

The Captain Oliver Filley House

Historic Resources Report

20 June 1994

The Connecticut Historical Commission

The Wintonbury Historical Society, Inc
P.O. Box 7454
Bloomfield, CT 06002

THE CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY HOUSE
BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT

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15. Well house
16. An old barn
17. Remnants of a small building

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

HIST-6 REV. 6/83

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
 CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 59 SOUTH PROSPECT STREET, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106
 (203) 566-3005

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Town No.:

Site No.:

UTM

QUAD:

DISTRICT

IF NR, SPECIFY

☐ S☐ NR☐ Actual☐ Potential

IDENTIFICATION

1. BUILDING NAME (Common)

Filley, Captain Oliver, House

(Historic)

2. TOWN / CITY

Bloomfield

VILLAGE

COUNTY

Hartford

3. STREET AND NUMBER (and / or location)

130 Mountain Avenue

4. OWNER(S)

Town of Bloomfield

☐ Public☐ Private

5. USE (Present)

See Continuation Sheet # 1

(Historic)

See Continuation Sheet # 1

6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC:

EXTERIOR VISIBLE FROM PUBLIC ROAD

☒ Yes☐ No

INTERIOR ACCESSIBLE

☐ Yes☒ No

IF YES, EXPLAIN

See Continuation Sheet # 1

7. STYLE OF BUILDING

Greek Revival

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

1833 - 1834 (per records)

8. MATERIAL(S) (Indicate use or location when appropriate)

☐ Clapboard☐ Asbestos siding☐ Brick☐ Other (Specify)☐ Wood shingle☐ Asphalt siding☒ Fieldstone☐ Board & batten☐ Stucco☐ Cobblestone☐ Aluminum siding☐ Concrete Type: _____☐ Cut stone Type: _____

9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

☐ Wood frame☐ Post and beam☐ Balloon☒ Load-bearing masonry, exterior wall☐ Structural iron or steel☐ Other (Specify) _____

10. ROOF (Type)

☒ Gable☐ Flat☐ Mansard☐ Monitor☐ Sawtooth☐ Gambrel☐ Shed☐ Hip☐ Round☐ Other (Specify) _____

(Material)

☐ Wood shingle☐ Roll asphalt☐ Tin☐ Slate☒ Asphalt shingle☐ Built up☐ Tile☐ Other (Specify) _____

11. NUMBER OF STORIES

Two plus attic

APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS

20 feet by 42 feet and 21 feet by 40 feet

See Attachment A, pp 1 & 2

12. CONDITION (Structural)

☐ Excellent☐ Good☒ Fair☐ Deteriorated

(Exterior)

☐ Excellent☐ Good☒ Fair☐ Deteriorated

13. INTEGRITY (Location)

☒ On original site☐ Moved

WHEN?

ALTERATIONS

☒ Yes☐ No

IF YES, EXPLAIN

See Continuation Sheet # 2

14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES

☒ Barn☒ Shed☐ Garage☒ Other landscape features or buildings (Specify)

See Continuation Sheet # 3

☐ Carriage house☐ Shop☐ Garden

15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

☒ Open land☐ Woodland☐ Residential☐ Scattered buildings visible from site☐ Commercial☐ Industrial☒ Rural☐ High building density

16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS

See Continuation Sheet # 3

(OVER)

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION

100 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM

Buildings and Structures

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

TOWN NO.:

SITE NO.:

UTM: 18 / - / - / - / - / -

QUAD:

DISTRICT: S NR: ACTUAL
POTENTIAL

CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory number: 1 Date: June 20, 1994

#5. USE. (Present/Historical)

The Captain Oliver Filley House is vacant at the present time. The house is sited on 139 acres of town-owned open space which is used for passive recreation and farming.

Captain Filley built the house in 1834 as a residential farm house for his son, Jay, with farm help housed in the wing. From 1913 to 1975, it was owned by LaSalette Missionaries who used the property for agricultural purposes.

#6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC:

The Oliver Filley House, situated on a hill about 250 feet from Mountain Avenue, is visible from the road. Public access to the exterior is good.

Future plans allow public access to the first floor, which will include restored rooms, some furnishings, and rotating displays of acquisitions of the Wintonbury Historical Society. Second floor rooms will have limited access, a place for books, records, stored acquisitions; not planned for the public.

The Duncaster Retirement Community is a short walking distance across Mountain Avenue.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION

7 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM

For Buildings and Structures

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: 2 Date: June 20, 1994

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

TOWN NO.:

SITE NO.:

UTM: 18 / - / - / - / - / -

QUAD:

DISTRICT: S NR: ACTUAL

POTENTIAL

#13. INTEGRITY (Location, Alterations)

The house remains on its original site, on property owned by the Filley family from 1793, as indicated by Simsbury land records. (Bloomfield was formed from land of Windsor, Simsbury and Farmington.)

Several alterations have been made to the house. Based on an 1885 photograph, (See Photograph #1), a porch, common to the period, has been removed. Windows have been altered in the area of the kitchen, and the front archway in the wing has been modified to accommodate a stairway to the cellar. (Photograph #2.)

Changes are apparent in the interior, as well. For example, the ornate woodwork on the first floor has been replaced. Fireplaces and chimneys have been changed or eliminated. No original walls have been removed, although partitions have been added, mainly in the wing.

At some time before 1885, the original use of a portion of the wing and of the archway were modified.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION

9 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106

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UTM: 18	/	/	/
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DISTRICT:	S	NR:	ACTUAL POTENTIAL

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: 3 Date: June 20, 1994

#14 RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

There are many outbuildings in various states of repair. (Photographs #12 to 17.) The enclosed site plan of the adjacent area (Attachment B) demonstrates the number and type of structures in close proximity to the house. Of particular interest is a three-level machine shop, (photographs 12, 13) with cable and pulleys intact. A well house of Victorian character (Photograph #15) acts as a gateway to the front yard. The drive leading to the house is lined with spruce trees.

A path leads to a hill a short distance from the house, one of the highest points in Bloomfield, with a dramatic view of Hartford's skyline.

#16 INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDINGS AND SURROUNDINGS

Historically, Bloomfield has been an agricultural society. This property survives as agricultural land, and nearby homes also retain the rural character of the area. The house is situated on 139 acres of open space, and nearby properties are also on spacious grounds, though not necessarily that large an acreage. Duncaster Retirement Community's community gardens are nearby, across Mountain Avenue.

The 4-H farm, Maple View Dairy and Wades' Market are active agricultural businesses within a mile of the park. Within a half mile is Moore's Sawmill, owned and operated by five generations of the Moore family.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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for Buildings and Structures

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UTM: 18/	/	/	/
QUAD:			
DISTRICT:	5	NR:	ACTUAL POTENTIAL

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: 4 Date: June 20, 1994

#17 OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE

The Captain Oliver Filley House, built in 1834, is a two story farm house. The masonry exterior is a patchwork of various shades of local stone, with quoins of quarried brownstone. (For close up view of wall, see Photograph #5.) Window lintels and sills are made of the same dressed brownstone.

The house is on the north side of Mountain Avenue, a road which runs westerly from Bloomfield Center. It is approximately 250 feet from the road, on a gently sloping hill, (Photograph #6), the main building on a town-owned open space 139 acre property. (Photograph #6) From a high hill a short distance to the rear, is a commanding view of the surrounding countryside and of Hartford, Travelers Tower and beyond.

There are two large rooms on each level of the main section, separated by a hallway and a graceful staircase. (See Photographs #8 & #9.) Windows, six over six lights with 9 by 12 inch glass, are deeply set, as the exterior walls are over a foot thick. The front doorway is attractive, framed with side lights and overhead panes as well. (Photograph #10.)

The kitchen, in the wing, has had many alterations. One can see in the basement the foundation of the original kitchen fireplace. A rear stairway leads to the second floor of the wing, where there are several small rooms. At the rear of the second floor of the wing an exterior door (photograph #4) gives evidence of a former outside stairway.

At the front of the house near the end of the wing is a large archway. (Photograph #2.) One half of the opening has been closed in with vertical boards. Above this the arch has been made smaller by a wooden lintel topped with cement infill. Behind the enclosure is an exterior stairway to the basement.

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SITE NO.:

UTM: 18 / - / - / - / - / -

QUAD:

DISTRICT: S NR: ACTUAL

POTENTIAL

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: 5 Date: June 20, 1994

#17 (continued) OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING & SITE

A small wooden lean-to, a late addition, houses a rear entrance to the first floor. (Photograph #4.)

There are two chimneys remaining, one in the main section and one in the wing. A third chimney at the rear of the main section, shown in the 1885 picture (Photograph #1,) has been removed, and its fireplaces have been closed, as have all the fireplaces. (Photograph #11.)

In order to preserve the building from further deterioration it was necessary to immediately replace the roof. This was completed in early 1994 by the Wintonbury Historical Society.

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5

NR:

ACTUAL

POTENTIAL

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: 6 Date: June 20, 1994

#19 HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

Captain Oliver Filley was a prominent master tinsmith, with peddlers selling his wares throughout the east coast. Records indicate that the Filley Tin Shop, started in 1807, once stood on the property, nearer the road than the present house. It will be a challenge to pursue archeological exploration in that area.

Several members of the Filley family carried on the business, with branch headquarters as far away as St. Louis. See Attachment C for a detailed history of the family.

The stone house was built in 1834 for his newly married son, Jay Humphrey Filley. Jay, not active in the tinware trade, was the only son to remain in the state. At the time of his father's death in 1849, records show Jay to be living in the house.

Of the many homes built in Bloomfield in the first half of the nineteenth century, this stone house is one of only four stone houses built during that period.

The fact that we have a detailed picture of the house dated 1885 will enable us to restore the exterior with great accuracy. We are particularly enthusiastic at the prospect of restoring the porch (Photograph #1), which appears to be original.

The detail of the original entrance door with sidelights and the adjacent gracious stairway, the high ceilinged rooms, as well as the attractive deep set windows, give a feeling of the grace of living during that period. We plan to restore the nineteenth century kitchen, giving children an opportunity to see how people lived without the convenience of electricity that we take for granted now.

THE CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY HOUSE
BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT

RESOURCES

Bidwell, Frederick C., 1935, Revised and Reprinted by Charlotte R. Goodrich assisted by Florence B. Jewell; Over Tunxis Trails; Second printing: Bloomfield CT; Connecticut Printers, Incorporated; 1965.

Bloomfield Town Records:

Various land records, 1835 and subsequent
Probate records: Captain Oliver Filley

Census Records

Bloomfield, 1840
Simsbury: 1800, 1810

Coffin, Margaret; The History and Folklore of American Country Tinware, 1700-1900; New York; Galahad Press; 1968.

DeVoe, Shirley Spaulding; The Tinsmiths of Connecticut; Middletown, Connecticut; Wesleyan University Press; 1968.

Filley papers in possession of Connecticut Historical Society, including:

Captain Filley's personal records of taxes,
Captain Filley's correspondence regarding business,
Accounts regarding purchase of supplies and other expenses relating to the construction of the 1834 Stone House.

Historical Committee of Wintonbury Historical Society, Paul W. Coons, Chairman; From Wintonbury to Bloomfield; Bloomfield CT; Connecticut Printers, Incorporated; 1983.

Marshall, Herman F., Restoration Consultant; Written Evaluation of Captain Oliver Filley House; 1993.

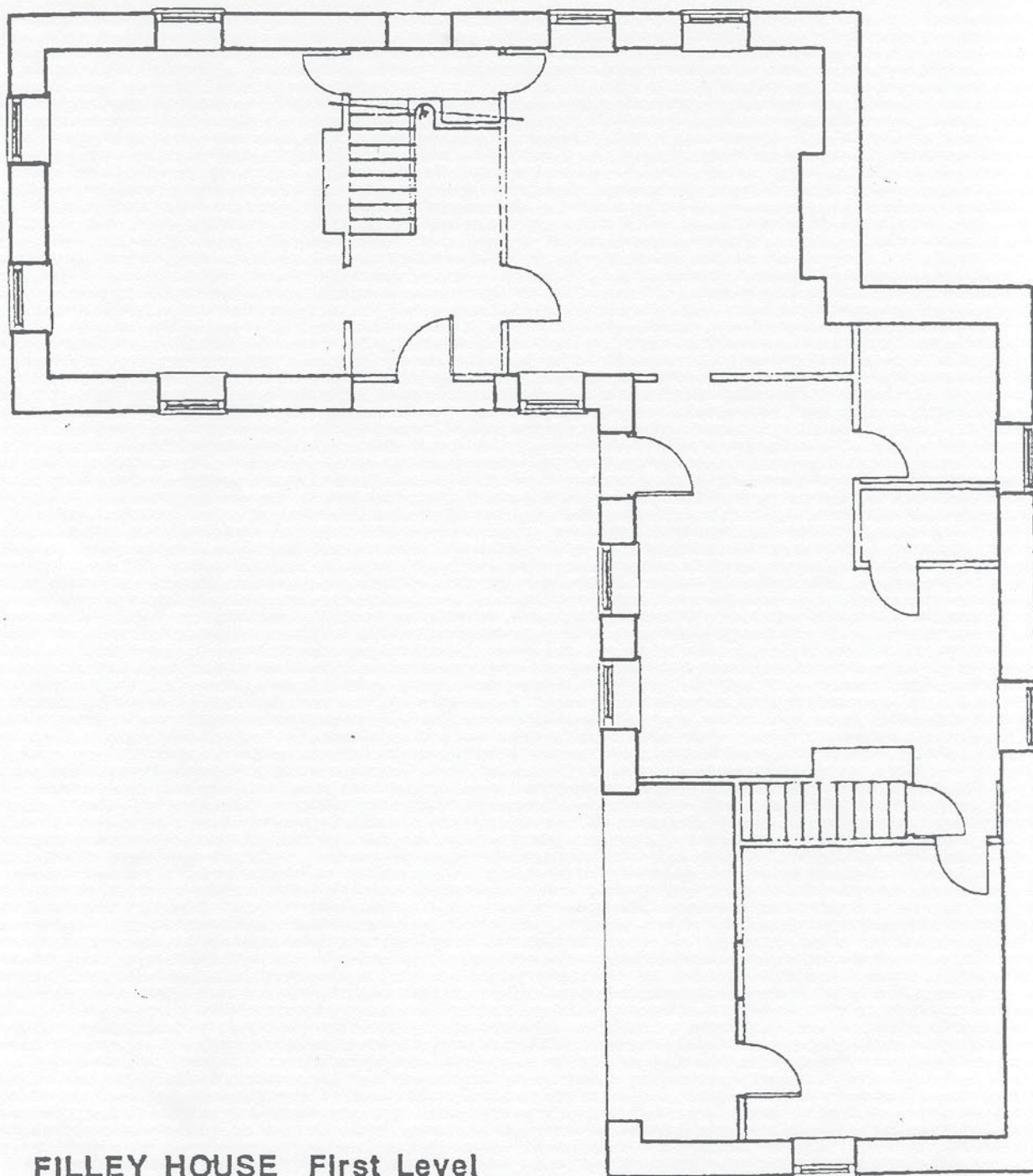
Papers in possession of Wintonbury Historical Society of Bloomfield: Miller, Nathan, early town historian; Filley information.

Simsbury Town Records:

Various land records re. purchase of several parcels of land of this estate,
Inventory of Estate: Oliver Filley I

CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY HOUSE
BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT

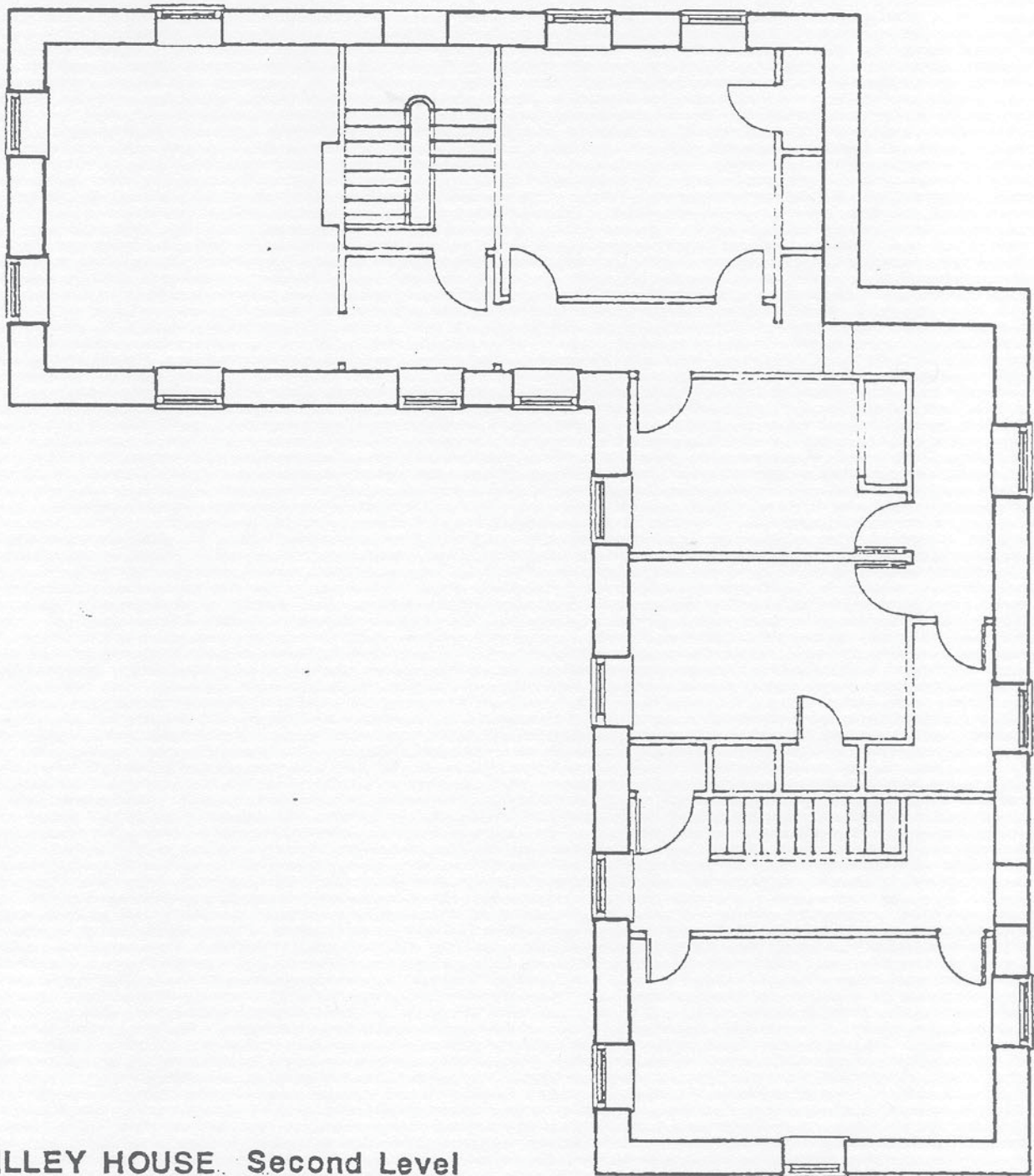
Attachment A Page 1



FILLEY HOUSE First Level
1/8" = 1'-0"

CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY HOUSE
BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT

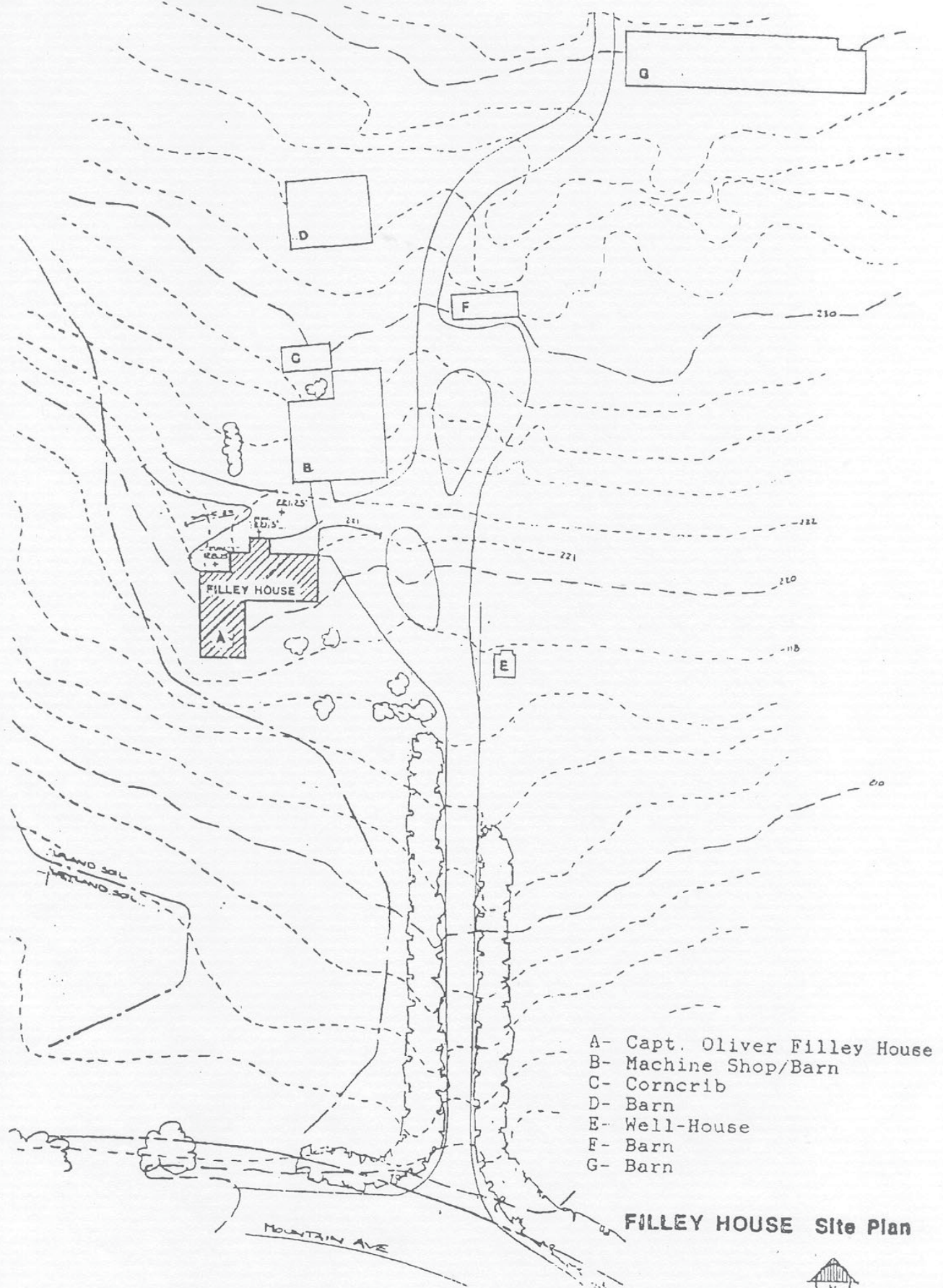
Attachment A Page 2



FILLEY HOUSE. Second Level
1/8" = 1'-0"

BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Attachment B



CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY HOUSE
BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Attachment C

THE
CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY
FAMILY

BY EILEEN PHELPS
APRIL 1994

CAPTAIN OLIVER FILLEY HOUSE
BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT
Attachment C Page 2

About 1810 there begins to be mention of turpentine, varnish, colors such as vermilion, which indicate that they were then starting japanning and decorating tinware, rather than just manufacturing and repairing it.

There are two books on tinware locally, one owned by the Wintonbury Historical Society, the other by Prosser library, donated by Dorothy Bidwell. From the latter I quote " ...Tinsmiths, decorators and peddlers made Oliver's shop their headquarters. Oliver was kept active teaching his trade to relatives as well as to others... This master-smith encouraged and advised members of the family who set up shops outside of Connecticut. He helped to finance, to order supplies, to train decorators; he shared his materials with the Filley tinsmiths who moved to Philadelphia, St. Louis and Lansingburgh, New York." Among the members of the family to enter the trade after learning it in the Bloomfield shop were; Oliver's younger brother Harvey, who was put in charge of the shop in Philadelphia, Augustus Filley, his cousin and brother-in-law who opened the branch in Lansingburgh, New York around 1815, Augustus' wife, (Oliver's sister), who was a decorator and his sons; Oliver Dwight who established his home and business in St. Louis and Marcus Lucius who worked in all the Filley shops and finally settled in Lansingburgh to become a manufacturer of stoves. It is also believed that Oliver's wife Annis did some decorating of the tinware.

Of interest are some of the contracts with apprentices, one with a young lad of 17 years, 8 months and 15 days signed April 16, 1811, spells out the responsibilities of each party. The term was 3 years, 3 months and 14 days, during which time the lad was to dwell with and serve his master; shall not play cards, dice or any other unlawful games; he shall not frequent taverns or ale houses; he shall not commit fornication nor contract matrimony; he shall not embezzle, waste, or lend any of his master's goods. Meanwhile, the master (Oliver) shall and will teach or cause to be taught, the trade, mystery or occupation of tin japanner in the best way and manner he can, and shall allow unto the apprentice decent and sufficient wearing apparel.

An agreement between a different master and apprentice is slightly more tolerant in one aspect and less generous in another in that, "for faithful performance the apprentice shall receive \$18 and a pair of shoes and if he does not get drunk above once in three months, a pair of stockings and his diet." It will perhaps not surprise you to learn that Oliver Filley gave the land for the first Methodist Church in Bloomfield.

Oliver was one of the Captains of the old militia company. The Wintonbury Historical Society has a copy of the members of his company of May 16, 1816 listing many local names such as Cases, Barnards, Burrs, Griswolds and Pinneys. The Captains drilled the militia regularly until it was disbanded. To quote the book, "Memorial History of Hartford", "just long enough before the Civil War for us to find only raw recruits." One of those raw recruits was Oliver's grandson Louis Jay Filley who was imprisoned at Andersonville and Libby prisons during the War.

The Wintonbury Historical Society has copies of two tax lists from Oliver's papers. The first list in 1827 when he was in Windsor listed one dwelling house and 168 acres of land. The second list from 1838 of property in Bloomfield listed 2 dwelling houses (the second house is the present stone house) and 149 acres of land.

The only son of Oliver Filley who did not leave Bloomfield was Jay Humphrey Filley, and we believe that it is this son for whom the stone house on Mountain Road was

built. Jay married Julia Newberry in 1833 but the house was not completed until 1834. A bill to Oliver from Elijah Whiting of Canton for "all the lumber I have carried him for to the present time" was paid in September 1834 with a notation by his great grand-daughter, "this is for the stonehouse where Papa was born." "Papa" being aforementioned Louis Jay, son of Jay and Julia. Another bill addressed to Oliver dated October 13, 1834 is for the boarding of masons to build the stone house and is for 50 weeks and one day at a weekly cost of \$1.50 totaling \$75.22.

Oliver's son Jay was living in the house in 1849 when his father's estate was settled. Jay then moved to Brown Street in Bloomfield. He raised and traded in tobacco and in 1865 entered into partnership with Gaylord Meacham and Timothy Jerome under the name "Filley and Co." for the purpose of buying and selling leaf tobacco. The tobacco was kept in Filley's warehouse on Brown Street. In 1874 he sold the Massaco Farm located on Brown Street in Bloomfield to his son Louis Jay, reserving the use of the tobacco warehouse for 8 years.

Jay's other son, Alfred Newberry, who lived on Brown Street next to the old Farm also made his contribution to Bloomfield. He was president of Prosser Library for 10 years, President of the Bloomfield Village Improvement Association and on his death he bequeathed to that Association a 7 acre tract of woodland for park purposes. In 1930 Wilbur J. Filley (Louis's son) provided funds to buy an overgrown pasture connecting the woodland to Tunxis Avenue and a little later his sister Mrs. Grace Bidwell purchased and gave to the Association 5 more acres completing what is now Filley Park which was dedicated in 1938. The newspaper clipping from which this was extracted states that in 1916 when the Chestnut blight killed practically all of these trees, over 200 beautiful native Chestnuts were cut from this tract. These trees were sold for telephone poles.

The third child of Louis Jay, Oliver Dwight, operated Massaco Farm. His only son Oliver Filley left Bloomfield for a military career and I understand, retired as another Captain Oliver Filley and is now living in South Dakota.

This is the end of the story, abbreviated as it is, of the Filley family. But let us trace the history of the house a little longer. Captain Oliver Filley died in 1846 and the house and farm were sold to Watson Wilcox of Sunbury in 1849, then by him to Amasa Holcomb on May 24, 1854, then by Amasa on October 25, 1854 to Samuel Pinney. The Pinneys lived in the house and farmed the land until it was sold in 1913 to the Missionaries of LaSalette. Recently the historian for the Wintonbury Historical Society, Roberta Kania, obtained some very interesting pictures and information from the LaSalette Missionaries archives about the property which they called "The Villa." The research on the Filley house is an ongoing project as the restoration of the house is undertaken by the Wintonbury Historical Society. If you have any information or old pictures you would like to share with the Wintonbury Historical Society please contact the Society at:

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Attachment C Page 3

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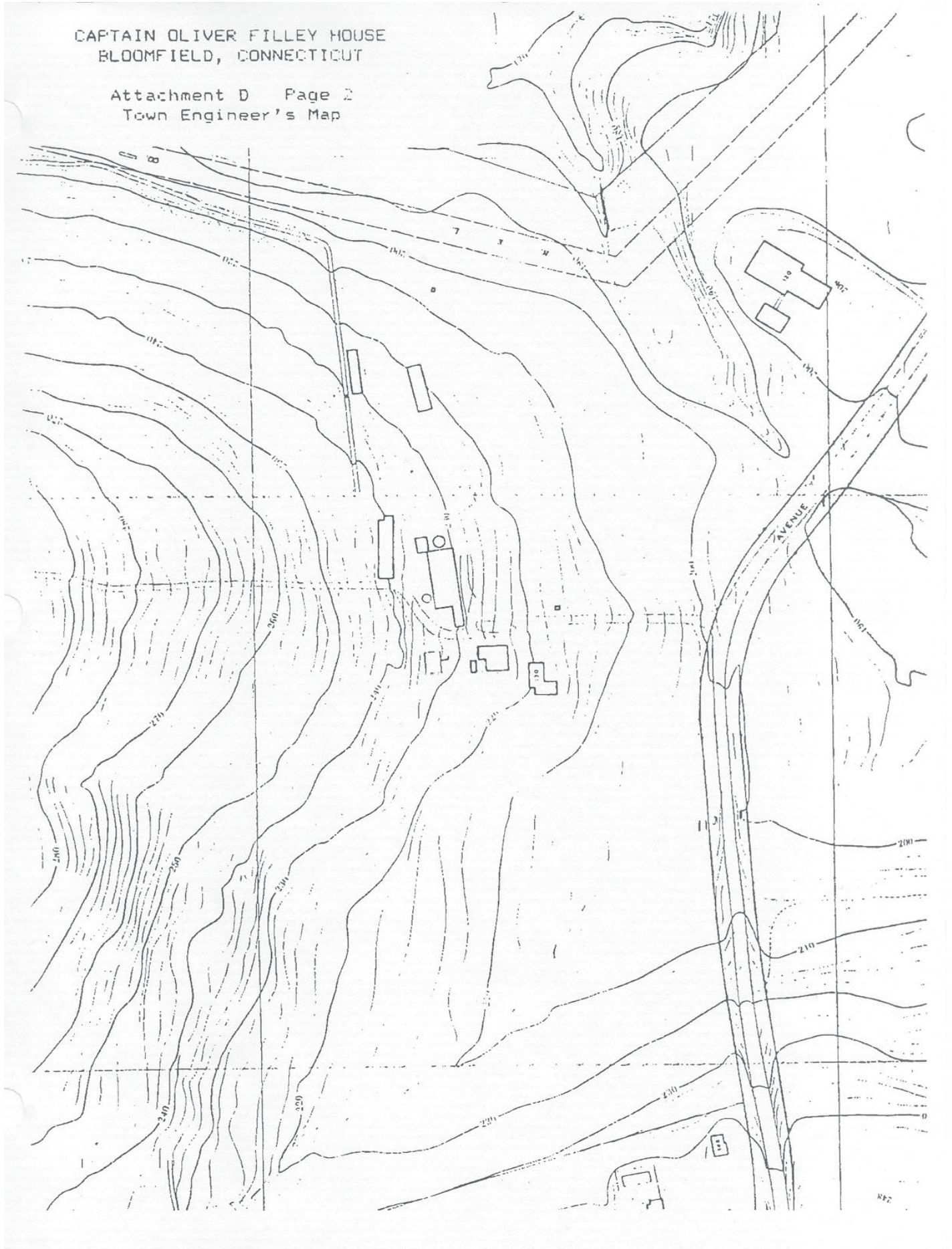
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Attachment D Page 2
Town Engineer's Map



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Attachment D Page 1
Town Engineer's Map

