Morningside Barn Record No. 52973
Thompson, Henry G., Morningside Estate Dairy Barn
96 Terrace Road
Milford
Woodmont - Morningside
New Haven
Beverly Johnson, 70 Terrace Road, Milford CT 06460
Domestic: multiple dwelling
Agriculture/Subsistence: agricultural outbuilding
Hybrid English-New England bank barn, Stick style
1868
2 1/2, B
50' x 80'
Converted to residential use, tool shed relocated.
PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT’D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

- Barn  - Shed  - Garage  - Carriage House  - Shop  - Garden
- Other landscape features or buildings: Farmhouse, Carriage barn, Tool shed on nearby parcels, shore and beach nearby to south. In-ground pool, orchard.

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 Carpenter: Miles B. Plumb / Mason: James L. Miles

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:


See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock  Date 3/04/2013

View Multiple Views  Negative on File CTHP

Name Charlotte Hitchcock  Date 4/26/2013

Organization Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude:
41.211508, -73.011398

Threats to the building or site:

- None known  - Highways  - Vandalism  - Developers  - Renewal  - Private
- Deterioration  - Zoning  - Other ________________  - Explanation ________________
Morningside is a neighborhood of Milford, located southeast of the center of town. Morningside occupies an area of approximately 81 acres east of Edgefield Avenue and west of the shore of Long Island Sound. In the late 19th century, Morningside was the estate of Henry G. Thompson. It was subdivided into house lots in the early 20th century. Terrace Road and Ridgefield Drive are streets running parallel to the shoreline, which is roughly north-south in this immediate area. The Thompson mansion, now gone, stood on a knoll overlooking the water, in the area of Thompson Hill Road and Manor Road. To the west, just beyond today’s Ridgewood Drive, stand the Carriage barn (115 Ridgewood Drive) and to its north, the Dairy barn (96 Terrace Road), which both served the Thompson estate. 96 Terrace Road has been converted into two residential dwelling units; the present owner also owns three small parcels at the southwest corner of Ridgewood Drive and Thompson Hill Road, which form a front garden with orchard trees, for a total parcel of .68 acre. To the west of these outbuildings, the land slopes down to a low area, formerly pasture. This is now a recreation area owned by the Morningside Association for the joint use of the Association members, who are the residents of the neighborhood. Additional buildings remaining from the estate include the superintendent’s farmhouse at 14 Crest Place and a house at 75 Ridgewood Drive which was formerly a tool shed attached to the dairy barn. All of these buildings are wood-framed structures in a Victorian stick style, with steeply-pitched slate-shingled gable roofs and deep overhangs.

The Carriage barn at 115 Ridgewood Drive is a 46’ x 72’ wood-framed building, now converted to a residence, consisting of two 2-story gable-roofed wings oriented with their gable-ends facing east toward the mansion site. Each of these has a pair of interior-mounted sliding doors with elaborate paneling and arch-topped surrounds with distinctive gabled cornices; above at the second floor are two double-hung windows with beveled upper corners. Original attic windows have been replaced. These windows are connected by a recessed 2-story section whose ground floor is an open space. A row of iron columns supports a single girdler within the recessed area. At the second floor level, a projecting gable-roofed bay has a hay door. The deeply-overhanging eaves and rakes are supported by elaborate stick-work brackets and trusses in the roof peaks. Siding is narrow clapboards with corner board trim and exposed rafter tails; siding is painted red with white trim. A flat section of the roof connecting the north and south wings, has two skylights and originally there were two cupolas on the ridges of the wings; these are now gone. The Carriage barn preserves much of its original detailing.

The Superintendent’s Farmhouse at 14 Crest Place is a one-and-one-half story, gable-roofed Stick-style house. The ridge is arranged parallel to the street and a narrow chimney is set centrally along the ridge line. There are very wide overhangs of the roof at the eaves, which feature exposed rafter tails and the rake which is decorated by scrolled brackets. The facade is 3 bays wide and arranged around a central entrance that is covered by a gabled portico that is supported by a pair of turned and bracketed posts. Windows are a combination of 6/1 and 2/1 double-hung sash. All are flanked by pilasters and are topped by a decorative pediment. Decorative elements include: elaborate wooden trusses in the gable ends. This same decorative stick-work can be seen on the portico and in the dormers on the side elevations. There are two large blocks at the rear of the house that are original and utilize the same decorative embellishments. The house is clad in wooden clapboards and rests on a raised brick foundation (Vairo).

The former tool shed at 75 Ridgewood Drive is a 1 1/2-story structure, 25’ x 40’, with a recessed ground floor porch and bracketed rake on the east front gable-end. The roof is slate shingles. Siding is wood shingles, which have replaced the original board-and-batten siding. Wall dormers in the north and south sides, west of center, may not be original.

The remainder of the neighborhood was laid out in residential streets which have been developed with a mix of single-family homes dating from the early 1900s to the present. Morningside is entered from Edgefield Avenue, formerly the track-bed of a trolley line, by way of two streets, Yale Avenue and Ridgewood Drive. At each of the entrances there is a stone-walled hip-roofed trolley stop dating from the early 1900s.
• Other notable features of building or site (Interior and/or Exterior):

Architectural description:

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

Dairy barn  c. 1860  C

Other associated buildings (115 Ridgewood Drive, 75 Ridgewood Drive, and 14 Crest Place) are under different ownership.

Dairy barn:

This is a tall 1 ½-story wood-framed structure 42’ x 73’ with a steeply-pitched gable roof having its ridge-line oriented north-south. A cross-gable roof in the east eave-side is off-center toward the north. The roof is slate, with deep overhangs on rake and eave sides, exposed ornamental rafter tails, and stick-work brackets and trusswork supporting the overhangs at the rakes. Historical photographs show a cupola with a flared hip roof and weathervane; this is not extant. Siding was originally board-and-batten but is now composition shingle siding. The barn is banked into the hill which slopes down toward the west, providing a basement exposure at the west eave-side.

Exterior:

The east eave-side originally had a double-height doorway under the cross-gable, with a pair of interior-mounted sliding doors whose detailing appears to have matched the adjacent Carriage barn. A hexagonal ornamental window was located above the doorway in the attic of the cross-gable. The eave-side has been altered by the removal of the original openings and installation of many double-hung windows at the first floor and also at a second floor level inserted into the barn. An entry door is located within the original door opening; this has a gable-roofed hood supported on Stick-style brackets. A square diamond window is in the attic gable.

The south gable-end originally matched the cross-gable of the east side, with tall doorway and ornamental trim and window above. The original openings have been replaced with double-hung windows on both levels, a diamond attic window, and an enclosed 1-story porch. A second-story door exits to the roof of the porch and has an exterior stair to grade at the east side. Earthen ramps extend to the first floor level at the original door locations, remaining much as in the historical photographs. The remainder of the foundation is cut stone, with several courses exposed and basement windows in several locations.

The west eave-side has its basement level exposed at a lower grade elevation. There are five bays – the end bays are enclosed with composition shingle siding while the three central bays have square posts supporting the upper levels and are infilled with a variety of garage door types. Historical photographs indicate that these bays were open and there were Stick-style ornamental brackets at the post tops. The tool shed stood west of the northwest corner and was attached to the main barn by a gable-roofed connector. One or more six-over-six double-hung windows gave light into the main level. Currently the main level and inserted second floor level have a series of double-hung windows of varying sizes.

The north gable-end has a centered dwelling entry door on the main (upper grade) level, flanked by modern double-hung windows. The second floor has three double-hung windows, and the attic has one diamond window. A retaining wall extends north aligned with the west wall of the barn. The tool shed wing appears from photographic evidence to have extended northward with this retaining wall as its east side.

A paved driveway area enters the site from the corner of Terrace Road and Thompson Hill Road and extends south along the west side of the building. Two residential chimneys project through the roof, one in the west pitch of the roof near the south end, and the other in the east pitch near the north end.

Interior:

The original barn interior is not visible, having been concealed by the residential conversion and insertion of a second floor level.
• 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 Dairy barn and its associated landscape are significant for the association with the former Morningside Estate, a gentleman farm of the late 19th century. The Dairy barn is an excellent and intact example of Stick-style architecture as applied to a utilitarian building type, gaining added significance from the multiple related structures, in particular the Carriage barn. The site has a significant history as the gentleman farm of a prominent Connecticut industrialist, Henry G. Thompson. The site and buildings also had a second period of significant development as a streetcar suburb in the early 1900s, during which the estate buildings were re-purposed.

Historical background:

The land that became Morningside was part of a purchase from the Indians in 1639, and was included in the “plantation” of Miles Merwin, who settled in this area in 1645. Like other parcels of land in Milford, it was secured by a patent granted in 1685 by the Governor of the Colony, Robert Treat, in the name of King Charles II of England, and by a later patent granted in 1713 by Gurdon Saltonstall, Governor, in the name of Queen Anne of England. “Merwin’s Farm” at Pond Point, as the plantation was known, has been the home of sixteen generations of the Merwin family. This section was known as the “Rock Farm” and was only separated from the Merwin holdings when Henry G. Thompson, a New England industrialist, purchased it from descendants of Miles Merwin. After sailing along the North Shore of Long Island from New London to New York in search of a suitable homesite, Thompson was attracted by this high bluff overlooking the Sound. In 1865 and 1866 he acquired 81 acres from Benedict, Mark, and William M. Merwin.

In 1868 Thompson built his 22-room mansion, called Morningside, between today’s Thompson Hill Road and Manor Drive. The estate was built by local carpenter Miles B. Plumb and mason James L. Miles. A Carriage barn, Dairy barn, and Superintendent’s farmhouse were all built in matching Stick style. The 1868 Beers map of Milford shows the estate’s mansion and farmhouse with the name Morningside. The estate had its own water system with a coal-fired pump and manufactured its own gas for its lighting system in a small building located near a big boulder off Thompson Hill Road. It had its own ice pond and icehouse just below today’s Recreation Field. In the basement of the main house were a milk room, a laundry room, an ice room, and other mechanical equipment spaces.

In addition to the main house, there were, on the Thompson Estate, a large Carriage barn, a Dairy barn and tool house, and the farmhouse of the Superintendent. The black walnut paneling and woodwork of the main house were carried over into many of the buildings, especially in the superintendent’s house and the Carriage barn. This barn housed several work and riding horses and two carriage horses. Below the Carriage barn were the piggery and vaults for the storage of grains and fodder. In the Dairy barn were stalls and pens for cattle, oxen, chickens and ducks. Adjoining this was the tool house which has since been detached from the barn and moved to 75 Ridgewood Drive. For privacy, Morningside was completely enclosed by fences, some of stone and many of white pine or closely-planted spruce trees.

Morningside was home to Henry G. Thompson, his wife, and their three daughters and two sons. Thompson was born in Enfield in 1818, of the carpet-making family for whom Thompsonville, Connecticut was named. He was in business himself for a time, but in later years he had many business interests including the Thompson Saw Company of New Haven, of which he was president, as well as others in New York City.

Following Thompson’s death in 1903, the family briefly used Morningside as a summer home, after which it passed through several owners. Finally, in 1912, the property was advertised for sale in the New York papers where it was noted by Milton T. Yale, who, with his two sons, Fred and Will, operated Yale Land Company of Flushing, Long Island. They were specialists in developing residential communities, and in Morningside they saw opportunities for an ideal shorefront development. After dividing the land into building lots, they laid out and constructed Morningside Drive on the shore front and Ridgewood Drive bordering the woodland, with nine roads running east-west to connect these drives and provide homesites. A sewer system was installed and provision for other utilities.
made. Water mains had been brought to the area and a trolley line linking Milford with New Haven and Bridgeport already ran along the edge of Morningside by 1897.

The Yale family converted the old manor house into a private inn called “The Morningside Club.” The Carriage barn was renovated to house the Anaconset Club, where there were card and billiard rooms, as well as a dance floor. Several tennis courts were constructed. During World War I, bomb shelters were maintained in the basement of the Club. The Dairy barn was remodeled by its owners, the William T. Bissells, equipped with extra sleeping rooms for guests and with a large private garage for residents or guests.

By 1921, many of the lots had been sold and about seventy homes had been built, and the Yale Land Company gradually withdrew its policy of active maintenance. The Morningside property owners decided to form an association and thereby assure the continuance of the standards which had made Morningside a desirable location. Several years later, in 1923, the Anaconset Club was also taken over by the residents. As the center of Morningside’s social life, it was the scene of dances, amateur theatrics, activity groups and buffet suppers. The club continued to be active until the Great Depression when the expense forced it to disband. The building reverted back to the Yale Land Company that held the mortgage, and remained unoccupied until purchased in 1942 by the artist Wendell Phillips Austin as his studio and home. The Thompson mansion also reverted to the Yales. When it became impractical to maintain it, the Yales sold the building itself to a wrecking company. It was demolished in the early 1930s. A Fairchild aerial photograph shows the site in 1934, with the mansion gone but its circular drive still visible.

Morningside’s two entrances were marked by the stone waiting stations of the Bridgeport-Milford-New Haven trolley line, and by gates which were initially closed to the general public. At the intersection of Yale Avenue and Ridgewood Drive, a flag pole was erected.

In 1970 the Morningside Directory was revised by the Women’s Club of Morningside, to include a narrative of the history of the site. Much of the history, originally written by Ellen Brown, was obtained from personal recollections of a number of people identified with Morningside over many years including Mr. and Mrs. John Maher, Mrs. Alanson B. Walker, Mrs. Paul Erlacher, Mr. and Mrs. Frederic H.B. Fowler, Mrs. Frances LaDue Thompson, and other members of the Thompson family (Morningside Association).

Architectural significance:

The Dairy barn and its associated landscape are significant for the association with the former Morningside Estate, a gentleman farm providing its own livestock needs as was typical of many late 19th- and early 20th-century estates. The Dairy barn is an excellent and intact example of Stick-style architecture as applied to a utilitarian building type, gaining added significance from the existence of multiple related structures, in particular the Carriage barn which retains much of its original detail. The site has a significant history as the gentleman farm of a prominent Connecticut industrialist, Henry G. Thompson.

Although the landscape of the Morningside Estate has lost its integrity as the Thompsons’ gentleman farm, its later evolution as an early 20th-century streetcar suburb provides a second period of significance. The conversion and re-use of the barns for functions relating to the suburban community of the 1920s, illustrate an early stage in the development of the shoreline residential communities along Long Island Sound, with trolley transportation and idyllic scenery as dominant features of this “streetcar suburb.”
• Sources (continuation):

Photographs and field notes by Charlotte Hitchcock 3/04/2013.


Map resources:

Town Name Assessor's Records: http://data.visionappraisal.com/MilfordCT/search.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,

Morningside Association web site: http://morningsidemilford.com/history.html
Historic photographs are copies from a Thompson family album in the possession of descendants of the former

Sexton, James, PhD; Survey Narrative of the Connecticut Barn, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation,


Vairo, Stacey, Historic and Architectural Resource Survey of Milford, Scheller Preservation Associates, Watertown,
2007.


4. Southeast view of Dairy barn at 96 Terrace Road, camera facing northwest.
5. Southeast view of Carriage barn, 115 Ridgewood Drive, camera facing northwest.

7. Northeast view of Superintendent’s Farmhouse, 14 Crest Place, camera facing southwest.

8. Southeast view of Tool shed, 75 Ridgewood Drive, camera facing northwest.
9. Trolley shelter and gate posts, c. 1920, at the Edgefield Avenue and Ridgewood Drive entrance to Morningside, west view, camera facing east.

10. East view of Barn, camera facing west, showing windows and entry door dating from c. 1912 conversion to residential use.
11. South gable-end view of Barn, camera facing northeast.

12. Northwest view of Barn, camera facing southeast. Tool shed was originally attached at the northwest corner along the present retaining wall and leftmost bay of the barn.

15. Historical photograph of Carriage barn, camera facing west.

16. Historical photograph of Barn showing the Tool shed and the west basement level, camera facing north.
17 a-b. Historical photographs of Carriage barn interior.

18. Historical photograph of the site. Barn and Carriage barn are viewed from the west, camera facing east. The estate mansion is in the center rear.

19. Historical photograph of the site. West view of the mansion with circular drive in the foreground.
19. Historical photograph of Superintendent’s Farmhouse – Carriage barn at right rear, camera facing northwest.

20. Fairchild 1934 aerial photograph of the site compared with modern aerial from Google Maps, from http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/historical_maps_connecticut_towns.html accessed 4/23/2013. Note that the Morningside mansion has been demolished but its circular drive remains. The mansion site is an open field east of the drive. The Carriage barn and Dairy barn are to the west of the new Ridgewood Drive.