

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

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

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

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

1. Name

historic Carl F. Schoverling Tobacco Warehouse

and/or common The Flat Iron Building

2. Location

street & number One Wellsville Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town New Milford N/A vicinity of congressional district sixth

state Connecticut code 09 county Litchfield code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input 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 Flat Iron Building Corporation

street & number One Wellsville Avenue

city, town New Milford N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New Milford Town Hall - Town Clerk's office

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 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect St.

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Flat Iron Building is a simple, wedge-shape building of mill construction, three stories in height with a low, gable roof. Built as a tobacco warehouse in 1897, the building stands at the top of an incline in a triangular lot formed by the convergence of two streets. The Flat Iron Building is located in the northwest section of the village of New Milford in a commercial and residential area of two and three-story, late 19th and early-20th-century frame houses (photograph 1).

The nominated property and its boundaries remain historically intact. The northwest section of the lot, once occupied by a large, two-and-one-half-story ell, is a parking and trucking area. The entire east and part of the west side of the building lie along the property lines and thus rise directly from the inside edges of the sidewalks.

The original appearance of the building was altered in a 1930s exterior renovation in which the west ell was removed, the windows blocked up to leave smaller openings, and the clapboard covered by asbestos shingles. The exterior is undergoing partial restoration.

The front, or east side of the Flat Iron Building, rises directly from the Wellsville Avenue sidewalk (photographs 2 and 4). Owing to the slope of the site, the stucco-covered brick basement wall is gradually revealed toward the south end of the front elevation. The entrance opening remains in its original position at approximately the center of the building's front wall.

The entrance, which has been remodeled, is inset and reached by a short flight of steps. The majority of the windows of the multi-fenestrated front wall remain blocked up, forming on the first floor a row of 20 nearly square, deep-set openings containing four-over-four panes. The first two windows toward the south end have been restored to their original appearance, and feature large, twelve-over-twelve panes set in double-sash.

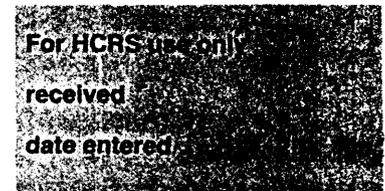
Although it is only 14 feet wide, the south end of the Flat Iron Building is the most visible side as it overlooks the head of Railroad Street (photographs 1 and 2). On this side, the brick basement wall is fully exposed and contains a large, double window with two-over-two panes. Another double window directly above this has been restored using twelve-over-twelve panes.

The southwest side is 47 feet long and forms an oblique angle to the other four sides of the building (photograph 3). Here, the lower grade of the site permits the exposure of the basement and foundation walls. The latter consists of cut granite and continues around part of the west side of the building. The upper stories of the southwest side contain both restored and blocked-down windows.

The back of the building, or the west side, retains its historic use as the center of shipping activities. The west side parallels the facade and thus gradually diverges from the west line of the property, or Housatonic Avenue. The roof plane and the basement elevation are visible on this side, giving the elevation a more monumental appearance (photograph 3). An original, paneled door containing a window is framed into a segmental-arch opening

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in the basement toward the south end. This opening is flanked by two full, double-sash windows. A larger door, situated directly adjacent to an elevator inside, facilitated the transfer of tobacco cases and bundles between the outside and the upper floors of the building. A shortened chimney stack rises to approximately 12 inches from the cornice near the center of the west wall. Towards the north end of the warehouse is a loading platform built into the more recent, concrete-block wall. Owing to the recent restoration of all the window openings on the north side, this end of the building is nearly original in appearance (photograph 4). A later, concrete-block addition covers the lower story.

According to a well-detailed, "Bird's Eye View" drawing made of the town center in 1906, and an 1897 article from The New Milford Gazette, the west ell originally extended in two, gable-roofed, two-and-one-half-story blocks (figure B). The smaller block was a single-story, 26 by 31-foot brick structure which housed the boiler for the steam-heating system. A 56-foot steel boiler stack rose above this block. The second block extended 62 feet to the north of the boiler house, and served as extra storage space.

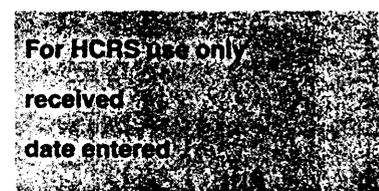
The major interior fabric of the Flat Iron Building is largely intact and remains an excellent example of 19th-century mill construction. The building is massively constructed, employing all timber in a slow-burning, mill structural system (photographs 6, 8, and 9). Large cross-beams are used in addition to the regular, closely-spaced joists. Each cross-beam is supported by a pair of T-shape post-and-beam structures, together which form two rows of posts through each story. Of particular note are the double-stacked, 12-inch girders in the central space of the second floor (photograph 6).

Except for a section of the first floor, which is undergoing renovation, the interior is strictly utilitarian in appearance. The basement, first, and second floors are similar in plan and closely recall their original arrangement. The third floor is not original, but was probably added before 1904. Each of the floors consists mainly of two, large, unfinished spaces which are divided by a sheathed, wooden partition which crosses the building at approximately one-third of its length from the north end. The larger space in the central and south sections of each story is interrupted by the wooden elevator shaft located equidistant from the side walls (photograph 9). The remodeling of the first floor is confined to the south end, where partitions, with exposed timber trim have been used to divide the area into a series of offices (photograph 5).

According to the 1897 New Milford Gazette article, the basement was originally divided into four spaces. The north end consisted of two storage rooms, the central section a shipping and receiving area (containing the west door and the elevator, photograph 7), and the south end another storage area. The two latter spaces remain as in the original plan.

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The first story plan remains essentially as it was originally, containing a 125-foot unbroken space used for sorting the tobacco, and the office area at the south end. The second floor is reached via a modern staircase at the front of the warehouse. The original, 26-foot height of the second story space was lowered considerably with the addition of the third floor around 1900, which was built using beams incorporated in the original construction for the option of a third floor. Both the sorting and sweating of the tobacco took place here, under the supervision of nearly 100 men, according to the Gazette article. The space featured large, 3½ by 4-foot windows necessary to admit daylight sufficient to light the interior, which would have been crowded with up to "3,000 cases of tobacco...piled five tiers high and close together, and at least 2,000 cases with alley ways...². Two features of particular interest are the sheathing of the north and east walls and a system of interior sliding shutters, which remains in place on the exterior walls.(photograph 8). The purpose of these elements may have been to help regulate the interior climate of the warehouse, as the curing of tobacco requires exacting conditions of temperature, humidity, and light. The shutters, when closed, and the sheathing may have helped to insulate the steam-heated interior during the winter curing months. The shutters may also have been opened or shut to regulate the degree of light desired in the room.

The third floor is reached by a simply-framed, open stair which ascends the side of the elevator shaft (photograph 9). The name, "C F Schoverling", is scrawled in charcoal across the back of one of the risers, almost certainly placing the addition of the third floor during Carl F. Schoverling's occupancy, or between 1897 and 1904. The third floor is a single, low space which may also have been used for the curing and storage of the tobacco. Built into the floor is a depressed ramp which begins near the center of the floor and slopes downward 14 inches to its junction with the elevator shaft. The purpose of the ramp was to receive loads of tobacco brought up on the roof of the elevator car, which could rise no higher than the second floor. With the roof of the car aligned with the lower end of the ramp, it was possible to wheel the bundles or cases from the elevator up the ramp into the third floor room for curing or storage.³

The elevator car, shown in photograph 7 with the doors open, was operated by the hydraulic pump visible in the right portion of the picture. The wooden car is open at the front and back sides, permitting the on and off-loading of goods from either side. Both sliding and swinging doors remain in place on the elevator shaft at each landing. The elevator was built by the Springfield Elevator and Pump Company of Springfield, Massachusetts.

FOOTNOTES

1. The stone foundation and brick basement walls extend to this point, whereupon the wall becomes concrete block. This change in material marks the location of the corner originally formed by the existing

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building and the west ell. The entire ell complex was removed in the 1930s, and the present concrete wall constructed.

2. The New Milford Gazette, 13 August 1897, p. 2
3. In the south gable of the main roof is a small, high window, reached by a short set of steps, which is said to have been a look-out station for monitoring incoming loads of tobacco. This high vantage point commands a full view of the Housatonic Valley and its roads south of the town center.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1897 - 1904 **Builder/Architect** Turney Soule & Co.; probably Lambert & Bunnell (Bridgeport)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Flat Iron Building is significant for its historic associations with the important tobacco industry of the Housatonic Valley region, which was a major center of tobacco production during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. The building is one of the two major tobacco warehouses remaining from the period 1875-1920 when New Milford fields were producing the American industry's finest grade of tobacco leaf, and was built and occupied by one of the domestic industry's leading packing and dealing firms.(Criterion A). In addition, the Flat Iron Building was hailed at the time of its construction as "probably the most extensive and complete (tobacco warehouse) in the United States^{#1}, and was praised especially for its modern layout, mechanical systems, and its sheer physical capacity.(Criterion C). The unusual, five-sided structure is well-preserved throughout and remains a strong visual reminder of New Milford's prominence as Western Connecticut's tobacco marketing center during this period.

Tobacco wrapper leaf production was begun in the Housatonic River Valley in the early 1850s, approximately 10 years after tobacco cultivation had begun in the Connecticut River Valley. The first decades of successful planting in New Milford were also those during which agriculture was coming into recognition as a science. The loss of thousands of Connecticut farmers to migrations westward and into the cities had contributed to the need for more economical crops and more efficient farming methods. During the 1860s several agricultural schools, partly government-supported, were established in the state to answer the need for a more competitive farming system. As a result of experimentation with crops, fertilizers, chemicals, and cultivation methods, significant improvements were made in the quality and production of certain crops. Farmers began specializing in only those crops which were found to be well-suited to the various regional conditions. In Litchfield County, dairy farming and tobacco production became the leading agricultural activities. Neither required large or flat tracts of land and both were adaptable to the region's hilly, ledge-ridden terrain and dark, iron-rich soil. Most of the tobacco grown in the state was wrapper leaf, with the Connecticut River Valley producing shade-grown varieties, and the Housatonic Valley growing a dark-colored leaf Broadleaf and later Havana Seed, both of which are sun-grown varieties.

New Milford achieved its importance as a leading center of tobacco production following the development of a superior wrapper leaf, known as Havana Seed. By the 1880s Havana Seed was being grown exclusively in the Housatonic Valley and was generally recognized as the superior leaf of the American domestic wrapper crop. In 1880, J.B. Killebrew, a government tobacco specialist and historian wrote:

It is generally conceded by dealers and manufacturers that the finest tobacco for wrappers comes from the Housatonic Valley,

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

91. 101 101111

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name New Milford

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UMT References

A 18 63210000 4604220
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property fronts 215' directly on Wellsville Avenue (east side); 110' on the north; 242' on the west directly on Housatonic Ave; and 65' on the south at the junction of Wellsville and Housatonic Avenues.

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

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alison Gilchrist

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date November 1981

street & number Box 838 telephone 203 263-4427

city or town Woodbury state Connecticut

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

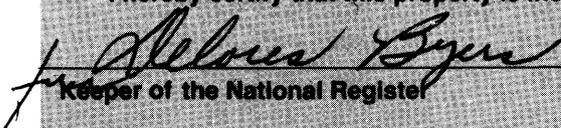
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date May 21, 1982

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

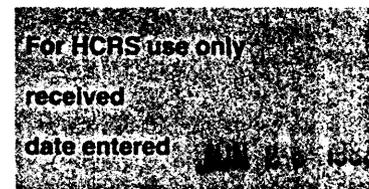

Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 6/28/82

Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration

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having all the silkiness of texture and the burning qualities of the Connecticut Valley leaf and all the desirability of color of the Pennsylvania Seedleaf. In elasticity of leaf, in fineness of face, and richness of color it stands unrivalled, and brings a higher price in the market than any other seed leaf grown in the United States¹.

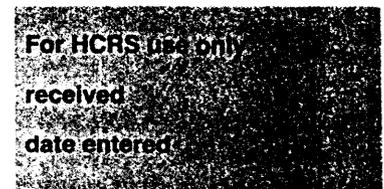
Until the late 1930s, the Connecticut and Housatonic Valley regions were supplying the major portion of wrapper leaves used in cigar manufacturing in New York and Philadelphia, and for export to Germany and Holland as well. In 1882 New Milford had eight packing firms; in 1907 there were 12. By the 1920s tobacco was still listed as a primary industry, but was soon after phased out as the development of the synthetic cigar wrapper and Cuban competition severely reduced the demand for massive quantities of the local leaf. In its elaborate preparation for market, tobacco reigned as New Milford's predominant industry. At the height of its production near the turn of the century, New Milford firms employed about 500 men, or roughly ten percent of the town's population. Employment was seasonal, intensifying during the late summer and through the winter, when the leaves were sorted, cured, and packed for market. While other small-scale industries such as button and hat manufacturing, and a few larger enterprises such as the Bridgeport Wood Finishing Company and the Eastern Lounge Company provided major employment, New Milford's main hedge against the later-19th century population loss to industrial river towns was its thriving tobacco business.

As in the Connecticut River Valley, the tobacco packing and dealing business in New Milford was largely a partnership of Yankee merchants and a newly-emigrated German population whose mid-century arrival had coincided with the flowering of the tobacco industry. The 1830 and 1848 revolutions in Germany had brought political and social instability and economic depression, inducing thousands to emigrate to the United States. Substantial numbers of the German-born and second-generation Germans quickly became assimilated into the business aspects of the industry in New York and tobacco-producing Connecticut areas. Of the eight packing firms in New Milford in 1882, several belonged or were co-managed by German-born dealers with New York-based firms who rented New Milford warehouses for their operations. Others owned local warehouses and lived in New Milford. The names of several New Milford firms reflect the German-American mix of the industry: Schoverling, Soule and Company; Bristol and Staub; Friedman and Hall.

The Flat Iron Building was built by Carl F. Schoverling, a second-generation German whose father and uncle had been very successful in tobacco both locally and in New York City. It is known that the Schoverling brothers arrived in New York well-educated in business and already fairly affluent

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in 1858. The Schoverlings may have been involved in cigar manufacturing in Germany, although their activities there are not known.

The brothers, William and Herman, had been engaged in the tobacco and other local industries for 30 years prior to the construction of the Flat Iron Building. William had married a New Milford woman in 1867, and in the same year moved to New Milford. Soon after, he established himself in tobacco packing in a warehouse on Railroad Street, and six years later was joined by Herman, and also David and Turney Soule of New Milford. The Soule family owned the leading building and lumber supply house in town, and their association with the Schoverlings allowed the tobacco firm to move into the large Soule warehouse on West Street. This move substantially increased their volume of business and boosted the firm to a leading position in the packing industry of the Valley, a rank it would hold for the next 25 years, or until 1904. During his partnership with the firm, William Schoverling was also involved in the manufacture of vegetable ivory buttons and in 1880 was instrumental in founding the Eastern Lounge and Upholstery Company, which was housed in his original tobacco warehouse on Railroad Street.

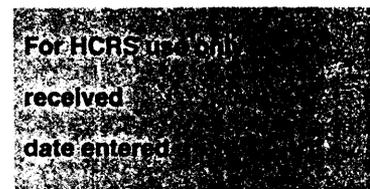
At some point during the next five years the firm, re-named H. Schoverling and Company, took on William's son, Carl. In 1895 the firm purchased the site at the corner of Housatonic and Wellsville Avenues, and two years later hired the Soule brothers to build the tobacco warehouse which would become known as the Flat Iron Building. By 1897, Carl, who had become nationally known for his tobacco, and Julius Reffelt, an associate from Holland, had taken over H. Schoverling and Company. In January of 1900, Schoverling and Reffelt were joined by A.T. Kinney of Cleveland, Ohio, to form the Schoverling-Kinney Company. This partnership then purchased the Flat Iron Building later in the month.

The Schoverling-Kinney Company was incorporated "for the purpose of buying and selling leaf tobacco, cigars, and general merchandise for itself and for others upon commission in this state and elsewhere, the acquiring, owning, holding, and controlling any property necessary or convenient for its purposes..."². For its time, the extent of the enterprise was impressive; the firm's initial investment was \$150,000 in cash and property, which was divided into 1500 shares between five stockholders. Three of the firm's directors were Dutch businessmen with Rotterdam addresses, an association which clearly suggests that Schoverling was exporting New Milford wrapper leaf to Holland for manufacture into cigars.

The reason for the company's liquidation only four years after their establishment is not known, although it may be related to the devastating tobacco crop failures of 1902 and 1903. The short-lived Schoverling-Kinney enterprise had thrived at the outset: after only one year of business, the company's assessment in merchandise and trade had leaped from \$5,500 to \$15,000, ranking the firm as one of the leading packing houses in the Housatonic Valley.

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At the time of its construction, Schoverling's building itself was considered the "ultimate" in tobacco warehouse design (see Appendix). On August 13, 1897, New Milford Gazette wrote of the new building:

The best tobacco warehouse in the New England states, and probably the most extensive and complete one in the United States, is now nearly finished in the village³.

Schoverling, moreover, had hired the prominent Bridgeport architectural firm, Lambert and Bunnell, to draw up the initial plans for his warehouse. According to the article, Schoverling made some revisions and additions to the architects' scheme, and was involved in the planning of the building⁴.

One feature of the new warehouse considered particularly outstanding was its sheer physical capacity, as reflected in the following excerpt from the Gazette article:

The second story...is for storage of tobacco for sweating and is capable of holding 3,000 cases of tobacco if piled five tiers high and close together, and at least 2,000 cases with alley ways so as to get at numbers and weights of each case. In fact this plant is capable of packing and storing annually 4,000 to 5,000 cases of tobacco.

The assorting room...will admit of working 65 to 70 assorters, who with packers and day hands, would make nearly if not quite 100 men⁵.

Production efficiency and human convenience were also well-considered in the layout of the modern plant. For example, the first floor assorting room was connected to the west ell storage space by an interior "runway", which would have sloped downward into the west ell, thereby facilitating the movement of the heavy tobacco loads between the buildings. Business operations were consolidated with production by locating the office area at the south end of the building on the first floor. The office function was especially well-suited to the narrow, tapered south end of the warehouse and to the ample daylight admitted through the large, east, south, and west wall windows. The building was steam-heated and had two toilets.

Perhaps the most modern feature of the warehouse was the hydraulic elevator, used to transport the heavy tobacco-filled cases between floors. Unlike most contemporaneous elevators, which were hand-hoisted and lowered by pulley, Schoverling's elevator operated by water-pressure pump.

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In addition to the principal builders, Turney and David Soule, several local craftsmen were involved in the construction of the building, and are listed in the Gazette as follows: Chris Hansen, masonry; C.H. Osborne, painting; S.R. Hill, assembly and erection of the boiler stack; A.H. McMahon, steam heating, plumbing, and tinning^o.

In 1917 the Flat Iron Building property was sold to the New Milford Security Company by the New Milford Savings Bank. The warehouse was subsequently bought by Joseph and Howard Cullman, who returned the building to its original use as a tobacco warehouse.⁷ With the final decline of the local tobacco industry in the 1930s, the site was sold to Gideon C. Bristol, an automobile dealer who also managed a moving and storage business, which he operated out of the warehouse. The building continued to be used as a storage warehouse under the subsequent ownership of Mariano Brothers Moving Company from 1956 to 1981, whereupon it was purchased by the Flat Iron Building Corporation as a warehouse for a Danbury chemical company.

The peculiar, five-sided form of the Flat Iron building appears to be solely a function of the narrow, triangular shape of the building lot on which it stands. Despite its odd shape, the lot was probably purchased for its valuable proximity to the railroad depot and its central location in the village.

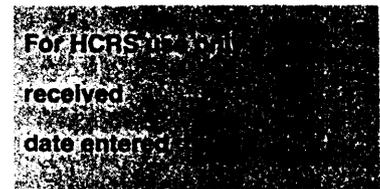
The Flat Iron Building and the contemporaneous Halpine Warehouse on West Street are the last, major physical remnants of the most successful industry ever to operate in the town of New Milford. As few other tobacco-related sites remain in the village, the presence of these two buildings lends invaluable meaning to the late-19th and early-20th-century development and present-day character of the New Milford townscape.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Tobacco Institute, Connecticut and Tobacco, p. 39
2. Corporation Record from 1900, p. 279, New Milford Town Records
3. The New Milford Gazette, "Best Tobacco Warehouse in New England", 13 August 1897, p. 2
4. No original plans for the building have been found. The Lambert and Bunnell attribution is taken from the Gazette article (see above entry).
5. The New Milford Gazette, op cit
6. Ibid
7. Joseph Cullman's son, Joseph Frederick Cullman III, also followed a career in the tobacco business, and is Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board of the Philip Morris Corporation of New York City.

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- Miss Staffner, Secretary, The Colbro Corporation, New York, NY. 5/5/82

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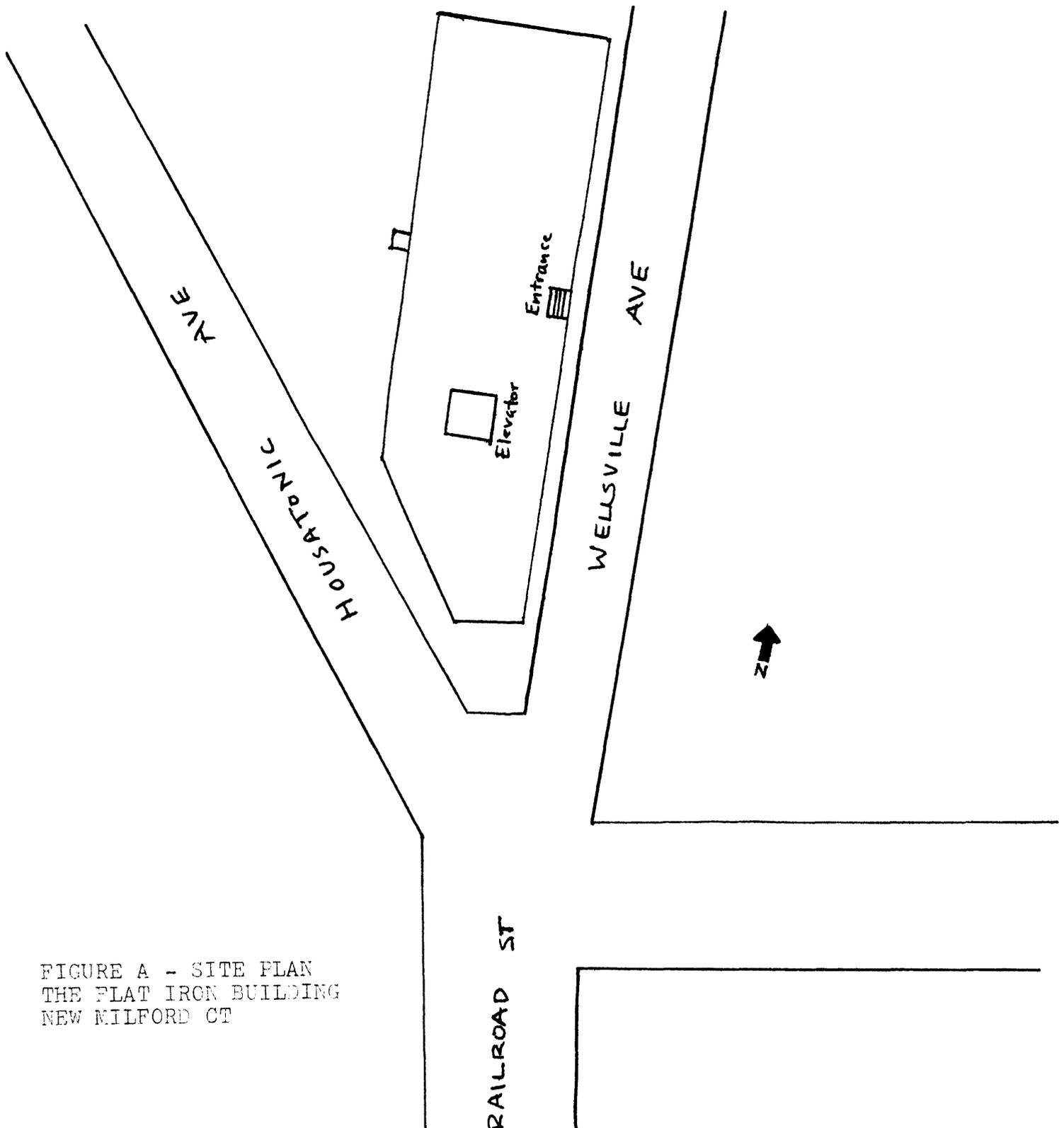


FIGURE A - SITE PLAN
THE FLAT IRON BUILDING
NEW MILFORD CT

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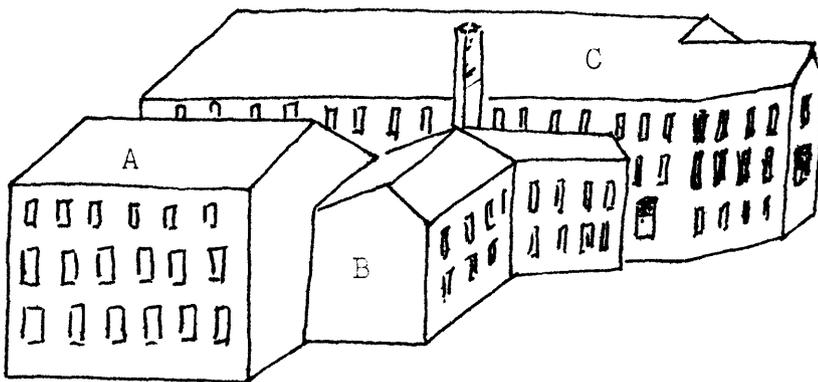


FIGURE B - ORIGINAL APPEARANCE OF FLAT IRON BUILDING (APPROXIMATE)
WITH WEST ELLS

- A: Sweat Room
- B: Boiler Room
- C: Existing building

1 Wellsville Avenue
New Milford, Connecticut