351

2 Crary Road

Mary B. Walton, P.O. Box 307, Jewett City, CT 06351

- Browning Road (Parcel 65/94/24)

Avalonia Land Conservancy, P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, CT, 06372

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Continuation Sheet**

Timothy Lester Farmstead, Griswold, New London County, Connecticut

Section number 7 Page 1

The Timothy Lester Farmstead is a historic farm complex in the rural southwestern part of Griswold. Situated just north of the Preston town line at the intersection of Crary, Browning, and Terry roads, it consists of the Lester House, a mid-eighteenth-century Colonial farmhouse, and its six contributing outbuildings, which range in age from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries (see Exhibit A for site plan). No other structures are visible from these crossroads. Even though Route 164, a well-travelled highway, is just a few miles to the west, the region remains quite rural and is largely unsettled. Stone walls border the roads and define the three parcels included in the nomination as the nucleus of the original 200+-acre farm: the house- and barnlots, both 11 acres, and a 23-acre meadow along Browning Road just across from the house, now deeded to a land trust. Except for an old apple orchard to the west, the rest of the farm's acreage is no longer used for agricultural purposes and has reverted to scrub and woodland. Land to the east of the farmstead along Crary Road has been subdivided into large lots, but the only house there is not visible from the road.

The Timothy Lester House is a five-bay two-story Colonial (42' x 31') with a two-story rear ell (19' x 24'; Photograph #s 1, 2, 3). Heavy moldings define the soffits of the gable overhangs and boxed eaves of the main block, which is sheathed with vertical planking and beaded-edge clapboards. The house was built in three stages (see Exhibit B for floor plans). The original three-bay end-chimney house (the east end of the main block), which then included the hall, hall chamber and most of the keeping room, was erected about 1741. Typically, its facade had a southern exposure. Within a short period, the original "starter" house was enlarged to its present size, possibly as early as 1750, by the addition of two more bays on the west.¹ The rear ell, said to have been a meetinghouse or chapel, was moved here in the 1770s.

As was the case with many farmhouses of this vintage, the exterior materials are not original. Photographs taken prior to or during a mid-twentieth-century restoration (1959-1960) document the poor condition of the siding and the existence of doors and windows from the Victorian period. As part of the restoration, the plank walls were resheathed with the present beaded-edge clapboards. Wide sill boards and corner boards were replicated. Apparently the west elevation was not redone, so clapboards there are of an earlier vintage. Although the original fenestration pattern is largely unchanged (except for three small windows in the rear kitchen wall), the late nineteenth-century two-over-two sash were replaced. The initial six-over-nine replacement sash selected and installed by the owners, was discarded in favor of the 12-over-12 sash now found throughout the building. It has the appearance of age, including old wavy glass, but obviously was salvaged from another structure. The Victorian panelled and glazed main door was replaced by the existing board-and-batten door, which now has a plain board surround with a bulls-eye transom.²

Framing, foundations, and interior finishes confirm the evolutionary history of the house. Some first-floor framing has been replaced, but earlier work, which is typical of the period of construction, remains in the eastern half of the cellar. The original joists, thick slabs with bark on the edges (6" x 13") sawn from full-width logs, are spaced 30 inches apart. They run parallel to the front of the house under the hall and at 90 degrees under the rear rooms. Two building stages are evident in the rubblestone foundation; the walls on the east end are wider and composed of slightly different stone. Where they join at the old southwest corner of the house, the original wall that returned to the chimney base was removed to provide access to the new half of the cellar.

The chimney stack base is massive (roughly 12' x 20'). Constructed of the same rubblestone as the eastern foundation and set eight feet back from the front wall, it runs all the way to the rear wall. Unlike the more typical square foundations that

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Timothy Lester Farmstead, Griswold, New London County, Connecticut

Section number 7 Page 2

utilize outriggers, braces, or beams to carry the hearthstones overhead, this base is wide enough to support all the stonework, and once served as the foundation of the earlier west wall of the house.

The roof framing consists of common rafters, four feet on center, half-lapped at the ridge, which are braced with collar beams. The framing is identical in the west end and repeats the overhang found on the east. Several pieces of vertical planking from the original end wall remain in place on the rafter truss on the west side of the stack. The stone chimney, which is canted to the rear to be centered on the ridge, was once capped with brick from the level of the collar beams.

As expected, interior framing is exposed in the hall and hall chamber (Photograph #s 4, 5). Prominent corner posts appear to continuous to the second-floor plate, where they angle out more than a foot, a configuration commonly called "gunstock." Similar posts support the chimney girts. The hall summer beam (8" x 13.5") displays rather roughly defined chamfers and lambs tongues, tooling also found on the posts and beams. Exposed sawn floor joists (nominally 4" x 4") are let into notches in the top of the summers and plates. They once were imbedded in a plaster ceiling, but the vestiges of the lath pattern (sawn not split) indicate that the ceiling may not have been finished until the west end of the main block was "improved" in the early Federal period for Lester and his second wife.³ The framing there is similar in type and size, but cased with beaded-edge boards (Photograph #s 6, 7). Except for wainscot of the fireplace walls, these rooms are plastered. The corner cupboard in the parlor probably dates from that period as well (Photograph #6). Wider ceiling joists in the original kitchen run at 90 degrees, parallel to the chimney girts (as they do in the cellar), but the ends of the joists are notched on one side to fit the early mortises of the carrying beams, indicating that they are replacements. All these rooms contain wide-board chestnut flooring and two-panel doors. Two doors have heart-shaped cutouts in the upper panel; the one in the second-floor northwest chamber is probably original.

As shown in these photographs, the most remarkable feature of the interior is the type and extent of the vertical wainscot. Consisting of alternating beaded and feather-edge boards of varying widths (up to about 24"), the wainscot is used for interior partitions and the inside finish of exterior walls. In the older part of the house, it appears in the hall, hall chamber, entry "porch," and kitchen, and sheathes the fireplace walls in the newer west end. Unlike the more typical vertical wainscot, in which each board has a bead and bevel, here feather-edge boards beveled on both sides are rabbitted into beaded boards, which act as stiles. In some locations, such as the partition between the kitchen and cellar stairs, the bead only appears on the more public side; the obverse has a square edge. Uncovered when late nineteenth-century plasterwork was removed from the walls during the restoration of the interior, the wainscot was in good condition. Only a few new boards had to be added or replaced next to fireplaces.⁴

The most unusual fireplace is in the original kitchen (Photograph #8). Not only does it have a massive stone firebox (7'9" x 4'10" x 3'), the six-foot rear wall contains two identical brick beehive ovens. The oven openings are about 16 inches square. Cheek walls that support the wood lintel (5" x 15") consist of stone blocks laid horizontally. The ten-foot hearthstone extends almost three feet into the room.

The rest of the fireplaces have similar construction, but are much smaller with stone lintels and shallower fireboxes (16" to 21"). Those on the first floor, which have larger openings (approximately 4' x 3') are more nearly centered on the walls. When lath, plaster and studding were removed and these fireplaces opened in the late 1950s,

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Timothy Lester Farmstead, Griswold, New London County, Connecticut

Section number 7 Page 3

the present panelled chimney breasts were added in the parlor and parlor chamber (Photograph #7).

To the east of the house are two of the six contributing outbuildings: a small wellhouse adjacent to the house and an early eighteenth-century gabled barn (called a "chaise house" in period deeds), with an attached woodshed on the east end; the latter may be contemporaneous with the dwelling (Photograph #s 2, 3). The rear wall of the shed is all stone construction, which is similar to that of the chimney base and original foundation of the house. Another structure farther up Crary Road on the north side, which has a gabled roof and low-studded walls, was built to shelter a large stone cistern. A windmill (no longer extant) pumped water from several wells to the cistern, which supplied the farm by gravity flow.

Several outbuildings are located on the barnlot directly across Crary Road. The largest structure there is a late nineteenth-century dairy barn (Photograph #s 9, 10). A gable-roofed building (1200 square feet), it rests on a high rubblestone foundation and incorporates a smaller and older barn at its north end. The roof is supported by wooden rafter trusses, with angled and braced kingposts tied into crossbeams below the loft floor. The simpler common rafter system of the south slope of the earlier barn roof was left in place and is visible from the loft floor of the newer section. Gypsum-board walls and ceiling are found on the main floor of the barn, which was partitioned for use as an antique shop. This floor is now given over to a business that fabricates and repairs furniture, with the owner's quarters at the rear. Nearby pasture, probably the meadow across the road, was leased to a dairy farmer until quite recently; his herd was accommodated in the animal floor below. Accessed from the rear (south) elevation, it remains unfinished with cow stalls spaced around the perimeter. To the northeast is a late nineteenth-century icehouse, now resting on a poured concrete foundation, which may also have served as a milkhouse (Photograph #10). A farm lane or pentway, partially bordered by a high stone wall, runs between these buildings and connects with Browning Road. An early twentieth-century outbuilding used as a bullpen and calving barn is located above and south of the lane. Several more buildings were standing on the property until the hurricane of 1938. At that time a horse barn on the south side of Crary Road and a chicken coop or coops were leveled. The foundation of the horse barn still remains.

Timothy Lester Farmstead
Name of Property

New London, CT
County and State

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

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

c. 1741 - 1948

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown probably Timothy Lester

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 # N/A (dated 12/13/1966)
- 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:

on file with Mary Walton and Griswold
Historical Society

Timothy Lester Farmstead
Name of Property

New London. CT
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 43

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	19	253160	4606360
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2	19	253680	4606250

3	19	253430	4605760
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4	19	253270	4605870

See continuation sheet

5 1 9 2 5 3 0 9 0 4 6 0 5 2 1 0

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, LLC date 5/15/98

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 See continuation sheet; Item 2.

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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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Timothy Lester Farmstead, Griswold, New London County, Connecticut

Section number 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

A significant illustration of the early cultural and agricultural heritage of southeastern Connecticut, the Timothy Lester Farmstead has commanded these crossroads for more than 250 years, a splendid isolation virtually undisturbed by the passage of time. The unusual number of surviving associated outbuildings add to the historic authenticity of the site and embody more than two centuries of agrarian history and tradition. The Lester House, which was associated with a prominent Griswold family, is a well-preserved regional example of its type and period. Several distinctive interior features add to this architectural significance. Through its plan, materials, and evolutionary form, this important cultural resource may demonstrate the diffusion of colonial building practices and customs in the Thames River Valley.

Historical Background and Significance

The settlement of the Thames River Valley was one of the major migration patterns of the early colonial period in Connecticut. Soon after 1646, when the New London Colony was founded at the mouth of the river, through the early 1700s, land-hungry farmers pushed north into the interior, undeterred by Indian wars and dubious land titles. By 1659 people from Saybrook had settled Norwich. In the third quarter of the century, New London proprietors and their descendants crossed the river to settle Groton and North Groton, later called Ledyard, and many laid claim to land farther north in the area that included what is now Preston and Griswold.

The upper reaches of the Thames River watershed, which includes the Quinebaug River, a major tributary, and the Pauchaug River in Griswold, was the dominion of the Mohegans for most of the seventeenth century. As a result of their alliance with the Connecticut Colony in the defeat of the Pequots in 1637, the Mohegans claimed all the former Pequot territory, which then encompassed much of the interior of eastern Connecticut. Led by Uncas, their chief sachem, the tribe also remained loyal to the English during King Phillip's War of 1675.

Although technically Connecticut took title to all Mohegan land in 1640 (except for planting grounds), the colony's claim was largely ignored by Uncas. During his lifetime, Uncas sold or gave away vast tracts, including nine square miles to the founders of Norwich. That area included the present city, as well as the later towns of Bozrah, Franklin, Lisbon, and Sprague, and a strip along the east bank of the Quinebaug River, which is now inside the western borders of Preston and Griswold. After Uncas died (about 1683), remaining tribal land was divided between his sons Owaneco and Joshua. Since Owaneco claimed much of the Quinebaug Valley in present-day Griswold, an area where his father made land grants, titles remained in dispute until ownership was ratified by Owaneco. Indeed, when James II of England threatened to annul Connecticut's charter in the late 1680s, landowners throughout the region hastened to legitimize their deeds to Mohegan land.

Among them was Joseph Morgan, who needed clear title to land which he bought in 1671 from New London proprietors. At that time, Morgan received 100 acres from his father James Morgan, Sr., then residing in North Groton, and an additional 50 acres of upland from James Avery, the first recorded deed references that include the nominated property. In 1686 Owaneco relinquished all of his "Native Right and title" to these parcels, a deed that acknowledged that Uncas had granted them to the Town of New London.

In the next 50 years, even though the Morgan property was divided and sold several times, none of the land was developed. The tract south of the Pauchaug River, which

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Timothy Lester Farmstead, Griswold, New London County, Connecticut

Section number 8 Page 2

later became the Lester farm, was deeded to Moses Belcher of Milton, Massachusetts, who came to Preston about 1720. After his estate was settled in 1731, the heirs quitclaimed their interest in the property to the youngest daughter, Mehitable Belcher (baptized 1718-1776), then only 11 years old. The quitclaim was not recorded until November 1741, a month after her marriage to Timothy Lester (1718-1795), a strong indication that the land was her dowry. Since by custom and general practice most houses were raised about the time of marriage, it is likely that their "starter" house was standing, or that construction was underway, another compelling reason to register the deed.⁵

Although he was born in Preston, Timothy was a great-grandson of New London proprietor Andrew Lester, who came to that colony in 1650 from Gloucester, Massachusetts. Like all the other proprietors, Andrew Lester also had extensive grants across the river in Groton. His son Andrew, Jr., who married Lydia Bailey, removed there in the 1670s and settled in the Ledyard section, where their son Andrew Lester 3rd (1675-1757) was born. Soon after his marriage to Lydia Starkweather, Andrew 3rd and his wife moved to Preston, where the births of all their children are recorded. Timothy, the builder of this house, was their second son. Timothy and Mehitable had seven children before her death in 1776. He remarried that year and had three more daughters with his second wife, Rebecca Ayrault, the granddaughter of a French Huguenot.

The Lester clan prospered in Preston. In each generation, their names appear on lists of appointed officials and church committees; probate inventories detail the extent of their landholdings and worldly goods. Much of their prestige flowed from Timothy Lester. In a world where land wealth was the measure of a man, Lester ranked with the gentry. Having enlarged the home farm and purchased other farms in Preston, Franklin, and Norwich, he provided handsomely for all his children, with land and buildings for all four sons, his eldest daughter, and a grandson. Even the two older daughters by his second marriage inherited a farm which they shared. His will of 1794 confirmed properties already deeded by *intervivos* trust to the eldest sons, Timothy and Moses. Elijah, his third son, inherited the homestead farm, then 200 acres, and the remainder of his landholdings in Preston went to Elisha, the youngest. Reserved for the use of Lester's widow was the west end of his "Mansion House," specified by the executors as "where the said deceased Lived, and Died," indicating that Elijah and his family already occupied the rest of the dwelling. During her lifetime, or as long as she remained a widow, Rebecca Lester had the usual privileges in the kitchen, the right of passage through the house, and access to the outside by the front and east doors, a detailed description that confirms the present layout of the building.

During the Revolution, the dwelling was known as "Garrison House," since the local militia met there on training days and drilled in the adjoining meadow. At that time the Town of Preston still had two parishes. Following an early attempt on the part of the North, or Second, Society to become a new town in 1787, the boundary between the parishes was adjusted south to the mouth of Broad Brook. Since the new line placed the Lester Farmstead inside the North Society bounds, the family was in the forefront of the next move for political independence. In 1815 all four Lester sons signed the ultimately successful petition to the General Assembly that created the Town of Griswold.

Elijah, who died in 1823, left the home farm to his son Joseph. Once again the west end was reserved for a relative, his youngest daughter Alice, who never married. Alice also had the use of the "Chaise House," the first specific mention of the barn near the house, along with a chaise and harness.⁶ After Joseph died intestate in 1836, his widow and two married daughters sold the property to Edwin Morgan, Joseph's nephew. Nearby

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Timothy Lester Farmstead, Griswold, New London County, Connecticut

Section number 8 Page 3

roads are named for later owners: the Terrys, who owned the farm from 1857 to 1936, and Frank Browning, who lived here until 1951.

Although the farm left the family in 1857, and some members left Griswold to make their fortunes elsewhere, the Lesters' ties to the community remained strong. In 1903, to honor the memory of her father and brother, Mary Elizabeth Lester of New York City, a direct descendant of Timothy Lester, presented a large granite memorial fountain to the town. Writing in 1929, town historian Daniel Phillips praised the family who had ranked among Griswold's most prominent citizens since settlement. In his words, the fountain was "looked upon as a memorial to all of the Lester name...."⁶

Like most farmers in Griswold, eighteenth-century Lesters grew Indian corn, oats, and barley and raised sheep and pigs for home consumption. They had a kitchen garden, possibly in the same location as the one maintained by the present owner at the rear of house. Although flax was also a major crop, it was grown in the bottomland along the Pauchaug River, not in the hillier sections of town. A codicil to Elijah Lester's will leaving a hogshead and barrels for cider to his daughter indicates that their apple orchard was established at least by the early 1800s. Another clue to the mixed agriculture carried on there were sheep left to his grandchildren.

Sheep as well as beef cattle were raised through most of the nineteenth century, a period when function-specific outbuildings were constructed and agriculture became more specialized. The era of the all-purpose barn was over. Like many farmers, the Lesters already had a chaise- or carriagehouse just for vehicles. Horse barns, sheep pens, and cattle barns proliferated, as did buildings reserved for special purposes, such as the calving barn built in the early 1900s.

Beef production, which supported several tanneries and slaughterhouses in the growing industrial village of Jewett City, dropped off after the Civil War as cheaper Western beef came to dominate the Eastern market. Many cattlemen turned to dairying as an alternative. Undoubtedly the Terry family, the owners of the farm at that time, added the new dairy barn and the ice- and milkhouse on the property. Although they used newer building techniques, it is notable that they, like generations of Connecticut farmers, oriented the new barn so that the gable end had a sheltered southern access for the animals. Typically, in the earlier barn there, the long axis ran east and west, but the entrance to the lower level was still on the south side. By the early twentieth century, chickens were raised on many eastern Connecticut farms. The Terrys, or Frank Browning, the last owner to farm there, installed the numerous chicken coops that once dotted the property.

Architectural Significance

A sense of history pervades the Timothy Lester Farmstead. Clearly conveyed by the great age of the house and the exceptional number of well-preserved outbuildings, this quality is further enhanced by the historic integrity of its setting. No modern development mars its perfection, one which is so characteristic of the region. Endless stone walls still border the narrow country byways that wind through the area and mark the limits of once productive fields, all common features of the rural Eastern Uplands. Stones for these walls were the perennial spring "crop" of farmers there. Turned over every year during plowing, they also were hauled away for use in foundations and chimneys, as they were on this farm. Even though most nearby fields have returned to woodland, the open meadow with its railed gateway is a picturesque reminder of a not so distant time when summer hay was gathered or cattle grazed there.

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Timothy Lester Farmstead, Griswold, New London County, Connecticut

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The Lester House is one of the best examples of eighteenth-century architecture in Griswold. It is distinguished by the integrity of its classic colonial form and an exceptionally detailed interior, which displays several extraordinary features, notably the wainscot and the double beehive ovens. The extensive use of such a rare type of wainscot has particular significance. According to restoration architect J. Frederick Kelly, "Of the early Connecticut houses which remain today, none is entirely finished...in this manner. The occurrence of even a single room which is wainscoted throughout is rare."⁷ It may be the work of a local joiner since similar finishing is found in another Griswold house of the same period, the Edward Cogswell House (National Register, 1993), which seems to have a comparable building history. There, however, the extent of this sheathing is limited to one or two walls in several rooms.

Prior to 1750, most baking ovens were installed in the rear wall of the kitchen fireplace. Since double beehive ovens are not mentioned in any of the standard texts on colonial architecture and are unknown to the author, those in the Lester House may be considered a rare and possibly unique variation of this standard practice. It is tempting to think that the second oven was built into the stonework at a later date, perhaps when the household included several families. That sequence was not a total impossibility, since this type of oven does not require a flue. However, their balanced placement and nearly identical size suggest that the fireplace was designed to accommodate two ovens originally.

Of even greater significance is the potential value of the Lester House as an expression of regional cultural traditions. The apparent persistence of these traditions and customs by the Lesters and possibly by other prominent families who migrated over the same route, such as the Averys and Morgans, may reflect a cultural mindset common to rural southeastern Connecticut. In Ledyard, blessed with enough land to nurture several generations, these descendants of New London proprietors often lived in rural isolation, intermarried, and founded extended family dynasties, a self-sufficient clan mentality that extended well past the colonial period. How certain building traditions were incorporated in this cultural paradigm in Ledyard has been researched and analyzed.⁸ No similar studies have taken place in Griswold or Preston, but there are enough striking similarities between the Lester House and those in Ledyard to suggest a pattern of cultural diffusion.

Many basic building traditions used in the Lester House have direct counterparts in Ledyard. Among them are the two-stage evolution of the main block and its framing pattern. Although building a house in stages occurred all over Connecticut, there was a high incidence in Ledyard, where the majority of surviving early eighteenth-century farmhouses were built in this manner. Due to the relative poverty there, some of those dwellings were not completed until after the Revolution. As was done in the Lester House, summer beams were used to frame the upper floors, but omitted in the cellar. Another Ledyard custom repeated there is the massive foundation for the chimney, which served the dual purpose of supporting the stack and some exterior walls. Several Ledyard cellars contain such a large stone base built into the corner of two foundation walls. Some customs were rather quaint, such as the heart-shaped cutouts in chamber doors in the Lester House, also found in a few houses in Ledyard.

The restoration of the Lester House and its impact on the building's architectural significance must be considered. Fortunately the process was photographed, allowing a fair and reasonably accurate evaluation of restoration goals, which for that period were not unusual. Many other houses have been rescued in this manner and restored to their eighteenth-century appearance. Although returning a house to a point in time is not considered ideal preservation practice today, it must be acknowledged that the exterior

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of house as it stood in the mid-twentieth century was badly deteriorated. Furthermore, the "modernization" of the late nineteenth century, although typical, had totally hidden some really fine interior colonial features. The removal of all vestiges of the plasterwork from that period not only revealed the fireplaces but panelling of exceptional quality. In general, interior restoration was limited to repairing or replacing missing or damaged material; only a few new features were introduced, such as the fielded panelling of the chimney breasts.

End Notes:

1. It also is possible that the addition was built about 1770 to accommodate a two-generation household, since Elijah, the third son, lived here after his marriage and later inherited the property.
2. As was the case with the windows, the restoration of the doorway took place in two stages. An earlier replacement surround was capped by an ornate pediment. It was still in place when the building was included in the 1967 Historic American Building Survey (HABS). The unfavorable comments by the surveyor as to scale and level of detail may have been conveyed to the owner, resulting in the more appropriate present doorway.
3. The time frame for these finishes is established by a reference in Lester's 1794 will leaving the west end of the Dwelling House to the widow which "we now Improve from the top of the house to the bottom of the cellar." Norwich Probate Records (NPR 9:96/97).
4. Photographs in the hands of the present owner document the progress of the remodeling in these locations and pinpoint the extent of the restoration.
5. Various sources date the house as early as 1695 and as late as 1756, but neither date is supported by documentary evidence. None of the land transactions prior to 1741 mention a dwelling or building of any kind. The later date of 1756 was assumed from the year and initials "T. L." inscribed on a stone in the shed, but there is no record that the Lesters lived anywhere else after their marriage. The 1741 date used here is more likely, one which is consistent with the architectural evidence and customary colonial practice.
6. The ownership of a chaise (a two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle) was a indicator of wealth in the nineteenth-century, especially in rural areas.
7. *History of Griswold*, reprint edition, 1997, p. 262. The fountain still stands on Pauchaug Green, almost in its original location.
8. See Kelly, *Early Connecticut Architecture*, p. 145.
9. See Janice Cunningham, Ledyard Multiple Property Submission: Eighteen-Century Farmsteads (NR 12/14/92), which was based on a comprehensive townwide architectural survey, cosponsored by the town and the Connecticut Historical Commission. Unlike most surveys which are limited to the exteriors, at the request of the Ledyard Historical Society, interiors of buildings were surveyed and important features measured and described.

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9. Major Bibliographic References

Avery, Rev. John. *History of the Town of Ledyard 1650-1900*. Norwich, Conn.: Noyes & Davis Press, 1901.

Caulkins, Frances Manwaring. *History of Norwich, Connecticut: From Its Possession by the Indians to the Year 1866*. By the Author, 1866.

Deveau, Mary R., Municipal Historian. Interview April 30, 1998.

Marshall, Benjamin Tinkham, ed. *A Modern History of New London County*. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1922

Phillips, Daniel L. *Griswold - A History: Being a History of Griswold From the Earliest Time to The Entrance of Our Country Into the World War in 1917*. The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company, 1929. Reprint edition, 1977.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the nominated property are shown on the attached site map drawn to scale from Griswold Tax Assessor's Map 65. They encompass parcels identified on that map as Block 94, Lot 24; Block 124, Lot 16; and Block 130, Lot 5.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes part of the land and all of the historic buildings directly associated with the property during its period of significance (c. 1741-1948). Even though the property continued as a working farm after 1948, the end date was selected because the customary end of the historic period is 50 years BP. The size and composition of the nominated property is justified because it demonstrates the functional inter-relationship of the land and buildings that formed the historic nucleus of the farmstead. The meadow was included on historical grounds, and as the the only agricultural field which has retained its open historic appearance. Most of the rest of the farm acreage has reverted to scrub and woodland and been sold off or subdivided,

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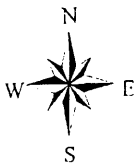
List of Photographs

Photographer: Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC

Date: 3/98

Negatives on file: Connecticut Historical Commission

1. Facade of house, facing N
2. East elevation of house with wellhouse and chaisehouse on R, facing W
3. Rear elevations of house and chaisehouse, facing SE
4. Hall with fireplace, facing NW
5. Hall chamber with fireplace, facing WW
6. Parlor with corner cupboard, facing SW
7. Parlor chamber with fireplace, facing NE
8. Keepingroom fireplace, facing SE
9. Dairy barn, facing NE
10. Icehouse and older section of dairy barn, facing SW



MEADOW

TERRY RD

BROWNING RD

CRARY RD

CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

- A House
- B Wellhouse
- C Chaisehouse
- D Cisternhouse
- E Icehouse
- F Dairy Barn
- G Bullpen/Calving Barn

0 100 200 300 400



Preston Town Line

EXHIBIT A: SITE PLAN

TIMOTHY LESTER FARMSTEAD
Griswold, New London County, CT

#s with arrows: Exterior photograph views

Drawn from Griswold Tax Assessor's Map 65
Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC 4/98

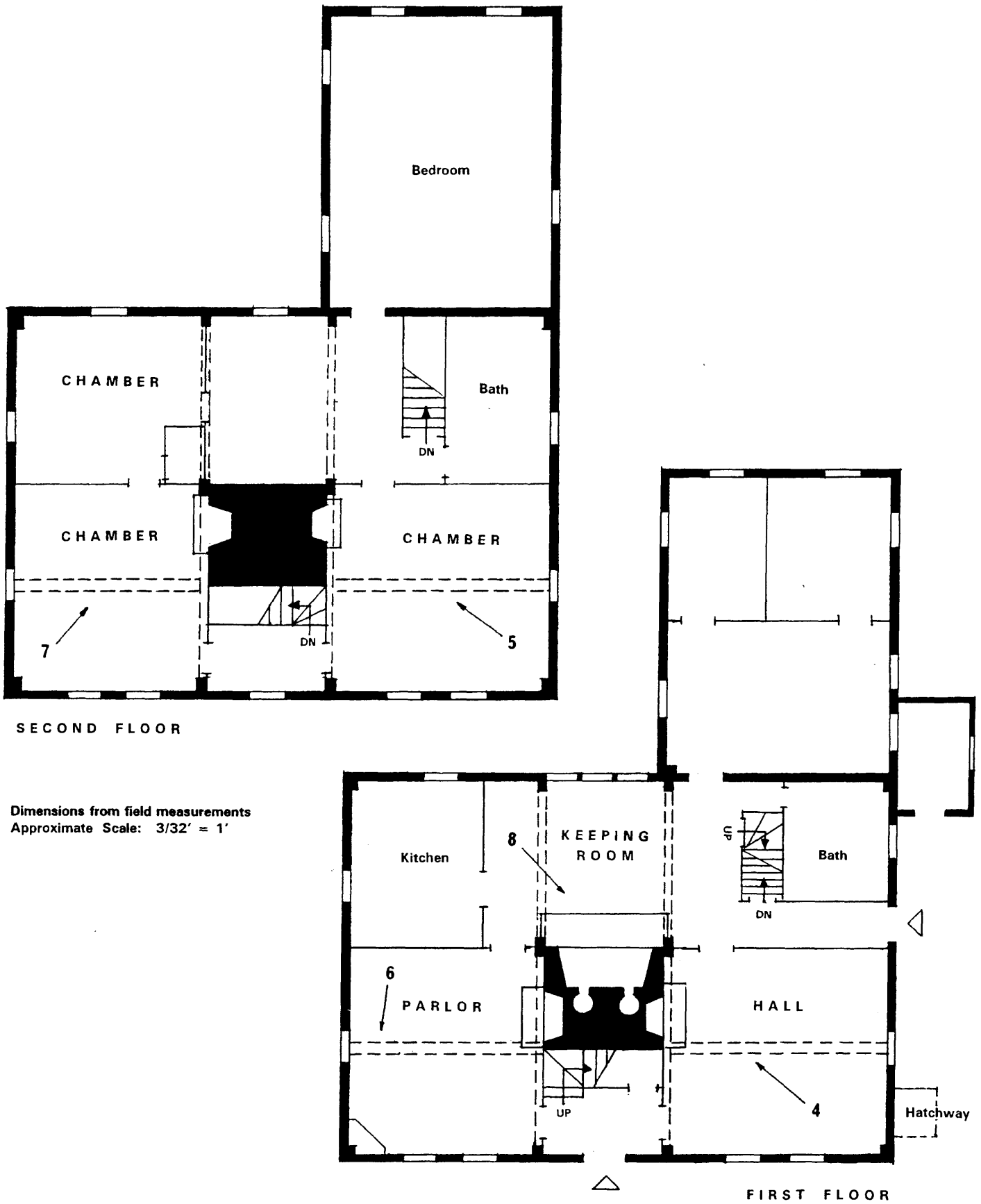


EXHIBIT B: FLOOR PLANS - TIMOTHY LESTER HOUSE Griswold, New London Cty., CT
 #s with arrows: Interior photograph views
 J. Cunningham 4/98