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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Bushnell-Dickinson House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 170 Old Post Road ☐ not for publication

city or town Old Saybrook ☐ vicinity

state Connecticut code CT county Middlesex code 007 zip code 06475-4421

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** ✓ **local**

Nancy Vario 7/1/13
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

DSHPO - CT State Historic Pres. Office
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

for [signature] 8/28/13
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Bushnell-Dickinson House | Middlesex | Connecticut
Name of Property | County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [x] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	2	**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

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COLONIAL/Georgian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone
walls: wood
roof: wood
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Bushnell-Dickinson House is a well preserved example of a late eighteenth century Georgian house, which retains a very high degree of historic integrity. Its exterior and interior have remained essentially unchanged over time and it retains its original floor plan, except for the addition of a small modern kitchen and three bathrooms. It is a two-story, five bay, side gable house of post and girt construction with a gambrel roof and a brick center chimney. It encompasses 2,128 square feet of living space and measures 38' x 28'. The exterior walls are covered with clapboard and the roof is covered in cedar shingles. It sits in its original location on a stone foundation near the street on the northeast side of a one acre lot which slopes gently to the southwest. There is a former barn to the northwest of the house, which has been converted into a guest cottage (Photo 39) and a two-car garage to the southeast (Photo 40), which also contains a workshop and forge used by a previous owner for the manufacture of reproduction architectural hardware. The house faces northeast toward a street now called Old Post Road, which was part of the main east-west road through Old Saybrook as early as 1683. This part of the old road, which loops toward the south, was bypassed by a new straight section in 1800.[1] The house is in a residential neighborhood which includes some eighteenth and early nineteenth century homes along the Old Post Road, as well as more recent infill construction.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The house sits on stone foundation with ashlar cut brownstone above grade on the northwest side of the façade and ashlar granite on the southeast side of the façade, as well as all other elevations. It has a brick chimney centered on a gambrel roof. The roof is covered with wood shingles and there are three dormers with shed roofs and six-over-six windows in the gambrel on the façade. There is a row of dentils at the cornice at the top of a frieze band on the façade (Photo 1). The main entrance is centered on the façade and the door is surmounted by a row of five lights. The doorway is approached by granite steps made up of flat stones (Photo 2). It is flanked by fluted pilasters which sit on molded plinths and have molded capitals which merge with the cornice. The paneled door, as well as its latch, which is mounted with rose head nails, is probably original to the house (Photos 3 and 4). There are two windows on each side of the door on the façade. They

[1] Harriet C. Chesebrough, *Glimpses of Saybrook in Colonial Days* (Old Saybrook: Celebration 3 1/2, 1984), 4.

have twelve-over-twelve sash and working solid, paneled shutters. The molding and dentils in the frieze on the window heads echo the cornice. The northwest elevation has a single window in the gable and two windows on the first and second stories. The gable window has six-over-six double hung sash, while the other windows have twelve-over-twelve sash. All windows have working solid paneled shutters and windows on the first and second floors have window heads identical to those on the façade (Photo 5). The southwest elevation has two dormers with shed roofs and six-over-six windows in the gambrel. This elevation has a fixed twenty-light window at its southeast end and a doorway surrounded by simple, flat molding to the northwest of the window. There are three windows to the northwest of the door and they are identical to those on the first story façade. A patio paved in brick extends fifteen feet from this elevation to the original well, which is still usable (Photo 6). The southeast elevation is nearly identical to the northwest elevation, except that a gabled enclosed entrance to the basement extends six feet from the southwest corner at grade (Photo 7).

Interior

First Floor

The house in entered through a classic eighteenth century stair porch with a flight of left-handed stairs directly opposite the doorway (Photo 8). The stairs have simple, rectangular balusters and newel posts. The front door is hung on iron strap hinges and it has bolts at the top and bottom (Photo 9).

The parlor is entered through a doorway on the northwest side of the porch (Photo 10). It has plaster walls and ceiling. An interior cornice with a row of dentils in the frieze that echo those on the façade cornice and window heads surrounds the room. Boxed posts with a beaded edge are prominent elements in all four corners. All four walls have a chair rail and baseboards. Doors and windows are surrounded by casings. The casings, chair rail and baseboards are elaborated with typical Georgian moldings. A brick fireplace with a stone hearth is on the southeast wall. It is surrounded by a mantelpiece surmounted by a narrow shelf. A cabinet is built into the southeast wall adjacent to the corner post above and to the southwest of the fireplace (Photos 11-12). There are two windows in the northeast wall and one in the north wall. A doorway in the southwest wall leads to the old kitchen. Windows have solid interior shutters on their lower sections (Photo 13). Flooring throughout the living areas of the house is wide pine plank.

The hall has plastered ceilings and walls with boxed and beaded posts in each corner. There is crown molding, a chair rail and baseboards on all walls. Windows and doors are surrounded by flat casings. Moldings elaborating these features are simpler that those in the parlor. It has a brick fireplace with a stone hearth, slightly larger than that in the parlor, on the northwest wall. The fireplace has a crane and is surrounded by a mantelpiece almost identical to the parlor mantelpiece. A cabinet is built into the wall above and to the left of the fireplace and another, which has two doors, starts at the floor and extends almost to the ceiling, is built into the wall to the right of the fireplace (Photo 15). There is a doorway leading to the porch to the east of the fireplace which has a Suffolk thumb latch mounted with rose head nails (Photo 17). There is one window in the southeast wall and two windows in the northeast wall. Windows and doors are surrounded by molding, simpler than that in the parlor, and windows have solid interior shutters on their lower sections (Photos 15, 16).

The old kitchen spans the northern two-thirds of the southwest or rear of the house. It has exposed joists in the ceiling with plaster between them. There are three windows in the southwest wall and a door at its southeast end. The walls are plastered but two posts are exposed on the southwest wall (Photo 18). One of them is fully exposed, but only the upper section of the other is visible. This post is flared at the top, a form that was no longer used by the 1790s, and it may have

been salvaged from another structure (Photo 19). Doors and windows in this room are surrounded by plain molding. A large stone cooking fireplace with a stone hearth is in the center of the northeast wall. It is surrounded by flat molding and is surmounted by a narrow shelf. There is a crane in the fireplace and an external oven with a wood storage compartment below it on the northwest side of the fireplace. A cupboard is built into the wall above and to the right of the shelf. The fireplace is flanked by doors to the hall and parlor (Photo 20). There are doors at each side of the northwest wall. The doors on the northeast lead to the basement and a closet, while those on the southwest of this wall lead to a bathroom and a stairway to the second floor (Photo 21). There are three antique thumb latches on doors in this end of the room. They are of both Suffolk and Norfolk patterns. The Norfolk latches on the basement and closet doors are mounted with screws. The Suffolk latch on the door to the parlor is mounted with rose head nails and botching (leather washers) (Photos 22-24). The southeast end of this room has been divided for a modern kitchen (Photo 25).

Second Floor

The second floor can be reached by the front stairs in the porch or by back stairs from the old kitchen. The front stairs lead to a landing with a door to the parlor chamber to the northeast and a door to the hall chamber to the southwest. The landing is illuminated by a dormer window (Photo 26). The parlor chamber can be entered by two doors, one in the southwest wall and one in the southeast wall. The door in the southwest wall leads to a landing with a bathroom to the northwest, the kitchen chamber to the southwest and the back stairs to the west. The walls and ceiling are plastered, doors and windows are surrounded by moldings and there are baseboards on the all but the northeast wall. The only fireplace on the second floor is located on the southwest wall of this room. It is made of brick with a brick hearth which is set slightly above the floor and is surrounded by a simple mantelpiece with a narrow shelf. There is a built-in cupboard with a paneled door surrounded by a flat casing attached to the southwest of the mantelpiece. Another cupboard with an identical door and molding is built into the wall above this one. It extends from the top of the lower cupboard to the ceiling (Photo 27). There is a window in the center of the sloped northeast wall with a window seat below it. There is a built-in wood closest to the northwest of the window and a built-in chest of drawers to the southwest of it (Photo 28).

The hall chamber may be entered through a door in its northwest wall and another in its southwest wall. The door in the southwest wall leads to a bathroom which also opens into the kitchen chamber. The wall and ceiling of the hall chamber are plastered. Doors and windows are surrounded by moldings and there are baseboards on all walls. There is a window in the center of the northeast wall with a built-in window seat below it. A closet is centered on the northwest wall and there is one window in the southeast wall (Photo 29). The door in the northwest wall has a reproduction thumb latch made and marked by Douglas Ryan, a previous owner of this house (Photos 30 and 31).

The kitchen chamber spans most of the width of the southwest side of the house. It has a bathroom which connects to the hall chamber at its southeast end. Its walls and ceiling are plastered and doors and windows are surrounded by flat casings. The chamber may be entered through doors in its southeast and northwest walls. The southwest wall is the interior of the gable and it slopes toward the ceiling. There are two inset widows in this wall with an alcove between them (Photo 32). The northwest wall is paneled and includes a closet and built-in bookcase (Photo 33).

Attic

The attic runs the full width of the house. The stone chimney is in its center and there are windows at each end (Photo 34). It is of common rafter construction and the rafters show raising marks (Photo 35).

Basement

There is a full basement under the house. The chimney stack is of stone, reinforced with wood. The level of the floor has been lowered eighteen inches and the basement now has a concrete floor and a concrete retaining wall around the entire cellar and the base of the chimney stack (Photo 36). The foundation is rubble stone below grade and ashlar cut stone above grade. Part of the northeast foundation wall has been replaced by concrete block. Floor joists are mostly hand hewn, but some have been replaced or sistered. The joists and girts have been planed and some have been chamfered. The underside of original flooring can be seen between the joists (Photos 37). There is a closed-off outside entrance to the basement on the southeast wall (Photo 38).

Bushnell-Dickinson House | Middlesex | Connecticut
Name of Property | 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.
- [x] 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

c.1790

Significant Dates

c.1790

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Period of Significance (justification)

This house was built by a member of the Bushnell c.1790.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Bushnell-Dickinson House is significant locally under Criterion C because of its architecture. It is a well-preserved example of a late eighteenth century Georgian colonial house. It was built circa 1790 and it retains a high degree of architectural integrity. Its gambrel roof and the relatively high level of its exterior trim distinguishes it from is plainer neighbors of the same period on Old Post Road. This house was built by Phineas Bushnell, a member of one of the oldest families in Old Saybrook. His descendants married into the Dickinson family, which was active in local and state politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Bushnell and Dickinson families owned and occupied this house from the time it was built until it was sold out of the family in 1934. The house underwent a sympathetic renovation in 1958, which added bathrooms, closets and a modern kitchen, but preserved the original plan and structure, as well as significant architectural features.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Architecture

All houses change over time, but the Bushnell-Dickinson House has changed very little since the end of the eighteenth century. The majority of the home's character defining features are intact and it is a remarkable example of the architecture of the period. Some of its most significant features are discussed below.

Plan

The plan of this home is a traditional one in Connecticut and it is nearly identical to a typical late seventeenth century center chimney plan as drawn by Frederick Kelly (Figure 1). The earliest frame houses in Connecticut (second quarter of the seventeenth century) were probably of a one room plan, one and one half or two stories high with the chimney stack at one end. The stairs were in front of the chimney stack at the entrance. These houses were soon expanded with the addition of

another room, often on the other side of the chimney. By the end of the century many houses had expanded again by extending the roof with the addition of a leanto at the rear of the two room structure. This arrangement allowed for an extra room at the rear of the first floor for the large kitchen fireplace and a new small room at the rear of the second floor. The chimney stack became the central element around which the house plan developed and the stair porch at the entrance in front of the chimney stack continued to be used. [2] By the time this house was built, many families had become larger and wealthier. They were able to devote more thought to the design of their homes and they soon eliminated the leanto for the true two story house. This design allowed for three full height rooms on the second floor rather than the two rooms that could be built in the saltbox style.[3] The Bushnell-Dickinson House is an excellent example of this evolved plan.

The first floor arrangement of the older leanto buildings - porch, parlor and hall, as well as the rear kitchen with smaller rooms at each end and a back stair - is continued in the Bushnell-Dickinson House. The kitchen usually had a buttery (pantry) on the cooler side and a "bedroom" on the other. The second floor plan mirrored that of the first. Second floor sleeping rooms were always called chambers and were named for the rooms below them – hall chamber and Parlor chamber. Only the first floor sleeping room was called a bedroom.[4]

Gambrel Roof

The use of the gambrel roof in this house allows a design based on the smaller Cape Cod cottage, which is usually one or one and one half stories high,[5] to accommodate two full stories and an attic without the added height of a gable roof. While the gambrel form, which was based on the French Mansard roof, was not as common as other roof forms, many books of the time provided plans for their framing.[6] Dormers were widely used in the eighteenth century and the light they provided was essential for rooms built into the gambrel.[7] The roof joists have raising marks, which were common in the eighteenth century (Photo 35).

Exterior Decorative Elements

Academic forms were imported from England around the beginning of the eighteenth century and distributed in the Colonies through books and immigrant craftsmen. The style of these buildings included the use, "... of level eaves and modillion cornice, of sash windows with wooden bars, of a framed pedimented doorway, of quoins or some simple pilaster treatment."[8] By the early eighteenth century, many illustrated works, such as those by William Halfpenny (from 1724) and William Pain (from 1758) were available in the Colonies. These books made it possible for local builders to design houses using the elements that were fashionable in England at the time.[9] The façade of the

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[2] J. Frederick Kelly, *Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924) New York: Dover Publications, 1963, 6-9.
[3] Frederick Kelly
[4] Ibid, 12-14.
[5] Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 78.
[6] Fiske Kimball, *Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic,* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1922) New York: Dover Publications, 1966, 83-84.
[7] Ibid., 90.
[8] Ibid., 53-55.
[9] Ibid., 60-61.

Bushnell-Dickinson House clearly shows the influence of these books in the pilasters framing the entrance door, the dentil cornice and window heads, as well as the double hung windows (Photos 1, 3, 5 and 7).

Interiors

After the middle of the eighteenth century, house design began to move toward "spaciousness and formality" rather than utility. Detail and refinement replaced the previous emphasis on massive construction.[10] By this time the principle framing members of a house were covered by wall or ceiling plaster or by casings of planed boards.[11] In the Bushnell-Dickinson House, this trend is clearly shown in the treatment of the plastered walls and ceilings, along with boxed and beaded posts at the corners of the hall and parlor. Moldings were introduced in the eighteenth century and they changed the look of all buildings. With a small repertoire of moldings, the Georgian joiner was able to produce an impressive array of decorative effects. Interior moldings are a character-defining feature of Georgian buildings and the interior cornice, sometimes used to mask girts, is often elaborated with carvings, including dentils.[12] Windows and doors were generally surrounded by casings of flat boards with beaded inner edges which define the opening and with backband moldings applied to their outer edges. Standard backband profile was the Roman ogee and fillet (Photos 11-16).[13]

The four fireplaces in the Bushnell-Dickinson House are also very typical of their period of construction. The mantelpieces of those in the hall and parlor are nearly identical to each other. They are both elaborated with Georgian moldings and both have narrow shelves. They are very similar in design to the mantelpiece in the Pratt Tavern (1785) in Old Saybrook (Figure 2)[14] and they may have been made by the same joiner. The only fireplace on the second floor is in the parlor chamber and, following eighteenth century practice, its mantelpiece is much simpler than those in the main rooms on the first floor. The kitchen fireplace is still the massive hearth needed to prepare meals, but the oven is located outside the fireplace, rather than within the main hearth. This location is characteristic of late eighteenth century houses[15] (Photos 11, 14, 20 and 27).

Hardware

Much of the architectural hardware in the Bushnell-Dickinson House appears to be original to the house. These items include the front door latch and strap hinges, but probably not the bolts at the top and bottom of the door (Photos 4 and 9) as well as several Suffolk latches (Photos 17 and 24) and Norfolk latches (Photos 22 and 23) throughout the house. Douglas Ryan, a former owner of the house, was a maker of reproduction eighteenth century architectural hardware. He marked his work with a "DR" stamp and at least two of his latches are used in the house (Photos 30 and 31).

1958 Work

A very sympathetic major renovation of the house was completed in 1958. The extent of this work is unknown, but it seems likely that the kitchen, bathrooms and closets were added at that time.

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[10] Kelly, *Early Domestic Architecture, 14.*
[11] James L. Garvin, *A Building History of Northern New England* (Hanover, New Hampshire: The University Press of New England, 2001), 10.
[12] Ibid., 100-102.
[13] Ibid., 155.
[14] Kelly, *Early Domestic Architecture, 166.*
[15] Garvin, *A Building History*, 57.

The windows were probably also rebuilt or replicated and hardware, some of it period and some reproduction, may have been added to existing doors. The solid blinds and interior shutters may also have been added at that time.

Owners and Date of Construction

Bushnell Family

The Bushnell-Dickinson House has historically been associated with the Bushnell family who were among the earliest settlers of Old Saybrook, Connecticut. The Bushnells moved to the area in the mid-seventeenth century when the Town of Saybrook was compromised of the present towns of Lyme, Westbrook, Deep River (Saybrook), Chester, Centerbrook, Essex, and Old Saybrook. Three family members were among the 40 who received grants of land on Saybrook Point in 1650. The town was divided into quarters, and the Bushnell-Dickinson House was built on the western edge of the Oyster River Quarter, near the present-day boundary with Westbrook. Francis Bushnell erected the first corn mill in town along the Oyster River in 1662, and the proprietors granted him with a farm on condition that he and his descendants keep the mill in service. The mill continued in operation until at least the beginning of the nineteenth century. The soil of the Oyster River Quarter was the richest in present day Old Saybrook, and the farm flourished, providing a living for the Bushnells and their descendants into the twentieth century.[16]

There are two contradictory local traditions about the construction of the house. One maintains that the house was built for Phineas Bushnell (1718-1803) in 1740, the other asserts that the house was built for Phineas' son, Samuel (1748-1828).[17] It seems most likely that there is a grain of truth in both traditions. Phineas Bushnell had inherited a house in 1754 from his father, Joshua, but this house was located on the opposite side of the road from the Bushnell-Dickinson House.[18] Phineas deeded part of his homestead to his son Samuel in 1799, and then in 1803, just prior to his death, he deeded the "new" house he and his wife currently occupied to Samuel, reserving life rights to the house and property for his second wife, Samuel's stepmother, Hepzibah Lewis Bushnell.[19] These deeds support the theory that Phineas Bushnell inherited property with an existing dwelling, but that some time before 1803 he constructed another house on his land, which he transferred to his youngest son Samuel. Phineas had served in the French and Indian War, and deeded land to his two oldest sons in 1760, when Samuel was still a minor. When Phineas died in 1803, the minister recorded that he had been an invalid since 1795, making the likely date of the house's construction some time prior to that date.[20]

Samuel Bushnell had married Hepzibah Pratt in 1775, and the couple's only child was also named Hepzibah (1776-1818). She married Samuel Dickinson (1774-1861) in 1796, and this union produced

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[16] Chesebrough, *Glimpses,* 30-33; Christopher P. Bickford, et al. eds., *Voices of the New Republic: Connecticut Towns, 1800-1832* (2 vols., New Haven, Conn., 2003), I, 205-14

[17] Chesebrough, *Glimpses*, 3-4; Erastus Clarke, "Sketches of Some of the Old Homes in Saybrook, Conn.," unpublished manuscript, Old Saybrook Historical Society; George E. Bushnell, *Bushnell Family Genealogy,* (Nashville, 1945), updated at bushnellfam.com,. 61-63, 89, 137.

[18] Joshua Bushnell to Phineas Bushnell, May 20, 1754, Guilford Land Records.

[19] Phineas Bushnell to Samuel Bushnell, Jan. 14, 1799, Sept. 22, 1803, Chester Land Records..

[20] Bushnell, *Bushnell Family Genealogy*, 89.

four sons, the youngest of whom was John Seabury Dickinson (1807-1879). Hepzibah Bushnell Dickinson died in 1818. Samuel Dickinson remarried and had a second family. In 1828 Samuel Bushnell left the house he had inherited from his own father to John Seabury Dickinson, reserving life rights to the house and real property and two-thirds of the household furniture to his widow, who lived in the house until her death in 1847.[21]

Dickinson Family

John Seabury Dickinson married Harriet Collins in 1830, and the couple had six children, three boys and three girls. John Seabury Dickinson farmed the family homestead as his ancestors had done, and according to the 1850 census, owned real estate valued at $30,000.[22] His two oldest sons pursued maritime careers, and his daughter Harriet married William Eaton Thayer in 1860. In 1872, he was nominated by the Democratic Party to run for State Senate, but lost the race. His youngest son, also named John (1846-1922), remained at home and followed in his father's footsteps, farming the land, and getting involved in local politics. John the younger and his two unmarried sisters, Hepzibah Maria (1835-1915) and Mary Louise (1839-1910), lived on the family homestead and inherited the house and approximately 100 acres upon the death of their father in 1879. Neither Hepzibah Maria nor Mary Louise ever married, and they kept house for their younger brother. Both sisters quit claimed their shares in the family homestead to their brother John. John S. Dickinson the younger was active in civic matters, and in 1911 was elected selectman of Old Saybrook.[23] He was the president of the Old Saybrook Musical and Dramatic Club during the period when the Club was raising money to purchase a site for a permanent town hall and provide a fund for construction of the building.[24] He was also a founder and first president of an Old Saybrook literary society, the Crackers and Cheese Club, which frequently met at his house.[25] Dickinson was also involved in other improvements in Old Saybrook, taking responsibility for laying out lots for cottages in Saybrook Heights[26], and serving on a committee in charge of investigating the cost of a new road from Boston Post Road to Long Island Sound in 1913.[27]

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[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., p. 137; Chester Probate Records, vol. 9, p. 307; Lurena and Roswell Whidden, , Old, "Probable Dickinson Genealogy, derived mainly from gravestones in Cypress Cemetery, Old Saybrook, 10-18-1967,"Old Saybrook: Old Saybrook Historical Society; 6th United States Census, 1840.
[23] *Hartford Courant*, "John S. Dickinson, Democrat, elected selectman of Old Saybrook," October 6, 1911.
[24] *Hartford Courant,* "John S. Dickinson was president of the Musical and Dramatic Club of Old Saybrook," November 13, 1908.
[25] *Hartford Courant,* "John S. Dickinson is president of a literary society in the western part of Old Saybrook, the Crackers and Cheese Club. Their meeting & musical program held at his home," March 29, 1914
[26] *Hartford Courant*, "John S. Dickinson surveyed the cottage lots for Saybrook Heights," November 27, 1909.
[27] *Hartford Courant*, "John S. Dickinson on town committee to investigate the cost of a new highway on the route of the pent way from the Boston Post Rd through New Ox Pasture to Long Island Sound," October 10, 1913.

Later Owners

After John S. Dickinson's death in 1922, his niece Edith Thayer Rivenburg inherited the family homestead. In 1934 she conveyed the house and about 40 acres to Gertrude C. Ekins.[28] Mrs. Ekins was the wife of Grove T. Ekins, who had trained for the ministry at Yale College.[29] Ekins left the ministry sometime after 1920, and by 1930 was living in Old Lyme working as a printer.[30] There is a tradition that there was a printing press in the house, and it may have been brought there by the Ekinses. Gertrude Ekins sold the house and the acreage she had acquired from Mrs. Rivenburg in 1956 to John E. and Francis T. McBrian,[31] who renovated the house in 1958 with an eye to preserving its original features.[32] In 1960, the house and one acre was sold to Douglas C. and Deborah Ryan.[33] Ryan was a blacksmith and he made replacements for some of the missing hardware in the house, stamping them with his initials. The Ryans also built the garage/forge located just to the south of the house c. 1968. This structure has a number of examples of Ryan's skill as a blacksmith. The Ryans also renovated the cottage that was located behind the main house in 1961. The property was purchased by the current owners in 1985, and they built the potting shed located in the southwest corner of the property.[34]

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

[28] Old Saybrook Land Records Book 38, 215-17.
[29] US Census, Middlebury, Connecticut, 1920.
[30] US Census, Old Lyme, Connecticut, 1930.
[31] Old Saybrook Land Records, Book 70, 436.
[32] *Gazette*, March 31, 1983.
[33] Old Saybrook Land Records Book 91, 123.
[34] Old Saybrook Land Records, Book 224, 375.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bickford, Christopher P., *et al.* eds., *Voices of the New Republic: Connecticut Towns, 1800-1832*. 2 vols. New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2003.

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Bushnell-Dickinson House | Middlesex | Connecticut
Name of Property | County and State

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 #_____
___recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
___recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_x_ State Historic Preservation Office
___Other State agency
___Federal agency
___Local government
___University
_x_ Other
Name of repository: **Rowayton Historical Society**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18T	717468.3	4573818.29
2			
3			
4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Boundaries of this property are described in the Town of Old Saybrook land records on map **027/017.**

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of this nomination are the boundaries of the lot on which the Bushnell-Dickinson House is located.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tod Bryant
organization Heritage Resources date September 27, 2012
street & number 23 Morgan Avenue telephone 203-852-9788
city or town Norwalk state CT zip code 06851
e-mail tod@heritageresourcesct.com

Additional Documentation

Bushnell-Dickinson House | Middlesex | Connecticut
Name of Property | County and State

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County: State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ___.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Knight and Arlene Merritt

street & number 170 Old Post Road telephone (860) 388-4035

city or town Old Saybrook state CT zip code 06475-4421

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.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

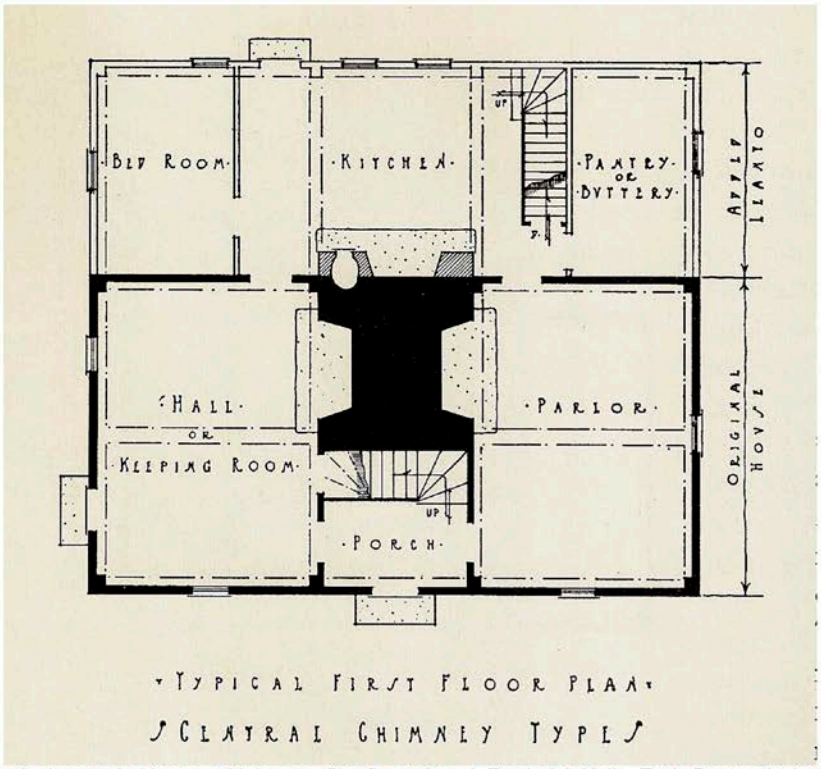

Figure 1. Typical central chimney with leanto first floor plan. J. Frederick Kelly, Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut.

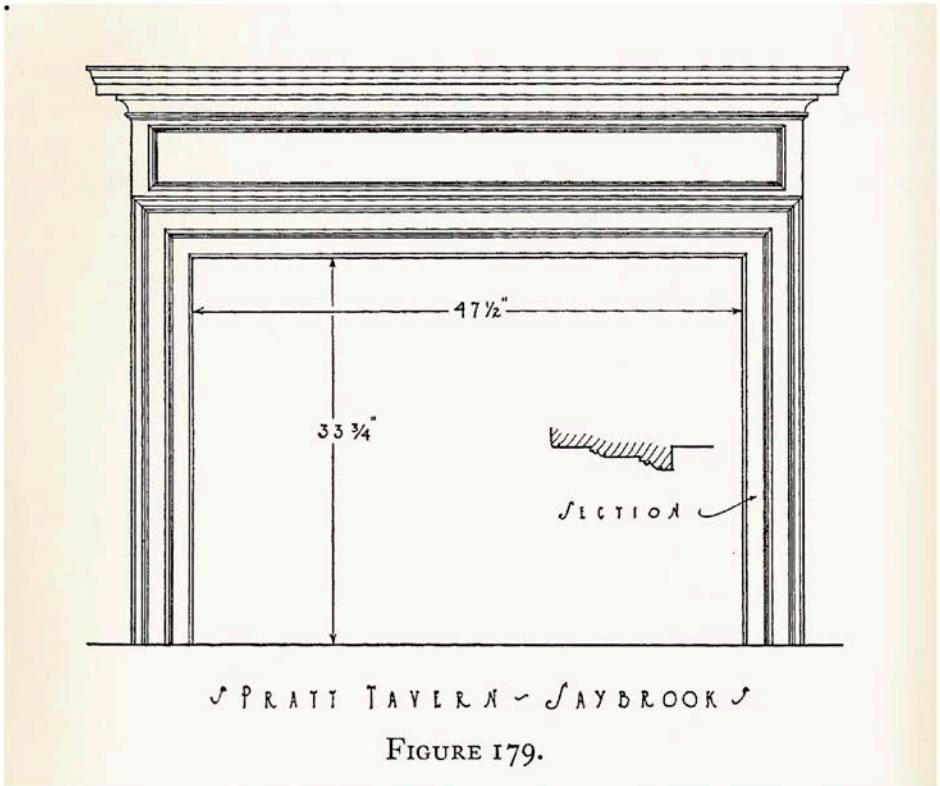

Figure 2. Pratt Tavern mantlepiece. J. Frederick Kelly, Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut.

Location of the Bushnell-Dickinson House at 170 Old Post Road, Old Saybrook, Connecticut

170
PHINEAS BUSHNELL
HOUSE
c. 1760

170

WELCOME

WELCOME

E PLURIBUS UNUM

DICTIONARY

PARIS L'EXPOSITION

MemoryWare
CEDAR GRILLING PLANKS