Morris Farmstead / The Old Morris Place                                      Record No. 5767

Morris, Eli Gould / Morris, Charles Gould and Elisabeth Woodbridge, Farmstead

133 Berkshire Road (Route 34)
Town/City Newtown Village Sandy Hook / Zoar County Fairfield
Owner(s) Erick Feucht & Kimberly Cornell, 133 Berkshire Rd, Sandy Hook CT 06482

Property Information
Present Use: Domestic: secondary structure; 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_________________________

Style of building English barn, New England barn; vernacular style Date of Construction 19th-20th c.

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):
☑ Clapboard ☐ Asbestos Siding ☐ Brick ☐ Wood Shingle ☐ Asphalt Siding
☑ Fieldstone ☐ Board & Batten ☐ Stucco ☐ Cobblestone ☐ Aluminum Siding
☑ Concrete (Type ______________) ☐ Cut Stone (Type ______________) ☑ Other Vertical wood siding

Structural System
☑ Wood Frame ☑ Post & Beam ☐ Balloon ☐ Load bearing masonry ☐ Structural iron or steel
☐ Other __________________________

Roof (Type)
☑ Gable ☐ Flat ☐ Mansard ☐ Monitor ☐ Sawtooth
☐ Gambrel ☑ Shed ☐ Hip ☐ Round ☐ Other __________________________ (Material)
☐ Wood Shingle ☐ Roll Asphalt ☐ Tin ☐ Slate ☑ Asphalt Shingle
☐ Built up ☐ Tile ☑ Other House: composite shingles

Number of Stories: 1 1/2 Approximate Dimensions Barn I: 40' x 70' Barn II: 24' x 46' (see continuation)

Structural Condition: ☐ Excellent ☑ Good ☑ Fair ☐ Deteriorated
Exterior Condition: ☐ Excellent ☑ Good ☑ Fair ☐ Deteriorated

Location Integrity: ☑ On original site ☐ Moved When? ____________
Alterations? ☐ Yes ☑ No If yes, explain: ________________________________

For Office Use: Town # ______ Site # _____ UTM ____________
District: ☐ S ☐ NR If NR, Specify: ☐ Actual ☐ Potential

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PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT’D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

- Barn
- Shed
- Garage
- Carriage House
- Shop
- Garden

☑ Other landscape features or buildings: Stone walls, two houses, chicken coop in ruins, foundation of water tank

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 1/10/2012

View Multiple Views ___________________________ Negative on File CTHP

Name Charlotte Hitchcock ___________________________ Date 3/14/2012

Organization Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude: 41.397588, -73.241681

Threats to the building or site:

☐ None known  ☐ Highways  ☐ Vandalism  ☐ Developers  ☐ Renewal  ☐ Private

☑ Deterioration  ☐ Zoning  ☐ Other ________________  ☐ Explanation ________________
• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

This site is located on two parcels, 125 and 133 Berkshire Road (CT Route 34), on the east side between the village centers of Berkshire and Stevenson. The Housatonic River is to the east of the site, with today’s Lake Zoar dividing Newtown from Southbury. Before the construction of the Stevenson Dam on the Housatonic River and creation of Lake Zoar (1915-20), this area, known as Zoar, was connected by local roads to bridges over the river at Stevenson, to the southeast, and Bennetts Bridge, to the north. Berkshire Road continued northwest to Berkshire where the S. Curtis & Sons box company had built a manufacturing center, on to Sandy Hook and to the Borough of Newtown. Today the road is still a major route from Derby to Newtown, though it has been re-routed over Stevenson Dam. The site is highly visible, located on the outside of a bend in a busy road.

The 8-acre property sits on a rise of land in a curve of the road. A flat area provides the site for the main house (133 Berkshire Road), a late 18th-century or c. 1800 colonial-style building of five bays and 2 ½ stories with a center chimney. The main block has its ridge-line oriented north-south parallel to the road, and the west eave-side is the main entry façade. A shorter 2-story wing extends to the north and porches have been added at the south gable-end and northeast corner. Windows are twelve-over-eight double-hung sash on both eave-sides, and the front entry has a six-pane transom above a vertical plank door. Trim is simple surrounds with lintels that project beyond the casings. Siding is narrow horizontal wood clapboards – the west front painted white and the rear stained dark – and roofing is a type of mid-20th-century synthetic composite shingle.

To the north of the main house is a second building (125 Berkshire Road), a simple three-bay 2 ½-story colonial-style structure, also with its eave-side facing west toward the road and a narrow center chimney. It has six-over-six double-hung windows on the eave-sides and gable-ends. The main entrance is in the center bay of the west eave-side, slightly off-center toward the left (north) and is a door with a glazed upper panel over three wood panels. A 1-story shed-roofed porch spans the south gable-end and has a door from the main floor level. A 1-story shed-roofed addition extends eastward across the east eave-side and is in process of renovation. Siding is wide wood shakes stained dark with white trim. Roofing is asphalt shingles.

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The road frontage is lined with a rubble masonry stone wall, with openings for driveways at the north part of the site, to the south of the house, and in front of the main front door. To the north and south of the level area are wooded rocky outcroppings, and to the east the land slopes down to a swampy area, also wooded. The immediate surroundings of the building complex are cleared with a few trees. The main barns are located to the southeast of the main house. An English barn (Barn I) is oriented with its gable-end toward the street and its south eave-side entry facing away from the houses. Barn II is a carriage barn located south of Barn I, and oriented with its eave-sides facing west and east. Barn III is a small structure northeast of the main house. Barn IV is a wagon shed located east of Barn I. In the woods along the north property line is a deteriorated shed-roofed chicken coop, now with trees grown up around it. Additional acreage nearby was formerly associated with the farmstead. On the knoll to the south of the barns some traces remain of a water storage tank.

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

Architectural description:

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

House: 133 Berkshire Road  c. 1790-1800  C
House: 125 Berkshire Road  c. 1873  C
Barn I main 3-bay block  19th c.  C
Barn I east addition  early 20th c.  C
Barn II  c. 1910  C
Barn III  early 20th c.  C
Barn IV  early 20th c.  C
Chicken coop  20th c.  C
Barn I:
The main agricultural structure is a 1 ½-story gable-roofed English barn which modified by several additions. The central block is a three-bay post and beam framed structure oriented with its ridge-line east-west. The south eave-side contains the main entry doorway. A 1-story shed-roofed addition along the north side extends the footprint of the barn, creating a saltbox profile. A 1 ½-story gable-roofed addition, configured as a ground level dairy barn, extends toward the east and a shed-roofed addition on its north side roughly aligns with the north wall to the west. A 1-story shed-roofed addition spans across the west gable-end. The central block is 26 feet wide x 36 feet long, the east dairy barn addition is 26 feet wide x 24 feet long, the north shed additions add 14 feet to the width, and the west shed addition adds 10 feet to the length.

Exterior:
The south eave-side of the main structure is a three-bay elevation with a full-height opening for barn doors in the center bay. The track for sliding doors runs above the opening and one of the doors is extant, parked to the right (east). The remains of the other is leaned against the wall. The opening is filled by a two-pane transom light below the eaves and a pair of hinged plywood doors. In the right (east) bay is a wood plank pass-through door. To the right (east) there is a discontinuity where the addition meets the main block, with the addition having a slightly lower eave elevation and steeper roof pitch. The addition has four six-pane hopper-type stable windows evenly spaced.

The west gable-end has three six-pane windows with trim in the attic above where the shed roof of the addition is flashed into the wall. The addition has a steeply-sloped roof with a low 1-story eave line. The south gable-end of the addition has a high one-pane window and a sliding door while the west eave-side has a pass-through door off-center toward the left (north) flanked by six-pane stable windows with trim. The earthen floor level of the addition is lower than the main barn floor, which has an entry ramp bermed up to meet the door sill.

The north addition has a pass-through door in the west gable-end. In the corner formed by the two shed-roofed additions, a low concrete wall appears to be the foundation of a former structure, possibly a tank or silo. The right (western) portion of the north wall, the addition to the main structure, has a fieldstone foundation and full-height wood board siding. There are two six-pane stable windows near the left (east) and center of this portion of wall. The left portion, which is part of the eastern addition to the barn, has a poured concrete foundation approximately two feet above grade, with wood siding above. There are three six-pane stable windows in this section. The wall has a discontinuity between the two sections, with the eastern wall bowing outward; the rooflines also are not aligned.

The east gable-end has a saltbox-like profile with the north addition roof extending downward toward the right (north). The ground level has two sliding doors at the left and right corners and an eight-pane attic window near the peak. The righthand sliding door has a six-pane window. To the right (north), at a lower elevation as the grade slopes down slightly, is a six-pane stable window and further to the right a sliding door accessing the interior of the shed addition.

Siding throughout is vertical boards, and roofing is asphalt shingles. Siding shows traces of red paint in some areas and is unpainted and heavily weathered in others.

Interior:
The interior of the main barn is a typical three-bay square rule constructed pegged post and beam frame with dropped tie-girts. The main timbers are hewn. The floor is wood planks. The rafter system is a series of widely-spaced major common rafters made from partially-squared timbers. The rafter tails extend outside beyond the exterior walls. Roof decking is wide random planks. There is no truss-work bracing above the level of the tie-girts. The wall sheathing has been removed on the west, north, and east sides where the space opens into the various additions, which are all timber framed. The west shed addition appears likely to be made with recycled timbers, as there are unused mortises in the plate and other members. The north shed has sawn dimension lumber rafters, indicating a date after the main block.

The two-bay east extension has a loft floor level with sawn dimension lumber joists over heavy timber lateral girders. The roof framing uses a pair of longitudinal purlins at the mid-span of the common rafters of sawn dimension
lumber. The roof deck is narrow boards evenly spaced. The stable windows on the main level are hoppers with triangular side panels to support the open sash. The floor has a variety of surfaces but includes some concrete with manure channels and some areas of end-grain wood blocks.

The northeast shed addition has a series of horse stall partitions and a well and pump in the northeast corner.

**Barn II:**

This barn is a 1 ½-story gable-roofed structure with its ridge-line oriented north-south, perpendicular to Barn I. The main block is a three-bay structure, and a 1-story gable-roofed wing extends to the north from the north gable-end. The location of Barn II with its northeast corner almost touching the southwest corner of Barn I, creates a sheltered barn yard area. The main block is 24 feet wide x 34 feet long, and the north wing is 20 feet wide x 12 feet long.

The west eave-side of the main block has a six-pane stable window in the left (north) bay and a pair of hinged barn doors in each of the center and right (south) bays. The doors have heavy ornamental wrought iron strap hinges, three per leaf. There is a projecting hood above the doors with asphalt shingle roofing. The north wing has its west wall flush with the main west side, and has no openings to the west.

The north gable-end of the main block has a six-pane attic window and is abutted by the shorter wing which spans the right part of the north side. The addition has a blank gable-end, located very close to Barn I.

The west eave side of the north wing is set back from the west eave-side of the main block. There is a gable wall dormer in the roof with a window that is boarded up. Below at grade is a pair of hinged doors with non-original hinges. The west side of the main block has door openings in the two end bays, with sliding doors on an overhead track that spans the entire length of the barn. A shallow hood protects the track hardware.

The south gable-end has two one-over-one windows in the attic level.

The interior is timber-framed with some steel tension rods; it is unknown whether these are original or modern repairs. The interior was not accessible for observation.

The roof has overhangs at the rakes and eaves, with simple molded fascia trim and sloped soffits. Roofing is asphalt shingles. The foundation of the main block is mainly cobblestone or fieldstone, while the north wing has a concrete foundation.

**Barn III:**

This barn is a 12 x 22-foot 1-story gable-roofed structure. The south eave-side has a sliding barn door located to right (east) of center. The west gable-end has a pass-through door with iron strap hinges. The remaining sides are blank. The structure has a concrete foundation, wood frame, and unpainted vertical board siding. The roof has asphalt shingles.

**Barn IV:**

This is a 1-story gable-roofed wagon shed structure with its ridge-line oriented east-west, open on the south side. However, the north eave-side has a pair of hinged doors with iron strap hinges, suggesting a possibly different earlier configuration. The three-bay timber-framed structure has openings in the left (west) and center bays of the south side. The west and east gable-ends are blank. The roof has overhangs, and simple decorative angle braces under the rakes. The foundation is concrete, siding is vertical boards, and roofing is asphalt shingles over plywood decking.
• 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.

This site is significant for the history of ownership by the Morris family whose members included Governor Luzon Morris in the 1890s and later, Charles Gould Morris, an attorney in New Haven, and Elisabeth Woodbridge Morris, a pioneering woman academic, teacher, and writer. The structures on the site are significant as intact examples of construction from multiple periods including the 18th-century house, a 19th-century square rule-framed English barn, an early 20th-century carriage barn, and a range of ancillary structures illustrating the evolution of a farm over time.

Historical background:

The main house (133 Berkshire Road) was sold to Eli Gould Morris in 1818 for $3000 by the heir of Salmon and Esther Curtis. The house itself has been variously dated from 1740 to 1800, but a date c. 1790-1800 appears likely. The deed of 1818 included 81 acres of plowland and upland meadow, a barn, a cider mill, outhouses, a carriage house, and a horse shed (Mitchell).

Eli Gould Morris (b. 1750) married Lydia Bennett (b. 1794) and had come with his father Daniel from Fairfield to settle in the nearby Grays Plain section of Newtown. Their son Eli James Morris remained here and farmed the property with his wife Jane E. At the time of the 1860 census, Lydia Bennett Morris and Eli James's sister Martha Jane, a schoolteacher, were also living here. They were identified as a separate household at that time, which may be a clue to the date of the second house, 125 Berkshire Road. Photographs of Eli James and Jane survive in the Morris Family Papers (Yale MSS 622) along with a pair of farm ledgers from 1790-1823 by Amos Beardslee and from 1822-1861 by Eli Gould Morris.

Eli's brother Luzon Burritt Morris (1827-1895) left Newtown to attend Yale and became a lawyer in New Haven. He served in the State Senate and was elected Governor in 1893. Luzon died shortly after the end of his term, in 1895.

Luzon Morris and his wife, Eugenia Laura Tuttle Morris, had six children, as listed in the 1880 census in New Haven (they built a home at 230 Prospect Street now owned by Yale University). Their second son, Charles Gould Morris (1871-1961), also attended Yale College (BA 1895) and Law School (LLB 1897), and was a prominent lawyer in New Haven through the first half of the 20th century. Another son, Robert T., the eldest, was a prominent surgeon. Both brothers shared interests in natural history.

Charles Gould Morris inherited the “Old Morris Place” on the death of his uncle Eli James, and subsequently operated it as a gentleman farmer. Through the first half of the 20th century, Charles Gould Morris owned and operated several ice cream and dairy businesses, was active in New Haven municipal affairs, in civil service reform, with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and issues of the modern dairy farming, and also in Newtown civic affairs including the Fairfield Hills Hospital, of which he was a trustee.

In 1899, Charles Gould Morris married Elisabeth Woodbridge (1870-1964), a graduate of Vassar College and one of the first women to earn a Ph.D. at Yale University.

Before her marriage Elisabeth Woodbridge had taught English and history at Vassar, and she continued to write and publish even as her family grew. The papers contain some of her writings, but the greatest quantity of material dates from her work with the Industrial Relations Club of New Haven and the Consumers’ League. With other educated women, many of them wives of prominent Yale faculty, she organized studies and lobbying efforts concerning the working conditions in industries primarily employing women (Finding Aid for MSS 622, Yale University Library).

Elisabeth Woodbridge Morris published several books, academic volumes in the field of English literature and personal essays, including “The Jonathan Papers” published in 1912 In “The Grooming of the Farm,” she described
the demolition of several ramshackle sheds and the construction of a new carriage barn, presumably the extant Barn II on the property.

The 1920 census shows the Morrises with six children and two servants, living in New Haven. At the time of a 1966 survey by the State Historical Commission, Elisabeth Morris was still the owner of the Berkshire Road farm.

A series of maps from the 1850s to 1905 and 1942, record the Morris family’s ownership of this site through decades in which roads were paved, the river dammed, bridge locations altered, and automobile travel from New Haven became easier, allowing use of the farmstead as a part-time home. The 1854 Fagan map depicts the “Home of E. J. Morris” as a vignette; similarly, a 1905 Newtown Bicentennial map includes a photograph of the “Residence of C. G. Morris.” The current owners are only the second following the Morrises.

Architectural significance:

The site and its farm buildings are significant for their association over a period of 150 years with the Morris family, whose members were prominent in politics, civic affairs, agriculture, women’s history, and culture. Luzon Burritt Morris, Charles Gould Morris, and Elisabeth Woodbridge Morris are significant figures in local and regional history.

The farm is also significant as an intact example of the evolution of a farmstead over 100 years from a subsistence farm to a gentleman’s working dairy farm. Barn I, whose core is a traditional 19th century English barn and whose additions trace the evolution of the early 20th-century dairy business as a gentleman's demonstration farm, represents the progressive history of farming in Connecticut. Barn II, the carriage barn, represents the gentleman farm aspect of the site’s history and also served as the model for a literary work by Elisabeth Morris.
Sources (continuation):

Photographs and field notes by Charlotte Hitchcock 1/10/2012.
Interview with Erick Feucht, property owner, 1/10/2012, at the site.

Map resources:

Newtown Assessor's Records http://maps.newtown-ct.gov/ags_map/
Parcel ID: 50-9-14

Newtown GIS Viewer http://maps.newtown-ct.gov/ags_map/
Aerial views from:

Bicentennial Map of the Town of Newtown, 1905.
Fagan, L., Map of the Town of Newtown, Richard Clark, Philadelphia, 1854.
United States Geological Survey Maps, Danbury and Derby, 1892.
UTM coordinates: http://itouchmap.com/latlong.html

Print and internet resources:

Ballard, Rose-Marie, Historic Resources Inventory of Newtown, 1996.
Charles Gould Morris Family Papers, MSS 622, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
Phillips, Morgan W., 1966 Inventory Form, State Register Files, Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office.

Town of Newtown
Geographic Information System (GIS)

Date Printed: 11/17/2011

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This map is for assessment purposes only. It is not for legal description or conveyances. All information is subject to verification by any user. The Town of Newtown and its mapping contractors assume no legal responsibility for the information contained herein.

4. Site Plan Sketch showing contributing resources – Barns numbered as Barns I through IV; based on information from Newtown GIS Viewer.

5. Northwest view of main house, 133 Berkshire Road, camera facing southeast.
6. Southeast view from left to right: rear of 133 Berkshire Road, south side of 125 Berkshire Road at rear, south side of Barn III; camera facing northwest.

7. East view of main house, 133 Berkshire Road, camera facing west.
8. Northeast view of 125 Berkshire Road, camera facing southwest.

9. West view of 125 Berkshire Road, camera facing east.
10. West view of chicken coop, camera facing east.

11. South view of chicken coop, camera facing north.
12. West view of Barn I at left, and Barn II at right, camera facing east. The hill at right was the location of a water storage tank.

13. South view of Barn I, showing the main English barn structure at left, and the early 20th-century dairy addition at right; camera facing north.
14. South detail view of the eave of Barn I, showing major common rafter end projecting beyond south wall, camera facing northeast.

15. West view of Barn I, camera facing northeast.

16. West view of Barn I west shed addition, camera facing northeast.
17. Northwest view of Barn I showing the north shed additions – the three stable windows at the far left rear are in the dairy barn section – camera facing west.

18. Northeast view of Barn I, showing the east gable-end of the dairy barn addition and north shed addition at right, camera facing southeast.
19. Barn I central block (English barn), interior view of square rule framing at the south side post west of the central bay, camera facing west.

20. Barn I central block (English barn), interior view of square rule framing at the southwest corner, with principal common rafter system, camera facing southwest.
21. Barn I central block (English barn), interior view of square rule framing at north wall, center bay, showing typical dropped girt, historic hay fork, north wall open to shed addition at left; camera facing northeast.

22. Barn I east dairy barn addition, interior view of the south wall with hopper windows, camera facing west.
23. Barn I east dairy barn addition, interior view of the loft level, camera facing east, showing purlin system with dimension lumber common rafters, 20th-century narrow board decking, hay track and horse fork.

24. Barn I east dairy barn addition, interior view of the loft level, camera facing southeast, showing purlin system framing with dimension lumber common rafters. This timber frame layout facilitates use of a hay track along the ridge-line.
25. Southwest view of Barn II, camera facing northwest.

26. East view of Barn II, camera facing west.
27. Southeast view of Barn III, camera facing northwest.

28. West view of Barn III, camera facing east.
29. Northeast view of Barn IV, wagon shed, with Barn I in background, camera facing southwest. Note hinged doors in old door opening, now superceded by open south side, seen in view below.

30. Southwest view of Barn IV, wagon shed, camera facing northeast.
31. Barn IV interior view of framing, camera facing northeast.

32. Vignette of the Morris House from Fagan Map of the Town of Newtown, 1856. Vignettes courtesy of Newtown Public Library.

33. Vignette of Morris House from 1905 Bicentennial Map of the Town of Newtown.
34. Farm ledger kept by Amos Beardslee from 1790-1823, Charles G. Morris Family Papers, MS 622, Series II Box 45 Folder 255, Yale Library Manuscripts and Archives.

35. Farm ledger kept by Eli Gould Morris from 1822-1861, Charles G. Morris Family Papers, MS 622, Series II Box 45 Folder 254, Yale Library Manuscripts and Archives.
36. Jane E. Morris and Eli James Morris, photograph with south wall of 133 Berkshire Road, Charles G. Morris Family Papers, MS 622, Series III Box 48, Yale Library Manuscripts and Archives.

38. Postcard photograph c. 1905 of 133 Berkshire Road (facing east), Charles G. Morris Family Papers, MS 622, Series III Box 48, Yale Library Manuscripts and Archives.

39. Postcard photograph c. 1905 of 125-133 Berkshire Road (facing west), Charles G. Morris Family Papers, MS 622, Series III Box 48, Yale Library Manuscripts and Archives.