

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

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

For HCERS use only
received MAY 28 1982
date entered JUN 28 1982

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

1. Name

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

2. Location

street & number 21-65 Church Street; 667-1009 Main Street;
24-28 North Street; 20-22 Walnut Street N/A not for publication
city, town Willimantic N/A vicinity of 2nd congressional district
state Connecticut code 09 county Windham code 015

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple (See continuation sheet)
street & number " " "
city, town " N/A vicinity of " state "

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Windham Town Hall
street & number 979 Main Street
city, town Willimantic state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places Willimantic Footbridge-National Register of Historic Places
has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1982 federal state county local
depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission
city, town Hartford state CT
NR Eligible: Old Post Office, Windham Town Hall

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Main Street National Register District is comprised of the properties lining both sides of Main Street in the Central Business District of Willimantic. The district is bounded to the west by Bridge Street, and to the south by the railroad tracks of the Penn Central line. To the east, the district is bounded by Church Street south of Main Street and by the First Baptist Church north of Main Street. The northern boundary follows the rear property lines on the north side of Main Street, except where it extends north on Church and North and Walnut Streets to include several period buildings. The boundary excludes several privately-owned parking lots behind Main Street between North and Bank Streets. The boundaries have been drawn to focus on the 19th century commercial development of Main Street as the major business and trading center for the city.

The district is approximately 21 acres in size and contains 62 buildings. Also included is the Willimantic Footbridge (NR, 4-19-79) at the southeast corner of the district.

Approaching the district from the west, there is a gentle rise of 7' from Bridge Street to High Street. Grade is level along Main Street to Bank Street. It then drops off 20' down a fairly steep hill between Bank and Church Streets, where it again levels off. The southern boundary at the railroad tracks is 20' - 25' lower in grade than Main Street. The buildings on the south side of Main Street are built into the steep hill, with basements and sub-basements accessible at grade from the rear. There are several old stone retaining walls, and the area has become overgrown with trees. An unpaved alley runs along the railroad track for the full length of the district.

The street pattern in the district is part of a larger pattern which extends to the north. Main Street was once part of the old Windham Turnpike and was a major east-west route between Windham and the Willimantic mill area east of the district. Cross streets run perpendicular to Main Street in a regular grid pattern and were originally developed for residential or lower-grade commercial uses.

The district is comprised primarily of late 19th century, three and four-story commercial blocks. Many of the buildings are substantial brick blocks with Italianate or Queen Anne details. Others are of wood-frame construction, and several feature pressed tin facade decoration. There is a mixture of free-standing structures and groups of buildings with shared party-walls. Interspersed with these commercial blocks are several mid-19th century residential properties, converted to commercial storefronts at ground level. Over the years, a number of remodellings have occurred and several new infill buildings have been built which are incompatible with the district in their scale, design or use of modern materials. Public improvements in the district include new brick sidewalks and trees. These investments, combined with the City's facade grant program, are having a major impact on returning many of the later inappropriate storefronts to their original Victorian character.

Two major public buildings are located near the western edge of the district. The Windham Town Hall (Fig. 12) was designed by Bridgeport architect Warren Briggs and was completed in 1896. This prominent brick structure has a cross-axial plan and features both Georgian Revival and Romanesque design influences. The central three-bay pavilion of the nine-bay facade is crowned by a pediment and contains a recessed entrance en-framed by Classical columns and approached from a grand staircase with stone balustrades.

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Continuation sheet

Item number 4

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List of Property Owners

<u>Street and No.</u>	<u>Owner's Name and Address</u>	<u>Contribution to Historical/ Architectural Themes</u>	<u>Map Identification No.</u>
Church Street 21-25	Mr. Paul Heller 14 Oakwood Drive Windham Center, CT 06280	C	1
31-45	Mr. Waldon Melo 202 Lake Road Columbia, CT and Mr. Omar H. Shepard Jr. Route 87 Columbia, CT 06237	C	2
off street between 45,55	Mr. Robert E. Casey 323A Oakridge Apts. Willimantic, CT 06226	C	3
55-65	Mr. Waldon Melo 202 Lake Road Columbia, CT 06237	C	4
Main Street 667	Mr. Harold Nichols Chairman, Board of Trustees of First Baptist Church Sanitarium Road South Windham, Ct 06266	C	5
679	Willimantic Savings and Loan Co. 679 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	N	6
699	Mr. Arthur Loiselle 175 Walnut Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	7
	Mr. George Fraser, Jr. 88 Roanoak Avenue Willimantic, CT 06226		
	Mr. Earl McSweeney 160 Windham Street Willimantic, CT 06226		

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Street and No.	Owner's Name and Address	Contribution to Historical/ Architectural Themes	Map Identification No.
711-15	Margaret Bruce 13 Atlantic Avenue Groton Long Point, CT 06340	C	8
721	Margaret Bruce 13 Atlantic Avenue Groton Long Point, CT 06340	N	9
725	Mrs. Dorothy Brown 115 Bolivia Street Willimantic, CT	C	10
33	Mr. Adam Todd Ravine Road Mansfield, CT 06268	N	11
Footbridge at Railroad St.	City of Willimantic Windham Town Hall 979 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	12
738	Dr. Edwin Brainerd 738 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	13
745	Mr. Richard Nassiff 325 Prospect Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	14
746	Mr. Raymond Medeiros Church Road Lebanon, CT 06249	C	15
750	Mr. Joseph Tubridy 298 Walnut Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	16
756	Mr. I. Mayo Cohen 303 North Street Willimantic, CT 06226	N	17
757	Mr. Jackson Sumner Windham Center, CT 06280	N	18

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Street and No.	Owner's Name and Address	Contribution to Historical/ Architectural Themes	Map Identification No.
760-68	Mr. Michael Zeising 264 Prospect Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	19
	Mr. Mark Zeising 71 Chestnut Street Willimantic, CT 06226		
776	Mr. Milton Johnson 99 Lewiston Avenue Willimantic, CT 06226	C	20
779	Connecticut Bank and Trust Co. Mr. Charles Poulin, Manager 318 Redwood Drive Manchester, CT 06040	N	21
786	Ms. Nancy Prague 104 Norwich Avenue Norwich, CT 06360	C	22
789	Mr. Sam Gordon 18 Willington Hill Road Mansfield, CT 06268	C	23
790	Mr. Henry Kucharski 384 Prospect Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	24
796	Mr. Henry Kucharski 384 Prospect Street Willimantic CT 06226	C	25
803	Mr. William Wilcox, President Willimantic Savings Institute 803 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	26
804	Mr. Walter Najduck Card Street Lebanon, CT 06249	C	27
819	Albert and Rose Riquier Lakeview Park Columbia, CT 06237	C	28

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822	Estate of Abraham Beller C/O Mr. Sidney Beller 35 Shoales Avenue Norwich, CT 06360	N	29
827-37	Business Manager Eastern Connecticut State College 83 Windham Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	30
832-40	YMCA of Willimantic 832-40 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	N	31
850-58	Salahuttin and Neriman Kardestuncer 146 Huntinglodge Road Storrs, CT 06268	N	32
851-3	Mary M. Fittabile 853 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	33
859	Mr. George Haddad 133 Prospect Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	34
860	Michael and Brenda Beattie 3 Eagle Court Storrs, CT 06268	C	35
866	Samick Enterprises C/O Mr. Samuel Gordon 18 Willington Hill Road Storrs, CT 06268	C	36
871	Willimantic Community Redevelopment Agency 54 North Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	37
872	Mr. Robert Haggerty Indian Hollow Road, RFD #2 Windham Center, CT 06280	C	38
873	Mrs. Rose Haddad 336 Valley Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	39

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877	Mrs. Rose Haddad 336 Valley Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	40
884-88	Dr. Vernon Mason 74 Pigeon Road Willimantic, CT 06226	N	41
893	Mr. Leo Santucci 74 Windham Street Willimantic, CT 06226	N	42
896-914	Buss and Ingram P.O. Box 379 Willimantic, CT 06226	C	43
901-7	City of Willimantic C/O Mayor John Lescoe Windham Town Hall 979 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	N	44
920	Mr. Robert P. Willis Chaplin, CT 06235	N	45
927	U.S. Postal Contractor's Inc. 19 Colonial Drive 1057 Trumbull Avenue Girard, Ohio 44420	N	46
931	Solomon and Elinor Tilles 419 Choffeeville Road Mainsfield, CT 06250	C	47
944	Mrs. Angeline Todaro C/O Mrs. A Shifrin 944 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	48
944 rear	Mr. Joel Anthony Cards Mill Road Columbia, CT 06237	C	49
948	Mrs. Evelyn P. Lonegan 128 Windham Street Willimantic, CT 06226	N	50

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Street and No.	Owner's Name and Address	Contribution to Historical/ Architectural Themes	Map Identification No.
956-60	Mr. Andrew Mangano 105 South Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	51
967	U.S. Postal Service 967 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	52
972	Mrs. Arline Seaforth Mullen Hill Road Windham Center, CT 06280	N	53
980	Southern New England Telephone Co. Cemetery Road Willimantic, CT 06226	N	54
at Bridge Street	Doris K. and Dorothy E. Brown 115 Bolivia Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	55
979	Mayor John Lescoe City of Willimantic 979 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	56
1003	Hall and Bill Printing Co. 1003 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	57
1009	Joseph and Lucy Handfield 127 Spring Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	58
North Street 24	Mr. George Haddad 133 Prospect Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	59
28	Mr. George Haddad 133 Prospect Street Willimantic, CT 06226	C	60
Walnut Street 20-22	Mr. Kenneth Shane Oak Hill Drive Willimantic, CT 06226	C	61

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Street and No.	Owner's Name and Address	Contribution to Historical/ Architectural Themes	Map Identification No.
32	Captain June Pasquali Salvation Army of America P.O. Box 595 Willimantic, CT 06226	C	62
<u>Vacant Lots</u>			
947 Main Street	Willimantic Savings and Loan Co. 679 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226	N	63
Main Street at Railroad Street	Willimantic Community Redevelopment Agency 54 North Street Willimantic, CT 06226	N	64,65

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The building sits on a raised foundation of ashlar brownstone. Its focal point is the high copper clock tower with cupola which rises from the center of the hipped roof structure. A one-story brick wing was added in 1955 at basement level along the west elevation.

Directly east of the Town Hall is the Old Post Office (Fig.11), completed in 1911. The Neo-Classical Revival structure is faced in limestone and has a central pedimented pavilion enframing the main entrance. The tall narrow windows with transoms are set in recessed panels with projecting keystones. The building is capped by a modillioned cornice and a panelled limestone parapet.

Several of the district's oldest structures were built c. 1825 by the Windham Manufacturing Company, later to become the Windham and Smithville Manufacturing Company. Located at the southwest edge of the district, the company store (Fig. 14) and rowhouse (Fig. 15) are built of coursed ashlar granite, with alternating wide and narrow courses of light and dark stone. The storehouse has a gable roof and is four bays deep and three bays wide. The center bay openings of the south elevation are large loading windows which face directly onto the Penn Central tracks. The rowhouse continues to be used in a residential function. It is two stories high with a partially raised basement and entrances in the center bay and the third bay from each end. Windows are now mostly six-over-one double-hung sash. The building has a gently pitched ridge roof with decorative wood brackets beneath the eaves of the end elevations.

The building at #24 Church Street and the Haran Block are typical of the brick commercial blocks in the district. The former (Fig. 13) is three stories and six bays wide with a high parapet comprised of two corbelled bands. The segmental-arched windows of the upper stories are decorated with granite impost, keystones and sills. Terra cotta tiles are laid in courses at the impost level and between the second and third stories. Original cast-iron columns are integrated into the period storefront designs. In the Haran Block of 1890, (Fig. 10) the five-bay facade has a corbelled parapet with large corbels between each bay alternating with smaller corbel bands. Granite is used for the keystones, impost and tabbed sills on the upper stories and as a lintel above the storefronts. A variety of terra cotta tiles are inlaid to form patterned courses on the facade, at floor, sill, sash and impost levels and between the large corbels of the cornice. The original storefronts are largely intact, concealed behind later wood and metal coverings.

Another prominent structure is Hayden's Marble Front Block of 1879 (Fig. 9). The five-bay, two-story facade is actually faced in limestone but was designed to give the appearance of marble. This building reflects Renaissance Revival influences in its balustraded cornice and large segmental-arched windows, each a full bay wide, at the second story. Except for storefront alterations, the building retains its prominence among the Main Street commercial structures.

Directly west of Hayden's Block is the Willimantic Savings Institute (Fig. 9). The original 1870 Victorian Gothic facade was replaced in the 1920's by the present Modernistic design. Faced in limestone, the six bays of the facade are separated by fluted pilasters capped with abstract decoration, all of which maintain the single plane of the facade.

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Further east on Main Street is the recently renovated Nassiff's Block (Fig. 8), formerly the F.W. Woolworth Block. This building has a fine Art Deco facade, three bays wide with a strong horizontal emphasis. The second story windows are capped by fluted spandrels which break the cornice in a parapet effect. Narrow bands of abstract pattern form courses above and below the second story.

The Murray Building of 1894 (Fig. 6) occupies a highly visible site at the corner of Main and Church Streets. The corner entrance bay capped by a gable strongly marks the eastern edge of this commercial block. The three-story structure is five bays wide and eight bays deep. The Main Street facade features large rectangular windows with multi-light transoms at the second story and paired one-over-one windows in each bay of the third story. Recessed panels and masonry piers between alternating bays add to the decorative relief of the design.

A highlight of the south side of Main Street is the restored facade of the Sadd Block (Fig. 1). This tall narrow building features a fanciful pressed tin facade of panelled piers, arched fans above the windows, floral patterned spandrels and a frieze of connecting festoons. The multi-tonal treatment accentuates the ornateness of the facade design. The two-story portion of the Sadd Block facade (Fig. 3) is faced in clapboards with two paired one-over-one windows at the second story. A simple bracketed cornice and panelled pilasters frame the facade.

The three-story Chapman Block (Fig. 4) is ten bays wide and is crowned by a fine corbelled cornice. The segmental-arched windows of the second story and the round-headed third story windows are each enframed by corbelled hoods. The simple lines and consistent pattern of the bays create a strong rhythmic element in the streetscape.

The eastern edge of the district is marked by the spire of the First Baptist Church (Fig. 5). Of Italianate design, this wood-frame structure is capped by an octagonal tower with round-arched vents in the four principal faces. The three-bays of the facade are framed by ornate Italianate pilasters. Within each bay is a recessed two-story round-arched inset, within which pairs of tall round-arched windows are placed above paired rectangular windows. The center entrance is surmounted by a richly modelled pediment supported on carved brackets. The side and rear elevations have been covered in aluminum siding, with minimal impact on the original design.

Later development is concentrated in the western portion of the district. These intrusions include the library (Fig. 17) and post office, Anchor Pharmacy, Beller Block, YMCA (Fig. 16), Lonagan Block, 893, 920 and 980 Main Street (Fig. 18) and the Connecticut Bank and Trust Company. The majority of structures, however, retain their original appearance with only minor alterations. Collectively, they contribute to the cohesive character and architectural integrity of this late nineteenth century business and trading center.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates N/A Builder/Architect multiple (See Item 7)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Main Street National Register District possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The district is associated with commercial developments which made a direct contribution to the nineteenth century development of the nation; it is associated with the lives of persons significant in the development of the city; and it embodies distinctive characteristics of the type, period and methods of construction typical of nineteenth century industrial communities of Windham County and the east-central Connecticut region.

The Main Street National Register District gains its historical significance from its role as a major railroading and trade center for the surrounding region during the mid-to late nineteenth century. The village of Willimantic Falls, however, dates back to 1706, the year that the first sawmill and gristmill were built at the junction of the Natchaug and Willimantic Rivers. The name "Willimantic" is an Indian word meaning "Land of the Swift Running Waters," appropriately selected to denote the 90-foot drop in the river between the town's western edge and its junction with the Natchaug. In 1822, water rights were purchased by pioneer cotton spinner Percy O. Richmond, a factor which was crucial to the development of Willimantic Falls as a manufacturing village. Within the next five years, Richmond's initiative was followed by others and there were soon four cotton mills operating in the village. These included the mill of the Jillson brothers, William, Asa and Seth, and the Windham Cotton Manufacturing Company established by Matthew Watson and Aranah Tingley of Providence. By 1836, there were six mills. The largest was the Windham Company mill, situated along the river near Bridge Street, while the others were further east.

Main Street at this time served as the main route between the two manufacturing villages and was edged by a scattering of small houses. Main Street had been laid out as early as 1707 and in 1799 was included as part of the Windham Turnpike. In 1826, local residents petitioned for better roads and bridges. Main Street was widened soon thereafter, and houses and shops began to dot its edges.

The arrival of the railroad in 1849 played a vital role in the commercial development of Main Street. First came the New London, Willimantic and Palmer line (later the New London Northern), then in 1853 the Hartford, Providence and Fishkill route. In 1872 the Boston, Hartford and Erie Railroad completed a line between Putnam and Willimantic, and the New Haven, Middletown and Willimantic (Air Line) also began operation. These four railroad lines, conveniently located directly south of Main Street and near the cotton mills, transformed Willimantic into one of the most important and convenient railroad centers in the country. The railroads quickly replaced the stagecoach trade, and dramatically increased the flow of goods and passengers in and out of the village.

Coinciding with this development was the founding in 1854 of the Willimantic Linen Company by Austin Dunham and a group of Hartford capitalists to manufacture linen, napkins and shoe threads. A shortage of flax due to the Crimean War of 1854 forced the company to develop new technologies for the making of fine threads. In 1876, the highest award of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition was awarded to the Willimantic

9. Major Bibliographical References

Crofit, Florence S.M., Guide to the History and Historic Sites of Connecticut, Vol.2, New Haven: Yale Press (1937).

Larned, Ellen P., History of Windham County, Connecticut, Vol.2, Chester, CT: Pequot Press (1976).

Willimantic Chronicle Newspapers, Photograph Collection

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 21 acres

Quadrangle name Willimantic, CT

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>2</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>
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D	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>2</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>
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E	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>
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F	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>
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G	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>
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H	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached sheet.

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

state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
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state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
-------	-----	------	-----	--------	-----	------	-----

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margo B. Webber, Preservation Planner

organization Anderson Notter Finegold Inc.

date August, 1980

street & number 77 North Washington Street

telephone (617) 227-9272

city or town Boston,

state Massachusetts 02114

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date May 21, 1982

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the National Register date 6/28/82

for

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

JUN 28 1982

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Linen Company. Production volumes increased dramatically over the next two decades. The company merged with the American Thread Company in 1898 and was renamed the Willimantic Thread Company. It continued to serve as the largest local industry and employer for many years.

The combined effect of the railroads and the Willimantic Linen Company was to create a bustling trade and business district along Main Street from Bridge Street east to Union Street. Many of the earlier wood-frame residences and shops were replaced by substantial commercial blocks after 1870. These blocks were constructed to take advantage of the proximity to the local mills and the railyards. By 1900, Main Street contained an impressive array of commercial structures.

These buildings embody distinctive characteristics of nineteenth century stylistic trends, and reflect the transition from residential to commercial uses. Today, the streetscape retains much of its late nineteenth century character. Also still intact are several Greek Revival residences from Main Street's early development, later converted to commercial uses in recognition of the area's changing role. The majority of buildings, however, are three and four-story structures, of brick or wood, with detailing of the Italianate and Victorian era styles. They form a cohesive grouping of buildings, consistent in massing, scale, materials and stylistic details. Major buildings were constructed by prominent local businessmen who were important figures in the growth and development of the community.

The Windham Savings Institute, completed in 1870, was the first of the major business blocks to be constructed on Main Street. The Victorian Gothic design featured lancet-arched storefronts and polychrome stone trim. It was remodelled in the 1920's to its present Moderne design. The Bank was founded in 1842 with Oliver Kingsley as its first president. Also housed in the building since 1879 was the Windham National Bank, the oldest bank in the county, having been organized in 1832. This building was also the first home of the Willimantic Normal School in the 1890's and later housed the library, Order of Elks and the Willimantic Women's Club in its upper floors.

On the site of the present Connecticut Bank and Trust Company stood the United Bank Building, a handsome Queen Anne structure built in 1885 to house the First National and Dime Savings Banks. The latter was organized in 1872 with Silas F. Loomer and O.H.K. Risley its first officers. The First National Bank, incorporated in 1878, was the youngest of Willimantic's financial institutions. W.C. Jillson served as its first president, succeeded by Ansel Arnold. A.T. Fowler and O.H.K. Risley served as vice president and cashier.

Among the most prominent of the commercial blocks was Hayden's Marble Front Block. It was built by Whiting Hayden in 1879. Hayden had previously served as a manager for the Windham and Smithville Company for many years. The Hayden Block housed the town offices and courtroom on its upper floor until 1896. The Murray Building was completed in 1894 by Hugh C. Murray to house the Boston Store. This was the first large-scale department store in Willimantic and in a sense marked its coming of age as a retail center. The Boston Store was founded by Murray, who had first gained success as a dry goods proprietor in a small shop in the Card Building on Main Street. The

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Chapman Block was constructed in 1876 by Ansel Arnold, a local pioneer in the wholesale grain business. Arnold, a founder and president of the First National Bank, was joined by Horace M. Chapman as a partner in the business from 1877-93. For many years the Chapman Block also housed the music store of A.C. Andrews. Other major commercial blocks included the Chronicle Building on Church Street and the Haran Block, put up in 1890 by Thomas Haran. The Fuller Block housed the community's oldest drug store, for many years owned by F.M. Wilson.

As Willimantic became a busy trade center, demands were created for hotel and cultural facilities. In 1886 S.G. Hooker opened the Hooker Hotel. It provided 100 fashionable hotel rooms and was a well-known stopping point for travellers. At the northeast corner of Church Street stood the Turner Block which housed the Windham Hotel, managed by proprietor Samuel H. Clark. It provided fifty rooms, some with private baths, a dining room and a large sample room for commercial travelers. A community fund-raising effort in the 1920's resulted in the construction of the Nathan Hale Hotel to meet a still-growing demand for hotel rooms. The hotel was then leased to a local proprietor although the City maintained ownership.

Franklin Hall was Willimantic's first public meeting hall. The present structure, built to replace the 1868 structure which burned, housed a public hall on its upper floor where theatrical performances, dances, school graduation and other public functions were held. The Loomer Opera House, a grand Second Empire structure designed by F.H. Kimball of New York, was built for Silas F. Loomer to serve as Willimantic's new theatrical and entertainment center. It stood at the northwest corner of Main and North Streets, on the site where Nassiff's was later built. The building contained shops, offices and society halls but its highlight was the 1,100-seat opera hall, with a 40-foot deep stage, a 35-foot proscenium opening, modern lighting, ventilation and acoustics. It was considered locally to be among the finest of New England theaters. In the 1920's, several movie theaters were built in the district. These included the Gem Theater, on the site of YMCA, and the Capitol Theater. The Capitol was the largest and most popular theater in downtown Willimantic. Another local landmark was the European Block at the corner of Main and Railroad Streets. This 2-1/2 story Italianate structure featured a gable fronting Main Street, round-headed shuttered windows and quoined corners. It housed the drugstore of John T. Baker. The Maverick Steam Laundry at 828 Main Street was for many years the only modern laundry in Windham County.

Growth of the commercial district prompted numerous public improvements as the borough grew into a full-fledged city. The first water pipe was laid in 1853, and by 1873 several of the mill owners agreed to pump water from the river up to Main Street and adjoining residential areas in return for an abatement of their taxes. In 1887, electricity was provided for lights and power. In the same years, a Board of Trade was formed to promote trade, aid in the development of mercantile and manufacturing interests and improve transportation facilities. Fifty members paid \$3 annual dues. In 1900 the Board of Trade sought the erection of a footbridge across the Willimantic River, an objective successfully accomplished by the City in 1906. The width of the footbridge was specifically designed to be wide enough to carry the hand-drawn fire pumps of the volunteer fire department. In 1902, under the director of Mayor W.D. Grant, the Willimantic Traction Company built the first trolley lines which ran from the railroad crossing just southeast of the district to Baltic, Norwich and New London. In 1904,

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tracks were laid on Main Street for the trolley line connecting to Coventry. During this period, sidewalks of brick or wood were first laid, and in 1913, Main Street was first paved in macadam.

Municipal facilities also relocated from Windham Center to Willimantic during the nineteenth century, in recognition of the district's growing importance as the center for business and governmental affairs. The Old Town Hall was located on Church Street in the building which later housed the Amvets. The first jail was located in the rear of the Holmes Block in a one-story brick wing which still retains the tiny arched cell windows along its north elevation. In 1896, the Town occupied its new building, re-locating its offices from the upper story of the Hayden Block. The new Windham Town Hall was completed three years after Willimantic received its city charter in 1893. Its bold architectural statement reflects the proud and self-confident image of the community. The local post office had many homes, beginning in 1825 when it was located in the Hebard Tavern. It later was housed in the Revere House Hotel on North Street and in the Jordan Building (676 Main Street) before moving to its own building, the Old Post Office, in 1911. This building was constructed under James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, and is a handsome example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture.

At the eastern edge of the district stands the First Baptist Church. This fine Italianate landmark was built to house one of the community's growing religious groups. The Baptist Church was established in 1827 with twenty members. Reverend Chester Tilden served as its first pastor until 1830. The first church was located on this site until 1858, when it was removed for replacement by the present structure. During its prime years, the district contained two other churches, the First Methodist Church, built in 1829 on the site of the later Atwood Block, and the First Congregational Church of 1827, remodelled in 1893 as the Melony Block across from the Hooker Hotel, where the Beller Block now stands.

The district also contains two of the last remaining structures of the Windham Cotton Manufacturing Company. The small Greek Revival structures are built of coursed ashlar granite and originally served as the company's store and boarding house. Today they serve as reminders of the days in the 1830's when the Windham Cotton Manufacturing Company, which stood just south and west of the district, was Willimantic's largest cotton mill. This company was later acquired by the Smithville Manufacturing Company.

The architectural quality of the district as a whole and of many of its individual components reflects the importance of Main Street as a business and trading center in the historical development of Willimantic. The district retains its historical integrity and is largely intact. The combination of early residential and commercial blocks forms a strong and relatively cohesive streetscape. Its distinctive sense of time and place is a reflection of its nineteenth century history and development.

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

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

For HCERS use only

received

date entered JUN 28 1982

Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

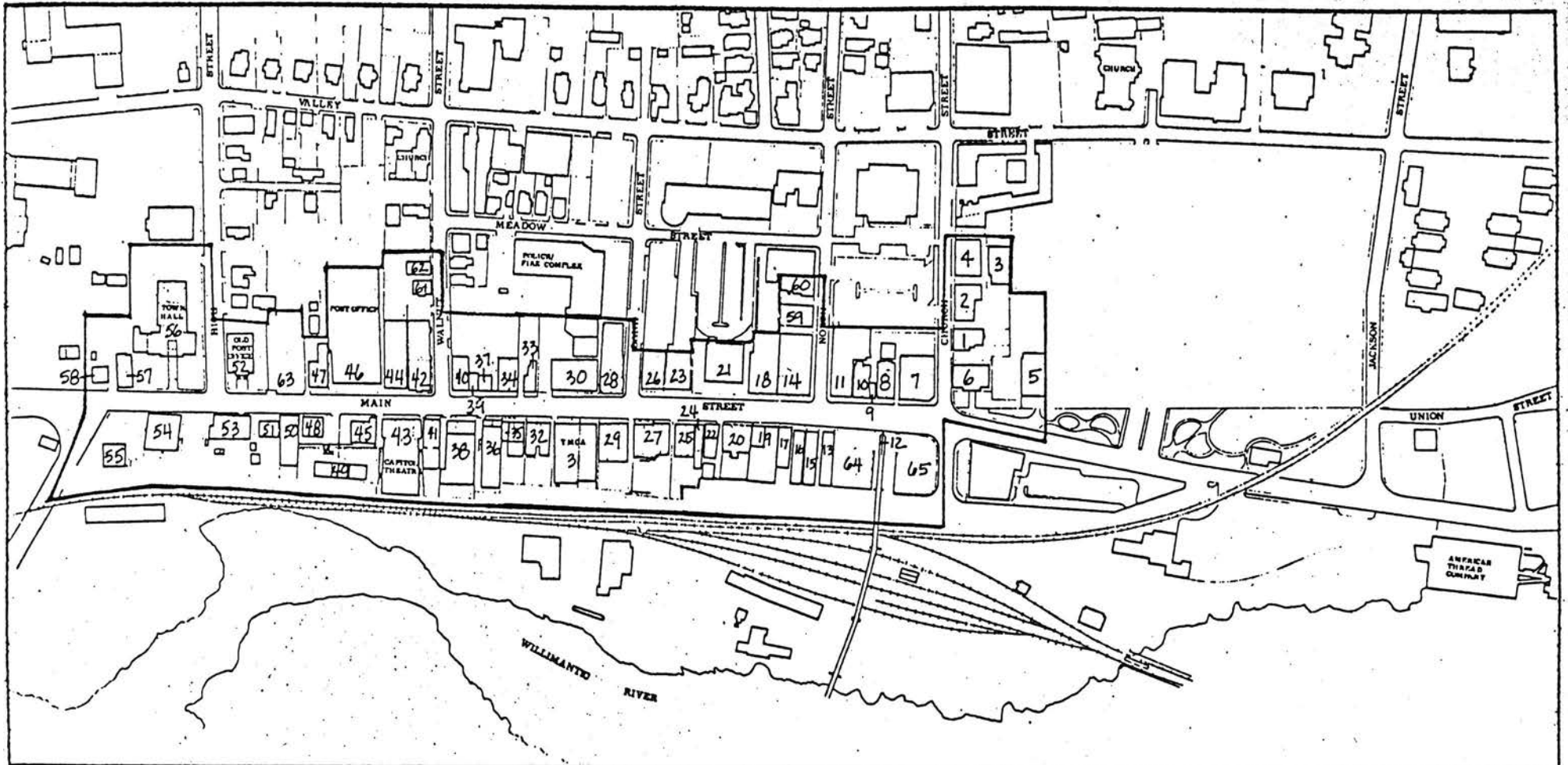
Beginning at a point at the centerline of Bridge Street at the southwest corner of the district, the southern boundary follows the northern edge of the property of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company to the centerline of Church Street; then north on Church Street to the centerline of Main Street; then east on Main Street to the eastern boundary of the First Baptist Church property; then following this property line north approximately 379 feet to the rear boundary of parcel 89/3A; then west along the northern boundary of parcel 89/3A to the rear property line of #31 Church Street; then north continuing along the rear property line of parcel 12 (Willimantic Coal and Lumber Co.) to the northern boundary line of #55 Church Street; then west to the center of Church Street and south to the rear property line of #699 Main Street. The northern boundary proceeds west along the rear property lines of the properties facing on Main Street to the centerline of North Street; then proceeding north to the northern boundary of #28 North Street; west along said line to the rear property line of said property; then south along west boundary to the rear property line of #745 Main Street; then west along the rear building walls of the north side of Main Street to the centerline of Bank Street; then north on Bank Street to the rear property line of #819 Main Street; then west along rear property lines of parcels on the north side of Main Street to the centerline of Walnut Street; then north to the northern property line of #32 Walnut Street; then west along said line to rear property line of said property and south to rear property line of #927 Main Street; then west along said line and continuing along rear property lines of parcels on the north side of Main Street to centerline of High Street; then north to rear property line of #979 Main Street; then west along said line to rear property lines of #1103 and #1109 Main Street; then south along western boundary of #1009 Main Street to centerline of Bridge Street; then proceeding south on Bridge Street to the northern boundary of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company property.

Item #9 (cont.)Willimantic Chronicle, Bicentennial Edition, September 8, 1967.Willimantic Journal, Souvenir Edition, H.P. Donlan, ed., 1896.

Personal interviews with:

Society.

Reference: Mrs. Lucy Crosby, Publisher, Willimantic Chronicle, Board of Directors Windham Historical Society.
Miss Florence Grant, Lifetime resident of Willimantic.
Mrs. Edmund J. Hurley, Lifelong Willimantic resident of 96 years.



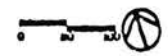
WILLIMANTIC DOWNTOWN STUDY

WILLIMANTIC REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

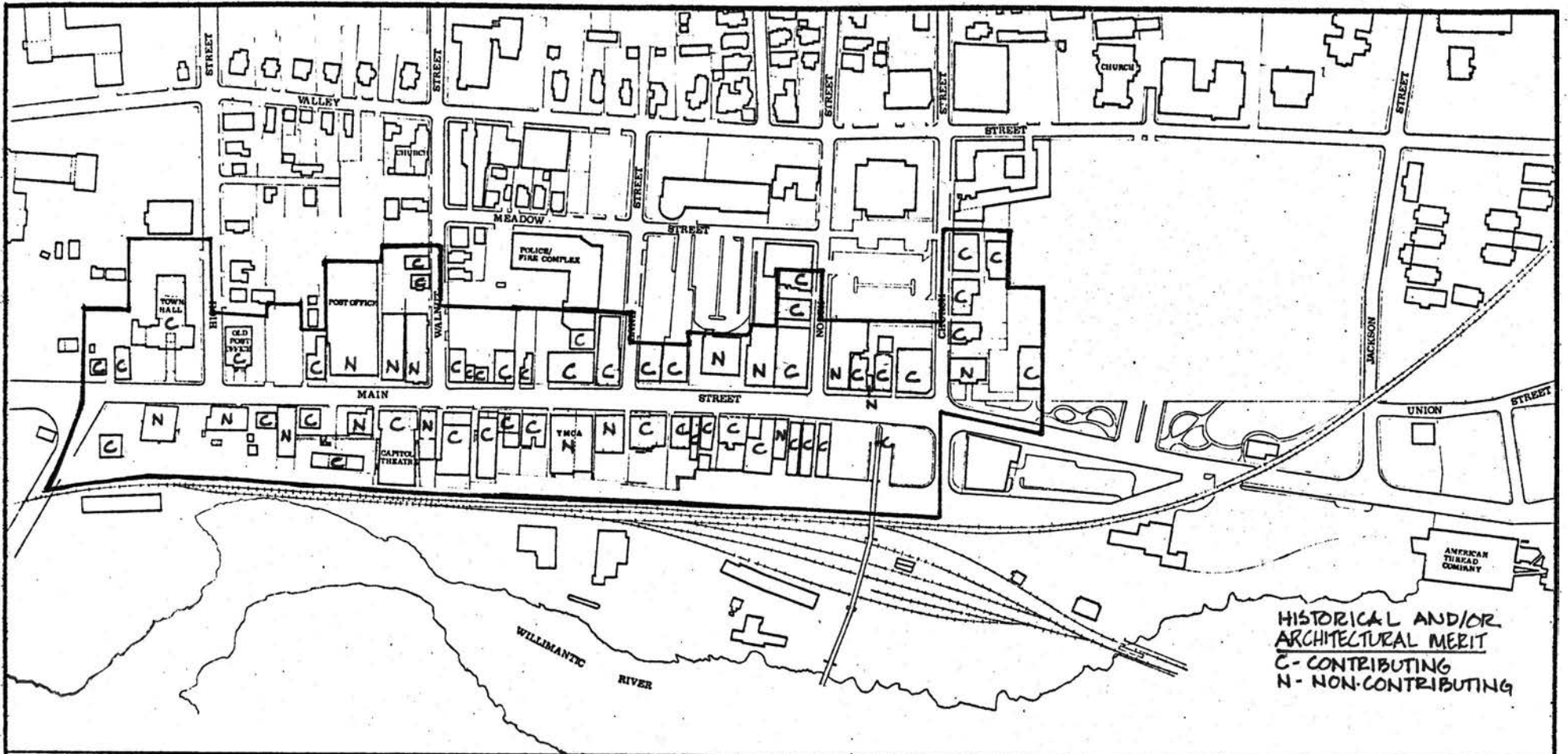
FEBRUARY 1980



MAIN STREET NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT
INDEX TO LIST OF PROPERTY OWNERS



ANDERSON NOTTER FINEGOLD INC.
Architects and Preservation Planners



WILLIMANTIC DOWNTOWN STUDY

WILLIMANTIC REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

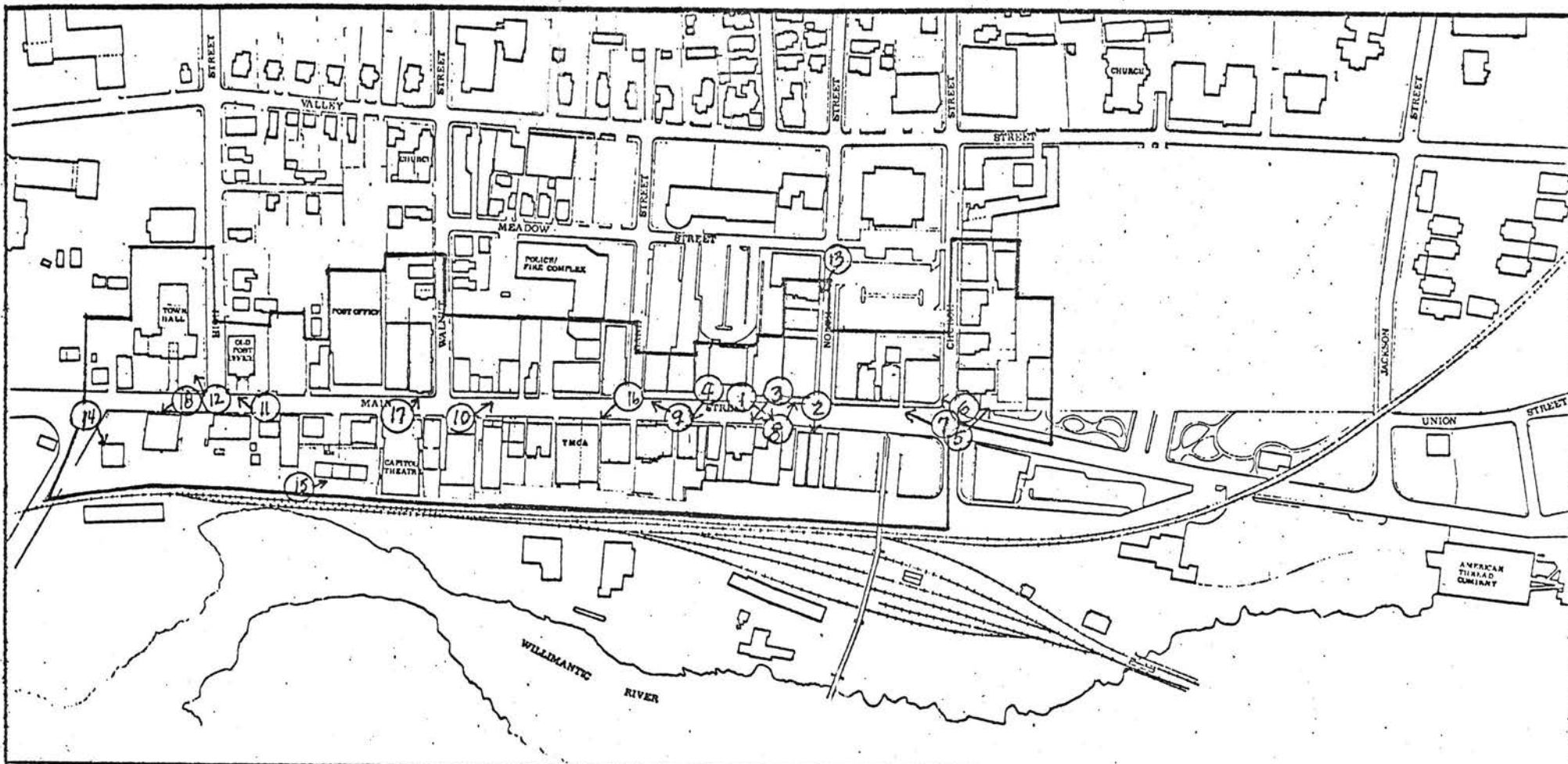
FEBRUARY 1980



MAIN STREET NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT
BUILDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO DISTRICT'S SIGNIFICANCE



ANDERSON NOTTER FINEGOLD INC.
Architects and Preservation Planners



WILLIMANTIC DOWNTOWN STUDY

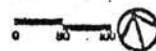
WILLIMANTIC REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

FEBRUARY 1980

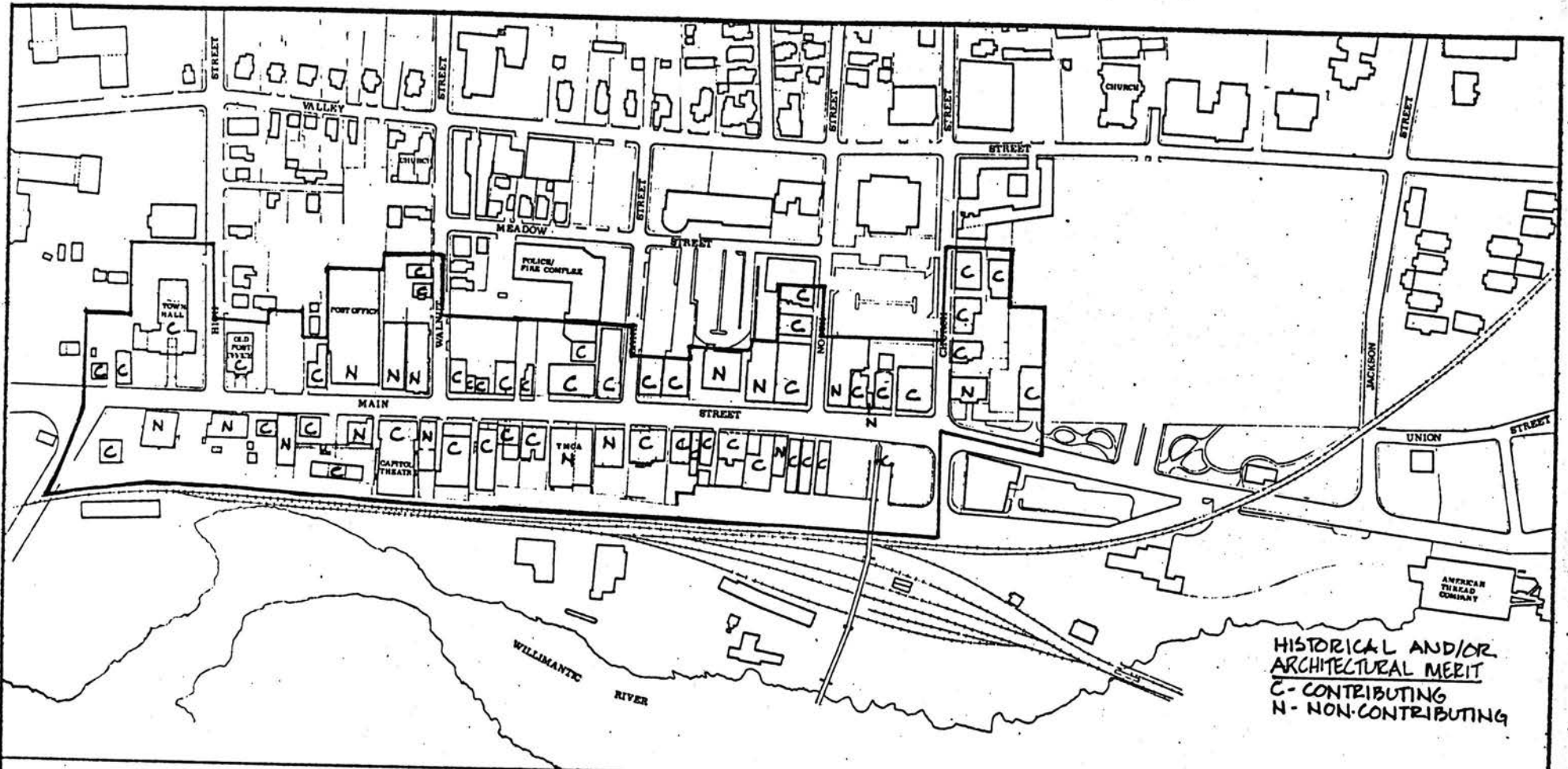


MAIN STREET NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT

PHOTO VIEW INDEX



ANDERSON NOTTER FINEGOLD INC.
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HISTORICAL AND/OR
ARCHITECTURAL MERIT
C - CONTRIBUTING
N - NON-CONTRIBUTING

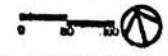
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WILLIMANTIC REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

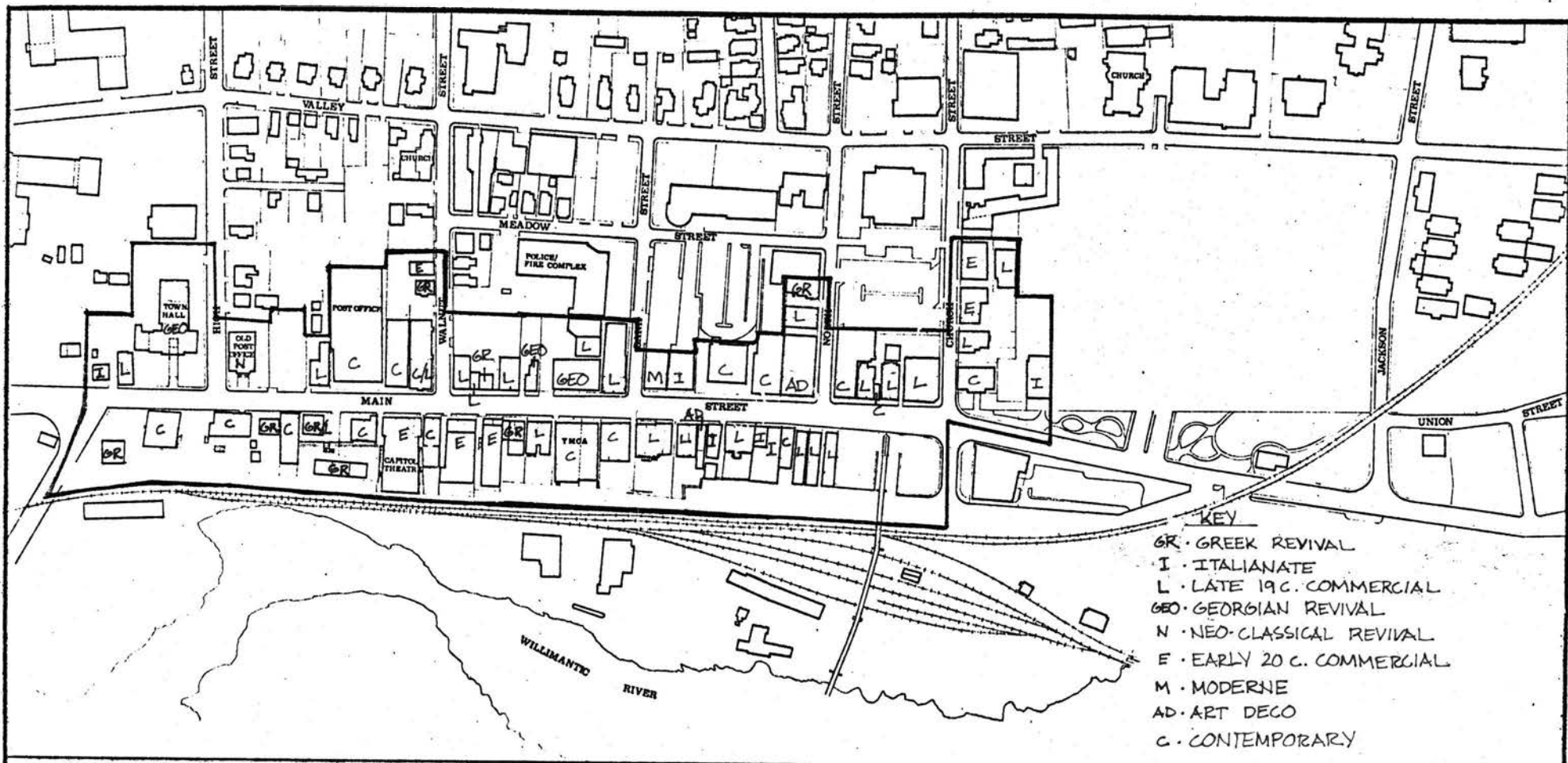
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MAIN STREET NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT
BUILDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO DISTRICT'S SIGNIFICANCE



ANDERSON NOTTER FINEGOLD INC.
Architects and Preservation Planners



- KEY**
- GR · GREEK REVIVAL
 - I · ITALIANATE
 - L · LATE 19c. COMMERCIAL
 - GEO · GEORGIAN REVIVAL
 - N · NEO-CLASSICAL REVIVAL
 - E · EARLY 20c. COMMERCIAL
 - M · MODERNE
 - AD · ART DECO
 - C · CONTEMPORARY

WILLIMANTIC DOWNTOWN STUDY

WILLIMANTIC REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

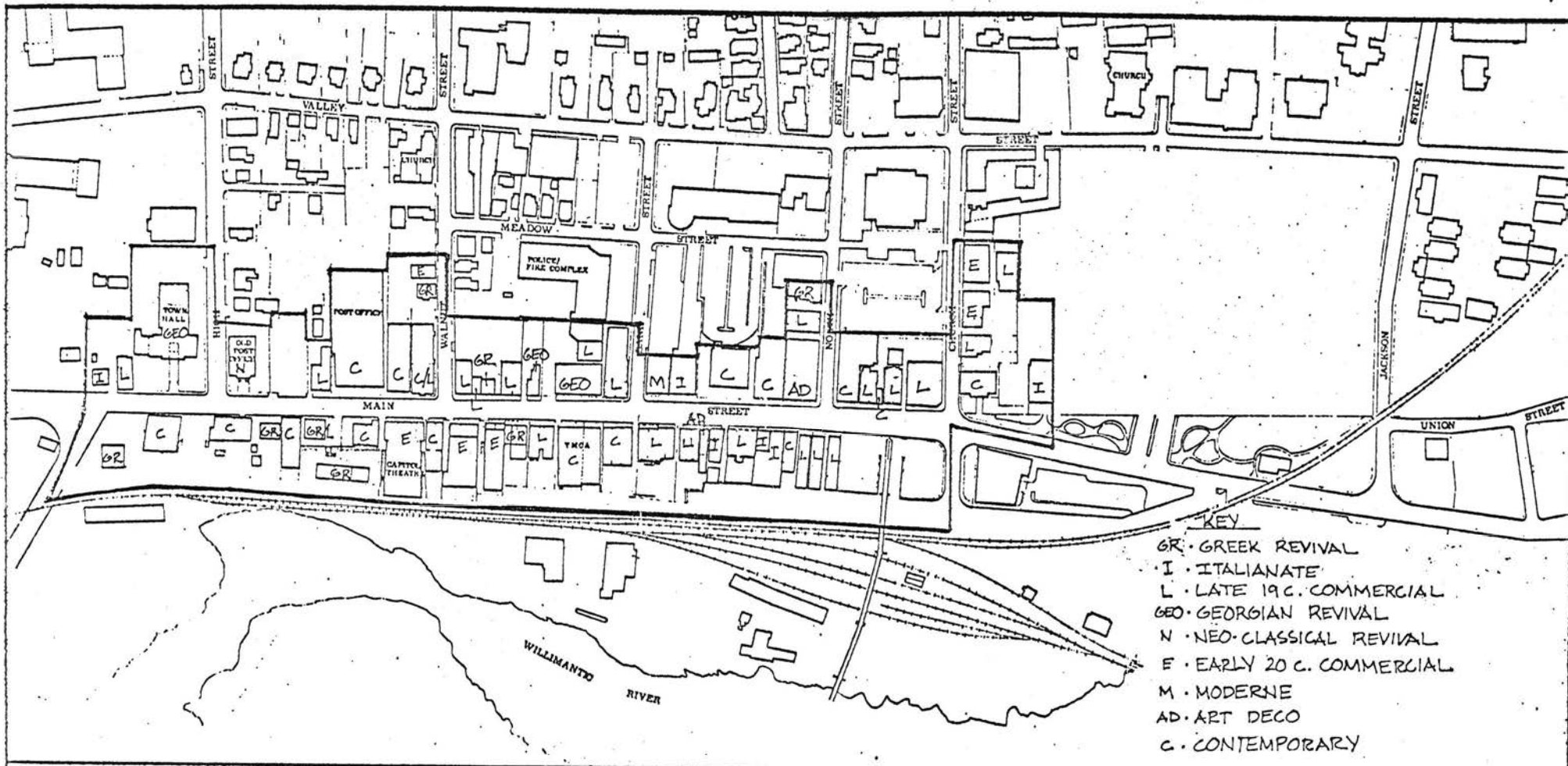
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MAIN STREET NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT
ARCHITECTURAL STYLES



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Architects and Preservation Planners



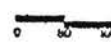
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WILLIMANTIC REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

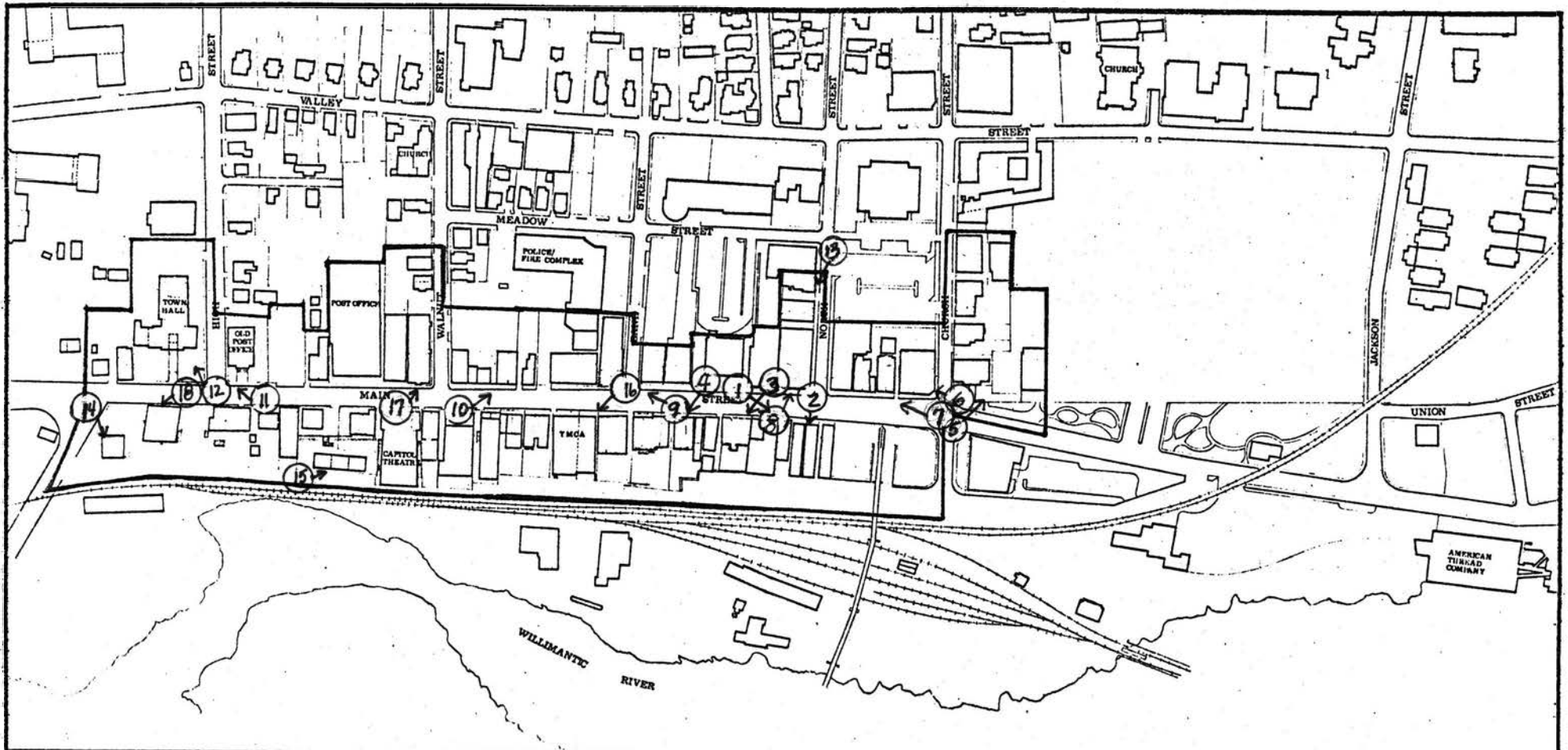
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MAIN STREET NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT
ARCHITECTURAL STYLES



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WILLIMANTIC DOWNTOWN STUDY

WILLIMANTIC REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

FEBRUARY 1980



MAIN STREET NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT

PHOTO VIEW INDEX



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SWEENEY'S
SUITING, INC.

GINGRAS
SHOE SALON

Ziesing Bros. Book Emporium

Book Emporium
Ziesing Bros.







Ben's Eagle Shoe

DeV's Coffee Shop

SINGER

WILLMARTIC CAMERA CENTRE

MUSIC





PREP SHOP

WOMEN'S SHOP

Stanley's MEN'S SHOP
WOMEN'S SPORTSWEAR























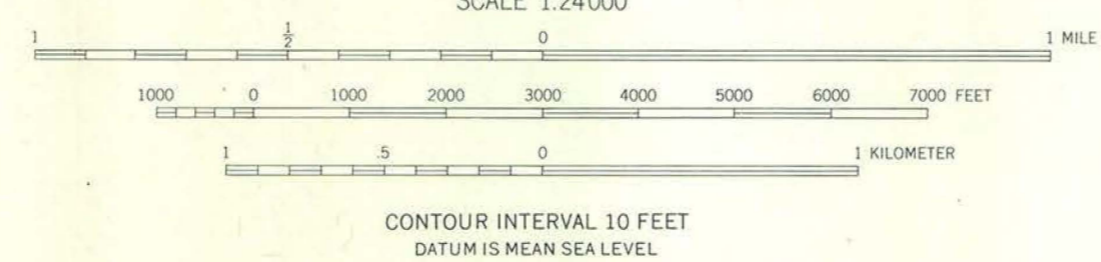
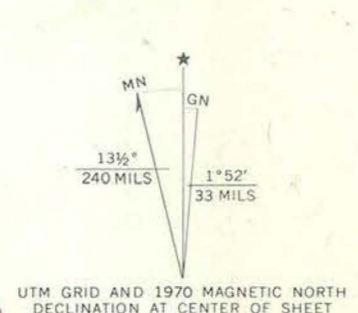




Willimantic, CT Quadrant.
MAIN STREET NATIONAL
REGISTER DISTRICT
Willimantic, Connecticut

UTM Reference
A 18/731360/4621480
B 18/731320/4621370
C 18/731930/4621240
D 18/732020/4621280
E 18/732030/4621360
F 18/732000/4621400
G 18/731950/4621410
H 18/731900/4621380
I 18/731870/4621400
J 18/731830/4621410
K 18/731610/4621420
L 18/731620/4621480
M 18/731580/4621480
N 18/731540/4621470
O 18/731470/4621500
P 18/731430/4621510

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Connecticut Geodetic Survey
Topography by plane-table surveys 1942-1943. Revised 1953
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Connecticut coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 18, shown in blue
Area covered by dashed light-blue pattern is subject
to controlled inundation
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with
Connecticut Highway Department from aerial photographs taken 1970
This information not field checked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	4 LANE 16 LANE	Light-duty
Medium-duty	4 LANE 16 LANE	Unimproved dirt
U. S. Route		State Route



WILLIMANTIC, CONN.
N4137.5-W7207.5/7.5
1953
PHOTOREVISED 1970
AMS 6567 II NW-SERIES V816

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

National Register of Historic Places

Note to the record

Additional Documentation: 2014

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY Main Street Historic District
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CONNECTICUT, Windham

DATE RECEIVED: 6/13/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/30/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 82004410

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT _____ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Additional Documentation Approved

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept

REVIEWER Elsan Beall

DISCIPLINE History

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 7-30-14

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Main Street Historic District

Name of Property

Willimantic, Windham County, Connecticut

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 1

The Main Street Historic District, Willimantic Connecticut was entered into the National Register of Historic Places on June 6, 1982. The YMCA building (1913) at 844 Main Street was listed as noncontributing at that time because its original façade was not visible. The structure covering the façade has now been removed and the original façade, which is mostly intact, has been revealed. The building now has enough architectural integrity to be included as a contributing structure to the Main Street Historic District. Work is underway to restore the facade of the YMCA building to its original appearance.

Plans for a new YMCA building in Willimantic were first announced to the public in the *Willimantic Daily Chronicle* on February 3, 1912. The article states that the building was designed by Palmer and Townsend of New Haven. The article describes the plans for the building in detail and mentions that they, "...show a building that will be an ornament to the city..." The new building was dedicated on February 5, 1913. An article in the February 6, 1913 *Willimantic Daily Chronicle* describes a well-attended ceremony which included a reception, musical selections, prayers and speeches by several dignitaries. One of the speakers, F. T Bates, State Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, congratulated the Willimantic organization for having, "...by far the best \$52,000 building in Connecticut." The building was a landmark on Main Street and it was photographed for a postcard (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Willimantic YMCA building c.1913.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Main Street Historic District
Name of Property
Willimantic, Windham County, Connecticut
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 2

In 1964, The YMCA decided to expand and it bought the Gem Theater building which shared a wall with the organization’s building. The modifications carried out at that time included the complete removal of the architectural detail of the Gem Theater’s façade and the covering of the facades of both buildings with a new common façade designed by a local architect in the style of New York architect Edward Durrell Stone (Figure 2). Miraculously, very few changes were made to the original façade of the YMCA building and it was simply hidden under the concrete screen.



Photo 1. 1964 façade.

The 1964 façade has now been removed to reveal the mostly intact 1913 façade of the YMCA Building (Figures 3 and 4). This building has enough architectural integrity to be included as a contributing asset to Willimantic’s Main Street Historic District, since it falls within the period of significance and it retains the distinctive characteristics of the type, period and methods of construction typical of the district.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Main Street Historic District
Name of Property
Willimantic, Windham County, Connecticut
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 3



Photo 2. Workmen removing 1964 façade.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Main Street Historic District
Name of Property
Willimantic, Windham County, Connecticut
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 4



Photo 3. Detail of revealed 1913 façade of YMCA building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Main Street Historic District
Name of Property
Willimantic, Windham County, Connecticut
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 5



Map of district showing location of YMCA Building.

National Register of Historic Places
Memo to File

Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

EVALUATION / RETURN SHEET

Property: Main Street, Historic District
State, County: CT, Windham
Federal Agency: _____

Working No. 5/28/82-1663
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/1/83
Date Due: 6/25/82 - 7/2/82

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Entered in the _____
National Register _____
Action: ACCEPT 6/28/82
 RETURN _____
 REJECT _____
photos
maps

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
 see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: technical corrections cited below
 substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

101 NPS 101

8. Significance

Period _____ Area of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- _____ summary paragraph
- _____ completeness
- _____ clarity
- _____ applicable criteria
- _____ justification of areas checked
- _____ relating significance to the resource
- _____ context
- _____ relationship of integrity to significance
- _____ justification of exception
- _____ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

USIT References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

Site _____ date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

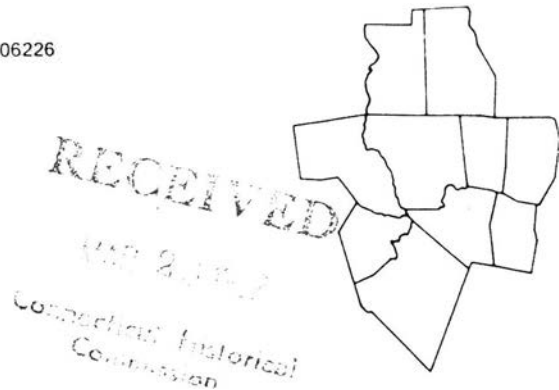
Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet

WINDHAM REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

968 MAIN STREET
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT 06226
203-456-2221

March 19, 1982



Mr. John Shanahan
State Historic Preservation Officer
59 South Prospect Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Mr. Shanahan:

Since I will not be able to be present at the April 1 hearing of the State Historic Preservation Board, I would ask that the following remarks be entered as written testimony in the board's consideration of the nomination of the Willimantic Main Street to the National Register.

The segment of Main Street which extends from the late Federal ashlar Jillson House on the East to the turn-of-the-century Court House in the West historically and architecturally spans the period of Willimantic's greatest prosperity as the first Thread City of the United States.

The Windham Regional Planning Agency first recognized the significance of this assemblage of late nineteenth century commercial buildings in its City Rivers plan of 1976, which sketched the history of the street and recommended its nomination to state and national registers. The plan, which outlined a comprehensive strategy for the preservation of the neighborhoods bordering the city's rivers, also recognized the significant part such designation could play in the renewal of the area and in heightening local awareness of its historic value. This recommendation was reiterated in the Regional Growth and Preservation Guide Plan, 1978, WRPA's comprehensive policy document and in the Willimantic City Plan, 1981, which the agency prepared at the behest of the Willimantic Community Redevelopment Agency.

On behalf of the Windham Regional Planning Agency I would therefore strongly urge that the board act favorably on this nomination.

Sincerely,

Margaret Hemphill
Acting Director

MH/e

WILLIMANTIC COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

54 North Street, Box 56
Willimantic, Connecticut 06226
telephone: (203) 423-8423

Executive Director
Mark E. Boyle

Commissioners
D'Ann Mazzocca, Chairman
David Knauss, Vice Chairman
Irene Flaherty, Secretary
Baron Bray
Fred Chmura
Edward Ouellette
Daniel Shea

April 5, 1982

Mr. Harlan Griswold, Chairman
Conn. Review Board For The National Register
of Historic Places.
59 S. Prospect St.
Hartford, CT 06106

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Connecticut Historical
Commission

Dear Mr. Griswold:

On behalf of the City of Willimantic, the Willimantic Community Redevelopment Agency urges the State Historic Preservation Board to approve the designation of the Main St. Historic District in Willimantic to the National Register of Historic Places.

This designation is of vital importance to the future preservation and development of downtown Willimantic.

The listing of the Main St. Historic District would strengthen significantly Willimantic's commitment and effort to preserve the City's sense of identity and stability. It would highlight the community's roots and unique character.

With its many rehabilitated properties, our preservation oriented revitalization program has contributed extensively to a resurgence in the City's history and pride.


Obviously, with today's economy and budget cutting measures, we in government cannot place a great deal of confidence in the future of such publically initiated efforts.

As a result, we must rely on private sources to assume a greater role in the future preservation and rehabilitation of our valuable properties.

Your designation will contribute strongly to such an effort with its corresponding economic incentives for private investment.

Again, we urge your approval and trust in your wisdom.

Very truly yours,
WILLIMANTIC COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY


Mark E. Boyle
Executive Director.

Successful Developer Embarks on New Venture

By MARK McGRATH

WILLIMANTIC — At 61, Lester Foster has already had two successful careers, and now he seems to be backing into a third one.

After getting his education about people and business through his father's produce wholesaling operation, which he later took over, and then striking gold in the apartment development business, Foster is working on plans for a downtown movie theater complex on vacant redevelopment land.

"I can tell you up front," Foster said, "the last thing I need is a theater, but I figured someone should do it. I felt that the major parcel was empty long enough, and Willimantic has been great to me."

City redevelopment officials had failed for six years to find a developer for a downtown mall on nine acres of land razed in an urban renewal program, and the city was considering putting in a parking lot and making the ragged patch of weeds into a park. Senior citizens were talking about growing vegetables on the site.

But Cate Enterprises Inc. of Cambridge, Mass., still wanted to operate a four-theater complex on the site, and when a real estate agent approached Foster about developing the cinema and leasing it to Cate Enterprises, he agreed.

Foster was aware of the potential for controversy in getting involved with the redevelopment program. Moreover, he acknowledges the cinema is a gamble but views it as a risk worth taking.

"The downtown area needs something to bring people down there," he said, "and this will convince people that downtown Willimantic isn't dead." If the theaters succeed, Foster figures that either he or someone else could develop small businesses like a restaurant, a cleaners, and a shoe repair shop, on the remainder of the large parcel, situated between Main, Valley, Church and Jackson streets.



Lester Foster

Besides owning the 408-unit Colonial Townhouse Apartments on the Willimantic-Mansfield line, and the 96-unit Orchard Acres apartments near the University of Connecticut in the Storrs section of Mansfield, Foster owns the Willimantic Trust Co. building with its 50,000 square feet in office space and is on the bank's board of directors.

He also is on the board of directors for Windham Community Memorial Hospital, and is chairman of the Board of Finance for the town of Windham, which encompasses the city of Willimantic.

Foster never went to college, but he figures that everything he needed to know he learned working with his father, the late Morris Foster, in the family's fruit and produce business.

The business started small in Moosup and moved to Willimantic when Foster

was 15. Foster still enjoys telling of selling baskets of apples to motorists stalled in traffic due to a highway construction project. "We sold loads and loads of apples," he laughs. "We had a captive audience."

The company relied heavily on its business with small grocery stores, and after his father died, and when it became apparent that big supermarkets would gradually replace "Mom and Pop" groceries, Foster started reading about real estate, and about education.

He figured the nearby University of Connecticut in the Storrs section of Mansfield would grow in the 1960s, and he entered the real estate business by buying eight apartments near UConn.

"I would come home in the evening and I couldn't eat my dinner," he recalled, "People kept calling — looking for a place to live — and I asked myself, 'What am I doing selling bananas?'"

The fruit business was gradually phased out, and Foster developed the 96-apartment Orchard Acres complex behind the UConn football stadium, and later, the Colonial Townhouse Apartments. He was second-guessed on both ventures, Foster recalled, due to the rough terrain at the Orchard Acres site and the distance between the Colonial Townhouse Apartments and UConn.

"But I always felt this way," Foster said, "that if the banks are backing you with 75 percent of their money, you can't be too crazy."

The enrollment at UConn did increase in the 1960s and early 1970s, particularly for graduate students with families, and Foster once again had a "captive audience."

Foster said that in 15 years he has never had an apartment remain vacant and never had to advertise. "There's an old saying in the real estate business," Foster said, "that if you have a large amount of apartments and they're filled all the time, then the rates are too cheap. I don't buy that."

"My training in the produce business

taught me one thing that was more important than anything else," he said "that there is nothing more precious than a customer. When someone comes in and gives you money every month you owe that person something more than a place to live — you owe them service."

Foster could retire to Florida, and have his checks mailed to him, but he works at the apartments every day, along with his brother and partner Bob, and they take care of bookkeeping and maintenance problems.

Foster moved into commercial real estate about five years ago, when the Foster Development Co. purchased the Willimantic Trust Co. building on Main Street in the urban renewal district, and did extensive renovations to create a total of 50,000 square feet of office space. Once again, Foster was second-guessed. He said he had difficulty for several years in finding enough tenants, but now all but two small offices are rented.

"Every Main Street in every town in Anywhere, U.S.A., is having trouble surviving and getting people downtown," Foster said. But while he figures the days of downtowns dominating the retail market are over, he believes downtowns have a future for offices and for entertainment and services.

Although he joined his father's business, Foster said his sons have chosen other pursuits. Two sons, Mark and David, are co-owners of Shaboo, a local night club with a statewide reputation for bringing in big-name musicians.

What worries him a bit about the movie theater project, he said, is that although many people were pessimistic about his previous ventures, which succeeded, most people are now very optimistic about the idea of the cinema. Foster says this creates "a kind of blur" over his thinking of the project.

But he's only 61, and seems to relish a new challenge. And, as he also confessed, "I'm never going to be a candidate for retirement."

Renewal Effort May Get New Focus In Willimantic

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the King's Horses and all the
King's men
Couldn't put Humpty together
again.*

By MARK McGRATH

WILLIMANTIC — This poem, of course, wasn't written as a satiric criticism of American urban renewal, which some prefer to characterize as "urban removal."

But if a visitor from outer space landed in certain sections of downtown Willimantic, or in downtowns in some other cities, he might easily be persuaded of this theory for the origin of the children's favorite.

Metaphorically speaking, the American way of redevelopment has been to push — or rather evict — Humpty from his wall, then demolish the wall and sell the parcel to an out-of-town developer.

Willimantic, like other cities that began redevelopment programs too late to benefit from the boom years of the 1960s and early 1970s, has made some recognizable improvements. But it has also been left with large vacant areas.

After years of obsession over developing a planned major commercial site, however, Willimantic may be about to change tack and concentrate on mending what remains of Humpty and the wall.

Development of Disposition Parcel No. 6, as the nine-acre site is officially called, has been the Holy Grail of politicians running for office, and it's been the white whale of redevelopment officials.

After plans for an 80,000-square-foot mall fell through last autumn, however, the agency commissioned a Boston consulting firm to study the situation and recommend what the city should do with Disposition Parcel No. 6.

It didn't take long for Paul McGinley, a vice president of the firm of Anderson, Notter, Finegold Inc., to realize that disposing of the parcel through commercial development would, at least for the time being, be "an impossible task."

The firm's report, officially presented to redevelopment officials last week, suggested the same uses for the property that were originally bitterly predicted by some people whose homes and businesses were demolished.

The report suggested the city turn the vast expanse of weeds into a park and a parking lot. It advised the city to reserve the acreage for development in some future year, when developers can afford to borrow money and pay contractors to build in places like Willimantic.

Anderson, Notter, Finegold said there simply isn't a market for the once-envisioned mall. The firm found fault with previous marketing studies, and it said the support that had existed for the parcel's development was apparently based on "community embar-

rassment" over previous failures to develop the site.

The consulting firm said there does appear to be a potential for more limited retail growth, and it advised the city to try to develop two small Main Street lots bounded by an historic footbridge, before the city again advertises the major parcel.

More important, however, is the firm's recommendation that the city concentrate its efforts to revitalize downtown on the renovation of existing structures.

The firm suggests the city take a serious look at the interesting old buildings still standing and try to get them used to their best potential.

The old post office on Main Street, for example, a 1911 stone structure with a neo-classical facade and contemporary boarded-up windows, is slated to be turned over by federal authorities to Eastern Connecticut State College for use by the college's maintenance department.

It's McGinley's opinion that a restaurant — perhaps a postal version of Hartford's Last National Bank — would contribute more to Willimantic's night life than ECSC snowplows.

Another Main Street building, which ECSC already owns, is the Nathan Hale Building, closed as a dormitory several years ago because it didn't meet new fire code standards. Now it's home for the college's maintenance department and weaving classes, but McGinley feels apartments or offices would serve to bring more people downtown.

The prize for the most obvious white elephant on Main Street, however, might well go to the old Capitol Theater.

From time to time, former owners had tried to resuscitate this old vaudeville house as a family movie theater, but the only signs that ever stayed long on the marquee were "Deep Throat" and "For Sale."

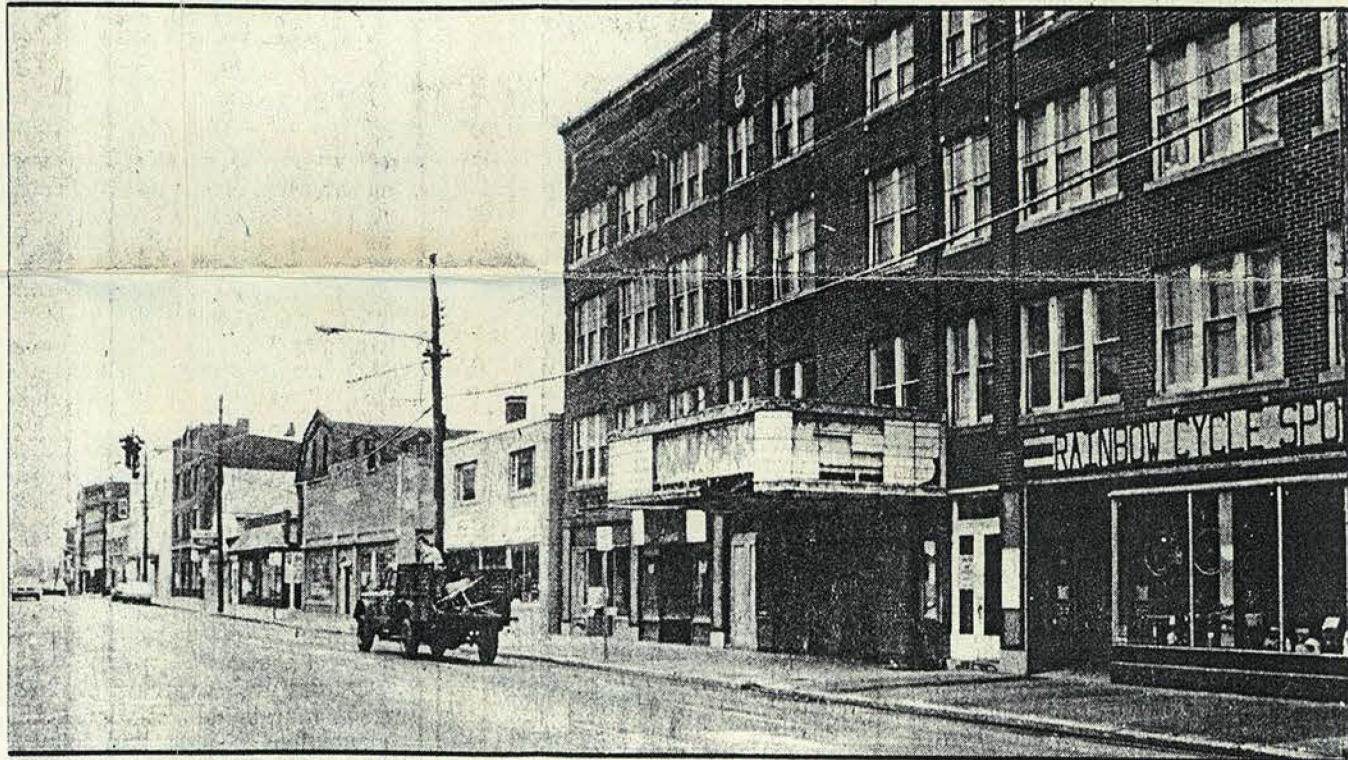
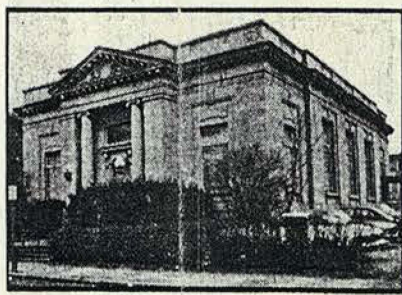
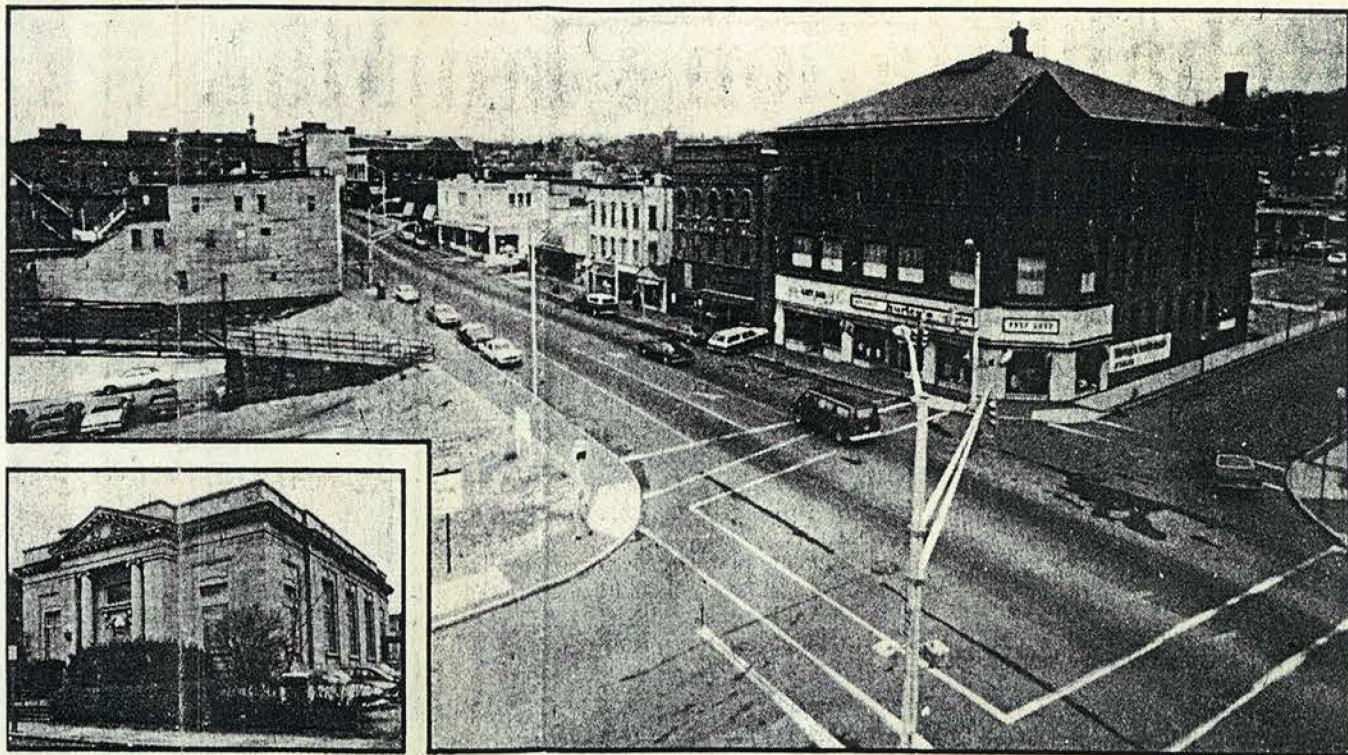
The theater has been closed in more recent years, although last year it almost reopened as a disco. Some city officials weren't really enthusiastic about having a downtown disco, but they welcomed the prospect anyway, figuring that at least the marquee and the front facade would be made more presentable. In the end, however, the disco owners decided to take their turntable elsewhere, saying the vibes they were getting didn't really tell them they were wanted here.

The Capitol, though, is basically in sound shape, and McGinley believes that if used creatively, for something such as a community-type theater, "It could be the center for a cultural re-birth in Willimantic."

A woman recently taking photographs of the Hotel Hooker, a boarding house for a partly transient population, was advised, "Don't shoot it, blow it up!"

Some pedestrians would just as soon walk under a ladder as invade the area

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FUNK PHOTOS

Willimantic officials are hoping to upgrade other areas of downtown to match the section of Main Street shown in the top photo. Among the potential targets for restoration are the Capitol Theater, lower photo, and the old post office, inset.

near the hotel. This building, said McGinley, could also be put to a more appropriate use which would encourage people to come to Main Street.

The eastern end of downtown is the location of the wasteland that is Disposition Parcel No. 6, which may soon become this city's "New England Green."

The mideastern stretch, where there have been public improvements such as brick sidewalks, new parking lots, pedestrian walkways, and new store facades, is the pearl of the urban renewal program.

But the midwestern stretch, from the Hotel Hooker to the old post office, where virtually no public improvements have been made, "is absolutely on its deathbed unless something is done," states McGinley.

The city had already planned improvements for the midwest, things like new sidewalks and parking lots, but McGinley stresses that the public investments must be coordinated in a

way that best leverages private investments into the old buildings.

The report also advises the city use to greater advantage the Willimantic River, which Main Street has literally turned its back on.

The consulting firm recommends that stores on the south side of Main Street open their rear entrances, which abut the railroad tracks and the river. The firm believes that vacant or underutilized attics overlooking the railroad tracks and river could be made into unique apartments and offices.

McGinley likened the process to one of "taking the silk purse out of the sow's ear." He also believes the city should consider designating the old downtown, along with neighboring Victorian neighborhoods, as historic districts.

Ironically, the bulk of the major findings by Anderson, Notter, Finegold are virtually identical to those made four years ago in a report by the Windham Regional Planning Agency. But that re-

port was virtually ignored.

Jack Condlin, redevelopment director for the past year, was formerly the agency official in charge of rehabilitation efforts, and he seems to personally prefer mending walls to putting up new walls. The agency already has been reconsidering the renovation or relocation of several houses that were scheduled for demolition.

D'Ann Mazzocca, chairwoman of the Redevelopment Commission, says the "main thing" from the report is a recognition that "Willimantic has got to capitalize on what it has already." To make progress, she said, redevelopment officials will now have to work hand in hand with merchants in a way that wasn't done before.

For the time being, Willimantic is back to square one.

The city has no king's horses or king's men to call on, but maybe that's a good thing. The city only has itself.



Department of Economic and
Community Development

Connecticut
still revolutionary

April 15, 2014

Mr. Roger Reed
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street NW
Washington, CT 20005



Subject: Technical Amendment to the Main Street Historic District
Willimantic, Connecticut 82004410

Dear Mr. Reed,

We are writing to inform you that the State Historic Preservation Office recommends the technical amendments to the Main Street Historic District in Willimantic, CT as described in the attached documentation.

The amendment to the inventory to include the property at 884 Main Street (the former YMCA building) adds to the significance of the district as a whole. This structure was covered by a decorative concrete block façade when the district was listed in 1982. Removal of the facade in late 2013 revealed that the original features of the ca. 1912 building were intact.

Since this is my last week at the SHPO, if you have any questions regarding this amendment, please email cct.history1@ct.gov to leave a message for the next NR Coordinator.

Sincerely,

Stacey Vairo
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Cc: Tod Bryant, Heritage Resources