

Southbury, Connecticut 350 Years of History

Welcome to Southbury, a town rich in history and historic architecture, with five Historic Districts and many individual structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These landmarks document more than 350 years of historical development.

Originally the home of the Pootatuck Indians, the first European settlers were religious dissenters who came to Southbury from Stratford and established what was then known as the Pomperaug Plantation. Southbury was incorporated in 1787.



Stone marker near the banks of the Pomperaug River where, in 1673, European settlers established Woodbury, a portion of which was to become Southbury in 1787.

During its first hundred years Southbury evolved as a quiet agricultural center situated along the fertile Pomperaug River, which provided a favorable environment for crops and furnished power for local mills. During the late 18th century and up through the Civil War the town gained in prosperity, with water-powered industries and prosperous mercantile enterprises. Manufacturing was located primarily in South Britain, on the Pomperaug River, and in Southford, on Eight Mile Brook, both of which produced goods for major urban markets. The New York and New England Railroad ran a line through Southbury, with three local stations.

Following the Civil War the industrial capacity of Southbury was surpassed by other towns in the region and it remained primarily agricultural for the next 100 years. The population was stable at approximately 2000 up until the early 1960's, when construction of I-84 brought with it new development and a rise in population to today's 20,000.



Southbury played a role in the American Revolution, when, in 1781, General Count de Rochambeau and his troops marched through the town to join General George Washington at Yorktown, Virginia.

The landmarks we see today reflect Southbury's early phases of growth, from the pre-Revolutionary period through the mid-19th century.

Despite many recent changes in the town, a significant number of historic structures remain, some of which are prime examples of their style and period. Clustered in the Main Street Historic District, along Main Street North, and in the South Britain Historic District, along and adjacent to South Britain Road, they tell the story of the people and events that shaped the town and gave it the special character that attract so many today. We hope you will look, learn and linger as you explore Historic Southbury.

HISTORIC SOUTHBURY

This guide to Southbury's Main Street Historic District and a companion guide to the South Britain Historic District are designed to introduce residents and visitors to Southbury's architectural and historical assets. Because of the town's rich architectural legacy, only a sampling of individual sites can be listed. For more information about the history of Southbury we encourage you to visit the Old Town Hall Museum in South Britain or the Town of Southbury website: www.southbury-ct.org.



Cornucopia at Oldfield, 782 Main Street North

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HISTORIC SOUTHBURY



Main Street Historic District

A Guide to the Main Street Historic District
Southbury, Connecticut, a *Preserve America* Community

Main Street Historic District

To explore Southbury, there is no better place to start than the Main Street Historic District, which showcases some of the most architecturally significant residential architecture in the region. The District, also known as Historic District 1, encompasses both sides of Main Street North from Old Waterbury Road at the southern end to the Woodbury town line at the northern end. Following the original trail created by the Pootatuck Indians, lined by tall trees, and flanked by stone walls and broad lawns, the District is an unusually well preserved and unified assemblage of historic structures and landscape features reflective of Southbury's most prosperous period, from the late 18th through the mid-19th century.



One of the striking features of the Main Street Historic District is its concentration of substantial residences, many of them associated with the families of Southbury's first settlers, the Hinmans, Curtisses and Stiles. Successful farmers, merchants, manufacturers, and lawyers, these families built in the best styles of their day, including Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival. Their homes were set on generous lots, surrounded by fences, meadows, woodlots, and barns or stables at the rear.



Interspersed with the residences are period outbuildings, including barns, fine examples of 19th century ecclesiastical

architecture, two early school buildings, stone walls and 19th century fences, and historic cemeteries where visitors can trace the town's social history.

We invite you to explore the rich legacy of Historic Southbury, starting with the following sampling of historic structures.

1 Hollister -Romanuskas House 185 Main Street North

This residence is one of the finest local examples of the Federal style, characterized by fine proportions and delicate detailing. Note the handsome entrance portico, intact roofline details, and complex of historic barns at the rear. It is one of more than seven houses in the Historic District associated with the Hinman family.



A nearly identical Federal residence at 194 North Main Street North, formerly the Congregational Parsonage, may be seen directly opposite. Forming a gateway to the Historic District, the two buildings reflect the architectural quality of the District's late 18th century residences.

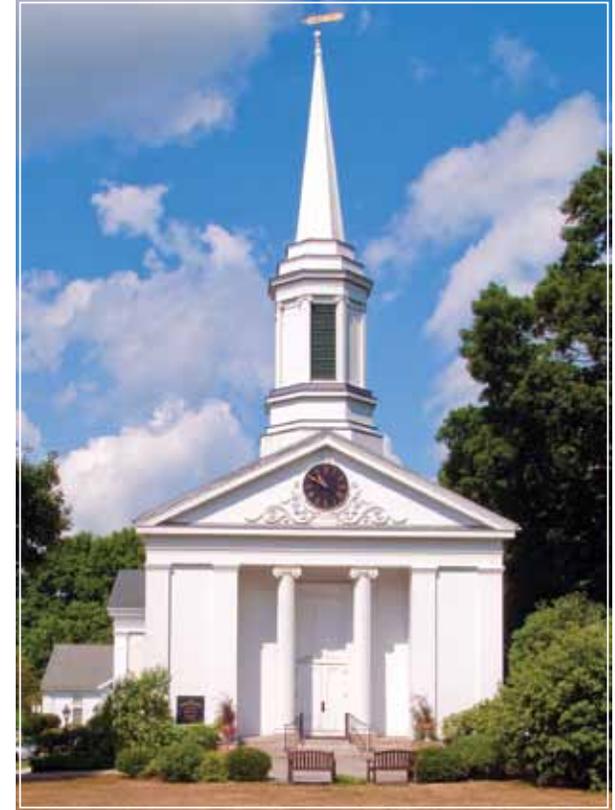
2 Bullet Hill School 250 Main Street North

The Bullet Hill School, formerly known as The Brick School, was built in the 1790's. It is one of the most significant buildings in the District, recognized as the oldest public building in Southbury and one of the oldest continuously operating school houses in New England. Through much of the 19th and into the 20th century it served as an educational center as well as the site of meetings, lectures and dances. The School is distinguished by Georgian style near-square proportions, locally made bricks laid up in Flemish bond, generous windows, and a hipped roof. The original cupola, now replaced, served as the model for Southbury's 1977 Town Hall and other public buildings. It is maintained by the town and operated by the Historical Society as a living museum that is open for class visits and tours.



3 United Church of Christ 283 Main Street North

The front portion of the United Church of Christ was constructed in 1844 as the third meeting house of the First Ecclesiastical Society of Southbury. This portion, with its distinctive Greek temple shape, popular in the 1840's and 1850's, is one of two distinguished Greek Revival buildings in the Historic District (see no.6) Note the gracefully recessed Ionic portico, the clock in the pediment, the octagonal spire, and the foliated decoration on the façade. At the rear are two separate sections, one of which is the 1847 former Southbury Methodist Church, also in the Greek Revival style, which was moved to the site and attached to the current building in 1957.



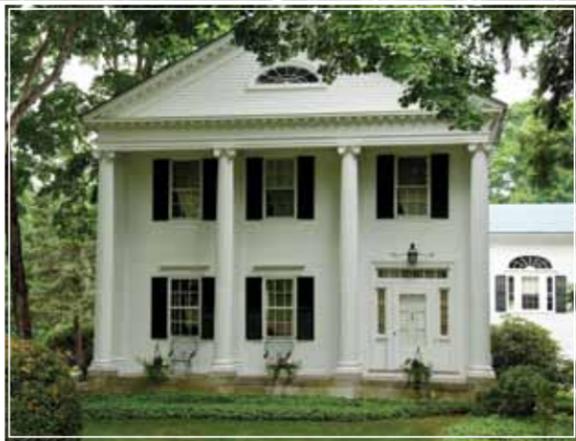
4 The Curtiss-Fabrique-Judson House 657 Main Street North (cover)

The exceptionally elegant front façade of this residence marks it as one of the Historic District's primary architectural landmarks. The front or main block was constructed in 1810, expanding the earlier, rear structure which dates from approximately 1765. The façade, which is beautifully proportioned, features a central pedimented pavilion, supported by fluted columns and a circular headed window with Gothic tracery.

5 The Methodist Parsonage 1021 Old Field Road

Constructed c. 1760 as a two story saltbox with chestnut beam framing, this building was a parsonage in the middle decades of the 19th century.

6 Mansion House (aka Mitchell Mansion)
97 Mansion House Road



The elegance and grand proportions of this Greek Revival structure qualify it as one of the outstanding sites in the Historic District and the finest local example of the Greek Revival style. Built in 1828 and used for years as a "house of public entertainment," it was known as the Mitchell Mansion. During the middle of the 19th century it was owned by noted New York furniture maker Duncan Phyfe.

The Mansion House displays sophisticated Greek Revival features, including its temple shape, the restrained Grecian doorway, an inset Ionic-columned portico and a cornice with continuous modillions. The quality of the exterior is matched by its interior detailing, with a semicircular staircase and, at one time, a large ballroom. Records found in the house indicate that one of the carpenters was James English, later to become Governor of Connecticut.

7 King's Land



"King's Land," a long sloping open space near the northern end of the Historic District, has multiple historical associations. Local tradition holds that the name derives from the fact that a local Revolutionary War hero was granted use of the property to reward his service to the new country. However, local neighbors who had been Tories objected to the grant and so he deeded the land back to King George III. At the time, the space was already the location of the first meeting house in Southbury, built in 1735 and used for 40 years. King's Land had also been a parade ground during the Revolution and was on the route taken by General Rochambeau and his army on the way to assist General Washington in the battle of Yorktown.

Following the Revolution King's Land became a common area where roaming domestic animals were gathered until their owners claimed them. Later on, the space was maintained by nearby farmers and neighbors and became known for its stately maple trees. King's Land is surrounded by architecturally significant homes on all sides. With its meadow-like feel and large trees it complements the surrounding historic structures and provides a special focus for the north end of the Main Street District.

8 David Stiles House and Barn
81127 Main Street North



The oldest of several early Stiles houses along Main Street North, local tradition dates this house to 1690, which may be the date of the south kitchen ell. The main, two-story section is from the 1740's, with a massive central chimney, twelve-over-twelve windows, and many original interior details. Some claim it was the first two story structure in what was then Litchfield County.

Well preserved, with an 18th century hay barn, open fields, a family cemetery, and nearby remnants of a grist mill, dam and mill stream, the David Stiles homestead offers a glimpse of Southbury as an agrarian community in the 18th century.



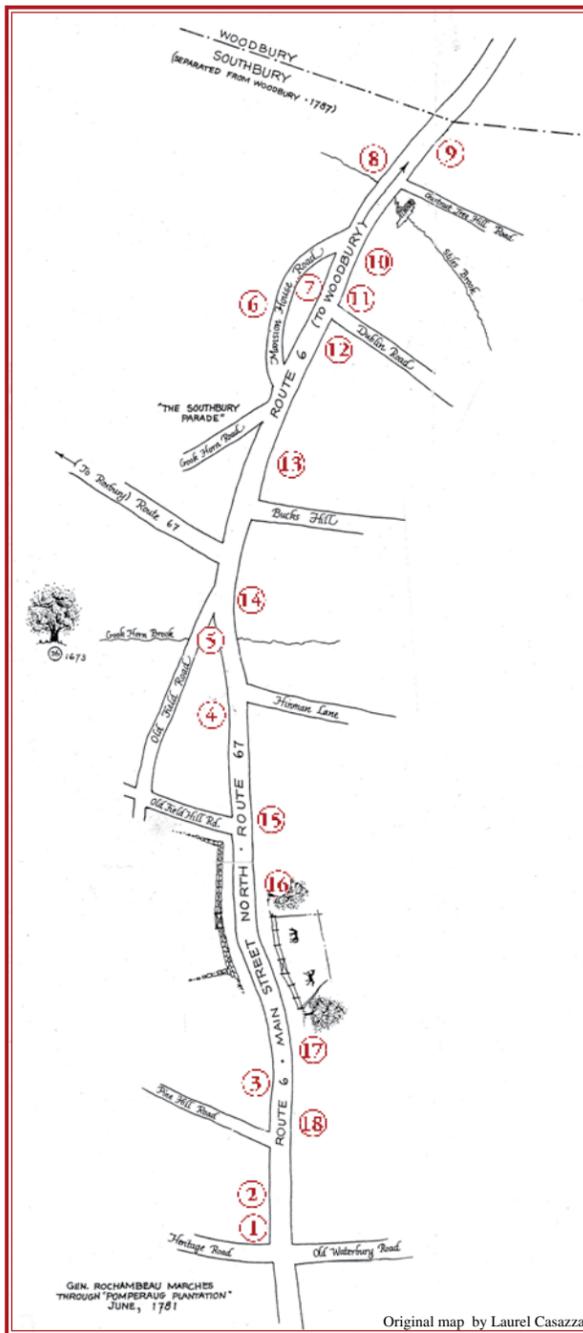
The Stiles Barn is recognized as the oldest barn in Southbury, and possibly the oldest in the region. It retains a central thrashing floor in one section and original massive framing beams. The roof was covered in thatch up until the early 20th century.

9 Fleiss-Curtiss House and Octagon Barn
1208 Main Street North

Like many historic structures in Southbury, the Fleiss-Curtiss House has undergone changes. The building's core is a central chimney dwelling said to have been constructed in the mid 18th century. It was for many years a tavern and may have provided quarters for French troops when they passed through the town in 1781. After 1906 the house was reworked in the popular Colonial Revival style, with substantial additions and exterior changes. Evidence of the specimen trees and landscaping added at the time are still visible on the grounds today.



The distinctive octagonal barn was constructed c. 1910. There are relatively few such structures in Connecticut. Constructed as an eight-sided polygon, it has plank siding and large overhead sliding doors providing access to the second floor. The Octagon Barn and other historic barns, sheds and outbuildings in the Historic District contribute to its architectural significance.



10 White Oak Cemetery
1076 Main Street North

One of two historic cemeteries in the Historic District, the White Oak Cemetery contains headstones dating from as early as the 1730's. Clusters of family graves mark generations of prominent Southbury families. The gravestones and monuments utilize a great variety of materials, including schist, marble, brownstone and granite. Even more striking, the shapes and styles of the gravestones reflect trends in form and decoration typical of different historical periods. The early death's head motifs, for instance, gave way in the late 18th century to cherubs and urn and willow designs in the 19th century. The White Oak Cemetery is a microcosm of New England cemetery design over 280 years. Another cemetery, next to the White Oak School (No 13) is also worth exploring, with a similar mix of monument and gravestone designs.

11 Benjamin Stiles House
1030 Main Street North



The Benjamin Stiles House is the most architecturally distinguished Georgian dwelling in Southbury, featuring superb proportions, a hip-on-hip roof with pedimented dormers, a handsome entrance porch with colonettes and cornice details, and unusual interior details including interior end chimneys that service diagonal corner fireplaces. The bricks for the building are said to have come from a kiln just across the Pomperaug River and are set in Flemish bond with glazed headers.

Built for Revolutionary War veteran and local lawyer Benjamin Stiles, local tradition holds that a French engineer in General Rochambeau's army provided assistance in designing the building, using the metric system. This well preserved house is one of several along Main Street North that were built by members of the Stiles family, some of which still remain in Stiles ownership.

12 The Parley House (aka Lutheran Home for the Aged)
990 Main Street North.

The handsome brick dwelling with a gambrel roof was constructed c. 1760 but underwent extensive renovations in the 1890's. Little of the original interior remains, and the house is now part of a retirement community, but the integrity of the structure, the original brickwork and the setting mark it as an important site. The house is most famous for its association with Samuel G. Goodrich, owner from 1857 to 1866, who authored many popular children's books and textbooks under the name of Peter Parley.

13 White Oak School
886 Main Street North

One of two historic schoolhouses in the district, the White Oak School was built c. 1840. It has typical Greek Revival features: a pedimental gable end, a symmetrical facade, and a bold pilastered entrance way. The School is located just north of the late 18th century Croucher-Redmond House, with a central chimney and late Georgian features.



14 Cornucopia at Oldfield
782 Main Street North (rear cover)

The Cornucopia at Oldfield, formerly known as the John Mosely House, is one of the finest local examples of the Federal style. According to family history, Mosely personally went to Maine to pick out the chestnut wood as there were no large trees left in the area when house construction began in 1818. The building is exceptionally well preserved, and exemplifies the detailing and elegant proportions typical of Federal buildings. Key features are the overhanging eaves and delicate cornice, the tripartite window on the front façade, lunette windows with Gothic tracery in the gable ends, and large twelve-over-twelve windows throughout. The entrance porch is particularly handsome, with Tuscan colonettes, an elliptical transom with radiating tracery and a detailed frieze and cornice. Famed antiquarian Wallace Nutting included images of the Cornucopia's interior features in his 1925 book *Connecticut Beautiful*.

15 Hinman House
516 Main Street North

Built c. 1770 for Colonel Benjamin Hinman, this handsome dwelling has later Federal and Greek Revival exterior details.

16 The Lincoln Tree
374 Main Street North

This massive sycamore on the McAllister property is known locally as the "Lincoln Tree." In 1865, a member of the McAllister family was working on the barn, near the tree, when he heard Southbury's church bells ringing to commemorate the passing of President Abraham Lincoln. The Lincoln Tree is one of many historic trees, mainly sycamores and maples, that line Main Street North and contribute to its gracious character.

17 Hveem-Harroff House
326 Main Street North

A central chimney house with proportions and details typical of other Federal dwellings, this building was constructed c. 1800. The original Federal entrance porch has been removed but other period details remain, including the graceful entrance bay. Like so many other homes in the District, it was associated with the early Hinman family. Some accounts claim that it was operated as a "public house" until 1840.

18 Church of the Epiphany
262 Main Street North

Constructed in 1867, this is one of the few later 19th century buildings in the Historic District and also one of the few local examples of the Gothic Revival style which was popular in the 1850's-60's. The stone church has simplified Gothic features including lancet windows and a steeply pitched roof. The belfry, in wood rather than stone, has elements of the "Carpenter Gothic," in which light frame construction was used to mimic stone.

