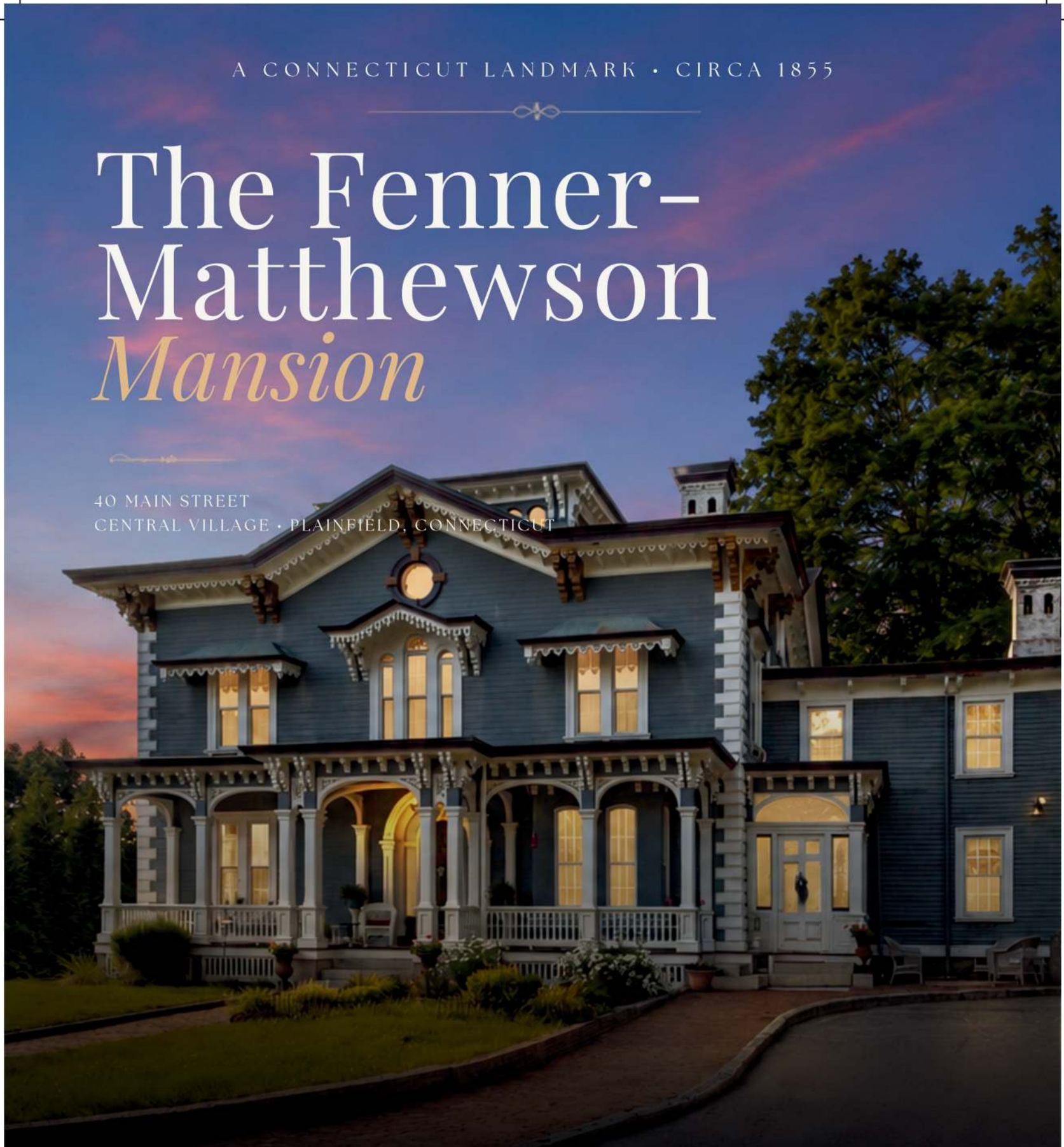
A CONNECTICUT LANDMARK • CIRCA 1855

The Fenner-Matthewson *Mansion*

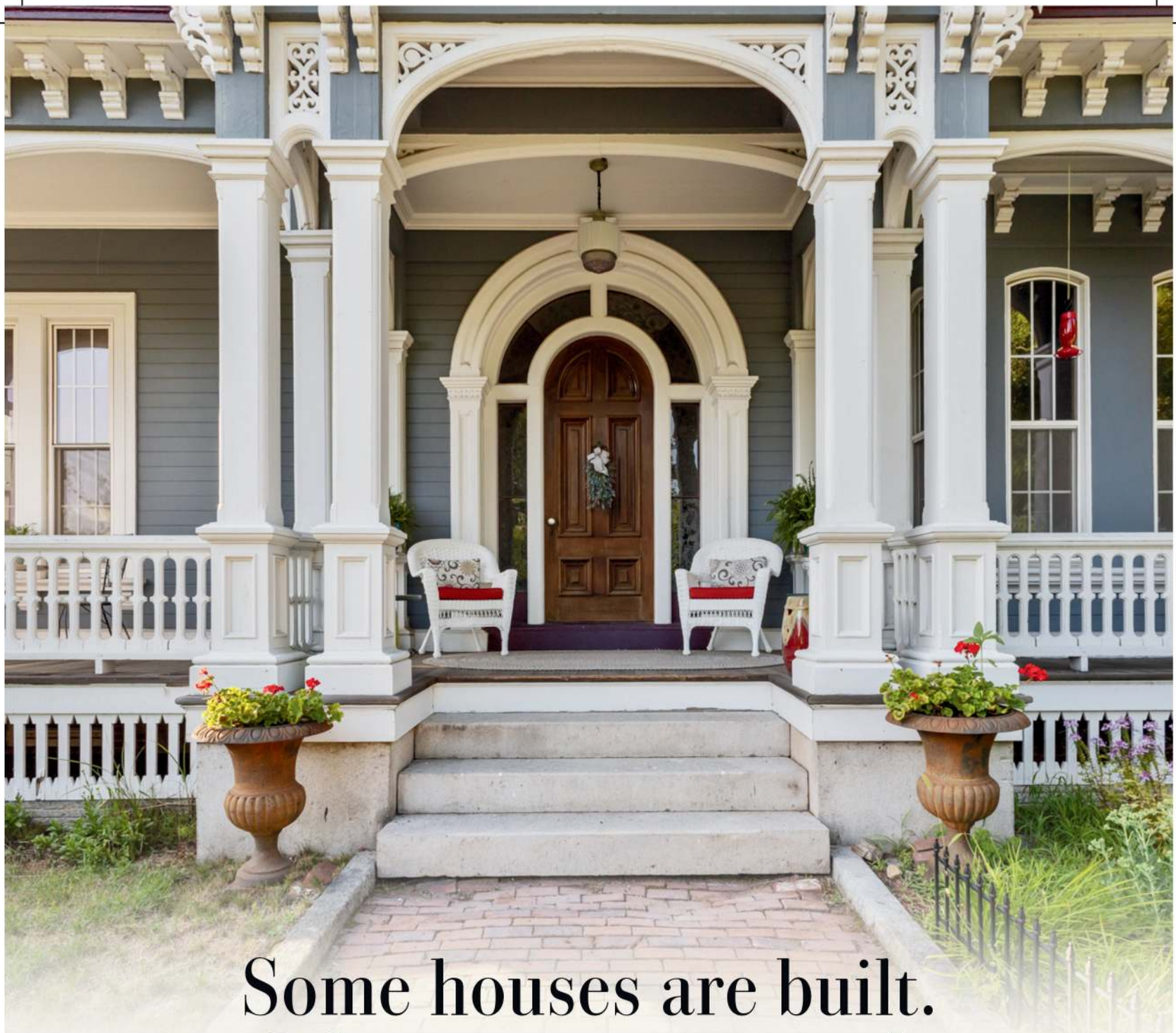
40 MAIN STREET
CENTRAL VILLAGE • PLAINFIELD, CONNECTICUT



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Some houses are built. Others are composed.

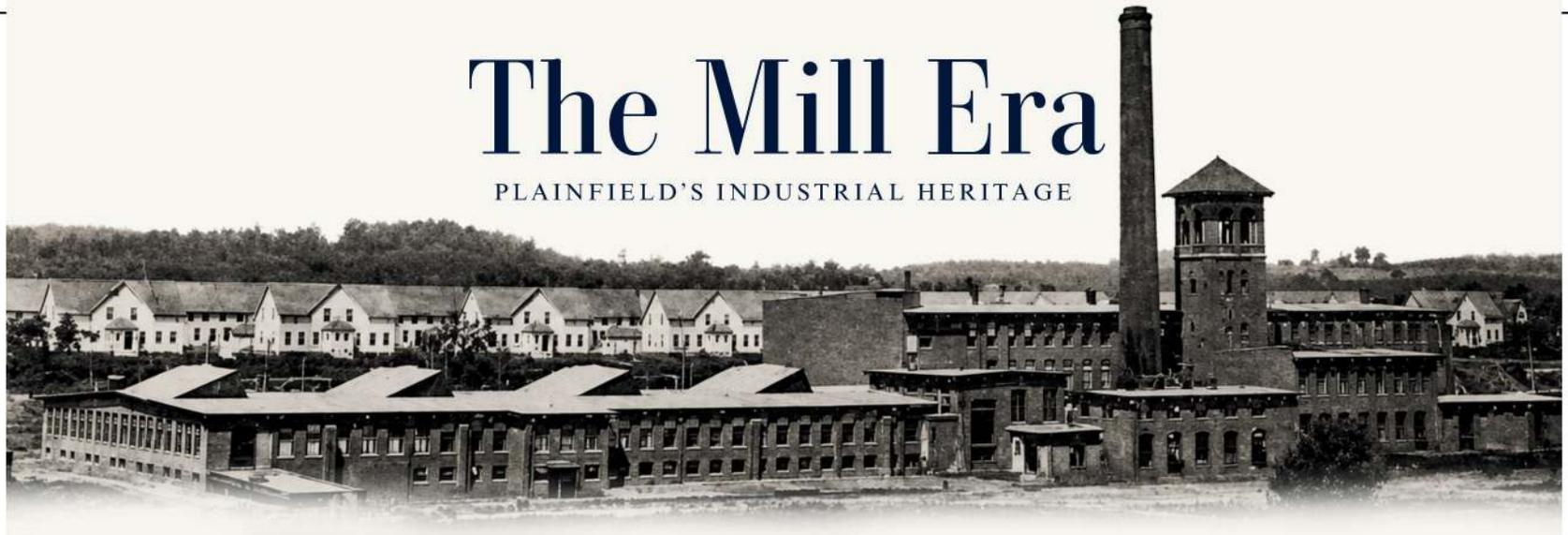
Beyond these remarkable arched doors lies a home that has quietly witnessed more than 170 years of Connecticut history. Built circa 1855 for textile manufacturer Arnold Fenner, the Fenner-Matthewson Mansion was conceived during an era when craftsmanship, proportion, and permanence defined great American homes.

Today, original black-walnut doors and millwork, soaring 12-foot ceilings, decorative glass, red-pine floors, marble fireplace surrounds, and extraordinary architectural details remain.

The pages that follow invite you to discover not simply a home, but its story.

The Mill Era

PLAINFIELD'S INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE



Central Village was built on water. The Moosup River gave eastern Connecticut the power to spin cotton, and over the first half of the nineteenth century the mills along it had drawn a settlement into being — first a scatter of houses, then a working village with a church, a school, a rail line, and a Main Street.

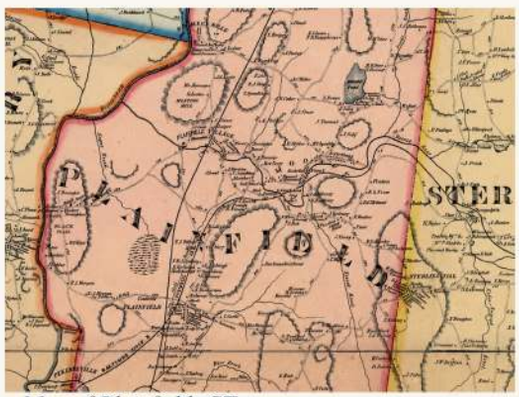
The Central Manufacturing Company anchored it. Established in 1814 and rebuilt over the following decades, it grew into the largest employer in the village, and the streets filled in around it: workers' housing near the water, and on the high ground above Main Street, the homes of the men who ran the mills. Locals came to call that stretch Manufacturers' Row.

What was built there was built to last. The Congregational church went up in 1845, the town hall across from it a generation later, and between them a run of houses whose scale and ornament still record exactly how much the textile trade was worth. In 1991 the historic core of Central Village was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Central Village Historic District.

The most architecturally significant house on the street belonged to the man who ran the mills.

A VILLAGE TAKES SHAPE

- **1814** — The Central Manufacturing Company is established on the Moosup River.
- **1827** — Arnold Fenner acquires a major interest in the Central Manufacturing Company.
- **1845** — The mill is the largest employer in Central Village; the Congregational church is built.
- **c. 1855** — Prominent mill owners' and businessmen's houses rise along Main Street.
- **1872** — The town hall is built across from the church.
- **1991** — The Central Village Historic District is listed on the National Register; the mansion is a contributing property.



Map of Plainfield, CT



View of Central Village CT



Fenner-Matthewson Mansion Today

Arnold Fenner

MANUFACTURER · MILL OWNER · LEGISLATOR



Arnold Fenner was born in Rhode Island in 1794 and settled in Central Village around 1825, when the settlement on the Moosup River was a young mill and not much else. In 1827 Fenner acquired a major interest in the Central Manufacturing Company. The following year, working with manufacturer Allen Harris, he helped establish a second brick mill in the upper village; Harris later sold his interest to Fenner. In 1845 the company's original mill was rebuilt in brick, and by that time the Central Manufacturing Company was the village's largest employer.

Fenner was also a leading civic figure. He was among the prominent citizens whose generosity supported the Congregational church established in 1845, and his influence was among the factors cited when Central Village was selected in 1871 for Plainfield's new town hall. He twice represented Plainfield in the Connecticut General Assembly.

Around 1855, Fenner built his residence at 40 Main Street on the rise above the village. The National Register nomination dates the house to c.1855 and identifies it as an exceptional Italian Villa. After Fenner's death, the house was later occupied by his daughter Helen and her husband, Philip Mathewson.

Mathewson, a retired merchant, led the Village Improvement Society and later represented the town in the legislature. Both names have stayed with the house ever since.

A LIFE IN MANUFACTURING

1794
Born in Rhode Island.

c. 1825
Arrives in Central Village, Plainfield.

1827
Acquires a major interest in the Central Manufacturing Company.

1828
Helps establish a second brick mill in the upper village with Allen Harris; Harris later sells his interest to Fenner

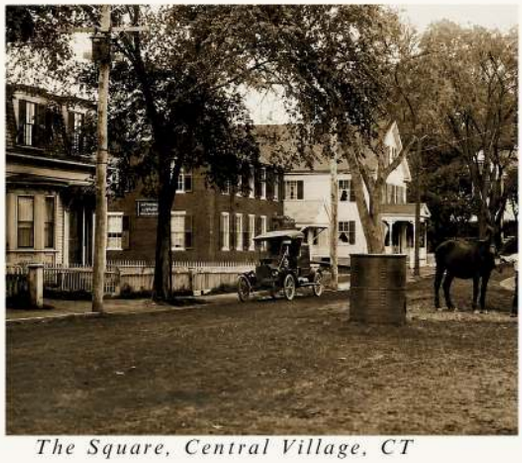
1845
The company's original mill is rebuilt in brick; Central Manufacturing becomes the village's largest employer. Fenner is among the prominent citizens supporting the Congregational church established the same year.

c. 1855
Builds his residence at 40 Main Street

1871
Dies April 8. His estate holds the house into the 1920s; his daughter Helen and her husband Philip Mathewson make it their home.



Main Street, Central Village, CT



The Square, Central Village, CT



The Square, Central Village, CT



The Architecture

AN ITALIAN VILLA, FULLY REALIZED

The Fenner–Matthewson Mansion is not merely Italianate in its details. It is an Italian Villa fully realized — a form Connecticut rarely attempted and more rarely kept. The state's architectural survey ranks it among the most outstanding and best-preserved examples of the mode anywhere in Connecticut.

Arnold Fenner raised it around 1855 on a knoll above Main Street, within sight of the mills that paid for it. The composition is picturesque and richly articulated: a box-like mass beneath a low roof, a belvedere crowning the whole, and a veranda wrapping the approach. Together those elements give the house the picturesque silhouette associated with the Italian Villa mode.

What distinguishes the house now is what survived. Brackets, quoins, arched openings, canopies, balustrades and jigsawn scalloped trim remain in place after a century and a half.

DEFINING FEATURES

ITALIAN VILLA

More than applied ornament. A complete compositional type, asymmetrical by design and uncommon in New England.

BELVEDERE

The rooftop lookout crowning the house, once commanding the mills and the Moosup valley below.

BRACKETED EAVES

Deep overhangs carried on carved wooden brackets, the signature rhythm of the Italian mode.

ARCHED OPENINGS

Round-headed windows and doorways that lift the eye and carry light deep into twelve-foot rooms.

CORNER QUOINS

Paired blocks at every corner, lending a wooden house the weight and permanence of masonry.

VERANDA & BALUSTRADES

A wrapping porch edged in turned balusters and jigsawn scalloped trim.



The arched entry beneath its scrolled canopy



Scalloped bargeboard framing the gable oculus



Paired corner quoins adding depth and scale



The belvedere, crowning the roofline



Carved brackets above paired arched windows



Stained-glass oculus





Etched and colored glass in the walnut entry doors

The Arrival

The door opens onto the full height of the house. Twelve-foot ceilings, one arch framing another, light through etched and colored glass.

The staircase is the argument — black walnut, turned balusters, a carved newel post. This is the formal staircase. Two additional staircases serve the house.

A house tells you what it thinks of itself in the first ten feet.



Black walnut, turned balusters, and a carved newel

What Survived

The house has been preserved rather than stripped of its character. Original black-walnut doors and millwork, red-pine floors, mercury-glass doorknobs, built-ins, ornamental plasterwork, decorative glass, and fireplace surrounds give its rooms a remarkable continuity of material and detail.

The National Register nomination recognized the mansion as a well-preserved example of the Italian Villa style, and much of what makes that assessment understandable remains visible throughout the house today. Here, craftsmanship is not confined to the grand rooms; it appears in doors, hardware, floors, ceilings, built-ins, and small details encountered throughout the residence.



Turned walnut newel and balusters. On the back staircase.



DECORATIVE GLASS
Floral panels in a half-bath door.



MERCURY GLASS KNOB
Silvered glass, still turning in its original lock.



PLASTER MEDALLION
Crisp after a century and a half.



RED PINE FLOORS
Wide boards in long runs.



MARBLE MANTEL
Marble surround and cast-iron firebox — one of nine.



CARVED WALNUT
Hand-cut detail on a built-in, in a spot most people never look.

Nine Hearths

Nine fireplaces, and no two mantels alike. From marble surrounds in formal rooms to carved wood and simpler upstairs treatments, the fireplaces vary with the character of the spaces around them. The hierarchy of a house built when heat was architecture and every room announced its rank.



01 | FRONT PARLOR



02 | STUDY



03 | LIVING ROOM



04 | DINING ROOM



05 | BEDROOM



06 | BEDROOM



07 | BEDROOM



08 | KITCHEN



09 | KITCHEN

Nine fireplaces. Nine stories. Countless memories waiting to be made.

The Grand Rooms

Twelve-foot ceilings, and doorways wide enough to stand open room to room. The principal floor unfolds as a sequence of distinct formal rooms — parlor into living room into dining room, each with its own fireplace and its own character.

Rooms here retain a traditional room-by-room plan rather than an open layout, preserving the sense of progression from one space to the next.



Carved millwork and built-in shelves frame a fireplace still in working order



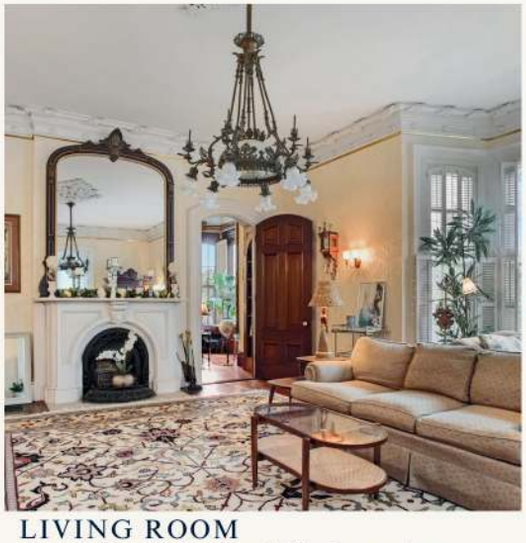
PARLOR

Arched windows, painted woodwork, and sightlines through the main floor.



DINING ROOM

A marble mantel, a crystal chandelier, and room for the whole table.



LIVING ROOM

An arched marble hearth and tall mirror anchor the room's lighter side.



STUDY

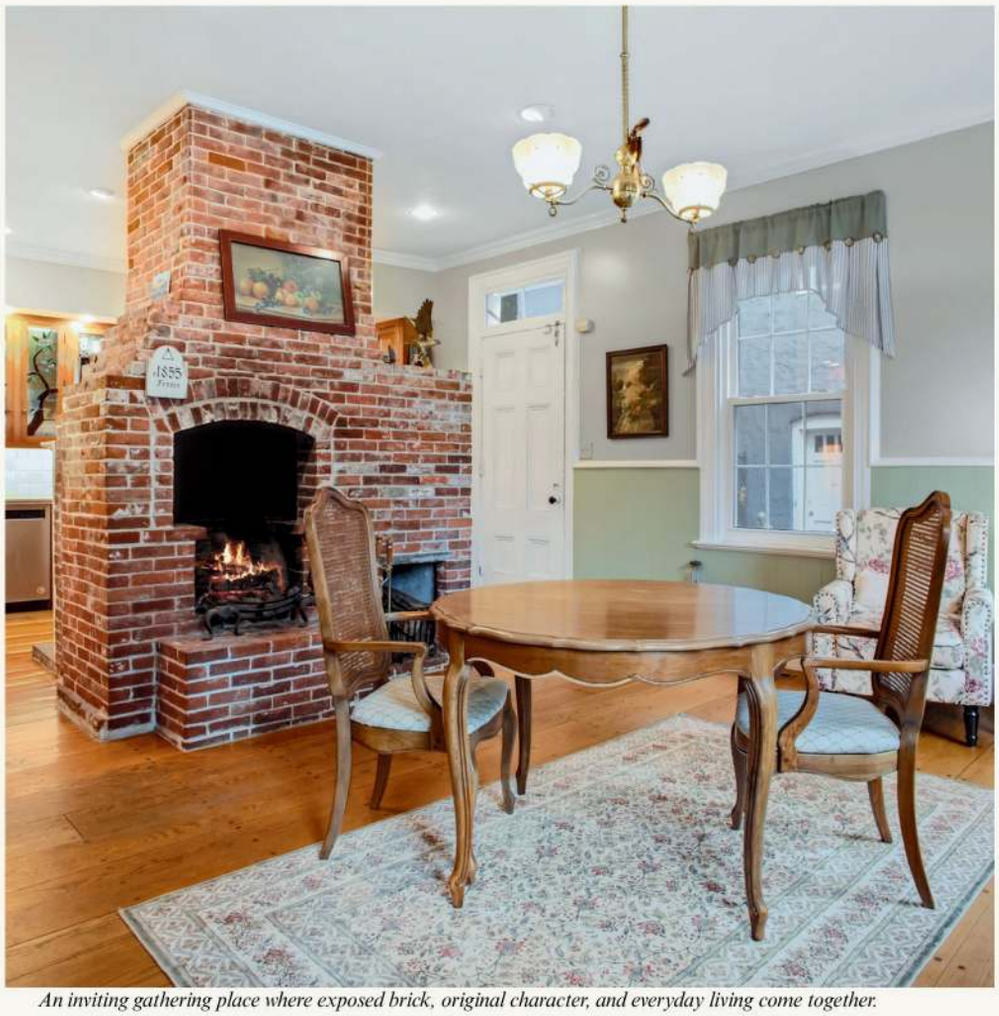
Natural light spills in from the front bay windows.

The Heart of the Home

Warm, welcoming, and rich with character, the kitchen feels as though it has evolved naturally with the home. Exposed brick, wide-plank floors, warm wood cabinetry, and historic hearths create a space that is unmistakably historic yet wonderfully livable.

Rather than erasing the past, thoughtful updates complement it—allowing original craftsmanship and modern convenience to exist beautifully side by side.

Made for slow mornings, shared meals, and evenings gathered by the fire.



An inviting gathering place where exposed brick, original character, and everyday living come together.



Warm wood cabinetry and wide-plank floors bring natural character to the updated kitchen.



A sunlit breakfast nook creates an intimate place for morning coffee and everyday meals.



Exposed brick and a working fireplace lend extraordinary warmth and character beside the kitchen's modern conveniences.

Private Retreats

HISTORIC CHARACTER BEHIND EVERY DOOR

Upstairs, the home's private rooms preserve some of its most beautiful original details. Red pine floors, black-walnut doors and trim, tall windows, and distinctive period millwork carry the craftsmanship of the home throughout the bedrooms.

Nine fireplaces are found throughout the residence, many framed in unique Italian marble surrounds, adding another remarkable layer to its architectural story. Thoughtful updates allow these historic spaces to feel comfortable and livable while preserving the details that make them irreplaceable.

Private spaces shaped by more than a century and a half of history.



Italian marble fireplace surround, red pine floors, and tall windows framed by architectural details.



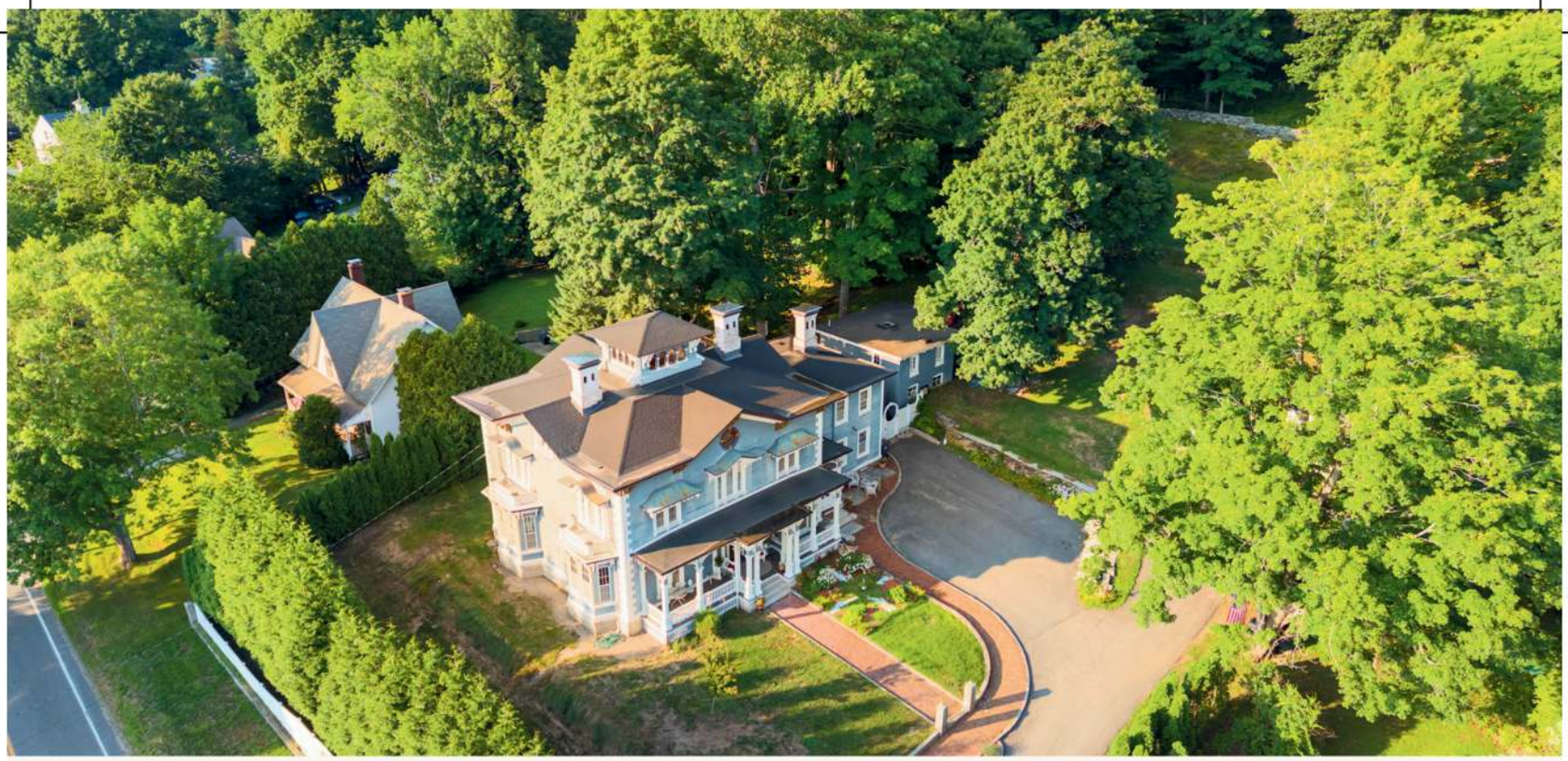
Red pine floors, original black-walnut doors, and beautifully preserved period details.



Clawfoot tub, vintage-inspired tile, and a furniture-style vanity.



Arched windows, red pine floors, and period architectural details.



The Grounds & Outbuilding

Beyond the residence, the grounds reveal another side of the property's character. Mature trees, stonework, a courtyard and inviting outdoor spaces create a private setting in the heart of Central Village. A separate stucco outbuilding adds another layer of flexibility and character to the property.



STONE COURTYARD

Stonework, a garden fountain and intimate outdoor spaces create a charming setting just beyond the house.



GARDEN FIXTURES

A sculptural fountain framed by mature trees and traditional stone walls.



STUCCO OUTBUILDING

A separate stucco outbuilding offers flexible potential as a studio, guest house or home office.

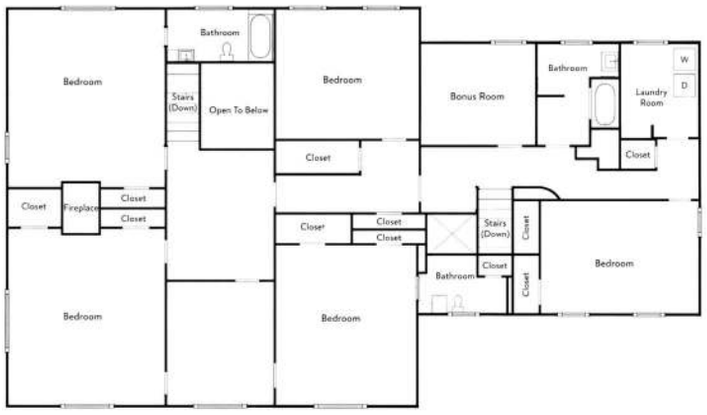
The grounds also feature a distinctive chicken coop—one more unexpected detail that adds to the property's singular character.

Every Room, Accounted For

FLOOR 1



FLOOR 2



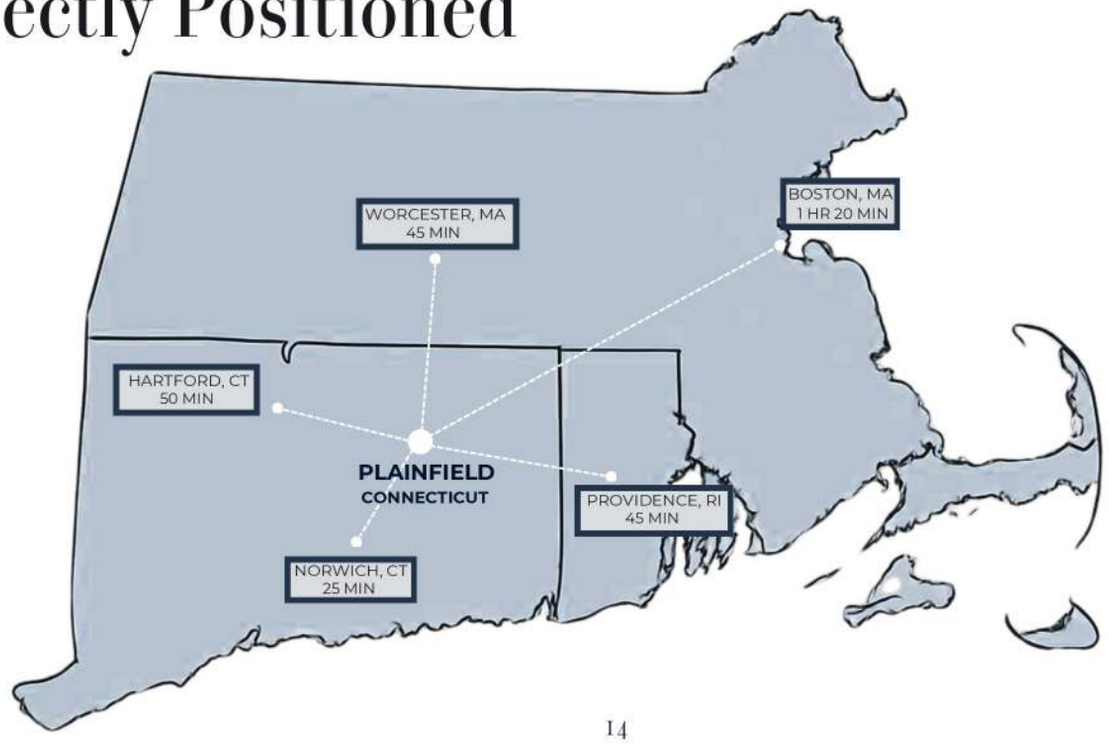
Floor plans and dimensions are for illustrative purposes only and are approximate.

6	4.5	5,856	2.65	12	9	CIRCA 1855
BEDROOMS	BATHROOMS	SQUARE FEET	ACRES	TOTAL ROOMS	FIREPLACES	

HEATING	Forced Air, Natural Gas
COOLING	Central Air
WATER	Public
SEWER	Public Sewer
ROOF	Asphalt

HISTORIC DISTRICT	Central Village Historic District
PARCEL ID	PLAI M1 CV B:0085 L:0043
STYLE	Italian Villa
CONSTRUCTION	Clapboard, Stone Foundation

Perfectly Positioned



Drive times are approximate



Sources and Acknowledgements

Historical information in this publication has been compiled from the Central Village Historic District nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (1991); Historic Resource Consultants' Historic Resource Survey of Plainfield Community Development Areas (1981); Richard M. Bayles, History of Windham County, Connecticut (1889); Plainfield Bicentennial: A Souvenir Volume (1899); and other historical and genealogical sources cited in the National Register nomination.

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Historical records spell Philip Mathewson with one T; the house has long been known as the Fenner-Matthewson Mansion.

Prepared exclusively for the marketing of 40 Main Street, Central Village, Connecticut.

The Fenner-Matthewson *Mansion*

A landmark for generations.
Ready for its next chapter.

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