



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The attached property, the Gillette's Grist Mill, in Litchfield County, Connecticut, reference number 77001403, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper of the National Register on 08/29/1977, as evidenced by FEDERAL REGISTER/WEEKLY LIST notice of Tuesday, February 6, 1979, Part II, Vol. 44, No. 26, page 7441. The attached nomination form is a copy of the original documentation provided to the Keeper at the time of listing.

  
Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

2/12/2009  
Date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC **Gillette's Grist Mill**

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER **Maple Hollow Road**

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN **New Hartford** VICINITY OF **6th - Toby Moffett**  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE **Connecticut** CODE **09** COUNTY **Litchfield** CODE **005**

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input 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 **Bakerville Lumber & Construction Company**

STREET & NUMBER **Maple Hollow Road**

CITY, TOWN **New Hartford** VICINITY OF **CT** STATE **CT**

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **New Hartford Town Clerk**

STREET & NUMBER **Main Street**

CITY, TOWN **New Hartford** STATE **CT**

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE **Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources**

DATE **1975** FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS **Connecticut Historical Commission**

CITY, TOWN **Hartford** STATE **CT**

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS - wheel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Gillette's Grist Mill is located on a fast-moving stream, the Nepaug River, in the Maple Hollow section of New Hartford. Although this area was thickly settled in the 19th century, there are now only a small cluster of houses and only this one mill left. Surrounded by trees and bushes, the mill and a two-story frame shed, of uncertain date and function, are a short way upstream from the point where Maple Hollow Road crosses the river.

The mill is a two-story, gable-roofed, frame building about the size of a dwelling-house, set on a deep foundation/wheel pit of mortared rubble probably left over from an earlier mill. The stonework is nearly all visible on the south side, next to the stream, which contains the only window lighting the wheel pit. The structure is framed much like a barn, with corner and center posts into which are pegged diagonal braces and rails. The timbers are heavy and up-and-down sawn, although there are several supporting members of comparatively recent installation. The ridgepole is extended and braced on the east end to form a beam for a hoist, which allowed grain to be loaded through a large opening to the second floor. Windows, which are 12/12 on the first story and 12/8 on the second, are large and evenly spaced, but most of the sash is missing; recently four of the windows on the south side were eliminated by replacement of decayed siding. On the north side is the entrance, once sheltered by a small shed roof; set somewhat right of center is a large, nine-panel door with hand-forged latch and external iron lock on the inside. The whole exterior is sheathed with vertical board siding except for the east side which has clapboards, in poor shape.

Inside the wheel pit are the remains of the wheel and power transmission. The wheel is about 18' in diameter and 6' across the face. According to the 1870 census, this pitchback wheel produced about 20 hp. All of the buckets and most of the rim have rotted away. The wheel is constructed using a cast iron axle and hub into which are set heavy wooden spokes. Iron rods tie the two sides of the wheel together at the ends of the spokes. The remains of the wooden rim show slots into which the buckets were fitted. The south side of the wheel has an additional wooden rim which carries an iron internal ring gear. Power was taken off this gear by a pinion at the west end where the water, carried by a wooden trough, falls on the wheel. The pinion is connected by a round shaft to a beveled gear which meshes with another beveled gear, the wallower, thus creating a vertical shaft. These drive parts are all iron, set in metal bearings. The large gear on the main shaft, which drove the spindles for the two stones (of which nothing remains), is iron but has individually removable wooden teeth.

There is little of interest on the first floor except a handle for controlling the gate from the sluice to the wheel and the outlet of the grain hopper. The vertical main shaft goes through this hopper: perhaps it had some kind of automatic feed mechanism worked by the shaft instead of the traditional damsel and shoe. On the second floor power is transmitted to square overhead shafts for belt-driving other equipment: there is a bolter, an inclined trough, hexagonal in section and covered with screening of different meshes, which rotates to grade the flour; and a smutter, "Leonard Smith's Patent Ventilator/ 1850," a tub-shaped machine for blowing fungus from the grain. The opening of the hopper is here, too, now filled with debris but worn from years of use.

Also on the site is the drain canal, millrace, or ditch which runs parallel to the river from the mill to the ruins of a rubble dam upstream; the ditch is built of earth and rubble and is mostly filled in. Below the mill is a small door in the river bank, probably the discharge of the tailrace.

# 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Gillette's Grist Mill is an important historic artifact because gristmills, once an integral part of village life, have practically disappeared from the landscape. Even where the mill building remains, it is rare to find the wheel and other machinery in place, in part because of the conversion to turbines in the 1870's and later. Gillette's Mill is therefore a major archaeological resource. Although it is in a deteriorated condition, alterations to the structure have been fairly moderate. Local people are interested in stabilizing the structure's condition; these efforts may assure the preservation of the mill.

For the industrial historian, Gillette's Mill is interesting as an example of a transitional technology. This 19th century enterprise shows a number of improvements over more traditional designs. The location of the building over the wheel pit simplified construction by eliminating the face wheel and critical bearing points necessary to bring the power indoors. The interior wheel may also have helped avoid freeze-ups. Also typical of the 19th century is the increased use of the water power to drive ancillary machinery, here represented by the bolter and smutter. There undoubtedly were other machines such as a sack hoist, to judge by the number of shafts and pulleys; census records indicate that only one hand was employed.

It is the wheel and power transmission which are of greatest value, since wheels, even in this condition, are rare. The wheel is a pitchback wheel, itself a fairly new idea, designed to overcome the backwatering associated with overshot wheels. The use of iron in the hub, reinforcements and gearing is the most significant development, however. It made the wheel more rugged, allowed greater precision and smoothness, and was less demanding to construct, since critical mortises were avoided. The ring and pinion drive, fitted directly on the water-wheel, simplified power transmission and eliminated some of the stress points of earlier designs. This, along with the inherent strength of the iron, allowed "a considerable reduction in weight, with a consequent increase in power."<sup>1</sup> Although water power was eventually superceded, it shared the general technological advance of the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The Gillette Grist Mill has local significance because this section of New Hartford, called the Nepash (Nepaug) Meadows, was once an intensively developed manufacturing site with a clock shop, turning shop, carding, grist and two saw mills. An early entrepreneur was Joseph Gillette (1778-1857), who built and operated saw and carding mills. His children, Harlow and Acantha, bought in 1840 the "stone grist mill" probably located on this site. Eventually the present mill was built.<sup>2</sup> The mills were all located adjacent to each other and the point was known as "Gillette's Mills." Although the Gillette family operated the gristmill until 1892, it was probably a declining business. Census records show that production over the years 1850-1870 dropped from \$5300 to \$1150 worth. New Hartford had become less agricultural, and the flour market became regionalized and then

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

Gillette's Grist Mill

8

one

nationalized. At the same time, many of the other mills on the river fell into decline. Gillette's Mill, stark and utilitarian, is the only reminder of the area's many water-powered enterprises.

<sup>1</sup>John Reynolds, Windmills and Watermills (New York, 1970), 43-44.

<sup>2</sup>It is difficult to date the mill with any degree of certainty. The first mill on the site was built in 1825 and was consistently known as the "stone grist mill." By 1858 the deeds call it merely a grist mill, but one history written in 1881 refers to "the present stone mill." Was this perhaps merely a traditional name? Since the mill is part stone, this is not entirely far-fetched. The wheel, of course, may not be contemporary with the wooden building. The wheel pit walls show signs of being raised about two feet to accommodate the present wheel; the earlier smaller wheel was probably a breast-shot. The smutter, dated 1850, the well-worn hopper and the door seem to be earlier than 1881, and even the construction of the frame is very traditional, pegged and mortised, with a few timbers around the wallower showing signs of the broad-ax. To add to the mystery, there are cut stone blocks piled near the mill with what appear to be mortises for beams. It seems that there is material on this site from different time periods and it would take considerable effort to sort out all the evidence.

My very tentative, personal conclusion is that the present wheel and probably the wooden building date from mid-century. The names in the deeds, the construction, and the continual decline of the business would indicate such a date. In 1880 the mill, last worked by Joseph R. Gillette 2d, was not even listed in the census (Joseph had given up milling for farming). It is difficult to believe major improvements would be undertaken at this time.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- County Atlas of Litchfield, Connecticut. New York: F.W. Beers, 1874.  
 Fagan, L. Map of New Hartford, Connecticut. Philadelphia, 1852, Conn. State Library  
 Jones, Sarah L. "New Hartford," History of Litchfield County. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co., 1881. Late reference to stone mill.  
 "Joseph R. Gillette," Biographical Review: The Leading Citizens of Litchfield

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>18</u>	<u>664020</u>	<u>4633510</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE	Bruce Clouette, Consultant	
ORGANIZATION	Connecticut Historical Commission	DATE January 16, 1976
STREET & NUMBER	59 South Prospect Street	TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005
CITY OR TOWN	Hartford,	STATE CT

# 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

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATT:ST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER	PAGE
Gillette's Grist Mill	9	two

County, Connecticut. Boston: Biographical Review, 1896.

Lewis, Leon. "Watson District, Town of New Hartford," Lure of the Litchfield Hills,  
XXX, no. 2 (1970), p. 11. An old but undated photo.

New Hartford Land Records, Vols. 20:76 (1858), 17:192-3 (1845), 16:50 (1840).

Reynolds, John. Windmills and Watermills. New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1970.

U.S. Census Office, Products of Industry, Ms. Schedules in Connecticut State  
Library, 1850-1880, Litchfield County.