

Route 195 & Route 74 Scenic Road



Proposed Scenic Road

This application proposes a new scenic road in Tolland. The proposed scenic road is 2.9 miles in length and travels past numerous historic properties, and encompasses copious natural resources through a forested and hilly landscape. It would be the first designated scenic road in the Town of Tolland, as well as Tolland County, the former County seat.

The route begins on Route 195 (north of Exit 68 of Interstate 84) approximately 150 feet southeast of Cider Mill Connector, where the “Welcome to the Tolland Green Historic District” sign is located. It then continues another 1,000 feet to the intersection of Route 195 and old Post Road. At this point, the main stem of the scenic road continues along Route 195 until it intersects Route 74, where travelers take a slight left to continue onto Route 74, but a number of side trips are possible (see below in italics).

Continuing along Route 74, drivers travel northwest for about 2,000 feet before leaving the Tolland Green Historic District. The scenic road continues another 2.2 miles past the intersection of Route 74 and Shenipsit Lake Road. The proposed scenic road ends near the Tolland town line, but travelers can continue along Route 74 to historic Rockville



Figure 1. One of the many historic homes along Tolland Stage Road. A snow-covered hitching post is visible in the foreground.



Figure 2. A historic home near the entrance to the Historic District.

Center, or turn left on Sand Hill Road to make their way back to Interstate 84 at Exit 67.

It is important to note that the Historic District is much larger than the proposed scenic road encompasses and the reason for the suggested additional side trips (*in italics*). Route 195 terminates at Route 74 at the mid point of the Historic District. While making a worthwhile trip in itself, we suggest the addition of the side trips.

Scenic and Historic Features of the Road

The proposed scenic road contains a wealth of historic buildings and features. Route 74 itself has a long history as well. Its modern name dates from 1932 when it was

originally commissioned. It follows the old Tolland Turnpike which dates from the 1800s. Recent research has indicated that Route 74 parallels the path of the Connecticut Trail, which connected the Massachusetts Bay Colony to Hartford. Over the years Route 74 has undergone significant changes, being widened considerably in 1963. Despite these changes, many of the road's historic assets remain intact.

The proposed scenic road begins at the entrance to the Tolland Green Historic District on Route 195. The Tolland Green Historic District is the traditional center of the town and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places registration form (see Attachment A) lists 55 buildings as “contributing resources”, as well as one site (the town green): the town green itself. A major component of the district and the factor that defines the green are the roads. They were the earliest structures to be laid out by the settlers. Our town was Chartered in 1715. Buildings in the district date from the 1720s (which is when the green was established) to the middle and late 1900s. Building styles include Colonial, Greek Revival, Romanesque Revival, Victorian, Federal, Italianate, and Swiss Chalet.

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While most of the district's buildings are private residences it also has two small-scale commercial structures, two churches, a municipal center, a library, two museums and an art center.

Once you see the "Welcome" sign here is an inventory of building sites:

On the right side of the street-

2 Tolland Green/Route 195 – Early 19th Century colonial with door canopy??? Hitching post remains in the front yard. Current residence and business.

4 Tolland Green/Route 195 - Circa 1760 This colonial was a former Congregational Church parsonage and later the last horse drawn driver of the mail stage resided here.

10 Tolland Green – Circa 1950 ranch style home is a private residence.

16 Tolland Green – 1776 Saltbox Colonial in near original condition. Position on lot is a result of the reconfiguration of the intersection.

Old Post Road



Figure 3. The Hicks Stearns House Museum.

22 Tolland Green –Circa 1879 This Vernacular Victorian was the Old Town Hall following the Constitutional revision of 1818 requiring the separation of church and state. Stick style bracing in the gable. Renovated to an art center in 1997 with original tin ceiling.

26 Tolland Green – Circa 1800s Colonial has been modernized twice, first as a Victorian then as a Colonial Revival. Tolland's first bank operated out of the southwest room until the bank was completed in 1829.

30 Tolland Green – Circa 1848 Modified Bungalow was built by and later owned by another physician, both who



Figure 4. The Old Tolland County Court House.

practiced here. It was remodeled in 1922 into the popular bungalow style.

34 Tolland Green –Circa 1780 Gambrel Roof Colonial was a law office, post office, town clerk's office and a kindergarten. Note the 12 over 12 windows.

42 Tolland Green – 18th Century Victorian started out as a Colonial and as a tavern known as *The Sign of the Yellow Ball* in the 1790s. It was Tolland's first Post Office. The Hicks family (University of Connecticut Agricultural College) bought it in 1842 and it remained in the family until 1974. It was Elizabeth Hicks, the last of the Hicks family, with that it become the Hicks-Stearns Family Museum.

46 Tolland Green – Circa 1800 This Greek Revival was built on a peach orchard as a general store. The second floor has housed harness making and repairs, an inventor, and a hoop maker for hoop skirts. Later it included groceries and still later antiques on the second floor. Always a gathering place!

Route 74/ Tolland Stage Road *

On the left side of the street-

7 Cider Mill Road – Circa 1730 Colonial with its central chimney point to its primitive roots. Tolland County Mutual Fire Insurance Company (chartered in 1828) was originally located in the front room of its first secretary.

2 Cider Mill Road - Circa 1760 Colonial was solidly built using hand-sawn beams and plank construction. It was run as a store, known as *Cooley and Waldo*. Note the distinctive saw tooth trim at the side gables.

55 Old Post Road - Circa 1760 Transitional today, the home was originally Colonial when in 1793 the Urial Lodge No. 24 A. F. and A. M. occupied the front of the second floor. Porches and trim came later perhaps after the fire that destroyed the roof and much of the second floor. The retaining wall was added when the state built Route 195, dug away the slope and realigned the road. The original meeting house sat on the knoll in the "Y" created by the



Figure 5. Looking out from 699 Tolland Stage Road.

roads, now the intersection of Old Post Road and 195/
Tolland Green.

Old Post Road

21 Tolland Green - 1908 Romanesque Revival was built with funds bequeathed by Ratcliffe Hicks along with contributions from his family. Originally, the school had 2 classrooms on the first floor, a library and auditorium on the second. It was considered a model school. A new wing with a gymnasium and library were added in 1938 by Miss Minnie and Miss Elizabeth Hicks. It was remodeled to a municipal center and town library in 1985.

25 Tolland Green -Circa 1873 Victorian was featured in *Pallister's Model Homes Handbook*. It originally had 6 fireplaces, stained glass in the transoms above the windows and a slate roof. The parlor was finished in birdseye maple, the library and dining room in ash. There was a wraparound porch extending from the small one on the left side across the entire front.

31 Tolland Green - 1860 Transitional influence has added two bay windows to the first floor, front of this house to show Victorian influence. In the 1980s there was a dental office in a portion of the first floor. Now a personal trainer and private residence.

35 Tolland Green - Circa 1820 Vernacular is one of five properties in a row that were built on land owned by U.S. Senator Calvin Willey in the 1820s. This structure was built to be a store. Today is a private residence.



Figure 6. Looking out from 699 Tolland Stage Road.

41 Tolland Green - Circa 1776 Transitional Colonial

47 Tolland Green - Circa 1838 Federal style is the third meeting house, the first in this location. The United Congregational Church bell was cast in 1792 for the second church which stood at the south end of the green. Granite stepping blocks cut from local quarries stood on either side of the church to assist ladies from their carriages. Hitching posts, granite steps and walks all remain. The 1893 alterations to the interior to give a more Victorian appearance gave way in 1977 to remodeling to its original appearance. An expansion to the back was completed in 2005. In the front yard of the church, very near the side walk, was a small building used by Senator Calvin Willey

as a law office in about 1820. It later housed the Tolland County Mutual Fire Insurance Company until 1899. Then Senator Edward Fuller had his offices here. Miss Elizabeth Hicks used it for her help. The church purchased it and later removed it. Behind the Courthouse were horse sheds used by churchgoers and the court and bank employees. There was also a ladder house, like a 40 foot long dog house, which housed a ladder to be used for the courthouse or church in case of a fire.

51 Tolland Green - Circa 1829 this brick and block building was built to be a bank and two banks operated out of this facility simultaneously using the same employees. The steel vault was added in 1924. The wing on the left was added in 1962. Today it is owned by the town and used by the Board of Education. Those are the original security doors used decoratively today.

53 Tolland Green - 1822 Federal is one of the finest early civic buildings in Connecticut. The Old Tolland County Court House was designed locally, it was built by subscription, without taxing County residents. The fanlight and Palladian windows were common in buildings of this period. The cupola denotes the public nature of the structure. The first floor granite vault may have been use as a cell to hold prisoners on court day. Used as a court until 1892 when session transferred to Rockville. The Tolland Public Library opened in the space in 1899 until it

relocated to the Municipal Center. The Tolland Historical Society assumed stewardship in 2001. It is a Historical Society museum with a restored courtroom on the second floor. The French Canadian Genealogical Society rents the first floor.

55 Tolland Green - Circa 1790 Greek Revival structure once stood on the lot to the right behind the tavern. During the Revolutionary War it had been an armory and one ceiling bears bayonet marks from militiamen who trained here. From the 1860s various businesses were run from here including the U.S. Post Office until its move to a modern brick building on Tolland Stage Road in 1965.

59 Tolland Green - 1926 Bungalow was the first 20th Century house built on the green. In the 30s the new owner added a sunroom on the south (left) side and operated a tea room, later a gift shop. Prior to the 20th Century, a tavern stood on this site for 100 years.

63 Tolland Green - Circa 1800 Transitional style structure has a rich history as a hotel. Interesting double windows are found in the gable ends. Today the Tolland Inn has 6 guest rooms all with private baths, seasonal gas fireplaces and some rooms have hot tubs.

Route 74/Tolland Stage Road *



Figure 7. House on Tolland Stage Road.

Suggested side trip: At Stop Sign cross Route 74 take a right on Tolland Green Road going north.

On your left side:

79 Tolland Green - Circa 1826 Greek Revival with an upper fan window and gable similar to the courthouse. The front door also has a fanlight. The Baptist Church was located to the south of this house where the road is now. Over the years various industries took place in its basement. It was removed and converted into a house on Torry Road in 1908.

81 Tolland Green - Late Victorian, locally designed, has stick style bracing at the gable. This was home to the blacksmith whose shop was across the road.

85 Tolland Green - Circa 1790 is a twin to its neighbor and as they were built about a year apart. Now a private residence, it served as St. Matthew Church rectory for several decades.

89 Tolland Green - Circa 1790 Georgian is a typical two-story home with a center chimney built in the colonial period. It served as a Methodist parsonage. Today it is a private residence.

91 Tolland Green - Circa 1800 Gambrel roof Colonial

95 Tolland Green - Circa 1880 Late Victorian Period structure was designed by a local architect as the second Lee Methodist Church (the former was moved back about 200' on the property). Forty years later the Methodists and Congregational Churches combined and this building was sold to the Grange. It was sold to a private individual in 2014.

Make a U Turn in the St. Matthew Church parking lot. Be mindful of the magnificent 2 sided stone wall which runs parallel to the road and concludes the north green.

On your left:

114 Tolland Green – Circa 1750 Cape Cod style is one of the oldest of the district. It has a central chimney, many additions, and low ceilings.



Figure 8. Original hitching posts on Tolland Stage Road.

Torry Road:

104 Tolland Green - 1941 Cape Cod Typical of the period in which it was built.

100 Tolland Green - 1965 Colonial

96 Tolland Green - site of the old blacksmith shop from late 1800s until 1922.

94 Tolland Green - 1986 Contemporary

88 Tolland Green - 1965 Cape This site was home to the Congregational Church minister for fifty-three years from 1759-1813.

80 Tolland Green - 1959 Colonial Newer parsonage to house the Congregational Church minister.

76 Tolland Green - 1883 Late Victorian by local architect. Several porches and a bay window distinguish this home. Garnet studded stones from a local quarry were used for the foundation and the house is supported by 11 hand cut granite blocks.

70 Tolland Green - 1940 Modern Colonial Three older homes were originally on this site. This home was built with beams from a barn which was in the rear of the property.

64 Tolland Green - Circa 1720 Georgian has a central chimney and foundation made of locally quarried stone. The fireplace stone was brought from the Connecticut River.

56 Tolland Green - 1945 This house was erected for the assistant jailer. It is now the headquarters for Tolland County Mutual Aid.

52 Tolland Green - 1856 Stone cellblock portion, 1893 former residence portion. Old Tolland County Jail and Museum is a Victorian style home by local architect, James H. Clough. It replaced the County House, a hotel operated by the jailer which burned down in 1892. The cellblock that you see is the fourth on this site. The first was built of wood in 1785. The current jail was used until 1968 when the town acquired

the property for an administration building. It has been a Tolland Historical Society museum since 1988.

Using right arm of the "Y" in the road bear right on to Route 74. Continue on state road.

Left side of Road:

714 Tolland stage Road - Circa 1790 Italianate was originally a saltbox-style house that partially burned in 1868. Owner had it rebuilt with the roof style seen today.

704 Tolland Stage Road - Circa 1859 Swiss Chalet is perhaps the most distinctive on the green with its gingerbread decorative porch braces on the second floor. There are three chimneys and a full balcony across the front. Stone wall create sunken gardens, carriage stones and hitching posts are found near the roadway.

Right Side of Road:

699 Tolland Stage Road - Circa 1792 Transitional style house housed an apothecary.

689 Tolland Stage Road - 1820 Transitional design is of post and beam construction and was originally located across the street. Prior to wiring and plumbing the lower level was used in its original location as a workshop to build carriages and wagons. The second site of the Lee Methodist Church was to the rear of this property.

665 Tolland Stage Road – Circa 1755 Colonial has an unusual shape and some question if it is the union of two separate structures. There are 3 fireplaces in a single chimney, 2 dormers on the roof and 2 wings in the back of the house form a U-shaped courtyard. The stone wall along the road is a fine example of work by local builder Moses Underwood.

Suggested side trip:

At the traffic signal, take a right and a quick left to travel along the east side of Tolland Green, a narrow carriage road that is lined with historic homes. Tolland Green Road intersects Route 74 after a short distance. Turning left at this intersection allows travelers to continue along the scenic road. Instead of turning onto Tolland Green Road, travelers can continue on Old Post Road. After about 1.3 miles, travelers come to a “y” intersection at Skungamaug Road. This is a smaller historic, rural area of Tolland. Continuing along Route 74 eventually takes travelers back to Interstate 84.

A complete inventory of residential structures in the district is included in the National Register of Historic Places registration form as Attachment A.

Historic features of the district, and the road, are not limited to buildings. One of the most notable features is the Tolland Green itself. The National Register of Historic



Figure 9. Swiss Chalet Style House.

Places registration form notes that the district is “significant for its landscape qualities as a relatively original-appearing village green”. The registration form goes on to note that while many towns throughout Connecticut and the East Coast had town greens, most of them have been altered to function more like contemporary parks. Tolland’s green has been preserved in its original form for the most part, though various road widening projects over the decades and centuries have taken land away from the green. Up to now keeping road projects on the conservative side has preserved the north and south sections of the green and maintained a sense of neighborhood in the Historic District.

Also noteworthy is the border of mature Sugar Maple trees around the north and south greens on private properties and the replanting project on the south green, replacing the elms lost during the Dutch Elm blight with a disease resistant variety. While pointing out surrounding features, one can't miss the granite pedestrian walkways.

Tolland Stage Road (Route 74) has a number of other historic roadside features. In front of 704 and 714 Tolland Stage Road, as well as 63 Tolland Green, there are original stone hitching posts. In front of 704 Tolland Stage Road, there are also granite mounting steps. Sidewalks in the district are mostly constructed of solid granite blocks that were quarried locally.

The present Route 74 was part of the Hartford to Tolland Turnpike, which terminated at the Tolland Court House. That Turnpike left that route at the intersection of Route 30 west through Vernon and Manchester. A second turnpike ran from Springfield through Tolland by way of the original Burbank Road and the section of 74 and 195 that passes through the green. Stage coaches from Hartford to Tolland passed through twice each day in both directions, and one coach a day each way from Springfield, with the routes terminating at the Tolland Court House.

Route 74 east of the green was the Tolland to Woodstock Turnpike. Horses were exchanged here, and the three taverns were busy with stagecoach passengers.



Figure 10. Leonard's Corner.

Heading west on Route 74 away from Tolland's Historic District along the section of the road common to both turnpikes, it's easy to miss a treasure on the Tolland to Springfield turnpike. On the left side in front of a small commercial area is a stone retaining wall running the entire length of the shopping area. But between the 2 driveways is the original retaining wall over 5 feet tall and tapering. The set-back portion was replaced by state workers in the 1980's when Route 74 underwent a widening. This wall has been cited by nationally known Professor Robert M. Thorson, geologist, of the University of Connecticut. The best viewing is from the parking lots of the commercial establishments.

Behind the stone wall there is a small commercial center on the left. The commercial area contains a hardware store, a florist, the town's post office, and a barber shop.

An adventurer might find the granite dam behind the Post Office worthy of a photo. Stone walls line both sides of the road and residential structures line the hill on the right.

Just past Dunn Hill Road, at about the 0.8 mile mark, the level of development decreases, the grade on the right drops off and further to the right in the woods near Old Rurbank Road is the Tolland Aqueduct, located on private property, it does not appear on current day maps. At about the one mile mark, the road begins to ascend along a gently curving path. Both sides of the road are wooded, full of Mountain Laurel, dotted with birch, and hilly. A few houses can be seen through the trees. There have been regular Bald Eagle sightings in the wooded area.

Traveling west along Route 74, the road curves through mostly contemporary houses that are set back among a forested landscape. Yet all along the route homeowners have maintained old farm stonewalls along the roadside and between properties. After driving for 0.7 miles, travelers pass Peter Green Road which is listed as a “scenic drive” in the Tolland POCD. Just beyond Peter Green Road is Poehnert’s Pond on the North side of the road. For a short stretch, travelers are offered views of this pond peeking through the trees and mountain laurel. Approaching the Doyle Road intersection, the road curves to the left around a property that harkens back to the turn of the 20th Century when Tolland went through a period



Figure 11. Leonard’s Corner in the 1930s.

as a summer get-away. Note the stonewall bordered property with its stone cottage and second story “Tudor” look. It was built to overlook the Connecticut River Valley (west) and all agricultural lands to the north (Massachusetts) and west. The view is still lovely overlooking new growth forest and some remaining farm land.

Sharp eyes may notice land disturbances and an abandoned quarry on the left at the corner of Hill Top Road before you begin your decent to the signaled intersection at 30 and 74. A granite quarry at the left roadside produced curbing for nearby Rockville in the early 20th Century. Rockville was rumored to be one of the earliest cities to use this product.



Figure 12. Flowering tree.

Driving a short distance further brings you to the

intersection of Route 74 and Route 30 (Crystal Lake Road). At this intersection, there is a beautiful view of barns and fields to the Northwest. The views at this intersection were noted in Tolland's Plan of Conservation and Development as part of the Town's "Cultural Resources Plan" (page 47). Historic homes and farms dot the area. At the northeast corner of the intersection (traffic light) is a former school house. It is a single story, colonial revival structure. It was one of the last one room school houses in town and later was converted to a fire station until the 1980s when a new one replaced it down Route 30. Today it is private residence on the main floor and a frame shop and gallery on the lower level.

To the North, along Crystal Lake Road (Route 30) are farm fields and cow pastures. Looking over the fields to the Northwest travelers can see across Shenipsit Lake into Massachusetts. Looking due west they can see the Connecticut River Valley in the distance.

Across Route 30, on the northwest corner travelers will see a stone wall and 2 sided watering trough that were part of the original barnyard. Livestock would drink from the barnyard side while passing horses were refreshed on the roadside. The current veterinary clinic sits on about 20% of the original huge barn footprint. The Rufus Leonard House is a large home constructed circa 1870. This house began as a modest Greek Revival, but a mother-in-law

addition and numerous design flourishes at the turn of the 20th Century made it an exciting architectural anomaly. Unlike other houses in the area, which were constructed in a modest style, this house exhibits numerous eclectic design flourishes. The house has a gable roof, turned columns, sawn brackets, and a wraparound porch. The local mill stones from Rockville mark the entrances to each driveway. Two Horse Chestnuts can be found in the front yard.

Continuing west along Route 74, which is also Rt. 30 for a short distance, on the south side of the road, is the Samuel Chapman house, built circa 1730. It is well-preserved example of an early New England “Saltbox” house. Again, it is necessary to document the 3 mature sugar maples along the bank in front of this and neighboring properties. West of this house, on the north side, is a modest vernacular home from 1850. Further to the west is the Elijah Chapman house, a well preserved New England farmhouse from 1750 with its exceptional central chimney and mature sugar maples.

The proposed scenic road ends on Route 74 at Shenipsit Lake Road.

Existing Land Uses

As noted previously, the corridor surrounding the proposed road is primarily residential. Inside the historic

district, the dominant land-use is residential. Lots average $\frac{1}{3}^{\text{rd}}$ of an acre to $\frac{1}{2}$ of an acre. Houses are set relatively close to the road, following a traditional development pattern. Most of the historic district also has original granite sidewalks.

As noted earlier, some non-residential land-uses are also present in the Tolland Green area. A handful of government buildings, two commercial structures, and some civic buildings are also present. All of these are historic buildings and contribute to the character of the district. The Town of Tolland has a Historic District Commission that is charged with ensuring that new development, or modifications of existing buildings, do not detract from the historic character of the district.

As travelers leave the Tolland Green Historic District the land-use pattern changes. Some light commercial structures are located on the southwest side Route 74 just as one leaves the historic district. Traveling northwest the dominant land-use continues to be residential, with houses set back among medium-density tree cover. The end of the corridor, at the intersection of Routes 74 and Shenipsit Lake Road, is a mix of light commercial, agricultural, and residential uses. Most of the area has low density single family housing.

This area is rich in wild life both avian and woodland. Bald eagles, kestrels, red tail and other hawks are quite

prevalent. Deer, coyotes, rabbits, fisher cats, raccoons and reemergence of skunks combine with all the native woodland creature and native birds. While the entrance to the “Rails to Trails” hiking trail on the old trolley bed is just beyond the boundaries of this route, it is just down the road and makes an interesting side trip to the visit, especially if you are interested in getting closer to nature as it runs along the Shenipsit Lake in the protected watershed area.

Conclusion

Routes 74 and 195 in Tolland are state highways deserving of protection and recognition. In the stretch of just over two miles, travelers go through a variety of scenic landscapes that reflect the town’s history. Drivers travel from the historic center of the town, through forests to farm land and cow pastures. Dotting the roadside are historic and natural artifacts that drew people to Tolland to explore and to settle; native vegetation, natural habitats, stone walls, quaint turnpikes and roads, our historic district and green. Much of the area’s charm is owed to the gentle curves, hills, and roadside features of the corridor. Scenic Road designation will help call attention to these attributes and protect them from unnecessary alterations.



A farm field at Leonard's Corner.



The stone wall at boundary of the historic district.



Cows in the farm field along Crystal Lake Road.



The Hicks Memorial Municipal Center & Library.



Historic home at Leonard's Corner.



A stone wall Leonard's Corner.



Mill stones in front of a house at Leonard's Corner.



Approaching the Tolland Green from Route 74.