

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 90001109 Date Listed: 08/02/90

Selleck, Sylvanus, Gristmill Fairfield CT
Property Name County State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for Beth L. Savage
Signature of the Keeper

8/2/90
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

8. Statement of Significance: Level and Area(s)

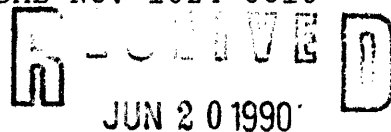
As supported by the text, Architecture is intended as an applicable area; it was inadvertently not indicated.

The appropriate levels of significance for this property are State, for its industrial importance as a rare surviving mill statewide, and local, for its historic role in agriculture.

This information was confirmed with John Herzan, National Register Coordinator, CTSHP, by telephone,

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

**NATIONAL
REGISTER**

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: SYLVANUS SELLECK GRISTMILL

other name/site number: Edwin Knapp Gristmill

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2. Location

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street & number: 124 Old Mill Road

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Greenwich

vicinity: N/A

state: CT county: Fairfield

code: 001 zip code: 06830

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3. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
<u>1</u>	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>2</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official: John W. Shannahan, State Historic Preservation Officer; Date: 6/14/90

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official; Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other (explain):

Signature of Keeper; Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: INDUSTRY Sub: grist mill
Current: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub:

=====
7. Description
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Architectural Classification:

NO STYLE

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation STONE: fieldstone roof WOOD: shingle
walls WOOD: weatherboard other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance
=====

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: _____.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: INDUSTRY
AGRICULTURE

Period(s) of Significance: c.1796-1895

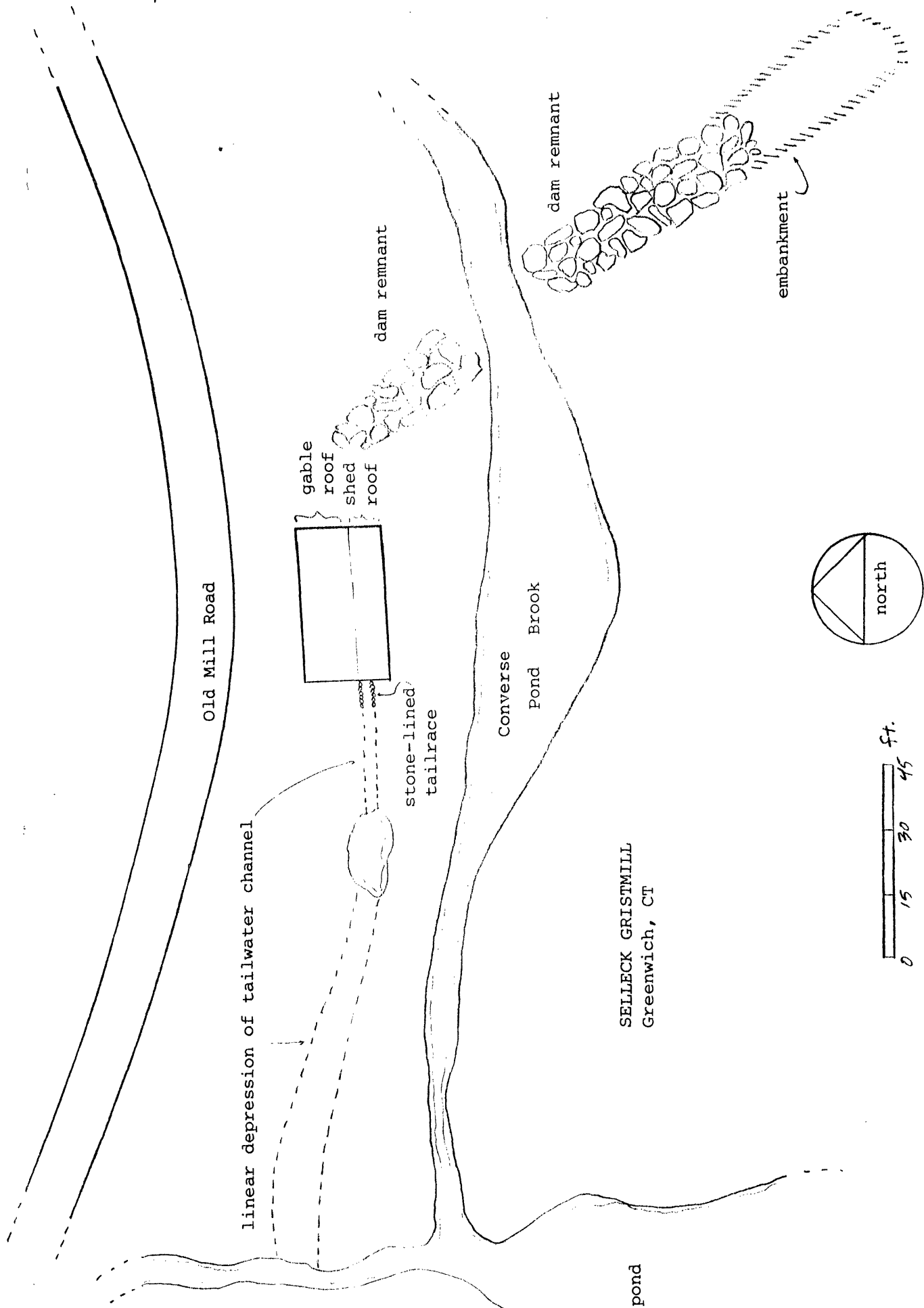
Significant Dates: c.1796 (built); c.1860 (altered)

Significant Person(s): _____

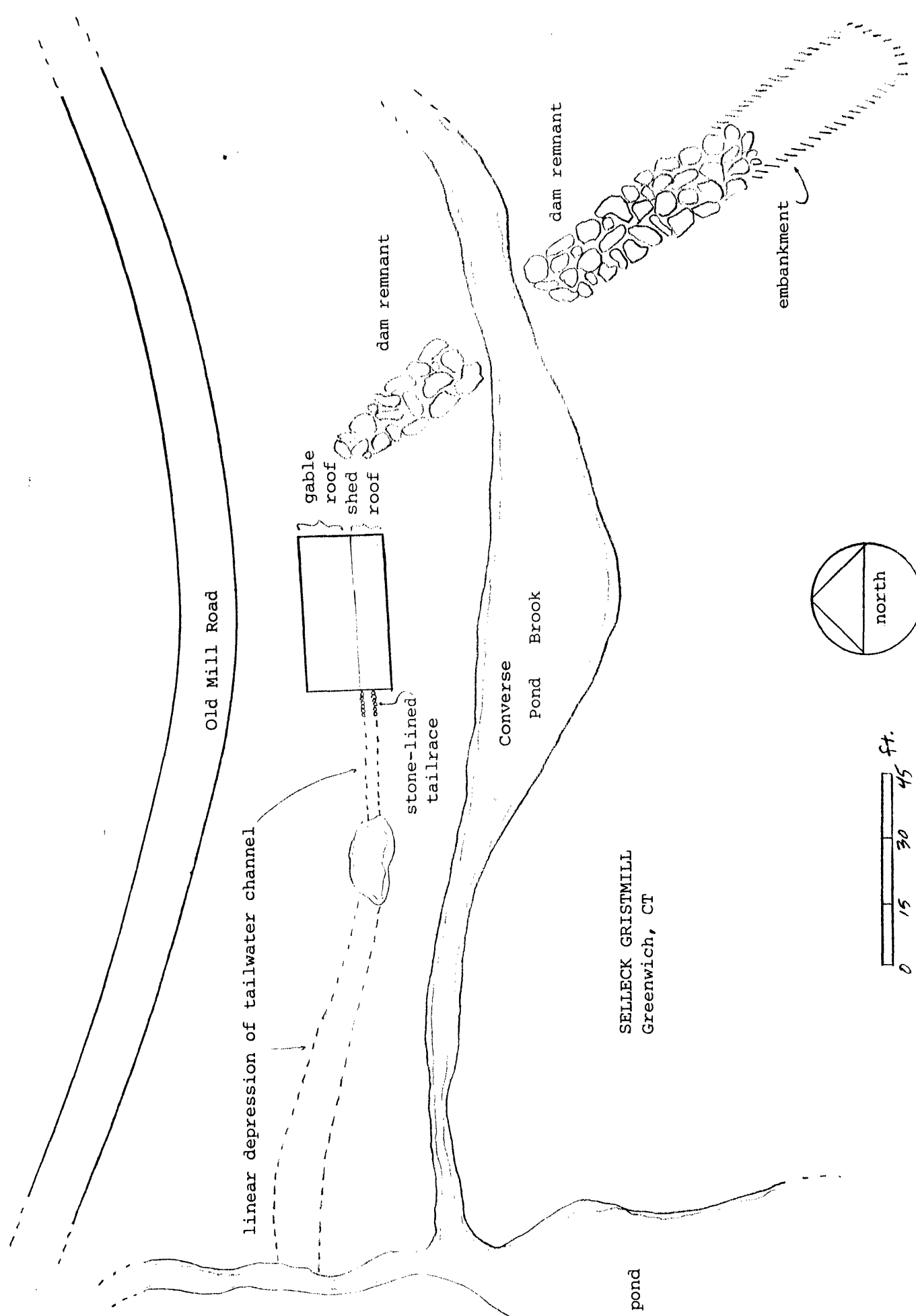
Cultural Affiliation: _____

Architect/Builder: Sylvanus Selleck
Edwin Knapp

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.



4126 7/90



Old Mill Road

linear depression of tailwater channel

gable roof
shed roof

dam remnant

stone-lined tailrace

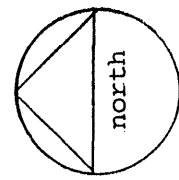
Converse Pond Brook

dam remnant

embankment

SELLECK GRISTMILL
Greenwich, CT

pond



H2c 7/90

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Photograph captions

Selleck Gristmill
Greenwich, CT

Photos-1

All photographs:

1. SELLECK GRISTMILL/KNAPP GRISTMILL
2. Greenwich, CT
3. Photo credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
4. January 1990
5. Negative filed with Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, CT

Captions:

East elevation, camera facing northwest
Photograph 1 of 17

North elevation (and a corner of the east elevation), camera facing
west
Photograph 2 of 17

North elevation, showing placement of new structural members, camera
facing west
Photograph 3 of 17

West elevation, camera facing northeast
Photograph 4 of 17

South elevation, camera facing north
Photograph 5 of 17

Dam, camera facing southeast
Photograph 6 of 17

Drain in dam, camera facing east
Photograph 7 of 17

Tailrace opening in west wall of mill, camera facing southeast
Photograph 8 of 17

Remanant of tailwater ditch west of the mill, camera facing east
Photograph 9 of 17

Basement, north portion of mill, camera facing east
Photograph 10 of 17

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Photograph captions

Selleck Gristmill
Greenwich, CT

Photos-2

Wheelpit in south portion of mill, showing draft tube and pressure case
in place, camera facing northwest
Photograph 11 of 17

Frame under millstones, camera facing north
Photograph 12 of 17

Main floor, north portion, camera facing northwest
Photograph 13 of 17

Main floor, south portion, camera facing east
Photograph 14 of 17

Roof framing, north portion, camera facing northeast
Photograph 15 of 17

Roof framing at junction of north and south portions of mill, camera
facing northeast
Photograph 16 of 17

Run of stone, camera facing southwest
Photograph 17 of 17

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office, 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property: less than 1

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>18</u>	<u>612620</u>	<u>4549630</u>	B	___	_____	_____
C	___	_____	_____	D	___	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

The nominated property includes the mill building, the dam, and the tailrace, all the features associated with the historic operation of the grain-milling process conducted on this site. See sketch map.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

The mill, dam and tailrace are the only resources associated with the processing industry that is the property's primary area of significance.

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

Name/Title: Matthew Roth and Bruce Clouette, Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

Organization: Historic Resource Consultants Date: January 29, 1990

Street & Number: 55 Van Dyke Avenue Telephone: 203-547-0268

City or Town: Hartford State: CT ZIP: 06106

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description (continued)

Sylvanus Selleck Gristmill Page 7-1
Greenwich, CT

Sylvanus Selleck Gristmill (Photographs 1-5) is a small post-and-beam structure with a fieldstone foundation, rough weatherboard walls, and a wood-shingle roof. It consists of a gable-roofed section, probably erected c.1796 by Selleck, and a shed-roofed south addition that was probably built c.1860 by Edwin Knapp. In addition to the mill and its contents, the nominated property includes the remnants of the dam (Photographs 6, 7) and watercourses (Photographs 8, 9) associated with the operation of the mill. The property stands in a wooded area in the northern part of the Town of Greenwich, an area of principally residential use. The nominated property is only the small northeastern corner of a large parcel (Map 183, Lot 19C in the Greenwich Assessor Records) that includes a dwelling and associated outbuildings.

The mill occupies the edge of a bank that slopes down sharply to the south; thus while the north elevation is built on grade, the slope provides room for a full-height basement (Photograph 10) and wheelpit (Photograph 11). Fieldstone foundations enclose these below-grade spaces.

The gable-roofed portion of the mill, which contained most of the operating equipment, is about 36'x18'. There is no sash in the few window openings and no doors in any of the entries, including the large freight opening in the west side of the foundation. Its framing of hewn oak and chestnut timbers (up to 14"x11" in section) has bracing at alternate posts (Photograph 13) and integral cross-bracing in the long north wall (Photographs 3, 13), features consistent with the substantial load of machinery and grain, and the vibration, that the structure had to bear. The south wall of the gable-roofed portion was altered when the shed-roofed portion was added, but mortises in the girts indicate that the south wall originally had the same bracing as the north. Rafters are connected by mortise-and-tenon joints at the ridge (Photograph 15).

In the basement are the remains of two frames that provided support and adjustment for two runs of stone that occupied the main floor of the mill. The west run of stone is gone and only fragments of its frame remain. The east run is in place (Photograph 17), although the hopper, case, and other wooden elements associated with operating millstones are gone; several pieces of wood lying half-submerged in the wheelpit appear to be parts of a hopper. The east frame is substantially intact (Photograph 12). The only other piece of milling equipment is the bottom half of the cast-iron case for a cob grinder, which extends below the main floor.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description (continued)

Sylvanus Selleck Gristmill Page 7-2
Greenwich, CT

The original configuration of the mill likely featured just the gable-roofed portion with an open wheelpit immediately adjacent to the south. Construction of the shed addition to enclose the wheelpit probably coincided with the installation of a vertical turbine to replace an earlier waterwheel. The addition's relatively light and unbraced framing (Photograph 14) includes hewn, circular-sawn, and vertically sawn members, suggesting frequent rebuilding and repair, or a long and interrupted sequence of construction. Besides the framing members from the historic-use period, the shed also has recent members added as a stabilization measure (see, for instance, the topmost "girt" in Photograph 12). Submerged in the wheelpit are the cast-iron penstock, draft tube and pressure case for a vertical turbine (Photograph 11). The turbine runner is most likely in place within the pressure case, but it is not visible; to judge from the pressure case, the runner would be approximately 30" in diameter.

The dam (Photographs 6, 7), built of dry-laid fieldstone, is about 9-1/2' wide at the base. The dam is breached so that Converse Pond Brook runs freely through it. Its battered sides once rose to a height of about 12', but the removal and erosion of stones has left a varying height of between eight and ten feet. North of the brook, the remains of the dam are about 40' long. South of the brook some 60' remain, along with an earthen embankment that extended the dam to the south. A hole through the dam probably served as a drain to lower the upstream water level (Photograph 7). The configuration of the waterwheel-based power system is not evident. Nor is the full extent of the turbine-based system completely visible: the intake into the penstock is obscured by fallen-down pieces of the dam. As noted above, the penstock, draft tube, and pressure-case are in place, but aspects of the tailwater system remain a matter of conjecture. The water exited the turbine into a stone-lined open channel (Photograph 8) that extends some three feet beyond the west wall of the mill. From the west end of the open channel, the water proceeds underground, its path evident in a shallowly sloped, linear depression (Photograph 9) that runs into a small brook; the brook in turn runs into a small unnamed pond (see sketch map). Both possible explanations of the tailwater system would assume that prior to the turbine installation the water ran in a completely open channel. Then when the turbine went in, the channel was dug out to greater depth and converted into a tunnel, or dug out and left as an open channel that has been partially filled by erosion.

The deterioration of the building (especially the south wall of the

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description (continued)

Sylvanus Selleck Gristmill Page 7-3
Greenwich, CT

addition, Photograph 5), the breaching of the dam, and the removal of much of the operating equipment have compromised the integrity of the nominated property. Nonetheless, even if the mill does not stand in pristine condition, virtually all elements of the building's distinctive structural system are either in place or readily discernible from data such as empty mortises, and the placement and operation of the machinery is also evident from structural data. Apart from the breach in the dam, the power system appears to survive in its entirety. Finally, recent efforts to stabilize the building have been executed with exemplary sensitivity to the historic fabric. Deteriorated members have been left in place and supported by "helpers" placed alongside (Photographs 3, 12). Moreover, those members that were necessary to remove have been saved on the site (see timbers on the floor in Photographs 13, 17).

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Significance (continued)

Sylvanus Selleck Gristmill Page 8-1
Greenwich, CT

Sylvanus Selleck Gristmill is significant because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the rural Connecticut gristmill (Criterion C). Its braced-frame construction is typical of country mills from the late 18th through the late 19th centuries, and it retains elements of the waterpower system and operating equipment from the mid-to-late 19th century. The mill is also significant in the history of local agriculture (Criterion A). In its earliest incarnation under Selleck, the mill served the crucial function of processing staple grains for local farmers. As staple production declined in the 19th century and farmers turned to stock-raising, the later owner, Edwin Knapp, used the mill to provide feed for livestock. Finally, as one of only two 18th-century gristmills presently known to survive, Selleck Gristmill has an incalculable degree of what may be termed scarcity value.

Sylvanus Selleck and Edwin Knapp

By the 1790s, farms had been established on virtually all the tillable land in Greenwich. As in most Connecticut towns, further increase in the number of farms was accomplished by subdividing existing holdings, a practice that resulted in denser population in the outlying areas such as Round Hill, where Sylvanus Selleck had his farm. For Selleck, the rise in number of farms was an opportunity to supplement his farming income by building a gristmill; the only mill in town was several miles to the south, on the Byram River, and a closer mill would save substantial travel time for the outlying farmers of Round Hill. Selleck himself sold off a portion of his farm in 1795, perhaps as a way to raise money to build the mill. In the deed for this sale, he reserved "privileges for all persons to pass and repass . . . to the mill that said Selleck is about to build."¹

Subdividing existing farms created many holdings with scarcely enough acreage to support a family; Selleck's 1795 sale was for only 22 acres. Soon, other factors further jeopardized the viability of Greenwich agriculture. The opening of the Erie Canal undercut staple production by enabling inexpensive transportation of grain from the Midwest to New York and then to Connecticut towns such as Greenwich. Unable to compete, Connecticut farmers moved away, turned to other occupations, or changed their agricultural pursuits to orchard crops or

¹ Greenwich Land Records, 13:666 (1795).

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance (continued)

Sylvanus Selleck Gristmill Page 8-2
Greenwich, CT

livestock. Selleck managed to struggle on as a farmer and miller; while income from each probably declined, the combined income contributed to his ability to continue. Nonetheless, he had to find additional means to earn an income, and started making bricks as well: his 1844 probate inventory included brick molds.

Edwin Knapp bought Selleck's entire estate -- 47 acres, dwelling, barn and gristmill -- at auction in 1846. The remains of the cob grinder indicate that Knapp added production of livestock feed, the additional processes perhaps accounting for the upgrading of the power system under Knapp's tenure. Knapp continued to operate the mill until his death in 1895. His daughter and son-in-law occupied the farm after that, but apparently did not run the mill. In 1927 a resident of Brooklyn, New York, purchased the property, completing its transformation from a working farm and gristmill to a country estate.

Gristmill Construction and Technology

The structural technology of rural gristmills was based on the familiar timber-framing methods employed in houses, barns and other buildings, adapted to the specialized requirements of the bulk-processing operations contained within. Gristmills had to withstand heavier floor loadings than most buildings, as well as vibration from machinery. Thus they usually featured heavier members than typical timber-framing, as well as additional bracing, such as the diagonal bracing seen at Selleck Mill. The heaviest equipment -- the millstones -- usually rested on frames that, from a load-bearing standpoint, functioned independently from the building. These frames of heavy, closely spaced timbers also incorporated the means of adjusting the spacing between the bed and runner stones. The most common method, as seen in Selleck Mill, was to rest the thrust bearing for the vertical shaft of the runner stone on a beam that could be pivoted up or down within elongated mortises in the posts of the frame (as seen in Photograph 12), usually by means of a screw mechanism. The visible remains of the stones at Selleck Mill represent standard technology for rural mills of the mid-to-late 19th century. Both bed and runner appear to be buhrstone or similar metamorphic stone; both have iron bands around the perimeter; and the dress features the straight-line pattern of grooves that in the 19th century replaced the earlier spiral dress. Additionally, the runner appears to consist of small stones bound together into the whole, contained by the iron band and the plaster-of-Paris cap (Photograph 17).

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance (continued)

Sylvanus Selleck Gristmill Page 8-3
Greenwich, CT

While the characteristics of Selleck Mill, its power system and its operating equipment appear to typify Connecticut gristmills of the late 18th century through the late 19th century, the fact that the site survives in recognizable condition is not typical at all. Indeed, the most conservative estimate would place the number of Connecticut gristmills at more than 200 in the mid-19th century. Of these, fewer than a dozen are known to survive in any condition that even approximates their historic appearance and function. Of those survivors, only Porter Gristmill in Hebron has elements that date from as early as the 1790s. The others are either considerably later in origin, or feature gristmill components that were added to earlier structures originally developed as sawmills. Thus Selleck Gristmill is significant in that most compelling way, as a rare surviving example of a once-typical kind of structure.²

² Matthew Roth et al., Connecticut: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites. Washington, D.C., 1981, pp. 47, 108, 201, 233, 234, 256.

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