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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Merritt Beach & Son Building
other names/site number N.A.

2. Location

street & number 30 Bridge Street N.A. not for publication
city, town New Milford N.A. vicinity
state Connecticut code CT county Litchfield code 005 zip code 06776

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	_____ objects
			_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N.A.
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N.A.

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official [Signature] Director, Connecticut Historical Commission Date 3/18/92

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:) _____

[Signature] 4/28/92

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/business

AGRICULTURE/storage

SOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/restaurant, professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Brick, wood

roof Asphalt

other Vinyl siding, composition

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Merritt Beach & Son Building is a three-story, flat-roofed, brick Italianate commercial block and former lumberyard. The original section of the building was constructed in 1873, six bays wide and five bays deep; in 1946 a two-story addition was constructed to its rear and in the mid-1970s two former lumber sheds originally built in the early twentieth century were remodeled into commercial space and attached to the 1946 addition. A third former lumber shed abuts the rear wall of the expanded building, but remains freestanding and is not connected. All of the lumber sheds were built c. 1910. The buildings cover most of a one-fifth acre lot between the former Housatonic Railroad tracks and West Street, and they front on Bridge Street, the main commercial thoroughfare connecting U.S. Routes 7/202 to the west with the village of New Milford. Bridge Street, which is a part of U.S. Route 202, is lined with former late-nineteenth century houses now converted to business use and by one and two story brick commercial buildings constructed in the early to mid-twentieth century. The buildings' nearest neighbor, to the east across the railroad tracks, is the E.A. Wildman & Son Tobacco Warehouse, listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places. To the west, West Street is a neighborhood of late nineteenth century houses on its west side and scattered former mills, factories and tobacco warehouses on its east side. Diagonally northeast from the Merritt Beach & Son Building lie Railroad and Bank Streets, New Milford's main built-up commercial district. (Photograph 1, Figure 1)

The building's facade is six bays wide and is bifurcated on the first story. The present entrances with flanking bay windows are historic, with panelled and glazed doors surmounted by transoms. The present pent roof and brick stoops replaced an earlier wooden porch in the late 1950s. One of the center bays of the facade, which once contained windows to light a stairway to the public hall, as well as a ground floor entry door which opened onto the stairway, was bricked up when the hall was converted to commercial use in the early twentieth century. Muntins in the doorway transoms and in the door glazing and plate glass windows were added since the 1940s. The rest of the windows on the facade are original six-over-six sash with round-arched hoods of cast metal, molded and springing from brackets, and sills of limestone. The facade is surmounted by a molded cast-metal cornice with scroll brackets, dentils, and a panelled frieze. (Photograph 2)

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The sides of the building have short parapets and three brick chimneys with corbelled caps. Windows on the east and west elevations are original, with limestone lintels and sills, although ground-floor windows on the west elevation have been blocked up or replaced (in two instances) with thermal glass.

Throughout the building's two brick sections, the brick is laid in American common bond. The brick two-story rear addition built in 1946 is four bays deep and matches the brick bond and fenestration of the original 1873 section of the building. (Photographs 3,4; Figure 1)

The rear sections of the building are former lumber sheds built in the early part of the twentieth century¹ They were originally open in front, but were remodeled into commercial space in the mid-1970s when partition walls were removed and their interiors were linked by open corridors to the rear of the 1946 addition. The two sheds incorporated into the building in this way were remodeled and vinyl-sided in front, and new windows added in their first stories. The eastern elevations of these former sheds have not been touched and retain their historic appearance when viewed from the railroad tracks. These elevations are sided with vertical weatherboard and retain sliding doors which opened onto a former railroad siding to receive lumber shipments. (Photographs 4,5; Figure 1) A third former lumber shed, south of the two incorporated into the building, has survived intact, freestanding and not connected with the expanded building, although its north wall abuts the south wall of the expanded Beach Building. This building, which contributes to the significance of the property, has vertical weatherboard siding, cornice brackets, and wooden eight-over-eight sash. Its only alterations have been new doors and windows on the first story. (Photograph 6, Figure 1)

¹View of New Milford, Connecticut, G. Burleigh & Co., Troy, N.Y., 1906, Interviews with Charles Beach Barlow, August and November, 1991. The sheds appear to have been constructed between 1906, when they do not appear to have been present on the Burleigh lithograph, and the 1920s, when Mr. Barlow recalls them as a child.

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The interior of the Merritt Beach & Son Building shares the bifurcation of the facade on the first story. A brick partition wall runs the length of the original building, with openings near the front and rear. The rear opening in this wall features elaborate scroll brackets with pendants accenting its lintel. Walls, historically brick, were sheet-rocked in some places during the 1950s, but this has recently been removed. Ceilings are of narrow boards, with 8" x 12" carrier beams down their centers, supported by original fluted cast-iron columns. The rear wall of the original building has been incorporated into the present, expanded structure, with window openings still visible. Floors throughout are also narrow boards of pine. The second floor is largely open utilitarian space with a small office near the front, with windows overlooking downtown New Milford. The third floor, originally the public hall, is occupied by a photography studio and school, and has been divided into smaller rooms by wallboard partitions. (Photographs 7,8,9)

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1873-1941

Significant Dates

1873

Cultural Affiliation

N.A.

Significant Person

N.A.

Architect/Builder

Merritt Beach & Son

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Merritt Beach & Son Building is significant historically to New Milford for its association with the town's economic growth and development and its use as a public meeting place. (Criterion A) It is significant architecturally to New Milford as the only commercial building of its period and Italianate style to survive in the town's commercial district. (Criterion C)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: COMMERCE AND RECREATION

The firm of Merritt Beach & Son constructed the building's original section in 1873 to serve as the outlet for its expanding lumber and hardware business. The business was founded in 1857 as Canfield & Beach with a lumberyard on Elm Street in New Milford; Canfield withdrew from partnership in 1866 and the firm was managed by four successive generations of the Beach and Barlow families. The business still exists today in the form of a holding company, making it the town's oldest business in continuous existence, although it is no longer associated with this building. It incorporated in 1915, and was New Milford's leading hardware and lumber supplier of its period. It retained that distinction into the twentieth century, when the firm, then known as C.M. Beach Company, remodeled and restored many of the eighteenth century houses in the New Milford area. Its association with this building continued until 1977, when the building was sold to the Prox Furniture Company which used its first floor as a showroom.

In addition to serving as a store and lumberyard, the building's original uses included a tobacco warehouse on the east side of the ground floor and on part of the second story, and a public hall on the third floor, both further reflections of New Milford's development during the late nineteenth century. New Milford was the packing and shipping center for the local sun-grown cigar wrapper-leaf tobacco industry and during the late nineteenth century supported 12 warehouses devoted to the crop, nearly all of them located adjacent to the tracks of the former

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Danbury News-Times, October 31, 1968.

New Milford Historical Society, Edith Newton's New Milford, 1979.

Orcutt, Samuel, History of the Towns of New Milford and Bridgewater, Hartford: Lockwood and Brainard Company, 1882.

Interviews with Charles Beach Barlow, great-grandson of Merritt Beach and former owner of Merritt Beach & Son Building, August and November, 1991.

N.A.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Conn. Historical Comm., 59 South Prospect St., Hartford, CT 06106

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .23

UTM References

A

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described in full in a deed from Richard Burkhart to Michaela McConaughey and Kenneth M. Walker, Volume 433, page 663, of the New Milford Land Records in the New Milford Town Clerk's Office, Main Street, New Milford, Connecticut. It is depicted as Lot 54 on the attached copy of the New Milford Tax Assessor's map (Figure 2).

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include the entire property that has been associated historically with the building.

See continuation sheet

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

name/title William F. Devlin, Consultant

organization New Milford Trust for Historic Preservation date November 15, 1991

street & number 36 Park Lane West telephone (203) 354-1370

city or town New Milford state CT zip code 06776

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Housatonic Railroad.² The Beach Building continued to be partially used for tobacco storage into the early years of the twentieth century.³ The local industry peaked around World War I. During the 1920s a number of factors, including foreign competition and the new popularity of cigarettes, sent New Milford area tobacco production into a decline from which it never recovered.⁴

The public hall on the third floor, known as Beach Hall, is a reflection of the need for public space in New Milford as it assumed increasing importance as the commercial and social center of the rural region of southern Litchfield County. The hall was used into the early decades of the twentieth century for dances. Between 1873 and 1876, when New Milford's present town hall was completed, Beach Hall served as New Milford's town meeting place, and as a temporary seat of town government.⁵

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Merritt Beach & Son Building is the only example of an Italianate commercial building of its period to survive in New Milford. Commercial development in New Milford centered during the colonial and early American periods around the town's green, northeast of this site. After the Housatonic Railroad, completed through town in 1840, stimulated industrial growth and commercial agriculture, Bank Street, a short street between the green and the railroad depot, became the village's commercial center. Merritt Beach, however, chose a site for his business on the edge of the town's industrial and warehouse area along the railroad tracks to provide space for his lumber operation and to facilitate delivery of his lumber by rail, as well as to accommodate the tobacco-packing operation in the building which also shipped by rail. His decision spared the Beach Building from destruction during a huge fire in 1902 that swept through New Milford's commercial district, leveling several commercial buildings on the green, all of Bank Street, and several others on Railroad Street. The commercial buildings which replaced those destroyed included several built in a more restrained Italian Renaissance mode than the Beach Building, and many others which reflect later Victorian styles. The ornate window hoods, exuberant cornice, and bracketed partition opening on the first floor are unique to this building in New Milford. The two-story rear addition built in 1946 complements this original structure without competing with it, while the remaining freestanding lumbershed to the rear, with its stick bracketed cornice,

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weatherboard siding, and sliding loading door facing the tracks, enhances the significance of the property by preserving intact evidence of one of its original uses.

1. New York Historical Society, notes for Edith Newton's New Milford, 1979; interviews with Charles Beach Barlow, August and November, 1991

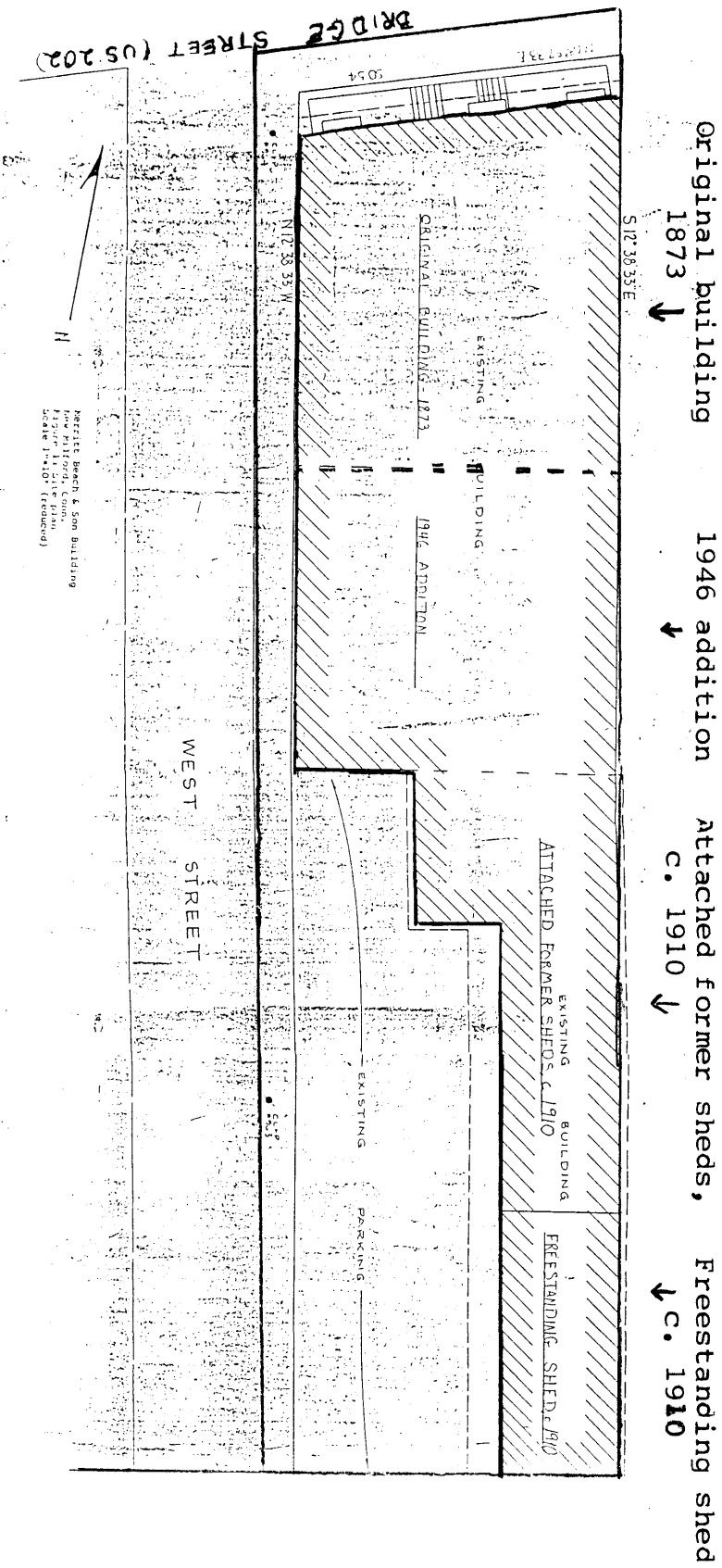
2. Devlin, William, National Register of Historic Places nomination for E. A. Wildman & Company Tobacco Warehouse, New Milford, Connecticut, November, 1987. Copies at Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, CT 06106.

3. New Milford Gazette, December 22, 1900, p. 4.

4. Danbury News Times, October 31, 1968.

5. New Milford Historical Society, *ibid.*, p. 58.

Merritt Beach & Son Building
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 Figure 1: Site plan, scale 1"=10' (reduced)



Merritt Beach & Son Building
30 Bridge St.
New Milford, CT

Handwritten:
Mrs. Cassidy
Nicholas Rd
B7 1989

Handwritten:
149
100'

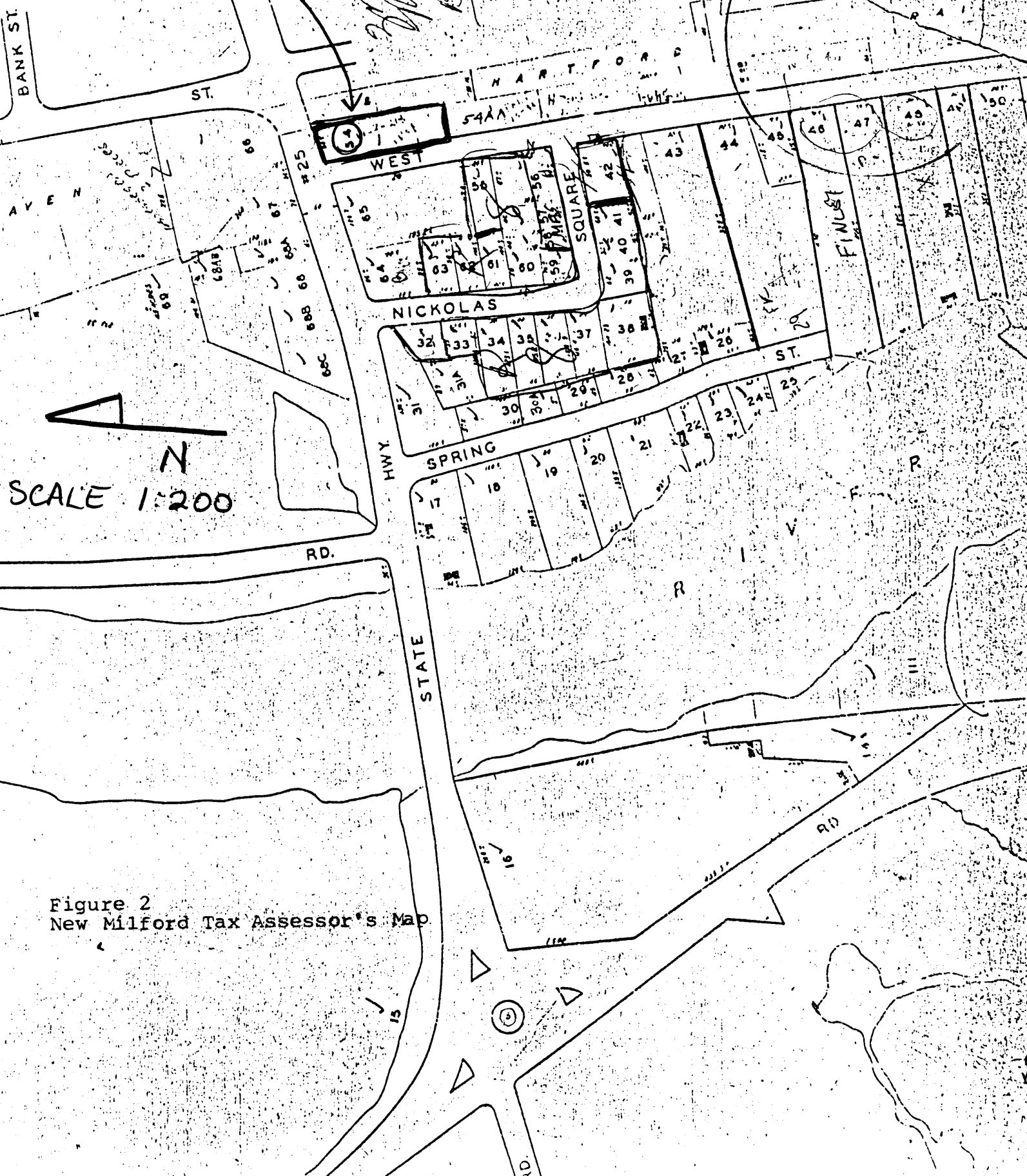


Figure 2
New Milford Tax Assessor's Map