

# 41 Hartford Village Historic District

## Hartford, Vermont

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In 1761, after the French and Indian War, the Town of Hartford was one of the first Vermont towns to be granted a town charter. In 1797, Hartford's future in the 18th and 19th centuries was set in motion when a dam was built on the White River in what is now Hartford Village, known until 1850 as White River Village. The dam provided power for saw and grist mills and provided settlers an opportunity to live and work in Hartford Village. Several other areas of town were settled in clusters as villages or rural hamlets. Eventually Hartford evolved into a five-village town that continues today. These villages are Quechee, White River Junction, Wilder, Hartford Village and West Hartford.



The Hartford Village Historic District is located on the banks of the White River, mostly concentrated along Hartford Main Street with additional structures on the hill to the north of the village. Hartford Main Street runs parallel and to the north of the White River. The Historic District includes portions of Hartford Main Street, Park Street, Pleasant Street, School Street and Mapleside Terrace.

Historic buildings constructed between 1800 and the early 1900s include the homes of wealthy mill owners and merchants, the more modest dwellings of those who worked in the mills and village businesses, commercial buildings and institutional buildings. In the late 18th century the village was the town's first community center, which thrived throughout the 19th century due to the presence of industry. Development was fueled by a variety of industries including a textile mill, a grain mill and a chair factory. Hartford Village is located one mile west of White River Junction, which ultimately emerged in the 20th century as the dominant community center in town. The Hartford Village Historic District was added to that National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

A small cluster of commercial buildings exists on Hartford Main Street; however, there are few remnants of the village's industrial history. By the 20th century, several fires caused a number of industries to close. For example, Jonathan Bugbee's carriage and blacksmith shop, and Zerah Clark's box shop were destroyed in 1886. Though both were rebuilt, fire again destroyed them in 1904. The Hartford Woolen Mill employed many residents from 1887 to 1957. In 1957, the Mill closed and 500 people lost their jobs. While some mill operations continued, the Village gradually became more of a residential community in the 20th century.

While frame and clapboard construction is dominant, five buildings within the district have brick exteriors, two are constructed of cinderblocks and one is sheet metal. Many historic clapboard structures can still be found in the village; however, synthetic sidings of asbestos, aluminum and vinyl cover many of these buildings. Most of the buildings in the district are set close to the road, on relatively flat, small lots. The highest elevations within the district include the Hartford Village School at the top of School Street and Mapleside Terrace. While sidewalks in the district are fairly limited, in recent years some streetscape improvements were made in front of the commercial buildings including new sidewalks and street trees.

**Sources:**

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