

National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Columbia Green Historic District Columbia, Connecticut

AHS Historian Bruce Clouette prepared the National Register nomination for a group of 42 buildings arranged along the remnants of the town common, collectively known as the Columbia Green (the original town common is now bisected in each direction by state highways). Four of the houses date from the 18th century, including a large Colonial house built for an early Congregational minister, Eleazar Wheelock, the founder of Dartmouth College. The majority of the houses are from the Federal or Greek Revival periods and include both simply detailed vernacular houses and more architecturally stylish houses with columns and other Classical detailing. The Congregational meetinghouse (1832) and chapel (1870) were also built in the Greek Revival style. Victorian buildings include the Queen Anne-style William Yeomans House (1880) and the Saxton B. Little library (1903). In addition to buildings, the nomination included a contributing object, the town's World War One memorial, and a contributing site, an 18th-century burying ground.



The nomination's Statement of Significance has two main themes: the importance of the district's buildings as examples of historical architectural styles, especially as those styles were interpreted in rural village settings such as Columbia; and the buildings' associations with the religious, political, economic, and social life of the community. Columbia was a predominantly agricultural town through the first half of the 20th century, and most of the houses in the district were originally occupied by farming families. Other buildings at this crossroads accommodated stores, small shops, and taverns serving those families. This small village center was also where families from throughout the town gathered for worship, town meetings, and Grange activities. The Columbia Free Library, organized in 1883, is now in its third building at the Green.

The nomination included recognition of Columbia's "Old Yard" burying ground as an outstanding assemblage of 18th- and early 19th-century grave markers, a major medium of artistic expression in that period. Among them are numerous stones by noted carvers Benjamin Collins (1691-1759) and his son, Zerubbabel (1733-1797).

