Agricultural Heritage Multiple Property Submission - State Register

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.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) The Hickories Farm
Building Name (Historic) Jones, Ebenezer/Lounsbury, Nathan & Delia, Farmstead/The Hickories-Brewster Farm
Street Address or Location 136 Lounsbury Road
Town/City Ridgefield Village Farmingville County Fairfield
Owner(s) Carroll W. Brewster, 136 Lounsbury Rd., Ridgefield CT 06877

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 During business hours
Style of building New England barn, Vernacular style Date of Construction Late 19th 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 block masonry)
- Cut Stone (Type)
- Other Vertical/plywood siding

Structural System

- Wood Frame
- Post & Beam
- Balloon
- Load bearing masonry
- 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

Number of Stories: 1 1/2 Approximate Dimensions Barn I: 42’ x 50’; see continuation sheet.

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

Location Integrity: On original site Moved When? Move
Alterations? Yes No If yes, explain: Barn moved within the site in 1936, addition to east side 1940s.

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: **Adjacent farm cottage, stone walls**

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 ____________________________ Date 12/07/2012

View Multiple Views Negative on File □ CTHP

Name Charlotte Hitchcock Date 12/20/2012

Organization The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517

- **Subsequent field evaluations:**

  Latitude, Longitude:
  41.291399, -73.46238

  Threats to the building or site:

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

The Hickories is an approximately 100-acre farm property consisting of multiple parcels at 126, 129, and 136 Lounsbury Road. The site spans the road in the Farmingville District of Ridgefield, along the eastern border of the town with Redding. The farm sits on a high plateau bordered on the east by a steep downward slope, with views east over the Norwalk River valley. To the west the road makes a loop, connecting with Blackman Road and Farmingville Road, along which are located a number of historic agricultural homesteads dating back to the 18th century. Further to the west is the Great Swamp, which has influenced the development of the area by forming a barrier between the center of Ridgefield to the west and the Farmingville area.

The farm includes a c. 1764 center-chimney Colonial main house of 2 ½ stories, 33’ x 36’, with major additions and renovations in the 1830s and 1920s doubling its size; the house is located on the east side of a curving section of Lounsbury Road. The main five-bay block has its gable roof's ridge-line oriented parallel to the road, with the northwest eave-side facing the road and containing the centered main entry. Windows are six-over-six double hung sash. The added wing is attached at the east corner and has a gable roof with the ridge-line perpendicular to the main block. A second massive chimney mass is at the intersection of the two blocks. The house has wood clapboard siding painted white and asphalt shingle roofing.

Across the road to the west is a c. 1880 Carriage barn, a 2 ½-story gable-roofed building 30’ x 52’, with its ridge-line oriented perpendicular to the road and its gable-end facing the road. The barn has a pair of wall dormers one centered on each of the eave-sides, and a cupola on the ridge. Siding is board-and-batten painted white, and the roof has deep overhangs with simple vernacular Italianate details including bracketed eaves and round windows in the gable-end and dormers below the peak. The cupola has pairs of arched louvered openings on all sides, steeply-pitched hip roof with bracketed eaves, copper roofing, and a weather vane. The Carriage barn has been converted to a residence with additional windows and French doors infilling the barn door locations.

A short distance to the north along the road, and located on the east side, are the farm buildings including a c. 1900 farmhouse, a late 19th-c. New England barn, and several smaller and older barns and sheds. The farm manager’s house is a 2 ½-story gable-roofed building, 20’ x 30’, with a 1-story addition extending east. The house is oriented with its ridge-line east-west, perpendicular to the road, and is connected to the Main barn by a roofed breeze-way. The front entrance is centered in the three-bay south eave-side, facing toward the Main house and Carriage barn; the entry is under a small gable-roofed porch.

The Main barn (I), north of the manager’s house, is oriented with its gable roof north-south, parallel to the road and set back from it toward the east. An unusual concrete silo of precast concrete corrugated staves is located at the northeast corner of the barn.

To the north, separated by a driveway, is a long 1 ½-story extended English barn (II), 23’ x 43’, with a 1-story extension to the east. This barn has a pair of sliding doors in the center of a three-bay western block, a small sliding door in the west bay, and an open bay to the east in an eastern block with a shallow hood its full length above the doorway. Two stable windows are in the far east bay. Siding is vertical wood painted white and roofing is asphalt shingles. This is thought to be the oldest structure in the farm complex, c. 1830.

A chicken coop (Barn III), 16’ x 36’, is located east of the Main barn, oriented east-west with its long south-facing wall filled with window openings. There are two small ventilation cupolas. There are also additional plastic hoop houses and small sheds. The fields and pastures extend east and south, with expansive views over the Norwalk River valley toward Redding. A pond is located southeast of the Main house.

Much of Ridgefield has been developed with 20th-century residential subdivisions, leaving this area as one of the few to retain the feel of its rural past. In part this is due to the owner’s sale of development rights on this property.
• Other notable features of building or site *(Interior and/or Exterior):*

**Architectural description:**

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

- **Main house**
  c. 1764, 1830s, 1920s
  - C

- **Carriage barn**
  c. 1880
  - C

- **Barn I**
  c. 1870
  - C

- **Barn II**
  c. 1830
  - C

- **Chicken coop**
  20th c.
  - C

- **Silo**
  mid-20th c.
  - C

**Barn I:**

This is a 1 ½-story gable-roofed New England barn, 42’ x 50’, with three bays. The ridge-line is oriented north-south, parallel to the road. The main entry is in the south gable-end. A 1-story shed addition encompasses the full length of the east eave-side, extending the width of the barn’s east aisle by six feet to accommodate dairy cows. A concrete stave silo is located adjacent to the north gable-end, near the northeast corner.

**Exterior:**

The west eave-side faces the road and has a row of four stable windows; three are three-pane and the far rightmost is eight panes. A pass-through door is centered between the windows. A tall and wide doorway is located in the south gable-end with a pair of sliding doors. At the left (west) corner a pass-through door opens to a covered walkway connecting to the Manager’s house. At the right (east) corner are two six-pane stable windows. In the attic there are three windows – two vertical openings below a horizontal attic window. The gable-end of the shed addition has a large opening. The foundation wall below the window sills on the southeast corner and east side of the addition is concrete (cinder block) masonry. Its roof is translucent fiberglass corrugated panels. The east eave-side has openings in the shed addition: a row of five four-pane stable windows of vertical proportion, and a door off-center toward the south. The north gable-end has a door centered in the ground floor and a pass-through door at the right (east) corner. The connection between the Silo and barn has been removed. Attic windows are similar to the south gable-end.

The walls are covered with asbestos shingle siding except for the ground floor of the north side which has plywood siding, and the concrete masonry of the east side. Walls are painted white. The roof is asphalt shingles, new in 2012, with a solar photo-voltaic array mounted on the east-facing slope.

**Interior:**

The interior frame is a post and beam frame of sawn lumber, with the relatively light-weight members of the late 19th-century when barn designs were engineered to minimize use of materials. The bents incorporate two interior posts forming three aisles, suitable for access through the gable-end doorway. Queen posts above a dropped tie-girt support longitudinal purlin plates carrying the rafters. Common rafters are sawn dimension lumber meeting at a ridge-board, and the uniform narrow roof deck boards are also typical of late 19th century construction. A metal hay track is secured to the ridge-board and the horse fork is still hanging near the north end. Upper loft floors are found in the north and south bays above the center aisle. The center bay is open full height. The side aisles are partitioned to a height of 1 story. The floor is concrete, poured over an original wood floor.

• Historical or Architectural importance:

Applicable Connecticut State Register Criteria:

1. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; (including women’s history);
2. Embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.
Historical background:
The Farmingville School District in the 18th and 19th centuries was a productive farming area. The loop known now as Lounsbury Road, Blackman Road, and Farmingville Road was in formerly all named Farmingville Road and held a series of working farmsteads. The story of these farms is detailed in *The Farms of Farmingville* (Jones).

The oldest block of the main house dates from c. 1764, built by Ebenezer Jones. In 1837 the farm was purchased by Nathan and Delia Lounsbury. They added a rear ell onto the house, raised six children, and farmed for a living. Their two sons George and Phineas both served terms as Governor of Connecticut, Phineas (the younger) in 1887 and George in 1894-1898. Phineas prospered with a shoe factory in Norwalk and Yale-educated George joined him in the business after training as a minister. Phineas built a mansion on Main Street in Ridgefield while George remained at the farm, which by 1876 had been expanded to over 200 acres. The 1880s saw the evolution of the earlier subsistence farming way of life to production of cash crops. Simultaneously, Ridgefield became popular with wealthy New Yorkers for country estates. The homegrown Lounsburys evidently made the transition to gentleman farmers by virtue of their industrial wealth. George Lounsbury’s widow Frances continued at the farm into the 1920s. Their sister Anne married a Rockwell, another prominent local family, and her son George Lounsbury Rockwell inherited the farm. He was also active in local politics and as a local historian. Further additions to the house occurred in the 1920s. The farmstead barns, and later the carriage barn, appear to have been built during the Lounsbury ownership.

George L. Rockwell sold the farm in 1925 and in 1937 it was purchased by Carroll H. Brewster, a lawyer, and his wife Blandina, a doctor, from New York City. They hired Fred B. Jones as the farm manager of their 100-acre property, and he remained for over 50 years until his death in 1999; Jones’s brother managed the nearby Starr Estate farm on Farmingville Road. Danbury farmer Otto Gravesen managed the farm during the 1990s.

The Brewsters’ sons were Carroll W. and John. Carroll W., the current owner, graduated from Yale College and Yale Law School. He was subsequently Dean of Dartmouth College and President of Hollins and of Hobart and William Smith College. In the 1990s Carroll Brewster sold development rights to the town to ensure that the land would remain intact. From the 1930s on for 50 years, the management of the farm by Fred Jones sustained the farmland and buildings as a working landscape. Daughter Blandina (Dina) Brewster returned to the property after some years as a high school teacher, and began farming in 2005. She currently operates an organic vegetable farm with sheep and a CSA of 200 members.

Architectural significance:
This property is significant both for the history of the site and the architectural quality and intactness of its barns. The site now stands as the last working farm in Ridgefield, protected by the sale of development rights and with hiking trails open to the public. The property as a whole retains great historical integrity.

The site had three periods of historical significance, first the 18th-century settlement of the Farmingville District of Ridgefield as subsistence farms, then the consolidation into larger farms in the 19th century when the Lounsbury family purchased the core farm and expanded it. They still operated it as a productive farm but derived their prosperity from industry and politics, with both Phineas and George Lounsbury elected to terms as Governor of Connecticut.

The third period was in the 20th century, with the acquisition by the Brewsters. The older Blandina Brewster was a pioneering woman physician, while Carroll W. Brewster has had a prominent academic career. The Brewsters owned the farm as a gentleman farm, yet management by Fred Jones continued it as a working farm except for a brief fallow period in the late 1990s.

The site’s architectural significance is enhanced by the four intact agricultural structures, the New England barn, Silo, English barn/wagon shed, and Chicken coop. The complex is completed by a connected farm manager’s house and by the Carriage barn and main house, which all together form a coherent agricultural landscape. Further study of Barn II would be appropriate to document its construction as the earliest structure relating to the subsistence farm period. The New England barn is an excellent example of its type, the vernacular sawn-timber structure of the late
19th century. The Silo is a rare example of its type, corrugated concrete stave construction. The Carriage barn is an elegant and well-preserved example of the late Italianate Victorian style with period details carefully retained in the conversion to a residence.

• Sources (continuation):


CT Trust for Historic Preservation Barns Grant Pre-application, November 2012.

Map resources:

Ridgefield Assessor's Records: Parcel ID: G14-0046 (136 Lounsbury Road), G14-0047 (126 & 129 Lounsbury Road)

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


2. North view – aerial “bird’s-eye” map of 136 Lounsbury Road, Ridgefield CT – [http://www.bing.com/maps](http://www.bing.com/maps) accessed 12/21/2012. The Main barn with Silo and Manager’s house is at the lower, north, part of the photograph. The main Farmhouse is above, south along the road, with the Carriage barn across the road from the house.
4. East view of Main farmhouse (left) and Carriage barn (right) with Lounsbury Road passing between – [http://www.bing.com/maps](http://www.bing.com/maps) accessed 12/21/2012.

6. Detail Site Plan Sketch showing contributing resources – base image from Google Maps.

7. North view of Main house at 126 Lounsbury Road, camera facing south.
8. Southwest view of Carriage barn at 126 Lounsbury Road, camera facing northeast.

9. South view of Carriage barn at 126 Lounsbury Road, camera facing north.
10. Southwest view of Manager’s house with Main barn I beyond and Barn II at left rear, camera facing northeast.

11. Southwest view of farm – Barn II at left, Main barn I at right, camera facing northeast.
12. Northwest view of the back of Barn II, camera facing southeast.

13. West view of Main barn I with Silo, camera facing east.

15. Northeast view of Main barn I and Silo, camera facing southwest.
16. Detail view of Silo construction showing precast concrete corrugated staves, camera facing southwest.

17. East view of barn complex, camera facing west. At left is the Manager’s house, at center is Barn I, Silo, and at right is the Chicken Coop.
18. Southeast view of Barn I, Silo, and Chicken coop, camera facing northwest; photo courtesy of PurePoint Energy.

19. South view of Manager’s house and Barn I, camera facing north.
20. Interior view of Main barn I, camera facing north.

22. USGS map of 1892, showing the site on a plateau overlooking the Norwalk River Valley, image from http://historical.mytopo.com/getImage.asp?fname=danb92sw.jpg&state=CT.