

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic N/A  
and/or common Upper Main Street Historic District

**2. Location**

street & number 36-100, 85-117 Main Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Ansonia N/A vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district Fifth  
state Connecticut code 09 county New Haven code 009

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<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 See Continuation Sheet  
street & number " "  
city, town " N/A vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state "

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ansonia Land Records, Town Clerk's Office  
street & number City Hall, Main Street  
city, town Ansonia state Connecticut

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Valley Regional Planning Agency has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1978  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission  
city, town Hartford state Connecticut

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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

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Upper Main Street Historic District  
Ansonia, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET Property Owners ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE 1

All structures are considered to contribute to the historic character of the district except 105 Main Street.

All addresses are Ansonia, CT 06401 unless otherwise noted.

100 Main Street  
Louis N. Mascolo and Steven  
Dobrowski, Sr.  
ABC Company  
540 Main Street

Ansonia Opera House. 1870. (Photograph 1) High Victorian Italianate, 3-story, 53 x 105-ft. brick building with grey and yellow stone trim. The facade is divided into five sections. The central section projects slightly

as a pavilion, has grey stone quoins at its corners, and is capped by a round pediment. The end sections have triangular pediments, quoins at the corners of the building and quoins in the flat wall plane to define their interior edges -- a total of six sets of quoins. The central, recessed, 3-door entrance, flanked by panelled stone piers under a basket handle arch and a cornice with modillion blocks, has a low triangular pediment. The four store fronts, two on either side of the entrance, have wide stone posts of rusticated vermiculated blocks and have stone lintels, now in part obscured by modern store fronts. Each of the five sections has paired, tall, windows at both second and third floors, 1-over-1 at the second floor (except in the pavilion where they are 4-over-1) and 6-over-6 at the third floor. At the second floor the yellow stone lintels are stilted segmental arches, while at the third floor they are round headed, all with polygonal keystones. The taller windows of the top floor articulate that floor's function as an auditorium. A second, yellow stone string course with a motif of repeated circles runs below the third story sills. At the second floor, single 1-over-1 windows with flat stilted arches of grey stone have been added, except in the central pavilion, on either side of the paired windows in each section. At the roof line the pediments and projecting cornice are covered by metal sheathing. In the back of the building enough of the sheathing is ruptured to reveal thick, stubby, C-shaped brackets under the cornice. The north and south (side) elevations are mostly solid brick walls with occasional windows and fire escapes. Demolition of the former abutting building on the south has revealed stone foundations of random sized stones capped by a dressed grey stone water table. The rear (west) elevation has the same fenestration on the second and third floors as the front, with pilasters instead of quoins dividing the five sections. All the rear second floor windows are 4-over-4. There are only two added, rectangular windows at the second floor, one in each of the sections flanking the central section. On the rear elevation the red brick has been painted red. There is a 17 x 51-ft. one-story addition in the rear at the south end of the building.

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The central front entrance opens to a wide stairway flanked by molded hand rails in front of wainscoting of vertical narrow beaded boards, leading to the second floor transverse (north-south) hall. To the left (south) the hall is narrow, with offices on either side. To the right and at the top of the stairs the hall is wider, but still with offices on both sides, leading north to a half flight of stairs and another landing where the stairs divide to two final, narrow half flights to the third floor opera house. At this landing the molded hand rails continuously follow the rounded corners as the stairs divide. The walls of the second floor hall are embellished with large, square panels formed by raised moldings, recessed at the corners, with a raised diamond in the center.

The third floor auditorium, or opera house proper, is a large open space under beamed ceiling with the stage at the south end and balconies on three sides (Photograph 8). The boards of the hardwood floor are laid parallel to each wall and meet in diagonal lines at the corners with a pattern of panels and a diamond in the center. The wall panels of raised moldings are continued on the walls of the auditorium and on the front and in the soffit of the balcony. The balcony in back, gracefully curved, is supported by three slim, fluted, cast-iron Cornithian columns with brackets and pendants. On the sides the balcony is supported simply by iron pipe straps hung from the roof framing. There are four round, cast-iron ventilating grilles in the ceiling, cast in a foliate geometric pattern. Metal chandeliers with exposed light bulbs are suspended from the ceiling, and the windows behind the balcony are protected by wrought-iron railings in a pattern of C-curves, circles, and diamonds.

The stage is small, about 12 x 12 feet.<sup>1</sup> To left and right of the stage, under the proscenium arch, are angled wall sections each with two wood columns, with the upper halves reeded, supporting a plain architrave, frieze, and cornice with modillion blocks. There is no curtain, and no apparent provision for a curtain. A small room on either side of the stage is accessible by narrow stairs from the south end of the second floor hall. Over each of these small rooms there is a lavatory, accessible from the balconies as well as from off stage.

There is a small, simple wood bar with soapstone sink set in a marble shelf in the northwest corner of the auditorium.

76-88 Main Street  
Patricia A. Colangelo  
c/o Valley Cycle Shop  
80 Main Street

Terry Block, (W. E. Griggs,) architect. (Photograph 2). Built in 1897 as a 4-story structure Damaged by fire in February 1938 (or 1937) after which it became a 2-story yellow brick (red brick in the rear), 58 x 70 foot building. The storefront surrounds are now

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covered with stucco. The entrances are paved with square, black-and-white tiles. The doorway to the second floor, at the south, with semi-circular transom, and the 10 second-floor, 1-over-1 windows are round headed. The arches are formed of vertical brick used as narrow voussoirs that are longer in the center, forming a blunt point over the center of the arch. Under the windows and over the storefronts there is a projecting terra cotta cornice of cavetto molding, filet, and smaller, stepped back, cavetto molding. At the roofline there is a stepped parapet over a row of bricks to simulate a dentil course. The parapet is capped with concrete, and the window sills are concrete.

68-74 Main Street

Joseph DeNigris  
51 Cottage Avenue  
Ansonia, CT 06401

c. 1880. Facade re-built c. 1950.  
(Photograph 2) 3-story, yellow brick  
(red brick in rear), 50 x 52-ft.  
building. The three storefronts are  
capped by rectangular panels framed by

raised brick with brownstone blocks at the corners, perhaps intended for signage. Under these panels glass leaded in an elongated diamond pattern spans the display windows. The walls under the display windows are faced with green-veined marble. At the second and third floors central double windows are flanked by tripartite windows, all under basket handle arches supported by small brownstone impost blocks, with transoms in the tympani. These windows are derived from the classical Diocletian form. The window sections are single panes, divided by panelled, wood mullions. In the tripartite windows the left and right sections pivot to open. At the roofline there is a stepped parapet, with brownstone coping, over a projecting sheet metal cornice that is supported by four slender brackets with geometric motives. There are parapets on the side walls as well.

54-64 Main Street

Ansonia Brass Workers'  
Building Fund, Inc.  
Box 433  
Derby, CT 06419

Hotchkiss Block. c. 1880. (Photograph  
2) 3½-story, 68 x 46-ft., brick build-  
ing with granite trim. At street  
level there are two stores on either  
side of the central entrance. At the  
second floor there are four 2-over-2

windows on either side of central paired windows, and at the third floor there are nine 4-over-4 windows under an elaborate cornice. In the first floor entrance, under the segmental, glazed transom, the two leaves of the door have rectangular vertical glazing over smaller horizontal panels. Flanking heavy piers, composed of alternating plain and vermiculated granite blocks with plain molded capitals, support a wide, plain frieze (Photograph 9). The storefronts, two on either side, have similar granite piers and granite lintels (Photograph 10). In the second floor the paired 1-over-1 windows over the entrance have a common, heavy, vermiculated granite lintel,

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supported by granite blocks, that has slightly pitched upper surfaces rising to a low point. The granite second-floor window sills extend to form a string course. At the third floor, the sills do not connect, but they are supported by small, granite blocks. The lintels of both second and third floor windows are granite blocks. The cornice is divided into three sections by four scrolled brackets with rectangular medallions at the top, and anthemion pendants. Within each section three, oblong, horizontal, two-pane attic windows are divided by smaller consoles, all brackets resting on a secondary cornice. There is a plain, granite frieze above the windows, then a heavy granite dentil course, and a sheet metal cornice at the roofline. (Photograph 11). The ground-floor store interiors have sheet metal ceilings embossed in elaborate classical patterns.

46-52 Main Street

Gardella Block. c. 1880. (Photograph 2) 3-story, 40 x 33-ft. brick building, painted yellow. There are two stores at street level, with modern fronts.

Richard Kastens

522 Howe Avenue  
Shelton, CT 06484

Entrance to the upper floors is by a narrow door between the stores. The second and third floors have eight 4-over-1 windows in a sequence of three windows of normal width, two narrow windows (in the center) and three windows of normal width. The windows have elaborate, cast-iron, combination lintels and caps with a raised pattern on the lintels, and cast-iron sills. The broad sheet metal cornice has consoles at the end and in the center. Each half of the cornice has five circles in its frieze under modillion blocks that support the projecting cymatium (Photograph 11).

42-44 Main Street

Gardella Block. c. 1880. (Photograph 2) 3-story, 24 x 33-ft. brick building, painted yellow. The street level has a modern store front that obscures a

Richard Kastens

522 Howe Avenue  
Shelton, CT 06484

horizontal line of vertical brick set on edge under the four, second floor, 1-over-1 windows. Similar bands of flat brick set on edge connect the second and third floor windows just below the level of their lintels. The lintels and sills are stone, painted yellow. The projecting sheet metal cornice has five grooved brackets with quatrefoils at top and bottom separated by four horizontal reeded panels under a dentil course. The lower band of the cornice is saw toothed, with small spheres in relief as embellishment (Photograph 12).

36 Main Street

Sentinel Block. 1881 (date in cornice). (Photograph 2) 3-story, 35 x 33-ft. brick building, painted yellow. The street level has two stores with modern fronts. The entrance door to the upper floors is at the south; its upper

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half is glazed with a single pane while the lower half has two vertical panels. The second and third floors each have six windows with segmental lintels and stone sills. The glazing is 1-over-1 on the second floor and 2-over-2 on the third. The windows are connected near their tops by bands of vertical bricks set on edge, i.e., angled brick set between stretcher bricks. The cornice ensemble starts with a wood band on which rest grooved brackets similar to those at 42-44 Main Street, with quatrefoil design at their tops. There is brick over the band, between the brackets, then a wood dentil course surmounted by the projecting sheet metal moldings of the cornice itself (Photograph 12).

In the south store round cast-iron columns are still in place.

The north elevation is simpler than the facade. The roofline steps down toward the rear. There are four 1-over-1 windows in the third floor and four 4-over-4 windows in the second floor, all with segmental lintels and without connecting bands of angled bricks. A 2-story, 23 x 10-ft. addition and a 1-story, 10 x 12-ft. addition have been built on the back.

153 Main Street<sup>2</sup>  
Edward F. Palmer  
7 Elizabeth Street

A. O. & C. Office Building. c. 1910?  
(Photograph 4) 3-story, Neo-Classical  
Revival, 40 x 43-ft., glazed yellow  
brick building on granite foundations.

The facade is divided into three bays by four pairs of brick pilasters with Corinthian capitals. The pilasters rise from pedestals that form the impost for semi-circular sandstone arches over the paired single pane first-floor windows, with granite sills, and central doorway. The tympani of the arches are half-round, glazed transoms. The wide 2-over-2 windows at second-floor level have segmental brick lintels and extended stone sills embellished with athenia. The roofline entablature is made up of molded architrave, plain frieze, dentil course, coffered soffit with modillions, and crown molding of sheet metal. An attic floor, perhaps added, surmounts the cornice. In it the double pilasters are carried, without embellishment, to the roof. Its paired 1-over-1 windows have flat arches over 4-light transoms. The north and south (side) elevations nearly duplicate the facade, except that the 2-story pilasters are replaced by piers, and the central first-floor bays contain windows not doors. The rear wall of the office building is a common wall with a long, 4-story factory building that is not included in the nomination. Open land occupies the spaces on either side of the office building in front of the factory. This building is visually in the district, only.

117 Main Street  
Vito Sabatelli, et al  
DRA Ver Realty  
117 Main Street  
Ansonia, CT 06401

Savings Bank of Ansonia. 1900 (date  
in facade) (Photograph 5). 2-story  
Neo-Classical Revival, 32 x 58-ft.

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solid brick building with granite facade. The facade is dominated by the central, deeply recessed pediment with carved beehive in its tympanum, heavy cornice, and four thick fruit garlands with swags in the frieze under the pediment. An anthemion acroterion embellishes the apex of the pediment. The wall above the cornice is decorated to resemble a parapet with simulated panelled posts and balustrade in a grid of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines. The impressive entablature is supported by four Corinthian pilasters on high pedestals. The two flanking the doorway are fluted and are compound in the sense that they have secondary sections in a plane between the primary section and the wall. The two pilasters at the corners of the building are not fluted and project to the plane of the secondary sections of the central pilasters. The central bay has a high semi-circular arch with a cyma reversa keystone. On either side are panels with egg and dart moldings, one with the year date 1862 and the other with 1900. The three bays are filled with metal, probably brass, windows and doorway. The vertical, rectangular glazing extends above first floor height. Wrought-iron railings on the sills protect the windows. A low, shallow marquise over the doorway is surmounted by a clock. The south elevation is a plain brick wall with high, narrow windows that repeat the glazing of the facade. The north wall is covered with stucco.

On the interior the banking floor with its high ceiling remains intact, although the building has been converted to use as a school for beauty culture. Many of the interior bank fittings continue in place, including the vestibule of dark wood, low marble and wood partitions, and tellers' counter. The walls carry pilasters similar to those on the exterior; tall, polygonal, metal lighting fixtures are suspended from the ceiling; and the central portion of the ceiling has a large skylight of colored glass. (Photograph 13)

Two story sections 12 x 32 feet and 18 x 32 feet have been added to the rear.

105 Main Street  
John J. Bennett  
105 Main Street

NO. After 1890. (Photograph 6) 3-story, 4-bay, 30 x 52-ft. brick building with curvilinear parapet. Formerly, there was a storefront at street level with

truncated corner at the north, facing the passway to the north and balancing the corresponding truncated corner of 99-101 Main Street. The storefront has been replaced with a brick wall pierced by wood panels having round-headed windows with small panes. Former 2-over-2 windows of the upper stories have been replaced with 3-over-3. A wood cornice has been added above the first floor. On the interior the embossed sheet metal store ceiling has been covered.

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99-101 Main Street  
George Lewis et al  
99-101 Main Street

Gardner Block. c. 1880 (Photograph 7)  
2-story, brick, 33 x 44-ft. building.  
The wood and sheet metal cornice not  
only projects in front of the facade

plane but also projects upward, above the roof. In the second floor there are two tripartite Chicago windows, i.e., the central section is a single large pane flanked by 1-over-1 double hung sash, not original. Bands of stucco run above and below these windows. There are two store fronts at street level. The south corner, next to the passway, is truncated.

85-89 Main Street  
Frank Perrotti & Son, Inc.  
1622 Whalley Ave.  
New Haven, CT 06515

Gardner Block. c. 1880. (Photograph 7)  
2-story, brick, 40 x 52-ft. building  
with granite sills and lintels. The  
sheet metal cornice has brackets at its  
ends. Between the brackets, under the

dentil course of the cornice, three rows of square terra cotta tile run across the full width of the building, over the second floor windows. Half of the tile are incised or stamped with a quatrefoil design, half with a circle or button design. The two alternate, but not consistently. Vertical brick set diagonally run between and beyond the second floor window lintels, forming a string course (Photograph 14). The nine windows have 2-over-2 double-hung sash. The store fronts have modern glass surrounds, but old wooden doors. There are four sections to the building at street level in the sequence of two stores at the north, a nine-foot open passway through the building, and one store front at the south. The passway has a wood ceiling, and a segmental arch at the back. The rear (east) elevation has windows similar to those on the front, while the north (side) elevation is a solid brick wall except for a wide, central, second floor window that is filled in.

1. It is stated to be 30 x 35 feet by Rockey, p. 489. The discrepancy is unexplained.

2. The A.O. & C. Office Building is visually part of the district but is not within the district boundary. The Office Building is attached to the factory that it is in front of, and therefore cannot be included in the district without also including the factory building. This factory in turn is attached to several other factory buildings behind (east of) the district. This complex, including the Office Building, constitutes a single structure. To include the factory complex within the district boundary would change the nature of the district to an undesirable degree. See final paragraph of Item 7.

# 7. Description

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

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

## Location of the District

The city of Ansonia, in western Connecticut, is located on the Naugatuck River two miles above its junction with the Housatonic River, and 11 miles above Long Island Sound. The land slopes sharply from highlands down to the river at Ansonia. Upper Main Street runs in the north-south direction along a ledge east of the river above the level of the water, and below the level of the top of the escarpment.

Downtown Ansonia has been the scene of some demolition with a view to urban redevelopment. An empty space south of the Opera House forms the southern boundary of the Upper Main Street District on the west side of the street. The northern boundary is Maple Street, which leads west to a bridge across the river. On the east side of the street, the district starts at an empty lot north of the A. O. & C. office building, and continues to a parking lot north of 85-89 Main Street. The district consists of 12 buildings unevenly spaced along both sides of 1/8 mile of Upper Main Street. (See maps.)

## West Side of Upper Main Street

The largest, and perhaps the oldest (1869-1870), building in the group is the Ansonia Opera House, which anchors the southwest corner of the district. Its height and mass, and its elaborate High Victorian Italianate facade, dominate the street (Photograph 1). Moreover, it is important as the southernmost extremity of a continuous row of seven buildings separated only by common walls, that provide a solid streetscape up to Maple Street. All of these buildings are two- and three-story structures, and all are brick. While the heights of their rooflines vary, and the architectural treatments of their facades range from High Victorian Italianate to 1930s commercial, together they form an unbroken entity (Photograph 2).

The ground slopes off behind these buildings, toward the River, and grade is one story lower on the back than at the front (Photograph 3). The main line of the railroad, initially known as the Naugatuck Railroad Co., is at the level of the river behind the buildings, and beyond the tracks is the river itself.

## East Side of Upper Main Street

The east side of Upper Main Street is under the escarpment, but there is enough room between the roadway and the embankment for factory buildings, and factory buildings have shared this area with commercial structures from the beginning of the city's history. The southernmost building on the east side of the street is the office building of the Ansonia Osborne and Cheeseman Co. The rear wall of the office building is a common wall with a much larger factory building, but only the office building relates to the street. The office building faces the street, and is part of the Upper Main Street streetscape that is the subject of the nomination. (Photograph 4). The yellow brick Neo-Classical Revival elegance of the A. O. & C office building

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is matched by its neighbor, the grey granite eminence of the Savings Bank of Ansonia building (Photograph 5). Both have colossal Corinthian pilasters, round-arched openings, and heavy cornices with dentil courses and modillions. The facades could be switched. Built a generation after the Opera House, they represent the Neo-Classical Revival in the district.

Number 105 Main Street, the building north of the bank, is unlike any of the others. Its curvilinear parapet sets it apart from the others architecturally, and it is the only building in the group whose original character has been altered and obscured by rehabilitation (Photograph 6).

The two buildings at 99-101 and 85-89 Main Street again are the brick commercial type that makes up the row along the western side of the street (Photograph 7). These two buildings have had a factory behind them from the first, and now have a factory parking lot to their north that marks the boundary of the district.

The buildings, seven on one side and five on the other, face one another across the street, which is 62 feet wide including sidewalks, wide enough for two lanes of traffic and parallel parking on each side. The river, the railroad, the embankment, and the factories are all visible from upper Main Street. It is the heart of the city.

From the first, Ansonia has been a factory town, for the most part devoted to the processing of metals. The district is bordered by factories to the north, on both sides of the street, and to the east. As the purpose of this nomination is to identify, describe and study the commercial buildings, the nearby factory buildings are not included in the district. The factories provided the economic basis that supported and required the commercial structures, and in this sense the activities in the district were dependent upon the industrial activities carried on in the factory buildings. But the industrial architecture of Ansonia is a separate study in itself, and is excluded from this nomination of a group of buildings that formed the commercial and social heart of the city, as differentiated from the industrial activity.

## 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"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
			<input type="checkbox"/> science
			<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
			<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
			<input type="checkbox"/> theater
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1870 - c. 1950 **Builder/Architect** See Item #4

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The commercial architecture of Upper Main Street in Ansonia by its exceptional integrity provides an accurate record of the important contributions made by Main Streets to the commercial and social fabric of small New England cities during the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. (Criteria A&C.) The 12 buildings in the cohesive grouping there are artifacts of a centrality of commercial and social activities that has ceased to exist.

### History

The confluence of the Naugatuck River with the Housatonic River made a natural site for settlement, and the town of Derby was established there in 1675. The town originally extended ten miles up the Naugatuck River, but it was gradually reduced in size as other towns were split off from it, including Naugatuck, Beacon Falls, Seymour and Ansonia.

In 1844 when Anson G. Phelps was looking for a site for a new plant for the Phelps, Dodge Co., which already had a factory in the Birmingham section of Derby, he decided on the location now known as Ansonia, probably because of the availability of both cheap land and water power. Anson G. Phelps (1781-1853) was born in Simsbury, Connecticut, but directed his business enterprises from New York City. He never was a resident of Ansonia. For a name for his new location, Phelps was advised to "take your Christian name, Anson, and make a Latin word of it and call it Ansonia, this will be euphonious, rather poetical, and will carry your name to the latest generations."<sup>1</sup> The metal working trade of which Phelps, Dodge was a part already was active along the Naugatuck River Valley, and has continued ever since to be the valley's principal industrial activity. Ansonia became a borough in 1864, a town in 1889 and a city in 1893.

The status in 1868 of buildings on land along Upper Main Street that comprises the district is shown in an atlas of that year.<sup>2</sup> A footbridge over the river, that has now become the Maple Street Bridge at the north border of the district, was already in place. Three stores stood below the bridge on the west side of the street, with land between and around them owned by W. & L. Hotchkiss. On the east side of the street the Methodist church is shown opposite the bridge. It burned in 1921, and the land upon which it stood is not included in the district. Below the church was a lumber yard and the premises of the Osborne and Cheeseman Hoop Skirt Factory. While the O. & C. presence continues, the existing factory building appears to have been built subsequent to 1868, and in any event it is not in the district. The locations of the three stores on the west side of the street are not

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Two

Quadrangle name Ansonia

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,5,0</u>	<u>7,0,0</u>	<u>4,5</u>	<u>7,8</u>	<u>6,4,0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing			

B	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,6,0</u>	<u>7,2,0</u>	<u>4,5</u>	<u>7,8</u>	<u>5,5,0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing			

C	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,5,0</u>	<u>6,8,0</u>	<u>4,5</u>	<u>7,8</u>	<u>5,4,0</u>
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D	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,6,0</u>	<u>6,7,0</u>	<u>4,5</u>	<u>7,8</u>	<u>5,9,0</u>
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E	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,6,0</u>	<u>6,4,0</u>	<u>4,5</u>	<u>7,8</u>	<u>5,8,0</u>
---	------------	--------------	--------------	------------	------------	--------------

F	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,6,0</u>	<u>6,0,0</u>	<u>4,5</u>	<u>7,8</u>	<u>7,1,0</u>
---	------------	--------------	--------------	------------	------------	--------------

G	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,6,0</u>	<u>6,4,0</u>	<u>4,5</u>	<u>7,8</u>	<u>7,2,0</u>
---	------------	--------------	--------------	------------	------------	--------------

H	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,6,0</u>	<u>6,6,0</u>	<u>4,5</u>	<u>7,8</u>	<u>6,2,0</u>
---	------------	--------------	--------------	------------	------------	--------------

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the district is shown by the dotted line on the map drawn to a scale of 1 inch equals 66 feet. See 7-1 for justification.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
-------	------------	------	------------	--------	------------	------	------------

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
-------	------------	------	------------	--------	------------	------	------------

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom, Consultant, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization	<u>Connecticut Historical Commission</u>	date	<u>December 16, 1979</u>
--------------	--	------	--------------------------

street & number	<u>59 South Prospect Street</u>	telephone	<u>203 556-3005</u>
-----------------	---------------------------------	-----------	---------------------

city or town	<u>Hartford</u>	state	<u>Connecticut</u>
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# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *[Signature]*

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date October 21, 1982

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.	
<i>[Signature]</i> Keeper of the National Register	Entered in the National Register date <u>12/2/82</u>
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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consistent with the present structures, and thus it appears that all the buildings in the district were constructed after 1868.

Perhaps the first to be built was the Opera House. It was constructed at a cost of \$40,000 by the Ansonia Hall Company which was organized June 25, 1869 "to erect, maintain and lease in parts or entire a suitable building for a public hall, stores, offices and rooms for societies and individuals of a public nature."<sup>3</sup> There were 20 stockholders in the Ansonia Hall Company of which the Phelps, Dodge Co. was the largest. Construction was completed by October 29, 1870 on which date the Ansonia Land & Water Power Co. conveyed to the Ansonia Hall Company the land with the Ansonia Hall Building standing thereon, "said building having been erected by and at the expense of the grantee."<sup>5</sup>

An 1875 perspective view of Ansonia<sup>6</sup> shows that the four buildings from 42 through 74 Main Street had been built by that year. The year date 1881 appears under the cornice of 36 Main Street, the building known as the Sentinel Block because it long housed the editorial offices and presses of The Naugatuck Sentinel, a newspaper founded in 1871 that continues to publish. The Sentinel block is the northernmost of the row of five buildings that were among the assets of the W. & L. Hotchkiss Co. distributed, apparently at the time of the firm's dissolution, on March 25, 1885.<sup>7</sup> According to the firm's January 1, 1879 balance sheet,<sup>8</sup> the W. & L. Hotchkiss Co. had assets of \$130,442 with \$79,062 represented by real estate, and most of the balance by mortgages. Willis Hotchkiss (b. 1803) and Lewis Hotchkiss (b. 1805) were brothers who learned the carpenter and joiner trade from their father. Lewis left the Naugatuck valley and owned 300,000 acres of land in Canada where he operated saw mills before returning to Ansonia to go into the building business with his brother. He is spoken of as the "architect" of a new church at Humphreysville.<sup>9</sup> As the 1868 atlas shows they owned the land, as they were builders by trade, and as their financial statement shows a figure adequate for these blocks, the presumption is that they were the builders of the row of buildings from 36 through 74 Main Street.

A picture taken at the time of the Great Blizzard of '88 shows the space between the Opera House and the Hotchkiss buildings still occupied by two small frame structures, probably two of the stores that show on the 1868 atlas map. They were replaced in 1897 by the Terry Block, a four-story structure that suffered severe damage by fire in the late 1930s. After the fire the top two stories were not re-built, and the block since that time has been a two-story structure.

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The fact that the ground sloped down from Main Street to the railroad provided a practical convenience for the row of stores located on the west side of the street. A railroad spur ran along directly in front of their rear lower level loading doors, providing for efficient handling of incoming merchandise.

The southern portion of the district on the east side of Main Street long was dominated by the A. O. & C. Co., or Cheeseman's as it was known locally. According to the 1887 Ansonia city directory, the Osborne and Cheeseman Co. manufactured a variety of brass goods, skirt material, suspender and garter webbing, and shoe and corset laces. The narrow fabrics part of the business survived the longest; in World War II the plant is said to have employed 1,600 people in the manufacture of ammunition belts. In the 1950s the manufacturing enterprise was terminated and the real estate sold. Their fine office building appears to have been built soon after the turn of the century, with the attic probably a later addition.

The Savings Bank building has two dates in its facade, 1862 and 1900. 1862 is the year the bank was organized. It had quarters in the National Bank building, demolished, that was just south of the district, until building its own structure in 1900.

The 1868 atlas shows that the passway between 99-101 Main Street and 105 Main Street was a path to a footbridge over a power canal that ran close to the escarpment. It is now a passway to a factory wall.

The 100 feet of Main Street frontage north of the passway, the location of 85-89 and 99-101 Main Street, was sold by the Ansonia Land and Water Power Co. April 10, 1869 to John B. Gardner.<sup>10</sup> An 1890 picture<sup>11</sup> shows the two buildings in place, in front of and part of the John B. Gardner Co. manufacturing buildings. The Gardner Co., founded in 1857, produced clock dials and clock parts for several decades. As the directories show that tenants occupied the two front buildings, at least in part, it may be that Gardner used them for a retail outlet for his products and as income producing property.

### Architecture

Four styles of architecture are represented in the district, High Victorian Italianate, late-19th-century commercial, Neo-Classical Revival, and 1930s commercial. Unfortunately, the name of only one architect is known, W. E. Griggs of Waterbury, Connecticut, who designed the Terry Block, 76-88 Main Street. The Opera House and the two Neo-Classical Revival buildings all appear to be professional work, but thus far anonymous. The bank

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building is the only one of the three with its original appearance still unchanged as the yellow brick office building had the attic added, and the Opera House had the additional windows inserted in the second floor. An 1896 photo<sup>12</sup> shows the Opera House still without the added windows in that year.

The late-19th-century brick commercial buildings are similar to one another in mass, scale, and general plan but different in details. The sheet metal cornices are a unifying element, but at different heights and in different profiles. An early color post card shows 36 through 52 Main Street with the red brick unpainted, in contrast to the present yellow paint which appears to have been in place for some years. The post card view also shows these buildings with shutters. Cast iron and terra cotta found their way to Ansonia, cast iron in the lintels and sills of the Gardella Block, 46-52 Main Street, and terra cotta in the three-tier band of tile under the cornice of the Gardner Block, 85-89 Main Street. The use of brick laid diagonally to form bands between windows appears on both sides of the street, at 42-44, and 85-89 Main Street. Modernization came to the second Gardner Block when the Chicago windows and stucco bands were added some time after 1890. They do not show in the 1890 picture, although the truncated corner on the passway does, apparently an original feature that was matched on the south side of the passway when the Bennett Building was constructed. The truncated corner of the Bennet Building has now been made into a square corner. The nine-foot passway through the north Gardner Block is carefully spelled out in the land records for the purpose of providing access to the Gardner factory in the rear, and the requirement to maintain the passway still encumbers the title to 85-89 Main Street.

The window arches of the Terry Building, now only two stories high, are unusual, and indicate that Griggs, its architect, was an individualist. The thin brick used as voussoirs make an arch that is thicker as it rises to almost a point at the center, a design not often seen in an 1890s building. As a further idiosyncrasy, this building originally has a central stepped pediment.<sup>13</sup>

Next door to the Terry Building, 68-74 Main Street underwent substantial facade changes at an undetermined date in the 20th century, perhaps as late as 1950. Originally, the building had a heavy cornice, similar to the others, with a central half-round pediment, and conventional rectangular windows. All this was changed with the introduction of the tripartite windows under basket handle arches and a stepped parapet at the roofline.

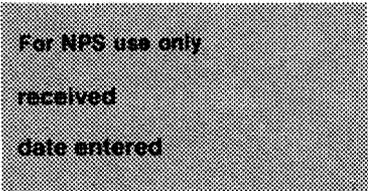
A further unifying element in the west side row, that has been lost, was a secondary cornice line over the storefronts, no longer apparent in the

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present treatment. The early photographs also suggest the presence of some cast-iron elements in the storefronts that conceivably may still be in place under the structural glass.

Sense of Time and Place

The ambience of Upper Main Street and its central importance in the function of the commercial and social life of the community up to approximately the time of World War II emerge from study of the history, architecture, and function of this eighth of a mile stretch of downtown.

During its period of greatest vigor, gracious elms and cast-iron street light stanchions lined both sides of the street. Trolleys ran down the middle. Grassy lawns flanked the A. O. & C<sub>14</sub> office building, in front of the factory. Each building had its awning.

Everything was here -- shops, professional offices, news dealer, Y.M.C.A., drug stores, Morris Plan Bank, billiard hall, restaurant, Board of Health, Salvation Army, Post Office, and Western Union and Postal Telegraph. Gardella's fruit store was a fixture for decades.

In the evening, all important events took place at the Opera House, including dances, graduation exercises, and boxing matches, in addition to theatrical performances. The Passtime movie theater occupied the upstairs of the Gardner Block. Various lodges, such as Clan McDonald and Lady McDonald and the Daughters of Scotia, met in the several halls above the stores. It was a bustling scene, day and night.

Now a barber shop that has been in the Hotchkiss Block since World War II and the continued use of the I.O.O.F. lodge rooms as a meeting hall by a union are about the only remaining remnants of former activities. Several of the old organizations continue in existence on Main Street, having moved a few blocks to the south, although the Y.M.C.A. has a new building to the north. Familiar names, formerly located in the district, that have moved to the south include Marks Hardware, Seccombe Mens Shop, the Post Office, the Savings Bank of Ansonia, and the Ansonia National Bank. Further south, but still on Main Street, more new construction has created the Ansonia Mall. The scene has changed. The twelve buildings that remain standing in a cohesive group along Upper Main Street are a record of a way of life that has ceased to exist.

1. Orcutt, p. 416.
2. New Haven County Atlas.

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3. Derby Land Records, volume 48, page 63.
4. The Ansonia Land and Water Power Co. succeeded to some of the interests of Anson G. Phelps after his death. See Rockey, p. 482.
5. DLR 48/278.
6. View of Ansonia, Conn., O. H. Bailey & Co., 1875.
7. DLR 64/215.
8. DLR 56/279.
9. Orcutt, p. 467. Humphreysville is now known as Seymour.
10. DLR 57/424.
11. Illustrated Review of the Naugatuck Valley, p. 16.
12. Gillespie, p. 18.
13. New York Industrial Recorder, p. 27.
14. See Photograph 15.

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HARTFORD RAILROAD

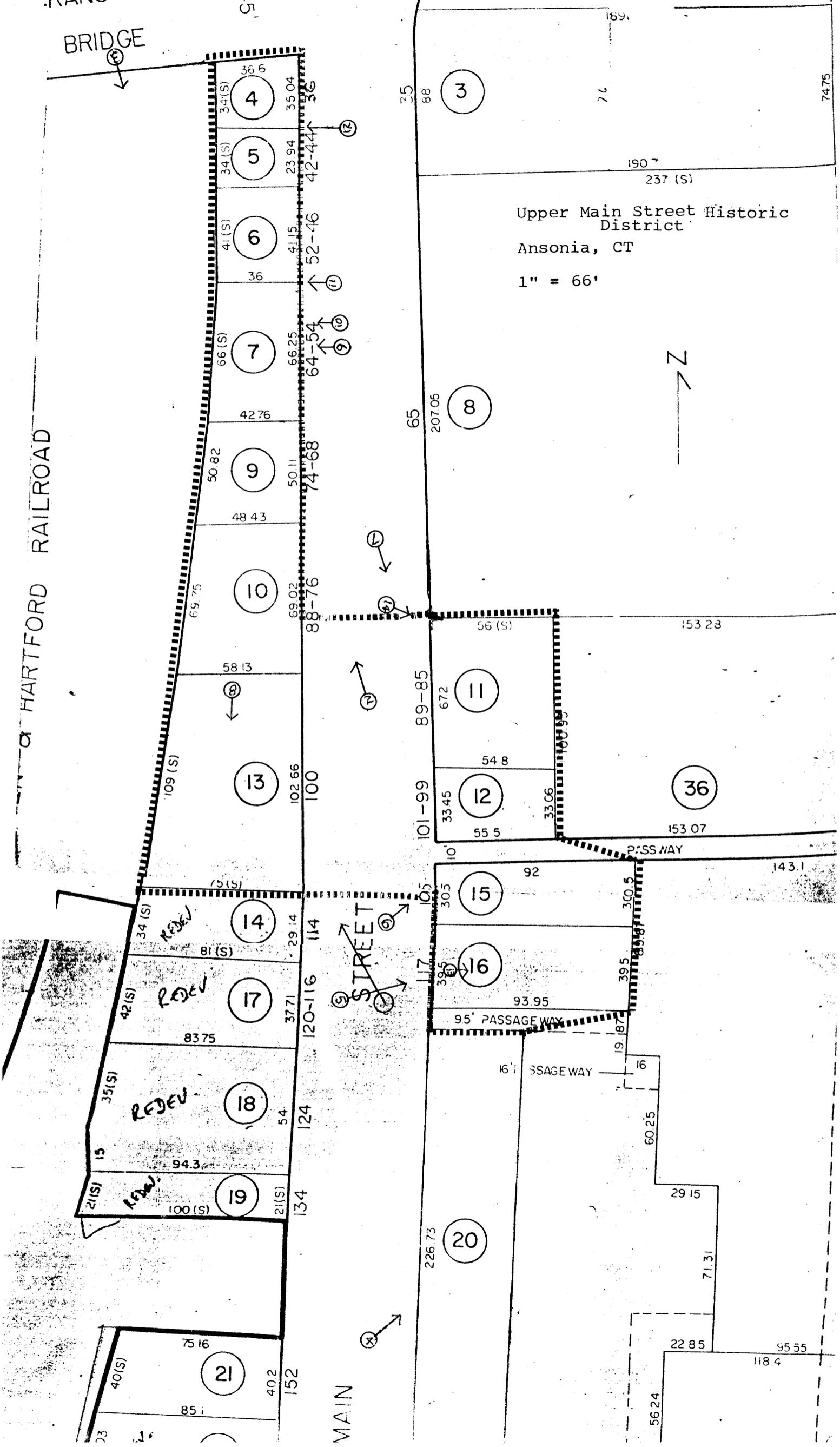
BRIDGE

51

Upper Main Street Historic District  
Ansonia, CT

1" = 66'

Z



MAIN

Lot No.	Dimensions (ft)	Notes
3	35, 88, 76, 190.7, 237 (S)	
4	36.6, 34 (S), 35.04, 36	
5	34 (S), 23.94, 42-44	
6	41 (S), 41.15, 36, 52-46	
7	66 (S), 66.25, 64-54, 42.76	
9	50.82, 50.11, 74-68, 48.43	
10	69.75, 69.02, 88-76, 58.13	
11	89-85, 672, 56 (S), 153.28	
12	101-99, 33.45, 55.5, 33.06, 54.8	
13	109 (S), 102.66, 100, 58.13	
14	34 (S), 81 (S), 29.14, 114	REDEV.
15	105, 30.5, 92, 143.1	
16	117, 39.5, 93.95, 95' PASSAGE WAY	
17	42 (S), 83.75, 37.71, 120-116, 114	REDEV.
18	35 (S), 94.3, 54, 124	REDEV.
19	21 (S), 100 (S), 134, 124	REDEV.
20	226.73, 16' PASSAGE WAY, 16, 60.25, 29.15, 71.31	
21	40 (S), 75.16, 40.2, 152, 85	