

Historic Resource Inventory  
City of Meriden  
Phase I

Heritage Resources

FuturePast Preservation

November 2013

**Historic and Architectural Resources Inventory**  
for the  
**City of Meriden, Connecticut,**  
**Phase I Study**

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*However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Office.*



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## Acknowledgements

The range of information and type of research required to complete a Historic Resources Inventory inherently necessitates the contributions of many people, without whose insight and expertise successful completion would not be possible. As such, this historic and architectural survey of the City of Meriden, Connecticut benefitted from the amenable and generous assistance of a number of individuals. A notable debt of gratitude is owed to Florence Villano, the City of Meriden's Grants Administrator, Tom Skoglund, Assistant Planning Director and to Mary Dunne, State Historic Preservation Office project director and Stacey Vairo, State Historic Preservation Office, National Register and State Register Coordinator.

The researchers have endeavored to generate an overview document and forms that are as up-to-date and accurate as possible. This does not, however, preclude the value or need for additional data or corrections. Anyone with further information or insight is encouraged to contact the Planning Division, City of Meriden, 142 East Main Street, Meriden, CT 06450

Historic Resource inventories similar to this report are based primarily on the format applied in the *Historic Preservation in Connecticut* series, compiled by the Connecticut Historical Commission (since replaced by the State Historic Preservation Office). The template for this study was provided by the State Historic Preservation Office and drawn from the *Historical and the Historical and Architectural Resource Survey of Clinton, Connecticut*, completed in March 2013 by Lucas Karmazinas of *FuturePast Preservation* and Tod Bryant of *Heritage Resources*.

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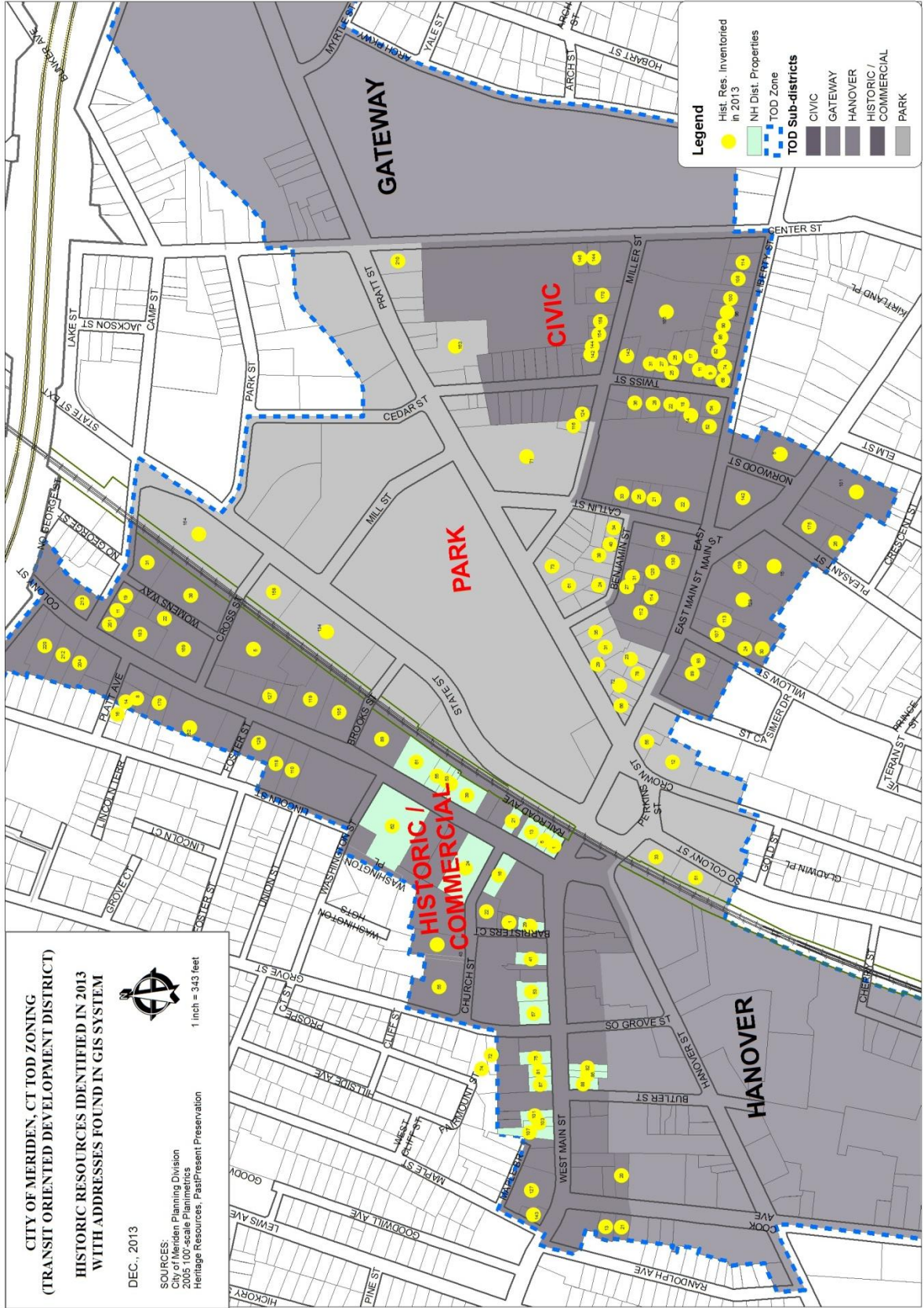
## I. Introduction

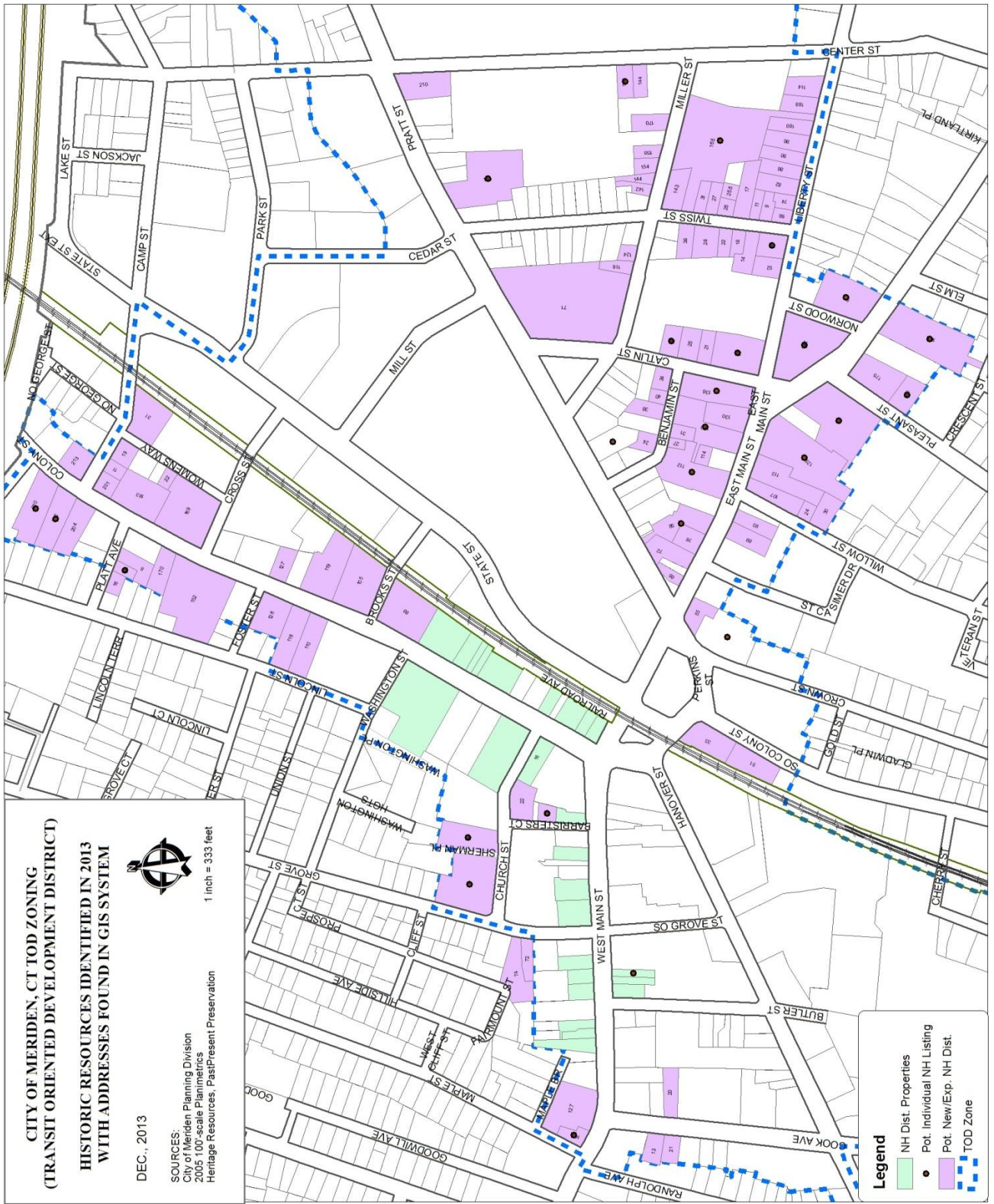
In the spring of 2013, the City of Meriden applied for, and received, a grant from the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office for the preparation of a Historic Resources Inventory. This report contains the results of the study, prepared between May and November 2013. The expectation was that this survey would enrich the town's historical record and aid in the realization of its Transit Oriented Development plan.

This report follows the format found in the National Park Service publication, *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning: National Register Bulletin #24*, and as identified by Connecticut's Statewide Historic Resources Inventory Update. It includes a historic and architectural overview illustrating the development of the survey area and commenting on its importance relative to the larger narrative of the town's history. It includes an individual inventory form for each resource surveyed identifying its historical and architectural significance. Additional sections highlight those resources potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as those noteworthy for their connection to the history of women and minorities.

A primary objective of this survey was to identify and document the historic significance and integrity of the included structures. This was done in an effort to acknowledge the historic value of the resources in the survey area as well as to supplement the town's historic record. Extensively documented and adequately preserved historic resources are often limited to those related to notable figures, or are those that are the oldest or most architecturally detailed. Historic Resource Inventory studies, however, allow for a broad analysis of the resources in a survey area and help to draw out those that may have been overlooked or undervalued. In the simplest of terms, the Historic Resource Inventory serves as an "honor roll" of a town's historic buildings, structures, and sites, thus allowing for the recognition of a diverse body of resources.

Historic Resource Inventories play an important role in various governmental planning processes and allow both the State Historic Preservation Office and town planning departments to identify state and federal projects that might impact historic resources. Well-preserved built environments contribute to an area's quality of life and municipalities benefit directly from efforts to maintain the unique makeup and aesthetic diversity of their historic neighborhoods. Historic Resource Inventories help to reduce tear-downs, increase local infrastructure investment, and facilitate economic development by informing local governments and populations of the quality and character of their built environment, and by aiding in its protection and preservation. Historic structures gain their significance from the role they have played in the community and from the value the community places on them as a result. It is hoped that this Historic Resource Inventory will serve to increase appreciation of Meriden's historic resources and in turn encourage their preservation.







## **II. Methodology**

### **The Survey**

This survey of historic and architectural resources in the City of Meriden, Connecticut was conducted by Tod Bryant of Heritage Resources, and Lucas A. Karmazinas of FuturePast Preservation, firms based in Norwalk and Hartford, Connecticut, respectively, specializing in historical research and the documentation of historic resources. Fieldwork, photo documentation, research, and writing were carried out between May and October 2013. Copies of the final report and survey forms are deposited at the City of Meriden, Meriden Public Library, and the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, One Constitution Plaza, Hartford, CT 06103. Copies of the report and survey forms will also be deposited by the State Historic Preservation Office at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford, and the Special Collections Department of the Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut in Storrs.

The visual information needed to complete this Historic Resource Inventory was gathered through a “windshield” survey followed by more intensive research of other resources. This involved first documenting each historic resource from the exterior and supplementing it with public data, such as town tax assessor’s and land records, as well as historic maps, previous survey and other sources. Neither the form, nor the survey in general, dictates what homeowners can do with their property nor does the information violate the privacy of those whose property is included. For homeowners who might be concerned about the implications of the survey, a review of the Historic Resource Inventory form demonstrates the public nature of the information on the forms. Data collected includes: verification of street number and name; use; accessibility (public vs. private); style of construction; approximate date of construction (to be compared with assessor’s information); construction materials and details; condition of the resource; character of the surrounding environment; description of the resource; and exterior photographs. This survey represents an inventory of historical and architectural resources and no attempt was made to identify archaeological sites. Such an endeavor would have been beyond the scope of this study and would have necessitated specialized procedures, extensive fieldwork, and a greater allocation of resources.

All photographs were captured with a Nikon D300s camera and Nikon professional lenses using a Solmeta Geotagger Pro to embed location information into the metadata of each image.

### **The Survey Area**

The survey area selected for this study is located near the center of the town of Meriden. It includes areas which are defined in the Meriden Transit Oriented Development project. The neighborhoods within the survey area represent many intact residential and commercial structures, constructed between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries (See map 1). The target area was delineated by the researchers due to the potential historical significance, density, and integrity of the resources found these areas. The street index can be found at the end of Section II.

The Meriden Historic Resources Inventory survey area is a collection of extant period architecture set in an urban environment. The identified resources illustrate the width and breadth of Meriden’s developmental history in the area surrounding the railroad station and the continuing evolution of the town’s economy during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The resources chosen for this survey include well-preserved examples directly reflecting these developmental patterns, as well as those related to commercial and industrial activities.

## Criteria for Selection

The Historic and Architectural Resources Inventory for the City of Meriden, Connecticut was conducted in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation* (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1983). The methodological framework was drawn from the National Park Service publication, *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning; National Register Bulletin #24* Derry, Jandle, Shull, and Thorman, National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1977; Parker, revised 1985).

The criteria employed for the evaluation of properties were based on those of the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service under the supervision of the Secretary of the Interior. Properties recognized by the National Register include districts, structures, buildings, objects, and sites that are significant in American history, architecture, engineering, archaeology, and culture, and which contribute to the understanding of the states and the nation as a whole. The National Register's criteria for evaluating the significance of resources and/or their eligibility for nomination are determined by the following:

The quality of significance in American History, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess the integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history, or;
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, or;
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a distinctive and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, or;
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.<sup>1</sup>

The above criteria formed the basis for evaluating the buildings in this survey, however these parameters were also broadened to identify resources associated with individuals or events significant to Meriden's history, or those structures that displayed vernacular styles or methods of construction typical of the period in which they were built. Not all of the resources identified by this inventory have been judged to be eligible for individual inclusion on the National Register, however, a large percentage are representative of Meriden's developmental and social history, and, as such, should be considered worthy of National Register recognition as historic districts. Connections have also been found between a notable percentage of the

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<sup>1</sup> *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation; National Register Bulletin #15*, By the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, finalized by Patrick W. Andrus, edited by Rebecca H. Shrimpton, (National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1990; revised 1991, 1995, 1997).

buildings surveyed and Pond's, a nationally significant industrial entity. The relationship between Ponds and the surrounding neighborhoods likewise makes them worthy of National Register district recognition for the role that they play in documenting the company's history, as well as the lives of those who worked there. Those resources determined to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as part of historic districts, will be discussed later in the *Recommendations* section.

Historic Resource Inventories are often prepared by focusing on the oldest resources in a survey area. These are evaluated relative to the period in which they originated, and are unified within the requisite overview study according to the chronology of the area's development. The decision to conduct this survey geographically, rather than according to the construction date of the included buildings, developed early in the planning stages and was influenced by several factors. First, was the hope that additional Historic Resource Inventories would eventually result in all of the town's eligible historic resources being documented. As such, conducting these surveys geographically, rather than chronologically, facilitated a more comprehensive and straightforward approach to identifying Meriden's historic buildings, structures, and cultural resources, and laid the path for future study based upon a similar method. In addition, this practice also serves to uncover the developmental patterns that shaped an area in question, thus helping the organizations involved better identify those areas worthy of further historical study or documentation.

The resources found within the Transit Oriented Development Area of Meriden are an ideal study group due to their historical significance and architectural integrity. These characteristics share a rich developmental history, which in turn supported sections of the survey area's potential eligibility for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Some buildings may also be eligible for individual listing in the National Register. Over 150 resources were selected for this study and they span over one hundred twenty-five years of the town's history. Some of these buildings have been altered by the application of synthetic siding and modern windows and doors, as well as the addition, or removal, of porches; all of those included in the survey retain the majority of their historic character, features, and form

### **III. The Historic Resource Inventory Form**

A Historic Resource Inventory form was prepared for each historic resource surveyed. These were completed following a standard electronic document (.pdf format) created by the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, the state agency responsible for historic preservation. Each form is divided into three main sections. These provide background, architectural, and historical information on the resource, and include; their street number and name, owner(s), type of use, style of construction, approximate date of construction, construction materials and details, physical condition of the resource, character of the surrounding environment, description of the resource, architect/builder (if known), exterior photographs, and historical narrative.

Much of the information in this inventory was gathered from town Assessor's records between June and October 2013. Architectural descriptions were drafted from on-site evaluations during this same period and the historical narratives were based on archival research. The majority of the fields on the Historic

Resource Inventory form should be self-explanatory; however the following is an elucidation of several of the more nebulous categories.

### **Historic Name**

In many cases the historic name of a resource serves as an indicator of its historical significance. When referring to public or commercial buildings, churches, social halls, etc., a historic name is based upon a structure's earliest known use and is typically straightforward. In the case of residential buildings things become a bit more complicated. Homes that sheltered the same family for a number of generations typically carry the surname of this family as their historic name, however, those homes that frequently changed hands or were rental properties are difficult to classify in this manner.

### **Interior Accessibility**

This was a survey of exterior features and all of the resources studied were private buildings. As such, access to the interior of these structures was not requested of the owners, nor was it necessary.

### **Style**

A building's style was characterized according to its earliest stylistic influences and regardless of later alterations or additions. Descriptions were based upon accepted terminology laid out in *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia and Lee McAlester (Alfred A Knopf: New York, 2005) and *American Houses; A Field Guide to the Architecture of the Home* by Gerald Foster (Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 2004). The most commonly applied architectural styles are described below. Many of the resources surveyed did not fall into a specific category as they lack the necessary attributes. These were simply classified as "vernacular." Such a term indicates construction typical of the period, yet lacking in many of the stylistic elements that would link it to a particular architectural style. Most of the architectural styles of the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries are represented in the survey area. They are: Art Moderne, Art Deco, Beaux Arts, Bungalow, Colonial Revival, Diner Car, Dutch Colonial Revival, Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, Italianate, Modern, Neoclassical Revival, Queen Anne, Renaissance Revival, Romanesque, Richardson Romanesque, Second Empire, Stick and Vernacular Victorian. The styles of commercial buildings have not been studied or classified as well as those of domestic architecture. We have assigned an architectural style to commercial buildings based on their similarity to domestic styles.

Descriptions of these styles as well as outstanding examples of each, are included in the Historical and Architectural Overview section.

### **Date of Construction/Dimensions**

Dates of original construction are based on the City of Meriden's Assessor's records, architectural and historical evidence, and archival research. In cases where the date listed by the Assessor's office seemed questionable, and a specific date could not be found through historical research, a circa (ca.) precedes the year indicated. This evaluation is an educated guess based upon the structure's architectural detail, construction methods, and information gleaned from archival sources, including maps and atlases. The

Meriden Assessor's records were also used to confirm and/or determine the dimensions of buildings and to support the survey of materials used in construction.

### **Condition**

Condition assessments were based on a visual investigation of the exterior of inventoried structures. It was not possible to give a detailed assessment of the structural condition of the resources, as extensive and interior assessments could not be conducted. Buildings listed as being in "good" condition lack any glaring structural problems. Those listed as "fair" had problems, including badly peeling paint, cracked siding and windows, or damaged roofs, which if left unattended, could result in serious damage. None of the resources were listed as "Deteriorated", which would have indicated severe exterior problems and neglect.

### **Other Notable Features of Building or Site**

While many of the preceding fields list the basic details of a resource's construction, specifically the style, original date, materials, structural system, roof type, and size, this category allows the surveyor to elaborate on a structure's other architectural qualities. In the case of this survey it typically included a building's orientation relative to the street, its floor plan (i.e. square, rectangular, or irregular), height, roof structure and materials, window types, wall cladding, and porch details. As the state does not expect inventories of this nature to address the interiors of private buildings, no such descriptions were compiled or included. This field also allowed the surveyor to comment on any substantial alterations made to a resource.

### **Historical or Architectural Importance**

Assessing the historical significance of each resource required detailed archival research. The methods applied varied, depending upon the information available for each structure, but did not include a complete chain of title research for each resource. Local land and census records, maps, and atlases typically revealed the information necessary to confirm the dates given in the Assessor's records, or as was the case with a many structures, provide a different, yet more accurate, date of construction. This research also served to build a socio-historical narrative for each structure. These highlight the relationship between the building and its users, and demonstrate each resource's relevance to the development of the community.

This field also contains information indicating how a particular resource exemplifies architectural qualities characteristic of a certain style or period, if pertinent. Architectural significance is assessed by evaluating a structure's historical integrity. This is determined by judging whether it retains the bulk of its original material, if contributes to the historic character of the area, or if it is representative of an architect's work, an architectural trend, or a building period. Although many homes have been modified in some way, unless drastic alterations have been made, a building is likely to retain much of its historic character.

## IV. Historical and Architectural Overview

### Meriden Today

The City of Meriden is a centrally located medium sized city and an important Connecticut transportation crossroads. It is located approximately halfway between Hartford and New Haven, as well as fifteen miles east Waterbury. The city is served by major highways, including Interstate 691, Interstate 91, Connecticut Route 15 and a rail line. It has an area of twenty-four square miles and a population in 2011 of 62,280. It is bounded by Berlin to the north, Southington and Cheshire to the west, Wallingford to the south and Middletown and Middlefield to the east. **The city's largest employers are the MidState Medical Center and the City of Meriden.** In 2009, there were 25, 272 housing units in Meriden and 54.8% of them were single units. As of 2000, 35.9% of this housing was built before 1950.<sup>2</sup>

### Lay of the Land

Meriden is located in the Central Valley, a lowland which stretches from the Massachusetts border to long Island Sound. This region is approximately twenty-five miles wide through most of its length and about fifty-five miles long. It narrows to about ten miles wide as it turns northwest toward Long Island Sound. The terrain is characterized by a gentle, rolling landscape that is bordered by the Metacomet Ridge, which rises to almost 900 feet at its highest point on the western third of the valley. This ridge divides the alluvial flood plain of the Connecticut River on the east from the smaller Farmington and Quinnipiac River Valleys to the west.<sup>3</sup> Meriden lies in a valley between the Hanging Hills to the west and Lamentation Mountain to the east. The Quinnipiac River runs along its western side and Harbor Brook runs through the center of town.<sup>4</sup>

### Early History

Before the arrival of Europeans, several Native American groups, including the Quinnipiac and Mattabeset, hunted in the dense forests and swampy lowlands in the area that is now Meriden.<sup>5</sup> Later on, Dutch trappers from the Good Hope Fort at Hartford may have trapped beaver in the *vly* (Dutch for swamp) around Harbor Brook.<sup>6</sup> English colonists came to know the area before 1634 as they passed through the valley between Lamentation Mountain to the east and the Hanging Hills to the west on their dangerous thirty-six mile journeys between Hartford and New Haven. There was no actual road, but only an Indian path through the wilderness which had no bridges and was marked by blazes on trees. It was only wide enough

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<sup>2</sup>Connecticut Economic Resources Center, "Meriden, Connecticut," <http://www.cerc.com/TownProfiles/Custom-Images/2011/Meriden2011.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Janice P. Cunningham, *Historic Preservation in Connecticut. v 3, Central Valley: Historical and Architectural Overview and Management Guide* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Commission, 1995) 7.

<sup>4</sup> Rockey, J. L. ed., *The History of New Haven County, Connecticut v.1* (New York: W. W. Preston & Co., 1892) 456.

<sup>5</sup> Meriden Bicentennial Committee, *Meriden at 200* (Meriden: Meriden Public Library, 2006) 1.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Bancroft Gillespie and George Munson Curtis, *An Historic Record and Pictorial Description of the Town of Meriden, Connecticut*, (Meriden: Journal Publishing Company, 1906) 15-16.

for travel on foot or horseback, but it was the sole means of communication between the two colonies. This path would later become Colony Road, now Colony Street, one of the oldest roads in Connecticut.<sup>7</sup>

The land between the two colonies was strategically important to both of them, so they both began buying land from Native American tribes in an effort to control as much of the area as possible. Colonists eventually bought the same land five times from different Native Americans. Montowese, a Sachem of the Mattabesett tribe,<sup>8</sup> sold the land between Harbor Brook at Colony Street and the Hanging Hills to the New Haven Colony in 1638. The same land was later sold by Seauket, another Mettabessett chief,<sup>9</sup> to Edward Higbee of Hartford (the Connecticut Colony) in 1664 and by Adam Puit, another Native American, to John Talcott of Hartford in 1683. There were also two other Indian Deeds which confirmed previous grants from Native Americans.<sup>10</sup> Based on these overlapping deeds, Hartford believed that it should control the territory. The colony decided to protect its claim by granting Jonathan Gilbert a farm of three hundred acres in Cold Spring on August 8, 1661. He is granted permission the keep a tavern at his house on May 15, 1662.<sup>11</sup> Sometime before 1664 he built a fortified stone house on the property for the purpose of protecting travelers on the Colony Road from Indian attacks. In return for stocking the house with arms and ammunition, inhabitants of the house were granted the right to, "...keep a tavern forever."<sup>12</sup>

Gilbert thus became the first European to build a house in present day Meriden and these grants effectively gave Hartford control over what would become the northern half of the city. His farm was called "Merideen" in the records.<sup>13</sup> Gilbert was a wealthy merchant and tavern keeper in Hartford and he did not live on the farm. His tenant manager was Edward Higbee, who became the first European to live in Meriden. Higbee, as noted above, bought additional land from Native Americans and built his house on it. His 1664 deed is the first recorded use of the name "Meriden" with that spelling.<sup>14</sup> The name Meriden was originally used only for the Gilbert farm and only later applied to the surrounding area.<sup>15</sup>

Gilbert made a fortune in his many businesses which included shipping furs to Boston on the ships of his son-in-law, Andrew Belcher. After Jonathan Gilbert's death in 1682 his will was contested by his wife and children. At the end of the litigation in 1686, all of the heirs except Gilbert's wife, Mary, had sold their shares to Andrew Belcher.<sup>16</sup> She finally sold her share to Belcher in 1700,<sup>17</sup> which gave him full title to Meriden. In October 1703 the Colonial Court granted to Belcher the 470 acres of the Gilbert Farm and additional land in May 1704. He continued to buy land until he eventually owned about 1200 acres, which he called "My Meriden Manor." He believed, like many others, that mineral wealth lay beneath the earth in the new world. He prospected around the farm, but was never able to operate a profitable mine.

Andrew Belcher seems to have lost interest in his Meriden Manor by 1707, when he transferred its ownership to his son, Jonathan Belcher. Jonathan Belcher was an imposing man. He was described as,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 8-10.

<sup>8</sup> Sherburne Friend Cook, *The Indian Population of New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976) 65.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 61

<sup>10</sup> Curtis, *An Historic Record*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 12-14.

<sup>12</sup> Rockey, *The History of New Haven County*, 456.

<sup>13</sup> Curtis, *An Historic Record*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 22.

“...charming in his manners, delightful in his vanity; picturesque in his lordly way of dispensing hospitality and always conscious that he was his majesty’s most imposing representative in these Puritan commonwealths.”<sup>18</sup> He lived in a grand English-style manor house with many servants in Milton, Massachusetts. He served as Royal Governor of Massachusetts from 1731 to 1741, followed by service as Royal Governor of New Jersey from 1741 to 1754.<sup>19</sup>

Jonathan Belcher also tried his hand at prospecting and mining but was also unsuccessful. Money spent in improving the property and difficulties collecting rent from the resident farmer and innkeeper caused him to try to sell the place starting in 1732. He found no buyers and eventually gave it to his son, Andrew, that same year.<sup>20</sup> Andrew was also unable to make the place profitable, and he sold 670 acres to Samuel Peck in 1742 and 250 acres to Nathaniel Edwards the same year.<sup>21</sup> He was the last Belcher to own land in Meriden, but the influence of the family was so great the land they owned is still known as the Belcher, not Gilbert farm.

### Origin of the Name

Several sources mention that the name Meriden could be a contraction of “merry den” as a reference to rowdy nights at the Gilbert/Belcher tavern, but all reject that notion.<sup>22</sup> At least two sources claim that it was named by the Belchers for their ancestral home in Warwickshire, England,<sup>23</sup> but George Munson Curtis disproved that theory by travelling to England to track down the true origin of the name Meriden. First he notes that the Jonathan Gilbert, not the Belchers named the farm and, second he did not believe that a town named Meriden in Warwickshire existed. He found and visited a place in near Ockley in Dorking, Surrey, England called Meriden Farm. He found that Rev. Henry Whitfield, who settled Guilford with his flock in 1639, had been the vicar of Ockley from 1618 to 1638 and that Ockley is only a few miles from Meriden Farm. Whitfield was a Church of England minister but he was sympathetic to the Puritans. His home in Ockley was visited by Reverend John Davenport of New Haven and Thomas Hooker of Hartford before they came to Connecticut. Two of his Ockley parishioners came with him to Guilford and many others were from Surrey County. The location of the Connecticut town also bears a resemblance to the English Meriden Farm. Both are in valleys between ranges of hills. Both were farms, not towns and both were near springs known for their “uncommon coldness.” Both places are screened by hills which have views of the sea and they have similarly named hamlets, Cold Harbor and Pilgrims Harbor nearby. This evidence makes a convincing case for the origin of the name Meriden.<sup>24</sup> However, the town of Meriden in England does exist and it was part of Warwickshire before 1974.<sup>25</sup> Thomas Gilbert, Jonathan’s father, was married there in 1617<sup>26</sup> and Jonathan

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 28

<sup>22</sup> See Brenda J. Vumbaco, *Meriden: Connecticut’s Crossroads* (Northridge, California: Windsor Publications, 1988) 17, Rockey, *History of New Haven County*, 457.

<sup>23</sup> See George William Perkins, *Historical Sketches of Meriden* (Meriden: Franklin E. Hinman, 1849) 16 and Rockey, *History of New Haven County*, 456.

<sup>24</sup> Curtis, *An Historic Record*, 44-48.

<sup>25</sup> Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, “Meriden History”,

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/localhistory/16410.htm> accessed October, 15, 2013.



Gilbert was born there that same year.<sup>27</sup> It is likely that this town is the source of the name of the Connecticut city.

Curtis goes on to discuss the etymology of English place names using many examples to establish that “merry” in medieval English meant sweet or pleasant rather than the current meaning of “jocund or mirthful” and that “den”, a common place name suffix in England, was originally “dene” or “dean” which was an early term for valley. Hence: Merry Den or Meriden = Pleasant Valley.<sup>28</sup>

Curtis debunks the notion that Pilgrims Harbor was named for the stop in that place by the Regicide judges William Goffe, John Dixwell, and Edward Whalley. He notes written evidence showing that the name was in use before those men left their hiding place in Boston and that the word “pilgrim” was also used for “traveler.” He suggests that, in England, shelters for travelers on remote roads are called “cold harbors” since they provide shelter from the cold. He theorizes that Pilgrims Harbor is named for a rustic traveler’s shelter that was once on the bank of the brook.<sup>29</sup>

### Development of the Town

In 1670 and later, about the same time that the General Assembly was granting huge tracts of land near Pilgrims Harbor to the Gilberts and Belchers, it was also granting smaller tracts of two, three, twelve and twenty acres to less wealthy people near a dense swamp called Dog’s Misery. Dog’s Misery was east of Pilgrims harbor and was so named because wild animals took refuge there when being chased by dogs, but the dogs often were, “...baffled or killed in their attempts to reach their prey hidden in this jungle.”<sup>30</sup> The population gradually increased around the swamp and it became especially profitable grow and export hops. “Hopp Lots” in Dog’s Misery were very desirable and their allocation was important. Several meetings were held to discuss the loss of timber due to the cutting of hop poles in the swamp or vly. Hops were not grown in the swamp, but it was a rich source of the long, thin poles needed to grow them. Large quantities of hops were grown for bread and beer, as they had been in England. Timber was also exported in large quantities and the loss of trees also became a problem. In 1724, a town meeting showed great concern and levied fines on the export of lumber without a permit.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ancestry.com, “Thomas Gilbert” [http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?gl=ROOT\\_CATEGORY&rank=1&new=1&so=3&MSAV=1&msT=1&gss=ms\\_r\\_f-2\\_s&gsfn=thomas&gsln=Gilbert&msydy=1610&msypn\\_ftp=Meriden%2C+Warwickshire%2C+England&msypn=88110&msypn\\_PInfo=8-|0|0|3257|3251|0|0|0|5288|88110|0|&cpxt=0&catBucket=rstp&uidh=a24&msydp=10&\\_83004003-n\\_xcl=f&cp=0](http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?gl=ROOT_CATEGORY&rank=1&new=1&so=3&MSAV=1&msT=1&gss=ms_r_f-2_s&gsfn=thomas&gsln=Gilbert&msydy=1610&msypn_ftp=Meriden%2C+Warwickshire%2C+England&msypn=88110&msypn_PInfo=8-|0|0|3257|3251|0|0|0|5288|88110|0|&cpxt=0&catBucket=rstp&uidh=a24&msydp=10&_83004003-n_xcl=f&cp=0) accessed October, 25, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Ancestry.com, “Jonathan Gilbert”, [http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?gl=ROOT\\_CATEGORY&rank=1&new=1&so=3&MSAV=1&msT=1&gss=ms\\_r\\_f-2\\_s&gsfn=jonathan&gsln=Gilbert&msydy=1610&msypn\\_ftp=Meriden%2C+Warwickshire%2C+England&msypn=88110&msypn\\_PInfo=8-|0|0|3257|3251|0|0|0|5288|88110|0|&cpxt=0&catBucket=rstp&uidh=a24&msydp=10&\\_83004003-n\\_xcl=f&cp=0](http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?gl=ROOT_CATEGORY&rank=1&new=1&so=3&MSAV=1&msT=1&gss=ms_r_f-2_s&gsfn=jonathan&gsln=Gilbert&msydy=1610&msypn_ftp=Meriden%2C+Warwickshire%2C+England&msypn=88110&msypn_PInfo=8-|0|0|3257|3251|0|0|0|5288|88110|0|&cpxt=0&catBucket=rstp&uidh=a24&msydp=10&_83004003-n_xcl=f&cp=0) accessed October, 25, 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 49-51.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>30</sup> Perkins, *Historical Sketches*, 46.

<sup>31</sup> Curtis, *An Historic Record*, 59-61.

The Town of Wallingford was settled in 1669 and established by the General Court in 1670. The northern boundary of the town was set at, “..where the old road to New Haven goeth over Pilgrimes Harbor,” Rather than at the southern boundary of Farmington. This left an unincorporated area three miles wide, which was still governed by the General Court.<sup>32</sup> As families in Wallingford grew, land began to be allotted in what is now Meriden and Cheshire, but the area north of the Pilgrims Harbor ford had not been included in the original grant for Wallingford. It was more fertile than much of the land that had been included within town boundaries in 1670 and Wallingford wanted it. However, The General Assembly would not issue a grant, so John Talcott, an Indian fighter, prominent citizen and friend of some Wallingford planters, secured an Indian title to the property in 1684 from Podunk Indian Adam Puit. Talcott then assigned the deed to Wallingford, which gave the town ownership of the land, but no right to govern it or to collect taxes from inhabitants.

The dispute over this land continued when overlapping resolutions to establish title to it by both Wethersfield and Middletown were passed by both towns in 1720, but nothing was done to try to enforce them. Wallingford’s claim on the disputed territory is finally upheld by the General Assembly in May of 1725. The territory is referred to as Wallingford Purchase Lands and its boundaries include the present town except for Thomas Belcher’s farm. At the May session in 1728 the farm is annexed to form the present town. Despite these official actions, the problem was not completely resolved, since Middletown and Farmington continued to try to annex the area.<sup>33</sup>

Even before the Adam Puit deed to Wallingford mediated by Major Talcott, The Colony of CT had granted two large tracts of land in the late seventeenth century to two prominent men of the colony: James Bishop and William Jones of New Haven. Both men held several offices in the colony and both served as magistrates. Jones succeeded Bishop as Deputy Governor after bishop’s death in 1691. Bishops land, 300 acres, was granted to him by the General Assembly in October of 1669. Its exact boundaries are unknown but it was in the center of the present town and includes the entire business district. It was an unsettled wilderness at that time and there are no records of how he used the farm, but he may have sold timber. Captain John Prout, a mariner from New Haven married one of Bishop’s daughters and came to possess the farm sometime after Bishop’s death in 1691. The boundaries of the land were recorded for the first time when Prout and his wife Mary sold it to John Merriam on November 3, 1716. No attempt was made to establish a settlement. Land was granted by the General Assembly and later sold only for farming.<sup>34</sup>

During the time that Meriden was divided, the Town of Wallingford controlled land to the south of a line beginning at Colony Street and Harbor Brook bridge and known as “Wallingford old Bounds” or northern bound line of Wallingford” in deeds of the period.. Land north of this line was controlled by the Colonial government and was granted and taxed by it. The northern section was settled mostly by people from Wethersfield, Middletown, Farmington, Durham and Massachusetts, while the Wallingford. Section was settled mostly by its residents. The dividing line had not been surveyed and its location was in dispute, which led to disagreements among land owners when a large farm began to be broken up into smaller parcels. In 1721 the Wallingford town committee laid out a “two rod highway beginning at Pilgrims Harbor brook and the Country road to follow the town line to Middletown bounds” in an effort to settle the matter. Deeds after 1721 indicate that the road was a straight line leading all the way to Middletown. The road followed

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 53

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 67-74.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.,75-76.

the path of Liberty Street from Harbor Brook Bridge to Middletown and traces of it could still be seen in 1906. The road was closed in 1786.<sup>35</sup>

Disputes over this border were still occurring in 1744, 20 years after Wallingford gained control of the northern half of Meriden. In another attempt to solidify its borders, Wallingford decided to establish once and for all western half of the old border and hired John Hitchcock, a New Haven surveyor to do it. His road ran from “the white wood stub by the west end of Pilgrims Harbor Bridge” to the edge Farmington (now Southington). Stakes were driven every eighty rods to mark the line and a road was built just south of it. West Main Street is the last remnant of this road.<sup>36</sup>

### *Separation from Wallingford*

At the same time that the borders of the future city were being disputed, the small number of farmers living around Dog’s Misery and Harbor Brook began to coalesce into a community. They were required to attend Sunday services at the Wallingford Meeting House, which was miles away over difficult terrain. The trip was impossible in the winter, so in 1724 they were given permission to hire a minister for the four winter months.<sup>37</sup> This was the first small step toward separation from the mother town.

The population of the area began to increase after the Revolutionary War and community feeling strengthened. By 1786 the Parish of Meriden petitioned the Town Of Wallingford that it, “...be Constituted a Distinct Town by the name of the town of Meriden...”, but their petition was denied. They tried again with motions for independence in Wallingford town meetings in 1794 and 1795. Both motions failed, but Wallingford agreed to hold one third of Town and Selectmen’s meetings in Meriden after 1795. This arrangement was not enough to satisfy the residents of the area. They continued to press their case and by 1805, Wallingford reluctantly agreed to the separation.<sup>38</sup> The new town was made official by the General Assembly on the second Thursday in May, 1806 and the boundaries were to be those of the old Parish of Meriden.<sup>39</sup> The first Town Meeting was held on June 16, 1806.<sup>40</sup>

### *Nineteenth Century*

Meriden and its industries continued to prosper through the first half of the nineteenth century and the Civil War. It was a town with a population of 3,559 in 1850 that would more than double to 7,426 in 1860. Meriden would become a city of 10,495 by 1870.<sup>41</sup> This rapid growth inspired a group of 644 citizens, led by pioneering industrialist Charles Parker, to petition the General Assembly for a city charter in June of 1867 and it was granted one month later. Charles Parker was elected the first Mayor of Meriden by an overwhelming margin and the new city government immediately set out to establish a municipal water supply, followed by professional police departments in 1868.<sup>42</sup> After the Meriden Britannia Company disaster, or “Big Shop Fire” of 1870, they realized the need for a paid fire department, which was established

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>37</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Curtis, *An Historic Record*, 333-335.

<sup>39</sup> Rockey, *History*, 456.

<sup>40</sup> Curtis, *An Historic Record*, 337.

<sup>41</sup> Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, “Connecticut Population by Town, 1830-1890”, <http://www.ct.gov/ecd/cwp/view.asp?a=1106&q=250672> accessed September 18, 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Meriden Sesquicentennial Committee, *150 years of Meriden*, (Meriden: City of Meriden, 1956) 99-103.

in 1873.<sup>43</sup> The city continued to grow to a population of 25,423 in 1890<sup>44</sup> and by 1892 one hundred to two hundred buildings were being constructed each year.<sup>45</sup> Its infrastructure improved quickly in the late nineteenth century. There were forty miles of streets in 1879, which had increased to sixty miles by 1889.<sup>46</sup> However, none of these streets were paved until the 1890's when a paving program began in the center of town.<sup>47</sup> Gas lights came to Meriden in 1863 and electric street lights were introduced in 1889.<sup>48</sup>

### *Twentieth Century*

By 1910, Meriden had a population of 32,066<sup>49</sup> and there were one hundred twenty factories in town with 7,845 employees earning salaries of \$5,429,000.<sup>50</sup> Meriden's factories supplied the war effort in both World Wars and the population continued to increase - from 34,764 in 1920 to 44,088 in 1950. The increase in population, Meriden's central location and the continued strength of industry in the first half of the twentieth century drove the expansion of the retail and commercial center of town around Colony Street and West Main Street. In 1956, there were forty-five members of the Merchants Bureau of the Meriden Chamber of Commerce. They included businesses like Upham's Department Store (which had been in business since 1836), Boynton's Mens' Wear (1930), Stylex Women's Wear (1920), Stockwell's (1906), Church and Morse (1925), Little, Somer & Hyatt (1872) and Butler Paint which built their building on Colony Street in 1894. These firms and many others, along with several banks and a large Post Office, did business in the stylish buildings of downtown, which today remind us of that era.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time, the area around the railroad station was changing dramatically. There were several destructive fires and owner neglect in West Main-Colony Street area. A large section of State Street burned in Meriden Lumber Company fire of 1954; the Palace Block fire of 1957 destroyed that landmark and many surrounding buildings. Downtown continued to decline despite a new urban renewal plan in 1961. Many long-established businesses, some in business at the same location for over 100 years, closed or sold out. Another major fire in 1965 destroyed several major buildings including part of the newly renovated Winthrop Hotel. Many buildings were replaced by parking lots.<sup>52</sup> By 1965, the Meriden Redevelopment Agency had spent \$5.8 million in demolition and land clearance with no increase in economic activity in the area.<sup>53</sup> According to one author, Brenda J. Vumbaco, by the end of the 1960s Meriden's downtown was an example of the fate of many cities during the Urban Renewal era. She quotes a Time Magazine article in 1962, which commented "All but the largest American cities were becoming like a doughnut, with a hole of

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>44</sup> "Connecticut Population by Town, 1830-1890"

<sup>45</sup> Rockey, *History*, 471.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 474.

<sup>47</sup> Meriden Sesquicentennial Committee, *150 years*, 105.

<sup>48</sup> Rockey, *History*, 474.

<sup>49</sup> Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, "Connecticut Population by Town, 1900-1960", <http://www.ct.gov/ecd/cwp/view.asp?a=1106&q=250674> accessed September 18, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Everett G. Hill, *A Modern History of New Haven and Eastern New Haven County*, v 1. (New York: S. J. Clarke, 1918) 301.

<sup>51</sup> Meriden Sesquicentennial Committee, *150 years*, 218-222.

<sup>52</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 68-69.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 71.

vacant stores in the center.” Despite this dire pronouncement, other parts of town did see moderate activity, including the new Horace C. Wilcox Technical School and new police-courthouse complex in 1980s.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Architecture 1825-1965***

The buildings erected in Meriden in the last decades of the nineteenth century represent three Romantic forms, the Greek Revival, Gothic Revival and Italianate, as well as eight of the Victorian forms and later forms popular at the time: the Queen Anne, Second Empire, Shingle Style, Stick Style and Tudor Revival for residential buildings and Italian Renaissance, Beaux Arts, Neoclassical Revival, Romanesque, Richardsonian Romanesque, Modern and Diner Car for commercial, civic, educational, religious and institutional buildings.



Greek Revival - 220 Colony Street

**The Greek Revival** style (1825-1880) was inspired by the discovery of ancient Greek ruins in the late eighteenth century. It is often considered to be the first truly American architectural style. Houses of this style have shallow pitched or hipped roofs, often with detailed cornices and wide trim bands. Fenestration consists of double-hung sash, tripartite, and at times, frieze band windows. The building at 220 Colony Street illustrates some of the major elements of this style with an end gable entry and a triangular pediment.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) 179-180.



Italianate - 110 Colony Street

**The Italianate** style (1840-1885) is the most numerous, other than vernacular, in the survey area with eleven examples of residential buildings. This style began in England in the middle of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the austere classical forms that had been fashionable there for the previous two hundred years. The inspiration was the rambling Italian farm house, but American examples modified, embellished and expanded on the English models to create an indigenous style with elaborate moldings, window treatments, bracketed cornices and porches.<sup>56</sup> One of the best examples is the Charles P. Colt house at 110 Colony Street. It has the characteristic flat roof, bracketed cornice and elaborate window treatments typical of the style.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide*,

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-212



Gothic Revival – Julius Pratt House, 118 Colony Street



Gothic Revival – First Congregational Church, 62 Colony Street

**Gothic Revival** (1840-1880 for houses, but still used for churches) This style with its Medieval elements originated in England in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was popularized in the United States by architect Alexander Jackson Davis and landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing who used the style almost exclusively in their popular books of house plans, *Rural Residences* (Davis, 1837), *Cottage Residences*

(Downing, 1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (Downing, 1850). It is characterized by deeply pitched roofs with cross gables, decorated vergeboards, quatrefoil or trefoil windows and pointed (Gothic) arches used in door and window openings.<sup>58</sup> Ecclesiastical buildings usually have towers, spires and multiple lancet windows.



Queen Anne - 21 Cook Avenue

**Queen Anne** (1880-1910) This style originated in nineteenth-century England with the work of Richard Norman Shaw and others, who sought to evoke the past with designs that were influenced by late medieval buildings. Their work included half timbering and patterned masonry, which were also used in many early American versions of this style. However, like many imported European architectural movements, indigenous versions soon developed which came to characterize it in this country. American Queen Anne houses typically have asymmetrical plans with highly decorated wall surfaces, towers, porches and spindlework.<sup>59</sup>

There are seven Queen Anne homes in the survey area. The most typical of these is at 21 Cook Avenue. It includes many of the defining elements of the style including a tower with a conical roof, asymmetrical massing, decorative shingles and a wide, wrap-around porch with corbels and spindlework.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-198.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 263-264.





**Second Empire** – Isaac C. Lewis House, 101 Victorian Business Way (189 East Main Street)

**The Second Empire** (1855-1885) style originated in France in the middle of the nineteenth century, but did not become popular in the United States until after the Civil War. Its most characteristic element is the Mansard roof, which usually had dormers on at least one elevation.<sup>60</sup> There are five examples of this style in the survey area. One of the most impressive is the Isaac C. Lewis House. This remarkably intact masonry house has a slate Mansard roof with iron cresting and a square tower with a similar roof and cresting.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 240-253.



Stick Style – 14 Pratt Avenue

**Stick** (1860-1890) – This style is similar to the contemporaneous Queen Anne, but it is distinguished by its characteristic multi-textured wall surfaces and roof trusses whose stickwork mimics the exposed structure of Medieval buildings. Prominent decorative roof trusses in the gable are a typical feature. The style grew from some of the designs of Alexander Jackson Davis and it was widely distributed in the books of house plans popular in the era.<sup>61</sup> The house at 14 Platt Avenue is an excellent example.



Vernacular Victorian – 124 Miller Street

**Vernacular Victorian** (1860-1910) – The buildings classified as Vernacular Victorian are those which demonstrate an amalgam of the architectural styles popular during the Victorian period (roughly 1860-1910). These included Stick (1860-c.1890), Queen Anne (1880-1910), Shingle (1880-1900), and Folk Victorian (c.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 255-256.

1870-1910) designs. While vernacular manifestations lack the intricate details of the high-style buildings they reference, shared features include rectangular plans, and front-facing pitched roofs, and one-story porches. Windows are typically double-hung sash and doors are wood paneled.<sup>62</sup>



Bungalow - 170 Miller Street

**Craftsman or Bungalow** (1900-1930 form was popularized in the United States through the work of California architects Charles and Henry Greene, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Characteristically one-and-a-half-stories in height, bungalows typically had rubble or cobblestone foundations and chimneys, low-pitched roofs extending over full-width one-story porches, widely overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, and bracketed eave lines. A variety of dormer arrangements are common, as are heavy columns or piers supporting the porch.<sup>63</sup> There are eight Craftsman homes in the survey area. There is one example of this form at 170 Miller Street

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 453-454.



Colonial Revival - Meriden City Hall



Dutch Colonial - 144 Center Street

**Colonial Revival** (1880-present), which began to develop at the end of the nineteenth century, also found its way to Meriden. The style was first popularized by the New York City architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White and was used by them in the design of many large and elaborate homes for the wealthy. They used elements of American Colonial houses in New England, such as gambrel roofs, fanlights, Palladian windows and elaborate doorway moldings to create new designs that were intended to evoke our country's beginnings. By the second decade of the twentieth century, it had become the dominant style even for more

modest homes.<sup>64</sup> Many variants of the Colonial Revival style, including Dutch Colonial Revival and Georgian Revival may be found in the survey area. The most impressive building in this style in Meriden is City Hall, which includes many elements common to eighteenth century Georgian and Federal architecture, including a full height colonnaded entry porch with a trabeated pediment, a fanlight over the entry door, pilasters topped with Ionic Capitals; a roof balustrade and a domed cupola with a clock, paired Ionic columns and urns. A more modest residential example of the style can be found in the Dutch Colonial home at 144 Center Street, which has the typical gambrel roof and a full width shed dormer.



Romanesque – 55 West Main Street

**Romanesque Revival** (1830-1900) This style is came to the United States from Germany in the 1830s. It most characteristic feature is the use of round arches in windows and doorways, sometimes with Italianate ornament. It was often used for churches and academic buildings as well as commercial buildings and houses. Its popularity was spread by pattern books such as Samuel Sloan's *City and Suburban Architecture* (1859), which included plans round-arched banks, stores, and a school.<sup>65</sup> A good example of this style used in a commercial building is at 55 West Main Street.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 320-341.

<sup>65</sup> Carroll L. V. Meeks, "Romanesque Before Richardson in the United States", *The Art Bulletin*, V. 35, 1 (March, 1953), 17-33.



Richardsonian Romanesque – 22 Liberty Street

**Richardsonian Romanesque** (1880-1900) – This is an important sub-style of the Romanesque Revival. It is named for American architect Henry Hobson Richardson who developed his unique and very sculptural form of the style in the late nineteenth century. Buildings in this style are always masonry and they are frequently public or educational structures. They have round-arched windows, porch supports and entrances. Their masonry walls are usually emphasized by rough-faced squared stonework and most have round towers with conical roofs set in an asymmetrical façade. He used unusual shapes, which gave his buildings great individuality.<sup>66</sup> The old Meriden High School at 22 Liberty Street is a textbook example of this style.

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<sup>66</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide*, 301-302.



Beaux Arts – 89 Colony Street

**Beaux Arts (1885-1930)** – Many American Architects traveled to Paris to study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When they returned they began designing buildings in the style that they had learned there. The designs are based on classical models, but they include elaborate surface ornamentation, cornice lines accentuated by moldings, dentils and modillions along with a profusion of classical quoins, pilasters and columns. These elements are freely combined to create exuberantly detailed buildings.<sup>67</sup> The U. S. Post Office on Colony Street illustrates this approach.



Italian Renaissance - J. J. Ferry & Sons Funeral Home, 86 West Main Street

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 379-380.

**Italian Renaissance** (1890-1935) – A revival of interest in Italian Renaissance architecture was started by the McKim, Meade and White’s 1883 design for the Villard Houses in New York City. It provided a dramatic contrast to the Medieval-inspired Queen Anne and Shingle styles which were also popular at the time. It more closely followed the design elements of the original buildings than the previous Italianate style. Buildings designed in this style had low-pitched roofs, upper story windows less elaborate and smaller than those below, arches over the entrance and first story windows and an elaborated entrance.<sup>68</sup> The J. J. Ferry & Sons Funeral Home at 86 West Main Street is a good example.



Neoclassical Revival – Curtis Memorial Library, 175 East Main Street

**Neoclassical Revival** (1895-1950) - Neoclassical Revival became an important style for domestic and commercial buildings nationwide between 1895-1950. It was directly inspired by the Beaux-Arts style and the Columbian Exposition of 1893. The style tends to include the features of classical symmetry and various classical ornaments such as dentil cornices. Because the style was more scaled down and flexible than its grander cousin, the Beaux-Arts, Neoclassical spread prolifically throughout the U.S. and became popular for a wide range of everyday buildings. Many main street commercial buildings and bank branches readily employed variations of the style. Also unlike Beaux-Arts style, Neoclassical buildings tend to stick with pure

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 397-398.



Greek elements, unlike Beaux-Arts which tends to incorporate both Greek and Roman forms, particularly that of the rounded, Roman arch.<sup>69</sup> The Curtis Memorial Building shows this Greek influence.



Art Deco - 13-17 Colony Street

**The Art Deco** style (1920-1940) was introduced into the United States in the 1920's it is one of the most distinctive architectural styles of the period and an Art Deco facade was sometimes used, as it is at 13-17 Colony Street to give a new look to an old building. The Art Deco style originated in Europe after World War I. It was based on the idea of simplifying Classical styles and adding a new repertoire of shapes to enliven the stripped-down forms. The style got its name from the abbreviation of the 1925 Paris show, *Exposition International des Arts Decoratifs et Industries Modernes*.<sup>70</sup> There are four Art Deco buildings in the survey area.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 343-344.

<sup>70</sup> Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture* (Hanover, New Hampshire: The University Press of New England, 2001) 241-242.



Diner Car – 82 West Main Street

**Diner Car (1900-1950)** A diner car is a prefabricated structure built at an assembly site and transported to a permanent location for use as a restaurant. Most are in the shape of a railroad dining car and their massing and detail reflect those origins. A diner is usually outfitted with a counter, stools and a food preparation or service area along the back wall. In the early years of the twentieth century, decommissioned railroad dining and passenger cars, as well as trolleys were sometime converted into diners. After World War I, many metal diners were designed in the Streamline variant of the Art Moderne style.<sup>71</sup> The only diner in the survey area is at 82 West Main Street.

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<sup>71</sup> "Diner History and Culture", American Diner Museum, <http://www.americandinermuseum.org/site/history.php> accessed September 5, 2013.



Modern – Meriden Fire Headquarters, 51 Pratt Street



Modern - Temple B'Nai Abraham, 129 East Main Street

**Modern** (1925-present) The design of these buildings evolved from the ideas of architects at the German Bauhaus school after World War I. They rejected historical references in favor of the mathematical and utilitarian vision of the Machine Age. Some of those architects, such as Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, came to the United States in the 1930s and their influence began to spread. The sub-groups within this broad style include the International Style buildings which usually have flat roofs, smooth, unornamented

wall surfaces and metal casement windows set flush with the wall.<sup>72</sup> They often have asymmetrical facades. The Meriden Fire Headquarters at 51 Pratt Street is a good example of this idea. In the 1950s Modernist architects began to look more toward Expressionism in their designs. They began to include more sculptural elements in their buildings and more of an individual vision.<sup>73</sup> The Temple B'Nai Abraham at 129 East Main Street illustrates this change in direction.



Mill Building – 134-136 State Street

**Mill Building** (1860-1920) Early factory buildings were usually not purpose-built, so the manufacturing process had to adapt to the existing building.<sup>74</sup> This practice was not always efficient and by the middle of nineteenth century, engineers and architects began to design factories specifically for the most effective handling of materials and the best use of space and light in the manufacturing process. The textile industry led the way in these efforts and the long, narrow mill building was developed to make the most efficient use of light and air.<sup>75</sup> By the late nineteenth century, designers looked to the mechanical efficiencies of the machine as a metaphor for their new vision of a factory with efficient materials handling. Some designers even considered the workers to be moving parts in the factory as “master machine”.<sup>76</sup> Companies often used the design of their buildings to present their best face to the public.<sup>77</sup> They intended the design of the building to express, “...strength, stability and function, rather than picturesque or formal considerations.”<sup>78</sup> The architects of many of Meriden’s mill buildings addressed this issue by employing a design solution influenced by the Romanesque or Neoclassical styles which were used extensively in churches and public buildings, as well as factories, in the last half of the nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup> The two buildings at 134 and 136 State Street are now combined into a single project but they were originally separate buildings. They are similar brick mill buildings, but 136 (1895) is a three story building influenced by Romanesque designs, while 134 (1865), the older of the two, is a two story building influenced by the Neoclassical Revival style.

<sup>72</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide*, 469.

<sup>73</sup> Gelernter, *A History*, 276.

<sup>74</sup> Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 25.

<sup>75</sup> Lindy Biggs, *The Rational Factory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)20.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 235-237.

## Industry

Meriden remained a small rural community, best known as a stop on the Colony Road or the Turnpike for the first one hundred years of its existence. The population of the area in 1728 was only 200, but it had more than doubled by the end of the Revolutionary war to 550. By the late eighteenth century the population was nearing one thousand and it had increased enough to support tradesman like blacksmiths, pewter makers, tinsmiths and small merchants.<sup>80</sup> The soil was so uneven and poor – rocky in some places and swampy in others- that it was not well suited to agriculture. It is unlikely that the town would have grown if some of its residents had not started small industries.<sup>81</sup> Samuel Yale was the pioneer manufacturer in Meriden. He began making cut nails in 1791 and added pewter buttons in 1794. He started making Britannia ware after his sons Samuel, Hiram, Charles and William joined business. They had shops on Liberty Street and at the corner of Broad Street and East Main Street.<sup>82</sup> Following Yale's example, Ashbil Griswold opened a pewter shop in 1808 making buttons and other metalware. There were other small shops in town supplying some of the basic needs of the residents.<sup>83</sup>

Meriden's economy began to slowly shift from the farm to the factory in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and by 1845 most of Meriden's 3200 resident worked in manufacturing.<sup>84</sup> The first major industry in Meriden was the ivory comb factory opened in 1822 by Julius Pratt in a mill on the south side of Harbor Brook near the old dam. The factory moved to Broad Street in 1824 and by 1828, Julius Pratt and Company owned a ten acre property at Center and Pratt Streets, which included the factory and a racetrack. This company and several smaller concerns made Meriden the leading manufacturing center for ivory combs in the United States. The city supplied about 75% of all domestic ivory combs and also exported around the world.<sup>85</sup>

Meriden's industry exploded in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of steam power. The first to use it in Meriden was Charles Parker, who built a steam powered factory between Elm and High streets in 1831 to produce coffee mills. His companies eventually produced many different products from the Parker shotgun to spectacles, lamps and builder's hardware.<sup>86</sup> Parker produced rifles during the Civil War and developed one of the first repeating rifles. This experience led to the production of world-famous Parker shotguns, which were made in Meriden until 1934 when the business was sold to Remington.<sup>87</sup> Parker's shotgun is still considered among the best ever made and the Parker vise, patented in 1854, is used in hundreds of applications around the world. Other companies followed his lead and began to produce diverse products such as piano stools, alarm clocks, curtain fixtures and music racks in steam powered factories.<sup>88</sup>

In the 1830s, large "grandfather" clocks had become very popular in the United States, but those with wooden works were all handmade and very expensive. Smaller mantle clocks with similar wooden

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<sup>80</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 29, 33.

<sup>81</sup> Perkins, *Historical Sketches*, 72.

<sup>82</sup> Rockey, *History of New Haven County*, 486.

<sup>83</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 33.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>87</sup> Meriden Sesquicentennial Committee, *150 years*, 85-86.

<sup>88</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 38.

works could be made cheaply and the Ira Twiss and his brothers began to manufacture them in Meriden.<sup>89</sup> The Twiss Brothers clock factory was very successful with factories in Montreal and Nashville, Tennessee, as well as in Meriden. The cases were carefully hand carved and hand painted with landscapes or popular aphorism of the day like "Time Flies" or "Time is Money." The faces of these clocks were often painted with scenes depicting, "...the smiling and amiable aspect of a young woman, with her hair dressed to kill, as was the mode of the day." The painting of the cases was done by two or three young women, "... in a shop no larger than an ordinary pantry" behind a house at the southwest corner of North Broad and Britannia streets.<sup>90</sup> This effort did not last long, because the wooden works began to fail regularly and the company ceased production. However, the idea of clock making was continued in Meriden by other manufacturers who made parts from brass. By the 1860s only one clock maker, Bradley Hubbard Co. remained in Meriden. They made both the works and irons cases, and also manufactured lamps and decorative brass accessories.<sup>91</sup>

Many other manufacturers of various kinds sprang up in Meriden in the nineteenth century, and the business that would make it world famous as The Silver City also started at that time. The table cutlery business in Meriden could be said to have its roots at the Wethersfield State Prison. An offshoot of the Julius Pratt Company, the Walter Webb Company, commissioned prisoners to make ivory handles and to assemble finished cutlery. Eventually they found that, despite the low cost, the prisoners often ruined the ivory and usually weren't in jail long enough to learn the trade. Pratt then hired David N. Ropes from Maine in 1834 to begin development of machinery to produce cutlery. He invented several machines and techniques that revolutionized the manufacturing of these items. By 1845 Meriden's cutlery factories could produce quality products less expensively than their competitors in Europe.<sup>92</sup>

The goods produced in Meriden were sold throughout the region and the country by itinerant salesman known as Yankee Peddlers. They were both praised and reviled by their customers and there were about 40 of them living in Meriden in 1829. The two who were to have the most impact on their city were the Wilcox brothers, Horace and Dennis. Horace had been listening to the complaints of his customers about uneven quality and supply and he began to think of ways to improve both. He also realized that the greater reach of the railroads would require new sales methods that would make it necessary for small local businesses to band together to increase their capital. To that end, they made the first step in turning Meriden into the Silver City by founding the Meriden Britannia Company in 1852. It started as a consortium of seven shops that made and sold Britannia ware and pewter. Their first office was at the corner of Main and South Colony Street and their combined sales in 1852 were \$50,000. The company quickly progressed from distribution to manufacturing and adopted many advanced production techniques; including rolling, stamping and spinning nickel silver as well as electroplating. By 1860 their sales had reached \$500,000 with 320 employees. The Wilcox brothers had known the Rogers brothers (Asa, Simeon and William) of Hartford since they sold their silverware as peddlers. Rogers Brothers had a reputation for making fine silverware, but they fell on hard times in 1862 when the Wilcox brothers bought their name and equipment and built a large new factory to house it. The company that would make Meriden famous around the world, The International Silver Company, was formed in 1898 from the Meriden Britannia Company by combining the assets of more than a dozen smaller silver makers with factories in Meriden, Wallingford, Hartford, New Haven, Middletown,

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<sup>89</sup> Meriden Sesquicentennial Committee, *150 years*, 35.

<sup>90</sup> "Faith" (Mrs. Frances A. Breckenridge) *Recollections of a New England town* (Meriden: Journal Publishing Company, 1899) 7-9.

<sup>91</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 35-36.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 336-37.

Waterbury, Derby and Bridgeport. More companies joined the larger concern later on. International Silver continued to use the Rogers brothers' trademark of "The 1847 Roger Bros." and it too became world famous.<sup>93</sup>

International Silver may have been the best known of Meriden's major manufacturers, but it was certainly not the only one. Industries of all types continued to grow throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ten years after railroad came to Meriden in 1849, a town of only 2500 people had developed thirty-five manufacturing firms with 590 workers, who produced goods worth \$16,317,000. Sixty years later, in 1910, there were one hundred twenty factories in Meriden with 7,845 workers earning salaries of \$5,429,000. By 1918 there were about 9000 workers from a population not over 35,000, who produced more than \$20,000,000 in goods per year. International Silver alone employed 3000-4000 workers.<sup>94</sup> Their products included Silver and silver plate ware of all kinds, pocket and table cutlery, lamps, guns, pianos and many others including those from nine hardware plants, three printers and seven cut glass factories.<sup>95</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century one author wrote of the town that its prosperity is built on manufacturing. It is known for excellence and businesses continue to open. It is "...one of the principal points in the Union for the production of Britannia, plated and silver wares, lamps, gas and kerosene fixtures, cabinet and builders small hardware, steel and plated cutlery, shot guns, clocks, pens, fancy tin goods, carriage goods and woolen goods." Plants, "...have assumed mammoth proportions." and they also produce, "...musical instruments, harness goods, bronze and art goods, and decorated wares... In diversity of manufactures, quality and quantity of the products, few places of the same size make a better showing than this city; and what is still more creditable, nearly all have been developed from meager beginnings, by men of small capital, but having a wealth of skill, industry and perseverance, who still control the vast enterprises and who are also the leading citizens in advancing other features in the life of this community." It is, he wrote, "...one of the foremost young cities of the east."<sup>96</sup>

Meriden's industries continued to grow. The pace of growth slowed during the Great Depression of the 1930s, but core industries survived. Only 5,500 workers were employed in 1938, but by 1940, the working labor force had increased to 11,000. World War II provided a huge boost to the local economy. By 1944, all of Meriden's eighty manufacturing plants had been converted to nearly 100% wartime uses. The population stood at 46,000 with 20,000, half of them women, involved in war related work.<sup>97</sup>

After the war the pace of growth began to slow, but Meriden was still a thriving community in 1956. Its largest employers were International Silver and General Motors' New Departure plant which had wartime peak of 8,000 jobs. New departure still going strong in 1956, the Miller Company employed 282, Parker about 300 and Pratt & Whitney, 900.<sup>98</sup> It was a walkable town with robust public transportation. "Many residents did not need to own automobiles..."<sup>99</sup> However, Meriden's industries soon began to feel pressure from foreign competition. In the 1950s International Silver president Craig D. Munson testified before Congress in support of higher tariffs on imported stainless steel products from Japan. Manning-Bowman, New Departure and other Meriden manufacturers also supported tariffs in an effort to save their businesses.<sup>100</sup> There were

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>94</sup> Hill, *A Modern History*, 301-302.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 304-305.

<sup>96</sup> Rockey, *History of New Haven County*, 486.

<sup>97</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 60-61.

<sup>98</sup> Meriden Bicentennial Committee, *Meriden at 200*, 176-82.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>100</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 65.

6,500 Meriden jobs directly related to silverware in 1959, but by the mid-1950s, flatware imports had become 82% of market. International Silver's sales for 1957 dropped 20% and in 1958 the company moved general operations from Factory E across from railroad station, to new headquarters away from the center of town at 500 South Broad Street. They continued to lobby for tariffs on imports without success. The Japanese agreed to reduce exports, but instead increased them.<sup>101</sup> The company tried to diversify by buying Times Wire and Cable. It changed its corporate structure and its name to Insilco in 1968 and continued to diversify.<sup>102</sup> They acquired businesses in electronics, automotive components, office products and other areas. However, increases in low-priced imports, shifting consumer preferences and rising silver prices, contributed to a shrinking market for silverware. Some International Silver facilities were converted to other purposes, but Insilco eventually sold the subsidiary. Manufacture of silverware in Meriden by the company that made it The Silver City, stopped in 1984.<sup>103</sup>

The pressure on Meriden's industries that began in the 1950s would only increase in the following decades. Manning-Bowman – founded 1859 in Cromwell and moved to Meriden in 1872, dominated area between Pratt and Miller Streets. It was famous for high quality metal work and electrical appliances, but it went out of business in the 1940s. Its factory, now known as the Kennedy Building, was turned into offices and apartments in 1970s. The New Departure ball bearing division of General Motors had been in a large factory on Pratt Street since 1920 and employed about 4000 after World War II, but the plant was closed in 1968. There was some, relatively short term business growth when Pratt and Whitney opened a plant in 1951, but they closed it in 1962 with the loss of about 1000 jobs. Other old Meriden business also failed during this period and their buildings were converted into other uses or left vacant.<sup>104</sup>

The lone survivor among Meriden's legacy industries is the Miller Company. It was founded in Meriden in 1844 by Edward Miller, who made lamps and other metal articles. It now produces, "... copper base alloys for the electronics industry and other markets. The company offers various phosphor bronzes, nickel silvers, brasses, tin brasses, copper nickel tin products, leaded nickel silver products, copper alloy strips, and other specialty copper alloys. It offers its products for various applications, such as electronic and electrical connectors; terminals; and components for electromechanical devices, such as conductive springs, switches, relays, and switchgear." It operates as a subsidiary of the German company Diehl Metall Stiftung & Co. KG and employs 100.<sup>105</sup> The Miller factory is just outside the survey area.

### Turnpike and Railroad

The history of Meriden has always been influenced by its location on important transportation routes. Meriden's topography and location in a valley that ran between the Connecticut and New Haven colonies made it an important travel link.<sup>106</sup> In fact, it could be said that the very existence of the town is based on its central location on the most direct route between Hartford and New Haven. There was no

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<sup>101</sup> Meriden Bicentennial Committee, *Meriden at 200*, 50-51.

<sup>102</sup> Carolyn Williams, "History of the International Silver Company", eHow Money [http://www.ehow.com/about\\_5065999\\_history-international-silver-company.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_5065999_history-international-silver-company.html) accessed September 10, 2013.

<sup>103</sup> "Meriden's Silver Lining", ConnecticutHistory.org, <http://connecticuthistory.org/meridens-silver-lining/>

<sup>104</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 65-67..

<sup>105</sup> Inside View, "The Miller Company, Inc." <http://www.insideview.com/directory/the-miller-company-inc> accessed September 8, 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 11-12.



actual road at first, but rather a 36 mile path through the forest. There were no bridges and it was marked by blazes on trees.<sup>107</sup> The first building to be erected near this road was on Jonathan Gilbert's Meriden Farm. The farm included a tavern designed to provide shelter for travelers and to protect them from attack by Native Americans.<sup>108</sup> The path would later be widened and improved. It was first called The Country Road, which meant that it was owned by the country – the Colonial government of Connecticut. In 1760, the General Assembly ordered that all obstructions on it be removed and that it be widened to four rods. It was known as Country Road until 1800, then the Old Road, and finally Colony Road. Present day Colony Street is a remnant of this road and it follows roughly the same route as the original path.<sup>109</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth century repairs ordered for the Country Road in 1760 had apparently not been maintained. That road along with many others in the state, was in bad shape and the General Assembly decided to follow an English practice to improve it. The state would grant licenses to turnpike companies which would improve and maintain a particular road at their expense in return for the right to charge a toll to use it. This was a popular program and Connecticut granted one hundred twenty-one turnpike franchises between 1795 and 1853. The majority of these franchises were developed. Most of the time, these companies took over an existing road, but occasionally the turnpike was purpose built over a new route.<sup>110</sup> In October of 1798, the General assembly passed an act creating the Hartford and New Haven Turnpike Company. This was one of the first of these companies to lay out a new road on a new route. In this case a nearly straight line, "...passing through the northerly part of New Haven over what is now Whitney Avenue, thence through the southeast part of Hampden, the westerly part of Wallingford and the center of Meriden. Crossing the easterly part of Berlin, the southeast corner of Newington, the northwest quarter of Wethersfield, it entered Hartford over the street now known as Maple Avenue."<sup>111</sup> The turnpike opened in 1799 and what is now Broad Street became "The Turnpike". One account reports that there was as much celebration at it opening as there was at the coming of the railroad thirty-eight years later.<sup>112</sup>

The center of town now shifted from the Country Road (Colony Street) to an area bounded by Broad, East Main and Curtis Streets. The social center became the Central Tavern or Central Hotel. The Central Hotel was originally a private home and it was converted into a tavern and hotel in 1752 by Dr. Insign Hough and continued by his son Dr. Issac Hough who also had a medical practice there. It was the political and social center of the town at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Tavern also housed Dr. Hough's extensive library, which he made available to the public. Stagecoaches on several routes stopped there often and news from the outside world was brought by travelers on the turnpike.<sup>113</sup>

The turnpike made it easier for peddlers selling the products of Meriden's industry to travel longer distances, but the next innovation in transportation would change the town forever. A railroad line through Meriden was proposed in 1835 to much local opposition. Three routes were proposed. The first was the most natural and direct and it would have run east of Broad Street, parallel to the turnpike. This location was opposed by farmers, who owned land in the right of way They were supported by Judge James S. Brooks who owned a considerable amount of land in the swampy area along Harbor Brook . His land would

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<sup>107</sup> Curtis, *An Historic Record*, 8-9.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>110</sup> Frederic James Wood, *The Turnpikes of New England and Evolution of the Same Through England, Virginia, and Maryland* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1919) 331.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 457.

<sup>112</sup> Curtis, *An Historic Record*, 340.

<sup>113</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 29-31.

dramatically increase in value if the railroad located there, bringing the business center with it. As Brooks expected, the center of town shifted back to Colony Street to follow an improved means of transportation.<sup>114</sup> The farmers won the battle to move the tracks, but lost not only the value of their land, but also their market to the teamsters on the turnpike.<sup>115</sup>

The New Haven and Hartford Line began to run through Meriden in 1839 and changed everything. Meriden's population more than tripled from 1850 to 1870, due to increased industrialization and improved transportation. Meriden Britannia Company and other manufacturers were growing rapidly and creating innovative manufacturing techniques and processes. Business grew around the early depot between Colony and State Streets. A larger and improved depot was built on that site in 1854 and it remained in use, after having been repaired from fire damage in 1864, until 1882. A new, much grander station was built in 1882 and it served until it was replaced by a Colonial Revival building in 1942. That station was replaced by the current, much smaller, building in 1970. It had a ridership of 34, 483 in 2012.<sup>116</sup> The station was part of the Winthrop Square area, named for the elegant Winthrop Hotel built in 1883 on Colony Street. The hotel, along with several adjacent buildings burned in 1965 and a municipal parking lot took its place.<sup>117</sup>

### *Impact of the Railroad*

The impact of the railroad in Meriden was so dramatic, that all but one building in the survey area was built after it began running. The location of the railroad immediately caused the commercial center of town to shift west. As a result, buildings that would house banks, stores, offices and civic organizations were built along Colony and West Main Streets. The railroad spurred massive increases in productivity in Meriden's industries. They could now reach more markets faster than they ever could before. This led to factories, especially the massive International Silver plant, being built near the best means of transportation. Increased production required more workers who usually lived near their jobs. More work in factories also meant better wages for workers and a new middle class - foremen, supervisors, managers and even some workers - could afford to build, buy or rent houses close to the factories. Meriden's upper classes, the factory owners, also benefitted from the manufacturing boom and some of them built grand houses on Colony Street and East Main Street. The enormous economic engine of Meriden's factories created the world that spawned these buildings. Even those that were built after World War II are the products of an economy dominated by manufacturing. The remaining factories in the survey area, all of which now have new uses, stand as silent witnesses to the end of this era.

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<sup>114</sup> Meriden Sesquicentennial Committee, *150 years*, 69.

<sup>115</sup> Rockey, *History of New Haven County*, 483.

<sup>116</sup> Great American Stations, "Meriden, CT (MDN)", <http://www.greatamericanstations.com/Stations/MDN> accessed October 15, 2013.

<sup>117</sup> Vumbaco, *Meriden*, 40.

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## VI. Women's and Minority History

Women were the driving force that created the free Meriden Public Library. Groups of women banded together in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to raise money to assemble the library's collections and to build an impressive home for them.

Meriden had a small subscription library of 153 volumes as early as 1759, but it closed in 1809.<sup>118</sup> Several attempts were made to establish another public library after the first one closed. The most successful of these was a small library established at the YMCA, which had collected about eight hundred volumes around 1848. This library had grown to 8,000 volumes by 1906 but it required a paid annual membership to check out books and it eventually closed.<sup>119</sup>

A group of Meriden women, known as the Thursday Morning Club, believed that the town should have a free library which was open to all. They held a series of lectures during the winter of 1897-98 that provided the funds to establish the institution. They established a library committee and voted \$1000 (\$500 for books and \$500 for expenses) to begin the project. They hired a librarian and an assistant and rented two rooms in the J. Coe House at 104 East Main Street (now the site of the Masonic Temple) to begin operations. Another group of women formed the Library Whist Club for the purpose of raising more money for the library.<sup>120</sup> Meriden's first free library, funded entirely by women's organizations, opened its doors to the public on January 31, 1899 with about one thousand books on the shelves.<sup>121</sup> These two rooms soon proved to be too small. Another woman, Augusta Munson Curtis, saw the need to create a permanent home for the library and in 1900 she offered to donate \$5,000 for land and \$25,000 for construction for a dedicated library building, if the City of Meriden would agree to \$3000 per year for maintenance. The City accepted her offer and the Curtis Memorial Library building, designed by New Haven Architect Richard Williams, was constructed in 1901 for about \$750,000 including building, site and equipment.<sup>122</sup> It opened in 1903 and was named for Mrs. Curtis' late husband George Redfield Curtis. By 1918 the library's collection had grown to 23,918 books.<sup>123</sup> This building served as the main library until the current building was opened in 1973.<sup>124</sup>

### *Minority History*

No buildings related to minority history were found in the survey area.

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<sup>118</sup> Meriden Sesquicentennial Committee, *150 years*, 246.

<sup>119</sup> Curtis, *An Historic Record*, 48.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Meriden Sesquicentennial Committee, *150 years*, 246.

<sup>123</sup> Hill, *A Modern History*, 296.

<sup>124</sup> Meriden Bicentennial Committee, *Meriden at 200*, 40.

## **VII. Recommendations**

### **Recommendations for the National Register of Historic Places**

A major purpose of a Historic Resource Inventory study is to identify those resources which satisfy the criteria for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. As the people of Meriden have long been committed to the preservation of their history, and the resources related to it, several areas of the city have buildings or districts already listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This section identifies those resources, and consists of recommendations as to which properties included in this study are likely future candidates, either listed individually, or as historic districts.

These recommendations are an informed opinion only and should not be construed as excluding any site from consideration for National Register of Historic Places designation. The sites listed below possess qualities that appear to make them eligible for listing on the National Register, however a separate and specific study must be made to determine confirm this. This process, and final evaluation, is administered by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, One Constitution Plaza, Hartford, CT 06103.

#### **Existing National Register Properties in Meriden, Connecticut:**

##### **Individual National Register of Historic Places Listings**

The *Moses Andrews House*, listed in 1978, includes the resource at 424 West Main Street.

The *Charter Oak Fire House*, listed in 1994, includes the resource at 105 Hanover Street.

The *Curtis Memorial Library*, listed in 1981, includes the resource at 175 East Main Street.

The *Solomon Goffe House*, listed in 1979, includes the resource at 677 Colony Street.

The *Ives-Baldwin House*, listed in 2003, includes the resource at 474 Baldwin Avenue.

The *Meriden Curtain Fixture Company Factory*, listed in 2003, includes the resource at 122 Charles Street.

The *Red Bridge*, listed in 1993, includes the resource near Oregon Road over the Quinnipiac River.

The *Meriden Main Post Office*, listed in 1985, includes the resource at 89 Colony Street.

##### **National Register Historic Districts**

The *Colony Street/West Main Street Historic District*, listed in 1987, 31 contributing resources along Colony, Grove, and West Main Streets, including 1-62 Colony Street (east and west sides of street), 55 Grove Street, 1-119 West Main Street (north side of street), and 82-110 West Main Street (south side of street).

*Hubbard Park*, listed in 1997, includes 9 contributing resources at 999 West Main Street.

### **State of Connecticut Historic Register Listings**

*Andrews, Moses House*, Colonial style residence, 424 West Main Street, 1764.

*Beechwood Lodge*, Second Empire style residence, Broad Street, c. 1870 (demolished 1976).

*Lewis, Isaac C. House*, Second Empire style residence, 189 East Main Street (101 Victorian Business Park), 1868.

*Meriden High School*, Richardsonian Romanesque style institutional building, 22 Liberty Street, 1884.

*Tracey, Col. Ebenezer House*, Colonial style residence, c. 1770 (moved to an unidentified location in Meriden from Lisbon, CT in 1959).

### **Recommended National Register Districts**

The study area identified by this Historic Resources Inventory contained several highly intact collections of period architecture set in rural environments. The number, concentration, and integrity of the historic resources inventoried in this survey support the eligibility of the following areas as possible National Register Historic Districts under Criteria A and C. These recommendations are based upon the professional opinion of the investigators, however, the decision to move forward with historic designations of any kind is beyond the scope of this project and rests with the respective local stakeholders.

***Colony Street/West Main Street Historic District Boundary Increase*** – This boundary expansion would increase the size of the historic district already present within Meriden’s central business district and would include a number of historic resources identified by this survey and located along Colony, West Main, Grove, Church, Cross, and Camp Streets; Platt and Cook Avenues; Barristers Court, and Women’s Way. Contributing buildings might include – but should not be limited to – the resources and related outbuildings at 89, 105, 110, 118, 119, 127, 128, 152, 169, 170, 183, 201, 204, 212, 213, and 220 Colony Street; 127 and 143 West Main Street; 72, and 74 Grove Street; 16, 22, 43, 55a, and 55b Church Street; 5 and 38 Cross Street; 11, 19, and 31 Camp Street; 8, 14, and 16 Platt Avenue; 13, 20, and 21 Cook Avenue; 1 Barristers Court; and 22 Women’s Way. The residential blocks to the west along Randolph Avenue, Linsley Avenue, North 1<sup>st</sup> Street, and beyond should also be evaluated for inclusion in a boundary increase but were not studied as part of this Historic Resource Inventory.

**South Colony Street Historic District** – This district would begin at South Colony Street’s intersection with Perkins Street and extend south to include the two former industrial and commercial buildings surveyed as part of this inventory. Contributing buildings would include 33 and 51 South Colony Street.

**Meriden Civic District** – This district would include a mix of institutional, commercial, and residential buildings located in the vicinity of Meriden’s civic core. This district would be centered near the intersection of East Main and Liberty Streets and would radiate outwards from the thematic anchor provided by Meriden City Hall. Contributing buildings might include – but should not be limited to – the resources and related outbuildings at 55, 66, 72, 78, 86, 89, 93, 107, 112, 113, 114, 120, 129, 130, 136, and 142 East Main Street; 22, 51, 52, 54, 55, 59, 65, 68, 73, 74, 82, 86, 90, 95, 96, 97, 100, 101, 107, 108, 111, 114, 117, 121, and 127 Liberty Street; 5 Norwood Street; 24 and 30 Willow Street; 15, 17, 26, and 139 Pleasant Street; 21, 25, 33, 34, and 71 Catlin Street; 24, 27, 31, 38, and 40 Benjamin Street; 29, 31, 35, 61, 73, and 163 Pratt Street; 116, 124, 142, 143, 144, 154, 158, 165, and 170 Miller Street; and 9, 11, 14, 17, 18, 22, 25, 25½, 27, 28, 31, and 36 Twiss Street; 144 and 146 Center Street; 12 Crown Street; and 101 Victorian Business Park. The properties on the south side of Liberty Street were not included in this Historic Resource Inventory (as they are located just outside of the TOD district) but should also be evaluated for inclusion in a potential historic district.

**Saint Mary’s Roman Catholic Church Historic District** – This district would include three buildings historically associated with Meriden’s German Roman Catholic community and Saint Mary’s Roman Catholic Church. Contributing buildings would include those at 43 and 55 Church Street.

### **Properties That May Be Individually Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places**

The following properties, several of which found within the areas that may be eligible for nomination as National Register Historic Districts, could also be nominated individually to the National Register under Criteria A and/or C. Many include related outbuildings, such as garages, carriage houses, or barns, which are also significant relative to Meriden’s history.

**1 Barristers Court**, Greek Revival Residence, c. 1850.

**33 Catlin Street**, Augustus H. Jones House, Italianate Residence, c. 1870.

**146 Center Street**, Augustana Lutheran Church, Gothic Religious Building, 1939.

**43 Church Street**, Saint Mary’s Catholic Church Convent, Tudor Revival Residence, 1939.

**55 Church Street**, Saint Mary’s Catholic Church, Gothic Religious Building, 1912.

**55 Church Street**, Saint Mary’s School and Convent, Gothic Institutional Building, 1936.

**212 Colony Street**, Davis S. Williams House, Second Empire Residence, c. 1875.



**220 Colony Street**, Ira and Eli Merriman House, Greek Revival Residence, *c. 1825*.

**5 Cross Street**, Foster, Merriam & Company Factory, Brick Mill Industrial Building, *c. 1890*.

**12 Crown Street**, Main Street Baptist Church, Gothic Religious Building, *1867*.

**86 East Main Street**, J.J. Ferry & Sons Funeral Home, Italian Renaissance Commercial Building, *1937*.

**112 East Main Street**, Masonic Temple, Neoclassical Revival Institutional Building, *1927*.

**120 East Main Street**, Lodge No. 35, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Colonial Revival Institutional Building, *1928*.

**129 East Main Street**, Temple B'Nai Abraham, Modern Religious Building, *1951*.

**136 East Main Street**, Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church, Richardsonian Romanesque Religious Building, *1866*.

**142 East Main Street**, Meriden City Hall, Colonial Revival Institutional Building, *1907*.

**22 Liberty Street**, Meriden High School, Richardsonian Romanesque Institutional Building, *1885*.

**54 Liberty Street**, German Baptist Church, Italianate Religious Building, *1876*.

**165 Miller Street**, State Trade School, Art Deco Institutional Building, *1930*.

**5 Norwood Street**, Saint Paul's Universalist Church, Richardsonian Romanesque Religious Building, *1891*.

**14 Platt Street**, Nancy C. and Henry B. Levi House, Stick Style Residence, *c. 1880*.

**15 Pleasant Street**, First United Methodist Church, Colonial Revival Religious Building, *1949*.

**17 Pleasant Street**, First United Methodist Church Parsonage, Queen Anne Residence, *c. 1880*.

**26 Pleasant Street**, Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church Parsonage, Italianate Residence, *c. 1867*.

**61 Pratt Street**, Meriden Fire Department Headquarters, Modern Institutional Building, *1950*.

**163 Pratt Street**, Converse Publishing Company Factory/Curtis-Way Company Factory, Brick Mill Style Commercial Building, *c. 1896, 1905, c. 1930*.

**101 Victorian Business Park (189 East Main Street)**, Isaac C. Lewis House, Second Empire Residence, *1868*.

**82 West Main Street**, Palace Diner, American Diner Car, *c. 1945*.

**143 West Main Street**, The "Professional Building," Italian Renaissance Commercial Building, *1927*.

### VIII. Street Index

<u>Inventory No.</u>	<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Architectural Style</u>	<u>Existing National or State Register Listing, if applicable*</u>
1	1 BARRISTERS CT	c. 1850	Greek Revival	
2	24 BENJAMIN ST	c. 1877	Vernacular Italianate	
3	27 BENJAMIN ST	c. 1887	Vernacular	
4	31 BENJAMIN ST	c. 1880	Vernacular	
5	38 BENJAMIN ST	c. 1870	Vernacular Italianate	
6	40 BENJAMIN ST	c. 1885	Vernacular Gothic Revival	
7	11 CAMP ST	c. 1895	Vernacular	
8	19 CAMP ST	c. 1880	Vernacular	
9	31 CAMP ST	1925	Vernacular Commercial	
10	21 CATLIN ST	c. 1890	Vernacular Colonial Revival	
11	25 CATLIN ST	c. 1860	Greek Revival	
12	33 CATLIN ST	c. 1870	Italianate	
13	34 CATLIN ST	c. 1870	Vernacular Italianate	
14	71 CATLIN ST	1921	Brick Mill	
15	144 CENTER ST	1927	Dutch Colonial Revival	
16	146 CENTER ST	1939	Gothic Revival	
17	210 CENTER ST	c. 1950	Vernacular Commercial	
18	16 CHURCH ST (alternately 16 COLONY ST)	1922	Neoclassical Revival	NR – CWM
19	22 CHURCH ST	1940	Colonial Revival	
20	43 CHURCH ST	1939	Tudor Revival	
21	55a CHURCH ST (shares parcel with 55b CHURCH ST)	1912	Gothic Revival	
22	55b CHURCH ST (shares parcel with 55a CHURCH ST)	1936	Gothic Revival	
23	1 COLONY ST	c. 1913	Neoclassical Revival	NR – CWM
24	5 COLONY ST	c. 1865	Italianate	NR – CWM

25	13 COLONY ST	c. 1865, c. 1870	Art Deco	NR – CWM
18	16 COLONY ST (alternately 16 CHURCH ST)	1922	Neoclassical Revival	NR – CWM
26	21 COLONY ST	1889	Neoclassical Revival	NR – CWM
27	24 COLONY ST	c. 1881	Vernacular Commercial	NR – CWM
28	39 COLONY ST	1922	Neoclassical Revival	NR – CWM
29	51 COLONY ST	c. 1895	Romanesque and Renaissance Revivals	NR – CWM
30	53 COLONY ST	c. 1895	Romanesque and Renaissance Revivals	NR – CWM
31	55 COLONY ST	1902	Neoclassical Revival	NR – CWM
32	61 COLONY ST	1922	Neoclassical Revival/Art Moderne	NR – CWM
33	62 COLONY ST	1876	Gothic Revival	NR – CWM
34	89 COLONY ST	1908	Beaux Arts	NR – MMPO
35	105 COLONY ST	1928	Art Deco/Beaux Arts	
36	110 COLONY ST	1853	Italianate	
37	118 COLONY ST	c. 1868	Gothic Revival	
38	119 COLONY ST	c. 1920	Vernacular Commercial	
39	127 COLONY ST	c. 1915	Vernacular Commercial	
40	128 COLONY ST	1902	Georgian Revival	
41	152 COLONY ST	c. 1950	Modern	
42	169 COLONY ST	1871	Brick Mill	
43	170 COLONY ST	c. 1888	Queen Anne	
44	183 COLONY ST	c. 1930	Vernacular Commercial	
45	201 COLONY ST	c. 1860	Italianate	
46	204 COLONY ST	c. 1903	Colonial Revival	
47	212 COLONY ST	c. 1875	Second Empire	
48	213 COLONY ST	c. 1940	Vernacular Commercial	
49	220 COLONY ST	c. 1825	Greek Revival	
50	13 COOK AVE	c. 1890	Queen Anne	

51	20 COOK AVE	c. 1880	Queen Anne	
52	21 COOK AVE	c. 1890	Queen Anne	
53	5 CROSS ST	c. 1890, c. 1860	Brick Mill	
54	38 CROSS ST	1923	Brick Mill	
55	12 CROWN ST	1867	Gothic Revival	
56	55 EAST MAIN ST	1883	Italianate	
57	66 EAST MAIN ST	c. 1865	Vernacular Commercial	
58	72 EAST MAIN ST	1880	Italianate	
59	78 EAST MAIN ST	1880	Italianate	
60	86 EAST MAIN ST	1937	Italian Renaissance	
61	89 EAST MAIN ST	1874	Stick/Eastlake	
62	93 EAST MAIN ST	1961	Modern	
63	107 EAST MAIN ST	c. 1870	Stick/Eastlake	
64	112 EAST MAIN ST	1927	Neoclassical Revival	
65	113 EAST MAIN ST	c. 1855	Italianate	
66	114 EAST MAIN ST	c. 1860	Greek Revival	
67	120 EAST MAIN ST	1928	Colonial Revival	
68	129 EAST MAIN ST	1951	Modern	
69	130 EAST MAIN ST	c. 1841	Italianate	
70	136 EAST MAIN ST	1866	Romanesque Revival	
71	142 EAST MAIN ST	1907	Colonial Revival	
108	159 EAST MAIN ST (alternately 15 PLEASANT ST)	1949	Colonial Revival	
72	175 EAST MAIN ST	1901	Neoclassical Revival	NR – CML
133	189 EAST MAIN ST	1868	See 101 Victorian Business Park	SR – LEW
74	55 GROVE ST (shares parcel with 57 and 61 WEST MAIN ST)	c. 1865	Vernacular Commercial	NR – CWM
75	72 GROVE ST	c. 1865	Vernacular	
76	74 GROVE ST	1923	Vernacular Commercial	
77	22 LIBERTY ST	1884	Richardsonian Romanesque	SR – MHS

78	52 LIBERTY ST	c. 1855	Vernacular	
79	54-A LIBERTY ST	c. 1890	Vernacular	
80	54-B LIBERTY ST	1876	Italianate	
81	68 LIBERTY ST	c. 1895	Shingle Style	
82	74 LIBERTY ST	c. 1907	Queen Anne	
83	82 LIBERTY ST	c. 1855	Vernacular	
84	86 LIBERTY ST	c. 1882	Italianate	
85	90 LIBERTY ST	c. 1875	Italianate	
86	96 LIBERTY ST	c. 1873	Italianate	
87	100 LIBERTY ST	c. 1875	Italianate	
88	108 LIBERTY ST	c. 1885	Queen Anne	
89	114 LIBERTY ST	c. 1885	Queen Anne	
90	116 MILLER ST	c. 1890	Vernacular Victorian	
91	124 MILLER ST	c. 1865	Vernacular Italianate	
93	142 MILLER ST	c. 1915	Vernacular Colonial Revival	
94	143 MILLER ST	c. 1865	Italianate	
95	144 MILLER ST	c. 1915	Vernacular Colonial Revival	
96	154 MILLER ST	c. 1890	Vernacular Victorian	
97	158 MILLER ST	c. 1895	Vernacular	
98	165 MILLER ST	1930	Art Deco	
99	170 MILLER ST	c. 1930	Bungalow/Craftsman	
100	5 NORWOOD ST	1891	Richardsonian Romanesque	
101	8 PLATT AVE	c. 1887	Stick/Eastlake	
102	14 PLATT AVE	c. 1880	Stick/Eastlake	
103	16 PLATT AVE	c. 1865	Second Empire	
104	15 PLEASANT ST	c. 1880	Queen Anne	
108	15 PLEASANT ST (alternately 159 EAST MAIN ST)	1949	Colonial Revival	
105	17 PLEASANT ST	c. 1880	Vernacular	
106	26 PLEASANT ST	c. 1867	Italianate	
107	139 PLEASANT ST	1912	Colonial Revival	
109	29 PRATT ST	1881	Vernacular Commercial	

110	31 PRATT ST	1910	Vernacular Commercial	
111	35 PRATT ST	c. 1870	Vernacular Commercial	
112	61 PRATT ST	1950	Modern	
113	73 PRATT ST	c. 1921	Vernacular Commercial	
114	163 PRATT ST	c. 1888, 1896, 1905	Brick Mill	
116	33 SO COLONY ST	1884	Vernacular Commercial	
117	51 SO COLONY ST	c. 1895, 1902	Vernacular Commercial	
118	134 STATE ST	c. 1865, c. 1895	Vernacular Italianate	
119	158 STATE ST	c. 1950	Vernacular	
120	164 STATE ST	c. 1920, c. 1945	Vernacular	
121	9 TWISS ST	c. 1865	Vernacular Queen Anne	
122	11 TWISS ST	c. 1900	Vernacular Queen Anne	
123	14 TWISS ST	c. 1890	Vernacular Queen Anne	
124	17 TWISS ST	c. 1865	Vernacular Italianate	
125	18 TWISS ST	c. 1880	Vernacular Italianate	
126	22 TWISS ST	c. 1890	Vernacular	
127	25 TWISS ST	c. 1880	Vernacular Queen Anne	
128	27 TWISS ST	c. 1895	Vernacular Queen Anne	
129	28 TWISS ST	c. 1870	Vernacular Italianate	
130	31 TWISS ST	c. 1890	Vernacular Queen Anne	
131	36 TWISS ST	c. 1880	Second Empire	
132	25 TWISS ST 1/2	c. 1895	Vernacular	
133	101 VICTORIAN BUSNS (alternately 189 EAST MAIN ST)	1868	Second Empire	
134	29 WEST MAIN ST	c. 1850	Italianate	NR – CWM
135	41 WEST MAIN ST	1921	Beaux Arts	NR – CWM
136	53 WEST MAIN ST	c. 1896	Italianate	NR – CWM

137	57 WEST MAIN ST (shares parcel with 61 WEST MAIN ST and 55 GROVE ST)	c. 1935	Art Deco	NR – CWM
138	61 WEST MAIN ST (shares parcel with 57 WEST MAIN ST and 55 GROVE ST)	1883	Italianate	NR – CWM
139	75 WEST MAIN ST	c. 1876	Italianate	NR – CWM
140	81 WEST MAIN ST	c. 1890	Vernacular Commercial	NR – CWM
141	82 WEST MAIN ST	c. 1945	Vernacular	NR – CWM (NC)
142	86 WEST MAIN ST	1949	Vernacular Commercial	NR – CWM (NC)
143	87 WEST MAIN ST	1917	Neoclassical Revival	NR – CWM
144	88 WEST MAIN ST	1905	Neoclassical Revival	NR – CWM
145	101 WEST MAIN ST	1883	Vernacular Commercial	NR – CWM
146	103 WEST MAIN ST	c. 1890	Vernacular Commercial	NR – CWM
148	107 WEST MAIN ST (shares parcel with 109 WEST MAIN ST)	c. 1897	Queen Anne	NR – CWM
149	109 WEST MAIN ST (shares parcel with 107 WEST MAIN ST)	c. 1890	Second Empire	NR – CWM
150	127 WEST MAIN ST	c. 1855	Italianate	
151	143 WEST MAIN ST	1927	Italian Renaissance	
152	24 WILLOW ST	c. 1875	Gothic Revival	
153	30 WILLOW ST	c. 1870	Vernacular	
154	22 WOMENS WAY	c. 1875	Gothic Revival	

\*Key to National Register nomination abbreviations:

CML = Curtis Memorial Library, individual National Register listing.

CWM = Colony/West Main Street Historic District, National Register district.

LEW = Lewis, Isaac C. House, individual State Register listing.

MHS = Meriden High School, individual State Register listing.

MMPO = Meriden Main Post Office, individual National Register listing.

NC = Non-Contributing Resource within historic district.

## **Listing in the National Register of Historic Places**

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places provides formal recognition of a property's historical, architectural, or archeological significance based on national standards used by every state. Results include:

- Becoming part of the National Register Archives, a public, searchable database that provides a wealth of research information.
- Encouraging preservation of historic resources by documenting a property's historic significance.
- Providing opportunities for specific preservation incentives, such as:
  - > Federal investment tax credits for income generating properties
  - > Preservation easements to nonprofit organizations
  - > International Building Code fire and life safety code alternatives
- Automatic listing in the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places
  - > Eligibility for State historic rehabilitation tax credit programs
- Special consideration when a State or Federal agency project may affect historic property.
- Eligible to display a bronze plaque that distinguishes your property as listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- National Register listing places no obligations on private property owners. There are no restrictions on the use, treatment, transfer, or disposition of private property.
- National Register listing does not lead to public acquisition or require public access.
- National Register listing does not automatically invoke local historic district zoning or local landmark designation.

## **Protection of Historic Properties**

Historic Properties are sometimes threatened with unsympathetic changes or demolition. Many legal and regulatory mechanisms exist in Connecticut to help protect these irreplaceable assets. Every situation is different and the most effective method of protection should be chosen from those available. Sometimes more than one of these programs can be applied to group of properties, which could be listed simultaneously in several ways. They could be a National Historic District (which automatically makes it a State Historic District) and they could also become a Local Historic District or a Village District and might also be considered for Historic Overlay Zoning. Some properties in the study area could be eligible an individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places and they could then be protected by preservation easements, covenants or deed restrictions. Historic properties, whether or not they are listed in the State or



National Register, can also be protected to some degree by a demolition delay ordinance which requires a waiting period and a public hearing before a significant building can be demolished. The City of Meriden should consider the use of appropriate preservation tools in the Transit Oriented Development area and throughout the city.

Most of the information that follows is included on the website of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation <http://www.cttrust.org/> The SHPO and the Connecticut Trust are the best sources of guidance on protection of historic assets.

### **Demolition Delay Ordinances**

A demolition delay ordinance is a tool that preservationists and municipalities can use to protect their communities historically and architecturally significant resources. The State of Connecticut has enabling legislation which allows towns to impose a waiting period of not more than 180 days before granting a demolition permit. This waiting period would allow interested parties to explore alternatives to demolition and provide "a window of opportunity for preservation".

An effective ordinance will insure that historic buildings continue to serve important and productive roles in our communities and will not limit or prevent development. Ordinances should clearly outline what buildings are covered by the delay, have a provision to lift the delay if building is not significant, allow for a public hearing and provide for stiff penalties if the ordinance is violated. It is also very important that an organization or individual in the community be willing to work on finding a viable alternative.

**The City of Meriden should institute a city-wide demolition delay ordinance to help insure that no significant buildings are lost to development.**

### **Village Districts**

The Village Districts Act, passed by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1998, is an aggressive tool to help municipalities protect and preserve their community character and historic development patterns. The law allows towns to designate village districts as a way of protecting sections of towns that have distinctive character, landscape and historic structures. Within these areas, the town zoning commission may adopt regulations governing such matters as the design and placement of buildings and maintenance of public views. These regulations also "encourage conversion and preservation of existing buildings and sites in a manner that maintains the historic, natural and community character of the district." They provide "that proposed buildings or modifications to existing buildings be harmoniously related their surroundings, to the terrain and to the use, scale and architecture of existing buildings in the vicinity that have a functional or visual relationship to the proposed building or modification." The scale, proportions, massing, size, proportion and roof treatments should be compatible with the area and the "removal or disruption of historic traditional or significant structures or architectural elements shall be minimized." In addition to design, the arrangement and orientation of any proposed new construction should be compatible with the immediate neighborhood. All applications for substantial reconstruction and new construction shall be subject to review and comment by an architect or architectural firm contracted by the commission. The bill applies to rural, urban and suburban communities, which can exhibit 'village' characteristics. Listed below are five steps towns should follow in the process of designating Village Districts:

1. Educate the residents and support for the designation of each area as a Village District.
2. Inventory the structures and landscape and settings of each district, and identify problems.

3. Establish standards of design unique to each area and in common to all, including public landscaping, sidewalks, lighting, street furniture, pedestrian, and bike and vehicle circulation.
4. Set up timing and funding schedules and adopt the needed zoning regulations.
5. Monitor progress and effects of the local zoning and revise as needed.

### **Local Historic Districts and Properties**

The Connecticut General Assembly gives towns the authority to establish locally designated historic districts and individual historic properties for which viewable exterior architectural changes are reviewed by a local preservation commission. This designation offers the most protection for areas or buildings of historic and architectural significance and ensures that exterior alterations are consistent and appropriate with the existing character of the district or property.

#### Local Historic Districts

Local Historic Districts are not to be confused with National Register Districts. Although both are automatically listed on the State Register of Historic Places, the way each is structured and the reviews that are required are very different.

A National Register Historic District is established through the State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service and is a formal recognition of an area that historically, architecturally or culturally significant. Alterations to a property listed in a National Register District only require review when there is state or federal involvement. A Local Historic District (LHD) offers much more protection and involvement from the community. A LHD is established and administered by the community itself to protect the distinctive and significant characteristics of an area and encourages changes and new designs that are compatible with the area's historic distinctiveness.

Why establish an historic district? It has been demonstrated that the existence of a Local Historic District creates community pride, fosters neighborhood stabilization and enhances the appearance and historic character of the area. Studies also show that property values in Local Historic Districts often increase faster than those in undesignated areas of the same municipality.

#### Local Historic Properties

A Local Historic Property is a building, structure, object or site that is designated for its significance in local, state or national history, architecture, archaeology and culture. Municipalities are authorized to designate a property or properties to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of these significant buildings and places. The designation procedure is very similar to the designation process of a Local Historic District. A study committee is formulated and prepares a report supporting the designation and forwards it on the State Historic Preservation Office and the local municipal government. A hearing is held and owner notified. If the owner objects then the designation process comes to an end. However if the owner does not object, the designation goes back to the municipal government for approval, modifications or denial.

Once a property is designated, a Historic Properties Commission is established to review alterations to the property. A town may designate an already existing Local Historic District Commission to administer these individual properties. Like properties located in a LHD, exterior changes to architectural features or work to sites of historic or archaeological importance are required to be reviewed by the Historic Properties Commission. A hearing is held, the proposal presented and the Commission will render a decision. To review the General Statutes of Connecticut regarding Historic Properties and Districts- See the Link provided below.

In Connecticut there are over 110 designated historic districts and individual designated historic properties. They are found in both urban and rural communities towns throughout Connecticut.

### **Historic Overlay Zoning**

What is a Historic Overlay Zone? First, an overlay zone is an additional layer of regulations for a specific area that is laid over the underlying zoning regulations. The base zoning regulations continue to be administered, but the overlay adds another level of regulations to be considered. Historic Overlay Zoning is when historic district design review is established through a zoning ordinance rather than an independent process such as establishing a Local Historic District (LHD). This Historic Overlay tier is applied to an area considered worthy of preservation because of its architectural, cultural or historic significance.

Historic Overlay Zoning is another avenue a Connecticut municipality can use to protect historic areas and structures rather than establishing a Local Historic District. In 1977 Connecticut General Statute 8-2 was amended to allow zoning commissions to consider historic factors when rendering a zoning decision.

In certain instances it may be more beneficial for a municipality to use zoning regulations for historic preservation than establishing a local historic district/property. A zoning change (overlay) does not require the two-thirds approval of property owners in order to establish it or approval of an ordinance by the municipal legislative body. To amend a local zoning ordinance and add a historic overlay it is not necessary to have a community election.

Another benefit for a zoning board review is that they can regulate the use of a building, whereas a Local Historic District Commission cannot. Although it may appear a LHD Commission may have more authority over a "district" because a zoning commission decision may be overturned or undercut by a zoning board of appeals, the zoning commission does have the power to prohibit ZBA from granting use variances in certain instances. A zoning commission can implement a similar control over individual projects through a special permit that a LHD Commission can exercise through a "Certificate of Appropriateness". Using a historic overlay zone may be a good alternative to establishing a local historic district when certain required criteria cannot be met, such as obtaining the required two-thirds property owner vote.

### **Preservation Easements**

Owners of historic properties devote considerable time, effort, and expense to restoring and maintaining the architectural details and historic character of their properties. Preservation-minded owners often worry that their properties will not be properly protected and maintained in the future by subsequent owners. Likewise, preservation organizations have a strong interest in ensuring the long term protection of the many thousands of historic properties that remain in active private use, whether a nationally-significant landmark, a rural village, a cultural landscape, or farmland.

For property owners looking to *permanently* protect their historic properties, one of the most effective legal tools available is the preservation easement – a private legal interest conveyed by a property owner to a preservation organization or to a government entity. The decision to donate a preservation easement is almost always voluntary, but, once made, it binds both the current owner *and future owners* to protect the historic character of the property subject to the easement. Preservation easements have been used to protect a wide range of historic properties across the country – from New England Cape Cod cottages

to Southwestern archaeological sites, and from Kentucky horse farms to mid-twentieth century Modernist houses in California. While some easements are for a period of years, in most instances easements are created as permanent restrictions.

Preservation easements have become an important component of state and federal policy to encourage public participation in the preservation of America's historic resources. Indeed, their use is specifically encouraged by an important economic incentive: property owners who donate qualified preservation easements to qualified easement-holding organizations may be eligible for a charitable contribution deduction from their federal income taxes for the value of the historic preservation easement – provided that the contribution meets the standards of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

### **Deed Restrictions and Restrictive Covenants**

Deed restrictions are stipulations contained within the actual deed regarding certain treatment or use of the property. Since these restrictions are actually part of the deed, they must continue to be honored when the property is sold. Any future owner is obligated to comply with the provisions contained in the restriction. Deed restrictions are used to accomplish different purposes. They can be used to regulate modifications to a structure itself, and can also be used to regulate uses or other types of activity on the property beyond that regulated through zoning. Deed restrictions are provisions enforceable through legal means.

Restrictive covenants are similar to deed restrictions in that they restrict specified alterations to a property. Although the terms are sometimes interchangeable, a covenant can be different from a deed restriction. Unlike a deed restriction, a covenant is an agreement between two parties, and is actually more similar to an easement. Restrictive covenants are sometimes viewed as more enforceable than deed restrictions but less enforceable than easement agreements.

Historic Overlay Zoning is another avenue a Connecticut municipality can use to protect historic areas and structures rather than establishing a Local Historic District. In 1977 Connecticut General Statute 8-2 was amended to allow zoning commissions to consider historic factors when rendering a zoning decision.

In certain instances it may be more beneficial for a municipality to use zoning regulations for historic preservation than establishing a local historic district/property. A zoning change (overlay) does not require the two-thirds approval of property owners in order to establish it or approval of an ordinance by the municipal legislative body. To amend a local zoning ordinance and add a historic overlay it is not necessary to have a community election.

Another benefit for a zoning board review is that they can regulate the use of a building, whereas a Local Historic District Commission cannot. Although it may appear a LHD Commission may have more authority over a "district" because a zoning commission decision may be overturned or undercut by a zoning board of appeals, the zoning commission does have the power to prohibit ZBA from granting use variances in certain instances. A zoning commission can implement a similar control over individual projects through a special permit that a LHD Commission can exercise through a "Certificate of Appropriateness". Using a historic overlay zone may be a good alternative to establishing a local historic district when certain required criteria cannot be met, such as obtaining the required two-thirds property owner vote.

## Connecticut Environmental Protection Act

The State of Connecticut has a law specifically protecting historic buildings from destruction. The Connecticut Environmental Protection Act, or EPA allows citizens to sue to prevent "the unreasonable destruction of historic structures and landmarks of the state," defined as buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. To review the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act: CT General Statutes Sections Title 22a, Chapter 439, Section 22a-15 to 22a-19b, please use the link provided at the bottom of the page.

**How it works:** According to the statute, private parties may file suit to prevent the demolition of historic buildings. But most often it is the State Historic Preservation Office that is involved in activating the EPA. There is no formal mechanism for informing the SHPO of proposals to demolish buildings listed on the Register. A few towns provide notice; others tell property owners that they must contact the Commission. Generally it has been by word of mouth that Commission becomes aware of such proposals.

When SHPO does become aware of a proposed demolition, the staff asks the owner to explain it at a meeting of the Commission. The SHPO determines if the proposed is reasonable in light of the facts and circumstances associated with that particular property. The Commission generally asks a series of questions and request specific information concerning the project to determine if there are "feasible and prudent alternatives to the demolition." If the Commissioners decide that the request to demolish is unreasonable, they may vote to ask the Connecticut Attorney General to seek an injunction preventing the demolition.

Connecticut is fortunate to have a preservation tool as powerful as the EPA. In order to effectively use it local support is crucial. Not only does the SHPO often rely on local preservationists to let it know when National Register buildings are threatened, the state also looks for local support in deciding whether or not to take an EPA case. The Commission does sometimes see itself as an advocate for buildings that have no other friends. But well organized local support always strengthens the case for preservation. Not all cases have to go to trial. The EPA can serve as a bargaining chip even when there is no legal action. The review procedure alone can provide an opportunity to persuade owners to find a way to avoid demolition.

The procedure can also provide time for local activists to organize. However preservationist must be willing to compromise. The focus of the EPA is unreasonable destruction of natural and historic resources. While developers and property owners- unfortunately the courts- tend to define reasonableness solely in terms of maximizing profits, owners are entitled to use their property for gain. Preservationists need to be able to demonstrate that there are realistic uses for threatened historic buildings.

Sometimes it simply isn't feasible to save the building. But the EPA may provide leverage that can be used to obtain concessions to protect an area's historic character: better architectural or landscape design, thorough documentation of the building before it is torn down, salvage of important parts, or an offer to allow the building to be moved to another site, maybe even with some of the cost of demolition thrown in for an incentive.

Be sure the truly important places are listed. The EPA only applies to buildings that are listed on or under consideration for the National Register. It's sometimes possible to get a National Register nomination through in time to save a building, but such cases are rare. Furthermore, last-minute designations are usually seen by would be developers as hostile acts, making them less willing to compromise. It's better to make sure that everything you care about is listed before the threats appear. Local historical and preservation organizations and even individuals can sponsor a nomination.