

The Borough of Newtown Historic District

“Be It Ordained As Follows:

To promote the educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare and to preserve the antique rural atmosphere of the Borough of Newtown through the preservation and protection of buildings and places of historic interest by the maintenance of such as landmarks in the history of architecture and of the Borough, and through the development of appropriate settings for such buildings there is hereby established an Historic District in the Borough to be known as “Borough of Newtown Historic District”....

(Taken from the report of the Historic District Study Committee 1995-1996)

The Borough of Newtown Historic District is a town center that includes more than 71 houses and other buildings. In general terms, the Historic District comprises the part of Newtown which was settled earliest and has remained the town center. The properties lying entirely within the Borough of Newtown covers the mile long stretch of South Main Street and Main Street from its intersection with Lovell's Lane on the south to the junction with Johnnie Cake Lane on the north. Also included are the small adjacent sections of Church Hill Road, West Street, Currituck Road and Hawley Road which are related in history and character to this central core. The properties within the Historic District present a panorama of architectural styles from the early 1700's to the present. The typical Connecticut saltbox, the Colonial Georgian mansion, and the post-Revolutionary Federal house of Newtown's first century are well represented, and scattered among these are distinguished examples of Greek Revival and Victorian styles. Back from the street, about two dozen sizeable carriage houses and barns are visible, survivors of one and even two centuries, adapted to modern uses but little changed externally. The setback of the houses, the shade trees, and the sidewalks running through the broad green areas along the road give a village-like character to the historic district. The properties are a mix of residential, commercial, religious, public buildings and open land. Religion, government, and education are primary concerns today as they were in the new town of the 1700's and buildings within the Historic District testify to their importance then and now.

In addition to the houses, the Historic District also includes buildings serving commercial purposes such as the c.1860 Newtown General Store, and early 20th century bank, a printing business and houses that have been converted for use as real estate and attorney's offices. There are two churches; Trinity Episcopal Church, an 1870 Gothic Revival-style at the top of Church Hill Road and its southeast intersection with Main Street, and the c.1808 Congregational Meetinghouse at 31 Main Street. Former or current public buildings include a small brick building erected in the middle of the 19th century to store the town records, the cobblestone Craftsman-style former Beach Memorial Library, and large elaborately detailed Colonial Revival -style brick buildings that serve as the current public library and town hall. The Historic District also includes as a contributing site a large expanse of open, undeveloped land immediately south of the built-up part of the village. Known as the Ram's Pasture, the meadow was part of Newtown's original common land. At the southern end are a small pond and stone-faced arched bridge presented to Newtown as a gift in 1930 from Mary Elizabeth Hawley, a longtime resident and the town's leading philanthropist. The inventory of properties in the Historic District also includes two notable objects; the granite Soldiers and Sailors Monument, and the 110-foot-tall steel flagpole

at the intersection of Main Street and Church Hill Road. The flagpole, the successor to the village's Liberty Pole originally erected in 1876 is counted as contributing, even though it is somewhat less than 50 years old because it is the latest in a series of in-laid replacements and because it has been the object of spirited community efforts to preserve it for its landmark qualities.

The Borough of Newtown Historic District is significant because it recalls the importance of the area as a political, religious, social, and commercial center for much of the surrounding town. The Historic District has architectural significance because many of the buildings embody the distinctive characteristics of particular periods and styles of American architecture. It should be noted that the Borough of Newtown Historic District is not a period piece; it is a living community. It has changed over the years, introducing new architectural styles as they came into fashion, yet retaining the pattern and the atmosphere of the early town. Past and present are merged, for history does not stop with any arbitrarily set date or event. The Victorian mansion and the modern ranch are as eloquent of Newtown's continuing history as the colonial saltbox, and they give evidence of vitality and growth.