

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For NPS use only

received **SEP 26 1985**

date entered

**NOV 8 1985**

**1. Name**

historic N/A

and/or common South Main and Washington Streets Historic District (Boundary Increase)

**2. Location**

street & number 11-15, through 54-60 South Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Norwalk  vicinity of South Norwalk

state CT Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 001

**3. Classification**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> buildings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Acquisition	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> others

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple Ownership - see continuation sheet

street & number

city, town Norwalk vicinity of South Norwalk state CT

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Norwalk Town Clerk

street & number City Hall - North Main Street

city, town South Norwalk state Connecticut

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

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

date 1985  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town 59 South Prospect Street state Connecticut  
Hartford

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
_____ excellent	_____ deteriorated	_____ unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
_____ good	_____ ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	_____ moved: _____ date
_____ fair	_____ u exposed		

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

This boundary increase adds eleven buildings to the South Main and Washington Streets historic district in South Norwalk (Town of Norwalk), Connecticut. That district, listed on the National Register on December 16, 1977, is characterized by late 19th and early 20th-century multi-story brick commercial buildings, extending in two parallel rows on Washington Street from South Main Street eastward to Water Street. This boundary increase enlarges that district at the west end so as to include one more block to the south on the east side of South Main Street and also the buildings on the west side opposite the original district and the added buildings on the east side (see sketch map). Six of the eleven added structures stand directly across the street from buildings in the listed district. With the boundary increase, the district will include all contiguous historic commercial structures in this area.

The buildings in the extension are mostly two or three stories tall, of brick construction, and are commercial buildings set close to each other or actually sharing party walls. Most were built in the 1920s, although one, the City Hotel (Photograph 6), is a landmark dating back to c.1870. The extension also includes an early diner (Photograph 4) and two mid 19th-century flat-roof Italian Villa-type houses forming rear additions to the commercial structures which replaced them in the 20th century (Photograph 4). There are no vacant lots or modern intrusions in the proposed area, so the buildings form cohesive rows of continuous historic structures (Photographs 1, 2 and 9). Some buildings are quite plain, but architectural elaboration runs the gamut from Classically detailed cornices (Photograph 2) to Spanish Colonial (Photograph 5) to Gothic (Photograph 10) to Tudor (Photograph 8). Buildings in the original district, including the pivotal cast-iron facade, are easily visible from every part of the boundary increase.

South Main Street is a busy urban thoroughfare and, along with Washington Street, forms the core of South Norwalk's commercial area. The district is visually set off from its surroundings by the raised railroad embankment on the north and west (including the heavy truss bridge under which South Main Street continues northward) and by residential areas to the south and east. The boundary for the increase was chosen to reflect both the obvious physical and visual barriers in the area and the commercial theme of the original district (see Boundary Justification, Item 10). (continued)

<sup>1</sup>At the time of the original nomination, it was anticipated that the buildings in the district on South Main Street would be demolished as part of a redevelopment program. Such demolition would have left the buildings presently under consideration isolated from the other structures on Washington Street. Since that demolition did not occur, the close relationship between the structures in the boundary increase and those in the original district has been preserved.

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South Main & Washington Sts. Historic District. (Boundary Increase)

Continuation sheet South Norwalk (Norwalk), CT Item number 2

Page

1

Location (continued):

Complete Street List:

11-15 South Main Street

17-19 South Main Street

23-29 South Main Street

33-35 South Main Street

37 South Main Street

47 South Main Street

40 South Main Street

46 South Main Street

51-53 South Main Street

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South Main & Washington Sts. Historic District (Boundary Increase)

Continuation sheet South Norwalk (Norwalk), CT Item number 4 Page 1

Owners:

Address	District/Block/Lot (Assessor Records)	Owner & Address	Contributing/ Noncontributing
11-15 South Main	2/45/16	Raphael Camhi 14 West Avenue South Norwalk, Connecticut 06854	Contributing
17-19 South Main	2/45/14	Roodner Realty, Inc. Attn: Cindy Cox 30 South Beach Street Rowayton, Connecticut 06853	Contributing
23-29 South Main	2/45/13	Paul Port & Ralph Miolla 400 Main Street Stamford, Connecticut 06901	Contributing
33-35 South Main	2/45/12	Charles Slapin <u>et al.</u> 201 Newton Avenue Norwalk, Connecticut 06851	Contributing
37 South Main	2/45/11	Charles Slapin <u>et al.</u> 201 Newtown Avenue Norwalk, Connecticut 06851	Contributing
46 South Main	2/44/28	Francis Keogh Pine Hill Road East Norwalk, Connecticut 06885	Contributing
40 South Main	2/44/31	Len Cohen/Continental Realty 83 East Avenue Norwalk, Connecticut 06851	Contributing
47 South Main	2/45/10	Charles Slapin <u>et al.</u> 201 Newton Avenue Norwalk, Connecticut 06851	Contributing
51-53 South Main	2/45/9	Joseph Falcone, Jr. 5 School Street Norwalk, Connecticut 06851	Contributing
54-60 South Main	2/44/1	Donald Gans 68 Water Street South Norwalk, Connecticut 06854	Contributing

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South Main & Washington Sts. Historic District (Boundary Increase)

Continuation sheet South Norwalk (Norwalk), CT Item number 6

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Existing Surveys (continued):

Norwalk: Historic Resources Inventory

Norwalk Redevelopment Agency  
1976 - Local

Records deposited with Connecticut Historical Commission  
59 South Prospect Street  
Hartford, Connecticut

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South Main & Washington Sts. Historic District (Boundary Increase)

Continuation sheet South Norwalk (Norwalk), CT Item number 7

Page 1

Description (continued):

The buildings in the district are in fair condition: most have some surface deterioration such as peeling paint or rusting architectural metal. Structural condition of most appears from the outside to be good.

The historical appearance of most of the buildings is largely intact. Several retain one or more of their original storefronts, and details such as cornices, window ornament and decorative brickwork survive unaltered. The most serious changes are the replacement of the City Hotel's mansard roof (Photograph 6) and altered second-story windows on two of the buildings (Photographs 1 and 9).

An inventory of structures included in the boundary increase follows.

INVENTORY OF CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

South Main Street, East Side

11-15 South Main Street: Appears as two two-story buildings, the larger four-bay north part of which was built c.1922 and the southern bay c.1930. Both are plain brick structures with little elaboration. The southern part has a single opening on the second floor divided into three windows with transoms; there is a simple stepped parapet. The north part's stucco second story and parapet may represent an alteration from a similar design. Photograph 1.

17-19 South Main Street (Roodner Block): two stories, c.1910. Two storefronts and narrower central entry bay. Second floor has wide windows between white-brick piers. Metal cornice includes mutules, egg and dart molding. Paneled parapet has slightly projecting breaks above the piers. Photograph 1.

23-29 South Main Street (McMahon Block): three stories, wood-frame construction with stuccoed exterior, 1900. Six-bay facade. Elaborate pressed metal cornice with dentils, egg-and-dart molding, modillions with acanthus carving, and a paneled frieze. Photographs 1 and 2.

33-35 South Main Street (Udelman Building): two stories, 1927, yellow brick with limestone facade on the ground floor. Prominent cornices above the central entry and two wide storefronts; entry is surrounded by rope-turn carving. Wide three-part second-story windows grouped in threes beneath a molded cornice and set off by limestone quoins; center second-story window has a blind arch filled with basketweave brickwork. Name and date tablet within the stepped center portion of the parapet. Photographs 2 and 3.

(continued)

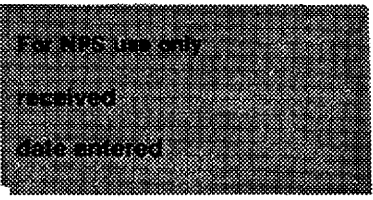
**United States Department of the Interior  
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South Main & Washington Sts. Historic District (Boundary Increase)

Continuation sheet South Norwalk (Norwalk), CT Item number 7

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Description (continued):

37 South Main Street: one story, c.1925. Limestone or cast-concrete facade with three storefronts separated by paneled pilasters; wide plain frieze with molded cornice. Photograph 4, right. Large one-story extension to rear c.1950.

47 South Main Street: Shippo Diner, vacant, 1937, a small arched-roof diner with painted galvanized sheet-metal sides; windows have blind round-arched heads. Photograph 4. Two-story flat-roofed clapboarded Italianate house to rear.

51-53 South Main Street: two stories, c.1925. Spanish Colonial Revival details include a tiled pent roof over the two center second-story windows, pergolas over the end windows, and a shallow peak in the center of the parapet. Two of three storefronts are largely original with small-pane glass over the display windows and recessed center entry and simple wood panels below. Photograph 5. Two-story flat-roofed Italianate house with belvedere to rear. Photograph 4.

South Main Street, East Side

34-40 South Main Street (City Hotel): four-story corner block, c.1870, with full fourth story and flat roof a replacement for the original dormered Mansard roof. Six bays facing South Main Street. Elaborately molded cast-iron window sills and hoods on acanthus-leaf consoles; two-over-two sash. Photographs 6 and 7.

46 South Main Street (Mercantile Building): three stories, 1920, eight bays wide with two large half-timbered and stucco gables. Flemish-bond brickwork with burnt headers. Wide windows with steel casement sash. Decorative effects include a stone stringcourse above the storefronts, stone tablets set into the parapet (the center one with the building name and date) and basketweave-brick arches above the center third-floor windows. Four stores with remnants of original storefronts (small-pane glass above display windows) and sheet-metal ceilings. Photograph 8.

54-60 South Main Street (Harris & Gans Building): two stories, five bays on South Main Street, stuccoed facade between brick piers. Gothic pinnacles rising above piers; paneled parapet. Central cast-concrete tablet with Gothic tracery in relief; "heraldic" shield with "H/G". Second-floor windows (replaced sash) grouped in fives; one original storefront with small-pane glass above the display windows. Photographs 9 and 10.

## 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 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 type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input 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 checked="" 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, C

Specific dates See Item 7, Inventory Builder/Architect Not known

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The buildings in this boundary increase contribute to the architectural and historical significance of the South Main and Washington Streets historic district. That district was nominated to the National Register because its buildings embodied the distinctive characteristics of late 19th and early 20th-century commercial architecture (Criterion C) and also because they illustrate the historical development of the area as South Norwalk's commercial center (Criterion A). Both these themes are amplified by the addition of the eleven buildings in the extension. Architecturally, they are very similar to the later buildings of the original district: predominantly of brick construction, they front directly on the sidewalk and are set close together in nearly continuous rows, the characteristic spatial arrangement of historic commercial areas. Stylistically the buildings exhibit the distinctive facades and architectural ornament which were intended to convey the good taste and prosperous status of the businessmen who built them. Elaborate cast-iron window hoodmolds, Classical cornices with diverse enrichment, and decorative brick effects illustrate some of the many options available to builders of the period. Moreover, the boundary increase extends the range of styles represented in the district with three revival designs -- Tudor, Gothic and Spanish Colonial -- from the 1920s.

The buildings in the boundary increase also continue the story of the area's development as the commercial hub of South Norwalk. The original uses of the buildings include a hotel, restaurants, and saloons to accommodate the many shoppers and travelers who passed through this busy area. Like the buildings in the original district, those in the extension also housed a variety of retail stores, particularly in the clothing and shoe businesses, and upper floors were rented for professional offices and service trades such as tailors. The area encompassed by the boundary increase was developed somewhat later than the major part of the district, and as a consequence the original owners and tenants of the buildings represented a greater diversity among the business people working there, with Irish, Italian, Jewish and women entrepreneurs joining the ranks of South Norwalk's proprietor class.

#### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Prior to 1900, the west side of South Main Street street was nearly entirely residential, but in the early years of this century it gave way before the commercial growth which had made Washington Street and the east side of South Main Street the center of South Norwalk. The east side of the street was already commercial: the City Hotel, built about 1870, was one of several large hotels in the area to take advantage of the nearby railroad depot. In the form of the similar and related Music Hall Block, the hotel originally extended onto the site of the Mercantile Building, and there was another hotel on the corner of South Main and Elizabeth Streets, the Clifford, which

(continued)



# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Lobozza, Carl. Norwalk, Connecticut: Pictures From the Past. Norwalk, 1974.

Norwalk City Directory, 1910-1930.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Norwalk and South Norwalk, 1884-1927.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2.5

Quadrangle name Norwalk South

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

### UTM References

A 

1	8
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6	3	2	7	3	0
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4	5	5	0	7	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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4	5	5	0	6	3	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

1	8
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6	3	2	7	6	0
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4	5	5	0	6	3	0
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D 

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E 

1	8
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4	5	5	0	5	5	0
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F 

1	8
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6	3	2	7	4	0
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4	5	5	0	5	8	0
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G 

1	8
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6	3	2	6	4	0
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4	5	5	0	5	8	0
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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The extension abuts the western end of the existing district and includes all the lots fronting on South Main Street through 54-60 on the east side and 51-53 on the west, with the boundary running along the rear property lines (see sketch map).

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

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bruce Clouette & Matthew Roth Edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Historic Resource Consultants date January 29, 1985

street & number The Colt Armory 55 Van Dyke Avenue telephone (203) 547-0268

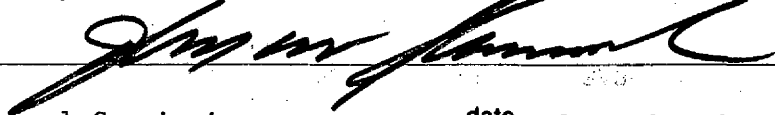
city or town Hartford state Connecticut

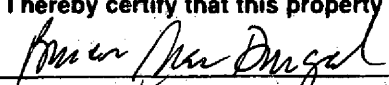
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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   
title Director: Connecticut Historical Commission date September 19, 1985

For NPS use only  
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
  
Keeper of the National Register date 11-8-85  
Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief of Registration

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South Main & Washington Sts. Historic District (Boundary Increase)

Continuation sheet South Norwalk (Norwalk), CT Item number 8

Page 1

Significance (continued):

burned in 1923. Both the Music Hall and the Hotel Clifford were replaced in the 1920s by commercial blocks. Thus both sides of the street primarily represent the commercial development of the early twentieth century.

Like many of the buildings in the original district, these new blocks had stores on the ground floor and mostly offices above. Clothing dominated the retail trade in the area, with millinery shops, shoe stores and garment retailers in abundance. Lawyers, accountants, and real estate agents filled the district's office space. Many buildings accomodated restaurants, saloons, or billiard parlors, reflecting the area's continued role as a center for entertainment and social life. Generalization, however, obscures one of the key points about the area: it had an extremely diverse collection of commercial uses. Following is a list of buildings with some of their earliest tenants; although not all these businesses were long-lived, they are at least representative of the commercial vitality of the area:

11-15 South Main Street: Champion Shoe Repair, contractor Vincent Camarata, tailor A. Czibere.

17-19 South Main Street (Roodner Block): Prensky Bros. Clothiers, shoe store, dentist office

23-29 South Main Street (McMahon Block): Pong's Chinese laundry, McPartland's saloon, Elite Bakery

33-35 South Main Street (Udelman Building): Udelman's Cloaks and Suits, Sanitary Bakery (later rented to the Post Office), American Conservatory of Music, plus three law firms, two realtors, and a bonding company

47 South Main Street: Burdick Diner, Rosenthal brothers, proprietors

51-53 South Main Street: United Paint & Wallpaper, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, chiropodist Lawrence Stiles, tailor Isadore Druks

34-40 South Main Street (City Hotel): hotel, Schneider's pool room, Magner & Troy Saloon

46 South Main Street (Mercantile Building): Mark-off Shoes, Postal Telegraph Cable Company, Sally Shop Millinery, Jack's Men's Shop, photographer M. H. Manugian, lawyer A. Slavitt, insurance agents Edward Nixon and Mrs. S.E. Lane, Hoyt realty, and accountant Frank Robinson

54-60 South Main Street (Harris & Gans Building): Clifford Pharmacy, Clifford Bowling & Billiards, jeweler Joseph Chirappa, shoedealer Samuel Green, Madame Jeanette's Ladies' Furnishings, the Savola Restaurant, and Henry Harris's delicatessen

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South Main & Washington Sts. Historic District (Boundary Increase)

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Significance (continued):

It is apparent from the names of these proprietors that the stores in the area of the boundary increase represented both the old wealth of Norwalk and business people of immigrant heritage. Of the established merchants, Samuel Roodner was typical. He was a flour and grain dealer and real estate speculator who, in addition to his Roodner Block at 17-19 South Main Street, also owned a large commercial block which still stands in the original district. Another established Norwalk firm which erected a block in the area of the extension was Harris & Gans, coal and wood dealers on Water Street. But many of the area's businesses were operated by people of Irish, Jewish, Italian and other ethnic heritage. Perhaps because this was a commercial area developed later than Washington Street and somewhat removed from the prime business center, rents were lower and there was more opportunity for both ethnic business people and women such as insurance agent Lane.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The architecture of the extension complements the value of the South Main and Washington Streets historic district as a diverse, richly detailed and representative collection of historic commercial architecture. In setting, scale, and materials these buildings are quite similar to those in the original district: they are mostly brick, multi-story structures set close to the sidewalk and close to each other, if not actually adjoining. For the most part the architecture in both the district and the extension is facade-oriented, in which enrichment is confined to street-facing elevations. Although the c.1870 City Hotel (Photograph 6) shares the elaborate cast-iron hoodmolds found on some of the original district's Victorian buildings, most of the structures in the extension date from the period 1900-1930 and represent the later end of the range found in the district as listed. The original district, however, explicitly stated as its theme commercial architecture from 1870 to 1920 and in fact includes several buildings from the period 1900-1930.

The 1900 McMahon Block (Photograph 2) has the prominent cornice enriched with modillions or other bracket forms which, in Italianate, Renaissance, or Classical form, was a dominant feature in commercial architecture from the 1870s on. Its neighbor is similar but its more Classical cornice and paneled parapet suggest a Georgian Revival influence. Other buildings in the district are considerably plainer (Photograph 1), but since in materials and setting and historical associations they are like others both in the extension and original district, they are included as contributing structures. The 1927 Udelman Building (Photographs 2 and 3) is a good example of 20th-century simplification of commercial architecture: rather than imitating an historical style, it uses decorative masonry effects (quoins, basketweave brickwork) to relieve the plainness of its form; it also has some excellent limestone storefront and entrance details.

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Continuation sheet South Norwalk (Norwalk), CT Item number 8

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Significance (continued):

Three 1920s revival styles not found in the earlier district are included in this extension: the Tudor Mercantile Building (Photograph 8), the Gothic-detailed Harris & Gans Building (Photographs 9 & 10), and the Spanish Colonial Revival building at 51-53 South Main Street (Photograph 5). In each case the most prominent feature of the facade -- the half-timbered gables, imitation stone pinnacles, or tiled pent roof -- transforms essentially plain lines and functional form (the wide window bays characteristic of the 1920s) into an aspect approximating the architecture of bygone days. These picturesque styles extend the usefulness of the original district as a catalog of commercial genres, as well as providing a diverse and visually interesting streetscape.

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South Main & Washington Sts. Historic District (Boundary Increase)

Continuation sheet South Norwalk (Norwalk), CT Item number 10

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Geographical Data (continued):

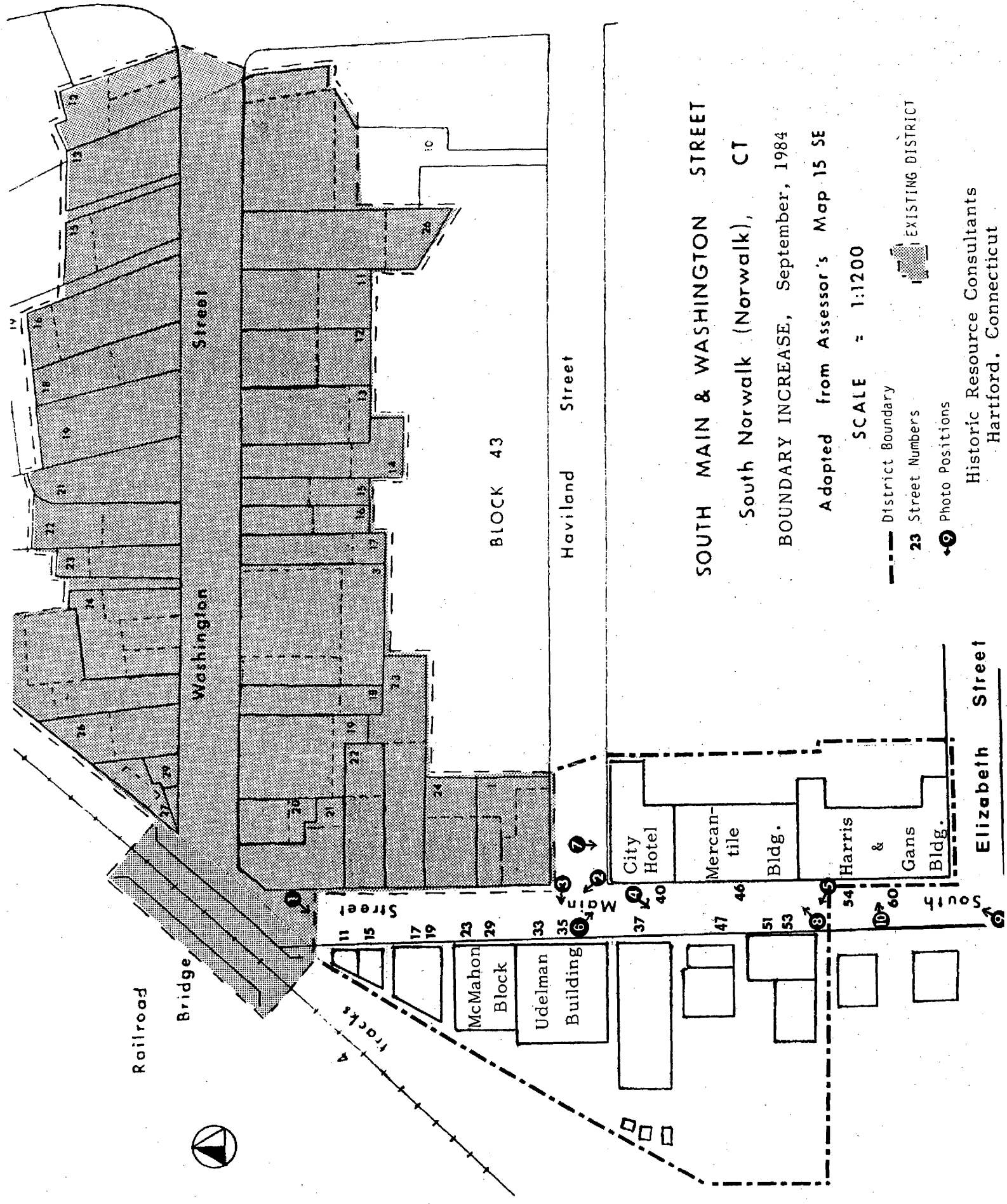
**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The theme of the original district was commercial architecture and the story of South Norwalk's commercial development. Residential architecture was not included, nor were the industrial uses nearby on Water Street. This proposed boundary increase continues to follow the commercial theme. Just as 19th-century houses on Haviland Street were not considered as part of the original district, so they have been excluded from this increase. By the same reasoning, houses adjacent to the southern edge of the west side of the proposed increase, part of a long row of similar Victorian dwellings, have not been included.

The barriers which formed part of the original boundary justification continue to visually and physically isolate these buildings from other parts of South Norwalk. The raised railroad right-of-way cuts off any sight line or other communication along the northern and western edges, and the massive railroad overpass provides a visual terminus to the area even though South Main Street itself continues to the other side.

The southern edge of the boundary, terminated on the west side by residential development, is terminated on the east side by Elizabeth Street. The lot south of Elizabeth Street is a large vacant parcel, and the next building is a modern discount retailer. The building after that is a c.1900 brick commercial structure, but the intervening open land and relatively recent construction make it inadvisable to extend the boundary so to include this not particularly distinguished building. Beyond that, South Main Street continues into residential development similar to the west side.

In summary, the proposed boundary increase augments the original district's themes of commercial development and commercial architecture by adding a cohesive group of mostly early 20th-century business buildings. While many of these are plainly detailed some, such as the Mercantile Block and the Spanish Colonial Revival building across the street, are architecturally distinguished by their stylish details. All form the continuous rows of multi-story, masonry structures which characterize historic commercial districts, and all are associated with the development of this part of South Norwalk as a retail and office center.



BLOCK 43

Haviland Street

SOUTH MAIN & WASHINGTON STREET  
 South Norwalk (Norwalk), CT

BOUNDARY INCREASE, September, 1984  
 Adopted from Assessor's Map 15 SE

SCALE = 1:1200

- District Boundary
- 23 Street Numbers
- Photo Positions
- EXISTING DISTRICT

Historic Resource Consultants  
 Hartford, Connecticut



Railroad

Bridge

Washington Street

Street

Street

Street

Street

Street

Street

Street

Street

Street

Street

Street

McMahon Block

Udelman Building

City Hotel

Mercantile Bldg.

Harris & Gans Bldg.

Elizabeth Street

South Street

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

<b>Significance</b>	<b>South Main and Washington Streets Historic District South Norwalk (Norwalk), Fairfield County, CT</b>	<b>8-1</b>
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Addenda, 5/1998

**Significance of Interlocking Tower**

Like the nearby railroad bridge, the interlocking tower that is situated adjacent to the Metro North railroad right-of-way, on the north side of Washington Street (Lot 27 on the sketch map), contributes to the significance of the district because 1) it dates from the period of South Norwalk's emergence as a major commercial center and 2) it relates to one of the factors that led to that development, namely, the area's exceptional access to rail transportation (Criterion C). The primary purpose of the tower, known as Berkshire interlocking, was to control the juncture of the New Haven Railroad's New Haven to New York City main line with an important branch line that led north at this point toward Danbury. Both lines carried passengers and freight.

The tower assumed its present form around 1895 when the right-of-way was widened and raised up so as to pass over the busy intersection of South Main and Washington streets; formerly, the trains ran at grade. This work, part of the largest episode of railroad construction in the state since the initial construction of the 1830s and 1840s, created the four-track mainline that was electrified a few years later and remains in service today, serving commuter trains to New York and the trains of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. The upper wooden part of the tower closely resembles an earlier Berkshire tower (c.1880?) shown in old photographs; it is likely that it was retained and raised atop a new brick base to serve the reconstructed grade-separated junction.

The Berkshire tower is also significant because it represents a once-common but now rare type of structure, the railroad interlocking tower (Criterion C). The purpose of such a tower was to provide shelter for a series of manually operated levers and indicators that controlled, via long steel rods, the numerous track switches associated with the junction. These control levers, still in place in the tower, are rarely found intact, since for more than 40 years all main track switches on this route have been under central electrified control. In addition to its historic engineering features, the tower exhibits the characteristic architecture of its type. As was typical, it rises a full two stories above the level of the track and provides a wide expanse of windows on all track-facing elevations; these elements reflect the important role of direct visual observation and visible signals in the track control of that period. The hip roof form was also very common and was typical of the picturesque detailing applied to passenger stations and other publicly visible railroad structures in this period.

United States Department of the Interior  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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