

**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

For HCRS use only

received FEB 8 1982
date entered

107 15 1982

1. Name

historic Jacob Pledger House

and/or common Miller-Dunklee House

2. Location

street & number 717 Newfield Street NA not for publication

city, town Middletown NA vicinity of congressional district 2nd

state Connecticut 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: offices

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. Peter B. Nelson

street & number 717 Newfield Street

city, town Middletown NA vicinity of state Connecticut 06457

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Middletown Town Clerk, Municipal Building

street & number 152 DeKoven Drive

city, town Middletown state Connecticut 06457

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1967; 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This Federal style brick farmhouse was built in 1803 in the formerly rural Newfield district of Middletown by Jacob Pledger. It is of a type of Federal style brick house in Middletown which features a nine-window facade symmetrically arranged into five bays; a two-room deep central hall plan; and end chimneys incorporated into a 2½ story, gable-roofed, ridge-to-street configuration.

Jacob Pledger (1762-1822) operated a farm on the premises which originally consisted of eighty acres divided almost evenly along both sides of Newfield Street. At present the Jacob Pledger house faces east from the northwest corner of Newfield Street and Tiger Lane on a lot 300' deep and 230' in front along Newfield Street (approximately 1½ acres). This area comprises the site to be included in this nomination.

The house is set back approximately 100' from the road behind a broad lawn shaded by several widely-spaced trees. A paved drive enters from Newfield Street along the north side of the property leading to a gravel parking area at the rear of the house. Across Newfield Street to the east is a large automobile dealership, and to the north and south along Newfield Street is a mixture of open land, scattered houses, and some industrial and commercial development. To the west behind the parking area is some brush cover bordering athletic fields along Tiger Lane which is the entrance to Middletown High School.

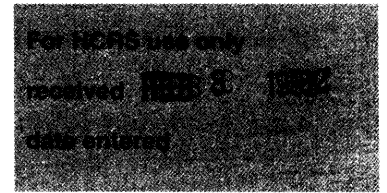
The Jacob Pledger house rests on a brownstone rubble foundation below grade. The house is 39' X 28', with a 20' X 17' original kitchen ell in the rear. The facade displays three courses of scabbled brownstone ashlar with bevelled water table above grade.¹ The brick is laid in Flemish bond with Queen closers. A large brownstone stoop with twin wrought-iron foot-scrappers gives access to the central entrance. The original six-panel Dutch entrance door is surmounted by a leaded, half-round fanlight set into an arch composed of header bricks. Period reproduction lanterns flank the entrance (photo #5). The nine windows of the facade are arranged in five bays and display 12-over-12 sash which are replacements for the originals. The first floor windows display heavy brownstone flat arch lintels set flush into the brick of the wall. Those at the second floor level are hung from the bottom of the main cornice, which features a prominent course of dentils below a broad, overhanging fascia. End chimneys rise from in front of the ridge halfway up the slope of the slate-covered roof (photo #2). Evidence from roof-boards seen in the attic suggests that the original roofing material was probably wooden shingles.

The brownstone ashlar with water table above grade portion of the foundation continues along the south elevation. Here the brickwork is also Flemish bond with Queen closers. Five windows are symmetrically arranged in three bays with two 12-over-12 sashes at both the first and second floor levels and a 6-over-6 attic window set in the peak of the gable. Each of these windows displays a brownstone flat arch lintel. The main cornice returns at the corners, then continues along the rakes with plumb-cut dentils. The decorative brick bonding pattern and the use of brownstone to trim the

¹Terms describing masonry construction are derived from: Harley J. McKee, Introduction to Early American Masonry (National Trust, Washington D. C., 1973).

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State Register of Historic Places (1975)

Greater Middletown Preservation Trust Survey (1978)

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windows differs from the north or opposite elevation, and suggests that the south elevation was given decorative consideration equal to the facade as it was the first view of the house seen by an approach from Middletown (photo #3).

At the rear of the house a 20' X 17' original ell is centered on the west elevation. This two-story ell is of less height than the main structure, with the ridge of its roof intersecting with the slope of the main roof at a point just above the eaves (photo #4).

The brownstone ashlar foundation with water table above grade ends at the rear corners of the main structure and becomes brick atop brownstone rubble. The brickwork of the west elevation and kitchen ell is laid in Liverpool bond. That section of the west elevation south of the ell is one bay wide with a 12-over-12 window at the first and second floor levels. These windows display gauged brick flat arch lintels. A metal cellar-way covers the exterior cellar stairs located beneath the first floor window. On that section of the rear elevation north of the ell is a single 12-over-12 sash with gauged brick flat arch lintel at the first floor level. The main cornice is not denticulated at the rear of the house (photo #4).

The north side of the kitchen ell is two bays wide, with two 8-over-12 sashes hung from the cornice line and two 12-over-12 sashes at the first floor level. The west window at the first floor level has a plain lintel and may originally have been a door opening. The east window has a gauged brick flat arch lintel (photo #4).

At the rear of the kitchen ell is a small 7' X 8' brick addition of recent construction used as a lavatory. South of this addition is an entrance into the ell which is also of recent construction. There are no other openings on this west wall which probably carried the original kitchen fireplace and chimney stack, since removed. Cabriole tie beam ends are visible at the rear corners of the ell.

The south side of the kitchen ell is three bays wide, with two end bays of 12-over-12 sashes flanking an entrance. The windows display gauged brick flat arch lintels while the entrance, probably original, features a segmental brick arch. A very large maple tree shades this entrance.

The north elevation of the main structure is laid in Liverpool bond. It is asymmetrical, with a 6-over-6 attic window in the gable peak, and 12-over-12 sashes at the first and second floor levels on the west end. These windows display gauged brick flat arch lintels. The plain treatment of this elevation is contrasted by the decorative attention given to the opposite (south) elevation (photo #4).

The roof framing system consists of two heavy hewn purlins each carried by four braced posts, supporting in turn fourteen pairs of sawn common rafters mortised together with no ridgepole.

Although the Jacob Pledger house shares a two-room deep central hall plan with other examples of its type in Middletown, it differs slightly in that the stair hall ends at a point even with the dividing walls between the front and back rooms. This feature allows three rooms of equal depth across the back of the house. Access to the kitchen ell is provided by a door from the middle one of these three rooms.

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The most distinctive interior architectural feature of the Jacob Pledger house is the very fine staircase. It rises in a straight run to a half-landing, turns ninety degrees to the left, and continues up a short straight run. The open tread ends have cut out brackets of simple form. The slender balusters are turned, and there are three to a tread. In the attic are stored twenty-five extra balusters of the same pattern which were never used. The carved handrail with ramps and easeoffs has a voluted terminus at the bottom atop a newel post surrounded by balusters. This turned newel post is a thicker version of the same pattern as the balusters. Plain dado follows the line of the handrail along the staircase wall (photo #7).

The parlors display wainscot, and feature finely detailed fireplaces (photo #6). As a consequence of meeting building code requirements, many of the original six-panel doors, door casings, and the folding window shutters have been removed. These items were carefully labeled and are stored in the attic, together with the before-mentioned extra balusters and the brick molds used in the construction of the house (Newfield has extensive clay deposits which have been used for brick-making since the eighteenth century). The hardware on the doors is of interest as the parlor doors display an early form of manufactured latches with small oval brass knobs. Other hardware consists of Norfolk latches.

The front rooms and stairhall of this house are protected by architectural covenants in the deed to the present owner, who was responsible for adapting the structure to its present use as professional office space. All modifications made to the house to accommodate it to its present use are minor and reversible, and consist primarily of measures taken to meet building code requirements.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1803 Builder/Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Jacob Pledger house, built in 1803 in the Federal style, is significant for its associations with the historical pattern of development of the agricultural community of Newfield (criteria A). This well-preserved brick farmhouse is also significant for architectural value as one of only five extant examples of its type of Federal architecture in Middletown (criteria C).

The area of Middletown known as Newfield was first settled in the late seventeenth century to accomodate the growth of the Middletown settlement. As its name implies, this fertile, low-lying land near the Connecticut River provided new fields for the creation of farms. The construction of the Jacob Pledger farmhouse in 1803 was apart of the continuing pattern of development in this agricultural community.

Jacob Pledger (1762-1822)^{emigrated} from Lavenham, Suffolk County, England in 1796 with the family of his father-in-law Samuel Watkinson (1754-1816). After his arrival in Middletown Pledger was employed as agent for the Middletown Brewery.

This Federal style house was built by Jacob Pledger in 1803 on land acquired by his father-in-law in 1800. Pledger operated a farm on the premises, raising livestock and cultivating crops, hay and fruit orchards on eighty acres of land almost evenly divided along both sides of Newfield Street, which was the turnpike road to Farmington.

On March 27, 1813 Samuel Miller (1782-1856) of Middlefield purchased the Pledger farm. Miller farmed the property until his death, whereupon a son, Augustus Henry Miller (1816-1895) bought out the other heirs and took over operation of the farm where he was born. A. H. Miller's only surviving daughter, Bernice M. Dunklee, inherited the property in 1896. Her husband Henry F. Dunklee managed the farm. Of their children, Earl M. Dunklee acquired the property in 1953, and subsequently sold it to the City of Middletown in 1969, ending a period of 156 years during which the farm was owned by the Miller-Dunklee family.

During this period this structure retained its traditional usage as a farmhouse through succeeding generations of ownership within the same family. In this traditional role the Jacob Pledger^{house} reflected the enduring rural character of the farming community of Newfield from the time of its settlement until post-World War II suburban development encroached upon this area.

The Pledger farmhouse was purchased by Dr. Peter Nelson, the present owner, from the City in 1975. This purchase was restricted by architectural covenants in the deed which were included to protect the integrity of the structure. Dr. Nelson has adapted the building to professional office use while preserving its significant architectural qualities.

This house is one of only five remaining houses of its type in Middletown which were originally similar in style, scale, construction and appearance (Mather-Mansfield house, ca. 1815, 151 Main St; John R. Watkinson house, ca. 1807, 70 Main St; Robert Johnson house, ca. 1823, 13 Johnson St;

9. Major Bibliographical References

Middletown Land Records; Middletown Grand Lists; Middletown Probate Court Records; Middletown Church Records; Commemorative Biographical Record of Middlesex County (Chicago, J. H. Beers Co., 1903).

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property approximately 1½

Quadrangle name Middletown

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8	6	9	3	3	4	4	6	0	5	9	4
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 Bounded east by Newfield St; south by Tiger Lane; west by land of the City of Middletown; north by land of Margeret Hidu and Fred Ewald (Middletown Land Records vol. 446 pp. 284-288)

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John E. Reynolds

organization Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

date November 1, 1980

street & number 27 Washington Street

telephone 203-346-1646

city or town Middletown

state Connecticut 06457

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 February 2, 1982

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

Entered in the National Register

date

3/15/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Thomas Griswold Mather house, ca. 1835, Silver St.). These brick houses each display a nine-window facade symmetrically arranged into five bays; a two-room deep central hall plan; and end chimneys incorporated into a 2½ story, gable-roofed, ridge-to-street configuration. Of the houses in this group only the Jacob Pledger and Mather-Mansfield houses have retained their integrity.

Among the Jacob Pledger house's distinctive architectural features are the very fine staircase; the use of a slightly modified central hall plan which allows three full rooms across the back of the house; and the orientation of the house to both east and south through the use of decorative Flemish bond and brownstone trim on those elevations. When these and other features are considered, it is apparent that the Jacob Pledger house represents a highly-developed example of local Federal architecture in the Newfield area of Middletown.