

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JAN 24 1986  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

5-30-86

1. Name

historic N.A.

and/or common East Windsor Hill Historic District

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheet

N.A. not for publication

city, town South Windsor vicinity of East Windsor Hill

state Connecticut code 09 county Hartford code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N.A.	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership

street & number See continuation sheet

city, town East Windsor Hill N.A. vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. South Windsor Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall

street & number Route 194 and Ellington Road

city, town South Windsor state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1975  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date 1913 (Inventory #21)
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The East Windsor Hill Historic District is a semi-rural residential area on upper Main Street in South Windsor, just south of the East Windsor line. It encompasses the state-mandated local historic district (established in 1979) on Main Street and Ferry Lane (also known as Sperry Street). In addition, it includes all the land west of Main Street to the Connecticut River and north to the Scantic River, a major tributary. The District contains a high concentration of contributing buildings and sites dating from about 1700 to 1910 (88%). The majority of these predate 1857. Many of the historic properties have retained their barns, sheds and other outbuildings; at least one property is still a working farm.

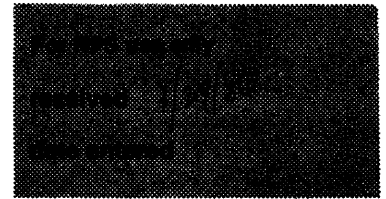
In East Windsor Hill Main Street runs in a northeasterly direction parallel to the Connecticut River at a distance of approximately 3000 feet. In this area the land is terraced back from the river in two stages. Most of the historic buildings are located on the generally level ground of the second terrace, 50 to 70 feet above sea level, and about 30 feet above the floodplain of the river, which covers the lower terrace. They line both sides of Main Street, following the axial settlement plan established in the seventeenth century. Seasonal steams create broad swales in the upper terrace and are bridged on Main Street. Open fields that have been under cultivation since settlement lie to the west on the first terrace (Photograph #1). The Bissell Ferry site and two historic buildings (Inventory #2, 3) are located on the riverbank at the end of Ferry Lane. Prior to settlement and during the early contact period, the meadows of the lower terrace were used for seasonal camp sites by native Americans from the Early Archaic period.

The intersection of Main Street, Ferry Lane and Sullivan Avenue at the head of the district was the historical center of East Windsor Hill, connecting the settlement with nearby towns. Sullivan Avenue was the "road to Wapping," another early settlement, today the center of South Windsor. Travel to the parent town across the river via a cable ferry at the end of Ferry Lane was accomplished possibly as early as 1633. Officially laid out in 1680, some forty years after settlement, Main Street was part of a major north-south thoroughfare on the east side of the river. The John Fitch Boulevard (Route 5) has replaced Main Street as the principal highway. It runs on a parallel course to the east for much of its length, but turns to the northwest, cutting across Main Street just north of the historic intersection; Main Street now dead-ends at this point. The intersection was also the site of a historic tavern and general store. The latter is still in operation, in conjunction with the East Windsor Hill Post Office. The bus from Hartford, which travels up Main Street (replacing an earlier trolley line), turns around there at the site of a former stagecoach stop.

Most of the buildings in the district are wood-frame, post-and-beam houses set on sandstone foundations. The distinctive reddish cast to the stone identifies it as upper Connecticut Valley stone, possibly quarried locally. Extensive clay pits, suitable for making bricks, are located in South Windsor, little more than a mile from the district. They continue to supply brick clay for a modern kiln and may have been a source for locally made brick as early as 1725, but brick was not a common building material until the eighteenth century in East Windsor Hill. A favored material for chimney construction in the two centuries after settlement, it replaced sandstone as an underpinning after

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2. Location

35, 47 Ferry Lane; 1533 - 1909, 1544 - 1906 Main Street; 22 Sullivan Avenue  
Also Map 25: Lots 1, 2; Map 32: Lots 1, 7, 26, 44; Map 33: Lots 3, 5, 7, 11;  
Map 34: Lots 1, 2; Map 43: Lots 9, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22; and Map 44: Lot 2.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Report of the South Windsor Historic District Study Committee, 1979.

North-Central Lowlands, Archaeological Survey, South Windsor, CT, 1979.

Depository for survey records: Connecticut Historical Commission  
59 South Prospect Street  
Hartford, Connecticut

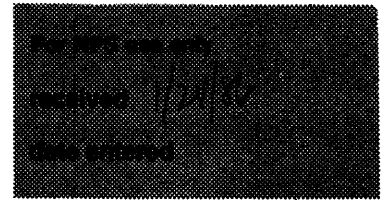
Works Project Administration, Connecticut Survey, 1937.

Colonial Dames Reports on Historic Houses in Connecticut, 1913.

Depository: Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut.

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1830. Only four load-bearing brick houses were built in the district, one just after the Revolution, and three more in the late Federal period (Inventory #42, 48, 50, 51).

A map drawn in 1800 indicates that Main Street was solidly lined with houses. Eleven of these remain in the district; three were built before 1750. The earliest is the Captain May House, built about 1700 (Inventory #29; Photograph #14). A typical plank-and-beam framed, one-room deep house with a lean-to at the rear, it is one of the few plank-walled houses remaining in South Windsor. Within a few years several more stylish houses were built, reflecting the initial prosperity generated by the West Indies trade from the riverport at the mouth of the Scantic. They include the hip-roofed Georgian Colonial Grant-Cook House, a finely detailed example with a pedimented doorway, built in 1744 (Inventory #15; Photograph #7), and the 1735 Nathan Day House (Inventory #26; Photograph #3). The latter house employs several Georgian-style features, such as double-cube proportions and shed dormers, but the roof form is very unusual. Its extremely steep, double pitch is rare in this period for a hip roof, and unique in the region.

The finest example of the Georgian style in the district is the Ebenezer Grant Mansion, built in 1757 (Inventory #21; Photograph #2). Grant, a wealthy merchant trader, employed the best craftsmen to produce the elaborate, broken-scroll pedimented entranceway that distinguishes this building. The hand-carved necking and pedestals, in particular, are recognized for their exceptional craftsmanship, as are the spiral balusters and newels of the interior central staircase.<sup>2</sup> Two other formally treated entranceways located on the south side elevation, one in an earlier ell (possibly prior to 1700), have a full pediment and pulvinated frieze. Another feature of this house was the use of brick barrel vaults in the cellar. They were destroyed, however, when the house was moved back from the edge of the road about 20 feet in 1913.<sup>3</sup>

An exceptional group of houses was built in East Windsor Hill after the Revolution, reflecting the increased wealth of the community from the success of the maritime trade in the Federal period. Earlier colonial houses were demolished to make way for high-style mansions built for merchant traders. Tradesmen and craftsmen were attracted to the town by its booming commerce and established themselves in more modest dwellings. Wagonmakers, tailors, tanners, clockmakers, saddlers, harness makers, and blacksmiths set up shop near the center. Some bought existing houses and established their trade in the rear ell or outbuilding. Several built new houses about 1780, small, one-and-one-half story cottages with gambrel roofs. This latter group includes the Bailey-Burnap House and the Samuel Webster House at the head of the street (Inventory #49, 50; Photograph #5) and the Eli Terry House at the south end of the district, home of the famous Connecticut clockmaker (Inventory #9). The Webster House is exceptional for its fine brick masonry, usually found only in much larger gambrel-roofed houses, and the unusual rear corner location of the staircase.<sup>4</sup>

Nearby are the more formal houses of the merchant elite. The earliest was built for John Watson (Inventory #47; Photograph #6). Sited prominently at the northeast corner of Main Street and Sullivan Road, this three-story, wood-frame Georgian/Federal-style mansion is a commanding presence. The heavy modillions under the eaves and the massiveness of the house contrast with the delicacy of the pedimented entranceway and the classical treatment of the central facade bay with its tripartite windows. A remarkable feature of this house

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is the use of a formal entrance on all four elevations. They are virtually identical with a pediment and fanlight, although only the main doorway has sidelights.

In the nineteenth century a remarkable pair of brick Federal-style houses was built by Aaron Bissell (Inventory #48, 51; Photograph 8, 9). The first was built for his daughter and her new husband, John Haskell, another merchant. It was duplicated on the next property to the south the following year, where Bissell demolished the family homestead and built his new house. Actually only the main block of these houses is the same--with identical facades of Flemish bond and a classic, recessed fanlighted entranceway with sidelights. A similar fanlight, with a delicate tracery of lead with a tree form at its center, is repeated in the gable ends of both buildings. Delicate mutules and a hand-carved dentil molding extend around the cornices and up the rakes of the pediments. The major difference between the two dwellings is the massive original rear wing of the house occupied by Bissell.

Another Bissell built his Federal-style brick house in 1815 (Inventory #42; Photograph #10). Still a working farm with wood-framed barns and outbuildings in their original setting, this house is distinguished by a colonnaded, pedimented portico on the south gable end. The main entrance portico with a high entablature and a flat roof is exactly duplicated on the north elevation, apparently following a then well-established East Windsor Hill tradition of more than one formal entrance. The brickwork is identical to other Bissell houses, including a flared, double soldier course of brick for the window lintels. It also displays mutules and dentils at the cornice and pediment.

The most notable of the many Greek Revival-style houses in the district is the mansion built for the president of the Theological Institute of Connecticut, Bennett Tyler, in 1835 (Inventory #32; Photograph #11). The large rectangular main block is set well back and above the road on the east side of Main Street, facing the river. It has a fully detailed colonnaded portico of the Doric Order. Four fluted columns support the flush-boarded pediment. The full entablature with trygylphs on the pediment is carried across the facade and under the pedimented gable ends.

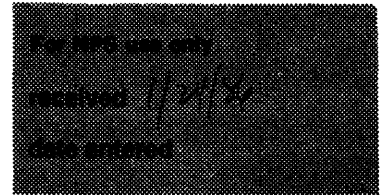
Although none of the remaining Greek Revival-style houses approaches the level of sophistication of the Bennett Tyler House, the full range of form and plan of the other nine houses in the district illustrate the diversity of this ubiquitous style. Many of these were built by men associated with the institute. They include the Professor William Thompson House (Inventory #27; Photograph #13), the Reverend Levi Smith House (Inventory #36), the Erastus Ellsworth House (Inventory #38), the Professor Ellery Tyler House (Inventory #45), and the Asabel Nettleton House (Inventory #8; Photograph #12). Although all of these houses were built within a few years of each other, no two are alike. The Tyler House was built in the cube form, almost approaching the Italianate style, but the Nettleton House, said to have been built from the proceeds of his published hymnal, is a classic example of the ridge-to-street form with a gable roof. The latter house also has a wide frieze board under the eaves, pedimented gable ends, and a formal Greek-Revival-style doorway with sidelights. Professor Thompson's house, by contrast, is a typical Greek Revival-style farmhouse, with the usual gable-to-street orientation, a side ell and porch. It displays a projecting window head in the pediment, as well as a projecting cornice over the formal entrance.

(See the following continuation sheets for a complete listing of buildings and sites.)

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East Windsor Hill, Connecticut



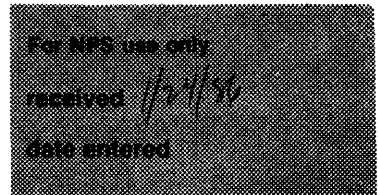
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Inventory #	Building/Site	Photograph #	C/NC	Map/Lot#
1.	BISSELL FERRY SITE, 1633-1925 ___ Ferry Lane		C	25:1
2.	___ Ferry Lane BISSELL FERRY FARM AND TAVERN Colonial, before 1750; additions, 1850	4	C	25:2
3.	___ Ferry Lane SPERRY FARM WORKER'S HOUSE 20th-century Domestic, 1905		C	44:2
	___ Ferry Lane Vacant farm lot			34:2
4.	47 Ferry Lane SPERRY FARM WORKER'S HOUSE 20th-century Domestic, 1905		C	44:3
5.	___ Ferry Lane (to rear of #47 and #35) Colonial Cape, ca. 1800		C	44:5
6.	35 Ferry Lane Federal Revival, ca. 1924		C	44:4
7.	___ Ferry Lane Two barns, other outbuildings, before 1900 (Site of Lewis Sperry house, demolished)		C	44:2
8.	1533 Main Street PROESSOR ASABEL NETTLETON HOUSE Greek Revival, ca. 1840	12	C	32:18
	___ Main Street Vacant farmland extends to river			32:17
9.	1544 Main Street ELI TERRY HOUSE Gambrel, ca. 1780		C	32:25
10.	___ Main Street, EDWARDS CEMETERY, 1704 -		C	32:19
11.	1554 Main Street 19th-century Domestic, ca. 1880; addition, 1940		C	32:24
12.	1559 Main Street Evergreen Lodge (site of earlier church) Classical Revival, 1901		C	32:20

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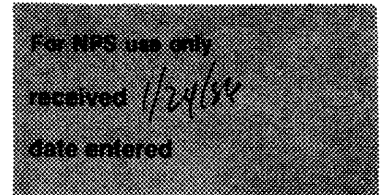


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Inventory #	Building/Site	Photograph #	C/NC	Map/Lot#
13.	1562 Main Street Colonial Revival, ca. 1920		C	32:23
14.	1576 Main Street Modern residence		NC	32:22
15.	1595 Main Street GRANT/COOK HOUSE Georgian Colonial, 1744	7	C	32:21
16.	1609 Main Street 20th-century Domestic, 1916		C	33:12
	<u>    </u> Main Street Vacant lot			32:44
17.	1624 Main Street Modern residence		NC	33:10
18.	1629 Main Street Modern residence with barn at river		NC	33:1
19.	1638 Main Street Modern residence		NC	33:9
20.	1648 Main Street AARON GRANT HOUSE (Post Office, 1837). Colonial/Federal, 1753/1782		C	42:15
21.	1653 Main Street EBENEZER GRANT MANSION Georgian, 1757/58; rear ell, ca. 1700	2	C	33:2
22.	1658 Main Street Four Square, ca. 1910		C	43:23
23.	1675 Main Street HORACE GILLETTE HOUSE Greek Revival, ca. 1835 Gambrel roof added, 1917		C	33:4

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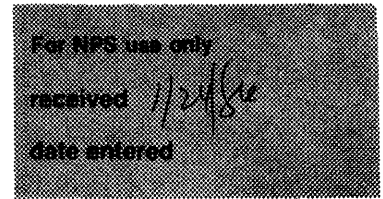
Continuation sheet East Windsor Hill Historic District Item number 7 Page 6  
East Windsor Hill, Connecticut

Inventory #	Building/Site	Photograph #	C/NC	Map/Lot#
24.	1678 Main Street HEDDY H. B. SMITH HOUSE 19th-century Domestic, 1867		C	43:21
	___ Main Street			43:22
	Vacant lots			43:20 43:19
25.	1689 Main Street CLAPP HOUSES (abandoned) Double house: Greek Revival, ca. 1850 19th-century Domestic, ca. 1880 Barn to rear of house		C	33:5
26.	1712 Main Street NATHAN DAY HOUSE Georgian, 1735	3	C	43:17
27.	1713 Main Street PROFESSOR WILLIAM THOMPSON HOUSE Greek Revival, ca. 1835	13	C	33:6
28.	1726 Main Street Colonial Revival, ca. 1910		C	43:16
29.	1732 Main Street CAPTAIN MAY HOUSE Colonial saltbox, ca. 1700	14	C	43:16
30.	1737 Main Street ELLSWORTH MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL Classical Revival, 1936 Facade incorporates elements of 1834 seminary.		C	33:8
31.	___ Main Street EAST WINDSOR HILL CEMETERY		C	33:11
32.	1748 Main Street PRESIDENT BENNETT TYLER HOUSE Greek Revival, 1835	11	C	43:15
33.	1760 Main Street Modern residence		NC	43:13



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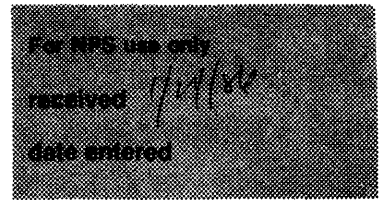
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Inventory #	Building/Site	Photograph #	C/NC	Map/Lot#
34.	1764 Main Street 19th-century Domestic, ca. 1850		C	43:12
35.	1766 Main Street Modern residence		NC	43:11
36.	1772 Main Street REVEREND LEVI SMITH HOUSE Greek Revival, 1842		C	43:10
37.	1803 Main Street Queen Anne, ca. 1880		C	43:1A
	___ Main Street Vacant rear lot; partially fronts on street			43:9
38.	1810 Main Street ERASTUS ELLSWORTH HOUSE Greek Revival, 1820		C	43:8
39.	1828 Main Street NOAH WELLS HOUSE Georgian/Federal, 1789		C	43:7
40.	___ Main Street DOCTOR WOOD'S OFFICE Greek Revival, ca. 1848		C	43:2
41.	1835 Main Street Greek Revival, ca. 1840		C	43:1
42.	1837 Main Street EPAPHRUS BISSELL HOUSE Federal, 1815	10	C	43:2
43.	1838 Main Street JUDGE RALPH GRANT HOUSE Four Square, 1895		C	43:6
44.	1846 Main Street JOHN S. CLAPP HOUSE Greek Revival, 1857		C	43:5

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Inventory #	Building/Site	Photograph #	C/NC	Map/Lot#
45.	1862 Main Street PROFESSOR ELLERY TYLER HOUSE Greek Revival, ca. 1840		C	43:4
46.	1865 Main Street Hill Grocery and Post Office Gambrel, before 1760		C	44:1
47.	1876 Main Street JOHN WATSON HOUSE Georgian/Federal, 1788	6	C	44:2
48.	1891 Main Street AARON BISSELL HOUSE Federal, 1813	8, 9	C	44:5
49.	1892 Main Street BAILEY-BURNAP HOUSE Gambrel, ca. 1780	5	C	44:21
50.	1906 Main Street SAMUEL WEBSTER HOUSE Gambrel, ca. 1780	5	C	44:20
51.	1909 Main Street BISSELL-HASKELL HOUSE Federal, 1812	8, 9	C	44:6
52.	22 Sullivan Avenue Colonial Revival, 1933		C	43:3

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Criteria A and C

<b>Specific dates</b>	1700–1857	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	Unknown
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## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Active commerce along the Connecticut River in the eighteenth century and a merchant marine trade from the riverports with the West Indies and East Coast port cities after 1750 produced a wealthy, sophisticated, and highly individualistic society in central Connecticut which is exemplified by the historic architecture in the East Windsor Hill Historic District (Criterion A). For over 150 years the carpenter-builders of East Windsor Hill produced a folk architecture of exceptional quality. The district contains an impressive collection of regional Connecticut Valley architecture dating from 1700 to 1857 which is distinguished by its outstanding craftsmanship, originality, and state of preservation (Criterion C). The district derives added significance from its association with New England Congregationalism, most particularly the establishment of the Theological Institute of Connecticut, a nineteenth-century, neo-Calvinist seminary.

## Architecture:

The dissemination of cultural values and ideas along the Connecticut River Valley produced a distinctive regional vernacular architecture. Regionally distinct variations of particular forms and styles can be found in all the river towns from Middletown to the Massachusetts border. East Windsor Hill, however, has an unusually large and comprehensive group of these buildings that have survived the test of time with exceptional integrity. They include Georgian/Colonials, gambrel-roofed cottages, elegant brick and wood-framed Federals, and numerous variations on the Greek Revival style. To a remarkable degree they have retained their historic setting and appearance.

Idiosyncratic adaptations of building styles are the hallmark of the Yankee carpenter-builder. What is remarkable about their work in East Windsor Hill is the exceptional vigor and self-assurance that shaped their stylistic consciousness. These buildings have the immediacy and freshness of a directly transmitted visual tradition that cannot be found in buildings constructed from style books. Although some of this architectural vitality was lost during the eighteenth century and transmuted into more elegant and sophisticated renderings in the nineteenth century, the later houses still have many original touches and the full range of stylistic possibility is explored.

The premier example of Georgian Colonial architecture is the Ebenezer Grant Mansion (Inventory #21; Photograph #2). Its exceptional Connecticut Valley entranceway, a type found as far south as Glastonbury and as far north as Deerfield, is a remarkable demonstration of wood carving and originality of design. The bold modeling of the forms with their beak-like profile gives the broken-scroll pedimented doorway an almost Jacobean appearance.<sup>5</sup> Intricate carving was required for the foliated pattern of ferns on the necking of the pilasters. The pedestals display a miniature replica of the doorway, complete with a broken-scroll pediment and quoining. The powerful but controlled energy of the doorway is also carried out on the interior detailing, particularly in the staircase. The very exaggerated spiral forms of the balusters and newels are reminiscent of similar details in

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 535

Quadrangle name Manchester

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References See continuation sheet

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries N.A.

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jan Cunningham, Preservation Consultant, Edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Cunningham Associates date 6/85

street & number 98 Washington Street telephone (203) 347-4072

city or town Middletown state Connecticut

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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. Shannahan*

title John W. Shannahan, Director, CT Historical Commission date 01-21-86

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

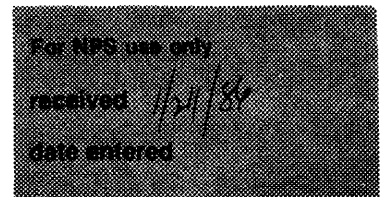
*Patrick Andrews* date 5/30/80  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest *Beth J. Savage* date 5/28/80

Chief of Registration

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the Silas Deane and Webb Houses in Wethersfield, but they are much more boldly executed in the Grant House. It is possible that the Grant staircase served as model.

The cross-fertilization between Wethersfield and East Windsor Hill is apparent as well in the form and appearance of the brick Federal-style houses in both towns. The understated treatment of the facades of the houses built by Aaron Bissell (Inventory #48, 51), relying primarily on superior brickwork, highlighted by recessed fanlighted doorways, can be found in several houses attributed to Captain James Francis, a Wethersfield builder. Two other examples exist in South Windsor (outside the district), one in Middletown, and two in Cromwell. One of the Cromwell examples is located right on the bank of the Connecticut River. The 1815 Epaphrus Bissell House, the last of the Bissell family's houses in the district, is a more individually significant and original building (Inventory #42). Taking the same form and type of construction, it is a more uncommon and skillful interpretation, distinguished by the colonnade on the end elevation and the addition of porticos at the entrances. It is interesting, given the other possible model for this style in town, the very elegant John Watson House (Inventory #47) built some 30 years earlier, that some of the more Adamesque detailing of this house, such as the Palladian windows, was not incorporated in one of the Bissell houses.

A more familiar Connecticut Valley form is the gambrel-roofed cottage. It was built in great numbers up and down the river, particularly after the Revolution. This type of house afforded the maximum amount of space for its size, which accounts for its popularity after the war when money was scarce. Rarely built by the merchant elite, who, if they preferred the gambrel form, always built it with two or more stories, it was popular with families of more modest circumstances, as it was in East Windsor Hill. At least five examples can be found in Middle Haddam, a riverport town to the south that experienced a similar history.

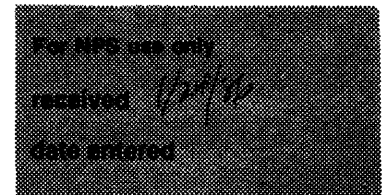
The last individually significant building to be constructed in the district is the equal of many found in the more urban centers of nineteenth-century Connecticut. The temple-fronted Bennett Tyler House (Inventory #32) with its colonnaded portico is well-proportioned and accurately detailed. Obviously constructed by a carpenter of some knowledge and sophistication, it rivals similar houses designed by architects of the period, such as Town and Davis. There is no evidence, however, that it was architect-designed. It is quite possible that the owner and his colleagues at the Theological Institute, very educated men for their time, were responsible for the design of this building, as well as some of the other Greek Revival-style houses associated with the school.

Historical Significance:

Settled in 1638 by families from Windsor, the parent town across the Connecticut River, East Windsor Hill was a prosperous farming community and an active trading center. Sons of prominent Windsor families, such as Bissells and the Grants, were quick to exploit the natural resources of the village. John Bissell ran the first ferry across the river, beginning in 1640. When it ceased operation in 1917, it was the oldest ferry in continuous operation in the United States (Inventory #1). Just to the north of the ferry landing, Bissell also established a ferry tavern, on the site of the present building (Inventory #2, Photograph #4). The extant ferry tavern may contain parts of the original

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structure, but it was not constructed until about 1750. The Bissells also established a sawmill and a shipyard near the mouth of the Scantic River, which became the basis of an active riverport in the eighteenth century.

East Windsor Hill families traveled across the river to attend church service in Windsor until permission was granted by the General Court to establish their own church society in 1691. The first meeting house was built next to the Edwards Cemetery in 1694 and replaced in 1714. The Reverend Timothy Edwards, one of the first men to be buried in the cemetery, was the first minister. The father of Jonathan Edwards, the noted theologian-philosopher of Puritan Congregationalism who was born in East Windsor Hill (his birthplace is no longer standing), the senior Edwards was a prominent minister in his own right who trained many Connecticut minister.

The wealth of the community was based on farming. East Windsor Hill merchants grew flax for export to New York and raised horses for the West Indies trade. Tobacco was also exported by Captain Ebenezer Grant and others to Europe and South America. During the Revolution, the town supplied provisions for the Continental Army under Grant's leadership. Major General William Prescott and the royal governor of New Jersey, William Franklin, the son of Benjamin Franklin, were quartered in East Windsor Hill as prisoners, along with their servants and a number of Hessian soldiers.<sup>6</sup> According to tradition, General Lafayette put the Hessian prisoners to work planting elm trees along Main Street north to the East Windsor border.

Active trading from the riverport resumed after the Revolution and flourished for another 35 years. Several factors were responsible for its decline in the early nineteenth century. Like all the riverports, East Windsor Hill was affected by the Great Embargo and the War of 1812, which virtually eliminated trade with the West Indies. The bridging of the Connecticut River at Hartford in 1808 was also a factor since it interfered with navigation above that point. It may have also affected the internal economy of the village by reducing ferry traffic between Windsor and East Windsor. Many towns in this period turned to other alternatives such as manufacturing to bolster their declining economies; East Windsor Hill became the home of the Theological Institute of Connecticut.

The establishment of the Theological Institute of Connecticut in East Windsor in 1833 was an event of major importance to the town. Thirty-six ministers met that year in East Windsor Hill to form the Pastoral Union of Connecticut with the express purpose of establishing the institution. Decrying the trend towards free-thinking religious expression that had overtaken Connecticut Congregationalism, they wished to return to the more rigid, doctrinaire principles of Calvinism. The appropriateness of locating the seminary in the town so closely associated with the Edwards family was undoubtedly taken into account in their decision. The town already had a private academy, established in 1800, and was well-disposed towards the founding of a new school. A new building for the training of ministers, the first of a remarkable collection of buildings generated by the institute, was built of brick, with a colonnaded temple front. No longer standing, it was demolished in 1936 and replaced by the Ellsworth Memorial High School (Inventory #30), which echoes the form of the original seminary and possibly incorporates some of the elements of the portico. In addition to the house built for the president in 1835, another five or six houses were built on Main Street by and for professors at the school. The institute remained in East Windsor Hill until 1865, when it moved to Hartford.

(See continuation sheet #4 for notes.)

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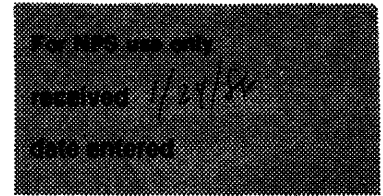
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Item number 8

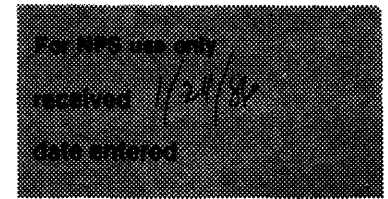
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Notes:

1. An archaeological survey in 1979 established the presence of a number of undisturbed sites below the plow line covered and protected by the river silts of the floodplain. Standard stratified random sampling techniques were used with transects. See McBride et al., "North Central Lowlands Archaeological Survey," 1979.
2. J. Frederick Kelly, The Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut (New York: Dover, 1963), Plate XLV for photographs of the staircase. See also the frontispiece for a photograph of the entrance, discussed on pp. 112, 113. For a general discussion of the building see also Isham and Brown, Early Connecticut Houses (New York: Dover, 1965), pp. 87-92.
3. T. Robins Brown, "Ebenezer Grant House: National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form" Item 7:1.
4. Kelly, p. 174.
5. Kelly, p. 113.
6. Later in the war Franklin was taken to Litchfield, Connecticut.

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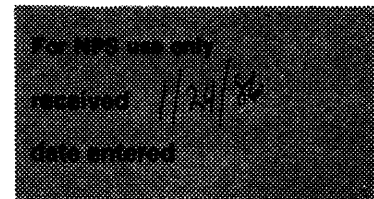
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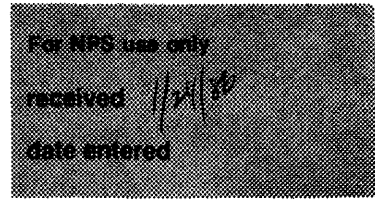
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Map: "List of the Inhabitants in South Windsor Street about the year 1800. Made out by John W. Barber of New Haven, Connecticut, assisted by Abner Reed formerly of South Windsor."

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UTM References - Manchester Quadrangle

A 18 697390 4635800	L 18 698100 4637400
B 18 697620 4636730	M 18 698320 4637240
C 18 697650 4637210	N 18 698420 4637280
D 18 697770 4637630	O 18 698680 4636960
E 18 698000 4637670	P 18 698820 4637000
F 18 697990 4637620	Q 18 698980 4636560
G 18 697880 4637610	R 18 698860 4636130
H 18 697820 4637470	S 18 698950 4636120
I 18 698010 4637500	T 18 698680 4635400
J 18 698000 4637290	U 18 698380 4635460
K 18 698070 4637200	V 18 698350 4635420

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The boundaries were established by historical and geographical criteria to achieve visual coherence and continuity, as well as thematic consistency. Included are all the historic properties that constituted East Windsor Hill during its major period of significance (1700-1857), encompassing the present local historic district (1979). Also included is all the open farmland historically associated with the above properties west to the Connecticut River, an area that also has considerable prehistoric archaeological potential. (See survey in #2, and #9). Below the district to the south on Main Street, modern residential intrusion has precluded extending the district any further in this direction. Visual continuity is lost for approximately one-half mile. Historic properties on the southern part of Main Street are historically associated with the village of South Windsor located there and are included in the Windsor Farms Historic District.

Beginning at a point on the bank of the Connecticut River at the southeast corner of Map 34, Lot 17 (as recorded in the Town Clerk's Office, South Windsor), the district extends to the northeast up the east bank of the Connecticut River to a point at the mouth of the Scantic River, where the lot designated as Map 34, Lot 1 terminates at the northwest corner; thence to the east, following the course of the Scantic River along the southern bank to a point on the west side of the John Fitch Boulevard, marked by the northeast corner of Map 44, Lot 6. At said point the district boundary extends to the southeast to Sullivan Avenue along said highway, before turning to the southwest and crossing Sullivan Avenue to the northeast corner of Map 43, Lot 4. Here the boundary turns and follows the rear eastern boundary of Lot 4, crosses Lot 9 and continues along the rear property line of Lot 11 and 15, before crossing Lot 16 to the northern property line of Lot 20. Following around the property line of Lot 20 to Lot 23, the boundary extends along the rear property line of Lot 23, crosses Lot 15, Map 42, and returns to the west to meet the northeast rear corner of Lot 10, Map 33; thence to the southwest along the rear property lines of Lot 10 and 13 on Map 33, and Lots 44, 22, and 26, on Map 32, before returning in a westerly direction to Main Street. Here the boundary crosses Main Street and runs in a northwesterly direction along the southern property line of Lot 32, Map 17 to return to the first point.