

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received **JUL 1 1986**
date entered **AUG 29 1986**

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

1. Name

historic N. A.

and/or common Cheshire Historic District

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheet.

N.A. not for publication

city, town Cheshire

N.A. vicinity of

state Connecticut

code 09

county New Haven

code 009

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple public and private

street & number See continuation sheet.

city, town Cheshire

N.A. vicinity of

state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall

street & number South Main Street

city, town Cheshire

state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

See continuation sheet.

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

date 1986 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commssion, 59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford

state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cheshire Historic District is located in the center of town in the area of the Town Green. The principal axis of the district is South Main and Main streets. South Main Street (Route 10) runs almost due north-south before turning to the northwest and continuing as Main Street (Routes 68, 70). Route 10 continues north as Highland Avenue. In the center of the district Church Drive forms a semicircle around the perimeter of the Town Green before returning to South Main Street. Wallingford Road extends to the east from South Main Street opposite the green.

The district contains 56 buildings and one site, a cemetery. Only 3 (5%) are modern buildings which do not contribute to the district. They include a modern brick church on Main Street (Inventory #26), a modern commercial block at the corner of South Main and Wallingford Road (Inventory #31), and a public library on Main Street (Inventory #23). Most of the contributing buildings were built as residences and continue to be used for residential purposes. Eleven buildings, however (17%), were built for other purposes. This latter group include three schools, three historic churches, four commercial buildings, one meeting hall, and the Cheshire Town Hall at the center of the district.

The basic layout of the district has changed little since the eighteenth century. South Main Street and its extension, Highland Avenue, were the route of an early nineteenth-century turnpike. The only change to this road occurred at the south end of the district where the grade of the present highway is considerably lower than it was originally. Several buildings (Inventory #45, 46) are located 15 to 20 feet above the road.

The Town Green was the site of the second meetinghouse built in Cheshire, somewhat to the east of the present church, on what was then called "Parson's Land." According to local historians a number of "Sabba-day" houses were clustered around the meetinghouse, all one-room buildings with a fireplace. The green today is a small semicircular grassed area which contains mature trees and a Civil War monument. In addition to the church, four houses face the green from Church Drive (Photograph #10). Wallingford Road is also an original thoroughfare. As its name implied it not only connected Cheshire to its parent town, but it was one of the principal roads in the nineteenth century for some of the mining activities carried out in Cheshire.

Most of the houses in the district are two-and-one-half stories in height and built of wood. Most of the houses built before about 1850 utilize brownstone foundations, a material common to central Connecticut which may have been surface-quarried locally. From the late nineteenth century into the beginning of the twentieth century, brick was a common underpinning.

A distinctive group of one-and-one-half story Cape-style houses is scattered throughout the district, with a small collection on the south side of Main Street. The Cape form came into popular use in the early eighteenth century in Cheshire and continued to be constructed through the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Another form which had an extended time frame was the gambrel-roofed house. It is found in several outstanding Georgian-style examples dating from the eighteenth century but it also was

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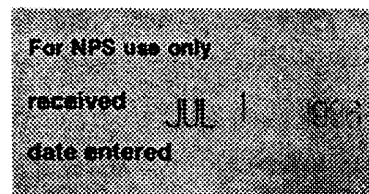
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Cheshire Historic District

Continuation sheet Cheshire, Connecticut

Item number 2, 6

Page 1



Location

-- Academy Drive and Highland Avenue
25-111 Church Drive
76 Foot Street
52-84 Highland Avenue
3-125; 84-126 Main Street
15-289; 116-242 South Main Street
19-69; 34-36 Wallingford Road
Cemetery bounded by Main Street and Horton Street

Representation in Existing Surveys

The History and Architecture of Cheshire, 1986.

Depository for Survey Records:

Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street
Hartford, Connecticut

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Item number 7

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used in the nineteenth century in commercial and residential buildings. Two of these on South Main Street are quite unusual, the Abijah Beach Tavern and its neighbor to the south, a smaller one-and-one-half story gambrel built in 1801 (Inventory #32, 34; Photograph #4). Both houses have unusual detailing for this form. The Beach Tavern, which is believed to date from the mid-eighteenth century, displays a stylized Palladian window flanked by lunettes in the gambrel peak. The Cook House also has Federal detailing, including a small fanlight in the gambrel peak and a fanlight over the door.

By far the most formal of the gambrel-roofed houses is the Reverend John Foote House on South Main Street (Inventory #39; Photograph #6). It has a brownstone foundation, clapboarded walls, and a wood-shingled roof. The entry portico with Corinthian columns may be a later addition. A sensitive adaptive reuse of this building by the Connecticut Savings Bank in 1973 has preserved much of the exterior and interior detailing. Another gambrel-roofed colonial of sizable proportion is located diagonally across the street, the Squire Samuel Beach House (Inventory #38). It, too, shows evidence of a portico but the house is in process of being prepared for moving to another site and its detail has been removed.

Although other examples exist in Cheshire outside the district, only one saltbox form of the colonial house has survived on South Main Street, the Deacon Stephen Hotchkiss House (Inventory #46; Photograph #2). The exterior of this building indicates that there have been several modifications. Undoubtedly the saltbox addition was added at a later date to a one-room-deep five-bay house. The south gable end displays an overhang between the second story and the attic level but there is no matching overhang at the north end.

The more common two-and-one-half-story five-bay Georgian house with a gable roof found in great numbers in most Connecticut towns has only one representative in the district. The Hitchcock-Phillips House (Inventory #4; Photograph #10) faces the green to the north of the church. Built by a prosperous merchant at considerable expense for the period (350 pounds), the house displays three gabled dormers in the front roof, a dentil course under the eaves, and Georgian-style molded cornices over the windows. It is now the home of the Cheshire Historical Society. The dormers are not original but were added in the early 1930s when the house was used as a dormitory by the Cheshire Academy, then known as Roxbury School. The other Georgian building in the district is Bowden Hall (Inventory #1; Photograph #5). Built in 1796, this seven-bay two-and-one-half-story brick building on a rose-colored brownstone foundation was the first building at the site of Cheshire Academy. Added to it on its north side is Bronson Hall, a two-and-one-half story Gothic Revival building also of brick, connected to Bowden Hall by a two-story passageway.

Although Federal-style detailing was incorporated into several of the gambrel-roofed buildings mentioned previously, purely Federal-style houses are a rarity in the

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district. The recently rehabilitated Doctor Thomas Tryon Cornwall House (Inventory # 37; Photograph #8), built in this style in 1807 as a gable-to-street side-hall building, had two symmetrical ells added in 1814. (Dr. Cornwall was an early cancer specialist and added these wings for his patients.) Fanlights in the front gable, the gable ends of the ells, and over the entry door are featured. Both recessed wings have later Victorian-period porches, columns, and balustrade. At the other end of the district is the only other Federal-style house, the Bishop Abraham Jarvis House (Inventory #27; Photograph #9), built in 1799 for the Episcopal Bishop of Connecticut. As one of the first trustees of the Episcopal Academy in Cheshire (the present-day Cheshire Academy), he moved to Cheshire that year. The Federal-style, gable-roofed entry porch and fanlight over the door are its distinctive features.

The centerpiece of the district, the Congregational Church on the green, is also Federal in style (Inventory #6; Photograph #11). Attributed to David Hoadley, the renowned Connecticut church architect, the building faces the green with a projecting pavilion featuring an Ionic colonnade. Three identical doorways with closed fans are set within the portico. A modern semi-detached addition to the building on the southwest corner was designed so as not to detract from the purity of the original form. The staged belltower with its conical roof, believed to be one of the finest examples of Hoadley's work, was fully reconstructed in 1966 and reinforced on the interior with steel. So well done was this reconstruction that the replica of the steeple appears to be original material.

Next to the church on its north side and set back is a small Greek Revival-style house used as a parsonage, one of the few Greek Revival-style houses in the district (Inventory #5). A similar house is found on the north side of Main Street, the Loren Humiston House (Inventory #20). The Greek Revival style was more popular for institutional buildings, with two surviving examples. The Cheshire Town Hall across the green from the church is a large brick building constructed just before the Civil War; it remains in use as a town hall (Inventory #30; Photograph #15). The Methodist Church to the north is also built of brick at the corner of Spring Street at the start of South Main Street (Inventory #12; Photograph #13). The original main block of this building constructed in 1834 had a pedimented enclosed entry portico on the east elevation facing the street. In 1981 an extensive post-Modern, one-story white addition was added. Designed by Tai Soo Kim (Hartford Design Group), it incorporates the portico and repeats the pedimented form at the south end.

Several vernacular versions of the later nineteenth-century styles are found in the district in both residential and institutional buildings, but less than a half dozen houses built in the Victorian period display any architectural detailing. One of the exceptions to this general rule is the Amos Baldwin/Benaja Beadle House at the corner of Wallingford Road and Main Street (Inventory #18; Photograph #18). Originally built in 1800, it became a two-story Second Empire style house in 1872. Iron cresting tops the roof of the two-story bay window on the south elevation. A carriage house/barn to the north on the property displays details of the Gothic Revival type, including stick work

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in the gable peak and a cupola. These features appear to be later additions to an original barn, which was the location of a private school in the early nineteenth century.

Two houses influenced by the Italianate style are found on South Main Street. One, a cross-gable dating from about 1860, has an exceptional wrap-around verandah with chamfered posts, and a second-story porch at the southwest corner (Inventory #35; Photograph #14). Both the house and the porch display brackets and Italianate-style modillions. An unusual three-story brick house on the other side of the street is one of the few buildings constructed of this material in the district (Inventory #45). It is cube-shaped and has a very slightly pitched gable roof. It originally displayed four integral chimneys, two on each side elevation. Twin gaps in the roof cornice on the north side reveal their original location. The other two remain in place.

The Queen Anne-style influence is exhibited to some degree on several houses. One of the more highly developed of these is located in the same area at 242 South Main Street at the southern end of the district (Inventory #42; Photograph #21). It too is an intersecting gable house with a nicely executed porch. What appears to be cutwork in the spandrel of the porch and in some of the gable peaks is actually only a slightly incised pattern highlighted by a contrasting paint color.

One of the more prominent of the institutional buildings was also built in this period, the St. Peter's Episcopal Church (Inventory #15). It is located at the southwest corner of Main Street and Highland Avenue. Constructed of brick and brownstone between 1840 and the early 1900s, it displays a square tower and pointed arched windows. Its present form and style are Gothic Revival. Because of the degree of addition and alteration to this building over time, it is difficult to ascertain its original form or style. The most recent addition to the building on the north side extends right to the edge of the gravestones of the immediately adjoining cemetery. A brownstone wall along Main Street here apparently was constructed over some of the graves on the boundary because of the location of the headstones.

On Wallingford Road several small workers' cottages can be found on the south side of the street. A series of three or four of these were built by or for some of the Cornish mine workers who came to Cheshire starting about the mid-nineteenth century. The best-preserved example of these is Inventory #51; Photograph #17. Across the street a large gable-to-street commercial building presently used as a food store is believed to be a meeting hall for the miners that was built about 1880 (Inventory #50). When the building was sided with woodgrain aluminum siding, the center projecting bay of the facade was removed, which has somewhat compromised its integrity.

In the twentieth century nine houses and one school were constructed prior to 1936. Most of the houses are Colonial Revival in style, a few displaying the gambrel-roof form; others rely on the typical Colonial Revival style porch with double columns and turned posts. One is neo-Federal in style and is located to the immediate south of the

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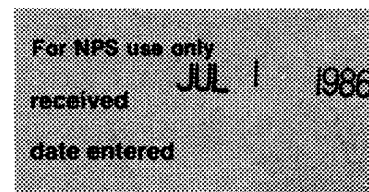
Congregational Church facing the green, the Reverend Van Ogden Voigt Parsonage (Inventory #6). It was built in 1912 on a site that had previously contained several historic buildings. The first of these was built in 1796 and operated as a tavern for most of the nineteenth century. About 1880 the property was acquired by Franklin Wallace, who moved the 1796 house to the rear of the property and built a mansard-roofed tavern and hotel known as the Wallace House. It was destroyed completely by fire in 1892 and never rebuilt. Trolley barns occupied the property for a short period until the present house was built for a parsonage in the early twentieth century.

The Humiston School at 29 Main Street, just across Spring Street from the Methodist Church (Inventory #14; Photograph #19), was the first building constructed for a high school in Cheshire. Previously the high school had operated out of a converted home. Miss Julia Humiston donated \$30,000 to the town to build the school on the site of the former Reverend Horton's house, on the condition that it be named for her father, Daniel. Built of brick and limestone in the Georgian Revival style, with a broken scrolled pediment over the entrance and a slightly projecting central pavilion, it is a quite typical school of the early twentieth century.

A complete inventory of all the buildings in the district follows. Dates of construction and names of owners are based on published sources and/or historic map searches. Some of the circa dates are ascribed to buildings on the basis of architectural evidence.

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Inventory #	Address	Name/Style/ Date/ Architect (if known)	C/NC	Photo-graph #
1.	Academy Road and Highland Avenue	BOWDEN HALL, 1798 Georgian brick	C	5
2.	Academy Road and Highland Avenue	BRONSON HALL, 1867 Gothic Revival brick	C	5
3.	25 Church Drive	MOSES BRADLEY HOUSE, 1898 Gothic Revival	C	
4.	43 Church Drive	HITCHCOCK-PHILLIPS HOUSE Georgian, 1785	C	10
5.	77 Church Drive	REV. JOSEPH WHITING HOUSE Greek Revival, 1831	C	10
6.	85 Church Drive	REV. VAN OGDEN VOIGHT PARSONAGE Federal Revival, 1912-1913	C	
7.	111 Church Drive	FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Federal, 1826, 1827	C	10, 11
8.	76 Foot Street	Stick, 1890	C	
9.	52 Highland Avenue	Late 19th-century vernacular Ca. 1890	C	20
10.	60 Highland Avenue	Queen Anne/Colonial Revival Ca. 1900	C	20
11.	70 Highland Avenue	Colonial Revival. ca. 1910	C	
12.	84 Highland Avenue	Cape, ca. 1820	C	
13.	3 Main Street	CHESHIRE METHODIST CHURCH (Temple Beth David) Greek Revival/Post Modern 1834/1981 Tai Soo Kim - addition	C	12, 13
14.	29 Main Street	HUMISTON SCHOOL Georgian Revival, 1912	C	19
15.	59 Main Street	ST. PETER'S ESPICOPAL CHURCH Gothic Revival brick and brownstone 1840/1880/1970	C	

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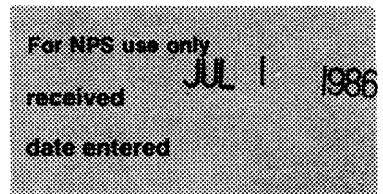
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16.	-- Main Street	Cemetery, ca. 1750 to 1850	C	
17.	81-83 Main Street	ANTONIO LAMBO HOUSE Cross-gable tenement, 1910	C	
18.	84 Main Street	AMOS BALDWIN HOUSE Second Empire, 1800/1872	C	18
19.	87 Main Street	EBENEZER BUNNELL HOUSE Colonial Cape, ca. 1740	C	1
20.	92 Main Street	LOREN HUMISTON HOUSE Greek Revival, 1854	C	
21.	93 Main Street	Colonial Cape, ca. 1770	C	
22.	97 Main Street	Cape, ca. 1820	C	3
23.	104 Main Street	Cheshire Public Library	NC	
24.	105 Main Street	19th-century vernacular, ca. 1850	C	
25.	110 Main Street	Four-Square, ca. 1920	C	
26.	120 Main Street	Baptist Church of Cheshire Modern brick, 1966	NC	
27.	125 Main Street	BISHOP ABRAHAM JARVIS HOUSE Federal with portico, 1799	C	9
28.	126 Main Street	Colonial Revival, ca. 1910	C	
29.	15-19 South Main Street	RUFUS HITCHCOCK STORE 18th-century commercial, 1787 Brick additions, 1947	C	7
30.	-- South Main Street	CHESHIRE TOWN HALL Late Greek Revival, brick, 1867	C	15
31.	116-136 South Main Street	Anderson Building Modern commercial, 1971	NC	
32.	137 South Main Street	ABIJAH BEACH TAVERN Federal/gambrel, ca. 1750	C	4

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Continuation sheet	Item number	Page
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33.	158 South Main Street 19th-century commercial/residential Ca. 1860 Italianate veranda	C 14
34.	163 South Main Street RUSSELL COOK HOUSE Gambrel/Federal, 1801	C
35.	166-168 South Main Street Cross gable, Italianate influence Ca. 1860.	C 14
36.	184-194 South Main Street Modern commercial facade hides ca. 1860 residence	NC 14
37.	193 South Main Street DR. THOMAS TRYON CORNWALL HOUSE Federal, 1807/1814; Porches, ca. 1860	C 8
38.	200 South Main Street SQUIRE SAMUEL BEACH HOUSE Colonial gambrel, 1762 (Being dismantled)	C
39.	219 South Main Street REVEREND JOHN FOOTE Colonial gambrel with portico, 1769	C 6
40.	220 South Main Street 19th-century domestic, ca. 1860	C
41.	222 South Main Street 19th-century commercial Gambrel, ca. 1850	C
42.	242 South Main Street Queen Anne, ca. 1890	C 21
43.	243 South Main Street Colonial Revival, ca. 1920	C
44.	245 South Main Street Colonial Revival, ca. 1920	C
45.	273 South Main Street Italianate brick, ca. 1870	C
46.	289 South Main Street DEACON STEPHEN HOTCHKISS HOUSE Saltbox, ca. 1740	C 2
47.	19 Wallingford Road Colonial Revival, ca. 1920	C 16
48.	29 Wallingford Road Saltbox/ Federal, 1780/1800	C
49.	34 Wallingford Road Italianate Commercial. ca. 1880	C

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50.	36 Wallingford Road	Victorian Commercial, ca. 1880	C	
51.	37 Wallingford Road	Victorian cottage, ca. 1860 (Possible workers' housing)	C	17
52.	39 Wallingford Road	Victorian cottage, ca. 1860 See #51.	C	
53.	41 Wallingford Road	Victorian cottage, ca. 1860 (See #51,52.)	C	
54.	43 Wallingford Road	Victorian cottage, ca. 1860	C	
55.	49 Wallingford Road	Cape, ca. 1780	C	
56.	57 Wallingford Road	19th-century domestic, ca. 1860	C	
57.	69 Wallingford Road	Cape, ca. 1780	C	

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/ humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Criteria A and C

Specific dates 1720-1936 **Builder/Architect** See item #7.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Cheshire Historic District, located in the town center, is a well-preserved, distinguishable entity which contains a high concentration (95%) of historic residential, commercial, and institutional buildings dating from 1720-1936 (Criterion C). An exceptional cross section of type and style constructed in several distinct time frames presents a tangible microcosm of Cheshire's history: the colonial period, the stage and turnpike era, the industrial period, and the early twentieth century (Criterion A).

History

The Town of Cheshire was a third-generation community founded about 1694. The settlers had come from Wallingford, a town established by sons of the planters of the New Haven Colony. They were attracted to the region west of Wallingford and beyond the Quinnipiac River by the area known as "ye fresh meadows" at the base of the Blue Hills, a range of mountains that divides Wallingford from present-day Cheshire. The town was named Cheshire about 1705 by Thomas Brooks, an early settler, after his birthplace in England. The Brooks name is preserved in the community of Brooksville in the southern part of Cheshire today. First known as the west farmers of Wallingford, the settlers soon petitioned for their own church society and government. As early as 1719 they had established their own school, which was open for two months of the year, and in 1724 had built the first meetinghouse in Cheshire. The present church is the third built by this society. Originally Cheshire included the present town of Prospect, which remained an integral part of the town until 1837.

Cheshire developed rapidly in the colonial period as a farming community. Glacial deposits overlaying a sandstone base provided fertile soil for the growing of fruit trees as well as other market crops. Sources of waterpower were readily available to run grist- and sawmills. In the Brooksville area the Mill River and several of its tributaries provided waterpower. The Quinnipiac and the Ten Mile rivers were also dammed at several spots. Shortly after the end of the eighteenth century, Cheshire had a population of about 2000. More than half the land in the town had been cleared and was under agricultural production or used for residential or commercial purposes. After the Revolution and until the Civil War population growth was at a standstill, despite the readily available sources of waterpower and the prosperity of the agricultural base. Some population loss was attributable to the setting off of Prospect as a separate community, but emigration to Vermont and the northwest frontier of New York and Ohio drained the community for several generations, a loss not offset by natural increase or immigration.

Several events in the early nineteenth century rescued Cheshire from economic decline. Turnpikes passed through town connecting to New Haven and Farmington. Another stage route came from Middletown and Meriden and passed through the town on the way to

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property Approximately 35

Quadrangle name Southington; Mount Carmel

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References See continuation sheet.

A

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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries N.A.

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jan Cunningham, Consultant, edited by John Herzan,
National Register Coordinator

organization Cunningham Associates date February 24, 1986

street & number 98 Washington Street telephone (203) 347 4072

city or town Middletown state Connecticut

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

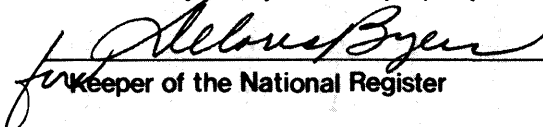
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date June 24, 1986

For NPS use only

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


Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register.

date 8/29/86

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

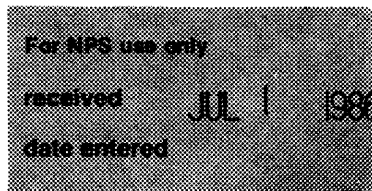
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Waterbury. The Farmington Canal, which was designed to run from New Haven to Northampton, Massachusetts, was a decided advantage when it was completed as far as Cheshire by 1827. Beachport was the town's depot on the canal in West Cheshire; goods were brought there and loaded on canal barges for transport to New Haven. So important was this depot that Naugatuck and Waterbury residents also brought in farm products for shipment, but in 20 years the railroad had replaced the canal, the line being constructed generally along the canal's original towpath. With the coming of the railroad, Cheshire had an opportunity to begin a new period of industrial development. Industry developed in the areas where water had been providing the source of power for the earlier grist- and sawmills. It included hardware of various types and a company founded in 1850, the Cheshire Manufacturing Company, for the production of items manufactured of ivory.

Much more important to the economy of the community was the development of mineral rights located in town. Cheshire had been aware of some of these sites since the eighteenth century. Copper had been discovered in 1712 in the eastern section of the town. Various attempts were made to mine copper after that time but none of those mines ever became profitable. Another mineral, barite (barium sulphate), became commercially profitable. It had been discovered by Professor Benjamin Silliman of Yale, who had done some prospecting in Cheshire in the early nineteenth century. It was not mined, however, until about 1850 because the mineral was contained in narrow seams of excessive depth. Experienced tin miners were needed and imported from Cornwall to work the mines. For about 40 years these mines proved to be extremely profitable, employing on the average more than 200 miners in addition to carpenters and drovers and rail-line operators. The ore was transported up Wallingford Road to the railroad depot located just to the west of the district. The miners established a meeting hall on Wallingford Road about 1880 (Inventory #50). Barium sulphate has a number of industrial uses including the manufacture of glass, paint, cloth, and rubber. It also was an essential ingredient for oil-drilling operations. Very shortly after the close of the Civil War, the veins of barite ran out and the mines were shut down.

Because of the presence of so many Cornishmen in town, who were Wesleyan Methodists, the Methodist Church needed to expand. Originally established in 1834 on Main Street, it built its new quarters on the present-day location. It remained an important denomination in Cheshire as long as the mines were commercially viable. Other sects reflected the ethnic diversity of the nineteenth century, including the Roman Catholics in 1856, the Baptists in 1888, and the Lutherans in the twentieth century. The present Baptist Church on Main Street, a modern building, was a replacement for the original nineteenth-century church.

One of the more influential of the Protestant denominations, the Episcopalians, had a major impact on the development of Cheshire. The present-day Cheshire Academy began as an Episcopal school established by the Reverend Reuben Ives, a friend of Bishop Seabury, the first Episcopal bishop of Connecticut. It was first established as a co-educational day school, but after it became a military academy in the Civil War years, only boys

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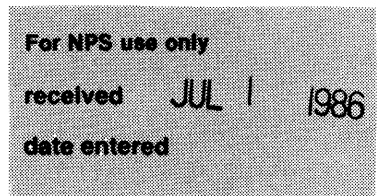
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were admitted. The present campus of Cheshire Academy occupies a good portion of the northeast section of the center of town, and four of its buildings are included in the district, including the first, Bowden Hall (Inventory #1, 2, 9, 10).

Like many of the towns in Connecticut, by the end of the nineteenth century Cheshire had become a seasonal retreat for people from New York or Hartford. Within a few decades some of the older houses in town had been purchased by these summer residents for permanent use. Access to the town improved with the building of the electric trolley line from New Haven and eventually continued on through to Waterbury and Milldale. Another important event in Cheshire's history at this time was the establishment of a reform school in the town about a mile to the north of the district, now called the Cheshire Correctional Institution.

Today Cheshire is one of the largest of Connecticut's 169 towns, with 33 square miles. Because of its central location with access to New Haven, Meriden, Wallingford, and Middletown, where more than 1 million people (about a third of the state's population) live, Cheshire has become one of the modern bedroom communities of the state. Industrial parks followed the establishment of Interstate Route I-84, and Cheshire has become a prosperous industrial community as well, with more than 35 industries in the town. By 1976 Cheshire's population was 20,000, ten times what it had been at the close of the eighteenth century.

Evaluation of Architectural Significance

Representative examples of historic architecture from the colonial period to the twentieth century are contained in the Cheshire Historic District. Historic growth and development have not erased its eighteenth-century origins; nineteenth- and early twentieth-century construction has generally interspersed and overlaid the colonial base. Although historic buildings have been lost through demolition in the last ten years and been replaced by modern construction, there is a minimal amount of modern intrusion. More recently, however, historic buildings have been demolished, or dismantled to be moved to a new site, as part of a planned "historic" residential development outside the district, a process which poses a threat to the surviving resources.

For the most part the houses and other buildings in the district are well-preserved. Most of the alteration has been historical in nature, having taken place in the nineteenth century. A limited amount of inappropriate modern siding has been used and in very few cases does this siding obscure or cover significant architectural details.

The eighteenth-century collection of buildings is particularly notable because it contains a high proportion of two representative types, the Cape Cod style and the gambrel-roofed colonial form. In contrast to other towns of the same age, where the more common form in the colonial period and beyond was a simple gable-roofed three- to five-bay house, people in Cheshire have utilized these gambrel and Cape Cod forms to an

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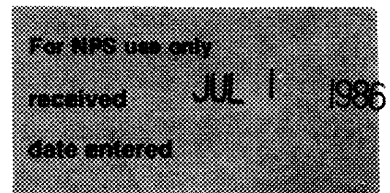
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exceptional degree. The retention of several of the gambrel-roofed commercial buildings which face the street adds a distinctive variety to the more usual eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century streetscape. Most notable of these is the Beach Tavern (Inventory #32; Photograph #4), with its exceptional fenestration: the Palladian window and the lunettes. The building has also retained many of its original interior features, including the fiddler's box in the ballroom on the third floor. Despite its Federal style detailing, it may have been built as early as 1750. An endangered building of the same form is located behind the residential properties across the street (Inventory #41). Until quite recently it was one of a pair of similar buildings constructed in the nineteenth century for retail or commercial use. It betrays its commercial origins by the protruding beam above the extended second floor window. Immediately to the northwest was another similar building which was demolished in 1985; the building in question is also threatened by a similar fate. The Squire Beach House (Inventory #38) immediately adjacent and sited closer to South Main Street is currently being dismantled to be moved to a new site; all this activity is part of the "historic" residential development project.

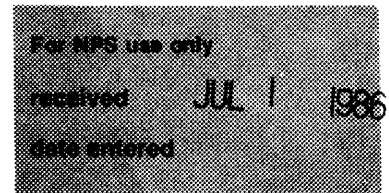
The prosperity of the community is evident in the fine examples of Federal-style architecture constructed during the turnpike era through the heyday of the Farmington Canal. Most notable of these is the exceptional church in the Adamesque style (Inventory #7; Photographs #10, 11). One of the best of Hoadley's designs, it is also notable for the superior craftsmanship displayed in the molded detailing.¹ The carving of the key blocks and fans over the entrances is finely executed, as are the column and capitals in the Scamozzi Ionic order with Attic bases, a Hoadley trademark. The Dr. Thomas Tryon Cornwall House is also a distinctive example of the Federal style (Inventory #37; Photograph #8). The addition of the matching wings has produced a rare, perhaps unique form, distinguished by its fully Federal detailing. The later porches in each wing have contributed rather than detracted from the architectural significance of the house. It derives further historic importance for its early association with the treatment of cancer. Less imposing but finely executed is the Bishop Jarvis House of the same period (Inventory #27; Photograph # 9), notable for its well-preserved original portico.

Two institutional buildings from the industrial period are important visual elements in the district. The Town Hall and the Methodist Church are remarkably similar brick buildings (Inventory #13, 30; Photographs #12, 13, 15). Built in the Greek Revival style more than 30 years apart, spanning the period when the mines were operating at full capacity, they are almost identical in size. The recent Post-Modernist addition to the Methodist Church has somewhat obscured its original mass when viewed from South Main Street, but it is still evident from Spring Street (see Photograph #13).

Several small houses and the meeting hall on Wallingford Road were the result of the mining industry. Modest vernacular examples of housing for the working class, they are the only buildings in the district with this direct association. Unfortunately, only one house has retained all of its original detailing and fabric (Inventory #51;

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Photograph #17). The remainder of the houses have enclosed or altered porches. The meeting hall has also been altered to some degree by the installation of aluminum siding. A central bay on the facade was removed, the building's only exterior architectural feature.

Several houses and one school were built in the early twentieth century. The houses are modest examples of the Colonial Revival style and blend well with the prevailing styles of the earlier streetscape. Two that are set well back from South Main Street at the southern end of the district have landscaped grounds and tennis courts. They may have been built originally as seasonal residences for people from New Haven or New York (Inventory #43, 44). One of the most distinguished of the houses built in this period is the neo-Federal house built on Church Drive as a parsonage in 1912 to the south end of the Congregational Church (Inventory #6). It blends well with the existing domestic architecture surrounding the Green, providing a complementary balance to this cluster of buildings. The school is a well-preserved example of the Georgian Revival style distinguished by a well-executed entrance with a broken scroll pediment.

Notes

1. J. Frederick Kelly attributes the Cheshire church to Hoadley, an attribution disputed by more recent architectural historians. Personal communication, Elizabeth Brown, June 5, 1986. It is possible that it is only a copy of his North Milford, now Orange, Connecticut church. A similar church in Milford Center may also be based on a Hoadley design.

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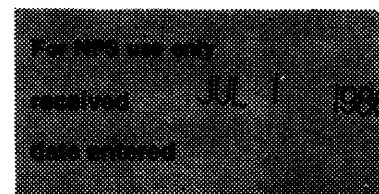
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UTM References:

Southington Quadrangle:

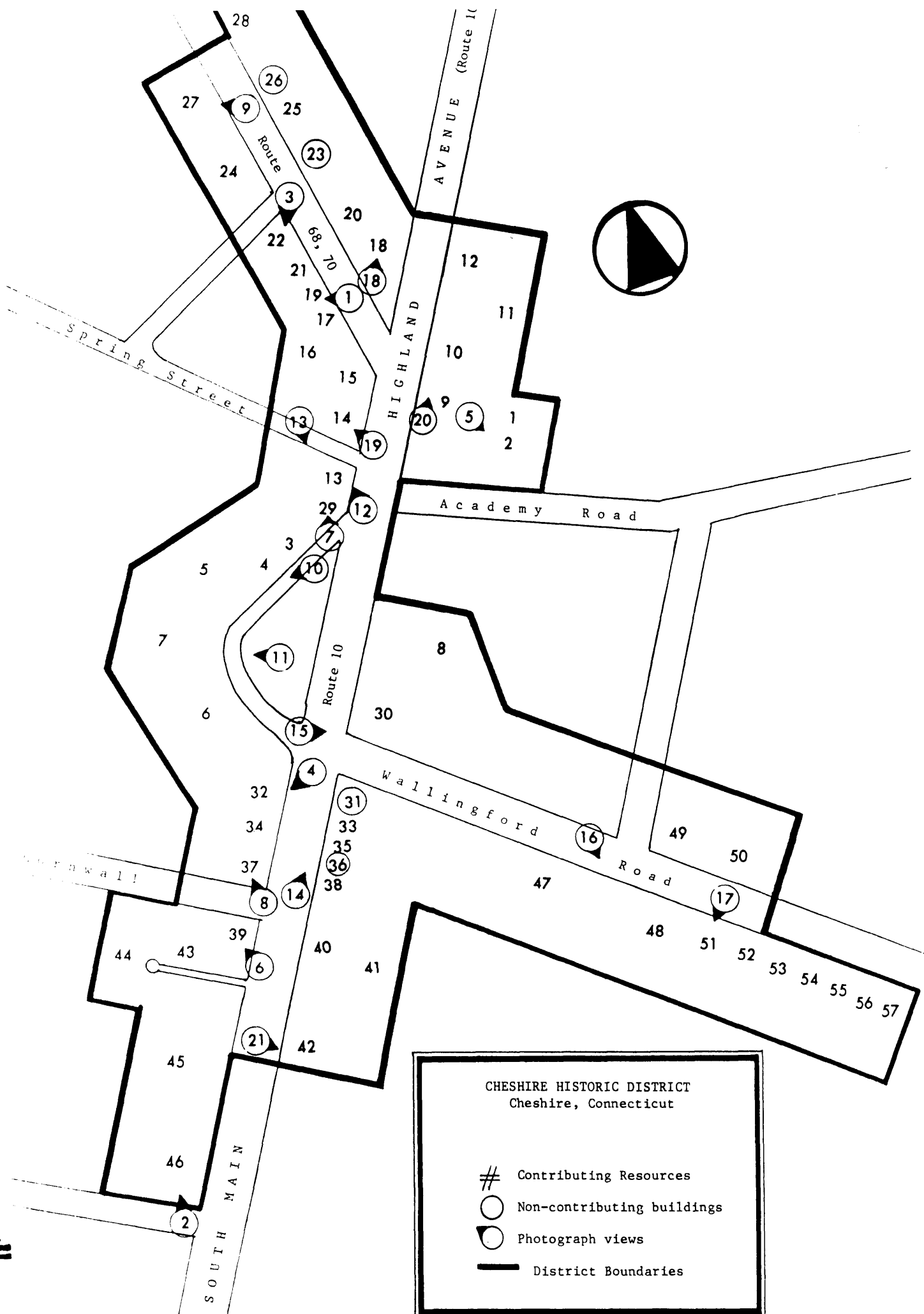
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F	18	674920	4596510
G	18	674950	4596520
H	18	675960	4596320
I	18	675240	4596330
J	18	675270	4596310
K	18	675200	4596250

Mount Carmel Quadrangle:

L	18	675220	4596120
M	18	675250	4596100
N	18	675230	4596000
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S	18	675240	4595840
T	18	675210	4595810
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HH	18	675120	4596100
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Boundary Description and Justification:

The district boundaries were drawn to encompass the maximum number of historic buildings in the institutional, residential, and historic commercial center of Cheshire and associated with its development from about 1720 to 1936. Modern commercial development has encroached upon Cheshire's center in recent years. This phenomenon is most evident to the immediate south of the district along Route 10, to the west of the district on Main Street, and to the north of the district on Wallingford Road. Because of this type of development there is a clear delineation between historic Cheshire and the surrounding area on the north, west, and south sides. The eastern boundary on Wallingford Road was established to include the last historic house on the south side of the street. Beyond this point there are no buildings visible as Wallingford Road makes a bend to the south.



CHESHIRE HISTORIC DISTRICT
Cheshire, Connecticut

- # Contributing Resources
- Non-contributing buildings
- ◐ Photograph views
- District Boundaries