

GPO No. 2024-0018
EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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received JAN 5 1983
date entered

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic Bristol Downtown Historic District

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Bristol N/A vicinity of ~~congressional district~~

state Vermont code 50 county Addison code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input 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
	N/A <input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name (See Continuation Sheets)

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Town Clerk

street & number N/A

city, town Bristol state Vermont

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Vermont Historic Sites
title and Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier state Vermont

7. Description

<u> </u> excellent	<u> </u> deteriorated	<u> X </u> unaltered	<u> X </u> original site
<u> X </u> good	<u> </u> ruins	<u> X </u> altered	<u> </u> moved date _____
<u> </u> fair	<u> </u> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located at the point where the New Haven River emerges at the base of the west slope of the Green Mountains, the Bristol Downtown Historic District encompasses the bulk of Bristol's central business district. Comprising most of the village's historic commercial architecture, the District stretches for about 500 feet along both sides of Main Street and includes sixteen mostly brick, 2 to 3 story commercial blocks, the Town Hall, two early automobile garages and in the rear to the south, a grist mill and related mill office. Dating from the early 19th through early 20th centuries, the buildings exhibit a variety of stylistic features, with the vernacular Italianate predominant.

Bristol is a quiet community of several hundred dwellings set in a mountainous part of central Vermont. A tall crag-rimmed mountain known as Deer Leap rises immediately above the village to the northeast, and a larger but less spectacular elevation - South Mountain - looms to the southeast, giving Bristol a rugged natural setting which few New England villages can match. The New Haven River flows roughly parallel to Main Street to the south.

The focal point of the villagescape is a large open green to the west of the Historic District. Except for the mainly brick-veneered commercial and public buildings concentrated within the historic district, Bristol's built environment consists almost uniformly of late 19th century, white-painted clapboard dwellings set out in evenly-spaced residential streetscapes.

The commercial District is well defined. Along the south side of Main Street is a row of eight adjoining or narrowly-spaced commercial blocks which constitutes Bristol's major commercial streetscape. Effecting a mirror image on the north side of the street is the Union Block (#15), a single elongated commercial block with seven separate brick facades which form a briefer but even more cohesive streetscape. Although erected over a span of half a century, all of these buildings show a remarkable consistency of form and plan: the two or three-story rectangular facades invariably have decorative cornices, symmetrical and evenly spaced fenestration, and storefronts with central entries recessed between display windows. Within this basic design there is a variety of style, exterior sheathings, and degree of surface enrichment, but it is the repetition of form and facade organization on these commercial blocks which stands out as the historic district's dominant feature, and gives it its strong sense of architectural integrity.

In addition to the core commercial blocks on both sides of Main Street the district includes a number of adjacent structures which are more individualistic in character. The most prominent of these is Holley Hall (#14), a large brick Queen Anne/Romanesque style building which lies at the west end of the district. At the east end of the district is the Hatch Block (#1), a bulky 3-story Italianate style building with a 2-tiered front porch, originally built as a hotel. Across Main Street from the Hatch Block is a stylish Colonial Revival gas station (#16) which effectively extends the streetscape eastward across a parking lot.

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- 15E. Basil and Rowe
RD #1
Middlebury, VT 05753
- 15F. Cecil Foster
West Street
Bristol, VT 05443
- 15G. George Rockwood
57 East Street
Bristol, VT 05443
16. Antonio Pomerleau
64 College Street
Burlington, VT 05401

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- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Ivan Hendee
Packard Road
Jericho, VT 05465 | 10. Stan Bryden
30 Pleasant Street
Bristol, VT 05443 |
| 2. Tony Thomas
27 Main Street
Bristol, VT 05443 | 11. Clayton Ledeau
R.D.
Bristol, VT 05443 |
| 3. Jackman's, Inc.
Pine Street
Bristol, VT 05443 | 12. Frank James
Bristol, VT 05443 |
| 4. Beverly Red
23 Main Street
Bristol, VT 05443 | 13. Thomas Yeager
Bristol Notch
Bristol, VT 05443 |
| 5. Beverly Red
23 Main Street
Bristol, VT 05443 | 14. Town of Bristol
c/o Town Clerk
Bristol, VT 05443 |
| 6. Terry Thomas
Bristol, VT 05443 | 15A. Clifford Adams
Maple Street
Bristol, VT 05443 |
| 7. John Anderson
23 Main Street
Bristol, VT 05443 | 15B. Ed Brown
P. O. 1475
Manchester, Mass. |
| 8. Merchants Properties, Inc.
123 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401 | 15C. Clifton and Louise Adams
Maple Street
Bristol, VT 05443

Paul & Gertrude Ralston
RD #2
Bristol, VT 05443 |
| 9. Woody Danforth
Main Street
Bristol, VT 05443

Ralph Burt
Vergennes, VT 05491 | 15D. Basil and Rowe
RD #1
Middlebury, VT 05753 |

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Bristol's central business district's physical appearance has undergone a number of drastic changes over the last century, largely as a result of periodic and sometimes disastrous fires. In general, however, the individual buildings retain their original exterior appearance to a great degree. Nearly all of the storefronts and several of the interiors retain portions or all of their original fabric. The greatest change in recent years has been the destruction of the historic Bristol Inn in 1961 to make room for the parking lot which now lies to the west of the Union Block (#15).

The individual structures within the Bristol Downtown Historic District are described as follows:

1. Hatch Block (27-31 Main Street), c.1887

The Hatch Block was built sometime between 1885 and 1889 as a hotel and commercial block. The style is vernacular Italianate, with paired cornice brackets and a 2-tiered front porch with chamfered posts, bracketed cornice and turned balustrade as its chief features. The massing is 6 x 4 bays and it is three stories high. The roof is flat except for a gabled western section whose front peak rises slightly above the main cornice to display a sunburst panel and simple valance screen. The original clapboard walls have been almost completely covered with modern asbestos shingle siding. Window openings are original, but original sash and heavy cornice moldings have been removed. The ground level has two storefronts, of which the larger, eastern storefront appears to be substantially intact. It has a central entry flanked by large-paned display windows.

An oriel window and two three-part openings, the left one with a central door, enhance the second floor facade. Although the building has been altered, most of the changes are reversible. The building's great scale and nineteenth century architectural features effectively extend and terminate Main Street's historic commercial streetscape.

2. Thomas Block (25 Main Street), c.1835

A two-story Federal period residence which was long ago converted to commercial use, and recently was more substantially altered by the addition of modern "weathered" board-and-batten siding and a modern storefront on the west gable end. When built, this was a finely-proportioned, 5 x 2 bay clapboard house of the common central-hall, eaves-front plan. A molded cornice and pedimented clapboard gables with fan louvres are the chief surviving Federal features. In the rear is a large gabled clapboard ell of vernacular construction which was probably added when the building was converted to commercial use sometime after the Civil War. Along its west side are freight openings with glazed transoms set under a long shed roof on brackets. Due to extensive alterations, the building is included in the District as a non-contributing structure.

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3. Stokes - Jackman Garage (23 Main Street), 1920

A 1-story clapboard garage, built in 1920 as Stoke's Auto Sales and Service. The village fire department has always used a portion of the building for equipment storage. The main block is 20' x 32', with a sheet metal hip roof which is screened in front by a low rectangular false front capped by a molded cornice. The facade has a large garage door centered between double windows and doors at the corners. Two long wings extend back to the rear; the gabled east wing has sheet metal walls and roof, and is set at an angle; the west wing has a shed roof and three garage openings on the west side. Although its scale and industrial character may seem inconsistent with the surrounding streetscape, the garage appears virtually unaltered, is an excellent example of an early automobile garage, and adds variety to the district's architecture.

4. Kilbourn Grist Mill Office, 1924

A small, 1½-story gabled house of simple vernacular construction, built in 1924 as the office for the Kilbourn Grist Mill (#5). Its most notable feature is the use of the stucco siding. The plan is 3 x 2 bays, with two-over-two sash, overhanging eaves, a plain front door on the north gable end, and a new picture window and deck on the south (rear) gable end. Its significance lies largely in its historical relationship with the adjacent grist mill.

5. Kilbourn Grist Mill, 1924

The Kilbourn Grist Mill may have been the last structure of its type erected in Vermont. It replaced an earlier mill - the "Cyclone" - which burned in 1924. The present building, built in the same year, owes its design more to the 19th century than to the 20th century. Now converted to a toy factory, it has been altered only by the addition of red, vertically striated sheet metal siding and new windows above the second floor. The building's most distinctive feature is its four-story grain elevator which rises two stories above the main gable roof. The frame is of very heavy post-and-beam construction.

On the ground floor are six-over-six sash, novelty siding, and a large double-door freight entry on the north gable end. A cantilevered shed roof extends out as a canopy over loading docks on the north and east sides. A gabled 1½-story ell projects to the west; a 1 x 1 bay shed is appended to the east side. Although not visible from Main Street, the building is a significant relic of Bristol's history as a farm market town, as well as an important part of its present economy.

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6. Dunshee Block (19-21 Main Street), c.1880

The Dunshee Block is one of the oldest and most architecturally significant buildings in the district. It is an excellent example of the Italianate Revival commercial style as interpreted by local builders throughout Vermont after the Civil War. Its richly ornamental cornices, appearing at the roof line window heads, and over the storefronts, give the wood-trimmed clapboard facade a strong horizontal emphasis and a profusive style which was usually only achieved with cast or stamped metal. Except for new plate glass on the storefront windows, the building appears to be virtually unaltered. It was built sometime after 1871 by a merchant named Dunshee to house two shops on the ground floor, a meeting hall on the second, and apartments on the third.

The block is 6 x 4 bays and three stories high. The main cornice rises above the roofline as a parapet, and is supported by panelled corner pilasters and large elongated paired brackets. Other entablature detail includes ornate modillions, a panelled frieze, and segmental arches cut into the architrave between the brackets to visually receive the heads of the third story windows. Fenestration is evenly-spaced and symmetrically organized; windows have denticulated cornices resting on consoles, two-over-two sash, and sills with feet. Identical storefronts are set under a modillioned cornice with heavy brackets framing either shop, and a narrow walk-up entry with glazed door and transom in the center; similar shop entries are recessed between large display windows. In the rear is a large one-story gabled utility wing.

7. South Side Drug Street (17 Main Street), c.1875

A 2-bay, 2-story, clapboard commercial block which, before a fire in 1924, was the easternmost shop in the Patterson Block (#9). Except for the missing cornice and a reglazed storefront, it retains most of its original Italianate Revival detail, and makes a significant contribution to the surrounding streetscape by maintaining its scale, style and texture.

Facade detail includes panelled corner pilasters, an arcaded remnant of the original bracketed cornice, heavy cornice window heads with delicate pendant brackets, two-over-two sash, and a modillioned cornice over the storefront which has a center recessed entrance flanked by display windows (with altered sash).

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8. Merchants Bank (15 Main Street), 1924

When a fire struck the Patterson Block (see #7 and #9) in 1924, this section, housing the First National Bank of Bristol was so heavily damaged that the bank totally rebuilt it with 12" fire walls separating it from the older wood sections on either side. The new facade combines beige-tinted bricks and granite trim in a neo-classical motif which was popular throughout Vermont in the 1920's. Although it differs in style and construction from the adjacent Italianate clapboard facades, the design of the Merchants Bank is compatible and adds a degree of variety to the commercial district's architectural resources.

The focal point of the facade is a large round-arched mullion window which is centered above the storefront and enclosed by a granite molding with carved keystone. Flanking this window, and resting on the storefront cornice, are paired brick pilasters with granite bases and caps; these pilasters support a full entablature with a granite modillioned cornice, granite architrave, and plain brick frieze; above the cornice is a plain brick parapet. Mounted on the facade to the right of the window is a steel alarm box.

The storefront has a large display window centered between two glazed and transomed doors; heavy diamondplate steel sills with "BANK" stamped in large letters are set in the entrance recesses. At the corners, brick piers with granite bases and caps support a molded granite entablature which is now mostly covered by a modern steel and glass sign band. The interior is a full two stories high in front, with a galleried second floor in the rear reached by an open balustraded staircase. Oak panelling and moldings are used extensively, especially on the curved tellers' bar.

9. Patterson Block (11-13 Main Street), c.1875

A 5-bay, 2-story, Italianate Revival commercial block in well-preserved condition. The facade originally extended another 4 bays and two shops to the east; a fire in 1924 destroyed the section now occupied by the Merchants Bank (#8) and left the present South Side Drug Store block (#7) separated and slightly altered. Although not quite as elaborate, the Patterson Block resembles the Dunshee Block (#6) in both style and form, and may well have been the work of the same builder. It is an integral component in the cohesive commercial streetscape along the south side of Main Street.

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9. Patterson Block (Cont'd)

The heavy projecting cornice is supported by panelled corner pilasters and paired brackets with pendants. Below are a panelled frieze and architrave. The evenly-spaced windows have heavy cornices with delicate brackets. The ground level has a walk-up entry with a glazed door and large 4-light transom in the center. To the left is an almost unaltered storefront with ornate modillioned cornice, recessed central entry framed by cast iron posts, and mostly modern glazing. The storefront to the right retains its original form but has all new steel and glass fabric; inside are pressed metal walls and ceilings.

10. Bristol Insurance Agency (7 Main Street), c.1880

A 2-story, 3-bay clapboard commercial block of extremely vernacular Italianate period construction. Its only stylistic detail is a molded wood cornice with three simple brackets. Window sash is two-over-two with simple molded surrounds. The storefront has been altered by the addition of a shallow asymmetrical gabled hood which spans the full width of the building. Beneath it, the storefront retains the typical recessed center entry flanked by display windows. The building maintains the form and character of the streetscape.

11. Dear Leap Furniture (5 Main Street), c.1916

A 2-story, 2 x 5 bay commercial block with a flat roof and bonded brick construction. It was built as a hardware store in 1916, two years after a fire had destroyed the Drake-Farr Block on this site. It is similar in style and construction to the Lathrop Block (#13), which was built at the same time, and perhaps by the same builder. The solid, rectangular massing helps to maintain the scale and form of the surrounding streetscape.

On the main (north) facade, the second story has two large recessed panels which are corbelled in at the top; inside each panel are paired one-over-one sash enclosed in concrete lintels and a continuous concrete sill course. On the side (east) elevation second story are five one-over-one sash enclosed within concrete lintels and sills and separated by projecting brick piers. The unaltered storefront has a central display window flanked by recessed entries.

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12. Tomasi Block (3 Main Street), 1946

A 2-story, 5-bay commercial block built of load-bearing brick. After the Drake-Farr Block burned in 1914, the site was rebuilt with the Lathrop Block (#13) and the present Deer Leap Furniture Block (#11); the space in between was used for a 1-story auto storage structure. In 1946 this building was either replaced or expanded by the Tomasi family into the present block. The facade has five plain double windows on the second floor, and plate glass windows and two flush entries below. Centered on the upper front facade is a tablet inscribed with "Tomasi 1946". Although plain in style, the wide brick facade visually links the two flanking commercial blocks and is of similar scale and materials. Due to its age, it is listed as a non-contributing structure in the historic district.

13. Lathrop Block (1 Main Street), 1916

A 2-story, 4 x 8 bay, brick-veneered commercial block built on an important corner site in the aftermath of the fire which burned the old Drake-Farr Block in 1914. It originally housed the post office. The style is a rather plain Colonial Revival, characterized by round attic windows, marble lintels and sills, and a generally formal symmetrically organized facade. The decoratively-corbelled cornice has a marble tablet inscribed "Noah Lathrop 1916" centered in front. Sash is one-over-one. The main storefront has a recessed walk-up to the left, and a central entrance recess flanked by plate glass display windows to the right. A heavy steel I-beam lintel encloses the whole. On the west facade, in the rear, is a secondary basement level storefront, also enclosed under an I-beam lintel.

14. Holley Hall, 1884

Bristol's town hall is situated on a visually strategic corner location at the west end of the historic district. It is one of the village's most important buildings, not only in terms of its architecture, but also as a landmark, focal point in the village scene, and as a community cultural resource. It was built in 1884 at the cost of \$11,000. Designed by C. W. Daman of Haverhill, Massachusetts, it was constructed by the Middlebury contracting firm of Smith and Allen. The site of the building was donated by Winter Holley. Holley Hall was long used as a meeting hall for both public and private functions; today it houses a performing arts theater upstairs and the town offices and historical society museum in the basement level.

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14. Holley Hall (Continued)

The building's style is essentially Queen Anne, with irregular massing and a variety of surface enrichment, but it also shows much Romanesque influence. Its most prominent feature is a 3-stage tower on the northeast corner which emphasizes the building's corner site. Construction is of brick veneer on a post-and-beam frame, with polished slate trim, slate-clad roof and dormers, and some wood shingle wall coverings. The main (north) facade shows a pronounced jerkinhead roof over a very large round-arched mullion window, a Romanesque feature, with stained glass lights and decorative wood "bullseye" motif spandrel panels. Round arches, the chief characteristic of the Romanesque Revival style, also appear on all four sides of the open belfry and on the east side shed dormer. The arcade-motif corbelled cornice is also a distinctive Romanesque feature.

The main (north) entrance has panelled double doors flanked by stained glass vestibule windows. The entry porch has a shingled shed roof supported by chamfered posts and large consoles. A secondary entry on the east side of the tower base has a panelled and glazed door set under a long shed roof supported by chamfered posts. On the north side of the tower base is a slate tablet inscribed "Holley Hall". The tower's second stage has shingle siding, flared at the bottom, and rectangular 8-light windows. The arched belfry openings are enclosed by decorative zig-zag motif pierced balustrades. The bellcast roof has a weathervane and clocks set in gables which emerge from the roof on all four sides. Side elevation windows have slate lintels and sills enclosing Queen Anne sash with borders of small stained glass lights. A tall gabled dormer on the east roof slope is faced with polychromatic slates in a concentric triangle pattern. The shed dormer beside it is trimmed with an iron roof crest and scroll spandrel ornament around a semi-circular light with radiating muntins.

15. Union Block (6-26 Main Street), 1899

The original Union Block was a clapboard structure which stood on the same site and had almost exactly the same plan and proportions as the present building. Built in the 1870's, it was Bristol's most important commercial block until it burned in 1898. Its name derived from the fact that, although built on a single frame and foundation, the separate retail spaces were separately owned, and the building was thus a "union" of merchants and property owners under a single roof. When the building burned on October 26, 1898, the various owners immediately set out to rebuild under the same scheme but with 12" brick firewalls separating the sections. The last of the new stores opened on March 25, 1899, less than five months after the fire. The result was a 2-story, flat-roofed block with seven separate brick veneered facades which varied in appearance to a degree, but generally employed similar organizational schemes and period stylistic motifs, and thus combined to create a continuous, cohesive commercial streetscape. The individual facades are described as follows:

9. Major Bibliographical References

Beers, F. W., Atlas of Addison County, Vermont (New York, 1871; reprint Rutland, VT, 1971)
 Bristol Herald, 11/27/88, 3/31/89, 4/6/89

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 8 acres

Quadrangle name Bristol Quad

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8	6	5	3	8	4	0	4	8	8	8	2	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

1	8	6	5	3	8	3	0	4	8	8	8	1	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

1	8	6	5	3	6	3	0	4	8	8	8	1	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

1	8	6	5	3	6	0	0	4	8	8	8	3	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at a Point A, located at the intersection of an easterly extension of the rear (north) property line of #15 and the east property line of #16, the district boundary runs south along said east property line of #16, crossing Main Street, and continuing

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John C. Page

organization Preservation Consultant

date August 1982

street & number Waterville, Vermont

telephone 644-2706 862-8262

city or town

state

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 William B. Pinney

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12-29-82

For NPS use only

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

John Nelson Byers
 Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
 National Register

date 2/3/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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 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		

Specific dates N/A

Builder/Architect N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Bristol Historic District is significant as the well-preserved, late 19th century business district of a small Vermont mill village. From its settlement in the 1780's until the Civil War, Bristol village was a modest hamlet which served as a market town for the surrounding farm and forest industries. From 1870 until World War I, the village was the site of a prosperous wood products industry which used modern industrial methods to exploit the vast timber resources of the surrounding Green Mountains. The commercial district which grew along upper Main Street during this period served the hundreds of mill workers who located in Bristol, as well as the attendant mercantile and professional classes and the village's long-standing agricultural markets. The present historic district is an excellent example of vernacular commercial architecture grouped into stylistically and visually cohesive streetscapes.

Bristol's early history as a farm market town was unremarkable; it provided necessary milling and mercantile services to outlying farmers who needed a place to sell their produce, buy manufactured goods, have grain milled and lumber sawn. Early manufacturing efforts included forges which produced bar iron at an early (c.1790) date, a pillbox mill in 1818, a tanbark mill in 1836, a fulling mill in 1845, and a chair factory, the first of the real wood products manufacturing, in 1850. From c.1840 until the 1880's the Bartlett family manufactured a plow in a foundry at Rocky Dale, several miles to the east of the village, which is credited with having helped to settle the midwestern prairie. Still, these enterprises served primarily the local economy, and in terms of large-scale employment which could build Bristol into a thriving community, their impact was minimal. As late as the Civil War there were only a few score dwellings in the village and just a handful of businesses.

The introduction of water-powered wood-turning equipment, an event which would bring the village into the modern industrial era, took place in 1862 when a sash and door mill was erected on the New Haven River just southwest of the village. This business was converted to a casket factory in 1869, and from 1880-1910 the Bristol Manufacturing Company employed over 150 people in a sprawling mill complex and was one of the country's major producers of caskets. Other industries grew up around the casket factory and turned hardwood lumber from the surrounding forests into a myriad of wood products, including butter tubs, clothespins, beekeepers' equipment, boxes, silos, water tubs, doors and sash, and wagons. After World War I the business quickly declined and, one by one, closed down their operations. The last casket was made in 1939. Today Bristol's largest industries - a large sawmill and a small furniture factory, carry on the town's wood manufacturing tradition.

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15A. Cubbers Restaurant (6-8 Main Street)

Five bays wide with a single modern storefront on the street level. The cornice has a plain parapet over a corbelled cross-motif frieze. Evenly spaced one-over-one sash are set between rock-faced lintels and sills. The storefront has large plate glass display windows flanking a flush center bay with single door; the central storefront bay and the area above and below the windows are sheathed with vertical planks. It originally housed the post office. An enclosed staircase is fixed to the west wall of the building.

15B. Sand and Pots Flower Shop (10-12 Main Street)

A 2-part, 5-bay facade with long, finger-like dentils on the cornice. Piers frame each section, leaving a narrow bay in the center which frames the walk-up entry at the street level. A pair of 1/1 windows mark the upper story of each half of the building. The present plastered brick facade may be original, and, along with the similar facade on 15D, gives the block a variety of surface textures. The typical period storefronts with plate glass display windows with transoms and recessed center entrances are largely intact, and are set under a single rosette-enriched steel I-beam lintel.

15C. State Liquor Store (14-16 Main Street)

A 2-part facade with separate storefronts set under each 4-bay section. The stone-trimmed corbelled cornice is the most elaborate on the block. Windows have rock-faced stone lintels and sills. The west storefront retains original turned posts and panelled storefront lintel. The east storefront has modern plank siding which extends up to frame the second story windows and a wood shingled mansard above the storefront. Both storefronts retain their recessed center entrances.

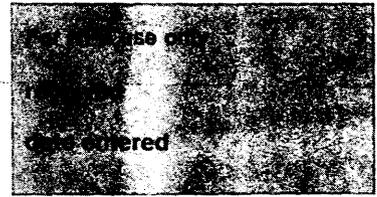
15D. Addison Buyers Club (18 Main Street)

Originally having a stucco-covered brick facade with denticulated cornice, similar to 15B, this building was damaged in a 1978 fire and the veneer was recently removed. (A decision as to whether or not to reconstruct the original facade had not been made at the time this nomination was prepared). Paired windows mark the second story. The storefront below retains its original recessed center entry configuration.

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15E. Country Insurance and Real Estate (20 Main Street)

The original brick facade was destroyed by fire in 1978 and replaced by "weathered" vertical board siding, modern windows, and a modern storefront with mansard roof. Non-contributing to the historic district in present form.

15F. Bristol Paint and Glass (22 Main Street)

A 4-bay facade which is almost identical in style and construction to 15G beside it. The wide, three-part cornice is extensively corbelled along the top, with long, stone-trimmed corbelled brackets extending down to a single projecting course in the architrave position, and round attic windows set in the frieze. Windows are evenly-spaced one-over-one sash with rock-faced stone lintels and sills. The storefront retains a recessed center entry flanked by plate glass display windows with (blind) transoms.

15G. Kountry Kupboard - Poor Richard's (24-26 Main Street)

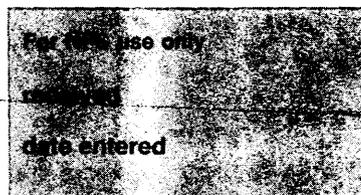
A 5-bay facade which is identical to 15F beside it, except that it is half again as wide, has two separate storefronts, and the second story windows are at a slightly lower level and are more widely spaced. The storefronts have been substantially altered. Along the east wall are three second story windows with one-over-one sash set under heavy brick flat arches.

16. Joe's Auto Body, 1930

An excellent example of an early service station in unaltered condition. The style is a refined Colonial Revival, characterized chiefly by the use of attenuated pilasters supporting entablatures as surrounds for all the entries, in a motif reminiscent of the Federal style. Built of clapboards on a one-story frame in three parts: the gabled east section, housing the office, has a central door framed by display windows with muntined transoms; the flat-roofed central section has two garage bays in front; and the slightly taller flat-roofed west section has a single garage bay. Six-over-six sash, molded cornices, and pedimented gables are other Colonial Revival design elements.

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The development of the present historic district closely paralleled the growth of industry in Bristol. Maps and photographs show that as late as 1870 the commercial center included about a score of small wood frame shops and stores, but no large commercial blocks to speak of. As the casket and other industries grew in the 1870's and 1880's, merchants erected a half dozen large buildings to house the village's expanding retail and service trade. These new blocks were all constructed of wood in stylish vernacular interpretations of the Italianate Revival. They displayed elaborate bracketed cornices and other typical period ornament. In just a few years they transformed Bristol's central business district and gave it much of its present character. Although a number of these buildings, including the two largest, were later lost to fire, some excellent examples of the type survive (see #1, 6, 7, 9, 10). The streetscape on the south side of Main Street (#1-10) appears today much as it did in 1890. The village's new-found prosperity also manifested itself in the construction of a large, stylish municipal building (#14) in 1884. This brick Queen Anne/Romanesque Revival style edifice is still a village landmark.

Since the 1890's nearly all new construction in the historic district has been in the aftermath of a fire. In 1898 the original Union Block burned and was immediately rebuilt in its present (#15) brick-veneered form. In 1914 the Farr-Drake Block burned and was replaced by the present Deer Leap (#11) and Lathrop (#13) Blocks, which continued the trend of local merchants to eschew all-wood construction in favor of more fire-proof brick structures.. In 1924 another fire destroyed the old Cyclone grist mill and a portion of the Patterson Block (#9); the present Kilbourne Mill, an unusually late example of a 19th century grist mill, was erected that year, and the First National Bank of Bristol rebuilt its quarters in the Patterson Block with a new Classical Revival style brick facade (#8). When another larger Italianate commercial block burned in 1929, it was replaced the following year by a stylish Colonial Revival service station (#16). These later structures, all erected in the wake of fires, changed the district's complexion from one of elaborate wood facades to include a mixture of more austere brick facades, but in general they maintained the form and character of the village's commercial streetscapes.

Today, the Bristol Downtown Historic District stands as an excellent example of a small town commercial center which reflects in its architecture the evolution of the village from an early 19th century market town to a prosperous late 19th century manufacturing center. Few modern intrusions mar the late 19th century character of the District, and efforts are now underway to restore both the economic vitality and historic fabric of the downtown.

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Dike, Kenneth W., et al, ed., History of Bristol, Vermont, 1762-1980, 3rd ed. (Bristol, 1981).

Norris, George E., Birdseye View of Bristol, Vermont (Brockton, Massachusetts, 1889) (map).

Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, New York, NY., Insurance maps of Bristol, Vermont, for years 1885, 1895, 1927, in possession of Wilbur Collection of Vermontiana, Bailey-Howe Library, University of Vermont.

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along the east property line of #1 to a Point B, located at the southeast corner of property #1. From Point B, the boundary runs southwesterly along the rear property lines of #1-5 to a Point C, located at the southwest corner of property #5. Thence the boundary runs north along the west property line of #5 to a Point D, located at the southwest corner of property #9. The boundary thence runs west along the rear (south) property lines of #'s 10 and 11 to Point E, located at the southwest corner of property #11. The boundary thence proceeds along the rear (south) property lines of #'s 12 and 13 to Point F, located at the east curb of River Street. From Point F, the district boundary crosses River Street to a Point G, located at the southeast corner of property #14. Thence the boundary continues in a westerly direction along the south property line of said property to a Point H, located at the southwest corner of said property. The boundary thence runs north along the west property line of said property to a Point I, located at the southern curb of West Street and the northwest corner of property #14. Thence the boundary runs easterly along said curb to Point J, located at the intersection of the western curblines of River Street. Thence the boundary proceeds in a southeasterly direction across River Street to a Point K, located at the intersection of the southern curb of Main Street and the western curb of River Street. The boundary thence continues east along the south curb of Main Street to a Point L, located at the intersection of a southerly extension of the west property line of #15. Thence the boundary continues north along said extension and said property line to Point M, located at the northwest corner of said property. Thence the boundary continues east along the rear (north) property line of #15 and an easterly extension thereof, passing to the north of #16, to Point A, the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the Bristol Downtown Historic District encompasses all of the village's core historic commercial properties; it excludes a number of modern commercial buildings lying to the west and north. To the east, beyond the District boundary, Main Street changes from commercial to residential in character. To the south is a large bluff overlooking the New Haven River. At the west end of the district, River Street, which descends the bluff to the site of the old Bristol Manufacturing Company is lined with residential structures and an extensively altered commercial property.



BRISTOL DOWNTOWN
HISTORIC DISTRICT

Bristol, Vermont

KEY

District Boundary

⊗
Non-contributing
Structure

Not drawn to scale

