

# State-Level Historical Documentation Housatonic Rail Line Historic Bridges and Culverts New Milford, Kent, and Canaan, Connecticut

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is replacing or rehabilitating bridges along 29 miles of track along the Housatonic Railroad, where it parallels the Housatonic River in northwestern Connecticut. These improvements required historical documentation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA). AHS inventoried and documented four historic bridges that would be affected by the project. The documentation package will be included in the Connecticut Historic Preservation Collection, housed at the Dodd Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs.



The bridges are significant as contributing components of the overall Housatonic Railroad line between New Milford and Canaan. Completed in 1842, the rail line is one of Connecticut's older lines and after a rocky start, it became a vital part of the region's economic infrastructure. The region through which it passed included stone quarries, iron furnaces, lime kilns, paper mills, and other industrial enterprises, and some of the larger farms undertook tobacco and dairy production that relied on rail transportation. New Milford and Pittsfield grew into small commercial centers, contributing to

the railroad's passenger business, and by the end of the 19th century, the railroad was serving the seasonal estates of the well-to-do who flocked to the Litchfield Hills and Berkshires.

The rail line is characterized by numerous early or original railroad bridges and historic freight and passenger stations, including some of the oldest station buildings remaining in Connecticut. These bridges embody the distinguishing characteristics of three types of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century railroad bridges: stone arch, railtop, and wooden trestle.

