**HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Please send completed form to: Stacey Vairo, National Register and State Register Coordinator, State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford CT 06103

* Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Building Name (Common) | Knowlton Farms | Record No. 12118
Building Name (Historic) | Knowlton, Edwin, Farmstead
Street Address or Location | 92 Knowlton Hill Road
Town/City | Ashford | Village | Windham | County
Owner(s) | Thomas E. Knowlton, 99 Knowlton Hill Road, Ashford CT 06278

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**PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Present Use: Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling
Historic Use: Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding; Domestic: single dwelling

Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes ☐ No ☐
Interior accessible? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, explain.

Interior accessible? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, explain ____________________________

Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes ☐ No ☐

Interior accessible? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, explain ____________________________

Material(s): (Indicate use or location when appropriate):
- ☑ Wood Frame
- ☑ Post & Beam
- ☑ Balloon
- ☑ Load bearing masonry
- ☐ Structural iron or steel
- ☒ Other Vertical wood siding

Structural System:
- ☑ Wood Frame
- ☑ Post & Beam
- ☐ Balloon
- ☑ Load bearing masonry
- ☐ Structural iron or steel
- ☒ Other Vertical wood siding

Roof (Type):
- ☑ Gable
- ☐ Flat
- ☐ Mansard
- ☐ Monitor
- ☐ Sawtooth

Roof (Material):
- ☑ Wood Shingle
- ☐ Roll Asphalt
- ☐ Tin
- ☐ Slate
- ☑ Asphalt Shingle

Number of Stories: 2 1/2, B

Approximate Dimensions: 40' x 70'

Structural Condition: ☑ Excellent

Exterior Condition: ☑ Excellent

Location Integrity: ☑ On original site

Alterations? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, explain: Basement level added, cupola replaced

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**FOR OFFICE USE:**

Town #: Site #: UTM:
- District: ☑ S ☐ NR

If NR, Specify: ☑ Actual ☐ Potential
PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT’D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

- Barn ✔
- Shed ✔
- Garage □
- Carriage House □
- Shop □
- Garden □
- Other landscape features or buildings: Stone walls, cupola, cell tower, pond

Surrounding Environment:

- Open land ✔
- Woodland ✔
- Residential ✔
- Commercial □
- Industrial □
- Rural ✔
- High building density □
- Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

See continuation sheet.

• Other notable features of building or site (Interior and/or Exterior)

See continuation sheet.

Architect _______________________________ Builder _______________________________

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:


See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock _______________________________ Date 12/02/2009

View Multiple Views _______________________________ Negative on File CTHP

Name Charlotte Hitchcock _______________________________ Date 12/28/2012

Organization Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude:
41.840129, -72.204391

Threats to the building or site:

- None known ✔
- Highways □
- Vandalism □
- Developers □
- Renewal □
- Private □
- Deterioration □
- Zoning □
- Other ________________ □
- Explanation ________________
• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

Knowlton Hill Road is a rural road in the southwest corner of Ashford; it intersects with US Route 44 at its north end (at a section called locally Squaw Hollow Road). To the south it runs into the town of Mansfield where it ends at Wormwood Hill Road. Knowlton Farms consists of over 400 acres of land in multiple parcels, in the area of Knowlton Hill Road, Wormwood Hill Road, and extending north of Route 44. Approximately 400 acres of Knowlton Farm sold development rights under the State of Connecticut’s Purchase of Development Rights program in 2009. A substantial parcel of land surrounding Knowlton Pond belongs to the Joshua’s Trust and is an open space preserve. The farm’s main complex of agricultural buildings is located at 92 Knowlton Hill Road, on the west side of the road.

Across the road on the east side there are two historic farmhouses, both 1 ½-story cape-style structures with their eave-sides facing west to the road. No. 95 is a 24’ x 32’ cape-style house c. 1880 with a central door flanked by bay windows; a 1-story ell extends north and has a porch along the west eave-side. No. 99 is a c. 1800 30’ x 40’ five-bay structure with a central doorway flanked by two windows on each side. A 1-story ell extends south and there is a small barn attached at the rear of the ell (Barn III). Between and to the rear of these houses is a small 1-story barn (Barn II). To the rear (east) of No. 95, there is a massive earthen ramp with fieldstone retaining walls, berming up toward the north. This is the remains of a ramp up to the loft level of a high-drive barn whose foundation can be seen adjacent to the north. The barn was destroyed by the hurricane of 1938.

On the west side the main complex is clustered around Barn I, a large, approximately 40’ x 70’ multi-level bank barn. Other structures include a large 1-story metal-roofed pole cow barn (Barn IV) uphill toward the southwest, a heifer barn (Barn V) toward the north, a barn/equipment shed (Barn VI) located close to the road at the north end of the complex, and another shed (Shed VII) close to the road at the south end.

The roadway is lined by stone walls, and there are open pastures and hay fields surrounding the farmstead, with forested hills and a cell-phone tower to the northwest, and Knowlton Pond to the east.

• Other notable features of building or site (Interior and/or Exterior):

Architectural description:

Inventory of structures (C – contributing, NC – non-contributing):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Contributing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House No. 95</td>
<td>c. 1880</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House No. 99</td>
<td>c. 1800</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn I</td>
<td>c. 1875</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn II</td>
<td>19th c.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn III</td>
<td>19th c.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barns IV-VII</td>
<td>20th c.</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barn I:

This 2 ½-story plus basement gable-roofed New England high-drive bank barn, 40’ x 70’, is oriented with the ridge-line running east-west. It is set against the up-slope of the hill to the west so that the west entrance in the gable-end is accessed at the third level from an earthen ramp the full width of the gable-end, with 2-story-high retaining walls of large boulder stone masonry. The north, east, and south walls are the full height of two stories above an exposed basement.

Exterior:

A concrete block masonry foundation/basement level (added in 1966) has six stable windows on the south side and five stable windows and one pass-through door on the north. A milk house, also of concrete block masonry, is attached at the lowest level on the east gable-end facade, with its north wall flush with the barn wall. The east wall of
the basement has one stable window near the southeast corner, a sliding door at the center for livestock, and the gable-roofed milk room addition.

The second level is sheathed on all three sides (south, east, and north) with vertical flush board siding. Access to the interior is through several hay doors; two on the south side and two on the north. The siding shows evidence of repairs and patching where windows were removed during a renovation in 1966. The west end is banked into the retaining wall of the upper entranceway.

The third level has no openings on the south, east, and north sides, and a large double sliding door off the ramp on the west. In the attic gable is a round window on the west facade and an arch-topped window on the east.

The vertical siding is painted red. The gable roof is asphalt shingles. A modern hip-roofed cupola (1997) with arch-topped windows is at the center of the ridge, a replacement for one that was blown off in 1938 by the hurricane.

**Interior:**

The interior of the loft level is a post and beam frame with five bays. The typical bent is formed with sawn timbers; two interior posts support a cross-girt which extends horizontally to meet the slope of the roof and carries longitudinal purlin plates at the outrigger ends of the tie-girts. The loft floor is located at approximately four feet below elevation of the plates, and provides a drive floor down the length of the barn in the center aisle. The side aisles are braced to the posts at the plate height and low plank partitions separate the hay mow areas from the drive floor. Rafters are sawn dimension lumber, discontinuous at the purlin plates. Roof decking is spaced rough-cut boards with wood shingle roofing visible through the gaps. Newer asphalt shingles have been laid over the original wood.

The level below this loft was formerly the ground level; the barn was jacked up in 1966 and a new concrete block masonry basement level was installed under the barn. A photograph by Bill Karosi shows the appearance before the renovation.

• **Historical or Architectural importance:**

Applicable Connecticut State Register Criteria:

1. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
2. Embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

The farm and its buildings are significant for the long history of ownership by one family, including the state-wide importance of the first Thomas Knowlton, whose statue is in the capitol in Hartford, and the local prominence of James E. and Royal Knowlton. The main barn, the farmhouses, and the foundations of the eastern barn, are significant as a complex of buildings that make up a working farm, where the massive barn structure of the late 19th century is juxtaposed with the rather small farmhouses which are the oldest extant buildings. The massive ramp accessing the loft level is a locally rare example of the high drive configuration.

**Historical background:**

The Knowlton family traces its roots back to Colonel Thomas Knowlton (1740-1776), a military hero in the Revolutionary War who died in 1776 at the Battle of Harlem Heights. The Knowlton homestead was nearby at 231 Ashford Center Road (US Route 44). Thomas and his wife Anna Keyes had nine children. By the time of the 1869 O.W. Gray map of Ashford, there were numerous Knowlton farmsteads scattered throughout the southwest corner of Ashford.

Among the Knowlton descendants, Edwin Knowlton (b. 1825) and his wife Mary had four children – Robert (b. 1859), George (b. 1863), James E.A. (b. 1866), and Hattie (b. 1870). James married Lottie Knowlton, a cousin, and by the 1900 census, Lottie’s mother and sister Blanche were also living in the household. James and Lottie Knowlton had four children, Edwin (b. 1901, Elizabeth (b. 1902), Royal (b. 1907), and Ruth (b. 1910). Royal O. Knowlton, father of the current owner, Thomas Knowlton, lived until 1999 and died at age 91.
Mr. Knowlton, a farmer and town clerk, was the town's main direct link to its history and was generally considered its historian. The Knowlton name dates back to colonial times, when Ashford's most famous resident, Col. Thomas Knowlton, led a small band of volunteers to fight in the Revolutionary War.

Today there is Knowlton Road, Knowlton Cemetery, Knowlton Pond and Knowlton Memorial Town Hall.

Royal O. Knowlton's father, James E. Knowlton, was the town clerk of Ashford from 1908 to 1950.

The son went away, to Middlebury College in Vermont, but returned after graduation. When the father retired as town clerk, the son took over for another 30 years in that office. He also served, at times, as the town's probate judge, assessor, treasurer, registrar of voters, and representative to the State Legislature.

When he retired as town clerk, he gave a typical no-wasted-words Connecticut Yankee reason: “I've been around long enough.”

But he hadn't been. For the last two decades of his life, Royal Knowlton served as a font of knowledge on the history of Ashford.

Barbara Metsack, who succeeded Mr. Knowlton as town clerk 20 years ago and who is now also Ashford's municipal historian, describes her former boss as a man of quiet, dry humor who always knew where to find answers in the records of town hall. He was quite concerned about the upkeep of the records, she said. That was understandable. Many of the records concerned were about his own family (Ryan).

Royal's sons Tom and James operate the dairy farm in their turn and live in the historic farmhouses facing the barns. Like many others, they manage to keep dairying with the help of income from their cell tower lease, and the sale of development rights which preserves the land for agricultural use into the future.

Architectural significance:

The farm and its buildings are significant for the long history of ownership by one family, including the state-wide importance of the first Thomas Knowlton, whose statue is in the capitol in Hartford, and the local prominence of James E. and Royal Knowlton.

The main barn, the farmhouses, and the foundations of the eastern barn, are significant as an example of the complex of buildings that make up a working farm, where the massive barn structure of the late 19th century is juxtaposed with the rather small farmhouses which are the oldest extant buildings. The evolution of the farm buildings including major changes in the 1960s, illustrates the sequence of adaptation in a farm from subsistence farming to feed one family, toward commercial scale dairy farming in the 20th century and beyond.

• Sources (continuation):

Photographs and field notes by Charlotte Hitchcock 8/04/2009, Bill Karosi 1960s-90s.

Interview with Tom Knowlton 8/04/2009, at the site.

Map resources:

Town of Ashford Assessor's Records  http://data.visionappraisal.com/AshfordCT/DEFAULT.asp

Aerial views from:

Historical aerial photography and maps accessed at UConn MAGIC:
  http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/mash_up/1934.html
  http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/historical_maps_connecticut_towns.html


Print and internet resources:
Connecticut State Library online: iconn.org or http://www.cslib.org/iconnsitemap/staff/SiteIndex.aspx#directories
Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, Historic Barns of Connecticut Resource Inventory, 2010,
Cunningham, Janice, Connecticut’s Agricultural Heritage: an Architectural and Historical Overview, Connecticut
Sexton, James, PhD; Survey Narrative of the Connecticut Barn, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation,

3. Detail Site overview identifying contributing and non-contributing resources – base image from Google Maps.

4. South view of Knowlton Farm, camera facing north along Knowlton Hill Road.
5. West view of farmhouses, camera facing east. No. 95 Knowlton Hill Road is at left, Barn II at center, and No. 99 Knowlton Hill Road at right.

6. West view of No. 95 Knowlton Hill Road, camera facing east (Ashford Assessor photo).

7. West view of No. 99 Knowlton Hill Road, camera facing east (Ashford Assessor photo).

10. Northeast view of rear of No. 99 Knowlton Hill Road, with Barn III at far left. Photograph taken c. 2000, courtesy of Bill Karosi.

11. Southwest view of the south ell of No. 99 Knowlton Hill Road, with Barn III at right rear.
12. East view of No. 95 Knowlton Hill Road (right) with the entry ramp to the former barn, camera facing west.

13. Northeast view of stone ramp, camera facing west. The former barn was a right (north) and the driveway shown passed under a bridge and between the massive ramp and the barn ground level. Barn VI beyond.
14. Southeast view of foundation walls of the former barn located to the north of the stone ramp, camera facing northwest.

15. Northeast view of Barn IV, camera facing southwest.
16. Southeast view of Barn V, Heifer barn, camera facing northwest from the west upper-level entry to Barn I.

17. Southeast aerial view of Barn VI, camera facing northwest. Photograph taken c. 2000, courtesy of Bill Karosi.
18. West view showing the south side of Barn I at left, Barn II in far distance, No. 99 Knowlton Hill Road, and Shed VII; camera facing east.

20. Northwest view of Barn I, camera facing east. No. 95 Knowlton Hill Road is at left rear.

21. Southeast view of Barn I, camera facing northwest. Photograph taken before the renovations of 1966, courtesy of Bill Karosi. Note original ground level stable windows, now replaced by siding and hay doors; milk room relocated to the northeast corner and reconstructed of concrete block masonry.
22. Southeast view of Barn I, camera facing northwest.
23. Interior view of Barn I, camera facing east, showing the typical framing bents at the upper loft level.

24. Interior view of Barn I, showing roof construction, camera facing northwest.
25. Interior view of Barn I loft level showing old hand hewn timber saved from renovation work, camera facing southwest.

26. Interior view of Barn I west door sill at loft entrance showing construction detail of 1966 renovation.
27. Southwest view of Barn I, camera facing northeast.