

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PHO 695 491

FOR NPS USE ONLY
JAN 24 1979
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED MAY 4 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Town Farms Inn

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Spring Street at River Road

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Middletown

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF

Second - Christopher J. Dodd

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

COUNTY

Middlesex

CODE

7

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Town Farms Inn, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

Silver Street

CITY, TOWN

Middletown

STATE

CT 06457

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Middletown Land Records, Municipal Building

STREET & NUMBER

De Koven Drive

CITY, TOWN

Middletown

STATE

CT 06457

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1978

— FEDERAL STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT 06106

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT DETERIORATED
 GOOD RUINS
 FAIR UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Town Farms Inn is a restaurant occupying premises that for almost 100 years from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries served as the Middletown, Connecticut, town farm. The site, now a little more than four acres, is located on the Connecticut River two miles southeast of the center of the city of Middletown in a rural setting of rolling fields. The brick buildings, dating from the 1830s and 1890s, are on the southwest corner of River Road and Spring Street, separated from the river only by the road and the Valley Line railroad track. There are no nearby neighbors.

The site is located on a bend in the Connecticut River below Middletown where the river flows to the east before resuming its southerly course toward Long Island Sound. Thus, the river and the railway track and the River Road that parallel it are north of the Town Farms site. The axis of the buildings is north-south, perpendicular to the river, and the buildings face eastward on Spring Street. The land across Spring Street to the east and the land to the south of Town Farms is owned by the State of Connecticut, part of the more than 1,000 acres devoted to the Connecticut Valley Hospital and other state uses. With the river to the north and the large state holding to the east and south, the town farm site retains its historical rural setting.

The two principal buildings of Town Farms Inn are connected brick structures, facing Spring Street. The northerly building is the older of the two, built in the late 1830s. It is a two-and-a-half story, five-bay, Federal style house with two chimneys in each end wall. The windows, with brownstone sills and splayed brownstone lintels, have been restored to twelve-over-twelve sash. The foundations are brownstone as well, the visible portions dressed with a hammer finish.

The chief decorative elements of the house are the row of modillion blocks under the roof cornice and the front doorway. The central entrance has a segmental arch built of brick. This arch is flush with, and is part of, the brick wall of the house, as contrasted with doorway arrangements that often have a projecting elements or applied moldings. Over the door (which is not original) is a leaded fanlight. There is no hood or porch. It is a simple but effective Federal entrance.

The plan of the house is almost square, 36 feet wide and 34 feet deep, giving about 2,500 square feet of space on the two principal floors. While the ground floor is now a single, open room in the restaurant, the position of the end chimneys and the central door suggest a central hall, four-room layout on each floor, altogether a large and comfortable country home. There is now a 24 by 46-foot ell, of a more recent date, to the rear at the northwest corner, but there are indications that a rear ell of smaller size was in place by mid-19th century.

The second of the two brick buildings, connected to the first at its southern end and like it facing Spring Street, is larger and was built in 1891. It is 52 feet wide by 34 feet deep, with full three stories and mansard roof, on brownstone foundations similar to the foundations of the house. The facade has six bays of two-over-two windows with rectangular brownstone lintels and sills. The third bay from the south is the front doorway. It is a near duplicate to the doorway of the first house, with an elliptical arch of brick, and leaded fanlight.

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Middletown, Connecticut

CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

The hip roof dormers and slate shingles of the mansard are in good condition. The mansard roof as a whole is unrelated to the Federal style of the rest of the building. Below the dormers the eaves are supported by simple brackets extending from a broad fascia. At the juncture of the two buildings the eaves of the mansard extend out over the top of the cornice of the earlier building, while the bottom of the mansard fascia lines up perfectly with the soffit of the earlier cornice.

A further addition 17 feet deep and 56 feet wide, probably built in the 20th century, runs across the back of the 1890s building and connects with the ell at the rear of the 1830s house.

There is a long brick outbuilding in the back yard, one story high with pitched roof. It was probably used for storage, although the eastern end, separated from the rest of the building by an interior brick wall, is thought to have been used as a smoke house and then as a smithy. A fire pit still in place on the floor supports this view. Small paned wooden sash windows throughout the building appear to have been added at a later date and suggest that at one time the building may have been used as living quarters.

In recent months the premises have undergone considerable rehabilitation. On the exterior of the 1830s buildings the work has been confined to cleaning and restoration of original elements. Several coats of paint that covered all the brick and brownstone were removed by sandblasting. In the north side wall several windows have been introduced for the sake of improved lighting.

The interior of the combined buildings was once fitted out with 14 rooms on the first floor, 29 on the second, and three on the third. During the recent rehabilitation several partitions on the ground floor were removed to create open areas for the restaurant. A few interior features of the ground floor interior of the larger building remain in place, including molded fireplace surrounds and the front stairway with its balustrade. The ell to the rear of the 1830s building had a number of small cubicles on the second floor. This entire second floor has been removed to create a two-story dining room. The second floor of the 1830s building was not altered during the recent program, but there is some question as to whether the several rooms there are in the original configuration. The second and third floors of the mansard roof section, however, appear to be original with modest size rooms on the third floor and two large spaces on the third. The third floor is finished with narrow beaded boards typical of the period which, together with the presence of what appear to be early radiators, suggest that this space was intended for use from the time the building was constructed.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1839, c. 1853 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The elements that combine to create the significance of the Town Farms Inn include the fine 1830s brick Federal house exterior, the large Victorian addition, and the fact that the premises functioned for a century as a social agency for the poor. The surrounding unchanged river and rural environment gives an excellent sense of the ambience of the town farm as it existed 100 years ago.

Middletown addressed the problem of providing for its less fortunate citizens as early as 1814, when an almshouse was built near the center of town on Warwick Street, where it still stands. A town farm that provided both employment and food for the indigent was a common expedient in 19th century American cities. Hartford, for example, operated a town farm for most of the 19th century on the land which is now the Sigourney Square National Register District. Middletown added a town farm, now Town Farms Inn, to its social agencies in 1853 by buying property not far out of town on the bend in the Connecticut River from Thomas Griswold Mather. The in-town facility was discontinued at that time.

The Mather family had owned land in this part of Middletown, known as the South Farms section, since early in the 19th century. Thomas Mather (1768-1849), who lived in a house on the green in town, acquired the first acreage by will from his first wife, Elizabeth Hubbard, who died in 1812. She had inherited it in 1806 from her father, Elijah Hubbard, who was a large land owner. Her half-brother, Samuel D. Hubbard, at the same time inherited the land on Main Street near the green where the Mathers lived, and built there the Mansion House Block.

Thomas Griswold Mather (1808-c. 1890), son of Thomas Mather, assembled additional parcels in the area in December of 1835 (MLR 61/476) and January of 1836 (MLR 61/480). He had married his first cousin, Jane Ann Mather, in 1834 and the presumption is that he bought the land and then built the house in the course of establishing his family. The records relating to the land he purchased and to the land he inherited from his father speak of land only, no buildings. This fact, combined with the presence of the date 1839 carved in a flagstone in the front walk, tends to confirm that the house was built in the late 1830s. Such a date is consistent with the style, plan, and building materials of the structure.

After his wife died, Thomas Griswold Mather sold the premises to the Town of Middletown in 1853 (MLR 86/38), having resided there less than 20 years. The Hubbard and Mather families were active and important in the development of Middletown in the early 19th century. The effort of Thomas Griswold Mather to establish himself on the farm with his large and elegant house provides an historic association between the town farm site and the two prominent, early 19th century Middletown families.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of Middlesex County, Connecticut, New York: J.B. Beers and Co., 1884.

Middletown Land Records.

(Continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4.3

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 69,831,0 4,610,321,0 B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING ZONE EASTING NORTHING
 C D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is lot 6, map 41, block 24-34 as described in the Middletown Land Records, volume 461, page 10.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

DATE

June 29, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

33 Sunrise Hill Drive

TELEPHONE

203 521-2518

CITY OR TOWN

West Hartford

STATE

CT 06107

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE

Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

January 18, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

5/4/79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

Bill Belovich

DATE

May 3, 1979

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

The History of Middlesex County, Conn., published by J. B. Beers & Co. of New York in 1884, gives an account of the town farm on page 76, here quoted in full. "The town farm was purchased in 1853. This consists of 35 acres in the home farm, and a wood lot of 16 acres. On the farm is a large brick dwelling house, with barns, etc., beautifully situated on the south side of a bend in the Connecticut River, and it adjoins the farm of the Connecticut Hospital for the Insane. The premises are under the superintendence of Frederic Cooley, who has made valuable improvements on the property. The average cost of maintaining the farm amounts to about \$2,000 annually." There is a discrepancy between the History, which refers to the 16 acres of woodlot as part of the 51 acres, and the land records, which identify the woodlot as additional to the 51 acres.

In his definitive book, The Discovery of the Asylum, David J. Rothman describes 19th century almshouses in general. His observations make interesting comparisons with the Reports of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Middletown, which are available from the year 1876 on. Some of Rothman's general remarks are specifically borne out at Middletown's Town Farm, and some are not. Rothman's principal theme (pp. 184-199) is that the 19th century brought a policy of caring for deviants in penitentiaries, insane asylums, and almshouses, as contrasted with the 18th century practice of supporting at least the mentally ill and the poor in their homes. Incarceration was considered basic to the desired norms of order, regularity, industry, and temperance. Moreover, according to Rothman, the average almshouse was poorly administered with inmates of mixed ages, sexes, health conditions, and moral outlook housed in crowded and nauseous quarters. And, he observes, little work was performed.

Incarceration did occur in Middletown, and whether by coincidence or not, the Insane Asylum and the Town Farm were located near one another. But the almshouse was not the total program for support of the poor in Middletown. The 1876 report of the selectmen shows expenditures of \$2,123 to support the Town Farm and \$4,760 for "outdoor poor," the classification for those not in the institution. (Apparently, the 1814 almshouse in the center of town had been terminated with the 1853 move to the country. An 1874 map shows the 1814 building, but it is not identified as an almshouse. Also the selectmen's reports refer only to the Town Farm.) The sum of the costs of the two types of poor support in 1876 came to \$6,800, out of a total town budget of \$39,000. In 1884 the discrepancy was even wider, with the figure for the Town Farm at \$2,580 and the figure for outdoor poor at \$8,914.

Evidence that work was indeed performed at the Middletown Town Farm is given by the 1883 report. that lists the value of the farm produce. But that was not all. "Besides the work on the farm," the report reads, "the inmates and teams have done

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a large amount of work on highway, in drawing stone and working on roads."

The 1887 report is the first to note the size of the inmate population, month by month. It averaged 22 throughout the year.

The 1889 report described living conditions at the Town Farm in terms consistent with Rothman's general observations. In addition to being of interest as documentation of unsatisfactory living quarters, the description is also of interest because it makes clear that in 1889 the premises consisted of only the original house and rear ell. The three-story mansard roof section had not yet been built.

The 1889 report concludes with the statement that the State Board of Charities had already found the accommodations to be inadequate, and that, "it can easily be seen that something should be done." Something was done. The 1891 report notes that "The (Town Farm) property has been much improved by the addition of the new building, at a cost of \$4,310." This statement fixes the date of construction of the three-story mansard roof section at 1890/1891. Immediately, speculation arises as to whether a conscious effort was made approximately to duplicate in the new building the doorway of the older building. Whatever the motivation, the brick arch doorway with leaded fanlight in the 1891 section probably is one of the latest examples of its type to be found. The mansard roof, as well, is somewhat surprising, as few were being built as late as 1891. These elements take on special interest when it is realized at what late date they were constructed.

The selectmen took some pride in what they had done. The 1893 report records that steam heat had been introduced, and bath tubs placed in the house. "Now your Almshouse will compare favorably with similar institutions in the State, and is a credit to the Town." The 1893 inventory fills three pages, giving a good indication of the scope of the operation.

The City of Middletown continued to own the property until after World War II when it was sold (MLR 214/148, April 5, 1946), town farms by that time having generally been superseded by other social agencies. The new owners established a restaurant here and a restaurant has continued through changes of ownership to the present time.

The farm-like appearance of the premises persists, although recent rehabilitation has probably brought a higher level of maintenance and housekeeping than may have prevailed during the 19th century. The exterior appearance of the buildings and of the site portray a social agency, once common in many cities throughout New England, that ceased to exist some decades ago. This aspect of social history can be readily observed at Town Farms Inn. The handsome 1830s Federal brick house especially enhances the site.

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The Warwick Street building that was constructed as the Almshouse in 1814 is still standing. It is a three and a half-story, brick, 40 x 60 foot Federal style structure. An 1825 likeness shows a segmental arch over the entrance door in a central pavilion and gable roof with cupola. After the 1853 purchase of the Town Farm, this building passed into the hands of a series of owners who used it as a factory for manufacturing various metal products, and since the 1930s it has been used as business offices.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971.

Reports of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Middletown, 1876- (at Connecticut State Library).

Elizabeth Loomis, Alms House Historic Resources Inventory Form (at Greater Middletown Preservation Trust).

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

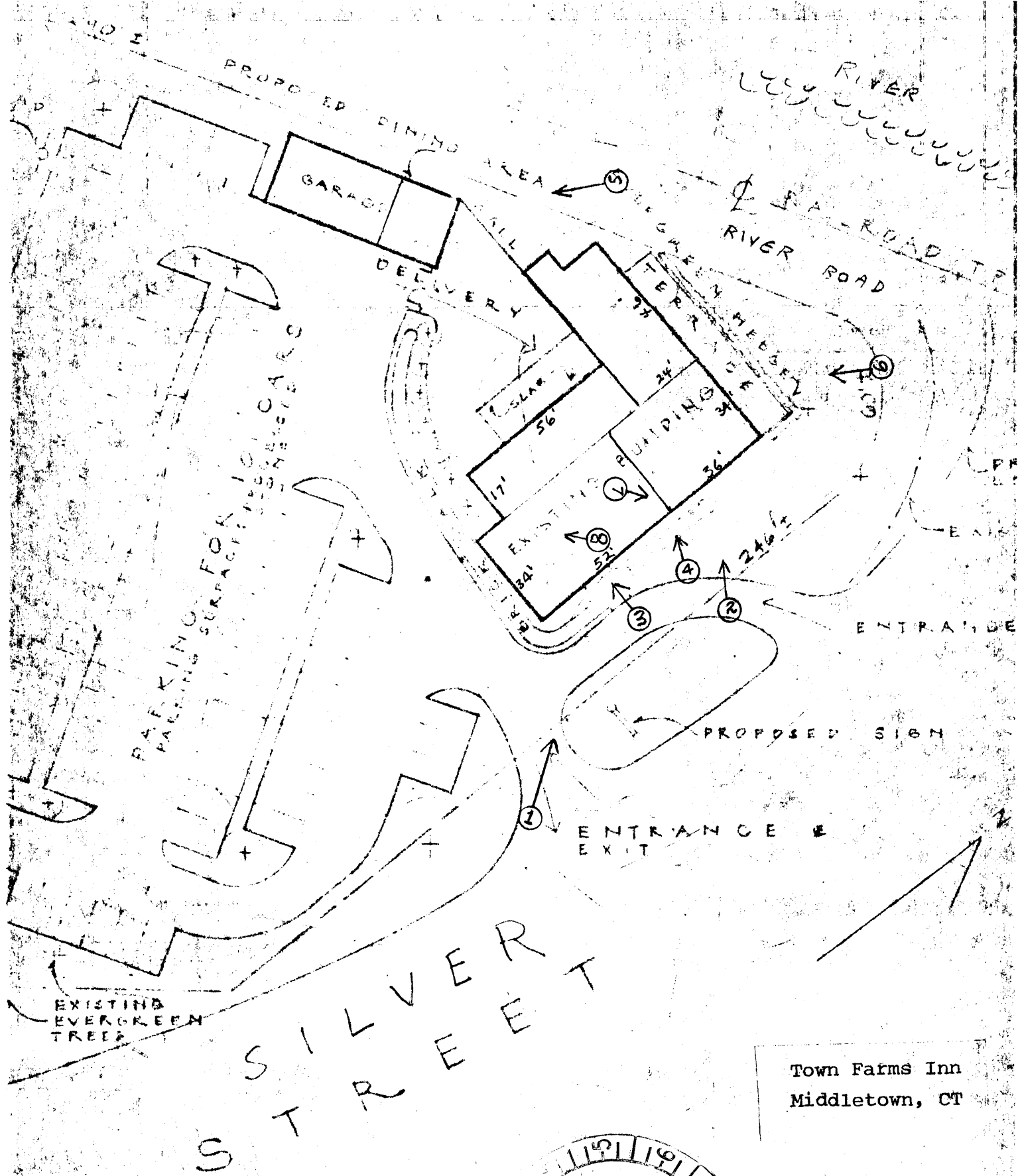
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CONTINUATION SHEET Addendum ITEM NUMBER PAGE 1

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About one-quarter of the 4.3-acre site, something over one acre, is devoted to the buildings themselves and a parking lot. About two acres are taken up with a low-lying area that is wetlands. The final acre is given over to grass and a kitchen garden that grows produce for the restaurant. Local tradition has it that decades ago this same plot was used as a kitchen garden for the almshouse.



Town Farms Inn
Middletown, CT

