

Archaeology at the Sanford Mill Site in Newtown
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See photos below

Louis Berger, under contract to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, recently completed an archaeological survey and documentation of the Sanford Mill Site (Site 97-75) in Newtown, CT.* The site was discovered while preparing for a project that will realign Edmond Road. The Sanford Mill Site is located along Tom (previously known as Foundry Pond) Brook. The complex includes a stone dam (Photo 1), a mill race along the north bank of the brook, two building foundations (Photo 2), and a well.

Archival research revealed the presence of a mill at this site since the early 19th century. Built and operated by the Sanford family in the 1850s and 1860s as a hat making business, the mill was later leased to Hon & Mitchell, a Boston-based wool hat manufacturer, who operated the factory until it was destroyed by fire in 1867. Following the destruction of the factory, the mill pond was used for commercial ice harvesting into the early 20th century. A series of photographs from 1904 show workers harvesting and storing ice on Foundry Pond. In the background is a large barn or "ice house" adjacent to the pond (Photo 3). By the 1950s, the site was abandoned and the barn demolished. Until the recent project involving Edmond Road, it was thought that the site was lost to the construction of Route 6 in the 1950s.

Because of the Mill's association with Newtown's hatmaking industry, the Sanford Mill Site is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Since road construction could not avoid the site, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and FHWA determined that the project would have an unavoidable adverse impact on an historic property. To mitigate this adverse impact, SHPO asked that the site be photo documented and the history of the mill and site information be made available to the public through a report and articles (Archaeological Society of Connecticut Newsletter, Society for Industrial Archaeology Newsletter, and the Friends of the Office of State Archaeology Newsletter). Mitigation for transportation projects can provide us with historical insights into places that might not otherwise be subject to investigation. Although the Sanford Mill Site will be lost, this site documentation and associated research preserves its memory while allowing us to improve our state's roads for today's travelers.

The full report, *Phase I Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey and Phase II Intensive Survey and Site Documentation, Proposed Relocation of Edmond Road and Improvements to Route 6, Newtown, Fairfield County Connecticut* by Wesley Willoughby, is available upon request to mandy.ranslow@ct.gov.

Photo 1: Sanford Mill Dam (Louis Berger)

Photo 2: Structure 1, Mill Building (Louis Berger)

Photo 3: Cutting Ice on Foundry Pond, 1904 (Dan Cruson)







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