

National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Registration Form

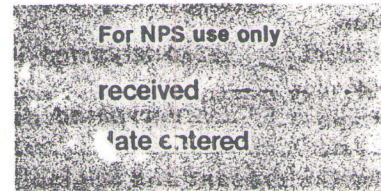
1. Name
Historic - Winthrop Mill
Common - Old Town Mill
2. Location
Mill Street
New London, CT
3. Classification
4. Owner of Property
5. Location of Legal Description
6. Representation in Existing Surveys
7. Description
8. Significance
9. Major Bibliographical References
10. Geographical Data
11. Form Prepared By
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification
Geological Survey
Map
Floor Plan
Photographs

OFF. NO. 1024-0018
EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



1. Name

historic Winthrop Mill

and/or common Old Town Mill

2. Location

street & number Mill Street

NA not for publication

city, town New London

NA vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Connecticut

code 09

county New London

code 011

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of New London

street & number 181 Captain's Walk

city, town New London

NA vicinity of

state CT

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Municipal Building

street & number 181 Captain's Walk

city, town New London

state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

See also
continuation sheet

State Register of
Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? ☒ yes ☐ no

date 1975

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Hartford

state CT

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Continuation sheet Existing Surveys

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Historic American Buildings Survey

1934

x federal

Library of Congress

Washington

DC

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Setting

New London's Old Town Mill, dating from 1650, contrasts vividly with the Interstate highway under which it is located. (Photograph 1.) The site was chosen for the gristmill in mid-17th century because of the water power provided by a stream as it emptied into the Thames River. The highway now elevated above it is the approach to a high bridge over the Thames River, constructed in mid-20th century.

The mill, initially on the northern edge of the community, is now surrounded by urban fabric. A parking lot to the north occupies the location of the former mill pond.¹ The surrounding areas on the east and west are of mixed residential and commercial character, while to the south are railroad tracks leading to piers on the river. The Old Town Mill stands alone as a reminder of the very early days of New London.

Exterior

The 1½-story, 36 x 30-foot, frame mill is on the west side of the stream, called Briggs Brook, at the bottom of the change in elevation that the stream descends to provide the water power. The mill faces south toward a fine 24 x 30-foot cobblestone courtyard. The dominant feature of its architecture is the gambrel roof, covered with wooden shingles, that flares out in front over a wide porch. The porch has four wooden posts that are tree trunks with the stubs of branches left in place. The porch floor is concrete, and the front elevation of the building is covered with segmentally-sectioned horizontal siding in a "log cabin" effect. The porch fenestration, in sequence from the left, consists of a 9-pane window, a 9-pane window, a Dutch door of wide, vertical boards, a 9-pane window and a large window of small panes, 21-over-28 (seven across and three and four high). (See HABS Sheet 1.) The mill is known to have had approximately this appearance in the 19th century. What it looked like earlier is unknown.

The east elevation has the same siding. At the first floor there are two 6-over-6 windows and, toward the rear, a modern door. At the second floor, toward the front, there is a goods door with a 6-over-6 window toward the back. (HABS Sheet 1.) The north (rear) elevation, of the same siding, has five windows, three 6-over-6 diminishing in size on the left, and two 12-over-12 on the right. (Photograph 2.) There is a low stone chimney in the upper slope of the roof on the east side.

The wheel is on the west elevation. The west wall of the mill is built of flush, vertical boards to a height of about the middle of the lower slope of the gambrel, with horizontal flush boarding above. There are two 6-pane windows at the level of the eaves. (Photograph 3.)

Power Train and Grinding Operation

The stream cascades down over rocks at the rear of the site. There is a dam at the top of the cascade where the water, when the mill is in operation, is diverted by a gate from its natural course to an elevated, wooden penstock

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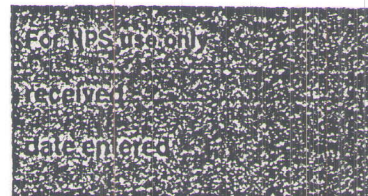
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Old Town Mill, New London, CT

Continuation sheet Description

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or flume that carries the water about 200 feet to the top of the wheel where it drops down and turns that wheel forward. Wooden trestles that support the flume are built in graduated heights on stone piers. (Photograph 4.)

The wheel pit is stone and stone walls contain the stream below the wheel. The stream flows through a segmentally-arched tunnel under Mill Street and on to Winthrop Cove and the Thames River, (Photograph 5.)

The shaft of the wheel, now somewhat out of alignment, extends into the mill where the power is transferred by a system of gears and bevel gears (Photograph 5, HABS Sheet 6) to two pairs of grindstones. Each pair of stones is fed by a hopper and is fitted tightly with an octagonal wooden bin to contain the product. (Photograph 7, HABS Sheet 3.) Grain is fed into the hopper at the top from which it drops down through the center of the stones. The grinding action between the faces of the stones propels the wheat and chaff by centrifical force to the perimeter of the stones and out into the bin.

Interior of the Interior

The two pairs of millstones and the gearing to drive them occupy the western one-third of the main floor. The other two-thirds is given over to an apartment, built, in its present knotty-pine version, in 1960.² The attic is unfinished. Some of the framing in the areas around the millstones and in the attic is visible. It is a mixture of old and new; the basic construction is hewn timbers fitted together with mortise-and-tenon joints. Some rose-headed nails are to be found.

It seems unlikely that the Old Town Mill historically had as little as one-third of its floor space devoted to its mill function. Moreover, the absence of any sifting devices, as normally found in gristmills to separate out the chaff, is striking. The mill was in operation until the early part of the 20th century; it is doubtful that the raw product of the grindstones would have been acceptable then, or much earlier. Consequently, the speculation is that the apartment occupies space that formerly was used for mill purposes, and that the present mill machinery is incomplete.

Sequence of Development

The mill is thought to have been first built in 1650.³ What the building looked like at that time is unknown. It seems likely that the elevated flume was essential from the first. The wheel pit and tail race may well be approximately original. The earliest indication of the appearance of the structure is given by a 19th-century picture⁴ that shows the front and west elevations, appearing about as they do now. The gambrel roof flares out over the wide front porch and is supported by four posts, but without the stubs of branches left in place. Horizontal sheathing is visible at the top of the

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west elevation, with three windows at the height of the eaves instead of two.

A major renovation was undertaken in 1960 under the direction of the City Engineer, Charles P. Biasi. The wheel was rebuilt at that time (Photograph 8) and the gearing for the grindstones was put into working order. The apartment was renovated. Presumably, the segmentally-sectioned, horizontal siding on the front, east and rear elevations also dates from this renovation. The flume was rebuilt in 1979.

The site offers the potential for archeological and industrial archeological examination.

1. The 1921 city atlas shows the pond still in place.

2. There already was an apartment in the building in 1960 (HABS Sheet 3). The date when an apartment was first built in the mill is unknown.

3. Two historians give this date, Caulkins, p. 66, and Decker, p. 6. Decker does not give a source. Caulkins refers to a November 10, 1650 Town Meeting at which it was voted to grant Winthrop the water rights for a mill. Examination of the New London Land Records (NLLR) failed to turn up the original grant of water power and ponding rights to Winthrop. A grant of water rights to Winthrop in 1664 (NLLR 2/1, April 4, 1664) appears to relate to a different location. See Frances Manwaring Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut, from 1612 to 1852, New London: H.D. Utley, 1895, and Robert Owen Decker, The Whaling City, Chester, Connecticut: Pequot Press, 1976.

4. Decker p. 8. See Photograph 9.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1650 **Builder/Architect** Engineer for 1960 rehabilitation:
Charles P. Biasi

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criteria A and B

New London's Old Town Mill was established as an essential part of the community in the early years of settlement. The fact that it has survived on its original site and in its original relationship to stream and flume is remarkable. The first proprietor of the mill was the leader of the settlement and a famous Colonial figure, John Winthrop, Jr., who went on to serve as governor of Connecticut from 1657 to 1676.

History

In his extraordinary career John Winthrop, Jr., (1606-1676) engaged in a wide range of activities. Son of a famous father, he was an entrepreneur, land speculator, colonizer, scientist, writer and physician. Until mid-life he moved from place to place and started a series of enterprises without staying with any one undertaking for more than a temporary period. One of his enterprises was the settlement of New London.

Winthrop, armed with a large land grant, organized a party of settlers and arrived at New London in 1645. He built his house on a river cove and then built the mill in front of his house.¹ Winthrop moved to New Haven in 1656 but left that city in 1657 to become Governor of the Connecticut River settlements. When the Colony of Connecticut was formed he continued as Governor and in this capacity negotiated the Royal Charter for Connecticut that was unique among the colonies.

Soon after it was settled, the community of New London needed a grist-mill. At a Town Meeting held on November 10, 1650 the town agreed to "a system of cooperation with Winthrop in establishing a mill to grind corn."² This was an exclusive arrangement, a monopoly, of considerable value.

When Winthrop departed from New London, he did not sell his property but instead leased it to one James Rogers. Difficulties ensued. There was litigation between Winthrop and Rogers, and the townspeople were not satisfied with the service rendered by Rogers. With a view to preventing "disturbance of the peace," the Court ordered Rogers to give "a daily attendance at the mill."³ Still dissatisfied with the mill operation, then owned by Winthrop heirs, the town ended the monopoly in 1709 by granting a mill privilege to others at a nearby falls.

In 1781 the mill was burned by the British landing party led by Benedict Arnold. The mill was one of the first properties encountered by the contingent that entered the north end of the town; they torched it, but the actual extent of the damage is unknown.

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Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

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It was not until after the Revolutionary War that Winthrop ownership of the property terminated. Francis Bayard Winthrop of New York City in 1794 sold to John Coles of Boston for £2100 76½ acres bounded in part by the Thames River "with large mansion house, barn, outhouses and gristmill."⁴ Foreclosure followed on May 15, 1810 for non-payment of a note in the amount of \$7700 secured by the property.⁵ On July 2, 1810 "The Winthrop estate" including the mill was sold for \$10,000 to James Stewart, British consul at New London.⁶

Throughout the 19th century the mill was owned and/or operated by a series of men, until acquired by the City of New London in 1892 for \$20,000.⁷ The City leased it for commercial operation until 1913. The 1960 rehabilitation, under the direction of City Engineer Charles P. Biasi put the mechanism in working order again.

Assessment

The significance of New London's Old Town Mill derives chiefly from the fact that a mill has survived on the site for 330 years, while the city grew up around it. Such continuity of lay-out and function on a site in a metropolitan area is unusual. The mill enjoys a valuable association in that it was originally built for John Winthrop, Jr., and remained under Winthrop family ownership for 150 years.

The flume, wheel and gearing are of interest but in their present form are not nearly as old as the site. The use of "log-cabin" siding, the stubs of branches left on the porch posts, and the "knotty-pine" character of the apartment all are less than authentic. The structure itself has seen many changes, but some of its framing may date from 1650. The fact that the site has survived as a gristmill is more important than the building itself.

1. The picture in Decker, p. 8, shows the mill and the house. They stood on a single parcel. After the City bought the property in 1892, the John Winthrop High School was built on the site of the house. The school has now been demolished, but its site continues as part of the mill parcel.

2. Caulkins, p. 66.

3. Caulkins, p. 91.

4. NLLR 32/191, October 7, 1794.

5. NLLR 32/191, May 15, 1810.

6. NLLR 32/201, July 2, 1810.

7. NLLR 80/548, February 27, 1892.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 4 prox.

Quadrangle name New London

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8
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7	4	2	5	8	0
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4	5	8	2	9	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property is described in the New London Land Records at vol. 80, page 548, and is Lot 1, Block 290 on Assessor's Map 46. The land is the remaining acreage of the original Winthrop holding that still goes with the mill.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code NA county NA code NA

state NA code NA county NA code NA

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Consultant

date April 4, 1982

street & number 59 South Prospect Street

telephone 203 566-3005

city or town Hartford

state Connecticut

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state x local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date October 15, 1982

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

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National Park Service

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Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 1

Caulkins, Frances Manwaring, History of New London, Connecticut, from 1612 to 1852, New London: H.D. Utley, 1895.

Decker, Robert Owen, The Whaling City, Chester, Connecticut: Pequot Press, 1976.

"Governor Winthrop Old Town Mill of New London," Connecticut Circle, v. 24 (Sept.-Oct., 1960) No. 5, pp. 23,24.

New London Land Records.

Historic American Buildings Survey, Connecticut No. 3-18, 1934.

6556 (NW)
(MONTVILLE)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STATE OF (UNC)
HIGHWAY 1

72°07'30"
41°22'30"

741000m.E.

742

(32) UNCASVILLE 4.2 MI.
QUAKER HILL 1.9 MI.
2 520 000 FEET (N.Y.)

743

5' 8.6 MI. TO CONN. 27
GALES FERRY 4 MI.

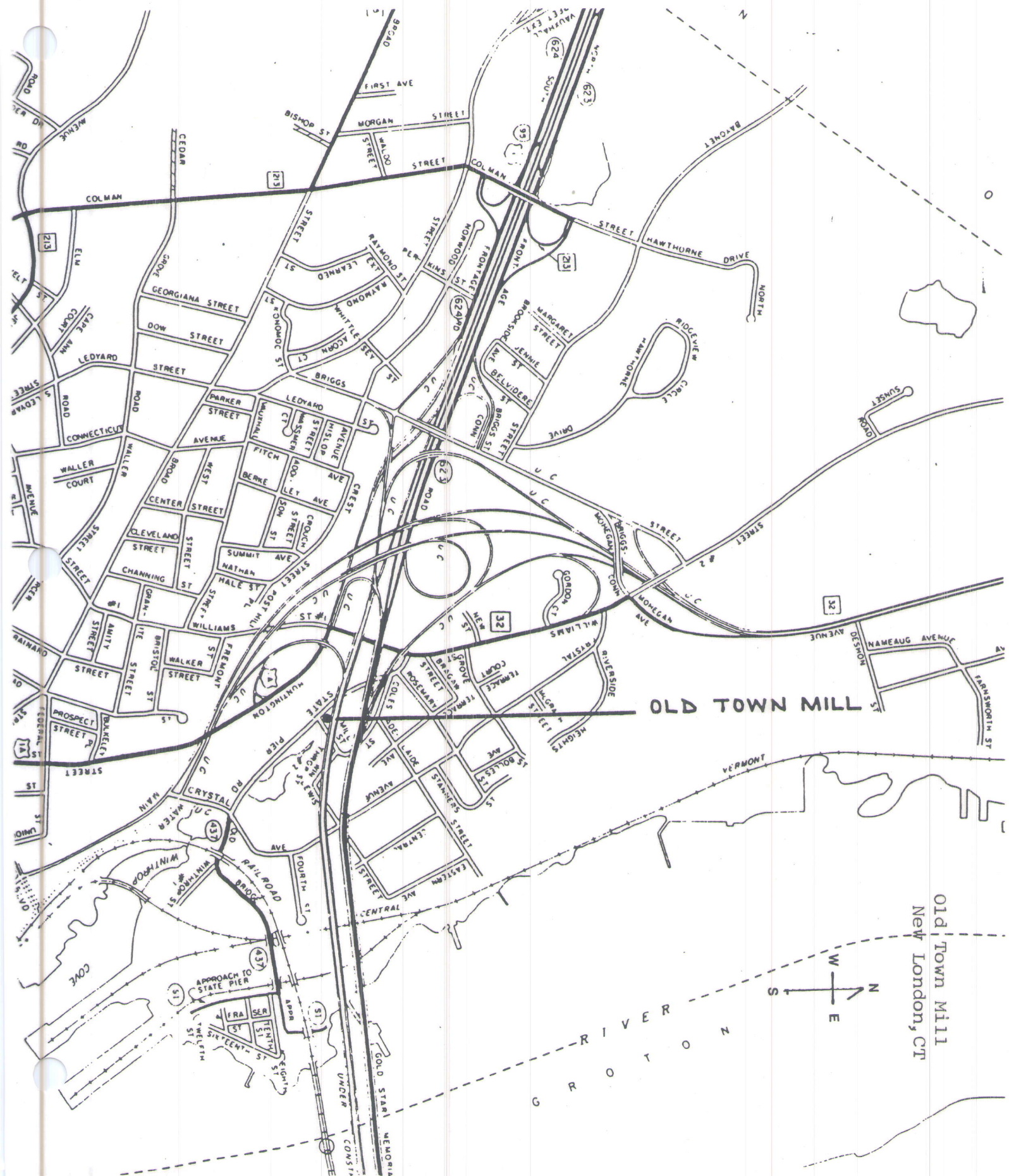
745

65
(UNC)

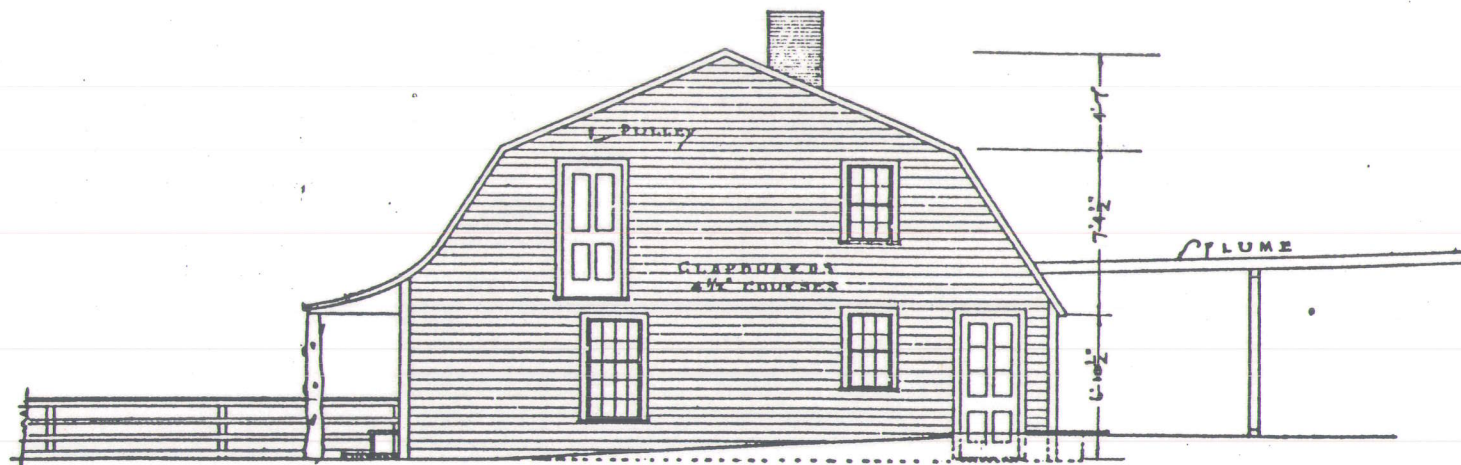
Old Town Mill
New London, CT

PM Reference
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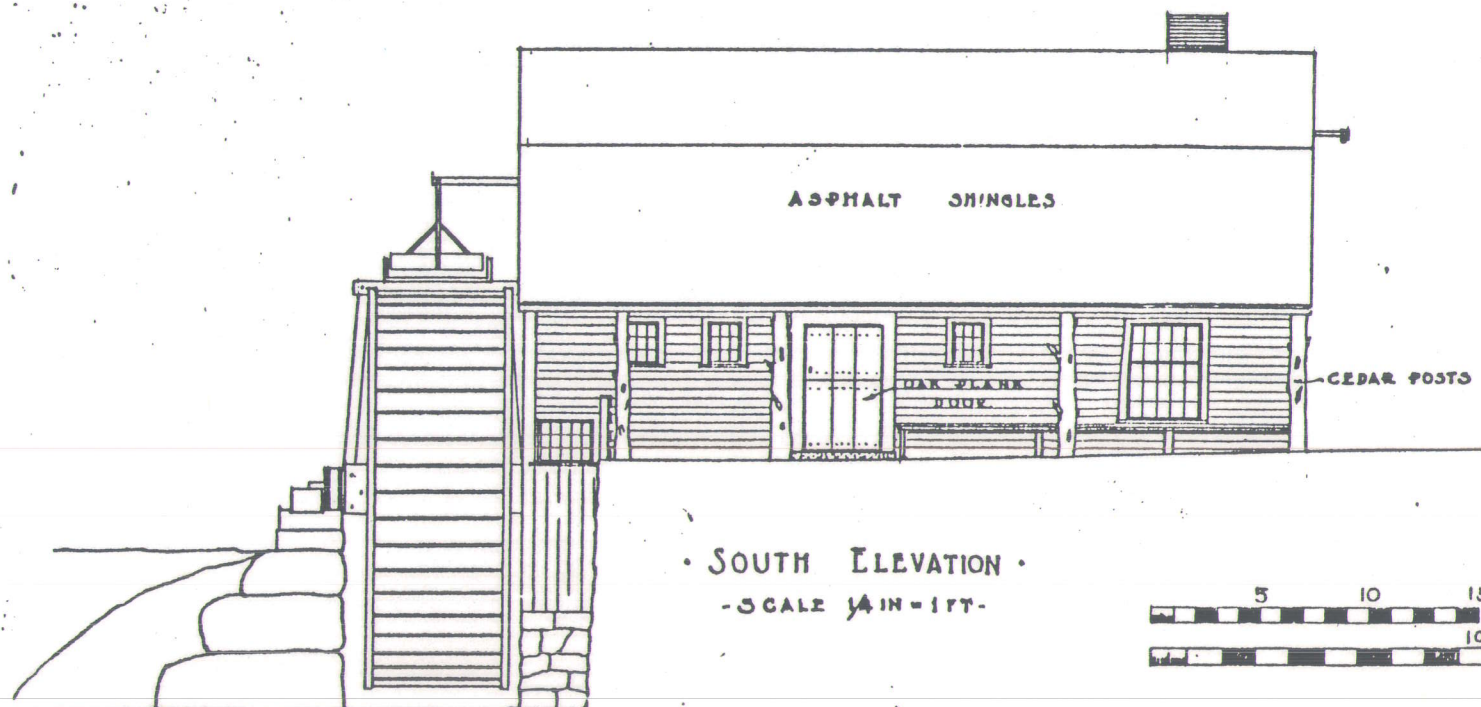




Old Town Mill
New London, CT

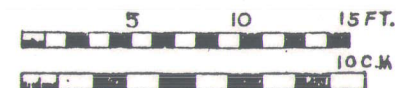


• EAST ELEVATION •



• SOUTH ELEVATION •

- SCALE 1/4" = 1 FT. -



L. H. GODDARD • DEL. •

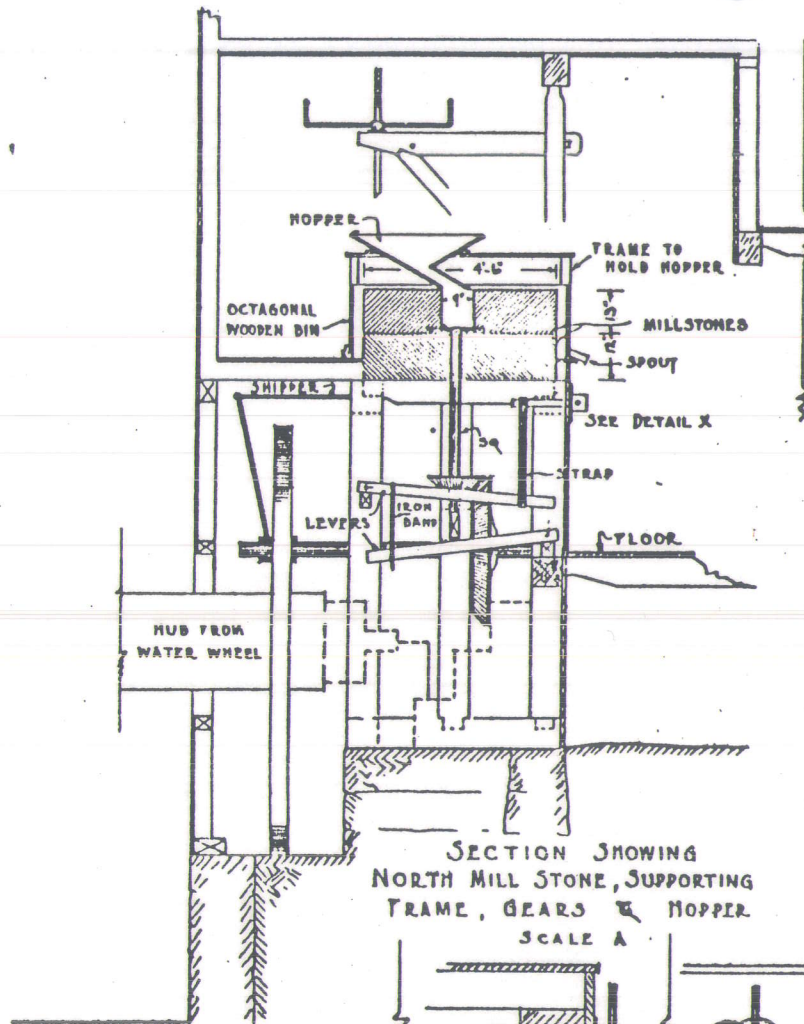
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF NATIONAL PARKS, BUILDINGS, AND RESERVATIONS
BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE
• YE OLD TOWN MILL •
• NEW LONDON COUNTY •

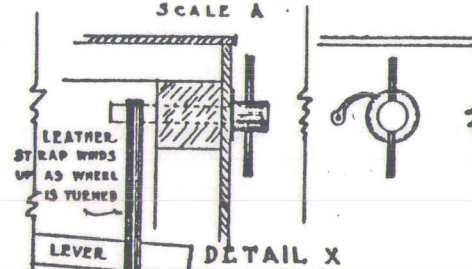
NEW LONDON CONN. -
SURVEY NO. 3-18
2-19-34

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 1 OF 6 SHEETS

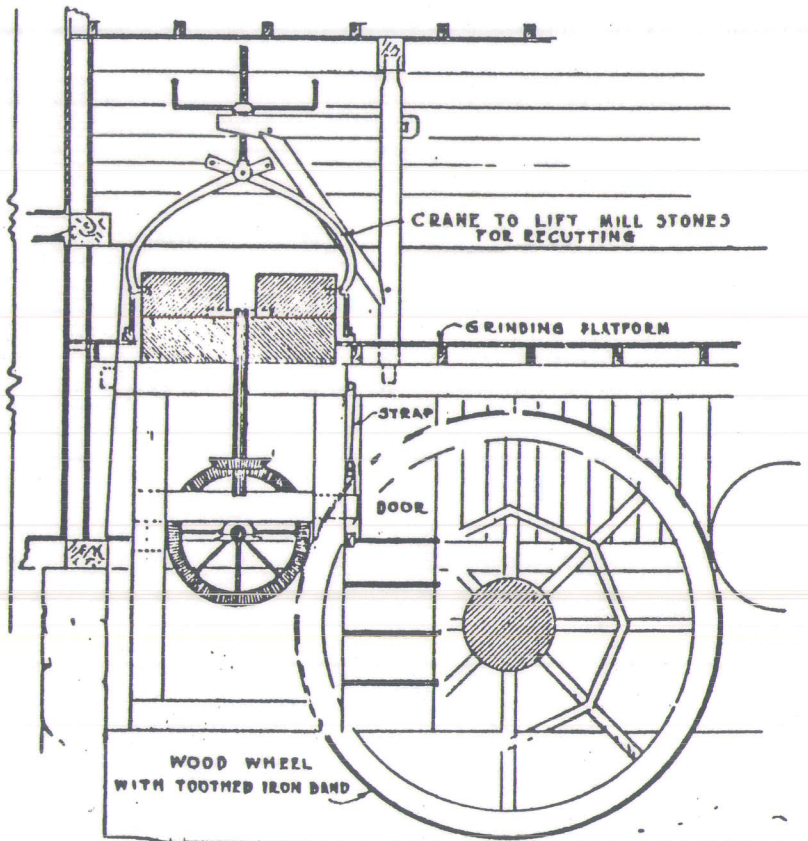
INDEX NO.
CONN
NEW LONDON
1.



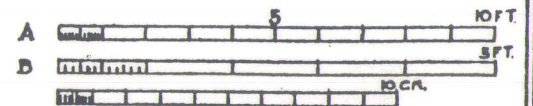
SECTION SHOWING
NORTH MILL STONE, SUPPORTING
FRAME, GEARS & HOPPER
SCALE A



SECTION ELEVATION
DETAIL OF LEVER AND
GEAR TO RAISE TOP MILL STONE



ELEVATION
LOOKING FROM WHEEL PIT TO MILL FLOOR
SCALE A



L.H. GODDARD, DEL.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF NATIONAL PARKS, BUILDINGS, AND RESERVATIONS
BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NEW LONDON COUNTY

NAME OF STRUCTURE
YE OLD TOWN MILL

NEW LONDON, CONN.

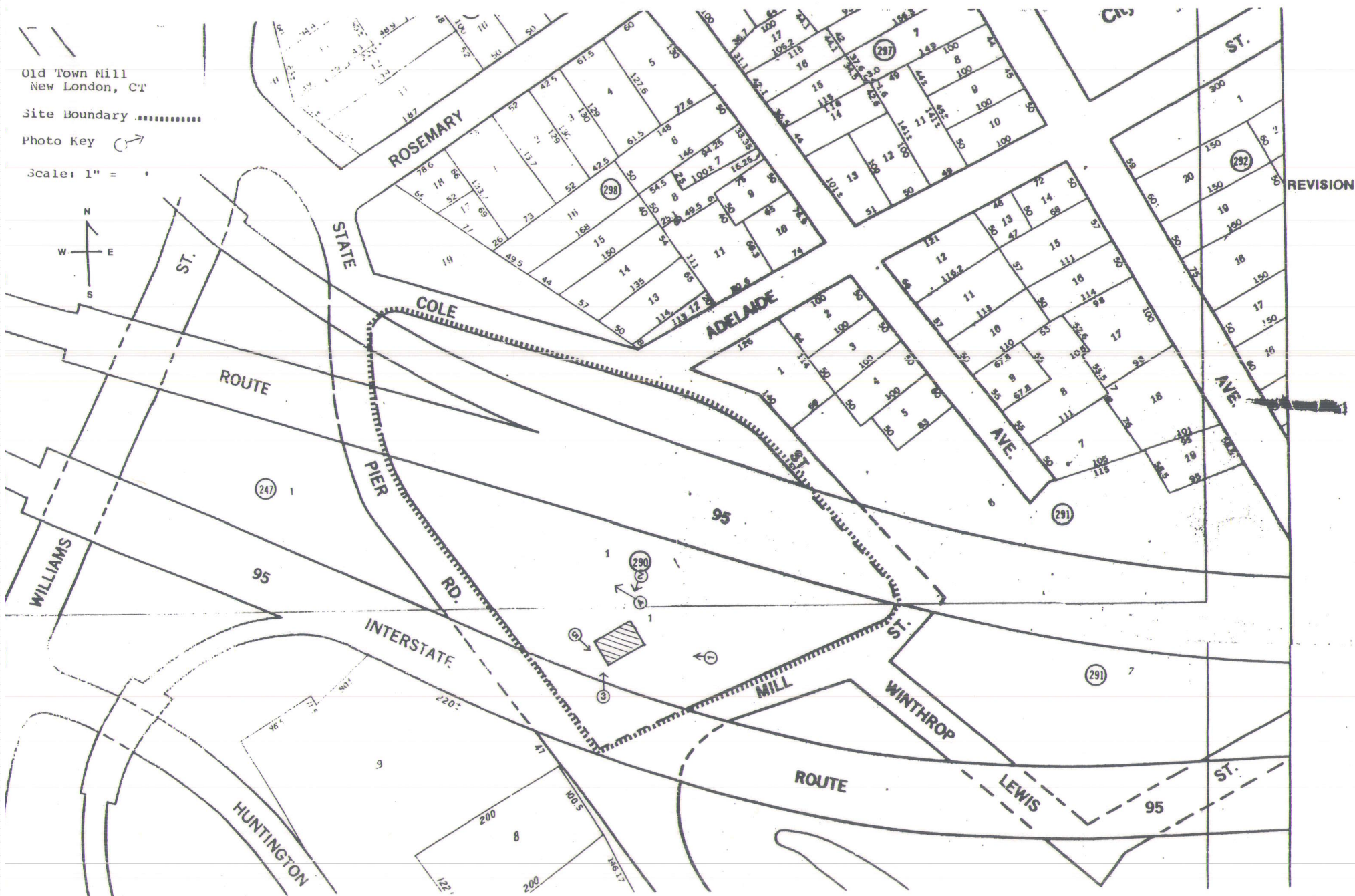
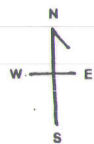


SURVEY NO.
3-18
3-5-34

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 6 OF 6 SHEETS

INDEX NO.
CONN
6-NEWLO
1.

Scale: 1" = 0



Old Town Mill
New London, CT
D. Ransom Photo, 9/81
Negative: Connecticut
Historical Commission
VIEW WEST
Photograph 1 of 8





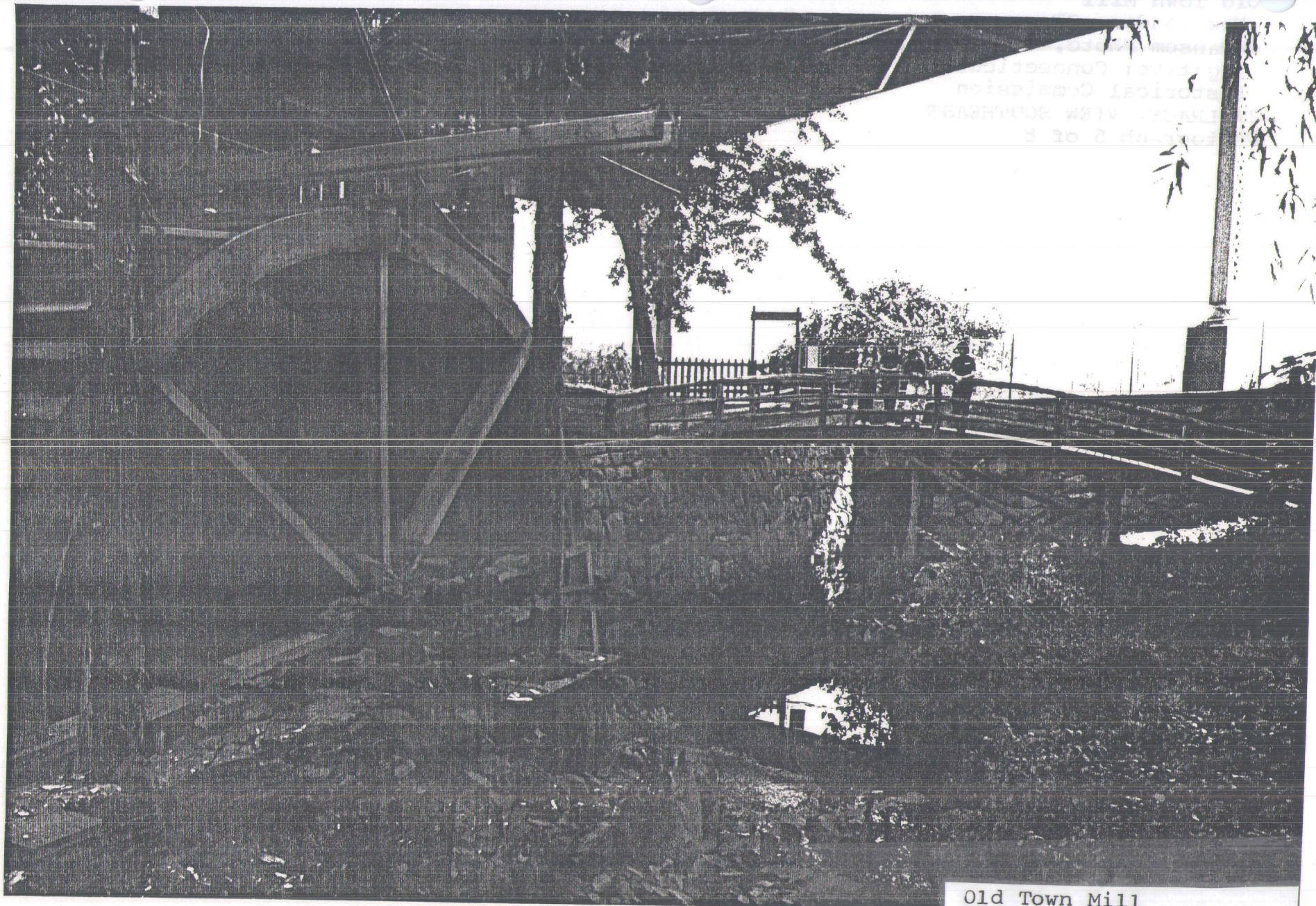
Old Town Mill
New London, CT
D. Ransom Photo, 9/81
Negative: Connecticut
Historical Commission
VIEW SOUTHWEST
Photograph 2 of 8



Old Town Mill
New London, CT
D. Ransom Photo, 9/81
Negative: Connecticut
Historical Commission
WHEEL AND FLUME, VIEW
NORTH
Photograph 3 of 8

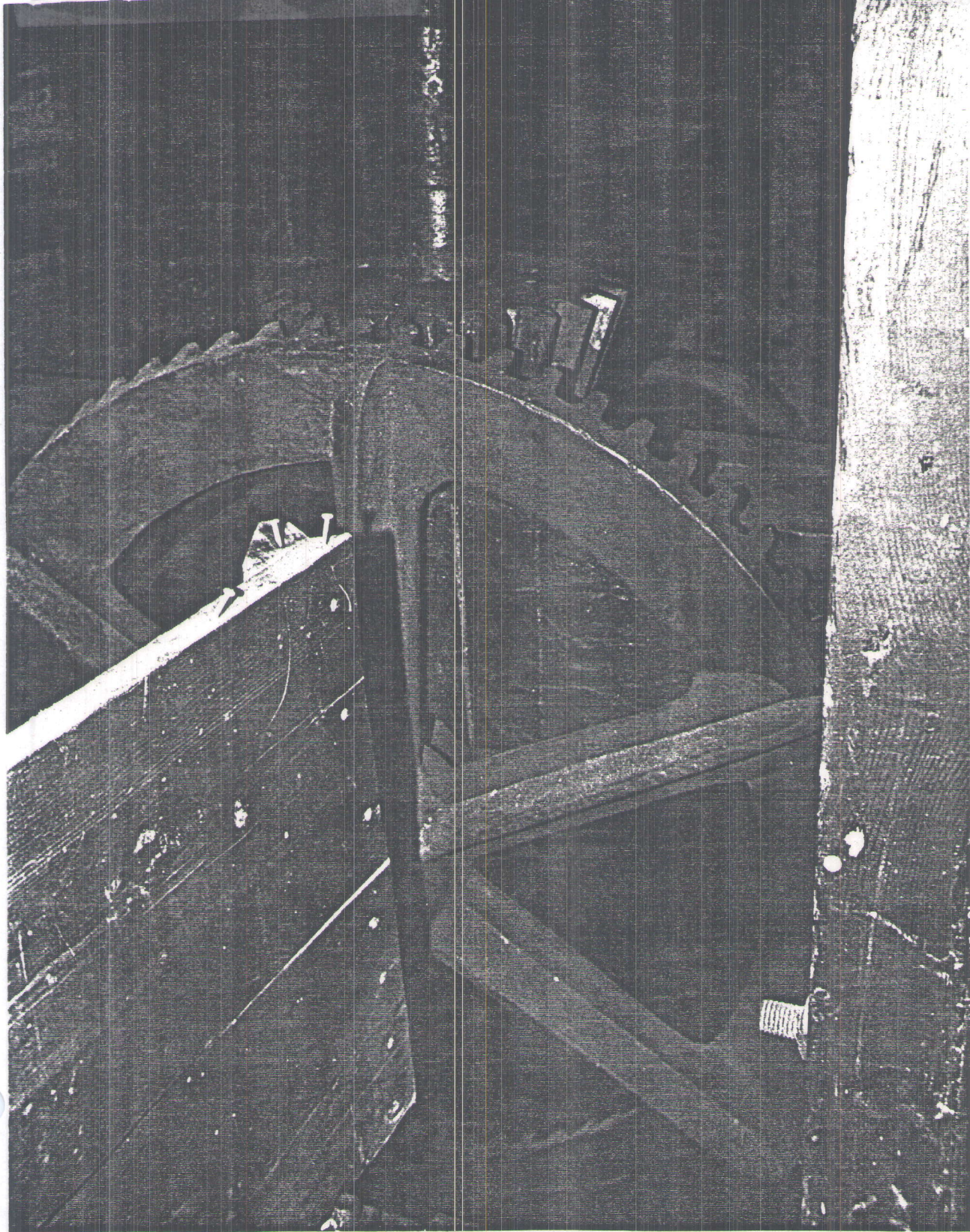


Old Town Mill
New London, CT
D. Ransom Photo, 9/81
Negative: Connecticut
Historical Commission
FLUME, VIEW NORTHWEST
Photograph 4 of 8



Old Town Mill
New London, CT
D.Ransom Photo, 9/81
Negative: Connecticut
Historical Commission
TAILRACE, VIEW SOUTHEAST
Photograph 5 of 8

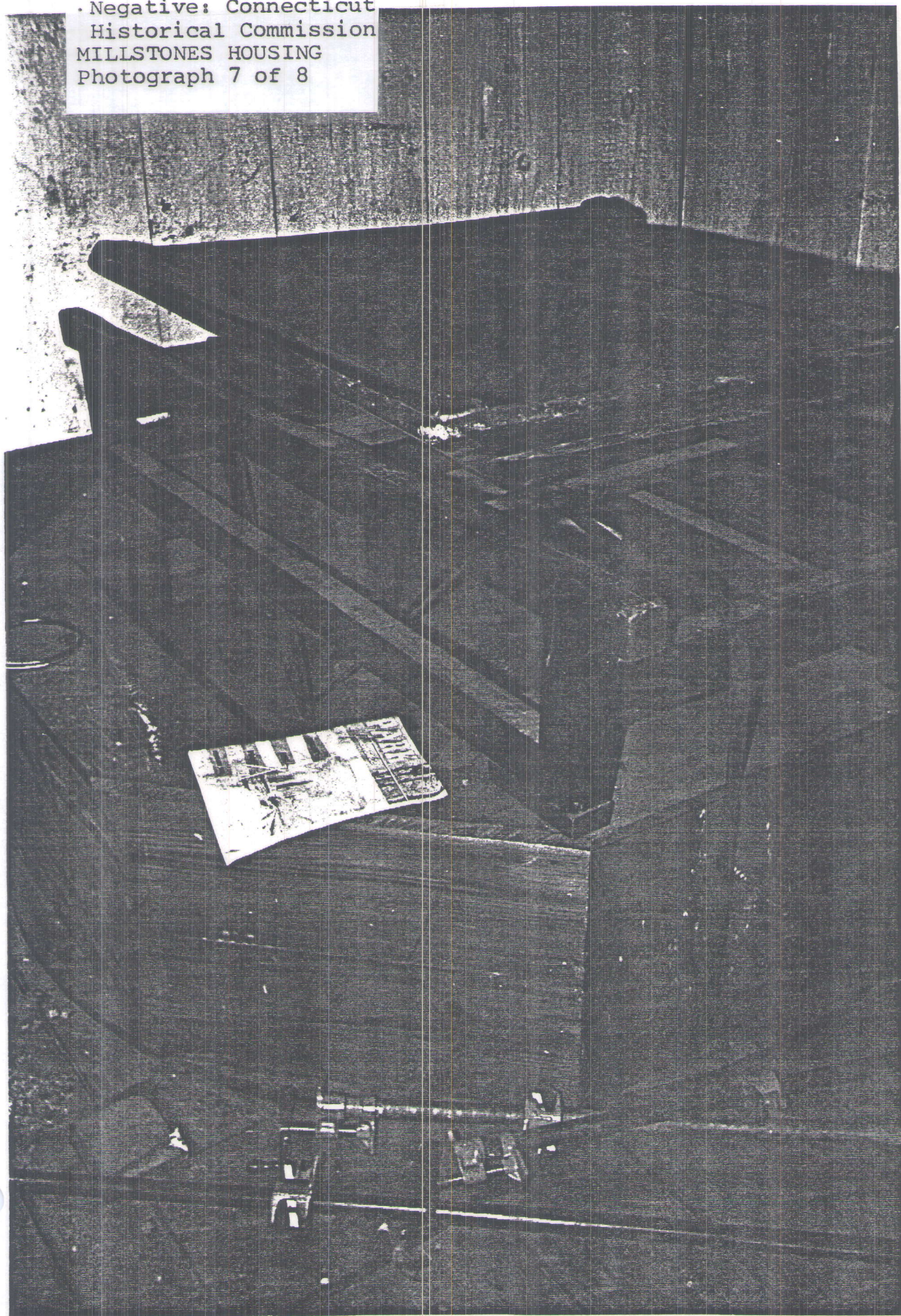
Old Town Mill
New London, CT
D. Ransom Photo, 9/81
Negative: Connecticut
Historical Commission
GEAR AND BEVEL GEAR
Photo 6 of 8

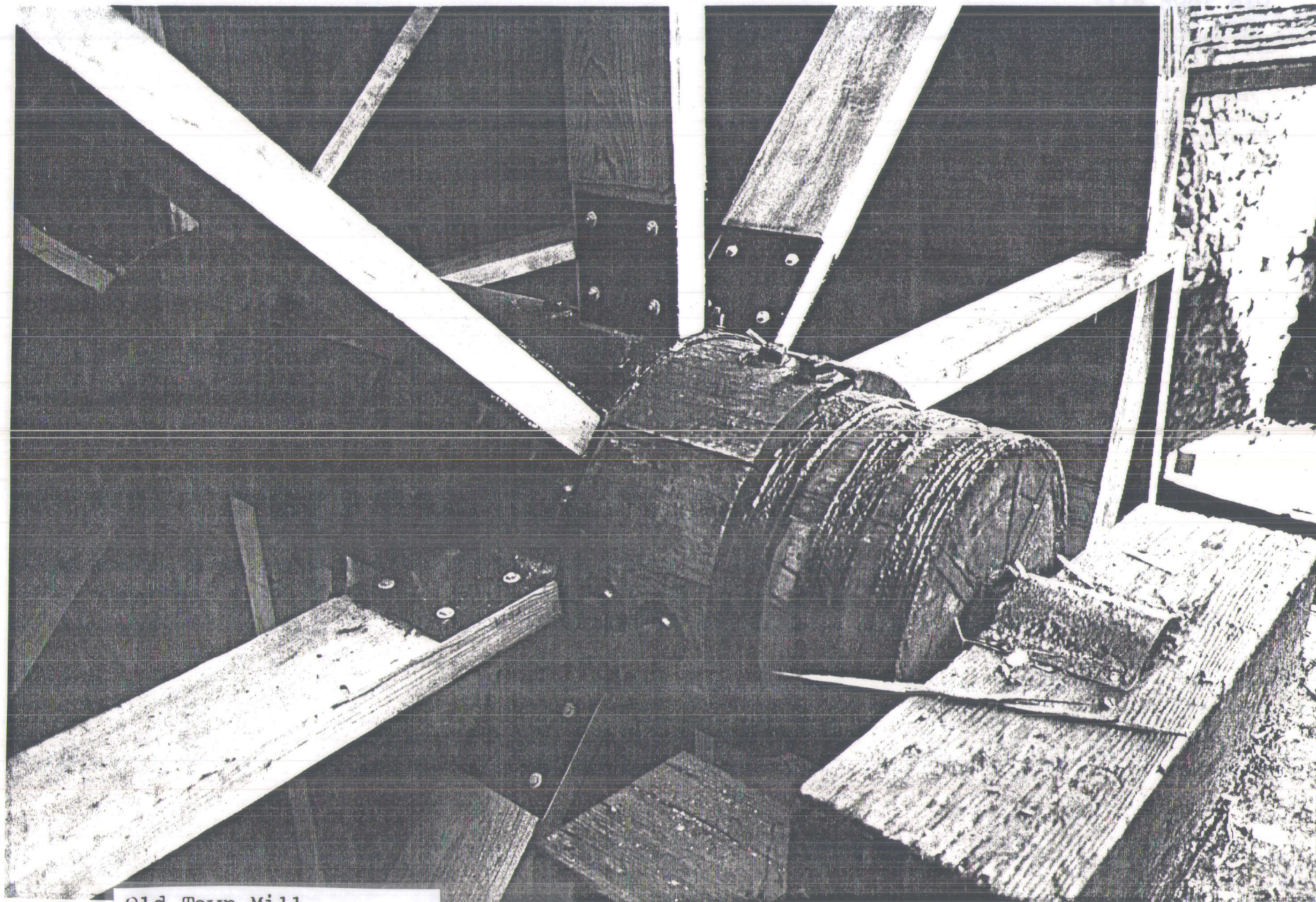


Old Town Mill
New London, CT

D. Ransom Photo, 9/81

Negative: Connecticut
Historical Commission
MILLSTONES HOUSING
Photograph 7 of 8





Old Town Mill
New London, CT
D. Ransom Photo, 9/81
Negative: Connecticut
Historical Commission
WHEEL HUB
Photograph 8 of 8