

Agenda Item B. Review of National Register Status for Properties Proposed for Demolition

In addition to reviewing new nominations, the State Historic Preservation Review Board is tasked with completing evaluations of National Register eligibility for other specific properties when necessary to assist the SHPO.

In Connecticut, a State Historic Preservation Review Board opinion is necessary in some cases when demolition is proposed and action under Connecticut Environmental Protection Act is being considered. The Protection Act applies to properties that are listed on the National Register. However, there are many cases where lack of clarity in the original nomination or a change in the physical integrity of a property warrants re-evaluation of the property's designation status.

At the June 17, 2022 meeting, the SRB will be asked to assess whether or not two separate properties, located within two separate National Register-listed historic districts, retain enough integrity to continue to contribute to said districts.

This package includes current information about the properties.

Agenda Item B.

B.1. Review of National Register Status for Property Proposed for Demolition, Tobacco Shed, 510 North Main Street, Suffield, Suffield NRHD (NR# 79003750)

Staff requests that the SRB evaluate whether the property known as Tobacco Shed, 510 North Main Street, Suffield, continues to contribute to the Suffield Historic District.

The Suffield Historic District was listed on the National Register on September 25, 1979 (NR# 79003750).

The building is not specifically identified in the nomination, as it was later subdivided. However, its parent parcel, 500 North Main Street is identified twice in the nomination, first in Section 4, page 3, and then in the Addendum, page 6. In the Location section (Section 2) of the nomination, the district is described as, "400 feet on both sides of two and one-half miles of the main street of Suffield." The tobacco shed is located approximately 194 feet from the center line of North Main Street.

The Suffield Historic District was listed on the National Register under Criteria C in the area of architecture as "a remarkable display of American building styles from early 18th century to mid-20th century." The nomination also makes reference to the specific influence that tobacco farming has on the district, "a unique industrial activity in Suffield, directly related to the farms..."

Description

According to a cursory conditions assessment report from Cirrus Structural Engineering dated April 21, 2022, and an information memo by Preservation Connecticut, the structure is a 32-foot-wide by 88-foot-long, 6-bay tobacco shed, with the gable end oriented to the street. Unusual to conventional tobacco sheds, the bays are oriented perpendicular to the ridge, between each frame, rather than parallel, and are accessed by pairs of hinged doors. The building is clad in hinged vertical wood boards, to allow for venting, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The shed sits on a series of poured concrete piers.

According to the conditions report, the building has multiple breaches to the building envelope, but does not appear to have suffered any structural damage from these deficiencies. There is observable damage to the southern elevation foundation piers, which would need to be repaired. Due to the design of the shed, the south elevation, which contains entry doors for the six bays, may need to be structurally reinforced to resist lateral wind loads.

History

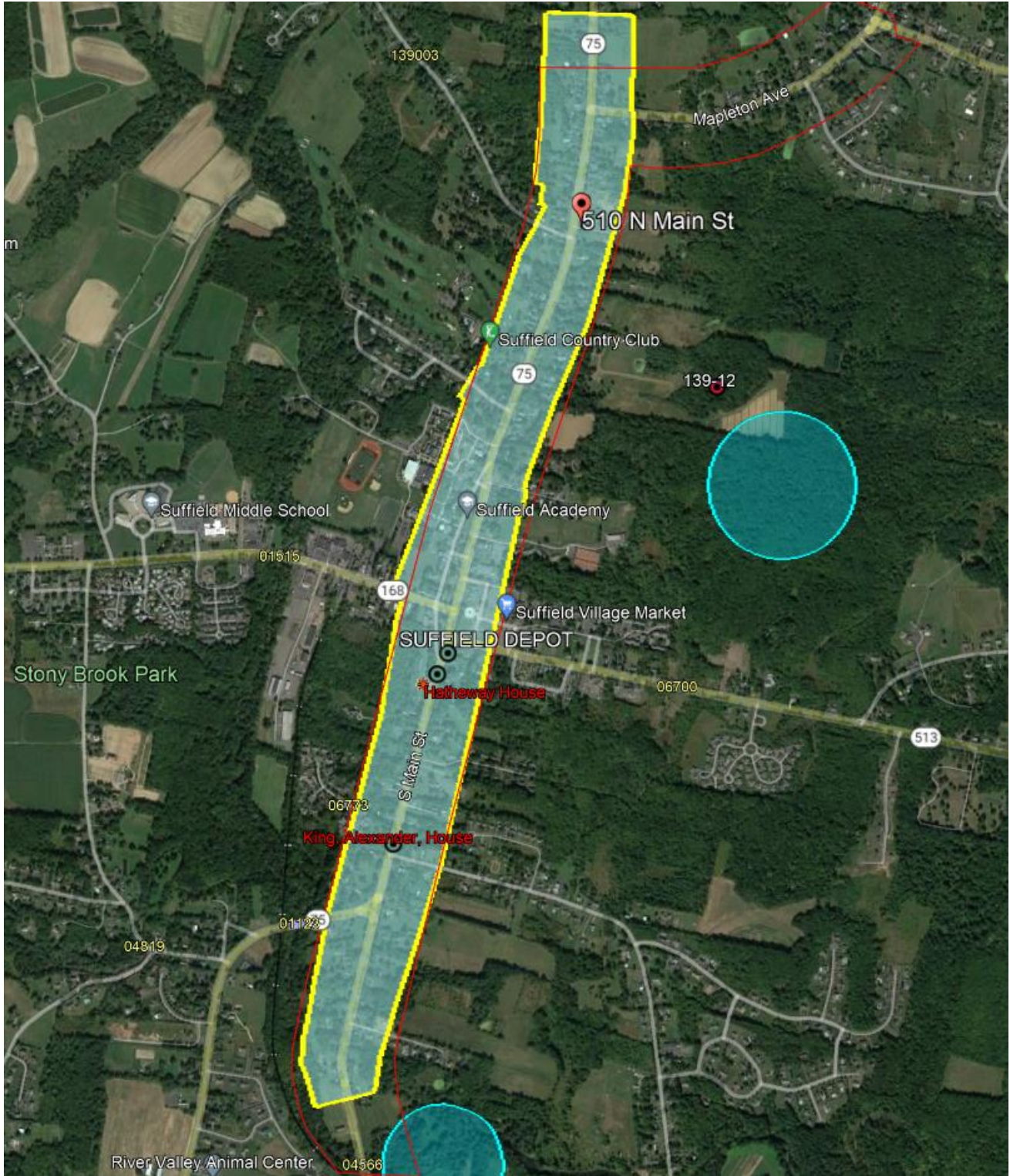
- Prior to 1934 – Tobacco Shed is constructed on property associated with 500 North Main Street.
- September 25, 1979 – Suffield Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and includes, “400 feet on both sides of two and one-half miles of the main street of Suffield.”
- July 10, 2017 – Town of Suffield Historic District Commission holds an informal discussion during their regularly scheduled meeting about the development of 500 North Main Street. Comments included the recommendation to retain the existing home and outbuildings in their existing locations as part of the development.
- September 18, 2017 - Town of Suffield Planning and Zoning Commission hold an informal discussion during their regularly scheduled meeting about the development of 480 and 500 North Main Street. Applicant reiterates the Historic District Commission’s guidance to keep all existing structures, in their existing locations.
- February 5, 2018 – Town of Suffield Historic District Commission hears a report on the proposed subdivision at 480 and 500 North Main Street, with a note that, “The outbuildings on the property would be looked at with an overall effort to preserve the character of the District.”
- July 25, 2018 – Rayco Development purchases the property at 500 North Main Street.
- July 31, 2018 – As part of environmental compliance, SHPO issues a letter to the project consultant with a finding of “No Adverse Effect,” with the understanding that, “the historic houses and their associated outbuildings would be preserved.”
- February 7, 2022 – The Suffield Historic District Commission votes 3-2 to approve a demolition application for the tobacco shed, now numbered as 510 North Main Street.
- February 22, 2022 – SHPO is notified by Preservation Connecticut (PCT) of the intent of the owner to demolish the tobacco shed, and has a videoconference with a concerned citizen, Klaie Bielonko.
- February 23, 2022 – A digital petition against demolition is created.
- March 7, 2022 – New owners of the property at 510 North Main Street, Peter and Christine Daub, are officially recorded in the Suffield Land Records.
- March 16, 2022 - SHPO and Preservation Connecticut conduct a building assessment with a structural engineer.

- March 22, 2022 – Letter explaining CEPA process is sent to Mr. Daub.
- April 4, 2022 – Letter of invitation to May 4, 2022 Historic Preservation Council meeting is sent to Owner.
- April 22, 2022 – Petition reaches 379 signatures. 39 individual letters/emails are received by SHPO encouraging preservation, with 2 received in opposition.
- May 4, 2022 – The Historic Preservation Council votes to refer the matter to the Office of the Attorney General to prevent “the unreasonable destruction” of the tobacco shed.

Demolition Delay

The Town of Suffield has a 90-day demolition delay ordinance. A demolition application has not yet been submitted.

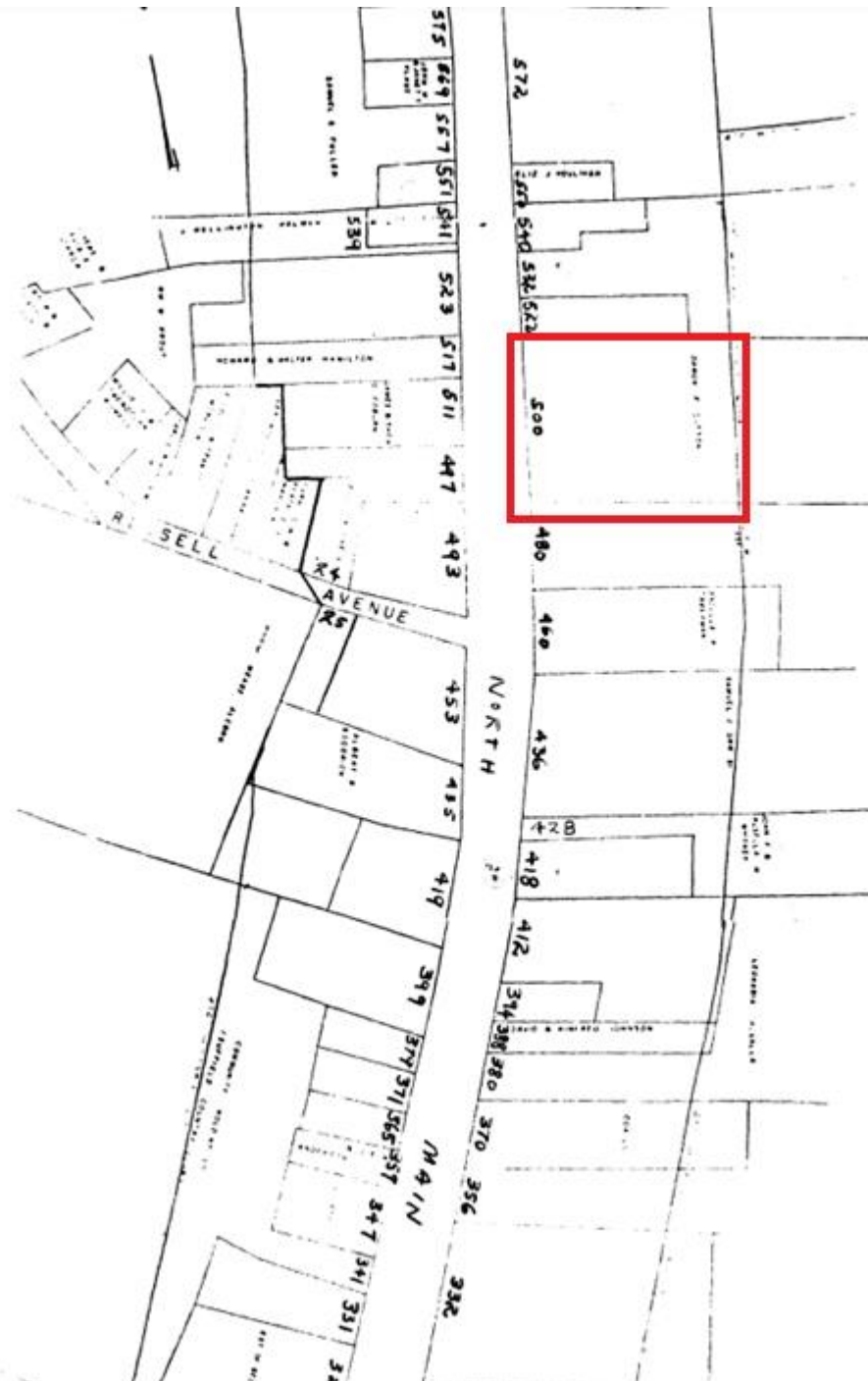
Photographs and figures are below:



Location of 510 North Main Street, Suffield, within the Suffield National Register Historic District, map oriented north (google earth, 9/18/2019). National Register boundary shown in yellow.



Location of 510 North Main Street, outlined in red (google earth, 9/18/2019).



APR 9 1979

Detail of National Register district boundary, from the 1979 National Register nomination. At the time of nomination, 510 North Main Street was part of 500 North Main Street (outlined in red).



North Main Street, Suffield, view looking north. Tobacco shed to the right. *Google Earth*, December 2021.



North Main Street, Suffield, view looking south. Tobacco shed to the left, out of frame. *Google Earth*, December 2021.



510 North Main Street, Suffield, camera facing east, tobacco shed in center, *Google Earth*, December 2021.



510 North Main Street, camera facing east, tobacco shed in center, March 16, 2022.



West Elevation of shed, camera facing north, March 2022.



East elevation of shed, camera facing west, March 2022.



Interior of Shed, March 2022.



North elevation of shed, camera facing southeast, March 2022.



South elevation of shed, camera facing northwest, March 2022.

B.2. Review of National Register Status for Property Proposed for Demolition, 17 Gravel Street, Mystic (Groton), Mystic River Historic District (NR# 79002728)

Staff requests that the SRB evaluate whether the property at 17 Gravel Street continues to contribute to the Mystic River Historic District. Please evaluate the contributing or non-contributing status of the property.

The Mystic River Historic District was listed on the National Register on August 24, 1979 (NR# 79002728). 17 Gravel Street is listed as a contributing property on Section 4, Page 16, of the 1979 nomination, identified as 17 Gravel Street. The structure is described on Section 4 page 16 as, "1835. 1 ½ story, Downing cottage. Central gable is faced with shingles in broken lines. Central doorway has bracketed hood surmounted by low pierced balustrade, and is flanked by three-sided bays. The roofs of the bays project and are supported by sawn ogee brackets."

The district is significant for its architecture (Criterion C), containing a variety of architectural styles that retain integrity, especially those of Greek Revival and Italianate, indicative of prosperous shipbuilders and the maritime industry that developed, "the variety of architectural styles that the prosperous seafaring citizens employed in building up their community provide fine examples of the ongoing, 19th century development of taste and design." Other styles are also represented, and according to the nomination, "should not be overlooked; for example, the Queen Anne house at 3 West Mystic Avenue, the A. J. Downing cottage at 9 Mystic Avenue, and the Second Empire house at 17-19 Elm Street... two interesting examples of the Shingle Style may be found at 23 Library Street and 17 Godfrev Street."

The district is also significant under Criterion A in the category of exploration and settlement, as the community of Mystic developed through the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Though not specifically marked as an area of significance, the nomination makes extensive reference to the role that shipbuilding maritime trade/activities shapes the physical fabric of the district, "The Mystic River National Register district is a statement of a 19th-century community whose life was tied to the sea. The architectural development displayed there and the relationship of homes, stores, public buildings, and industrial sites combine to form a district of unusual integrity."

Gravel Street, including 17 Gravel, is specifically noted as an outstanding example of architecture in the district:

"The most spectacular line of houses in Mystic is that along the west side of Gravel Street, just north of the center, and facing the water. The view of this range of houses, taken from Route 1 bridge over the river, is probably one of the most photographed scenes in New England. Exclusively white, and exclusively from the mid-19th century, these eleven houses incorporate many of Mystic's best features. Several of the houses are five-bay, 1 ½ story cottages. Several are two-story, three-bay, Greek Revival houses with the gable facing the street forming a pediment. To round out the variety there is a Downing cottage, an Italianate house, and a Second Empire house. As the land in the back of the houses slopes up, several are on high brick or stone basements. This arrangement requires a flight of steps from grade to the first floor entrance above the basement."

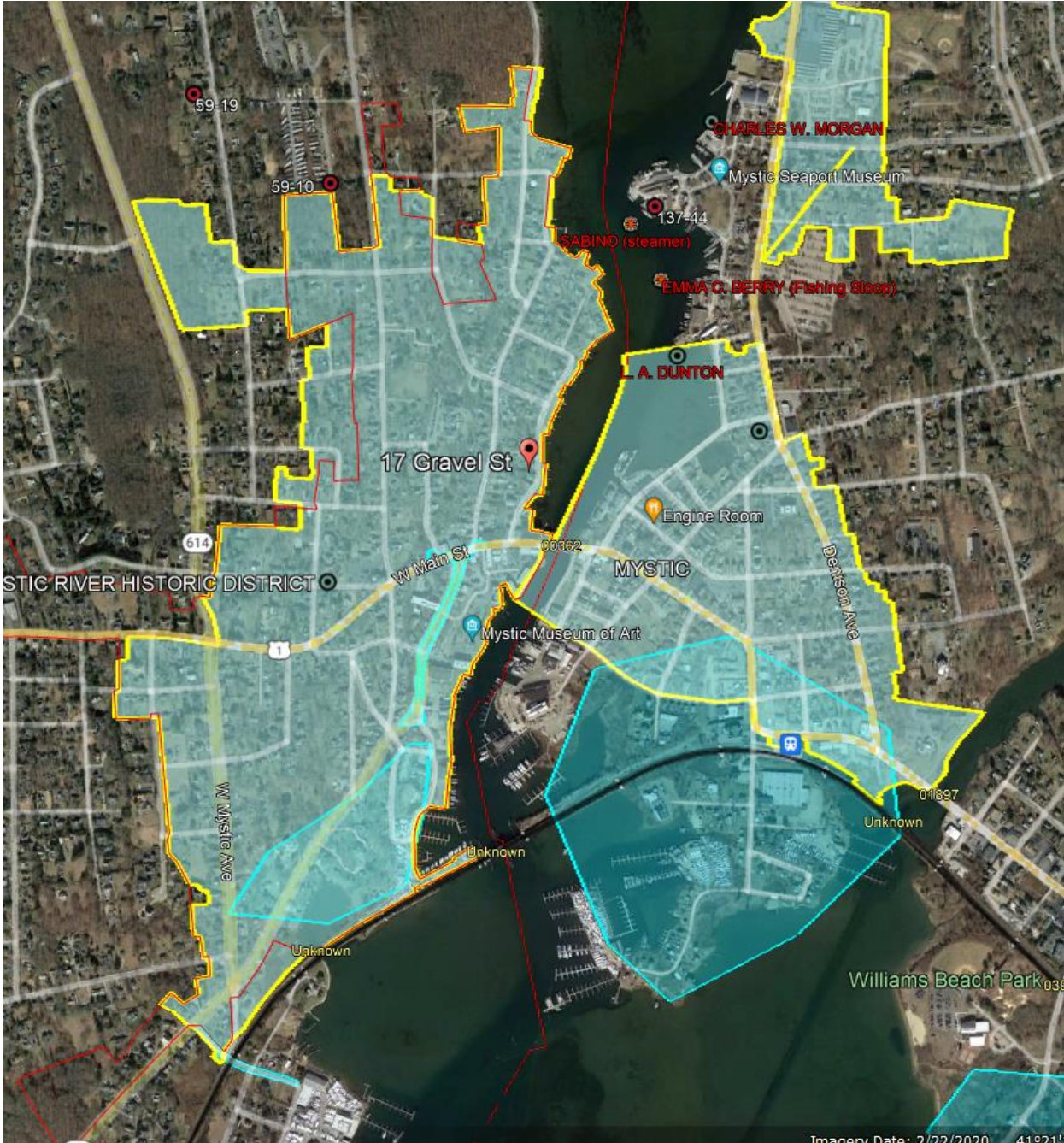
Description

According to the assessor’s card, 17 Gravel Street is an “old style” residential structure built in 1835, with a full basement and finished attic. It is clad in either aluminum or vinyl and is categorized as a single family residence.

Demolition Delay

The Town of Groton has a 90-day demolition delay ordinance. A demolition permit has not yet been filed. On May 20, 2022, the property owners agreed to not pursue any demolition activities until at earliest July 20, 2022.

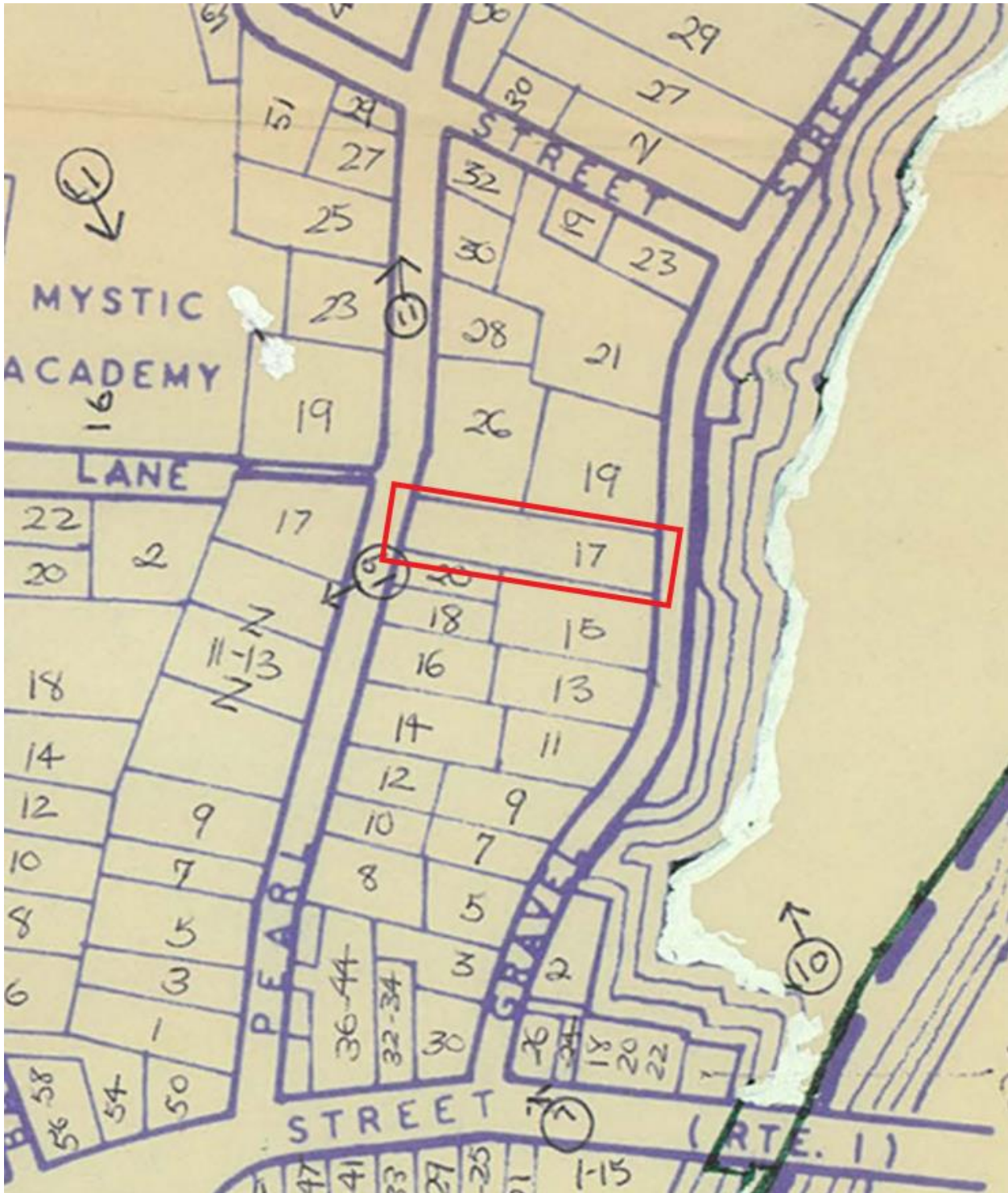
Photographs and figures are below:



Location of 17 Gravel Street, Mystic (Groton), within the Mystic River National Register Historic District, map oriented north (google earth, 2/22/2020). National Register boundary shown in yellow. The Mystic Bridge National Register Historic District and Rossie Velvet Mill National Register Historic District are located to the east and northeast, respectively, also outlined in yellow.



Location of 17 Gravel Street, outlined in red (google earth, 2/22/2020).



Detail of National Register district boundary, from the 1979 National Register nomination, 17 Gravel Street outlined in red.



National Register photo of 17 Gravel Street (outlined in red). November 1978.



17 Gravel Street, Mystic (Groton), view looking west. *Google Earth*, October 2018. Note: blur to the left is obscured 15 Gravel Street per Google privacy request.



17 Gravel Street, Mystic (Groton), camera looking west. May 2022. *Note: Overhang over entry door has been removed.*



Rear of 17 Gravel Street, Mystic (Groton), camera looking east. May 2022.