

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY BUILDING AND STRUCTURES HIST-6 REV. 01/06 STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON CULTURE AND TOURISM 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106 (860) 566-3005				<i>FOR OFFICE USE ONLY</i>																			
				Town No.												Site No.							
				UTM																			
				QUAD:																			
				DISTRICT												IF NR, SPECIFY							
☐ S ☐ NR												☐ Actual ☐ Potential											
1. BUILDING NAME (Common) Twitchell-Rowland Homestead												(Historic) Joseph Twitchell Homestead											
2. TOWN/CITY Oxford												VILLAGE						COUNTY New Haven					
3. STREET AND NUMBER (and/or location) 116 Christian Street																							
4. OWNER(S) Glendale of Oxford, LLC 1137 Seaview Avenue Bridgeport, CT,06606 ☐ Public ☒ Private																							
5. USE (Present) Empty										(Historic) Housing													
6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC:		EXTERIOR VISIBLE FROM PUBLIC ROAD ☒ Yes ☐ No						Interior accessible ☐ Yes ☒ No				IF YES, EXPLAIN											
7. STYLE OF BUILDING Integral leanto colonial												DATE OF CONSTRUCTION c.1755											
8. MATERIAL(S) (Indicate use or location when appropriate) ☐ Clapboard ☐ Asbestos Siding ☒ Wood Shingle ☐ Asphalt Siding ☐ Board & Batten ☐ Stucco ☐ Aluminum Siding ☒ Concrete Type: Block_____ ☒ Brick ☐ Other (Specify) _____ ☒ Fieldstone ☐ Cobblestone ☐ Cut Stone Type: _____																							
9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM ☐ Wood frame ☒ Post and beam ☐ Balloon ☐ Load bearing masonry ☐ Structural iron or steel ☐ Other (Specify) _____																							
10. ROOF (Type) ☒ Gable ☐ Flat ☐ Mansard ☐ Monitor ☐ sawtooth ☐ Gambrel ☐ Shed ☐ Hip ☐ Round ☐ Other (Specify) _____ (Material) ☐ Wood Shingle ☐ Roll Asphalt ☐ Tin ☐ Slate ☒ Asphalt Shingle ☐ Built up ☐ Tile ☐ Other (Specify) _____																							
11. NUMBER OF STORIES 2.5										APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS 30'x 34' with 21'x16' ell													
12. CONDITION (Structural)										(Exterior)													
☐ Excellent ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated										☐ Excellent ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated													
13. INTEGRITY (Location)										WHEN?		(Alterations)		IF YES, EXPLAIN									
☒ On original site ☐ Moved												☒ Yes ☐ No		Ell added, new exterior door, back stair re-oriented.									
14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES ☒ Barn ☐ Shed ☒ Garage ☐ Other landscape features or buildings (Specify) ☐ Carriage House ☐ Shop ☐ Garden																							
15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT ☒ Open land ☐ Woodland ☒ Residential ☒ Scattered buildings visible from site ☐ Commercial ☐ Industrial ☒ Rural ☐ High building density																							
16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS The building sits in a prominent place on a hillside at the head of Towner Road with open fields around it.																							

(over)

17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (Interior and/or exterior)
See continuation sheet.

18. ARCHITECT
N/A

BUILDER
Unknown

19. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE
See continuation sheet.

PHOTOGRAPHER
James Sexton

DATE
February 2005

VIEW

NEGATIVE ON FILE

NAME
James Sexton

DATE
15 March 2006

ORGANIZATION

ADDRESS
274 Clinton Ave.
New Rochelle, NY 10801

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE

☐ None known ☐ Highways ☐ Vandalism ☒ Developers ☐ Other _____
☐ Renewal ☐ Private ☐ Deterioration ☐ Zoning ☐ Explanation _____

HIST-6 REV. 01/06 (Back)

Section 17 (Continued)

Exterior

The Joseph Twitchell Homestead is a 2.5-story integral leanto house with an ell and enclosed modern front porch that sits on Christian Street, looking west down Towner Lane, in the northeastern part of Oxford. (Figures 1-3) It was constructed ca. 1755. Despite subsequent additions, the main block's size, shape, pattern of fenestration and the location of its chimney all identify it as a product of the 18th century.

Four distinctive elements define the original structure. The asymmetrical mass of the building, with a 2-story front wall and a 1-story rear wall (and the attendant asymmetrical roof) identify the building as a saltbox or integral leanto house. (The fact that the leanto is in fact integral to the original house can be confirmed on the interior of the building.) The brick chimney rising from the middle of the roof's ridge indicate that it built on a center chimney plan. The symmetrical disposition of the windows on the façade suggests that the building is a product of a burgeoning Georgian interest in balance. Finally, an overhang at the level of the attic floor creates a shadow line across the end of the building, providing a decorative touch in an otherwise simple building. These elements are not diminished by the various additions to the building. The modern front porch emphasizes the location of the entry in the middle of the façade, while the dormer on the rear of the building is also centrally located. While the ell was added to the northern end of the eastern wall, it clearly reads as an addition and so does not diminish the impact of the original structure. An extension of the roof to create an overhang along all four walls also does not greatly affect the overall impression the building creates. The roof is currently covered with asphalt shingles.

The majority of the doors and windows in the building were changed after the building was constructed. Most of the windows are double-hung sash with the majority being 6/6. There is also 20 pane fixed window flanked by two 4/4 windows in the northern wall of the main block. The porch contains 1/1 fixed windows that have had muntins added to look like 2/2 windows. The front door is a 19th century four panel door while the door in the southern gable end is a modern six panel door. The two rear doors both contain two panels surmounted by nine lights.

The main block of the building sits on a fieldstone foundation while the front porch rests on cinder blocks. The ell is supported by a combination of the two materials.

Interior

The interior of the building is a combination of well-preserved spaces and those that have been modified both to contain modern conveniences and to turn part of the second floor into a separate apartment. It is divided into four rooms on the first floor and five on the second. The earliest material is located in the front rooms and stair hall on both floors; most of the eastern rooms have been modernized.

While the front door was replaced during the 19th century much of the rest of the material in the stair hall appears to date to the construction of the building ca. 1755. The open stringer stairs rise in three runs to the second floor; the central run sits atop a paneled wall. The molded banister sits on turned balusters with sawn decorations on the end of each stair. (Figure 4)

Both the northwestern and southwestern rooms on the first floor feature elaborately paneled fireplace walls with arch-topped fireplace openings decorated with bolection moldings. (Figures 5 and 6) In the southwestern room the other walls are decorated with paneled wainscoting; in the northwestern room there is a chair rail. The posts and girts are visible and cased in each room. No summer beam is visible in either room.

The rear spaces on the first floor have all been modernized, with a single large room and bathroom in the leanto of the main block and a modern kitchen in the ell. The leanto also contains the stairs to the cellar. In the cellar, one can see the base of the completely reconstructed chimney as well as a small space under the front porch which a former resident indicates was used to store canned goods.

The second floor follows a similar pattern to the first floor: the best preserved rooms are in the western part of the house while those in the eastern part have been modernized and modified.

The two front rooms on this floor both contain original material on their chimney-end walls. In the northwestern room the wall is sheathed with feather-edge boards while in the southwestern room this wall is covered in paneling. The southwestern room also contains a fireplace.

The rear of the second floor was reconfigured to provide a modern kitchen (under the dormer), bathroom, and access from the exterior so that it could be used as a separate apartment. This resulted in the removal of much of the original material, other than the cantilevered tie beams that support the rear slope of the roof.

The attic is a single, large open space that is entered from behind the chimney on the second floor.

Outbuildings

There are two historic outbuildings on the Twitchell Homestead property, both barns. (Figure 7) The more easterly, or upper, barn was constructed as a three-bay side-entry (or English) bank barn during the middle of the 19th century. (Figure 8) The original barn of roughly 30' by 40' was expanded in four building campaigns. The first involved the addition of another bay to the south, lengthening the building along the ridge. Next, a small ell was added to the east of the structure. During the 1930s this small ell to the east was replaced with the current shed which was formerly used for equipment storage. Finally, a small pent roofed addition was run across the lower level of the barn at the northern end. This provided additional space in the lower level of the barn, and new access to this space. The barn is covered in vertical siding and has an asphalt shingle roof. There are sliding doors on the eastern side of the main block; the ell has doors opening to the north.

The second barn is also from the 19th century, although it appears to have been built toward the end of that period. (Figure 9) While rectangular in shape, it is a narrower and longer structure than the upper barn. It, too, is built into the hillside. Its eastern side is one story while its western is two. This barn was also expanded along its long axis. This expansion was undertaken during the 1930s when the Rowland family was trying to make their farm more productive.¹ The barn is covered in a combination of vertical sheathing and clapboards. It is roofed with asphalt shingles.

¹ Electronic correspondence with Dorothy DeBisschop, May 23, 2006 recounting discussion with Fred Rowland and Ed Rowland.

Section 19 (Continued)

The house has long been associated with prominent people and families in the Oxford area. It was originally constructed for Joseph Twitchell, a descendant of John Twitchell, who had come to Derby from Middlesex County, Massachusetts. (There is some debate about exactly where he came from.) John Twitchell served as a town selectman in Derby and was one of the petitioners who sought, successfully, to form the new Oxford ecclesiastical society in 1741.² Joseph Twitchell's son, Jeremy Twitchell was the next owner of the house. He married Anna Candee.³ The Candee's were another prominent family in Oxford. Anna Candee's nine uncles all fought in the Revolution, and three of them were later carpenters in the community.⁴

The Twitchell Homestead later passed to Jeremy's son-in-law, D.C. Riggs (husband to Eunice Twitchell), a leader in the Oxford Agricultural Society during the 1860s and 1870s, when that group operated the largest agricultural fair in the area.⁵ Riggs was also the First Selectman in Oxford. The house next belonged to Owen Buckingham who operated a meat and butchering business, supplying homes and stores in Oxford, Seymour and vicinity with fresh beef, pork, lamb, and poultry. After Buckingham, the house was owned by Jordan Crofut before being purchased by Philip Rowland. Rowland's farm was known for the high quality of the milk produced there and was among the first accepted to produce milk for the Southbury Creamery. Mr. Rowland was also active in community activities. For many years he was the moderator at the Oxford Town Meeting. He was one of the first Masters of the Oxford Grange and also one of the organizers of the Oxford Boy Scout Troop #1.⁶ The Rowland family owned the farm for much of the 20th century before selling to developers in the 2004.

Architecturally the house is distinguished by three elements: the amount of original material that survives, the quality of its interior woodwork, and the way in which the timber frame is assembled. While the building has been modernized and reorganized, a surprising amount of original material survives. In addition to the timber frame, a number of early doors, the original stairs, several walls of paneling and other decorative woodwork still remains in the building. The interior woodwork, especially in the two front rooms on the ground floor, is of very high quality. The curved bolection molding in the surround of the fireplace in the northern first floor room is especially well executed. The frame of the building is also quite significant because it is an example of a construction style, referred to as reverse assembly, which reverses the relationship between the plate and tie beam.⁷ It also uses mortise and tenon joinery, rather than lap dovetail joinery, to tie the three major posts together at the post head.⁸ While there are well documented examples of this approach being used in England, it is frequently cited as a sign

² Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *Genealogy of the Twitchell family; record of the descendants of the Puritan - Benjamin Twitchell, Dorchester, Lancaster, Medfield and Sherborn, Massachusetts, 1632-1927*, (New York, N.Y. : Priv. print. for H.K. Twitchell, 1929), p. 15.

³ Unpublished genealogical notes provided by Dorothy de Bisschop; <http://www.oxford-historical-society.org/Homestead-history/3gens-twitchell.pdf>.

⁴ Oxford Historical Society website. <http://www.oxford-historical-society.org/>

⁵ B. H. Davis, "Oxford Reminiscences No. 20," *Seymour Record*, 1913. Oxford Historical Society website.

⁶ Oxford Historical Society website.

⁷ "Ozengell Barn, Ozengell Grange, Ramsgate" *The Annual Report of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, 2004*, p. 10.

<http://www.canterburytrust.co.uk/annreps/pdfs/2004/004.pdf>. The term was coined by Cecil Hewett in opposition to the more common approach, which he dubbed normal assembly ("Timber Building in Essex," *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, New Series (1961), 33-37).

⁸ Jack A. Sobon, *Historic American Timber Joinery: A Graphic Guide*, Section II "Tying Joints: Tie at the Plate," p. 9.

<http://www.tfguild.org/joinery/part2.pdf>

of an archaic building.⁹ Nevertheless, it can be found in this country. The technique is relatively rare in Connecticut, with fewer than 40 documented examples and none prior to 1700.¹⁰

⁹ “Ozengell Barn, Ozengell Grange, Ramsgate,” p. 10; Sarah Pearson, *The Medieval Houses of Kent: An Historical Analysis*, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office for the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1994); J.T. Smith, “The Early Development of Timber Buildings: the passing-brace and reversed assembly,” *The Archaeological Journal*, v. 131 (1974), p. 239.

¹⁰ James Sexton, “Lowland Framing Influences on the Pre-1750 Domestic Architecture of Coastal Connecticut,” *The Impact of New Netherlands upon the Colonial Long Island Basin: Report of a Yale-Smithsonian Seminar Held at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, May 3-5, 1990*; James Sexton, *Craftsmen, clients, and buildings: the domestic architecture of Guilford, Connecticut, 1689-1789*, Doctoral Dissertation, Yale University, 1999; additional materials in the files of the author.

Joseph Twitchell Homestead
116 Christian Road
Oxford, CT

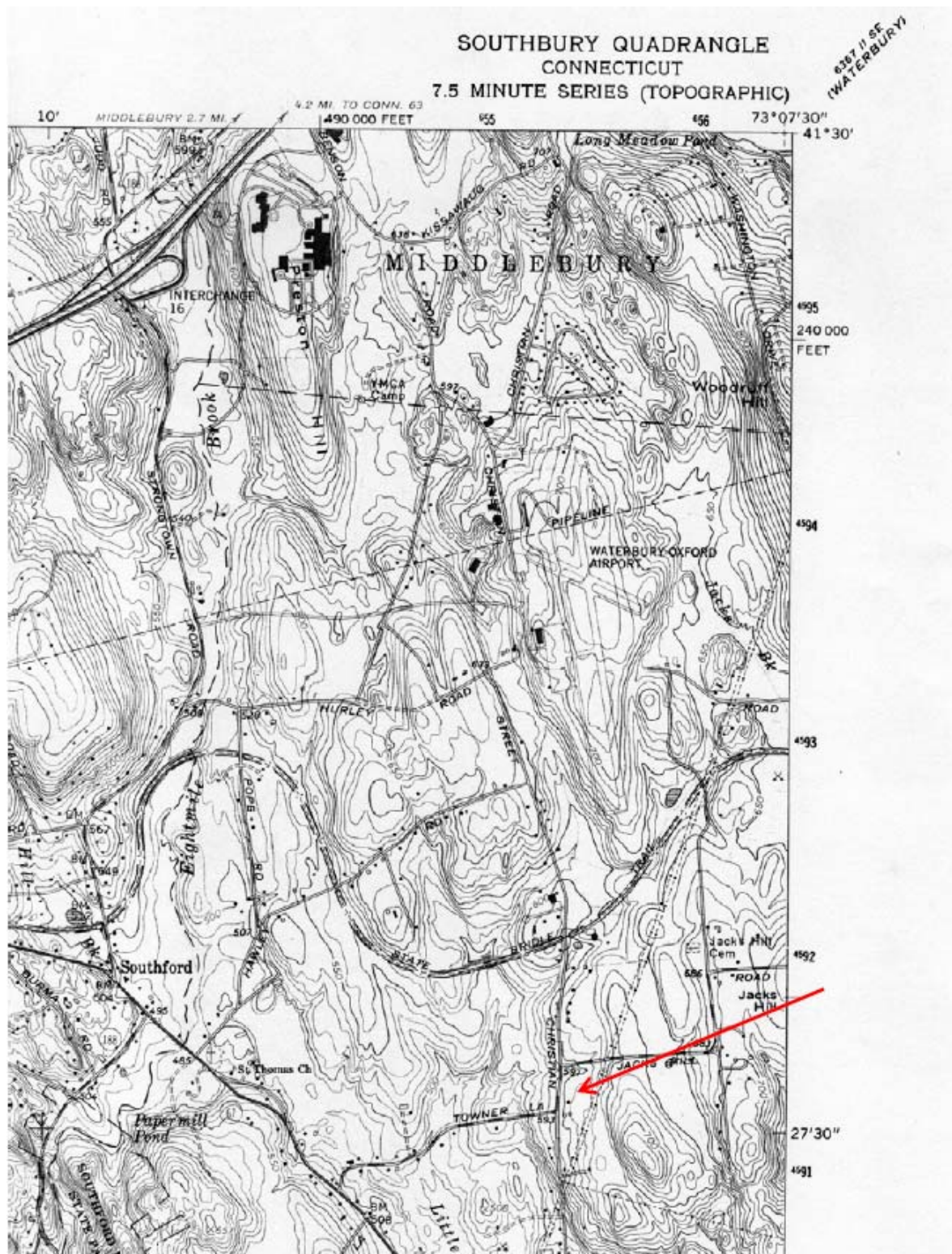


Figure 1 -- The Joseph Twitchell Homestead is located at the head of Towner Lane in Oxford.



Figure 2 – The Joseph Twitchell Homestead from the northwest.



Figure 3 – The Joseph Twitchell Homestead from the southeast.



Figure 4 – The front stairs from the southwest.



Figure 5 – The fireplace wall in the northwestern room from the North.



Figure 6 – The fireplace wall in the southwestern room from the southwest.

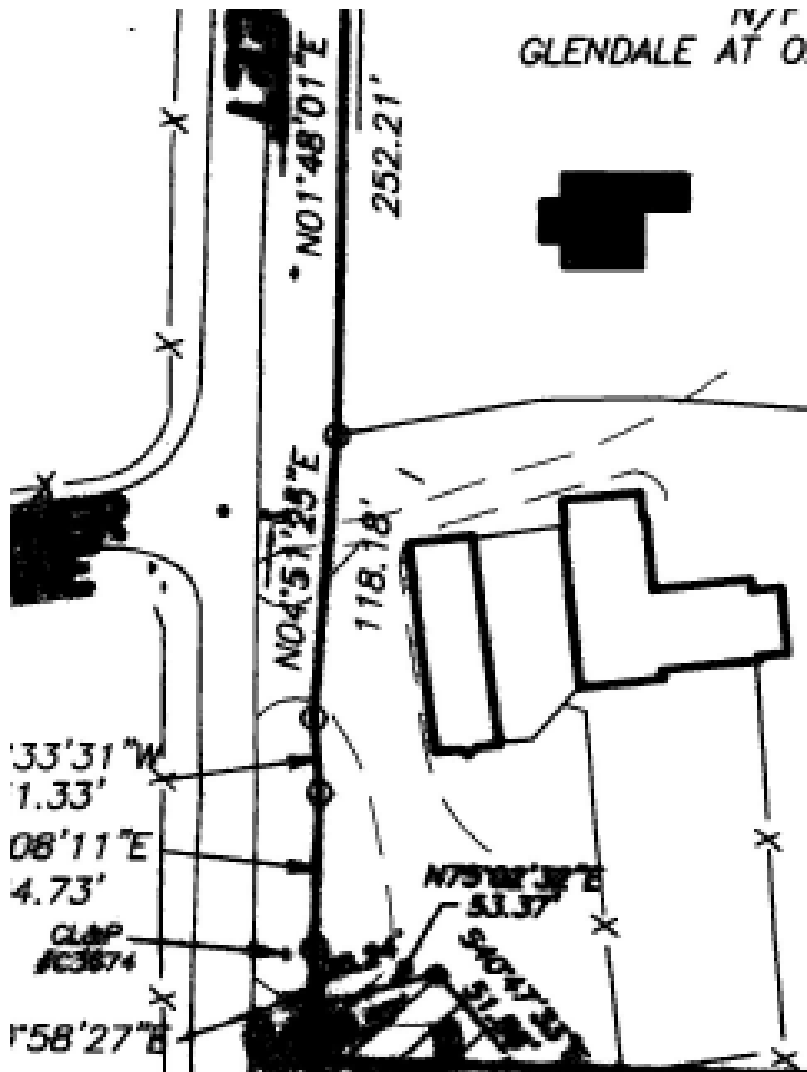


Figure 7 – A detail of the Twitchell property map showing the relationship between the house (the solid figure at the top) and the two barns (the open figures below it). The upper barn is the L-shaped outline to the right; the lower one is the rectangle to the left. The intersection is between Towner Lane and Christian Road.



Figure 8 – The “upper” barn.



Figure 9 – The “lower” barn.