

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

APR 25 1983

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

N/A

AND/OR COMMON

Indian Hill Avenue Historic District

2 LOCATION

Intersection of Main Street and Indian Hill Avenue West to River

STREET & NUMBER

N/A -- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Portland

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

Connecticut

VICINITY OF

N/A

CODE

09

COUNTY

Middlesex

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multiple Ownership

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

" "

STATE

" N/A -- VICINITY OF

"

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Portland Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Town Hall - 265 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Portland

STATE

CT 06480

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1983

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Indian Hill Avenue is a short street running west from Main Street to the Connecticut River in the northern part of Portland, Connecticut. The River bends westward at this point and then turns southward again, so that the river forms the western and northern edges of the neighborhood. Just to the north is a large island in the river, Gildersleeve Island. The land is high enough above the water as to be generally free of swampiness, though there is some marshy ground around the point where a small brook, Taylor Creek, flows into the river. The land slopes upward forming a plateau near the middle of the avenue, which takes a slight bend at this point, then it falls off, rising again as the avenue joins Main Street. The soil in the neighborhood has been classified into three types of sandy loam, as indicated on the accompanying map.

Of the 32 major structures in the proposed district, 15 have been judged to be noncontributing to the historical character of the district, a character created by the remaining 17 buildings, most of which are 18th or early 19th-century houses. Four of the noncontributing buildings form the complex of the Petzold Marina (Photograph 9), a pleasure-craft sale, storage and repair business built on the site of a much earlier shipyard: presumably the concrete and steel structures which make up the marina have covered over any historic archaeological remains of earlier enterprises. Two others of the noncontributing structures are the brick and cinderblock buildings of the rubber factory (Photograph 2). In addition to these, there are six houses of fairly recent construction (Photograph 15), an old house which has lost its historic appearance (663 Main Street), the recreation pavilion at the end of the avenue, and a cinderblock bowling alley set back from both Main Street and Indian Hill Avenue (Photograph 3).

Of the historic structures in the proposed district, eight are from the 18th century, including both 1½- and 2½-story examples and a gambrel roof as well as the standard gable. These all have their ridgelines set parallel to the road and generally have central chimneys, symmetric three or five-bay facades with central entranceways, brownstone underpinnings, and at least some raised panelling in most of the interiors (Photographs 4, 6, 11, 13, 14, and 16). Three of the contributing buildings are Greek Revival houses with their gable ends facing the road and a pediment effect created by a full cornice return (Photographs 12 and 15). The district also includes three rather plain Victorian-period houses, with Carpenter Gothic, Stick-Style and Eastlake trim around their entranceways (Photographs 7 and 8). In addition to the houses, there are two stores which date to the 1850s, one built of brick (Photograph 1), and a long, narrow four-family tenement built in 1873 to house workers at a steam sawmill once located on the site of the rubber factory (Photograph 5). The district's houses are generally quite plain, with limited ornament confined to the entrances. Most are in an unrestored state, with more recent additions such as dormers and porches and modern siding materials partly obscuring their historical integrity.

The district includes one significant object, in addition to the inventoried structures: a wrecked wooden barge, probably built at the Gildersleeve shipyard around 1900, and lying partly buried in the riverbank at the northwest corner of the marina's lot (Photograph 10).

Several sites within the district have been associated with reports of Indian burial discoveries. No formal archaeological testing has occurred, but the reports of burials detailed in the inventory which follows, osteological

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Portland, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE 1

LIST OF PROPERTY OWNERS from Portland Assessor's Records, June 15, 1982

MAP/BLOCK/LOT ADDRESS	OWNER AND ADDRESS (If different)	CONTRIBUTING/ NONCONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES (C/NC)*
72/12/14,15 Indian Hill Avenue	Airex Rubber Products P.O. Box 247, Portland, CT 06480	NC
72/12/13 32 Indian Hill Avenue	Gerald W. & Lorraine Belcher	C
72/12/12 36 Indian Hill Avenue	Salvatore A. & Fayette Rossitto	NC
72/12/11 40 Indian Hill Avenue	George A. Stevenson	C
72/12/10 42 Indian Hill Avenue	J. Robert & Ethel W. Wilcox Pepperidge Road, Portland, CT 06480	C
72/12/9 46 Indian Hill Avenue	Jane Rich	C
72/12/8 52 Indian Hill Avenue	Rudolph Lustig	C
72/12/7 54 Indian Hill Avenue	Audrey Samuelson	NC
72/12/6 58 Indian Hill Avenue	Brian F. Wood	C
72/12/76 64 Indian Hill Avenue	Richard A. & Martha V. Johnson	C
72/12/0-73 Cor. Indian Hill Ave. & Taylor Drive	Jack E. & Sara J. Sutcliffe 24 Taylor Road Portland, CT 06480	NC
72/12/4 70 Indian Hill Avenue	Stanley L. & Anna L. Rustek	C
72/12/3 74 Indian Hill Avenue	Mildred & Clifford L. Post	NC
72/12/2 76 Indian Hill Avenue	Mildred Post & Margaret Goodrich	C
72/12/1 Indian Hill Avenue	Portland Hose Company & Volunteer Firemen's Recreational Association, Inc. Portland, CT 06480	NC

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

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

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MAP/BLOCK/LOT ADDRESS	OWNER AND ADDRESS	CONTRIBUTING/ NONCONTRIBUTING
12/95/5 3 Indian Hill Avenue	Monroe A. & Dorris Sherrow	C
12/9/6 5 Indian Hill Avenue	Anna E. O'Brien	
12/95/7 7 Indian Hill Avenue	Robert S. and Elizabeth J. Gomola 405 Main Street Portland, CT 06480	NC
12/95/8 15 Indian Hill Avenue	John L. & Esther M. Czajka	C
12/95/9 21 Indian Hill Avenue	Olivia Bosworth Kohler	C
12/95/10 Indian Hill Avenue (Shipyard)	William J. Petzold, Jr. P.O. Box 27 Portland, CT 06480	NC
12/95/11 41 Indian Hill Avenue	Wallace P. Robley & Brenda Lisitano-Robley	NC
12/95/13, 13A 51 Indian Hill Avenue	William J. & Agnes B. Petzold, Sr. P.O. Box 27 Portland, CT 06480	Land only
12/95/14 57 Indian Hill Avenue	Joseph Rachbauer Box 247, RD 2 Killingworth, CT 06417	C
12/95/15, 16, 16B Indian Hill Avenue	William J. & Agnes B. Petzold, Sr. P.O. Box 27 Portland, CT 06480	Land only
12/95/16A Indian Hill Avenue	Clifford L. & Mildred Post 74 Indian Hill Avenue Portland, CT 06480	Land only
72/12/17 644 Main Street	Clara Opuszynski 642 Main Street Portland, CT 06480	C
72/12/16 646 Main Street	Max Grower	C
12/95/4 660 Main Street	Joel F. Smith & George E. Scheer, Jr.	C

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Continuation sheet Portland, CT Item number 4 Page 3

MAP/BLOCK/LOT ADDRESS	OWNER AND ADDRESS	CONTRIBUTING/ NONCONTRIBUTING
12/95/3 668 Main Street	Richard D. & Terry O. Kelsey	NC

*
NOTE: The assessment of a property's contribution reflects the architectural and historical significance of structures on that property, and is not intended as an evaluation of the archaeological significance or potential associated with the property.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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Surveys (continued):

Historic Resources of Portland

Ongoing - Local

Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
Middletown, CT

Indian Hill Avenue has been finished and was made available for this report.

A Preliminary Analysis of Documented Historic Burials at Indian Hill,
Portland, Connecticut

1979 - Local

Public Archeology Survey Team
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT

Copy with Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, CT

**United States Department of the Interior
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materials purported to have come from these burial sites, and a wealth of cultural material remains, such as projectile points, recovered from the area of Indian Hill Avenue all suggest that the area possesses prehistoric archaeological significance. Objects in collections from Indian Hill include many prehistoric archaeological artifacts; numerous projectile points (Photograph 17), some early Archaic period bifurcate points (Photograph 18), and undateable objects such as stone mortars and tool pre-forms (Photograph 19) are noted within these local collections.

The boundaries of the district were chosen to reflect the patterns of historic settlement, insofar as they are known. The river forms easily delineated borders on the north and west, and Main Street was taken as the eastern boundary because its character is predominantly 19th-century, reflecting a later period of growth in the area's history than the largely 18th-century Indian Hill settlement. The boundaries of the district include all of the hypothetical extent of burials as posited by the report of the Public Archaeology Survey Team, as well as coinciding closely with the boundaries of the Wangunk tract sold in 1765.

The inventory on the following pages provides more detailed descriptions of the structures and the reported sites of burials. Numbers in the inventory and on the map are street numbers as recorded in the Assessor's records.

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INVENTORY OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Indian Hill Avenue:

3. JOB BATES HOUSE, c.1755, 1½ stories, clapboarded, gable roof, brownstone foundation. Small peaked dormer in the center of the roof a later addition. Five-bay facade, with breaks in the cornice bed moldings forming breaks as caps over the windows. Original interior features include wide floor boards, one room with a raised-panel fireplace wall (another panelled wall is covered by a later stairway, and a large kitchen fireplace.
5. DAVID BATES HOUSE, 1779, 2½ stories, clapboarded, gable roof, brownstone foundation. Five-bay facade with central entrance. Mid 19th-century alterations include an open Italianate veranda across the front, two small brick chimneys near the ends, and interior detailing, including a 7x8' ice box and polished wood bar in the basement, remnants of the building's days as a tavern.
15. JOHN BUTTON HOUSE, c.1800, 2½ stories, asphalt siding over clapboards, brownstone foundation, gable roof. Five-bay facade with central, sidelighted entranceway. Original twelve-over-eight light in the west gable. Interior features include beam casings, panelled wainscoting, and kitchen fireplace with oven. Photograph 4.
21. GILDERSLEEVE TENEMENT HOUSE, 1873, 1½ stories, four-unit tenement set back from the street. Facade (east side) has two double entrances sheltered by simple shed-roofed porches. Small windows light the attic story. Six-over-six sash, asphalt siding. Photograph 5.
32. ELIJAH SHEPARD HOUSE, c.1800, 2½ stories, wood shingled, gable roof, brownstone foundation. Five-bay facade with central transomed entrance. Roof was raised to 2½ stories in the 19th-century. Interior remains include wide-board floors and, possibly, panelling beneath the present walls. Photograph 6
40. THEODORE F. LEWIS HOUSE, c.1846, 2 stories, gable end to street, shallow-pitch roof, clapboarded, brick foundation. Peaked entrance shelter on stick-style braces, with vine-like bargeboard in front, probably added after 1870. Six-over-six sash. Photograph 7.
42. JOHN R. LEWIS HOUSE, c. 1880, plain with Stick-Style ornament, 1½ stories, gable end to street orientation, asbestos siding, brownstone foundation. Peaked entrance shelter on stick braces has scalloping along its edges. Main gable has scissor-truss type bracing with a pendant hanging from the intersection. Photograph 8.

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Contributing Structures (continued):

46. ABIEL CHENEY-GEORGE LEWIS, JR. HOUSE, c.1785, 2½ stories, five-bay facade with central entrance, brownstone foundation, large central chimney, fully exposed basement story. Doorway reached by later steps and enclosed porch. Aluminum siding. Photograph 11.
52. WILLIAM DIXON HOUSE, 1849, Greek Revival; 2½ stories, gable end to the street orientation, full cornice return. Exterior altered with modern wood shingles, enclosed porch across facade. Original appearance was very similar to # 57.
57. RICHARD CONKLIN HOUSE, 1849, Greek Revival, 2½ stories, gable end facing the street, brownstone foundation, full cornice return, wood-shingled exterior. Corner pilasters, six-over-six sash, pilastered and sidelighted doorway sheltered by pediment-roofed portico on Tuscan columns (probably a replacement). Photograph 12.
58. PHILIP GILDERSLEEVE HOUSE, c. 1787, 2½ stories, three-bay facade, central chimney, brownstone foundation, aluminum siding. Sidelighted central entrance has paneled pilasters, pulvinated frieze, and corner blocks, a late Federal-period addition. Some interior panelling remains. Photograph 13.
64. JOHN PELTON, JR. HOUSE, c.1796, 2½ stories, 5-bay facade with central entrance (asymmetric), large stack placed off-center, brick foundation. Windows have six-over-six sash. Hewn overhang at the level of the second story. Outline of a previous roof on the chimney show the house was raised from a 1½-story, gambrel-roofed structure. Interior features include original floors, fireplaces, panelling. Photograph 14.
70. SARAH LINCOLN HOUSE, c.1870, 2½ stories, gable end to street, brownstone foundation, aluminum siding, full cornice return, six-over-six sash. Photograph 15.
76. THOMAS STEVENSON HOMESTEAD, c.1766, 1½ stories, gambrel roof with one shed dormer, three-bay facade, brownstone foundation. Alterations include wood shingled exterior, small central stack, and two-over-two sash. Photograph 16.

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Inventory of Contributing Structures (continued):

Main Street

644. BUCKINGHAM STORE, c.1850, 2 stories, shallow-pitched roof, gable end to the street, central entranceway, some six-over-six sash, rear ell with residence. Presently a package store. Photograph 1.
646. GILDERSLEEVE STORE, 1855, brick, 2 stories, shallow-pitched roof, gable end to the street, brownstone foundation and window trim. Some six-over-six sash. Central doorway flanked by display windows, under a flat-roofed porch carried on square columns. Now a floor and wall covering store. Photograph 1.
660. House, c.1880, 2 stories, L-shaped plan with intersecting gable roofs and a peaked dormer on the ell. Asbestos sided. Bracketed bay on the facade and a bracketed porch across the ell. Windows have two-over-two sash and Eastlake trim, including consoles, vine-like molding, and applied turned forms on the casings.

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Prehistoric Archeological Sites:

General Areas of Burial

- A. "Several skeletons have been plowed out in repairing the road in this vicinity (Theodore Lewis House, 40 Indian Hill Avenue)" (Neff, 183).
- B. "Evidence of burials of the natives have been found on the left bank of Taylor's Creek as it enters the Connecticut" (Field, 1853, p. 36).
- C. "An indian gravestone lay of several years in the dooryard at George Conklin's"(57 Indian Hill Avenue); "Bought what may be an indian idol or perhaps a totem stone of Mr. Joseph Gleason who lives at the old Conklin house;" "A skeleton was washed out about the year 1840 by a heavy rain near the residence of George Conklin, having a long string of beads wound several times about the arm." (Neff, 179, 209,184).

Specific Burials

- D. "Four indian skeletons were found June 14, 1899 in digging a trench for a water pipe at the house of Frederick Gladwin (36 Indian Hill Avenue)" (Neff, 194).
- E. "In digging the cellar for the Theodore Lewis House it is said that many indian skeletons were found. They were put in a pile and afterwards buried in the corner of the old Lewis garden." (40 Indian Hill Avenue) (Neff, 183).
- F. "Their burial place was further to the east near where Mr. John Lewis's house (42 Indian Hill Avenue) stands, under the chimney of which is the skeleton of a gigantic Indian" (Beers, 497).
- G. Oral tradition locates the John Onckous gravestone at 45 Indian Hill Avenue; "on it is written: Here lies the body of John Onckous, who died Aug. the 30, 1722, aged 26 years." (Field, 1853).
- H. Four burials were found in the backyard of 46 Indian Hill Avenue in the 1930s. One of the skulls is in a private collection.

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National Park Service**

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Inventory of Noncontributing structures:

- Indian Hill Avenue (Lot 72/12/14 & 15), Airex Rubber factory, one 1-story brick building, attached 2-story frame and brick ell, separate 1-story cinderblock building. Part may date to 1910. Photograph 2.
- 7 Indian Hill Avenue, 2-story cinderblock bowling alley. Photograph 3.
- 36 Indian Hill Avenue, 2-story frame house, probably post-World War II.
- 54 Indian Hill Avenue, 1½-story frame house, recent construction.
- 74 Indian Hill Avenue, 1-story ranch-style house, 1955. Photograph 15.
- 31 Indian Hill Avenue, Petzold Shipyard, large steel-sided marine building, frame 2-story marine stores building, 2 smaller steel-sided buildings, brick modern residence. Photograph 9.
- 41 Indian Hill Avenue, 1½-story frame house, c. 1930.
- 668 Main Street, greatly altered 1864 house; brownstone foundation, new sash, sided, roof altered to flat roof with no cornice.
- 28 Taylor Drive, 1966 ranch-style house.
- End of Indian Hill Avenue, Fireman's Recreation Area pavilion, 1-story concrete structure, 1965.

6 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1765 - sold to the English BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Indian Hill Avenue has been the site of human activity for thousands of years, and the evidence of this habitation makes the area a significant addition to the National Register of Historic Places. From the relatively recent past, the barge wreck, tenement house, and two mid-19th century stores recall the importance of the area as a commercial center and shipbuilding site. The houses along Indian Hill Avenue are historically significant, as they were inhabited by some of the earliest English settlers of the area, and later by some of the ship carpenters which made the area a prosperous place. The historical development of the neighborhood is mirrored in these structures (Criterion A). Although they are plain and somewhat modernized, these houses illustrate well the vernacular architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries, and therefore the district has an architectural significance as well (Criterion C). Finally, Indian Hill Avenue has a long-standing reputation as one of the prime locations for the discovery of Indian artifacts in the entire Middletown area. Although no formal archeological testing has been done to date, the concentration of artifacts in the area and the documentary and physical evidence of several burials there give Indian Hill Avenue an archaeological potential (Criterion D).

At the time of the English arrival, the town which is now Portland was occupied by people called Wangunks or Wongunks. Although they had their own leaders, they were apparently a subsidiary group of the Mattabesetts of Middletown, and through them, were part of a larger political entity embracing many of the groups in the greater Hartford-Middletown area. Beginning in 1672 the town of Middletown began purchasing land on the east side of the river from the Wangunks, who reserved from the sale 100 acres in the Wangunk meadows north of the proposed district, 23 acres around what is now Indian Hill Avenue, and about 200 acres near the junction of Main and Bartlett Streets. In 1748 part of the last-named tract was sold for the second parish meeting house, and in 1765 the remaining Wangunk land was sold and divided into parcels. The proceeds were used to support the remaining Wangunk people in the town, but there were only a few left: in 1764 the majority of the group joined the Podunks and others at Farmington, and later migrated to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, then New York, and finally settled in 1834 in Calumet County, Wisconsin. As late as 1850, however, Wangunk visitors were reported in the area, having returned to Portland to visit the graves of their forbears ("Indian Proprietors of Mattabeseck"). In addition to the migrants, it appears that there were some Wangunks who stayed in the area but adopted more of the Europeans' customs, such as Christianity and individual ownership of land.

Throughout 19th-century writings on Portland (Field, 1819, 1853; Beers, 1884) Indian Hill is described as an important Wangunk burial place, and this undoubtedly explains why the Wangunks reserved that place after selling off most of their other land. According to this tradition, the Wangunks used the place for burial before the English arrival and for some time thereafter. Although the descriptions in the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Beers, J.B. (ed.). History of Middlesex County. New York: J.B. Beers & Co., 1884.
Commemorative Biography of Middlesex County. Chicago: J.H. Beers, 1905.
Connecticut Archives, Series I. Indians, Vol. II. Connecticut State Library.
Field, David D. A Statistical Account of the County of Middlesex. Middletown: Clark & Lyman, 1819.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY about 35

QUADRANGLE NAME Middle Haddam, Middletown

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A

ZONE	EASTING								

B

ZONE	EASTING								

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

see continuation sheet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

N/A

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Bruce Clouette, Consultant, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission DATE May 26, 1980

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN Hartford STATE CT


12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

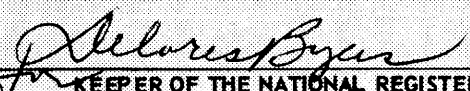
DATE April 8, 1983

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Entered in the
National Register

DATE 5/26/83


KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: _____ DATE _____

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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Significance (continued):

local histories are sketchy, the reported burials are intriguing because they show the indigenous culture changing in the face of European settlement. Supposedly, the "sitting" posture was common, with ornaments, weapons, utensils, and "wampum" placed in the grave. Some of these items appear to have been European manufactured goods, such as a small brass cup found in a child's grave.¹ Field (1819) described the place as having some inscribed monuments after the English fashion, and one of these was recorded in 1853: "Here lies the body of John Onckous, who died Aug., the 30, 1722, aged 26 years." Although the digging of foundations, road work, and erosion have ruined many of these discoveries, it is not unreasonable to assume that burials from this early historic period remain, and if carefully, respectfully investigated by archaeologists, could illuminate the history of Portland's native inhabitants.

Indian Hill Avenue's archaeological potential is also suggested by the wealth of "arrowheads" and other artifacts collected there over the years. In the late 19th century, amateur archaeologist Charles H. Neff collected many things there, and proclaimed it one of the best spots in the area for digging up points and similar relics. His collection is fairly well cataloged as to time and place of discovery (mostly surface collection after plowing) but is presently stored at Wesleyan University and is not available. Other collections have been less specific, but the plethora of projectile points in these local collections (Photograph 17) suggests that Indian Hill Avenue was the focus of unusually intense activity. Moreover, there are a great number of Archaic-period bifurcate points (Photograph 18) which indicate activity at this spot for several thousands of years. Although systematic evaluation of the district's archaeological potential is lacking, the weight of documentary evidence and the numerous artifacts discovered by collectors suggest that the area is far above the ordinary in the duration and intensity of pre-European activity, and should be treated with a careful regard for potential archaeological resources.

Specifically, the human skeletal remains uncovered in the proposed Indian Hill Avenue National Register District are a significant archaeological resource for the study of the Aboriginal/European contact period and the interaction of Indians and Whites during the 17th and 18th centuries in central Connecticut. Human osteological remains and the information to be derived from study of their morphology, context and artifactual associations, provide a rare body of data for the reconstruction of late prehistoric and early contact period demographics, stature and disease, as well as specific attributes of aboriginal society and ideology.

The recovered skeletal remains along Indian Hill Avenue, their proximity to one another and their artifactual and documentary associations clearly indicate that this is the site of an aboriginal cemetery of the historic period. The burial sites have yielded evidence of European items found in other similar sites in association with aboriginal burials of the contact period. Specific comparative information which may be used to place the site within an interpretive context is provided by the historic Indian burials excavated at the West Ferry site on Conanicut Island in Rhode Island.

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Fifty nine Narragansett graves dating to the 17th century were excavated by William Simmons. The associated artifacts of the same type as the brass cup and trade beads recovered at Indian Hill, permitted dating of the site to the 17th century. At Indian Hill the excavated graves are supplemented by other graves with stone markers with inscribed Indian names of the 18th century. In addition, the flexed burial position at Indian Hill (usually erroneously reported as a sitting position in the historical records), was the dominant position for mortuary ceremonialism and body orientation in southern New England during the historic period. The historic skeletons at the West Ferry site were flexed and oriented towards the southwest.

The unexcavated portion of the Indian Hill cemetery is undoubtedly quite large, since 59 graves were uncovered together in Rhode Island and less than a dozen at Indian Hill. The archaeological potential of this site is great in that it probably contains intact deposits of historic Indian burials. Large areas comprising the backyards along the south side of Indian Hill Avenue remain unexcavated suggesting that the integrity of this site has remained largely unaltered by the 18th century architecture comprising the proposed National Register District.

To date, relatively few examples of contact period Indian cemeteries have survived the ravages of time and development in Connecticut and particularly in Portland. Thus, in terms of local survivals the Indian Hill cemetery is probably unique. The site undoubtedly contains trade goods, aboriginal products and the skeletons themselves, which are invaluable and rare sources of information for understanding such problems as the form and physical condition of contact period Indian populations, the nature of disease and health practices among these people, the attributes of religious ideology, ceremonial forms and mortuary practices, and the prevalence of aboriginal technology and the adoption of goods of European origin. The information contained within the Indian Hill site would provide comparative materials so that research questions designed to distinguish Connecticut aboriginal peoples from those better known to the north, east and west, could be answered.

The architectural significance of the district is much more concrete. No where else in Portland is there such a concentration of 18th-century and early 19th-century houses. Although not as well-preserved as those in some other districts in the state, these houses are important locally because they illustrate the typical building customs of the area's early settlers. The use of native stone (Portland brownstone), the central stacks, the orientation of the early houses with their ridge parallel to the street, raised-panelling interior walls, and the symmetrical three- and five-bay facades are the hallmarks of vernacular 18th-century building. The houses are devoid of ornament, except for two which have Federal-period entranceways (Photographs 4 and 13). The nineteenth century is well-represented by the typical Greek Revival house at 57 Indian Hill Avenue, whose corner pilasters and fully returned cornice are representative of country building of the period. Victorian decorative devices may be seen in the bargeboard-like entrance trim at 40 Indian Hill Avenue, the Stick-Style bracing next door (Photographs 6 and 7), and the Eastlake turnings applied to the window trim of 660 Main Street. These later buildings illustrate how vernacular building, while still rather plain, incorporated decorative elements from the more fully developed historical styles of the 19th century.

The buildings are also important for local history, because they are associated with

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the historical development of Indian Hill Avenue (earlier called Shipyard Lane) as a shipbuilding and commercial center. The English had built a few small vessels there even before the Wangunks sold the land, but the shipbuilding potential of the place was one of the reasons local settlers petitioned the Assembly to buy the land at Indian Hill. The river was deep there, and sheltered from storms in nearly every direction, since the river took a bend there and had Gildersleeve Island to the north. Houses of early settlers include the Job Bates House (3 Indian Hill Avenue), built by a blacksmith "through mistake"² on Wangunk Land before its sale in 1765. Another blacksmith, Thomas Stevenson, and his ship carpenter brother Robert, build the gambrel-roofed house at the end of the street soon after 1765; it was later owned by the operator of the ferry which crossed the river between Middletown and a landing at the end of the lane. Within a few years there were four or five small shipyards building vessels of all sorts, and consequently blacksmith shops, hardware and supply stores, taverns (such as 5 Indian Hill Avenue) and small craft shops connected with the shipbuilding industry. The Philip Gildersleeve House, 58 Indian Hill Avenue, is especially important, since he was the progenitor of a shipbuilding family that would dominate the economy of the place throughout the 19th century and who gave the name Gildersleeve to the locale. Philip was master carpenter for the building of the 514-ton U.S. ship Connecticut in 1798. Other houses with significant historical associations are the house of shipyard owner George Lewis, Jr. (46 Indian Hill Avenue) and those of master carpenters Elijah Shepard, John Button, Richard Conklin and William Dixon (32, 15, 57 and 52 Indian Hill Avenue; see photographs 4, 6, 11, 12, 13 and 15). After about 1840, when there were numerous yards and 90 ship carpenters in Portland (then called Chatham), shipbuilding declined, but even in 1860 when there was but one yard left, S. Gildersleeve and Sons, the industry was second only to the famous Portland brownstone quarries in the number hands employed. After the Civil War, the Gildersleeves turned to building barges, scows and lighters, as railroads and iron ships took away their earlier business of large wooden ships. The barge wrecked on the banks of the river is a typical product of the Gildersleeve yard in its last phase, the only visible relic of this important industry whose site is now occupied by the newer marina.

The Gildersleeve family did not confine itself to shipbuilding. In the 1850's Sylvester Gildersleeve build the brick store on the corner for one of his sons, and in later years the Gildersleeve country store became more financially important to the family than the yard. Sylvester dreamed of a manufacturing village at Indian Hill, and beginning in 1868 built a steam-powered sawmill and lumber yard near his shipyard. He also constructed a four-family tenement to house the workers, and in addition bought up and rented out many of the previously-built houses in the area. Although the site did not become the boom town he hoped for, the sawmill and lumber yard were important enterprises in their own right, as well as contributing material for the shipyard. One of their specialties was Southern yellow pine, first imported for shipbuilding, but later in great demand in the Victorian period for interior trim. The store, barge wreck, tenement house, and Philip Gildersleeve homestead remain today to mark the enterprise of this important Portland family, one which gave its name to the vicinity as well as endowing local churches and schools.

¹Brass would undoubtedly be European in origin, although copper objects may have come from the Great Lakes region.

²Connecticut Archives, Series I, Indians, Vol. II. State Library, Hartford.

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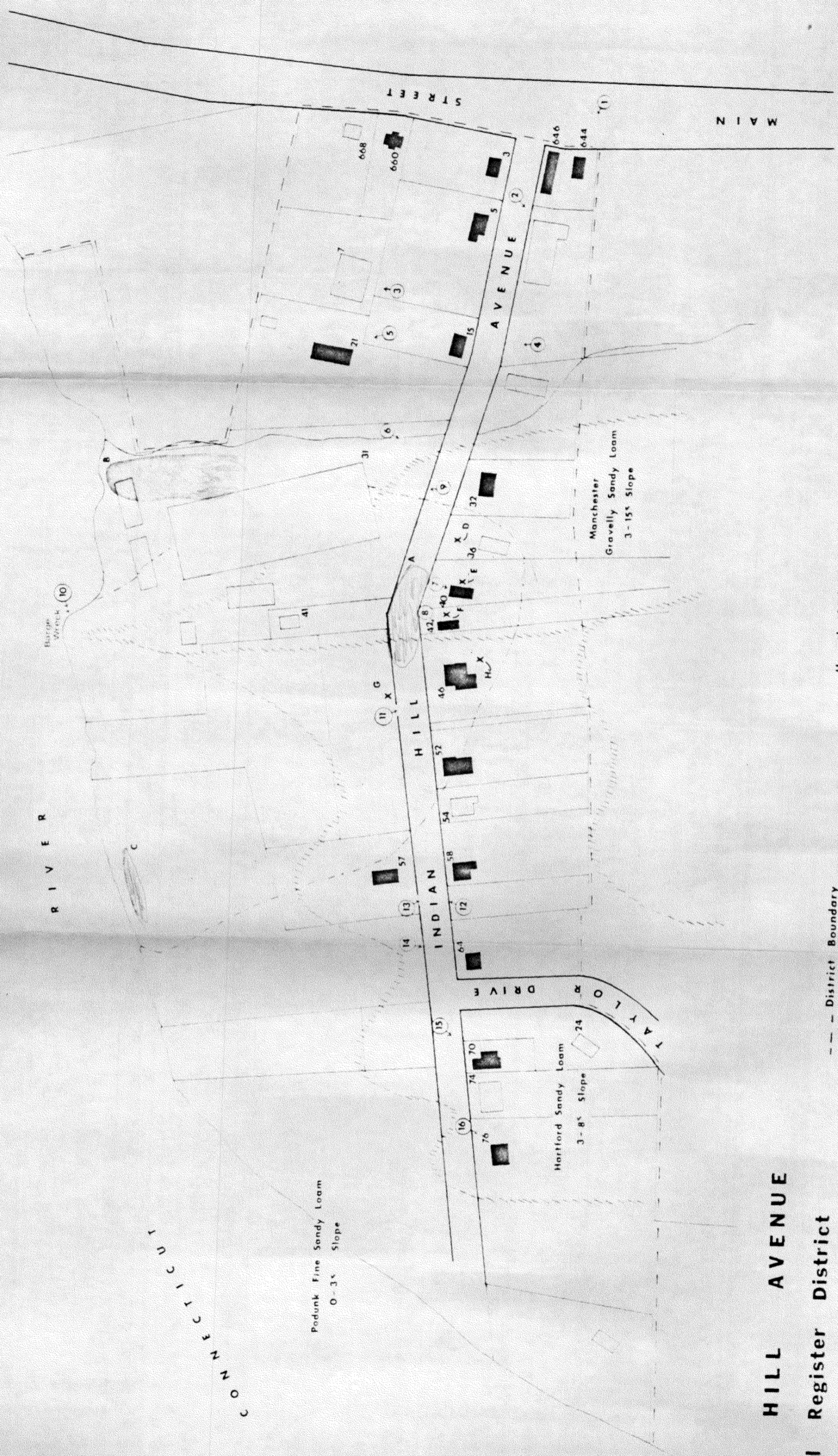
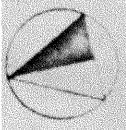
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B: 18/698300/4607780
C: 18/698180/4607760
D: 18/698180/4607720
E: 18/698330/4607620
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K: 18/697770/4607840
L: 18/697920/4607860
M: 18/698130/4607830
N: 18/698180/4607800

Verbal Boundary Description:

The district uses present-day property lines to encompass nearly the same tract given up by the Wangunks in the 18th century and includes all of the properties on Indian Hill Avenue. Beginning at the northeast corner of Lot 10 Block 95, as shown on Portland Assessor's Map 12, at the Connecticut River, the district boundary follows the line of Lot 10 southerly and westerly to the northwest corner of Lot 9. Then it runs easterly along the lines of Lots 9, 7 and 3 to the western edge of Main Street. It follows Main Street southerly to the southeast corner of Lot 17 Block 12 Map 72 and then runs westerly along the southern lines of Lots 17, 15, 14 and 13, cuts across Lots 12, 11 and 10 to the southeast corner of Lot 9, then follows the rear property lines of Lots 9, 8, 7, 6 and 076 to Taylor Drive. Crossing Taylor Drive, it runs along the western curb southerly to the southwest corner of Lot 0-73, then runs westerly along the rear lines of Lots 3 and 2 continuing in a straight line to the southeast corner of Lot 1 Block 12 as shown on Map 12. It then continues westerly along the southern line of Lot 1 to the River, and follows the river bank northerly and easterly to the first point.



INDIAN HILL AVENUE
National Register District

Portland, CT

- District Boundary
- (6) Photos
- Historic Buildings
- Noncontributing Buildings
- Hypothetical Extent of Burials
- A General Areas of Burial
- G x Specific Burials
- USDA Soil Classifications

