

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Montclair MRA

Continuation sheet Montclair, Essex County, NJ Item number

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MILLER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

DESCRIPTION

The Miller Street Historic District is a group of Vernacular cottages built between 1870-1930. This area is part of a neighborhood which has continuously provided housing for local workers since the 1830s. Mills had once existed nearby, located along the eastern boundary of Montclair during the 18th and 19th centuries.

There are no intrusions in the Miller Street District, which includes 24 structures built between 1870-1930. The District, which includes Miller Street and a section of Fulton Street running west from New Street, is the only part of the neighborhood where the integrity of the workers' cottages survives. On the southern edge of the District where Miller Street meets Elmwood Avenue there was no development until about 1920 when a mixture of attached double-decker homes and small Plan-Book houses were built on the narrow lots between Elm Street and Maple Avenue. Today the area is still residential; small scale neighborhood churches of modern design and modest brick multi-family homes complement the older structures in a pleasant suburban setting.

Along the northern boundary of the District, where residential use continues to the commercial section on Bloomfield Avenue, most of the small cottages have been rehabilitated. The standard of workmanship varies; many of these small homes have lost their character through use of incompatible materials.

On New Street to the east, where some of the cottages are smaller and show earlier dates than those in the rest of the District, the erosion to the building fabric is considerable and the architectural integrity of many buildings lost through poor alterations. West of Miller Street the scale of the buildings changes where a mixed-use area of churches, apartment blocks and two-family homes extends along the east side of Elm Street. St. Vincent's Hospital provides stability on the northwest corner of Elm and Fulton Street.

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Today the neighborhood reflects a quiet residential character. Tall trees shade the sidewalks and the small gardens are colorful and neat. The many gables and porches add a rhythm to the streets of this old-fashioned neighborhood.

ARCHITECTURE

The small homes built in the Miller Street District after 1870 were Vernacular in character, conforming to the accepted tradition of the late 19th century. These simple structures were typically 2-3 bays wide with the gable facing the street and an open front porch. Brackets, pierced barge boards, and rounded Italianate windows were often added for decoration. Gambrel and hipped roofs appeared on the houses built after the turn of the century, which were otherwise similar to the earlier structures in scale and character. There is an absence of any surface decoration on these later houses.

The cottages on the south side of Fulton Street are almost contiguous with the sidewalk; the structures to the north are set slightly further back. On Miller Street the houses on both sides have 5' setbacks, except for 17-27 (#9) on the east side near Elmwood Avenue, which is located about 10' from the street. Original outbuildings remain at 16 Fulton (#4) and 15 Miller (#10). There are no garages in the District. On Miller Street, north of #10 (#1), an empty lot is used for parking.

There are 24 structures in the Miller Street Historic District.

- 1 is a key building, built in 1870
- 15 are contributing, built between 1870 and 1927
- 1 is harmonizing, built after 1927
- 7 are harmonizing (altered), built between 1870 and 1927

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In compiling the following individual building descriptions, a system of five categories has been used to assess the architectural and streetscape qualities of each structure.

1. The term "Key" is applied to those buildings which possess district architectural and historical significance, and which act as landmarks within the architectural matrix of the District.
2. "Contributing" refers to buildings dating from the period of the District's significance which have some architectural and/or historical importance, and which visually contribute to the cohesiveness of the District's streetscapes.
3. "Harmonizing" buildings are those from a later dating period.
4. "Harmonizing" (altered) buildings are those dating from the period of the District's significance (1870-1930) which have been significantly altered. Buildings in this category should undergo further investigation prior to Tax Act Certification.

Miller Street

1. Number 10--Vernacular cottage; c.1870; harmonizing (altered); 2-1/2 story, 2 bays; stucco; bracketed gable roof, with lunette below gable; center chimney.
Alterations: 3 bay front porch with supporting brick piers and concrete steps to the north have been added.
2. Number 12--Vernacular cottage; c.1892; contributing; 2-1/2 story, 3 bays; clapboard siding with scalloped shingles on front gable wall; 3 bay open porch with turned columns and open frieze below roof; center chimney; slate roof.
3. Number 14--Vernacular cottage, Italianate elements; c.1892; contributing; 2-1/2 story, 3 bays; broad

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clapboard siding; small arched window in front gable peak; 2-story open porch on northeast corner.

Alterations: Secondary entrance and stair added to north wall.

4. Number 16--See Montclair Inventory (0713-1009); key building.
5. Number 20--20th Century Vernacular; c.1926; contributing; 2-1/2 story, 2 bays; clapboard siding; open front porch, gable roof; 1/1 windows, paired on 1st floor.
6. Number 22--20th Century Vernacular cottage; c.1924; contributing; 2 story, 3 bays; broad clapboard siding; paired 1/1 windows 1st bay; 3 bay open front porch.
7. Number 24--20th Century Vernacular cottage; c.1924; contributing; 2 story, 3 bays; broad clapboard siding; paired 1/1 windows 1st bay; 3 bay open front porch.
8. Number 26--Vernacular 20th Century cottage; c.1927; contributing; 2-1/2 story, 2 bays; wide clapboard siding; 2-story open porch with flat roof.
9. Number 17-27--See Montclair Inventory (0713-1010); contributing.
10. Number 15--Vernacular late 19th Century; c.1870; contributing; 2-1/2 story, 5 bays; beveled clapboard siding; open front porch with turned columns; entrance in 3rd bay.
11. Number 11--Eclectic late 19th Century cottage; c.1888; contributing; L-shape plan; 2-1/2 story, 4 bays; clapboard finish with scalloped shingles in front and side gable walls; bargeboard with sunburst motif front gable peak; open front porch with frieze below roof; 2 chimneys.
12. Number 9-9-1/2--Vernacular; 2-family house; c.1908; contributing; 2-1/2 story, 4 bays; clapboard siding;

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glass-paneled double entrance doors in corner bays; open front porch with rounded columns; paired windows in center bays; paired gables across front elevation; scalloped slate finish on rear roof; center chimney.

Fulton Street

13. Number 16--Vernacular cottage; c.1870; contributing; 2-1/2 story, 3 bays; open front porch; small square window in attic gable. Alterations: Asbestos siding added; new entrance on east elevation.
14. Number 18--Two-family house/early 20th Century; c.1923; contributing; 2-1/2 story, 5 bays; paired windows on 2nd floor, flat roof. Alterations: Asbestos siding added.
15. Number 22--Vernacular 20th Century cottage; c.1927; harmonizing (altered); 2-1/2 story, 3 bays. Alterations: House heavily altered; additions include large dormer in front roof; new brick entrance and aluminum siding.
16. Number 24--Vernacular cottage; c.1887; harmonizing (altered); 2-1/2 story, 3 bays; gambrel roof. Alterations: Siding added; original porch columns altered.
17. Number 26--Vernacular 20th Century cottage; c.1927; harmonizing (altered); 2-1/2 story, 2 bays; 2-story open porch across 1st bay. Alterations: Asbestos siding added; original windows replaced.
18. Number 28--Vernacular cottage; c.1926; harmonizing (altered); 2-1/2 story, 2 bays. Alterations: Enclosed porch added above entrance; aluminum siding.
19. Number 30--Dutch Colonial cottage; c.1930; harmonizing; 2-1/2 story, 3 bays.
20. Number 34--See Montclair Inventory (0713-956); contributing.

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21. Number 25--Turn-of-Century Vernacular cottage; c.1900; harmonizing (altered); 2-1/2 story, 3 bays. Alterations: Siding added.
22. Number 21--Vernacular cottage; c.1872; harmonizing (altered); 2-1/2 story, 3 bays; asbestos siding; lunette below gable peak. Alterations: New brick steps added; present windows are replacements.
23. Number 17--Vernacular cottage; c.1897; contributing; 2-1/2 story, 3 bays; asbestos siding; open front porch with curvilinear brackets; deep barge board; center chimney.
24. Number 13--See Montclair Inventory (0713-957); contributing.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Miller Street Historic District is significant as the only neighborhood in Montclair where a group of small Vernacular cottages have maintained their integrity and continuously provided working-class housing since the beginning of the 19th century. The area is additionally significant as a section of the township where development is not historically linked to the railroad and the affluent commuter suburb of "Montclair."

HISTORY

There were mills in the area south of Bloomfield Avenue and east of Maple Avenue since 1827. At this time Henry Wilde from Yorkshire, England, bought the Harrison Milling Company's buildings near Glenridge Avenue, enlarged the business, constructing a new, larger mill down the stream on the Wheeler property. Wilde improved the machinery, using local water power for spinning and cording wool. He began the manufacture of plaid shawls said to be the first made in the

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country. The mills closed in 1839, but opened a couple of years later when John Wilde (a cousin of Henry) started to manufacture calico prints which continued until 1853. Unoccupied for some time, the mill buildings were bought by Grant J. Wheeler in 1856. Wheeler in conjunction with James C. Beach started a firm to manufacture straw board. These two men were the original inventors of the process. The business was successful and continued until 1887 when pollution of the nearby streams forced the Board of Health to close the mills.¹

Henry Wilde had built a Methodist Church (St. Mark's) on Bloomfield Avenue for his English employees in 1836.² The first Roman Catholic church was constructed in 1856 on the site of the present St. Vincent's Nursing Home.³ Since then churches have continued to flourish in the area.

Miller Street was called after a German, Frederick Muller, who purchased property there in 1860.⁴ Mullers were listed as masons and other occupations connected with the building industry. The Montclair City Directory of 1897 shows four houses, 10, 12, 14 and 16 Miller Street (#1, #2, #3 and #4), occupied by members of the Muller family. Karl Frederick Muller worked as a mason on Glenfield School, built nearby on Maple Avenue in 1896. Other members of this family continued to reside on Miller Street until 1930.

¹Philip Doremus, Reminiscences of Montclair, Montclair, New Jersey, May 1908, pp. 22-29.

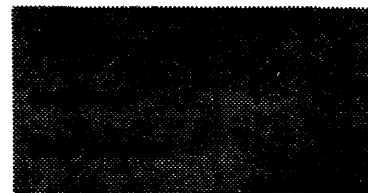
²Henry Whittemore, History of Montclair Township, 1977 (reprint of 1894 edition), pp. 36-37.

³Ibid., p. 79.

⁴The City Directory of 1890 lists the family as Miller. In the Directories after 1897 the name appears as Muller.

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The most colorful individual on Miller Street in these early days was Louis Heckman, who resided at #10 (#1). Heckman founded a religious group, the Pilgrim Mission, in 1870. Many affluent town residents contributed to his efforts and mill-owner James G. Beach donated property on Bloomfield Avenue near the present Mission Street where a suitable church was built.⁵

The 1871 map of Montclair shows only a section of Miller Street cut through from Fulton Street. The second part of the street was opened to Elmwood Avenue by Elliott Marshall c.1915.⁶

After World War I the ethnic mix of the area gradually changed. Attracted by the small, affordable housing and the availability of rental space, many working class Italians and later Blacks moved into the neighborhood.

Blacks have lived in the area since 1870. They had first worked as servants but many soon acquired their own properties and lived in the small streets adjoining Bloomfield Avenue. As the Blacks became more prosperous, many moved to the southeast corner of the town, known locally as the "South End." Today Blacks live throughout the town, and have made important contributions to the community. While some Black residents of Montclair are prominent leaders in business, education and the entertainment world, others are still part of the local working class community.

The Muller family continues to own a number of the buildings on Miller Street which they hold as rental properties. The standard of maintenance has been good and most of the structures still retain their original clapboard siding and simple architectural details.

⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

⁶ Deed to property 44-H-20, December 15, 1919 at Tax Department, Montclair Municipal Building.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARCHITECTURE

While the Vernacular architecture in the Miller Street Historic District conforms in general to the accepted character of the time, there are subtle differences between the buildings. The earliest structure, 16 Miller Street (#4), is smaller in scale than the surrounding houses. Other distinctive features of the cottage include attic windows and a north-south gable roof.

The steep gables, combined Italianate and Queen Anne elements seen at #14 (#3), #12 (#2), and #11 (#11) are typical of the late 19th century cottages found in other parts of the town. Only #11 (#11) shows more elaborate details, including a barge board with sunburst motif. On the west side, a two-family house, 9-9-1/2 Miller Street (#12), shows twin gables to the street and a continuous porch across the main elevation.

The later cottages on the southwest section of the street, though similar in scale to the earlier structures, are devoid of ornament. Two of these structures show hipped roofs and one has a two-story front porch. Built in the Craftsman style, #17-27 (#9), the multi-family dwelling in the southeast section of Miller Street, is uniquely different. The stucco finish of this building appears stark but the porch and roof gables harmonize well with the earlier cottages. Most of the houses on Fulton Street, built between 1870-1900, have been drastically altered. The newer cottages built in the 1920s have also been sided and changed. In spite of later additions and other alterations, #34 (#20), the largest of the early residences on Fulton Street, retains its Italianate elements and molded window surrounds.

There are no intrusions in the Miller Street District. The standard of maintenance is good. Most of the houses on Miller Street still retain their original siding and other simple architectural details.

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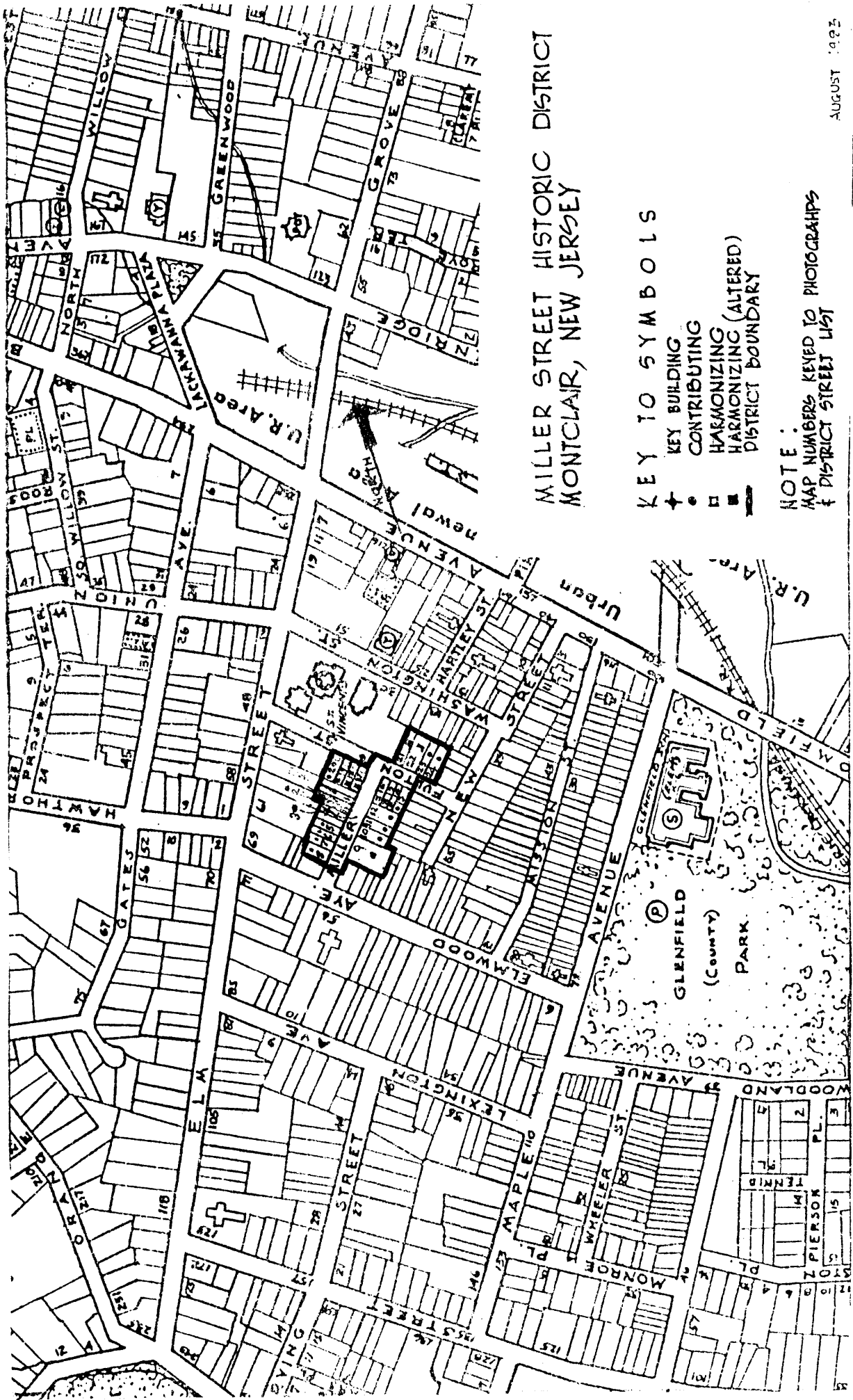
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Miller Street Historic District

GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARY

For precise definition of District boundaries, see
attached Tax Map.

±4 acres



MILLER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

KEY TO SYMBOLS

- † KEY BUILDING
- CONTRIBUTING
- HARMONIZING
- HARMONIZING (ALTERED)
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY

NOTE:
MAP NUMBERS KEYED TO PHOTOGRAPHS
† DISTRICT STREET LIST

1"=500' (approx)

AUGUST 1995