

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: SOUTHWEST DISTRICT SCHOOL

other name/site number: N/A

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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not for publication: N/A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

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.

Signature of certifying official: [Handwritten Signature] 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

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):

Entered in the National Register [Handwritten Signature] 7/24/92

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 STONE roof ASPHALT
walls STONE other _____

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

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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
Bloomfield, Hartford, County, CT

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Southwest District School (Photographs 1 through 3) is a small 1-story gable-roofed stone building built in 1858. It is situated very close to Simsbury Road (Route 185), which runs in a north-westerly direction, and is oriented with its gable end facing the highway. The surrounding neighborhood is a rural residential area, with several 18th and early 19th-century dwellings interspersed among more modern houses. The school's lot is small, only one-twentieth of an acre, and there are no outbuildings.

The stone that makes up the school's walls (Photograph 4) is random in size and shape and is laid up in a sandy lime mortar light-brown in color. Most of the stone is locally quarried trap rock (basalt), some of which is very small and dark, but several other types of stone appear, including brownstone, slate, and schist, giving the walls a rich variety of color and texture. Carefully squared and chisel-finished brownstone blocks form quoins at the building's corners, with similar stone employed for window lintels and sills. The stonework is secured at all four corners with iron plates and bars and tie-rods that pass through the interior of the school. A small brick chimney is built into the rear wall.

The end elevations have two windows, with three windows on the side elevations. Except for some old or original six-over-six sash on the northwest side, these openings contain relatively modern one-over-one windows. The school's sole entrance is on the southeast side, near the front corner, embellished only by a brownstone lintel like those over the windows; the door is a relatively modern Colonial-style paneled door with a row of arched lights at the top.

The interior plan features one large classroom (Photographs 5 and 6), with a small hallway at the front immediately inside the entrance. The hallway is divided approximately in half by a partition of narrow beaded boards, forming a closet in the southwest corner; there is a dry sink in the closet (Photograph 7). As the rest of the hallway is finished with wide plain tongue-and-groove boards, the partition would appear to be a later modification. In the classroom are plaster walls and ceiling (above a modern pressed-board ceiling) and a dado of wide beaded tongue-and-groove horizontal boards. Other original

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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.

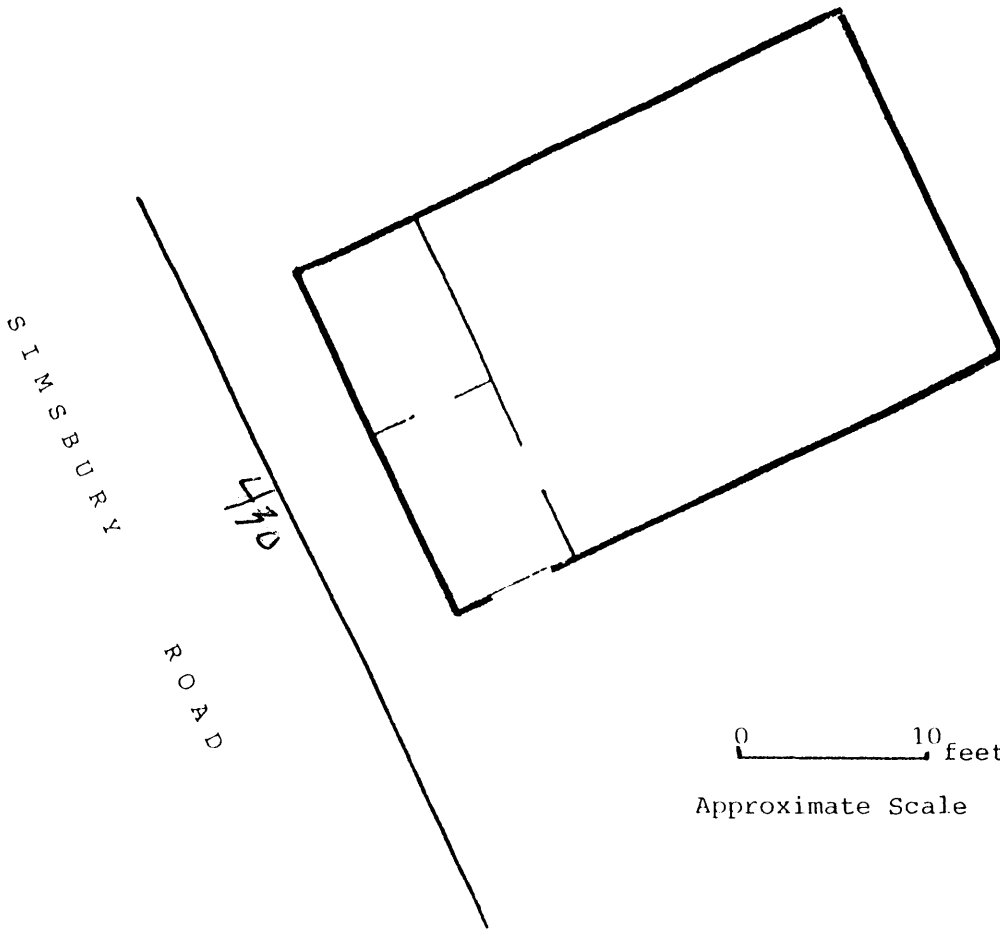
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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description

Southwest District School
Bloomfield, Hartford, County, CT

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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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at Southwest District School reached 31, which the School Visitors considered overcrowded, and by 1905 there were 35 children.

Finally, in 1909, the Town of Bloomfield took over the schools from the separate school districts and began a program of consolidation. The Town built large centralized schools that allowed the children to be grouped by age into grades. One by one the one-room schoolhouses were rendered superfluous. With the opening of two modern schools in September of 1922, Southwest District School, along with three other one-room schools, was discontinued.

Educational Significance

The one-room school was a unique educational experience, one common to a majority of Connecticut residents in the 19th century. After the middle of the century, the teachers were almost all young women, many of whom were hired by the term and boarded with a local family. Although instruction was limited to the most basic aspects of a few subjects, the teacher was faced with a whole range of ages and abilities at once, undoubtedly challenging her creativity (and patience). While later educators decried the lack of grade-appropriate instruction, the one-room school had some educational advantages: students could learn ahead, listening to what the older children were being taught, while slower students could work at a younger level.

The one-room school also played a role in knitting together the life of small-town communities like Bloomfield. Students attended the same school, year after year, as part of a small group of family members and neighbors. Although they were isolated from students in other districts, they came to know not only children of their own age, but also those who were half a dozen years younger and older. The one-room school thus provided part of the familiarity that underlay the social structure of rural Connecticut towns.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

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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Bibliography Southwest District School 9-1
 Bloomfield, Hartford, County, CT

Atlas of Hartford City and County. Hartford, 1869.

Bloomfield, Town of. Annual Report, 1878-1922.

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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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