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

   State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

Photographs
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory -- Nomination Form

See 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 & number: 68 Federal Street
   City, town: New London
   State: Connecticut

3. Classification
   Category: Building(s)
   Ownership: Private
   Status: Occupied
   Present Use: Other Office

4. Owner of Property
   Name: Francis McGuire
   Street & number: 133 Lower Boulevard
   City, town: New London
   State: CT

5. Location of Legal Description
   Courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: New London City Clerk
   Street & number: 181 State Street
   City, town: New London
   State: CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys
   Title: Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources
   Date: 1975
   Depository for survey records: Connecticut Historical Commission
   City, town: Hartford
   State: CT
DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

X. EXCELLENT
_-DETERIORATED
_-RUINS
_-FAIR
_-UNALTERED
_-EXPOSED

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

X. 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. Peneled 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 scree 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 sidelighted 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 upstairs, has an elaborately paneled ceiling. The offset stairway has rather elegantly turned balusters, turned and carved newels and plain railings; 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 archway. 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
SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1837 - built

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.
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.


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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

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**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

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**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. Hanahan

**TITLE**

State Historic Preservation Officer

**DATE**

3/2/76

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**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

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

**DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**ATTEST:**

**KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**
Form No. 10 301a

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

NAME
ACORS BARN HOUSE
AND OR COMMON
Law Office of Francis McGuire

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

PHOTO REFERENCE
PHOTO CREDIT
Bruce Clouette
DATE OF PHOTO
1975
NEGATIVE FILED AT
Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, CT

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

Interior, second-floor hall, view north

PHOTO NO
4
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

NAME

HISTORIC
Acors Barns House

AND/OR COMMON
Law Offices of Francis McGuire

LOCATION

CITY TOWN
New London

VICINITY OF
New London

COUNTY

STATE
CT

PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT
Bruce Clouette

DATE OF PHOTO
1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT
Connecticut Historical Commission

Hartford, CT

IDENTIFICATION

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

Rear (south) façade, view north east

PHOTO NO
2
NAME
HISTORIC
Acors Barns House

AND OR COMMON
Law Offices of Francis McGuire

LOCATION
CITY TOWN
New London

VICINITY OF
COUNTY
New London

STATE
CT

PHOTO REFERENCE
PHOTO CREDIT
Bruce Clouette

DATE OF PHOTO
1975

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Hartford, CT

IDENTIFICATION
DESCRIBE VIEW DIRECTION ETC IF DISTRICT GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Front (north) facade, view south

PHOTO NO
1
NAME
HISTORIC Acors Barns House
AND/OR COMMON Law Offices of Francis McGuire

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

MAP REFERENCE
SOURCE United States Geological Survey, 7.5' Series, New London Quadrangle
SCALE 1:24000
DATE 1970

REQUIREMENTS
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS
1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES