

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received SEP 26 1985

date entered OCT 24 1985

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

1. Name

historic N.A.

and/or common Main Street Historic District

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheet. N.A. not for publication

city, town Cromwell N.A. vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Middlesex code 007

3. Classification

| Category                                     | Ownership                                   | Status  | Present Use  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | <input checked="" 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                | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                   | <b>Accessible</b>                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                |
|  | N.A.  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no                | <input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:                          |

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership

street & number See #2.

city, town Cromwell N.A. vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cromwell Town Clerk

street & number 5 West Street

city, town Cromwell state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Districts has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1985  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

---

## 7. Description

---

|  |                                       |   |   |            |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|------------|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                            | <b>Check one</b>                                  |            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent       | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |            |
| <input checked="" 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 Main Street Historic District is primarily a residential area located in the eastern part of the Town of Cromwell.<sup>1</sup> The district includes five streets: Main Street, the central core of the district (Route 99), New Lane, Prospect Hill Road, Prospect Place, and Stevens Lane. Main Street, which generally follows the route of an early nineteenth-century turnpike, runs almost due north and south along the spine of a small ridge. It rises from level ground at the southern boundary of the district (the intersection of West, Main, and Wall streets) to pass on the west side of Nooks Hill. Nooks, or Prospect Hill Road, begins at the southern base of Nooks Hill and veers to the northeast before continuing east to the Connecticut River. At the "vee" formed by Main Street and Prospect Hill Road lies Valour Green, a twentieth-century memorial park (1973).

Although today Main Street is a well-travelled highway, it has retained its historic residential character. The street is lined on both sides with mature trees and historic residential properties set well back from the road on well-maintained lawns. Behind these historic properties the terrain slopes away from Main Street on both sides and also from Prospect Hill Road to the east. Very little development has occurred between Main Street and the Connecticut River to the east. Some of the open land is still maintained as farmland, especially east of Prospect Hill. But both natural and manmade barriers have limited development behind the historic lower Main Street buildings. A 500-acre section of low-lying marshland, called Dead Man's Swamp, extends to the river. The railroad track, which crosses Main Street at an angle from southwest to northeast just below the district, turns and continues north on an almost parallel course to the street. A fertile alluvial floodplain below and behind the west side of Main Street has remained in production for agricultural purposes since settlement. Today it is occupied by the nursery fields, greenhouses, and brick buildings of a 200-acre commercial nursery in operation since the late nineteenth century.

The district contains a high concentration of historic residential and public buildings dating from 1750 to 1933.<sup>2</sup> After 1780, buildings were built in every decade, 150 years of almost continuous architectural development. Sixty-six of the seventy-four buildings in the district contribute to its architectural character (90%). A few widely scattered houses remain from the eighteenth century. But the majority of the existing historic buildings along Main Street and its lateral extension, Prospect Hill Road, were built in the nineteenth century. Twenty of these buildings were constructed before 1850; sixteen more between 1850 and 1900. They are generally two-and-one-half stories in height and built of wood or brick. On the east side they are set back a uniform distance of approximately fifty feet. On the west side they hug the street more closely because the properties generally drop off to the rear and the street was widened in the twentieth century. Twentieth-century in-fill mainly consists of residential buildings built before 1933; twenty-four houses from this period remain in the district.

#### Eighteenth-Century Appearance

Main Street was sparsely populated prior to the Revolution, little more than a country road connecting widely scattered farmhouses. Although land records indicate that at least eleven eighteenth-century houses were located along Main Street and Prospect Hill Road, only seven have survived. Three were removed and replaced by residential construction in

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

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

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 2, 6

Page 1

2. Location

316-396, 351-471 Main Street; \_\_\_ & \_\_\_ New Lane; 2-18, 33 Prospect Hill Road;  
2-8 Prospect Place; 2-6 Stevens Lane.

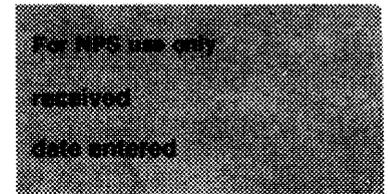
6. Representation in Existing Surveys

The History and Architecture of Cromwell, published by the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, Inc., 1980.

Deposit of Survey Records, Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street,  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106.

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

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



Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 2

the late nineteenth century and one was possibly incorporated as a rear addition to a later building (Inventory #42). The early eighteenth-century houses that remain include two post-and-beam-framed houses built by the same family: the Deacon Thomas Ranney House (Inventory #65) on Prospect Hill Road and the Captain Daniel Ranney House (Inventory #30) on Main Street. Although altered over time, the essential colonial form of these five-bay, gable-roofed dwellings remains. Successive alterations to the Captain Daniel Ranney House by various owners provide an interesting record of changing tastes and needs (Photograph #6). It is clear that the roof was raised to accommodate a frieze with a set of small windows. The other manifestation of this stylistic consciousness--the Greek Revival-style portico--was obviously enlarged when the house became a two-family dwelling, probably re-using the elements of the existing portico. The other Ranney House was modified by the addition of a hip roof with gable dormers when the building was purchased for use by the Cromwell Hall sanitarium in 1884. Between 1866 and 1883 this house, and the octagon nearby, were part of the Mineral Springs Institute that utilized a natural chalybeate spring on its property.

Four of the five later eighteenth-century buildings are unadorned ridge-to-street, gable-roofed houses with central chimney. The one exception is the Wells-Hubbard House at the northern end of the district (Inventory #52; Photograph #10). Although its central-chimney plan is not typical of the Georgian style, this house has obvious Georgian-style symmetry, proportions, and details, including the Palladian window in the center of the facade, and the modillion course under the eaves, which is repeated in the doorway and window heads. When the house was converted to a tavern about 1808, two wings, both a full two stories in height, were added to the south and east.

Another late example of the colonial-house form, located on Prospect Hill Road, was also associated with the sanitarium. Originally a Federal-style house, it was extensively altered sometime after 1850 by the removal of the central chimney and the addition of an Italianate portico with arched braces, brackets, and a balustraded balcony (Inventory #61; Photograph #8). One other unaltered colonial-period house on Main Street presents a marked contrast to its neighbors: a well-preserved, gambrel-roofed, one-and-one-half-story cottage with original dormers built about 1780 (Inventory #34; Photograph #15). The form is rare in Cromwell, where only one other house of the type is known to exist.

#### Nineteenth-Century Development

The early decades of the nineteenth century produced some residential and institutional development. Two churches, a school, and several small stores were built. Three houses exhibit Federal-style detailing. Two are wood-framed and the other is constructed of load-bearing brick. The brick building, with a side-hall plan, a three-bay facade, and a ridge-to-street roof, is unusual. It has a vertically elongated appearance because the full-story exposed facade foundation is constructed in the same Flemish bond as the facade (Inventory #5; Photograph #3).

Brick was also a favored material for the numerous late Greek Revival-style buildings in the district. Examples include the Congregational Parsonage, which displays a full pediment in the gable end (Inventory #19), and the Academy (Inventory #4), also a simply detailed brick building with a pediment. The bell tower, a feature of the Academy's original

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

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

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 3

For NPS use only

received

date entered

function as a school, has been removed. The popularity of the Greek Revival style is illustrated by its use in two commercial buildings to the south of the Academy. The first, built in 1850 with a pediment, had a larger building, also echoing this style, added to its south side twenty years later. These buildings served originally as a store and a public hall. Currently both buildings are stuccoed with a diamond pattern on the facades, and both have had extensive alterations, including the removal of the central windows. The storefronts on both buildings, although modernized with a roof extending over the sidewalk, still retain their original three-bay configuration (Inventory #3; Photograph #2).

The most fully developed Greek Revival-style building is the Congregational Church, built about 1840 (Inventory #11; Photograph #18). The wooden Doric portico is supported by six fluted columns sheltering a Doric entranceway. The Doric order is used throughout the interior, including the engaged pilasters with a keystone segmental arch which frame the altar. Even though there were several brownstone quarries in Cromwell, local brownstone was not used in the foundation or trim; parishioners hauled the stone across the frozen Connecticut River from the Portland quarries. The church is quite similar to the old Middletown Courthouse, designed by Town and Davis of New Haven, but there is no record that they were the architects. The courthouse was built by Cromwell masons Sage and Russell, who also served on the building committee for the church and may have influenced its design.

Several well-preserved examples of the Italianate style are included in the district, providing with their mass and scale a counterpoint to the smaller houses built earlier, and later in the twentieth century. Six of the eight houses are wood and in the classic cube form with a slightly pitched hip roof and cupola. Built between 1852 and 1867, all six display overhanging eaves supported by carved brackets (Inventory #6, 13, 15, 24, 40, 47; Photograph #4, 5, 13). Two (358 and 360 Main Street) have retained their original bracketed, columned entrance porticos (Inventory #13, 15).

Despite the proximity of successful quarries in the late nineteenth century (one on the property of 360 Main Street) and the almost universal use of the material for foundations, only two houses in the district are built entirely of brownstone, both in the Italianate style (Inventory #9, 32). It is possible that these buildings also used Portland brownstone, as the church had done earlier, because of the inferior quality of the local product. Today both houses are stuccoed, perhaps as a preservation measure.

Two other popular styles of the mid-to-late nineteenth century are each represented by one example. The Carpenter Gothic-style cottage on Prospect Hill Road, built about 1865, is one of two in this style in the district. Despite aluminum siding, it retains most of its decorative detail, including bargeboards, shingle course at the eave line, and foliated cutwork brackets on the wraparound porch. Most of the original porch columns have been removed and not replaced. (The Baptist Church, the other Carpenter Gothic-style building, is also aluminum-sided, but all its architectural detailing has been removed as well.) Cromwell also boasts one Octagon-style building built about 1854. Currently one of the four buildings of the Holy Apostles College, it has lost its architectural detail, but retained its essential form and interior plan (Inventory #64; Photograph #9).

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

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

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 4

For NPS use only

received

date entered

A lull in residential building followed the Civil War, and only a few Queen Anne-style houses were built near the end of the century. Unfortunately, the one that most clearly exhibits the asymmetrical massing and projecting pavilions and towers of the style has been aluminum-sided, a treatment which covered its patterned, shingled walls (Inventory #21). The porch, however, with its decorative scrollwork, remains. One of the best examples of the style is located at the end of a long driveway and not visible from the street (Inventory #45; Photograph #11). It also exhibits influences of the Colonial Revival style, which was to become popular on Main Street ten to thirty years later.

Twentieth-Century Development

The streetscape was essentially complete by 1930 with the proliferation of Colonial Revival-style residences in two distinct time frames: just prior to World War I and about 1925. Although several four-square hip-roofed houses were built, the gambrel-roof form with a full-width shed dormer and a Colonial Revival-style columned portico was particularly popular (Inventory #28, 33, 50, 58, 59). At least five examples of the style were built on the east side of Main Street, the only area not completely filled in by the nineteenth-century residential construction, completing an historic streetscape begun at least 150 years earlier. One of the five is located at "Holy City," a unique complex composed of small cottages which are vernacular interpretations of the Colonial Revival style (Inventory #49, 50, 68-71; 8:3, paragraph 2).

A complete inventory of the buildings in the district is included below.

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

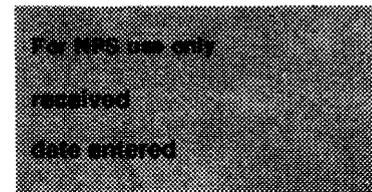
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 5

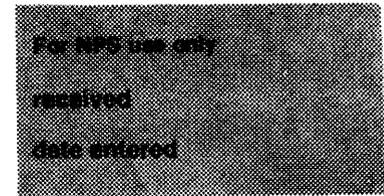


| Inven-<br>tory # | Building/Site*  | Contributing/Non-<br>contributing (C/NC) | Photograph # | Map/Block/Lot |
|------------------|---|--|--------------|---------------|
| 1.               | 316-330 Main Street<br>Late 19th-century commercial<br>ca. 1870                                   | C  | 1            | 40A/55/1      |
| 2.               | 332-334 Main Street<br>Late 19th-century commercial<br>ca. 1870                                   | C  |              | 40A/55/2      |
| 3.               | 336-338 Main Street<br>STEPHENS HALL & SAVAGE STORE<br>Greek Revival,<br>North, 1850, south, 1872 | C  | 2            | 40A/55/4      |
| 4.               | 346 Main Street<br>THE ACADEMY<br>Greek Revival, 1834   | C  |              | 40A/55/5      |
| 5.               | 348 Main Street<br>WILLIAM M. HAND HOUSE<br>Federal, 1812   | C  | 3            | 40A/55/6      |
| 6.               | 350 Main Street<br>STEPHEN P. POLLY HOMESTEAD<br>Italianate, ca. 1870                             | C  |              | 40A/55/7      |
| 7.               | 351 Main Street<br>BAPTIST CHURCH, 1853<br>Originally Carpenter Gothic<br>Severely altered        | NC                                       |              | 40A/43/31     |
| 8.               | 352 Main Street<br>Early 20th-century Domestic<br>ca. 1910  | C  |              | 40A/55/8      |
| 9.               | 353 Main Street<br>REV. C. W. POTTER HOUSE<br>Italianate, 1853                                    | C  |              | 40A/43/30     |
| 10.              | 354 Main Street<br>CHARLES H. HUBBARD HOUSE<br>Greek Revival, ca. 1840                            | C  |              | 40A/55/9      |
| 11.              | 355 Main Street<br>FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH<br>Greek Revival, 1840                             | C  | 18           | 40A/43/30A    |
| 12.              | 357 Main Street<br>CAPTAIN ABSALOM SAVAGE HOUSE<br>Colonial/Federal, 1806                         | C  |              | 40A/43/29     |

\*Inventory numbers for this nomination only

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

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



Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 6

| Inven-<br>tory # | Building/Site   | Contributing/Non-<br>contributing (C/NC) | Photograph # | Map/Block/Lot |
|------------------|---|--|--------------|---------------|
| 13.              | 358 Main Street<br>JOHN HASKELL HOUSE<br>Italianate, 1852   | C  | 4            | 40A/55/10     |
| 14.              | 359 Main Street<br>NATHANIEL SAVAGE, JR. HOUSE<br>Federal, ca. 1825   | C  |              | 40A/43/28     |
| 15.              | 360 Main Street<br>EDWARD S. COE HOUSE<br>Italianate, 1876  | C  | 5            | 40A/55/11     |
| 16.              | 362 Main Street<br>Colonial Revival, ca. 1910   | C  |              | 40A/55/12,13  |
| 17.              | 364 Main Street<br>Early 20th-century Domestic, 1911  | C  |              | 40A/55/14     |
| 18.              | 366 Main Street<br>Colonial Revival, 1913   | C  |              | 40A/55/15     |
| 19.              | 367 Main Street<br>CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH PARSONAGE<br>Greek Revival, 1834   | C  |              | 40A/43/27     |
| 20.              | 368 Main Street<br>Colonial Revival, ca. 1913   | C  |              | 40/55/16A     |
| 21.              | 369 Main Street<br>ALBERT J. BRIGGS HOUSE<br>Queen Anne, 1891   | C  |              | 40A/43/25     |
| 22.              | 370 Main Street<br>Colonial Revival with Bungalow-<br>style details, ca. 1915                                       | C  |              | 40/55/17,18   |
| 23.              | 371 Main Street<br>Modern cape, ca. 1950  | NC                                       |              | 40A/43/25     |
| 24.              | 372 Main Street<br>JOSEPH M. WATERS HOUSE<br>Italianate, 1865   | C  |              | 40/55/18      |
| 25.              | 373 Main Street<br>DANIEL EELS HOUSE<br>Colonial, ca. 1785, additions<br>ca. 1870; Queen Anne additions<br>ca. 1890 | C  | 17           | 40/43/23      |

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

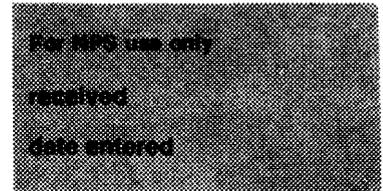
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 7



| Inventory # | Building/Site   | Contributing/Non-contributing (C/NC) | Photograph # | Map/Block/Lot |
|-------------|---|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 26.         | 374 Main Street<br>ZEBULON KIRBY HOUSE<br>Originally Center-chimney<br>Colonial, 1796<br>Extensively altered  | C                                    |              | 40/55/19      |
| 27.         | 376 Main Street<br>Early 20th-century Domestic,<br>ca. 1910; extensively altered  | C                                    |              | 40/55/20      |
| 28.         | 378 Main Street<br>Colonial Revival, 1933   | C                                    |              | 40/55/21      |
| 29.         | 379 Main Street<br>WILLIAM WILLIAMS HOUSE<br>Federal, 1825  | C                                    | 16           | 40/43/22      |
| 30.         | 380-382 Main Street<br>CAPTAIN DANIEL RANNEY HOUSE<br>Originally Center-chimney Colonial,<br>ca. 1750; Greek Revival additions,<br>ca. 1830, Colonial Revival, ca. 1920 | C                                    | 6            | 40/64/1       |
| 31.         | 384 Main Street<br>Colonial Revival, 1914   | C                                    |              | 40/64/2       |
| 32.         | 385 Main Street<br>ELISHA STEVENS HOUSE<br>Italianate, 1863   | C                                    |              | 40/43/21      |
| 33.         | 386 Main Street<br>Colonial Revival, 1920   | C                                    |              | 40/64/3       |
| 34.         | 389 Main Street<br>RILEY-GRIDLEY HOUSE<br>Center-chimney Colonial, ca. 1780   | C                                    | 15           | 40/43/20      |
| 35.         | 390 Main Street<br>Early 20th-century Domestic<br>ca. 1910  | C                                    |              | 40/64/1       |
| 36.         | 390A Main Street<br>Ranch, ca. 1960   | NC                                   |              | 40/64/5       |
| 37.         | 391 Main Street<br>SAMUEL SPENCER HOUSE<br>Center-chimney Colonial, 1777<br>Italianate additions, ca. 1870  | C                                    | 14           | 40/43/19A     |

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

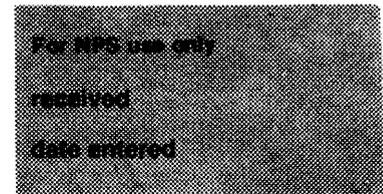
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 8



| Inven-<br>tory # | Building/Site   | Contributing/Non-<br>contributing (C/NC) | Photograph # | Map/Block/Lot |
|------------------|---|--|--------------|---------------|
| 38.              | 392 Main Street<br>FRANCIS WILCOX HOUSE<br>Center-chimney Colonial,<br>ca. 1770                     | C  |              | 40/64/24      |
| 39.              | 394 Main Street<br>Early 20th-century Domestic, 1912  | C  |              | 40/64/25      |
| 40.              | 395 Main Street<br>STEVENS-FRISBIE HOUSE<br>Italianate, 1853  | C  | 13           | 40/43/19      |
| 41.              | 396 Main Street<br>Early 20th-century Domestic<br>ca. 1910; north-south additions<br>ca. 1920       | C  |              | 40/64/26      |
| 42.              | 397 Main Street<br>EDWARD SAVAGE HOUSE<br>Greek Revival, 1837                                       | C  |              | 40/45/6B      |
| 43.              | 409 Main Street<br>Early 20th-century Domestic  | C  |              |               |
| 44.              | 423 Main Street<br>A. N. PIERSON HOMESTEAD<br>Queen Anne, 1892                                      | C  | 12           | 40/45/5       |
| 45.              | 459 Main Street<br>RUTH C. DYER HOUSE<br>Queen Anne with Colonial Revival-<br>style influence, 1907 | C  | 11           | 41/45/5       |
| 46.              | 460 Main Street<br>Modern ranch, ca. 1960   | NC                                       |              | 41/54/3       |
| 47.              | 462 Main Street<br>JEREMIAH HUBBARD HOUSE<br>Italianate, ca. 1870                                   | C  |              | 41/54/3A      |
| 48.              | 463 Main Street<br>FREDERICK WILCOX HOUSE<br>Greek Revival, ca. 1845                                | C  |              | 41/45/3       |
| 49.              | 464 Main Street<br>Colonial Revival, 1922-1925<br>North addition, ca. 1950                          | C  |              | 41/54/4       |
| 50.              | 466 Main Street<br>Colonial Revival, 1922-1925  | C  |              | 41/54/6       |

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

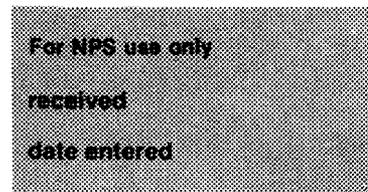
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 7

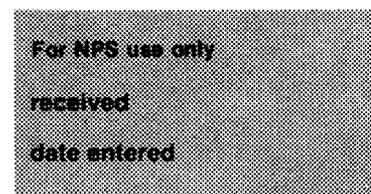
Page 9



| Inven-<br>tory # | Building/Site  | Contributing/Non-<br>contributing (C/NC) | Photograph # | Map/Block/Lot |
|------------------|--|--|--------------|---------------|
| 51.              | 469-471 Main Street<br>NATHAN WILCOX, II HOUSE<br>Federal, ca. 1825                                | C  |              | 53/46/12      |
| 52.              | 472 Main Street<br>WELLS-HUBBARD HOUSE<br>Georgian, 1795   | C  | 10           | 41/52/1       |
| 53.              | New Lane<br>A. N. PIERSON COMPLEX<br>Late 19th-century Commercial<br>ca. 1870                      | C  |              | 40/45/6       |
| 54.              | New Lane<br>Modern ranch, ca. 1960   | NC                                       |              | 40/43/18B     |
| 55.              | 2 Prospect Hill Road<br>WILLIAM HULBERT HOUSE<br>Carpenter Gothic, ca. 1865                        | C  | 7            | 40/65/13      |
| 56.              | 4 Prospect Hill Road<br>Modern Cape, ca. 1950  | NC                                       |              | 40/65/14      |
| 57.              | 6 Prospect Hill Road<br>Modern ranch, ca. 1950   | NC                                       |              | 40/65/16      |
| 58.              | 8 Prospect Hill Road<br>Colonial Revival, 1924   | C  |              | 40/65/17      |
| 59.              | 10 Prospect Hill Road<br>Colonial Revival, 1935  | C  |              | 40/65/18      |
| 60.              | 12 Prospect Hill Road<br>Queen Anne, 1894<br>Major alterations                                     | C  |              | 40/65/20      |
| 61.              | 14 Prospect Hill Road<br>KIRBY-WILCOX HOUSE<br>Federal, ca. 1800<br>Italianate additions, ca. 1870 | C  | 8            | 40/65/21      |
| 62.              | 16 Prospect Hill Road<br>Modern ranch, ca. 1960  | NC                                       |              | 40/65/22      |
| 63.              | 18 Prospect Hill Road<br>EBEN WILCOX HOUSE<br>Federal, 1816<br>Additions, ca. 1950                 | C  |              | 40/65/23      |

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

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



Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 10

| Inven-<br>tory # | Building/Site   | Contributing/Non-<br>contributing (C/NC) | Photograph # | Map/Block/Lot |
|------------------|---|--|--------------|---------------|
| 64.              | 33 Prospect Hill Road<br>EBENEZER BECKWITH<br>Octagon, 1854   | C  | 9            | 41/54/2       |
| 65.              | 33 Prospect Hill Road<br>DEACON THOMAS RANNEY HOUSE<br>Originally Center-chimney Colonial,<br>ca. 1750, Queen Anne alterations, ca.<br>1890 | C  |              | 41/54/2       |
| 66.              | 33 Prospect Hill Road<br>Modern gymnasium, ca. 1950   | NC                                       |              | 41/54/2       |
| 67.              | 33 Prospect Hill Road<br>Queen Anne, ca. 1880<br>Octagonal addition, ca. 1900   | C  |              | 41/54/2       |
| 68.              | 2 Prospect Place<br>Colonial Revival, 1922-25   | C  |              | 4/54/5        |
| 69.              | 4 Prospect Place<br>Colonial Revival, 1922-25<br>Bungalowoid influence  | C  |              | 41/54/9       |
| 70.              | 6 Prospect Place<br>Colonial Revival, 1922-25   | C  |              | 41/54/10      |
| 71.              | 8 Prospect Place<br>Colonial Revival, 1922-25   | C  |              | 41/54/11      |
| 72.              | 2 Stevens Lane<br>JOHN STEVENS TENANT HOUSE<br>Late 19th-century Domestic, 1875   | C  |              | 40/43/15      |
| 73.              | 4 Stevens Lane<br>JOHN STEVENS TENANT HOUSE #2<br>Late 19th-century Domestic, 1875  | C  |              | 40/43/16      |
| 74.              | 6 Stevens Lane<br>JOHN STEVENS TENANT HOUSE #3<br>Late 19th-century Domestic, 1875  | C  |              | 40/43/17      |
| 75.              | Memorial Town Green<br>Location of first Meeting House  | C  |              | 40A/43/Green  |

## 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education   | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/  |
| <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry    | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation      |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)     |

Criteria A and C

**Specific dates** 1750-1935 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Main Street Historic District in Cromwell illustrates the transformation of a rural, eighteenth-century settlement to the residential and institutional nucleus of a twentieth-century town. Most of this transformation took place in the nineteenth century. Main Street became a fashionable residential area in this period with over half of the buildings in the district built or owned by the leaders of Cromwell's agricultural and industrial development. They included wealthy merchants, farmers, civic leaders, professional people, and industrialists (Criterion A). A cohesive and well-preserved entity, the district contains a high concentration of historic residential and public buildings (90%). Good vernacular examples of most of the major domestic architectural styles are represented in the district, including Colonial, Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival dating from 1750 to 1935 (Criterion C). Of particular note is the quality and state of preservation of the Italianate-style, cube-form residences.

### History

Cromwell, settled in 1651, was a typical colonial farming community in the early eighteenth century, populated by farmers and artisans.<sup>3</sup> Surviving account books reveal that although farming remained the principal means of subsistence, and a barter economy persisted until well after the Revolution, the town began to participate in the maritime trade as early as the middle of the eighteenth century. Surplus agricultural products were shipped from the riverport to major East Coast ports and on a limited basis to the West Indies. Commerce prospered at the riverport (located to the southeast of the district) for approximately thirty years following the Revolution but ceased with the War of 1812.<sup>4</sup> Although a local river trade continued after the war and provided a decent market system, the economy of the riverport never fully recovered. Capital was released, however, for some limited industrial development. Several small mills were established in Cromwell, beginning an era of small-scale industrial development in the Nooks section to the northeast of the district, which had a significant impact on the town later in the nineteenth century.

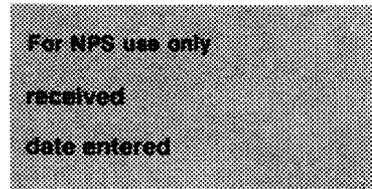
While the Connecticut River continued to provide Cromwell with an important means of transportation until the 1850s, the turnpike system established throughout the state by the early nineteenth century brought Cromwell in closer contact with other towns and cities. The Middlesex Turnpike, from Saybrook to Hartford, was established in 1802 and passed through Cromwell (present-day Main Street); it joined the Middletown-Berlin Turnpike (present-day West Street) at the Town Green, the southern boundary of the district.

Although the Town Green had been the site of early eighteenth-century institutions such as the village school and the meeting house, and Main Street had some scattered residential development in the eighteenth century, the importance of these land routes was not recognized until the riverport was clearly on the decline. In the 1820s Main Street began to be the commercial and institutional center of the town. Several merchants built stores on Main Street which are no longer standing. A tavern is still located on the



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

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



Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 8

Page 2

turnpike just above Prospect Hill (Inventory #52; Photograph #10). The Ralph B. Savage Store, at the south end of the district, was built on Main Street by 1850; it was used by Savage as a general store as well as his dwelling (Inventory #3; Photograph #2). The First Baptist Church in Cromwell (1803) was moved from its original location on the West Green to its present location next to the Town Green in 1833. Between 1834 and 1840 the Congregational Church carried out its remarkable building program whereby the old church was replaced with a new brick building and a brick parsonage and school were erected. These buildings were located on lower Main Street and utilized the Greek Revival style.

Commercial agriculture was the mainstay of Cromwell's economy in the first half of the nineteenth century. Several of the commercial farmers were also prominent in town and business affairs. The Wilcoxes, a wealthy and influential family who lived in Cromwell during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, left splendid visual proof of their prosperity. Eben Wilcox, who had interests in farming, banking, and real estate, maintained extensive landholdings in town. The 1816 Eben Wilcox House, located at 18 Prospect Hill Road is the northernmost of the farms on the east side of Main Street which were owned by the family (Inventory #63). There are four other Wilcox houses in the district (Inventory #38, 48, 51, 61).

By the third decade of the nineteenth century the factory system had become well established in New England. Newer industries which concentrated on metal casting and fabrication displaced many of the unsuccessful textile mills. In Cromwell, tools, hardware, and metal toys were the chief products. Between 1840 and 1860 at least three hardware factories were established in Cromwell, several of which were built on the sites of earlier cotton mills.

The most successful and long-lived manufacturing business established in the nineteenth century, the J. & E. Stevens Company, was not founded by Cromwell residents. John and Elisha Stevens, two brothers who started the company about 1843, were originally from Bristol, Connecticut.<sup>5</sup> By 1850 the company was producing cast iron and steel hardware and other products and was the largest industry in town. In 1866 Russell Frisbie, a pattern maker for the W. & B. Douglas Company of Middletown, purchased a quarter share in the company and accepted the position of superintendent. Frisbie apparently started the manufacture of mechanical iron toys, which eventually proved to be the most significant items produced by the company. The Stevens Company formed the American Toy Company in 1867 as a sales subsidiary in New York. By the turn of the century the company had developed to such proportions that it was catering to national and international markets, still producing mechanical toys and banks. Although the company dissolved in 1945, some of the factory buildings survive just to the northeast of the district and stand as a reminder of the active industry which took place in Cromwell.

The success of the J. & E. Stevens Company is manifested in several residential buildings that are still standing on Main Street and in the surrounding area. Built by men associated with the business they include the Joseph M. Waters House, an elaborate Italianate-style house built about 1865 (Inventory #24); the Samuel Spencer House, a colonial-period house occupied by Joseph M. Waters in the nineteenth century and purchased by Russell

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

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

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 8

Page 3

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Frisbie in 1873 (Inventory #37); the Stevens/Frisbie House, an Italianate-style house built about 1853-54 by John Stevens and later acquired by Russell Frisbie (Inventory #40); the Williams/Stevens House, a late colonial-period house built by Jehiel Williams around 1780 (outside the district) and purchased in 1855 by one of the employees of the J. & E. Stevens Company and a member of the family, George W. Stevens; and the William Hulbert House, a Carpenter Gothic-style cottage built by John Stevens between 1865 and 1870 (Inventory #55) and sold in 1879 to William Hulbert, who was then the secretary/treasurer of the J. & E. Stevens Company.

Another successful business was founded in the last half of the nineteenth century. Andrew N. Pierson, originally from Sweden, came to Cromwell in 1871. He established a small floral nursery which eventually became one of the largest commercial growers of roses in the country, A. N. Pierson, Inc. The contribution of the Pierson enterprise to the development of the Main Street residential area is evident from the several houses in the district that were associated with the company. In addition to the A. N. Pierson Homestead at 423 Main Street (Inventory #44; Photograph #12), several tenant houses in the district, built originally by John Stevens in 1875 to house his workers, were taken over by Pierson in 1893 and continued to serve as workers' housing for his company for several decades (Inventory #72-74). The "Holy City," a curious group of buildings associated with this family, was built by Pierson between 1922 and 1925 (Inventory #49, 50, 68-71). He was inspired to build these Colonial Revival-style cottages because of his Russellite faith (a splinter group of the Seventh Day Adventists). The Russellites believed that the end of the world was imminent. These houses were prepared for the faithful who would be saved and allowed to return to the "Kingdom of Heaven on Earth."<sup>6</sup>

Architecture

Unlike many nearby towns of similar age (such as South Glastonbury or Durham) where colonial-period architecture predominates along the highway through town, Cromwell features a Main Street which is clearly a product of the nineteenth century. It contains the town's most distinguished collection of well-preserved residential buildings dating from this period. Its nineteenth-century appearance is enhanced by the continuous sweep of broad lawns fronting the historic residential properties and plantings of mature street trees. Because the buildings have retained their historic setting, the district conveys a distinctive sense of time and place.

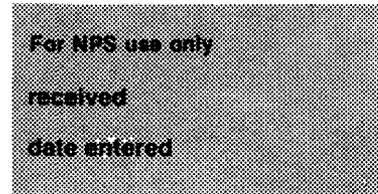
The eighteenth-century houses, while recalling the first period of development of the street as a residential area, generally play a subordinate role. These houses make a historic contribution but none are fully realized examples of particular architectural styles. In fact, several were so altered in the nineteenth century that they derive their significance from the later period.

The earliest individually significant house was completed at the turn of the nineteenth century. Notable for its state of preservation and fully-expressed architectural detail, the Wells-Hubbard House is the only Georgian-style building in the district and one of the very few in the Middletown area (Inventory #52; Photograph #10). An appropriately commanding presence, it is set apart from its neighbors to the north and clearly announces the northern entrance to the Main Street Historic District. The sophisticated use of the

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

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

Main Street Historic District  
Cromwell, Connecticut



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 4

Georgian-style detailing, including the Palladian window, decorative windowcaps, and extensive use of modillions is unusual on a basically simple center-chimney, five-bay house.<sup>7</sup>

The proliferation of the Greek Revival style in both institutional and domestic construction continued for an extended period in the district (1834-1850). Although all of the buildings so constructed utilize the temple form, with a fully pedimented gable facing the street, only the church is an outstanding expression of the style. Sited on the west side at the beginning of the district, the church's sheer mass and scale provide a visual anchor (Inventory #11; Photograph #18). With the exception of the upper tier of the steeple (replaced after the hurricane of 1938), the church appears as it was built in 1840. Later additions to the rear of the church are not visible from the street because of sloping terrain and do not detract from its historic appearance.

The most popular residential style in Cromwell in the nineteenth century was the Italianate. The majority of these buildings are significant in their own right; together they make an impressive architectural contribution to the district. Many of these large wood and brown-stone mansions built by the members of the industrial elite were later altered, the most popular change being the removal of an Italianate portico and the addition of a Queen Anne-style wraparound porch. The John Haskell House (1852) and the Edward W. Coe House (1876) are well-preserved examples that exhibit their original configuration and detailing (Inventory #13, 15; Photograph #4, 5). The earlier house utilizes four types of carved brackets in the cupola, frieze, and overhangs. The heavy window heads with "winged world" pediments and the almost delicately detailed portico are also original. The Coe House is less ornate but some detailing may have been removed or concealed in the twentieth century with the application of the modern siding. The roof brackets that resemble decorative rafter ends and the simple bracketed window heads are more characteristic of the Italian Villa style, rather than the later Victorian Italianate style.

The Stevens-Frisbie House is clearly the most outstanding of the Italianate group (Inventory #40; Photograph #13). Currently the home of the Cromwell Historical Society (it was donated to the society fully furnished in 1968), the building retains all its original materials and detailing. The hand-carved, scrolled brackets with pendant drops in the overhang of the roof and the cupola are emphasized by the historically accurate color scheme.<sup>8</sup> Surprisingly, the Queen Anne-style wraparound porch, which curves around the main block to the full-height bay on the south side, combines so successfully with the Italianate-style house as to appear original.

While none of the early twentieth-century houses are individually significant, they do contribute to the district as a group. Their similarity of form adds to the visual continuity and cohesiveness of the streetscape. Like their eighteenth-century antecedents, these buildings play a subordinate role. Relatively small in scale, visually similar, they are the supporting cast which allows the more architecturally significant buildings of the earlier periods to dominate the historic streetscape. Although quite obviously built in the twentieth century, these later buildings recall the beginnings of this historic residential area and bring the architectural development of the street full circle

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

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

|                  |
|------------------|
| For NPS use only |
| received         |
| date entered     |

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 8

Page 5

... completing the remarkably full record of architectural history in Cromwell's Main Street Historic District.

Notes

1. This nomination is compiled from the research files of the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust and Johnson, Judith E. and William H. Tabor, The History and Architecture of Cromwell, ed. Janice P. Cunningham, the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, 1980.
2. Dating of the houses is based on title searches carried out by the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust.
3. For the first two hundred years of its existence, the area that is now the Town of Cromwell was part of the Town of Middletown. The first area of settlement was located on the bank of the Connecticut River in 1651 and designated the "Upper Houses" to differentiate it from the main Middletown area of settlement located downriver. In the eighteenth century the town was known as the North Society of Middletown. In 1851 it was incorporated as an independent political entity and renamed Cromwell. Throughout this nomination the town will be called Cromwell, regardless of the period of history under discussion. The term "Upper Houses" is used only to refer to the original settlement of the riverport.
4. The prosperity of the riverport after the Revolution is reflected in the surviving Federal-period houses built by merchants and sea captains in the riverport community of Upper Houses (now a 1979 National Register district), but a few of the wealthier men involved in the maritime trade built their houses in the Main Street Historic District including Captains Daniel Ranney and Absalom Savage (Inventory #30, 12).
5. See Bonnie Bernstein, "Historical Archaeology in Middlesex County: The Manufacture of Toys in the 19th Century," unpublished student paper, Wesleyan University, 1975. (On file with the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust.)
6. The houses remained vacant during the lifetime of the participants.  
One house was prepared for Pierson's wife complete with furnishings and clothes.
7. Land records indicate that a "new house, partly finished" (by the original owner, Oliver Wells), was purchased by Simon Hubbard and completed by his brother George in 1806. It is clear that George Hubbard, who presumably bought the house to use as a tavern on the newly opened Middlesex Turnpike, added the Georgian-style detailing and the large complementary additions.
8. Testing for the original color scheme was performed by the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust at the request of the Cromwell Historical Society.

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

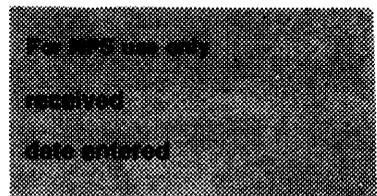
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Main Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Cromwell, Connecticut

Item number 9

Page 1



Major Bibliographical References

Adams, Charles Collard. Middletown Upper Houses. New York: The Grafton Press, 1908.

Beers, J. B. Commemorative Biographical Record of Middlesex County. Chicago: J.B. Beers & Co., 1903.

\_\_\_\_\_. History of Middlesex County, Connecticut. New York: J. B. Beers & Co., 1884.

Bernstein, Bonnie. "Historical Archaeology in Middlesex County: The Manufacture of Toys in the 19th Century," unpublished paper, Wesleyan University, 1975.

Cromwell Land Records

Cromwell Vital Statistics, Vols. 1-7, 1850-1934.

Johnson, Judith E., and Tabor, William H. The History and Architecture of Cromwell. Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, 1980.

Maselli, Elizabeth A., comp., "Cromwell Historical Collection" Vols. 1-11, Belden Library, Cromwell, Connecticut.

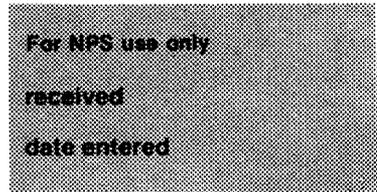
Middletown Land Records

Middletown Probate Records

1859 Walling Map

1874 Beers Atlas

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Main Street Historic District  
Cromwell, Connecticut

Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

UTM References

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| A 18 695650 4608950 | O 18 696140 4607380 |
| B 18 695760 4609000 | P 18 696060 4607930 |
| C 18 695780 4608950 | Q 18 695960 4607900 |
| D 18 695820 4608960 | R 18 695920 4607990 |
| E 18 695870 4608860 | S 18 695580 4607890 |
| F 18 695800 4608830 | T 18 695520 4608110 |
| G 18 695880 4608610 | U 18 695640 4608150 |
| H 18 696030 4608620 | V 18 695580 4608330 |
| I 18 696040 4608500 | W 18 695640 4608350 |
| J 18 696100 4608510 | X 18 695620 4608540 |
| K 18 696260 4607530 | Y 18 695780 4608560 |
| L 18 696220 4607260 | Z 18 695730 4608720 |
| M 18 696190 4607270 | AA18 695650 4608700 |
| N 18 696200 4607370 | BB18 695630 4608750 |
|                     | CC18 695730 4608790 |

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

Beginning at the northwest corner of the intersections of Main Street (Route 99) and Nooks Hill Road, the district boundary extends in an easterly direction from Lot 12, Block 46 (as shown on the Cromwell Tax Assessor's Map 53), crossing Main Street to follow the northern and eastern boundaries of Lot 1, Block 52, Map 1. Here the boundary turns in a southerly direction, crossing Nooks Hill Road at ninety degrees, until it meets Lot 10, Block 54, Map 41. Next it turns in an easterly, then southerly direction, to follow the boundaries of Lot 5, Block 54, Map 4. At the intersection of the southern property line of Lot 11, Block 54, the boundary turns in a westerly direction to connect with the eastern property lines of Lots 4, 3A, and 3, Block 54, Map 41, where it continues in a southeasterly direction. After meeting the northern property lines of the Holy Apostles College complex (Lot 2, Block 54, Map 41), the boundary heads in an easterly, then south-westerly direction until it meets a point opposite the northeast corner of Lot 23, Block 65, Map 40. From here it crosses Prospect Hill Road at ninety degrees and turns in a southerly direction along rear property lines until it connects with the southern boundary of Lot 1, Block 55, Map 40A. Following the said lot's boundaries it moves north until it meets a point opposite the southeastern corner of Lot Green, Block 43, Map 40A. Here it crosses Main Street at ninety degrees, adjusting to the said lot's southern and western boundaries. Next it crosses West Street at ninety degrees, to head in a northerly direction until it intersects with the southeastern corner of Lot 17, Block 43, Map 40. From here it heads east, then north, crossing New Lane at ninety degrees in a westerly direction. The boundary next follows the property lines of Lot 6, Block 45, Map 40 (A. N. Pierson Complex) until it meets and follows the southern, western, and eastern boundaries of Lot 5. Finally it heads north along the property lines of Lot 3, Block 45, Map 41, crossing Nooks Hill Road, to meet the first point.

These boundaries encompass the historic settlement area of Main Street as it developed between 1750 and 1935. Residential development was historically confined to the area described because of physical and manmade barriers discussed in paragraph 2, Item #7, of the nomination.