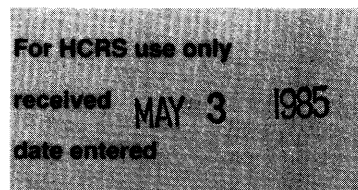


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 William Stevens House

and/or common William Stevens House

2. Location

street & number 131 Cow Hill Road NA not for publication

city, town Clinton NA vicinity of congressional district 2nd

state CT code 09 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>NA</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Edward G. Buxton

street & number 131 Cow Hill Road

city, town Clinton NA vicinity of state CT 06413

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clinton Land Records, Town Hall

street & number 54 East Main Street

city, town Clinton state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See continuation sheet has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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

Overview

The William Stevens House is a 2½-story, Colonial, frame, gable-roofed, 3-bay, central-entrance, central-chimney house on stone foundations, covered with clapboards, and shaped like a salt box house. It is located on the west side of Cow Hill Road about 2½ miles north of the business center of Clinton, Connecticut. By tradition, the house is thought to have been built in the late 17th century. Some aspects of the house may be consistent with that tradition. The floor plan is most unusual.

Exterior

The house is sited close to the road on a 2.2-acre site of irregular shape, all that is left of the earlier Stevens farm of close to 100 acres. In the 3-bay front (east) elevation, the door and windows are evenly spaced. Principal windows are 12-over-12 and others are 6-over-6. The door, not original, is paneled. Door and window casings are flat. There is no jetty overhang of first floor over second, and at the roof line the eaves overhang is shallow. There is a crown molding at the eaves. (Photograph 1) The north elevation has three windows arranged vertically under the ridge line, with two windows, one above the other though not directly so, to the rear. (Photograph 2). The south elevation is similar but with a door instead of a window at first floor toward the rear, and with an added projecting double window to the rear of the door. (Photograph 3)

The rear (west) elevation is dominated by the long slope of the wood-shingled roof. The central chimney rising well behind the ridge line is stone as it emerges above the shingles, but then changes to brick. The top of the chimney is corbeled, but as the top several feet of the chimney appear to have been replaced during the 20th century, the corbeling is not old.

The rear wall of the house is covered with weather boards. (Photograph 4) Presumably, this wall extended across the full width of the rear of the house originally, but it is now interrupted by what appears to be a 19th-century, 1-story addition, or ell, to the rear, that in turn has been further extended to a garage or shop, probably in the 20th century. (Photographs 5 and 6)

There is a corn crib near the house, while two barns are located to the rear. One of them is a good-sized, 2-story, shingled hay barn of considerable age. (Photograph 7)

Interior

When the house was surveyed for the WPA Census of Old Buildings in the 1930s, a first-floor plan was made, and is used here. (See floor plan.) On this plan, the rear ell is the 19th-century addition, the new piazza

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William Stevens House, Clinton, CT

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Surveys

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State Register of Historic Places

no

1975

state

Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street
Hartford

Connecticut

WPA Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut

1930s

state

State Library
231 Capitol Avenue
Hartford

Connecticut

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William Stevens House, Clinton, CT

Continuation sheet	Description	Item number	7	Page	1
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was a screened porch now removed, and the fenestration is improperly shown. The south front window and window toward the front on the south elevation are missing and the new bay on the south elevation is shown without windows. On the north elevation, a door is shown in the position of the present window toward the rear.

Nonetheless, the plan is useful, and shows that the front door opens into a hall leading to the rear. Immediately inside the door, on the left, there is one riser to a small landing from which the stairway rises in a straight run, toward the rear, to the second floor. (Photograph 8) The present owner advises that he was told by the prior owner that this was an enclosed stairway, enclosed by unpainted wide feather-edged boards, and that he, the prior owner, in the 1970s removed the tops of the boards to open up the stairway. The simple railing was installed at that time. Stairs to the cellar descend under this stairway, as indicated by the arrow on the plan.

The north front room is the living room. Its west wall is now continuous, without fireplace or door to the rear as shown by the plan. (Photograph 9) The WPA form states that the mantel in this room, still in place in the 1930s, dated from the early 19th century. The present owner believes that the fireplace is still there behind the wall, but has no knowledge of the door north of the stack. There are parallel beams in the ceiling.

The other two fireplaces, both with stone hearths, continue to be visible (Photograph 10), but again the plan is suspect as the kitchen fireplace with beehive oven in the upper wall to the right is not faithfully drawn. (Photograph 11) Moreover, the space indicated by A is too narrow and the masonry indicated by B (these letters not on the plan as drawn by the WPA surveyor) is not there now. Compare Photograph 10. In this photograph, also, may be seen the heavy timbers that form part of the chimney structure.

The plaster ceilings were removed from the house in the 1970s, as being beyond repair, and the lath marks are visible. Removal of the plaster ceilings makes it possible to view the framing and second-floor floor boards. (Photograph 12) Also visible are rabbets in the corner edges of ceiling timbers. There are three such rabbets along each side of the southwest room, suggesting that diagonal members once fitted into them. (Photograph 13)

There is an ell-shaped partial cellar, now with concrete floor. The cellar runs across the front of the house, but not for its full 32-foot width. It is eight feet short, the shortfall occurring at the north end. The inside corner of the ell, seen at the center of Photograph 14, is the base of the chimney. The cellar extends to the rear under the southwest first-floor room, but not under the kitchen. The hearth of the kitchen

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Continuation sheet

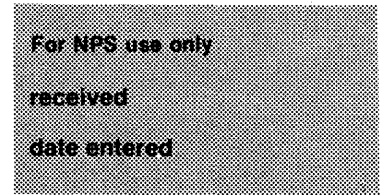
Description

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fireplace rests on earth. A north-south girt supported on posts runs from the front of the chimney base to the south wall, as seen at the left in Photograph 14. Joist timbers are mortised into this girt, front and back. This girt is under the partition that on the first floor divides the front and back rooms of the south side of the house.

On the second floor there are no fireplaces. There is a simple but old pine corner cupboard in the southeast bedroom. This room also has fine unpainted feather-edge boarding. (Photograph 15) The chimney is still stone at this level with a sharply stepped taper. Mud mortar is in evidence. (Photograph 16). On this floor there is carving, presumably by children, of small boats with high sterns, and use of black light reveals chalk drawings of Indians. There are several old doors with old hardware on the second floor.

The roof framing visible in the attic makes use of common rafters without purlins and without ridgepole. The attic floor is made of wide boards.

The corner posts in the house are large with pronounced flare that starts close to the floor.

8. 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input 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 Late 17C/18C **Builder/Architect** Attributed to William Stevens

(1630-1703)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C - Architecture

The William Stevens House is significant for its age, perhaps dating from the 17th century, and for the presence of so much original fabric in the house, including fine feather-edged boarding, many mortise-and-tenon timbers and mud chimney mortar. Of even greater interest than these features is the non-standard floor plan which is quite different from the floor plan usually found in Colonial houses.

Discussion

At first glance from the exterior, the William Stevens House appears to be a conventional 2½-story Colonial saltbox. The 3-bay front elevation with central doorway is surmounted by a gable roof whose rear slope extends down to first-floor level. The first suggestion that the house is not conventional comes from a view from the side where the chimney is seen to emerge from the roof well behind the ridge line. The chimney is farther back from the front elevation than is customary.

This observation is confirmed upon entering the front door where, instead of the usual double-dogleg stairway in front of a central chimney, there is a narrow hall to the rear with stairs to the second floor rising on the left in a straight run. Only after proceeding to the rear of the hall does the chimney become visible, off center to the right. In the conventional plan, the chimney is near the front wall with twin front rooms to right and left of it, and kitchen in the rear. The front wall of the chimney has no fireplace, in the conventional plan, there are fireplaces for the two front rooms in its two side walls, and the great kitchen fireplace is in the rear wall of the chimney. In the William Stevens House the front rooms, of uneven size, are in front of the fireplace, there is a fireplace in the front wall of the chimney, and no fireplace in its north side wall.

A reliable explanation for the unusual floor plan probably could be arrived at only after long study and might well require dismemberment of the house in order to analyze in detail its construction. But there are hints. Because it is so unconventional, it is likely that the house was not initially built with its present floor plan. It probably grew, from time to time. Instead of representing the ordinary saltbox where the rear lean-to section may be added to an already existing front section, the William Stevens House, conjecture suggests, may have seen the rear section built first, and the front added later. The sequence of construction of the parts of the house is not clear.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.2

Quadrangle name Clinton

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8	7	0	5	4	1	0	4	5	7	2	2	6	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H

Zone				Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is described at the Clinton Land Records, volume 116, page 390. The boundary oncludes the land that now goes with the house.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code NA county NA code NA

state NA code NA county NA code NA

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom, Consultant; edited by John Herzan, National Register
Connecticut Historical Coordinator

organization Commission date September 4, 1984

street & number 59 South Prospect Street telephone 203 566-3005


city or town Hartford state CT

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

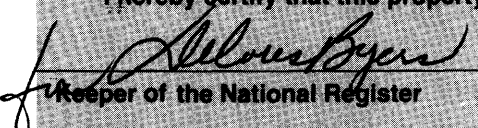
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date 4/23/85

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

 Entered in the National Register date 5-30-85

Resepor of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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The rabbets in the north-south girts of the southwest room might have been for the purpose of receiving diagonally placed rafters, for a low gable roof. The cellar girt below the east wall of this room has timbers framed into it from either side, suggesting that it once might have been an outside wall of the low-roofed, 1-room structure. Under this hypothesis, the two front rooms divided by the narrow hall that runs to the front door were built at a different time. How the position of the chimney fits in is uncertain. The kitchen fireplace with its oven in the front wall is a standard 18th-century artifact but it is difficult to envision a kitchen in the small space between it and the presumed location of the rear wall, prior to the existence of the 19th-century ell; the space was too small. A rationale that fits together these several components is not at hand.

What is perfectly clear is the excellent quality of much of the original or early fabric remaining in the house. The timber framing is sound and much of it is visible, due to the loss of the plaster ceilings. The wide floor boards throughout the house, including the attic, are important as are the many unpainted, feather-edged boards. The early corner cupboard approaches the primitive, and the carving and drawings are rare artifacts.

How the age of the house has been determined is unknown. The WPA Census (1930s) cites a date of "1699 (marker)", presumably meaning that there was a sign on the house with that year. Connecticut in the American Guide Series (1938) says that the Stevens farm had been cultivated since 1675. The State Register of Historic Places survey form (1967) uses a date of 1687 without stating its source. The house is conspicuously old and its significance based on its structure and components is obvious. While future study may turn up the date of its initial construction and dates of alterations and enlargements, those specifics are not essential to a realization that this is an important house.

Stevens Family Note

John Stevens came to the New Haven Colony in 1639. The house of his father, Sir Edward Stevens, in County Gloucester, England, had been besieged and captured by the Royalist Party. John Stevens brought with him to America his son, William, born 1630. With his brother, Thomas, and their father, William was opposed to the uniting of New Haven with Connecticut, and consequently left New Haven to live in Killingworth. The Main Street of Killingworth and surrounding area subsequently broke off from Killingworth to become the Town of Clinton.

A 1665 map of Main Street, Killingworth,¹ shows a home lot near the Green for William Stevens. It is probable that in addition to the home lot he also had a farm on the outskirts. By conjecture, it is possible to arrive

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at the notion that the house that is the subject of this nomination was built initially as an outbuilding on the William Stevens farm, possibly to shelter whoever worked the farm. It is unlikely that William Stevens himself, born in 1630 and with a house lot in town, would have built his principal residence on the outlying farm, especially if, at the outset, it were a 1-room structure. Under this hypothesis, the house called the William Stevens House was built initially as a small structure on the William Stevens farm, and was enlarged subsequently.

The Stevens family cultivated the farm for nine generations. Descendants of William Stevens owned the house and farm for almost 300 years, until the mid-1970s. A collateral member of the Stevens family still lives next door.

Scholarly Comment

Because the William Stevens House appears to be of above average interest, and because it poses difficult problems, comment was sought from two scholars in the field, John C. Curtis, Director of Curatorial Services at Sturbridge Village, and Abbott Lowell Cummings, Charles F. Montgomery Professor of American Decorative Arts at Yale University.

Curtis characterized the house as an enigma with an atypical floor plan that might have evolved from a 1-room plan, but did not consider the visible framing to be representative of the 17th century. Beams are rough hewn rather than smooth finished as was customary in the 17th century, and don't exhibit the usual chamfers and sops. Posts are not beaded. The joists are not planed.³

Cummings agreed with Curtis' observations regarding the visible framing and offered the additional tentative comment, subject to field visit, that the use of several parallel summer beams as shown by Photo 9 is a trait found in early New York houses built up the Hudson River valley under Dutch influence as early as the 17th century. The framing of this room is so different from that of the rest of the house as to suggest the possibility that the house may have a 17th-century origin now largely obscured by later work.⁴

These comments support the view that the house is of above average interest and could be the subject of further useful study.

1. The map appears in History of Middlesex County, Connecticut, New York: J.B. Beers & Co., 1884.

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2. Cummings is author of The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625-1725 and former Executive Director of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

3. Letter, John C. Curtis, October 2, 1984, to author.

4. Interview with Abbott Lowell Cummings, October 22, 1984.

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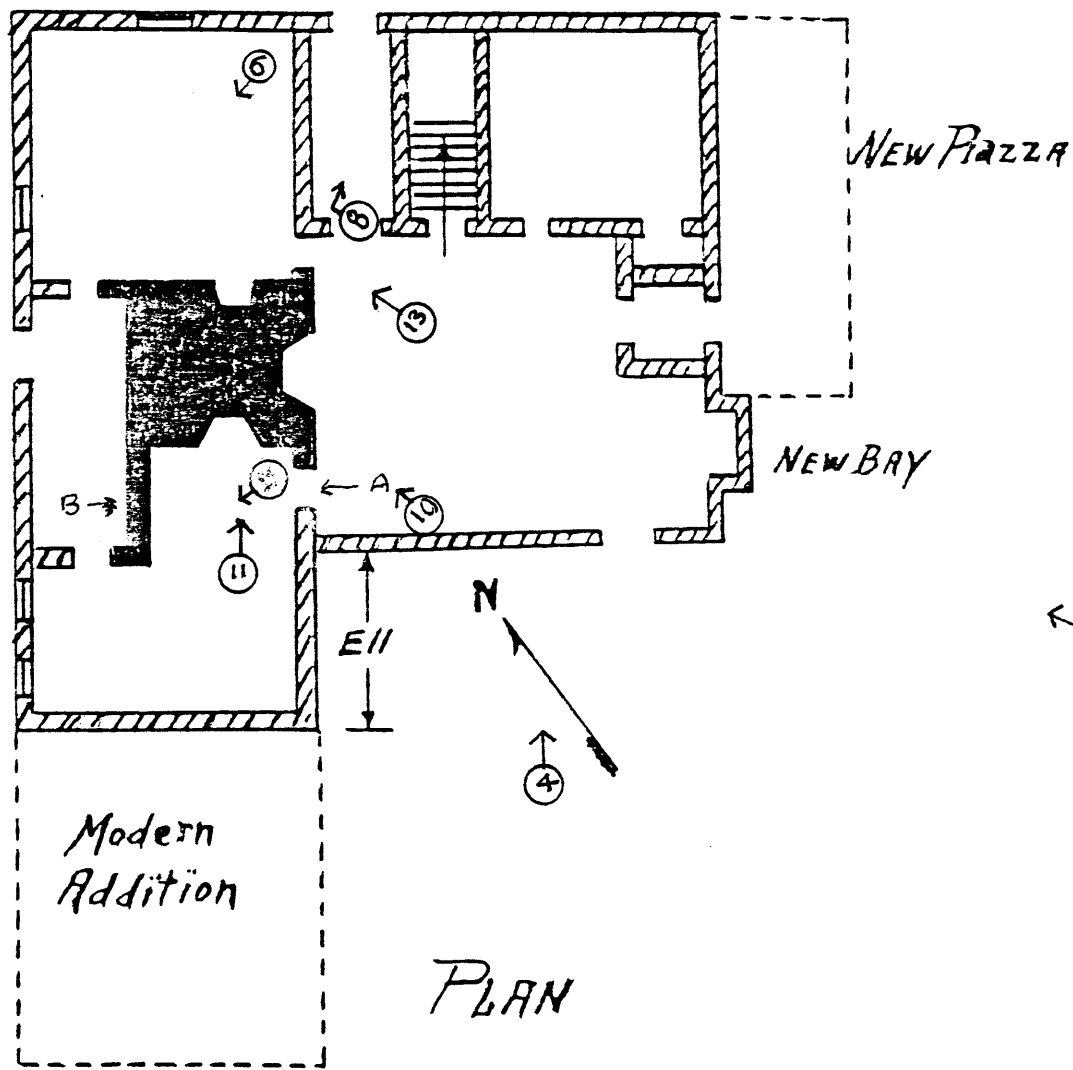
Connecticut, American Guide Series, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938.

History of Middlesex County, Connecticut, New York: J. B. Beers & Co., 1884.

Holmes, Charlotte Steevens, comp., A Genealogy of the Lineal Descendents of John Steevens, 1906.

Curtis, John C., letter, October 2, 1984, to author.

Cummings, Abbott Lowell, interview, October 22, 1984.



PLAN

William Stevens House
 Clinton, CT
 First floor plan, from
 WPA Census of Old Buildings
 A and B added
 Scale: 1" = 8.5'
 ← Nomination north
 Photo key

Note: This plan was and
 is inaccurate.