

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: SOUTHWEST DISTRICT SCHOOL

other name/site number: N/A

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number: 430 Simsbury Road

city/town: Bloomfield

not for publication: N/A  
vicinity: N/A

state: CT county: Hartford code: 003 zip code: 06002

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3. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property: public - local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification  
=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ See cont. sheet.

*James Shannon*  
Signature of certifying official  
Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

Date 6/17/92

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====  
5. National Park Service Certification  
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Delores Byne* 7/24/92  
Entered in the National Register

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic: EDUCATION Sub: school  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Current: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

No Style

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation	<u>STONE</u>	roof	<u>ASPHALT</u>
walls	<u>STONE</u>	other	

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Significance: EDUCATION  
ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1858-1921

Significant Dates: 1858

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: David Grant, builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office                      Connecticut Historical Commission
- Other state agency    59 South Prospect Street
- Federal agency    Hartford, Connecticut 06106
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approx. .05 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>18</u>	<u>685460</u>	<u>4631730</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The nominated property includes the schoolhouse and its surrounding lot, known as 430 Simsbury Road.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the historical schoolhouse lot.

11. Form Prepared By    Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

Name/Title: Bruce Clouette and Matthew Roth

Organization: Historic Resource Consultants    Date: January 20, 1991

Street & Number: 55 Van Dyke Avenue    Telephone: 203-547-0268

City or Town: Hartford    State: CT    ZIP: 06106



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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description                      Southwest District School                      7-2  
   Bloomfield, Hartford, County, CT

interior material includes plain-board window and door frames and one four-panel door. The building is presently used for storage by a local historical society, and there are no school furnishings or equipment in evidence.

The school appears to be in fair condition. The iron reinforcement is of undetermined age but appears to have been done long ago, and no further cracks or settling of stone is immediately evident. The building's simple wooden cornice is somewhat deteriorated, and ceiling damage suggests that the roof has leaked in the past.

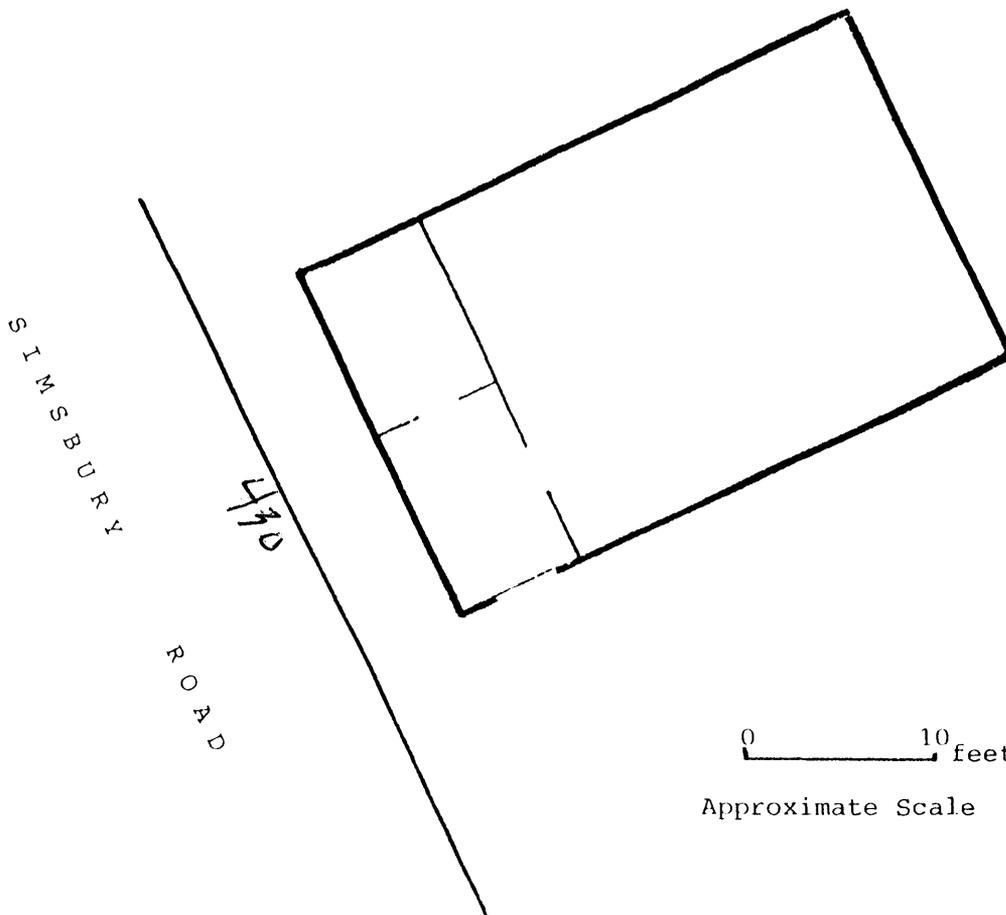
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description

Southwest District School  
Bloomfield, Hartford, County, CT

7-3



0 10 feet

Approximate Scale

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance

Southwest District School  
Bloomfield, Hartford, County, CT

8-1

Summary

Bloomfield's Southwest District School is significant as one of a dwindling number of Connecticut one-room schoolhouses to survive in relatively unaltered condition. The one-room or district school was an important institution in the history of education in Connecticut (Criterion A). Most Connecticut towns maintained a system of widely scattered district schools in the 18th and 19th centuries. Governed by local school societies, each served the families in a particular part of town, with children of all ages taught by a single teacher in one large room. Beginning with the cities, such schools were gradually replaced by larger graded schools, but one-room schools remained a part of the educational experience of many Connecticut residents, especially those in rural areas, well into the 20th century. Although most of the state's 169 towns once maintained a dozen or more schools, few remain today, and many of those are unrecognizably altered into houses or incorporated into larger buildings. As an example with exceptional integrity (the windows and door are the only major alterations), Southwest District School also embodies the distinctive architectural characteristics of the 19th-century one-room schoolhouse (Criterion C). Its small size, plain appearance, and lack of amenities are typical of school buildings built before professional architecture and Progressive-period educational ideas altered the appearance of America's schools.

Historical Background

Southwest District School served an outlying part of town, near the corner where Bloomfield, Simsbury, and West Hartford come together, that was predominantly agricultural throughout the 19th century. Characterized by widely scattered family farms, the area typically sent some 15 to 20 children to the school. The present schoolhouse was built in 1858, replacing an earlier building, about which little is known.

By the 1890s, Southwest District School began to feel the effects of a slight rise in population in Bloomfield. Railroad connections with Hartford, beginnings of suburban growth, and a new lease on life for agriculture brought about by tobacco cultivation all spared Bloomfield the precipitous decline experienced in most rural areas of the state. In 1900 enrollment



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Significance                      Southwest District School  
   Bloomfield, Hartford, County, CT

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Architectural Significance

Although some areas chose to build schools with simple Greek Revival or other consciously stylish details, most schoolhouses of the period were utilitarian structures like Southwest District School. With its simple plan and plain plaster and wood interior finishes, the school provided little beyond what was needed for its function. The hallway offered protection from drafts from the door to the outside, so a single stove in the classroom could generate sufficient heat. Educational materials were limited, so little storage space was needed. Since the building contained only one small classroom, the eight windows could provide quite a lot of light, as well as cross-ventilation. Given the small sum spent on public education in the period (much of which was provided by the State School Fund), Southwest District School was considered a good school, sufficient for its purpose.

Its stone construction reflects local building practices. Around the middle of the 19th century, a relatively large number of stone houses were built in Bloomfield and neighboring Simsbury. Built of local fieldstone and quarried stone, their rubble or crude ashlar walls resemble the colorful stonework found in Southwest District School. The stone construction may also acknowledge a preference for masonry schoolhouses on the part of early education advocates. Reformers such as Henry Barnard, Connecticut's first Commissioner of Education, were critical of wood-frame schools, both because of susceptibility to fire and because they tended to become rundown sooner than schools of more substantial construction. In response, many forward-thinking districts built their schoolhouses of brick (stone is much less common). However, less expensive wood-frame construction remained the norm for rural schools.

David Grant, who built Southwest School, was a Bloomfield resident. He probably worked only occasionally as a stonemason, since he gave his occupation as "farmer" at the time of the federal census of 1860, and his large farm must have occupied his attention most of the time.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Bibliography                      Southwest District School                      9-1  
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Stiles, Henry R. The History of Ancient Windsor. Hartford, 1891.

U.S. Census Office. Population schedules, Eighth Census, 1860.  
Microfilm, Connecticut State Library.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Photo captions          Southwest District School                                  Photos-1  
                                 Bloomfield, Hartford County, CT

All photographs:

1. Southwest District School
2. Bloomfield, Hartford County, CT
3. Photo Credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
4. October, 1991
5. Negative filed with Connecticut Historical Commission  
                                 Hartford, CT

Captions:

West and south elevations, camera facing northeast  
Photograph 1 of 7

North and west elevations, camera facing southeast  
Photograph 2 of 7

Rear (east) and south elevations, camera facing west  
Photograph 3 of 7

Detail of stonework, southwest corner, camera facing northeast  
Photograph 4 of 7

Interior, classroom, camera facing northeast  
Photograph 5 of 7

Interior, classroom, detail of dado and door, camera facing south  
Photograph 6 of 7

Interior, closet with sink, camera facing northwest  
Photograph 7 of 7