



# For the Common Good

*A Guide to the Historic and Scenic  
Town Commons & Greens of The Last Green Valley*

**NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR**



THE  
last  
green  
valley™



# For the Common Good

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CONNECTICUT

*For the Common Good* is dedicated to the memory of James O. Robertson - historian, artist, poet, writer, friend and neighbor.

We are grateful for the research and assistance of noted historian Elizabeth Pratt Fox, and for the generosity of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation in sharing material from its website: [www.towngreens.com](http://www.towngreens.com)

Cover photo: The Common at Old Sturbridge Village was originally laid out in 1939 by the Village's founders, members of the Wells family of Southbridge, Massachusetts. They designed it to reflect the appearance of the rural communities that they knew well in central Massachusetts and northeastern Connecticut. Today Old Sturbridge Village maintains the Common as part of its re-creation of a New England town center of the 1830s, with historic houses, shops, bank, law office, country store and meetinghouse. Photograph by Thomas Neill, courtesy of Old Sturbridge Village. All other photos that appear elsewhere in this publication and are credited in those locations.



## It's a "common"! No, it's a "green"!

The use of the terms "green" and "common," though interchangeable in meaning, occurred regionally according to at least one expert. In *Handbook of the Linguistic Geography of New England*, published by Brown University in 1939, Hans Kurath points out a regional dividing point, slightly diagonal and running northwest to southeast through the region. Those communities south of the line used the term "green," while those in the northern reaches preferred "common." On inspection of the 44 greens and commons listed in *For the Common Good*, there is general support for the premise. A diagonal line from the Massachusetts border southeast to Pomfret and Killingly mark the distinction between terms. Of course, there are always exceptions; Lisbon, Connecticut, has a town common; Webster, Massachusetts, has a town green.

## A Heart of Green

Those who live in and visit The Last Green Valley are fortunate that this area is the home to a variety of open spaces. One of the earliest planned examples of such a space was the town common or green. When land was granted to the English in The Last Green Valley, those receiving it were called the "proprietors." These individuals often laid out their town with common land set aside on which to build their meetinghouse, establish their burial ground and temporarily graze their livestock. The common was the social, political and religious center of the town. Surrounding these swathes of green were trade shops, taverns and homes.

As part of the Puritan tradition, these early religious societies covenanted to create what they saw as a godly community. During the 18th century, as the land on the outskirts of town was settled, an increasing number of families had to travel a distance to attend the required two services every Sunday. These families often requested that small "warming houses" or "Sabbath-Day houses" be built and used between religious services to warm both people and meals. Sturbridge erected several of these structures as late as 1791.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, residents living on the outskirts of a town would request their own meetinghouse and religious society, and another common would be set aside. These societies usually developed into separate towns, although some, like Woodstock, remained one town with several village centers.

Many of the early towns were originally much larger than they appear today, having been divided into smaller



governing bodies after the American Revolution. As a result, some of these smaller second-generation towns lay beyond the focus of the original greens. Putnam, for example, was incorporated in 1855 from portions of the pre-existing towns of Pomfret, Thompson and Killingly. Its original common on Putnam Heights was actually the earliest settlement in Killingly. Rotary Park developed after the flood of 1955 as part of a larger flood control project and today serves both as the town's green and as a tie between the community and the river.

Not all towns set aside common ground when they were settled or incorporated. For example, the town of Dudley, incorporated in 1732 without a common. Two years later the Pegan Indians conveyed four acres for the purpose of erecting a meetinghouse. In exchange, the Pegans received seats there for worship. The land was also used as a burying ground and a training field for the local militia, thus serving other important communal needs.<sup>2</sup>

Only a few towns in The Last Green Valley are without a green, and some are fortunate to have several. The city of Norwich has four: Norwichtown and Bean Hill date from the colonial period, while Chelsea Parade and Little Plain Green were established during the early 19th century. Although the colonial period greens served traditional community functions, the later "greens" were actually given as parks for community improvement. The donors of Chelsea Parade, for instance, could not have been clearer in their intention to have the land remain as open space when they wrote that the gift was for the "purpose of a Public Parade or open Walk, to be unincumbered [sic] with any kind of building or buildings, public or private, or nuisance whatever, and for no other purpose."<sup>3</sup> All four are now considered to be greens.<sup>4</sup> The town of Woodstock boasts seven commons, more than of any of the other towns in The Last Green Valley, perhaps because of its 63-square-mile area.

In the last two centuries many commons went through various transformations. The formation of Village Improvement Societies in the mid-19th century altered a number of commons. Buildings and burial grounds were moved off the land and replaced with trees, fences and monuments, as the common slowly evolved into a town square or park. The Village Improvement Society of Thompson, loosely organized in 1845 and officially founded in 1874, continues to maintain that town's common today.

During the Industrial Revolution, mill villages were also created in some of the towns - at times becoming small cities in themselves. The settlements were deliberately designed along the rivers and streams of The Last Green Valley to harness the power they provided. They usually included the mill itself, as well as workers' houses and stores, but often had no common or green. By the later part of the 19th century, however, these towns and cities tried to create public spaces to fill

the need for outdoor activities. The resulting "parks" were similar in appearance to the old greens but, unlike them, were designed primarily for social and recreational use.

Some town greens have been severely depleted or lost due to the development of roads, while others, such as the Lebanon Green, have been maintained as open land and help to retain the rural character of the town. In some areas, the center of community life changed over time, drastically altering the town's focus on the common. The Old Common in Oxford, for example, lost its importance as the center of town moved south and by 1927 Joslin Park had replaced it as the acknowledged town common.

The few towns in The Last Green Valley without a central common are in the process of working with developers to create a common area in their town centers.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the nation, greens of the type found in The Last Green Valley are the inspiration of contemporary town planning.<sup>6</sup> The planned use of common land has now come full circle - around a "heart of green."

- 1 John R. Stilgoe, "Town Common and Village Green in New England: 1620 to 1981," *On Common Ground: Caring for Shared Land from Town Common to Urban Park* (Harvard, Mass.: The Harvard Common Press, 1981), 16-17.
- 2 Paul J. Macek, *Early History of Webster, Dudley and Oxford* (Webster: Paul J. Macek and James R. Morrison, 2001), 181-182.
- 3 Frances Manning Caulkins, *History of Norwich, Connecticut: From its Possession by the Indians, to the Year 1866* (Norwich: Published by the Author, 1866), 534.
- 4 James Sexton, "Norwich Greens: A case study by James Sexton, architectural history consultant," paper written for the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, 2002.
- 5 Regine Labossiere, "Streetscape Would Give College-Town Feel to UCONN," *The Hartford Courant*, Nov. 11, 2004, B5.
- 6 Philip Langdon, "Building A Town Center By Degree," *The Hartford Courant*, Jan. 30, 2005; Mary Murphy, "The Shops at Evergreen Walk: Lifestyle Center combines dining, shopping and New England Charm," *The Hartford Courant*, Oct. 28, 2004.



# For the Common Good Interactive Map

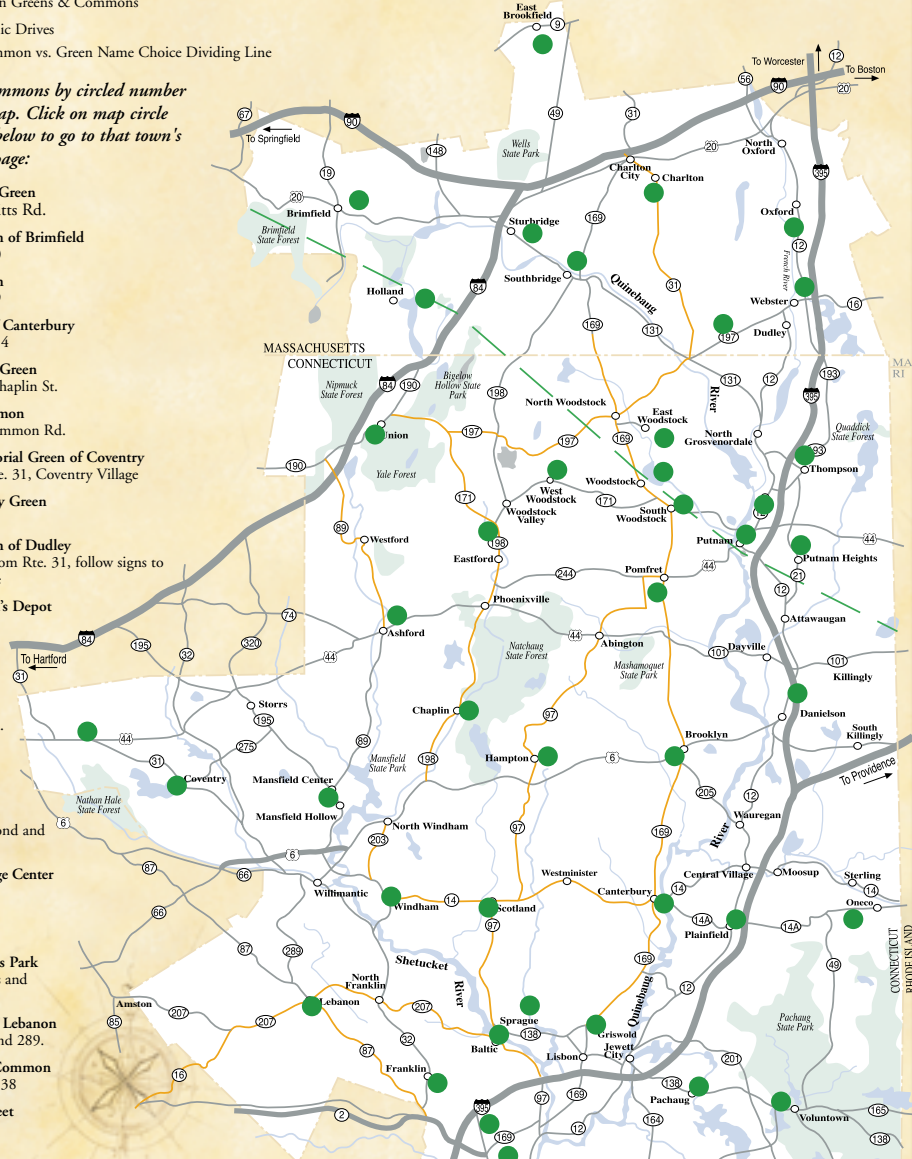
KEY # Town Greens & Commons

— Scenic Drives

— Common vs. Green Name Choice Dividing Line

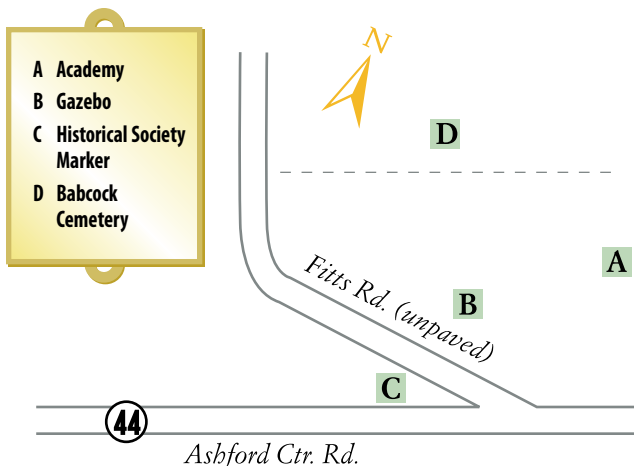
List of greens/commons by circled number referenced on map. Click on map circle or circle in list below to go to that town's green/common page.

- 1 Ashford Town Green  
Rte. 44 and Fitts Rd.
- 2 Town Common of Brimfield  
Rtes. 19 and 20
- 3 Brooklyn Green  
Rtes. 6 and 169
- 4 Town Green of Canterbury  
Rtes. 169 and 14
- 5 Chaplin Town Green  
Rte. 198 and Chaplin St.
- 6 Charlton Common  
Rte. 31 and Common Rd.
- 7 Veteran's Memorial Green of Coventry  
Lake St., off Rte. 31, Coventry Village
- 8 North Coventry Green  
Rtes. 44 and 31
- 9 Town Common of Dudley  
Rte. 197 east from Rte. 31, follow signs to Nichols College
- 10 East Brookfield's Depot Square  
Mechanics and Pleasant Sts.
- 11 Eastford Green  
Rte. 198 and Old Colony Rd.
- 12 Franklin Green  
undetermined
- 13 Griswold's Pachaug Green  
Rte. 138, Edmond and Bethel Rds.
- 14 Hampton Village Center  
Rte. 97
- 15 Holland  
Mashapaug Rd.
- 16 Killingly's Davis Park  
Main, Reynolds and Broad Sts.
- 17 Town Green of Lebanon  
Rtes. 87, 207 and 289.
- 18 Lisbon Town Common  
Rtes. 169 and 138
- 19 Mansfield's Street  
Rte. 195
- 20 Norwichtown  
Green, Norwich  
Town St.
- 21 Little Plain Park, Norwich  
Broadway, Union and  
Crossways Sts.
- 22 Bean Hill Green, Norwich  
West Town St.
- 23 Chelsea Parade, Norwich  
Broadway and Washington St.
- 24 Town Common of Oxford  
Main St.
- 25 Plainfield's Memorial Park  
Community Ave.
- 26 Town Green of Pomfret  
Rtes. 44, 97, and 169
- 27 Preston's Common Lands  
undetermined
- 28 Rotary Park of Putnam  
Rte. 44 and Kennedy Dr.
- 29 Putnam Heights Common  
Rte. 21
- 30 The Scotland Green  
Rtes. 14, 97 and Center St.
- 31 Southbridge Town Common  
Mechanics St. off Rtes. 131  
and 169 rotary
- 32 Sprague's Hanover Green  
Main. St., Hanover
- 33 Sprague's War Memorial  
Park  
Rte. 207 and Park Dr., Baltic
- 34 Sterling Hill Green  
Sterling Hill Rd.
- 35 Town Common of  
Sturbridge  
Rte. 131
- 36 Town Common of  
Thompson  
Rtes. 200, 193 and  
Chase Rd.
- 37 Town Green of Union  
Rte. 190 and  
Town Hall Rd.
- 38 Voluntown's Veteran's  
Memorial Park  
Rtes. 165, 138 and 49
- 39 Webster Green  
Rte. 12 and Church St.
- 40 Town Green of  
Windham Center  
Rtes. 14 and 203
- 41 Woodstock Hill Common  
Rte. 169 at Academy and  
Childs Hill Rd.
- 42 West Woodstock Common  
Rte. 171, Bradford Corner  
and Bungay Hill Rds.
- 43 East Woodstock Common  
Woodstock and Dr. Pike  
Rds. and Prospect St.
- 44 South Woodstock  
Common  
Rtes. 169, 171 and  
Roseland Park Rd.



# THE TOWN GREEN OF ASHFORD

CONNECTICUT



**Wheelchair access:** No barriers; unpaved

**Restrooms:** Town Hall 1 mi. east on Rte. 44

**For further information:** [www.ashfordtownhall.org](http://www.ashfordtownhall.org)

Although it no longer serves as the town center, the Ashford Town Green retains its early 18th-century form. It fronts Rte. 44 on the south and is bisected diagonally by Fitts Rd. A stone fence marks part of the western boundary, with a remnant along the lower part of the green's eastern border. The land slopes rather steeply from the north, where Babcock Cemetery is located, to the southeast corner. Today, however, the green appears much smaller because dense woods covers about two-thirds of its expanse. Just the central portion where a few trees have been planted is kept open and mowed.

The Ashford Green, a square of about ten partially wooded acres, was established in 1718, four years after the town was incorporated as a separate ecclesiastical society. Records show that members voted to erect a meetinghouse near the center of Pine Hill and determined that "there shall be ten acres of land where the meetinghouse now stands for the convenience of a green or common, all which land for minister, ministry and common, is not to be accounted any part of the land to be paid for by the settlers." A recorded survey in the Town Records from 1731-32 provides the boundaries of the green.

Several meetinghouses were destroyed by fire and a hurricane, before the congregation eventually moved to a site on Westford Hill Rd. Originally part of the town center, the green continues to function as a gathering place and burying ground. Rev. James Hale, the first minister of Ashford's First Congregational Church, is buried here.



Ashford Center, with the green at its heart, was a thriving community until the separation of Eastford parish in 1874. Since the town line is about a half mile from the green, Eastford attracted much of the activity, resulting in Ashford Center's decline. However, activity in the Center picked up in the early 19th century, benefiting from the sawmills, tanneries, a cotton mill and a glass factory in the area. According to an 1869 map next to the east side of the green were a blacksmith shop and coal house owned by Aaron Cook. Nearby was the home of Dr. J. H. Simmons, a physician and surgeon, who also served as state senator from 1861 to 1865. At the intersection of Rte. 44 and North Rd., just east of the green, stood the former Dyer Clark Hotel and on the green itself was the Ashford Academy.

The railroads bypassed Ashford Center in the second-half of the 19th century, and the activity generated by industry dwindled, leaving the town a rural agrarian community. Only the Ashford Academy still stands on the green as a testimony to the bustling earlier period. It was restored in the mid-1960s after a fundraising campaign garnered donations from former Ashford residents living as far away as California and Florida. The Academy and its outhouse were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

Based on information from the CT Trust for Historic Preservation online at [www.towngreens.com](http://www.towngreens.com)

Photos: Charlene Cutler

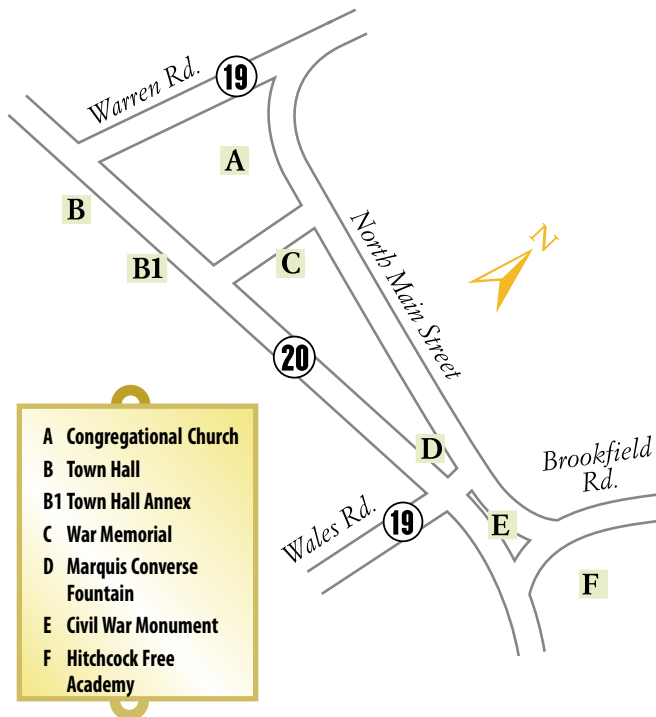


THE LAST GREEN VALLEY



# THE TOWN COMMON OF BRIMFIELD

MASSACHUSETTS



**Location:** Intersection of Rtes. 19 and 20 in the center of Brimfield, less than 10 mi. west of Sturbridge Exit off the Mass. Turnpike.

**Wheelchair access:** There is no curbing on the back side of the Common

**Parking:** Behind Town Hall and Town Hall Annex

**Restrooms:** None

**For further information:** Contact the Brimfield Public Library

**B**rimfield's Town Common is the center of what makes Brimfield a community. Structures for all the basic village functions – the town hall, Congregational church (the third in that spot since 1720), the post office, the town's few stores, many of its oldest homes, and the Hitchcock Academy Recreation Center – surround it, and the elementary school and cemetery are close by.

Now at the heart of Brimfield, the common was not always the grassy spot seen today. When it was set off in the early 1700s it was a wild, untended place full of stumps, its grass trampled by both wandering livestock and marching militia companies. After years of neglect, residents began to take a greater interest in their common and their own homes in the vicinity. In 1852, townspeople formed a Society for the Improvement of Brimfield



Common, and the town became the first in Massachusetts to request a design to improve its common. Col. John Foster, an engineer, geologist, and Brimfield native, drew up the plans. As part of the improvement, a fence was installed to protect the common, the church hill was graded, and new trees were planted. The land had ceased to be merely a neglected town lot and had again become a common, in essence a public park, in the center of the village.

As the years went by, Brimfield added few structures to its open green heart. However, in 1866, it was one of the first towns to erect a Civil War monument, and in 1895 a memorial fountain honoring prominent Brimfield citizen, Marquis Converse, was built there. The only other permanent structure is a small memorial honoring the veterans of all recent wars at the west end of the common. The land has been used by the town rather like a pleasant front lawn. Town events such as concerts, Christmas tree lightings and local fairs are held there, and residents and visitors alike stroll under the trees and sit in their shade. Throughout its history, Brimfield has nurtured its common simply by keeping it as open space surrounded by old homes and roads – a quiet green oasis amid the bustle of modern life.

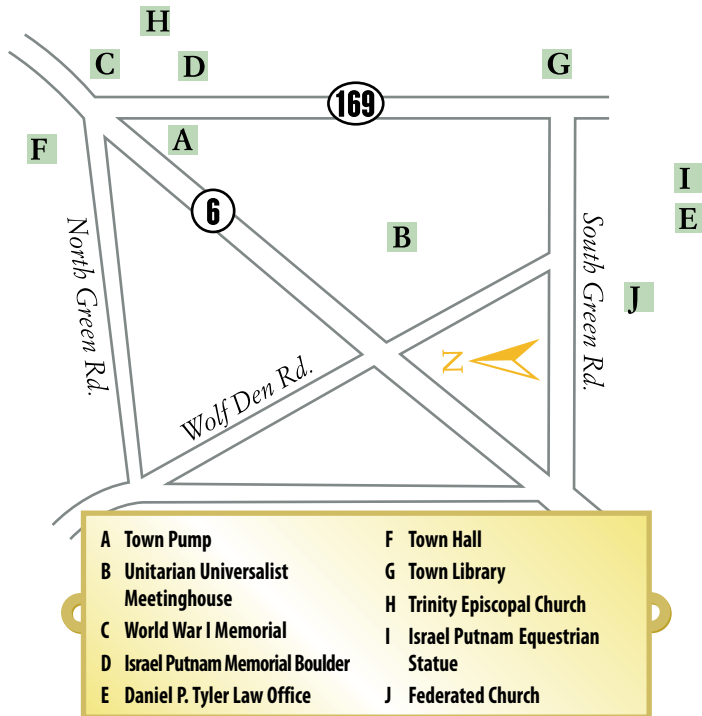
*Text: Larry and Koren Lowenthal*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*



# THE TOWN GREEN OF BROOKLYN

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Rtes. 6 and 169, Brooklyn, CT

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** Roadside or church lots

**Restrooms:** Town hall, town library

**For further information:** Brooklyn Historical Soc.  
(860) 774-7728

**Nearby:** Daniel P. Tyler Law Office – Brooklyn Historical Soc. Museum, special exhibits and collection on the life of Israel Putnam, 25 Canterbury Rd. (Rte. 169); (860) 774-7728

The area encompassed by Brooklyn, originally known as Mortlake, was part of Canterbury and Pomfret until it separated from them and incorporated in 1786. The green, located at the intersection of Hartford and Pomfret Rds., was acquired in 1733 as a location for a Congregational meetinghouse and school. Then encompassing two and a half acres, it has since been significantly reduced in size by road incursions and D.O.T annexations. Today it is bounded by Putnam Place, Rte. 169, and Green Rds. (N., S. and W.) and bisected diagonally by busy Rte. 6 and Wolf Den Rd. Except for a parcel south of S. Green Rd. that belongs to the Federated Church and a bank, the Green is owned by the Unitarian Universalist Society.



Situated around the Green are Trinity Parish Episcopal Church (1866), the town library, town hall (1820), the Federated Church of Christ (1871), a bank, and several private houses dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. On the Green itself stands the Old Brooklyn Meeting House (now the Unitarian Universalist Church) which, along with the Green, is on the National Register of Historic Places. There are also a tree with a plaque indicating that it was planted by the Class of 1935, a town pump with a 1911 shelter, and a small stone marker with its surface inscription effaced, set in the ground; its purpose is unknown.

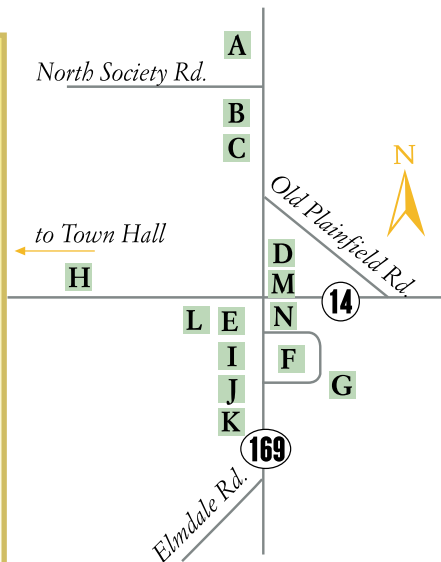
In the course of its history, the Brooklyn Green was home to the first meetinghouse (1734), the original schoolhouse, the second, Georgian-style meetinghouse (1771) and several horse sheds. There are no war memorials on the green; these are located across Rte. 169. The most notable is a 25-ft. high equestrian statue next to the post office honoring Israel Putnam, the local Revolutionary War hero best known for issuing the command, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes" at the Battle of Bunker Hill. He is also recognized for having slain the last known she-wolf in Connecticut after being lowered into her den. The purported site of this encounter is in Mashamoquet State Park, but it gives its name to Wolf Den Rd. Behind the equestrian statue, below which lie Putnam's remains, is the Daniel P. Tyler Law Office, a museum operated by the Brooklyn Historical Society. A simple unformed boulder citing Putnam's response to the Lexington alarm can be found south of the World War I veterans' memorial in front of Trinity Episcopal Church.

*Text by Dennis Landis and Elaine Knowlton  
Photos: Charlene Cutler*

# THE TOWN GREEN OF CANTERBURY

CONNECTICUT

- A Finnish-American Heritage Society
- B The Pillars (private)
- C Cleaveland Cemetery (& Memorial)
- D Grange Hall #70
- E Prudence Crandall Museum
- F First Congregational Church
- G Green Schoolhouse
- H Dr. Helen Baldwin School
- I John Carter House, c. 1765 (private)
- J David Nivens House, c. 1746 (private)
- K Sarah Adams House, c. 1842 (private)
- L First Parsonage, c. 1709 (private)
- M Wm. Moore House, c. 1803 (private)
- N Dr. Andrew Harris House, c. 1815 (private)



**Location:** Intersection of Rtes. 169 and 14

**Wheelchair access:** No sidewalks

**Parking:** Grocery store

**Restrooms:** Town Hall (when open), and for customers at local eateries

**For further information:** Contact Prudence Crandall Museum (860) 546-9916 or Town Hall (860) 546-9377.

Canterbury separated from Plainfield and incorporated as a town in 1703. Records show that in 1705 Robert Green sold 3½ acres near his home to the town for 30 shillings "To build and erect a meetinghouse on, or for training, or for any other use the said inhabitants of Canterbury shall see a use for." Today the Green encompasses the historic structures within the general area of the intersection of Routes 169 and 14.

The 30 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places are each identified by a special plaque and include excellent examples of Colonial, Victorian and Greek Revival architecture. In addition, a 1906 monument to Moses Cleaveland, Canterbury native and founder of Cleveland, Ohio, stands in front of the Cleaveland Cemetery. A sign describing the history of Canterbury is located on the front lawn of the First Congregational Church, built in 1964 to replace an 1805 structure destroyed by fire. The original, small meetinghouse had been built on the green shortly after its donation to the town.



Of particular note is the state-owned Prudence Crandall Museum, an 1805 "Canterbury Style" structure built by architect Thomas Gibbs for Elisha Paine. It housed the first academy for "little misses of color," opened by Prudence Crandall in 1833. Also important are the one-room Green (Centre) Schoolhouse that served the town from approximately 1850 until 1947; the first parsonage for the First Congregational Church, in which young men, including Benedict Arnold, were tutored for college; and the Dr. Helen Baldwin School, built in 1947 as the town's first consolidated school, ending the one-room District Schoolhouse era.

Nearby is the Finnish-American Heritage Society's (FAHS) museum and social hall, built in 1924 by immigrants and now open by appointment. Just south of it stands "The Pillars," a private home built c. 1760 for Lt. Timothy Cleaveland whose family owned it for nearly 100 years. Members of the Jenks family, its subsequent owners, added the balustrade and Mount Vernon-like portico in 1915 to give it its present Colonial Revival appearance. Grange Hall #70, opposite and south of the cemetery, was built in 1915 as a meeting and social hall for members of the local chapter of the national organization then called the Patrons of Husbandry. Both FAHS and the Grange schedule events throughout the year. Prudence Crandall Day in honor of Connecticut's state heroine is held annually on the green.

*Text: Prepared by Steve Orloski, based on 1998 "A Listing of Canterbury's Blue and Gold"*

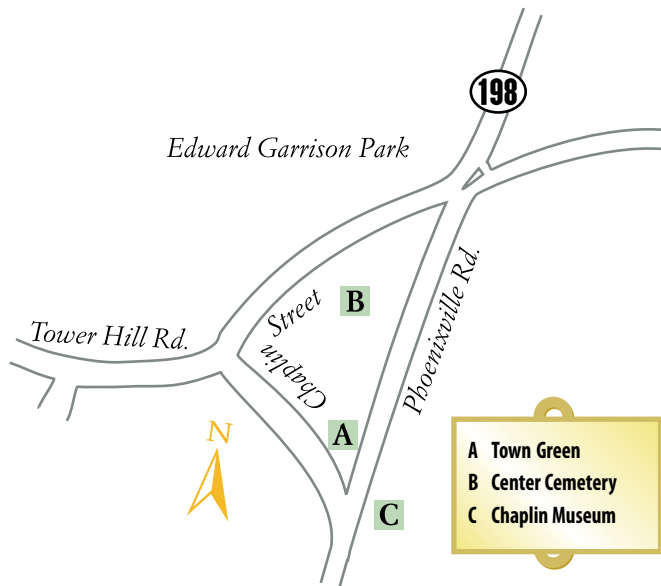
*Photo: Charlene Cutler*





# THE TOWN GREEN OF CHAPLIN

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Bounded by Rte. 198 and Chaplin St.

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** On adjacent streets

**Restrooms:** At restaurants (patrons only)

**For further information:** First Selectman's Office, Chaplin Town Hall (860) 455-0073

The first known permanent settler in what is now the Town of Chaplin was Benjamin Chaplin, son of a Pomfret deacon. According to the *History of Windham County (1880)* by Richard M. Bayles, "He went into the wilderness, and for a while lived a solitary life here, in a clearing which he had made on the banks of the Natchaug ... making baskets and wooden trays. In 1747 he married Mary Ross, a widow .... Not long after, he built a large and handsome mansion, still known as the old Chaplin house, where he reared a large family. Mrs. Chaplin equaled her husband in thrift and economy, and they soon accumulated property."

Chaplin willed his assets to the local residents to establish a church in 1795. In 1822, the assembly granted town privileges to Chaplin, and the boundaries of the ecclesiastical and school societies were soon made congruent with those of the town. As to the character of the place, Bayles notes that "No ecclesiastical council has ever been called to adjust any church or ministerial difficulties, and no minister placed over this people has been accused of, or tried for any scandal or heresy while pastor here or elsewhere. It is a temperance town. No saloon, tavern or dancing hall is known to exist; and probably a dancing school or hall has not been known in the town in the last fifty years, if



ever; certainly not in the last thirty years. Many noted revivals have taken place, and the church has been in a vigorous state for a rural community." These pious words were trumpeted despite the still-visible presence of a structure built in 1822 as the Gurley Tavern directly in front of the church.

Also in 1822 a parcel of land at the south end of Chaplin St. was dedicated as a green. Two monuments are now located there, the first commemorating the Civil War and the second the two World Wars. Though now greatly reduced in size due to the encroachment of Rte. 198, the green was never very large; today, at 0.05 acres, it holds the distinction of being the smallest in the state. Small greens characterized post-Revolutionary War Connecticut because public land was less in keeping with the concept of private property which came to predominate at that time. Nearby, the one-room Chaplin Museum at 1 Chaplin St. offers annual special exhibits and local articles and memorabilia.

The houses on the Chaplin St. side comprise a National Historic Register District. This Chaplin Historic District preserves the mostly Federal and Greek Revival houses built on the wealth of the town's early industries: silk production, a trade in calfskin boots, a sawmill, a gristmill, and a large paper mill. Today Chaplin is largely rural with a number of farms and campgrounds and a considerable population of commuters.

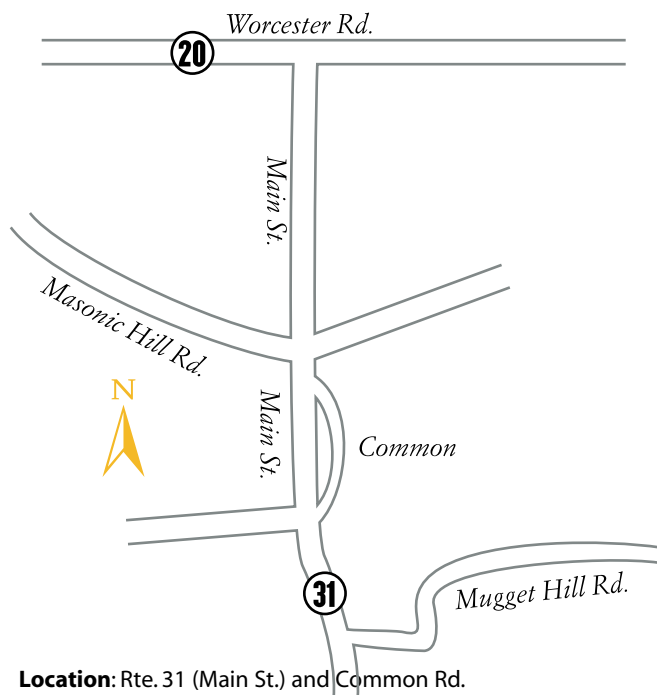
*Text by Marvin Cox and Andrea Ader*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*

THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# THE TOWN COMMON OF CHARLTON

MASSACHUSETTS



**Location:** Rte. 31 (Main St.) and Common Rd.

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** On-street and behind Municipal Building

**Restrooms:** In Municipal Building

**For further information:** (508) 248-2052

Charlton was incorporated as a district in 1775. Once a rural community with large tracts of available land, this central Massachusetts community has become more residential over the past few years. Its Town Common is located in Charlton Center on the gentle crest of one of the town's many hills and fittingly recognizes its past while actively serving a community in transition.

The common was a gift from tavern-owner Ebenezer McIntire in the period before the American Revolution. A lancet-shaped area bounded by Rte. 31 (Main St.) and Common Rd., the Charlton Common has hosted militia drills, pastured horses, and even provided space for lawn tennis over the years. In addition to McIntire's tavern and barn, it was the site of the first and second meetinghouses (1761, 1804), and the first animal pound. A number of historic buildings were also constructed around the common, including the Congregational and Universalist Churches, the town library, several levels of schools, and single-family homes.

The common is the center of the Charlton Center Historic District, which extends along Main St. from Mugget Hill Rd. to Masonic Hill Rd., includes some 44 buildings and was designated



250th Anniversary Folk Art Print

a National Historic Register District in 1995. Although somewhat changed in size and shape due to road alterations over the years, the Charlton Common has been the scene of the annual Old Home Day celebration since 1896. This Labor Day event has featured soapbox races, a craft fair, a five-mile road race, booths on the common, a Charlton Alumni reunion, and a parade. The theme of a recent Old Home Day was "Celebrate Charlton – the hometown with a heart!"

Much a part of Charlton's history is Dr. William T. G. Morton, a town native and dentist whose pioneering work with ether led to the development of anesthesia and the miracle of pain-free surgery in 1846. Not surprisingly, Morton is Charlton's favorite son, and his monument on the common appropriately anchors the town.

Another Charlton native who reflects a very different dimension of local history is James Capen Adams. Known as "Grizzly" Adams, the fabled mountain man headed west in 1852 and became fighter of grizzly bears, later demonstrating his skills with P.T. Barnum. Reportedly, he died in one such encounter and is buried nearby in Bay Path Cemetery (once called the Old Burying Ground) on Rte. 31. His friend and fellow showman P.T. Barnum commissioned his headstone.

Also nearby is the Rider Tavern, 255 Stafford St., Federal period wayside inn which hosted the Marquis de Lafayette. Open by appointment: Charlton Historical Soc. (508) 248-3202

*Text by William Hultgren and James Conrad  
Photo: Tammra Russell*

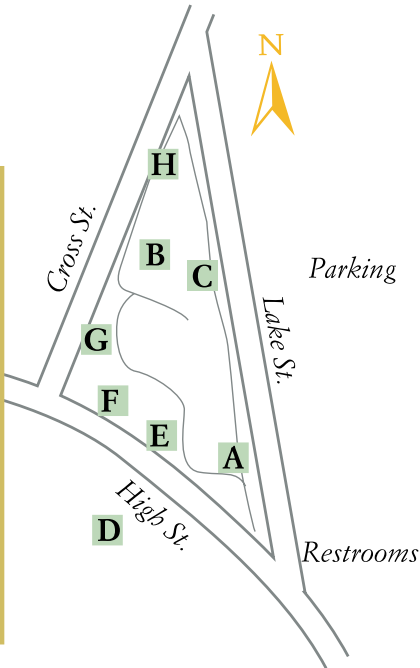


THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# THE VETERANS MEMORIAL GREEN OF COVENTRY

CONNECTICUT

- A WWII Monument and Flag Pole with trees
- B Revolutionary War Boulder
- C Cannon
- D Site of first Meeting House, 1712
- E French Soldiers Monument
- F Korean War Monument
- G Vietnam War Monument
- H Nathan Hale Northern Red Oak Seedling



**Location:** Lake St., off Main St. (Rte. 31) in Coventry Village

**Wheelchair access:** Level, paved walk and street access

**Parking:** Lot on Lake St.

**Restrooms:** Patriot's Park Community Center, Visitors' Center on Main St., restaurants (patrons)

The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut record that William Pitkin, Joseph Talcott, William Whiting, Richard Lord and Nathaniel Rust were charged in 1711 with laying out the Town of Coventry and "settling a minister of the gospel." The land was part of the trust east of the Connecticut River granted by "Joshua, Indian sachem." The First Ecclesiastical Society (later called First Congregational Church) built its first meetinghouse (32' x 36') in 1715 on the plateau overlooking Lake Wamgumbaug (Coventry Lake). Coventry Green was part of the church lawn until a road was cut in front of the building. This meetinghouse was eventually destroyed by fire and a new structure was erected on Main St. in Coventry Village.

The Green is dotted with trees and is surrounded by Colonial residences interspersed with wooded fields. Once a training ground, it was the assembly site of those going off to fight in the Colonial Wars, the American Revolution, the War of



1812 and the Civil War. A monument expresses the townspeople's gratitude for their sacrifice, particularly noting 21-year-old Coventry-born school teacher-spy Nathan Hale, whose reputed last words, "I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country," have inspired generations of Americans. A commemorative cannon was presented by the U.S. government in 1928. Nearby lies the Nathan Hale Cemetery which dates from 1716. An obelisk-shaped cenotaph (a memorial to someone buried elsewhere) honors the young hero who was hanged by the British on Sept. 22, 1776 in New York.

An honor roll commemorates the men and women of Coventry who served in World War II, while the Vietnam and Korean Memorials cite those who gave their lives in those conflicts. Nearby is the French Army Memorial erected "to pay tribute to the valor of General Rochambeau and the soldiers of his French army who fought for American independence." In 1999, a memorial assembly was held on the green to commemorate the seven French soldiers who died of smallpox on the march to the decisive battle at Yorktown and were buried "near the Great Pond" in 1781.

*Text: Rose Fowler*

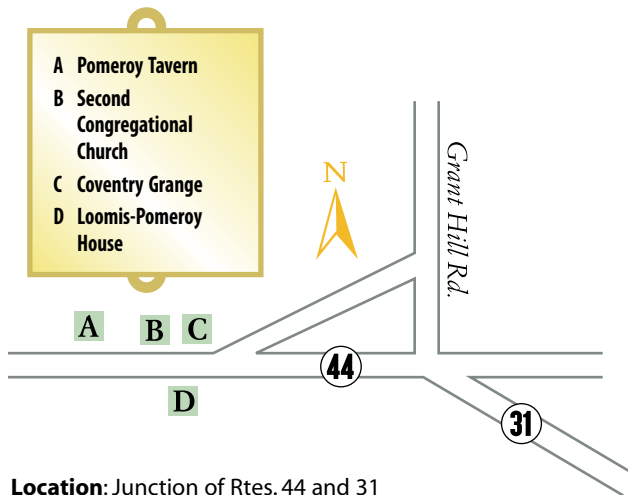
*Photo: Charlene Cutler*





# THE TOWN GREEN OF NORTH COVENTRY

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Junction of Rtes. 44 and 31

**Wheelchair access:** From north side of green

**Parking:** On road along north side

**Restrooms:** Restaurant (patrons only)

**For further information:** Coventry Historical Society e-mail: WriteToUs@coventrycthistory.org

**Nearby:** Nathan Hale Homestead, 2299 South St. (follow signs off Rte. 44): 1776 family home of Revolutionary War patriot/spy and now CT's State hero; museum is open seasonally for tours and education programs; (860) 742-6719

Originally created in the 1700s in this largely agricultural part of town, the North Coventry Green was enlarged in the 1930s when Rte. 44 was re-aligned. The green property, as well as a few others in the area, was conveyed to the Village Beautification Society to be kept in the style of a "traditional New England green." The properties were later conveyed to the Town of Coventry after the Society disbanded. The green was hayed and mowed by Mr. Loomis who owned a fine colonial house just down the street. A milk stand once stood on the green where local families could pick up and drop off big 30-gallon milk containers. Clarence Smith's blacksmith shop, located adjacent to the green, was the site for repairing wagons and wheels and shoeing horses. Smith also appeared to be the local "tinkerer." In the 1920s and '30s, parades were held around the green for which the local schools and the Grange created floats.

Several significant historical structures that still stand near the green include the Loomis-Pomeroy House which is on the National Register of Historic Places and the 1847 Second Congregational Church (an earlier building was located somewhat



farther west on present-day Rte. 44). Local residents once referred to Grant Hill Rd. as Minister's Hill because the parsonage was located there. The Coventry Grange building was originally an academy built in 1834 for the church. It later served as a chapel and a select school until 1889 when it was sold to the newly organized Coventry Grange, a still-active organization that sometimes rents the building for others to use. Pomeroy Tavern, a former stagecoach stop that is now a private home, is just west of the church.

Stately elms once graced this green offering a very picturesque setting but they succumbed to disease in the 1960s and were removed. The local 4-H-forestry group began beautification efforts based on plans designed by Prof. Rudy Favretti of the Landscape Architecture Department at the University of Connecticut. In the 1970s, the Coventry Garden Club was formed and began its continuing task of maintaining the landscaping.

*Text: Rose Fowler, Arnold Carlson and Eric Trott*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*



# THE TOWN COMMON OF DUDLEY

MASSACHUSETTS



On the western side it is bordered by Nichols College buildings constructed in the 1880's, including a former two-room public school built in 1893, the Congregational Church at the top of Dudley Hill, and the Italianate-style Dudley Grange Hall. On the other side, along Center Rd., are buildings and homes that date from the 1790's and 1800's including additional college structures. Also on this side, at the intersection with Tanyard Rd., is the Black Tavern, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and home to the Black Tavern Historical Society. Interesting examples of Colonial, Federal and Greek Revival architecture can be identified. By the mid-1800's, however, the town's population center had shifted to mill villages along the French River; this halted commercial growth around the hilltop green and preserved it as a 19th-century village.

Over nearly three centuries, the common has seen numerous events including militia drills, fairs, programs and lyceums in the Academy Hall, a continuing Strawberry Festival, church events and suppers, Grange programs, Black Tavern Historical Society events and college-sponsored cultural programs. Monuments on the common commemorate Dudley veterans who served in America's wars from the Revolution through World War I. Today, Dudley's Town Common is an even busier place than the early settlers could have imagined as current residents continue their "common" heritage.

*Text: James L. Conrad*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*

**Location:** Rte. 197 east from junction with Rte.131; follow signs to Nichols College.

**Wheelchair Access:** Yes

**Parking:** Lots exist round the church and college.

**Restrooms:** No public facilities

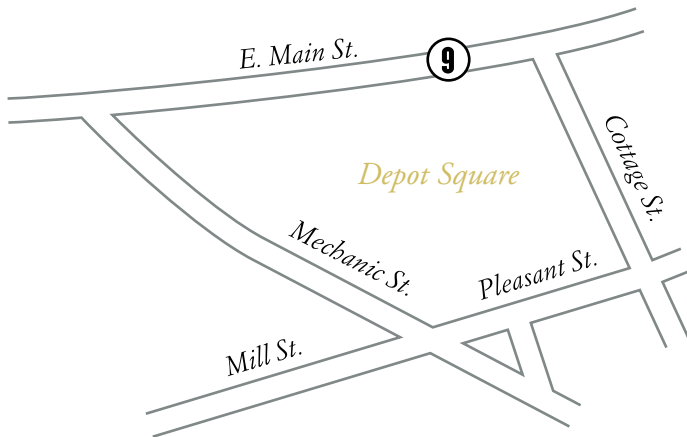
Sitting serenely on Dudley Hill, the Town Common of Dudley was established in the 1730's shortly after the south-central Massachusetts town was first settled and formalized as an open use area by the early 19th century. It evolved from a military training field prior to the War of 1812 to a place for monuments in the early 20th century.

The common lies in front of the First Congregational Church of Dudley, constructed in 1890. This church is an architectural achievement, with a large and beautifully designed tower that gives it a commanding presence on the green and over the lush valleys surrounding it. The greensward, extending from the common to the Dudley Grange on the north and including part of Nichols College to the south, is an extensive, historic, and appealing area.



# THE DEPOT SQUARE OF EAST BROOKFIELD

MASSACHUSETTS



**Location:** Depot Square (Mechanic and Pleasant Sts.)

**Wheelchair access:** Curb cut

**Parking:** On street

**Restrooms:** Town Hall and E. Brookfield Public Library

**For further information:** Town Hall (508) 867-6769

Originally a small section of the town of Brookfield in central Massachusetts, East Brookfield was not incorporated until 1920. The northern-most town in The Last Green Valley, with a population of slightly more than 2,000, East Brookfield has developed a strong sense of community in the process of creating its place and character. As a consequence of its late appearance – it is the youngest town in the Commonwealth – its infrastructure was established one to two centuries after most of its neighbors. Traditionally town commons or greens had evolved from meetinghouse lots, militia training grounds, and land otherwise set aside for public or common use in 17th or 18th-century New England. The town of East Brookfield, with a section long known as “Podunk,” gained its common land from a seemingly different society and a different way of life than the communities that produced their greens and commons centuries before.

In 1931, a small, triangular piece of land in the center of Depot Square known as Vizard’s Common was given by a private citizen to the new town with the stipulation that a



memorial to 28 World War I veterans be placed there. In time, commemorative monuments honoring local veterans of World War II and the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts joined the earlier monument. In the year 2000, these were all formally dedicated and the area surrounded by an ornamental rail fence and commemorative bricks.

Reflecting the commercial and manufacturing nature of its community and the wars of 20th-century America, the small public area at Depot Square is as much a product of its times as are the familiar and more spacious greens and commons of older, neighboring communities. Depot Square and its monuments are surrounded by the former town hall, library, senior center, general store, and various 19th-century structures. Although the common land there covers less area and is visually diminutive, it has been created by the same need for a community-centering space and the desire to recognize the sacrifices of its collective past.

*Text by Bertina Brennan and James L. Conrad*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*

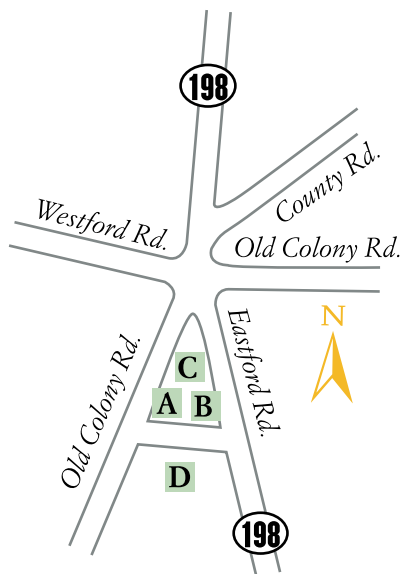




# THE TOWN GREEN OF EASTFORD

CONNECTICUT

- A Veterans' Memorial
- B Flagpole
- C Historical Marker
- D Ivy Glenn Memorial



**Location:** Rte. 198 and Old Colony Rd.

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** In front of Ivy Glenn Memorial

**Restrooms:** Public Library in Ivy Glenn Memorial during open hours

**For further information:** Town Hall (860) 974-0133

The Eastford Green is of relatively recent vintage, although it is located at the town's historic center. For much of its history, the land was in private hands, appearing on old atlases as part of the central village intersection. Around it stand a number of historic buildings that recall the village's mid-19th-century prosperity. Most of these are wood-framed and clapboarded, with the exception of the cast concrete of Bowen's Garage (c. 1920).

The village was on the Hartford to Boston Turnpike, making the Eastford House, also known as the General Lyon Tavern (at Westford and Old Colony Rds.), a popular overnight stop. Gathered around the crossroads were a woolen mill, wagon works and spoke manufactory, several groceries, and other shops. The Methodists built their meetinghouse just south of the intersection in 1847, and provided a basement room for town meetings following Eastford's incorporation that same year. After 1860 the town's importance and prosperity declined. The railroad bypassed the village, and commerce followed it. However, the village remained the center of town affairs. To celebrate the 1876 centennial, a Village Improvement Society was formed and saw to the installation of sidewalks and street lamps.

After the Congregation-alist and Methodist congregations merged, the latter sold their now-redundant meetinghouse to the town, with the condition that it be used forever for a "library



and such social and civic uses as will be wholesome for the community." Renamed Town Hall, it housed municipal offices until the construction of a newer building on Westford Rd. Despite recent structural problems, the building, now known as the Ivy Glenn Memorial, is regularly used for community events and has housed the library since 1934.

In 1932, the green was created when residents Ellery Bartlett and Beatrice Kennedy conveyed to the Town a small, triangular land parcel bounded by Old Colony Rd., Eastford Rd. (Rte. 198) and the Ivy Glenn Memorial. Civic embellishments soon followed. The veterans' monument was erected in 1934 using stone brought from the birthplace of Eastford's Gen. Nathaniel Lyons, the first Union general killed in the Civil War. A flagpole and large boulder with bronze plaques honoring local veterans of various military conflicts stands at the south end of the green. Near the center is a historical marker placed during the American Revolution bicentennial festivities.

Since it is a relatively recent creation, the Eastford Green does not appear to have built up the historic significance and symbolism that many greens enjoy. However, it has figured in town events and celebrations since its inception. It was the site of Town Centennial programs in 1947 and it is used today during Memorial Day observances.

Based on information from the CT Trust for Historic Preservation online at [www.towngreens.com](http://www.towngreens.com)

Photo: Charlene Cutler

THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# THE TOWN GREEN OF FRANKLIN

CONNECTICUT



much, according to legend, as he could walk around in a day. His was the first permanent settlement in the area and the farm he established is the second oldest remaining farmhold in America. Today Ayer Mountain Farm at 55 Ayer Rd. is still operated by the family as a combined equine training and huntseat facility.

Franklin Congregational Church was founded in 1718, followed by the construction of a school on Meetinghouse Hill. It is here that a piece of common land may have existed. The "Church on the Hill" is the fourth to stand there, each in different locations. It is still a Congregational Church, but after two separate mergers became part of the United Church of Christ in 1961.

Dr. Samuel Nott, the church's third pastor, wrote in his diary that the Society was made up principally of "respectable farmers of peculiar character" who had dismissed two pastors (all they ever had) and that he had no particular wish to settle among them or any expectation that they would wish to have him do so. They did extend a call, however, which he accepted. He later confided to his diary that the "injudicious conduct" of many of his parishioners led him to believe that he was doing little good, but that if he left them, they might never be able to secure another pastor. Dr. Nott served in Franklin for 72 continuous years, establishing a national record.

*Text by Andrea Ader based on the town's history by Marjorie Robbins*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*

**Location:** Undetermined

**Restrooms:** Town Hall (Meetinghouse Hill Rd., off Rte. 32)

**Nearby:** Blue Slope Country Museum (138 Blue Hill Rd.) celebrating 18th to 20th-century rural American life; (860) 642-6413 or [www.blueslope.com](http://www.blueslope.com)

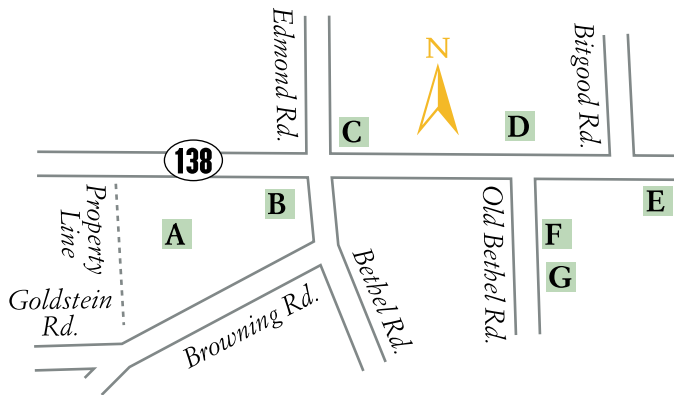
Franklin's Green – or lack thereof - is a good example of how things, even real estate, can get lost in the untidiness of history. Local historians are currently researching whether or not brief references to a "green" in various sources are accurate, and if so, to what parcel of land they might refer.

Later named after Benjamin Franklin, the area was originally called West Farms and was part of a tract in Mohegan Territory. In 1663, John Ayer of Haverhill, Massachusetts, bought approximately 300 acres of land from the Native People - as



# THE TOWN GREEN OF GRISWOLD'S PACHAUG

CONNECTICUT



- A Lester Fountain
- B Historic Marker
- C Stanton Birthplace
- D First Congregational Church
- E Fire Department
- F Old Town Hall
- G Pound

**Location:** The green is 2 miles from Exit 85 off I-395. Follow Rte. 138 toward Voluntown to the intersection with Edmond Rd. and Bethel Rd.

**Wheelchair access:** Pachaug Green is at street level

**Parking:** On Browning Rd. off Rte. 138

**Restrooms:** Same as above or at the nearby Texaco or Citgo gas stations.

**For further information:** *Griswold-A History* by D. L. Phillips and *Griswold in the 20th Century* by Ted Cyr and Erwin Goldstein; Griswold Historical Society (860) 376-4577.

The history of Pachaug Green, named for the village formed around it circa 1690, shows what has happened to many town greens or commons as history has given way to modernity. The Town of Griswold, including Pachaug, was first part of Norwich, then of Preston, before becoming a separate town in 1815. The green was originally much larger than its present size, naturally forming a square when roads were built to connect homes in the village in the late 18th or early 19th century. The 1959 construction of Rte. 138 greatly reduced its square footage and destroyed its original layout, creating the present triangular formation.

The Green is surrounded by 18th and 19th-century homes and is a short distance from the First Congregational Church built in 1836. A few hundred feet down the road stands Griswold's first town hall as well as its 18th-century animal pound. The birthplace of Henry Brewster Stanton, noted abolitionist, journalist and husband of suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, is directly across the road from the green.



The site of a state historical marker and a wooden flagpole, both dedicated in 1974, Pachaug Green is dominated by the Lester Fountain, donated on Oct. 15, 1903, by Mary Elizabeth Lester of New York City in memory of her father and brother. The Lester family had been prominent in Griswold since the early 1700's. Water for this fountain, a replica of one on New York's Upper West Side, comes from a supply on Meech's Hill, 1,700 feet west of the Green. The Ionic column topped by a sphere was originally designed to fill the surrounding basin with water for travelers and their horses through an often-stolen lion's head in the base of the shaft. The water is unpotable at present. The fountain is constructed of Westerly granite and the bowl alone weighs nine tons.

*Text: Mary Rose Deveau*

*Photo: Lester Fountain on Pachaug Green (courtesy of the Griswold Historical Society)*





# THE VILLAGE CENTER OF HAMPTON

CONNECTICUT

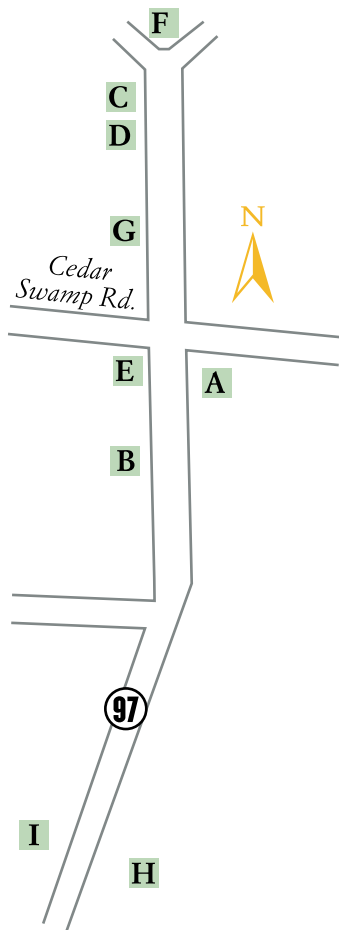
- A Gov. Cleveland #246
- B Jos. Prentis #241
- C Capt. Daniel Fuller #279
- D Stedman-Taintor #27
- E Ford-Hovey-Brewster #249
- F Billings-L Mosley #298
- G Congregational Church
- H Town Hall
- I Burnham-Hubbard House Museum

**Location:** Rte. 97,  
Hampton, CT

**Wheelchair access:**  
No sidewalks

**Parking:** Church/library  
lot; no parking on  
Rte. 97

**For further information:**  
Town Clerk  
(860) 455-9132 or  
Town Historian  
(860) 455- 0783



Hampton has been called “Canada,” “Windham Village,” and “Hampton Center” at various times in its history. Incorporated in 1786 from parts of Pomfret, Canterbury, Mansfield, and Windham, there is no evidence that the town ever had a functioning green. Its village center is situated high above a ridge west of the Little River on both sides of the present Rte. 97. Most of the land was bequeathed in 1671 by the Mohican Sachem Joshua to John Mason and other English allies during the 17th-century Pequot Wars. These men traded their land rights and interests until 1706 when the Windham proprietors surveyed 100-acre lots for sale, with settlement beginning in 1710 in the southeastern part of town. The area took the name of “Canada” after one of these early inhabitants. Lots near the village center were first occupied around 1713 by settlers who became religious participants in the Windham Society based in Windham Center. While some may have realized that they might eventually separate from Windham (a 1713 deed refers to Hampton Hill as “Meetinghouse Hill”), the split did not begin until a petition was



made to form the Second Windham Society in 1717 and the subsequent construction of a meetinghouse in Windham Village (now Hampton Village).

As originally laid out, the main road split east and west around what today would be called a “median strip” in Hampton Village, with the right-of-way running up to the house fronts as they currently exist. In 1750, the road through the village center measured 10 rods (165 ft.) at its widest. Since Hampton was not originally thought of as being distinct from Windham and since the earliest settlers had not built along the road, the proprietors probably did not provide for a village green. In the 20th century, the road was redesigned to run down the middle of this strip of land, making it appear that the adjacent houses have large front yards.

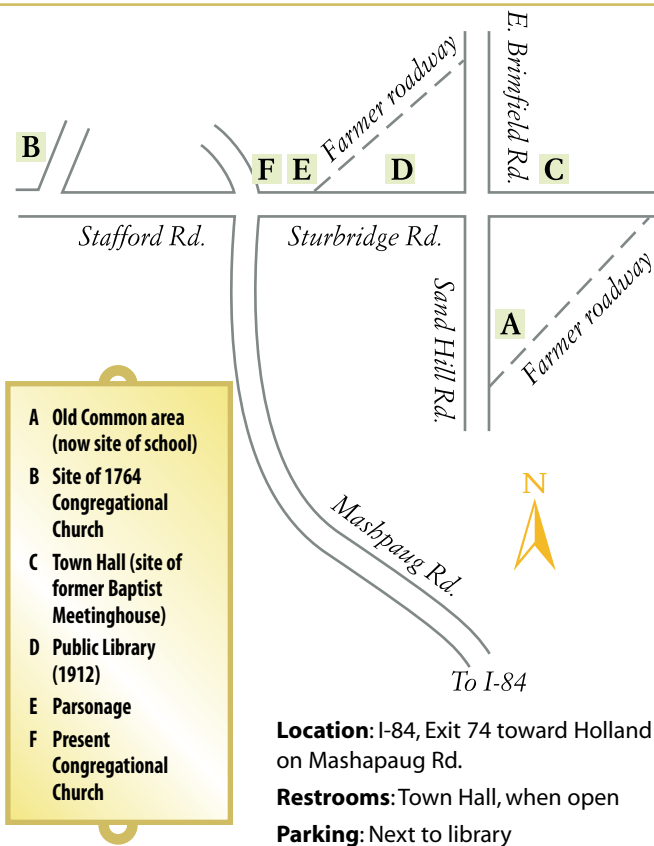
This rural farming community has managed to preserve its past. The earliest village houses were built in the 1750s on the west side of the street with a view east over the Little River valley. The east side was not significantly developed until the 1830s. The frontage was subdivided until 1897 when the street took on its present appearance. In 1982, the Hampton Hill Historic District was federally recognized. Especially significant are houses built for Gov. Chauncey F. Cleveland (1836); Joseph Prentis, Esq. (1822); Capt. Daniel Fuller (1791); Stedman-Taintor (1790/1823); Ford-Hovey-Brewster (1738/1761); and Billings-Mosely (1723/1780). The Hampton Congregational Church is the second oldest meetinghouse in continuous use on its original site in the state. Nearby is the Burnham-Hubbard House Museum (185 Main St.), an early 19th-century home with local furnishings, displays and re-created living areas; it is open by appointment and operated by the Hampton Antiquarian & Historical Society (860) 455-0783.

*Text by Robert Burgoyne*

*Photo: Vintage postcard (courtesy of Hampton Antiquarian and Historical Society)*

# THE TOWN COMMON OF HOLLAND

MASSACHUSETTS



Despite its small size, Holland has a number of important distinctions. First, the headwaters of the Quinebaug River are located there as it begins its course through The Last Green Valley. Second, the existence of the Hamilton Reservoir, contributing as it does to both the town's charm and nature, has influenced the character and development of one of the region's smaller towns.

Changing fortunes and directions have affected the existence of a town common in Holland. Incorporated as a town in 1783, Holland established a common soon afterwards across from the former Congregational Church and Baptist Meeting House. This area was the scene of militia drills in the 1790s. During its first hundred years, according to the first historian of Holland, its citizens reflected the "toil and self-sacrifice to the loftiest ideas of duty and of life..."



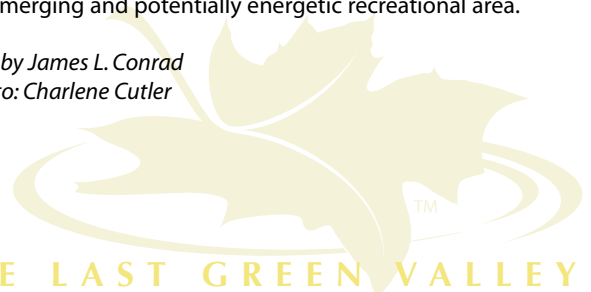
During the 20th century, the town and its common were impacted by a number of events that affected its development. Time, a declining rural economy, construction of a new dam on the Hamilton Reservoir, and the loss of some available lands due to a flood control project with its restrictions, all worked against further recognition and development of a town common. According to a 1995 study, the town common area was perceived as including the Congregational Church, parsonage, library, and town hall. Furthermore, across from the town hall stands a monument to Holland's war veterans, quite probably on the edge of what was the common.

Holland is not the only town to experience a period when its common has not been carefully defined. Mill towns such as Sturbridge and Webster to the east have gone through similar periods, only to develop common areas later in their history. Importantly, although Holland has lost a substantial amount of land to the waters of the reservoir and flood control projects, it has not lost its attractive nature.

While the body of water formed by man-made Hamilton Reservoir substantially divides Holland into two parts, it has become the town's central feature and attraction. In the summer the town of slightly more than 2,000 nearly triples in size due to seasonal residents. Concurrently, the presence of flood control projects has placed Holland in the center of an emerging and potentially energetic recreational area.

*Text by James L. Conrad*

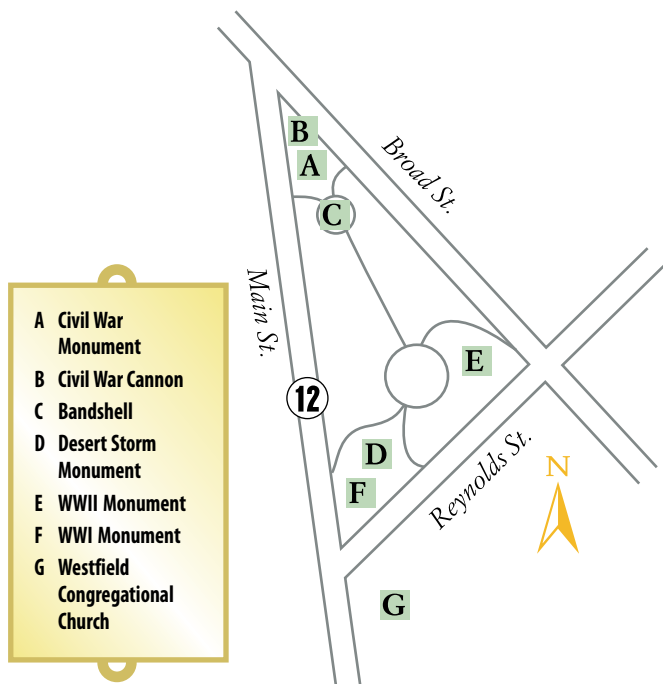
*Photo: Charlene Cutler*



THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# DAVIS PARK OF KILLINGLY

CONNECTICUT



- A Civil War Monument
- B Civil War Cannon
- C Bandshell
- D Desert Storm Monument
- E WWII Monument
- F WWI Monument
- G Westfield Congregational Church

**Location:** Main, Reynolds, and Broad Sts., Danielson, CT

**Parking:** Broad St. and Reynolds St.

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Restrooms:** At restaurants (patrons only)

**For further information:** Killingly Historical Center (860) 779-7250

Davis Park, located in the Killingly borough of Danielson, was opened in 1890 and named in memory of Randall and Philia Kies Davis. Their son Edwin, a Danielson native living in Iowa, donated part of the land in 1889 in honor of his parents. The Borough of Danielson, with help from prominent merchants and manufacturers, purchased the rest of the property. The triangular park is gently rolling, well-maintained, and landscaped with many trees and shrubs. Concrete walkways with benches traverse the park, encouraging public use.

Bounded by Main, Reynolds, and Broad Sts., Davis Park is located just north of the commercial center of Danielson. Surrounded primarily by 19th-century residences of some architectural and historic distinction, it is also near the Westfield Congregational Church (1855). The Park's location was also auspicious, as it was located among the homes of many prominent citizens such as merchant Orvil M. Capron (#170 Main St., c. 1855 Italian Villa) and manufacturer Edwin H. Jacobs (#172 Main St., a c. 1890 Victorian Vernacular).



Located throughout Davis Park are several monuments to military veterans. The oldest (1878), faces the intersection of Main and Broad Sts. and honors Civil War soldiers; it was erected by the Women's Monument Association of the Town of Killingly. In front is a 30-lb. Civil War cannon. The World War I memorial, near Westfield Congregational Church, consists of a large bronze eagle with outstretched wings resting on a granite boulder. Near the center of the park stands a World War II memorial with a granite base and three columns supporting a flat granite cap. On the Main St. side is a granite monument honoring Desert Storm veterans.

An original fixture of the park is the hexagonal bandstand (c.1900) with its bracketed roof, arched frieze, and plain posts and railing. From the start, it was used regularly for concerts. Early on, the park was also embellished with a fountain (now removed) that featured a nude allegorical female figure.

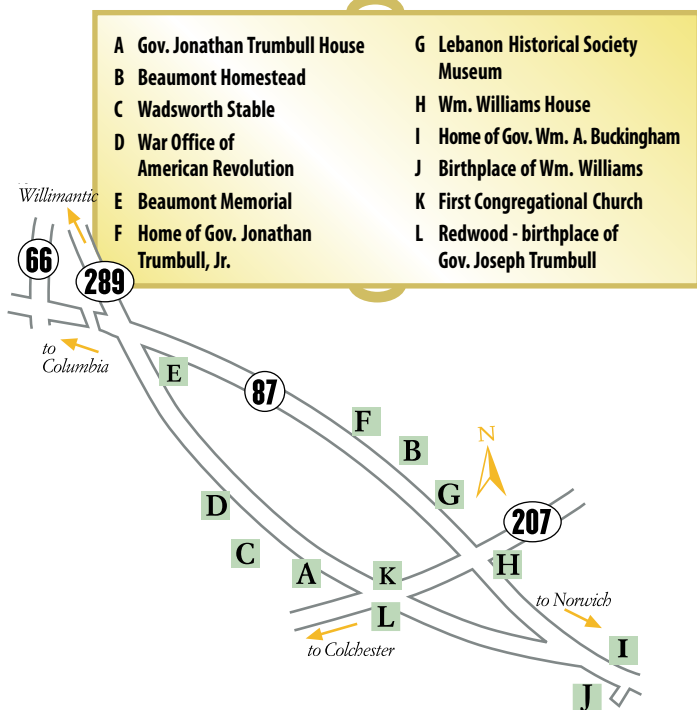
Although not called a town green, Davis Park functions as one in its historical role as a place for important public events and recreation. It is an example of the "village improvement" movement of the late 19th century to beautify communities, and it reflects Danielson's rising commercial and civic role in the town and region. It was one of a number of community improvements that changed Danielson greatly in the 1880s and 1890s, including telephone service, gas lighting, and electricity. Through the years the park has been the site of many major town events, ranging from the 1908 bicentennial celebration to the Christmas festivities and crafts fairs of today.

Based on information from the CT Trust for Historic Preservation online at [www.towngreens.com](http://www.towngreens.com) and Lynn La Berge  
Photo: Charlene Cutler



# THE TOWN GREEN OF LEBANON

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Junctions of Rtes. 87 and 207 in the south and Rtes. 87 and 289 in the north.

**Wheelchair Access:** Yes, cinder walkway extends 1 1/2 mi. around the green. Handicap parking behind library and church at Rtes. 87 and 207.

**Parking:** Free behind library and church on the green, at Lebanon Historical Society Museum and Visitors Center, and other museums on the Green.

**Restrooms:** Town Hall, Jonathan Trumbull Library, Lebanon Historical Soc. Museum and Visitors Ctr., and Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., House Museum.

The Town of Lebanon's most distinctive feature is its Town Green, a vast open space that extends for a mile through the village center and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its upper end is still mowed for hay by neighboring farmers. A church, the town hall, the library, and a local store stand along its way. Although its great size and continued agricultural use are unusual, the Lebanon Green is best known for its association with the people and events of the American Revolution.

Lebanon was the home of William Williams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Gov. Jonathan Trumbull, the only Colonial governor to defy the Crown and lead Connecticut's



mobilization of men and provisions (a feat that earned it the nickname "The Provisions State"). The Council of Safety met more than 500 times at his headquarters in the War Office; the nearby green was the rallying point for the state's contribution to the patriot cause. From November 1780 to June 1781, Lauzun's Legion, the cavalry unit of the French army, camped in the fields to the west and baked their bread in ovens they built on the green itself. Here also American and French soldiers practiced their drills, and Gen. Washington came to review the French troops.

Some of the most important buildings connected with Connecticut's role in the Revolution are located around the green and are open to the public. These include the Gov. Trumbull Home, the Revolutionary War Office, the Wadsworth Stable, and the Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., House Museum, where Washington stayed on March 4, 1781. Other nearby sites include the birthplace of Dr. William Beaumont, the early 19th century medical researcher, and the Lebanon Historical Society Museum and Visitors Center, which provides visitor services and exhibitions on local history. The First Congregational Church (1804-07), designed by John Trumbull, the great artist of the Revolution, is on the south end of the green. Visitors can feel more than two centuries come alive as they stroll through these historic buildings and along the green itself.

*Text: Alicia Wayland*

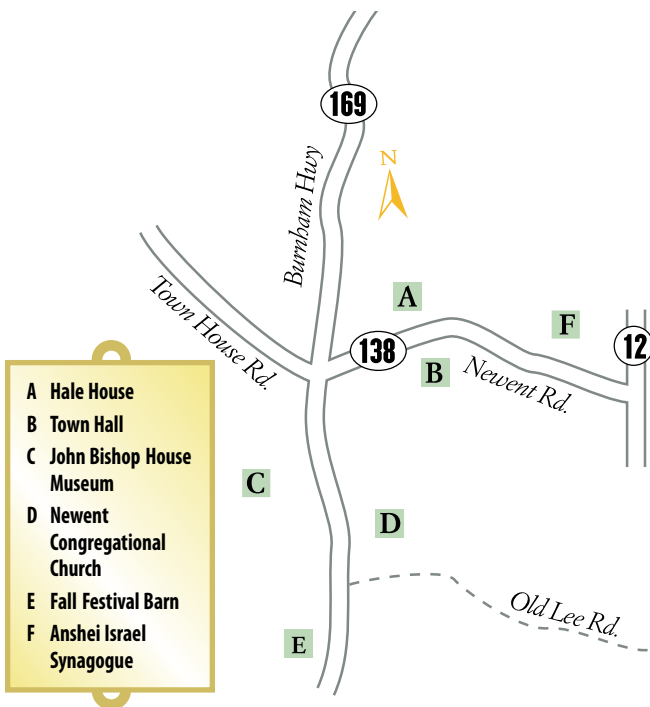
*Photo: Charlene Cutler*



THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# THE TOWN COMMON OF LISBON

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Rtes. 168 and 138

**Wheelchair access:** No (steeply sloped)

**Restrooms and Parking:** Town Hall

**For further information:** Lisbon Historical Society (860) 376-0869

During the Revolutionary War monument dedication, July 4, 1976 on the lawn of Lisbon Town Hall, it was recalled that those assembled were gathered in "a spot of beauty...on sacred and historical ground. All this area and what is now the church green to the south was called 'the common' and was used for a training ground for the militia of colonial days." To the north, stands the former church parsonage, built by the Rev. David Hale, younger brother of Nathan Hale. In the 1770s, only the church meetinghouse, the one-room school, Bradlaw's house and Jewett's house and nail shop (where the school's upper parking lot is now located) formed Lisbon's center (from *History of Lisbon* by the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission).

Today the center of Lisbon remains beautiful, retaining its small town, rural charm. The town hall on the corner of Rtes. 169 and 138 occupies the site of the first school. The present Newent Congregational Church, on the east side of Rte. 169, was designed and built in 1858 by Ebenezer Tracey, a famous local cabinetmaker. The old "Town House," a small gambrel building originally situated opposite the Hale House, was moved in 1953 and attached to the church. A monument to the fallen of World War I stands on the church lawn. Adjacent to that, on the south



along the abandoned Old Lee Rd., archaeological ruins have been discovered. This town parcel, called the Jeremiah Kinsman site, is being studied to establish its local historical, social and cultural significance.

The John Bishop House (c. 1810), directly across the street, was designed so its front door was exactly in line with that of the church. The house has seven fireplaces and a shaft leading from the buttery down to a dug well, where water could be obtained without leaving the house. Home to the Bishop, Brown and Bradlaw families, the house remained a residence through the mid-1980s. It is now town-owned and leased to the Lisbon Historical Society as a museum that offers guided tours as well as open hearth cooking and weaving demonstrations.

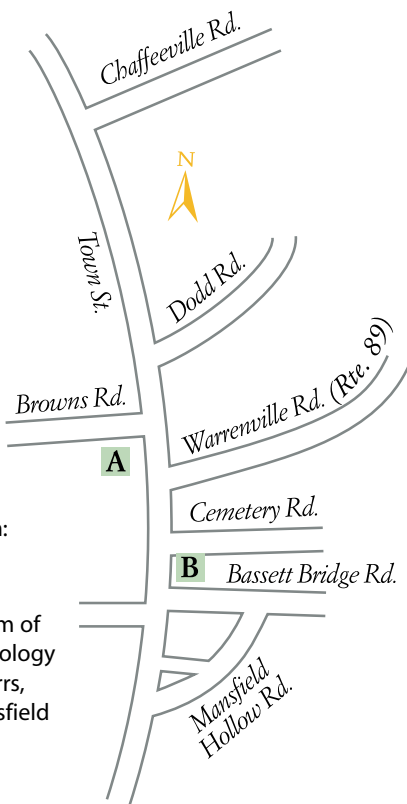
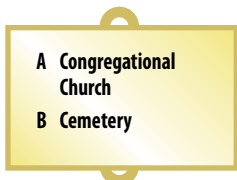
Nearby on Rte. 138, about one mile east of Rte. 169, stands Anshel Israel Synagogue, a 20' x 30' structure that is a good example of a small country Jewish house of worship. It is elegantly simple, but its tall projecting tower shows the 20th century Colonial Revival tradition. It is under restoration by the Lisbon Historical Society and is not yet opened to the public. Also nearby is the first railroad tunnel in the USA, built by the Worcester Railroad through the Quinebaug River bank in 1837. It is 300 feet long, 23 feet wide and 18 feet high and was cut by hand through solid rock. (It is not advised to tour the tunnel as it remains on an active rail line.)

*Text by Paula Adams, Kim Sperry, and Carolyn Read Burns  
Photos: Charlene Cutler*

THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# THE “STREET” OF MANSFIELD

CONNECTICUT



## Location:

Rte. 195 (Storrs Rd.),  
Mansfield, CT

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** On street

## For further information:

Mansfield Historical  
Society (860) 429-6575

**Nearby:** CT State Museum of  
Natural History & Archaeology  
Ctr., 2019 Hillside St., Storrs,  
(860) 486-4460 and Mansfield  
Historical Soc. Museum,  
Storrs Rd., Storrs, CT  
(860) 429-6575

In February 1685 sixteen legatees of the will of Joshua, son of the sachem Uncas, had 21 home lots laid out along Town Street (now Storrs Rd./Rte. 195) in Mansfield Center, an area originally called “Ponde Place.” At 8 rods (132 ft.), the Street would seem, by present standards, excessively wide. However, at the time, it took the place of a town green as the site of many town activities including the training of the local militia, a parking area for wagons, and a storage site for logs en route to the sawmill. This one and a half mile portion of “The Street” stretched from the foot of Dug Hill (just north of Chaffeeville Rd.) to below Mansfield Hollow Rd. and was lined mainly on the east side by well-spaced 5- to 6-acre home lots. Later subdivisions led to the present, denser landscape. In the late 17th century, settlers drew lots for farmland farther from the center of town, which created the radial system from the center as access to their farms.

The original meetinghouse was situated high on the south side of Browns Rd. midway along the Street. The burial ground (1693) was not adjacent to the meetinghouse as in North Mansfield (Storrs) and many other communities, perhaps because the



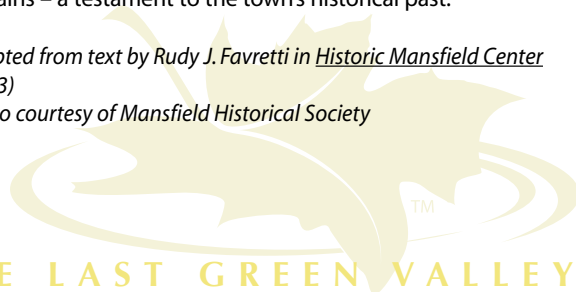
ground was too hilly or rocky there. Instead, it was situated on a well-drained, gravelly site 250 yards south. A school once stood at the present junction of Browns Rd. and Rte. 195; the site is now occupied by the former library (1926), which is a private residence.

According to Gen. Thomas S. Cummings’ *A Passing Sketch of the Village* (1880) and contemporary photographs, the original Street was rutted, with water-filled ditches that bred insects during the rainy seasons and collected litter during the rest of the year. It was lined by an occasionally-mowed grassy verge with trees planted randomly where shade was desired. The Street’s boundaries were indicated by the fences and walls that marked individual properties. In the early years, livestock roamed the street, grazing on the verges and wallowing in the ditches. Later, as selective breeding was introduced, animals were penned and, in 1888, the position of pound keeper was abolished in Mansfield, although the pound still remains on Browns Rd.

Stone walls were usually built between houses, while wooden fences marked the frontage. As the village developed beyond its original plan, lots were sold on the west side of Town St. and stone retaining walls were built to create flat terraces. The Dan Storrs House at 521 Storrs Rd. illustrates this, but the ultimate example is the Dewing Wall (c. 1882) just south of First Congregational Church near the Rte. 89/195 junction, which currently abuts a parking lot. Despite Mansfield’s recent development, many of the old houses remain, as do some of the outbuildings and open fields. The wide street remains – a testament to the town’s historical past.

Adapted from text by Rudy J. Favretti in *Historic Mansfield Center* (2003)

Photo courtesy of Mansfield Historical Society



THE LAST GREEN VALLEY



# THE TOWN GREEN OF NORWICHTOWN

CONNECTICUT

- A First Congregational Church
- B Former Jessie Brown Tavern
- C Former Jos. Carpenter Silversmith Shop
- D Former Daniel Lathrop School
- E Simon Huntington House
- F Former Knight-Peck Tavern
- G Lathrop House



**Location:** I-395 to Exit 82 (Town St.); proceed 1/2 mile east

**Wheelchair Access:** Yes

**Parking:** Free around perimeter of the green.

**Restrooms:** Within 1/2 mile.

The Norwichtown Green, presently a 4-acre triangular plot bounded by Town and East Town Sts. and Elm Ave., is one of four in the city, the others being Bean Hill Green, Chelsea Parade and Little Plains Green. (The latter two are actually more representative of parks than greens, since they were once privately owned and deeded to the public as the area moved from agriculture to industry.)

The Norwichtown Green was the focus of the original settlement tract purchased from the Mohegans in 1659. On its southwest corner at the base of a 30-foot rock outcropping, stood the first Meeting House. (The present federal-style building that houses the First Congregational Church is the fifth in a succession of variously located structures.) The courthouse, jail and whipping post were located near the southeast corner, while taverns, shops, the homes of the minister and the magistrate, and the



homesteads of the original proprietors occupied the rest of the perimeter. As early as 1684 the town's inhabitants voted to sell the southeast corner of the common land to James Fitch's son whose father's land abutted the green. In 1729, however, the town resolved to keep the remaining part of the green as public space in perpetuity.

The original common, like many others in New England, may have been used as a transfer point where livestock could be collected from families each day and driven to outlying pastures by herdsman, then returned for dispersal each evening. Records from as early as 1666 indicate that the land was used for military training, and it is clear that in 1767 a "Liberty Tree" was raised on the green to protest the Stamp Act. This common area was also a gathering place for war news during the American Revolution, but by the mid-1800s the only "war" on the green was the one waged by children in their snow forts. At about the same time edges of the formerly open common space were planted with elms, maples and other trees, so that by the early 20th century the Norwichtown Green had begun its evolution into a park. Today it is the scene of summer concerts and other celebrations.

*Text: Based on "Norwich City Greens," 1998 report, [Landscapes of Westport, CT](#) and "A Walking Guide to Historic Norwichtown, CT," 1995, Norwich Tourism Office.*

*Photos: Charlene Cutler*

### Little Plain Park

Little Plain Park, located within a National Historic Register and local historic district, is a long and narrow triangle that dates from 1811. The greensward is the focal point of a fine residential neighborhood dating from the mid-18th century to late 19th centuries and is bounded by Broadway, Union St. and Crossway St. The only institutional building is the Catholic Church (c. 1876) north of the green.

The focal point of the green is the Civil War monument, a stone obelisk located at the northern tip, dedicated to the 28th Regiment of the Connecticut Volunteer Infantry. Toward the southern end, a 1909 pink stone fountain honors the park's founders Hezekiah Perkins and Deacon Jabez Huntington. The most interesting feature is the fence, probably erected in the late 19th century, which is comprised of metal stiles between stone rails, making the open space more formal than the other Norwich greens.

### Bean Hill Green

Laid out in late 17th century, Bean Hill Green is a grassy, tree-shaded rectangle that is part of a National Historic Register District. The Bean Hill settlement was laid out shortly after the first settlement of Norwichtown was established along West Town Street, an important major highway leading north from Norwichtown through Bean Hill Plain. At the summit of the hill is the surviving early town plan: homes arranged around an open square. Many of these early buildings remain on three sides of the green; however, 20th-century commercial buildings now dominate the side bounded by West Town St.

The simple houses in the Bean Hill area were owned by mechanics, artisans, and shop and tavern keepers who lived in the area when it was the local center for manufacturing and commercial activity between about 1740 and 1820. The only non-domestic structure from this period is the Methodist church (1833), the first church of that denomination in Norwich. Although it has been converted to commercial use, it is still an important structure that relates historically, visually and functionally to the green.

### Chelsea Parade

Chelsea Parade, initially called "The East Sheepwalk," was first used as common pasture. In 1740, two roads (today's Broadway and Washington St.) were built linking Norwichtown with the public wharfs at the port of New Chelsea (or Chelsea Landing). A plateau at their intersection became known as the "Great Plain." As early as 1793 it was used as a parade ground by Col. Joseph Williams. Eventually W. Thomas Fanning, Joseph Perkins and Joshua Lanthrop obtained ownership from the absentee landowners and conveyed it to the town for use as a park. Dedicated as a "Public Parade" in April 1797, it eventually became known as Williams Park for Gen. William Williams who held military reviews there and lived nearby for 50 years. In the 20th century, it was renamed Chelsea Parade. By the mid-19th century, the park took on its present appearance of a grassy, tree-lined open space and became the focal point of a wealthy Victorian residential neighborhood. As such, it represents the growth and urbanization of Norwich during that period.

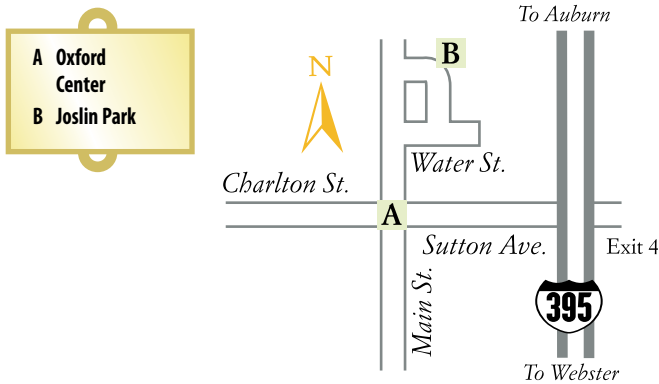
In 1873, a Civil War monument was placed on the northern section. Inside its metal fence a small stone marker indicates that a time capsule buried there in 1959 is to be unearthed in 2059. A stone marker along Chelsea Parade North proclaims that "this tract of land is dedicated to Veterans of all Conflicts and Wars by the Veterans Council of the Norwich area." An 1889 stone watering trough with four bowls (now planters) lies at the northern tip. A 1920s howitzer, a 1932 monument to Samuel Chester Reid (a Norwich native who designed the U.S. flag of 1818), a large granite World War I memorial (c. 1920), and "Freedom Tree" (1998) dedicated to Col. Paul G. Underwood, a Vietnam era pilot, are among the monuments. A small triangle of land east of the Parade's main section features a small boulder dedicated to the U.S.S. Maine, its plaque cast from metal recovered from the vessel destroyed in Havana's harbor. Near the center of the green lies a monument honoring Columbus erected in 1992 by the Italian Ladies Club.

The oldest property facing Chelsea Parade is the 1789 Joseph Teel House on the southwest corner. Park Congregational Church was erected in 1880; the Masonic Temple dates from 1828. Norwich Free Academy established its campus on the eastern side of the park in the 1850s. Although the larger buildings around Chelsea Parade are most evident, they do not dominate it because of its wide expanse. In fact, the variety of buildings - in scale, function and materials - provides a visually and historically rich setting for the open space.

*Text based on information from CT Trust for Historic Preservation on-line at [www.towngreens.com](http://www.towngreens.com)*

# JOSLIN PARK • THE TOWN COMMON OF OXFORD

MASSACHUSETTS



**Location:** Exit 4 off I-395 onto Sutton Ave.; right on Main St.

**Parking:** Along Main St.

**Restrooms:** For patrons at local eateries

**For further information:** Oxford Historical Commission  
(508) 987-6032

Oxford's Old Common, sometimes referred to as the North Common, was established by the English on Main St. at Dana Rd. in the early 1700s. The first meetinghouse was built near it. By the mid-1800s, however, that part of town had lost its importance as new businesses, a new meetinghouse and a town hall were built near the present Oxford Center (also called Huguenot Square), a natural crossroads between adjacent towns. The Old Common was later home to the two-room Hammond School and is now the site of the Oxford Police Station.

The present town common, Joslin Park, exists primarily because of the vision and financial resources of Dr. Elliot P. Joslin. Bounded by Main and Water Sts., it was originally part of Oxford's "Old Training Grounds" where the local militia drilled. Later, in 1881, the town erected the Plains Primary School along the Main St. portion of the site (close to the present memorials). Long dubbed the "Green School" because of its color, it was considered very modern for its time. However, in September 1927, four years after the school closed, it was put up for auction, and Dr. Joslin purchased it, along with some of the surrounding grounds, for \$2,725. Along with his brother and sister,



he then donated the purchase back to the town in memory of their parents. In this way, their gift guaranteed that this land would be preserved for all to enjoy. Many years later, the town purchased a small parcel along the northern boundary to make Joslin Park the size that it is presently.

Today, plantings highlight a Korean/Vietnam Conflict memorial, a Spanish American War memorial, and a watering trough for horses moved here from Oxford Center after 1904. The 1872 North Gore School was also moved here and the bandstand was added in 1987. The park is bordered by private homes, the First Congregational Church (1829), and old Oxford High School (1913). South Cemetery, dating from 1713 and located across Main St., was originally part of the same parcel.

Dr. Elliot Joslin wished to preserve the quality of Main St. which he believed was about to change in 1927. His family already owned beautiful properties on Main St. not far from what became Joslin Park. Perhaps Dr. Joslin, more than any other person during the last century, could be credited with preserving Main St. for all of us to enjoy. Ever mindful of his hometown roots, he had a vision for Oxford and was willing, time and again, to put his finances to work to turn that vision into a reality.

*Text: Jean O'Reilly*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*





# THE MEMORIAL PARK OF PLAINFIELD

CONNECTICUT



**Location:**

Triangle across from  
Town Hall

**Wheelchair access:**

Yes

**Restrooms and**

**Parking:**

Town Hall

**For more information:**

Plainfield Historical  
Society, P. O. Box 104,  
Central Village, CT 06332  
or

[www.plainfieldhistory.org](http://www.plainfieldhistory.org)

During the town's early years, the section of Norwich Rd. (Rte. 12) which today is the Plainfield Street National Historic Register District with its Congregational meeting-house and site of the former Plainfield Academy, appears to have served many of the purposes of a town green. This may be the site referred to in the poem, "The Old Brick Schoolhouse," by George S. Burleigh, printed in an article on the history of Plainfield Academy in *The Putnam Patriot* in 1899:

*The Old Brick Schoolhouse on the green  
With its pyramid roof and windows high,  
And the sentinel poplars, tall and lean,  
That seemed to my fancy and boyish Eye,  
Standing up stiffly and brushing the sky  
As a trooper's plume is seen –  
I figure them still as I saunter by,  
Though house and trees, and the green itself,  
Have gone at the touch of Time, the elf;  
Who leaves, for old things laid on the shelf,  
Only new ones – and a sigh!*



By the early 1800s, numerous textile mills, each with its own surrounding village, had been established in town. Four of these villages survive: Central Village, Moosup, Plainfield and Wauregan, each with its own post office, volunteer fire department and voting site. The first Town Hall was built in the 1870s in Central Village. As the town grew, however, more space was needed and in the early 1940s the town purchased the former Lawton Mills Community Building in Plainfield village for its administrative offices. The town hall is at the heart of the Lawton Mills Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The "town green" of today is a triangle of land near the Plainfield Town Hall. Just after World War II, a fund of \$7,500 was raised to establish a memorial park on the triangular plot of land donated by the Plainfield Corporation (successor to Lawton Mills). Congresswoman Chase Going Woodhouse secured the donation of an army tank for the park, which commemorates the patriotic service of men and women from the entire town. According to the local paper, *The Journal*, 15% of the town's total population, 1,071 men and women served in the war. Today, military ceremonies are held on the "green," with larger community events held in Lion's Park adjacent to Town Hall.

*Text by Plainfield Historical Society*

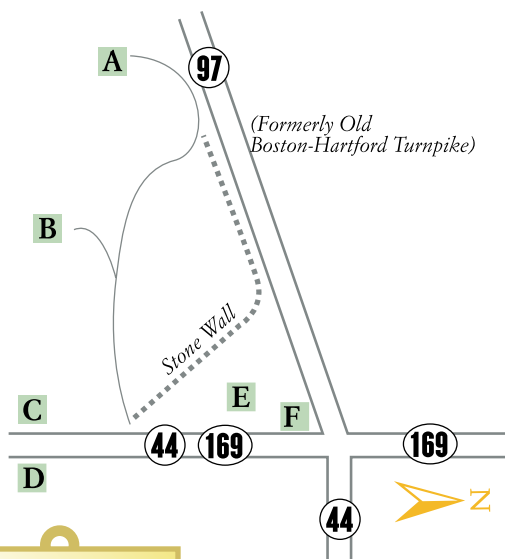
*Photo: Charlene Cutler*



THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# THE TOWN GREEN OF POMFRET

CONNECTICUT



- A Most Holy Trinity Church
- B Rectory
- C Rectory School
- D Christ Church Episcopal
- E Liberty Pole
- F WWI Memorial

**Location:** Intersection of Routes 44, 97 and 169

**Wheelchair Access:** No curbs

**Parking:** Adjacent to Green

**Restrooms:** For patrons of local eateries

**For further information:** Contact Pomfret Town Hall (860) 928-0343

Established in 1713, the Town of Pomfret takes its name from the Yorkshire town of Pontefract and was built on land bought from local Native People in the "Mashmuket Purchase." Eventually Brooklyn, Hampton and Putnam (including the highly lucrative industrial section called Pomfretville) broke away from Pomfret and became separate towns. Two of the areas remaining in Pomfret had established greens: Abington and Pomfret Hill; however, neither of these commons exist today.

The Abington Common or Training Ground was almost completely lost in the development of Rte. 97, although a sign still marks its location on Hampton Rd. The nearby Abington Burying Ground and two pre-Revolutionary buildings, the Abel Clark Tavern and the Ephraim Ingalls Tavern still exist, although both buildings now house apartments. Nearby Abington Congregational Church (built in 1751) is the oldest meetinghouse in continuous use in the state. The Pomfret Hill Green, also called the "Train Band," is now part of the Connecticut Audubon Society's Bafflin



Sanctuary. Next to this training ground stood the original meetinghouse and burying ground, the latter eventually being moved to the bottom of the hill (South Cemetery).

The present Pomfret Green was established after World War I primarily to accommodate a war memorial. Occupying a very small area at the intersection of Rtes. 44, 97 and 169, it is the site of Memorial Day services and a holiday caroling and tree lighting. The green has a Liberty Pole and the original memorial listing the town residents who served in World War I, but the wooden World War II memorial is presently stored in the Pomfret Town Hall.

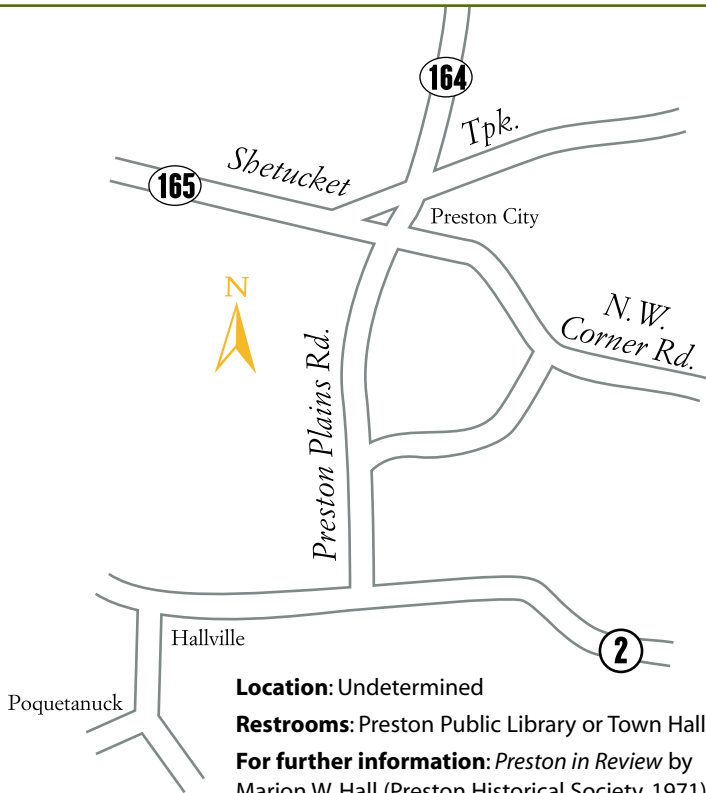
Across from the Green is the Most Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, a wooden rural structure built in 1887 and moved to its present location on Woodstock Rd. in 1973. The interior stenciling of the church has been completely restored. The building is located in the Pomfret Street (Rte. 44) Historic District, which, in the 1890s, received so many summer residents from New York that it was dubbed "the other Newport." Further down Pomfret St. is Christ Church - Episcopal, an 1882 building of rubble stone and brick with six Tiffany windows. The Rev. Phillips Brooks, who wrote the lyrics for the carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem," laid the cornerstone for this building. Not far away on Rte. 44 is Mashamoquet Brook State Park, site of the restored Brayton Gristmill with its Marcy Blacksmith Collection, and Wolf Den, where Israel Putnam reportedly killed the last she-wolf in northeast Connecticut.

*Text: Ann Hennen and Mary G. Page*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*

# THE TOWN "COMMON LANDS" OF PRESTON

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Undetermined

**Restrooms:** Preston Public Library or Town Hall

**For further information:** *Preston in Review* by Marion W. Hall (Preston Historical Society, 1971) available for study or sale at Preston Public Library, 389 Rte. 2; (860) 886-1010

Preston is a small, picturesque town established as a farming community in 1687. The town is actually made up of several small villages: Poquetanuck, Hallville, Preston City, Long Society, and Brewster's Neck. The original settlement was established on land deeded by Owaneco (chief sachem of the Mohegans) between Stonington, Norwich, and New London. Initially, this settlement included most of present-day Griswold. Poquetanuck was established in 1716 from the eastern part of Norwich and was called the "Long Society" or "East Society of Norwich." Rough and swampy terrain separated it from the main part of that town and rendered travel to worship extremely difficult. It was later annexed by Preston.

In 1687, the inhabitants petitioned to become a separate township, due largely to the difficulty in traveling to distant meetinghouses for the required worship services. As in the rest of Connecticut at that time, the Congregational Church was the established religion supported by taxes and both religious services and civic gatherings took place in the meetinghouse. The law dictated that a town could not become independent until it could support an organized church and a settled minister. This continued until 1818 when church and state were finally separated.



Preston may have developed without a town green, although some areas were probably set aside for militia training and for grazing livestock by the 39 individuals who purchased land from Owaneco after the town's formation and who could sell off parcels or set them aside for public use. Surveyors were responsible for determining which of the "common lands" would be reserved for town animal pounds and poorhouses. Any town common or green would likely have been in close proximity of the meetinghouse around which most activity revolved.

Today, Preston's most prominent memorial is the 1898 Civil War Soldiers' Monument in Preston City, donated by Judge Lucius Brown. A bronze World War I plaque was added later. His brother, Charles H. Brown, built the adjacent Queen Anne-style library, present home of the Preston Historical Society. The library itself moved to a new larger building in 1990. A monument to the soldiers of the Revolutionary War stands at the junction of Rte. 165 and the Old Shetucket Turnpike.

Several areas of Preston are now on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Hallville Mill Historic District, Hall's Mill Rd. and Rte. 2A on Hallville Pond
- Long Society Meetinghouse on Long Society Rd.
- Poquetanuck Village Historic District, Main St. (Rte. 117 to Middle Rd.) and along School House and Cider Mill Rds.
- Preston City Historic District between Amos, Old Shetucket, N.W. Corner Rds., and Rte. 164.

Text by Andrea Ader; Photo: Charlene Cutler

THE LAST GREEN VALLEY



# THE ROTARY PARK OF PUTNAM

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** From I-395 take Exit 97, then Rte. 44 to junction with Kennedy Dr.

**Wheelchair access:** Rotary Park is accessible and traffic lights emit audio “walk” signals.

**Parking:** Free in large lot near the public restrooms, diagonally across from the park

**Restrooms:** Public facilities are diagonally across from the park

Although an older green (“the Common at the Old Congregational Church”) is located on Rte. 21, Rotary Park along the Quinebaug River in downtown Putnam developed more recently. The town itself was incorporated in 1855 from parts of Killingly, Pomfret and Thompson. After the Great Flood of 1955 washed out portions of the town, the park was created through a 1965 federal flood control project under an urban master plan by the world-renowned Maurice Rotival Associates. Funding provided by Rotary International and the Putnam Rotary Club inspired the new recreational area’s name.

Rotary Park was an immediate success. Its location on the wide Quinebaug River affords a panoramic view of the surrounding hills and the rows of old brick buildings in the bustling restaurant and antiques district. A river-level view includes beautiful Cargill Falls and five old stone and brick textile mills



with their accompanying dams, worker houses and owner mansions. Ledge outcropping, shrubs and weeping willows add interest. Flags of the United States, Connecticut, and Rotary fly on poles erected by the local Rotary Club and are illuminated at night.

In addition to its value as a tourism site, the park has been regularly used for such local events as the town’s 125th anniversary celebration in 1980, a controversial Vietnam War “teach-in,” the annual Rotary Club children’s fishing derby, and a rally to support American Gulf War troops. More than 30,000 people visited the Vietnam War Wall of Remembrance during its week-long stay in the park.

River fires are held several times during the summer and feature food, music and mesmerizing river caldrons.

The 1.32-mile Putnam River Trail, completed in 1998 as a part of the East Coast Greenway that will link many U. S. cities, winds through the park. There, two of the trail’s five interpretive plaques explain the founding of Putnam and the impact of the 1955 flood. A monument on the trail below the historical marker honors Dr. Robert Dinolt, originally of Vienna, Austria, as a “physician, planner, public servant.” In 2003, a new, spacious, state-of-the-art bandstand was dedicated, greatly increasing park activities and continuing Putnam’s “Common” heritage.

*Writers: Robert J. Miller and Louise C. Cutler*

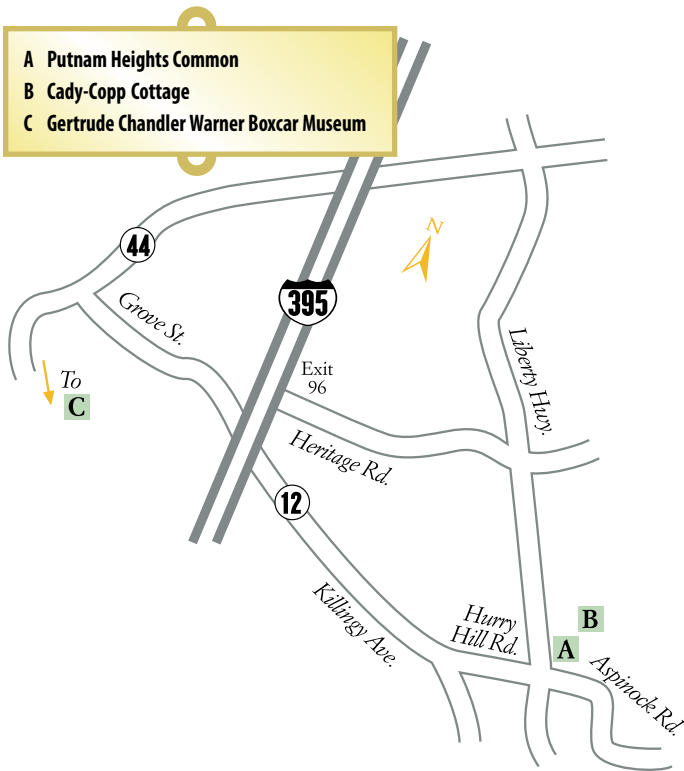
*Photo: Charlene Cutler*



# THE TOWN COMMON OF PUTNAM HEIGHTS

CONNECTICUT

- A Putnam Heights Common
- B Cady-Copp Cottage
- C Gertrude Chandler Warner Boxcar Museum



**Location:** Off Exit 96 of I-395 via Heritage Rd. to Liberty Hwy. (Rte. 21)

**Wheelchair access:** Yes, fairly level

**Parking:** Roadside

**Nearby:** Gertrude Chandler Warner Boxcar Museum, honoring educator and author of *The Boxcar Children* series near the old train station, S. Main St. (860) 963-7088

In the early 19th-century, a traveler going east on Grove St. past the cemetery and up Hurry Hill Rd. to Liberty Highway would have found themselves in a part of Killingly. Putnam, as we know the area today, would not be incorporated as a separate entity until 1855. Between 1700 and 1703, early settlers had chosen plots of land suitable for farming and close to trading routes atop what was then Killingly Hill, avoiding the flood-prone Quinebaug River. Trees grew there that could be sent to New London to become ships' masts and there the settlers set up small shops, a smithy, a mill, and eventually a tavern inn, which still stands today. As the community prospered, the houses grew in size; many striking examples of these homes still stand across from the common.

The most prominent building is the Old Killingly Hill Church (Congregational), built in 1747 from existing materials from the earlier structure it replaced. At that time a common was set aside



adjacent to the new building. The meetinghouse functioned as the community's decision-making site and its parishioners heatedly debated the issues of the day. When conflict with England seemed inevitable, they decided to train a militia on the spacious grounds beside the meetinghouse.

Nearly every local family had a member in the 11th Regiment under Israel Putnam (for whom the town was later named) in the prelude to the Revolutionary War. Many would later respond to the Lexington Alarm. In 1774, the residents raised a flag of their own design featuring a rising sun and other devices on a Liberty Pole atop Killingly Hill. Here the Sons of Liberty assembled. One English Loyalist reportedly threatened: "You know nothing of Old England; she will come and cut down your Liberty Pole." The rest, as they say, "is history."

After the war, entrepreneurs opened mills near the Quinebaug River, which provided abundant water power, and Putnam became a center of growth. Putnam Heights, as Killingly Hill came to be called, stood still and watched the changes taking place below, secure in its own "quiet corner." The common where the troops trained remained the same and, in 1976, a symbolic Liberty Flag was raised there. The church, rebuilt in 1819, is no longer open for religious services but is still used for special occasions.

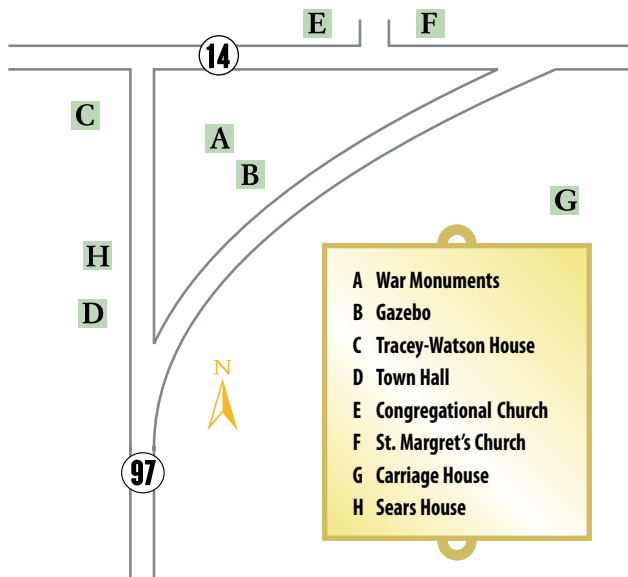
Back from the common stands a colonial cottage once home to the first minister, Rev. Perley Howe and his wife Demaris Cady. Now known as the Cady-Copp Cottage, this National Historic Landmark is being carefully conserved in its existing condition by the Town of Putnam and the local Aspinock Historical Society. Like the common and the church, it is a testament to Putnam's early history.

*Text by Ruth H. Flagg; Photo: Charlene Cutler*

THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# THE TOWN GREEN OF SCOTLAND

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Huntington Rd., Devotion Rd. and Center St., Rte. 14

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Phones, Restrooms, Information:** Town Hall

**Nearby:** Gov. Samuel Huntington Birthplace, 36 Huntington Rd. (Rte. 14); (860) 456-8381

The small, triangular Scotland Town Green is bordered by streets as well as by history. There, in 1780 on Huntington Rd., Gen. Rochambeau's carriage broke down as he rode to meet Gen. Washington in Hartford. The same local wheelwright who reluctantly fixed the conveyance was called upon again when the carriage broke down a second time on the return trip! In 1781, French troops marched along this road past the birthplace of Samuel Huntington, first President of the Continental Congress, on their way to the Battle of Yorktown.

The town's history began in 1700 when Scottish speculator Isaac Magoon bought land from Windham and named it Scotland Center. Gradual settlement led to a highway, gristmill, burying ground, livestock pound and school, although residents continued to attend church and town meetings in Windham Center. In 1732, a separate ecclesiastical society formed and chose a site on a knoll east of Merrick's Brook. Nathaniel Huntington deeded them a small parcel and in 1733 they held their first meeting in a building on the green. In 1751, he deeded another parcel "to be unfenced forever and free from encumbrances to accommodate the publick interest of said society on Sabbath Days and other days of publick interest." In 1772, a new meetinghouse was built on the site of the present Congregational Church and the original structure



was removed from the green. Fire safety concerns also led to the relocation of the schoolhouse.

By the early 19th century, Scotland had become an agricultural village built around the green. The early domestic buildings date from the late 18th century when the town flourished as a crossroads community. Especially impressive is the Tracey-Watson House, once a tavern, built by or for Lemuel Pettengill (c. 1760) at the southwest corner of Rtes. 14 and 97. The nearby Richard Warner House (1836) contains the bar front from the 1628 Windham Inn.

Scotland's agrarian fortunes declined until the mid-19th century when Merrick Brook's limited waterpower ushered in the Industrial Revolution. The present Congregational Church (1842) and adjacent chapel (1867) are both from this period. The school, expanded in 1896, became the state's first consolidated school. The G.H. Billing Hotel once stood across Center St.; all that is left of it, however, is the carriage house.

A sense of community and of Scotland's evolution is evident through the variety of buildings around the green. The contemporary St. Margaret's Church is juxtaposed with the Greek Revival Congregational Church, and the 1920s Sears cottage is tucked beside the 1896 town hall. The green is also a commemorative site with a central gazebo donated by the Scotland Garden Club and two stone memorials honoring the veterans of the Vietnam Conflict and World War II. The green has been the site of the town's 1957 Centennial Celebration, the annual carol sing, concerts, weddings and the annual Memorial Day parade. In 1991, the Second Congregational Church gifted the property to the Town and it continues to be the community's hub and heart.

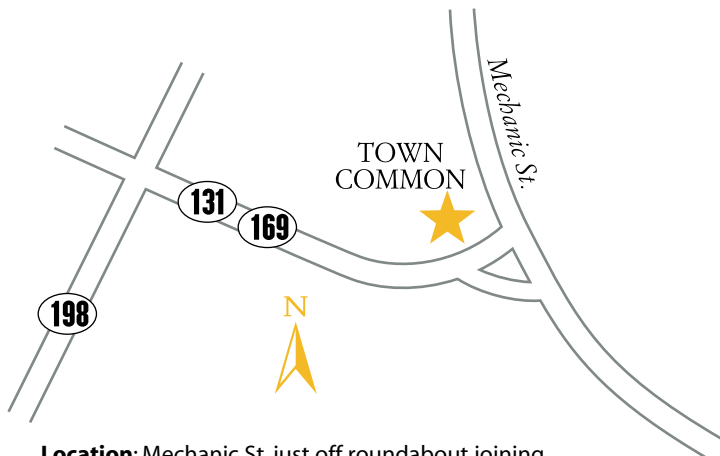
*Text by Georgia Stauffer, Polly Miller and information from CT Trust for Historic Preservation on-line at [www.towngreens.com](http://www.towngreens.com)*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*



# THE TOWN COMMON OF SOUTHBRIDGE

MASSACHUSETTS



**Location:** Mechanic St. just off roundabout joining Rtes. 131 and 169

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** North, Crystal, and Mechanic Sts. on northeastern edge of park

**Restrooms:** Town Hall (41 Elm St.)

**For further information:** Town Manager (508) 764-5405

The Southbridge Town Common was established in 1996 when the American Optical Capital Company generously donated a grassy park with trees and walkways across the street from its administration building. Because “AO Park” already existed, conveyance of the property to the town required no further funding campaigns, groundbreaking ceremonies or heavy construction and it was transferred into municipal care by little more than the stroke of a pen. The gesture provided space for a new police headquarters at the western end of the park, reserving the largest area for common use.

As a manufacturing community incorporated in 1817 from parts of Charlton, Dudley and Sturbridge, the town had never before had the advantage of a common. Its citizens warmly received the new facility, immediately referring to it as “The Town Common.” Soon thereafter, the DiGregorio family of United Lens had a gazebo designed and built at the eastern end of the park. In 1999, upon completion of both the gazebo and a rose and perennial garden donated by the Harrington Trust of Hyde Manufacturing Company, the first summer of weekly concerts on the common took place. As the park became the scene of weddings and photographs, concerts, festivals and special events, its transition from private park to town common was complete.



In 2000, the former AO administration building was redeveloped into a hotel and conference center. The façade and clock tower, which face the common, were supported with huge steel beams while the remainder of the building was demolished and then rebuilt behind them. Restored pendant lamps were reinstalled on the façade of the building. Both the building and park were ready to begin the new millennium with new personae, in harmony and style.

The park is prominently located where Rtes. 131 and 169, two major roads into town, join in a roundabout and lead into the downtown area. Motorists circumnavigating the roundabout have the clearest view of the changing visage of the rose garden and of the Quinebaug River, lying just to the east. Memorials within the roundabout honor Franco-American veterans, Gold Star Mothers, Italian American veterans, disabled veterans, and those who served in the Vietnam Conflict. Trees in the park have been well cared for throughout the years, and the American Optical Company's tradition of covering them with brightly colored holiday lights has been maintained. Maple trees were planted to augment the collection of mature spruce and rhododendron, daylilies, lavender, astilbe, coreopsis, plumbago, and other plantings.

*Text by Cassandra Acly*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*



THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# SPRAGUE



## Hanover Green

**Location:** Main St. at Potash Hill Rd. in Hanover

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** On-street

## War Memorial Park

**Location:** Park Dr. and Rte. 207 (W. Main St.) in Baltic

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** On-street

**For further information:** Sprague Historical Society  
(860) 822-3000 ext. 223

**H**anover Green, in the village of Hanover, has been used historically as a public gathering place. Today it remains as open space, governed by the Hanover Congregational Church. The small, 0.4-acre semicircle of land sloping slightly toward the east, was used as a children's play yard until the school was torn down. Except for the addition of a central flagpole and some shade trees, there have been no alterations to its rural nature. If it were not for the Congregational Church across Main St. at the northwest corner and the burying ground to the south, the grassy plot could easily be taken for the front yard of the early 19th-century house facing the green.

In 1763, when the Hanover Society separated from the one in Norwich, two parishioners deeded to the society the property where the church, green and burying ground now stand. Around it grew a small crossroads community including the



War Memorial Park



Hanover Green

house at the northeast corner, formerly the Lisbon Inn/Tavern (c. 1800); the Hanover General Store, razed c. 1920; a schoolhouse south of the present parish house, razed in 1966; and several 19th-century residences. The five buildings around the green today date primarily from the first half of the 19th century, dominated by the Congregational Church (1847). A gambrel-roofed house facing the dirt road with its several out-buildings is also a strong presence. The 20th-century parish house is the only modern edifice.

Not far away is the Sprague's **War Memorial Park**, which lies within a 19th-century company town developed by William Sprague III to support the textile mill he built in 1856 across the river. The area which is now the park was occupied by a boarding house and an athletic club built in 1856, damaged in the 1938 hurricane, and subsequently torn down. Five identical 19th-century wood frame duplexes frame the park on the west. To the south is the former company store. The second floor, which is now divided into apartments, at one time housed Sprague Hall, a community center used for meetings and entertainment.

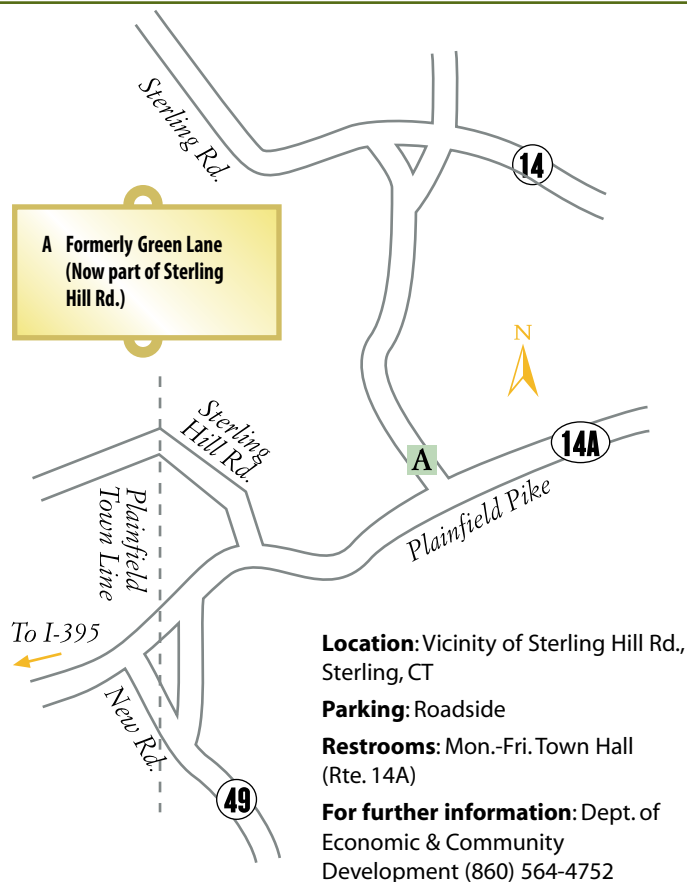
Bounded by Rtes. 97 and 207 and Park Dr., War Memorial Park was established in 1947. This long, triangular open space along the Shetucket River is used for Memorial Day services and other commemorative functions. A flagpole and war memorials honoring those who served in World Wars I and II, Vietnam and Korea joined the first permanent memorial constructed there. The Lords Bridge Gazebo hosts summer concerts and other town gatherings. Though relatively new, War Memorial Park, in the eyes of many local people, has evolved into the village's green because of its central location and commemorative function.

*Text based on information from CT Trust for Historic Preservation on-line at [www.towngreens.com](http://www.towngreens.com)*

*Photos: Charlene Cutler*

# THE TOWN GREEN OF STERLING HILL

CONNECTICUT



Sterling, CT, was originally part of Voluntown and with it made up the remote territory granted to those who had volunteered for service in the Narragansett Wars. Voluntown's population was large and contentious, and a dispute over where to build the meetinghouse in the town's long, narrow configuration threatened to split the settlement. Residents attended churches in other towns more convenient to their homes. Ellen Larned notes in her *History of Windham County* that many also belonged to smaller sects or took their example from neighboring Rhode Island "which led many to eschew all church-going and rate-paying," a reference to the practice of taxes being levied by and through the established church of the community.

By 1793, a proposition to divide Sterling from Voluntown met no opposition and in 1794 it was separately incorporated. Larned observes that "Sterling obtained town privileges without the customary struggle." The first town meeting was held at the house of Robert Dixon, Esq., on Sterling Hill, June 9, 1794. A committee was appointed to divide all of Voluntown's corporate property, to



settle the town line and make division of the poor. "Sheep and swine were allowed liberty 'to go on the common.'"

According to Larned, "the lack of a suitable place for holding town meetings was an annoyance and mortification to the leading men of the town." Since no religious society was ready to take the lead in erecting a house of worship and meetinghouse (the two were seen as inextricably linked), public-spirited citizens built one on Sterling Hill at their own expense. Though not centrally located, this "was virtually the head and heart of the town, the centre of business, the residence of the most influential citizens." A committee of subscribers obtained a deed for a building lot on the "east side of the Great Lane (now called the Green), . . . for the purpose of setting a meetinghouse and that only, and the convenience of a green." Beginning in the autumn of 1797, the town held public meetings and religious services there but no regular worship was maintained. Different religious societies used the meetinghouse until 1812 when the Baptists, having grown stronger, were able to maintain stated worship there and it was given to them.

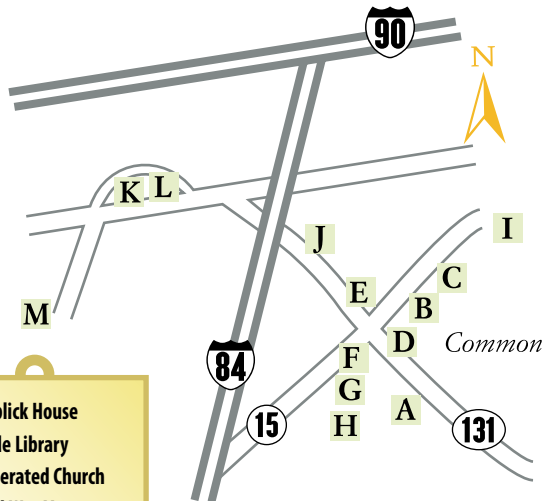
The height of Sterling Hill provides a lovely view of the surrounding country. The Sterling Hill Historic District is here, located between Green Lane (now part of Sterling Hill Rd.) and Rte. 14A; it is characterized by Greek Revival, Italianate, and Federal-style structures. The exact boundaries of the green are unknown but it was probably located adjacent to the church.

Text by Andrea Ader  
 Photo: Charlene Cutler



# THE TOWN COMMON OF STURBRIDGE

MASSACHUSETTS



- A Publick House
- B Hyde Library
- C Federated Church
- D Civil War Monument
- E Town Hall
- F Center School
- G WWII Monument
- H Old Burial Ground
- I North Cemetery
- J Post Office
- K Visitors Center
- L Rest Rooms
- M Old Sturbridge Village

**Location:** Rte.131

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** Behind Town Hall

**Restrooms & information:**  
Visitors Center on Rte. 20

The name "Sturbridge" comes from "Stourbridge" (Bridge over the River Stour), a town in England's West Midlands. Originally called "Tantuisquis," it was also known as "Dummer" and "New Medfield" before assuming its present name when it was incorporated on June 24, 1738. The town has been called the "Crossroads of New England" given the town's proximity to major state roads and interstate highways. In earlier times, the Native People's Connecticut Path and Providence/Oxford Path also came together here to become part of the Bay Path, running west from Boston.

Settled as an agricultural community, Sturbridge became a manufacturing town in the 1700s when the Quinebaug River was harnessed to provide waterpower for gristmills, hammermills, and eventually cotton and woolen textile mills. The river begins as a brook flowing from a swamp on the south side of town into Union, CT, and Holland, MA, before curling back into Sturbridge and thence south through the Thames Watershed.



Sturbridge is also known for the discovery of graphite in 1633 and, subsequently, the first mining operation in New England. Today, the major industry is tourism, which came with the establishment of Old Sturbridge Village, a recreated early 19th-century working community.

Sturbridge Common, a six-acre plot of common land, was used as a Revolutionary War training ground and a reenactment of the militia leaving for Boston in 1776 takes place there on the last Saturday in June. Surrounding the Common are the Old Burying Ground (1740-1894) where the earliest settlers are interred, the 1855 Center School, 1838 Town Hall, 1897 Joshua Hyde Library, the 1910 Federated Church (a union of Baptist, Congregational and Unitarian churches), the 1771 Publick House Historic Inn (the oldest continuing business in Sturbridge), and residences dating from the early 1800s, some of which were built as businesses.

Monuments honor men who died in the Civil War and World War II, and an honor roll lists servicemen from World War II, Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Marble plaques adorn the upper walls of the Town Hall to commemorate those who served in the Civil War, World War I, and the Spanish-American War. A small granite stone in front of Center School remembers Lt. Charles Collins of Baraboo, WI, whose plane crashed in Sturbridge in 1943.

Fairs were held on the common from 1855 to 1869 before being moved to the new Worcester South Agricultural Society fairgrounds. A bandstand built by volunteers in 1995 is used for summer concerts, weddings, prom pictures, and a live nativity pageant, while the common itself is the site of an annual October harvest festival, scarecrow contest and various other events.

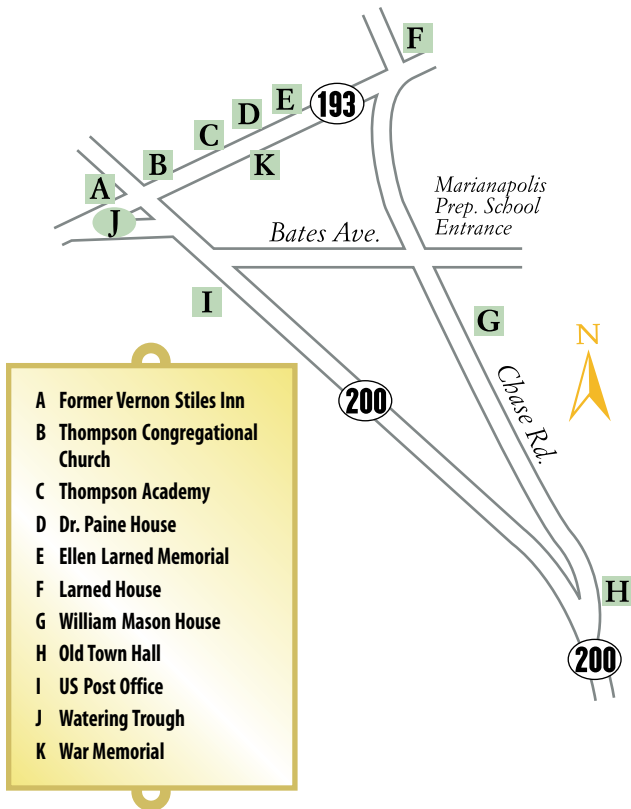
*Text: Robert Briere*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*

THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# THE TOWN COMMON OF THOMPSON

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Exit 99 off I-395 to Rte. 200 east for 1/2 mi.

**Wheelchair access:** No sidewalks; use local roads or grass

**Parking:** Along Bates Ave.

**Restrooms:** Congregational Church, Ellen Larned Museum and Old Town Hall when open.

**For further information:** Contact Thompson Historical Society (860) 923-3200 or visit [www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)

When the earliest buildings were constructed on Thompson Hill in the 1700s, today's manicured common did not exist. Ellen Larned, in her *History of Windham County*, describes how Benjamin Wilkinson improved the site in the 1770s: "Under his auspices the broken land about the meetinghouse was transformed into a comfortable common and training-field. He cut down the brush, dragged off stones and dug out the relics of aboriginal tree-stumps. The dilapidated pound was 'rectified' and an extensive peach orchard set out east of the common." The 1938 Works Progress Administration state guidebook notes that the common was a militia training ground on which troops from eastern Connecticut were mustered in 1775 at the Lexington alarm.



The boundaries of today's Common (Rtes. 200 and 193 and Chase Rd.) appear to have been established when earlier roads were set out at the turn of the 19th century. The Boston-Hartford Turnpike (1797) and the Providence-Hartford Turnpike (1803) made Thompson Hill a crossroads trading center with bustling shops and stagecoaches stopping at the taverns, including the former Vernon Stiles Inn.

Ellen Larned wrote that in 1845 Prof. William A. Larned lectured in Old Town Hall on "Beauty, Taste, Tree-Culture - all now summed up in the term, 'Village Improvements.' ... Spontaneous pledges were given by many of the hearers to aid in carrying out suggestions, and in November a day was devoted to setting out elm, maple and ash trees under the special oversight of Mr. William H. Chandler. Ten years later, the common left bare by the demolition of the old meetinghouse was made over to Thomas E. Graves, Esq., for fencing, smoothing and cultivation, which added much to its beauty and with later touches from the recent Village Improvement Society, and the growth and verdure of the trees, has brought it into fine condition."

Today, Thompson Common is owned by the Thompson Congregational Church and maintained by the Village Improvement Society of Thompson, a volunteer group informally organized in 1845. After the present church was built in 1856 at Rte. 193 and Quaddick Rd., the informal consensus on the planting and upkeep of the Common continued for 18 years; in 1874 the Village Improvement Society was officially founded to carry out the tradition begun 100 years earlier. The common is now at the center of the 440-acre Thompson Hill Historic District, which includes 130 buildings, 100 of which were constructed before 1935. The federal district and the buildings there were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. A new Ellen Larned Museum opened in the Old Library in 2003.

*Text: Jane Vercelli*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*

THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

# THE TOWN GREEN OF UNION

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Rte. 190 to Town Hall Rd.

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** Lots adjacent to Union Free Library and Congregational Church

**Restrooms:** None

Last of the towns east of the Connecticut River to be settled because of its rough terrain and poor soil, Union was sold by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1720 to twelve proprietors for £207. Before the town was incorporated in 1734, the proprietors established 200 acres for public use, with places for a meetinghouse, burying ground and parade ground. Today's green is a small wedge of publicly owned land at the north end of a 5.3-acre triangle bounded by Town Hall Rd., Buckley Hwy. (Rte. 190) and Kinney Hollow Rd. Within that triangle, in a larger, densely wooded portion known as the Town Grove, the first meetinghouse was erected in 1741. A 7-ton, 7-foot square monument of local granite, engraved with the names of the church's first pastors, was erected in 1908 to mark the location. In 1833, the town deeded the site where the Congregational Church of Union now overlooks the green to the Ecclesiastical Society.

A simple one-room schoolhouse (District I: Centre School) constructed in 1846 still stands on Town Hall Rd. In 1847, the "old" one-story, clapboard Town Hall was built on the green. Used for a court, town meetings and other town functions until 1955, it was dedicated as the Union Historical Society's Museum on the Green in 1975. Both Town Hall and Centre School were



built by local contractor and merchant Merrick Marcy, who employed 150 people manufacturing shoes and boots after the Civil War until 1876. He also constructed the "Marcy Block" of stores nearby, which was destroyed by fire in 1881.

In 1901, the foundation was laid for the Mothers' Soldier's Monument, a cannon supported on a rough-finished dark gray granite base. Initially 60 cannonballs formed four pyramids, one at each corner; today only one pyramid remains. On Memorial Day, 1902, it was "Dedicated in grateful memory, to the mothers who gave their sons, to the soldiers who gave their lives, and to those who daring to die, survived the War of the Rebellion 1861-65." One bronze plaque lists the soldiers from Union and another the charter members of G.A.R. Post #74. The green is also home to a descendent of the original Charter Oak presented during the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration, four young crabapple trees planted during Connecticut's 350th Celebration, and a Connecticut Historical Commission marker giving a brief history of Union. An open-air pavilion was dedicated in the Town Grove in 1984 to celebrate the town's 250th anniversary.

Since the town's founding, Union Green has been the center of the community's political, religious, educational and social life. Town gatherings and celebrations are still held there. Symbolically, visually and functionally, it is the heart of Connecticut's smallest town.

*Text & Photo: Jeannine Upson*

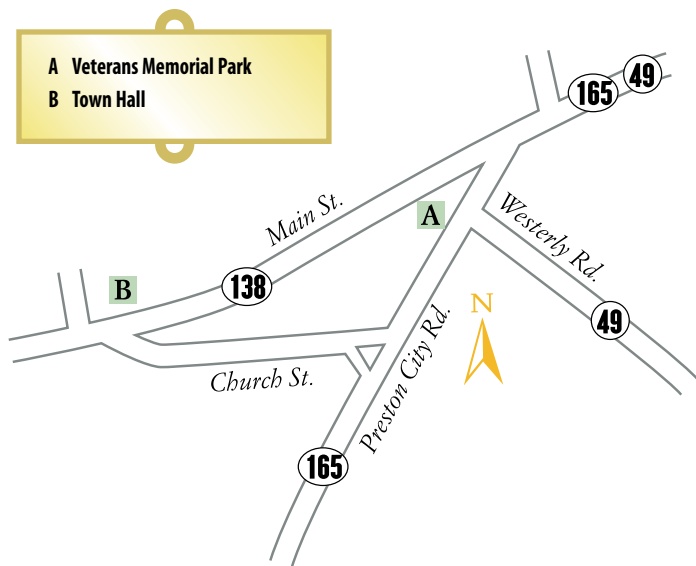


THE LAST GREEN VALLEY



# VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK OF VOLUNTOWN

CONNECTICUT



**Location:** Rtes. 165, 138 and 49

**Wheelchair access:** No

**Parking:** Along Rte. 165

**For further information:** Town Hall (860) 376-4089

In 1700, the Connecticut Assembly approved a petition to set aside a six-square mile tract that included the area of present-day Voluntown and Sterling for the “volunteers” of the Narragansett War; hence, the name “Voluntown.” In 1794, the towns separated and the original common on Sterling Hill ceased to be a part of Voluntown.

In 1953, a group of Voluntown veterans began a new tradition by establishing Veterans Memorial Park, a beautiful little triangle of land located at the junction of Rtes. 138 and 165. A wooden Honor Roll board bearing the names of local servicemen had stood in front of Town Hall in the early 1940s. Unfortunately, it had deteriorated beyond rescue. After the Korean War, however, returning veterans began working to establish a new monument. The public, choosing among entries posted in Town Hall, selected one made of “Rock of Ages” granite because of its long-lasting qualities and beauty. The price was \$1,800 ... no small amount in the 1950s!

The Committee worked tirelessly, organizing all sorts of fund-raising events. The State granted permission to erect the monument on state property and authority to name the site “Voluntown Veterans Memorial Park.” A signed agreement was filed in



the town records to insure that the monument could never be moved from state land. Army, Navy and Marine insignias are carved into the granite, as well as the following inscription:

DEDICATED TO THE VETERANS OF THE TOWN OF VOLUNTOWN,  
AND TO THOSE WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE.

LESTER R. CONGDON  
CLARENCE E. MACOMBER  
HAROLD M. VIOLETTE  
LIONEL L. MARCAURELE

ERECTED BY THE VETERANS OF THE TOWN OF VOLUNTOWN

On Memorial Day, 1956, Boy Scouts unveiled the monument erected by Buzzi Memorials. Actress/Comediene Ruth Buzzi, daughter of the company's owner, attended and the Norwich Concert Band played for the ceremonies. It was a great day for the Memorial Committee and a proud day for the town! In 2002, Voluntown resident Scott Medrzychowski helped to beautify the green as part of his Eagle Scout project. His plantings included a white oak descended from the historic Connecticut Charter Oak.

As Voluntown celebrates Memorial Day each year, it carries on a tradition dating back at least a century when parades honoring the town's war heroes began. Since 1956, there has been a ceremony each year at Veterans Memorial Park - thanks to a small group of dedicated veterans who felt it was important to remember our heroes.

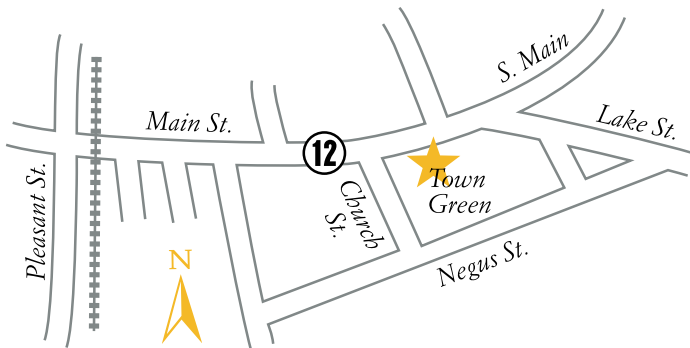
*Text: Nan Chapman*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*



# THE TOWN GREEN OF WEBSTER

MASSACHUSETTS



**Location:** Main and Church Sts.

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Restrooms and Parking:** Town hall (Main St.), Chester Corbin Library (Lake St.)

Located on Main St. in front of the town hall complex, Webster Green is considered the town's major political and social meeting place, the spot where all holiday parades wind down. Although the green is actually a late 19th-century creation, its striking appearance echoes the design of the many old commons that dot most New England towns.

After Samuel Slater established his first mills in Webster, the workers started settling the area in 1811. Later the Town of Webster was created when parts of two neighboring towns – the eastern part of Dudley and the south gore section of Oxford – were merged. Through Slater's personal efforts, the Commonwealth incorporated Webster in 1832. Slater named the town after one of his lawyers, the great American orator and politician, Daniel Webster.

Before he died in 1835, Slater stipulated that a railroad line be designed to run through Webster from Worcester, MA, to New London, CT. This new mode of transportation guaranteed that his family business could distribute the bulky textile products expeditiously and cheaply throughout the country. Because Samuel Slater ran an industrial textile empire that dominated New England from the 1790s, many historians regard him as one of the founders of the American Industrial Revolution. He and his family are buried at Mt. Zion Cemetery off Worcester Rd.



As part of Slater's plan for Webster's expansion, the present green was set between South Main St. and the United Church of Christ structure on Church St. The first major building there, the original Bartlett High School (1906), honored Webster High School principal Amos Bartlett, who led a detachment of local volunteers in the Civil War. The impressive Webster Town Hall was built in 1928 as an addition to the old high school which now faces a quiet back street. The current Bartlett High School is off Lake Parkway.

On the green between the Chester Corbin Library (1921) and Webster Town Hall stands a gazebo that hosts concerts and other public events. Webster recently designated an area there as the Walk of Fame. Funded by the town and the Massachusetts Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor Commission, the walk highlights a massive Civil War memorial, a statue of a World War II soldier, and various monuments to veterans of the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts. Thus, Webster Green still functions as a center for community meetings and memories.

*Text by John Parrillo*

*Photo: Charlene Cutler*





- A Site of Courthouse
- B Windham Inn
- C Post Office
- D Dr. Hunt's Office
- E Library (former Bank)
- F Former Hat Shop
- G Congregational Church
- H Site of Jail

**Location:** Southernmost junction of Rtes. 14 and 203

**Wheelchair access:** Curb cuts at the Green

**Parking:** Along the Green in front of the library or at Windham Center School

**Restrooms:** Windham Textile and History Museum (Willimantic) and some area gas stations

**For further information:** Windham Textile and History Museum in Willimantic (Rte. 14 west to Rte. 66/Main St.); website:

[www.millmuseum.org](http://www.millmuseum.org).

Windham is one of several towns in eastern Connecticut built on land willed to settlers by Joshua, Mohegan Sachem, son of Uncas, in 1675. The earliest known map shows the original house and pastures laid out around a green at the town's founding in 1686. Incorporated in 1692, Windham eventually included a meetinghouse, four taverns (serving residents as well as stage coaches), a tannery, stores, a smithy and a schoolhouse. Established as the county seat in 1726, it became one of eastern Connecticut's foremost inland towns. At its first court session on June 26, 1726, forty-six cases were tried but until the courthouse was built in 1729 the jail was a back room of a private home. The ghost of Betsy Shaw, the first person executed in the county (1745), is said to haunt the Windham Inn.



In 1754, according to a popular tale, citizens were awakened one night by a tumultuous noise and prepared for an Indian attack – the racket, however, was caused by bullfrogs fighting over water in the drought-ravaged pond! These legendary frogs would later be commemorated on Windham National Bank money and by huge bronze statues on Willimantic's new bridge called Thread City Crossing.

Prior to the American Revolution, a tax collector was hanged in effigy on the green. Later, French troops under the Comte de Rochambeau marched by it en route to assist Gen. Washington in ending the war. Today the green is surrounded by Colonial, Federal and Victorian style homes including the LaFollett sisters' small, gambrel-roofed home and millinery shop and the early 19th-century medical office of Dr. Chester Hunt. Since 1897, the old bank building has housed the Windham Free Library, which owns a 3-ft. wooden Bacchus carved in 1776 by four British soldiers imprisoned on the green. Here World War II and Vietnam War memorial plaques stand along with a descendant of Hartford's famous Charter Oak tree.

*Text: Bev York*

*Photos: Charlene Cutler and 1892 Bicentennial of Windham (courtesy of the Windham Historical Society)*

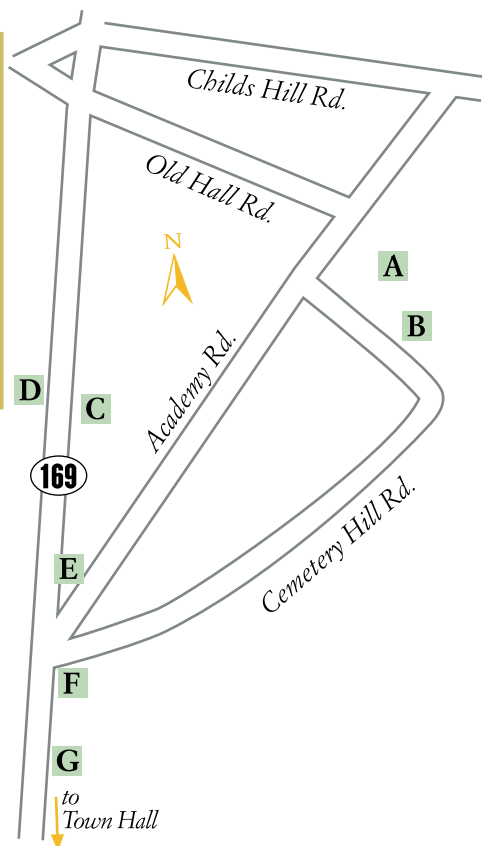


# THE TOWN COMMON ON WOODSTOCK

# HILL

CONNECTICUT

- A Woodstock Academy
- B Pres. Grant Plaque
- C Historical Marker
- D Roseland Cottage/  
Bowen House
- E War Memorial
- F First Congrega-  
tional Church
- G Woodstock  
Historical Society



**Location:** Rte. 169 at Academy Rd. and Child Hill Rd.

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** Along Academy Rd. or Cemetery Hill Rd.

**Restrooms:** The Bowen House (seasonal) and Town Hall

The Town of Woodstock is comprised of six villages, five of which have common lands. The 8.9-acre common on Woodstock Hill is as old as the community itself. This settlement was the first in a land grant of seven miles square offered by the Massachusetts Bay Colony to any citizens of Roxbury who would move to the grant and build houses within one year of settlement.

In 1684, four Roxbury men were sent out to “view the premises and find a convenient place” for settlement. They chose the area that encompasses most of what is now called Woodstock Hill. By 1686, settlers began arriving and a plan of development was drawn up. The Common at the north end of “the Plain Hill,” took up a very large portion of the planned area.



It was used as a training ground for the local militia and for such amenities as a powder house, stocks, and a whipping post. Part of the common was designated as a burial site, while another portion was set aside for a school.

Henry C. Bowen (1813-1896) lived as a child in a house next to the Common and remembered seeing the stocks and whipping post in use. The present Academy building on the common land was one of the many improvement projects initiated by Bowen, who made a large fortune in New York and returned to spend a great deal of it in the town in which he and his father had been born.

The Bowen family continued to be influential in Woodstock. Henry's house, known as Roseland Cottage, was the first in the area to be designed by an architect. Situated near the common, it is open to the public. His son Clarence, who wrote a comprehensive *History of Woodstock*, was active in the erection of the World War I monument on the Common. A World War II monument was added later.

Some trees on the common were planted by the Bowens but a significant elm was planted by President Ulysses S. Grant on the grounds of Woodstock Academy. It eventually succumbed to disease, but a new elm tree was planted in 2001 to replace it; the site is marked with a plaque.

*Text: Elizabeth B. Wood and Pam Russo*

*Photo: Woodstock Academy and Playing Fields on the Common, early 1900s (courtesy of Hall Family Collection)*



# THE OTHER COMMONS OF WOODSTOCK

CONNECTICUT

As the town continued to grow from its 1686 beginnings, other commons developed in the various villages. The half-acre **West Woodstock Common** was granted to the residents in 1743 when they requested recognition as a separate parish. A school, which no longer exists, was also built on the property. The present Church of the Good Shepherd was erected in 1892. Adjacent to it stands the West Woodstock Library, formed in 1806. The 1890's Williams Law Office, which once housed the library, was moved to serve as an addition to it.

**Location:** Rte. 171, Bradford Corner Rd., and Bungay Hill Rd.

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** Roadside

The **East Woodstock Common**, created in 1760, was originally used as a military training ground. Today, a modern white bandstand graces its center. Around the common stand the Congregational Church, a cemetery from the 1760s, a brick schoolhouse (now owned and used by the church), and several 19th-century structures including a library. Church fund-raising events were first held on the common following the Hurricane of 1939 which had collapsed the roof. The annual July 4th East Woodstock Jamboree continues that fund-raising tradition today.

**Location:** Woodstock Rd., Prospect St., and Dr. Pike Rd.

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** Church lot

The boundaries of both the **South Woodstock Common** and the South Baptist Church Common have been disputed. The land for the latter was originally granted to the Holmes family for a sawmill. A lawsuit later determined that the Town had usurped part of it for common use. The congregation of the Second Baptist Church moved there from Quasset in 1840 and the land around it was, on occasion, put to common secular use. The Samuel McClellan House is in the immediate vicinity of both commons, as is the American Legion hall that once housed the only two-room schoolhouse in Woodstock.

Many fine old shade trees dot the South Woodstock Common, created in 1686 but reduced to its present size by an 1813 lawsuit. In 1775, Capt. (later Gen.) McClellan mustered 45 men there following the alarm from Lexington and Concord. On that day, his wife planted the "McClellan Elms," the last of which perished in 1967. In 1975, the Woodstock Historical Society planted a disease-resistant elm during the Lexington Alarm re-enactment. Two seedlings of the McClellan elms were also planted on the grounds of the Samuel McClellan House.

Although begun as a military training ground, the common later functioned as a fairground, a site for band concerts and tag sales. A well there was capped in the 1970s and a small monument and flagpole were installed to honor A.L. Simonds, owner of the Linemaster Switch Corp., who initiated the replanting of the common. A time capsule was also buried in 1976 by the students of the Woodstock Public School, to be opened in 2086.

**Location:** South Woodstock Common: Rte. 169 and Roseland Park Rd.; South Baptist Church Common: Roseland Park Rd., Stone Bridge Rd., North Gate Rd., and Muddy Brook

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** Church lot or roadside

The grassy two-acre triangle of land known as the Woodstock **Plaine Hill Common**, marks the end of Woodstock Hill. This parcel was originally part of the land bought in 1816 by William Bowen, grandfather of Henry C. Bowen. William built Plaine Hill as a gentleman's farm and it was owned by six generations of Bowens until it passed out of the family's hands in 1982. The Georgian-style building now houses the privately-owned Inn at Woodstock Hill.

**Location:** Plaine Hill Rd. and Rte. 169

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** Roadside or at Inn lot

**Restrooms:** Restaurants patrons only

Covering three quarters of an acre, the **North Woodstock Church Common** was created in 1831 and is owned by the North Woodstock Congregational Church, a parish resulting from a split with the East (formerly North) congregation. The Town then granted ample land to the church with the understanding that it might be used for secular as well as religious purposes. Surrounding the common are 19th-century houses and small businesses.

**Location:** Rtes. 197 and Scenic 169

**Wheelchair access:** Yes

**Parking:** Church lot

*Text by Pam Russo and Elizabeth B. Wood*



THE LAST GREEN VALLEY

*There are 35 towns in The Last Green Valley:*

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Canterbury, CT  
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**The Last Green Valley, Inc.**

P.O. Box 29  
203B Main Street  
Danielson, CT 06239-0029

P.O. Box 186  
Southbridge, MA 01550

860-774-3300  
860-774-8543 fax  
Email: [mail@tlgv.org](mailto:mail@tlgv.org)  
[www.thelastgreenvalley.org](http://www.thelastgreenvalley.org)

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