

Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism
Historic Preservation and Museum Division/State Historic Preservation Office

CONNECTICUT STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating individual properties and districts to the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places (C.G.S. Chapter 184b, Sec. 10-409(2)). See instructions in *How to Complete the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets. Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Frederick R. Buckley-Thomas A. Curry House
 other names/site number Peter Tuttle House

2. Location

street & number 300 Newtown Avenue
 city or town Norwalk vicinity
 county Fairfield zip code 06851 not for publication

3. State Agency Certification

I hereby certify that this nomination meets does not meet the documentation standards and criteria for registering properties in the Connecticut Register of Historic Places. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 State Historic Preservation Officer Date

4. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
 (Check only one box)

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

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
1	0	structures
		objects
2	1	Total

Property Owner
 name Randolph Briggs & Elaine McCarthy
 address 300 Newtown Avenue
 city Norwalk state code CT
 zip code 06851 phone 212-795-7916

5. Historic Preservation Council

Approval date _____

Comments _____

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/Archaeological Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial _____

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Granite
walls Shingle, clapboard
roof Asphalt shingle
other _____

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Setting:
The Frederick R. Buckley-Thomas A. Curry House sits on a .56 acre lot at the southeast corner of Newtown Avenue (Connecticut Route 53) and Partrick Avenue. It includes two buildings and two structures, one building and both structures are contributing. The contributing building is a cross-gable Vernacular house built c.1794 with later nineteenth century additions (Photos 1-6).¹ The structures are a stone well house to the southwest of the house, which is still in use with a modern pump (Photos 9 and 10, and a dry-laid stone wall which surrounds the property on the north, south and west sides (Photos 28-30). The wall continues to the east to delineate the eastern half of the original one and one half acre lot which was subdivided in 1976.² A noncontributing wood frame garage with a gable roof, on the site of an older barn

¹ Brophy, "Narrative History of 300 Newtown Avenue Norwalk, CT;" Reyman-Lock, "Documented History of 300 Newtown Avenue."

² Leonard Surveyors. "Map of Property of R. Richard Roina, Norwalk, Connecticut," 1976.

(demolished) is to the northeast of the house (Photo 11). A dry-laid stone wall surrounds the property on all sides. The area surrounding the house is prominently residential, but there is a neighborhood variety store and deli to the northwest across Newtown Avenue.

The house faces south on a site that rises gently to the east. It is bounded by Newtown Avenue (Connecticut Route 53) on the west, Partrick Avenue to the north, the lots of houses at 151 Partrick Avenue to the east, and 294 Newtown Avenue to the south (Figure 1). Newtown Avenue was originally part of the Newtown and Norwalk Turnpike, which was chartered in 1829.³ It is a two lane, two-way macadam-paved roadway without sidewalks in this section. It joins Partrick Avenue at a signalized intersection on the northwest corner of the lot of 300 Newtown Avenue. Partrick Avenue is named for the family that once owned land at this intersection. It is a two lane, two-way macadam-paved roadway without sidewalks that connects Newtown Avenue in Norwalk with Wilton Road (Connecticut Route 33) in Westport, where its name changes to Partrick Road. Landscaping consists of a lawn to the north, south and west of the house, as well as foundation plantings, mature trees and shrubs. A gravel driveway near the southern boundary of the property runs east from Newtown Avenue to the garage.

Exterior:

The house sits on an exposed ashlar granite foundation. It is covered in unpainted wood shingles and painted clapboards. It has several distinctive periods of construction. The oldest section was built c.1794 and as a one-and-a-half story early Post-Colonial era side gable house with a full basement. It was later expanded with a lean-to addition to the east (Photos 1-6). The façade is three bays wide with the main entrance in the westernmost bay. A stone path leads up to the original front door from the garage situated toward the southeastern extent of the property and terminates in two large fieldstone entry steps directly in front of the main entrance. There is a painted nine-over-six double hung wood window to the east of the entrance in the original section of the house and another to the east of this window on the lean-to addition. A single painted nine-over-six double hung wood window is centered in the gable of the original block. There is a basement entrance with a bulkhead door centered under the window to the east of the entrance. The profile of the original roof gable is visible on the façade of this block and it steps down at its junction with the lean-to. The west elevation has a pair of windows similar to those on the façade on the first story and two six light painted wood awning windows at the cornice. A painted casement window with three twelve-light sash is centered on the east elevation of this block (Photos 1, 2, 6-8). The northern third of this elevation is part of an addition. It is covered in wide clapboard and there is an entrance near its juncture with the original block and a square four-light, awning window to the north of this entrance. There are two skylights in the roof above the entrance and a dormer with a casement window with two-over-two sash above the skylights (Photo 5).

A two-story side gable addition was built on the north elevation of the original block in the nineteenth century. It has an exposed rubble stone foundation with a window near its western end and it is covered in painted clapboard. There is a painted wood six-over-six double hung window on the first story near the western end and an identical window above it on the second story of the south elevation of the addition. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles and it has a centered brick chimney at the ridge of the roof. A second, larger brick chimney is on the east side of the roof. The west elevation of the addition has a wood eight-over-eight double hung window on the north side of the first story and a wood six-over-six double hung window on its south side. There are wood six-over-six double hung windows on the north and south sides of the second story and a similar window is centered in the gable (Photos 1-4).

The north elevation of the house is divided into two sections. The western section is an extension of the addition and it has a wood six-over-six double hung window in the center of its first story and a similar, larger

³ Frederick James Wood, *The Turnpikes of New England*, 402.

window on the second story. There is a narrow return on the east side of this section and this has an entrance with a stone entry porch protected shed roof. The center section reveals the same profile as the original block and it has two wood six-over-six double hung windows on the first story with a similar window centered in the gable. The lean-to has a single centered, square two-over-two window (Photos 4 and 5).

Interior:

The entry from the front door located in the earliest part of the house leads directly into a plain public room, rather than an entryway. This room, currently used as a TV room but referred to hereafter as the Keeping Room, has two fireplaces – a hearth with a Yankee crane and an external bake oven with an underlying niche and a smaller secondary fireplace on the western side of the chimney – which would have been situated along the original northern side of the home (Photo 12-14). The eastern side of the original house has a shed roof which once was likely a lean-to where animals were kept. This lean-to was incorporated into the home and enclosed during the 19th century. The floor in the Keeping Room is wide plank oak, although this is part of a major renovation and restoration project done in 2012 by the current owners (Photos 15 and 16). To the north of the Keeping Room is a second room which functions as a family room. This room was part of the late 19th century addition and has original wide plank pine flooring. The original floors are overlain by 20th century strip-flooring, which the homeowner intends to remove to expose the pine planks.

To the northwest of the Keeping Room is a dining room with original windows and mantle, although it was used for a stove and is now blocked. Lying to the north of the dining room and accessible from it is the kitchen. The kitchen has original vertical strip ash wall, floor and ceiling (Photos 17-19).

There are two staircases which allow access to the upstairs. The first is located in the southeastern corner of the Keeping Room and leads to a room which is now used as a bedroom, although during Buckley and Curry's proprietorship it was used as a writer's studio. The banister and newel post of this staircase were grain painted during the restoration (Photo 15). The second staircase is located in the northeastern corner of the dining room and it has a narrow well and a steep rise (Photo 17).

There are four interconnected rooms on the second floor. All second floor rooms have furnished tongue-in-groove fir floors, plaster ceilings and plaster walls with wood baseboards. Doorways are framed in simple flat moldings and windows are surrounded by similar moldings. All doors are wooden batten construction; painted doors were installed with the c. 1870 addition, while the unpainted door in the northeast room appears to be older (Photos 20-23). The room on the northwest corner of the nineteenth century addition is reached by stairs from the dining room (Photos 20 and 21). It connects to the bedroom on the southwest corner of the house, which has a stairway to the attic and a closet on its north wall (Photo 22). That bedroom also connects to the northeast room on the second floor has windows on its north and east walls. It has an exposed beam on its west wall and an early batten door on the south wall. The doorway on the south wall leads to a short hallway with a bathroom, including a vintage tub and sink, on its east side and a bedroom on the southeast corner of the second floor (Photo 23). This room has windows on its south and west walls as well as exposed posts at its corners and two exposed beams (Photos 24 and 26). Frederick Robert Buckley used the southwest corner of this bedroom as a writing space (Figure 2, Photo 24). The window on the lower right of the current image was added later.

Integrity

The Frederick R. Buckley-Thomas A. Curry House retains the feeling, setting and association of as the house in which both Frederick R. Buckley and Thomas A. Curry lived while writing most of their work. The home was well maintained throughout this period, but retained many of its late 18th century features including lean-to

addition and internal dirt floor (now wood).⁴ It remains in its original location surrounded by mature trees and the lot is bounded by early stone walls. The plan of the house has evolved over time from a simple two story house with one room on each floor, to a larger, but still modest, home. Its exterior remains intact and all additions are sympathetic to the original building. The interior retains plaster walls, wood trim, exposed structural elements and fireplaces. Its plan, scale, massing and interior are nearly unchanged from the period of significance associated with Frederick Robert Buckley and Thomas (Tom) Albert Curry, Jr. (1921-1976). The current owners have undertaken a thoughtful and painstaking restoration of the property over the past 17 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Frederick R. Buckley-Thomas A. Curry House is significant under Criterion 1 for literature as it derives its primary significance for its association with pulp fiction writers Frederick Robert Buckley and Thomas Albert Curry, Jr. Buckley and Curry wrote a total of 401 works while residing in the house, the first of which was Buckley's "Reveries of a Fiction Writer," published in the January 1921 edition of *People's Favorite Magazine*.⁵ Buckley lived in the house year-round between 1921 and 1934 when he sold the property to his brother-in-law, Tom Curry, who remained in the house until his death in 1976.

Criteria # 1: Literature

Pulp Fiction

As a genre, pulp fiction was an incredibly important type of literature. It not only accompanied the growth of literacy in America, the industrial revolution and the associated diffusion of ideas, but also the exploitation of the new markets therein created. Ultimately, it provided the foundation for film noir and served to satisfy interests not previously discussed in literature, particularly those considered uncanny and taboo.

"Pulp" describes a type of fiction writing popular between the 1880s and 1950s that was printed originally on the cheapest grade of pulpwood paper⁶. Overtime, the term took on additional categoric and aesthetic meanings. As a type of literature, the pulps were concerned with providing thrill and escape for their readers; simply put, they were intended to elicit excitement, astonishment or, as the case may be with more the more taboo issues, arousal.⁷

The pulps owe their existence to developments in the 19th century which saw improved school systems, increased literacy of the common masses, and inventions which allowed mass-production, printing and distribution to become more efficient, quicker, cheaper and easier. Among these innovations was rotary steam presses and the expansion of both the railroads and the postal system which allowed for both timely and cost-effective distribution of goods. These new systems attracted entrepreneurs of the industrial age, all of whom saw a new market of literate people to exploit. As a result, the first mass-produced, affordable fiction was introduced; it took the form of newspapers and magazines and could be bought with a single penny. This new market was strictly profit-driven and meant to satisfy the baser tastes of the masses. Penny Dreadfuls and story weeklies quickly gave rise to dime novels full of melodrama, crime and lechery in the 1860s. Soon publishers had a set of proven plot lines on which they relied and recurring characters began to surface; this gave birth to new genres of literature including science fiction and the hard-boiled detective story. It also created a demand

⁴ Reyman-Lock, "Documented History of 300 Newtown Avenue."

⁵ BUCKLEY, F(rederick) R(ober) (1896-1976) ([stories](#)) and "CURRY, TOM; [i.e., Thomas Albert Curry, Jr.] (1900-1976) ([stories](#))," *TheFictionMags Index*.

⁶ Dinan, *Sports in the Pulp Magazines*, 3,

⁷ Ibid, 4.

for hacks – writers who were reliable and could produce a steady product on-demand. These hacks were paid little for their product and often were required to use house pseudonyms to ensure they would not gain personal fame and demand higher fees.⁸

In 1882, the first pulp magazine appeared. It was called *The Golden Argosy*, and eventually became a 200-page periodical called *Argosy* dedicated to short fiction. *Popular Magazine*, owned by Street and Smith, was its chief rival.⁹

By 1900, the pulps had expanded. They no longer were agglomerations of general fiction, but some were dedicated to specific genres, including Western, crime and fantasy. By the 1930s, the literary environment was open to anything and the pulp magazines responded¹⁰. New pulps were dedicated to stories about World War I Flying Aces, while others were sex themed or focused on zeppelins. Of these, some gained a degree of notoriety because of their innovative creations. For instance, *Amazing Stories*, published by Hugo Gernsback, invented the science fiction story, while *Black Mask* originated detective stories by employing authors like Dashiell Hammett, the creator of the *Maltese Falcon* and characters like Hammett's Sam Spade.¹¹ In the 1930s, the introduction of the paperback book ultimately led to the demise of the pulp magazine altogether. Within two decades, the pulps had evolved from simple newspaper and magazine style publications which relied on a tried-and-tested set of platforms, to original paperback books that relied on the of commissioning new work in addition to reprinting hardcover editions in a more affordable format. These paperbacks led to a revolution in pulp fiction - gritty and realistic stories which often incorporated controversial and taboo themes¹².

Pulp authors who went on to greater achievements were rare. The genre depended on many journeyman writers who were willing to turn out massive amounts of material that would be published using several different names. Frederick Robert Buckley and Thomas Albert Curry, Jr. were part of that group of authors who provided the stories that fueled this industry. Though never truly famous, both of them created popular characters and story series that were read for decades by thousands of fans; many of their books were reprinted in the 1960s and 1970s. Curry's stories, in particular, were inspired by historical events and people, and he was able to successfully transition from pulps to other genres that enabled him to enjoy a longevity that other pulp writers did not. One of his most famous characters was The Rio Kid. The series had its own magazine published between 1939 and 1953 (Figure 3). They earned a living at their craft and spent most of their careers writing at 300 Newtown Avenue.

Frederick Robert Buckley

Frederick Robert Buckley was a notable pulp fiction author. He was born on December 20, 1896 in Colton, Staffordshire, England to Robert John and Mary (Wakelin) Buckley. He spent much of his childhood at his grandfather's house in Ireland, but received his formal education at the King Edward the Sixth's School in Birmingham, England.¹³ In an autobiographical article, Buckley stated that he started writing when he was 10 years old and credits his father with instilling in him an understanding of the craft. His father worked as a newspaper journalist. Initially, he was the Irish special commissioner for the *Birmingham Gazette*, but was later employed as a music critic for the *Manchester Guardian*.¹⁴ When Frederick was 18, he matriculated to

⁸ Server, *Encyclopedia of Pulp Fiction Writers*. xi.

⁹ *Ibid*, xii.

¹⁰ Carr, *The Western Pulp Hero: An Investigation Into the Psyche of an American Legend*., 16-17.

¹¹ *Ibid*, xiii; Cline, *Dashiell Hammett: Man of Mystery*, 2014, 30.

¹² *Ibid*, xiv; Dinan, *Sports in the Pulp Magazines*., 180.

¹³ "F. R. Buckley – Swashbuckling Author."

¹⁴ "Wife of Norwalk Writer Ends Life in Husband's Car." *Hartford Courant*, November 16, 1931; Buckley I, January 7, 1922.

Birmingham University where he studied journalism. Upon graduation, he worked for newspapers in both the United Kingdom and France.¹⁵

Frederick was ultimately hired as a junior reporter for the *Birmingham Gazette*. While employed here, he began writing stories in his spare time. The strain of working as a journalist and creatively writing on his own took its toll and Buckley's health began to deteriorate, spurring him to quit his job. He sought alternative employment and soon was hired as the secretary to a businessman and munitions magnate bound for the United States. In 1915, Buckley boarded the steamship *St. Louis* in Liverpool and arrived in America on June 7 of that same year. He worked as the foreman of a building materials yard for some time, and soon his health improved.¹⁶

It was not long after he arrived in the United States that Buckley met Helen Curry, a Broadway actress and her brother, Tom. On July 1, 1916, Frederick married Helen in Stamford, Connecticut.¹⁷

After World War I started, Buckley could not find passage back to England. The only way he could get home was to join the army. Unfortunately, the medical examiner at the consulate found he did not meet the physical criteria; his illness had left him with heart trouble and he had poor eyesight. Now stranded in the United States, he began to look for newspaper work. He secured a job at *The Evening Mail*, a New York evening newspaper, as a movie critic. *The Evening Mail* had a Saturday magazine supplement called *Motion Picture Mail* to which Frederick was soon promoted editor. He left this job to take a position at Vitagraph, a New York motion picture studio, as a scenario writer and script reviewer. He even acted in several films while there.¹⁸

It was during his tenure at Vitagraph that Buckley sold a yarn called "Getting It" to *Black Cat Magazine* for \$20. After saving about \$200, Buckley left Vitagraph to pursue writing full-time. It was a fruitless endeavor; Frederick did not sell any stories and was forced to return to editing once again. He saved more capital and, once again, left his job to try his luck at fulltime creative writing. He sold 12 stories to *People's Magazine* and, although the magazine was interested in purchasing more, Buckley believed he had outgrown the magazine and produced a series of emotional and introspective stories which resulted in bankruptcy. He returned to editing again.¹⁹

Eventually, Frederick realized the purpose of writing was to entertain others, rather than himself²⁰. With that idea in mind and more money saved, he once again left his job and achieved his first great success in 1921, the same year that he and his wife moved to 300 Newtown Avenue in Norwalk, Connecticut, where he would continue to write all of his stories until he sold the house to his brother-in-law, Tom Curry, in 1934. He wrote "Peg-Leg Garfield" for *Western Stories Magazine* and, subsequently, sold stories to *Adventure*, *The Blue Book*, *Short Stories*, and *People's*. In 1922 he won the O'Henry Prize for his short story "Gold-Mounted Guns," published in the March 1922 edition of *Red Book Magazine*, which was accompanied by an award of \$500. That same year, his daughter, Faith Ann, was born.²¹ In 1923, Buckley petitioned for naturalization and he was granted citizenship on May 21 of that year in Bridgeport, Connecticut.²²

¹⁵ Buckley, "Writing Entertaining Fiction."

¹⁶ Ibid; "F. R. Buckley – Swashbuckling Author."

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Ends Life in Car, Seated By Husband." *New York Times*. November 16, 1931; "Wife of Norwalk Writer Ends Life in Husband's Car." *Hartford Courant*, November 16, 1931; "Cobb Wins O Henry Prize." *New York Times*, March 24, 1923.

²² Buckley, Frederick Robert. *United States of America Petition for Naturalization, March 30, 1921. Naturalization Records*; Buckley, Helen Abigail. *United States of America Petition for Naturalization, March 30, 1921. Naturalization Records*; Buckley, Frederick

Buckley was highly interested in the American West for a time. In order to really understand the genre, he decided to live in Laredo, Texas and immerse himself in Wild West culture in the 1910s; he collected guns, drove a large red Cunningham touring car, wore ranch clothes and carried a gun in a holster on his belt. This last custom he continued long after he moved to Norwalk²³. In 1924, while living at 300 Newtown Avenue, he began writing the Caradosso series which focused on an Italian soldier of fortune during the Middle Ages in the southeast bedroom on the second floor of the house. By this time, he had already amassed a large corpus of work consisting of approximately 150 short stories and novelettes²⁴. He was described in *Wireless Age Magazine* as smoking a pipe, staying up too late at night, being slightly unkempt and disheveled. The passage also mentioned his house as “a Colonial farmhouse [300 Newtown Avenue] which he rebuilt and fitted with modern improvements by his own fair hands.”²⁵

In 1931, Helen Curry Buckley committed suicide. The couple had been to dinner with friends, many of whom were other artists and writers in the Silvermine Colony.²⁶ Frederick and Helen left the dinner soon after 1:00 am and arrived in their driveway around 2:00 am on Sunday morning, November 15.²⁷ While Frederick usually wore his pistol in a holster on his belt, he had transferred the weapon to his overcoat pocket shortly before dinner. Newspapers suggested that Helen took the .45-caliber gun prior to getting in the car and, after her husband got out of the car to open the garage door, shot herself in her right temple, just in front of her ear causing almost immediate death.²⁸ The bullet tore a hole in the roof of the car. Although the medical examiner could not establish a motive, it was his opinion that Helen was “seized with a temporary fit of sadness.” The chief of police ruled it a suicide. Buckley was taken to the police station and questioned for a few hours but was not further detained.²⁹

After his wife’s death, Buckley’s brother-in-law, Tom Curry, and his wife moved into the house in Norwalk with their two children. Faith Ann, Frederick’s daughter, remained with her uncle and her father moved back to the United Kingdom in 1934. By July of that year, Buckley had found employment as a film critic for the *Birmingham Evening Despatch*. He also wrote several dramatized versions of the Gunpowder Plot – an historical event which saw Guy Fawkes arrested upon his attempt to blow up The House of Lords during the opening of Parliament on November 5, 1605. Several of his dramatizations were staged over the next few years on the anniversary of that plot.

From 1950 onward, Buckley lived in a supposedly haunted house in King’s Lynn, Norwich, called the Exorcist’s House. He died in 1976.³⁰

Robert. *United States of America Declaration of Intention, December 9, 1920. Declarations of Intention filed in New York County, 1907-1924.*

²³ “F. R. Buckley – Swashbuckling Author.”

²⁴ “Your Authors.” *Wireless Age Magazine*, October 1924.

²⁵ “Tom Curry – Author, Engineer, Sportsman.” *The Hour*, November 24, 1974.

²⁶ The Silvermine section of Norwalk was home to many writers, actors, and other artists beginning in the late nineteenth century. A full discussion of the arts in Silvermine can be found in Paul Graziano and Phillip S. Esser, “Silvermine Center Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places nomination, 2008.

²⁷ “Ex-Actress Kills Self Seated with Husband.” *Wilmington Morning News*, November 16, 1931; Frasier, David K. *Suicide in the Entertainment Industry*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002, 52.

²⁸ “Wife got gun in his coat, says writer.” *New York Daily News*, November 16, 1931

²⁹ “Ends Life in Car, Seated By Husband.” *New York Times*, November 16, 1931; “Wife of Noted Writer Commits Suicide in Auto.” *Billings Gazette*, November 16, 1931; “Blames Melancholy.” *Albuquerque Journal*, November 17, 1931.

³⁰ “A 17th century cottage with an unusual past: the ‘Exorcist’s House’ of King’s Lynn.” *Flickering Lamps*, April 7, 2017.

Thomas Albert Curry, Jr.

Like his brother in law, Thomas Albert Curry, Jr. (1900-1976) was a prolific pulp fiction writer. He was born on Retreat Avenue in Hartford, Connecticut on November 4, 1900. Although he spent his first two-and-a-half years in the house in which he was born, the rest of his childhood was punctuated by a series of moves. The first saw his family remove to Buffalo and then Syracuse, New York, before moving to Ridley Park and Summer Hill, Pennsylvania when Tom was ten. Four years later, they returned to New York and settled in Manhattan.³¹

As a boy, Tom was surrounded by successful writers. His father, Thomas Albert Curry, Sr., worked as the secretary/general manager to famed Broadway producer David Belasco and, in 1914, sold a play to his boss called “Just the Same As Now.”³² His mother, Sarah W. Jefferis, was a noted playwright³³, too, while his sister, Helen, was not only a Broadway actress, but also married fellow pulp fiction writer, F. R. Buckley. Although his household was immersed in the literary and dramatic arts, Tom did not initially pursue writing as a career.

Curry matriculated to Columbia University in 1918 and studied chemical engineering for three years. While there, he was a member of the varsity water polo team and, while at a football game, met his future wife, Louise Moore³⁴. It was not until the age of 20 that Tom began to write³⁵. It is unclear whether or not he viewed it as a viable career choice initially, but he said in an interview that he probably would not have pursued writing had his first serious attempt not been successful. In 1921, his first story, “Diamond in the Rough,” was purchased by A. L. Sessions, the editor of *People’s Favorite* magazine, for a total sum of \$25.³⁶ Within the year, he began writing prolifically and was published in six popular pulp magazines. Most of these early stories were Wild West fiction³⁷.

A few years after graduation, when Curry was 23, he accepted a job as a crime reporter for the William Randolph Hearst morning newspaper, *New York American*. He worked the overnight shift (6pm - 3am) and often accompanied policemen on investigations and arrests. In this way, he began to collect knowledge which, ultimately, aided in his creation of realistic stories that were rooted in life³⁸. Curry did not stay at this job long; he quit to create a number of detective stories, some of which were published in *Black Mask Magazine*.

Black Mask Magazine was started in 1920 by journalists H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan. They sold it in November of that year to Warner Publications and Joe Shaw became editor. Along with Curry, Dashiell Hammett (known for his characters Sam Spade and Nick and Nora Charles of *The Thin Man* fame) and Erle Stanley Gardner (creator of the Perry Mason series) became regular contributors.³⁹

³¹ Farley, *Tom Curry: A Biography*, 5-7.

³² “Experiences of 18 Years as Late David Belasco’s Secretary Related by Thomas A. Curry, Former Resident of Hartford.” *The Hartford Courant*. September 24, 1933; “Ex-Aide Farley of Belasco to Branch Out.” *The Los Angeles Times*. April 16, 1934; “Thomas A. Curry.” *New York Times*. June 24, 1947; “Thomas A. Curry in London with Belasco.” *The Hartford Courant*. May 17, 1920.

³³ Oakes, Catherine. “Soph Drama is Fast-Moving: Senior Offering Merits Cup.” *Connecticut College News*, March 9, 1949.

³⁴ Farley, *Tom Curry: A Biography*. 5, 7, 9.

³⁵ “Thomas A. Curry, Writer of Western Novels, Dies.” *New York Times*, October 9, 1976.

³⁶ Dinan, . *Sports in the Pulp Magazines*, 17; Farley, *Tom Curry: A Biography*, 8.

³⁷ Farley, *Tom Curry: A Biography*, 7-8

³⁸ Faison, *Existentialism, Film Noir, and Hard-Boiled Fiction*.

³⁹ Hughes, *Erle Stanley Gardner: The Case of the Real Perry Mason*, np.

On March 18, 1926, Tom married his college girlfriend, Louise Moore. He was an established author and had his storied published in many magazines. The couple was in no rush to buy a house and put down roots. Instead, they passed their first summer as a married couple in the Buckley home at 300 Newtown Avenue in Norwalk, Connecticut while his sister and brother-in-law were in Europe. Upon the Buckley's return, the Currys settled in Bermuda for six months where they lived in a cottage by the sea before moving to Westport, Connecticut. Eventually, the couple bought a house in Weston, Connecticut where they lived for the next four years. They then removed to Seabright, New Jersey.⁴⁰

Around 1930, Curry wanted new inspiration and, as a result, he and his wife began to travel. The couple went to the Western United States followed by a number of foreign countries. Eventually, they ended aboard a ship bound for the Caribbean and South America.⁴¹ In 1931, Tom's sister, Helen, wife of Frederick Buckley, committed suicide as described above. The Curry family, his wife and two children – Stephen Jeffery and Thomas III – moved into the Buckley home in Norwalk at that time. Frederick, Tom's brother-in-law, decided to return to his native England and left his daughter, Faith Ann, with her uncle and aunt. Eventually, Tom bought the house from Frederick.⁴² Tom Curry lived and wrote at 300 Newtown Avenue from 1931 until his death in 1976.

When his children were young, Tom found the noise generated too distracting to work. Although his brother-in-law worked in the upstairs room, Tom built a studio toward the rear of his property (demolished), but continued to live in the house. He worked in this studio at his typewriter for five or six hours per day, seven days a week including holidays. On average, he wrote between 500,000 and 600,000 words per year for twenty years and could finish full-length books or magazine stories in two to four weeks.⁴³

Throughout his life, Tom Curry loved swimming and took to tennis playing in the summer. He played competitively in Norwalk and Westport and won several competitions. During the 1930s, he competed alongside Robert Carse, another local fiction writer known for his maritime themed books.⁴⁴ won the men's doubles championship in the Westport Invitation Tennis Tournament. During the winter, Tom played badminton to stay active and even won several championships in that sport.⁴⁵

Between 1926 and 1933, Curry published 38 short stories for *Black Mask Magazine*. After 1931, all of his writing was done at 300 Newtown Avenue. In 1936, he began to produce a series of 85 *Texas Ranger* stories under the name Jackson Cole – a house-name he shared with Leslie Scott and Walker Tomkins, both of whom also wrote *Texas Ranger* other Western genre yarns. The series gained popularity and in 1939, Leo Margulies, the editor-in-chief of Standard Magazines - the Thrilling Group, asked Tom to author a new series for which Tom created one of his most famous characters, the Rio Kid. This character, as well as many of his others, were loosely based on historical figures, including Benito Juarez, Cochise, Geronimo, General George Armstrong, Custer, Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Wyatt Earp, Pat Garrett and Judge Roy Bean.⁴⁶ The first *Rio Kid* yarn, *Frontier Guns*, debuted in December 1939.⁴⁷ The first two installments earned Curry \$250, but the series had a

⁴⁰ Farley, *Tom Curry: A Biography*, 13-16.

⁴¹ "Tom Curry – Author, Engineer, Sportsman." *The Hour*, November 24, 1974.

⁴² Farley, *Tom Curry: A Biography*. Williamsport, Maryland: The Zane Grey Collector, 1975, 13-14; Reyman-Lock, "Documented History of 300 Newtown Avenue."

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "Robert Carse, 67, Wrote Sea Books." *New York Times*, January 15, 1971.

⁴⁵ "Tom Curry – Author, Engineer, Sportsman." *The Hour*, November 24, 1974.

⁴⁶ Dinan, *Sports in the Pulp Magazines*, 17; Reasoner, Ten Western Pulp Authors Worth Reading." *Cowboy Jamboree Magazine*, n.d.

⁴⁷ Stephensen-Payne, "The Rio Kid Western." *Galactic Central Publications*.

total of 76 issues and finally ended in May of 1953.⁴⁸ Several were reprinted in America in 1972, and some issues were contemporarily reprinted in Canada.

In 1946, tragedy struck the Curry household. Their son, Thomas III, was hit by a coal truck while riding his bicycle. He complained of a dull ache in his head, but otherwise seemed to be in good health. Three weeks after the accident, Thomas III died in the bathtub, most likely from the injuries he sustained several weeks prior. His father, as well as a local doctor, performed artificial respiration, but the medical examiner proclaimed the child dead when he arrived at the hospital around 10:00 pm that night. The bathtub in which the child died is still in the house.⁴⁹

In 1951, the magazine market collapsed. Tom had been writing at a fast clip for the previous 20 years, but he found a job working for Dorr-Oliver, Inc., an engineering firm who specialized in water filtration, located in Westport, Connecticut. Albeit an engineer by training, he worked for the company as an accountant, customs broker and buyer for chemicals and supplies for the next 14 years. He continued to live at 300 Newtown Avenue and wrote periodically during those years. During this time, he published an article on the Old West in the *Saturday Review*. He researched this article in the Western United States and his papers are filed with the University of Oregon. However, it wasn't until he retired that he made his return to writing and produced several hardcover westerns, many of which were revisions of other previously published pulp books.⁵⁰

During the 1960s, while still living at 300 Newtown Avenue, Tom wrote for the Zane Grey Western series under his own name and the house name, Romer Zane Grey. In 1964, Curry returned to freelance writing fulltime and, alongside Wood Cowan - another writer, illustrator and longtime resident of Connecticut.⁵¹ wrote 60 short biographies of famous cowboys like Billy the Kid, Calamity Jane and Black Bart.⁵²

By 1971, Thomas Curry had written yarns for 300-400 pulp magazines, published over 175 novels in both soft and hardcover editions. The vast majority of this work was done while he lived at 300 Newtown Avenue. He was a member of the Western Writers of America, enjoyed ping pong, and resided in the little house on Newtown Avenue in Norwalk for over 50 years. When Curry died in the living room on October 7, 1976 at the age of 75,⁵³ ownership passed to R. Richard Roina, a local lawyer, before being sold to the Litts and Zlatevs until the current owners, Elaine McCarthy and Randolph Briggs assumed control in 2003.

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⁴⁸ Carr., *The Western Pulp Hero: An Investigation Into the Psyche of an American Legend*, 40.

⁴⁹ "Artificial Respiration Fails to Revive Thomas Curry 3rd, 9." *The Hour*, 1946.

⁵⁰ "Tom Curry – Author, Engineer, Sportsman." *The Hour*, November 24, 1974.

⁵¹ "Wood Cowan Papers." *Syracuse University Libraries*. accessed online September 23, 2018.

⁵² "As it was in the Old West." *Daily News*, November 22, 1965.

⁵³ "Thomas Curry, Author of Adventurers, Dies." *Hartford Courant*, October 10, 1976.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _____

Municipal Map, Block and Lot Number and UTM Coordinate (If possible)

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	<u>5</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>24</u>				
	Map	Block	Lot				
1	<u>43T</u>	<u>365394</u>	<u>4555911</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

The boundaries of the property are those of the property at Map 5, Block 19, Lot 24 in the City of Norwalk, Connecticut.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The property was one full acre until 1976. After Curry died, his estate sold off the Partrick Avenue side of the property for development. The complete stone wall still surrounds the original full one acre plot that Buckley and Curry owned with just a break made for the driveway of the new house built on Partrick in 1976. The nominated boundary is congruent with the building lot surrounding the house owned by both Frederick R. Buckley and Thomas A. Curry during their years actively writing there.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daryn Reyman-Lock, Ph.D. and Tod Bryant, MA

organization Heritage Resources date August 24, 2020

street & number 23 Morgan Avenue telephone 203-852-9788

city or town Norwalk state CT zip code 06851

CONNECTICUT STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM – Continuation Form

Frederick R. Buckley-Thomas A. Curry House

Name of Property

Norwalk

Municipality

GRAPHICS

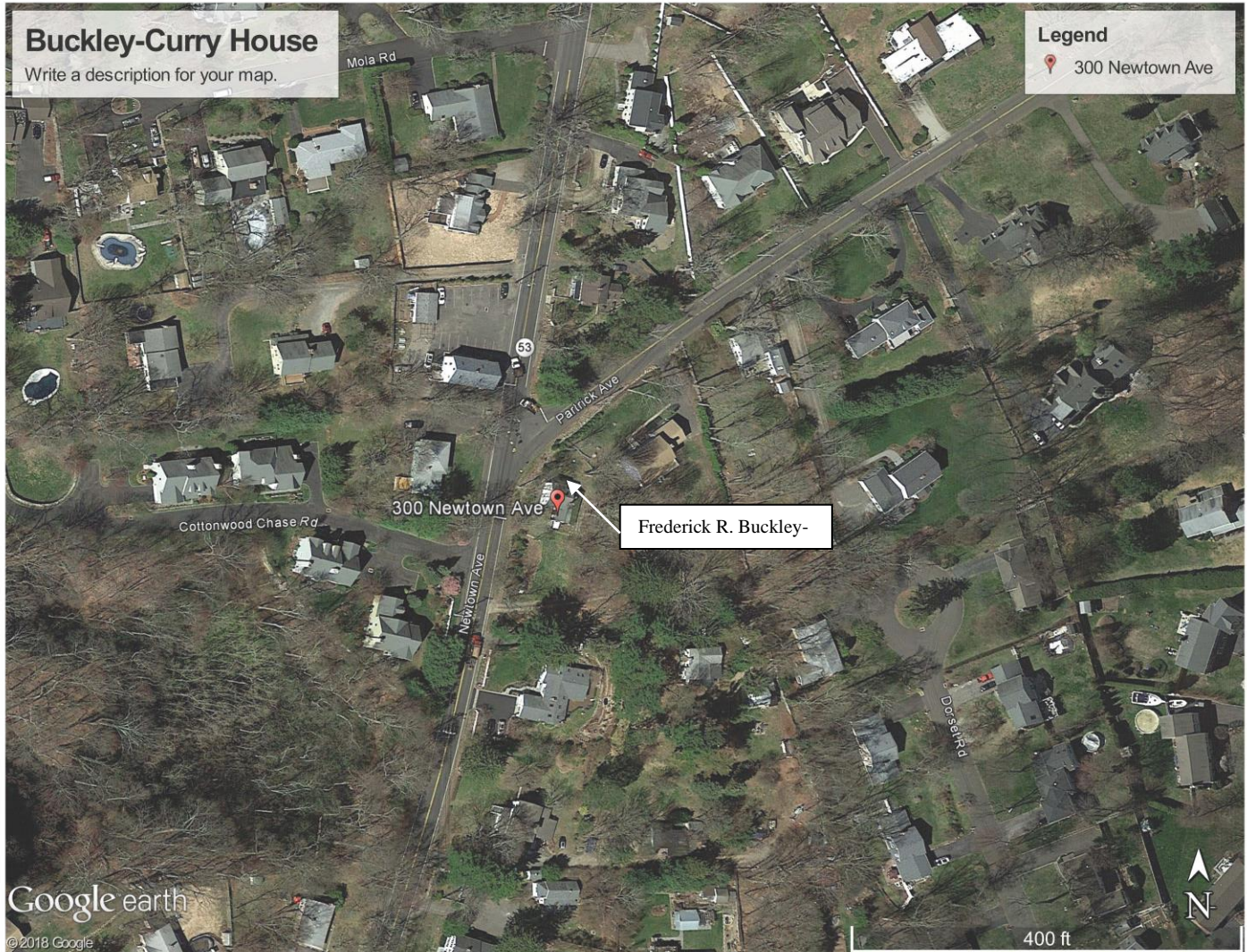


Figure 1. Map showing location of Frederick R. Buckley-Thomas A. Curry House



Figure 2. View Frederick Robert Buckley's writing studio c.1925 in the southwestern corner of southeast bedroom on second floor. (Briggs-McCarthy Collection)

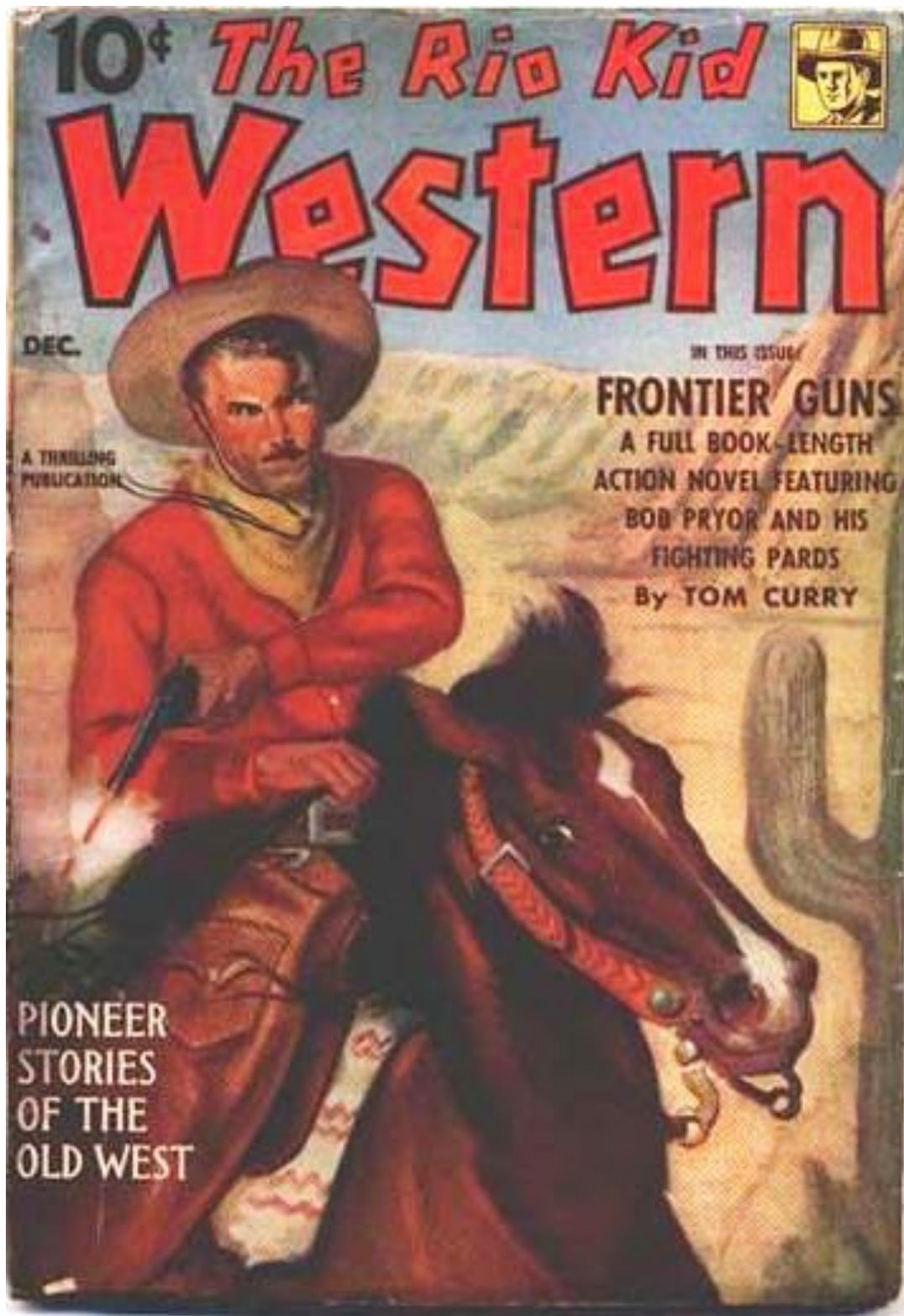


Figure 3. Cover of *The Rio Kid Western* magazine featuring a story by Tom Curry. (Adventure House)



Figure 4. Characteristic marks used in scribe rule framing. (Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation)

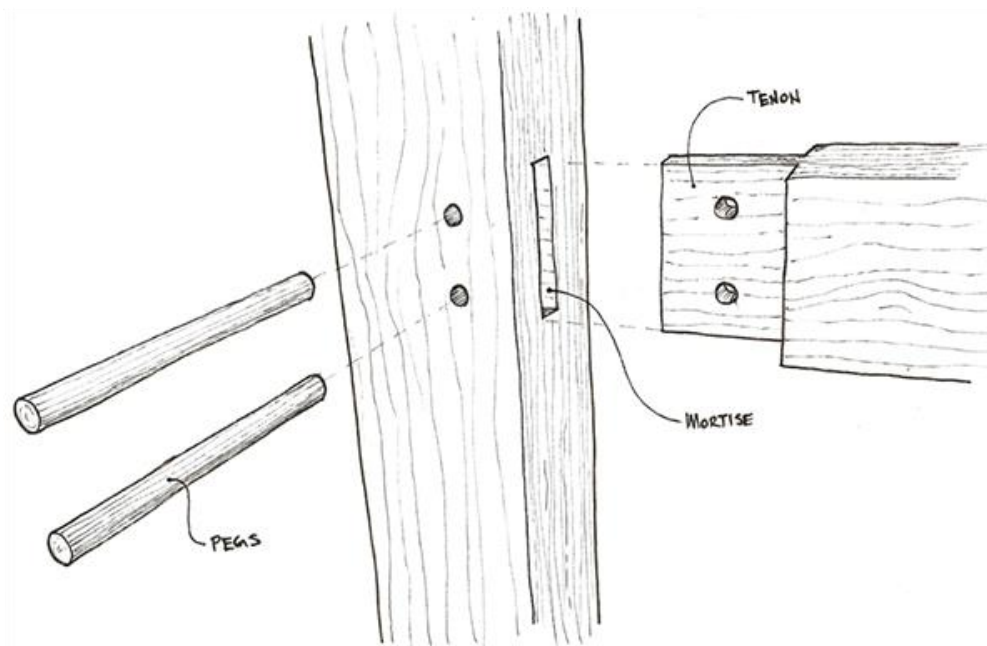


Figure 5. Square rule diagram. (anawhite.com)



Figure 6. Exterior Photo Key

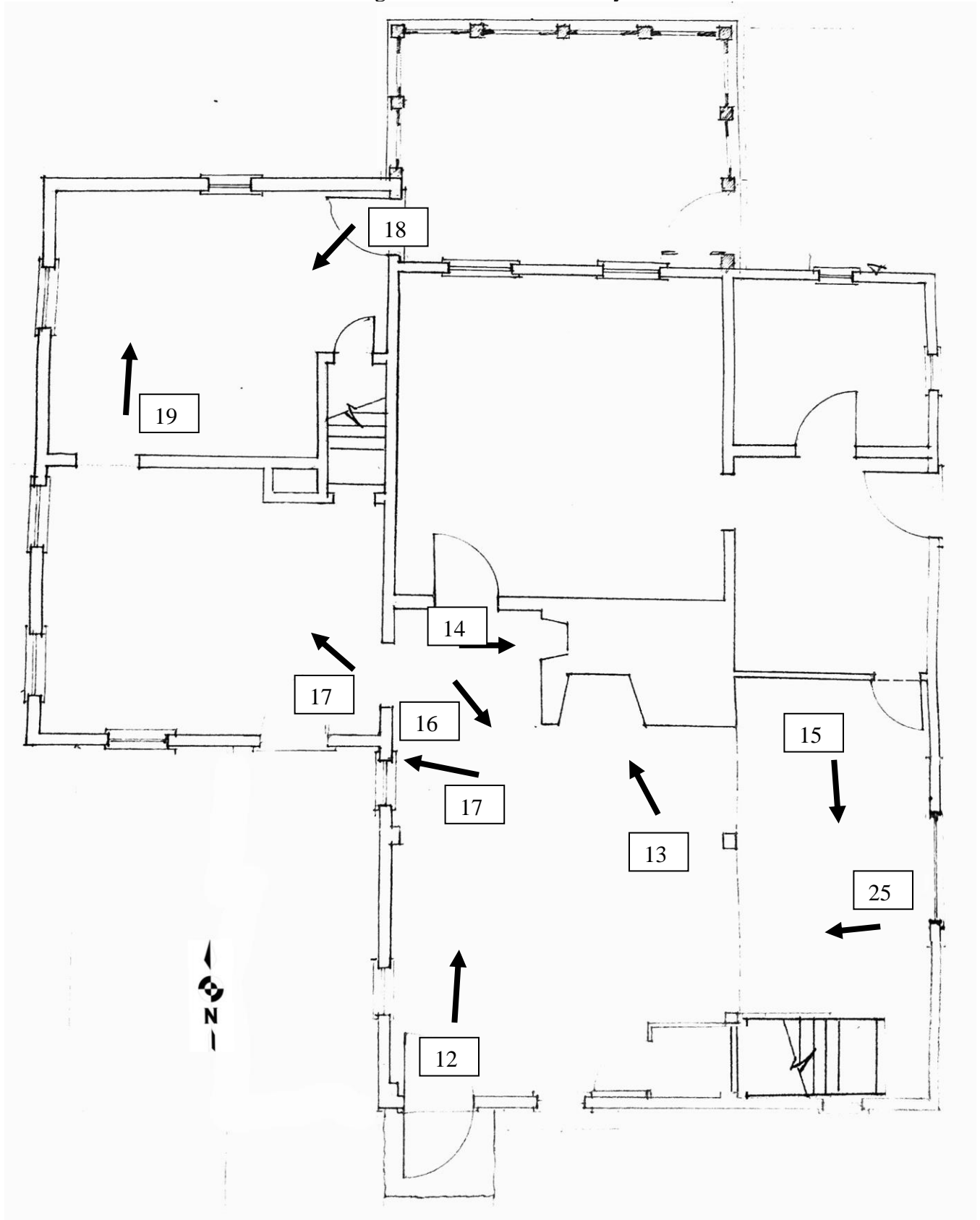


Figure 7. First floor photo key.

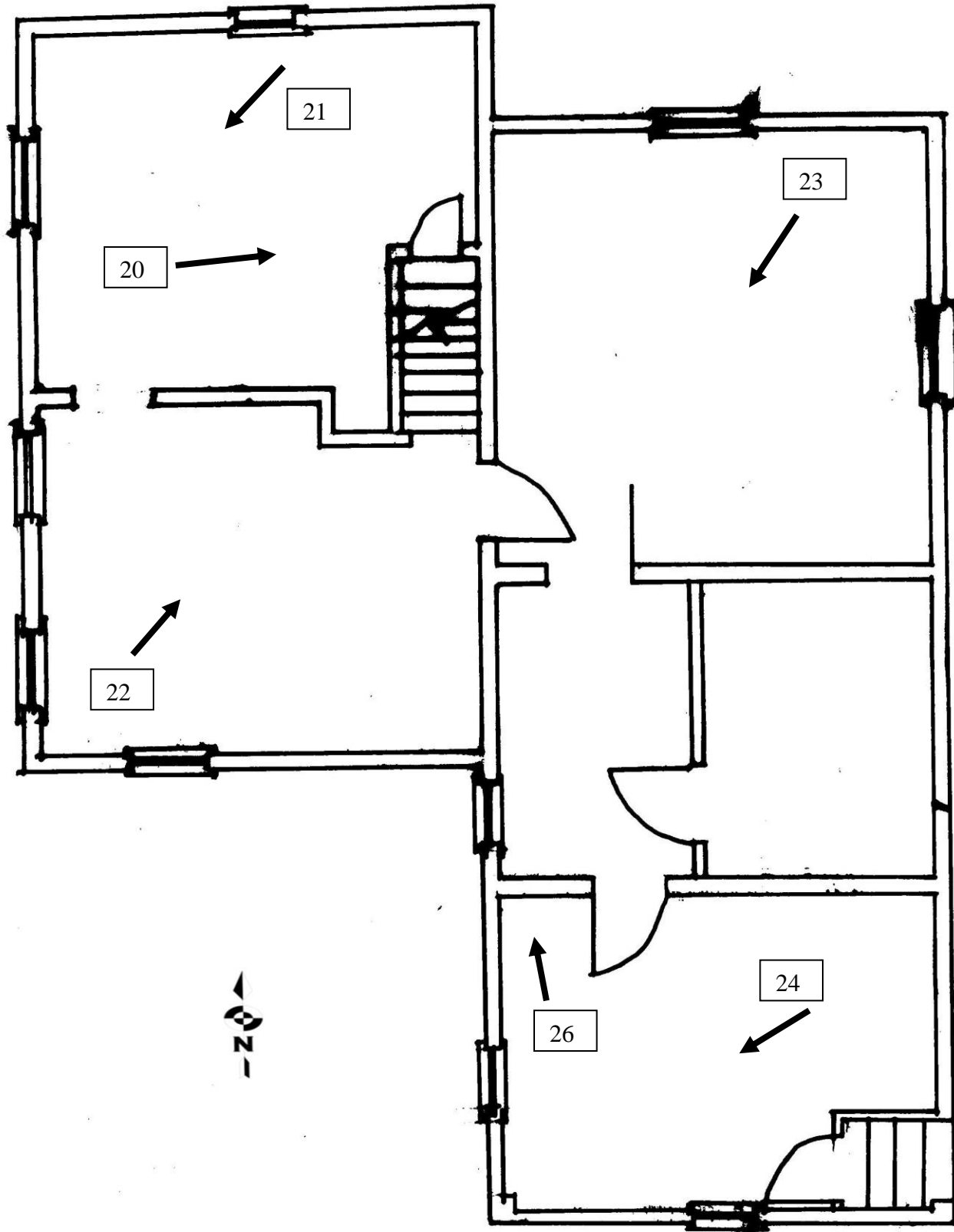


Figure 8. Second floor Photo key.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1. View north showing facade of original house and south elevation of nineteenth century addition.



Photo 2. View northeast showing south elevation of addition with west elevation and facade of original block.



Photo 3. View northeast showing west and south elevations of nineteenth century addition.



Photo 4. View south showing north elevation.



Photo 5. View southwest showing east elevation and part of north elevation. Eighteenth century section is covered in unpainted shingles and nineteenth century section is covered in painted clapboard.



Photo 6. View northwest showing facade of original block and east elevation with leanto.



Photo 7. view northeast of stepping stones leading to main entrance.

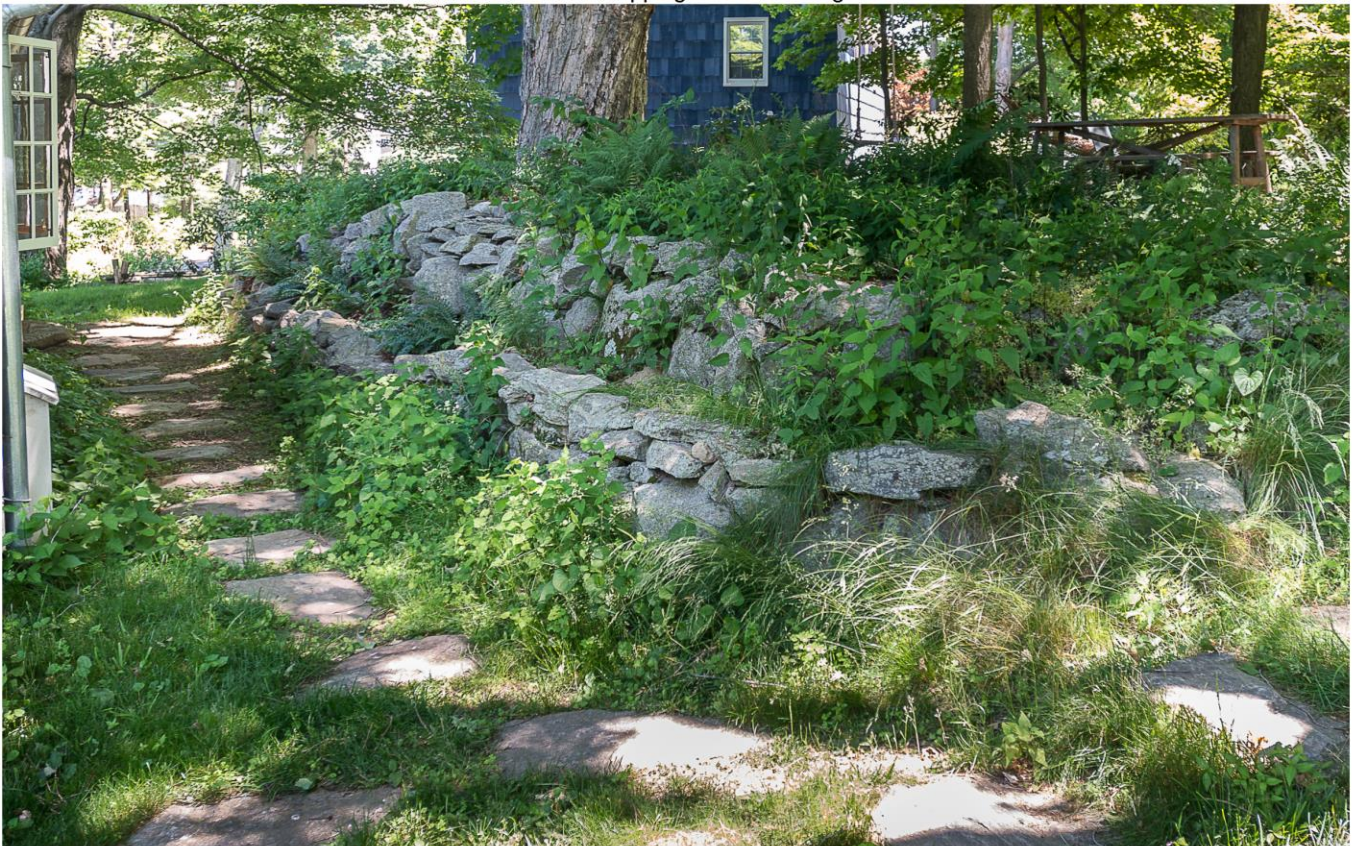


Photo 8. View north showing stone walkway and retaining wall to the east of the house.



Photo 9. View north showing well house.



Photo 10. View north showing well house interior.



Photo 11. View east showing west elevation of garage.



Photo 12. Interior view northeast showing living room and fireplace.



Photo 13. Interior view northwest showing main fireplace.



Photo 14. Interior view northwest showing smaller west fireplace.



Photo 15. Interior view southwest showing living room.



Photo 16. Interior view southeast showing living room.



Photo 17. Interior view west showing dining room.



Photo 18. Interior view west showing kitchen.



Photo 19. Interior view north of kitchen showing vertical strip ash walls and section of ceiling.



Photo 20. Interior view southeast showing stairway entrance to northwest room on second floor.



Photo 21. Interior view southwest showing doorway to southwest bedroom from northwest room on second floor.



Photo 22. Interior view northeast showing doorway to northwest room, stairway to attic and doorway to northeast room from southwest bedroom on second floor.



Photo 23. Interior view southwest showing doorway to southeast bedroom and doorway to northwest bedroom from northeast room on second floor.



Photo 24. Interior view southwest showing southwest corner of southeast bedroom on second floor.



Photo 25. Interior view west showing unused mortises in timber frame on first floor.



Photo 26. Interior view northwest showing unused mortises in timber frame on second floor.



Photo 27. Interior view northwest showing joints in timber frame on first floor.