NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

476

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.

RECEIVED 2280
JUN 25 2014
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mystic Bank
Other names/site number: The Indian and Colonial Research Center
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 39 Main Street
City or town: Old Mystic State: Connecticut (CT) County: New London (011)
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

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**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___**A** ___**B** ✓**C** ___**D**

Stacy Vairo DSHPO 6/12/14
Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State Historic Preservation 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 Edson H. Beall 8.8.14

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	x
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	x
District	
Site	
Structure	
Object	

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
COMMERCE/financial institution - bank
GOVERNMENT/District Hall

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
EDUCATION/library
RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

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7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: Granite, Concrete; Walls: Brick, Granite, Weatherboard; Roof: Asphalt

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Mystic Bank building is located in the small village of Old Mystic in the Town of Stonington in New London County. The well-preserved building sits between Main Street and the Mystic River, just south of the crossroads that mark the center of the village. The building is a one-story, gable-front brick building with a granite foundation, three-bay blind arcade across the facade, and a small wood-framed modern addition on the rear. The addition occupies the site of a small wagon shed that had been modified and enclosed before replacement by the current addition in 1977. The two sections are each 30 feet deep; the front section is 22 feet wide, two feet wider than the rear section. The exterior retains its masonry details, large double-leaf door, and barred six-over-six, double-hung windows. On the interior, the historic section retains its original plan, Greek Revival details, flooring, plasterwork, and vault. In many places decorative finishes have remained visible; in others portions have been exposed through the careful removal of more modern paint layers.

Narrative Description

The Mystic Bank is divided into two distinct parts: a historic brick portion to the front (east) and modern wood-framed portion to the rear (west). The brick section is a one-story, three-bay, gable front building with a blind arcade across its façade and Greek Revival elements.

Exterior

The main block of the building is a small, temple-front, Greek Revival building constructed of brick (Photograph 1). The bricks are laid in a running bond pattern and sit on a foundation of granite blocks, which project slightly from the plane of the brick wall. The upper face of the granite blocks are beveled, providing a water table for the building. The rest of the visible portion of the blocks has a rock-face finish; the blocks are held together, in part, by large iron staples (Photograph 2). The brick wall is capped by a simple cornice, composed mainly of the top eight courses of bricks (Photograph 3). At the bottom of the fascia, three courses of bricks project slightly from the plane of the wall, with next two courses projecting progressively further. The final three courses appear to return to the plane of the bottom of the fascia and terminate in a simple, tripartite molding that makes the transition to a plain soffit. The gable is made up of exposed brick in the tympanum surrounded by simple, molded trim. A small chimney emerges from the northwest corner of the asphalt roof. The historic section of the building has six-over-six, double-hung windows throughout: two windows are located in its façade, flanking the main entrance (all elements are located within individual blind arches). Two more windows are in the south side of the building, and one is located on the north side of the building. Each window sits on a granite sill and is capped by a granite lintel. The rear wall of the main block has no fenestration. Iron bars protect all the windows in the front section of the building. The front door sits in the central arch in the façade. The metal-faced door has two narrow leaves with a large metal hasp to lock them together (Photograph 4). A small handle and keyhole sit beneath the hasp. The entry is accessed by two granite steps with a pair of wrought iron railings.

The rear section of the building is wood-framed addition that abuts the western gable of the main block. The southern wall sits slightly back from the southern wall of the main block; the northern walls of the two parts align. The addition sits on a concrete block foundation and is clad in novelty siding with a gabled asphalt roof. Because of the building's low eaves, the entry on the south side of the building projects through the roof and is located in a gabled, wall dormer. The door is reached by four wooden steps with a small landing. The steps and landing have a simple wood rail made from unmolded dimensional lumber. A horizontal window is located to the east of the door while it appears that two windows, currently hidden behind vertical board shutters, are located to its west. Similar shutters appear on the east end of the building. The north side of the addition shows no sign of fenestration.

Interior

Like the exterior, the interior of the building has both a historic section and a modern addition. The historic section is divided into three distinct parts: the banking room, the vault, and the directors' room. The banking room is roughly rectangular room with the main entrance centered in the east wall, and flanked by a pair of windows. The double-leaf door has nearly rectangular panels at the top and bottom. Evidence of the bolts holding on the exterior metal cladding form a grid on the door and three large strap hinges on each leaf allow them to swing (Photograph 5). A single window is located roughly in the center of the north and south walls. The west wall is divided in two. On the south is a six-panel door that opens onto the directors' room. On the north is a plaster arch springing from consoles with foliate details; in a niche behind the arch sits the vault. The vault is secured with a Coverts Patent Bank Lock (Photograph 6). The vault is currently outfitted to serve as secure storage for the collections of the Indian and Colonial Research Center. The directors' room is located in the southwest corner of the main block of the building. It is a small, rectangular room with a window in the south wall, and doors in the other three walls. The eastern, six panel door, leads to the banking room, while a door at the west leads into the ICRC's library and reading room. A small door is located high on the north wall; it leads to furnace and climate control systems. A door at floor level in the northeast corner of the room leads to an entry way to the vault. The trim, doors, and windows in the banking and directors' room are surrounded by elaborate moldings decorated with graining (Photograph 7). The side of the banking room side of the main door and the doors into the directors' room and the storage space over the vault are also grained. The baseboards and architraves in the two rooms are also grained. The window surrounds rise from the base board, with a single raised panel sitting below the window. Each room has an elaborate entablature; it appears to be pulled plaster (Photograph 8). Careful removal of paint in the banking room has revealed small portions of elaborate stenciling that is thought to have once decorated the walls in room (Photograph 9). Cut-outs in the north side of the front door surround also suggest that a banking counter was once located there (Photograph 10). The rear section of the building now contains a modern research library.

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.)

- [X] 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.)

- [ ] 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
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance
1856-1887

Significant Dates
1856
1887

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

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Mystic Bank is locally significant under Criterion C (a "property [that] embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction") as an example of a well-preserved, Greek Revival-style bank building constructed in brick. It is also locally significant under Criterion A (a "property [that] is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history") as its closure in 1887 demonstrates the changing settlement patterns in the area.

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

Historical Context

The building was constructed in 1856-7 for the Mystic Bank. It was the bank's second building (the first was moved from its original location not far from this building to Mystic Seaport in 1951).[1] The bank was founded by a group of local businessmen in 1833 to serve the needs of the growing shipbuilding community of Mystic and the surrounding area. It was chartered in June of that year by the Connecticut General Assembly with $50,000 of capital. The bank's founders were local leaders: Congressman Elisha Haley and his brother Stephen, both from nearby Groton; Stonington selectman Elisha Faxon; Probate Judge Asa Fish, from Mystic Bridge; Nathan Daboll, a mathematician and author of Daboll's Almanac; whaling agent Captain Silas Beebe of Mystic River; Elias Brown; John Hyde; Latham Hull; George W. Noyes; Elias Hewitt; and William H. Woodbridge. Elias Brown was chosen president and George Noyes was the first cashier. The bank predominantly served the local shipbuilders and cotton manufacturers. [2]

Located at the head of the Mystic River, the bank was located in the center of the community in the 1830s. Serving the merchants behind the area's cotton mills and shipyards, the bank prospered. By 1856, the bank was ready for a larger building.

While the directors felt comfortable expanding their quarters, changes in the community that would ultimately signal the end of the bank were emerging. In 1851 a new bank at the mouth of the Mystic River, the Mystic River Bank, was chartered.[3] The competing bank demonstrated the shift of the economic center of the community away from the head of the river to the communities of Mystic River and Mystic Bridge located at its mouth. (The community of

[1] "Mystic Bank," http://www.mysticseaport.org/locations/village/mystic-bank/. Accessed June 2013.
[2] Carol W. Kimball, :Banking at Old Mystic," *Historical Footnote: Bulletin of the Stonington Historical Society* (Spring, 1982), p. 1.
[3] Finding aid for the Records of the Mystic River National Bank, G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport.

Mystic is unusual in that it is located within two different towns: Stonington on the east side of the river and Groton to the west (Map 1).) The shift began with the building of the bridge across the river near its mouth in 1819; this bridge became a draw bridge in 1835. Its construction allowed for traffic to pass easily from one side of the river to the other without a ferry and allowed for a shift in the commercial center closer to the coast.

In 1865 the Mystic Bank changed its name to the Mystic National Bank, indicating that it was now a federally chartered entity under the recently passed National Banking Acts of 1863 and 1864.[4] Business at the bank was relatively uneventful until January of 1884, when the *Stonington Mirror*, ran a story with the following headline, "A Bold Attempt at Robbery – The Mystic National Bank Burglarized but No Plunder Secured." Burglars had entered the bank during the night through the windows (after failing to gain entry through the reinforced door) and had attempted to blow the door off the safe. As a result of the attempted burglary bars were added to the windows. In 1887, the bank closed.[5]

After closing the bank was sold to the town of Stonington for $800. The town used it as a District Hall for voting at election time. In the 1940s the shed attached to the rear of the bank building was renovated by the local Reliance Fire Company for use as Civil Defense headquarters. It was later used to store equipment. By 1960 the building was no longer used for voting.

After Mystic Seaport had expressed interest in moving the building to their complex in the early 1960s, local support for keeping the building in town and finding a new use for it arose. The building was ultimately sold by the town to the ICRC for $1. The ICRC was originally formed to preserve the work of noted local anthropologist, archeologist, historian, and naturalist Eva L. Butler (1897-1969). Over her lifetime Ms. Butler, who had studied at the Universities of Pennsylvania and New Mexico, taught at Eastern Connecticut State University, participated in research to celebrate the State of Connecticut's Tercentenary, and established both a children's museum in New London (which would evolve into the Thames Science Center) and the Tomaquag Indian Museum in Ashaway, Rhode Island. During that time she also participated in archeological digs and extensive documentary research on a variety of local and regional topics. The results of these investigations were collected in more than 2000 loose-leaf notebooks. These notebooks were original core of the ICRC collection; the bank building was purchased to provide a repository for them. The ICRC organization continues to own and maintain the building today; it currently serves as a repository for community history and archives, including that information gathered by Eva Butler.[6]

Historical Significance

The Mystic Bank building is a well-preserved example of a small Greek Revival bank building. With a gable-front plan, elaborate moldings, and a high level of decorative painting the building demonstrates both the architectural and decorative styles of the day. While it is a modest building compared to the highly academic Greek revival buildings constructed in the country's

[4] *Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History*. Detroit: Gale, 2000.
[5] Notes in the collections of the ICRC.
[6] Notes in the collections of the ICRC.

urban centers, it nevertheless played an important role in the small town of Mystic in the middle of the nineteenth century. Constructed of brick and decorated with an eye toward the fashions of the day it demonstrates both the solidity and grandeur needed to inspire confidence in the bank's depositors and shareholders.

The building also demonstrates the changing settlement patterns in the area. When it was founded in 1833 and when the second building was constructed in 1856-7, the bank was located at the heart of Mystic. In the years between the opening and the closing of the bank, the focus of business and settlement in the area shifted from the head of the river, where the bank was constructed, to near the mouth of the river. This shift may have been started by the construction of the Mystic Bridge in 1819. This allowed travelers and merchants to cross the river without resorting to a ferry or traveling up to the head of the river (where its narrower width made it easier to cross). As Leigh Fought notes in *A History of Mystic,Connecticut*:

> These two villages [Mystic River and Mystic Bridge] on the lower part of the river were both the focus and the major beneficiaries of the capitalist brand of businessmen…whose business ventures flourished between the 1830s and the 1870s. This period coincided with the most lucrative years in large fisheries, an exploding textile industry, and the demand for fast sailing vessels to skirt Cape Horn.[7]

By 1887 the settlement at the head of the river was no longer the focus of the community, and the bank it supported could no longer survive. Just three years after the bank closed, the name of the village that housed it was changed to Old Mystic and Mystic Bridge and Mystic River were given a single post office with the name of Mystic.

[7] Leigh Fought, *A History of Mystic, Connecticut: From Pequot Village to Tourist Town* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2007), p. 62.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Files of the Indian and Colonial Research Center.

Fought, Leigh. *A History of Mystic, Connecticut: From Pequot Village to Tourist Town.* Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2007.

Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History. Detroit: Gale, 2000.

"History of Mystic." http://www.mystichistory.org/mystic's_history.htm. Accessed June, 2013.

Hurd , Duane Hamilton. *History of New London County, Connecticut: With Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men.* Lebanon, Conn.: J.W. Lewis & Company, 1882.

Kimball, Carol. "Banking at Old Mystic." *Historical Footnotes: Bulletin of the Stonington Historical Society.* Vol. XIX, No. 3 (May, 198

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:

____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.06 ac.

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: Longitude:
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

[ ] NAD 1927 or [X] NAD 1983

1. Zone: 19N	Easting: 252499	Northing: 4586305
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The property boundaries match those described in Book 269, p. 350 of the Stonington Land Records. (See Map 3.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundary matches the extent of the property currently associated with the ICRC and the Mystic Bank Building. The bank's property was originally the same width (32 feet) but ran west to the riverbank (between an addition 14 and 64 feet).

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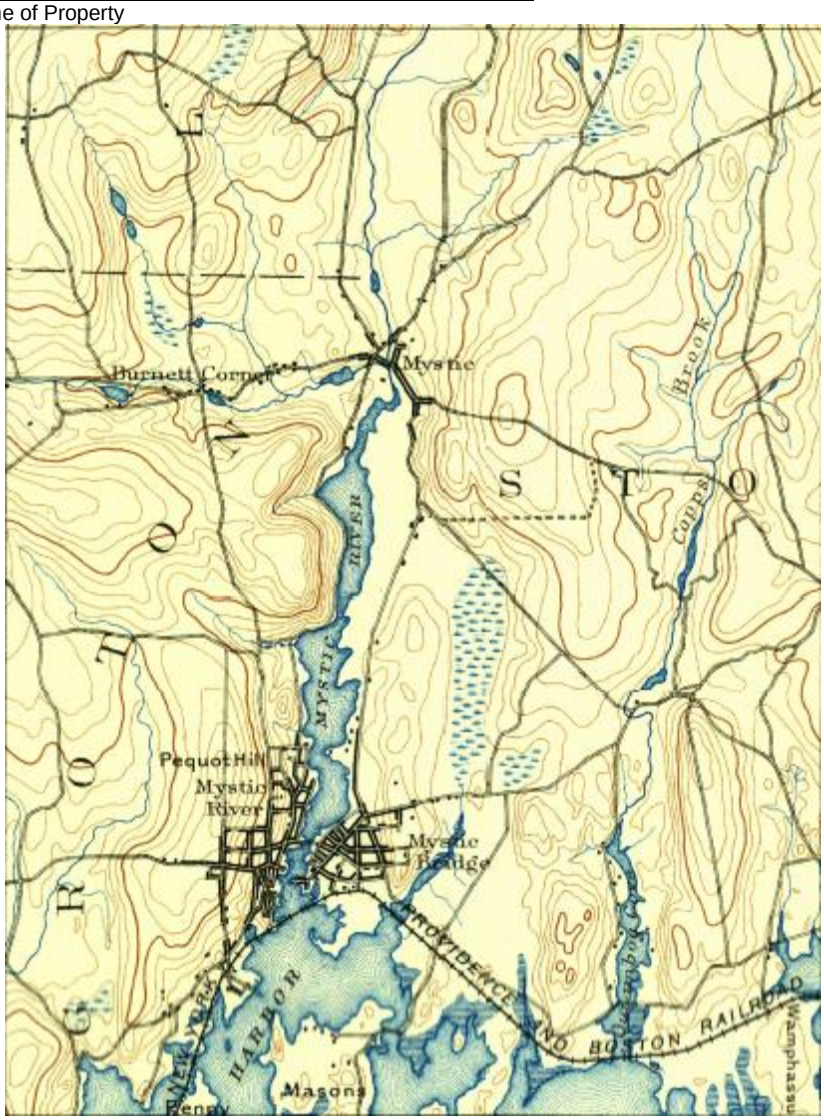
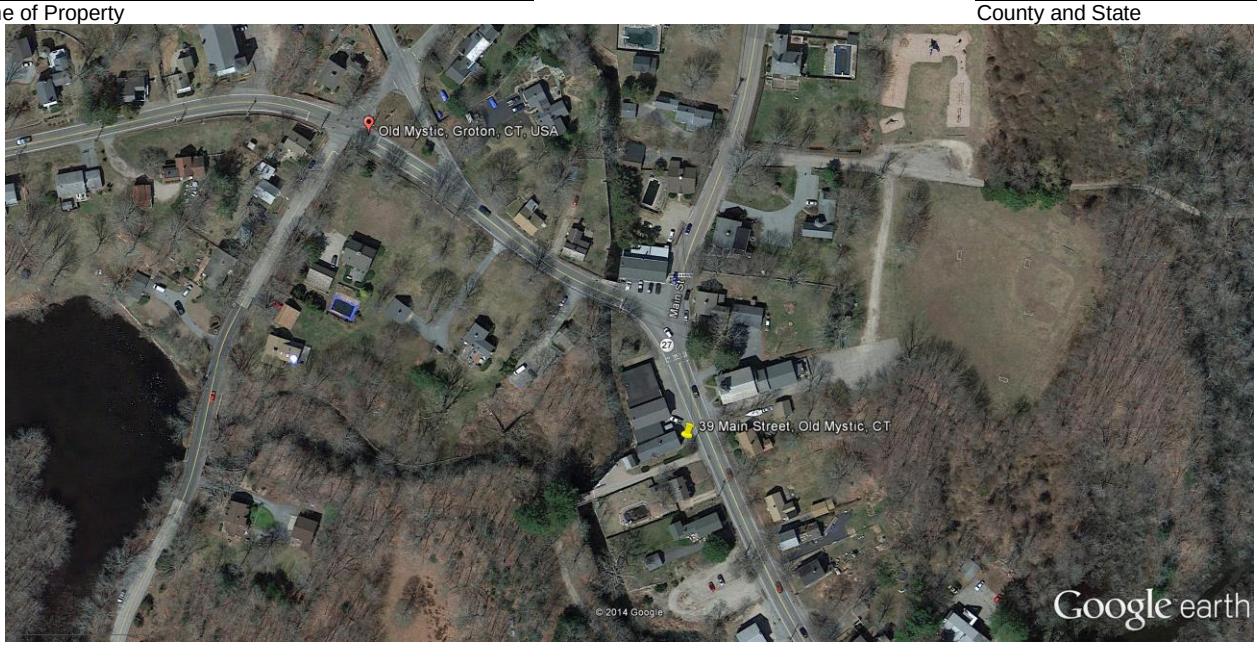
11. Form Prepared By

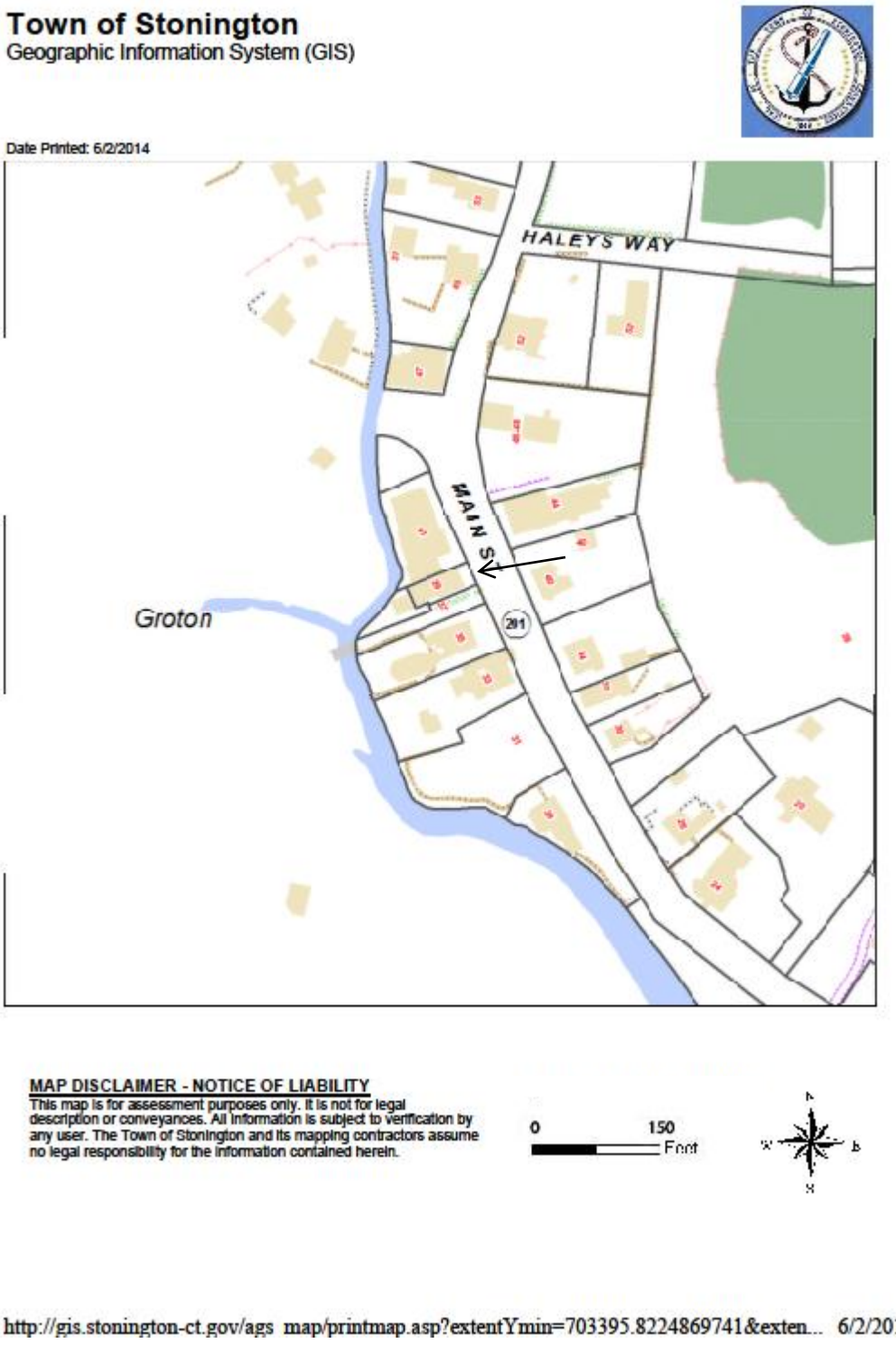
name/title: _James Sexton, Ph. D._____
organization: _Consultant to the Indian and Colonial Research Center_____
street & number: _274 Clinton Avenue_____
city or town: New Rochelle_____ state: _NY_____ zip code: 10801_____
e-mail_jmbjcs@hotmail.com_____
telephone: 914.235-8074_____
date: 1 June 2014_____



Map 1 – Detail of the 1889 USGS Map for the Stonington Quadrangle showing Mystic, Mystic Bridge, and Mystic River.



Map 2 – Location map for 39 Main Street, Old Mystic, CT.



Map 3 – Plat map showing the location of 39 Mains Street, Old Mystic, Connecticut.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Mystic Bank

City or Vicinity: Stonington

County: New London State: CT

Photographer: James Sexton

Date Photographed: January 9, 2013

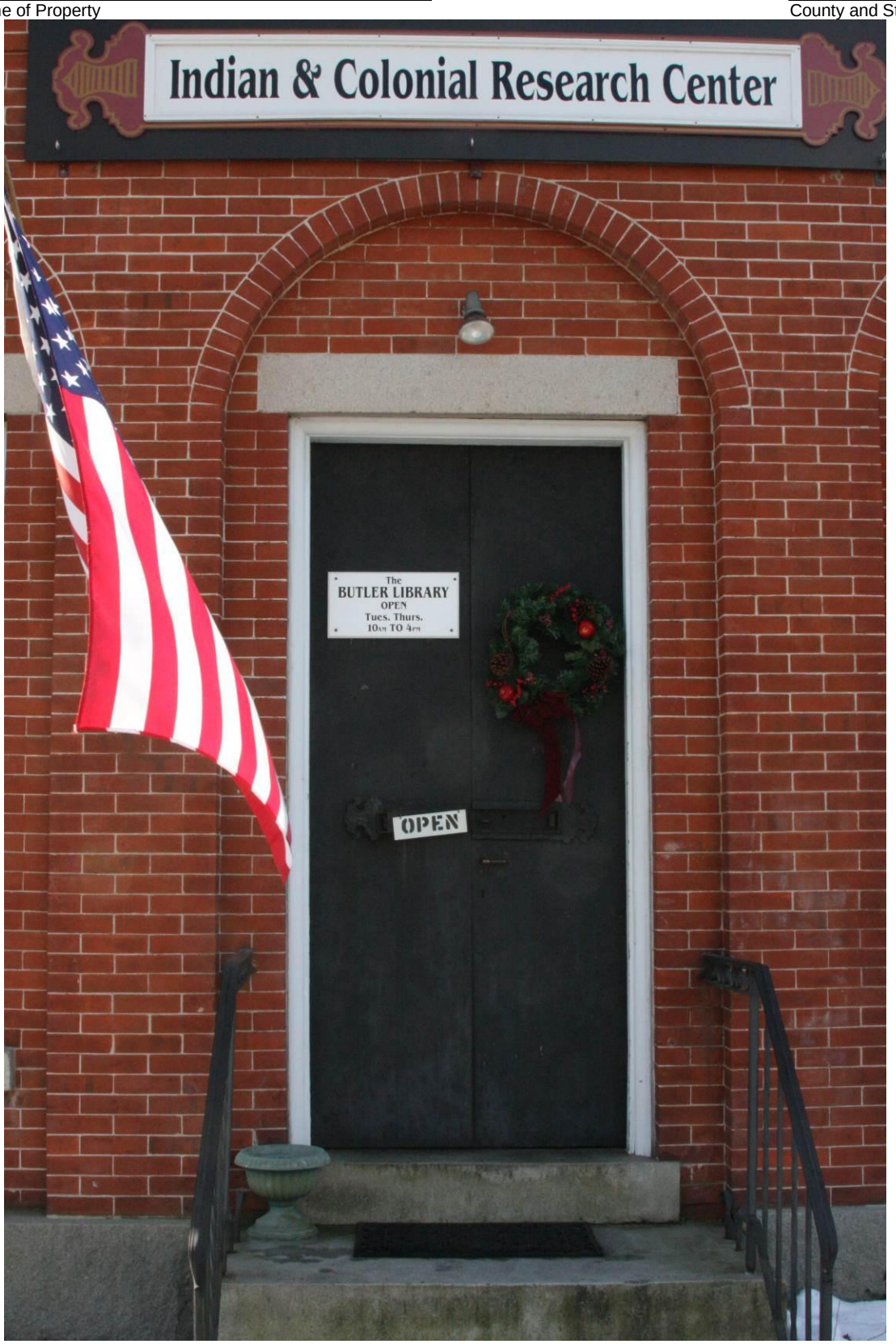
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 10 – Looking northeast at the exterior Mystic Bank.
2 of 10 – Looking north at a detail of the south exterior wall and foundation.
3 of 10 – Looking north at a detail of the cornice.
4 of 10 – Looking west at the front door.
5 of 10 – Looking east at the interior of the front door.
6 of 10 – Looking at a detail of the vault lock.
7 of 10 – Looking east at the directors' room door.
8 of 10 – Looking at a detail of the cornice in the banking room.
9 of 10 – Looking at a portion of the revealed stenciling located in the southwest corner of the banking room.
10 of 10 – Looking east at the front door surround at the point where the banking counter may have abutted the trim.

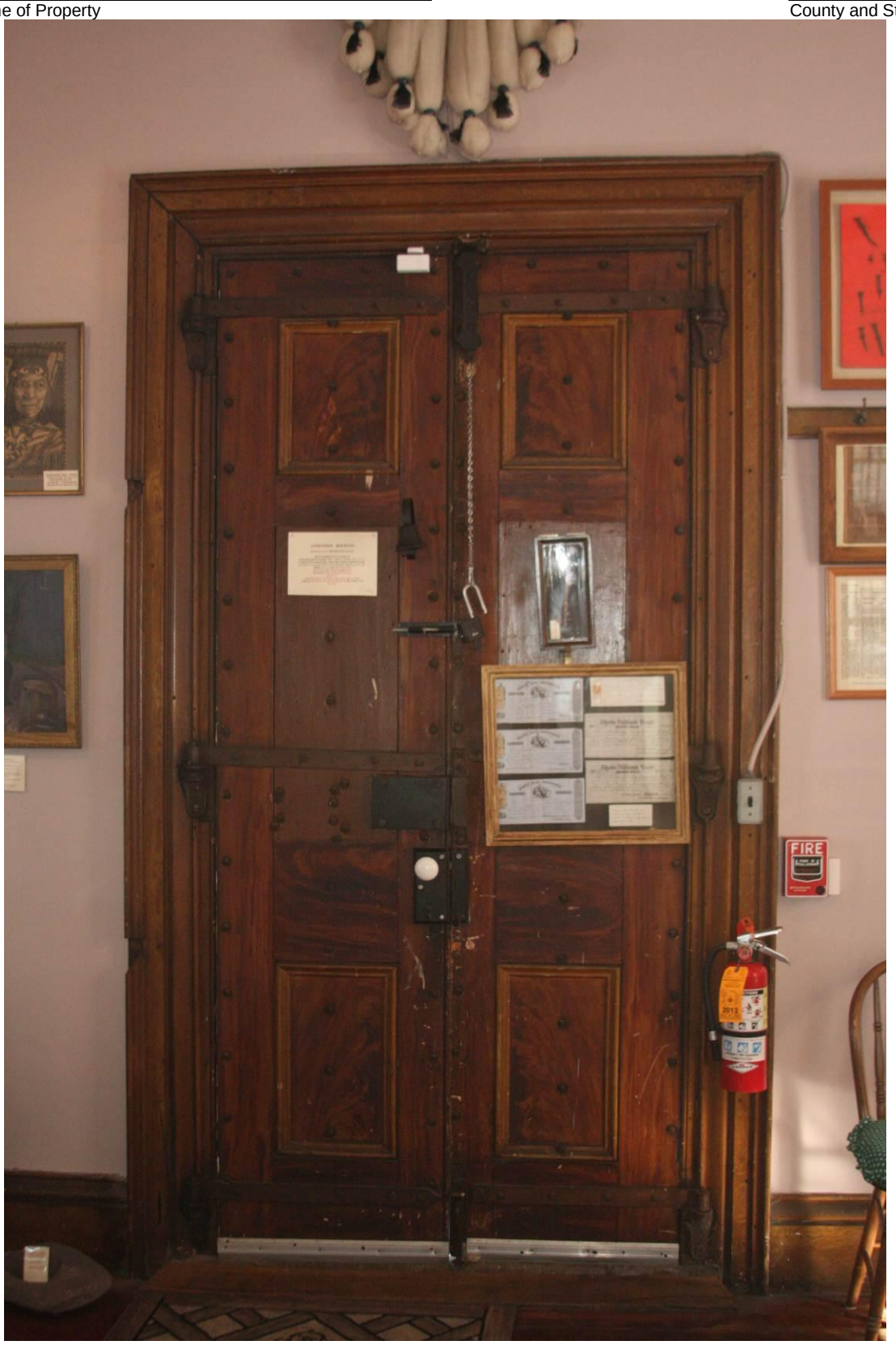
1 of 10 – Looking northeast at the exterior Mystic Bank.

2 of 10 – Looking north at a detail of the south exterior wall and foundation.

3 of 10 – Looking northeast at a detail of the cornice on the southwest corner of the building

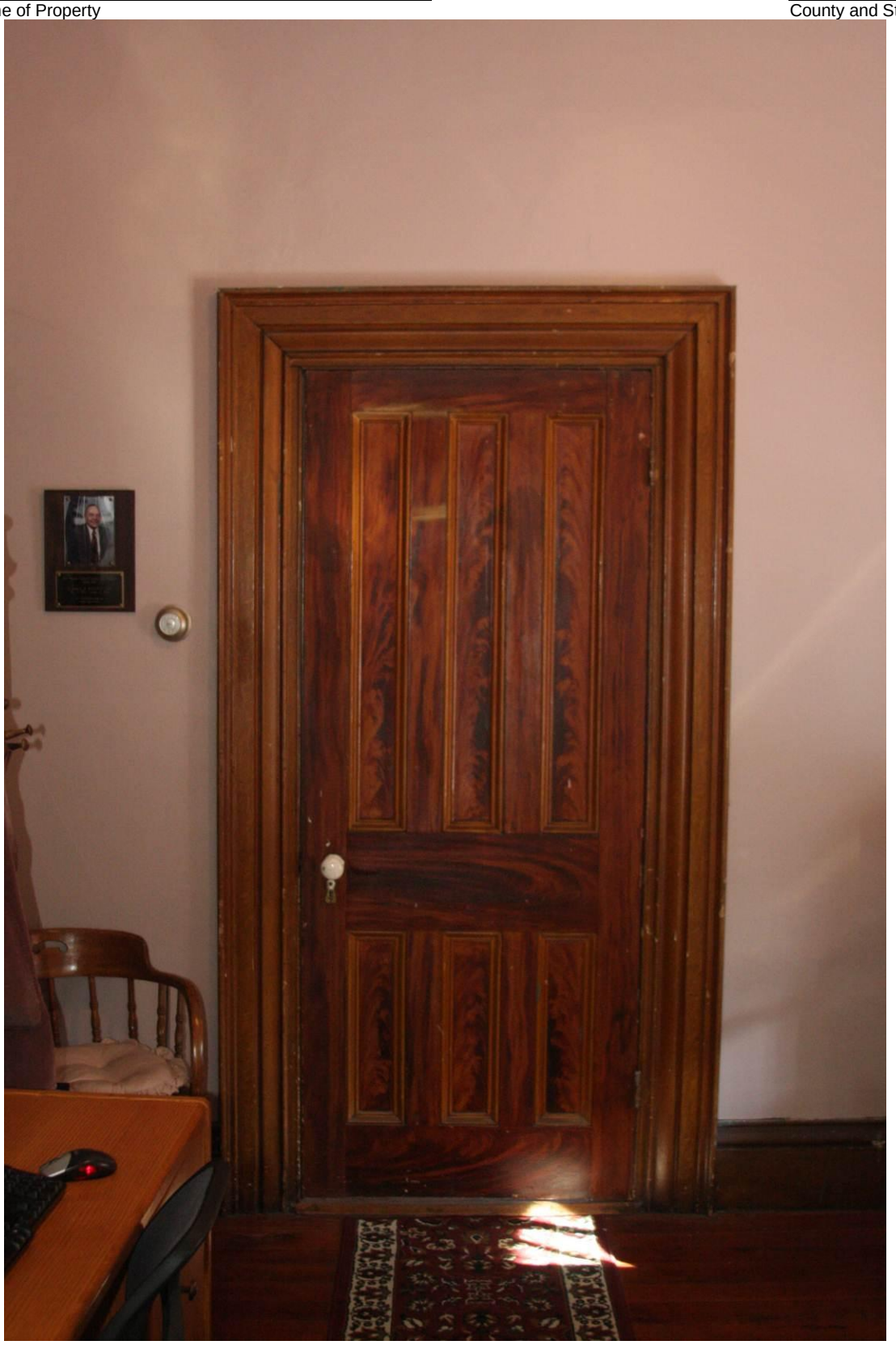


4 of 10 – Looking west at the front door.

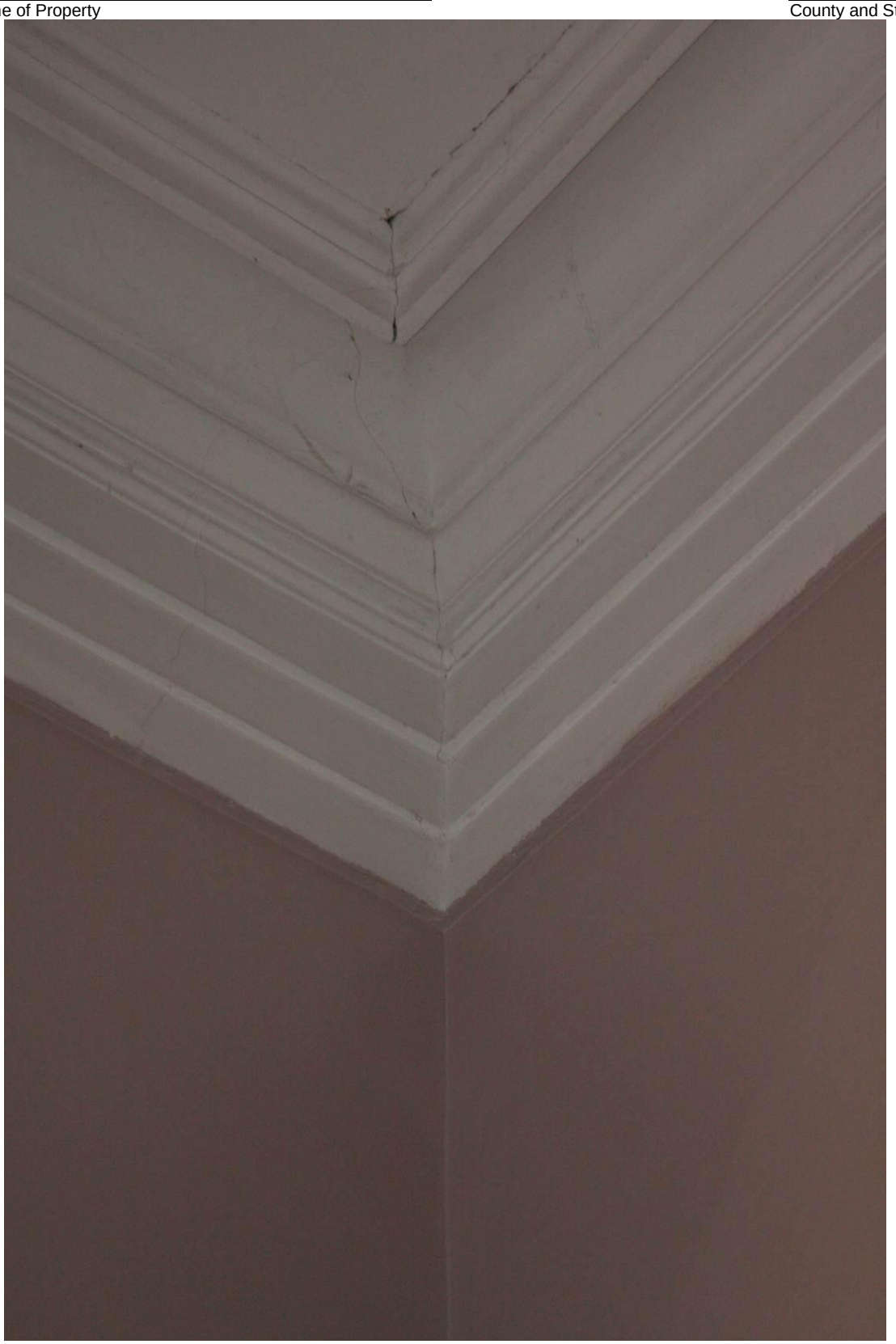


5 of 10 – Looking east at the interior of the front door.

6 of 10 – Looking at a detail of the vault lock.



7 of 10 – Looking east at the directors' room door.



8 of 10 – Looking at a detail of the cornice in the banking room.

9 of 10 – Looking at a portion of the revealed stenciling located in the southwest corner of the banking room.

10 of 10 – Looking east at the front door surround at the point where the banking counter may have abutted the trim.

Indian & Colonial Research Center
The
BUTLER LIBRARY
OPEN
Tues. Thurs.
10AM TO 4PM
OPEN

Genealogical Research Center

BRIGGS & HUNTINGTON, ROCHESTER, N.Y.
COVERT'S PATENT.
1857, 1858.

Pontiac
(1720-1769)
Ottawa

FIRE
2012