

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

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

received **MAY 12 1986**
date entered **6-13-86**

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

1. Name

historic N/A
and or common NEW MILFORD CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

2. Location

street & number See Item 7, Inventory, and Continuation Sheet N/A not for publication
city, town New Milford N/A vicinity of
state Connecticut code 09 county Litchfield code 005

3. Classification

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <u>N/A</u> 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | <u>N/A</u> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple
street & number N/A
city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New Milford Town Hall
street & number 10 Main Street
city, town New Milford state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1985 federal state county local
depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission - 59 South Prospect Street
city, town Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one | #96 Railroad St.--Moved c. 1870 from Main St. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved | date #26 East St. - Moved in 1875 from Main St. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | | #6 Aspetuck Ave. (brick bldg.) - Moved in 1964 from Main St. |

The New Milford Center Historic District is an area of approximately eight blocks of older two, three, and four-story commercial, residential, and civic buildings which distinctly form the "downtown" of New Milford, Connecticut. These blocks lie in a loose grid pattern, to the east and west of one of the longest greens in Connecticut (See Fig. 1). This 100-foot wide by one-quarter of a mile long shaded grass commons, oriented on a north-south axis, divides the town's Main Street. The major portion of the district lies on a plateau which overlooks the Housatonic River to the west. The district includes 160 structures, six of which are non-contributing.

The district includes those streets and structures that relate historically, functionally and visually to the green. Hence, the included area extends beyond the center to encompass the Center Cemetery, an approximately 17-acre plot off the northeast corner of the town center, and South Main Street, a 19th-century residential neighborhood south of the green. Generally, the district's boundaries lie along topographical or man-made features, such as a hollow or railroad tracks, which form cognitive edges in the townscape. The district is bounded to the north by Aspetuck Hill, to the east by open land around the north, east and south edges of the cemetery, and by a hollow and a brook, to the south by another hollow, and to the west by the railroad tracks and incompatible structures. The latter boundary turns into the body of the district in order to exclude the concentration of mid-20th-century commercial structures and their parking areas which extend between Railroad and Main Streets.

It is the district's large late-19th-century civic and ecclesiastical buildings overlooking the green, and its turn-of-the-century commercial structures which give the area its district identity as a historically active and relatively prosperous older town center. It is the district's high proportion of single-family mid-and late-19th-century houses which gives the district its strong historic character and architectural continuity. These houses, which form the major portion of the building stock in the area, reflect residential development patterns associated with the tobacco and secondary industries in New Milford during the third and fourth quarters of the 19th-century.

In general, and for the purposes of this description only, the center is divided into three use zones, mixed use (the east side of the green and Church and East Streets), commercial (Bridge, Bank, and Railroad Streets), and residential (Bennitt and South Main Streets). This informal pattern of land use remains from the mid-19th-century. With its mix of monumental civic buildings, churches, and modest clapboard 18th- and 19th-century dwellings, the green and its east side comprise a familiar and traditional New England townscape (photographs 1-5, 8). The blocks on which these buildings stand are at a slightly higher grade than the green, which gives the structures, and especially the larger ones, a commanding presence. The buildings stand back from the Main Street at a fairly regular distance. Paved sidewalks, generally set in from the street, lie beneath large old maple and oak trees. Toward the south end of the green is a six-sided Victorian. The greatest concentration of older commercial structures is on Bank Street and the south end of Railroad Street (photographs 10, 11, 12). Both sides of Bank Street are nearly continuous masonry blockfronts of turn-of-the-century commercial buildings in eclectic styles, giving this section of town a more urban appearance than the green. From the east end of Bank Street, which descends steeply, there is a dramatic view over Railroad Street, the tracks, and the river.

Railroad Street is walled at its southeast section by a continuous row of four-story brick commercial blocks, contemporaneous with the Bank Street buildings. One of these, Young's Hotel (photograph 11), overlooks the railroad depot (listed on the National Register). The middle section of Railroad Street is less intensively developed, with

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New Milford Historic Resources Survey (1979) Local Survey

Depository for Survey Records:
Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street
Hartford, CT 06106

New Milford Town Hall
10 Main Street
New Milford, Connecticut 06776

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scattered, commercial frame and masonry buildings and warehouses, some of which have been entirely disfigured or rebuilt in an incompatible architectural mode. (These are excluded from the district.) Toward the southeast corner of Railroad Street and on Bennett Street, the buildings are closely spaced two-story 19th-century dwellings built for the working class. Bennett Street's south side has the oldest concentration of structures in New Milford.

The architecture of Whittelsey Avenue and South Main Street is more characteristic of the residential neighborhoods of New Milford's center. Both have tree-lined blocks of modest mid- and late-19th-century single and two-family houses, representing vernacular versions of the Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne modes (photographs 6 and 7).

The public, institutional, and residential buildings in the district remain largely unchanged. Almost all the alteration that has occurred has been to store fronts at the street level.

During the extended heyday of tobacco production in New Milford from 1875-1915, its appearance changed principally in the rebuilding of the block bounded by Railroad, Bank, and Main Streets following the Great Fire of 1902, which destroyed this block. Where the area was once a dense development of frame commercial buildings, its reconstruction in masonry dramatically transformed the business district's appearance into one of a modern, more sophisticated market center (photographs 10,11,12). Except for the west side of Main Street, north of Bank Street, the green area remains almost exactly as it looked in 1902. The west side of Main Street (which is not included in the district) had been redeveloped with larger Queen Anne-style residences during the 1870s and 1880s by some of the local businessmen who had prospered in the tobacco and building industries. The buildings which replaced these houses in the 1960s are low and do not significantly mar the quality of the green or the east side of Main Street.

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INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS

Aspetuck Avenue:

- 3 Victorian house, c. 1890; C
- 5 Victorian house, c. 1890; C
- 6 Colonial house, c. 1758; C. 1963 addition; NC
Federal one-room building, c. 1820; C
- 7 Victorian house, c. 1890; C

Bennitt Street:

- 2,4 & 6 Federal period house and connected shop, 1808; C
- 7 & 9 Mid-19th century stores c. 1860; (2 structures)
- 8-10 Victorian house, c. 1880; C
- 11 Vernacular Federal house, c. 1813; C
- 12 Vernacular Greek Revival house, c. 1844; C
- 15 Victorian house, 1882; C
- 16 Mid-19th century vernacular house, c. 1867; C
- 18 Mid-19th century vernacular house, c. 1838; C
- 20-24 Vernacular Greek Revival period houses, c. 1843 (3 structures): C
1984 additions
- 25 Tudor Revival house, c. c. 1930; C
- 26 Vernacular Greek Revival house, 1838; C. c. 1890 addition

Bank Street:

- 8-18 Late 19th century vernacular commercial c. ; C
- 19 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C
- 20-24 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C
- 21 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C
- 25 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C
- 28 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C
- 31 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C
- 36-40 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C
- 44-48 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03 with Art Moderne
facade, c. 1930; C
- 49 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03 with c. 1960 sheet
metal and composite "modern" facade; NC
- 50-52 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C
- 51-57 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C; J.W. Northrup, architect
- 56-60 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03, with c. 1970 synthetic
facade; C
- 64 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902-03; C

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Brookside Avenue:

Lot 108 Vernacular Shingle-style church, 1901; C

Bridge Street:

- 54 Vernacular Italianate house, 1866; C
- 58 Federal house, 1825, with neo-Classical portico, by Ehrick Rossiter, architect, 1910; C
- 60-62 Vernacular Shingle-style/Colonial Revival house, c. 1900; C
- 64 Vernacular Shingle-style house, c. 1900; C
- 66 Victorian house, c. 1890; C
- 70 Mid-19th century vernacular Greek Revival house, c. 1850; C
- 71 Late 19th century commercial eclectic, c. 1890; C. mid 20th-century addition
- 69 Late 19th century Colonial Revival vernacular house, c. 1890; C
1982 addition
- 65 Early 20th century American Foursquare, c. 1915; C
- 63 Early 20th century American Foursquare, c. 1915; C

Church Street:

- 11-17 Late 19th century commercial, c. 1880; C
- 19 Victorian vernacular firehouse, 1889; C
- 25 Late 19th century commercial, c. 1890; C
- 28 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1880; C
- 29 Early 20th century commercial, c. 1910; C
- 32 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1880; C
- 35 Victorian vernacular house, c. 1890; C
- 36 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1880; C
- 38-40 Vernacular Late Gothic Revival house, 1877; C

East Street:

- 2 Vernacular Federal house, 1812; C
- 15 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1885; C
- 16 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1880; C
- 17 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1880; C
- 18-20 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1870; C
- 22 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1870; C
- 25 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1880; C
- 26 Vernacular Federal house, c. 1821, moved from present site of Town Hall in 1875 when latter was built. Later 19th century addition; C
- 27 Vernacular Greek Revival house, c. 1840, probably moved from original site. Mid-19th century addition; C
- 30 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1880; C
- 31 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1875; C
- 34 Vernacular Federal house, c. 1825; C; side porch enclosed 1985, Stephen Lasar, architect.
- 41 Mid-19th century vernacular, c. 1861; C

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East Street, continued

- 44 Mid 19th century vernacular, 1861; C
- 45 Mid 19th century vernacular, 1867; C
- 47 Mid 19th century vernacular, c. 1861 with Victorian tower addition,
c. 1880; C
- 50 Neo-Colonial school, 1920; C
- 60 Late 19th century vernacular, 1881; C
- 64 Late 19th century vernacular, 1880; C
- 66 Late 19th century vernacular, 1888; C
- 68-70 Late 19th century vernacular, 1893; C

Elm Street:

- 3 Early 20th century eclectic school; C
- 5 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1885; C
- 12 Vernacular Victorian house, 1898; C
- 14 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1890; C
- 20 Vernacular Greek Revival house, c. 1840; C
- 22 Mid 19th century vernacular house, 1866; C
- 24 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1880; C
- 28 Vernacular Greek Revival house, c. 1847; C
- 30 Vernacular Greek Revival house, c. 1840; C mid 20th century addition
- Lot 92 Late 19th century vernacular, c. 1880; C

Elm Street Extension:

- Lot 94 Mid 19th century vernacular house, c. 1885; C
- Lot 95 Mid 19th century vernacular house, c. 1865; C
- Lot 96 Early 20th century bungalow cape (vernacular); C

Grove Street:

- 11 Federal vernacular house, 1812; C

Main Street:

- 2 Mid 20th century neo-Colonial church; NC
Federal house, c. 1798; rear, possibly c. 1708; C
- 4 Vernacular Greek Revival house, 1845; C
- 6 Vernacular Federal period house, 1795; C
- 7-15 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, 1902; C
- 10 Classical Revival, 1875; C
- 21 Beaux Arts commercial, 1902-03; C (National Register listed)
- 12 Vernacular Greek Revival, 1837, addition c. 1880; C
- 16 Bungalow, c. 1925; C
- 20 Vernacular Greek Revival house, c. 1838; C
- 24 Richardsonian Romanesque Revival library, 1897, Joseph W. Northrup,
architect; 1978 addition linking with No. 24 Main St.; C
- 30 Norman Gothic Revival church, 1882; C
- 32 Vernacular Federal period house, c. 1825; C
- 34 Colonial house, 1774; C
- 36 Greek Revival church with Wrenian steeple, 1833; C

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Main Street, continued

- 40 Early 20th century school, c. 1915; C
- 42 Greek Revival period house, c. 1835, Second Empire roof, 1882; C
- 46 Transitional Federal-Greek Revival house, 1827; C
- 51 Georgian house, 1793; C; possibly master-built by William Spratt

Mill St.:

- 52 & 54 Mid 19th century dwellings, c. 1860; both C

The Green Victorian bandstand, c. 1875; C

Railroad Street:

- 10 Early 20th century commercial eclectic, Renaissance Revival, 1902-03; C
- 22-24 Early 20th century eclectic, Renaissance Revival, 1902-03; C
- 56-58 Late 19th century commercial, c. 1880; NC (faced with synthetic siding; windows altered)
- 60 Mid 20th century commercial, c. 1975; NC
- 64 Late 19th century commercial vernacular; 1884; C
- 96 Federal period gambrel-roofed store, c. 1790; C
- 112 Late 19th century commercial, c. 1890; C
- 114 Late 19th century vernacular house, c. 1880; C
- 116 Mid 19th century vernacular house, c. 1860; C
- 118 Mid 19th century vernacular house, c. 1860; C

South Main Street:

- 6 Vernacular Prairie-style house, c. 1925; C
- 8 Late 19th century Victorian vernacular house, c. 1895; C
- 9 Vernacular Victorian Italianate house, c. 1870; C
- 10 Vernacular Victorian Italianate house, c. 1870; C
- 11 Vernacular Victorian Italianate house, c. 1870; C
- 13 Vernacular Victorian Italianate house, c. 1870; C
- 14 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1870; C
- 15 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1870; C
- 16 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1870; C
- 17 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1870; C
- 18 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1870; C
- 19-21 Early 20th century Colonial Revival, c. 1910; C
- 20 Vernacular Victorian Italianate house, c. 1870; C
- 23 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1865; C
- 24 Vernacular Victorian Italianate house, c. 1870; C
- 25 Vernacular mid 19th century house, c. 1860; C
- 26 Vernacular Victorian Italianate house, c. 1870; C
- 29 Victorian house, c. 1870, with c. 1890 addition; C
- 30 Mid 19th century vernacular house, c. 1860; C
- 32 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1870; C
- 33 Victorian house, c. 1890; C
- 36 Italianate house, c. 1870; C
- 37 Mid 19th century vernacular house, c. 1860; C
- 38 Vernacular late 19th century house, c. 1875; C
- 39-41 Mid 19th century house, c. 1860, with later addition, c. 1880; C

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South Main Street, continued

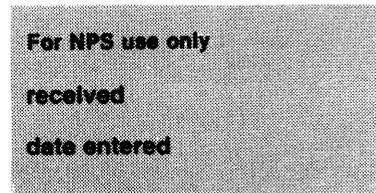
- 42 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1870; C
- 43-45 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1870; C
- 46 Early 20th century Colonial Revival vernacular house, c. 1910; C
- 49 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1870; C
- 53 Queen Anne Victorian house, c. 1890; C
- 55 Queen Anne Victorian house, c. 1890; C

Whittelsey Avenue:

- 10 Queen Anne Victorian house, c. 1890; C
- 11 Mid 19th century vernacular house, c. 1860; C
- 14 Queen Anne Victorian house, 1892; C
- 16 Vernacular Victorian house, 1892; C
- 17 Mid 19th century vernacular house, c. 1860; C
- 18 Vernacular Victorian house, 1892; C
- 20 Queen Anne Victorian house, 1894; C
- 22 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1895; C
- 24 Vernacular Victorian house, c. 1890; C
- 25 Vernacular Queen Anne/Colonial Revival house, 1884; C
- 33 Italianate house, 1861; C

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Range of Building Numbers for Each Included Street:

Aspetuck Avenue: 3,5,6,7

Bennitt Street: 2,4,6,7,8-10,11,12,15,16,18,20,22,24,25,26

Bank Street: 8-18,19,20-24,21,25,28,31,36-40,44-48,49

Brookside Avenue: Lot 108

Bridge Street: 54,58,60-62,63,64,65,66,69,70,71

Church Street: 11-17,19,25,28,29,32,35,36,38-40

East Street: 2,15,16,17,18-20,22,25,26,27,30,31,34,41,44,45,47,50,60,64,66,68-70

Elm Street: 3,5,12,14,20,22,24,28,30, Lot 92

Elm Street Extension: Lot 94, Lot 95, Lot 96

Grove Street: 11

Main Street: 2,4,6,7-15,10,12,16,20,21,24,30,32,34,36,40,42,46,51

Mill Street: 52, 54

The Green: Bandstand

Railroad Street: 10,22-24,56-58,60,64,96,112,114,116,118

South Main Street: 6,8,9,10,11,13,14,15,16,17,19-21,20,23,24,25,26,29,30,32,33,36,
37,38,39-41,42,43-45,46,49,53,55

Whittelsey Avenue: 10,11,14,16,17,18,20,22,24,25,33

8. Significance

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

Specific dates See Item 7–Inventory **Builder/Architect** See Item 7–Inventory

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The New Milford Center Historic District is significant because it contains a well-preserved concentration of older commercial, civic, and residential buildings which collectively reflect New Milford's history as an important regional center of tobacco production and commerce during the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries (Criterion A). From 1880 to 1920, Housatonic Valley fields in New Milford were producing substantial quantities of some of the highest grade Havana Seed tobacco wrapper leaf in the United States.¹ This industry employed a large percentage of New Milford's work force. The resulting strong economy stimulated off-shoot industrial and commercial enterprises, and the commercial and residential development of the town.

The district is also significant for the quantity, quality, and physical integrity of its 19th- and early 20th-century vernacular architecture (Criterion C). A wide range of building types of various stylistic periods, including Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, and commercial eclectic, remains in the center of town. The Romanesque Revival public library and two commercial buildings in the district were designed by Connecticut architects. The integrity of the town's historic physical plan is also outstanding. New Milford's green, surrounded by older buildings of mixed uses and diverse architecture, is a setting which embodies the 18th- and 19th-century character and history of the typical Connecticut town.

The early 18th-century and present center of New Milford, identified by the green, is the site of the first commercial and residential buildings, and the geographic core for the town's later and most intensive period of development following the opening of the Housatonic Railroad in 1840. Twenty-two structures in the district remain from the pre-railroad settlement of self-sufficient farms, cottage industries, and mills.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

New Milford's two major periods of physical development are associated with the opening of the railroad, and the peak years (1870–1890) of tobacco production. By expanding the market for New Milford's farm and factory output, the latter of which included tinware, hats, wool cloth, and boots, the railroad prompted the growth of existing industries and the establishment of new retail outlets in town. By 1845, state statistics reported that New Milford had six hat factories valued at \$38,225, employing 71 people; two woolen mills producing 24,000 yards of satinet per year valued at \$17,000; six tanneries; and a boot and shoe industry making over 7,000 pairs per year.² While manufacturing activity in New Milford never compared to that in Danbury or Winsted, the town's early access to the railroad made it a commercial center for the surrounding towns of Bridgewater, Washington, and parts of New Fairfield and Sherman. Several existing buildings dating from the 1830s and 1840s reflect the anticipation by local farmers and businessmen of the economic growth to follow the railroad's opening, and

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the prosperity which did ensue. Among these structures are the William J. Starr house at 20 Main Street, the Burroughs Beach house at 12 Bennitt Street, both built in 1838, and the Nelson Sanford tin and shoemaking shops (1843) at 20, 22, and 24 Bennitt Street.

From 1860 to 1920 the large-scale cultivation of tobacco wrapper leaf on the flat, iron-rich valley flood plain dominated the local agricultural scene. During the 1870s, the industry of sorting, curing, and packing the tobacco for shipment began to alter the face of the town. E.A. Wildman's tobacco warehouse, built in 1868, was the first of the several dozen erected in and around the center of town during the next 50 years. This building remains on its original site beside the tracks and across Bridge Street from the depot.

The tobacco industry employed about 500 men each winter, or approximately ten percent of the town's population.³ While variable market and climate conditions caused sometimes serious fluctuations in the industry, the general popularity of the cigar between 1850 and 1920, and Connecticut's corner on the market kept the state's crop in tremendous demand. According to historian Howard S. Russell in his recent book, A Long, Deep Furrow, an expansive study of New England's agricultural history, "Only a handful of soils elsewhere in the nation could produce cigar leaf of a quality to compare with that grown in the Connecticut and Housatonic Valleys."⁴

During the 1870s and 1880s, the accumulation of capital and the promise of a blossoming economy led many successful New Milford businessmen to diversify. Between 1866 and 1880, Turney Soule and his brother and partner David, had built "seventy-five dwelling houses, ranging from one thousand to eight thousand dollars cash, beside several large tobacco warehouses, store blocks, etc."⁵ In 1873 the Soules entered the tobacco industry, did well, and subsequently joined William and Herman Schoverling, a New York-based firm with a large warehouse in New Milford. Schoverling and Soule became one of the town's principal tobacco companies, packing approximately 1,800 cases yearly, or 800 cases more than the average volume per firm.⁶ In 1880 William Schoverling started the Eastern Lounge Company, manufacturing upholstered reclining chairs. The factory prospered through the 1930s. In 1884 Schoverling and David Soule founded the New Milford Button Company with George Anthony, another successful tobacco dealer.

Reflecting their prosperity and thrift, the Soules, Schoverlings and Anthony each built modest but comfortable residences for themselves on Main and South Main Streets, the most desirable neighborhoods in town in 1882, according to the late-19th-century historian Samuel Orcutt.⁷ Anthony's elegant Italianate residence remains on South Main Street in a line of contemporaneous houses of comparable social class (photograph 7).

By 1880, the demonstrated success of the tobacco industry had drawn many new professionals, merchants and laborers to New Milford. The population increase from 3,586 in 1870 to 3,907 in 1880 was six times the average rate of increase for the previous six decades. Speculative development generated new residential streets and single and two family houses. The Bank Street blocks were filled in with new buildings housing service shops, saloons, hotels, and banks, making the town increasingly attractive for commercial and residential growth. In 1886 the New Milford Gazette Annex, a supplement to the local newspaper, wrote, "(the town's) merchants supply a large section of the surrounding country with groceries and dry goods, furniture, lumber and hardware."⁸

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The steady economic growth and the later-19th-century advances in agricultural science, steampower, and other technological progress brought about a higher standard of public and private comfort. The work of the Village Improvement Society, a private citizens' group formed in 1871, resulted in the landscaping of the green, the construction of the bandstand, and the provision of electric lighting, a central sewer system, and an underground-piped water supply, modern amenities necessary to attract new business and industry. The construction of a new grammar school on East Street in 1876, and the architect-designed public library on Main Street in 1897, reflect the late 19th-century interest in educating the public (photograph 8). The Town Hall, built in 1875 on the prominent corner of Church and Main Streets, was New Milford's first designated public meeting place.

During the 'teens, tobacco production and sales peaked, with 1,700 acres in New Milford in cultivation. Within a few years the Connecticut industry succumbed to the competition of newly popular and cheap synthetic-wrapper cigars, and to the vogue of the cigarette after the first World War. While the number of farms in New Milford and Litchfield dwindled steadily, New Milford's economic base gradually shifted toward diversified manufacturing.

ARCHITECTURE

The New Milford Center Historic District is also significant as a well-preserved townscape whose central green and surrounding architecture embodies the characteristics of the typical, 18th-century-settled, Connecticut town. The nuclear setting of 18th, 19th, and early-20th-century commercial, civic, ecclesiastical, and residential structures bordering an open commons creates an unmistakable sense of the place where townspeople have traditionally gathered to work, worship, play and conduct business and community affairs (Criterion C).

New Milford's green-centered plan probably derived from the first settlers' wishes to have a central area, otherwise unsuited for building or crop cultivation, on which they could graze farm animals. This basis for village planning was sometimes applied in areas of England during the Middle Ages.⁹ In New Milford, the flat, dry site divided by a stream and set well above the arable river flood plain offered the opportunity to geographically concentrate pastureland, buildings, and cropland.

The development of the green evolved from the siting of the first structures facing this north-south linear common ground. The house lots were drawn long and narrow and oriented east-west. Roads later emerged from paths worn along the long edges of the central ground, and west toward the river, ultimately forming the two sections of Main Street, Bennitt Street, and Bridge Street. To accommodate slowly increasing growth during the early 19th century, New Milford's linear town plan was expanded cross-wise. The resulting rough grid street pattern is clearly visible today.

The Center Cemetery, established in 1714, is also significant as a historic landscape associated with the village center, and as a cultural remnant and record of 18th, 19th, and 20th century New Milford. The cemetery is the site of the graves of 50 Revolutionary soldiers, and hundreds of other New Milford citizens.

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New Milford's historic character owes also to its high concentration of 19th- and early 20th-century vernacular buildings (Criterion C). A high quality and quantity of architecture representing the Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne, Early 20th-century Commercial Eclectic, Beaux Arts, and Craftsman periods remains in the district in a generally high level of physical integrity. The district is distinguished particularly by the wide range of vernacular architectural expression within each stylistic period, and by the existence of at least one building in each period which is an excellent vernacular example of the particular style. While three buildings in the district are known to have been designed by an architect, the consultant has concluded that there are no high style examples of any architectural period in the district.

The domestic building stock spans the entire stylistic range represented, or from c. 1770-1935. Most of the commercial and institutional buildings fall within the period between 1850 and 1935. Approximately 75 percent of the district's buildings retain their original facades or have been insignificantly altered. The remaining percentage have sustained moderate to severe alteration, consisting primarily of the remodeling of storefronts on Railroad and Bank Streets.

Five buildings constructed during the 18th-century remain within the district's boundaries. Their architectural diversity reflects the evolution from the central chimney to the central hall plan. The most highly developed example is Elijah Boardman house, a very late-period example of Georgian domestic architecture (photograph 2, IF #16).^{*} Owing to its close similarity to the several Georgian houses in Litchfield which were compiled from English pattern books by master builder William Spratt, it is possible that he also inspired Boardman's house. The facade is characteristic of most country Georgian houses; the middle bay of the second story projects and contains a Palladian window, suggesting the presence of the wide central hallway behind. The fluted, Ionic columns before the entrance, and the quoins and elaborate modillion-blocked cornice reflect architectural sophistication relative to contemporaneous buildings in New Milford.

Ithamar Canfield, another merchant and business partner of Boardman's, built a large Federal style clapboard house in 1825, which also reflects the earliest success of slowly increasing trade within the village (photograph 3, IF #93). As in Canfield's house, New Milfordites generally clung to the 18th-century architectural practice of orienting the roof ridge parallel to the street, longer than people building in the Connecticut River Valley or coastal communities.

This building retains its fanlit and sidelit entrance, second-story Palladian windows, elliptical attic window, and quoins. The Classical Revival portico is an addition designed by the architect Ehrick Rossiter for owner Charles Merritt Beach. Two smaller brick houses built in 1812 (2 East St. and 11 Grove Street, IF #s 167 and 168) are very good, simpler examples of vernacular Federal domestic architecture in the district. Another excellent example of the Federal mode is the comparably sophisticated Dr. George Taylor house, built c. 1827, near head of the green (photograph 4, IF #143). The spacious entrance hall of this temple-fronted residence contains an elegant, curved, open staircase.

* (IF#) refers to the Inventory Form numbers for each structure listed in the New Milford Historic Resources Survey, completed in 1979.

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A high number of Greek Revival period dwellings displaying a wide variety of forms and details remain in the district. A regionally noteworthy example of Greek Revival architecture is the classical temple front of the Congregational Church (1833), which stands on the green (photograph 1, far left, IF #146). The church has a well-proportioned, Doric-columned classical portico and a Wrenian tower. The former Episcopal Church (1837), is a more typical example of the Greek Revival mode in New Milford (photograph 5, IF #126). Before its conversion for commercial use in 1882, the church had a short, square tower and no front windows or porch. The flush-jointed front siding and flat-board architrave and pilasters are characteristic of the rural area's simplified interpretations of the Greek Revival mode, which lasted well into the 1850s.

The influence of the mid-19th-century Italianate style is visible in the Lockwood house (photograph 3, far right, IF #92) built in 1866, and in several contemporaneous houses on South Main Street (photograph 6, IF #s 84-88). The popularity of the two-story, flat-roofed, bracketed dwelling is evident in the several such houses which remain in town. One of the best examples of this vernacular Italianate mode in the town is the George Anthony house at 36 South Main Street. This residence exhibits a greater sensitivity to the larger scale and more vertical proportions of the style (photograph 7, IF #70).

Examples of how national architectural trends were applied locally are more prevalent in New Milford's non-domestic, later 19th-century buildings. The fourth church built by the Episcopalians, and the memorial library, erected in 1882 and 1897, respectively, show the increasing architectural diversity of the post Civil-War period, and the relatively new availability of structural, fireproof steel and Portland cement. With the construction of the Norman-Gothic Revival stone church and Richardsonian Romanesque library (photograph 8, IF #s 149 and 123) the scale of the predominantly residential green took on a new monumentality. The latter was designed by Bridgeport architect Joseph Northrup, and is one of the few architect-designed buildings in the district. The polychrome library is architecturally comparable to other Romanesque Revival structures in the region.

The wood structures built during the last two decades of the 19th century in New Milford are characterized by restrained, vernacular interpretations of Victorian Gothic and Queen Anne architecture. It is the architectural continuity of the residential neighborhoods of the post-Civil War period, or South Main Street, East Street, Church Street, and Whittelsey Avenue, which, to a great extent, give the town center its historic character. Most of the houses of the 1880s and 1890s are gable-roofed, cruciform in plan, and have a corner entry porch. Although it is not a house, the Water Witch Hose Firehouse, raised in 1889 on Church Street, captures the architectural character of these late-19th-century residential neighborhoods (photograph 9, IF #128).

Bank and Railroad Streets are outstanding for their continuous blockfronts of three-story masonry turn-of-the-century commercial vernacular buildings (photographs 10, 11 and 12). The 1930 Art Moderne facade is the sole example of Art Moderne in New Milford, and one of the best in Connecticut.¹⁰ On the green and scattered along Bridge Street are several diverse and strong examples of early 20th-century residential architecture. Among these are a large, two-family transitional Victorian shingle style-

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house, c. 1900 (60 Bridge Street, IF #94), two American Foursquare dwellings (63 and 65 Bridge Street, IF #s 100 and 101), an unusual, one-story variant of the Prairie style (6 South Main Street, IF #59), and a Craftsman Style house (16 Main Street, IF #125).

The presence of the New Milford green as the traditional, symbolic center and the architectural quality of the surrounding buildings embody the characteristics of the typical, 18th-century-settled, Connecticut town.

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END NOTES

1. Howard S. Russell, A Long, Deep Furrow, p. 307.
2. Daniel P. Tyler, statistics, pp. 147-148.
3. Historical Committee of New Milford, p. 86.
4. Russell, p. 307.
5. History of Litchfield County, p. 458.
6. Orcutt, p. 527.
7. Orcutt, p. 502.
8. New Milford Gazette Annex, May 1886.
9. Richard Muir, The English Village, p. 76.
10. CT Association of Historic Theaters, Survey of CT Theaters

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Maps

c. 1850 map of the center of New Milford (CT State Library)

1859 wall map of New Milford (New Milford Library)

1867 map of New Milford Center. Atlas of New York and Vicinity.
Beers, Ellis and Soule.

1874 map of New Milford Center. Atlas of Litchfield County. F.W. Beers Co.

1882 map of New Milford Center. Atlas of Litchfield County. F.W. Beers Co.

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- A 18/ 632900 4604800
- B 632940 4604560
- C 632730 4604300
- D 632820 4604140
- E 632640 4604100
- F 632780 4603960
- G 632680 4603740
- H 632780 4603740
- I 632800 4603640
- J 632720 4603620
- K 632560 4603720
- L 632560 4603340

- M 632480 4603840
- N 632340 4603780
- O 632260 4603960
- P 632420 4603920
- Q 632300 4604080
- R 632320 4604240
- S 632180 4604240
- T 632100 4604200
- U 632260 4604320
- V 632480 4604280
- W 632600 4604240
- X 632800 4604820

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VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The district includes those streets, structures and sites that relate historically, functionally, and visually to the green. Hence, the included area extends beyond the center to encompass the 18th-century Center Cemetery, an approximately 17-acre plot off the northeast corner of the town center, and South Main Street, a 19th-century residential neighborhood south of the green. Generally, the district's boundaries lie along topographical or man-made features, such as a natural hollow or railroad tracks, which form cognitive edges in the townscape.

Starting from the northeast corner of the cemetery (and the district), the nominated area is bounded on the east by open land extending south to Brookside Avenue. The line jogs east to include a Victorian shingle style church on Tax Map Lot 108. The line then turns into the body of the district to exclude a mid-20th-century shopping center on the corner of Brookside Avenue and East Street. The line then follows Great Brook to include a continuous row of Victorian dwellings on the east side of East Street, and diverges from the stream north of the intersection of East and Bridge Streets to exclude a gas station. The southeast chunk of the district is formed by the property lines of two Federal-style brick houses which are set well back from the main roads but visible from them.

The south boundary returns to Great Brook, the line of which coincides with all but one of the rear lines of the properties on the east side of South Main Street, a Victorian residential neighborhood visible from the green. The district boundary line turns west along the north side of Mill Street, the latter of which is part of another neighborhood not visible from the green.

The west boundary then follows the path of the railroad tracks north, also the rear line of several properties fronting on the west side of South Main Street. At Middle Street the line diverges from the tracks to exclude a neighborhood of dwellings and industrial buildings which do not relate visually to the green area, and follows the rear property lines of South Main Street lots. The line turns east, north, and west around the South Main-East Street intersection to exclude a group of larger scale, mid-20th-century brick buildings and two gas stations at the corners of Main and Railroad Streets. The line cuts through the center of the block to include the turn-of-the-century commercial buildings and their lots fronting on Bank Street.

The west boundary follows the east side of Railroad Street to exclude the New Milford Railroad Station (already listed on the National Register) and the entire west side of Railroad Street, which consists of parking lots and inappropriately remodeled structures. The line turns east into the body of the district to include turn-of-the-century buildings fronting on Bank Street and to exclude open lots and several architecturally undistinguished structures on Railroad Street, the west side of Main Street, and the northwest corner of Main and Bennitt Streets. The boundary then turns west again to include a concentration of 19th-century houses and shops on Bennitt and upper Railroad Streets. Except for the building on the corner of Aspetuck and Bennitt Streets, which is a new and architecturally incompatible structure, four Victorian buildings on the west side of Aspetuck Avenue are included because they are significant architecturally and are visible from the green.

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The line turns east to exclude a parking lot north of these houses and to include an 18th-century building, an early 20th-century school, and a Victorian house on Elm Street. The line crosses Elm Street to exclude the large, mid-20th-century New Milford Hospital buildings, and to include a continuous line of 19th-century houses on the south side of Elm Street. The line turns north to include a Victorian house on the corner of Elm Street and Route 202, then east and north to exclude buildings unrelated to the green area and to include the cemetery. The cemetery is included because it was established on its present site in 1714, as part of the first settlement and layout of the town center.