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

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC David Ogden House AND/OR COMMON

# **2** LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 1520 Bronson Road			IN	
CITY TOWN Fairfield	VICINITY OF	CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT FourthStewart McKinney		
state Connecticut	code 09	COUNTY Fairfield	CODE 001	

## **3** CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESE	ENTUSE
DISTRICT	PUBLIC	X_OCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	XMUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	XPRIVATE	UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE	ВОТН		EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENCE
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
5	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
		NO	MILITARY	OTHER:

## **4** OWNER OF PROPERTY

	•	
NAME		
	storical Society	
STREET & NUMBER		
<u>636 01d Post</u>	Road	
CITY, TOWN		STATE
Fairfield	VICINITY OF	Connecticut
LOCATION O	F LEGAL DESCRIPTION	
COURTHOUSE,		
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.	Fairfield Town Clerk	
STREET & NUMBER	·	
	Old Post Road	
CITY, TOWN		STATE
	Fairfield	Connecticut
REPRESENTA	TION IN EXISTING SURV	EYS
TÎTLÊ		
<u>State Registe</u>	er of Historic Places (see	also continuation sheet)
DATE		
1978		DERAL X.STATECOUNTYLOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS		
	necticut Historical Commi	ssion
CITY, TOWN		STATE
	tford	Connecticut

# 7' DESCRIPTION

CON	DITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE	
XEXCELLENT	DETERIORATED	UNALTERED	XORIGINAL SITE	
G00D	RUINS	XALTERED	MOVED DATE	
FAIR	UNEXPOSED			

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The David Ogden House is a  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -story integral saltbox dwelling with a central chimney. It is located in the town of Fairfield approximately midway between the village centers of Southport and Greenfield Hill. The surrounding neighborhood is suburban in character, consisting mostly of single-family mid-20th-century houses on 1-acre plots. There are a few other early houses scattered throughout the general vicinity. The Ogden House faces west and is set back more than 100 feet from Bronson Road, a heavily-traveled thoroughfare. It is situated about one-tenth mile from the flood plain of the Mill River, and a stream known as Brown's Brook flows through the rear of the property.

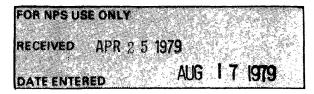
The Ogden House was extensively restored between 1931 and 1935. As it stands today, covered with unpainted oak shingles showing 12 inches to the weather, its appearance is strongly suggestive of its 18th-century origins. The front of the house is 3 bays wide. Its windows are comparatively large and contain 15-over-15-pane sash, installed in place of smaller Federal-period sash at the time of the restoration. The door frame is severe in its simplicity and contains an 18th-century door (a replacement for the original, reportedly stolen in the 1930s). The side walls contain 12-over-12-pane windows in the main rooms, with 4-over-4-pane sash in the attic gables and 4-pane casements in the kitchen chamber. A doorway on the south side enters into the kitchen. The chimney is unusual in the Fairfield area, with a T-shape addition to the rear of the main stack. It is of stone construction topped with brick from just below the ridgeline.

The parlor occupies the northwest corner of the house. Its dimensions are approximately  $1/_{1}$  by 18 feet and there is a fireplace 6 feet wide in the south wall. There are gunstock posts visible at both outside corners of the room as well as an end girt, all covered with plaster (the front wall has been furred out so that no projecting beam is visible). A summer beam was apparantly hewn away and has been plastered over. The floor in this room is composed of random pine boards varying from 6 to 14 inches in width, fastened with rose-head nails (all other floors in the house are oak). The fireplace is recessed some 8 inches between two closets. Ιt is surrounded by a bolection moulding, a 1930s restoration that replaced a Federal-period mantel. Above it are two horizontal wood panels. There is a segmented hearth, and indications that the inside had once been plastered. Doors to this room are four-panel, with raised panels on the sides facing inward.

The adjoining front entry is panelled on the staircase wall, repeating the pattern of the four-panel door. The right-hand stair is entirely enclosed by this wall and is entered through a door on the north side.

The hall (south front room) corresponds in size to the parlor. It contains a cased summer beam 16 inches wide, plastered end girts which project into the room 5 by 10 inches, and cased chimney girts projecting 6 by 12 inches. The fireplace here is 10 feet wide and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet deep with

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



CONTINUATION SHEET

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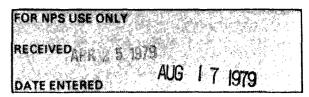
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Historic American Buildings Survey Official Project 465-15-3-8 Connecticut Survey #56 CONTINUATION SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



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brick side walls and a plastered back. It contains a rear bake oven. The hearthstone measures  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet in width and is composed almost entirely of a single granite slab. There are two wood panels above the fireplace and a doorway to the left of it that formerly led to a cellar stair (now closed off). To the right of the fireplace is a cabinet which projects into the room having a two-panel door.

The kitchen is 12 feet wide and 32 feet long across the rear of the house. The fireplace protrudes some 3 feet into the room; it measures 10 feet by  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet and is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet deep with a segmented hearth. To the right of it is a rear staircase (now closed off at the top). The recess to the left was reportedly formerly occupied by a cupboard. The entire structure of this room is exposed and the wood left unpainted, and the floorboards of the kitchen chamber are visible above the 6-inch-square joists. The 10-by-14-inch chimney girts show axe marks below these joists, indicating that they were once plastered. The former kitchen bedroom at the northeast corner of the house serves as a modern kitchen.

The second story is arranged in typical 18th-century fashion, with two bedchambers separated by a stairhall and a storage area across the rear The main stairway to it consists of four diagonal treads at the bottom and two at the top, with five square treads in between. There is a simple railing across the top with square balusters and a moulded handrail.

The parlor chamber contains a fireplace 4 feet wide and a panelled chimney wall. The arrangement of these panels is similar to that in the parlor below, with two horizontal panels above the opening and four vertical to the right. There is a small closet (14 inches deep) to the left enclosed by a two-panel door. The panelling in this room is joined to the ceiling by a heavy moulding, and the beams are plastered.

The hall chamber is without a fireplace (its usual space is occupied by a closet) and has been restored to an earlier appearance than the parlor chamber. It has batten doors, beaded sheathing boards along the chimney and rear walls, and exposed beams (apparantly formerly plastered). A rear door leads to a modern back staircase, built along the south side of the chimney. The kitchen chamber is now occupied in part by a modern bathroom, reached through a doorway in the parlor chamber.

Today the house is furnished with appropriate 18th century pieces and its interior woodwork painted what are reputed to be original colors. It is opened during the summer months as an interpretive museum by the Fairfield Historical Society. It was first opened to the public May 23, 1974.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW						
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION			
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE			
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE			
1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN			
<b>X</b> 1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER			
1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION			
<b>X</b> 1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	politics/government Preservatio	XOTHER (SPECIFY)			
Criteria	A and C		Preservatio	on History			
SPECIFIC DATES c. 17211750 BUILDER/ARCHITECT							

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The David Ogden House is a typical example of Connecticut domestic architecture of the first half of the 18th century, restored to its supposed original appearance in the 1930s. It has long been recognized as one of Fairfield's outstanding examples of early building, an importance given added weight when it is considered that much of the pre-Revolutionary town was burned by the British in 1779.

The building began as a farmhouse in a fertile agricultural area. An extensive title search conducted by Mrs. Henry Elstein<sup>1</sup> fixes its date between 1721 (when, according to the report, "Joseph Ogden obtained  $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres from Robert Rumfrey...In the next deed...Joseph Ogden sold an orchard to Joseph Perry in consideration of Perry's bearing one-half the cost of building for the said Joseph Ogden a dwelling house like that of Samuel Smith's on Mill Hill) and 1750 (where it cites a record of David Ogden Sr. giving to his son David Jr. "10 acres of land west of the Mill River, 'together with the new house standing on ye granted premesis'").

The architectural evolution of the house has stirred debate among the experts who have studied it. In his historography of the house,<sup>2</sup> preservation consultant Richard M. Candee states:

Several Connecticut antiquarians and architect-historians have looked into the architectural history or ownership of the David Ogden house in Fairfield over the past forty-five years or so. Among the most experienced architectural experts were J.F. Kelly and Elmer Keith, who both seem to have studied the house after (possibly during) the restoration...Each shared a set of opinions, however, which have created interpretive difficulties. They all were, to one degree or another, followers of the late 19th c. architect and antiquarian Norman Isham who espoused a theory of sequential growth from one room plan to central chimney and two room plan which culminated in the addition of a rear leanto...Stubborn insistence on the theory of evolutionary growth (and the dates connected to buildings of each type) had led former investigators to "see" that the two story southern end

lon file at the Fairfield Historical Society

<sup>2</sup>Ogden House Report on file at the Fairfield Historical Society

No E Morrowhar	Vol. LVI No. 6, L v 1060 mm 755 6	ecember, 1949, p	p. 446-9; Vol. XCVI
Candee, Richard M.	r 1969, pp. 755-6 Ogden House Repo	ort. Unpublished	manuscript on file
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED	BY	•	
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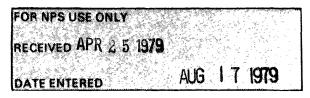
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



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of the house was erected before the rooms at the northern end, and that both were followed by the addition of a rear leanto. This is simply not so.

Actually, the Ogden House is a straightforward integral leanto roofed house of a single construction...This revised interpretation is based on

- (1) <u>roof</u>--original 18th c. numbering system of common rafters, whose rear rafters are single sticks from apex to rear leanto plate.
- (2) <u>chimney--the base (as restored)</u> shows no indication of two stages of growth.
- (3) <u>frame</u>--the rear parts of the walls dividing the front rooms from the leanto show that there never was a rear wall of sheathing to hold shingles (which would have been needed before an "added" leanto).

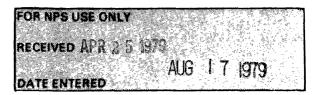
David Ogden Jr. died in 1776, and the house eventually passed into the hands of his son Sturges. Sturges' daughter Ellen Silliman sold the house out of the family in 1839 to Henry W. Banks, who continued to farm the surrounding land into the 20th century. By the 1920s, however, after a succession of tenant occupants, the house was in a severe state of disrepair. People concerned about area history began to agitate for the preservation of what was thought to be the oldest house in the community.

Annie B. Jennings, a local heiress with a great concern for Fairfield's past, acquired the property from its absentee owners in February, 1931. She in turn sold the house to Mary C. Allis the following April. Miss Allis, a noted expert on antiques and collector of Americana, immediately commenced what was probably the largest restoration project Fairfield had seen up to that time. Norman Isham and Henry Stoddard were retained as consultants, and Howard Gray was the contractor. The collapsed chimney and foundation walls were rebuilt following closely what were determined to be original lines; plaster was stripped from kitchen walls, and additions of the Federal period and later were removed. A series of "before" photographs documents the works<sup>2</sup>. The result was hailed in national publications as an exemplary work of American preservation<sup>4</sup>. The Ogden House passed to Lillian Wadsworth in 1944, who devised it to the present owner, the Fairfield Historical Society, in 1974.

<sup>5</sup>set of 50 8 x 10 photographs by Howard Gray, on file Fairfield Hist. Soc.

<sup>4</sup>see particularly <u>Antiques Magazine</u>, Dec. 1949; <u>Ladies Home Journal</u>, Aug. 1948, <u>100 Most Beautiful Rooms in America</u> by Helen Comstock, pub. 1955.

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

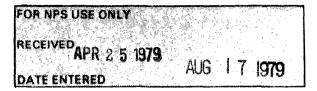


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The David Ogden House today embodies distinctive characteristics of two periods of American history--the construction methods used in the first half of the 18th century and the restoration techniques employed by the early 20th century generation of preservationists. A substantial amount of original fabric has been maintained to convey a sense of the house's early origins, and the modifications of the present century have contributed to the overall development and significance of the structure.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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- Elstein, Mrs. Henry. Ogden House Title Search. Unpublished manuscript on file at Fairfield Historical Society.
- Keith, Elmer. <u>Research Material on Ogden House Architecture</u>. Unpublished manuscript on file at Connecticut Historical Society.
- Perry, Loretta B. (compiler). <u>Old Houses of Connecticut: Historical and</u> <u>Technical Information</u>. Hartford: Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames of America, 1938.

FHR-8-300A (11/78) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

David Ogden House Fairfield, Connecticut FOR HCRS USE ONLY RECEIVED AUG 1 1979 DATE ENTERED AUG 1 7 1979

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The Ogden House includes all of Parcel 15 on Assesor's Map 176 in the Town of Fairfield.