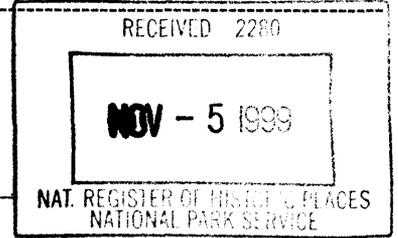


United States Department of the Interior

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1472



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: North Branford Center Historic District

Other Name/Site Number: NA

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 4, 10, 20, 25, 28 Church Street; 1640, 1675, Green, 1680, 1700, 1720 Foxon Road/SR 80; 1 Library Place; 10, 11, 19, 29, 34, 37, 40, 41, 43, 45, 50, 52, 60 North Street; Not for publication: NA

City/Town: North Branford

Vicinity: NA

State: CT County: New Haven Code: 009

Zip Code: 06471

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: x
Public-local: x
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s):
District: x
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>33</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u>6</u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>40</u>	<u> </u> Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

PROPERTY NAME

North Branford Historic District

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

John W. Shannahan 10/26/99
Signature of Certifying Official Date
John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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:

Edson H. Beall

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub:	<u>single dwelling</u>
	<u>TRADE</u>		<u>store</u>
	<u>SOCIAL</u>		<u>meeting hall</u>
	<u>GOVERNMENT</u>		<u>town hall</u>
	<u>EDUCATION</u>		<u>school</u>
	<u>RELIGION</u>		<u>church</u>
	<u>FUNERARY</u>		<u>cemetery</u>
	<u>CULTURE</u>		<u>monuments</u>
	<u>LANDSCAPE</u>		<u>park</u>

Current:	<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub:	<u>single, multiple dwelling</u>
	<u>TRADE</u>		<u>store</u>
	<u>SOCIAL</u>		<u>meeting hall</u>
	<u>GOVERNMENT</u>		<u>town hall</u>
	<u>RELIGION</u>		<u>church</u>
	<u>FUNERARY</u>		<u>cemetery</u>
	<u>CULTURE</u>		<u>monuments</u>
	<u>LANDSCAPE</u>		<u>park</u>

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:	Materials:
<u>COLONIAL/English</u>	Foundation: <u>BRICK, STONE/Sandstone,</u>
	<u>CONCRETE</u>
<u>MID-19C/Greek Revival</u>	Walls: <u>WOOD/Weatherboard, Shingle;</u>
	<u>BRICK</u>
<u>VICTORIAN/Queen Anne</u>	Roof: <u>STONE/Slate; WOOD/Shingle;</u>
<u>EARLY 20C/Bungalow</u>	<u>ASPHALT</u>
	Other Description: _____

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

North Branford Center Historic District, located at the original four corners of the Town of North Branford, Connecticut, incorporates character-defining land and buildings of the center from days of earliest settlement in the 17th century through the year of the town's incorporation, 1831, and on into the 20th century. The Green, Congregational Church, burying ground (Photograph 1), school, town hall, library, tavern, and store are on Foxon Road/State Road 80, the main highway which runs southwest/northeast, while houses dating from the 18th century are located on side roads to the north. Most of the 18th-century houses are on North Street, which lies between the hills of the valley of the Branford River.

The buildings in the district are of modest size, the church being the largest. Its sanctuary is 40' x 51'. All other buildings are domestic in scale, including the store, town hall, and library. Colonial and Colonial Revival are the dominant architectural styles, with the Greek Revival, Federal, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Stick, and Queen Anne styles recognized through use of details more than by fully articulated examples. All buildings are frame, with the exception of the library, which is brick.

The triangular Green was where Revolutionary War volunteers gathered in 1777 and is the site of five monuments memorializing conflicts from the Civil War to Vietnam (Photograph 2). The North Branford Center Green is small compared with others in comparable Connecticut towns, but, not having been reduced in size over the centuries, today still occupies approximately its original bounds. The adjoining Congregational Church building, constructed in 1908, is the third edifice on the site. It is a mixture of Romanesque Revival round arches and square tower with Colonial Revival classically inspired trim. Its chapel is older, dating from 1887 in a Gothic Revival/Stick style mode. (Photograph 3)

The burying ground and school/town hall, across Foxon Road from the church, are the only resources located south of the highway. Burials originally were made in the churchyard, but over time more space was needed. The school, which is next door to the burying ground, dates from the Civil War era, becoming the town hall when school consolidation occurred after World War I. Its space now in large part is used as a senior center. (Photograph 4)

The Clark Store is also a mid-19th-century building, with early 20th-century shop windows. Its second-floor hall was the scene of community activities such as meetings, dramatic productions, and dances. Several additions have changed the primary function at present to housing. (Photograph 5)

The Atwater Memorial Library, the only masonry building, is an example of Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival architecture popular at the time of World War II. Its red brick and white trim, gabled wooden portico, flat window arches with keystones, quoined corners, and central cupola are all in line with good practice at the time. (Photograph 6)

The district has six two-story 18th-century Colonial houses and a single one-story example. The two-story five-bay buildings include 1 Library Place, the Hezekiah Reynolds House, which has gambrel roof and 6-over-2 windows (Photograph 7); 11 North Street, the Dennis Hart House, with Italianate porch and 1-over-1 windows (Photograph 8); 19 North Street, the Nathan Harrison House, sited on 10 acres, one of the largest parcels in the district (Photograph 9); 29 North Street, which at one time was the Congregational Parsonage and still has a kitchen fireplace in the ell; 40 North Street, the Timothy Russell House, an original saltbox (Photograph 11); and 45 North Street, the Samuel Eells House, now covered with weathered wooden shingles (Photograph 13).

All have gable roofs with the exception of 1 Library Place, which has a gambrel roof, as does 28 Church Street, the Jacob Page House, which is the district's only one-story 18th-century house. The Page House also is different because it has three bays instead of five.

Houses in the district reflecting 19th-century architectural styles are both less numerous and more varied in design. While the 18th-century houses are all in the Colonial style, by contrast the 19th-century examples have only one house in each style. 1640 Foxon Road, the General Philo Harrison House, clearly articulates the Federal style (Photograph 1). 37 North Street, the Elizur Foote House, is transitional

between the Federal and Greek Revival styles, with the distinctive three-bay temple front toward the street (Photograph 10); 60 North Street, the Seth Russell House, built later in the century, is Italianate (Photograph 15); while 52 North Street, the Charles F. Holabird House, is quite different from the others with its Queen Anne/Stick-style asymmetrical massing and classical details (Photograph 14).

When the Bungalow became a popular American architectural style in the 20th century, examples built in the district included houses at 20 Church Street and 43 North Street (Photograph 13). There is also one Cape-style house at 25 Church Street.

Inventory

In the following entries the letter C before the street address indicates that the resource is considered to contribute to the architectural and historical significance of the district. Dates are taken from the Historic Resources Inventory of 1980 unless otherwise noted. The final number in parentheses (x) indicates the count of buildings/structures/objects used in the Number of Resources at Item 3, above.

Parcels of vacant land are included in the following inventory and in the street address list at Item 2, but are not designated Contributing, except for the parcel under common ownership with an adjoining historic house property, and, with the same exception, are not included in the Number of Resources at Item 3. Breakdown is as follows:

Contributing buildings and objects	- 39
Contributing vacant parcel	- 1
Other vacant parcels	- 3

- C 4 Church Street ca.1890 visual 1-story frame gable-roofed 16' x 24' shop. Flush vertical siding. Central cross gable with double loading door. Added small-pane windows. (1) Built as carriage house for 1640 Foxon Road.
- 10 Church Street Vacant parcel.
- C 20 Church Street 1920, assessor 1-story frame gable-roofed 24' x 38' Bungalow, covered with clapboards at first floor, shingles at second. Tripartite Chicago windows of large central pane flanked by 1-over-1s at first floor, 12-over-12s at second. Prominent central truncated front dormer. Garage, poultry house. (3)
- C 25 Church Street 1930, assessor 1-story frame gable-roofed Cape covered with weather boards. 24' x 32'. Central paneled door under 8-light transom flanked by two 6-over-6 windows on each side. Three gabled dormers in front roof slope. (1)

- C 28 Church Street Jacob Page House 1785 1-story frame gambrel-roofed Colonial house. 24' x 34' plus rear addition. First-floor fenestration is three evenly spaced 8-over-8 windows with door between first and second, at left. Small replacement central corbeled chimney. Garage. (2)

Jacob Page was a Revolutionary War soldier who was imprisoned in Portsmouth, England.

- C 1640 Foxon Road/SR 80 General Philo Harrison House ca.1820 2-story gable-roofed 38' x 50' Federal 5-bay house covered by wood shingles, with central doorway and interior tapered end chimneys. First-floor windows are 12-over-1, second floor 12-over-2. Former Doric portico seen in WPA survey photograph now replaced by wide gabled hood. Doorway bay consists of door flanked by two abutting windows; central tripartite Palladianesque window above. Shed. (Photograph 1) (2)

Built as tavern. Builder's descendant, Charles Albert Harrison, Esq., opened house and extensive gardens for 175th anniversary exercises of neighboring Congregational Church, 1902.

1675 Foxon Road

- C Center School/North Branford Hall ca.1870 1-story frame gable-roofed Vernacular/Queen Anne 40' x 94' building, gable end to street, mostly covered with clapboards. Fishscale shingles at gable peak. Bracketed gabled hood over front door has radial truss; simpler truss at gable peak reflects Stick-style influence. 2-over-2 windows appear to be original. Present building replaced original school moved from across street ca.1865. Historic photographs show pyramidal bell tower with central finial and front door well above present grade, together giving building vertical thrust. Became Town Hall 1920. Rear addition 1925. Grange met here for many years. Now town offices (front) and senior center (rear). (Photograph 4) (1)

- C North Branford Cemetery 1804 213' x 203' Wrought-iron picket fence across front, row of trees at rear. Monuments lined up in rows. Oldest monuments are 18th-century brownstone carved with winged death's heads. Early 19th-century stones are square-topped marble with willow tree motifs. Half dozen obelisks. Church's first three ministers, Jonathan Merrick, who served from 1727-1769; Samuel Eells, 1769-1808; Charles Atwater, 1808-1825, are buried here. (Photograph 4) (1)

First burying ground was across street next to (east of) church. When additional space was needed, this location was established in 1804. In 1887 stones were moved across street from churchyard to make room for new chapel.

1680 Foxon Road

- C North Branford Green 1724 Triangular parcel running approximately 500' along Foxon Road, by 100' deep. Flagpole marks spot where Revolutionary War volunteers gathered in 1777. 1966 re-landscaping followed planting plan designed by Rudy Favretti. Row of war memorials includes, from south:

Vietnam Lettering incised in smooth surface of boulder reads IN HONOR OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED OUR COUNTRY IN THE VIETNAM CONFLICT. Dedicated May 1996.

World War II Bronze plaque listing names of six men who died in war, mounted on pink granite boulder from nearby Stoney Creek quarry.

World War II Bronze plaque having four columns of names of men and women who served in war. Mounted on dark brown stone boulder. Erected 1955.

World War I Bronze plaque listing names of 17 who served in war, mounted on Stoney Creek granite. Erected 1935, replacing earlier memorial.

Civil War Westerly granite obelisk 25' tall. 1866. Seventh oldest Civil War monument in Connecticut. (Photograph 2) (5)

- C North Branford Congregational Church Frame gable-roofed 51' x 80' church (1908) and 30' x 42' chapel (1887, Charles F. Wooding of Wallingford, Connecticut, builder) connected in U shape by 72' x 24' parish house (1961). All covered with clapboards. Dominant feature is central projecting tower 14' square and 48' tall. Steps approaching tower flanked by massive stone piers. Romanesque round-arched entrance with stained-glass half-round transom is framed by Colonial Revival paneled pilasters under shallow pediment outlined by dentil courses. Two narrow round-arched windows are at second floor, with Thomaston, Connecticut, clock above. Round-arched louvered openings in tower's third stage are surmounted by six-sided spire. Behind tower, gable end of church forms pediment supported by fluted pilasters.
- Entrance to chapel on south side has bracketing similar to that at peak of front gable. Large Gothic-arched window in front elevation. Chapel moved to this location when parish hall was built in 1961. (Photograph 3) (1)
- C 1700 Foxon Road Russell Clark's Store 1851 2-story frame gable-roofed Greek Revival/Italianate building, covered with clapboards. Gable end toward street has rectangular horizontal attic window under wide roof overhang. Fascia under overhang extends around building. 1-story front shop window section projects, is covered with Texture 111 fiber board, and glazed with imitation small panes. Two pairs of 6-over-1 windows are at second floor. Original 2-story 26' x 40' building was extended, then 1-story rear section added, followed by 1-story wing. 2-car garage is covered by novelty siding. (Photograph 5) (2)
- Clark operated store he built until 1871. It also served as post office. Large room upstairs was used for meetings, dramatic productions, and dances. When Clark's son became Town Clerk, building functioned as Town Hall, 1920-1928.
- C 1720 Foxon Road Atwater Memorial Library Original 1-story gable-roofed Colonial Revival brick building 1943 (William P. Towner of Middletown, architect); concrete-block addition 1967 (Babbitt & Damuck, architects). Originally 40' x 25', now 70' x 58'. In central gabled wooden portico, fluted pilasters support entablature with dentil course. Two 8-over-8 windows each side have splayed brick lintels with keystones. Brick is quoined at corners of building. Corner finials decorate first stage of small cupola under pointed roof and ball finial. 1967 addition runs across full width of rear and wraps around south corner. Main feature of new rear elevation is 36-foot double wall of translucent patterned Plexiglass. (Photograph 5) (1)
- Site was acquired by town in 1765 as "a place of Parade and other Public Exercises and uses and purposes" (North Branford Land Records, volume 3, page 319, July 15, 1765). It was also called Common, Green, and Drilling Ground. It appears to have balanced open space south of church now serving as Green.

- C 1 Library Place Hezekiah Reynolds House ca.1786 2-story, frame, gambrel-roofed Colonial house covered with clapboards. Central doorway and twin chimneys. 40' x 40'. Front flare of gambrel approaches Dutch bellcast form. Five-bay first floor consists of central doorway with flanking 6-over-2 windows. Heavy front door is hinged at one side and also in middle, folding back on itself in what may be a 19th-century alteration. Lower front concave roof slope flares out 3 feet. Three gabled dormers having small 6-over-6 windows are positioned at intersection of roof slopes. South ell in Greek Revival style has horizontal windows under eaves. North ell dates from later in 19th century. (Photograph 7) (2)

Ownership passed from Reynolds to Rose, Munro, Clark, Wood, and Beers families. Russell Clark lived here when he ran store at 1700 Foxon Road (see above). Building housed Town Clerk's office, 1928-1961, and Judge of Probate's chambers, 1937-1961.

10 North Street Vacant parcel

- C 11 North Street Dennis Hart-Jared Chidsey House ca.1785, 1850 2-story gable-roofed Colonial house with Italianate front porch. 42' x 72'. Central replacement chimney off center to north. Five bays of replacement 1-over-1 windows. Central front door of single pane over horizontal panels is flanked by narrow 3-pane vertical sidelights. Porch posts are paneled under molded capitals, standing on paneled pedestals. Motif of paneled pedestals repeats under sidelights. Main-roof eaves return slightly. Horizontal window reflecting Greek Revival-style influence in south gable end. Large added 2-story section to rear. Garage. (Photograph 8) (2)

Jared Chidsey, farmer and shoemaker, lived in house, which he completely renovated, from ca.1828 to his death in 1869. He tore down older house next south, and in another transaction deeded to town ground on which library stands (see 1720 Foxon Road, above). From time to time smithy, printing shop, and store were also located on property.

- C 19 North Street Nathan Harrison House ca.1796 Large 2-story frame gable-roofed Colonial house, covered with clapboards. 50' x 68' on 10 acres. Five bays. Central double door and central brownstone chimney. Six tombstone-shaped lights, arranged in two groups of three, form transom. Windows are 12-over-1, except in second-floor central bay which has pair of narrow 6-over-1s. Upper sash have thick muntins. Double overhang on all four elevations. Picket fence across front; summerhouse in south side yard. Former barn and pond no longer in place. Large 2-story rear addition, ca.1921. Garage. Barn. (Photograph 9) (4)

- C 29 North Street (former) Parsonage ca.1772 2-story frame gable-roofed Colonial house covered with new clapboards. Central small twin chimneys probably replace original central chimney. Five bays of 12-over-12 windows in plain narrow flat surrounds under projecting caps. Central door flanked by 4-pane vertical sidelights. Two 12-over-12 windows at each floor in side elevations. Kitchen fireplace in rear ell, which has horizontal eaves windows reflecting Greek Revival influence. Garage. (2)

The Reverend Charles Atwater, third minister of church, resided here, 1809-1825. Library named for him (see 1720 Foxon Road, above). House purchased by church 1838 and served as parsonage to 1952.

34 North Street Vacant parcel

- C 37 North Street Elizur Foote House ca.1854 2-story 3-bay frame Federal-/Greek Revival-style house with gable end toward street. Covered with clapboards. 55' x 50'. Recessed doorway in south bay is flanked by leaded sidelights. Windows are 6-over-1 under bold lintel caps. Leaded fanlight in center of flush gable-end pediment above. If fanlight is original, and if construction date of ca.1854 is correct, fanlight is retarditaire, because it is an architectural feature identified with Federal style of first decades of 19th century. Added attached 2-car garage set back on south. (Photograph 10) (1)
- House was moved to this location in 1970 from Foxon Road by Irving Beck, North Branford's first town manager. Original Foxon Road site now occupied by Branford Savings Bank Plaza, across highway from library. Photographic record of move on file at Totoket (North Branford) Historical Society.
- C 40 North Street Timothy Russell House ca.1764 2-story frame gable-roofed Colonial saltbox with 5 bays, central doorway, and central brownstone chimney. House covered with clapboards, roof with new wooden shingles. 64' x 48'. 19th-century kitchen ell; 1970 south wing. 6-over-6 windows are larger at first floor (replacements) than second; muntins of second-floor windows (original?) thicker than first. Front door has narrow surround flanked by narrow plain pilasters with plain capitals, shallow architrave, frieze and flat cap, complete. Pilasters carry up and break out through entablature. Wide lawns to sides; stone terraces, brook, two ponds to rear. (Photograph 11) (2)
- C 41 North Street 1935, assessor Square 2-story frame gable-roofed vernacular house, covered with wooden shingles. 22' x 32' on narrow lot with 15' frontage. Two bays in front elevation have 1-over-1 windows at first and second floors. Wide hipped-roof front porch with square posts protects central front door. (1)
- C 43 North Street Gustafus A. Aronson House 1924 1-story frame gable-roofed Bungalow covered with wooden shingles. Ridge parallel with street. Porch formerly open behind tapered posts on shingled parapet now enclosed with large 1-over-1 windows. Broad shed dormer above has two pairs of 1-over-1s. Slender tall central chimney. In south side elevation first floor, pair of 1-over-1s is toward front, another toward rear. Three 1-over-1s in second floor. Exterior brick chimney on north elevation. Garage. (Photograph 12) (2)
- Aronson was landscape gardener. Remnants of terraces he created behind house are distinguishable.
- C 45 North Street The Reverend Samuel Eells House 1769 2-story frame gable-roofed Colonial house covered with weathered wooden shingles (originally clapboards). 44' x 48' on 9 acres. Five bays of 12-over-12 windows with thick muntin cross sections on front elevation; windows vary on other elevations. Front entry has double 6-paneled Dutch door under transom of eight tombstone-shaped lights. Chimney reported by 1977 survey as brownstone now is brick in visible section above roof line. Chimney serves seven fireplaces. Porch on south; attached shed to rear. (Photograph 13) (1)
- The Reverend Eells was second pastor of North Branford Congregational Church. He purchased present acreage and built house when he began his ministry in 1769. After his death in 1808, property was acquired by Palmer family and has descended from generation to generation. House and land are original to 1769 and have been sold only once.

-
- C 50 North Street Vacant parcel under common ownership with abutting Contributing property of 40 North Street (see above). Works visually with 40 North Street.
- C 52 North Street Charles F. Holabird House 1879 High 2-story frame gable-roofed Queen Anne house covered with clapboards. 35' x 35'. Front elevation has two 2-over-2 windows at both first and second floors. Window sills are supported by curved wooden corbel blocks. Attic window has arched top. Gable end is decorated with strut inspired by Stick style. Large square hip-roofed porch featuring square floor-to-ceiling posts projects from south front corner. 2-story 3-sided flat-roofed bay on south elevation. In rear, foundation from earlier Stedman Tavern remains. (Photograph 14) (1)
- C 60 North Street Seth Russell House/Parsonage 1845 1 3/4-story frame hip-roofed Italianate house covered with weathered brown wooden shingles. 35' x 58'. Front elevation has three bays of 6-over-6 windows at first floor, 3-over-3 at second. Entrance is via shed-roofed porch, which is supported by turned posts, on south elevation. While house is plain, its cubical mass, low hipped roof, and modest roof overhang are consistent with Italianate style. Other Italianate features may have been lost when shingled siding was added. Shingled barn has truncated gable. (Photograph 15) (2)

PROPERTY NAME

North Branford Center Historic District

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United States Department of the Interior

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally:___ Statewide: x Locally:___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A x B___ C x D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

Areas of Significance:	Period(s) of Significance		Significant Dates
<u>ARCHITECTURE</u>	<u>1727</u>	<u>1939</u>	_____
<u>SETTLEMENT</u>	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: _____

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary

In the North Branford Center Historic District the buildings and spaces are a visual record of the history of a typical town center as it developed in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. In North Branford these resources are in place with unusual concentration and integrity, generally well-preserved and free from intrusions. Buildings and land with town-center functions, such as church, Green, tavern, store, library, burying ground, school, and town hall, as well as houses, remain in place in their original relationship to one another, augmented by houses which are good examples of Colonial and later architecture. The collection of 18th-century Colonial houses, the largest segment of the district's resources, is outstanding, and is augmented by examples of the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne styles of the 19th century. The history of a representative small Connecticut community is readily apparent from these resources.

History

The area that is now North Branford was part of the New Haven Colony settled under the leadership of Theophilus Eaton and John Davenport in 1638. By 1653 the eastern section of the colony was known as Branford. The Connecticut General Court authorized an ecclesiastical society separate from New Haven in 1687, an action which, as was so often the case in Connecticut, started Branford on its way to becoming a separate town.

Settlers in the northern part of Branford soon expressed dissatisfaction at the onerous journey required to comply with mandatory attendance at weekly church services, a common complaint in remote regions of colonial Connecticut communities. Again following the usual Connecticut pattern, in 1717 they petitioned the General Court for a second ecclesiastical society, a request which was granted in 1722. The resulting Second Ecclesiastical Society completed its first meetinghouse on the site of the present church edifice in 1731.

Since the minister was the leader of the community in both religious and temporal matters, the early history of North Branford is intimately tied to the careers of the first ministers. The first three ministers are interred in the North Branford Cemetery in the district. They were Jonathan Merrick, who served 1727-1769; Samuel Eells, 1769-1808; and Charles Atwater, 1808-1825.

Upon assuming the pastorate, the Reverend Samuel Eells bought nine acres of land and built his house at 45 North Street in 1769, where it continues to stand, on the original nine acres.

The economy of the district necessarily was self sufficient and agrarian. Settlers were farmers, concentrating on the cultivation of crops such as wheat, rye, and corn. Many also followed a second commercial activity by having shops on their properties for trades such as shoemaker, printer, button maker, or blacksmith. These trade shops were essential to the community's society, and provided an additional building type now no longer in evidence.

Residents of the northern part of North Branford repeated the complaint about the long distance traveled from home to church, leading to establishment of the Third Society, known as the village of Northford, but both Second and Third Societies together were incorporated as the Town of North Branford in 1831. Thus the geography of the town was based on bounds established by religious function long after disestablishment of the Congregational Church by the Connecticut constitution of 1818.

The church continued to hold its prominent position in the town center. The first edifice was replaced in 1830 in the Greek Revival style with a building constructed by Volney Pierce, and again in 1908, after a fire, with the present sanctuary. The 19th century brought other new buildings, including the store and school, as well as houses in 19th-century revival architectural styles. Construction in the 19th century, however, decreased from the 18th-century pace, a trend that was accelerated by arrival of the railroad in 1871. Introduction of new fast transportation put North Branford in communication as never before with wider commercial opportunities. Availability of competitive goods transported by rail put an end to North Branford hand trades and shops. All aspects of district society no longer were tied to the land; the industrial revolution had ushered in a new era even in this small country town center.

Census figures reflected the change. Population declined from 1,025 in 1880 to 825 in 1900 as young people took advantage of the new transportation and communication facilities to broaden their horizons. Conditions at this low level of activity remained stable to 1940, when population was 1,438, before exploding to 10,778 in 1970 in response to post-World War II expansion, mostly as a residential area. The North Branford Center Historic District has less physical evidence of the mid-20th-century development explosion than most of the town.

Architecture

Buildings in the North Branford Center Historic District are good examples, well-preserved, of Connecticut village architecture in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. The largest single segment of the resource, and most significant, is the group of seven frame 18th-century houses which remain standing on their original sites and in their original relationship and spacing with respect to one another.

The oldest example in this category is at 40 North Street, the Timothy Russell House, 1764. Appropriately enough, it is a Saltbox, the archetypical Colonial design. Windows at the second floor in its five bays are smaller and with thicker muntins than those at the first, indicating that they may be older. The doorway has a surround that is complete but restrained in its classical components. The central chimney is brownstone, one of three in the district. The material of the new roof, wooden shingles, is indicative of the general level of preservation apparent in the premises. Side lawns are extensive, with stone terraces, a brook (Branford River), and two ponds to the rear. The site today is large, as it was historically, and probably is more carefully landscaped now than in the past.

45 North Street, the Reverend Samuel Eells House, is symbolic of the commitment to the parish made by the new minister in 1769. It is sited well back and above the street on the slope of the hill which forms the eastern side of the Branford River valley. Its heavy two-leaf Dutch door is unique in the district. The front elevation has five bays, as do all the houses in this 18th-century group, save one (28 Church Street). The chimney, now brick above the ridge but reported to be brownstone below, serves seven fireplaces in the large house.

The Second Ecclesiastical Society long owned 29 North Street, 1772, as a parsonage, buying the property from the Reverend Charles Atwater, who followed the Reverend Eells. It served as the parsonage, 1838-1952. The house has distinctive detailing in its narrow plain window surrounds with flat projecting caps and its four-pane vertical sidelights.

Both the Dennis Hart House, 11 North Street, and the Jacob Page House, 28 Church Street, date from 1785. Features of 11 North Street were substantially altered in the mid-19th century, witness the Italianate front portico and 1-over-1 replacement windows. There is a large two-story addition to the rear. 28 Church Street is different from other 18th-century houses in the district in several important respects: It is smaller, is one story high, has only three bays, and is capped by a gambrel roof.

The Hezekiah Reynolds House, 1 Library Place, 1786, is the only one of the group located adjacent to the main highway, Foxon Road. The location no doubt contributed to use of the property for a variety of civic and commercial purposes. The front

elevation has a distinctive door, hinged in the middle as well as on the hung edge, and a gambrel roof with pronounced Dutch flare to the front eaves. An ell clearly in the Greek Revival style probably is the most accurate articulation of the style in the district.

The last in the 18th-century group, 19 North Street, the Nathan Harrison House, 1796, is distinctive for several reasons: It is large and has a brownstone chimney, 12-over-1 replacement windows, and a six-tombstone-light transom in which the lights are arranged in two groups of three. All four elevations have double overhang. For this house the location of a former outbuilding, a barn on the site, is known. In all probability most houses in the district had one or more outbuildings which were important to the visual character, and to the function, of the rural town center and which have been lost.

The rate of construction fell off in the 19th century to only six known projects. In non-residential buildings, the store, 1700 Foxon Road, 1851, and the school, 1675 Foxon Road, 1870, are both plain rectangular buildings with Victorian-era embellishments, while four domestic buildings reflect the development of architectural styles which occurred as the 19th century progressed. The domestic buildings include 1640 Foxon Road, the General Philo Harrison House, 1820, in the Federal style, a tavern but also a residence, with its carriage house at 4 Church Street; 60 North Street, the Seth Russell House, unusual in the district because it is 1 3/4 stories high and a tentative statement of the Italianate; 37 North Street, the Elizur Foote House, 1854, a late example of transitional Federal/Greek Revival architecture; and 52 North Street, the Charles F. Holabird House, 1879, which is unusual in the district because of its extreme height and Queen Anne-style treatment.

Construction declined again in the 20th century to five buildings, which are 20 Church Street, 1920, and 43 North Street, 1924, two Bungalows; 41 North Street, 1935, a small vernacular house; 25 Church Street, 1939, the district's only Cape-style house, and 1720 Foxon Road, the Atwater Memorial Library, 1943, Colonial Revival. All five are reasonably successful examples of their types, the library being the most ambitious and the one building in the district for whose design a professional architectural firm has been identified.

The district's initial period of growth is well reflected by its outstanding group of 18th-century houses. The smaller 19th-century roster of civic and commercial buildings, which is representative of the era, carries the district through a level period of limited growth. In the 20th century, the more ambitious Colonial Revival library is a symbol of the arrival of the post-World War II population explosion and intensive development which occurred in the Town of North Branford as a whole, but which brought few changes to the district.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gregan, Janet S. Historical and Architectural Resource Survey of North Branford. Statewide Historic Resource Inventory. Connecticut Historical Commission, 1980.

North Branford Assessor's records.

Ransom, David F. "Soldiers' Monument, North Branford CT." *Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* 59 (1994) 1-4, pp. 113-115.

Van Dusen, Albert E. *Connecticut*. New York: Random House, 1961, pp. 55-56, 73-74.

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: Totoket Historical Society, 1605 Foxon Road, North Branford, CT

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATAAcreage of Property: 53

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A	<u>18</u>	<u>4577949</u>	<u>786920</u>	B	<u>18</u>	<u>4577440</u>	<u>687060</u>
C	<u>18</u>	<u>4577380</u>	<u>687900</u>	D	<u>18</u>	<u>4577300</u>	<u>687940</u>
E	<u>18</u>	<u>4577240</u>	<u>687870</u>	F	<u>18</u>	<u>4577270</u>	<u>687760</u>
F	<u>18</u>	<u>4577220</u>	<u>687720</u>	G	<u>18</u>	<u>4577900</u>	<u>687600</u>

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the district is shown by the dashed line on the district map. It follows the property lines of the peripheral district properties as defined in the North Branford Land Records.

Boundary Justification:

The district boundary is drawn to include contiguous residential, civic, commercial, and religious properties identified with the 18th-, 19th-, and early 20th-century development of North Branford center.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: David F. Ransom, Consultant, reviewed by John F.A. Herzan, National Register Coordinator

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List of Photographs

Photographs were taken by David F. Ransom in June 1998. Negatives are on file at the Connecticut Historical Commission.

Photograph 1

1640 Foxon Road, the Green,
and Congregational Church
View northeast

Photograph 2

War memorials on the Green
View northeast

Photograph 3

Congregational Church
View northeast

Photograph 4

Cemetery and School/Town Hall
View southwest

Photograph 5

Clark Store
View northwest

Photograph 6

Atwater Memorial Library
View northwest

Photograph 7

1 Library Place
View north

Photograph 8

11 North Street
View east

Photograph 9

19 North Street
View east

Photograph 10

37 North Street
View north

Photograph 11

40 North Street
View south

Photograph 12
43 North Street
View north

Photograph 13
45 North Street
View northeast

Photograph 14
52 North Street
View west

Photograph 15
60 North Street
View northwest