

**MAKING PLACES: Historic Mills of Connecticut**  
A Project of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

**Statewide Survey of Historic Industrial Resources in Connecticut**

*Edited for Website, Mills: Making Places of Connecticut*

**January 2017**

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Department of Economic and  
Community Development

State Historic Preservation Office



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**Notes:**

- 1) *This document is a modification of the Survey & Planning Grant Report submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office in January 2017. Specifically, appendices have been removed as the information is available in the website itself.***
- 2) *The relational database from which the website draws information continues to be updated, so that resource numbers and information may vary from text of this document.***

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Identifying the buildings, sites, structures, districts and objects that comprise Connecticut's cultural heritage is a statutory responsibility of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The SHPO accomplishes this by maintaining a Statewide Historic Resource Inventory (SHRI) made up of geographic and thematic cultural resource surveys. A thorough and up-to-date SHRI is fundamental to SHPO's greater mission to register and protect the state's resources.

Connecticut has a long history of making things -- from consumer wares to industrial parts and products -- and a large but diminishing built environment of places where things have been made since the 1700s. These resources were last surveyed thematically in 1978 when the SHPO initiated a Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) survey of industrial resources, the results of which were published in *Connecticut: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites* (Society for Industrial Archeology: 1981). The scope of that inventory was broader than manufacturing sites, including transportation, extractive and specialized structures built prior to 1930. Further, in the 35 years since, several important mill buildings included in that inventory were lost to fire, neglect and new development. Recognizing the importance of these properties to the history of our state and local communities, and the vital role which they can play in economic development through reuse, the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and SHPO commissioned the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation to conduct a new survey in 2013. Focused primarily on manufacturing and its associated contexts, *Making Places: Historic Mills of Connecticut* was funded by the Community Investment Act.

*Making Places* builds upon and greatly expands the HAER inventory of 200 surviving historic manufacturing sites. Inclusion in the HAER survey was limited by a qualifying timeframe prior to 1930 and restrictive project-specific criteria, such as substantial survival of machinery and equipment, as well as relative significance of the site within its field of manufacturing. The more comprehensive *Making Places* inventory investigates all 169 Connecticut cities and towns for resources, utilizes less restrictive State Register criteria which consider local significance for inclusion, and moves the cutoff date forward to 1965.

Consistent with the policy goals of *Investment in Connecticut: State Historic Preservation Plan 2011-2016*, *Making Places* has focused on above-ground resources in need of rehabilitation which hold the greatest opportunity to stimulate employment, leverage resources of SHPO and other agencies, enhance community quality, and advance sustainable growth. However, the survey also documents previously rehabbed or converted mills as well as archaeological industrial resources.

The resources documented in this survey of historic industrial complexes fall into four categories:

- Resources already listed on the National and/or State Register of Historic Places, and therefore eligible for the utilization of Federal and/or State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits;
- Resources potentially eligible for the State Register and therefore potentially eligible for the utilization of State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits (some may also be candidates for the National Register, and therefore utilization of Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits);
- Resources with known manufacturing uses but whose potential historic significance has not been determined within the scope of this survey; and
- Resources which have been demolished since their listing on the HAER survey, State and/or National Register or since the beginning of the *Making Places* survey.

In addition to historic industrial complexes, *Making Places* has looked at the communities surrounding these complexes (whether or not the complex itself survived) to identify extant worker housing and public or commercial buildings which owe their presence to those complexes in a very direct way. The survey has documented buildings that were constructed by mill owners or companies with the express purpose of assuring the presence of a local, reliable workforce for their manufacturing operations. It links these communities to the factories which employed their residents.

The survey team has included the following:

- Wesley Haynes, Project Director;
- Renée Tribert, Project Manager;
- Lucas Karmazinas, FuturePast Preservation, Lead Historical Consultant and Researcher;
- Michael Forino, former Project Manager, and Independent Researcher;
- Charlotte Hitchcock, Independent Researcher;
- Jordan Sorensen, Independent Researcher;
- Erin Marchitto, Independent Researcher; and
- Sarah Johnson and Kristen Hopewood, interns;
- with administrative oversight by former Executive Director, Helen Higgins, and current Executive Director, Daniel Mackay.

## **2. METHOD**

### ***2.1 Identification***

#### ***2.1.1 Statewide List of Potential Historic Industrial Resources***

The earlier Connecticut inventory prepared as part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) in 1981 was used as the basis of a spreadsheet of historic manufacturers and their locations. The HAER inventory was supplemented with resources already listed on the State and/or National Register. A variety of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century business directories, manufacturing

directories and registers, city directories, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and Department of Economic and Community Development lists of industrial sites, as well as historic printed “Birds Eye” and “Aero” views were reviewed at the Connecticut State Library and through online searches to identify the various manufacturing enterprises located in the state over time. Local historical societies across the state were contacted for information on historic mills in their respective communities; responses were received from the following: Brookfield, Deep River, Durham, Salmon Brook (Granby), Guilford, Haddam, Meriden, Monroe, Old Lyme, Seymour, Wood Memorial Library (South Windsor), Stonington, Torrington, Westport and Windsor. The spreadsheet was populated with the resulting roster and contains some 4,000 individual entries for manufacturers documented as having operated within the state.

### *2.1.2 Town Maps of Historic Industrial Resources*

Sanborn Insurance Atlases were historically updated to reflect changes in the built environment and therefore provide rich evidence of manufacturing facilities over time. The most recent versions available online were compared against Google Maps aerial imagery for preliminary identification of surviving industrial fabric. A Google Map was created for each town and overlaid with boxes corresponding with industrial complex locations from the Sanborns, shaded to indicate whether demolished or extant.

The next step in the process was to determine the relationships between the many manufacturers on the town spreadsheets and potential surviving physical industrial fabric on the town Google Maps. By comparing company names and addresses against Sanborns and Google Maps, and conducting internet searches on company names, virtually every spreadsheet entry was accounted for. Frequently a single physical industrial complex (whether demolished or surviving) was occupied by multiple manufacturers either at the same time or over time. Occasionally the process identified additional physical factory locations not otherwise documented through Sanborn review, leading to the creation of additional resource entries. Some companies were located in structures built as commercial or even residential buildings; such buildings were generally excluded from the resource list.

### *2.1.3 Mill Communities*

With the identification of historic industrial resources completed, a town-by-town search was conducted to identify company-built worker housing and community buildings such as stores, boarding houses, libraries and churches. In some cases, it was a matter of linking existing Historic Districts with industrial complexes. However, further research using Google Maps, online, and written sources has identified numerous additional mill community resources.

The decision to focus on those resources that were ‘company built,’ i.e. those with either distinct or highly probable connections to the individuals or companies that owned nearby industrial entities, was made because it allowed for the most efficient identification of associated resources using historic maps and both primary and secondary sources. While substantial residential districts often surrounded various industrial complexes - particularly

throughout Connecticut's largest cities - evaluation of the housing in these neighborhoods was beyond the scope of this phase of the project.

There was one exception to the company-built determination, however, with the decision to include worker housing built by the Federal Government during the First and Second World Wars. While these developments were at times completed in financial and logistical collaboration with industrial firms, more often than not they were exclusively government projects meant to provide much needed housing for the influx of workers required to support the aforementioned war efforts. For this reason, it was decided that this housing stock played a significant role in the history of the state's industries and thus should be included in this inventory.

The overall process of documenting mill community resources generally followed one of two methods. In the instances where existing Historic Districts were present, the process of associating these districts with nearby industrial resources was often a simple matter of searching the district nominations for references of the relevant industrial entities and then documenting these connections. In many cases, development of the district in question was directly driven by and mirrored the growth of local industries and this historical narrative was clearly identified. In other situations, however, an industrial resource might fall within or abut an existing Historic District yet no reference to connections between the two could be found. Regardless, in such instances associations were often eventually identified as a result of the same system of evaluation that uncovered mill communities in areas where Historic Districts do not yet exist.

The latter survey work took form as a sort of digital "windshield" survey and did not involve on-the-ground evaluation of the identified resources. Rather, both digital and documentary sources were evaluated in an effort to create a baseline inventory of ancillary buildings either clearly or very likely associated with nearby industrial resources. The first step in this process involved evaluating modern satellite and street view imagery in an effort to identify historic structures located in the vicinity of inventoried industrial resources. This information was cross-referenced with that gleaned from the same historic maps, atlases, and written sources used to identify and document the various mills or factory complexes and any surviving resources listed as being associated with these industrial entities were recorded in the survey database as a mill community. These entries differ from those created for the industrial resources as they are meant to serve as a preliminary identification tool or placeholder, rather than a comprehensive inventory form. Regardless, a range of information was included in each entry, such as:

- name of the community (either a historic appellation or a given title referencing the associated industrial entity);
- address (this assigned to a point near the geographic center of the community);
- description of the geographic location and boundary of the community;
- number of housing units;
- dates of construction;
- structural condition;

- architectural style;
- historical significance and associated industrial entities.

In many instances, examples of archetypal company built structures were identified in the vicinity of inventoried industrial resources; however, the buildings do not appear on available maps or in written sources. The architectural characteristics of these structures often provided enough evidence of their historical connection so that an educated determination of likely association could be made. Such often included boarding houses, duplexes, and multi- and single-family residences designed according to standardized forms and erected in replicate groups. The presence of clusters of such buildings in otherwise rural sections of the state provided strong evidence of potential associations, as did the tidy rows of houses found in those areas that initially developed as company-developed hamlets yet later evolved into villages or towns in their own right. Most of the latter are well documented in the 1981 HAER inventory; however, some that were left out of that survey have been captured here.

The process of identifying ancillary residential structures associated with the industrial resources included in this survey resulted in the documentation of 150 mill communities (totaling hundreds of individual historic structures) located throughout the state. These consist of 51 mill communities identified as part of existing National and/or Local Historic Districts, with the remainder being located outside of such districts. Most of the latter represent excellent potential for future documentation, particularly considering the historical significance of the associated industrial resources and other ancillary structures such as dams, mill ponds, canals, and rail infrastructure. Many of these industrial sites and mill communities retain a high degree of their historical integrity and would be excellent candidates for State or National Register Historic District nominations.

## ***2.2 Historic Resources Field Survey***

The field survey portion of the project centered on above-ground historic industrial resources which could be viewed from the public way, and was conducted on a town-by-town basis using the town maps and annotated town spreadsheets from the identification phase. The documentation of interior conditions was largely beyond the scope of work of this project.

Based on preliminary information from the identification phase, field survey work was conducted in 91 towns. The fieldwork allowed the survey team to:

- Confirm the physical presence of identified industrial resources; in some cases, resources were found to have been demolished and in other cases new resources were noted;
- Determine potential eligibility for State Register listing on the basis of architectural integrity; and
- Screen those industrial resources that may be candidates for State Register listing but which appeared to be well maintained and/or already rehabbed, and therefore likely to survive for any future documentation.

While all extant industrial complexes found in the identification phase have been retained in the survey, the information garnered during the field survey was used to evaluate which industrial resources to research and document for potential State Register listing. Those resources previously identified in the HAER survey and/or in National Register Districts were also evaluated and in some cases updated to acknowledge material site changes or to more fully document their historic and/or architectural significance. An integral part of these evaluations was a review of current use and condition, so that underutilized mills and factories that presented redevelopment opportunities would be identified.

### **2.3 Selection Criteria**

Selection criteria for the historic resource survey of industrial sites in Connecticut were based on the National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation:

*The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess 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 patterns of our history; or*
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or*
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.*

The identification of industrial resources in the Historic Resource Inventory is based upon Criteria A and D. These are sites that are significant in the development of manufacturing processes and industries in Connecticut from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through 1965, and that frequently played a role in broader societal events or trends. Connecticut industries have been leaders in new product development and technological advancements, and they have been at the center of local community growth and change, immigrant labor populations, labor relations, and wartime economies. Many resources meet Criterion B for their association with significant persons, and Criterion C for the architecture; however those evaluations have not specifically been made under the scope of this Statewide Historic Resource Inventory.

In addition, despite some losses of buildings within complexes and physical changes to building fabric over time, the industrial resources determined to be candidates for listing on the State Register retain the basic National Register requirements for integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

## 2.4 Documentation

### 2.4.1 Research

Staff and consultants used primary and secondary sources, available both online and at repositories such as the Connecticut State Library, historical societies and municipal offices, to document individual historic industrial complexes. Bibliographical references for individual researched Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) forms are included on those forms.

All identified historic industrial resources, with or without potential State Register eligibility, and including those that have been demolished since the HAER survey, State or National Register listing or the current *Making Places* survey, have been entered into the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation proprietary relational database. So too have mill community resources. The database provides the framework for production of HRI forms and search outputs.

Historic industrial fabric has been documented in 126 of Connecticut’s 169 towns. Several towns have only archaeological sites and/or early grist, saw, iron or textile mills, others have largely intact mill communities, and others still have large numbers of complexes that offer evidence of their rich manufacturing heritage over a hundred or more years. Concentrations of factories most often coincide with readily available water power, railroad accessibility or urban centers with established infrastructure and labor bases.

A total of 1,470 industrial complex sites have been documented. This number includes archaeological sites and sites where the factory buildings have been demolished in recent years. Resources are distributed across all eight counties of the state:

Fairfield County	384 mill complexes across 16 of 23 towns
Hartford County	310 mill complexes across 26 of 29 towns
Litchfield County	113 mill complexes across 16 of 26 towns
Middlesex County	87 mill complexes across 14 of 15 towns
New Haven County	385 mill complexes across 24 of 27 towns
New London County	78 mill complexes across 13 of 21 towns
Tolland County	45 mill complexes across 8 of 13 towns
Windham County	68 mill complexes across 9 of 15 towns

Many of these resources have not survived intact: a dozen are ruins or state archeological sites, 23 have been demolished within the past 25 years or so, and another dozen have only one or two buildings, often the administrative offices, of what were once sprawling complexes. In addition, it should be noted that as of delivery of this inventory (January 2017), demolition has been approved for several resources but to the best of our knowledge, not yet undertaken; the names of these resources have been clearly annotated.

Nearly 280 industrial resources are already on the State and/or National Register, either individually or as contributing resources to a Historic District; for these an effort has been made to include links to the relevant district or individual Register nomination forms.

The survey has identified and provides research on approximately 427 significant industrial resources, including those previously documented in the HAER inventory, which have been deemed candidates for State Register listing. The number of such resources is a function of the constraints of the project rather than any lack of significant mills or factory buildings; as previously stated, the decision was made to focus largely on those resources in need of rehabilitation and which present opportunities for redevelopment. Of the remaining 750 or so historic industrial sites, future research would yield information that would suggest eligibility for State Register nomination for many; 297 candidates for future priority documentation have been identified.

#### *2.4.2 Historic Resource Inventory Forms*

The standard Connecticut SHPO Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) Form was modified for the *Making Places* project with SHPO review and approval. The form recognizes the fact that a factory seldom comprises only one building: it is more often a series of attached and/or free-standing blocks that speak to both the varying industrial processes and the growth of manufacturers over time. The revised HRI form identifies each resource as an industrial complex and allows for additional information such as:

- brief description of specific location, as well as latitude and longitude (typically at the center of the complex) to better define the location when a single point address is not sufficient;
- separate fields for architectural description and historical narrative;
- a listing of companies associated with the complex and corresponding dates;
- documented workforce numbers;
- power sources and transportation links; and
- condition notes.

Each resource has a unique record number ('CT Trust dbase id') in the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation relational database, and an HRI form with varying levels of information. At a minimum, each form includes a Microsoft Bing Bird's Eye view of the site, a company name (if known), address, assessor information, and geophysical location (latitude and longitude).

For the 427 resources identified as candidates for State Register listing, the HRI form was fully completed, with historical narratives, architectural descriptions, information pertaining to occupants and manufacturing operations, labor, power sources, conditions, and street level photographs. Interior descriptions are beyond the scope of this project.

When mill community resources have been identified, the information is included on the HRI form under the heading “Associated Mill Communities” in order to document the linkages between industries and housing; the name of the community resources and the Connecticut Trust dbase id are provided for reference. Additional information such as overall boundaries, and a brief description of the numbers, types, architectural styles and construction dates of buildings within the community is available in the relational database and in a separate output.

### *2.4.3 Survey Search Output Forms*

In an effort to maximize the utility of the information gathered during *Making Places* for historical research and redevelopment potential, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation proprietary database allows for a variety of searches. Search parameters (which can be updated and revised as needed) and search output forms have been created. The contents of the survey can be searched to find, for example, historic industrial resources in a particular town or county, of specific building materials, in general industry categories, or by current use (including vacancy) when known.

While HRI forms present all available information on a particular complex, search output forms provide limited information on the industrial complexes that meet given search criteria. The search output form is intended as a digital product providing practical information for preliminary assessment of individual properties for reuse or redevelopment. It includes links to an aerial image of each given complex; links to the relevant assessor records(s) where available; parcel identification; acreage (as a substitute, however inadequate, for square footage); current and historic uses where identified; known historic designations; and construction dates when known.

The contents of the entire survey can also be searched for words or phrases to identify, for example, complexes where a particular product was made, complexes occupied by related companies or where output was affected by wars. In this case, the database returns a list of complexes with links to the relevant database entries for further research.