



RESOURCE EVALUATION

DATE: March 8, 2021

STAFF: Jennifer Betsworth

PROPERTY: Village of Philmont Historic District

MCD: Philmont

ADDRESS: Various

COUNTY: Columbia

PROJECT REF: 20PR00509

USN: 02143.000040

- I. Property is individually listed on SR/NR:
name of listing:
- Property is a contributing component of a SR/NR district:
name of district:
- II. Property meets eligibility criteria.
- Property contributes to a district which appears to meet eligibility criteria.

Criteria for Inclusion in the National Register:

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possess high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- D. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Based on the results of the reconnaissance-level survey of the village, the proposed Village of Philmont Historic District appears eligible under Criterion A in the area of industry for its association with the growth and expansion of textile mills powered by Agawamuck Creek. While mills using the creek’s waterpower existed earlier, the establishment of hosiery and paper mills resulted in the substantial growth of the village during the late nineteenth century. The district is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a representative example of an older mill hamlet that rapidly expanded into a factory village. The historic resources within the district reflect its early development, industrial and residential architecture associated with its expansion, and the twentieth century evolution of the village into a factory town. The preliminary period of significance for the district extends from 1795, reflecting the establishment of the hamlet, through 1969, when the last significant building in the district, the Catholic church parish hall, was completed.

Settlement around Philmont began by 1795, when George Philip (ca. 1754-1806) acquired the right to open a fulling mill on Agawamuck Creek. Joseph Horton opened a second mill upstream from High Falls in 1807. The mill hamlet that served this operation was known as Factory Hill. Anticipating the completion of the New York & Harlem Railroad to the community, George P. Philip (1811-1890) began improving the waterpower and mill

infrastructure, establishing a power canal. The depot associated with the hamlet was named Philmont in recognition of Philip's role in the economy; this name was quickly applied to the hamlet itself. During the mid-nineteenth century, manufacturers of straw paper and hosiery and a machine shop were established along the canal. By the 1870s, following Nelson P. Aken's (1839-ca. 1879) lucrative contract with the Union Army, hosiery, or machine-knit long underwear, became the primary good produced in Philmont. The hamlet's population and new housing increased along with production during the last decades of the century. A commercial district developed along Hillsdale Street (Main Street), four churches were constructed, and new residential buildings ranged from simple tenements and boarding houses to the grand homes of mill owners. The village was incorporated in 1892. After the turn of the twentieth century, Philmont's prosperity diminished somewhat as a result of lessened demand for long underwear and changes in freight transportation. By the mid-1910s, the Harder family's High Rock mill was the primary manufacturer and employer in the village. The mill suffered from the Great Depression and a 1938 hurricane; it closed in 1939. Susquehanna Mills purchased the buildings and continued to operate from them through 1953; other outside firms continued to use them through 1963. In the postwar era, the village established a new centralized school (1953) and built a new village hall (1962). The Sacred Heart Roman Catholic church parish hall (1969) is the last major building constructed in the district. While the loss of mills impacted the village, its construction reflects that the community remained stable.

The preliminary boundary for the district incorporates most of the village. To the south, it runs across the ridge and includes both sides of Summit Street and all of Summit Lake. To the east, it includes the south side of Martindale Road and Route 217 to the village boundary. To the north, the boundary generally includes the extent of the village's north-south streets, including Eagle, Columbia, Maple, Prospect, and Highland. To the west, the boundary runs along the western boundary of the village. The Village of Philmont Historic District includes approximately 425 resources, including the man-made Summit Lake. The early hamlet extended along Main Street, which was improved as a turnpike in the early nineteenth century. Several mill buildings and structures associated with waterpower remain extant throughout the community. Most of the village's residential and commercial buildings date to ca. 1870-ca.1900, during its period of peak expansion. A few central commercial and institutional buildings in the center of the community and residences near the edges date to the first half of the century, reflecting both the village's physical maturation and the relative stability of the factory town during that period.

If you have any questions concerning this Determination of Eligibility, please contact Jennifer Betsworth at (518) 268-2189 or Jennifer.Betsworth@parks.ny.gov.