

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

M. Swift & Sons Company

Name of Property

Hartford County, CT

County and State

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 13000527

Property Name: M. Swift & Sons Company

County: Hartford County

State: CT

Multiple Name:

=====
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

7/24/13
Date of Action

=====
Amended Item in Nomination

This SLR is issued to make the following technical corrections:

Section 1

The historic name on the nomination is the "M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District". The nomination is for an individual listing of buildings, not an historic district (and is correctly marked in Section 5). Historic District should be removed from the name of the property.

Section 8

Under Areas of Significance, "Commerce" and "Social History" should be removed the justification for the property is only for Architecture and Industry.

Under Significant Dates, "2005" should be removed as the period of significance ends in 1948.

The State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

=====
Distribution

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



527

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District

Other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 10 and 60 Love Lane (See continuation sheet) not for publication

city of town Hartford vicinity

State Connecticut code CT county Hartford code 003 zip code 06112

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

Stacy Vairo
Signature of certifying official/

6/3/13
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

CT SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

for [Signature]

7/27/13

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- Ownership options: private, public - Local, public - State, public - Federal, private

- Category options: building(s), district, site, structure, building(s), object

Table with columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, Total. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, Objects, buildings, Total.

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Industry: Manufacturing Facility

Vacant/Not In Use

Domestic: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

No Style: Vernacular

foundation: Brick, Stone, Concrete

Early 20th Century American Movements: Commercial

walls: Wood, Brick

Style - Commercial Vernacular

roof: Asphalt

20th Century Revival: Colonial Revival

other:

M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District

Name of Property

Hartford, CT

County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

See continuation sheet(s).

Narrative Description

See continuation sheet(s).

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Commerce
- Industry
- Social History

Period of Significance

c. 1887-1948

Significant Dates

c. 1887, c. 1895, c. 1900, 1903, 1914, 1929, 1941, 1947, 1948, 2005.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

See continuation sheet(s)

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- 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.

Period of Significance (justification)

See continuation sheet(s).

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

See continuation sheet(s).

M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District
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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

See continuation sheet(s).

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

See continuation sheet(s).

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

See continuation sheet(s).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

See continuation sheet(s).

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.6
(do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Decimal Degree References found on continuation sheet.

A. _____
Zone Easting Northing

C. _____
Zone Easting Northing

B. _____
Zone Easting Northing

D. _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

See continuation sheet(s).

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

See continuation sheet(s).

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Lucas A. Karmazinas, Consultantorganization FuturePast Preservationdate 1/21/2013street & number 940 West Boulevardtelephone 860-429-7982city or town Hartfordstate CTzip code 06105e-mail FuturePastPreservation@gmail.com**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District**City or Vicinity:** Hartford**County:** Hartford**State:** Connecticut**Photographer:** Lucas A. Karmazinas**Date Photographed:** 4/28/2013**Description of Photograph(s) and number:** See continuation sheet(s).**1 of 18.**

North (front) and west (side) elevations of original workshop (c. 1890) from Love Lane.
Camera facing southwest.

2 of 18.

West (side) elevation of original workshop (c. 1890) from Love Lane.
Camera facing east.

3 of 18.

West (side) elevation of c. 1900 addition to original workshop from Love Lane.
Camera facing east.

4 of 18.

West (side) elevation of factory showing c.1900 and 1903 additions from Love Lane.
Camera facing northeast.

5 of 18.

South (front) elevation of factory from Love Lane, showing 1929 block with side ell.
Camera facing north.

6 of 18.

South (front) and west (side) elevations of factory from Love Lane, showing 1929 block with side ell.
Camera facing northeast.

7 of 18.

East (side) elevation of factory from Garden Street, showing 1929, 1947, and 1948 additions.
Camera facing northwest.

8 of 18.

West (side) elevation of factory from Love Lane, showing primary entry in 1929 block.
Camera facing east.

9 of 18.

West (side) elevation of factory from Love Lane, showing detail of entry to 1929 block.
Camera facing east.

10 of 18.

South (front) elevation of Swift homestead (c. 1887) from Love Lane.
Camera facing north.

11 of 18.

West (side) elevation of Swift homestead (c. 1887) from Love Lane.
Camera facing east.

12 of 18.

North (rear) and east (side) elevations of Swift homestead (c. 1887) from interior of property.
Camera facing southwest.

13 of 18.

West (front) and north (side) elevations of 1914 Swift house from Love Lane.
Camera facing southeast.

14 of 18.

West (front) and south (side) elevations of 1914 Swift house from Love Lane.
Camera facing northeast.

15 of 18.

East (rear) and south (side) elevations of 1914 Swift house from interior of property.
Camera facing northwest.

16 of 18.

West (front) elevations of c. 1914 garage from Love Lane.
Camera facing east.

17 of 18.

West (front) and south (side) elevations of 1941 garage from Love Lane.
Camera facing northeast.

18 of 18.

South (front) and north (side) elevations of c. 1960 and c. 1970 storage buildings from Love Lane.
Camera facing northeast.

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.).

M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District

Name of Property

Hartford, CT

County and State

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Architectural Description: M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District

Interrelationship of Buildings and Surroundings:

The M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District is located in the Northeast neighborhood of Hartford, Connecticut. The district is situated in the north-central section of the city; approximately 1.75 miles east of the West Hartford line, 1.3 miles west of Interstate-91, 1.75 miles west of the Connecticut River, and 1.2 miles south of the municipal boundary with Bloomfield. The district is located approximately one block north and west of the Capen-Clark National Register Historic District (1982), and two blocks east of the Upper Albany National Register Historic District.¹ The proposed district includes all but one of the structures located within a triangular block bounded by Love Lane to the west, Garden Street to the east, and extending south-to-north from Westland Street to a boundary running roughly from Love Lane's intersection with Waverly Street, east to Garden Street. Five historically-significant industrial and residential structures are found in the district, with the largest portion of the aforementioned 2.6-acre block occupied by a two-story brick factory complex built in six stages between c.1900 and 1948. The remainder of the district's primary contributing resources include two wooden residential structures dating to c.1887 and 1914. A one-story, two-bay, frame garage, built in 1914; and a one-story, four-bay, brick garage, built in 1941, make up the remainder of the district's contributing buildings. A one-story brick and metal-frame storage building likely built during the mid 1960s is considered non-contributing to the historic district.

Although located in a largely residential neighborhood, the industrial character of the M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District does not overwhelm its domestic surroundings. On the contrary, its location at the five-point convergence of Love Lane, Westland Street, and Garden Street, makes it an important feature and central focus point of the area. Whether industrial or residential, all of the buildings within the district relate directly to the conception and development of the M. Swift & Sons Company. Due to the length of their uninterrupted industrial use and continuous family ownership and operation, the structures retain their physical and historical integrity, thus contributing greatly to the neighborhood's character. The inclusion of two residential structures within the district reflects the connection between the Swift family and the industrial entity that bears their name as well as emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between the factory and the neighborhood.

Notable Features of District:

The factory complex at 10 Love Lane consists of five blocks built in six stages (see site plan). The first and oldest block is a two-story wood and brick structure located at the center of the district. Built c. 1895 it was raised from its original one-story height around 1900 (Photograph 1). Measuring 32' x 51', the rectangular building has a square-cut stone foundation, load-bearing red-brick masonry walls on the first story, wood framing on the second-story, and a front-facing gable roof above. The west (front) elevation has a wood-paneled entry door with large glass light and a segmental brick relief arch above. A two-over-two double-hung window is located on each side of the entry (Photograph 2). This window arrangement is mimicked on the second story where the original

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doorway has been framed over and there is a single two-over-two double-hung window in the gable end. Fenestration on the north (side) elevation includes seven two-over-two double-hung windows on the first story and nine on the second.

The factory's second-oldest block is a c.1900 two-story addition located directly to the south of the original block. It is connected to the c. 1895 block by a short one-story brick corridor and measures 30' x 40' overall. The addition has a square-cut stone block foundation, load-bearing red brick masonry walls, wood and steel structural support members, and a flat roof finished with asphalt and slag (Photograph 3). The block has five bays on its west (side) elevation and fenestration consists of two-over-two double-hung sash with brownstone sills and segmented brick relief arches above.

A third block dates to 1903 and was built as an expansion to the south side of the c.1900 building. The 24' x 118' two-story addition replicates many of the features of the previous block, including its stone foundation, load-bearing red brick masonry walls, wood and steel structural support members, and two-over-two double-hung windows with brownstone sills and segmented brick relief arches above (Photograph 4). Rather than a flat roof, however, the 1903 block has a gable roof with asphalt shingles.

The factory's third addition is a two-story rectangular block measuring 55' x 178'. It has a 24' x 55' ell at the center of its west (side) elevation and was erected adjacent to the south elevation of the 1903 block in 1929 (Photographs 5 and 6). Features of the block include a reinforced concrete foundation; brick-pier exterior walls; wood and steel structural support members; rectangular window bays with brick spandrel panels, concrete lintels, and small-pane steel sash with awning window openings; and a flat roof. Three bays span the south (front) elevation of the main block while eleven bays span the east (side) elevation (Photograph 7). The west (side) elevation south of the ell consists of five irregularly spaced bays (Photograph 8). An entryway is located in the center of the west elevation of the main block (Photograph 9). This has paneled double doors, decorative fanlight with sunburst tracery, and a bracketed half-round portico. A stepped brick parapet capped with concrete coping decorates the roofline of both the main block and side ell of the 1929 addition.

The final portion of the factory consists of two rectangular blocks measuring 55' x 137' and 55' x 101', respectively (Photograph 9). These blocks were built adjacent to the north elevation of the 1929 block in 1947 and 1948. The additions replicate construction details from 1929 yet lack roofline parapets. Extending an additional fourteen bays, the 1947 and 1948 blocks terminate near the intersection of Garden and Risley Streets.

In addition to the factory complex, the M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District includes two residential buildings. The first is a two-story wood-frame residence erected c.1887 and situated to the north of the factory's original block (Photographs 10, 11, and 12). Located on the same parcel as the factory, the house at 10 Love Lane has a red-brick masonry foundation, horizontal board siding, side-gabled roof, and two-story cross-gable rear ell connecting the main block to a two-story rear addition. The first story of the front (south) elevation has a partially-enclosed shed-roofed porch with simple balustrade, turned supports, and cross gable with decorative trusses over the entry. Four small, three-over-three double-hung windows span the second-story of the facade. The gable ends of the main block have three six-over-six double-hung sash on the first story and two six-over-six double-hung sash on the second story. A four-pane round-head window is placed in the gable end.

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A two-story rectangular ell extends from the rear of the building. The ell is comprised of two blocks, both of which mimicking the architectural qualities of the main block. These include red-brick masonry foundations, horizontal board siding, gable roofs, and double-hung windows. The latter, however, are two-over-two rather than six-over-six double-hung sash. A shed-roofed entryway is located on the front (south) elevation of the rear ell along the west side of the house.

A second residential building – identified as 60 Love Lane – is located to the north of the c.1887 house (Photographs 13, 14, and 15). The residence is a two-story frame house with ashlar brownstone foundation, wood shingle siding, wide frieze, and projecting hipped roof. Colonial Revival influences are visible in the hip-roofed entry porch with Doric columns and wide denticulated entablature, sidelight-flanked doorway, and second-story Palladian-inspired tripartite window comprised of a center window flanked by diamond-pane sash. There is a pair of three-sided bays along the south (side) elevation of the house, each with three nine-over-one double-hung sash, decorative entablatures, and hipped roofs. Fenestration throughout the remainder of the building consists of a mix of nine-over-one, six-over-one, and one-over-one double-hung sash. There are hipped-roof dormers with nine-over-one double-hung sash on all four elevations. A two-story porch with chamfered square supports on the first story and enclosed block above is located on the east (rear) elevation.

Three outbuildings complete the district's structural inventory. The first is a c.1914 one-story, two-bay frame garage with horizontal-board siding and hipped roof (Photograph 16). A pair of paneled frame double doors with nine-pane windows provide access to the structure. The second structure is a one-story, four-bay brick garage built in 1941 (Photograph 17). The garage has metal roll-up style doors and a shed roof. The third building is a brick and metal-frame storage unit (Photograph 18). Erected as temporary storage c.1960 and c. 1970 it is not considered as contributing to the historical significance of the district.

¹ Barbara Ann Cleary and Merle Kummer, Consultants, Connecticut Historical Commission. National Register Nomination for "Capen-Clark Historic District, Hartford, CT," April 27, 1982; Bruce Clouette and Matthew Roth, Consultants, Connecticut Historical Commission. National Register Nomination for "Upper Albany Historic District, Hartford, CT," September 29, 1986.

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Significance: M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District

Summary

The buildings in the M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District are significant because of the important role the company played in the economic and industrial development of the City of Hartford (Criterion A). Driven by the success of its metalworking industries, Hartford emerged as a national manufacturing leader by the 1880s. The gold beating firm of M. Swift & Sons Company settled into this fertile business environment beside firearm, hardware, and sewing machine producers and like many of these entities, eventually received national recognition for their product. The district's factory complex functioned as the home of the M. Swift & Sons Company throughout its over one-hundred year history, making it a significant component of the City's industrial heritage. Similarly, the residential structures included in the district served as the homes of the Swift family for the majority of the company's history, thus establishing their character as important components of the district. The contributing buildings within the M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District are also significant as they represent notable examples of late brick mill construction and late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century residential architecture typical of that found throughout Hartford during the period of their construction (Criterion C). The district's factory complex is one of a dwindling number of nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrial structures in the city and its two residential buildings represent significant phases in the evolution of Hartford's built environment.

Historical Significance

Gold Beating and Hartford

Metalworking industries formed the backbone of Hartford's rapidly expanding economy in the nineteenth century. Entities such as Colt Firearms, Hartford Machine Screw, the Weed Sewing Machine Company, and the Pope Manufacturing Company were born and bred by the process of manipulating metals into finished products. These firms earned Hartford national recognition as an industrial center known for the skill and precision of its metalworkers. Significantly, Hartford's gold beaters were also well known for the superior quality of their products and their craftsmanship.

Like those companies that worked in iron or steel, the gold beating business relied upon skilled, knowledgeable, and well-trained craftsmen. The largely manual operation required the careful execution of various manipulative processes on an inherently fragile medium. There was little room for error and much relied upon the judgment of the workers. A brief description of the process as it was conducted in the nineteenth century is helpful in understanding its difficult nature.¹

First, gold bars typically twelve inches long, one and a half inches wide, and a quarter inch thick were rolled to a thickness of 1/1000 of an inch. After being cut into squares the metal was dusted with calcium carbonate - applied to the fragile medium with a gentle brush, often a hare's foot - and placed between a pair of thin membranes originating from the outer layer of an ox's intestine

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known as a beater's skin. Notable Hartford firms imported the skins from Germany, another large gold leaf-producing country, and the hare's feet from England, the third major international leaf supplier. Up to three hundred stacks of these layers – each known as a “cutch” – were then repeatedly struck with a sixteen-pound hammer until they reached a desired size and thickness. The sheets were then cut into squares and the process was repeated with a ten-pound hammer. After this, the sheets would again be quartered and placed in a “mold” where they were thinned further using a six pound hammer. When they were judged by the gold beater to have reached the appropriate thickness the sheets were then cut into squares of standardized sizes, typically 3 3/8” on each side. By this point the leaves would have become so thin that a stack of 280,000 would stand only an inch high. The completed leaves were then packed between pieces of parchment, the fragile nature of the leaf required the use of wooden tongs, as the human touch would cause it to disintegrate. In short, the work of the gold beater required a careful combination of skill, precision, as well as a delicate touch.²

While the factories in which these aforementioned processes took place were never as expansive nor the final product as technologically intricate as many of Hartford's other industries, gold beating holds a significant place in the history of the city due to its longevity and national recognition. The roots of the Hartford trade can be traced to the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1812, Marcus Bull, a twenty-five year old Hartford entrepreneur, started a business producing hand-beaten gold leaf. Originally hoping to compete with the goods being imported from neighboring New York, and later in order to provide the highest quality product available, Bull established his own dental gold refinery; the first in America, where he manufactured gold dentistry foil and decorative gold leaf in the City of Hartford. Despite its success, Bull's involvement in the business was short-lived. He became devastated by the sudden loss of his wife of just two years, Elizabeth Colt Bull, in September 1812, and shortly thereafter he abandoned the firm and the city.³

Following the departure of its founder, Bull's business passed through multiple hands over the course of the next fifty years. The first to take up Bull's work was a man by the name of William Johnson. Johnson continued Bull's work until 1839 when the business was assumed by one of his employees, James H. Ashmead. Ashmead ran the shop until 1846 when he took on a partner by the name of Edmund Hurlbut, thus forming the firm of Ashmead & Hurlbut. The partnership survived for some 17 years before the relationship was dissolved and the pair went their separate ways in 1863. After the split, Ashmead went into business with his two sons – thus establishing the firm of J. H. Ashmead & Sons – and Hurlbut formed a partnership with a former clerk by the name of John M. Ney.⁴

After Edmund Hurlbut's death in 1866, Ney assumed sole control of the company that originally bore Bull's name. A long-time resident of the city, Ney's ascent into manufacturing reflects the industrial character of Hartford as well as illustrates the opportunities available in the city at the time. From beginnings as a clerk in a modest gold beater's shop Ney became the founder of J.M. Ney & Company, an entity destined to become nationally recognized for quality gold dentistry products and gold, silver, and platinum metallurgy.

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Like Ney, Matthew Swift came to Hartford as a young man and soon found work in one of the city's industrial firms. Born in Birmingham, England in 1842, Swift immigrated to Hartford in 1864. Not long after his arrival, Swift found work at the gold beating shop of J. M. Ney, which by this time had grown into the largest gold beating entity in the city. During Swift's employment the firm secured the contract to gild the dome of the newly constructed State Capitol, a task requiring over 4,000 square feet of gold leaf.⁵

Swift worked for close to twenty-five years in Ney's downtown Asylum Street shop before he chose to venture out on his own around 1887. By the time of Swift's departure from J. M. Ney & Company, the gold beating industry had grown quite competitive and shortly after leaving Swift lost \$1,600 in the failure of the Hartford banking firm, George P. Bissell & Company. This loss threatened his ability to maintain his fledgling operation. After laboring together for such a long period, however, Swift and Ney had established a strong friendship. Ney offered assistance to Swift rather than let his old friend falter. The Hartford Courant reported of Swift's loss, "Mr. Ney, hearing of it, gave him metal enough to keep going without taking any security at all."⁶ Swift's close connection to Ney facilitated the conception of what would become the M. Swift & Sons Company and Ney's generosity allowed the company to survive this potentially crippling early blow.⁷

In the period that J. M. Ney employed Matthew Swift, the latter made his residence on Westland Street in the largely undeveloped north end of Hartford. When Swift purchased a plot of land from William Westland near the intersection of Garden Street and the highway known as "Love Lane" in January 1871, the property, like those around it, was undeveloped. Ten years later some residential buildings had been erected in the area, but the Swift property remained empty. By 1887, however, Swift had built the two-story frame house on the east side Love Lane that remains on the property. It was at this time that Swift left J. M. Ney and began operating a gold beating business out of his new home.⁸

The initial growth of Matthew Swift's gold beating venture soon necessitated building a proper workshop for the business. The original building was a single-story wooden structure built just to the south of Swift's residence and completed by the late 1890s. Continued success soon required further construction. Around the turn of the century the c. 1895 frame shop building was elevated and a brick first story constructed beneath it. In addition, a second two-story brick structure was built behind and to the south of the original shop to provide additional space. The two were then connected by a brick hallway. It was around this time that Matthew Swift's shop took on the title of the M. Swift & Sons Company.⁹

By 1902 M. Swift & Sons had established itself as the largest gold leaf beating firm in Connecticut, and one of the most significant in the country. In an industry of 100 manufacturers and 1200 workers nationwide, the M. Swift & Sons Company employed a disproportionately-high number of laborers. The firm retained thirty-two employees, sixteen of which were women. The employment numbers were double that of Swift's local competitor, George L. Bladon, and four times those of Swift's former employer, J. M. Ney. Understandably, gold beaters were considered master craftsmen and the skill and success of those that the M. Swift & Sons Company is clearly illustrated by the firm's constant need for further expansion. By March 1903, the company had filed a permit to build another addition to the factory. The two-story brick building measured 24' x 118', nearly triple the size of the existing workshop.¹⁰

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The years between 1912 and 1915 brought a wave of changes to M. Swift & Sons. The most significant was the death of Matthew Swift in June 1912. Swift dictated that upon his death control of the company should pass to his sons, Matthew H. and Ernest. Swift also divided the family homestead and property, then identified as 100 Love Lane, between his two sons and four daughters; Rosa, Ida, Lucy, and Edith. He also granted life use of their home to his wife Carrie. Carrie M. Swift passed away in October 1914, leaving all of her financial estate, a respectable \$4,780.52, to her four daughters and the house on Love Lane to her daughters Rosa and Lucy.¹¹

In the meantime, Matthew H. Swift had contracted the prolific Hartford architect Burton A. Sellev to design an eight-room house on a piece of property abutting the northern boundary of the Swift homestead. Built by the A.C. Downs Company, the \$5460.00 home was contracted to be completed, "Before October 1, 1914."¹² After the death of his mother, Matthew Swift likewise conveyed the house and adjacent property to his sisters Rosa and Lucy.¹³

Ernest H. Swift died unexpectedly in August 1915 at the age of thirty-five. He conveyed any property related to M. Swift & Sons to his brother along with all, "undivided interest, in the plant and business, machinery, tools, motors, wiring, shafting, pulleys, belting, utensils of trade, stock of unmanufactured and unmanufactured goods, books, furniture, cash on hand and in banks, etc."¹⁴ Ernest is noted as being a significant figure in the company and a talented inventor. His obituary in the *Hartford Courant* reads, "He was responsible for many of the mechanical improvements which have given the Swift Company a leading place in the gold beating industry in this country."¹⁵ This likely includes the company's patent for a "roll for holding metallic films for printing,"¹⁶ granted just days after Ernest's death.¹⁷

The loss of its founder in 1912, and its most gifted mechanical mind only three years later was not enough to derail the company. In September 1928 the firm was incorporated, "To manufacture and sell metal wares."¹⁸ The company released 500 shares paid in capital to the amount of \$10,000 by Matthew H. Swift, his son M. Allen Swift, and the company's sales manager William S. Jones. Less than six months later, in February 1929, the company awarded a contract to builders A.F. Peaslee, Inc. to build a new two-story \$100,000 addition.¹⁹

At the time of its 1929 expansion, the *Hartford Courant* identified the M. Swift & Sons Company as, "One of the largest concerns in their line in the world."²⁰ Significantly, the 1929 factory addition doubled the overall size of the Swift plant on Love Lane. The need for this massive building project was likely driven by the evolving nature of gold beating, specifically the increasing mechanization of the process and the resultant space necessitated by the addition of large machinery. The new building further benefitted the company in the form of advanced heating and air conditioning technology. The fragile nature of gold leaf renders it highly susceptible to shifts in temperature and humidity and the inclusion of air conditioning allowed Swift to better control the environment in which their product was manufactured.²¹

The expansion of the Swift factory not only resulted in the company increasing its force of employees to over 150, but also allowed it to expand into hitherto untapped markets. By March 1930, Swift's contract to deliver 2,400,000 gold leaves at a rate of 100,000 per month for two years to an Argentinean firm made it the first American gold leaf company to break the dominant grasp of German leaf producers on South American markets. By 1936, after shifting into the related aluminum market, the M. Swift & Sons

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Company was identified as producing ninety-nine percent of all beaten aluminum used in camera flash bulb filaments in the United States. The process of preparing aluminum for flash filaments was very similar to the process of gold beating. The Swift Company received aluminum foil from the Reynolds Metals Company of New York, and the metal, already rolled to 1/1000 of an inch, was placed between beater's skins and thinned by a three hundred pound magnetic hammer striking it at a rate of 130 times per minute. After seven hours the initial one-inch squares had been thinned into squares six inches on a side. These were stacked in a method similar to gold leaf, three to be used in each standard camera flash bulb, six for larger ones.²²

The M. Swift & Sons Company continued its lead in the development of technologically advanced metal working processes through the following decades. In 1940, its pioneering use of infrared technology as an industrial tool drew comment from the *Hartford Courant*. Of Swift the newspaper reported in June 1940, the "concern is reported to be making more extensive use of infrared baking in connection with its manufacture of gold leaf, than other companies hereabouts."²³ In 1942, in perhaps one of the company's grandest moments, the M. Swift & Sons Company was awarded a contract to supply the gold leaf required for the re-gilding of the dome of the Connecticut State Capitol. In 1950, the company unveiled its line of "Golden Touch" decals, a product of five years of research and development that allowed for the placement of gold leaf by laymen rather than by master craftsmen. In 1952, the M. Swift & Sons Company announced that it would be the sole domestic distributor of a groundbreaking product designed by the British firm of Masson Seeley & Company, Ltd. which allowed foil markings to be placed on a variety of products hard or soft, flat or round. The *Hartford Courant* wrote that the machine, "reportedly furnishes a revolutionary new method for marking delicate machine parts without damaging metal structures."²⁴ Concerning the machine's use of pigment foils as a marking method the newspaper wrote, "The machinery will be a companion line for the local concern, which has long been established as one of the country's prominent manufacturers of gold leaf, sized gold, bronze, roll leaf, and color foils."²⁵ The arrangement is a further indication of the Swift Company's international presence, as well as its domestic status.²⁶

Unsurprisingly these developments were facilitated and marked by additional expansion of the M. Swift & Sons Company plant. In August 1947, Swift unveiled plans for a \$25,000 addition to the Love Lane factory.²⁷ A year later, the company petitioned the City Council to extend the 10-foot building line on the west side of Garden Street north to Risley Street so that they could put forward plans for another \$125,000 addition. In February 1953, the company opened their fourth national branch office in Los Angeles, California. In October 1965, the M. Swift & Sons Company was granted an additional contract to supply the gold required for a restoration of the Connecticut State Capitol dome.²⁸

The post-World War II years were fat times for the company, yet, as is prone to happen, the good times could not last forever. The establishment of a free market for gold in 1968, combined with shifting tastes and technologies, slowly unseated gold leaf as the product of choice for labeling, signage, and the decorative arts. The proliferation of neon and plastic, as well as the use of synthetic materials in printing and decorative accents, drove the slow decline of the gold beater's trade. While the firm of M. Swift & Sons survived thirty-seven years after the removal of the gold standard, the company's last years were marked by the slow decline experienced by many industries in the Hartford and the nation. In 2005, after the death of M. Allen Swift, grandson of Matthew Swift, the company finally succumbed to the growing pressures of a globalized economy, ceased operations, and closed its doors.²⁹

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Architectural Significance

The buildings within the M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District can be organized into two categories of architectural significance. The first is as one of a dwindling number of surviving examples of Hartford's once thriving industrial economy. The Swift Company factory complex can be identified as such. The buildings that housed the M. Swift & Sons Company gold beating business are significant both as designs typical of the period and as evidence of the constant growth and resultant physical expansion that many such institutions experienced throughout their operation.

Although unique due to its location in a primarily residential area, the M. Swift & Sons Company complex exemplifies typical factory design in its standard brick mill construction and functional open floor plan. The factory grew in a series of stages as the company responded to financial success and ensuing demands for additional production space. Each of the building's resultant additions reflects several aspects of general factory design: brick mill and brick-pier construction; multiple stories; long, narrow proportions; and copious windows providing for the admittance of large amounts of natural light. Earlier sections of the building have pitched roofs, while later construction has flat, tarred roofs, each typical of the period of their design. These arrangements resulted in large, open, and well-lit working environments, as well as provided adequate space for machinery and on-site storage.

Like the factory complex, the district's two residential structures represent domestic forms typical of the period of their construction. Built c. 1887, the older of the two homes was constructed in a period in which Hartford's northern neighborhoods remained largely rural. Small farmhouses were located on large lots spaciouly distanced from one another. As such, the Swift homestead is a simple vernacular structure set apart from the influence of popular architectural styles shaping contemporary urban homes. Being the residence of a craftsman, the home of Matthew Swift is a functional design expanded over multiple building periods typical of non-architecturally designed working-class housing stock. The largest of these additions, located at the rear of the structure, likely housed Matthew Swift's gold beating shop until a formal shop was constructed c. 1890. After the construction of the Swift's new house in 1914, the original homestead continued to function as an office and cafeteria for employees.

In contrast to the original Swift homestead, the second residential building in the M. Swift & Sons Company Historic District is a stylized, professionally designed structure. Illustrative of the Swift's increasing financial success, the home was a product of prolific Hartford architect, Burton A. Sellow, and was constructed by local builder, A.C. Downs. Like many homes built during the period, the eight-room structure exhibits a number of notable Colonial Revival details. Typical of designs influenced by architecture from the Georgian period, the building at 60 Love Lane has a rectangular footprint, symmetrical facade, and hip-roof. Colonial Revival details include the one-story portico with Doric columns and wide denticulated entablature, sidelight-flanked entry, Palladian-influenced second-story tripartite focal window, and hipped-roof dormers.

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¹ "Imports for the Week," *Hartford Courant*, April 5, 1901, pg. 4.

² "Imports for the Week," *Hartford Courant*, April 5, 1901, pg. 4; "Imports for the Week," *Hartford Courant*, August 30, 1902, pg. 5; "Imports for the Week," *Hartford Courant*, January 17, 1903, pg. 13; "Imports for the Week," *Hartford Courant*, May 23, 1903, pg. 5; "Imports for the Week," *Hartford Courant*, September 19, 1903, pg. 13; "Imports for the Week," *Hartford Courant*, December 19, 1903, pg. 15; "Imports for the Week," *Hartford Courant*, April 23, 1904, pg. 4; "Gold Beaters' Strike," *Hartford Courant*, July 22, 1902, pg. 9; Amanda Quinby, "M. Swift and Sons: Tradition vs. Economics and the Craft of the Gold Beater," <http://livingwithgilt.com/essays/swiftcompany.html> (accessed September 29, 2009).

³ Elizabeth Bull was the daughter of Elisha Colt, cousin to Samuel Colt and one of the early financiers of the Colt Firearms Company in Hartford, Connecticut. George B. Chandler, "Industrial History," in *History of Connecticut: In Monographic Form*, vol. 3, ed. Noris Galpin Osborn (New York: The States History Company: 1925, 314; "Hon. John M. Ney," *Hartford Courant*, September 27, 1907, pg. 7; "An Old Inhabitant Celebrates Today," *Hartford Courant*, February 16, 1912, pg. 13; "Obituary - No Title," *Hartford Courant*, September 29, 1812.

⁴ George B. Chandler, "Industrial History," in *History of Connecticut: In Monographic Form*, vol. 3, ed. Noris Galpin Osborn (New York: The States History Company: 1925, 314; "Hon. John M. Ney," *Hartford Courant*, September 27, 1907, pg. 7; "An Old Inhabitant Celebrates Today," *Hartford Courant*, February 16, 1912, pg. 13.

⁵ "Obituary 2 - No Title," *Hartford Courant*, July 1, 1912, pg. 8; "An Old Inhabitant Celebrates Today," *Hartford Courant*, February 16, 1912, pg. 13.

⁶ "Hon. John M. Ney," *Hartford Courant*, September 27, 1907, pg. 7.

⁷ "Hon. John M. Ney," *Hartford Courant*, September 27, 1907, pg. 7.

⁸ Geer's Hartford City Directory, 1886-1889; "City Atlas of Hartford, 1880." G.M. Hopkins, C.E., Philadelphia, PA, 1880; Hartford Land Records (140/350), January 6, 1871; Hartford Land Records. (204/196), February 21, 1887; "Hon. John M. Ney," *Hartford Courant*, September 27, 1907, pg. 7.

⁹ Letter from R.C. Abbott, M. Swift & Sons, Inc. to Mr. Chas. McSheffrey, Director of Licenses & Inspections, City of Hartford; September 16, 1975. Hartford Building Department, Love Lane folder.

¹⁰ "Gold Beaters' Strike," *Hartford Courant*, July 22, 1902, pg. 9; "Permits to Build," *Hartford Courant*, March 21, 1903, pg. 7.

¹¹ "Many Wills Recorded in the Probate Court," *Hartford Courant*, October 22, 1913, pg. 5; "Real Estate Transaction 1 - No Title," *Hartford Courant*, October 21, 1913, pg. 3; "Obituary 5 - No Title," *Hartford Courant*, September 19, 1914, pg. 11; "Wills Recorded in Probate Court," *Hartford Courant*, October 6, 1914, pg. 7; "Many Inventories from Probate Court," *Hartford Courant*, December 12, 1914, pg. 9.

¹² "Job Estimate for Home at Love Lane," Contract between Albert C. Downs and Matthew H. Swift, May 13, 1914, Connecticut Historical Society, Swift Collection, Folder 6.

¹³ "Job Estimate for Home at Love Lane," Contract between Albert C. Downs and Matthew H. Swift, May 13, 1914, Connecticut Historical Society, Swift Collection, Folder 6; Hartford Land Records (399/707), November 14, 1914

¹⁴ Hartford Land Records (451/161), December 14, 1917.

¹⁵ "Obituary 3 - No Title," *Hartford Courant*, August 16, 1915, pg. 9.

¹⁶ "Connecticut Patents," *Hartford Courant*, August 19, 1915, pg. 6.

¹⁷ "Legal Notice 1 - No Title," *Hartford Courant*, May 9, 1916, pg. 20; "Obituary 3 - No Title," *Hartford Courant*, August 16, 1915, pg. 9.

¹⁸ "Corporation Papers Filed," *Hartford Courant*, September 28, 1928, pg. 26.

¹⁹ "Corporation Papers Filed," *Hartford Courant*, September 28, 1928, pg. 26; "Gold Leaf Working Co. Expanding," *Hartford Courant*, February 24, 1929, pg. B1.

²⁰ "Gold Leaf Working Co. Expanding," *Hartford Courant*, February 24, 1929, pg. B1.

²¹ "Gold Leaf Working Co. Expanding," *Hartford Courant*, February 24, 1929, pg. B1; "Building Permits," *Hartford Courant*, March 8, 1929, pg. 11.

²² "NRA Pledges Signed Here on Thursday," *Hartford Courant*, September 15, 1933, pg. 1; "Hartford Firm Sells First U.S. Gold Leaf in Argentine District," *Hartford Courant*, March 2, 1930; "The Flash in Nearly All Photo Flash Bulbs 'Hammered Out' on Love Lane in Hartford," *Hartford Courant*, December 26, 1936, pg. D1.

²³ "Infra-Red Process Used Locally," *Hartford Courant*, June 10, 1940, pg. 16.

²⁴ "New Process For Metal Printing," *Hartford Courant*, February 25, 1952, pg. 14.

²⁵ "New Process For Metal Printing," *Hartford Courant*, February 25, 1952, pg. 14.

²⁶ "Infra-Red Process Used Locally," *Hartford Courant*, June 10, 1940, pg. 16; "New Gold Will Gleam on State Capitol Dome," *Hartford Courant*, October 6, 1965, pg. 13; "Local Firm Produces New Gold Leaf Decals," *Hartford Courant*, February 8, 1950, pg. 19; "New Process For Metal Printing," *Hartford Courant*, February 25, 1952, pg. 14.

²⁷ "Swift Files Application for \$25,000 Addition," *Hartford Courant*, August 13, 1947, pg. 17.

²⁸ "Alternate Proposed for New Highway," *Hartford Courant*, August 24, 1948, pg. 15; "Swift Concern Names New Branch Director," *Hartford Courant*, February 3, 1954, pg. 20; "New Gold Will Gleam on State Capitol Dome," *Hartford Courant*, October 6, 1965.

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²⁹ "Gold Decision Halts Area Firms' Activity," *Hartford Courant*, March 19, 1968, pg. 1; "Area Firms Back in Business Under New Gold System," *Hartford Courant*, March 20, 1968, pg. 4.

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Geographical Data:

Decimal Degree Coordinates -

A: 41.793371, -72.681110

B: 41.793217, -72.680320

C: 41.791240, -72.681030

D: 41.791283, -72.681315

E: 41.791722, -72.681393

F: 41.792391, -72.681347

G: 41.793084, -72.681690

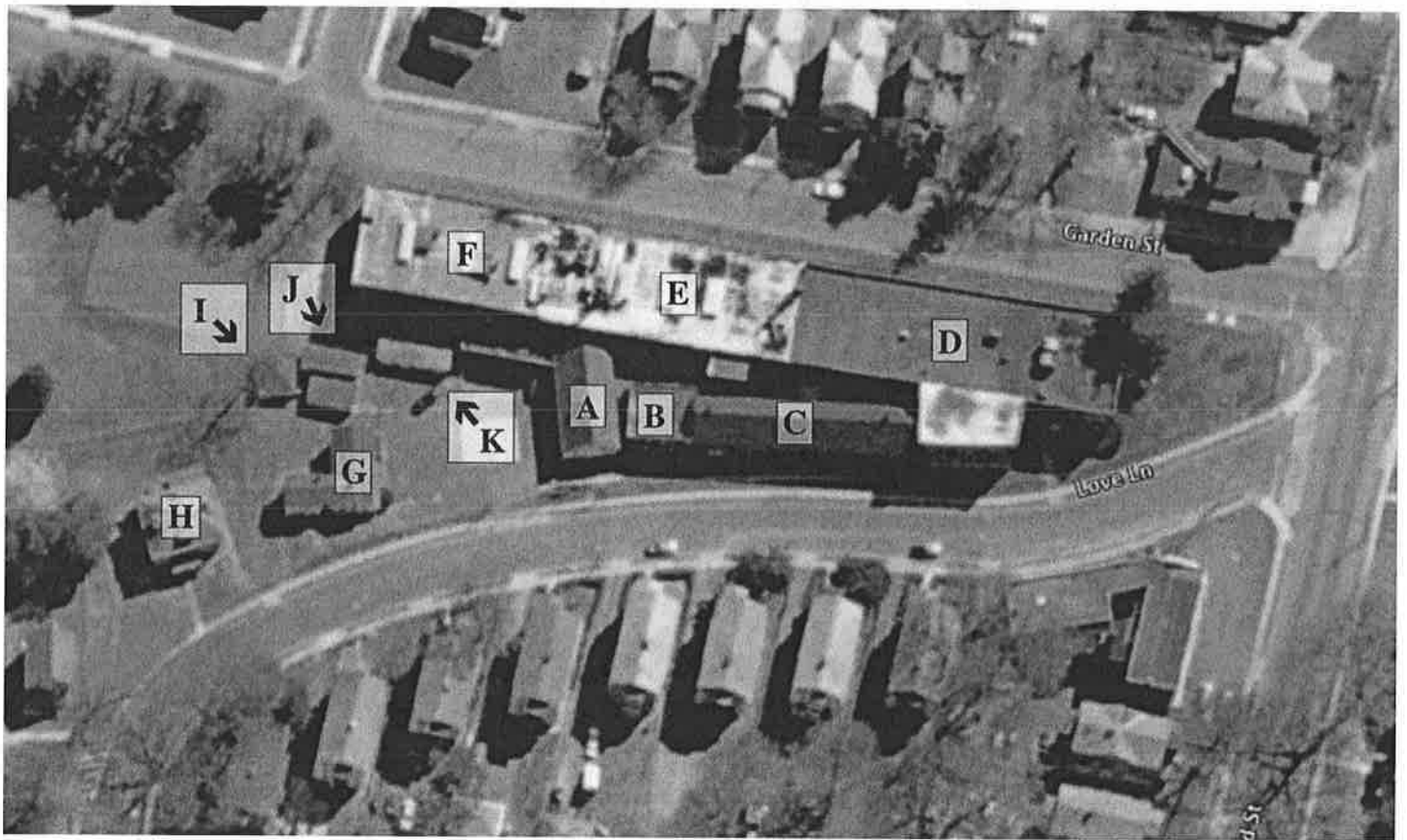


Google earth

feet
meters



Site Plan:



SITE PLAN:

- A. c. 1890 Block
- B. c. 1900 Block
- C. 1903 Block
- D. 1929 Block
- E. 1947 Block
- F. 1948 Block
- G. c. 1887 House
- H. 1914 House
- I. c. 1914 Garage
- J. c. 1960 and 1970 Garages
- K. c. 1941 Garage

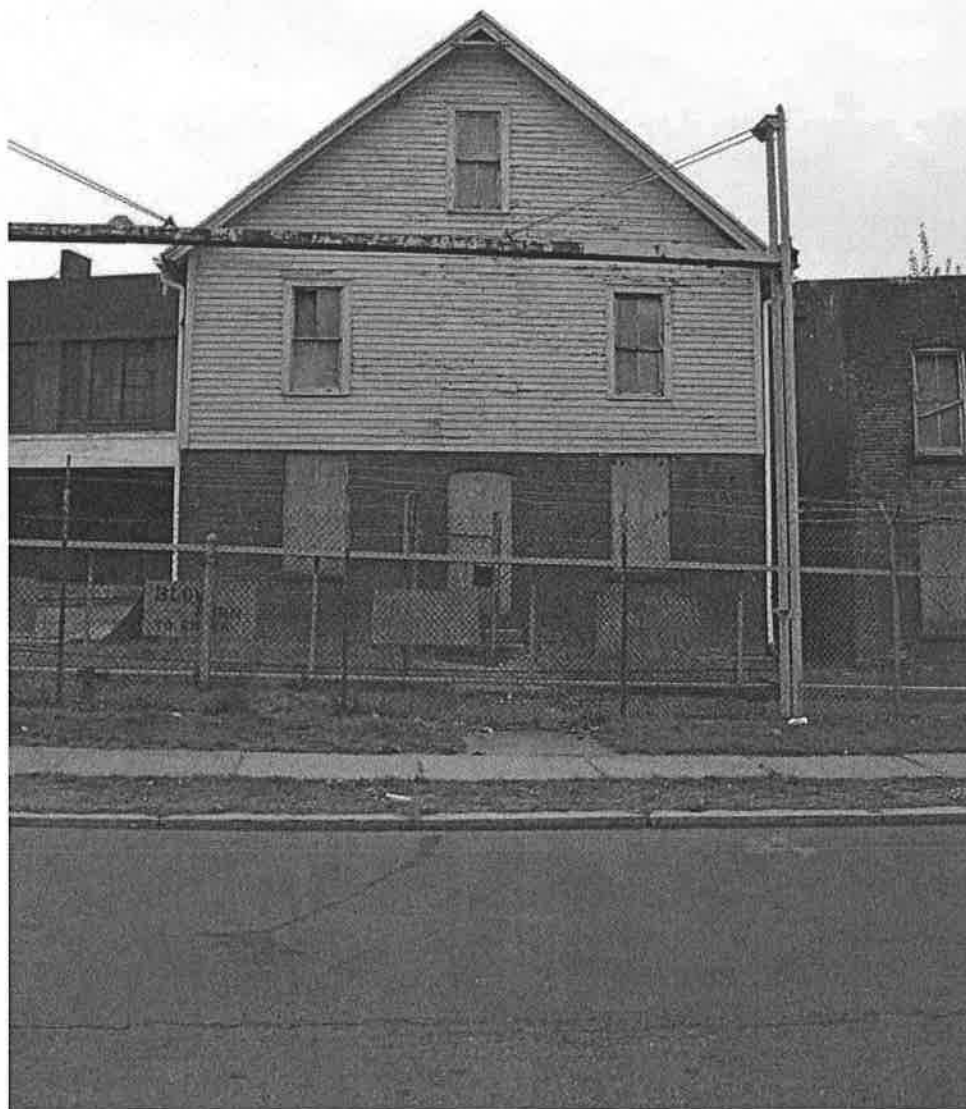
Site Plan (with photo positions):



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**North (front) and west (side) elevations of original workshop (c. 1890) from Love Lane.
Camera facing southwest.
Photograph 1 of 18.**



**West (side) elevation of original workshop (c. 1890) from Love Lane.
Camera facing east.
Photograph 2 of 18.**



West (side) elevation of c. 1900 addition to original workshop from Love Lane.
Camera facing east.
Photograph 3 of 18.

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M. Swift & Sons Factory Historic District; Hartford, Connecticut



**West (side) elevation of factory showing c.1900 and 1903 additions from Love Lane.
Camera facing northeast.
Photograph 4 of 18.**



**South (front) elevation of factory from Love Lane, showing 1929 block with side ell.
Camera facing north.
Photograph 5 of 18.**

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**South (front) and west (side) elevations of factory from Love Lane, showing 1929 block with side ell.
Camera facing northeast.
Photograph 6 of 18.**

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M. Swift & Sons Factory Historic District; Hartford, Connecticut

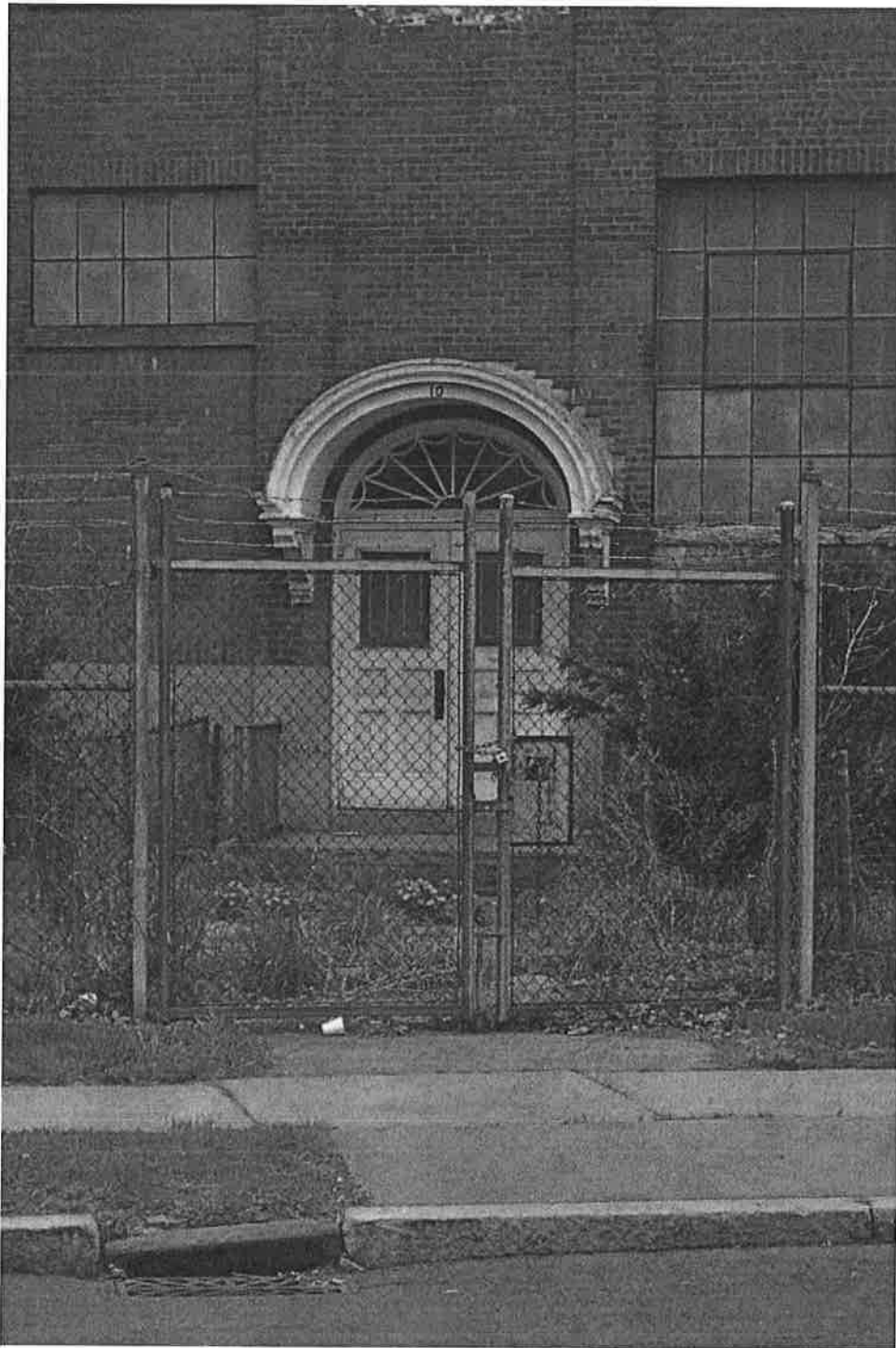


**East (side) elevation of factory from Garden Street, showing 1929, 1947, and 1948 additions.
Camera facing northwest.
Photograph 7 of 18.**

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West (side) elevation of factory from Love Lane, showing primary entry in 1929 block.
Camera facing east.
Photograph 8 of 18.



West (side) elevation of factory from Love Lane, showing detail of entry to 1929 block.
Camera facing east.
Photograph 9 of 18.



**South (front) elevation of Swift homestead (c. 1887) from Love Lane.
Camera facing north.
Photograph 10 of 18.**



**West (side) elevation of Swift homestead (c. 1887) from Love Lane.
Camera facing east.
Photograph 11 of 18.**



**North (rear) and east (side) elevations of Swift homestead (c. 1887) from interior of property.
Camera facing southwest.
Photograph 12 of 18.**



West (front) and north (side) elevations of 1914 Swift house from Love Lane.
Camera facing southeast.
Photograph 13 of 18.



**West (front) and south (side) elevations of 1914 Swift house from Love Lane.
Camera facing northeast.
Photograph 14 of 18.**



**East (rear) and south (side) elevations of 1914 Swift house from interior of property.
Camera facing northwest.
Photograph 15 of 18.**



**West (front) elevations of c. 1914 garage from Love Lane.
Camera facing east.
Photograph 16 of 18.**



**West (front) and south (side) elevations of 1941 garage from Love Lane, 1948 block at rear.
Camera facing northeast.
Photograph 17 of 18.**



**South (front) and north (side) elevations of c. 1960 and c. 1970 storage buildings from Love Lane.
Camera facing northeast.
Photograph 18 of 18.**





BLOWN
DOWN
TO ENTER

Hand-painted green symbol on the asphalt road, possibly a bicycle or pedestrian icon.











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33640





















