

Simsbury, Connecticut
Historical and Architectural Resources Inventory
West Simsbury and Wolcott Road Area
2013



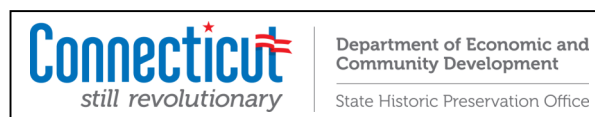
Rachel Carley, Project Historian

Sponsors:

Simsbury Department of Planning and Land Use

Simsbury Historic District Commission

Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office



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Rachel Carley
Litchfield, Connecticut
March 2013

Methodology

This survey of historic and architectural resources of Simsbury, Connecticut was conducted under the auspices of the Simsbury Planning Department and the Simsbury Historic District Commission by Rachel Carley, an architectural historian and preservation consultant based in Litchfield, Connecticut. Funding was provided by the Commission on Culture and Tourism, Department of Economic & Community Development. The purpose was to add to the database of previously surveyed resources in the town by focusing on rural and agricultural properties, primarily west of the Farmington River in the West Simsbury area, and in the historic Wolcott Road district in the northeast corner of town. The consultant made a specific effort to include barns and other agricultural outbuildings.

Sites cover a time period extending primarily from the mid-1700s to the 1930s and were selected on the basis of their architectural or historical significance and as representations of particular periods, styles and types. No attempt was made to locate archaeological sites, which would have been beyond the scope of this project.

The consultant undertook research, fieldwork and photography in late 2012 and early 2013, using a preliminary listing compiled from data on record at the Simsbury Office of the Tax Assessor, which she refined as the fieldwork progressed. Copies of the final report have been deposited with the Simsbury Department of Planning and Land Use, the Simsbury Historical Society, the Simsbury Public Library and the Department of Economic and Community Development in Hartford. Microfiche copies of the report will be deposited by the DECD at the Connecticut State Library and at the Homer Babbidge Library at the University of Connecticut.

Surveys of this type provide accurate historical and architectural data. They identify buildings, sites and districts worthy of further study and preservation and serve as the basis for nominations of properties to the National Register of Historic Places. It is hoped that the information included here will not only be a useful planning tool for the Town of Simsbury, but will also benefit citizens by helping them make informed decisions about the historic buildings, landscape features and other resources found on their properties and throughout town.

Survey Area and Criteria for Selection

The survey was conducted in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation (National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior). Criteria for evaluation of properties were based on those of the National Register of Historic Places, administered by the National Park Service under the supervision of the Secretary of the Interior. Properties listed on the National Register include districts, individual structures, sites and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture, and that contribute to the understanding of the history of the states and of the nation. The National Register criteria for evaluation state that:

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

- a. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history, or;
- b. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, or;

- c. that embody the distinctive characteristics of type, period or method of construction; or that represent the work of a master; or that possess high artistic values or that represent a distinctive and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, or;
- d. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

The inventory also includes structures that may not clearly demonstrate National Register eligibility as individual resources, but are nevertheless associated with an important person or event; or have architectural significance; or while not exceptional on their own, illustrate certain styles or construction methods or contribute to the historical context of the neighborhood or vicinity. These sites may represent clear patterns of settlement and land development or otherwise enhance the understanding of Simsbury's history. A discussion of individual buildings and groups of buildings that appear to meet National Register criteria may be found in the Recommendations section of this report.

Because this survey provides a way to identify and record alterations for the historical record, structural and cosmetic changes *per se* did not necessarily preclude resources from inclusion. Buildings were excluded, however, when the alterations made it impossible to identify the stylistic or historic origins of a resource or changed a property to such a degree as to seriously compromise its significance.

Resources

The project historian conducted research in materials on file in the Simsbury Town Clerk's office, the Simsbury Historical Society, the Simsbury Public Library and the Connecticut State Library. Among the materials consulted were historic maps, land records, census records, archival photographs and newspaper articles. The consultant also relied on interviews with homeowners and consulted published histories and other secondary sources. The digital historical archive of *The Hartford Courant* was another resource.

The Inventory Form Explained

A standard digital resource inventory form issued by the Office of Culture and Tourism was prepared for each surveyed site according to guidelines supplied by the commission, which is the agency responsible for historic preservation in Connecticut. The form provides fields for a physical description, an account of alterations, a statement of architectural and historical significance and a listing of notable/useful information sources. Descriptions are based on an on-site survey, when field notes are recorded for each property. Although this report is primarily concerned with the exteriors of buildings, the project director occasionally included information about notable interior features for the historical record when it was available. Sites are not marked as accessible to the general public unless they are commercial, religious or public properties that are open during posted hours.

Identification, Date and Location: Each site is assigned an alphanumeric inventory form (IF) number. Street names, numbers and homeowners were recorded as they appeared in the Simsbury Tax Assessor records at the time the information was collected. Tax assessor field cards also provided the approximate dimensions of structures and information about materials that was confirmed or revised as part of the on-site field survey. The date of construction was usually based on information from tax records, title searches, historic maps and from additional primary and secondary sources, and occasionally on a visual assessment. The photograph(s) on each form show as much of the significant fabric as possible. When ancillary structures and outbuildings at a

given address constitute significant groupings, or are assigned their own street addresses in tax records, they are recorded, numbered and photographed individually. Otherwise, the project historian has included a photograph of pertinent outbuildings on the main inventory form.

Materials and Condition: Materials were identified and exterior condition was assessed as part of the visual record made during fieldwork. Buildings lacking obvious problems (by eye) were deemed structurally sound with the designation “good.” The designations of “fair” and “poor” denote problems like deteriorating siding or roofing materials, badly peeling paint and rotting, failing or missing elements. “Deteriorated” was reserved for buildings that are failing structurally beyond much hope of repair, due to lack of maintenance and/or because they are vacant or being vandalized.

Architectural Style: An architectural style was identified on the inventory forms whenever the structure, material and decorative elements supported such a clear style designation (Colonial, Greek Revival, etc.) according to generally accepted designations used by historians in Connecticut. The term “vernacular” refers to localized building types associated with a given period but do not exhibit any clearly identifiable, or high-style, features. For terms and styles, the project historian used a variety of sources, including *A Dictionary of Architecture*, by John Fleming, Hugh Honour and Nikolaus Pevsner (Penguin Books, 1977 reprint); *A Field Guide to American Houses*, by Virginia and Lee McAlester (Alfred A. Knopf, 1984); *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture*, edited by Cyril M. Harris (Dover Publications, 1983); and *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* (Henry Holt, 1994), by Rachel Carley (the consultant on this project).

Explanations of some of the most frequently used typology and stylistic terms that appear in this study are as follows:

Colonial, Post-Revolutionary and Classical Styles



Red Gate, 162 Old Farms Rd, five-bay center-chimney cape, c. 1735 (dormers added)

As elsewhere in Connecticut, most of the pre-Revolutionary building in Simsbury consisted of wooden structures fabricated with a *post-and-beam* frame, which was hand hewn, joined and pegged using a technology transplanted to the colonies by English settlers. The commonly encountered *center-chimney* type incorporates a simple plan in which the rooms revolve around a centrally placed chimney. The facade usually displays a symmetrical design, with a center door flanked by one or two windows to make the respective *three-bay* or *five-bay* arrangement. Second-story windows usually tuck directly under the roof eaves. The compact *cape* (one or one-and-one-half stories) is a traditional center-chimney form, characterized by a

low-slung roof (with or without dormers) that drops downward to meet the window and door tops.

An iconic Connecticut form, the two-story, five-bay center-chimney farmhouse was well established in Simsbury by the mid-1700s. The ample proportions and stately aspect of the c. 1782 Tuller Homestead at 265 Farms Village Road (IF 40) define a type that became prevalent around the 1760s and prevailed even after the Revolutionary War. Positioning such a large

dwelling on a slight rise was fairly common in Connecticut, and likely done to emphasize the building's prominence—an architectural statement of the time.



Tuller Homestead, 265 Farms Village Road, center-chimney type, c. 1782

A number of houses in the survey area display an interesting, somewhat subtle, variant of the center-chimney form, characterized by a very broad facade with widely spaced windows and a low roof pitch. The c. 1763 Jerris Spring House (8 Westledge Road; IF 134), the 1784 Jared Case House (11 Woodchuck Hill; IF 153) and the Will Case House (444 Bushy Hill Road; IF 18) all share these attributes. Another distinctive feature of the town's Revolutionary-era houses is a full gable cornice return (223 Farms Village Road; IF 26).



Will Case House, 444 Bushy Hill Road, c. 1743, low roof pitch

English building traditions, which dominated Connecticut architecture for generations, tended to take hold first in the colony's well-populated river and coastal settlements. Traditions crossed the Atlantic Ocean with the help of British pattern books and itinerant housewrights who helped spread new ideas inland to rural areas from more cosmopolitan coastal settlements. The British influence is clearly evident in the preference for classically inspired design features, which the English aristocracy enthusiastically adapted

from Italian Renaissance models (in turn based on ancient Roman precedents) beginning in the late 1600s. Classical taste grew increasingly pronounced in this country during two phases of colonial architectural development, known (by American historians) as the **Georgian** (c. 1750–80) and **Federal** (c. 1780–1830) styles, which followed the English models with about thirty-year time lag.

The term Georgian denotes an English-colonial style that proliferated in New England during the reigns of King George I, II and III and is now loosely applied to much of the pre-Revolutionary-era architecture in America. There is no high-style Georgian building to be found in the survey area, but the symmetrical five-bay format evident in most colonial farmhouses here can be attributed to the Georgian influence.

The Federal style, fashionable in Connecticut in the decades following the Revolutionary War, is named for its close association with an affluent mercantile class of American Federalists who maintained ties to Britain after Independence. High-style Federal design was relatively scarce outside American port cities, but its impact is apparent in a general shift from the robust forms and ornament of Georgian building to more attenuated proportions and delicately rendered



223 Farms Village Rd., c. 1717, full cornice return

motifs (swag, urn, rosette) and geometric elements associated with *Adamesque* design. Favored decorations include the *ellipse* (frequently carved into mantelpieces), and the flattened fanlight, often used over entries and in gable peaks. Note the elegant entry at 455 Bushy Hill Road (c. 1834; IF 19) framed by flattened columns and crowned by a beautiful leaded fanlight.



455 Bushy Hill Road, c. 1834

relatively universal in Simsbury by the early 1800s and lasted through the Federal period. Hallmarks of the style include a trim, rectangular silhouette and low, hipped roof (455 Bushy Hill Road; IF 19). The 1834 Amasa Bacon Jr. House (IF 109) at 210 Old Farms Road is a great example of a center-hall Federal-period house interpreted in local brownstone.

By the 1830s the Federal style was phasing out in favor of its universal

As stylistic tastes advanced, builders rejected the old-fashioned center-chimney format in favor of the more sophisticated *center-hall* form, yet another transplant from Great Britain. In this traditional *double-pile* type (two rooms deep), a hall runs on axis with the door through the center of the building, and the chimneys are located at or near the building's gable ends (70 Hop Brook Road and 210 Old Farms Road; IF 71 and IF 109). The center-hall plan was



Amasa Bacon Jr. House, Federal style, 1834, 210 Old Farms Rd.



70 Hop Brook Rd., Federal style, c. 1830

replacement: the **Greek Revival** style. As its name suggests, the Greek Revival reflects the influence of classical orders (Doric, Ionic and Corinthian), incorporating motifs and design principles that are specifically associated with ancient Greek (rather than Roman) architecture. Greek Revival buildings are often (but not always) turned end-to-front so that the short *gable end*—rather than the long side—serves as the façade.



Dwight Bacon House, 533 Firetown Road, Greek Revival style (gable front variant), c. 1840

In the gable-front variant, the main entry is frequently located off center, necessitating a *side-hall* plan. The survey area preserves many great examples, including the Dwight Bacon House (c. 1840) at 533 Firetown Road (IF 53), on which the gable is framed by its cornice in a triangular silhouette to suggest the look of a classical pediment. A particularly distinctive, and local, feature of the Bacon house is its recessed gable paneling, designed to emphasize the triangular profile of the roofline. The same feature appears on the Noah and Asa Hoskins Houses (85 and 100 Hoskins Road; IF 82 and IF 83). All three buildings may have been

the work of John Shaw, an Irish joiner, who is the documented builder of 100 Hoskins Road. Many of Simsbury's Greek Revival farmhouses exhibit a *trabeated* (post-and-lintel) entry treatment, framed by flattened columns, known as *pilasters*, and surmounted by a simple, horizontal (never peaked) entablature. The palmette, anthemion (honeysuckle) and Greek key, or fret, are traditional decorative motifs of the era. Rectangular gable windows, typically fabricated with geometric or otherwise decorative *muntins* (dividers) are another signature feature of the Greek Revival style, which lasted into the mid 19th century.

Victorian and Early 20th-Century Styles

The Victorian era (c. 1840–1905) introduced to America a period of highly romanticized, *picturesque* styles, often rooted in European revivals like the medieval Gothic. During this era—which coincided with the Industrial Revolution—the balance and order that defined earlier,



328 Firetown Rd., 1903, Victorian Vernacular

classical, styles were rejected in favor of exotic decoration, asymmetrical floor plans and lively silhouettes created with intersecting gables, projecting bays and porches.

By the last quarter of the 1800s, the lightweight *balloon frame*, fabricated from stock-sized lumber, had replaced the hand-hewn timber frame of the colonial era. Fanciful wooden brackets, gable tracery, turned posts and spindles, novelty shingles and other assembly-line millwork also flooded the market. An especially noteworthy advance was the high-speed mechanical scroll saw, or

jigsaw, which made it possible to mass produce the decorative “gingerbread” associated with Victorian design—instant embellishments that could be ordered inexpensively from catalogues and nailed on quickly and cheaply. Mechanized production also made possible the large panes of window glass introduced during this era, resulting in the 2/2 glazing widely employed for window sash. Multi-hued paint schemes came into fashion as well.

The terms **Victorian** and **Victorian vernacular** are used to identify 19th-century

buildings that display forms and features of the period (overhanging roof eaves, for example, or tall, narrow gables), but that generally lack high-style features linked to a particular style. Typically defined by vertical proportions (encouraged by the lightweight balloon-frame construction), Victorian houses in Simsbury tend to display an L-shaped plan, created with two intersecting gabled blocks—a very characteristic layout for vernacular houses in the second half of the 1800s. Whimsical scrollwork (machine-cut wooden ornament) adds interest, shadow and variety to otherwise simple structures.



134 County Road, Italianate villa, c. 1850

Among the first of the Romantic Victorian styles to take hold in the 19th century was the *Italianate*, an improbable (for New England) style rooted in the medieval building traditions of Tuscany and first fashionable in the 1840s and 1850s. In rural areas, the Italianate found its chief expression in the *villa*, a comfortable form of country house promulgated by A.J. Downing and A.J. Davis, leading tastemakers of the day.

the villa type, which is defined by squarish proportions, a very low-pitched *hipped* (four-sided) roof finished with a projecting cornice mounted on cut-out brackets, and, often (not here), a rooftop cupola. The tall, two-over-two double-hung sash windows and bracketed entry porch with a segmentally arched opening on the County Road house are highly characteristic of the style.

By the turn of the century, the architectural pendulum was swinging back toward traditional New England styles, a trend influenced by the architectural and history pavilions featured at the 1876 Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia. An outgrowth of the nostalgia

No. 134 County Road (IF 23) is a fine Simsbury example of

inspired by the centennial, the **Colonial Revival** style originated as a fashionable movement in the development of resort and country-house architecture.

The “revival” relied on iconic colonial building features—the fanlight window, for example, or pedimented entry—and familiar silhouettes like the double-pitched gambrel roof to evoke (rather loosely) a sense of New England tradition. No. 69 Hop Brook Road (IF 70) is a great example of the period, notable for the use of shingle and fieldstone—materials that specifically recall the New England vernacular. The eyebrow



69 Hop Brook Rd., Colonial Revival, 1901

widow and diamond shingle patterns on the house are characteristic of the revival’s **Shingle Style** variant.

By the first decade of the 20th century, the wide availability of mail-order builders’ plans helped bring a range of modest, affordable house styles into the mainstream. Arts-and-crafts

furniture maker and popular tastemaker Gustav Stickley (1858–1942), publisher of *Craftsman* magazine (1901–16), is credited with introducing the bungalow to the American consumer, who increasingly saw it as the expression of a newly informal American lifestyle. This appealing house type met the demand for a well-built, comfortable residence that could be erected at reasonable cost. With its bracketed eaves, low-slung roofline, overhanging porch and chunky rubblestone base, the stucco-faced bungalow at 20 Westledge Road (IF 135) exemplifies the type.

By the 19 teens and twenties, popular magazines like *Ladies Home Journal* were filling their pages with plans for bungalows and other modest suburban residential types. Among the basic, and ubiquitous, models of the day was a vernacular gable-entry farmhouse type like the 1920 example at 316 Bushy Hill Road



20 Westledge Rd., Bungalow, 1924

(IF 13). A porch added a bit of character to the front, and the low headroom on the upper floor could be expanded with dormers.

In another development, manufacturing and retail companies like Sears Roebuck and Gordon Van-Tine began aggressively marketing construction plans, as well as fully prefabricated houses. Ordered from a catalogue, a complete kit of pre-cut building parts could be shipped by rail car—labeled and numbered for construction—to virtually any town in the country with a freight depot. Between 1908 and 1940, Sears alone sold some 70,000 houses and marketed more than 440 styles. The tiny cottage (1927) at 408 Bushy Hill Road (IF 14) resembles the four-room “Rosita,” from the 1926 catalogue of Sears Modern Homes; the Rosita sold for \$772. Sears was not only happy to modify their basic plans according to the requests of the buyers, but also worked with blueprints submitted by their customers. Variations of the types and style were therefore infinite.

Meanwhile, the **Colonial Revival** had by the 1920s emerged as a favorite choice for suburban houses, finding a welcome place in the timeline of American favorites. Dating from a pre-World War II Phase of suburban residential building in Simsbury,



408 Bushy Hill Rd., 1926



316 Bushy Hill Rd., 1920

FOUR ROOMS AND PORCH

Home-Kit
The Rosita \$772.00
 No. 2068 - 4 Rooms and Porch
 No. 2069 - 4 Rooms and Porch
 No. 2070 - 4 Rooms and Porch

As the prices quoted we will furnish all the material to build this four-room house, including lumber, roofing, paper, paint, trim, hardware, etc., except the plumbing, heating, and electric work, which are extra. We will also furnish the foundation, and the lot on which to build. See page 115 for full details.

See the FULLY COMPLETE with full range of options, America's best value for the money.
 No. 2068 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2069 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2070 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00

ALMOST anybody can own a home when the materials are furnished for these remarkable low prices. This is particularly true when, as in the present instance, the material comes already cut and fitted. This reduces the cost of expert labor. Has good wood sheathing under the narrow level siding and when built according to our specifications will be warm enough for any climate. The finished porch gives it a finished appearance, and the Fire-Proof Shingle Roofing, which we furnish in either dark or sea green color, gives you roof protection, either from rain or sun, for more than seventy years.

Main Floor There are four good size rooms in this house, all well lighted and properly ventilated. A central hall leads from the porch into the living room, from which doors lead into the kitchen and bathroom. Another door leads from the kitchen to the rear porch. A closet is located from the living room to the rear porch.

We furnish our best "Quality Guaranteed" mill work, shown on pages 116 and 117. Interior finish is fireproof paint, with trim and flooring of much of yellow pine, in beautiful grain and color. Windows are made of clear California white glass, with good quality glass set in with low grade of putty. Paint has to be one good finishing.

Paint for three coats inside, your choice of color. Varnish and wood filler for exterior finish. Standard Design Booklet, see page 115.

Build on a concrete thick foundation, frame construction and sided with narrow level clear cyprus siding. Fire-Proof Shingle Roofing for the roof, guaranteed for seventy years.

Basement under entire house, 7 feet high.

Options
 No. 2068 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2069 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2070 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2071 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2072 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2073 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2074 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2075 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
 No. 2076 - 4 Rooms and Porch, \$772.00
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Page 90, SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO.

nos. 86 Old Farms Road and 291 Bushy Hill Roads are representative of one of many variations on the “colonial” theme, often labeled **Dutch Colonial** because of the gambrel roof profile with flaring eaves. Intersecting gables, clapboard siding, simple door hoods, paired windows and enclosed sun porches are typical of these attractive interpretations of a perennial favorite.



291 Bushy Hill Rd. , Colonial Revival, 1929



86 Old Farms Rd., Colonial Revival, 1925

Vernacular Barns and Outbuildings

English Barn (18th and 19th century): This basic barn type is a peak-roofed timber-framed building with three interior *bays*, or sections, divided by post-and-beam *bents*. The main entrance



English barn, 264 Old Farms Rd.

is located on the long side of the building rather than in the short, gable end. It is usually possible to determine a rough date for a timber-



108 Westledge Rd., square-rule timber frame

framed barn based on its construction. The *scribe rule* method of framing, involving hand-scribed joints, was used prior to about the 1820s or 1830s. The joints were usually identified with “marriage marks,” often Roman numerals or chisel marks. After about the 1830s, the *square rule* method came into use. The square rule allowed a builder to standardize the joints, which can be identified by rectangular notches.



Bank Barn (Westerberg), Hopmeadow St.

Bank Barn (19th and 20th century):

This traditional form takes its name from its multi-level construction; the barn is excavated at the lower story, or *banked*, into a sloping site in order to provide ground-level access at more than one story. Bank barns are notable for substantial

stone foundations that can run as deep as ten feet. As the foundation adjusts to the slope, it forms the interior (under-grade) wall, or walls, of the lower level. Many of these barns also incorporate retaining walls. This type did not come into widespread use in Connecticut before the 19th century.

Gable-Front Barn (19th and 20th century): In this peak-roofed barn type, the main entry is located in the short gable end—a common 19th-century form.

Dairy Barn (20th century): This amply proportioned barn type usually incorporates a concrete milking area laid out with an efficient system of tie-ups or steel-pipe stanchions fronted by feed troughs and backed by litter alleys. The roof might feature a double-pitched *gambrel* design to accommodate more space for the hay stored at the loft level. A triangular hood usually projects over the loft door to protect the tackle used for hauling hay via a track-and-pulley system.



Ground-level Dairy Barn (Covenant Presbyterian Church), 1947, 124 Old Farms Rd.

Tobacco Shed (20th century):

Simsbury is fortunate to have many surviving examples of the Connecticut Valley tobacco shed, used for curing tobacco leaves for both sun-grown and shade-grown varieties. The traditional



Tobacco barn, horizontal hinge ventilating system, Hoskins Rd.

regional form is a long, rectangular structure with a peaked roof, concrete footings and a dirt floor. The framework typically consists of a parallel series of transverse *bents*, or

frames, fixed in place at even intervals (often fifteen feet) with horizontal *girts*, whose placement

corresponds to the location of the building's side posts. The result is an open *bay*, or aisle, running the full length of the structure. A barn in which the frames are arranged in pairs is known as a *two-aisle* shed; a series of three frames side by side creates a *three-aisle* layout. Laths laid across horizontal rails spanning the bays serve as a drying rack to which tobacco leaves are tied for curing. Most of the Simsbury barns are ventilated with one of two systems. In one, the building is covered with horizontal wood siding in which the boards are hinged at even intervals on their tops so they can be opened and closed simultaneously using a pole handle. A second system employs vertical siding and side hinges. The sheds usually have gable entries and some method for rooftop ventilation, including low wooden ridge ventilators, metal ventilators or a combination of both. Many of the tobacco sheds in town were built by L. Carleton Donaldson, who also constructed sheds in East Granby and Suffield.

Historical and Architectural Overview

Located in the northern reaches of the Farmington Valley, some fifteen miles northwest of Hartford, Simsbury enjoys a well-deserved reputation as a desirable suburb, distinguished by a traditional New England character and a rich architectural heritage. This community of about 34.5 square miles is roughly rectangular in shape, bordered by Granby on the north, by Canton on the west, by Avon on the South, by Bloomfield on the east and southeast and by East Granby on the northeast. Home to about 23,000 people, the town has an attractive commercial and civic center that straddles Hopmeadow Street (Route 10), a busy thoroughfare running north/south parallel to the Farmington River to its east. Streets located close in to the center are fairly densely developed, whereas the districts to the east and west unfold into countryside, where housing developments are interspersed with farm fields and tracts of undeveloped land.

Geographically, the entire town is essentially a valley, hemmed in by hills and mountain ridges: on the east is Talcott Mountain, part of the Metacomet Ridge, a mountainous traprock ridgeline, and to the west are the West Mountains, incorporating the smaller Hedgehog and Sugarloaf and Weed Hills. Two adjoining humps at the northwest corner of town have long been known as the Barndoor Hills for a silhouette said to resemble a pair of open barn doors. In addition to the Farmington River, which runs on the east side of town—and was once replete with shad and salmon—there are numerous ponds and waterways. Bissell's Brook flows through Simsbury's northwest corner; Munnisunk Brook runs near the Granby line; Saxton Brook empties into the Farmington River; Grimes Brook parallels much of Firetown Road north of Hoskins Station; Hop Brook travels through West Simsbury to the Farmington River.

As first settled by colonists, Ancient Simsbury encompassed a significantly larger area than today—stretching from Avon at the south to the Massachusetts line on the north, and comprising present-day Granby, East Granby, Canton and the western portion of Bloomfield. (The southern, Avon line is the only border that remains the same.) This region constituted part of the greater tribal lands of the Massacoes, members of the Algonquin-speaking peoples. The earliest known attempt at English settlement here dates to 1642, when the General Court of Connecticut granted permission for a group of Windsor, Connecticut settlers to take up lands in the newly designated “Massacoe Plantation,” which was initially annexed to Windsor. There is no sure record that anyone arrived in this first settlement frontier west of the Connecticut River Valley before 1660, when a committee for Windsor granted land to John Moses, Josiah Hull, Nathan Gillett and Daniel Clark.¹

By 1663 formal allocation of land had begun, and ten years after those early forays by the Windsor group, the settlement was at last incorporated in 1670 as the independent town of Simsbury. Official boundaries were laid out, enclosing an area ten miles square that extended west to Cherry's Brook in present-day Canton.² Six years later, with their fledgling community just underway, inhabitants buried their valuables and fled Simsbury under threat of attack during the armed conflict between British settlers and natives known as Metacomet's, or King Philip's, War. Setting fire to the abandoned settlement, Native Americans destroyed the dwellings of some forty families. According to legend, the devastation occurred at the hands of Metacomet, called

¹ In this period, interest in settling the new town stemmed in part from the refusal of Windsor's conservative Congregational Church to accept the half-way covenant, a controversial and short-lived Congregationalist doctrine (1657–62) that permitted a partial church membership for people who had not had a true conversion experience.

² Since the incorporation of Simsbury in 1670, the boundaries have altered significantly. Granby's 1786 incorporation reduced the size of the town by roughly half. When Canton was created in 1806, another large section on the west side of Simsbury was absorbed into that town. In 1843 Bloomfield annexed a one-mile strip of land, once again changing the Simsbury borders.

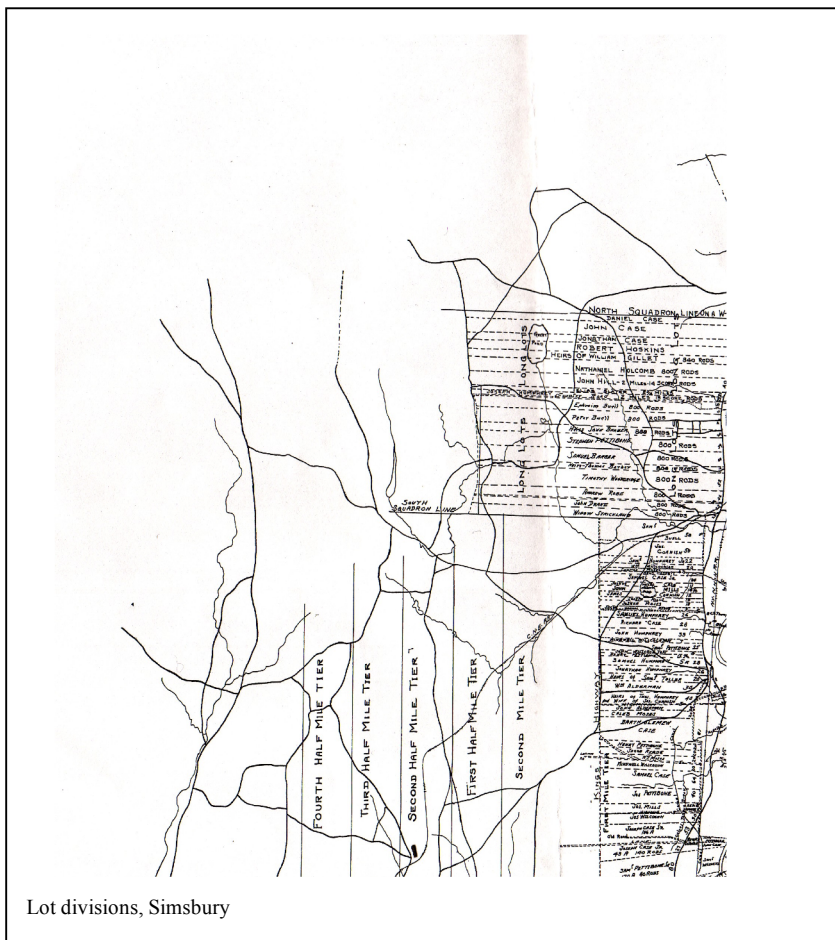
King Philip by English colonists. The sachem reportedly watched the spectacle—the only organized Native American invasion of any Connecticut town—from a cave on Talcott Mountain just south of the Hartford Road.

By 1701 colonists had begun reconstruction. As was customary in Connecticut, settlers formed a land company known as a proprietorship, in which the investing members owned any undivided acreage as a corporation. The group allocated shares as needed in periodic divisions, typically known as tiers or pitches. Home lots were laid out in the first “mile tier” (mile-wide) on the west side of present-day Hopmeadow Street. Subsequent divisions occurred as proprietors received agreed-upon allotments of grazing land, planting land and woodlot, typically in noncontiguous parcels. In such divisions, proprietors usually held a lottery to determine the order of choice—hence the term “lot.”

To divide a large portion of land west of the river, Simsbury’s surveyors established parallel “squadron lines.” These helped to define the long narrow lots, known eponymously as “long lots,” which were laid out in 1723 and ran about two-and-one-half miles westward of

present-day Hopmeadow Street. (Long lots were found in other towns, including Fairfield.) Old Farms Road is thought to be the west boundary of the long lots, stacked horizontally from the south squadron line (which ran east/west above present-day Farms Village Road) to the north squadron line, just above Great Pond. Acreage below the south squadron line and west of the home lots was divided periodically into a total of five vertical tiers. Allotments continued as late as 1815.

Simsbury settlers were primarily in search of the grazing land they found in the plains, but they also took advantage of an abundant supply of pine. Colonists used this



highly valued resource to manufacture pitch, turpentine and tar, the so-called naval stores used in shipbuilding that were so critical to sustaining the British navy.

Saw and gristmills, clay pits and gravel and stone quarries ranked among the town’s other significant commercial ventures. The high quality of the region’s red sandstone was well known, and the locally sourced material found its way into the foundations and hearthstones of many colonial and post-Revolutionary buildings in Simsbury. One early quarry located on Hop Brook furnished stone for the first dams on that waterway, as well as for the Hop Brook arches of the Farmington Canal (1826) and for the Belden Distillery. Two fine Federal-era houses in the survey

Arguably most significant, the 1705 discovery of copper in Simsbury in the Turkey Hills Section (now East Granby) put the town on the map as the location of colonial America's first smelting operation and first chartered copper mine. Simsbury taxpayers were allowed to invest as shareholders in the new operation, which shipped raw ore to Boston and England in addition to refining it locally.³

It is thought that the oldest extant dwelling in West Simsbury is the Timothy Case house (233 Bushy Hill Road; IF 9), which occupies land that was part of a division in the second half-mile tier allocated to Richard Case in 1723. The dwelling, now much altered, was probably built sometime before 1745. Large for its date, the center-chimney building may have originated as a smaller one-story structure—as was the case of the nearby c. 1760 Timothy Sexton house (221 Bushy Hill Road; IF 5). Both are now part of the Ethel Walker School. The stately c. 1784 residence at 73 Westledge Road (IF 139) is another important Case-family landmark in the West Simsbury area. Its ample proportions and center-chimney design exemplify the taste of an affluent farmer in the post-Revolutionary War era.

[illegible]

³ In 1773 the General Assembly took over the site for use as the prison eventually known as New Gate.

intersection of West Mountain Road, west of the 1854 Greek Revival-style stone schoolhouse (259 Farms Village Road; IF 37).

The Tullers, who repeatedly intermarried with the Cases, received allotments in the First and Second Half-Mile tiers, and put down their roots in the area in 1768. That year Elijah Tuller bought a house, orchard and barn in the first half-mile tier from Joseph Weed and was soon amassing additional acreage, including much of present-day Tulmeadow Farm. When Elijah died in 1814, his land was producing corn and hay for fodder; tobacco; flax; sheep's wool and lumber. Because his estate was divided among nine offspring, it is difficult to trace ownership clearly back to the original Tuller farmhouses. Elijah is generally credited with building the 1777 dwelling at 1 Westledge Road (IF 133), which contained a backroom tavern and second-floor ballroom. A neighboring house also attributed to the elder Tuller (265 Farms Village Road; IF 40) was more likely built by his son Joel, who was married to Mary Case. That substantial farmhouse has a place in local history as the later home of the Rev. Curtiss and Philomena Goddard; the Rev. Goddard preached the first Methodist services in Simsbury there. (He earned \$75 a year for his services.)

As of 1810 the population of Simsbury was just shy of 2,000 people, enough to support one doctor, one lawyer and one clergyman. According to *A Gazetteer of the States of Connecticut and Rhode-Island*, published in 1819, a small cotton factory, three tinware manufacturers and as many wire factories were doing business at that time. There were also a handful of distilleries, gristmills, sawmills and four stores, along with two wool-carding operations and a pair of tanneries. The *Gazetteer* also described the town's extensive tracts of meadowland and alluvial bottomland. Elevated plains covered with a light, sandy soil—good for cultivating rye—stretched west of the Farmington River; gravelly loam to the east was favored for orchards, hay, Indian corn and pasturage.

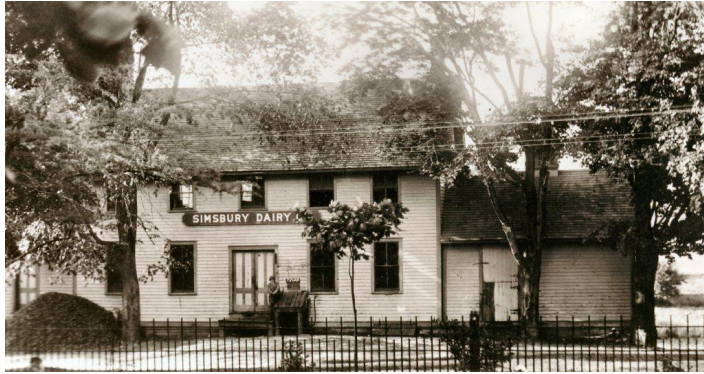
Between 1840 and 1850 the population of Simsbury increased substantially—from 1,895 citizens to 2,737—partly as a result of the establishment of a Tariffville carpet factory (1825) and the Ensign-Bickford firm (1836), both of which generated company towns in their immediate vicinities. As a result, Simsbury went from being the thirteenth largest township in the state to eighth largest.

As of 1850, the year of the first Federal U.S. Agricultural Census, there were 142 farmers in Simsbury, which (families averaging six to eight members) probably accounted for 800 to 1,000 members of the town's population—or roughly one-third. Among the largest of the farms was that of John Pettibone, who owned 1,000 acres, of which 700 were improved. The smallest, five-acre property belonged to Edward Goodwin. More typical holdings ranged from 100 to 200 acres. Of the produce and crops recorded, Irish potatoes held the top spot; indeed, virtually every farmer grew potatoes, and all reported having dozens of bushels on hand, some as many as 400. Among other stores were buckwheat, orchard fruit, rye, oats and the hay and Indian corn used for cattle feed. There were also substantial stockpiles of butter. Most farmers had just one or two workhorses, a few dairy cows (usually fewer than five), a team or two of oxen (the farmer's essential beast of burden) and three or four pigs.

A third of the farmers in town were also raising sheep—about 1,020 animals in total. The largest herd (135) belonged to Samuel Holcomb. The substantial number of sheep reflected a parallel growth of the American wool industry in the nineteenth century. When U.S. embargos prior to the War of 1812 had interrupted foreign trade, an increase in the prices of wool from domestic sheep stimulated a demand for better grades and a related effort to improve native stock, resulting in the “merino craze.” The first merinos are thought to have been introduced to America in 1802, when Col. David Humphreys, who served as U.S. ambassador to Spain from 1797 to 1801, imported a flock of the Spanish sheep to his farm in Derby, Connecticut. By 1810 the high-quality wool from these purebreds was bringing five times more on the dollar per pound than ordinary sheep's wool.

The data for Simsbury provided by the 1850 census presents a representative picture of mid-19th-century farmsteads throughout the state. The majority of farms were subsistence efforts, primarily devoted to producing food and goods for the owners and perhaps a small surplus for market. By the late 1800s it was not unusual for farmers to have small herds of dairy cows (perhaps ten to twenty head), which allowed them to sell their surplus milk to local creameries.

The Tuller creamery, established about 1880, may have been the first in town. According to an 1883 newspaper clipping, this West Simsbury enterprise was producing 200 to 300 pounds of butter per day. Much of the Tuller cream went to New Haven confectioners; the family also wholesaled butter and eggs to Hartford merchants. The dairy building (260 Farms Village Road;



Tuller Creamery, 1912, courtesy Simsbury Historical Society

IF 38) still stands, although it was moved from its original roadside location to its present site in a hollow in 1940. The creamery itself was in the basement, while the upper floor contained living quarters used over the years by various family members.

By the late 1800s Simsbury farmers were advancing their interests with a number of formally organized efforts. The town's first grange,

the Advance Grange, formed in 1885. Members originally convened in the home of Samuel Stockwell (1 Westledge Road; IF 133). Around the same time the Simsbury Agricultural Society organized and was soon sponsoring the Simsbury Fair, a yearly event that attracted crowds from surrounding towns as well as from Hartford. Located north of Great Pond, the first fairgrounds occupied the large triangular field presently bounded by Holcomb Street and Firetown and Barndoor Hills Roads (now owned by the town). By the early 1900s the fair had moved to Phelps Park (named in honor of donor Jeffrey O. Phelps) at the intersection of Firetown and Great Pond Roads at the top of Fairview Street (site of Henry James School). When the bleachers at this park were dismantled, the wood was used to construct houses in the area.

Enthusiastic reports in *The Hartford Courant* detailed the pleasures (games and food) and perils (fakirs and pickpockets) encountered by fairgoers, who thronged a host of activities ranging from trotting and bicycle races to horse shows featuring some of the most famous thoroughbred stallions in the country. There were also requisite displays of small livestock and cattle. When visitation began to flag after several years, the Farmington Valley Association formed (1905) in the effort to inject the festivities with renewed vitality. The 1905 fair advertised the largest bloodhound and the smallest poodle in the world, the best Jersey cattle in the state (owned by none other than Jeffrey O. Phelps) and the best apple cider in town. The Simsbury Cornet Band held forth and, for a nominal fee, visitors could gape at the original wild man of Litchfield County (who was *he?*). Produce, preserves, cakes, quilts, soap, flowers and fancy work were also on hand for judging. A star attraction of the 1907 fair was a 2,200-pound Holstein bull owned by Gen. Phelps Montgomery, which traveled to Simsbury in its own private rail car. In some of the less orthodox events, locals raced pigs and the sledges known as "stone boats" used to haul traprock from the West Mountains. By that time English polo teams were competing and a gymkhana offered a diversion for children.

Another equally important organization in this era was the town poor farm. The concept of sheltering needy citizens has deep roots in Connecticut, which was the first New England

colony to pass relief laws that held every town responsible for the care of its own paupers.⁴ Simsbury initially adhered to these statutes by paying a subsidy to the lowest bidders for the care of the poor and indigent in private homes. In 1856 the town established an almshouse, known as the Sanford Home, in Tariffville, and around the same time town officials also began exploring the purchase of a work farm.

That idea finally came to fruition with the 1882 acquisition by Amos R. Eno of the former Simon Wolcott farm on the west side of present-day Wolcott Road. Simon Wolcott (1624–87), scion of one of Connecticut’s most prominent colonial families, had been among the first settlers in this historic section of northeast Simsbury, moving from Windsor to the settlement in 1671.⁵ The farm, which changed hands several times, eventually straddled the road and



Town poor farm, 1909, courtesy Simsbury Historical Society

consisted of 140 acres and several buildings by the time of Eno’s purchase. The town officially accepted his gift in 1883 with the proviso that the property always be used to benefit the destitute and otherwise needy. (The Tariffville almshouse continued to take in vagrants from other communities.)

Upon the poor farm’s establishment, an existing, c. 1827 Federal-

period residence (69 Wolcott Road; IF 145) facing east onto Wolcott Road was enlarged to accommodate its new tenants. Here individuals under the town’s care received shelter in return for working the farm, which originally maintained a vegetable garden, about a dozen dairy cows and a contingent of pigs and poultry. Newspaper stories detail the sometimes heartbreaking accounts of those taken under the town’s wing—among them a couple with three children, who were discovered in 1915 hiding in a West Simsbury barn and making a living selling soap.

As a self-supporting entity, the Town Farm produced dairy products, vegetables, pork and eggs—sometimes bartering with local stores for groceries. In 1892 the town appropriated funds to build a tobacco shed across the road. By 1907 the farm was harvesting 5,600 pounds of tobacco, which was by then its main income producer. The shed no longer stands, but a post-and-beam structure incorporated in the farm’s dairy barn (IF 147) dates to at least 1883, when the town took over the property, and may be older. Until as late as about the 1990s, a statute on the town books required that the town supply stud services for any cow in Simsbury.

Expanding Enterprises

All of these various organizational efforts formed the backdrop for an increasingly diversified agricultural economy. By the late 1800s, John Collins Eddy, president of the Hartford County Farm Bureau and one of the most prominent West Simsbury farmers of his day, had built a

⁴ The first poor farm on record in the Connecticut Colony was established in 1640 in Hartford.

⁵ Tradition has long held that Simon Wolcott’s famous son, Roger Wolcott (1679-1767), Connecticut’s colonial governor from 1751 to 1754, was born in the Wolcott homestead in Simsbury, but church records established his birthplace in Windsor.

successful business in commercial market gardening. Eddy's Hop Brook Farm (124 Old Farms Road and 75 Hop Brook Road; IF 100–101; IF 72), which he operated with his son S.W. Eddy, produced asparagus and strawberries for the Hartford market. The Eddys also operated a popular produce truck locally.

Around the same time, Oliver D. Tuller and his son Oliver C. Tuller began expanding the family's West Simsbury farm, which they originally called Basswood in honor of several large trees growing on the property. By the early 1900s Oliver C. owned about 500 acres, including pasture, spreading all the way up Westledge Road (including the present site of The Master's School). In addition to maintaining a small herd of Guernseys, the Tullers raised pigs and cultivated about seven acres of tobacco. Basswood Farm's sawmill was also in constant operation, processing white pine, hemlock and oak harvested from the property into the lumber used to build most of the Tuller farm's outbuildings. The family continually worked to improve their acreage: the beautiful level field that unfolds for a full half mile on the north side of Farms Village Road was reclaimed from a bog through patient draining and leveling.

During World War I, Simsbury citizens were encouraged to participate in the victory garden movement, and apparently did so with mixed levels of enthusiasm. A May 1918 issue of *The Hartford Courant* reported that school-sponsored gardens were falling off that season due to the lack of an instructor in agriculture and to the difficulty of disposing of small quantities of produce. That year J.B. McLean offered land to any students interested in planting a garden, in addition to employment on his own Firetown Road farm at an hourly wage. The paper mentioned that the greatest crop increase among Simsbury farmers was expected to be in corn, which had been winning local growers, including McLean, prizes. The previous summer a town crop of corn had been raised on the Dodge Farm on Bushy Hill Road.

Then one of the most impressive estates in Simsbury, the Dodge Farm consisted of three adjacent country homes of D. Stewart Dodge, his brother Norman Dodge and Stewart's son Walter Phelps Dodge. The properties are now part of the Ethel Walker School.⁶ Bell-Hurst, the large Italianate-style summer home of Stewart Dodge, which stood on the site of the present Beaver Brook Hall, had been built c. 1870 by Dodge's father-in-law, John J. Phelps. (Phelps was partner with Amos R. Eno in a New York dry-goods business.) Phelps's ancestral home and birthplace, the Timothy Sexton house (221 Bushy Hill Road; IF 5) was just across the street. Bell-Hurst boasted fabulous views east across the town cornfield and a skating pond toward Talcott Mountain.

Prior to the sale of Bell-Hurst and some 400 acres to Ethel Walker in 1917, the Dodge Farm had been a model country estate, complete with beautiful grounds and bridle trails. Now the centerpiece of the school's riding program, the large red barn with distinctive clipped gables on the west side of Bushy Hill Road (IF 8), originated as part of Dodge's dairy operation. Raising purebred cattle was a fashionable late-Victorian pastime among affluent country dwellers, and modern barns like this one were typical components of country estates.

Now attached to a residential development on Teachers Turn, a pair of handsome barns at the corner of Great Pond and Hop Brook Roads (2 Teachers Turn; IF 124) are the remnants of another substantial estate, owned by the Whitman family of Massachusetts. Two other prominent

⁶ None of the three estate houses still exists. Both the Stewart Dodge house and the Norman Dodge house burned in 1933. The Walter Dodge house, a Tudor-style, 16-bedroom estate known as the Grange, was given to Ethel Walker School in 1919 by the Cluett family in honor of their daughter Emily, an Ethel Walker pupil who had died in the influenza epidemic the previous year. Located on the hill on the west side of the campus, it served as a senior house known as Old Cluett, and was later torn down. For a time the Walter Dodge house served as the school infirmary. By the onset of World War I, Dodge family members had scattered, Stewart Dodge was in poor health and the properties had gone on the market. Ethel Walker School eventually absorbed all three estates.

gentleman's farms, owned by Joseph B. Thomas Jr. and the McLean family, stood on Firetown Road in the vicinity of the Hopmeadow Country Club. J.B. Thomas's Valley Farm, established about 1904, bred exotic Russian wolfhounds, which raced in Alaskan dog-sledding derbies and accompanied polar expeditions. Thomas proudly showed his dogs at the Simsbury Fair.

The roots of the nearby McLean farm dated to 1809, when Holly Hill, the ancestral homestead of Sen. George P. McLean (1857–1932) was built on the west side of Firetown Road, site of the present golf course. In 1895 George McLean and his aunt Sarah Abernathy together constructed an estate house known as the Homestead (the present nursing facility at 36 Firetown Road; IF 41), and the old farmhouse was torn down ten years later. Upon receiving a \$3 million inheritance from Sarah in 1905, McLean began expanding his Simsbury holdings, ultimately accumulating some 4,000 acres before his death in 1932. Much of this land is the core of the McLean Game Refuge.

Among McLean's acquisitions was the former Valley Farm, property that J.B. Thomas had actually purchased from the senator years earlier. By the time George bought back the farm in 1918, a new owner had converted Thomas's kennels into poultry sheds. McLean used the property to raise tobacco, potatoes and corn. The clubhouse of the Hopmeadow Country Club (85 Firetown Road; IF 42) was part of McLean's extensive dairy operation, where the senator raised prizewinning purebred Guernsey cattle—selling his milk wholesale to Hartford distributors and to Ethel Walker School.

Tobacco in Simsbury

The foray by the Town Farm and George McLean into tobacco culture represented one of the fastest expanding agricultural enterprises in Simsbury. The history of tobacco in the area may date back as far as the 17th century. English settlers learned how to grow the weed—which they smoked, chewed and brewed as a beverage—from Native Americans. Members of the Plymouth Colony had begun shipping tobacco to England and the West Indies as early as 1629, and colonists planted crops in the Connecticut River Valley soon after the Hartford, Windsor and Wethersfield settlements formed in the 1630s.

Records document the export of Simsbury tobacco to the West Indies in 1750. The

lucrative cash crop proved well suited to the sediment-rich soil of the region's alluvial bottomlands, and in 1753 Connecticut's General Court began regulating production by requiring growers to certify their exports. Legend has it that Israel Putnam, a Connecticut-born general of Revolutionary War fame, imported the taste for cigars upon a return to the colony from a 1762 military campaign in Cuba.

Interestingly, only two Simsbury farmers were recorded raising tobacco in the 1850 agricultural census. This may have been Maryland broadleaf, a sun-grown variety used primarily for finely textured cigar wrappers that was introduced in the Connecticut River Valley in the mid-1800s.



Tobacco wagon on the Robert A. Kerr Farm, Firetown Road, c. 1910, courtesy Simsbury Historical Society

Havana Seed tobacco followed in 1875.

When a cheaper, thinner, very smooth-burning wrapper variety from Sumatra began to infiltrate the market in the late 1800s, the Connecticut Valley Tobacco Growers Association organized. The group attempted to mitigate the impact of this competition from the East Indies by lobbying for a federal tariff on the Sumatran imports. Around the same time, the Connecticut and Massachusetts Agricultural Stations joined forces in the effort to help growers improve production. The U.S. Department of Agriculture began experimenting in Florida with various tropical varieties. By 1899 that agency had achieved success with a Florida Sumatra tobacco seed that produced a thinner leaf. Seed for a new Connecticut Valley sun-grown broadleaf variety used for the binder layer (sandwiched between a cigar's wrapper and its inner filler) was also developed.

Farmers continued to advance tobacco-cultivation efforts by introducing a method for shade growing using tents fabricated from cheesecloth, designed to approximate a microclimate like that of Sumatra. Around the turn of the century, Simsbury's Mitchelson brothers (Joseph and Ariel) formed the Connecticut Tobacco Corporation and became the first local farmers to try raising shade tobacco, on eighteen acres in Tariffville. Among other prominent Simsbury growers of this era were William Hayes and Alexander T. Pattison.

The significantly higher cost of shade production limited cultivation to planters who had sufficient capital to invest in such a venture. The demand for land nevertheless increased the value of local real estate, and farmers were able to sell acreage to local growers at significant profit. According to a 1914 article in *The Hartford Courant*, Cullman Brothers, the Bartlett Farm at Terry's Plain, the Connecticut Tobacco Corporation, Ketchin and Hayes, A.T. Pattison, E.A. and F. C. Hoskins, Max Brink and Morton Sanford counted among the primary buyers of land that year. The paper also reported that Joseph Mitchelson had acquired a 250-acre tract in northwest Simsbury with the intention of raising tobacco there in the future.



Tobacco Harvest, Samuel Weldon Farm, West Simsbury (near present-day Stratton Brook Park), c. 1915, Courtesy Simsbury Historical Society

Cultivating any kind of leaf on any amount of acreage was a high-risk venture, subjecting crops to damage by mold and pole rot, storms and early frost. Tobacco farming is also a notoriously labor-intensive type of agriculture, in which mechanization plays scant role. The process for growing shade tobacco begins in May with weeding and transplantation of seedlings. Field workers then spend the following weeks moving slowly through the fields,

carefully removing shoots and peeling off worms before the initial harvest can begin—one plant at a time. Because small hands and bodies were less likely to bruise the plants in the process,

children were often tapped for the picking.⁷ The temperature easily soared to 100 degrees or more under the tents.

Women sometimes helped their husbands in the field, but more typically held jobs transporting baskets of leaves to the sheds, where the tobacco was sewn or hung on laths (leaf by leaf in the case of shade-grown) to slowly cure by air. The Ketchin Tobacco Corporation, which had plantations at Tariffville and Hoskins Station, first “experimented” with hiring female field hands during the 1916 season and reportedly found them equal to the task of riding the setting machines. (The brownstone Ketchin warehouse still stands at 7 Church Street in Tariffville.)

At the height of the season, additional pickers were often hired from the greater Hartford area. Simsbury’s public schools customarily opened in mid-September only after picking concluded so local girls and boys could pitch in. Growers typically celebrated the end of the harvest with a clambake or corn roast.

Market fluctuations and international competition were constant concerns. Farmers customarily borrowed against their future harvests in order to put their crop on the market. Against this backdrop of risk, the arrival of well-organized, well-capitalized corporate growers was only a matter of time. Among the first of these enterprises in Simsbury was the New York-based Cullman Brothers. The firm’s American genesis dates to 1848, when Ferdinand Kullman (Cullman), a German wine and tobacco merchant, immigrated to the United States. In 1892 Ferdinand’s sons Joseph F. Cullman and Jacob Cullman founded Cullman Brothers, which originated as a tobacco brokerage house. Joseph’s son, Joseph F. Cullman Jr., represented the third generation when he entered the tobacco business in 1904. The younger Cullman established plantations in Simsbury and Granby in 1906, laying the foundation for what would become one of Connecticut’s largest wrapper-leaf growers. At its height the company had sixteen tobacco farms between Connecticut and Massachusetts, four of which were in Simsbury: Farm #1 (Firetown/Barndoor Hills Road area; Farm # 2 (Hoskins Road); Farm # 4 (Wolcott Road and Route 10) and Farm #9 (Quarry Road).

As of 1914 only a small percentage of Simsbury farmers was cultivating tobacco “under cloth,” although American Sumatra was then raising 100 acres of the shade-grown variety (in addition to fifty acres of broadleaf). That year a total of about 800 acres was devoted to tobacco, and most of it was the sun-grown Havana seed. Many farms planted only a few acres. Because of their manpower needs, the larger companies immediately turned to an immigrant labor force to help fill their quota of planters, pickers and sorters. Initially this labor supply consisted primarily of Europeans—chiefly from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. Despite their varied ethnic origins, its members were known collectively as “Polanders.”

Aided by this new influx of workers, the larger plantations thrived. An August 1914 issue of *The Hartford Courant* reported on Simsbury’s half-million-dollar harvest, a bumper crop so plentiful that farmers were busy building new sheds or enlarging their old ones with additions. A.T. Pattison, Cullman Brothers and American Sumatra were then the three largest growers in town. After building a railroad switch on their plantation just south of Weatogue that summer, American Sumatra was able to receive freight by rail. Equally important, the rail switch meant the company no longer needed to haul manure through the main streets of town—heretofore a source of constant complaint among Simsbury residents.

World War I was soon to bring a new host of challenges. One New York-based Simsbury grower, the Griffin, Neuberger Tobacco Company, ran into an unexpected problem when the Neuberger half of the partnership, a German citizen, found himself conscripted into the German army on a trip abroad. Griffin was left to handle business on his own. Growers generally confronted a depleted workforce as the immigrant workers moved on to better paying jobs in

⁷ A report issued in 1917 by the National Child Labor Committee year recorded 1,458 children on Connecticut tobacco farms. Two-thirds of them were between the ages of eight and thirteen.

munitions factories. Hartford-area planters tapped yet another new labor pool when they began hiring black workers, who were generally kept out of factory jobs thanks to union resistance. Blacks were also willing to fill in when other field workers went on strike for better pay (unrest that was often fomented by labor organizers from outside the tobacco industry).

Marcus Floyd, the USDA agent instrumental in developing the Sumatra seed, was able to contact black educators in the South through introductions provided by the National Urban League, then serving as a clearinghouse for jobs. Floyd first arranged to bring students from Morehouse College, an all-male, primarily black institution in Atlanta, to his Hazelwood Plantation on the Windsor/East Granby border in 1916. Students earned \$2.00 a day and paid \$4.50 a week for their room and board.

American Sumatra also began bringing southerners to Simsbury that year, drawing on the company's own supply of workers from its fifty-two plantations in Florida and Georgia. Of the 400 employees on the American Sumatra payrolls in 1917, one-quarter were black. (According to one account, they included thirty students from Virginia's Hampton University; according to another, eighty-seven students came from Morehouse College.) Around this time corporations began building their own tobacco "camps" in an effort to minimize labor problems by consolidating their work force in one place and keeping it dependent on employers for food and living quarters.

After the war plantations entered a period of consolidation. In 1924 A.T. Pattison, still the largest individual, non-corporate grower in Simsbury, took over part of the Ketchin Tobacco Corporation's holdings on the College Road (present-day Route 10). In the 1920s Cullman Brothers bought out the Mitchelson plantation and established a large operation in Terry's Plain, before moving to the Firetown Road area. Fire dealt a devastating blow to American Sumatra in 1934, when sparks from a boiler the company used to sterilize seedbeds with steam ignited the roof of a tobacco shed. The blaze, which burned a mile across the company's 3,000-acre plantation near the Avon line, destroyed five sheds, a six-family tenement house, a storehouse, hay barn, tool shed, workshop and water tank. All the plantation wagons, several tons of fertilizer, ten tons of hay and 1,000 bushes of corn used for mule feed also were lost. The wind carried burning shingles more than a mile, as far as Ethel Walker School on Bushy Hill Road.

The aftermath of the 1929 stock market crash hit tobacco cultivation hard, and planting fell off during the Depression. In the fall of 1934, Cullman Brothers, which owned a seat on the stock exchange, turned its vacant fields on the Firetown Road plantation over to grazing cattle as part of a program in which drought-plagued western ranchers shipped livestock east for pasturage.

Cullman Brothers apparently survived the Depression relatively unscathed. After their father's death in 1938, Joseph F. Cullman III and Howard S. Cullman gained control of the company. Investing in tobacco and real estate, the brothers formed Tobacco and Allied Stocks Inc., which acquired controlling interest in Benson and Hedges and Phillip Morris, Inc.

World War II brought another shortage of field labor. In 1943 the Shade Growers Agricultural Association organized a new work pool in cooperation with the U.S. Farm Security Administration, recruiting farmhands from West Virginia and Kentucky. The same year the War Food Administration (future U.S. Department of Labor) also established a program to hire British subjects under contract to the federal government. As part of that effort more than 1,300 workers arrived from the British West Indies that summer. Coming from Jamaica, Barbados, the Grenadines, Antigua and British Honduras, these families were collectively known as "Jamaicans."⁸

⁸ In 1957 there were 2,700 Jamaicans working in Connecticut tobacco fields. By 1988 that number was reduced to about 600. In the 1950s Puerto Ricans begin to supplant that labor force, later followed in the 1980s by Laotians.

Planters also revived the hiring program with southern schools during World War II. In this era Dr. Benjamin Mays of Morehouse College was one of many college presidents who recruited promising students for temporary jobs on northern tobacco plantations with the goal of helping them earn tuition money. While the black workers were employed as field foremen, they always reported to white supervisors, typically “Polanders” who had fled to America during WWII.

At that time Cullman Brothers had three bunkhouse camps in the area: Morehouse College and Hoskins Station and Indian Head off Route 189 in Granby. Food was plentiful, and living quarters were Spartan but adequate, although the dorms typically lacked indoor plumbing until after 1945.

As a Morehouse student, Martin Luther King Jr. spent two summers, in 1944 and 1947, working (at age fifteen and eighteen) at Cullman Brothers’s Farm #1 (boarding in a dorm that no longer stands). King savored the racial freedoms he found in New England and became bitter about the prospect of returning to a segregated society. In letters home he remarked on his ability to walk without worry in white neighborhoods and to eat in any restaurant of his choice. The young student was also able to enter movie theaters at will, thanks to the Connecticut Inter-Racial Commission, established in 1943 by Gov. Raymond Baldwin, a staunch defender of equal rights. One of agency’s first actions was to get the managers of Simsbury’s movie theater, Eno Memorial Hall, to sign a statement agreeing not discriminate against black tobacco workers.

King also sang in one of the many concert choirs sponsored by tobacco camps throughout Connecticut and by WTHT Radio, which hosted an annual broadcast of spirituals performed by southern blacks and West Indian islanders. The Connecticut Council of Churches sponsored recreational activities for the tobacco workers as well. While living at the Cullman plantation, King began holding church services for his fellow workers, and he later remembered calling his mother from Simsbury to tell her of his decision to become a minister.

Coping with Change

Meanwhile, farmers outside of the tobacco industry were working hard to stay afloat during the Depression and war years, while trying to fend off competition from outsiders. After decades of business the Tuller dairy closed in 1923, because farmers were able to get better prices directly from Hartford wholesale creameries and bottlers. (*The Hartford Courant* dourly predicted that all butter soon would soon be coming to New England pre-packaged from the Midwest.)

In 1931 town residents organized by forming the current Simsbury Grange with sixty-one charter members. Two years later the grange moved to their present headquarters (236 Farms Village Road; IF 27), which—scene of square dances, husking bees and card parties—had previously served the West Simsbury Community Club. Among many projects was a contest to collect the egg masses of tent caterpillars during a devastating 1936 infestation (15,702 were retrieved). The grange instituted an annual fair the same year, and a group of local ladies known as the Busy Buzzers soon began a tradition of potluck lunches and sewing bees to craft items for sale.


Around this time at least two families on the west side of town launched significant poultry-farming operations. In 1934 Edward and Mary Oelkuct established the Lone Oak Poultry Farm, a large egg farm at 147 Great Pond Road (IF 59). Initially establishing a flock of Rhode Island Reds, the Oelkucts constructed three huge laying houses, each three stories high, to accommodate their 1,500 brooders (area of present-day Whitman Pond Road). Oelkuct went on to develop a new and highly touted crossbreed known as the Rokisland fowl.

Around the same time Flamig Farm (7 Shingle Mill Road; IF 116–119), long a landmark at the corner of Shingle Mill and West Mountain Roads, started another successful Simsbury egg business. Under the stewardship of William Flamig, the family expanded a relatively small flock of chickens into veritable army of laying hens. While Bill Flamig sold most of his eggs, packed

into thirty-two-dozen crates, as part of a wholesale operation, he also ran a local delivery truck selling vegetables and strawberries. The Flamigs' large poultry barn (7 Shingle Mill Road; IF 119) with its locally famous sign ("Eggs" turned in reverse) dates from 1952.

Meanwhile, funds from the Eno family estate provided for a much-needed 1932 expansion at the town poor farm on Wolcott Road, soon to gain seven new outbuildings. Once a primary income producer, the farm's tobacco operation had never fully recovered after a storm had destroyed the 1920 crop, and the town had more recently set its sights on dairy farming. The

★ HUNT • HELM • FERRIS & CO. ★
★ STAR LINE EQUIPMENT ★



Star General Purpose Barn No. 18

34 ft. wide, 70 ft. long and 36 ft. high from grade to ridge.


There is a wide driveway on the silo end from which hay can be unloaded into the mow. Driveway is separated from the rest of the barn by a tight partition, which prevents the dust from getting into the barn proper.

The barn contains accommodations for 12 cows, a cow pen and a pen for 5 calves. Provisions are made for 4 horses, including a box stall and a grain bin. The stock face out. Hay mow capacity is 70 tons.

The barn is of a plank frame, trussed construction, as shown on page 146. The foundation extends 3 ft. 6 in. above grade, and is of concrete. The frame walls above foundation are sided with vertical siding.


The feed and cleaning alleys are wide and the cross alley is well located. The vertical siding above the high foundation gives this barn a pleasing and substantial appearance.

Here is a roomy and convenient barn. It is well lighted and well ventilated and is out-fitted complete with STAR Equipment, which means making it a building in which the greatest amount of work can be accomplished with the least effort.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Page One Hundred Eighty-two



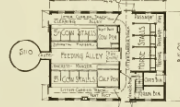
Star General Purpose Barn No. 19

34 ft. wide, 44 ft. long and 37 ft. high from grade to ridge.

Four horses are stabled across one end, separated from the cow barn by a tight partition. The cows face in, and there are stall accommodations for 10 animals, a calf pen and a cow pen. Grain bins placed in one corner are well located for the feeding of stock. The hay chute is centrally located. Access to mow is by an enclosed stairs in feed room. The hay mow capacity is 30 tons of loose hay.

Ceiling height is 8 ft. 6 in. in clear. The ground floor and foundation is of concrete. The foundation wall extends two feet above grade. The construction is a plank frame with a hinged rafter roof. The exterior walls are covered with horizontal drop siding.

This general purpose barn is designed to meet the needs and requirements of farmers owning about 80 to 120 acre farms. It is compact in arrangement, especially well lighted and ventilated. It is a type of barn that will form the nucleus of a good set of farm buildings that will prove a credit to the farm and community.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Page One Hundred Eighty-three

Star Line barn designs

large gambrel-roofed dairy barn (IF 147) behind the boarding house dates from 1937, when it was constructed as part of a WPA-funded building scheme. The town board of finance initially opposed using federal monies and an outside work force for such a project, but ultimately voted to go ahead. Plans for the barn came from the Star Line catalogue of Hunt, Helm & Ferris Co., an Illinois manufacturer of agricultural equipment. Harold Case was the building contractor, and local men were pulled from town relief rolls to serve as carpenters and masons. (More than one person has speculated that the exceedingly substantial brick foundation was deliberately overbuilt to keep the men employed as long as possible.)

One of the major successes of the era was Orkil Farms, a 450-acre operation founded in 1928 by Orrin P. Kilbourn (1892–1986). A Hartford native, Kilbourn had settled in Simsbury after retiring from an advertising career in Detroit. Back in Connecticut, Kilbourn took on an active role in the regional business community, heading a new firm, Orkil Inc., distributor of General Electric appliances. Orrin Kilbourn's main interest, however, was his farm in West Simsbury, where he had settled into the old Holcomb Place (82 Old Farms Road; IF 96) and begun accumulating pastureland and outbuildings for a new agricultural venture.

On the advice of a professor of farm management at the University of Connecticut, the newly minted farmer decided to concentrate on orchard fruit, while running a dairy sideline to provide income while his trees matured. By the 1940s Orkil Farms boasted not only a herd of purebred Guernseys, but also thirty head of Aberdeen Angus beef cattle. Among Kilbourn's prize-winning cows was Timber's Holdl, which won honors as a class leader in milk production in 1951, producing 18,240 pounds of milk and 875 pounds of butter fat for the year.

Orkil was even better known for the operation's fabulous fruit. Kilbourn's prize-winning apples, grown under the guidance of orchard manager Bill Marshman, were legendary: so bright in color that the farm's motto was "Apples You Can Eat in the Dark." At the peak of the harvest, demand for pickers was so high that Orkil Farms began hiring boys from Simsbury's Westminster School. The students were allowed to return to their dorms from summer vacation early and helped with the picking until the official start of school required them to be in their classrooms. Girls from nearby high schools also pitched in.

People came from miles away to the Orkil Farms apple barn (60A Old Farms Road; IF 95) to buy preserves and the many other varieties of fruit raised on the property, including blueberries, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, quince and raspberries. Many of the former customers remember the Kilbourns' weekly lamb barbecues and sleigh rides. Art shows, barn dances and theatrical performances by the Apple Barn Players were among other the other homespun attractions. Much altered, the building now houses the Simsbury Department of Culture, Parks and Recreation.

Despite Kilbourn's success with his prize-winning cows, dairy farming in Simsbury had been on a generally steady decline since the 1940s. During the Depression Simsbury dairymen could still get by with as few as ten or fifteen cows. By the end of World War II, however, farmers faced increased competition from surplus milk shipped to Connecticut by dairies in New York State, where the farming country was better and output was higher. New requirements for bulk tanks and electric refrigeration posed additional problems, as did Connecticut production quotas established in response to the New York surplus.

As New York State dairies continued to undercut Connecticut sellers, the competition made it unrealistic for many local farmers to stay in business. The simultaneous rise in real-estate values in response to development demands made the prospect of selling hay fields and pasture land increasingly attractive at a time when farmers (with the rare exception of the Tullers) could not rely on a new generation of family members to take over.

The Town Farm on Wolcott Road phased out its dairy operation in 1952, while keeping the boardinghouse open to residents under the management of Charles and Mary Dunham.⁹ Although Holly Farm Dairy on Firetown Road had continued to operate for years after the 1932 death of Senator McLean, it finally closed down in 1956 upon the retirement of its longtime manager Harry Costello. The milk route and farm lease were taken over by Pharos Farm on the east side of Simsbury. Because Pharos already had a full herd, the Holly Farm cattle and much of the farm's equipment was sold at public auction. Work on converting the McLean farm into a country club began in 1961; the golf course was ready in 1962, and the clubhouse (IF 42) opened a year later.

No statistics illuminate the pressure for development more clearly than those found in census records. Between 1952, when Simsbury had 4,800 residents, and 2000, when the population skyrocketed to 23,200, the town grew almost *five times* in size. Not surprisingly, subdivision of Simsbury's former farmland became increasingly common. In 1963 Orrin Kilbourn, then in his early seventies, sold the Orkil orchards with 279 acres—bounded on the northwest by Old Farms and Hop Brook Roads—to Clyde Carter. The real estate developer announced plans to develop the property, but his ill health stalled the project. Five years later the town acquired the land for \$800,000 with the original idea of leasing the orchard business. Controversy ensued, and that scheme, ultimately supplanted by the Simsbury Farm golf course and recreation center plan, never came to pass. In the process, the Orkil Farms legendary orchard,

⁹ In 1970 Baker Nurseries leased the poor farm with a three-year agreement and cultivated evergreens and flowering shrubs on the east side of Wolcott Road. As of 1979 three men still occupied the boardinghouse. Joseph Frank, the last resident, was relocated in 1981. At the time, the Wolcott Road poor farm was one of the three such institutions in Connecticut, the other two being in Greenwich and Glastonbury.

left untended, reached a point of no return, and most of Kilbourn's trees have long since disappeared.

For years the large tobacco growers had also been closing down or consolidating their plantations. As early as 1941, the town zoning board approved 90 acres of tobacco fields on Wolcott Road for a flying field. In 1964 Cullman Brothers sold 1,000 acres contained in sixteen parcels to the General Cigar Co. as part of a merger of their farm operations under a General Cigar division known as Culbro Tobacco Division. General Cigar was the largest premium cigar manufacturer and marketer in the U.S., with prestigious brands like Macanudo and Partagas. In the 1970s and 1980s, the company diversified its holdings and changed the name of its farming division to Culbro Corporation.

In 1977 Culbro embarked on a controversial plan to subdivide a 113-acre parcel in the Barndoor Hills Road area in order to construct ninety-six homes. In 1984 the State Department of Environmental Protection ordered the company to clean up ground water in the Firetown Road area due to contamination by the chemical Vorlex. Eleven years later the Simsbury Planning Commission denied Culbro permission for a planned subdivision of 400 acres roughly bounded by Firetown, Hoskins, County and Barndoor Hills Roads partly due to pesticide contamination.

A development known as Meadowood, to incorporate 296 homes, was finally approved in the late 1990s. The first phase of remediation was undertaken in 2012. In the meantime, the town took ownership of the triangular field (former fairground) bordered by Holcomb Street and Firetown and Barndoor Hills Road, along with one Culbro Tobacco shed in Firetown Road (five sheds across the road belong to Culbro). Until recently Daggett Farm was raising market produce on a portion of the Hoskins Road tobacco land; a small portion (about twenty acres) further down the road is still being farmed in tobacco by Arnold.

Meanwhile, some of Simsbury's most firmly rooted farmers, including the Flamigs and Tullers, were gamely reinventing their own operations in the effort to stay economically viable. In the mid-1970s, a third generation of Flamigs added a local egg route and began growing organic vegetables for sale as part of a new retail enterprise. As of 1976, Oliver and Robert Tuller at nearby Tulmeadow had a herd of 131 Holsteins and were producing about 1,500 quarts of milk daily. By that time Tulmeadow had also expanded into poultry, and the farm's 2,000 chickens were producing 100 dozen eggs a day. One hundred Tulmeadow acres were under cultivation with alfalfa, another forty acres were devoted to corn for silage, and a sizable apple orchard numbered 150 trees.

By the late 1970s it was becoming clear that, due to federally regulated milk prices, a viable dairy operation required a herd of 400 to 600 head. By 1983 the Tullers, shifting their efforts to retailing, had established a market garden and were building a local customer base for their sweet corn and tomatoes. Two years later they added greenhouses on the site of the old poultry house behind the farm store. The shop began offering ice cream in 1994. The Tulmeadow dairy herd (then seventy-five head) was sold in 2003, and the farm transitioned to grass-fed beef cattle. That herd currently numbers sixty head. Through it all Tulmeadow has remained one of the oldest continually operating farms in the state.

Flamig Farm is currently managed by Nevin Christensen, grandson of Herman and Bertha Flamig, who had started the farm with a few cows and pigs after immigrating to Connecticut from Germany in 1907. Christensen has instituted a petting zoo and summer day camp, and the farm sponsors apprenticeships and a variety of activities designed to promote environmental awareness.

One final Simsbury dairy operation began at the town poor farm in 1990, under lease to Bill and Agnes Walsh. After successfully starting a small business delivering milk to stores and restaurants in the Avon-Simsbury area, Bill expanded into a home-delivery route. At its peak, his herd consisted of about forty registered Jerseys. In 1994 the Walshes opened a creamery in the old Town Farm garage building (IF 148), where they sold yogurt, cheese and other cultured dairy

products that they made fresh on the premises. The shop had a good run before closing in 2003; the dairy followed about five years later.

At that time the Ethel Walker School and the Billings Forge Community Works of Hartford launched a collaborative effort to run the former poor farm in keeping with its original mission of serving the needy and disadvantaged. Leasing seventy-five acres, the Community Farm of Simsbury, Inc., which now serves as the managing arm of the group, currently sponsors educational programs and summer teaching gardens. Produce grown on the farm is sold at the Community Farm farmstand and is also sent to food-distribution services. The remodeled boardinghouse now contains residential units as part of the town's affordable-housing program.

As of this writing, George Hall is responsible for the largest certified organic farming effort in town. Hall oversees a well-known roadside fruit and vegetable stand at his home (180 Old Farms Road; IF 106), where the rooftop sign "HALL'S" on his tobacco barn (IF 107) is a local landmark. He also runs a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, organized about fifteen years ago. The bulk of Hall's produce is grown on forty acres leased from the town-owned Pharos Farm.

Preserving Simsbury's Agricultural Heritage

In addition to highlighting the historic residential buildings documented on the following pages, it is hoped that this survey will raise awareness of Simsbury's important agricultural past and inspire efforts to preserve the town's many farm buildings. There is no doubt that the tobacco and other types of barns recorded in this inventory are a valuable but threatened legacy, as are many of the historic landscapes that they occupy.

The good news is that as of December 2012, almost one-third (30.7%) of the total land area (6,726 acres) in Simsbury is held as open space by various entities, including the town, which requires a 20% open-space dedication as part of subdivision regulations. As of this writing the Simsbury Land Trust (founded 1976) owns land—or interest in land—at thirty locations totaling 832 acres of fields, farmland, wetlands and ridges. The land trust recently completed a three-phase plan to purchase agricultural conservation easements on 260 acres of Tulmeadow Farm property. Walking paths through portions of the farm are open to the public.

While barns and outbuildings are an integral part of such historic landscapes, they seldom receive the spotlight that conservation efforts focus on open space, and thus remain a severely endangered species, threatened by vandalism, fire and general neglect. With the loss of each barn goes an irretrievable piece of Connecticut history.

Fortunately, a significant number of barns in the survey area remain in surprisingly good condition. Two large dairy barns (75 Hop Brook Road and 45 Old Farms Road; IF 72 and IF 94), complete with silos, have found new life through residential conversion. The most surprising, and arguably most innovative, example of adaptive re-use is found at 124 Old Farms Road, where the Covenant Presbyterian Church operates out of a 1947 dairy barn (built from stock plans issued by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture). The congregation, which bought twelve acres and the farm buildings on them from Isabel D. Mahoney in 1962, completed this remarkable conversion four years later. While the distinctive profile of the gambrel-roofed building (IF 100) is intact, the huge open loft now contains the church's sanctuary. Colored-glass panels replace the hayloft doors; a cross hangs from the baling track; and the silo has been retrofitted as a meditation chapel. The church has also found new uses for an apple barn and poultry house on the property.

Another noteworthy survivor is the Dodge Barn (IF 8) at 233 Bushy Hill Road. That high-profile structure on the Ethel Walker School campus underwent significant refurbishing in 2012 with the help of volunteers from Second Chance Ranch in Granby. The renovation yielded thirty-six new stalls, new lighting and windows, along with a work area for farriers and veterinarians, heated wash stalls and a feed room. Despite its modern amenities, the building

retains its original exterior profile and late-Victorian character. It remains one of the most historically and architecturally important barns in town.



Culbro shade tobacco tents, 1988, Firetown Road, courtesy Simsbury Historical Society

Many of the town's smaller barn complexes are also very well maintained, including a pristine grouping at 69–73 Westledge Road (IF 138); the well-preserved barnyard is visible to passersby from both Old Farms and Woodchuck Hill Roads. Others, like the Westerberg barn on Route 10, standing forlorn and unused next to a vacant shopping center and car dealership, appear doomed.

Ironically, one of the town's most important architectural legacies—its tobacco sheds—is also the most endangered. The surviving sheds represent a fraction of the massive buildings that once dominated the Simsbury landscape. All of the seventeen tobacco sheds (Hoskins Road, Firetown Road, Wolcott Road and Route 10) recorded in this survey are unused and falling into an increasing state of disrepair. Word has it that most of the Culbro sheds face imminent dismantling, which would leave the town virtually bereft of these highly significant resources. The town-owned tobacco shed on Firetown Road is all the more important to save. (More tobacco barns are located outside the survey area.)

The best tool for barn preservation in Connecticut is the Barn Grant Program of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation (www.connecticutbarns.org), designed to help barn owners understand that abandonment is not the only option. The barn grant can be used for conditions assessments, restoration plans, feasibility studies and/or to explore adaptive reuse options. Funds are also available for preparing nominations to the State and National Register of Historic Places. In Simsbury, as in most towns throughout the state, property owners still face the obstacle of zoning and building codes that can inadvertently make it difficult to reuse or adapt an outbuilding. It is highly recommended that the town address ways in which it can help the owners of historic agricultural buildings maintain and reuse these important structures.

National Register and Other Recommendations

Maintained by the National Park Service, the National Register of Historic Places is a federal inventory of significant buildings and sites recognized for their historic, architectural or cultural significance. The listing process for Connecticut properties is administered by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in State Historic Preservation Office of the Office of Culture and Tourism, Department of Economic & Community Development in Hartford. To qualify, properties must be proven to have historical and architectural significance according to standards set by the U.S. Secretary of Interior. Any individual or group can propose a particular district or property for listing on the National Register by contacting the National Register Coordinator in the Office of Culture and Tourism.

During the time a nomination is under review by state personnel, property owners and local officials are notified of the intent to nominate, and public comment is solicited. Owners of private property have an opportunity to support or object to the listing. For National Register districts a simple majority (51%) of all property owners in the proposed district must be in favor. When a property is nominated for individual listing, it is necessary to obtain approval from the owner. If objections prevent the listing of a qualified district or property, the State Historic Preservation officer may still forward the nomination to the National Park Service, but only for a determination of eligibility. Any property or district that achieves listing for the National Register is automatically included on the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places

Listing on the National or State Registers is an honorific citation only. National and State Register designations do not restrict the rights of owners in the alteration, use, development or sale of their property. However, a review is required if proposed changes involve federal funding, licensing or permits.

As of January 2013 twelve individual properties and four historic districts in Simsbury are listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Horace Belden School and Central Grammar School
- Robert and Julia Darling House
- Drake Hill Road Bridge
- Eno Memorial Hall
- Amos Eno House
- Heublein Tower
- John Humphrey House
- Massacoe Forest Pavilion
- Capt. Elisha Phelps House
- Simsbury Bank and Trust Company Building
- Simsbury Railroad Depot

- Simsbury Townhouse
- East Weatogue Historic District
- Simsbury Center Historic District
- Tariffville Historic District
- Terry's Plain Historic District

District Recommendations:

Based on the resources documented in this survey, two types of district listings should be pursued for Simsbury's farm buildings:

1. Thematic Multiple Property Listing (non-contiguous resources)

It is recommended that a thematic, multiple-property nomination for Simsbury's historic barns and related outbuildings be explored. This type of district focuses on *shared architectural and historic contexts and themes* and does not require that the properties be contiguous. The resources included, however, must all be individually eligible for the National Register and share similar physical characteristics and historical associations. In this case the defining context would be Simsbury's rich agricultural history.

The thematic approach can furnish essential information for historic preservation planning because it evaluates properties on a comparative basis within a given geographical area. It can also be used to establish preservation priorities based on historical significance. A thematic district of historic farm buildings would help to illuminate the stages and patterns of Simsbury's settlement and document the development of a distinctive architectural typology of the surviving agricultural buildings. Such a district would also shed light on the immigrant and African American experience, provide insight into the economy of local farming and foster appreciation for this important history and the buildings (many endangered) that represent it.

* The focus of a thematic multiple listing could also be narrowed to buildings related to *tobacco agriculture*. There are seventeen tobacco barns recorded in this inventory and additional examples outside the survey area that could also be included.

2. Historic Districts (contiguous resources)

A historic district is the designation used for areas that contain a number of resources that are geographically connected and relatively equal in importance, such as a neighborhood, rural village or a large farm made up of numerous buildings and resources.

Two historic districts should be considered for listing as National Register districts based on the significance and integrity of the buildings, structures and landscapes they contain:

West Simsbury Historic District

This would include Tulmeadow Farm and surrounding buildings

Farms Village Road: nos. 223, 236, 243, 246, 248, 250, 252, 259, 260, 261, 265

North Canton Road: nos. 2, 26

Shingle Mill Road: no 7, including Flamig Farm buildings
Sugarloaf Cut: no. 15
West Mountain Road: nos. 29, 53, 57
Westledge Road: nos. 1, 8, 20, 28, 69, 73, 82, 108, 111
Woodchuck Hill Road: no. 11

Wolcott Road/Town Poor Farm Historic District

Wolcott Road: nos. 56, 69 (Town Poor Farm Buildings), 77, 85

Owners of any other historic properties in Simsbury who would like to proceed with National Register designation are invited to submit a request to have their property evaluated by the Historic Preservation division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism.

Rural Historic Landscapes

In recent years there has been growing interest among preservationists in recognizing and protecting the cultural values that centuries of land use and occupation have embodied in rural America. The Rural Historic Landscape is one of the categories of property qualifying for listing on the National Register as an individual historic site or as a district. Such a site or district is defined as a geographical area that has been used historically by people, or has been shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy or intervention—and that possess a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways and natural features.

It is recommended that the town of Simsbury evaluate the possibility that certain geographical areas and landscapes may qualify for listing as Rural Historic Landscapes. For more information, see National Register Bulletin no. 30, “Guidelines for Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes.”

Resources Associated with Minorities and Women:

- Tobacco Barns and related properties on Hoskins Road, Wolcott Road, and Firetown Road (seventeen barns and related buildings at 85 Hoskins Road). These properties are associated with the minority workers (blacks, West Indians, and immigrants) who worked for Cullman Brothers.

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6	233 Bushy Hill Rd.		c. 1740	p5
7	233 Bushy Hill Rd.	Hendersons Cottage, Ethel Walker School	c. 1920	p6–7
8	233 Bushy Hill Rd.	Dodge Dairy Barn	c. 1890	p8–9
9	233 Bushy Hill Rd.	Frank O.H. Williams Barn	c. 1890	p10
10	277 Bushy Hill Rd.		c. 1890	p11–12
11	291 Bushy Hill Rd.		1929	p13
12	311 Bushy Hill Rd.		c. 1850	p14
13	316 Bushy Hill Rd.		1920	p15
14	408 Bushy Hill Rd.		1927	p16–17
15	412 Bushy Hill Rd.		1922	p1
16	416 Bushy Hill Rd.		c. 1790	p19
17	425 Bushy Hill Rd.		c. 1840	p20
18	444 Bushy Hill Rd.		c. 1743	p21
19	455 Bushy Hill Rd.		c. 1835	p22–23

IF #	Address	Name	Date	Image #
20	7 Canton Rd.		Unknown	p24
22	10 County Rd.		1928	p25
23	134 County Rd.		c. 1850	p26
24	202 Farms Village Rd.		c. 1845	p27
25	222 Farms Village Rd.		1920	p28
26	223 Farms Village Rd.		c. 1788	p29–30
27	236 Farms Village Rd.	Simsbury Grange	1926	p31
28	243 Farms Village Rd.		1850	p32–33
29	246 Farms Village Rd.		1929	p34
30	248 Farms Village Rd.		1883	p35
31	250 Farms Village Rd.		1923	p36–37
32	252 Farms Village Rd.		1830	p38
33	255 Farms Village Rd.	Tulmeadow Farm East Barns	19 th C	p39–40
34	255 Farms Village Rd.	Tulmeadow Farm North Barns	19 th /20 th C	p41–44
35	255 Farms Village Rd.	Tulmeadow Farm Store and sheds	19 th and 20 th C	p45–48
36	257 Farms Village Rd.		1853	p48A
37	259 Farms Village Rd.	Stone School, barn	1845	p49–50
38	260 Farms Village Rd.	Tulmeadow Creamery	c. 1880	p51
39	261 Farms Village Rd.	Whiting Shepard Homestead	1830	p52–53

IF #	Address	Name	Date	Image #
40	265 Farms Village Rd.	Tuller Homestead	c. 1782	p54
41	36 Firetown Rd.	The Homestead	1895	p55–56
42	85 Firetown Rd.	Hopmeadow Country Club	c. 1920s	p57–58
43	101 Firetown Rd.	Patrick Henchey House	1879	p59
44	144 Firetown Rd.		1915	p60–61
45	150 Firetown Rd.		c. 1880	p62
46	164 Firetown Rd.		1900	p63–64
47	200 Firetown Rd.		c. 1874	p65
48	230 Firetown Rd.		1934	p66
49	258 Firetown Rd.		1916	p67
50	288 Firetown Rd.	Hoskins Homestead	c. 1775	p68
51	328 Firetown Rd.		1903	p69
52	500 Firetown Rd.	Dwight Gates Homestead	1862	p70
53	533 Firetown Rd.		c. 1840	p71–72
54	Firetown Road East Side	Culbro Tobacco Division Farm #1 Barn	1920s	p73
55	Firetown Road West Side	Culbro Tobacco Division Farm #1 Barns	1920s	p74–75
56	10 Great Pond Rd.		1837	p76
57	46 Great Pond Rd.	John Shea Farm	c. 1860	p77–78
58	55 Great Pond Rd.		1934	p79
59	147 Great Pond Rd.	Lone Oak Poultry Farm	1920	p80
60	215 Great Pond Rd.		c. 1823	p81–82
61	215 Great Pond Rd.	Barns	19C	p82A
62	38 Hedgehog Lane		c. 1783	p83

IF #	Address	Name	Date	Image #
63	62 Hedgehog Lane	Stone Hedge Farm	c. 1755	p84–85
64	62 Hedgehog Lane, barns	Stone Hedge Farm	19C/c. 1930	p86–87
65	89 Hedgehog Lane	Bank barn	late 19C/early 20C	p88
66	25 Holcomb St.	Union District Schoolhouse	c. 1845	p89–91
67	40 Holcomb St.		c. 1771	p92
68	80 Holcomb St.		c. 1820	p93
69	128 Holcomb St.		c. 1860	p94
70	69 Hop Brook Rd.	Simsbury Farms Recreational Complex Maintenance barn	1901	p95
71	70 Hop Brook Rd.		1750/1830	p97
72	75 Hop Brook Rd.		c. 1940	p98
73	76 Hop Brook Rd.		c. 1930	p99
74	78 Hop Brook Rd.	Simsbury Farms Recreational Complex Maintenance barn	c. 1930	p100
75	109 Hop Brook Rd.	Shepard's Farm	1860	p101
76	1349 Hopmeadow St.	Westerberg Farm	c. 1940	p102
77	1484–86 Hopmeadow St.		1900	p103
78	1503 Hopmeadow St.	Culbro Tobacco Sheds		p104–105
79	45 Hoskins Rd.	Culbro Tobacco Division Farm #2 Boarding house	c. 1940	p106
80	45 Hoskins Rd.	Culbro Tobacco Division Farm #2 Housing	c. 1920s	p107
81	45 Hoskins Rd.	Culbro Tobacco Division Farm #2 Tobacco shed	c. 1920s	p108
82	85 Hoskins Rd.	Asa Hoskins House	1840	p109–10A

IF #	Address	Name	Date	Image #
83	100 Hoskins Rd.	Noah Hoskins House	1851	p111
84	100 Hoskins Rd.	Noah Hoskins House, barn	c. 1875	p112
85	176 Hoskins Rd.		c. 1850	p113
86	Hoskins Rd.	Culbro Tobacco Barn	c. 1930	p114
87	Hoskins Rd.	Culbro Tobacco Barn	c. 1930	p115
88	Hoskins Rd.	Three Culbro Tobacco Barns	c. 1930	p116
89	66 Laurel Lane		1883/c.1935	p117
90	2 North Canton Rd.		c. 1841	p118
91	26 North Canton Rd.		c. 1870	p119
92	5 Oakhurst Rd.		c. 1830	p120
93	44 Old Farms Rd.	Peter Buel House/Watson Case Farm	c. 1810	p121
94	45 Old Farms Rd.	Watson Case Farm	19 th C/20 th C	p122–23
95	60A Old Farms Rd.	Orkil Farms Apple Barn	c. 1925	p124
96	82 Old Farms Rd.	Holcomb Place/Twin Oaks Farm	1781	p125–26
97	83 Old Farms Rd.	Orkil Farms Stable	c. 1940	p127
98	86 Old Farms Rd.		1925	p128–29
99	91 Old Farms Rd.		1828	p130
100	124 Old Farms Rd.	Covenant Presbyterian Church	1947	p131–32
101	124 Old Farms Rd.	Covenant Presbyterian Church Outbuildings	mid 20thC	p133–35
102	147 Old Farms Rd.		1887	p136
103	162 Old Farms Rd.	Red Gate	19 th C	p137
104	162 Old Farms Rd.	Barn	mid 19 th C	p138
105	179 Old Farms Rd.		19 th C	p139

IF #	Address	Name	Date	Image #
106	180 Old Farms Rd.	Hall's Farm	c. 1845	p140
107	180 Old Farms Rd.	Hall's Farm Tobacco Barn	20 th C	p141–42
108	180 Old Farms Rd.	Halls Farm Outbuildings	1940s	p143–46
109	210 Old Farms Rd.	Amasa Bacon Jr. House	1834	p147
110	237 Old Farms Rd.	Amasa Bacon Sr. House	1831	p148
111	264 Old Farms Rd.	Bacon-Rice Homestead	c. 1836	p149
112	264 Old Farms Rd.	112 Bacon-Rice Barn	19 th C	p150
113	2 Old Stone Crossing		c. 1845	p151–52
114	2 Old Stone Crossing	Barns	19 th C	p153–55
115	6 Shingle Mill Rd.	Flamig Homestead	c. 1809	p156–57
116	7 Shingle Mill Rd.	Flamig Farm Shop	c. 1875	p158
117	7 Shingle Mill Rd.	Livestock Sheds	1930s–40s	p159–61
118	7 Shingle Mill Rd.	Sugarhouse	c. 1890	p162
119	7 Shingle Mill Rd.	Poultry House	1952	p163–64
120	15 Stratton Brook Rd.		c. 1800	p165–66
121	18 Stratton Brook Rd.		1920	p167
122	115 Stratton Brook Rd.		1915	p168
123	15 Sugar Loaf Cut		1815	p169
124	2 Teachers Turn		c. 1870	p170
125	29 West Mountain Rd.		c. 1800	p171–72
126	53 West Mountain Rd.		1923	p174
127	57 West Mountain Rd.		c. 1818	p175

IF #	Address	Name	Date	Image #
128	90 West Mountain Rd.		c. 1785	p176
129	96 West Mountain Rd.		c. 1801	p177
130	221 West Mountain Rd.		c. 1800	p178–79
131	251 West Mountain Rd.		c. 1775	p180
132	315 West Mountain Rd.	Eli Terry House	c. 1790	p181–82
133	1 Westledge Rd.	Tuller/Stockwell House	1777	p183
134	8 Westledge Rd.	Jeris Spring Homestead	c. 1763	p184
135	20 Westledge Rd.		1924	p185–87
136	28 Westledge Rd.		1790/1863	p188–90
137	69 Westledge Rd.		1928	p191
138	69–73 Westledge Rd.	Case/Stoddard Barns	19C	p192–92D
139	73 Westledge Rd.	Samuel Stiles Case Homestead	1783	p193
140	82 Westledge Rd.		c. 1850 or earlier	p194–94A
141	108 Westledge Rd.		c. 1900	p195–96
142	111 Westledge Rd.	Oliver Case House	c. 1800	p197
143	15 Wildwood Rd.	Bushy Hill Schoolhouse	1850	p197A
144	56 Wolcott Rd.		c. 1915	p198–99
145	69 Wolcott Rd.	Town Poor Farm	c. 1827	p200–03
146	69 Wolcott Rd.	Town Poor Farm, bunkhouse	1908	p204
147	69 Wolcott Rd.	Town Farm Dairy Barn	c. 1870/1937	p205–09
148	69 Wolcott Rd.	Town Poor Farm, Garage/Sheds	1930s	210–12
149	77 Wolcott Rd.	Reagan Farm	c. 1920	p213–14
150	77 Wolcott Rd.	Horse Barn	1932	p219–20

IF #	Address	Name	Date	Image #
151	85 Wolcott Rd.	Regan Farm bungalow	1920	p215
152	85 Wolcott Rd.	Tobacco Shed	c. 1920s	p216–18
153	11 Woodchuck Hill Rd.	Jacob Case House	c. 1784	p221
154	11 Woodchuck Hill Rd.	Case Barn	19C	P221A–D
155	15 Woodchuck Hill Rd.	Jacob Case Cottage	c. 1783	p222
156	16 Woodchuck Hill Rd.	Higley Barn	19C/c. 19701	p223
157	47A Woodchuck Hill Rd.		c. 1900	p224

