

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SRB Copy
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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Plainfield Center Historic District

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing) N/A

STATE REVIEW BOARD COPY

2. Location

Street & number: Portions of Broom, Central, Main, Pleasant, and Union Streets and Church Lane
(see attached data sheet for addresses)

City or town: Plainfield State: MA County: Hampshire

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☒

Public – Local

☒

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☐

District

☒

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

67

Noncontributing

25

buildings

5

0

sites

1

0

structures

1

0

objects

74

25

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic/single dwelling

Commerce/Trade/general store

Government/town hall

Education/school, library

Religion/religious facility

Funerary/cemetery

Agriculture/Subsistence/agricultural fields, outbuildings

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic/single dwelling

Commerce/Trade/specialty store

Government/town hall

Education/school, library

Religion/religious facility

Funerary/cemetery

Agriculture/Subsistence/agricultural fields, outbuildings

Recreation and Culture/museum

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Early Republic: Federal

Mid-19th Century: Greek Revival

20th Century Revivals: Colonial Revival

Early 20th Century American Movements: Bungalow

Modern Movement: Post-War Traditional Ranch

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Stone, Clapboard, Brick

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Plainfield Center Historic District covers approximately 730 acres in the Western Massachusetts town of Plainfield, which is the northwestern corner of Hampshire County. Located approximately 20 miles from the county seat in Northampton and approximately 130 miles west of Boston, Plainfield is a rural community bordered by Windsor and Savoy on the west, Cummington to the south, Ashfield to the east, and Hawley to the north. All of those towns and others in the region are often referred to as the Hilltowns of Western Massachusetts. Plainfield is also one of 38 rural towns that are part of the Highland Communities Initiative, which was established by the Trustees of Reservations in 2001 to identify and protect the "extraordinary natural landscapes and community resources" of towns situated between the Housatonic and Connecticut River valleys, and the Vermont and Connecticut borders.

Plainfield is, and has historically been, sparsely settled with a current population of approximately 650 people spread over some 20 square miles. By contrast, the most populous town in Hampshire County is Amherst (population approximately 38,000). Because the western third of Plainfield is mountainous, Plainfield Center developed in the less rugged terrain of the eastern two thirds of the town.

The spine and most densely settled portion of the Plainfield Center Historic District runs for about half a mile along Main Street (route 116) between Union and Central streets, where the Congregational Church (1846), Plainfield Town Hall (1847), and the Shaw Memorial Library/Hallock Memorial School (1925) are located. To the north, Union and Central Streets converge at the Hilltop Cemetery, which forms the northern boundary of the historic district and is one of the district's three burial grounds. South of Main Street the district fans out along Union and Central Streets as they diverge. Here the district is dotted with modest houses and sprawling farmsteads complete with barns, all surrounded by the fields and pastures

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

from which Plainfield takes its name. Maple and apple trees are common, and have been a historic source of revenue, along with potatoes.

The district retains a rural feeling characterized by stone walls, an absence of sidewalks, and at least two streets (Broom and Pleasant) that become dirt roads. At 25 Pleasant Street, the farmstead at the end of the road includes a separate parcel on the opposite side of the street where a barn is located. In addition, a few of the district's numerous barns are part of connected farmstead complexes, e.g., 330 Main Street, 12 North Central Street, and 338 Main Street.

Although Plainfield Center is the town's municipal core, it is primarily residential, and it includes many of the town's oldest houses. For a town center, it has remarkably little retail/commercial activity unless one counts the active farms, some of which sell their crops and livestock. The houses in Plainfield Center are consistently modest in size, and all buildings are vernacular examples of their styles and types. In fact, Plainfield Center is remarkable for its absence of high-style buildings and its lack of pretention. A general characteristic of all the buildings in the district is restrained use of decorative detail so that the styles are distinguished from one another more by form, roof type, and location of chimneys and main entries than by trim and other ornamental features.

While there are several fine examples of 2½-story, 19th-century houses in the district, most of the historic houses are Cape Cod cottages (Capes). Plainfield Center's historic houses are generally wood frame and clad with clapboard, but there are three brick houses in the district. Only about 12 houses are clad with synthetic siding, and the majority of those date to the mid 20th century or later, when vinyl siding was often the original cladding. The earliest houses in the district date from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and they are remarkable for demonstrating how long "old-fashioned" features lingered in rural areas. For example 12/12 sash, characteristic of the mid 18th century, are found on 1830s houses. It is, however, possible that closer inspection could reveal that the 12/12 sash are late-20th century replacements.

The Plainfield Center Historic district retains its historic integrity and contains 74 contributing and 25 noncontributing resources. Because the district is rural, with expansive fields between buildings as one moves out from the center, the noncontributing buildings are not intrusive enough to warrant making a tight boundary that would exclude them. In addition, some newer garages and additions extend to the rear of their lots and are often sensitively sited on a downhill slope, so that they are not readily apparent in the streetscape. The nomination includes as contributing all resources within the boundary depicted on the assessor's maps that retain integrity and fall within the district's period of significance. (See section 8 for an explanation of the period of significance.)

Narrative Description

Representative examples of each architectural style in the district are described below, progressing from those of the late 18th century to the end of the district's period of significance, which is 1965. Descriptions are based on the exterior appearance of the building as viewed from the street or as seen in recent photographs. Some houses are believed to incorporate ells or wings that are older than the main block (based on exterior stylistic features of the latter); other houses appear to have been updated during the district's period of significance. In both cases, the houses will be described based on the dominant style of the main block. The buildings selected for description are those that retain important character-defining features of their architectural style or period. The dates of the earliest houses (late 18th and early 19th

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

centuries) in the district were determined by local historians, who often dated buildings based on documentary research. Physical evidence, based on interior inspections conducted by an architectural historian with experience in dating late 18th- and early 19th-century houses, is needed to confirm the dates. Later houses can be more readily dated by eye and correlated with maps and deeds because architectural styles began to change with each decade, starting in the mid 19th century.

Late 18th and early 19th centuries

The earliest houses in the district were built after the American Revolution when the architectural style began to change from Georgian to Federal. While the side-gable or hip-roofed form of Colonial-period houses continued in the Federal period, the orientation of the house to the street sometimes changed from a street-facing to side-facing facade. As the bold trim characteristic of the Georgian style became old fashioned, it was superseded by more delicate Federal-period features. In addition, Federal-period windows were typically 6/6 sash rather than the 12/12 or 8/8 sash characteristic of the Georgian style. Because the more-fashionable stylistic features were usually slow to arrive in rural communities, Georgian/Colonial features often lingered well into the early 19th century. In addition, the newer Federal stylistic features are often absent on modest houses because these houses had limited architectural detail to begin with and may have lost historic features over time. In urban areas, Federal-style features began to be phased out in favor of Greek Revival features in the 1820s and 1830s, but in rural communities like Plainfield, Federal features and forms continued to be built well into the 1830s.

That said, in a ca. 2005 pamphlet entitled "Architecture in the Highland Communities," preservation consultant Bonnie Parsons wrote: "Despite their distance from urban centers, a large number of Highland communities' residents were architecturally sophisticated...." She went on to note that housewright Asher Benjamin (1773-1845), the author of seven architectural handbooks for builders, lived in nearby Greenfield. Benjamin's deeply influential "how-to" books on the Federal and Greek Revival styles were widely read by local builders, as well as those across the new nation. In fact, the ca. 1812 Town Hall in Ashfield, just east of Plainfield, is a near copy of Plate 27 from Asher Benjamin's 1797 *Country Builder's Assistant* (Ashfield Town Hall, NRDIS 1991).

The best examples of each building style and type in the Plainfield Center Historic District are described below in roughly chronological order.

The oldest house in the district may be the Colson House at 27 Broom Street (photo 1). Local historians have concluded that Ebenezer Colson built the house in 1783. Facing south at the east end of Broom Street, it is a good example of a full-Cape house type. As such, it is 1½ stories tall, five bays wide and two deep, and has a side-gable roof, center chimney, and center entry. Square in plan, the main block is 40 feet wide and 40 feet deep. A leanto extends the west elevation by an additional bay. The eight-panel front door, flanked by reeded pilasters and topped by a five-light transom, is a particularly nice feature. The façade windows are located at the eaves, which is typical of 18th-and early 19th-century Capes. The current 2/2 sash postdate the 1850s, when crown glass was replaced by cylinder glass, which could be formed into larger window panes. Second-story windows on the east and west elevations have 6/6 sash, which could be original. Small windows with four-light sash are located in the second-story knee wall and at the peak of both gable ends. A long two-story wing (ca. 1970s?) extends from the rear of the east elevation and terminates in a three-bay, projecting, gambrel-roofed section. A one-story porch spans the space between the main block and the gambrel section. A two-story barn with cupola stands to the rear and east of the house. Covered with vertical boards, it has a combination gambrel and shed roof, and it

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

appears to date to the mid 20th century. The property extends to the opposite side of Broom Street, where a large ca. 2003 horse barn stands.

The Beals-Shaw House at 70 South Central Street (photo 2) is another good example of a Federal period, full Cape. Believed to date to 1791, it is similar to 27 Broom Street, but it has a side orientation to the street. A vertical board door with iron strap hinges that likely dates to the last half of the 20th century is flanked by fluted pilasters and topped by a five-light transom. Windows and the door head are set at the eaves, and sash are 6/6. Narrow cornerboards trim the house, and an unusual widely-spaced dentil course trims the eaves. A nice feature on the east (street-facing) gable end is a pair of four-light, knee-wall windows. In addition, there is a secondary entry in the east gable end. An ell that reportedly predates the house (ca. 1780) extends from the north elevation. A stone retaining wall runs along the south elevation, and a large side-gabled barn with integral leanto stands to the north (photo 3).

Two more good examples of early capes, which are similar to the Beals Shaw House, are the Ziba White and Samuel White houses at 214 and 242 South Central (ca. 1793 and 1799, respectively). Built by brothers, they are Federal-style, full capes that face east with center entries. Both also have secondary entries in the gable ends of their south elevations. The center entry of the Ziba White House features partial sidelights, while the center entry at the Samuel White House is defined by pilasters rising to a frieze with five-light transom in the cornice.

The Joy-Thatcher House at 1 Pleasant Street, ca. 1810, is a somewhat altered example of what may have been one of the finest Federal-style houses in Plainfield at the time. It is also one of only three brick houses in the district. Although altered by the addition of a two-story porch centered on the façade, the house retains its Federal form and is the district's only example of a two-story, hip-roofed house from the Federal era. Facing south at the intersection of Pleasant and South Central streets, the house is five bays wide with a center entry. Three of probably four original and symmetrically placed chimneys rise through the east and west slopes of the roof. (The northeast chimney is gone.) Remaining Federal-period details include the splayed window lintels and a fanlight above the main entry. Alterations include the 2/2 sash (post-1850) and the shingle-style front porch (ca. 1930). A one-story wing with attached carriage shed extends from the northeast corner of the main block. The house stands at the southwest corner of a nearly 60-acre parcel that also holds a variety of working farm buildings. These include two dairy barns, a greenhouse, and a poultry barn.

Another example of a brick Federal-period building is the Old Brick Store at 278 East Main Street (photo 4). Believed to date to 1820, it was built as a general store. At present it is used as a residence and antique shop, making it one of the few buildings in the district that remains in commercial use. Situated in the core of the district at the corner of Main and Central streets (Four Corners), the building has the proportions of a house and a side-facing orientation to the street. It rises 2½ stories to a side gable roof with interior chimneys rising through the roof ridge at each gable end. Five bays wide and three deep, the building is rectangular in plan. The first story of the façade (west) features two blind bays at the south end, presumably the location of the store. The main entry is off-center under an overscaled, splayed lintel. The south elevation, which faces Main Street, has two entries at the gable end. Most of the principal windows have replacement sash with removable muntins in the 12/12 pattern. The original window configuration would have been 6/6. Remaining Federal-period features include the splayed window lintels and a denticulated cornice with returns at the gable end. A one-story porch, which rests on turned posts (late 19th century), spans the façade, and a one-story, two-car garage extends from the east elevation.

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

The house called Streeter's Inn at 9 Union Street (photo 5) reportedly dates to 1793, but received a significant alteration in 1825. At that time, the house reached its present height with the addition of a new first story. Prior to the addition, the house is believed to have had a center chimney, suggesting that it was originally a Cape. The present main block of the house displays Georgian-style window sash, but otherwise it appears to be a well-preserved example of a 2½-story Federal period house with side-gable roof. Facing south with a side orientation to Union Street, the house is five bays wide with a center entry. Interior chimneys rise in front of the roof ridge at each end of the house, indicating that it has the center-hall plan seen in fine houses of the period. A third chimney rises behind the roof ridge on the northeast slope. It is likely that the house once had four symmetrical chimneys. The main entry is topped by a six-light transom, which may have been retained from the 1793 Cape. Sash on the first story are 12/12 and at the second story 12/6. Clad in clapboards, the house is trimmed by narrow cornerboards rising to a narrow frieze between the second-story windows and moderately projecting cornice. A 1½-story ell, which reportedly dates to 1799, extends from the rear (north elevation). A front-gabled carriage barn with vertical wood siding stands opposite the house facing Union Street.

The Reverend David Kimball House at 296 Main Street (photo 6) is believed to date to 1831, when it was built as a parsonage. Facing south, the center-entry, clapboard-clad house displays an unusual combination of conservative and avant-garde features. The main block rises 2½ stories to a side-gable roof with center chimney. If original, the incorporation of a center chimney in a house built in 1831 is an example of how long conservative features lingered in rural areas. Windows contain 12/12 sash, which are another conservative feature unless they prove to be part of a later remodeling. The bold, pilastered door surround with a full entablature is a Greek Revival-style detail. The doors themselves appear to be double-leafed or possibly two doors, but the house is currently a single-family residence. A two-bay, two-story wing extends from the west elevation. It also features a Greek Revival-style entry, but with sidelights on paneled bases. An attached, one-story, two-car garage steps downhill and extends from the west elevation of the wing. The downhill location and small scale of the garage minimizes its visual impact on the historic streetscape.

The Shaw-Hudson House at 286 Main Street (photo 7), which dates to 1833, is another example of a transitional house that displays a mix of Federal and Greek Revival elements. Facing south at the intersection of Main and Central streets, it is covered with clapboards and trimmed by narrow cornerboards, and it displays the 2½-story, side-gabled form of the Federal-period houses described above. The Shaw-Hudson House is unique in Plainfield Center, however, in that it is six bays long to incorporate a doctor's office, which remains intact inside the house (photo 24). Three chimneys rise through the roof ridge: the western two are a pair that serve the residence; the more narrow eastern chimney serves the office. The façade is also unusual in that it has two identical entries, both in the Greek Revival style with sidelights on paneled bases and with pilasters as well as a full entablature. The frieze of the entablature displays an unusual detail of four vertical blocks that line up with the pilasters. (A remnant of a similar detail is visible on Town Hall at 348 Main Street.) Each entry has an eight-panel door. One entry is centered in the five-bay section of the house and the other is in the sixth bay where it leads into the office. Another nod to the Greek Revival style is that the second-story windows are set beneath a modest fascia board, rather than into the eaves. The window sash, which are 12/12, are the most conservative feature of the building. A one-story, side-gabled wing extends about 36 feet from the west elevation where it connects with a front-gabled barn that likely dates to the last quarter of the 19th century. The body of the barn is clad with vertical boards, and the gable end is covered with staggered shingles. A stone wall provides a buffer along Main Street.

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

The Ira Hamlen House at 330 Main Street (photo 8) is also transitional in that it has the narrow cornerboards and shallow eaves characteristic of the Federal period, but displays a Greek Revival-style door surround and six-light second-story façade windows. The latter are relatively rare in Massachusetts and when they do occur in conjunction with the Greek Revival style, they are typically narrower (three-light) and set into a frieze band. Believed to date to ca. 1833, the south-facing, 1½-story house is five bays wide and two deep with a center entry, narrow center chimney, and side-gabled roof. The principal windows have 1/1 sash that date to ca. 2012, replacing 2/2 sash visible in a 2009 photograph.

Other late 19th-century features include a side porch with turned posts on the east elevation and a one-story projecting bay window on the west elevation. These alterations may have coincided with the house becoming a parsonage in 1895. A front-gabled ell extends from the rear bay of the west elevation to connect with a front-gabled barn, making the complex an example of a connected farmstead.

The Reuben Remington House at 338 Main Street (photo 9), reportedly built between 1833 and 1837, is Plainfield Center's earliest example of a front-gabled house with side-hall plan—a hallmark of the Greek Revival style. Constructed of brick, the 2½-story house appears to have been well preserved and was probably a showpiece in its day. Three bays wide and four deep, the south-facing house has a Greek Revival-style door surround with sidelights and a transom surmounted by a bold stone lintel. A Federal-style fanlight decorates the gable end of the façade and lights the attic. A specialty window in the front gable field was a characteristic Greek Revival feature, but the use of a Federal window design is conservative. Even more conservative, if they are original, are the 12/12 sash, which appear in all visible windows. The combination of an avant-garde side-hall plan and conservative features is a good example of how a local housewright might interpret and adapt the plans and details found in the builders' guides that became widely available in the early decades of the 19th century. A one-story ell with integral porch extends from the rear elevation of the main block to connect with a barn, portions of which were altered before 1985 to become a gift/antique shop. A stone wall extends across the front of the parcel.

The David Shaw House at 1 Church Lane, which dates to 1842 (Dyer, p. 97), is a late example of a transitional Federal/Greek Revival-style house. The house has the 2½-story, Federal-style form with a side-gable roof, but the main entry features a Greek Revival door surround. Clad with clapboards, the south-facing house is five bays wide with a center entry. One interior chimney remains near the west end of the roof ridge. Windows have simple frames and 6/6 sash, with the second-story façade windows set into the eaves. The main entry features a six-panel, Federal-style door flanked by sidelights with paneled bases. The house is trimmed with narrow cornerboards that rise from the watertable to the cornice, which has a minimal return at the gable end. A stone wall spans the front of the house. A one-story wing terminating in a carriage shed extends from the east elevation. A series of one-story ells extends from the rear elevation to connect with a tall, 1½-story, two-car garage (ca. 2000) that appears to have living space in the attic. Placing the new building at the rear of the house helps to preserve the historic streetscape in the district.

The Congregational Church at 356 West Main Street (photo 10) is a fine and well-preserved vernacular example of a Greek Revival-style ecclesiastical building. Built in 1846, it faces south and is deeply set back from the street on a low hill. The building rises 1½ stories to a front-gabled roof with a three-stage steeple centered on the south end of the ridge. Rectangular in plan, the building is three bays wide and three deep (47 feet wide by 70 feet long). The facade features a central window flanked by entry bays with double-leafed doors topped by double-leafed panels. Both the doors and panels are cased by an architrave that makes them appear to be double-height doors. The façade bays are divided by five paneled pilasters that rise to a full and deep entablature that wraps down both side elevations and crosses the

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

façade to create a pedimented front gable. The pilasters and pediment are intended to evoke a Greek temple. Both the façade window and those on the side elevations are long—another characteristic of the Greek Revival style—and they appear to contain triple sash in the 15/10/15 configuration. The secondary elevations of the church are clad with clapboards, but the façade is flushboarded, a technique intended to simulate stone with wood. The three-stage steeple ends in an octagonal cupola with weathervane. The present steeple reportedly dates to 1859 when the original, taller steeple was blown down. Other notable features include pilasters at each corner of the building and an inset triangle in the façade pediment.

Plainfield Town Hall at 348 Main Street (photo 11) no longer contains the town offices, but is used for town meetings. A smaller and less architecturally elaborate version of the Congregational Church, it stands one door east of the church, and was built in 1847—one year after the church—by the same builder (discussed in section 8). The two buildings have similar setbacks and both face south. Rising 2½ stories to a front-gable roof, the town hall is four bays wide by five deep (33 by 47 feet, respectively). Paneled corner pilasters rise to a full entablature with pedimented gable end. Like the church, the town hall has an inset triangle and flushboarding in the pediment. The entablature has a deep cornice that extends down both side elevations, and on the façade, the frieze carries the name “Plainfield Town Hall.” The main entry is off-center on the façade and features a recent replacement door-and-sidelights unit. The doorway is flanked by pilasters that rise to a full entablature. The frieze portion of the entablature has paired blocks that now line up with the sidelights, but originally were extensions of pilasters that framed the door. The original door and surround may have been similar to that on the Shaw-Hudson House at 286 Main Street (described above), raising the possibility that they are the work of the same builder. The principal windows have simple frames and replacement sash (ca. 1990) with snap-in muntins in the 6/6 configuration that was typical of the Greek Revival period. A small structure to accommodate restrooms was added to the rear elevation in 1953.

The Solomon Clark House at 3 South Central Street (1847) is an example of a modest Greek-Revival-style Cape. Set on a three-plus acre lot at the corner of Main and South Central, the clapboard-covered house is deeply set back from Main Street and faces south overlooking expansive fields. The west side elevation faces South Central Street. The main block rises 1½ stories to a side gable roof. Five bays wide, the main block has a center entry framed by half-sidelights on paneled bases. The door (replaced ca. 1994) and sidelights are framed by a simple architrave and cornerblocks. Narrow cornerboards rise to a narrow architrave and wide frieze. The latter is a major character-defining feature of the house. The cornice is relatively shallow, and it returns at the west gable end. The space between the top of the windows and the eaves is substantial and typical of mid-19th-century Capes. An ell extends from the rear of the house, but is on the same plane as the west elevation, giving the west side a gable-and-wing form that is a common Greek Revival feature. The ell, which also features the wide frieze, has a wide pilaster at the northwest corner. It is likely that the front corners of the house originally had similar wide pilasters. Windows have 6/6 sash and simple frames. The house shares its large lot with a number of outbuildings, including a gambrel-roofed barn, a large metal outbuilding, and a 4,608 square foot, one-story, metal tire warehouse (ca. 1979) that faces Main Street.

The Gun House at 274 East Main Street (photo 12) was built as an armory ca. 1847. Locals report that it stood in a field near 343 Main Street before being moved to its present location, where it became a dwelling ca. 1860. The 1½-story, five-bay house faces south. Its Greek Revival-style features include a trabeated door surround and full sidelights, 6/6 sash, and a deep frieze beneath a modestly projecting cornice, which returns at the gable end. A one-story ell/shed projects from the rear of the house to connect with a barn. A round, stone disk for forming metal wagon wheel rims stands in the front yard (photo 13).

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

The object was placed in its present position by the Plainfield Historical Society, which owns the property.

Victorian Period

The extant building stock in Plainfield Center reveals that little construction occurred during the last half of the 19th century. The era is often referred to as the Victorian Period because it coincided with Queen Victoria's long reign in England. It was a period in which new architectural styles emerged with every decade, progressing from Italianate to Second Empire to Queen Anne with a few less-common styles interspersed. The absence of Italianate and Second Empire-style buildings is consistent with the fact that the Plainfield economy was severely depressed and the population was in marked decline, having fallen by more than half between 1830 and 1890. (The reason for the decline is discussed in the historical overview near the beginning of section 8.) There are, however, two examples of houses that display modest features of the Queen Anne style, which was popular in the last two decades of the 19th century.

The Clark Smith House at 2 South Central Street (photo 14) stands on almost 6 acres at the southwest corner of Main Street, which it faces. The late 19th-century house displays modest Queen Anne details in its two porches (north and east elevations) and its two-story projecting bay windows on the Central Street (east) elevation. The house rises 2½ stories to a front-gable roof with projecting eaves and no returns at the gable end. The main block is nearly square in plan, with three bays at the first story of the façade and two at the second story. A major character-defining feature is the full-width, one-story porch that spans the façade. The porch consists of chamfered posts rising to a full entablature with spindle frieze and a central pediment decorated with a partial sunburst. The east elevation features a pair of two-story, front-gabled bay windows with scalloped shingles in the gable ends. A one-story side porch with decorative scrolls fills the space between the two projecting bays. A third two-story projecting bay window rises up the west elevation. A two-story ell extends from the rear of the house, and a large, front-gabled banked barn stands behind the house facing South Central Street. The Smith House stands on the site of a brick house that was demolished. A barn and carriage house on the property were lost to fire ca. 1889.

The Charles Dyer House at 344 Main Street (photo 15), which stands one door east of Town Hall, is an even more modest example of the Queen Anne style. It was built in 1887 to house a grocery store, post office, and residence, which explains its wide façade and two front entries. The Dyer House rises 2½ stories to a front-gabled roof with projecting eaves and no returns at the gable end. The major character-defining feature is the one-story porch spanning the façade. It rests on turned posts decorated with brackets at the porch cornice. Windows have 2/2 sash, which were standard from about 1850 to 1900. An ell extends from the rear (north) and a ca. 1920s front-gabled garage stands on a separate small parcel to the northwest of the house.

Early 20th Century

As the century turned, Plainfield's population was continuing to decline, and little new construction occurred. The historic district does, however, have two good examples of modest houses of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as an early 19th-century farmhouse that was altered to its present appearance ca. 1920. In addition, a new civic building—the Shaw Memorial Library/Hallock Memorial School (304-312 Main Street)—was erected in 1925.

The Ruth and Floyd Thatcher House at 198 South Central Street (photo 16) is a good example of a Craftsman Bungalow, a house type that is relatively rare in New England, due in part to the immense popularity of the contemporaneous Colonial Revival style. The Craftsman Bungalow originated in Southern California and made its way east through popular magazines and patternbooks such as those put

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

out by Sears, Roebuck, and Company. The house plans could be purchased along with the materials, which were delivered to the site. Probably dating to ca. 1920, the house rises 1½ stories from a concrete foundation to a side-gable roof with a two-bay shed dormer and integral one-story porch spanning the façade. The porch, a major character-defining feature, is supported by tapered posts that rise from a shingle-clad knee wall. The house is nearly square in plan (29 feet wide by 27 feet deep), has a narrow chimney centered on the roof ridge, and appears to have a side-hall plan. The first story of the house is clad with clapboards, the attic story and shed dormer are shingled, and the roof appears to be metal.

The Bryn House at 32 South Central Street (photo 17) is a fine example of an eclectic Colonial Revival design of the mid 1930s. Like the Craftsman Bungalow (above), it may have been a patternbook house. The six-room house is unusual in that the typical Colonial Revival-style house of the period was symmetrical like its 18th or early 19th-century predecessors. For the Bryn House, colonial details were combined in an asymmetrical and somewhat fanciful composition. Facing east, the main block of the house is five bays wide and two deep. It rises 1½ stories from a concrete foundation to a side-gable roof with an oversealed wall dormer resting on a three-bay projecting section that is the dominant feature of the façade. A one-story side-gabled wing extends to the north. The body of the house is covered with wood shingles, but the wall dormer features vertical boards. The two principal windows of the first-story façade have 6/6 sash and the wall dormer has a classical round-arch window with sunburst pattern muntins—a feature that was common in grand houses of the Georgian period, when such windows often lit the stairhall. The wall dormer has flared eaves, and its base rests on widely spaced blocks that could be exposed rafter ends. A small front-gabled dormer, located to the south of the wall dormer, lights the attic. Secondary windows are multilight casements. While the main entry may be centered on the façade, it appears to be asymmetrical because of its location in the southern bay of the projecting section. Another character-defining feature of the house is the stone chimney rising up the center of the south elevation. While most of the chimney is interior, the stonework is exposed on the exterior, where it is a major decorative feature of the south elevation, which is also enlivened by quarter-round windows in the gable end.

The Jacob Porter House at 12 North Central Street (photo 18) was built ca. 1812, but its present appearance reflects the Shingle Style and likely dates to a ca. 1920s remodeling. Now covered with shingles, the original side-gabled, two-story main block of the west-facing house appears to have been five bays wide with a center entrance (resembling 9 Union Street, described above). A one-story wrapping porch was added to the façade, along with an open second-story sleeping porch on the south elevation. The Shingle Style-porch, which is now a major character-defining feature, includes a knee wall and porch posts that splay out to create angled openings, similar to the added porch at 1 Pleasant Street. The principal windows in the main block have 2/2 sash that likely date to the last half of the 19th century. A narrow center chimney rising through the roof ridge is also a probable alteration. A two-story ell, which may predate the main block, extends from the rear of the house to connect with a large barn and silo, making the house an example of a connected farmstead.

The Shaw Memorial Library/Hallock Memorial School at 304-312 Main Street (photo 19) is a Colonial Revival-style complex that served as a school and library when it was built in 1925. In 2002 a substantial, but sensitively sited addition on a downhill slope at the rear appears to have at least doubled the square footage while having a limited impact on the historic appearance of the streetscape. Today the building serves as a library and contains the town offices. The original library/school building, designed by architect Karl S. Putnam, rises 1½ stories to a side-gabled roof. The 78-foot-long façade (south) is divided into eight bays with a recessed library-entry bay at the west end, followed by five bays of multilight sash, then a one-bay projecting, front-gabled section containing the entrance to the former school, and a final

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

bay with multilight sash. Clad with clapboards, the building has one chimney astride the roof ridge and in line with the library entrance. Both entrances have wide doors with multilight transoms and simple classical surrounds. The recessed entry to the library is created by an overhang that rests on tall columns or posts with capitals. Other trim includes corner pilasters rising to a frieze that carries the names "Shaw Memorial Library" and "Hallock Memorial School" above the respective entries. An accessibility ramp spans the middle bays of the façade. The west elevation contains a triple window divided by mullions and surmounted by a blind arch. The 30-by-72 foot, side-gabled addition, which projects about 18 feet beyond the main block, is classically detailed with pilasters, a full entablature, and a pedimented gable end.

Mid 20th Century

While the post-World War II era was a period of prosperity in suburban Massachusetts towns, this was not the case in rural towns like Plainfield. The population decline continued until its nadir of 237 people in 1960. For this reason, new construction was minimal. Nevertheless, a few houses and one civic building were erected in the historic district on land created by the age-old practice of dividing a larger lot. Some mid-20th-century houses took a new form, known as the Ranch, but most continued the tradition of the Cape. The Ranch, which became the most popular house type in the nation after World War II and into the 1960s, is a one-story dwelling with a low-pitched roof and, often, with an attached breezeway and garage that increased the overall horizontality of the house and reflected the increasing importance of cars. The fenestration is usually asymmetrical and functional with a large window marking the living room and a small one marking the kitchen. There is an absence of ornament, and front porches are small and usually framed by simple iron railings. Like the patternbook and prefabricated houses of earlier periods, the Ranch was often shipped to its site as a kit. The style of Ranches is either Postwar Traditional or Contemporary. The Plainfield examples of both mid-century Ranches and Capes are modest (1,200-1,500 square feet) like their predecessors of earlier eras, and the original siding appears to have been vinyl.

The Newman and Alice King House at 116 South Central (ca.1952) is a modest example of a Ranch in the Postwar Traditional style. Facing east, the main block of the house rises one-story to a low-pitched side-gable roof with extended front slope. A single door is flanked by a large, horizontal, 12-light, slightly projecting window and a small window, both set into the eaves. A 1½-story, cross-gabled two-bay section projects from the south end of the façade. It contains a one-car garage in the southernmost bay. The house is clad with horizontal synthetic siding, except for the cross-gable end, which has vertical siding. The house stands on a 0.7-acre parcel, but vast woodlands extend beyond the parcel to Union Street.

The William Packard House at 343 Main Street (ca.1955) is representative of an economical, utilitarian cottage of the mid-century. Rectangular in plan, the one-story, side-gabled, 4-by-2-bay house has a central chimney, off-center entry, and no ornament. Fenestration of the façade is asymmetrical and functional; windows have 6/1 sash. The roof has modestly overhanging eaves on the façade (north) and no overhang on the side elevations. The ca. 1940 barn/workshop is 1½ stories tall under a front-gable roof. It has 2/2 window sash and a chimney at the north end of the roof ridge. The building stands on a concrete-block foundation with basement windows. Both buildings are covered in clapboards.

The Edward and Pauline Romer House at 258 East Main (1958, photo 20) is the best example of a Postwar Traditional-style Ranch in the historic district. Clad in wood shingles and rising one story, it is composed of a long, one-story, four-bay main block. A two-bay connector that may have been a breezeway links the house to a one-car, front-gabled garage. The three components are in a line facing south onto the street. Character-defining features include a front door with three lights at the top, a large

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

triple window, a similar double window, and smaller paired windows that are probably over the kitchen sink. Windows are flanked by narrow decorative shutters.

Hathaway Hall at 315 Main Street (1965, photo 21) is the only civic building constructed during the mid 20th century. Built as a fire station in the Colonial Revival style, it is reminiscent of the Shaw Memorial Library on the opposite side of the street. Facing north, the building rises 1½ stories and appears to rest on an at-grade foundation. A projecting three-bay garage under a front gable roof anchors the west end of the building. A five-bay, side-gabled wing extends to the east, and its overhanging roof rests on six posts with capitals that form a front porch. At the east end of the façade a projecting, pedimented gable marks the main entry. The garage section of the building has overhead garage doors beneath paired sash in the gable end.

Cemeteries

The Old Burying Ground (photo 22), which is also known as Center Cemetery and Union Street Cemetery, was established ca. 1792. It is located on the east side of South Union Street, about 500 feet south of Main Street. The cemetery occupies 0.3 acres of a 14.8-acre field on private property that extends to Main Street. Although the cemetery has an abandoned appearance, an iron sign indicating its presence was erected in 2012 near a dilapidated shed and a path leading from South Union Street. The shed, which stands within the burying ground, is timber framed as was used for machine storage, as far as can be determined. Broken, spalling, and illegible grave markers are scattered over a low, wooded hillside, and it is likely that markers have been lost over time. Unbroken markers are slate with arched tops and shoulders. One of the arched stones has scalloped carving surrounding a face ringed with curls. The inscription reads: "This stone was erected in memory of Lt. Ebenezer Colson, who died April 19, 1801, aged 86 years." Colson built the house at 27 Broom Street. On-line records (www.findagrave.com) indicate the presence of 21 known graves with dates of death ranging from 1792-1855. Six of the 21 are members of the Streeter family.

Hilltop Cemetery (photo 23), established ca. 1810 and still active, is located at the north end of the historic district on the east side of North Central Street. A low stone wall (ca. 1860) and iron cemetery sign (2012) mark the 4.4-acre graveyard, which is covered with grass and a variety of mature trees. Three unpaved drives lead into the cemetery from openings in a stone wall enclosing the graveyard. On-line records (www.findagrave.com) indicate the presence of 1,172 burials. Arranged in rows, the majority of the historic headstones are rectangular tablets with arched or squared tops. Markers are typically marble or granite and range from small headstones to obelisks, of which there are more than twelve, the most important marking the Shaw family's plot, which includes Dr. Samuel Shaw (286 Main Street). The most prominent marker in Hilltop Cemetery is a granite column surmounted by a sphere. Located close to the street, this 1899 Civil War monument lists all the Plainfield casualties of that war. The cemetery grounds have been enlarged several times (ca. 1856, 1978, and 1992). A receiving tomb dating to 1884 was removed ca. 1950.

Dyer Cemetery, sometimes referred to as the Pleasant Street or McCloud Cemetery, was established ca. 1812. It is located in a rural setting at the southern end of the historic district on Pleasant Street between South Central Street and Old South Street. Forming one of the district's boundaries, the 0.3-acre parcel is relatively flat, grassy, and bordered by a stone wall and a barn on the adjacent farm property to the west. Otherwise, the cemetery abuts woodlands. It features a 2012 cemetery sign of the same design as those for Hilltop Cemetery and the Old Burying Ground. The 65 known burials range in date from 1812 to 1893, after which the cemetery became inactive. Typical markers are rectangular tablets and round-arch,

Plainfield Center Historic District

Name of Property

Hampshire, MA

County and State

shoulder stones generally set in rows. Some of the flat capstones on the cemetery wall are believed to be footstones.

There are two obelisks in Dyer Cemetery; one is dedicated to Thomas Cook (4/15/1856, 55 years) and his wife Rachel (12/16/1874, 76 years). The other obelisk is dedicated to Maj. David Whiton (9/9/1849, 80 years), a veteran of the Revolutionary War. There is also a large rectangular tablet in memory of mill owner Ziba White (4/7/1842, 70 years), who lived at 242 South Central Street. The inscription reads, "Be Ye Also Ready."

Noncontributing buildings

Noncontributing building in the historic district are generally those that were built after the end of the district's period of significance (1965). Most of the buildings are houses, and they are interspersed with the houses that preceded them. Typically, the noncontributing houses continue to be of modest size and similar to the houses of the 1950s and 1960s. Most have synthetic siding, which may have been the original cladding. Examples include a ca. 1970 Colonial Revival-style cape at 305 Main Street, a ca. 1972 astylistic ranch at 319 Main Street, and a 1991 Cape with connector and attached two-car garage at 35 South Central Street. There is also one mobile home, located at 181 South Central, that dates to the 1970s. It abuts the present farmstead at 1 Pleasant Street. Among approximately ten noncontributing outbuildings, the most apparent is a large, ca. 1979 metal tire warehouse on the south side Main Street at Four Corners, in the core of the historic district. It is part of the historic farmstead at 3 South Central Street, and is the only obvious commercial enterprise in the historic district.

End Section 7

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture
Social History

Period of Significance

ca. 1783 to 1965

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Karl S. Putnam, architect
John Cook, builder
David Shaw, builder
Cyrus Joy, builder

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Plainfield Center Historic District is a good example of a rural town center that experienced most of its growth in the first half of the 19th century. The landscape is characterized by acres of fields and woodland dotted with modest houses, sprawling farmsteads, and three cemeteries. The more densely settled civic/institutional core of the historic district includes the Congregational Church (1846), town hall (1847), and the public library (1925), which are spread along Main Street between Union and Central streets. The Plainfield Center Historic District is the location of the town's first meetinghouse (site of the current Congregational Church) and its oldest extant houses.

While many of the historic houses take the form of Capes, the presence of several substantial 2½-story Federal and Greek Revival-style buildings reflects the district's most prosperous period, which was ca. 1800 to the 1840s. Of particular note is the ca. 1833 Shaw-Hudson House, which includes the intact doctor's office of Samuel Shaw, the town's mid 19th-century physician. The present public library, which stands on the site of the Reverend Moses Hallock's house, is dedicated both to Dr. Shaw and to Rev. Hallock, who was the town's first minister as well as the headmaster of a notable private school during the Federal period. The Plainfield Center Historic District was also home to the town's 19th-century historian Charles N. Dyer, who was born in Plainfield and lived in the historic district for most of his life. In 1891, Dyer authored the most definitive history of the town written to date. The Plainfield Center Historic District retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and meets National Register Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places with a local level of significance.

The period of significance begins ca. 1783, which is the presumed date of the oldest house in the district (27 Broom Street). The period ends in 1965—50 years from the present. The standard 50-year cutoff for historical significance was established by the National Park Service to allow adequate time for properties to be considered in an objective historic context.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Architecture: Plainfield Center is architecturally significant for its collection of modest, vernacular houses and farmsteads as well as its institutional and civic buildings. The dominant architectural styles are Federal and Greek Revival, but the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles are also represented. While there are several examples of 2½-story 19th century houses in the district, most of the historic houses are Cape Cod cottages (Capes), so much so that Capes were noted as a distinguishing feature of the built environment in Plainfield, as compared to more than 40 other municipalities in the region (Historic Preservation Inventory, 1979).

Social History: Plainfield Center is historically significant as the focus of life in a small, rural town from its initial settlement to the present day. Through the buildings one can trace the town's periods of prosperity and its periods of decline. The historic resources in Plainfield Center stand as reminders of the people who built, lived, and/or worked in them. Taken together these historic resources form an ensemble that retains its integrity as the town's historic civic, institutional, and residential core.

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Historic Overview of the Town of Plainfield

The extensive territory initially known as Plantation No. 5, which included present-day Cummington and Plainfield, was sold at auction, June 2, 1762, at the Royal Exchange Tavern in Boston to John Cummings for 1800 pounds. At a division of lots, Dec. 29, 1762, twenty-seven additional names were recorded as proprietors. The Massachusetts Bay Colony stipulated that within five years there be sixty settlers, each of whom was required to clear five acres for fields, pastures, or English grass, and to build a 20 by 30 foot cabin. The first colonial settler in the area that is now Plainfield was a Scotsman named McIntire, who arrived with his family in 1769. A cellar hole in a thickly wooded area along North Central Street (outside the boundaries of the historic district), marks the site of the McIntire's cabin.

By 1775, fewer than ten families had settled in the area that would become Plainfield, then part of Cummington, which was established as a town in 1780. Growth was steady and in March 1785, the Plainfield District of Cummington was established, and in 1807 Plainfield became a separate town. The name Plainfield appears to be related to the town's topography, which was described by John Warner Barber in 1848 as follows: "This township lies on the eastern side of the Green mountain range, and as might be expected, the surface is undulating...less so, however, than that of the adjoining towns. Indeed, the summit of East Hill, on which is the principal village, may be considered as level through nearly the whole breadth of the town."

Plainfield's late 18th- and early 19th-century settlers came primarily from southeastern Massachusetts towns such as Abington, Weymouth, and Bridgewater, and nearly every male head of household had fought in the Revolutionary War. Once the woods were cleared, the "plain fields" were planted with flax, corn, oats, barley, rye, and buckwheat as well as vegetables and fruit trees. The setting out of an apple orchard was a high priority, with the fruit being used to make enough cider to last a farmer through the winter.

Settlers also tapped the local streams and brooks running north-south through Plainfield to power a number of early grist and sawmills. Two of the brooks flank the Plainfield Center Historic District, but are not within the district boundary. Mill Brook, the town's largest waterway (Barber), is about half a mile west of Union Street, and Meadow Brook is about half a mile east of Center Street. Samuel Streeter, who lived at 9 Union Street, was operating a sawmill on Mill Brook by 1791 (Dyer, p. 68). By 1826 the Streeter family had a woolen factory on the site.

In 1816, several men from Plainfield Center collaborated to harness the water power of local streams to bring water to dwellings and businesses. Organizers of the Plainfield Aqueduct Company (1816-1971) included John Mack, who built the Old Brick Store at 278 East Main Street, and Dr. Jacob Porter, who lived at 12 North Central Street. In addition to providing water to those properties, the aqueduct, which delivered water through wooden pipes by gravity, eventually supplied water to a number of properties in Plainfield Center (e.g., 4 North Central, 276 Main, 2 South Central, and 296 Main streets). The extremely narrow lot (15C-21) to the east of 296 Main Street is a right-of-way for the former aqueduct's pipe system.

The population of Plainfield in 1790 was 458; it peaked to almost a thousand (984) in 1830. According to historian Barber, in 1837 Plainfield had two woolen mills that produced 20,000 yards of cloth. At the same time, the raising of sheep was a major economic driver. Barber reported that in 1837 "there were 238 Saxony, 1,775 merino, and 1759 other kinds of sheep." Sheep raising took place in the hilly parts of Plainfield, which had poor, rocky soil that made fine grazing land for sheep. The relatively flat land in

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Plainfield Center was good, agricultural farmland, so while sheep farming was important to the local economy, there is no record of sheep raising on property within the historic district.

Several factors contributed to an eventual collapse of the sheep industry and helped fuel a population decline that would continue for more than a century. The sheep denuded the land of vegetation and depleted the soil of nutrients. Due to changes in tariff laws, wool prices dropped from 57 cents per pound in 1835 to 25 cents per pound in the late 1840s. Sheep farmers also suffered from competition in the Midwest. The average annual cost of keeping a sheep in New England was one to two dollars a head, while Midwestern farmers were spending twenty-five cents a head. In addition, the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 created an accessible transportation system to fertile Midwestern land, which attracted many Plainfield families who were barely surviving tilling the rocky soil or raising sheep. Many farmers packed their belongings on wagons and walked or rode horses to Albany (NY) where they were able to board a canal boat that carried them 363 miles to Buffalo. From there they spread out to Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois. One group from Plainfield, who settled in Chatham, Ohio, established a Congregational church, and their descendants refer to the Plainfield Congregational Church as the Mother Church.

Despite the westward migration, a variety of small industries continued to rely on water-powered mills in the Early Industrial Period (1830-1870). In addition to gristmills, sawmills, and cider mills, there were tanneries and three factories that made satinet, flannel, and other woolen goods. Other mills manufactured wooden items that included broom handles, whip-butts, chopping bowls, meat skewers, and shingles. The 1837 Census shows that boots were manufactured in households, hides tanned, and clocks and chairs produced. In 1840 it was reported that 48,000 palm-leaf hats were made in one year by women and children in their homes. Potash works provided a source of income from the clearing of wood from the forests. The property at 355 Main Street had both a potash works and a cider mill. One of the uses of potash was in the bleaching of textiles. Tanner Joel Carr lived at 372 West Main Street in the early 19th century. Tannery owner Ruben Remington built the brick house in which he lived at 338 Main Street. Shoemakers Niles and Webster Noyes bought the house at 4 North Central Street in 1837, and made shoes in the now-attached shop using leather from the tannery in Plainfield.

Brickmaking was another Plainfield industry during the 19th century, and the three brick houses in the historic district (338 Main Street, 1 Pleasant and 278 East Main) were constructed of local brick. According to Dyer (p. 70), brick was made early in the 19th century at a brickyard located north of Pleasant Street and the Dyer Cemetery along Meadow Brook, probably by Joshua or Thomas Shaw. Other brickmakers include O. S. White who lived at 214 South Central Street.

In many Massachusetts towns and cities, the second half of the 19th century was a prosperous period characterized by intense immigration, urbanization, and population increases brought about by industrialization. This was not true in rural communities like Plainfield, which lost population to urban centers and communities with job opportunities. In addition, the area became somewhat isolated because it was not served by the railroad. For these reasons, there was essentially no immigration. In 1855, the foreign-born segment of the population was thirteen (five from Ireland), which is less than 2 percent of the population, and the smallest percentage of any town in Hampshire County (town report).

Wool production, which had declined after 1832, received a boost during the Civil War, due to the demand for blankets and uniforms. Over sixty Plainfield men served in the Civil War, according to the adjutant general's records. Among the six who died was Charles Gurney, who was born at 24 South Union

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Street. He was killed at Gettysburg July 2, 1863. Most of those who survived settled elsewhere after the war. By 1890, Plainfield had lost over half of its 1830 population.

While the section above provides historical context for the town of Plainfield as a whole, the sections that follow trace the development of the Plainfield Center Historic District from its beginnings in the Federal Period to the present day.

History of Plainfield Center Historic District

Federal Period (1775-1830)

As was typical in Massachusetts at the time, everyone was required to attend church on Sunday, spending much of the day at "meeting" and the rest of the day traveling to and from it. Prior to the creation of the Plainfield District of Cummington in 1785, residents had traveled to Cummington to attend the meeting of Reverend James Briggs. Thus the impetus to establish a separate municipal entity was likely driven by the desire of an increasing population base to shorten the distance to the meetinghouse, which was also the seat of town government. For that reason, one of the first tasks of the residents of the Plainfield District of Cummington was to hire a minister. In August 1785, the residents voted to raise 14 pounds for that purpose. After several probationary preachers were rejected, the Reverend Moses Hallock was called in August 1792.

Church services were held in private homes until a meetinghouse was built in Plainfield Center on the site of the present Plainfield Congregational Church (356 West Main Street). With dimensions of 55 feet by 42 feet, Plainfield's first meetinghouse was dedicated on June 15, 1797. Due to limited funds, this was five years after ground was broken in 1792. An undated drawing (Dyer, p. 29) shows a 2½ story side-gabled, seven-bay building with the entrance in the middle bay and a projecting belltower on the gable end. The latter had been added in 1800, and the bell was subsequently transferred to the present Congregational Church.

The site of the meetinghouse had been carefully selected by a committee who were "appointed to measure and find the center of Plainfield and likewise agree upon a place which they shall think most proper for erecting a meetinghouse upon." (Dyer, p.29) The meetinghouse was erected under the ministry of Reverend Moses Hallock, one of Plainfield's most revered historical figures. He served as Congregational minister until his retirement in 1829, but because he continued to preach until his death in 1837, his ministry lasted 45 years.

Considered the conscience of the community during the Federal Period, Hallock lived in Plainfield Center and ran a boarding school—sometimes called the Plainfield Academy—out of his house (not extant). Between 1793 and 1824, more than 300 students, including 30 girls, attended Hallock's school, where they were taught classical languages, natural science, religion, philosophy, and mathematics. In its early years, the school's graduates supplied Williams College (Williamstown, MA) with a substantial portion of its freshman classes. A number of Hallock's students became ministers, missionaries, doctors, teachers, and scientists. Perhaps for this reason, Martha Nash Lamb, editor/owner of the *Magazine of American History*, as well as a Plainfield native and former student of Hallock's, wrote the following in an 1887 article about Plainfield: "This seemingly inconsequential Massachusetts town has sent out into the world, for active, important work, more educated Christian ministers, authors, and editors than any other town of its size on the globe."

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

It is unfortunate that much of Hallock's legacy has been lost due to his request that all of his writings be burned after his death. In addition, his house and school, which stood on the site of the present public library, was destroyed by fire on August 10, 1916. (See Shaw Memorial Library/Hallock Memorial School below.) Nevertheless, to quote the 1879 *History of Connecticut Valley, Massachusetts*, the Rev. Moses Hallock's "life and labors were a legacy of priceless value to Plainfield, and the town stands forever honored by the ministry of this noble man, this beloved pastor, this distinguished teacher."

The location of the meetinghouse established the civic focus of the town and what became Plainfield Center along present-day Route 116/Main Street. In the early 19th century, a group of citizens also set out a "town common" to the east of the meetinghouse in the vicinity of Main and Central streets—known locally as Four Corners. Deed references indicate that the Brick Store at 278 East Main Street stands on "the common, so called." Unlike the typical New England common, which takes its name from the fact that it was common/public land, the Plainfield common was privately owned from the beginning, and the land was gradually sold off for development. The Gun House, which was moved to 274 East Main Street ca. 1860, also stands on land that was once the common.

Plainfield's population climbed steadily from 1790 to 1830, when it peaked at 984. That number translated to a growth rate of nearly 115 percent, nearly twice the county average and surpassing, by far, the growth in surrounding towns (e.g., Ashfield, 19 percent; Cummington, 44 percent). What fueled the dramatic population increase is not clear, but may be related to the fact that Plainfield became a separate municipality in 1807.

Cemeteries

All three cemeteries in the Plainfield Center Historic District were established during the Federal Period. The Old Burying Ground, ca. 1792; Hilltop Cemetery, ca. 1810; and Dyer Cemetery ca. 1812. The dates are taken from cemetery signs erected by members of the cemetery association in 2012. A 1946 manuscript about Plainfield Cemeteries (by Patricia Dyer Allen) recorded the presence of 10 cemeteries scattered across the town of Plainfield, many of which were small and abandoned. One of the latter, on the grounds of the property at 54 South Central Street, was described as overgrown with brush and having "no inscribed stones." At present there is no visible evidence of this burial ground.

The Old Burying Ground (ca. 1792) is also known as the Union Street Cemetery and the Center Cemetery. It was described by local historian Charles Dyer in 1891 (p.56) as an ancient cemetery on the "east side of the road [now Union Street] just south of the meetinghouse." Noting that it was in general use for about twenty years, Dyer implied that it was also used sporadically until 1855, when the last internment was that of Daniel Streeter, Jr., who committed suicide. Dyer noted that about "20 headstones bearing inscriptions still remain." Recent records at findagrave.com list the presence of 21 gravestones. Among them are the graves of several other members of the Streeter family, beginning with the oldest known stone—that of Lt. Daniel Streeter, who died in 1792, and who built the Cape at 355 West Main Street. Lt. Ebenezer Colson, who lived at 27 Broom Street and died in 1801, is also buried there. Pricilla Dyer Allen noted that the Old Burying Ground was then (1946) located in a cow pasture, just as it is now. It is likely that the date of the Old Burying Ground was deduced from the date of the oldest visible stone. It is reasonable to assume that the cemetery may contain earlier burials.

A number of individuals originally in the Old Burying Ground were reinterred at Hilltop Cemetery, which became Plainfield's principal burying ground. While the Old Burying Ground had been located about 1/3 of a mile south of the meetinghouse, Hilltop was sited about 1/3 of a mile to the north on a hill at the

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

intersection of Union and North Central streets. Both cemeteries were initially associated with the Congregational Church and were surely sited to be within walking distance of it. The date on the Hilltop Cemetery sign is 1810, but Charles Dyer recorded its date as 1808 and Pricilla Dyer Allen postulated 1803. The first person interred there was Lt. Solomon Shaw (1731-1808). Hilltop is the resting place of many historically significant residents of the Plainfield Center Historic District, including the town's first pastor Rev. Moses Hallock, scientist Dr. Jacob Porter (12 North Central Street), town physician Dr. Samuel Shaw (286 Main Street), general-store proprietor John Mack (278 East Main Street), and innkeeper/mill owner Samuel Streeter (9 Union Street).

Hilltop Cemetery was enlarged in 1856 and enclosed by a stone wall. It was expanded again in 1978 and 1992 to its present size of about four and a half acres. In 1884, a receiving tomb was built in the northwest section of the grounds, but it was removed ca. 1950. Historically, people walked up Union Street from the Plainfield Congregational Church to Hilltop Cemetery for funerals. Plainfield veterans and residents continue this tradition on Memorial Day by marching from Plainfield Town Hall to the 1899 Civil War Memorial in Hilltop Cemetery to commemorate Plainfield's deceased veterans.

Dyer Cemetery (ca. 1812) is located at the western edge of the historic district on the south side of Pleasant Street and just west of Meadow Brook. Also known as the Pleasant Street Cemetery and the McCloud Cemetery, its name seems to have changed over time based on its associations. The property adjacent to it at 25 Pleasant Street has been owned by both the Dyer and McCloud families, but there is no record of it having been a private/family cemetery. Inactive since ca. 1893, the cemetery contains the graves of many residents who lived in the southeast part of Plainfield, including the brothers Samuel (1776-1871) and Ziba White (1771-1842), who lived at 214 and 242 South Central Street, respectively. Both were active in town affairs, Samuel having served as a selectman in the 1830s. Ziba owned a mill on the nearby Meadow Brook, which runs just east of the cemetery. Ziba's wife Huldah (1770-1848) is also buried in Dyer Cemetery.

Houses

The oldest houses in the Plainfield Center Historic District are late 18th-century Capes (see descriptions in section 7). They all stand in the southern section of the district on or near South Central Street (e.g., 27 Broom Street, 70, 214, and 242 South Central Street). The presence of early Capes may reflect the Southeastern Massachusetts origin of many of Plainfield's Federal-period settlers. In addition to the four Capes, there are four substantial 2½-story Federal-period houses, two of which are brick. One of the brick houses (278 East Main Street) was also a general store. A late 18th-century tavern located near the meetinghouse (9 Union Street) was subsequently enlarged, becoming a substantial wood-frame, Federal-style dwelling.

The oldest house in the historic district is the Colson House at 27 Broom Street, which is believed to date to ca. 1783. It was built by Lt. Ebenezer Colson (1716-1801), who had been in the area since 1776. He served in the Revolutionary War and was elected Town (district) Moderator at the first meeting of the Plainfield District of Cummington in 1785. While Broom Street is now a short, dead-end road, in the 1790s it was a through street that ran easterly from Central Street, intersecting Main Street well beyond the eastern boundary of the district. The street takes its name from the broom-handle industry, which probably began around 1830 (town report, p.5). In 1801 Ebenezer Colson, Jr. inherited the house and land from his father. He and his wife Lavinia (nee Packard) lived there until they sold it in 1815 to Brackley Shaw IV of Abington.

Plainfield Center Historic District

Hampshire, MA

Name of Property

County and State

The main block of the Beals-Shaw House at 70 South Central Street was built by Caleb Beals (1757-1817) ca. 1791 when he acquired the property. The present house includes a kitchen ell that may date to the 1780s, when the property was owned by Jonathan Monroe, a farmer who settled in what is now Plainfield before 1780. At the first town (district) meeting in 1785, Monroe was elected one of the tythingmen. The second through the ninth town meetings (September 1785 to April 1787) were held in Monroe's house. In the early 1800s the house was sold to Josiah Shaw, Jr. (1785-1863), who lived there with his wife Lydia and their nine children. Josiah was the older brother of Dr. Samuel Shaw of the Shaw-Hudson House (286 Main Street).

The Samuel White House at 214 South Central Street dates to ca. 1799, when Samuel White (1776-1871) married Polly Norton. The house was one of three belonging to the White family. Brothers Samuel and Ziba White (242 South Central Street) built their houses flanking the house of their father Caleb (not extant), who may have divided his land for the purpose, as was customary. Caleb White (b.1744) was born in Bridgewater, but had moved to Cummington by the time his sons Ziba (b.1771) and Samuel were born. Caleb White had settled in what is now Plainfield by 1785, serving as a selectman from 1786-1790. Samuel White, who raised fourteen children, presumably at 214 South Central Street, also served as a selectman (1834-1838). According to historian Charles Dyer (p.184), Samuel White, who had a total of seventeen children (three died as infants), produced the largest family ever recorded in Plainfield. Only one of his ten sons, Orson S. White, remained in Plainfield, which underscores the town's population loss.

Jacob Joy (1760-1839?) built his house at 1 Pleasant Street, ca. 1810. In contrast to the Capes of the late 18th century, Joy's house is grand. Constructed of local brick, it rose two stories to a fashionable hip roof with end-wall chimneys. (While those features remain, the house has been altered. See section 7.) The size of the house suggests that Joy was well-to-do. He served as a selectman in 1814, and was able to send his son Cyrus to Williams College (Williamstown, MA). The Joy House is one of three brick buildings constructed in the historic district between ca 1810 and 1837. (The others are 338 Main and 278 East Main street, discussed below.)

Scientist Jacob Porter built his house at 12 North Central Street ca. 1812, just north of the junction of Main and Central streets (Four Corners). Now altered somewhat, it retains its 2½-story, side-gabled form and was probably a Federal-style house with a center chimney. Jacob Porter (1783-1846) was a botanist, mineralogist, and geologist. He also had a small medical practice that was secondary to his other interests. He studied the plants, rocks, and minerals of Plainfield and Cummington, discovered the mineral Cummingtonite, and amassed what may have been the first "cabinet collection" of these specimens in the vicinity. Porter also had an extensive library of more than 400 volumes and 1,200 pamphlets. He wrote an 1834 town history entitled *Topographical Description and Historical Sketch of Plainfield*, which town historian Charles N. Dyer later credited with being of great assistance to him in writing his 1891 history of Plainfield. Many of Porter's papers were published in foreign countries and translated into German and French. He had three wives, Betsey Mayhew (d. 1813), Sarah Reed (d. ca.1825), and Sarah Packard. With the latter, he had three children: Juliet, Clarissa, and Charles.

John Mack, a prominent businessman, selectman, and captain in the 3rd artillery regiment, erected the second extant brick building in the historic district, ca. 1820. Now called the Old Brick Store (278 East Main Street), it was Plainfield's only general store, and it was also Mack's home. Located at Four Corners, the Old Brick Store appears to be the oldest extant building along Main Street in the core of the historic district. Goods sold included liquor, molasses, salt, codfish, loaf sugar, chintz cloth, and thread. John Mack did a thriving business until his death in 1833. John Mack, Jr. carried on the business for a

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

year or two, after which it had various owners, including Wanton Gilbert (see 2 South Central Street) in the 1850s. It closed around 1856, reopened in about 1873, and operated until the 1890s.

The house at 9 Union Street was enlarged in 1825 under the ownership of Homer V. Curtis (1799-1857), who hired Cyrus Joy to do the remodeling. The house is called Streeter's Inn, however, because of its 18th century associations. The ell is believed to date to ca. 1779, when it was built by Samuel Streeter (1754-1844), who operated an inn at his house. Located directly behind the meetinghouse, Streeter's Inn—probably a Cape at the time—was a gathering place between church services. Streeter, who was born in Stockbridge, had served in the Revolutionary War, and was a farmer and the owner of a sawmill on Mill Brook in Plainfield. The house remained in the Streeter family until it was purchased by Homer Vinson Curtis in 1825. Curtis, who bought and sold a good deal of land in the area, was born in Plainfield to Vinson Curtis and Comfort Streeter. In 1846, he married Almira Stetson, and five years later the couple sold the house. Along with their son, they moved to Wisconsin where Almira's parents and brother had settled.

Early Industrial Period (1830-1870)

At the opening of the period in 1830, Plainfield's population stood at 984 people—the largest population statistic past and present. The population had declined to 910 by 1840, and had reached 521 at the close of the period in 1870. The reasons for the population decline are discussed above in the overview of history of Plainfield.

While the Federal period had seen the development of the meetinghouse, a tavern, a parsonage, a general store, and a public school, dwellings were typically part of large farmsteads and were therefore dispersed. The more clustered settlement that we see today in the area of the meetinghouse occurred in the 1830s and 1840s when a minor building boom resulted in what now makes up of the core of the district along Main between Union and Central streets, including the present Congregational Church, the Town Hall, and several of Plainfield Center's finest houses.

The earliest of these is the two-story, Federal/Greek Revival-style house at 296 Main Street, which was built ca. 1831 at the direction of Congregational minister Moses Hallock. It was to be the parsonage for his "colleague pastor" Reverend David Kimball. When it was built, the house stood one door east of Hallock's own house (now the location of the Shaw Library). It is possible that Hallock subdivided the eight-acre parcel he had bought in 1793, and on which he had built his house. (See Shaw Memorial Library/Hallock Memorial School, discussed below.) Rev. Kimball was installed as "colleague pastor" after Reverend Hallock officially retired in 1829. Kimball served until 1837 when Moses Hallock died. Reverend Hallock's son Leavitt lived in the Kimball House for a brief period of time before selling it to the First Congregational Society. Rev. William Agur Hawley bought the house in 1843 and owned it until 1854, although he served the Plainfield church only from 1841 to 1847. Freeman Hamlen (1805-1889) bought the house in 1854. Freeman followed in his father John Hamlen's footsteps as a selectman and representative to the general court in Boston. He was chosen as town clerk in 1853 and held the post for 23 years. A deacon in the Congregational Church from 1844 to 1867, he died in the sitting room of the Kimball House.

Plainfield's beloved physician Dr. Samuel Shaw (1790-1870) built his house in 1833 (286 Main Street). Complete with its integral office in the easternmost bay of the six-bay house, it stands one door east of Reverend Kimball's house and is similar in style. Now known as the Shaw-Hudson House and operated as a house museum by the Plainfield Historical Society, it is Plainfield's most notable and well-preserved

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

historic house. Dr. Shaw and his second wife, Elizabeth Owen Clarke of Northampton, lived in the house until their deaths in 1870 and 1863, respectively. During that time they raised five children. Dr. Shaw served for eight years as a Plainfield selectman and was a member of the Massachusetts Medical Society.

Samuel Shaw was born in Abington, MA, but his family moved to Plainfield in 1792. He attended the Hallock School (site of present Shaw Library), and then studied medicine with Dr. Peter Bryant of neighboring Cummington. After receiving his license to practice medicine in 1821, he went into partnership with Bryant and married his daughter Sarah Snell Bryant, who died of tuberculosis in 1824, apparently the same year as her father.

Sarah's death inspired her brother, the distinguished poet and editor of the *New York Evening Post*, William Cullen Bryant, to write a poem entitled "The Death of Flowers." Bryant, who had attended the Hallock School, had another brief association with Plainfield when, after being admitted to the bar in 1815, he practiced law in town for eight months (Ehrlich, p.56; office location unknown). During that period, while walking from Cummington to Plainfield, Bryant was moved by the sight of a bird in flight, and he wrote the poem, "To a Waterfowl." (The William Cullen Bryant Homestead in Cummington has been owned by the Trustees of Reservations since 1929, and the property was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966.)

After the death of his wife and her father, Dr. Samuel Shaw returned to Plainfield, and in 1830, he married Elizabeth Clarke, who was descended from a long line of Northampton's early settlers. While they built their new house, the Shaws lived nearby in the ca. 1805 Cyrus Joy House (4 North Central Street). Dr. Shaw practiced medicine from the office in his home until 1854, when a serious carriage accident made it impossible for him to make house calls. After his death in 1870, his daughters and grandchildren occupied the house during the summer and fall months. In addition, they preserved his office so that it remains exactly as he left it. In 1962 his granddaughter, Clara E. Hudson, left the house and property in a trust for the benefit of the Plainfield Congregational Church to be used for charitable purposes. The house continues to be used by church organizations and the Plainfield Historical Society.

Around the same time that that Dr. Shaw built his house in 1833, Ira Hamlen built his Greek Revival-style house at 330 Main Street. Hamlen was a hatter, whose earlier home and hatters' shop, possibly on the opposite side of the street (345 Main Street), had burned down. From 1855-1891 Leonard Campbell operated a store in the house at 330 Main Street. For twenty-five years Campbell specialized in the palm-leaf hat business supplying palm leaves to residents who wove them into hats. At one time, 75 percent of the homes in Plainfield were involved in making palm-leaf hats.

It is believed that Reuben Remington, a tannery owner, constructed his house at 338 Main Street between 1833 and 1837. Remington's Greek Revival-style house with a gable front and side-hall plan is one of three brick houses in the historic district. (The other two are at 1 Pleasant and 278 East Main streets, discussed above.) By 1856, the Remington House was owned by Jason Richards, son of one of Plainfield's first settlers, James Richards, who lived at 166 East Main Street (outside the historic district boundary). Jason Richards (1798-1885), who spent his life in Plainfield, was educated at Hallock's school. He taught for many years in the Plainfield schools and in schools of adjacent towns. He served as town clerk from 1833 to 1845, represented Plainfield in the Legislature in 1841 and 1842, and was justice of the peace from the early 1840s until shortly before his death. He studied common law, and although he had no formal legal training, he was considered an authority by the people of the town, who often consulted him on legal subjects.

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

David Shaw (ca.1793-1884) built his house at 1 Church Lane in 1842. Located one door west of the Congregational Church, it is one of Plainfield Center's two-story, Federal/Greek Revival-style dwellings. Its size indicates that Shaw had become a man of means. Self-educated, he was respected for his mathematical and mechanical abilities. He was a surveyor and was known for numerous inventions, including a seed-sower and an odometer. He also made violins, umbrellas, and a clock with wooden works. He repaired clocks and watches until his death at the age of 91.

In 1846, the Congregational Church of Plainfield, 356 West Main Street, was constructed on the site of the 1797 meetinghouse. The following year, Plainfield Town Hall was constructed less than 100 feet to the east at 348 Main Street. These two Greek Revival-style buildings represent the physical separation of church and state in Plainfield, although the process had probably begun prior to 1833, when the separation of church and state was decreed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Prior to that time, town governments across the Commonwealth were intertwined with the Congregational, or First, church. The meetinghouse was used for both church and civic functions, and the expenses associated with maintaining the building, as well as the salary of the minister, were shared by all taxpayers. As a town's population became more diverse and/or religions other than Congregational began to appear, linking town government to one religious group became unacceptable.

In order to address this in Plainfield, the First Parish and Religious Society was formed in 1838 to pay the minister and cover other church-related expenses that had formerly been paid for by the town. It then took almost another decade to raise the funds to build a separate town hall and a new church, both of which were constructed by Captain John Cook. The new church cost \$2,450, and required razing the 1797 meetinghouse, which was a hotly contested issue and perhaps the first time the town debated a historic preservation issue. Some church members wanted to preserve the old building, believing it was in good condition and made of better materials, particularly the timbers, than a new one would be. Nevertheless, the majority of the parishioners favored a new building, and Plainfield's gable-front Greek Revival-style Congregational Church was completed in 1846 during the pastorate of Reverend William A. Hawley, who served from 1841 to 1847. Known changes to the building include replacement of the original tall spire, which blew down in 1859, with the present cupola-type steeple, and replacement of the large pulpit with a desk and a gallery for the choir in 1890.

The Congregational Church is the only extant church building in Plainfield. Dyer (p. 40-41) noted that from 1833 to about 1870, there was a Baptist Society with a chapel in the eastern part of town, and in the western part of town, there was an Advent chapel in the 1880s. Neither are extant, and no other churches or chapels are known to have come and gone since Dyer's time. Perhaps because it is the only ecclesiastical building in Plainfield, the Congregational Church serves the larger community by providing a venue for weddings, funerals, concerts, and other town events.

Like the Congregational Church, Plainfield Town Hall, 348 Main Street, was built by Captain John Cook. Completed in 1847, it stands less than 100 feet east of the church so that together, the buildings form a Greek Revival pair. While many Massachusetts towns built churches and town halls in the Greek Revival style, they were not usually side by side, and if they were, one or both, particularly the town halls, may have been replaced. Thus, the Plainfield pair may be rare survivors. They are believed to comprise the only such example in Western Massachusetts.

Plainfield Town Hall, which also served as the Center School when it opened, stands near the site of a one-room school that was razed for the new building. Dyer (p. 42) describes the location of the one-room school as having been between the present town hall and C. N. Dyer's store (now 344 Main Street).

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

The history of public schools in Plainfield began in April 1788, when the Plainfield District of Cummington voted to "raise thirty pounds to be laid out in schooling the ensuing year" and to "divide the District into proper divisions for schooling." (Dyer, p. 42) Initially there were three school districts, but it was not until April 5, 1790, that it was "voted to build school-houses in each of the three districts." Dyer describes the site of Plainfield Center's first school as being "about midway between the brick store and the cemetery," which places it north of Main Street and along North Central Street. By 1837, nine schools had been established in Plainfield, along with a union school in Hawley. That was the situation when the new Center School opened in Plainfield Town Hall.

Plainfield Town Hall was built at a cost of \$900, almost half of which was paid for by the Center School District. The first floor contained two schoolrooms and a town office, and the second floor held the meeting hall. At the time (1847), the school was graded and had two teachers.

In addition to town meetings, the second-floor meeting hall was used as a Lyceum for the discussion of literary and social subjects. Later on, the Grange, a fraternal/social service organization of farmers, met in the building. After the Civil War, the Grand Army of the Republic, composed of those who had served in that conflict, met in the Hall regularly, as did their auxiliary, the Women's Relief Corps.

Known changes to the town hall included reconfiguring rooms on the first floor as the school population and town needs changed. In 1868, when there were approximately 100 students in the public schools, the district school system was abolished and the number of schools was reduced to six due to the declining population. By 1872, as the school population continued to shrink, two rooms were no longer needed and the large north room was divided, the southeast room enlarged, and a room for wood storage made in the northeast corner. School was held in the southeast room until 1925, when the Hallock Memorial School (304-312 Main Street, discussed below) opened. One of the last graduates of the 8th grade class in 1924 was Priscilla Dyer Allen (see 344 Main Street below). The northwest room in the town hall was given to the church for prayer meetings, Ladies Benevolent Society Meetings, and other gatherings. In 1924 spring water was piped into the town hall, and the northwest room became a kitchen. When the southeast room was no longer needed for a school, it was made into a dining room. At present the town hall serves as a meeting place for all town and committee meetings. The kitchen and dining room are used for social events.

Around the time that Plainfield Town Hall was being constructed (1847), a Greek Revival-style Cape was built at 3 South Central Street, just south of the junction of Main and Central streets (Four Corners). Little is known about the original owner, except that he was from Boston. The house was sold to Wanton C. Gilbert, the owner and operator of the Old Brick Store (278 East Main Street), which is almost across the street at the northeast corner of Main and Central streets. Wanton Gilbert represented Plainfield in the general court from 1852-1853 and was a selectman in 1854. He died shortly after his term as selectman. In 1858, his widow Lucy (née Richards) married the new minister, Solomon Clark (1811-1902), a widower. He moved into her house and a year later on their first anniversary they had a daughter, Elizabeth R. Clark. Rev. Clark was pastor of the Plainfield Congregational Church from January 1858 until 1886—twenty-eight years. This was a significant accomplishment since a number of his predecessors had short tenures due to difficulties between the members of the church and their pastor.

After his retirement Solomon Clark, who was originally from Northampton, published a history of the town of Northampton and worked on a history of the First Church of Northampton. He lived in his Plainfield house for forty years, and it became known as the third parsonage (the first having been Moses

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Hallock's House, and the second being the Kimball House at 296 Main Street). Reverend Clark is buried in Hilltop Cemetery. Because of his significance to the town and his long residence, the historic name of his house is the Solomon Clark House even though he did not build it or occupy it until 1858. Lucy Clark died in 1903, a year after her husband, and their daughter Elizabeth inherited the property, which she kept until 1939.

A house similar to the Solomon Clark House was moved to its present location at 274 East Main Street and converted to a dwelling ca. 1860. Now called the Gun House, it was initially built in 1847 to house the cannon for the third artillery regiment of the Massachusetts Militia. The militia for the eight hill towns of Plainfield, Goshen, Chesterfield, Savoy, Windsor, Cummington, Hawley, and Ashfield was organized in Williamsburg in the late 1700s, moving to Plainfield in the early 1800s. In 1845 Captain Levi N. Campbell requested that an armory be built for the militia. Built by David Shaw in 1847, it is believed that the armory/Gun House stood roughly opposite 330 Main Street. It stored cannon, ammunition, and other weapons until it was sold around 1860 and moved a quarter of a mile east on Main Street, where it became the home of Mrs. Frances P. Clark.

Between 1850 and 1870, the close of the Early Industrial Period, Plainfield's population had gone from 814 to 521, so it is no surprise that real estate development essentially stopped throughout Plainfield. The Old Brick Store, 278 East Main, struggled to survive as it passed through numerous owners before closing in 1856. No store was kept there until about 1873, when the property was purchased by Charles R. Burt, who stocked it and carried on the business for some four years before selling it to Mrs. Eliza A. Packard, who kept the store with the assistance of her sons.

Another house that became a commercial enterprise during the period is at 355 West Main Street, in the core of the historic district. At present, the heavily altered house is 1½ stories tall, but in 1849, when it was 2½ stories tall, its owner, the recently widowed Abigail Streeter, began operating a hotel there. At the time, Main Street was on the stagecoach route between Williamsburg and Adams, so it is likely that Mrs. Streeter accommodated travelers. She died in 1853, and Leonard Joy purchased the property and continued to operate it as a hotel. By 1860, the property was shown on the Walling map of Hampshire County as the "Hampshire House." Postcards indicate that it had a "million dollar view."

While there was little to no new construction, existing houses were inherited or purchased by new owners. For example, Lewis Shaw (1816-1884), one of the nine children of Josiah and Lydia Shaw (70 South Central Street), remained on the family farm. In 1864, he married Rachael Tuller (1835-1922) of Haydenville (Williamsburg, MA). They had two children, Carrie born in 1865 and Mary born ten years later. Lewis served as a selectman from 1854 until 1872 and was on the school committee from 1875-1878. He died April 16, 1884. At a town meeting held soon after his death, the following was adopted: "Resolved, that as citizens of Plainfield we express our high appreciation of his wise and faithful management of public affairs, and tender our sympathy to the widow and her family under this heavy bereavement." Rachael and Lewis Shaw are buried in Hilltop Cemetery.

Late Industrial Period (1870-1915)

Plainfield continued its long decline throughout the period, with population statistics as follows: 1870-521; 1880-457; 1890-435; 1900-404; 1915-369. Overall, this represents a decline of 28 percent, and there was no influx of foreign-born individuals as was the case in towns with an industrial economy. No railroads or street railways served the town, so wage earners moved their families closer to large population centers that promised employment, or families left the state altogether. Those who remained in

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Plainfield made their living as dairy and chicken farmers or they grew apples and potatoes, the latter being Plainfield's strongest agricultural product. One reminder of apple growing is a former apple storage barn (converted to a residence in 1979) at 268 East Main Street. It was built ca. 1890 by the Packard family, when they owned the Old Brick Store at 278 East Main Street.

In spite of the population decline, a few new houses were built in the historic district during this period, the most notable being the Clark Smith House at 2 South Central Street and the Charles N. Dyer House at 344 Main Street.

Clark Smith built his modest Queen Anne-style house at 2 South Central Street ca. 1873. Located in the core of the historic district on the corner of Main and Central streets (Four Corners), it stands on the site of a brick house (owned by E. Warner in 1860) that was taken down because the mortar was defective. Little is known about Clark Smith, except that he was born in 1825 and lived in this house in 1873 and 1877. By 1889 the house was occupied by his son William C. Smith, when a major fire burned down the barns and carriage house, killing numerous cows and hogs.

One of Plainfield's most distinguished 19th-century historical figures, Charles Newell Dyer (1850-1918), built the house at 344 Main Street in 1887 and lived in it until his death. He wrote his name and the date he built the house on a rafter at the south end of the attic. The simple Queen Anne-style house is situated in the core of the historic district just east of Plainfield Town Hall. According to his own writing in 1891 (in the third person), Dyer (p. 67), "...bought of D. H. Gould the corner lot east of the Town Hall, on which he at once erected a building to be used for a store and tenement to which he removed his business, including the post office, about Sept. 1, 1887, and where he still carries it on." The "business" Dyer refers to was a grocery store, which he had operated in his previous residence at 12 North Central Street. His new house at 344 Main Street was laid out with the Dyer family's living quarters on the east side of the first floor and the post office and grocery store on the west side. The tenement, or rental apartment, was upstairs.

Charles Newell Dyer was the author of the most definitive history of Plainfield written to date: *History of the Town of Plainfield, from its settlement to 1891*. Dyer served ten years on the school committee, beginning in 1872. Chosen town clerk and treasurer in 1876, he became justice of the peace in 1884 and postmaster on June 18, 1889.

Charles Dyer's grandfather, Jesse Dyer (b. 1769), came to Ashfield from Abington, MA, around 1790, but his farmland extended into present-day Plainfield. Charles's father, Newell, the youngest of the eight children of Jesse and Sally Dyer, was born in 1818. He settled in Plainfield and, with his wife Mary Ann Whitmarsh, had one child, Charles Newell Dyer, who was born January 7, 1850, at 166 East Main Street (not in the district). The latter is a late 18th-century Cape, which Newell Dyer bought ca. 1847. The family moved to 12 North Central Street when Charles was six years old. He married Mary Antoinette Ford of nearby Peru, MA, Oct. 6, 1872, and apparently inherited 12 North Central Street, where their three children (Albert, b. 1873; Lora, b. 1880; and Charles Frederick, b. 1882) were born.

Charles Frederick Dyer (1882-1977) and his wife M. Arvilla (née Sampson) had two daughters, Priscilla C. (1910) and Arvilla Lois (1923-2004), whom they raised at 344 Main Street beginning in 1924. Charles Frederick Dyer, who lived in the house until his death in 1977, served as town clerk, and his wife was the town librarian (see Shaw Memorial Library, below). Their daughter Priscilla (Dyer) Allen inherited her grandfather's love of history and spent many years compiling information about the early settlers in Plainfield. Daughter Arvilla was an occupational therapist in the U.S. Army for 30 years, retiring as a lieutenant colonel. Arvilla returned to her family house at 344 Main Street in 1971, and lived there until

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

her death in 2004, serving as town clerk for 26 years. Active in many community organizations, she was president of the Plainfield Historical Society for 30 years, and she was the first chairperson of the Plainfield Historical Commission, which was established in 1987. The house was inherited by her nieces (Priscilla Allen's daughters), Nancy and Marcia Allen, who live in it during the summer. The upstairs apartment (now 346 Main Street) is rented to a year-round tenant.

The same year that Dyer built his house (1887), blacksmith Daniel Gould (1840-1912)—from whom Dyer bought his land—bought the fine Greek Revival-style, brick house at 338 Main St, which had been occupied by Jason Richards until his death. According to a photograph in the collections of the Plainfield Historical Society, Gould's blacksmith shop stood at 324 Main Street, which has been a vacant lot since 2000. In addition to his blacksmithing, Gould appears to have bought and sold real estate, and he ran a dairy farm. He also had an extensive tool collection, some of which he used to make water logs that brought water from a spring to his home. Gould's granddaughter, Anna, married Clarence Tirrell in 1909. Three years later, Tirrell and Gould died in what appears to have been a murder/suicide committed by Tirrell (*North Adams Evening Transcript*, Feb. 13, 1912). He was survived by Anna and their infant son Frederick. Anna, with the help of an uncle, ran the dairy farm and lived at 338 Main Street until she died in 1971.

In 1895 the Plainfield Congregational Church bought the Ira Hamlen House at 330 Main Street to be used as a parsonage. The ell of the Ira Hamlen House/parsonage was used as the town library from 1902 until 1925, when the Shaw Memorial Library 304-312 Main Street (see below) was built.

During the Late Industrial Period, fresh air and open space could be hard to come by in cities and thriving industrial towns; thus, rural areas like Plainfield began to attract seasonal residents, some of whom inherited family homesteads. Unlike areas that were served by the railroad, however, there was never a major seasonal influx of tourists to drive the economy as was the case, for example, to the west in the Berkshires or on Cape Cod. Some recreational development did occur outside the historic district around local ponds, and there was some demand for accommodations in Plainfield Center, as indicated by the house at 4 North Central Street, which was in use as a guest house by 1873, when owner Lucian White gave it the bucolic name "Maple Heights."

The use of Plainfield Center's extant houses for seasonal residences can be seen in the Shaw-Hudson House, 286 Main Street, which was occupied in the summer and fall by Dr. Samuel Shaw's daughters and grandchildren after he died in 1870. Another example of seasonal use is the Samuel White House, 214 South Central Street. In the early 20th century, Dr. Irving Maurer, president of Beloit College, purchased it for his summer home. Washington Irving Maurer, born in Iowa, was a Congregational minister for many years before becoming president of Beloit College (Wisconsin) in 1924, where he served until his unexpected death following surgery in 1942 at age 63. Among his four children was Margaret Gibson, who continued to use the house as a summer residence with her children and grandchildren.

Early Modern Period (1915-1940)

When this period opened, World War I was raging in Europe. In 1917, the United States entered the conflict in which fifteen men from Plainfield served. The end of the Great War kicked off the period of economic prosperity known as the Roaring Twenties, which was to be followed by the stupendous economic collapse of the Great Depression. Within that context, Plainfield's population continued to decline: 1915-369; 1920-332; 1930-300; 1940-264. At the end of the period, electric lines came to Plainfield.

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Farming continued throughout the Early Modern Period. For example, the farmstead at 1 Pleasant Street, which had been purchased by Charles E. Thatcher in 1906, has been operated as a dairy farm by the Thatcher family for more than 100 years.

The Early Modern Period was also the beginning of the automobile era, and the car no doubt contributed to an increase in the summer/seasonal use of property in Plainfield Center as well as in the region. One of the first cars in Plainfield Center may have been owned by the Reverend Sylvester Robertson, minister of the Congregational Church from 1913-1916. A photograph shows him in his one-cylinder Reo Motor Car in front of the parsonage at 330 Main Street.

Perhaps benefiting from the prosperous national economy in the 1920s, the town of Plainfield was able to erect a new municipal building to house both the public library and the public school. The Shaw Memorial Library and Hallock Memorial School at 304-312 Main Street was built in 1925 on land donated to the town and with funds raised through private solicitation. It stands in the core of the historic district between Central and Union streets on the site of the house and school of the Reverend Moses Hallock (discussed above), which burned down in 1916.

The land on which the library/school building now stands is shown on the current Plainfield assessors map as "the school lot." Historically, the present 2.5-acre parcel was part of a large and complex land grant to John Dickinson of Hatfield, who sold it to Plainfield settler Simon Burroughs in 1776. On June 23, 1793, Burroughs sold approximately eight acres to Moses Hallock, the town's new minister, who built his house and ran his classical school in it. The house was inherited by Leavitt Hallock, who sold it to Sarah Mack in 1840. In 1860, Mack moved to Delaware and sold the property to blacksmiths James and Edward Spearman. In 1893, the Spearman estate sold the property to Daniel Gould, who conveyed it to Frank Holden the following year.

When Hallock's house/school burned, Mrs. Laura Shaw Hudson, daughter of Dr. Samuel Shaw, bought the land and deeded it to her daughter Clara Hudson. After learning from the town leaders that public opinion would favor the town's accepting and maintaining a school and library building on this site if funds could be obtained from private sources, the Hudsons began soliciting donations for the building. They raised \$22,000: \$10,000 from Mrs. Ethel Hallock du Pont, a descendant of Moses Hallock; \$5,000 from the Shaw descendants in memory of Dr. Samuel Shaw; and \$7,000 in gifts from multiple contributors. On May 29, 1925, Clara Hudson of Plainfield conveyed the school lot to the town of Plainfield for "one dollar and other good and valuable consideration." The deed specified that the property was to be used for educational purposes and a playground. It also noted that the property was the "site of the homestead of the Rev. Moses Hallock." The library is a memorial to Samuel Shaw (see Shaw-Hudson House) and the school is a memorial to Moses Hallock.

Architect Karl S. Putnam designed the new school and library in the Colonial Revival style. It is the only historic building in the district for which the architect is known. Putnam's architectural drawings of the building (on file at the Massachusetts Archives) include two sets of plans and elevations. One set appears to show the library and the other the school, suggesting that the original project was for two separate buildings.

A prolific architect, Karl Scott Putnam (1883-1965) grew up in Leverett, MA, and was most active in the Connecticut River Valley area, particularly Northampton, where he was a professor of architecture at Smith College, which holds his papers. An architectural historian as well as architect, Putnam was

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

proficient in the revival styles of the period, one of the most popular being the Colonial Revival, of which the Shaw Memorial Library/Hallock Memorial School is an example. Among Putnam's other library commissions are the Field Memorial Library in Leverett (1916) and the Frederick Sargent Huntington Library in Worthington (1914). His schools include the Williams Street School in Northampton (1913) and the Center School in Sunderland (1922, now Town Hall, NRDIS 2002).

The Shaw Memorial Library was Plainfield's first purpose-built public library. Previously, the library had been kept in private houses. The town's first library was in the home of Mrs. Julia Gurney Sears at 12 North Central Street. She opened the library in 1892, just two years after formation of the Massachusetts Free Public Library Commission. The commission, a state agency, encouraged the establishment of public libraries through "direct aid" and by offering advice on the operation of libraries in Massachusetts (Wikipedia, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners). Mrs. Sears ran the library at 12 North Central Street until her death in 1902. The town library then moved to the ell of the Ira Hamlen House (330 Main Street) under librarians Miss Anna King, Miss Bessie Holden, Miss Hattie Parker (later Mrs. Newton Lincoln), Mrs. Martha Stowell Smith, and Miss Florence Bliss. Miss Bliss, who lived at 1 Church Lane from 1906 to 1934, was the librarian when the Shaw Library opened in 1925. Another longstanding librarian at the Shaw Memorial Library was M. Arvilla Dyer, wife of Charles Frederick Dyer (see 344 Main Street, above). Arvilla Dyer held the position from 1931 to 1976, when she died at her desk in the library at the age of 96. The children's room in the library is now dedicated to her memory.

Before the Hallock Memorial School opened, there were five public schools in Plainfield, which in 1921 served 80 pupils, ages five to sixteen. With the opening of the Hallock Memorial School in 1925, Plainfield's schools were consolidated into the new building. The former Center School that had been in Plainfield Town Hall (discussed above) was closed. In 1930 there were 61 pupils in grades one to eight, and by 1940 only 41. Town Hall was again used as a public school from 1935 to 1941, when grades four and five were moved to Town Hall. The Hallock Memorial School closed in 1966, when a Regional School was constructed in Ashfield, about three miles east of the Plainfield line. At that time, town offices moved into the available space in the former Hallock Memorial School.

In addition to the new school/library, and in spite of the depressed local economy during the Early Modern Period, two small but notable houses were built in the Plainfield Center Historic District—a ca. 1920s Craftsman Bungalow at 198 South Central Street and an eclectic Colonial Revival-style house at 32 South Central Street. The latter, built in 1934, was owned by Elisabeth Bryn until 1957. Little is known about Bryn, except that she served in the Women's Army Corps during World War II. Ruth and Floyd Thatcher built the bungalow at 198 South Central Street. They were part of the Thatcher family, who have operated the farm at 1 Pleasant Street since 1906. The Thatcher Farm (Joy-Thatcher House) is on the corner of Pleasant and South Central Streets, just opposite the Ruth and Floyd Thatcher House.

A house that became a seasonal residence during the Early Modern Period is the Reverend Kimball House at 296 Main Street. It was the summer home of Robert Carpenter, MD (1888-1955), who was a family physician and hospital administrator. He served in medical capacities in both World Wars, holding the position of executive officer to the surgeon general in World War II. He is buried in Hilltop Cemetery.

Other houses were altered during the period. Among these is the Jacob Porter House at 12 North Central Street. In the early 20th century, the former Federal-style house was remodeled in the Shingle Style with the addition of a two-story sun/sleeping porch on one end and a wrapping porch across the façade. A number of garages may also date to the first quarter of the 20th century, but further research is needed to confirm this. An example of a garage that likely dates to the 1920s is at 344 Main Street, the Charles N.

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Dyer House. Charles Frederick Dyer, son of Charles N. Dyer, moved his family into the house in 1924 and may have constructed the garage at that time.

Modern Period: 1940-1965

Across the nation, the years leading up to and during the Second World War had required great sacrifice of both lives and quality of life, and after the war, most urban and industrial centers experienced an economic decline as returning veterans moved to the newly developing suburbs to raise their families. In isolated rural areas like Plainfield, which sent 36 men to war, the population decline continued until its nadir in the 1950s: 1940-264; 1950-228; 1960-237.

The 1945 report by Plainfield's superintendent of schools summed up the times:

It is a relief that World War II has closed and signs of more normal conditions are returning. Many restrictions have been removed and many scarce items are beginning to appear. As far as materials are concerned, annoying shortages should be eliminated in a relatively short time, but there is an acute shortage of trained teachers and that condition will last for several years. The enrollment in teachers colleges began to drop about five years ago. There have not been enough graduates to fill the normal number of vacancies, and the small number of beginners that formerly started [teaching] in the small towns are going to the cities and large towns that used to demand experienced teachers. It has been necessary to call on many former teachers to return to the schools. Many have returned out of a feeling that it was a patriotic duty.... In the past ten years your school has dropped from a three teacher school with eighty-four pupils to an enrollment of fourteen pupils and one teacher. You have fifteen pupils in high and vocational schools this year, one more than last year.

Furthermore, article 14 in the town warrant for 1947 read: "To see if the town will appropriate a sum of money to encourage a physician to locate within the community of Plainfield or Cummington."

Limited agriculture continued in the historic district throughout the period. For example, Helen S. Van Venschoten purchased the Federal-period Colson House at 27 Broom Street in 1941 and started raising chickens and canning chicken broth as a business. Many residents of Plainfield were employed in this business, which supplied its products to fine restaurants.

In 1941, Edward Bloom, believed to be Plainfield's first Jewish resident, bought the Federal-period Cape at 70 South Central Street. During the next twenty years, it was called "The Maples" and took in summer boarders. In the 1950s, Jeanna and Bill Carver bought the Queen Anne-style Clark Smith House at 2 South Central Street and resided there. Bill Carver had originally come to Plainfield from Boston as a ward of the state to work on a farm and board with a Plainfield family. He and Jeanna leased the ell of their house to the U.S. Postal Service, and Jeanna served as postmistress for 16 years. The town's post office is still in the building.

The 1930s Colonial Revival-style Bryn House at 32 South Central was purchased by Lawrence Anderson in 1957. Anderson ran an antique shop in an outbuilding on the property, which suggests that there were tourists passing through Plainfield or vacationing there.

New construction in the historic district during the Postwar period included approximately seven houses, as well as several garages and barns. At the end of the period the town built Hathaway Hall at 315 Main Street (discussed below).

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

The best example of a house built during the period is the Post War Traditional-style Ranch with attached garage at 258 East Main Street. Built in 1958 by Edward and Pauline Romer, the house is noteworthy as one of the first all-electric homes in Plainfield. Edward Romer was in the construction business, and he collected Allis-Chamber tractors. He served in the U.S. Navy, held several town positions, and was a deacon in the Plainfield Congregational Church. His wife, Pauline, drove a school bus. They had three daughters, Judy, Cindy and Patty.

The House at 343 Main Street was built in 1955 by William Packard as his retirement home. The utilitarian house is representative of the modest houses that continued to characterize Plainfield. William Packard had previously lived at and run a general store and gas pump at 345/347 Main Street. He also built the garage at 343 Main Street, and lived in it with his wife, Ruth, until their new house was finished. Ruth Packard died soon after they moved in to 343 Main Street.

The last building constructed in the historic district during the period of significance was Hathaway Hall at 315 Main Street. Built in 1965 by volunteer firefighters using donated materials, it housed Plainfield's first firetruck. The Plainfield Men's Club, the loyal supporter of the Plainfield Volunteer Fire Department, obtained the firetruck in the late 1950s and needed a more permanent location than the barn in which it was initially housed. The new building was named Hathaway Hall for Fire Chief Norton "Dutch" Hathaway. Hathaway Hall was used as a fire station until 2010, when a new public safety complex was constructed on North Central Street (not in the historic district). At present, Hathaway Hall is leased to a company that installs cables for high-speed internet access.

The Modern Period closed with the formation of the Plainfield Historical Society, which was founded in 1961 to preserve the town's historical records, objects, and antiquities, and to publish an "illustrated history of the town with sketches and maps." The movement to establish a historical society was started by Thomas Packard, a descendant of one of Plainfield's early settlers and the author of several publications about the history of Plainfield that are cited in the Bibliography of the present nomination. The first building proposed to house the society's collection was the ca. 1820 Old Brick Store at 278 East Main Street, which had been owned by the Packard family in the 1890s. As explained in the Plainfield Historical Society Charter: "The site is well located at the crossing of two of our main highways, both dating from early times. The building is of nearly fireproof construction, built by Plainfield bricks and in a fair state of preservation." As it turned out, however, the proposal to use the Old Brick Store for historical society purposes did not come to fruition.

1965 to the present

Over the course of the last fifty years, Plainfield's population reversed its long decline. The statistics show that the population tripled from 1970 to 2010 (1970-287; 1980-425; 1990-571; 2000-589; 2010-648), and is equal to what it was in 1855. The resurgence in population is due to several factors: People who have retired are drawn to the peacefulness and natural beauty of the area with its magnificent sugar maple trees lining the rural roads. Improved telecommunications have enabled professional people to work, via computers, out of their homes or to commute to work only a few days a week. Finally, an increased interest in sustainable living and the demand for local products has drawn people interested in farming to an affordable rural community that retains its agricultural roots and acres of open land. In the historic district, for example, maple syrup was produced at 343 Main Street as recently as 2012. The farmstead at 25 Pleasant Street is in use today, as it was in 1825 when the farmhouse was built; the present owners raise organic livestock and produce. The present owners of 12 North Central Street maintain an orchard and garden, and raise llamas. The Joy-Thatcher property (1 Pleasant Street) has been

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

an active farm for more 200 years. The farm on which the Colson House (27 Broom Street) stands is a bed and breakfast and horse boarding facility offering holistic care for the horses.

Along with the population increase has come new construction that rivals the amount of building that took place when Plainfield Center developed in the first half of the 19th century. Approximately ten new houses as well as a number of barns and other outbuildings were built in the historic district in the past 50 years. In retrospect, the years of economic decline can be viewed as beneficial in that many of the now-historic houses retained more original features than they might have if property owners had been able to fund modern improvements and major renovations. In addition, during the last 50 years, there has been an increasing interest in historic preservation.

While early historic preservation activities in Massachusetts generally date from the nation's Centennial in 1876, the modern historic preservation movement began in the 1960s, initially driven by the demolition that was occurring in cities as a consequence of urban renewal policies and demands for high-speed, limited-access roadways. The Bicentennial in 1976 increased the interest in the nation's past, with a particular focus on architecture. While rural areas like Plainfield were generally later than urban centers to advocate for historic preservation, local interest in the historic preservation movement may have gotten a jump start in the 1960s. At that time Clara E. Hudson, granddaughter of Dr. Samuel Shaw, left the Shaw-Hudson House with its intact doctor's office in a trust, administered by the Greenfield Savings Bank. The Congregational Church of Plainfield was designated as a beneficiary, and the rooms on the east side of the second floor were to be used for historical purposes. Today, the Plainfield Historical Society maintains those rooms, and the Congregational Church uses the rest of the house for social events and historical tours. There is considerable overlap between the historical society and the church, with both contributing to the preservation of the house.

The Shaw-Hudson house and its collections are a rare ensemble that includes Dr Shaw's office as well as objects, art, and furniture, all preserved by Clara Hudson. Cultural-resource consultant William Hosley, who presented a lecture on the house in 2012, called it a time capsule "...that is not a restoration or the product of some curator's idea of the past." According to Hosley, Dr. Shaw's medical office is of national significance because it "is one of the most important survivals from the dawn of the medical profession." Hosley continued, "There are a handful of doctor's offices and apothecary shops preserved as museums in various parts of the county. NONE are earlier, better documented or provide a more authentic and compelling glimpse of the origins of American medicine."

The Gun House at 274 East Main Street, while not open to the public, is owned by the Plainfield Historical Society. In 1979, the Society bought the house from Cliff Stetson, who was born there in 1898. Stetson sold the house subject to a life tenancy, and he lived there until 1983, when at age 85 he moved to a nursing home. An interview with Cliff Stetson is in the 1994 book *Old Friends* by Tracy Kidder. The Gun House contains items from the collection of the Plainfield Historical Society. One of the objects in the collection that stands outside, in front of the house, is a massive stone disk. It has recently been established that it is a frame for wagon wheels made by blacksmith Daniel Gould. It was authenticated by Bruce Davis, who moved the disk from the site of Gould's blacksmith house and mounted it in front of the Gun House.

Historic preservation efforts in Plainfield were initially driven by the Plainfield Historical Society after its formation in the 1960s. A reconnaissance-level survey of Plainfield's historic resources was conducted in 1974 by the Lower Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission (now the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission). Approximately twenty of Plainfield's most historic buildings were photographed, mapped,

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

and dated by eye in a windshield survey. In their final report, the 1974 survey team recommended the establishment of a local historical commission and the creation of a Plainfield Center National Register District. The Plainfield Historical Commission was established in 1987 with the following Commissioners: Arvilla Dyer, Tom Holder, Peri Kelly, Peter Romer, and Doreen Waryjasz.

In 2008, the Plainfield Historical Society and the Plainfield Historical Commission collaborated to update the 1974 forms and prepare additional inventory forms. After bringing its inventory up to date, the PHC turned its attention to listing properties in the National Register of Historic Places. Initially, they focused on the Shaw-Hudson House for individual listing. While the house clearly met the criteria for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places, it stood amongst a number of historically significant buildings with architectural integrity that, in the opinion of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, met the National Register criteria. As a result, the Plainfield Historical Commission commenced work on the Plainfield Center Historic District nomination, which is the town's first listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

While listing in the National Register of Historic Places will enable municipal and institutional properties to qualify for historic preservation grants to help preserve their buildings, the overarching purpose of National Register listing is honorary, not regulatory. National Register listing is intended to encourage historic preservation by building community pride and raising awareness of the historical and architectural significance of the collection of properties in the Plainfield Center Historic District. Among the preservation challenges going forward will be the retention of the modest houses and open spaces that characterize the historic district.

[End section 8]

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

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Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

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Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository: Plainfield Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): See district data sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 729.6 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.521550 | Longitude: -72.914406 |
| 2. Latitude: 42.518256 | Longitude: -72.907189 |
| 3. Latitude: 42.513070 | Longitude: -72.898353 |
| 4. Latitude: 42.503277 | Longitude: -72.888461 |
| 5. Latitude: 42.501094 | Longitude: -72.906539 |
| 6. Latitude: 42.509802 | Longitude: -72.918813 |
| 7. Latitude: 42.515164 | Longitude: -72.922697 |

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 18	Easting: 671310	Northing: 4709794
2. Zone: 18	Easting: 671912	Northing: 4709443
3. Zone: 18	Easting: 672652	Northing: 4708884
4. Zone: 18	Easting: 673491	Northing: 4707817
5. Zone: 18	Easting: 672012	Northing: 4707538
6. Zone: 18	Easting: 670980	Northing: 4708480
7. Zone: 18	Easting: 670646	Northing: 4709068

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Plainfield Center Historic District extends in an east-west direction along Main Street, and in a north-south direction along Union and Central streets, which converge at the north end of the district at the Hilltop Cemetery. The Main Street leg of the district is approximately one-half mile long; the Central Street leg approximately 1½ miles long, and the Union Street leg approximately three-quarters of a mile long. Pleasant Street, Broom Street, and Church Lane are shorter streets or segments that intersect the major roadways.

The district boundaries are outlined on the Plainfield Center Historic District map, which consolidates the parcels that are outlined on Plainfield Assessors maps 15A, 15B, 15C, 15D, 21, 21A, 21B, 22, and 28. The boundary follows the lot lines of all parcels listed on the attached datasheet with the exception of a line of convenience through parcel 15D-17 (258 Main Street) to include the house, which straddles lots 15D-16 and 15D-17, and a land buffer, but not the majority of the 15-acre field that extends east from the house.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Emanating from the core of the district along Main Street where the town's civic and institutional buildings are located, the district boundaries have been drawn to include the largest concentration of buildings, objects, structures, and sites that retain integrity and fall within the district's period of significance (ca. 1783-1965). Contributing resources within the boundary include historic farmsteads, three cemeteries, and numerous houses dating from the late 18th to the mid 20th centuries. The boundary of the district was drawn to exclude expansive vacant parcels or parcels containing noncontributing resources. On the north side of East Main Street at the east end of the district, a line of convenience has been drawn thru parcel 15D-17 to include the house (258 Main Street) that straddles the 15D-16/15D-17 property line.

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Judith Bryan Williams, Plainfield Historical Commission, with Karen L. Davis and Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director
organization: Massachusetts Historical Commission
street & number: 220 Morrissey Blvd.
city or town: Boston state: MA zip code: 02125
e-mail: _____
telephone: 617-727-8470
date: January 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Plainfield Center Historic District

City or Vicinity:

County: Hampshire

State: MA

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

Photographer: Dario Coletta

Date Photographed: 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. 27 Broom Street, from street looking north
2. 70 South Central Street, from street west
3. 70 South Central Street barn
4. 278 East Main Street, from street north
5. 9 Union Street, from street north
6. 296 Main Street, from street northeast
7. 286 Main Street, from street northeast
8. 330 Main Street, from street north
9. 338 Main Street, from street north
10. 356 West Main Street, from street northwest
11. 348 Main Street, from street north
12. 274 East Main Street, from street north
13. 274 East Main Street (stone disk)
14. 2 South Central Street, from street northwest
15. 344 Main Street, from street northeast
16. 198 South Central Street
17. 32 South Central Street
18. 12 North Central Street
19. 304-312 Main Street, northeast
20. 258 East Main Street
21. 315 East Main Street
22. Old Burying Ground
23. Hilltop Cemetery
24. 286 Main Street, interior of former doctor's office

Plainfield Center Historic District
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County and State

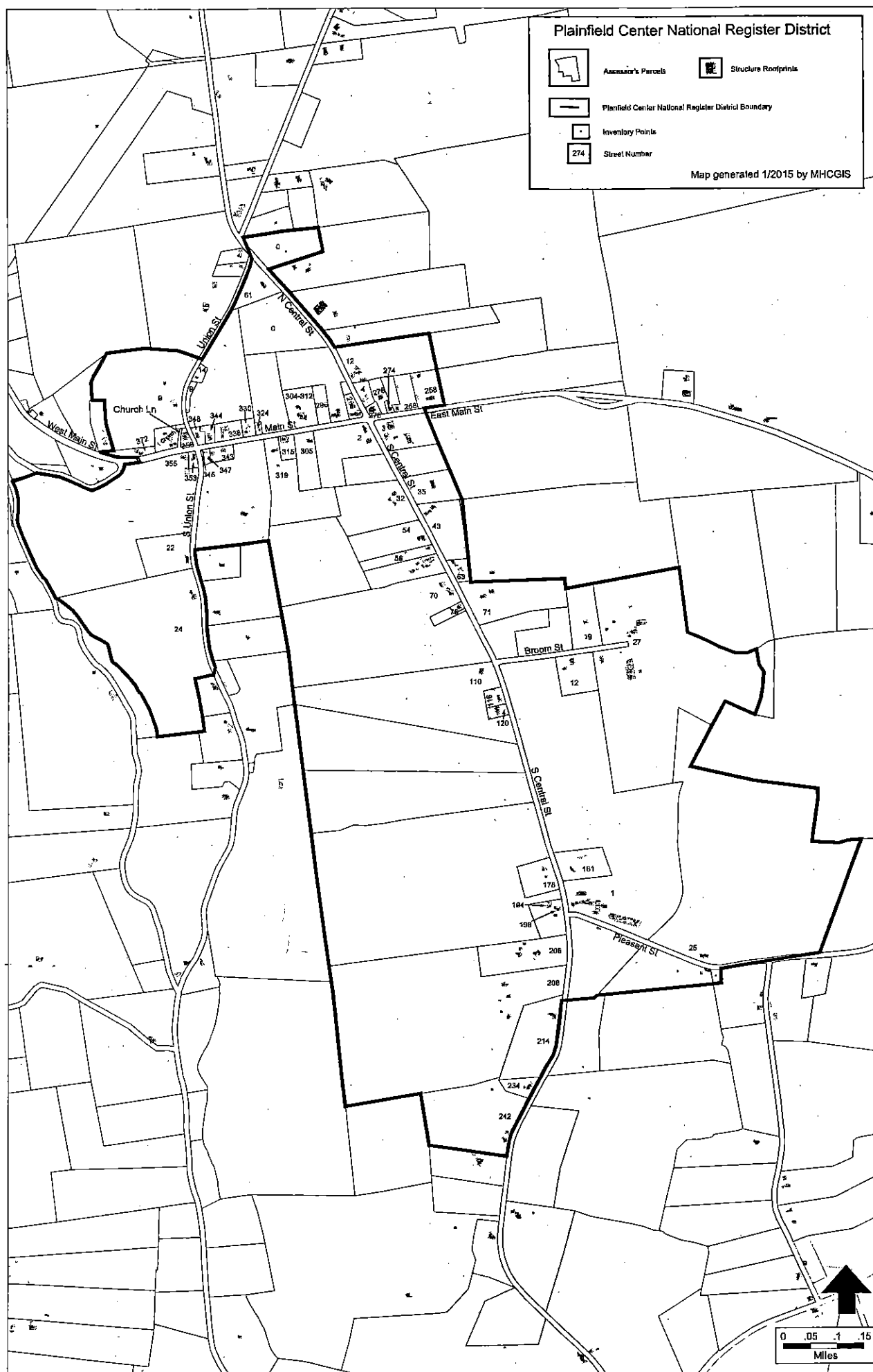
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

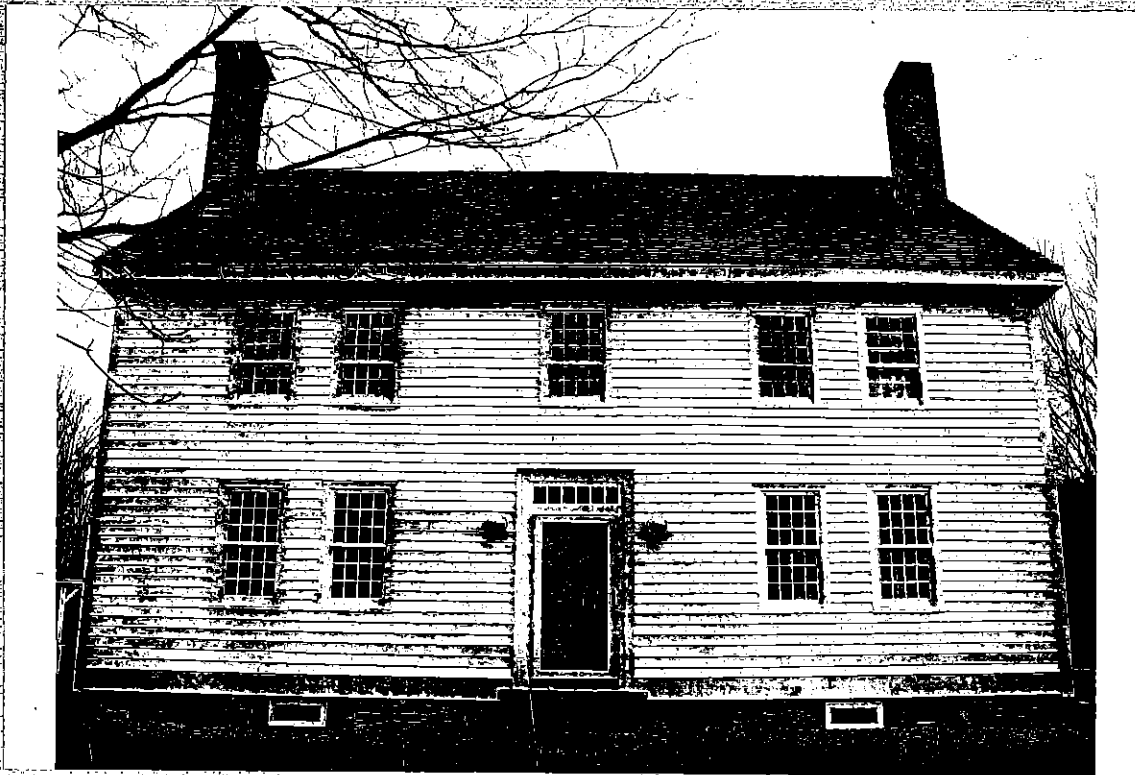
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



PLAINFIELD CENTER HD
(top) Beals-Shaw House
(bottom) Old Brick Store





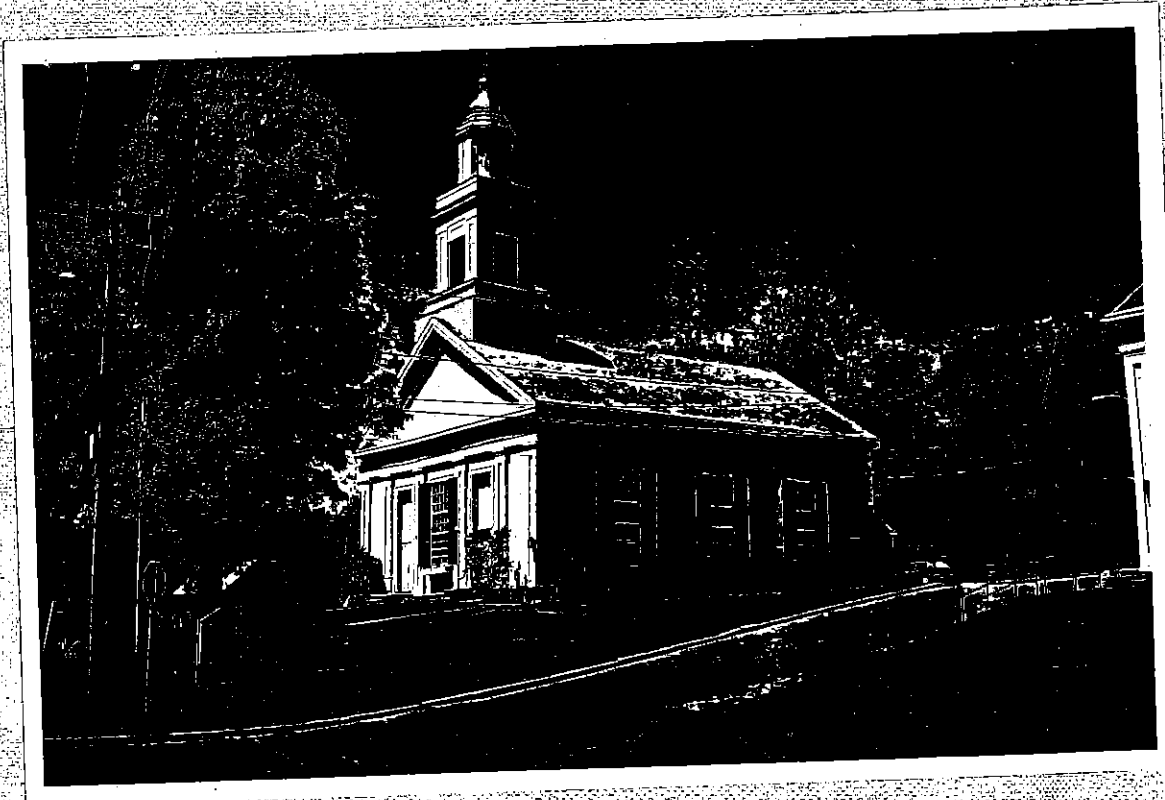


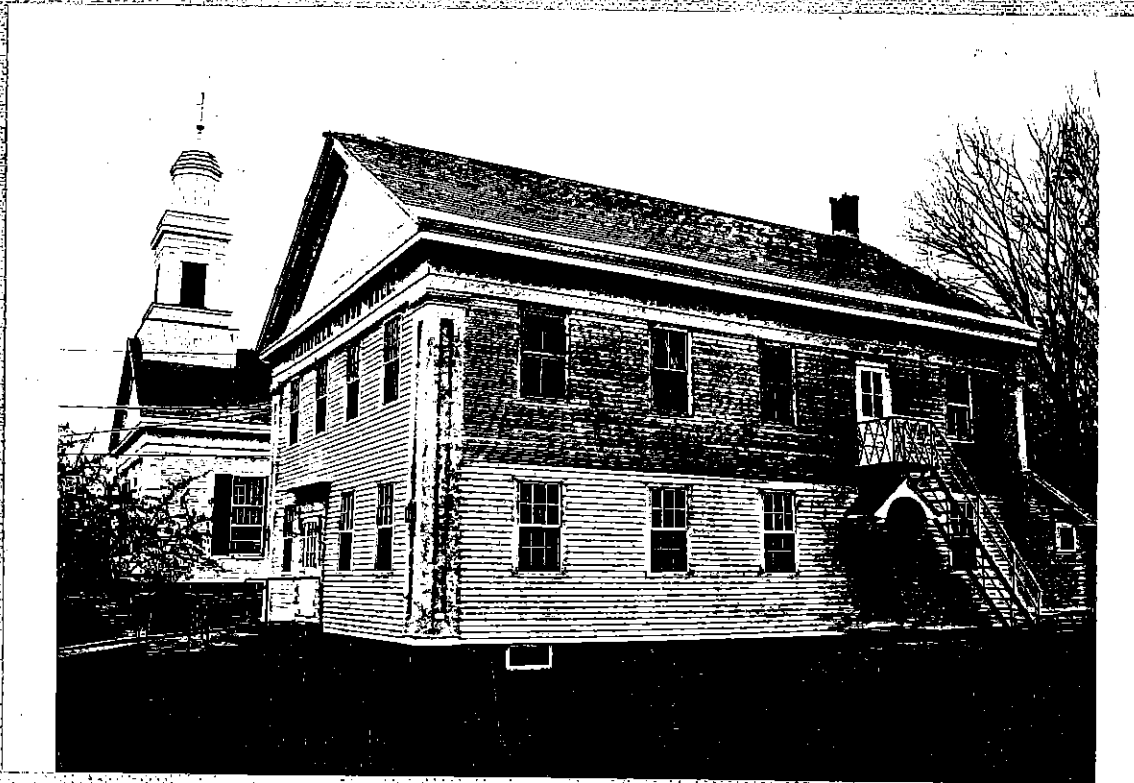
PLAINFIELD CENTER HD
(top) Streeter Inn
(bottom) Shaw-Hudson House





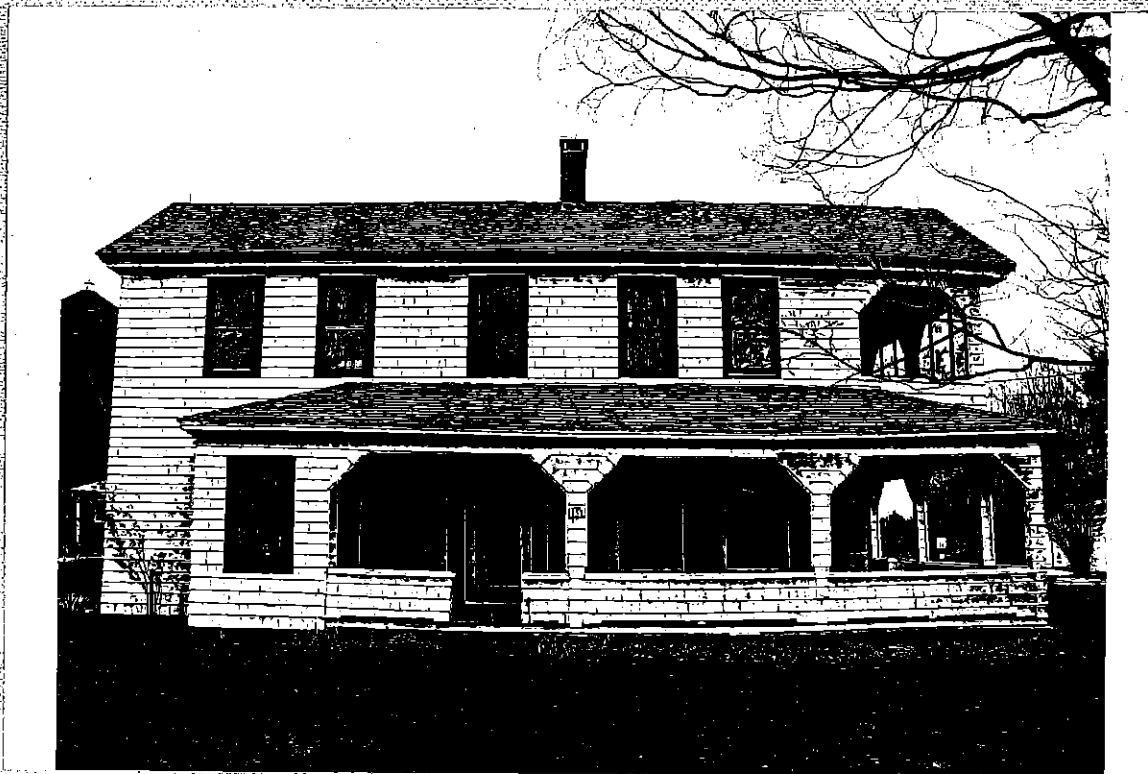
PLAINFIELD CENTER HD
(top) Reuben Remington House
(bottom) Congregational Church





PLAINFIELD CENTER HD
(top) Town Hall, church
(bottom) Bryn House





PLAINFIELD CENTER HD
 (top) Jacob Porter House
 (bottom) Library, town offices





PLAINFIELD CENTER HD
(top) Hathaway Hall
(bottom) Hilltop Cemetery



