

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

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

For NPS use only

received OCT 26 1987

date entered NOV 30 1987

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

**1. Name**

historic Town Hall and District School No. 6

and or common Old Town Hall and Mill School

**2. Location**

street & number 12 South Street (Route 61) NA not for publication

city, town Morris NA vicinity of

state CT code 09 county Litchfield code 005

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>museum</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> other:
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	

**4. Owner of Property**

name Morris Historical Society, Inc.

street & number 12 South Street

city, town Morris NA vicinity of state CT

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Morris Land Records, Town Clerk's Office

street & number Morris Community Hall, Route 109

city, town Morris state CT

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1987  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission  
59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state CT

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	Town Hall
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date 1910, 1939, 1981
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			Mill School

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

The Old Town Hall and the Mill School are the two white frame 1-story buildings that stand side by side just south of the intersection of Routes 61 and 109 at the center of the Town of Morris. (Photograph 1) The Old Town Hall has been at this location since it was built in 1861, but the Mill School, built c. 1772, was moved to the site in 1981. They function together today as the headquarters and museum of the Morris Historical Society.

The Town Hall is a gable-roofed 28' x 40' structure on stone foundations (but without basement), covered with clapboards. In the front elevation there are two large (52" x 82") 6-panel doors and, at the attic level, a 9-over-6 window, all three with flat molded caps. The roof overhangs markedly, above an architrave, and the eaves return. A low 1-stage square tower, louvered for a bell, rises just back of the front peak of the roof. The overall effect, even without pilasters and pediment, is late Greek Revival, but the overhangs of the main gable roof and the flat tower roof reflect Italianate influence. (Photographs 2, 3)

There are three 12-over-12 windows in each side elevation, and two in the rear elevation. The eaves return on the rear elevation as they do on the front, but there is no attic window. A small corbeled brick chimney rises from the ridge line. (Photographs 4, 5)

Over the years the Town Hall has undergone changes, but it appears today much as it did in 1916. (Photograph 6) In between, during the years from 1942 to 1959, it served as a firehall. The doors were replaced by overhead garage doors and a concrete floor was poured for the trucks. (Photograph 7) At the time the decision was made to use the structure as a firehall, it was known that the use would be temporary. Therefore, parts of the building, for instance the doors and their surrounds, were stored in the Congregational Church carriage shed and were returned to place when the new firehall was built across the street.<sup>1</sup> The Town Hall first came under the care of the Morris Historical Society in 1959 and was renovated as a museum in 1973.

On the interior most of the Town Hall is a large single room, with two small rooms at the back. Interior finishes are plain. A dado of narrow beaded boards runs around the perimeter under a chair rail which is an extension of the window sills. Windows, plaster walls, and ceiling are original. The ceiling light fixtures have not been changed since the time when electricity was brought into the building. The only access to the attic was by ladder through the ceiling hatch door until addition of a rear stairway in recent years. (Photographs 8, 9, 10) The lay-out of the room when used as the Town Hall until 1932, when the present Morris Community Hall was constructed, is shown by sketch. The benches were similar to the benches now in the room. The central stove has been replaced by through-the-wall heating units.

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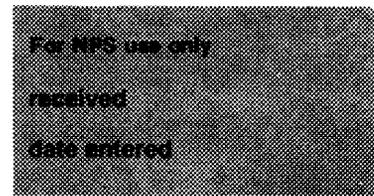
Town Hall and District School No. 6, Morris, CT

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Description

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The oak and chestnut roof framing visible in the attic is a rafter-and-purlin system resting on plates that are above floor level. There are three pairs of posts, creating four bays, to support the purlins, with wind bracing. The massive collar beams connecting two pairs of posts laterally below the level of the purlins are unusual, but may have been thought necessary to support the snow load. (Photograph 11)

The Mill School is so named because originally it was located about 3½ miles southeast of the center, opposite King's Gristmill, in a section known as the Mill District where, because of the water power, several mills were located. (See U.S.G.S. map.) It was moved 0.3 mile west in 1910 to make room for the construction of the City of Waterbury's Morris Reservoir dam, continuing in use as a school until 1915. After standing vacant for 25 years, in 1939 it was moved again to become part of an apple cider mill, and, finally, in 1981 was brought to its present site adjacent to and north of the Old Town Hall, where it was installed on poured concrete foundations over a basement, and was renovated.

The school is a simple vernacular gable-roofed structure, 18' x 26', covered with clapboards. The front entrance consists of a 4-panel door under 5-light transom and plain frieze and projecting flat cap. There are three 12-over-12 windows on the north elevation, two on the south and in the rear. The building has simple corner boards and the eaves return briefly.

Inside the front door there is a small room to the left, which is finished in wood and may have been the wood-storage room, and another to the right, which is finished in plaster and has hooks and shelves for coats and lunch boxes. The balance of the building is occupied by the schoolroom, whose appearance in 1911 is recorded by a historic photograph. (Photograph 12) The perimeter benches and desks were so arranged that students would face the walls when the teacher was instructing other students in the center of the room. The schoolroom has been returned to its original appearance. The plaster and windows, with wavy glass, are original; the floor, ceiling, and dado are replacements. The peripheral desk along the south wall is original, while the five conventional 2-pupil desks, which are later, also were used in the school before 1915. They were stored while the building was used for apple storage. (Photographs 13, 14)

<sup>1</sup>The benches and flooring also were stored, but were stolen while in storage.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1861, c. 1772      **Builder/Architect** Henry Payne, builder, Town Hall

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Criterion C - Architecture

The Old Town Hall and Mill School are significant architecturally because they are fine examples of vernacular rural public buildings from the 19th and 18th centuries. The two structures are austere, simple, and well proportioned in a manner that is typical of New England public buildings of their eras. Their materials and plain detailing demonstrate country building practices in an environment that today continues to be complementary to their architecture.

Historical Note

The Town of Morris was named for Major James Morris (1752-1820), a Revolutionary War soldier, who in 1790 opened the widely known Morris Academy on the site where the firehouse now stands across the street from the Old Town Hall and Mill School. The area was part of the Town of Litchfield until set off as the separate Town of Morris in 1859. The Town Hall was built soon thereafter at the center of the community and served until the present Morris Community Hall, a Georgian Revival structure of brick and light trim, was built in 1932 at the northeast corner of the intersection of Routes 61 and 109. The new building incorporates a library.

Before Morris became a separate town, it was part of a separate ecclesiastical society within the Town of Litchfield called the South Farms Ecclesiastical Society, established by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1767. The South Farms Ecclesiastical Society voted at a meeting held December 17, 1771, to establish the Mill School. There was a school for approximately every 30 families. This was the sixth and last such district school, implying a total of 180 families, which at five people per family would be a population of about 900. The census declined by 1900 to 555 and in 1980 had grown to 1900.

Architecture

Despite the difference of almost a century in their ages, the Old Town Hall and the Mill School are similar structures. Common features include the simple rectangular plan, gable roof, clapboard siding, narrow corner boards, and windows of small lights. The Town Hall has more architectural character by virtue of its somewhat more elaborate front elevation and its tower. The three apertures with projecting caps, the more pronounced eaves returns, and the overhang of the roof, all surmounted by the tower, give it greater presence. The fact that the Town Hall has two front doors and the school one is the reverse of what might be expected.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Litchfield

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	8	6	4	9	8	4	0	4	6	1	5	8	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is described at Morris Land Records, volume 40, page 804. The land included is land that traditionally has gone with the Town Hall.

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

state NA code NA county NA code NA

state NA code NA county NA code NA

# 11. Form Prepared By

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

organization Connecticut Historical Comm. date May 18, 1987

street & number 59 South Prospect Street telephone 203 566-3005

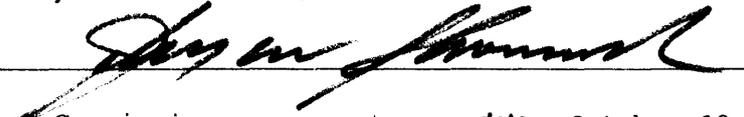
city or town Hartford state CT

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

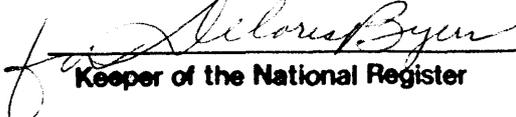
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date October 19, 1987

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

 Keeper of the National Register date 11-30-87

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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The unpretentious character of the buildings is suitable to the rural community they serve. Morris has never been a town of great activity, wealth, or development. The intersection of Routes 61 and 109, the center of the community, is the intersection of two country roads. Buildings are well spaced. East of the intersection on Route 109 is the Morris Congregational Church, 1841, a Greek Revival edifice with corner pilasters, recessed, entrance pediment, and square 1-stage tower that probably was the model for the Old Town Hall tower. The Old Town Hall and Mill School are flanked by 18th-century houses. Further away from the intersection farms and houses along Routes 61 and 109 are well spaced and generally modest, some dating from the 18th century, some in the Greek Revival and later 19th-century styles, and some modern.

The Old Town Hall was the principal public building of its era in Morris, and appears today as it did during its early years. The Mill School is the only one of its peers to appear today as it did originally. Two other district school structures remain in existence, but have been altered to houses and are unrecognizable.<sup>2</sup>

At the time they were built, the Old Town Hall and Mill School, plain, utilitarian, and sturdily constructed, reflected the architectural aspirations of the rural community. The details of the Town Hall give it a modest degree of distinction appropriate to its function as the seat of town government. These observations and circumstances are as relevant today as when the buildings were constructed. The Old Town Hall and Mill School continue to demonstrate architecturally the history and character of the Town of Morris.

<sup>1</sup> South Farms Ecclesiastical Society Records, v 1, p. 39. When the Town of Morris was established, the ecclesiastical society changed its name to Morris Ecclesiastical Society. It continued in existence until 1945, when it dissolved and deeded the church property to the church. When the school became town property is not known.

<sup>2</sup> Land used for district schools was used with the stipulation that should the use cease to be for school purposes title of the property would revert to heirs of the original owners. In the cases of the two extant structures the heirs were located, and both elected to sell. One structure was moved to Bantam; the other remains on its original location.

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Bibliography

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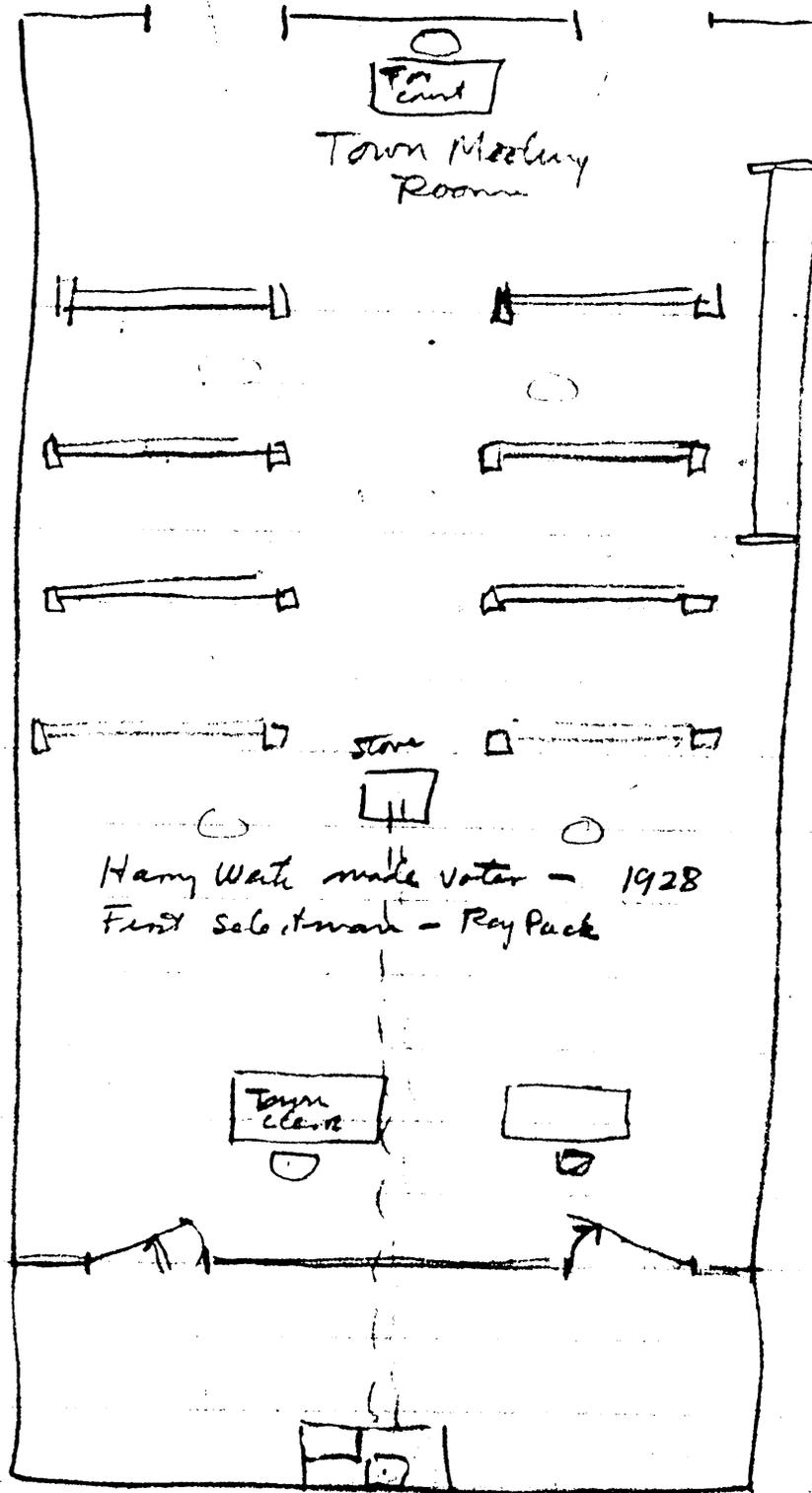
Selectman's Reports at Town Meetings October 1, 1960 and October 7, 1861. Morris Town Records.

Weik, Laura Stoddard, One Hundred Years. Morris: Morris Centennial Committee, 1959.

Wetmore, J.S. "Old House Day" flier. August 24, 1911.

⊙ Frag Pole

Stone  
Parks ⊙



Sketch of pre-1932 floor plan of Old Town Hall, drawn from memory by Harry Weik, First Selectman, Town of Morris, 1940-41, 1944-81.