

*National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form*

1. Name

*Historic - Acors Barns House*

*Common - Law Offices of Francis McGuire*

2. Location

*68 Federal Street*

*New London, CT*

3. Classification

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

7. Description

8. Significance

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

*Photographs*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Acors Barns House

AND/OR COMMON

Law Offices of Francis McGuire

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

68 Federal Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

New London

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd - Christopher Dodd

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

09

COUNTY

New London

CODE

011

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES, RESTRICTED

YES UNRESTRICTED

NO

## PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

COMMERCIAL

PARK

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

MILITARY

☒ OTHER Office**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Francis McGuire

STREET &amp; NUMBER

133 Lower Boulevard

CITY, TOWN

New London

VICINITY OF

STATE

CT

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. New London City Clerk

STREET &amp; NUMBER

181 State Street

CITY, TOWN

New London

STATE

CT

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

DATE

1975

FEDERAL ☒ STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

# 77 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Acors Barns house, formerly the residence of one of New London's wealthy families, is now well-preserved as law offices. Although redevelopment has deprived the site of environmental continuity, the property itself retains sufficient physical integrity which, along with its successful adaptive use, makes it a worthwhile historic place. The house sits close to the street, yet its corner lot is filled with trees and shrubs which set the house apart from the neighborhood; in addition, a low wrought-iron fence surrounds the property.

The house, though built in 1837, is in form similar to houses of the preceding century: a rectangular-plan, frame building, 2½ stories tall, five bays wide, gable roof with ridgeline parallel to the main street and clapboarded exterior. The underpinning, as well as the entrance steps and the retaining wall which levels the house site, is of dressed granite laid as coursed ashlar. Four brick chimneys rise near the corners of the building. A large, pediment-shaped dormer, probably added in the late 19th century, projects at right angles from the main roof in the front; the dormer is lighted by a rectangular double window with 8/8 sash.

The front facade's principal feature is the main entrance, which shows Greek Revival inspiration in its flat-roofed portico. Fluted Doric columns rise directly from the top entrance step and support a heavy entablature consisting of a plain architrave with simple transitional moldings, an unadorned frieze, a row of dentils and a molded cornice. Behind the portico, the single-panel door is surrounded by sidelights and a transom of rectangular panes. Paneled pilasters stand behind the columns. The relative simplicity of this treatment is repeated again in the pilasters at the corners of the building, the simple window trim, and the main cornice, which is very heavy but even plainer than the portico's. The cornice outlines a pediment in the gables, which contain unusual windows in the form of a triangle. The triangle actually contains two windows, each of which opens to a separate room in the attic.

Across the rear of the building extends a one-story veranda. This open porch consists of a shallow hipped roof supported by square columns with a plain balustrade connecting them. The whole rests on square brick piers with a wood scre between them. Part of the veranda has been enclosed for more interior room, and the stairs which led to formal gardens are no longer present. There is a side-lighted entrance from the center of the porch. The windows opening onto the porch are almost a full story high and have 6/9 sash, unlike the other windows which have 6/6. A second-story projection has been added above the center of the porch; the elegance of the rear facade has been somewhat compromised by this modification and by the enclosure of part of the porch.

The interior presents a contrast with the stately but plain exterior. Based on a central hall plan, the lay-out of rooms has been retained in the present use. The hall, both downstairs and up, has an elaborately paneled ceiling. The offset stairway has rather elegantly turned balusters, turned and carved newels and plain rails; the whole is of a dark-stained wood which has the appearance of mahogany. One end of the upstairs hall is formed into an alcove by two slender fluted columns. The parlor rooms on the right side of the house are separated from each other only by a wide archway which, like the window casings, makes use of a shallow pediment arch. Sliding doors recede into the bookcases on either side of the arch. On the left side are two rooms with a connecting cupboard, apparently a dining room and a pantry. The latter has a dumbwaiter to the kitchen in the cellar below. On the

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS-GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1837 - built

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Acors Barns house is an important artifact of New London's history because Barns and his family were representative of the city's merchant elite and their house provides some understanding of the lifestyle of this class. In addition to its value for social history, the house has considerable architectural interest, particularly because the present use of the building has preserved much of the interior intact.

Acors Barns (1794-1862) was the son of a mariner and lived first in Westerly, R.I. and Stonington, Connecticut, where he owned a merchant vessel. After moving to New London, he formed in 1827 a company with William Williams, Jr. This became one of the largest whaling firms in the city. After 1849, however, the whaling industry began a sharp decline, and the city of New London lost the basis of its prosperity. Barns was not personally affected by the decline of the port. Like many other New London merchants, he was able to reinvest his money elsewhere. After a brief involvement with the Willimantic and Palmer Railroad, Barns founded in 1852 the Bank of Commerce. His son and grandson succeeded him as president until 1902; thus Barns was able to provide amply not only for himself but for subsequent generations.

The Barns house, in the family until 1919, reflects the prosperous lifestyle of its owners. The house is thoroughly unpretentious from the street: it is rather traditional in design, with simply a surface application of the Greek Revival in the portico and pilasters; only the corner chimneys suggest something out of the ordinary. This plain appearance is belied by the veranda across the back of the house and the formal gardens which were once there. Further evidence of wealth is offered by the interior, with its elaborate hall ceilings, detailed woodwork, and marble fireplaces. The contrast between the interior and exterior is intriguing. The age of conspicuous consumption had not yet arrived; perhaps Barns wanted to project an image of sober frugality, while at the same time providing for a comfortable home.

Moreover, the Barns house clearly reveals the dependence of the family on servants. In 1850, Barns employed two female servants, but it seems that more were required in later years. In the cellar can be seen the remains of the kitchen, wash room and wine cellar. On the ground floor, the dumbwaiter and the cupboard in the front room, and in the attic, the servants' plain cubicles are all reminders that gracious living was created by the domestic help. The Barns house physically documents the symbiosis by which the wealthy and the propertyless shared a home. Its value as an artifact is enhanced by the successful reuse which has retained the character of the building.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER	PAGE
Acors Barns House	7	one

second floor there are four chambers and in the attic, five small rooms. Throughout the house the woodwork is well preserved, with finely molded interior cornices, baseboards and door and window casings. In the front rooms there are folding paneled shutters. A notable interior feature are the marble coal fireplaces, with round-arched opening, reverse curve mantel and sculptured central bracket. Like the hardwood floors, these fireplaces appear to be later modifications made by Barns or his son. They are, however, fully in keeping with the overall tone of the house. Moreover, the present owner has preserved the atmosphere of a substantial residence by using appropriate furnishings, such as period furniture, oriental rugs, suitable wallpaper, and Barns family portraits.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Decker, Robert. The New London Merchants: 1645-1909. Unpub. diss., University of Connecticut, 1970.

U.S. Census Office, Population Schedules for 1850, New London County, CT, Vol.5, p. 186. Ms., Connecticut State Library.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one  
UTM REFERENCES

A 18 742690 4582230  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C                              

B                                
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D                              

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Bruce Clouette, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE July 16, 1975

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN Hartford

STATE CT

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

John W. Shamahan

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 3/2/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN

New London

VICINITY OF

COUNTY

New London

STATE

CT

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT

Bruce Clouette

DATE OF PHOTO 1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Connecticut Historical Commission  
Hartford, CT

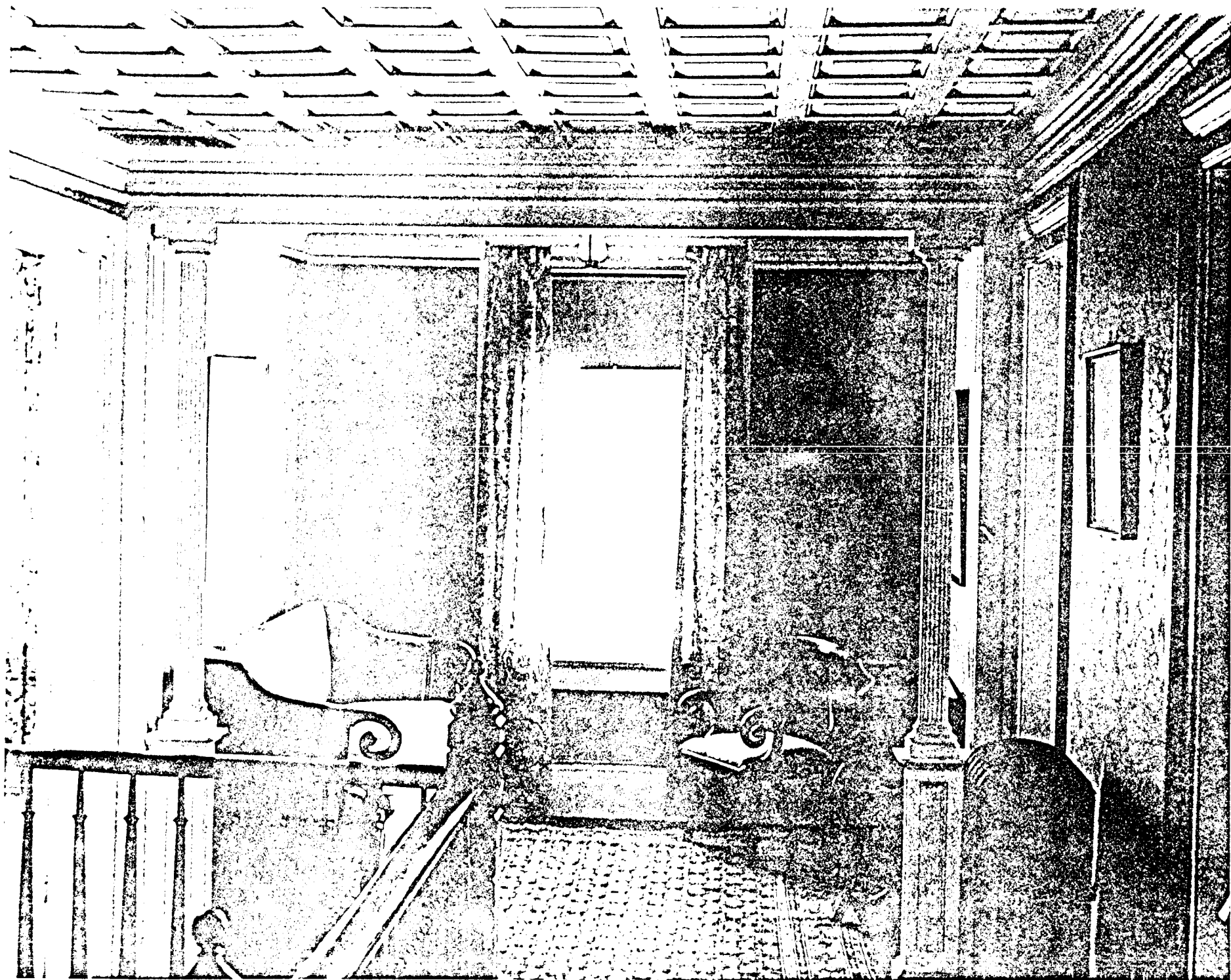
**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO

Interior, second-floor hall, view north

4





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PHOTO CREDIT

Donna Clouette

DATE OF PHOTO 1975

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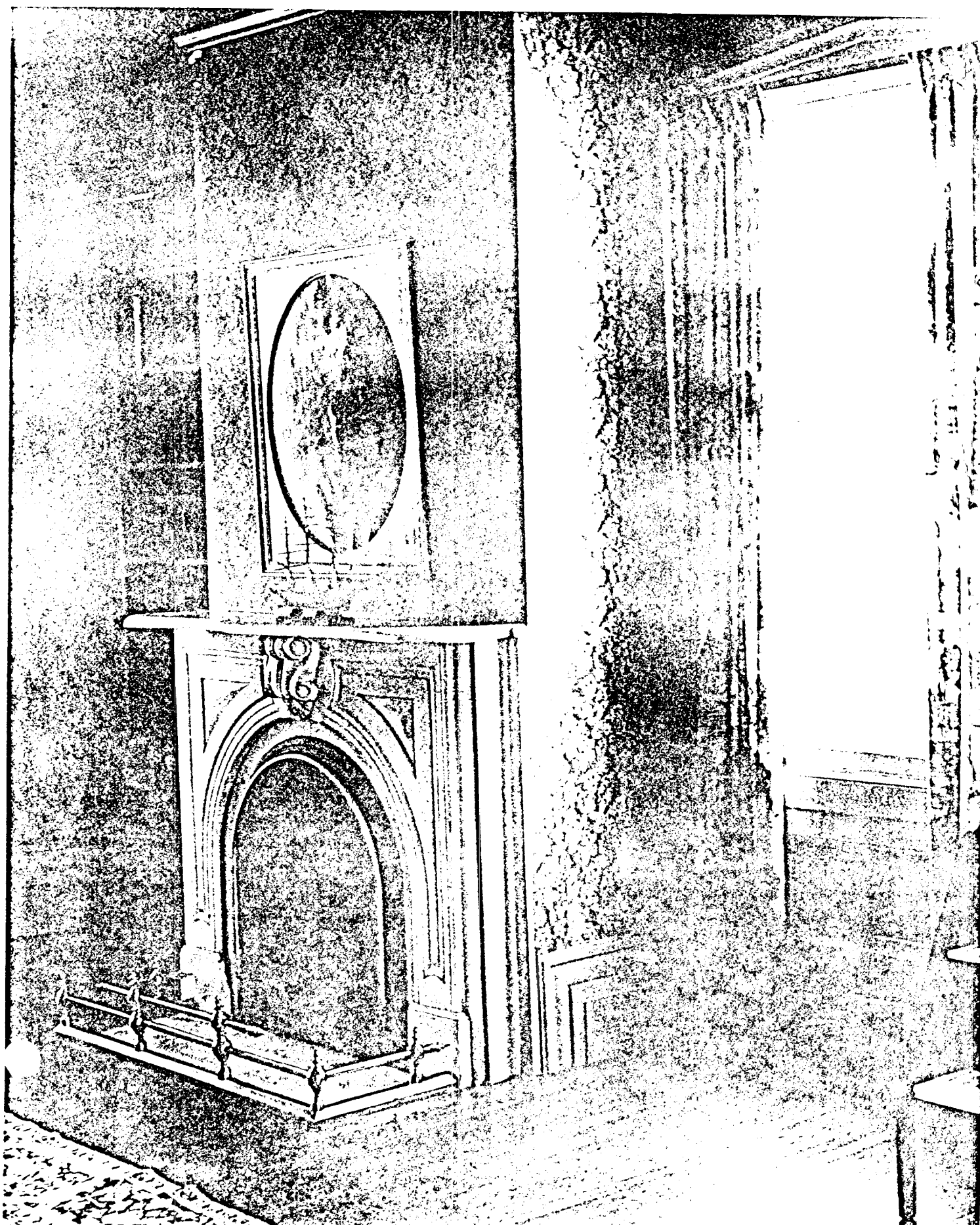
**4** IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO

Interior, showing parlor fireplace, view southwest

3



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PHOTO NO

Rear (south) facade, view north east

2



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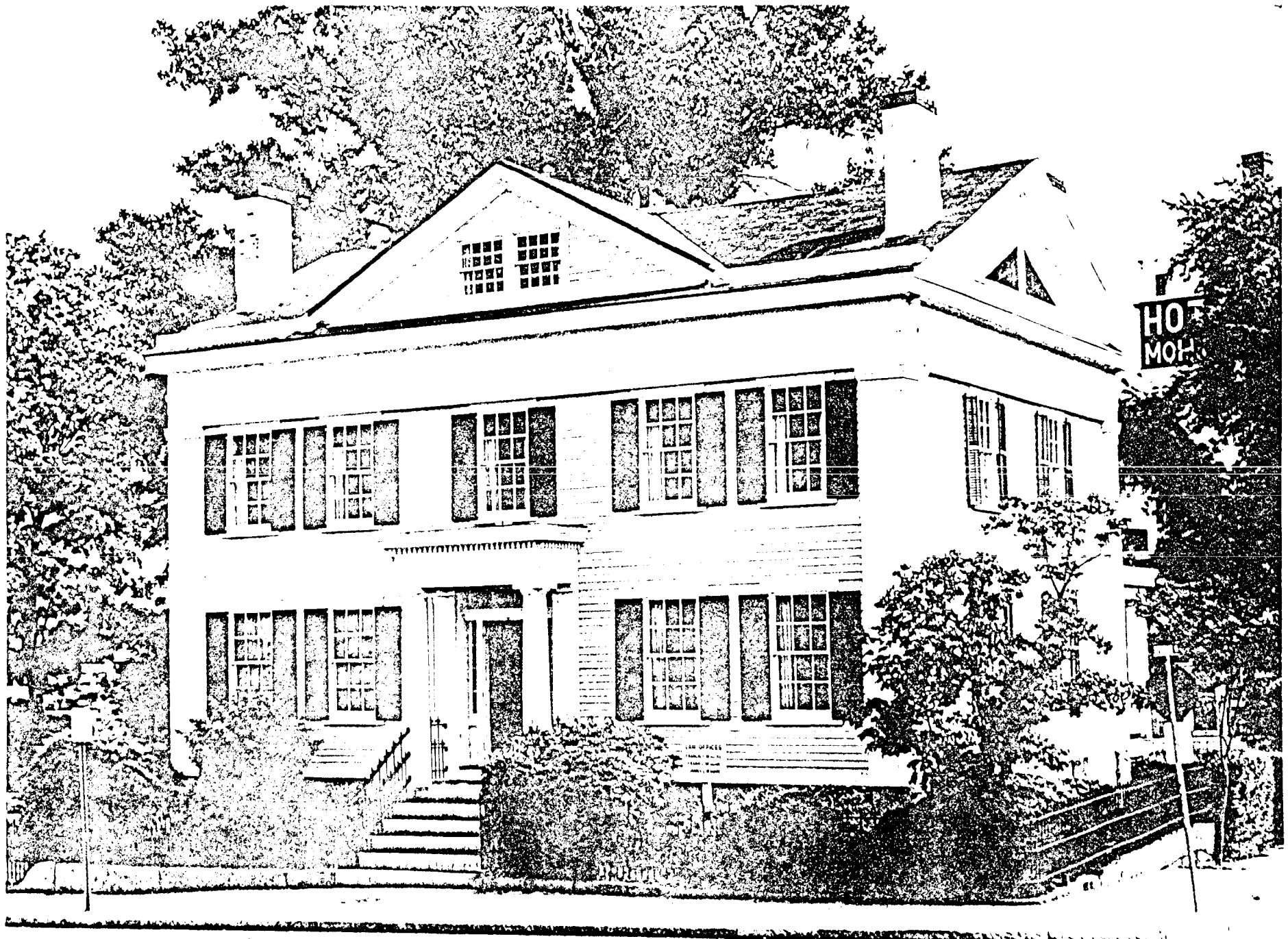
**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO

Front (north) facade, view south

1



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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH MAP

**1** NAME

HISTORIC Acors Barns House

AND/OR COMMON Law Offices of Francis McGuire

**2** LOCATION

CITY, TOWN New London VICINITY OF COUNTY New London STATE CT

**3** MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE United States Geological Survey, 7.5' Series, New London Quadrang

SCALE 1 : 24000 DATE 1970

**4** REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES

ACORS BARNs HOUSE

New London, CT

UTM Reference:

18/742690/4582230

