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ANOTHER CITY UPON A HILL:
LITCHFIELD, CONNECTICUT, AND THE COLONIAL REVIVAL

by
William J. H. Butler

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture

June, 1983

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LITCHFIELD, CONNECTICUT, AND THE COLONIAL REVIVAL

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INTRODUCTION

This paper analyzes the changing image of the New England village and how it became a national symbol during the Colonial Revival. Litchfield, Connecticut (Figure 1), a stereotypical town that popular sentiment perceives as a realistic representation of an eighteenth-century colonial village, is in fact an idealized interpretation of what élite society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thought was colonial.
Figure 1. Village Green, Litchfield, Connecticut. March 1982. (Author).
CHAPTER 1

ALL ROADS LEAD TO LITCHFIELD:

THE NEW ENGLAND TOWN IN AMERICAN IDEOLOGY

A typical New England town in the modern landscape is a nucleated village of white clapboard houses lining elm-shaded streets, with a simple Congregational church, a general store, and a small schoolhouse surrounding a park-like green. We perceive this classic setting as a monument to colonial America, a monument unchanged since the eighteenth century. We assume that Puritans, in search of religious freedom, founded this typical settlement in the midst of a hostile wilderness. Small-town boys grew up here, fought for our nation's independence, and then became famous statesmen. This village is steeped in Yankee tradition and conservatism: it is the home of town-meeting democracy and the "American experience." Most of the inhabitants are genteel farmers living in houses built by their Revolutionary ancestors. George Washington must have slept here.

But the New England town has not always evoked such stereotypes and has undergone significant alterations since the earliest English settlements. Even contemporary geographers and architectural
historians have perpetuated the stereotype of the New England town, basing their conclusions on romanticized tradition, misconceptions, and erroneous town histories. The geographer John Brinckerhoff Jackson is perhaps the first scholar to raise questions about the accuracy of popular as well as scholarly images of the archetypal New England town. In "Several American Landscapes" Jackson alerts his readers that

> no landscape has ever changed so profoundly and so swiftly as ours; not merely within the recent past but from its very beginning. So completely did the Colonial landscape vanish during the nineteenth century that aside from a few monuments nothing remains of it.

Despite doubts such as these, scholars have never sufficiently analyzed the rethinking and--more importantly--the reshaping of the New England town during the Colonial Revival. An understanding of these processes of transformation requires an accurate documentation of the colonial, or pre-Revolutionary, landscape as well as a brief history of the New England village and its changing role in American ideology.

Boston, the first community in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was intended to be a compact agricultural village planned around a meetinghouse and governed by a Christian Covenant that promoted unity and equality. This fabled "city upon a hill," like similar Puritan settlements, however, began to break down after its first generation of establishment. By the mid seventeenth century most New Englanders did not live in compact villages, but rather on
dispersed farmsteads. Those who did live within the boundaries of a town built town or village centers that contained nothing more than a meetinghouse, a school, a tavern, and a few houses.

The nucleated village did not emerge in New England until after the Revolution, when our nation experienced commercial, transportation, and general economic expansion. The hill villages of northwestern Connecticut and Massachusetts particularly enjoyed a "Golden Age" between 1780 and 1830; several became modern urban villages, prospering with stylish architecture, new industry, and increased business.

During the next generation, however, many New England hill villages suffered from a steady decline in manufacturing, commerce, and population. Their difficult mountainous geography prevented the establishment of a railroad network, thereby cutting off substantial trade. Agriculture, in turn, diminished as farmers either relocated on more productive land in the West or moved to large cities for factory work. This change especially altered the colonial character of the New England landscape as river and coastal towns, with more powerful water sources, gradually became industrial cities, while once-prosperous hill villages gracefully aged as fashionable Victorian summer resorts.

Wealthy city folk were largely responsible for transforming colonial urban villages, essentially barren of natural vegetation,
into "picturesque" or countrified towns. They formed Village Im­
provement Societies, which decorated streets with towering shade trees and
inviting parks. These summer residents broke away from classical
tradition to build stylish gothic and Italianate cottages that better
harmonized with the natural colors of the landscape. Beautification
and architectural changes in resorts such as Stockbridge, Massachusetts,
or Litchfield, Connecticut, in no way re-created America's historical
past. Most of élite society during the mid nineteenth century were
modernists, too preoccupied with the progress of the present to think
about the past.5 Our nation had written histories, celebrated
patriotic anniversaries, and formed historical repositories, but
because our nation was so new, we interpreted our heritage as an
index of how far we had come, not as what we should revert back to.

By the 1860s, however, Americans were becoming increasingly
bewildered by the effects of industrialization, urbanization, and
immigration. Society became increasingly stratified culturally,
economically, and politically, at last fighting a Civil War.
Disillusionment with the war, discontentment with Reconstruction,
and a severe financial panic in 1873 prompted Americans to reminisce
about what seemed a more stable and less complicated past. The
Centennial celebration of 1876 extolled the advancement of modern
machinery while at the same time it encouraged Americans to appreciate
their national heritage. Writing in 1877, the architect Robert Swain
Peabody observed that with the Centennial we "discovered that we too
have a past worthy of study . . . . Our Colonial work is our only native source of antiquarian study and inspiration." A new historical consciousness had indeed been discovered as a better source of inspiration for the present and the future. A Colonial Revival resulted.

Architecture was the most effective material manifestation of the Colonial Revival. As an early chronicler of the movement wrote, "Architecture is crystallized history . . . it represent[s] the life of the past in visible and enduring form." New England-style architecture tended to dominate taste during most of the Colonial Revival. Just as New England monopolized biased American histories, so too did it monopolize architecture. Architects thought that New England buildings were the oldest American buildings and therefore the most truly American. The prevailing taste for colonial New England, furthermore, represented Northern supremacy to a society recently recovering from a war between its states.

William B. Rhoads has pointed out that patriotic sentiment was one of the appealing forces behind colonial-style architecture. Native Americans restored historic buildings and built modern Colonial Revival structures as a sign of nationalism. In addition, these structures could function as symbols of ancestry and social status. Immigrants, living in cities, could at least identify themselves with Colonial Revival buildings because the immigrant was himself a "modern colonial" in the American landscape.
During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the intensification of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration threatened the identity of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Individual colonial or Colonial Revival buildings standing alone did not satisfy the ideological needs of elite WASP society, which began to search for a comprehensive colonial environment. It sought refuge in the venerable New England town. Here history prevaded; one found a higher concentration of colonial structures as well as inhabitants of "superior native stock." The wealthy upper class could easily escape the poverty, filth, and overcrowding in cities to summer in the Arcadian hills of New England. Elites further transformed the urban village (become Victorian resort) into an emblem of what they thought best symbolized colonialism: stability, morality, and democracy. In many popular novels, writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe--born and raised in Litchfield--romanticized life in New England towns at the turn of the nineteenth century. The widespread "Country Life Movement" of the Progressive Era monumentalized the colonial New England village as an archetype for all of rural America to emulate. Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, the poet and promoter of rural improvement, suggested in one of his widely-circulated Proclamations that the United States become a new "New England of ninety million souls." By the early twentieth century the ubiquitous New England village was a popular subject for art, literature and advertising, and had become a stereotype in the American mind. It was a treasured image so familiar to people everywhere, that Thornton Wilder did not use a scenic
backdrop, but just a few evocative lines, to re-create Grover's Corner, New Hampshire, in Our Town.\(^{10}\) Even the possessive pronoun in the title further suggested that the landscape was distinctively American and symbolic.

Certain New England villages figured more prominently than others as archetypes during the Colonial Revival. Writers continually praised Stockbridge, Massachusetts, for having the first Village Improvement Society in America. Places such as Old Lyme, Connecticut, and Cornish, New Hampshire, were noted as exclusive artists' colonies. Deerfield, Massachusetts, gained admiration for its "untouched" charm. Wallace Nutting, like many writers and travelers, favored the hill country of northwestern Connecticut. Nutting boldly proclaimed in *Connecticut Beautiful* that this state was

a museum of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century American life. Her numerous historical societies have done far more than Massachusetts, or indeed, than any other state in keeping for us the examples and records of what is very old . . . . Connecticut landscapes are more definitely defined as early American scenes than any other part of our land.\(^{11}\)

Litchfield, Connecticut, was one of the most admired New England villages during the Colonial Revival. Local tradition records that Sinclair Lewis once said that the "only street in America more beautiful than North Street in Litchfield was South Street in Litchfield."\(^{12}\) Photographs of this village accompanied numerous national advertisements for everything from white paint to old-fashioned candy. During the last nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries, American architectural history books, academic journals, and popular periodicals featured articles and measured drawings of the town's colonial architecture. Litchfield furthermore attracted worldwide recognition in 1913 as the first town in America to remodel its historic landscape comprehensively in the colonial style.

The legacy of a landscape like Litchfield's persists into modern times. The "typical" New England village still answers to the aspirations and normative values of Americans. In the prologue to their McCarthy-era book *Frontier of Freedom: The Soul and Substance of America Portrayed in One Extraordinary Village*, Old Deerfield, Massachusetts, Samuel Chamberlain and Henry N. Flynt saw the New England village as an answer to Communist anti-American propaganda:

there is a legion of ... replies to the vilification of the Communists, and they do not need to be couched in calumny or hollow phrases. They can even be expressed pleasantly. Visual truth speaks louder than words in contradicting propaganda. A graphic picture of one of a hundred phrases of American life—a state university, a western farm, a New England village—can be the most eloquent response to the strident falsehoods poisoning the air today. We have chosen the symbol of a specific village street. Among many others, it demonstrates the calm strength of American today.13

Chamberlain demonstrated the strength of the New England village and perpetuated its image in popular culture by publishing between 1930 and 1975 several photo-essay books, post card series, and calendars featuring his favorite towns. Litchfield appears to have been the epitome of the stereotype, Chamberlain ennobling its Congregational Church on the cover of his 1962 book, *The New England Image*. 
Chapter 2
FROM PIONEER WILDERNESS TO POLITE WORLD:
THE COLONIAL LANDSCAPE OF LITCHFIELD

During the Colonial Revival most of the inhabitants of Litchfield believed that they were living in a unique city upon a hill that accurately re-created the look of colonial times. Wooden houses painted white with dark-colored blinds, towering elm trees arching over streets, a well-manicured village green, and a classical Congregational church were the most important elements of this idyllic setting. The homogeneity of the landscape and the pristine quality of the architecture suggested perfect eighteenth-century order. The conventional historical interpretation of Litchfield's settlement relied on the a priori assumption that its first inhabitants had cleared a "pioneer wilderness" and bravely established a nucleated village around a meetinghouse. The community remained church-oriented and compact throughout the eighteenth century. Until the Revolution, most families lived in crude log cabins. After the war, a newly rich mercantile class built fashionable homes in Litchfield, and the town became part of the sophisticated "polite world." Litchfield deliquesced into an isolated but dignified backwater in the nineteenth century, only to be restored to its "colonial" grandeur during the early part of the present century.
It is true that Litchfield's comprehensive restoration did not convince everyone. An early skeptic once remarked: "The village looked more colonial in 1930 than it ever did in the colonial era." But this response was exceptional; few people had doubts about the appearance of Litchfield's contrived landscape during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The town's first history, printed in 1845, relied almost exclusively on tradition and one man's memory of the past, rather than on documented facts. Subsequent histories, down to this day, expand upon and perpetuate Litchfield's mythology. In order to understand the misconceptions and idealizations embodied in the Colonial Revival landscape we must begin with an unromanticized documentation and interpretation of colonial Litchfield.

Third-generation New Englanders established Litchfield in 1719 as part of the late frontier settlement of northwestern Connecticut. This wilderness community in the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains was thirty miles west of Hartford, and 102 miles northwest of New York City. The original town measured ten miles square; its nucleus contained a mile-long plateau of large farm lots. Litchfield was a speculative or proprietary settlement, and about half of its original investors, or approximately thirty heads of households, actually lived in the town. Only about ten families permanently settled within the nucleus; the rest lived on dispersed farms.
During the first generation of settlement, most families lived in one- or two-room unpainted plank structures (Figure 2a). A Congregational meetinghouse in the "plain" style stood on common land in the center of the village. A few houses and three large garrisons were the only other structures within the nucleus. By the 1740s, land records indicate that inhabitants built larger two- and four-room houses, presumably in the latest style.

In 1751 Litchfield became the shiretown for Litchfield County and grew in area and population. The first recorded population was 1,366 in 1756. Even though the town was an important administrative center, a map drawn by Ezra Stiles (Figure 2) in 1762 indicates that while some 220 families owned farms or mill sites on the outskirts of town, only about thirty lived within the nucleus, mainly rich attorneys, physicians, and merchants, a school teacher, clergyman, and several tavernkeepers. These "professional gentlemen" built fashionable five-bay houses (Figure 2c) painted shades of red, brown, green, and blue—if they were painted at all. Such houses usually had rear additions of a kitchen ell, sink room, wood house, and stable. Interior rather than exterior shutters prevailed. Most houses did not have front lawns; they abutted unshaded dirt streets. Pig pens, poultry yards, vegetable gardens, an outhouse, and several barns were close to the main house.

"Sabba-day" or "nooning houses," (Figure 2d), common in the eighteenth century, were extinct by the early nineteenth. These
Figure 2. Ezra Stiles, Map of Litchfield, Connecticut, 1762, with later insets:

2a. House-type built from 1719-1760

2b. Mary Ann Lewis's sketch of the Congregational Meetinghouse

2c. House-type built from 1740-1810

2d. Sabba-day house.

(The Litchfield Historical Society)
buildings were small one- or two-room impermanent structures that farmers who lived on the outskirts of town used for warmth and noonday meals between religious services on the Sabbath. They also functioned as town houses when a farmer conducted extended business in the village center. The town allowed farmers to build Sabba-day houses on common land, the most popular place being the middle of a street.

When Ezra Stiles drew his map the second Congregational Meetinghouse was an unpainted structure less than a year old. It was not "coloured" until ten years later. In all likelihood, the original color was a stone red, as microscopic analysis of Ralph Earl portraits reveal that although the steeple of the meetinghouse was white, the rest of the structure was red. A sketch by Mary Anne Lewis also shows that this meetinghouse was painted red as late as 1817 (Figure 2b). A classic white Congregational church did not appear in Litchfield until the 1820s or perhaps with the third church structure of 1829.

The meetinghouse, courthouse, jail, tavern, and schoolhouse stood in the middle of Litchfield's main intersection. There was no park-like green with ornamental rows of trees in the town's village center during the colonial period. Writers referred to this location as an open "area," "square" or "space," containing market stalls, hitching posts, and animal pens in addition to garbage and wood piles. Until the Revolutionary War, there were no more than fifty buildings
within Litchfield's nucleus. The town essentially was a milling and agricultural settlement.

During the Revolution, however, Litchfield became a strategic crossroads for travelers en route to Boston, Hartford, Albany, or New York. Craftsmen, merchants, and innkeepers began building up the village center. The town played a renowned role in our nation's struggle for freedom. Governor Oliver Wolcott, signer of the Declaration of Independence and brigadier general of the Connecticut militia, came from an old Litchfield family. Ethan Allan was a native son. Folklore has it that the famous Regiment of Horse—led by Colonel Elisha Sheldon of Litchfield—was George Washington's favorite corps. Washington also visited Litchfield on several occasions. The town served as an important outpost for supply storage and maintained a secret prison for British spies. The most famous event occurred when the Sons of Liberty tore down the lead equestrian statue of King George III from its pedestal on the Bowling Green in New York City and then secretly shipped it to Litchfield, where it was melted down for bullets. Such people and events, of course, were glorified during the Colonial Revival.

After the war Litchfield enjoyed a "Golden Age of Prosperity" as a commercial and industrial urban village. The town was noted as a center for progressive education. In 1784 Judge Tapping Reeve founded the first private law school in America, training future vice presidents, senators, congressmen and, among others, John C. Calhoun, John M. Clayton, Horace Mann, Noah Webster, and
Samuel F. B. Morse. Sarah Pierce started the first female academy in America, attracting a distinguished group of young ladies from all over the United States. Miss Pierce's school pioneered education as well as equal rights for women. The reputation of these academic institutions combined with a growing merchantile economy fostered new prosperity in Litchfield.

The stark urban appearance of northwestern Connecticut's hill villages impressed travelers during the colonial period. Sensitive observers particularly admired the stylishness of Litchfield's federal architecture. William Martin, a well-traveled Southerner, remarked that Litchfield was "one of the most beautiful towns in the world with houses that were large and elegant, neatly arranged and all painted." Several writers commented on the "impressive size and very elegant fashion of the meetinghouses." Timothy Dwight felt that the county courthouse was "handsomer than any other in the state." The contrasting countryside also attracted the attention of numerous visitors, J. P. Brissot de Warville referring to the region as the "paradise of the United States." Ralph Earl perhaps best captured Litchfield's fashionable buildings and lush countryside. Wealthy families such as the Wolcotts and the Tallmadges proudly commissioned him to paint their portraits with their new homes, the Congregational Church, and rolling hills as the background. It was Litchfield's landscape that inspired Earl to be among the first formally trained American artists to paint sitters in a local rather than a classical setting.
During the Golden Age of New England's hill villages, homes and shops built close together in a congested nucleus on treeless wide-open streets were positive signs of modernity and "civilized advancement." In the late 1780s when Oliver Wolcott, Jr. planted thirteen sycamore trees in honor of the thirteen original colonies, town elders criticized him for obstructing progress by reforesting the streets that the town's founding fathers had worked so hard to clear. By colonial standards, treeless streets represented order and man's dominance over the landscape. In Greenfield Hill (1794) Timothy Dwight described a "flourishing" village as one where "industry resounds." Dwight's poem, like Ralph Earl's paintings, was a fitting tribute to America's distinctive landscape. As Kenneth Silverman has postulated, Greenfield Hill was the first lengthy poem in America consciously written for a native audience. Both Dwight and Earl provided Americans with some of the earliest images that eventually contributed to the stereotype of the ideal New England village.

By 1810 Litchfield was the fourth largest settlement in Connecticut, with a population of 4,639. There were over 400 farmsteads on the outskirts of town, in addition to the mills and manufactories listed in Table 1. Litchfield's nucleus now contained over 125 houses, shops, and public buildings. Table 2 enumerates some of the uses of these structures.

There was no separate business district in Litchfield's village center during the colonial period. What later became
### TABLE 1

**MILLS AND MANUFACTURES ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF LITCHFIELD IN 1810**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forges for iron</th>
<th>Saw mills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slitting mill</td>
<td>Large tanneries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil mill</td>
<td>Small tanneries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper mill</td>
<td>Comb manufactures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nail manufactory</td>
<td>Carding machines for wool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulling mills</td>
<td>Cotton manufactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grist mills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 2

**SHOPS AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS IN LITCHFIELD CENTER IN 1810**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hatters shops</th>
<th>Brick yards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carriage makers</td>
<td>Post office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justices of the peace</td>
<td>Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorneys at law</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians</td>
<td>Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgeon</td>
<td>Courthouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldsmiths</td>
<td>Book shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House carpenters and/or joiners</td>
<td>Blacksmiths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet makers</td>
<td>Potters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddlers</td>
<td>Clothiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taverns</td>
<td>Jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both Tables are adapted from James Morris, *A Statistical Account of Litchfield, Connecticut, 1810.*
sprawling residential streets during the Colonial Revival were congested commercial streets throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. An individual either had a shop or an office adjacent to his residence. The prosperous merchant Julius Deming lived in a house and store similar to that in Figure 3. Deming made most of his money in the China trade as well as in several industrial enterprises that developed after the Revolutionary War. He commissioned William Sprats to design his house in 1793, one that reflected the latest, "most elegant" style of architecture. Accordingly, it was painted white, an uncommon color in Litchfield during the last decade of the eighteenth century. Deming's fashionable house most likely stood out as a significant symbol of social status and economic wealth.

Recent research on the original colors of eighteenth-century New England structures shows that white was not a popular color. Only as part of the later neoclassical or federal aesthetic did light yellow-ochres, pale pearl grays, and various shades of off-white become fashionable. Shades of white reached their peak in popularity between roughly 1810 and 1840, but these shades varied from a stone gray to a buff brown. The stark white so familiar to us today was, in fact, first produced during the Colonial Revival.

Litchfield reached the peak of its Golden Age during the 1820s when tradesmen, merchants, and professional gentlemen served a population of more than 4,600. Enrollment in both the Tapping Reeve Law
Figure 3. The Elijah Boardman House (Built in New Milford, Connecticut, 1792) painted by Ralph Earl, 1796. The architect of this house, William Sprats, built the Julius Deming House in Litchfield, Connecticut, a year later. (Cornelia Boardman Aldridge Service.)
School and Miss Pierce's Female Academy also reached a record high. The Reverend Lyman Beecher served the Congregational Church and directed an overwhelming religious revival. Rebecca Couch, a student at the Academy, captured the prosperity of Litchfield at this time in a watercolor (Figure 4), and Benjamin Silliman, on his travels through New England in 1820, described the town in this way:

Litchfield Hill is a beautiful spot. One principal street extends more than a mile and contains a collection of very handsome houses with gardens and courtyards. The houses and appendages are generally painted white. And it is rare to see so considerable a number of houses in a country town where nearly all apparently belong to gentry... It presents a very interesting and gratifying spectacle.

Such a depiction made a lasting impression on Litchfield's residents. This classical image of the early nineteenth century, rather than the pre-Revolutionary pioneer appearance of the eighteenth, served as the archetype to which people looked when they "restored" the town during the Colonial Revival.
Figure 4. Rebecca Couch, View of Litchfield, Connecticut, ca. 1820. (The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center.)
CHAPTER 3
FROM COLONIAL URBAN VILLAGE TO VICTORIAN COUNTRY TOWN

Beginning in the 1830s, Litchfield's political, educational, and economic structure drastically changed with the closing of the Tapping Reeve Law School, which yielded to competition from larger, more metropolitan law schools at Harvard and Yale. Litchfield lost its reputation as an influential legal center, along with a substantial amount of related business and trade. As a means of recovery, a few entrepreneurs built larger mills and manufactories, only to find that Litchfield's rivers could not supply sufficient water power. Commercial activity drastically declined when the railroad bypassed the hill-top village. The population dropped below 4,500 as laborers, craftsmen, and merchants sought better work in the more industrial cities of Hartford, Waterbury, Danbury, New Haven, and Bridgeport.²⁵

Agriculture also decreased substantially during the 1830s and forties as families abandoned their farms in Connecticut and moved to more competitive farming regions in the West. Such moves were familiar to Litchfield's agricultural population because Connecticut farmers moved to Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan, taking their Connecticut culture with them. Each of these states has a town named after Litchfield. Settlements in Ohio often copied the plan and classical architecture of their native New England counterparts. Litchfield's
Congregational Church, for example, inspired the Congregational Church in Tallmadge, Ohio, a tribute more than appropriate because the church's first minister was from Litchfield, Connecticut. Indeed, the town itself was named for Benjamin Tallmadge of Litchfield, a major land speculator on the Western Reserve. Such transmission of style was an important contribution to the West's stereotypical image of the New England village.

Even though Litchfield experienced a rapid depopulation and deindustrialization in the 1830s, it did not become a decadent backwater. Many of the wealthy "professional gentlemen" retired and continued to live in Litchfield as part of the landed aristocracy. A few lawyers and doctors moved to New York for career advancement but maintained their ancestral homes in Litchfield as country summer residences. The high price of real estate came down, and other well-to-do New Yorkers quietly began buying or building second homes in Litchfield. Year-round inhabitants welcomed these summerfolk because they came from social, cultural, and economic backgrounds similar to those of the Litchfield native and were, like them, descendants of old American families. Summer residents also brought increased revenue for the townspeople and a new desire to create a more pastoral village. Along with the support of permanent Litchfield residents, summer residents planted trees and created a central park in 1835. Beautification efforts continued for another ten years, and the once-barren colonial village became a carefully landscaped Victorian resort. Residents planted irregular, overgrown greenery
after Andrew Jackson Downing's "picturesque" fashion. Colonial picket fences were torn down so that the entire village would resemble a rambling park. Residents demolished most of the eighteenth-century shops, offices, and outbuildings, and built asymmetrical, polychromed cottages in their place. Owners of colonial homes updated their houses with earth-tone color schemes and bracketed architectural details. Litchfield kept pace with the times, enjoying the transition from a commercial urban village to a residential country town.

By the mid nineteenth century several other towns in the Berkshires were summer retreats for old-money New Yorkers and Bostonians, influential figures who formed Village Improvement Societies that planned landscape beautification more carefully. The Reverend Horace Bushnell, the Reverend B. G. Northrop (both of whom were born and raised in Litchfield County), and A. J. Downing promoted rural and village improvement nationwide. They suggested planting trees, ivy, and shrubbery that would grow to please the present generation and--more importantly--those of the future. This type of beautification did not evoke a sense of the past. Instead, as Downing stated, such improvements were a "powerful means of civilization . . . and progress."26 "Improvement," in this particular mid nineteenth-century context, meant modernization. Picturesque landscaping updated the old-fashioned bare streets. "Beautification is a town's prosperity" was a popular slogan for Village Improvement Societies, and "prosperity" meant modern advancement.
Progress and prosperity, in a sense, preoccupied the minds of most individuals in nineteenth-century America. We regarded ourselves as an abundant, superior, and unique nation; only in the United States, the land of opportunity, could the bucolic country town so successfully co-exist with the industrial city. But not all Americans shared positive feelings about progress in the mid nineteenth century. There were some antimodernists who were skeptical of our nation's rapid industrial and urban expansion. The Congregational theologian Horace Bushnell consequently advocated a stronger religious understanding of progress, modernization, and village improvement. In his nationally circulated essay The Age of Homespun (1851) Bushnell described Litchfield County's smooth transition from a primitive wilderness to a civilized culture, elevated through the advancement of industry, commerce, government, and education. He admonished disbelievers to have faith in God and His influence over the future. Skepticism from all levels of society increased nonetheless as the next generation faced dramatic social changes in industrial cities and as our nation became politically and culturally divided in the Civil War.
CHAPTER 4
CREATING THE IDEAL COLONIAL IMAGE

During the postwar Centennial celebration and subsequent Colonial Revival, America's new interest in the past prompted Village Improvement Societies to beautify towns in a different style. As cities and industry expanded uncontrollably, antimodernism intensified, these societies began to historicize the landscape in what they thought was a proper colonial fashion.

In Litchfield people looked back not to the Age of Homespun as a colonial source, but to the Golden Age of Prosperity, the period of the stylish white house that expressed order, balance, rationality, and security. Residents did not rely on documentary evidence for their colonial restorations, but based their work instead on traditions and memory, romanticizing, sentimentalizing, and idealizing the image of the colonial style, copying only the most elite features. Eager residents wanted what they perceived as an accurately reproduced colonial house, but they did not want the outbuildings, stables, shops, animal pens, and vegetable gardens that had originally gone along with such a house. The residents of Litchfield wanted the look of the flourishing federal village minus the signs of the period's commercialism and industrialism. They wanted to create what they
deemed a more refined and dignified colonial setting. Home owners preferred flower to vegetable gardens, white to red houses. Elm-shaded streets were based on sparse historic references to sporadic tree plantings.

The Litchfielders, like so many of the Colonial Revivalists that were to follow their example, worked less to achieve strict historical accuracy than to create a generalized colonial conceit. In a recent article on R. T. H. Halsey as curator of the original American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Wendy Kaplan observed that "idealization of the past [was] a reaction to fears of foreign contamination, industrialization, and irrevocable change in American life." She cites anthropologist Ralph Linton's "observation that such idealization leads to ancestor worship, wherby 'the society's members feel that by behaving as the ancestors did they will, in some usually undefined way, help to recreate the total situation in which the ancestors lived.'" Having lost a national sense of innocence after a shattering civil war, faced with a bewildering influx of immigrants, and surveying the disintegration of American agrarianism, the Litchfielders sought asylum in the idealized New England village, commencing its elevation to the status of national symbol.

Litchfield was at the forefront of a new phase of Village Improvement. The town's first "colonialization" project preserved and labeled the remains of Oliver Wolcott, Jr.'s thirteen sycamore trees. For the Centennial, the Society replaced the randomly planted
mixture of trees along the town's streets with regimented rows of American elms, choosing this type of tree for its distinctive native branching pattern. In addition, the planners knew that the elm grows very quickly in Litchfield's climate so that it would take only about fifteen years for the trees to arch over the village streets, creating a homogeneous "colonial" appearance. Such tree formations also suggested an important spiritual security, people readily associating overarching branches with the all-embracing arms of God.29

Most of the funding for Litchfield's beautification projects came from private sources. The town legislature, however, provided the manual labor. It required all locally jailed prisoners to water and mow both public and private lawns. The townspeople believed that this was one of the best ways to rehabilitate criminals and turn them into patriotic, law-abiding, and conscientious citizens.

In the early 1880s Litchfield's Village Improvement Society initiated an important architectural project. Prior to this time the townspeople had taken pride in their colonial homes but had directed more attention to the historic events and people associated with houses rather than to the age and architecture of the building themselves. Their interest shifted to the physical structures during the Colonial Revival. Litchfield was most likely the first town in America to sponsor a campaign to date and placard its historic houses. Litchfield's colonial homes, in a sense, needed designation because about 65% of the town's houses were in the competing gothic style.
A building marked with a colonial date, then, acquired a special significance and function. As one writer observed, "the passerby would gain a sense of history, security, patriotism and stability when he encountered a doorway bearing an eighteenth-century date."³⁰

Litchfield's secluded rural setting helped to determine the persistence of a strictly colonial American style. Residents in the town did not build what Henry James called "white elephants, with their affront to proportion and discretion," homes indigenous to seaside summer resorts such as Newport and generally not found along restrained village streets. In A Backward Glance Edith Wharton remarked on how extravagant summer residences ruined the colonial character of Newport. Wharton even described her joyous "escape" from an ugly Tudor house in Newport, "a vapid watering-place," to a Colonial Revival home in the Berkshire Mountains, "the real country."³¹

Litchfield also did not attract any of the ostentatious "nouveaux riches," as Newport did. Litchfielders often referred to the Newport "400" as "un-American hybrids."³² In contrast, Litchfield appealed to old-money families with impeccable ancestral attachment to the town. Most year-round residents lived in colonial houses or on land owned by their forebears. Many summer residents were either descended from old Litchfield stock or from ancestors who once attended school there. A Miss Perkins, a great granddaughter of the merchant Julius Deming, is typical of Litchfield's residents. She posed for a photograph (Figure 5) wearing an approximation of a
Figure 5. Miss Perkins, ca. 1890. (Mrs. Ludlow S. Bull.)
colonial dress and a locket miniature of her grandfather as she pours tea from his armorial set of Chinese export porcelain. Miss Perkins was just one of thousands of "aboriginal aristocrats" in Litchfield, influentials who initiated a comprehensive restoration of the town in the colonial or "ancestral" style that was in full force by the mid 1880s. The security—but, more importantly, the social and cultural status—of living in a colonial home became a self-conscious concern for Litchfield's elite. These townspeople went to great lengths to create what they perceived and idealized as the colonial style of architecture.

The most common way of achieving a colonial look was to perpetuate the tradition of the white house with black or dark green shutters. The John Collins house (Figure 6), for example, was built in 1782 and was first painted red; it was not painted white until 1815, during the height of Litchfield's Golden Age. Exterior shutters most likely were added at this time, too, the building originally having had interior shutters. This house remained white throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. During the Colonial Revival no one doubted that the house had always been white. The owners relied on tradition, believing that they were restoring the "correct" colonial appearance of the house by painting it white.

A second way that a home owner could create the colonial look was to take an eighteenth-century structure such as the Julius Deming house (Figure 7) and make it an even grander statement of the colonial style (Figure 8). The architect E. K. Rossiter duplicated the
Figure 6. The John Collins house, Litchfield, Connecticut, 1782. (Nan F. Heminway.)
Figure 7. William Sprats, facade and south elevation, The Julius Deming house, Litchfield, Connecticut, 1793. Photographed in 1875 before alterations. (Mrs. Ludlow S. Bull.)

Figure 8. The Julius Deming house, south elevation after 1888 alterations by Rossiter and Wright. (Mrs. Ludlow S. Bull.)
original Palladian facade on a new and larger projecting portico on the south elevation. He added colonial dormer windows to a raised roof and romantic bay windows to the ground floor of the south elevation. Enlarged chimney-stacks displayed the dates 1793 and 1888, commemorating both the original construction and the later colonialization.

The coveted colonial style could also be achieved in several other ways. During the late nineteenth century, it was common to take a polychrome Victorian house and render it "colonial" by painting it white (Figure 9). Even though this type of house had no characteristically colonial architectural elements, it could at least match Litchfield's classic color scheme. This structure underwent a more dramatic change during the 1920s when the owner totally transformed it into a gambrel roof colonial-style structure (Figure 10). Many Victorian homes were subjected to such a character change. In order to create a more authentic colonial appearance, architects made exact copies of details from genuine colonial structures or period design books. Several houses in Litchfield had meticulous reproductions of moldings, doorways, and columns from Asher Benjamin source books. The Colonial Revival architect and critic Aymar Embury II often found it difficult to distinguish between colonial and Colonial Revival details. Any type of house could be colonialized during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Academic and popular journals, as well as advice books, offered helpful hints for turning even the "smallest eyesore of a structure into a colonial jewel."33
Figure 9. The Lamb house, Litchfield, Connecticut, photographed ca. 1905, before alterations. (The Litchfield Historical Society.)

Figure 10. The Lamb house, Litchfield, Connecticut, after 1920s colonialization. (The Litchfield Historical Society.)
A final way of achieving the colonial look was to commission a New York architect to design a "modern Colonial" home. This came in two distinct styles. The first copied local architecture from Litchfield's Golden Age. On the Mary Perkins Quincy house (Figure 11) the architects Howells and Stokes combined the overall Georgian form of the 1775 Benjamin Tallmadge house with the Palladian window and doorway of the Julius Deming house. The Quincy house was painted a pale yellow and had olive green shutters. Complete with a white picket fence, it stood in perfect harmony with the surrounding colonial houses.

The second "modern Colonial" style was a bit more romantic: it evoked a familiar and erroneous stereotype of the Southern plantation (Figure 12). Even though this style had never been a part of Litchfield's colonial building tradition, it was nonetheless a tasteful architectural interpretation. The use of this style in Litchfield was appropriate because it, too, suggested a significant Golden Age, the very reverse of post Civil War Northern supremacy: the age of the antebellum South and white supremacy. As one resident of Litchfield remarked in a discussion of the potential immigrant threat in the United States, "with a rise in white supremacy comes the rise of white pillars."

By the turn of the century, Litchfield's colonial and colonial-looking homes, situated behind green sloping lawns and nestled under canopies of elms, rendered a peaceful, homogeneous
Figure 11. (below) Howells and Stokes, the Mary Perkins Quincy house, Litchfield, Connecticut, 1892. (above) The Benjamin Tallmadge house, Litchfield, Connecticut, 1775. (The Litchfield Historical Society.)
Figure 12. Samuel Edson Gage, The Underwood house, Litchfield, Connecticut, 1898 in the "Southern Colonial" style. (The Litchfield Historical Society.)
appearance. Litchfield was noted throughout the United States as a white city upon a hill. The townspeople took great pride in their village. An active Daughters of the American Revolution sponsored historical exhibits in concert with the town's historical society. The Village Improvement Society offered several lecture series on American architecture in conjunction with their beautification projects. Individuals tried to approximate the lifestyle of their ancestors by holding colonial teas, costume balls, musicales, and historical pageants. Mrs. Shepherd Knapp donated her large colonial farm to the Fresh Air Fund so that poor New York City children could come to the country for a "breath of our great democracy" and be "moulded into upright and honored citizens." Newspaper accounts of the period praised the congenial rapport between the city summer folk and the year-round residents. Merchants gladly catered to the needs of the upper classes. Litchfield had a harmless immigrant population of Irish who were mainly servants and caretakers for the wealthy. The townspeople did not feel threatened by the Irish because they were small in number, knew their place in society, and were honest Roman Catholics. In addition, their fair features did not make them look too foreign, and they shared at least a similar language.

The residents of Litchfield delighted in showing off their ideal town while making it virtually inaccessible to the common folk. The wealthy elites forbade both the railroad and the trolley from coming through, primarily to discourage tourism. They did not want any of what they called "unworthies" spoiling their "utopia." This
act also represented a conscious rejection of a modern intrusion that would lead to commercialism and industrialism. A trolley was for the evil city, not the virtuous country. Merchants in other towns objected to being cut off from wealthy customers living in Litchfield. For more than a decade Litchfield publicly fought surrounding towns for its privacy. In an argument printed in a local paper one merchant from nearby Torrington accused Litchfielders of being too proud to associate with commoners and speculated that they spent all of their time tracing their ancestry. Such accusations only pleased the inhabitants of Litchfield, who were not ashamed of their insular prejudices. Litchfielders honestly believed that they were serving their country by preserving and isolating their unique village. It was in all seriousness and with a due sense of patriotism that one of the town's leading citizens proposed sending a model of Litchfield to the St. Louis exposition as an example of the ideal New England town, the defender of democracy.
CHAPTER 5
THE SHAPING OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT

In 1923 Thorstein Veblen observed that "the country town is one of the great American Institutions; perhaps the greatest in the sense that it has had and continues to have a greater part than any other in shaping public sentiment and giving character to American culture." Veblen might not have made such a powerful statement had Americans not so self-consciously shaped the character of their idyllic country towns during the preceding years of the Colonial Revival. The early twentieth century witnessed our nation's most concerted efforts to preserve its country town. In 1908, as a direct response to the adverse effects of industrialization and to the concomitant desertion of farms throughout the United States, Theodore Roosevelt initiated the Country Life Movement, which more seriously re-evaluated social, economic, and cultural conditions in rural America. In addition, this movement helped to establish our nation's first state forests and parks as well as to preserve our natural resources. New England's colonialized villages and restored farms served as inspirational models for rural towns all over America.

_Rural Manhood_ and _The Village Magazine_, primarily published for Western farmers, carefully detailed the improvements of New England's towns and farming regions. Articles in such periodicals
made a universal impression on the landscape. In *Main Street* Sinclair Lewis said of Mankato, Minnesota, that it is "not a prairie town, but in its garden-sheltered streets and aisles of elms is white and green New England reborn." The future stability of farms and villages in the West depended on the ideal appearance and survival of the New England archetype. As Lewis Mumford assured society:

> In what other part of the world has such a harmonious balance between the natural and the social environment been preserved? . . . the New England village reaches a pretty fair pitch of worldly perfection; and beneath all the superficial changes that affected it in the next century and a half a reference to the dramatic changes of the nineteenth century its sturdy framework held together remarkably well.\(^{38}\)

Beginning in 1913 Litchfield played its most important role as a national archetype and symbol. In this year the Village Improvement Society, directed by Ludlow S. Bull and Charles T. Payne, proposed a town-wide project to remodel in the "purely" colonial style all of Litchfield's public and commercial buildings as well as the village green. With the completion of this project, Litchfield would become America's first comprehensive restoration of our colonial past. Newspapers nationwide praised the town by reporting that

> while practically every boro, village, and town in the United States is seeking twentieth-century improvements and zealously working for a position in the march of progress, Litchfield thru the choice of its people, after standing aloof and looking on, is about to turn the other way.\(^{39}\)

That Litchfield proposed such colonialization plans in 1913 is no accident of history. The townspeople's deliberate rejection of

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modern design coincided with the opening of the Armory Show in New York and America's official introduction to "modern art." Many of Litchfield's summer élite disliked the show but had to be careful in what they said about it because many of their social and cultural peers accepted the new styles. A candid interview with two of Litchfield's oldest and most prominent residents revealed that many townspeople disliked the foreign style of the show because it competed with the native American colonial style. Some residents, furthermore, resented the prominent Jewish families who patronized this art, a prejudice that only strengthened Litchfield's colonial crusade.

Depictions of villages and village life, ironically, were in fact exhibited at the Armory Show. American artists such as Anne Goldthwaite, Childe Hassam, and Maurice Prendergast featured abstract works depicting New England genre scenes. The French artist Maurice de Vlaminck exhibited the most abstract painting in this vein, a scene entitled "Village," depicting Rueil, France. In this composition the artist reduced white houses, black shutters, green trees, and a village church to mere patches of color.

Litchfield was not interested in such abstraction. The Village Improvement Society commissioned architects A. P. F. Adenaw, of LaFarge and Morris, and F. B. J. Renshaw to design all of the colonialization plans, which were first exhibited in private apartments and clubs in New York City and then in Litchfield for public approval. A lecture

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series on colonial American architecture accompanied each exhibition. The Village Improvement Society personified antimodernist sentiments; the Society wanted to camouflage all signs of industry and commerce, leaving not "the slightest vestige of modern design." It is not surprising, then, that their first project involved transforming the railroad depot and a series of Victorian storefronts into domestic-looking colonial structures. The Society had white wooden cornices, pediments, doorways, quoins, and pilasters custom made and then attached to the buildings. In some cases, wooden clapboards were placed completely over the brick exterior of a structure. The Society similarly changed the court house (Figure 13), thought to be in the style of "utilitarian ugliness," to a more colonial-looking icon of justice and democracy.

One of the most important symbols in Litchfield, the village green, also underwent a total transformation at this time. The Village Improvement Society hired John Charles Olmstead and Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. to relandscape this chaotic plot of land. The green had been graded and planted several times during the last half of the nineteenth century but had never had a complete overhaul. Even though there was no grassy green in eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century Litchfield, the Olmstead brothers "restored" one based on an idealized composite of several non-colonial New England greens. Their product, a symmetrical, tree shaded park, harmonized with the town down to the smallest details: lampposts and benches even copied colonial designs. Litchfielders justified the existence
Figure 13. (left) Litchfield County Courthouse, 1888. (right) Litchfield County Courthouse as it looked after its 1913 colonialization. (The Litchfield Historical Society.)
of such a green by arguing that if Litchfield had had a village green in colonial times, it most surely would have resembled the Olmsteads' work.42

Other important persons contributed to colonializing and preserving Litchfield's landscape in 1913. A group of ambitious ladies formed the town's first Garden Club of America chapter, with membership limited only to those women already in the D. A. R. With true patriotic zeal they promoted new colonial-style gardens. They idealized the past and planted old-fashioned, English flower gardens rather than the more authentic herb and vegetable gardens. As a direct result of Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission, Alain C. White established a 4,000-acre conservation reservation in Litchfield. In 1913 this was one of the country's largest privately supported public trusts. White contributed more land over the next few decades, buying abandoned farms, scenic lookouts, waterfalls, and mountains. What eventually totalled well over 6,000 acres of prime land formed the basis of Connecticut's parks and forest system. The residents of Litchfield enjoyed the security of knowing that their lush countryside would never be destroyed.

1913 was a landmark year for village improvement generally. P. T. Farwell published in that year a comprehensive book on the movement, citing the New England town as the model American community. Farwell perpetuated the myth of the nucleated tree-shaded village, identifying environmental protection and town beautification with the colonial way. He reminded readers that
identifying environmental protection and town beautification with the colonial way. He reminded readers that

it is worth remembering that the old Puritan settlers must have had some deep sense of the value of natural beauty, else they would not have surrounded these commons and planted them, here and there, with the graceful elms, now in their majestic old age . . . . The old Puritans were not without their appreciation of beauty, and oftentimes in town-planning they showed more forethought than has been accredited to them, and more than the builders of the newer towns have usually exercised.43

Also in 1913 many cities instituted beautification projects based on the New England village archetype. Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. chaired the National Conference on City Planning, campaigning for better landscaped cities, new building codes, and improved sanitary conditions. These plans were interrupted, however, by our nation's entrance into its first world war and an even more intense period of nativism and insecurity.

Although Litchfield's architectural colonialization abated during World War I, the town still served as an important symbol of Americanism. Many New York City families, not necessarily previous summer residents, moved to this isolated village for a sense of security and protection. Rather than spend money on cosmetic colonial remodelings, these people instead founded small hospitals for wounded soldiers, prepared bandages, and packaged supplies just as their Revolutionary ancestors had done.

After the war Litchfield's Village Improvement Society undertook its final and most arduous project, the restoration of the
Congregational Church. Richard Henry Dana, Jr., a New York architect and nearby summer resident, supervised this six-year "restoration," which may be more accurately termed a reconstruction. The first step was particularly drastic. The parishoners demolished the existing Gothic Revival church built in 1873, rejecting Victorian taste in favor of the colonial style. The next step required salvaging what was left of the 1829 Congregational Church, which by the 1920s was gutted, having been used variously as a cow barn, warehouse, movie theater, and gymnasium. The sparse remains of this structure were moved to a site overlooking the village green. Richard Henry Dana, Jr., totally redesigned the interior, basing it on early nineteenth-century architectural design books. Everything but a new mahogany pulpit was painted white. Dana reconstructed a steeple and other exterior ornaments, and by 1929 the church had assumed the classical appearance we still see today (Figure 1). With the completion of this icon and the romantic restoration of the Tapping Reeve Law School during the following year, the residents of Litchfield had created their ideal image of a "colonial" New England town for Americans to admire and adopt. For a nation experiencing the uncertainties and hardships of the Great Depression, Litchfield's landscape served as an even greater symbol of survival, stability, and democracy.
CONCLUSION

THE SURVIVAL OF THE REVIVAL

Other New England towns, particularly rural summer resorts, underwent similar transformations during the Colonial Revival, but Litchfield was at the forefront of the colonialization process. The town furthermore served as a source of inspiration for establishing the later museum villages of Colonial Williamsburg, Old Sturbridge Village, and Historic Deerfield. The visual plan of Litchfield, like the spiritual plan of John Winthrop's Boston, was to create an ideal city upon a hill. Winthrop's plan, however, was unsuccessful, and Americans did not fashion an ideal image of a New England town until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is the Colonial Revival image of the New England town rather than the historically accurate colonial image that has made a lasting material mark on the American landscape.
The term colonial in the context of this study requires an explanation. When I documented and interpreted the colonial landscape of Litchfield I am referring to 1719-1780, or roughly from the town's first English settlement to just before the close of the Revolution. Popular society today loosely uses "colonial" to describe the style and epoch of the eighteenth century, particularly the years surrounding the Revolution. During the Colonial Revival, popular culture thought of the colonial period as starting in 1620, with the landing of the Pilgrims, and ending around 1840, with the beginnings of industrialization. Some architectural historians during the Colonial Revival were aware of the inexact use of this word: C. Matlack Price coincidentally raises this issue in "Historic Houses of Litchfield," The White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs 5, no. 3 (June 1919): 13-14. Also in this article (and for the first time in the monograph series), Price discusses the stereotypical image of the New England town, using Litchfield as an example.


4Wood, p. 5.


8Rhoads, pp. 239-254.


12Interview with Mrs. Ludlow Bull, Litchfield, June 1980. Sinclair Lewis first said this to Mr. Ludlow Bull in the early 1920s and the statement has been widely quoted since in articles about the town.


Interview with Mr. Harmon Poole, Litchfield, June, 1980.

I am indebted to Sara B. Chase, of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, and Richard Candee, preservation consultant, for sharing their research and knowledge of eighteenth-century paint colors.

See, for example, Ralph Earl's painting, Mrs. Benjamin Tallmadge (1790) at the Litchfield Historical Society. The Mary Anne Lewis sketch of the second Congregational meetinghouse was rediscovered at the Litchfield Historical Society in June 1980. Because it shows a red structure, this sketch was rarely used in historical studies of the town. For a landmark study of the prevailing use of colors other than white on colonial meetinghouses see Peter Benes, "Sky Colors and Scattered Clouds: The Decorative and Architectural Painting of New England Meetinghouses, 1738-1834," in New England Meeting House and Church: 1630-1850, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1979), pp. 51-69.


Litchfield Monitor (January 3, 1788). There were some decorative landmark trees along Litchfield's streets during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but these were not regimented rows of arching elms; instead, townspeople planted clusters of oak, beech, horsechestnut, and lombardy populars. Such trees, however, often died before attaining substantial height.

Figure 3 is actually the Elijah Boardman house built in New Milford, Connecticut, in 1792. In 1793 Julius Deming built a duplicate of this house (Figure 7) in nearby Litchfield. Both Deming and Boardman came from the same mercantile background and class; the similarity between their homes is important for my discussion of the new Federal style of architecture in Litchfield.

Again, I am indebted to Sara B. Chase and Richard Candee for this information on paint color.

Benjamin Silliman, Geology, Mineralogy, Scenery, etc. in the Counties of New Haven and Litchfield (New Haven, 1820), p. 27.


Horace Bushnell, The Age of Homespun (Hartford: Edwin Hunt Publishing, 1851); also reprinted nationwide during the last half of the nineteenth century in newspapers and collections of Bushnell's speeches and discourses.


William Solotaroff, Shade Trees in Towns and Cities (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1911); Charles L. Pack, Trees as Good Citizens (Washington, D.C.: The American Tree Association, 1922). During the 1820s when the Reverend Lyman Beecher was stationed in Litchfield, he preached about the spiritual significance of trees, which inspired a small tree planting movement. His children, Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, discussed the moral and patriotic value of trees in several of their writings during the latter half of the nineteenth century.
Newspaper accounts from the period strongly suggest that Litchfield was the first town to placard houses. In checking with other American towns, I have not yet found an earlier occurrence. For the quotation see "Beautiful Litchfield," Litchfield Enquirer (May 3, 1882).


For the quotation see Charles T. Payne to Ludlow S. Bull, letter dated September 17, 1923. In the collection of Mrs. Ludlow S. Bull, Litchfield. During the Colonial Revival popular culture associated large classical porticoes supported by colossal columns with Southern plantation-style architecture; this is yet another erroneous stereotype (see Lewis Mumford, Sticks and Stones (1924; reprint ed., New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955), p. 54. Several residents of Litchfield even organized tours to the South to get ideas for their homes. In a lecture given at the Winterthur Conference on the Colonial Revival in America (1981), Gretchen Schneider of Colonial Williamsburgh discussed the association of the Civil War-era stereotypical Southern belle's costume with the "colonial" style of dress.

"Opening of Shepherd Knapp Memorial Home," Litchfield Enquirer (July 6, 1905).

"Litchfield Trolley," Litchfield Enquirer (November 12, 1903); "Torrington Objects," Litchfield Enquirer (November 19, 1903); "Litchfield the Only," Litchfield Enquirer (July 24, 1902).


40 Interview in Litchfield, March, 1982. Both individuals wish to remain anonymous. For a scathing article on antisemitism in Litchfield see Willson Whitman, "O Little Town . . . (Restricted)," The Nation (December 25, 1943): 751-754.


42 Extemporaneous remarks of John C. Olmstead, 1913 (typescript at the Litchfield Historical Society); Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., to F. Kingsbury Bull, letter dated March 15, 1913, in the collection of Mrs. Ludlow S. Bull, Litchfield.


44 As Kenneth L. Ames has contended in courses on Victorian material culture given at the Winterthur Museum, elites in the 1920s rejected Victorian artifacts and architecture because they were products of a time that significantly altered and, more importantly, threatened their society. Elites favored the colonial style because it suggested to them a more stable and refined era.

45 Interview with Mrs. Ludlow S. Bull, November, 1982. Mrs. Bull recalls that the founders of these museum villages made several trips to Litchfield to get ideas for planning their restorations.
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Correspondence of Ludlow S. Bull to Richard Henry Dana, Jr.

Correspondence of Ludlow S. Bull to Charles T. Payne.

Correspondence of Ludlow S. Bull to Kingsbury F. Bull.
