

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: WILTON CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

other name/site number: N/A

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number: Belden Hill Road, Lovers Lane, Ridgefield Road

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Wilton

vicinity: N/A

state: CT county: Fairfield code: 005001 zip code: 06897

=====

3. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property: private, public-local

Category of Property: district

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>20</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
		sites
<u>1</u>		structures
		objects
<u>21</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  x  nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  x  meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ See cont. sheet.

*John W. Horn*  
Signature of certifying official  
Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

Date 7/1/92

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Alcorn/Sykes* 8/19/92  
Entered in the National Register

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic:	<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub:	<u>single dwelling</u>
	<u>RELIGION</u>		<u>religious structure</u>
	<u>GOVERNMENT</u>		<u>city hall</u>
	<u>INDUSTRY</u>		<u>energy facility</u>
Current:	<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub:	<u>single dwelling</u>
	<u>RELIGION</u>		<u>religious structure</u>
	<u>SOCIAL</u>		<u>meeting hall</u>

7. Description

=====  
Architectural Classification:

COLONIAL

FEDERAL

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation STONE roof ASPHALT  
walls WOOD other STONE (dam)

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

=====  
8. Statement of Significance

=====  
Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: state.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : A,B

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE  
EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT  
INDUSTRY

Period(s) of Significance: 1790-c.1940

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Not known

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.  
X See continuation sheet.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description	Wilton Center Historic District Wilton, Fairfield County, CT	7-1
-------------	---	-----

Wilton Center Historic District consists of 15 major buildings, six associated outbuildings, and one stone dam. These resources stand along Ridgefield Road, Lovers Lane, and the south end of Belden Hill Road, which all intersect in front of the Congregational Church (Photograph 1) that is the central building in the district. The district is in the south-central part of the Town of Wilton. The area is primarily residential, with continuing religious use of the church and community use of the Townhouse (the former Town Hall, built in 1832; Photograph 3). The town also maintains a small park at the foot of Lovers Lane. Buildings in the district are mostly late-18th-century to mid-19th-century, several with Victorian modifications; two Colonial Revival houses are also included. Along Ridgefield Road, the church and the buildings across from it are set close to the road (Photograph 2), but to the north and west the houses are set back on landscaped grounds (Photograph 6 and 8). Along Lovers Lane, a narrow thoroughfare winding among steep slopes, the buildings were placed more to take advantage of limited level ground than to assert any relationship to the street (Photograph 13). Mature shade trees surround most of the houses, and there are several small barns that date from the late 19th century or earlier (Photograph 5 and 16).

The houses in the district have clapboarded or wood-shingled exteriors, stone foundations, and one or two brick chimneys. The Davenport House (Photograph 8), at the edge of the district, is a simply detailed 5-bay, 2-1/2-story, center-chimney dwelling, entirely typical of the houses of late 18th-century farmers of middling means. The dwellings closer to the church, though all have massing similar to the Davenport House, all exhibit structural features (e.g., the central-hall plan) or Classically inspired decorative treatments (e.g., pilaster-and-lintel entries, elliptical transoms, window hoodmolds, and round-arched gable-end windows) characteristic of Federal-style architecture (Photograph 2, 4, and 6). The church (Photograph 1) reflects its 1844 remodeling in the Greek Revival style, particularly the flush-boarded Doric pavilion that was added to the front of the building. Along Lovers Lane, the character of the buildings is not so consistent as in the rest of the district, due to a history of mixed use, including milling, as well as 19th- and early 20th-century modifications. The Silas Gregory House (Photograph 12) retains part of its original Federal-style entry treatment in the transom and sidelights, but the portico is a Colonial Revival addition. The Gregory-Merwin House (Photograph 14) has embedded within it some fabric from a small c.1800 house associated with the nearby mill, but its current appearance owes

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description	Wilton Center Historic District Wilton, Fairfield County, CT	7-2
-------------	---	-----

more to Victorian-era remodeling, including the porch with chamfered posts and pointed-arch attic window.

With the exception of the Merwin Barn, the barns in the district are small and unornamented. The Merwin Barn (Photograph 16) is not only twice as large as the other barns, but features a squat, hip-roofed cupola. The dam (Photograph 9) was built to take advantage of a natural ledge that creates a 25-foot-high waterfall as Comstock Brook passes over it. The ledge itself served as the spillway, with wingwalls built up at the banks to provide a small forebay.

Overall the district retains a high degree of historical integrity due to the limited construction in the last 100 years. As a result, the district provides a rare opportunity to grasp the diversity of land use in small village centers during the late Colonial and early national periods, with the church, the town hall, one of the town's largest waterpowered mills (not extant), and residences, all within a few score feet of each other. The only two 20th-century houses (e.g., Photograph 7) have ample yards in keeping with the setting of the earlier structures, and both exhibit a picturesque Colonial Revival appearance that complements the older houses. Unsympathetic modifications to the district's buildings are few, and major buildings such as the church, the parsonage, and the Nathan Comstock House retain virtually all of their exterior fabric.

The boundaries of the district (see sketch map) were chosen to encompass all the visually contiguous resources and virtually all of the historic extent of the small village center. To the south and northwest, the space between neighboring buildings increases to tenths of a mile rather than the few feet between buildings in the district. To the north and northeast is a wooded recreation area, and to the east is the modern Wilton Center, which gets its character from the imperatives of the internal-combustion engine and mid-to-late 20th-century consumerism.

A local historic district, designated Wilton Historic District Number Two, encompasses all the buildings in Wilton Center Historic District except for those on Lovers Lane. The boundary of Wilton Historic District Number Two is delineated on Wilton Town Clerk's Map #2992.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description	Wilton Center Historic District Wilton, Fairfield County, CT	7-4
26 Lovers Lane	GREGORY-MERWIN HOUSE, c.1875, Victorian Vernacular, 2-1/2 stories, gable roof, wood shingle; 5-bay facade with central, sidelighted entry, porch with chamfered posts; originally center-chimney dwelling (c.1800) associated with nearby grist mill, remodeled c.1875 by Augustus Merwin, later owner of mill; west wing added c. 1925. Barn to north (gable roof, vertical-board siding) contributes to district; garage to south is former blacksmith shop. Three contributing buildings. (Photograph 13 and 14)	
33 Lovers Lane	WILTON ACADEMY, c.1850, vernacular, 2-1/2 stories, gable roof, clapboard, simple shed-roofed porch with chamfered posts; originally a small barn or utility building, converted to use as private academy in 1867. One contributing building. (Photograph 15)	
Foot of Lovers Lane	MERWIN BARN, c. 1875, utilitarian, high 1-story, gable roof, vertical-board siding, cupola with arched louvers; recent additions to south and west elevations. One contributing building. (Photograph 16)	
65 Ridgefield Road	CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH PARSONAGE, 1832, Federal style, 2-1/2 stories, gable roof, clapboard; 5-bay, central-hall plan with end chimneys; pilaster-and-lintel entry; molded window caps; molded cornice with partial return; lean-to at rear is an early addition. One contributing building. (Photograph 2, left)	
69 Ridgefield Road	WILTON TOWNHOUSE ("Old Town Hall"), 1832, Federal, 2-1/2 story, gable roof, clapboard, pilaster-and-lintel entry fitted with double-leaf door, partial return of molded cornice, octagonal cupola with ogee roof; rear wing added 1948. HABS No. CT-31. One contributing building. (Photograph 3)	

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description	Wilton Center Historic District Wilton, Fairfield County, CT	7-5
70 Ridgefield Road	WILTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, 1790/1844, Colonial with Greek Revival modifications, high 1-story, gable roof, clapboard; tower, added c.1800, has square base, shingled octagonal drum with arched and louvered openings, and octagonal spire; pedimented, flush-boarded Doric portico (1844) with recessed entry; parish hall (1952) attached to northeast corner. HABS No. CT-194. One contributing building. (Photograph 1 and 2)	
77 Ridgefield Road	NATHAN COMSTOCK HOUSE, c.1820, Federal style, 2-1/2 stories, gable roof, clapboard, 5-bay; center entry with elliptical transom, sidelights and reeded pilasters; partial return of molded cornice, lunette windows in gable ends. Breaks in cornice indicate that eastern three bays were built slightly before two west bays that completed center-hall plan. Two barns, both 1-1/2 stories and gable roofed, one with board-and-batten walls, one with vertical boards. Three contributing buildings. (Photograph 4 and 5)	
80 Ridgefield Road	ANDREW AND KATE WINTON HOUSE, c.1925, Colonial Revival, 2 stories, wood shingle, gable roof with slope extended to encompass 1-story north bay and attached garage. One contributing building. (Photograph 5 and 7)	
98-100 Ridgefield Road	Colonial Revival House, c. 1940, 2-1/2 stories, gable roof, wood shingle; 1-1/2-story, gable-roofed barn converted to garage. Two contributing buildings.	
108 Ridgefield Road	DEODATE DAVENPORT HOUSE, c.1791, Colonial style, 2-1/2 stories, gable roof, wood shingle, 5-bay with center entry; entry lintel and denticulated cornice are Colonial Revival alterations; modern garage. One contributing building, one noncontributing. (Photograph 8)	



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description	Wilton Center Historic District Wilton, Fairfield County, CT	7-6
-------------	---	-----

**CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES**

Lovers Lane at Comstock Brook	MERWIN GRIST MILL DAM, c.1856, coursed-rubble masonry built atop substantial ledge outcropping. (Photograph 9)
----------------------------------	--

**NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDING**

108 Ridgefield Road	garage
---------------------	--------









United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance (continued)      Wilton Center Historic District      Page 8-5  
Wilton, Fairfield Co., CT

characteristic of Victorian vernacular houses with a suggestion of Italianate influence. Similarly, the Gregory-Merwin House incorporates a small center-chimney dwelling from the Colonial or early national period, but assumed its present appearance with remodeling in the 1870s; its mass-produced exterior woodwork displays not only the Italianate influence on otherwise simple Victorian houses (e.g., the chamfered porch posts), but also the Gothic influence (e.g., the pointed-arch attic window). The original portion of the Grist Mill Tenant House is a simple vernacular cottage of the mid-19th century, interesting primarily for the half-story attic made possible by the use of 16-foot-tall posts that achieved extensive use during that period.

Criteria Exceptions

- A. The Congregational Church (1790/1844) is still in religious use but its significance derives from its architectural distinction and from the role it played in establishing the institutional character of this neighborhood.
- B. The former Parish Hall (1871, now Wilton Playshop, Photograph 11) was moved in 1952 from its original location next to the church to its present site. Its contribution to the district is based in part on its association with the church, which is somewhat vitiated in the new location, but also on its architectural character, which is still discernible.

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # CT-31 and CT-194
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office                      Connecticut Historical Commission
- Other state agency    59 South Prospect Street
- Federal agency    Hartford, Connecticut 06106
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approx. 24

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

A	___	_____	_____	B	___	_____	_____
C	___	_____	_____	D	___	_____	_____

x See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The boundary is shown on the accompanying map, scale 1"=200', traced from Wilton Assessor Maps 73, 74 and 88.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the town hall, church and associated parish buildings that constituted the village core, as well as houses and a dam that are chronologically and visually connected with that core. The boundary follows property lines except where it crosses properties to exclude excessive back acreage.

11. Form Prepared By Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

Name/Title: Matthew Roth and Bruce Clouette

Organization: Historic Resource Consultants      Date: March 4, 1992

Street & Number: 55 Van Dyke Avenue      Telephone: 203-547-0268

City or Town: Hartford      State: CT      ZIP: 06106

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Bibliography	Wilton Center Historic District Wilton, Fairfield County, CT	9-1
--------------	---	-----

Atlas of New York and Vicinity. New York, 1867.

McCahon, Mary. "Cultural Resource Survey of Wilton, Connecticut."  
Wilton, 1989.

Eighteenth Century Dwellings in Wilton. Wilton, 1976.

Hubbard, G. Evans. Annals of Wilton, Volume III, Wilton Village: A  
History. Wilton, 1971.

Hurd, D. Hamilton. History of Fairfield County, Connecticut.  
Philadelphia, 1881.

Map of Fairfield County, Connecticut. Philadelphia, 1858.

One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of the Organization of the  
Congregational Church, Wilton. New York, 1876.



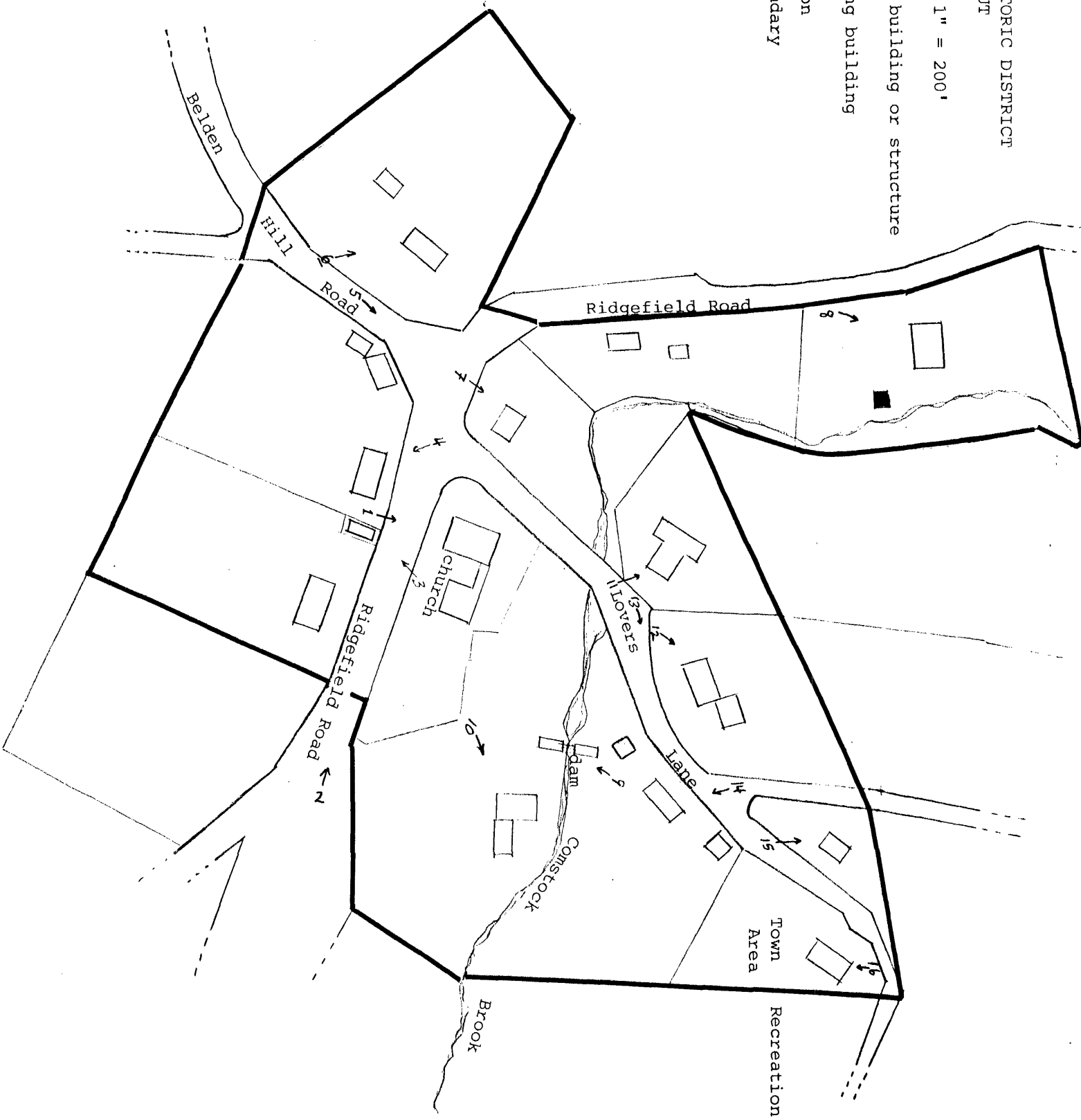
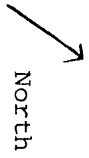




WILTON CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT  
 WILTON, CONNECTICUT

Scale (approx.): 1" = 200'

- Contributing building or structure
- Noncontributing building
- 7→ Photo position
- District boundary



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Photograph captions      Wilton Center Historic District      Photos-1  
   Wilton, Fairfield County, CT

All photographs:

1. Wilton Center Historic District
2. Wilton, Fairfield County, CT
3. Photo Credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
4. February 1992
5. Negative filed with Connecticut Historical Commission  
Hartford, CT

Captions:

Congregational Church, camera facing north  
Photograph 1 of 16

View along Ridgefield Road, Congregational Parsonage, Townhouse, and  
Nathan Comstock House to left, church to right, camera facing  
northwest  
Photograph 2 of 16

Townhouse, camera facing southeast  
Photograph 3 of 16

Nathan Comstock House, camera facing southeast  
Photograph 4 of 16

View north from Belden Hill Road, Winton House in background, barns  
associated with Nathan Comstock House in right foreground, camera  
facing north  
Photograph 5 of 16

Daniel Gregory House, camera facing northwest  
Photograph 6 of 16

Winton House, camera facing northeast  
Photograph 7 of 16

Davenport House, camera facing northeast  
Photograph 8 of 16

Dam remnant, camera facing southeast  
Photograph 9 of 16