

6. Historic and Cultural Resources

North Stonington, incorporated in 1807, is a rural town whose character is most vividly seen in its active and historic farms; miles of stonewalls; buildings of architectural and historical distinction; scenic views and large tracts of forest. As early farmers began to harness the power of the Shunock River, the town became a prosperous mill town. This not only enhanced the town's strong agricultural heritage, but contributed to its many successful cottage industries and thriving mercantile center in the 19th Century.

It is the lasting presence of historic structures, roads and bridges intermingled with more modern elements that give North Stonington a sense of authenticity and place. Even though North Stonington undeniably complements the greater New England area it occupies, it has held fast to its own traditions and resisted often strong development pressure over the years. The former success of the historic mills and cottage industries despite the presence of nearby modern facilities, demonstrates the almost willful self-reliance of the residents - a trait that is still quite evident today.

Until the 17th Century, Native Americans were the only human residents. The white settlers that ultimately inhabited this region kept a number of the native names for the town's prominent geologic features including the Shunock Brook, Assekonk Swamp, Wintechog and Cossaduck Hills. Eventually, two reservations were allotted to the Pequots, one of which is located along Long Pond near Lantern Hill.

The first colonial settlers to what was then the larger town of Stonington were Ezekeil Main and Jeremiah Burch. Other prominent families included the Miners, Wheelers, Browns, Palmers, Hewitts and Averys. In the early 19th Century, residents in the northern portion of the town of Stonington began to regard themselves as possessing a character separate from their southern counterparts (now Mystic, Pawcatuck and Stonington) to which they were attached and so they officially separated to form their own town (North Stonington). North Stonington has roots in small town entrepreneurship, philanthropy, and volunteerism which enabled it to thrive in the 19th Century and ultimately survive to the present with its character intact. Many of the industries were self-sustaining and the products were primarily for



(Above) Saw Mill Complex, Lower Dam on Shunock River, ca 1900 (connecticuthistory.org); (Below) North Stonington Village, ca 1907.



local consumption. Connectivity was also emphasized as evidenced by strong road networks and the old trolley line.

North Stonington has always had a substantial farm population with industrious core values. In 1808, 53% of the town's area was dedicated to farming. The town's agricultural wealth and successful mills contributed to its commercial success and growth. After the Civil War, the population began to decline as people began to migrate to cities and to the West. In the early 20th century the construction of the trolley line, and ultimately paved highways through town, led to rapid growth. North Stonington became a bedroom community for the postwar defense industry and military community of southeastern Connecticut. The town added 600 residents during the 1950's with the construction of Cedar Ridge, and another 1,800 with the construction of the Kingswood-Meadow Wood housing development in the 1960's.

6.1 Historic Resources

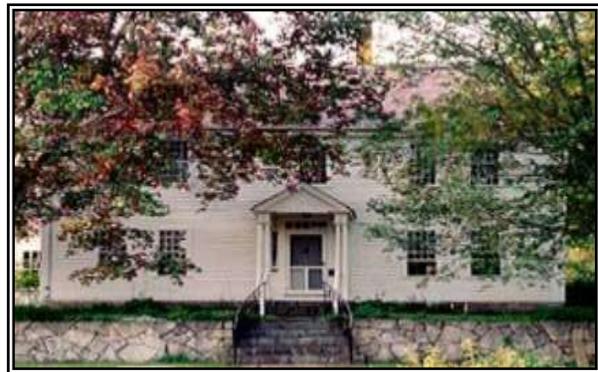
The residents of North Stonington cherish the town for its beauty, historic value, agricultural heritage and rural character. In 1983, the Village was added to the **National Register of Historic Places**. The Luther Palmer and John Randall homes are also on the list, though not located within the Village. There are many other historic structures, farms and areas located throughout town as depicted on the Character Resources Map on page 29.

North Stonington has approximately 123 **cemeteries**, scattered throughout the town, many of which are ancient. The town's Cemetery Committee uses an 'adopt a cemetery' program to outsource upkeep. The Old Plains Cemetery contains 307 graves and many rare examples of early stonecutter's art, which require special preservation efforts. The cemetery contains some of the earliest marked stones in town.

The **Historical Society's Steven Main Homestead** holds historic and genealogical records, a collection of art and artifacts, and is open to members for meetings and weekly luncheons. It is presided over by Anna Coit, a 105



Old Plains Cemetery



Steven Main Homestead



The Dye House

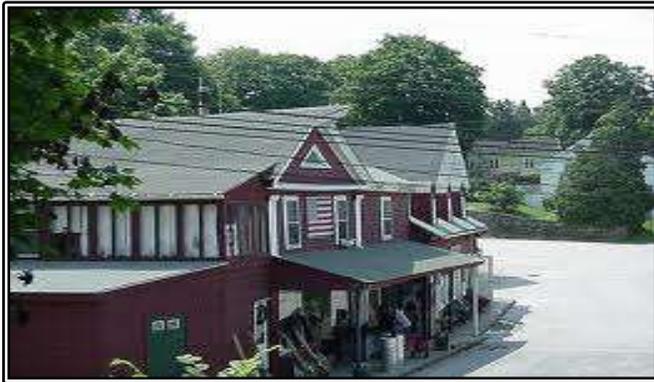


year old fountain of historic information and humorous anecdotes. Her writings for the monthly historical society newspaper are a much awaited part of many North Stonington residents' mail. The Historical Society has recently opened a **Dye House** with a respectable collection of items and information about North Stonington's early mill history. Their Dye House Day celebrates this part of the town's history and has become a well-attended annual event.

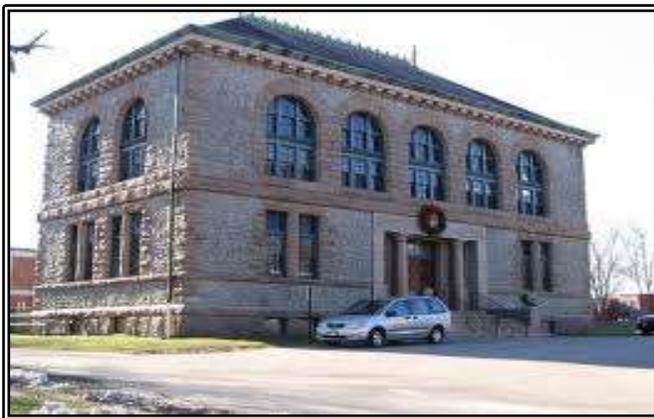
6.2 Cultural Resources



The Grange



Hardware Store & Former Watermark Cafe - Village



Wheeler Library

The Grange was founded in the late 19th century to help farms that had been devastated by the Civil War. In the 20th century, the North Stonington Grange was the cultural center of town. Many residents still remember going to square dances there every weekend. The Grange's civic interests have broadened over the years, but it still hosts two of the largest cultural events in town: the Agricultural Fair and the Halloween Party/Cup Social. These and its bi-monthly meetings provide a much needed chance to rub elbows with fellow townspeople. In fact, every Grange meeting ends with a social hour around a bountiful refreshment table.

From Brown and Stone's General Store to the Watermark Cafe, **2 Wyassup Road** was always the gathering spot in town, where residents could hang out and catch up with their neighbors. It's destruction in the flood of 2010 was a cultural blow to the town and the village and it is sorely missed. During the visioning process residents repeatedly lamented the loss of this cultural resource and expressed keen interest in supporting a similar business in the abutting properties.

Since the flood, **Wheeler Library** has tried to fill the need for a community hub, and has presented a variety of programs for all ages. Built in 1900, it contains a period hall comprising the entire second floor, which functions both as the main floor of the collection, and an inviting location to hold



Holly Green Plaza

events. Although the library is a private trust, its fund drives are always well supported by townspeople. Wheeler Library is located near the schools, encouraging use by students. Since 1990, the library has undergone renovations, which include the installation of an elevator, a meeting room, and new computer terminals. The Library is actively supported by a volunteer group: *Friends of the Wheeler Library*.



Aerial View of Hewitt Farm

New to town is **The Wired Bean**, a coffee shop in Holly Green with Wi-Fi. Its owners, local residents and owners of businesses in Holly Green are hopeful it will fill a much needed roll as a place for kids to gather after school.

Hewitt Farm is 104 acres of forest, farm, and historic buildings purchased by the town. It contains walking trails, and a community garden, and provides a location for events that celebrate the rural environment, such as picnics and night sky watching. Interest has been shown in opening a farmers market, and working with the school to teach agriculture and science to students.



Meadow on Hewitt Farm

The town has many **public trails and pathways** that were created throughout its milling, woodland harvesting, and farming history. These connective and access features can provide future generations with many recreational opportunities to enjoy the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the town.



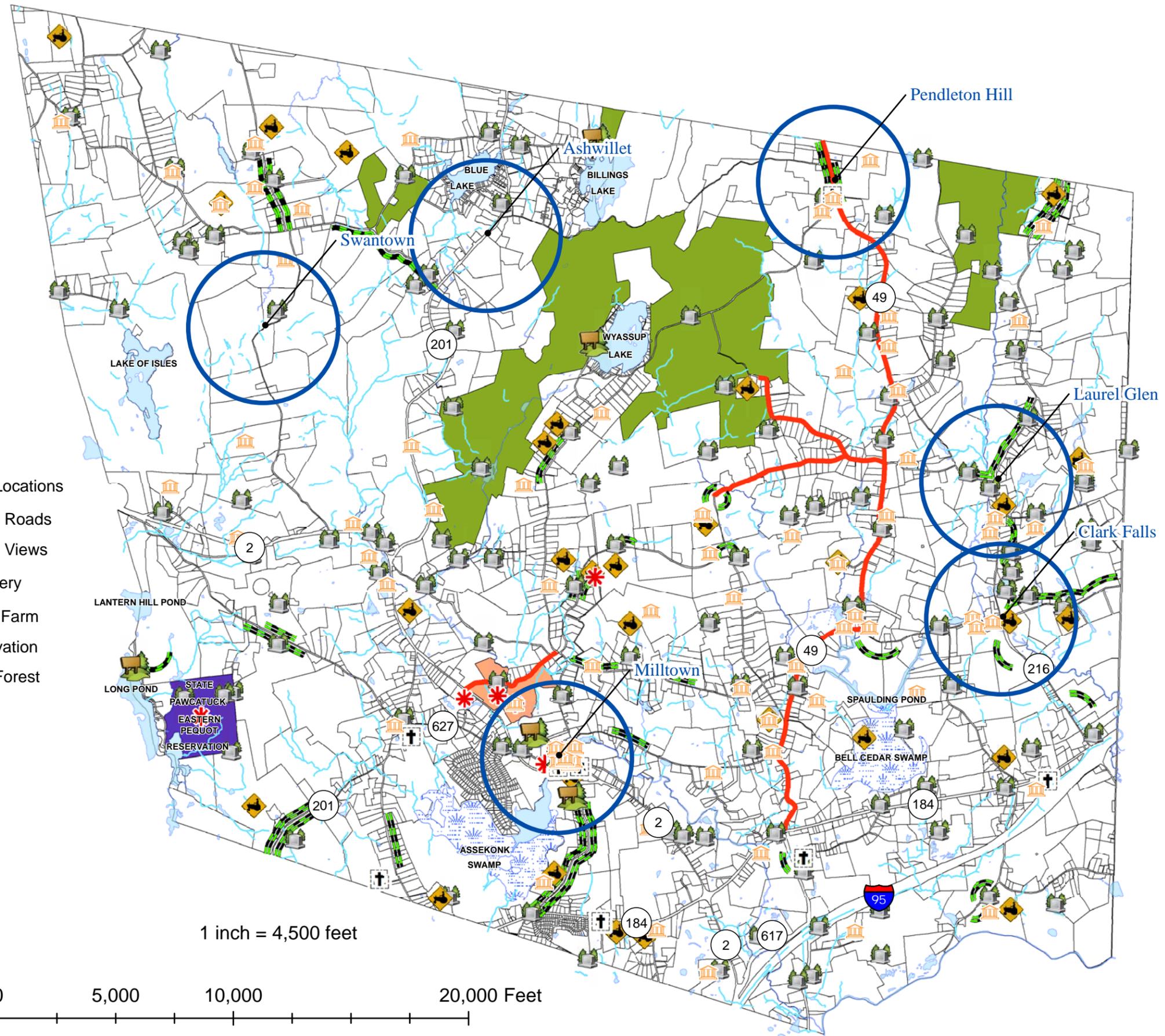
North Stonington
Connecticut

Character Resource Map

Parcel Lines To
7/1/2013

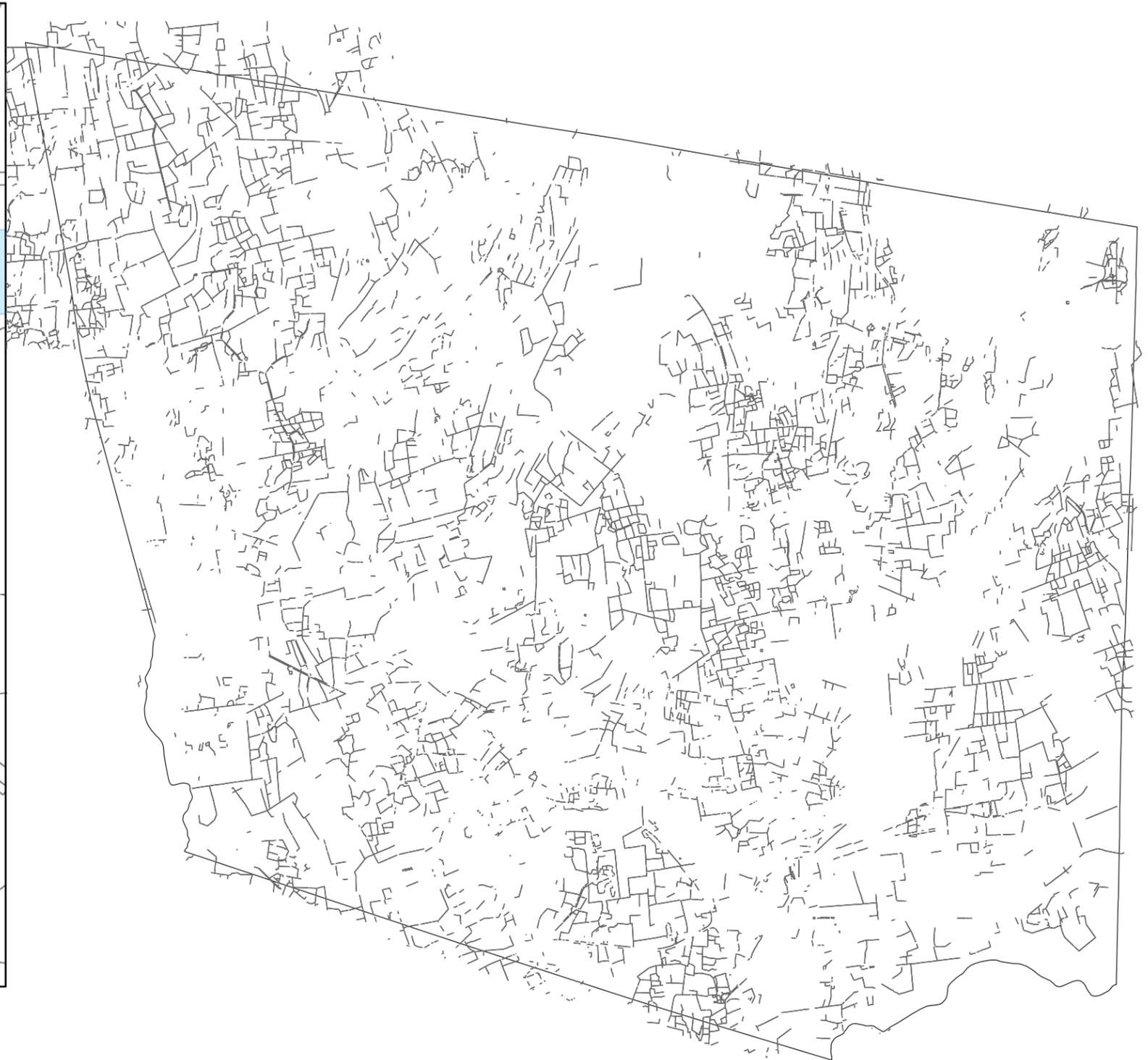
Character Resources

- Church
- Cultural Resources
- Historic Homes/Resources
- Parks and Recreation
- Villages
- Farm Locations
- Scenic Roads
- Scenic Views
- Cemetery
- Hewitt Farm
- Reservation
- State Forest



North Stonington Village

Stonewalls



Character Resources

-  Church
-  Cultural Resources
-  Historic Homes/Resources
-  Parks and Recreation
-  Farm Locations
-  Scenic Roads
-  Scenic Views
-  Cemetery

