

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Connecticut
COUNTY: Fairfield
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
John Rogers Studio

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
John Rogers Studio

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
33 Oenoke Ridge

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Canaan

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
Fifth

STATE:  
Connecticut

CODE:  
09

COUNTY:  
Fairfield

CODE:  
001

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
New Canaan Historical Society

STREET AND NUMBER:  
13 Oenoke Ridge

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Canaan

STATE:  
Connecticut

CODE:  
09

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
New Canaan Town Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Canaan

STATE:  
Connecticut

CODE:  
09

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Building Survey (5 photographs)

DATE OF SURVEY:  
1967

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Division of Prints and Photographs

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Library of Congress

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
D.C.

CODE:  
11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Connecticut
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**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1876 John Rogers decided to build a house on Oenoke Avenue in New Canaan and to make it his permanent residence. At this time New Canaan was a lovely suburban village where the Rogers family had summered for a number of years. Of the area, John Rogers wrote in April 1883, "New Canaan may be lonely in winter, but it is delightful and healthy from now 'til winter, and even a stormy day like this the children do not find any time hang heavily on their hands."

Peabody and Stearns, Boston architects, were commissioned to design a large Victorian frame house and studio for the Rogers. From the site of the house there was a magnificent view south all the way to Long Island Sound.

The studio is a little one-room frame Victorian cottage with overhanging eaves and decorative bargeboard. There is a large skylight on the north, set into the side of the roof.

The studio was saved in 1960 by the New Canaan Historical Society, after the Rogers house had been demolished. They moved it one house lot away, about 300 feet south of where it originally stood. Judging from the 1880's photograph of the sculptor and his daughter in front of the studio, the building is very little changed from when he worked there, except that it has a much lower foundation and is unencumbered with vines and foliage as it was in Rogers' day.

For many years after Rogers death the studio remained as it was when he created his groups there. His own collection of works were neatly displayed in the studio and 38 of the bronze master models encircled the walls, cared for by Katy Rogers until 1936 when they were sold to the New York Historical Society. In 1955 the property was sold to St. Mark's Church for the construction of its new building and grounds. The house was torn down, but the studio, through local efforts, was saved and moved to property owned by the Historical Society just one week before it too was to be demolished.

Boundary

Since the site of the studio is not original, the boundary is the exterior walls of the structure.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1878-1904

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political            | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

John Rogers, during his 33-year career as sculptor, was one of America's most popular artists. Producing nearly 80,000 copies of 86 different works, at an average price of \$14, he was known in practically every home in the United States. For his portrayal of nineteenth-century scenes of "the little moments in life, humorous and sentimental, events which make up a lifetime,"<sup>1</sup> he is today finally being recognized as an important artist of the common people. He was as inventive a businessman and mechanic in the art of sculpture production as he was an artist. He successfully assessed what kind of art Americans would buy and how to sell it to them.

Rogers' popularity is interesting because in spite of harsh criticism his work sold. Although his figures possess a spontaneity and a realism, they violated many esthetic principles. Art historian Loredo Taft, wrote that "They are as honest and as inelegant as a stable boy."<sup>2</sup> But Rogers accurately reflected the life of his era and in so doing appealed to the usual interest in the literal.

Rogers' one-room studio in New Canaan, Connecticut, where he worked for many years, often using neighbors for models, remains today. It was saved and moved when Rogers' home was destroyed, and today it houses a large and growing collection of his works.

Biography

Born in Salem, Massachusetts October 30, 1829, Rogers showed an early interest in sculpture, but pursued engineering as a career until eye trouble forced him to turn from that. A brief trip to Europe in 1858 convinced him that he could never sculpt in the classical style then being taught in the academies, so upon his return to a job in Chicago he made almost no effort to pursue sculpture as other than a hobby.

<sup>1</sup> John Rogers, "John Rogers of New Canaan, Sculptor and Artist," (paper presented to the New Canaan Historical Society June 5, 1972), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Loredo Taft, The History of American Sculpture (New York, 1930), p. 182.

(Continued)

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Bleir Paul, and Bleir Meta, John Rogers' Groups of Statuary; Pictorial and Annotated Grude for the Collector, N. Woodmere New York, 1971.  
 Eaton, Walter P., "Catching Up to John Rogers", The American Magazine of Art, XI (Sept 1920) 392-397.  
 Rogers, John "John Rogers of New Canaan, Sculptor and Artist." Paper presented to New Canaan Historical Society, June 5, 1972.  
 Smith, Mr. & Mrs. Chetwood, Rogers Groups: Thought and Wrought by John Rogers, Boston: Goodspeed, 1934.  
 Taft, Loredo, The History of American Sculpture, New York, 1930.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0	'	"	0	'	"	UTM 18.626040.4556310		
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"			
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"			
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service      DATE: December 17, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 1100 L Street NW.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D.C.      CODE: 11

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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 National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Landmark Designated: Dec 21, 1965 date

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Chief Hist. & Arch. Surveys date

ATTEST:

Boundary Affirmed

[Signature] 7/27/75  
 Keeper of The National Register date

Director, OAHIP

Date \_\_\_\_\_ date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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8. Statement of Significance: (1)

John Rogers Studio

Nevertheless, Rogers modelled small groups as a pastime and his "The Checker Players," caught the public fancy when exhibited at a charity fair in Chicago in 1859. The success of this work persuaded Rogers to resign from his position in the city surveyors' office to devote himself to his art work. From this decision came the "Slave Auction" which, when exhibited in New York in 1859, gained him considerable noteriety.

In 1861 Rogers realized a profit, for the first time, on a war scene, "Picket Guard." Two versions of the group were published and with the Civil War affecting more and more homes, interest in his work grew. During the war John Rogers did not volunteer for military service, but was praised for his contribution to the war effort by capturing in plaster common scenes as well as many busts and figures. Rogers groups were never more in sympathy with their times than during the Civil War. By its end, John Rogers, only 35 years old, was an established popular sculptor.

In 1865 also he married Harriet Moore Francis, a school teacher from New York City. After a trip to Niagra and a journey through Europe, Rogers returned to New York City. Late that year he produced what he and others consider his finest group, "Taking the Oath and Drawing Rations." Probably his most sensitive piece, it is an expression of the emotion over the course of Reconstruction which divided the victorious North.

Following the War, Rogers did a number of genre groups, for which he is perhaps best known. In 1868 he produced "The Council of War," one of his most famous groups. The figure of Lincoln which he produced from photographs, was, according to Robert Todd Lincoln, considered by the family to be the most life-like portrait of his father in sculpture.

In August of 1868, the Rogers family sought relief from summer in New York City and their family doctor recommended that they rent a house in New Canaan, Connecticut. The railroad had come to this little village on July 4 of that year and the Rogers family took the doctor's advice and rented a home on East Avenue. The following year they rented the David St. John House on Park Street, and every summer thereafter until 1878 they stayed in that little house. During the summer, John Rogers would spend most of his time in New Canaan, commuting to New York now and then to check on his business or to put a new group into production.

In August 1870 Rogers produced his most popular work, "Coming to the Parson." Perhaps because of its appropriateness as a wedding gift, the piece was especially popular and total sales in about 20 years were approximately 8,000 copies or about 10% of the sculptor's entire output. By now Rogers was 41 years old and his success was probably due to his recognition that, as he said, "Home scenes interest everybody," and that "By taking a subject on which there is a divided opinion I lose half my customers." He determinedly kept prices low and rapidly developed a method for making

(Continued)

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STATE	
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(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance: (2)

John Rogers Studio

durable figures from plaster. He shrewdly appraised his market when he wrote, "As I want them popular they must be put low, or else nobody but the rich will buy them and they would not want them in their parlors."

Among Rogers favorite subjects were children, especially his own. "We Boys," modelled in 1872 in New Canaan, featured the St. John's old workhorse, Marianne, and James and Joseph Silliman who lived next door posed for the two boys. The Silliman boys were playmates of the Rogers children and they grew up in the Hanford-Silliman house, now on the grounds of the Historical Society. Rogers had seven children and they and his wife were frequently models for his scenes. After 1868 the majority of the modeling was actually done in New Canaan.

"The Favored Scholar" went on sale in the Spring of 1873. By this time Rogers groups were being sold by agents in several cities, and by mail order as far as the Pacific Coast. Prices of the groups were the same everywhere, and safe delivery was guaranteed, free of charge, to any railway station in the country. In addition to catalogues, advertisements were appearing regularly in magazines. Rogers even sold small repair kits to refurbish damaged groups. By the time John Rogers was 45, his groups were being produced and sold by the thousands. Rogers produced two or three groups a year at such a regular rate that new groups could be expected to appear prior to the Spring and Christmas seasons.

In 1876 Rogers decided to build a home for his family on Oenoke Avenue in New Canaan and to make it his permanent residence. In the same year Rogers displayed many of his groups at the First Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia and for his works he received a number of bronze medals. Also in 1876 he released "Weighing the Baby," one of his best known pieces. It was the profits from "Weighing the Baby," and other groups sold that year, that enabled Rogers to build his home in New Canaan.

The majority of the groups released during the 1880's were genre scenes with a humorous theme. The Rogers groups were still the elaborate works they had become after 1876. The meticulous attention paid to the rendering of the expressions and the little details which the sculptor felt helped to tell the story were still present.

By 1888 sales of Rogers groups had slowly declined and as the popularity of the group waned several were taken off the market and advertising expenditures were substantially reduced. A creeping paralysis, which started years before, began to make Rogers work more difficult. As the groups began to lose their popularity, the sculptor turned to monumental work, such as the one of the Great Emancipator. He hoped that such groups would leave him lasting fame. However, it was his plaster groups which accorded him the notoriety he has today.

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**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**      **INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Connecticut	
COUNTY Fairfield	
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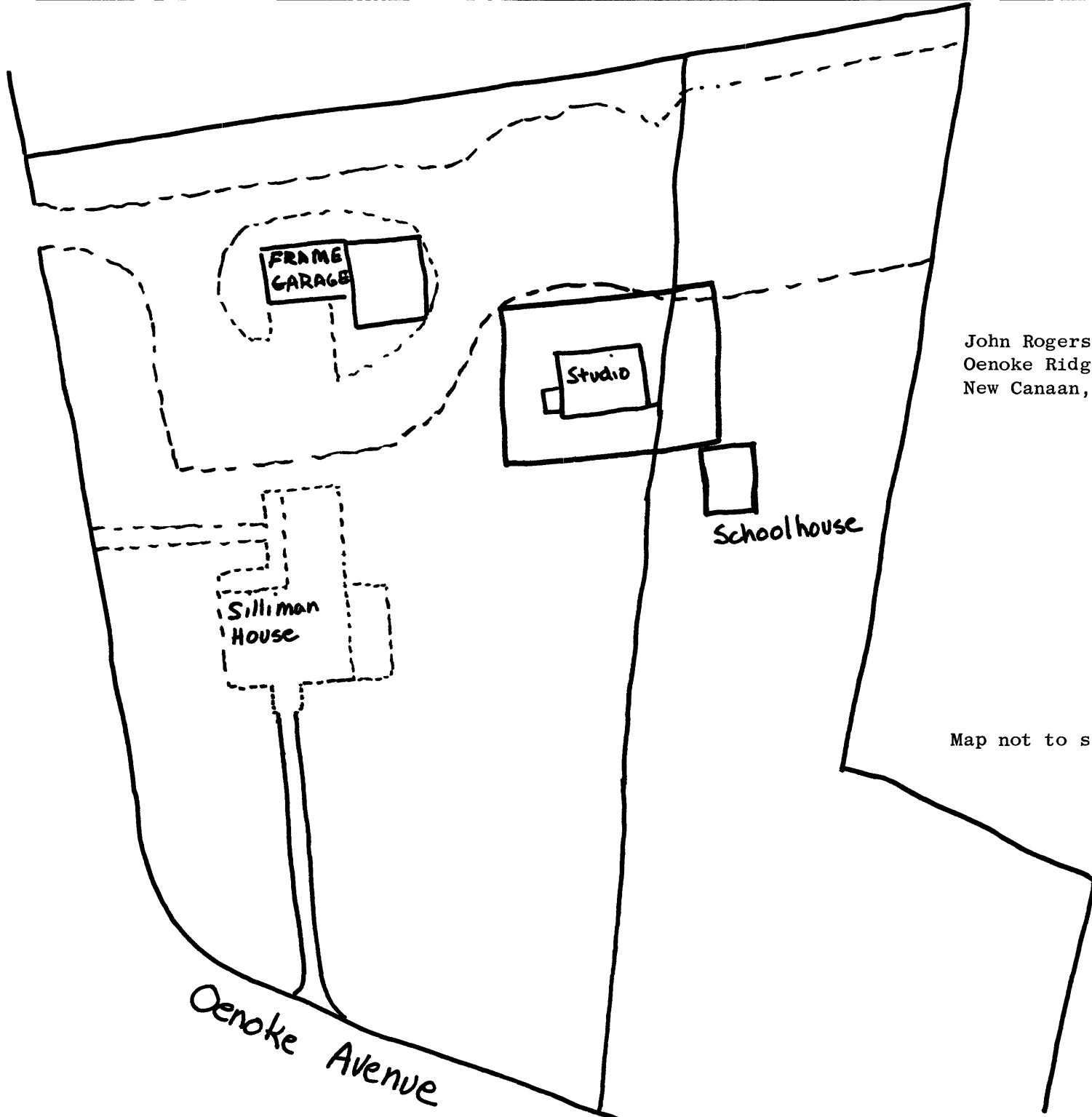
(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance: (3)

John Rogers Studio

The last of these groups was "The Watch on the Santa Maria," produced in 1892 for the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. Five months later on February 1, 1893, Rogers announced that he was selling his statuette business. The same year his statue of Lincoln received a bronze medal at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

At age 64, John Rogers suffered from near paralysis in both hands, but continued his sculpting. In 1897 he sold his home in New York and retired to New Canaan where he died in relative obscurity July 26, 1904. During his last years the fame he had achieved practically vanished as Rogers groups were banished to the attic and dusty closets, or just thrown out with other Victorian embellishments.



John Rogers Studio  
Oenoke Ridge  
New Canaan, Connecticut

Map not to scale