

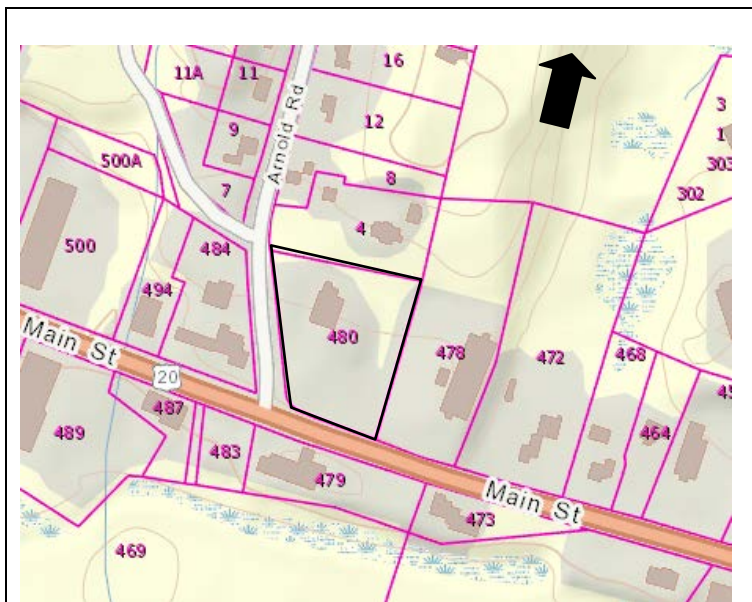
## FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

### Photograph



### Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Shannon Walsh, PVPC

**Organization:** Sturbridge Historical Commission

**Date (month / year):** July 2017

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

415-02433-480

Southbridge

STU.C

STU.113

**Town/City:** Sturbridge

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*): Snellville, Fiskdale

**Address:** 480 Main Street

**Historic Name:** Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse

**Uses:** Present: (Senior) Community Center

Original: Public School and Meeting House

**Date of Construction:** 1874

**Source:** *Massachusetts Spy* newspaper

**Style/Form:** Italianate

**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Brick and Clapboard/Granite, Wood

Roof: Shingle

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**

None

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*):

Circa 1970s shed roof rear addition

Circa 1990s rear elevator and stair tower addition

Circa 1990s and later interior rehabilitation

**Condition:** Very Good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** .78 acres

**Setting:** This institutional building faces south along Main Street, at the intersection with Arnold Road, in the Snellville neighborhood of Fiskdale, a village in Sturbridge.

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☒ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

*Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.*

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

The Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse provides a good example of late nineteenth century Italianate architecture, used on an institutional building constructed in response to the growth and residential development of the Snellville area of Fiskdale, a village of Sturbridge. The building is 5 bays wide by 5 bays deep and two and a half stories high. It has a brick exterior, a granite foundation and granite and wood trim. The brick pattern appears to be Common (Flemish Bond). There are two-story brick pilasters at each of the building's four corners. The front gable roof has a moderate pitch and overhanging eaves with elaborately designed paired brackets. An interior brick chimney is visible towards the rear, northwestern side of the main roof. A secondary two-story wing with a multi-level gabled roofline is connected to the northern, rear side of the building, as well as a one-story, clapboard ell with a shed roof. A concrete ramp provides access to a secondary, later addition entry on the rear, northern facing elevation.

Constructed when Italianate architectural design was fashionable (1840-1885), characteristics of this style include the low-pitched roof with pronounced, overhanging eaves and paired, decorative brackets, and tall, narrow arched windows, with hooded segmental arch-shaped brick crowns.<sup>1</sup>

The main, southern facing façade has three sets of stairs leading to separate entries. The centered, main entry has double paneled doors, with a divided transom light topped with a carved motif in the wooden surround and a hooded, segmental arch brick crown. The other two entries have single doors, each also topped with the carved wooden motif and hooded, segmental arch brick crowns. The first story on this façade has two 6/6 windows and the second story has four 6/6 windows and centered, paired 4/4 windows. The upper half story has paired windows, set in the gable, each with 4 divided lights in the upper sash and venting in the lower half. There are two circular windows, each with 4 divided lights to the east and west of the upper story paired window, within the gable.

The western and eastern facing side elevations have single 6/6 windows with granite sills and brick lintels. The single windows have the same carved, wooden motif in the upper surround and hooded, segmental arch brick crowns as the windows on the main façade. The western elevation also has two paired first story 6/6 windows with granite sills and brick lintels.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

This area in Fiskdale was formed in the late eighteenth century, first as "Wight Village," related to the Wight saw, grist, and fulling mills, and was redeveloped in 1842 when brothers Thomas Snell Jr. (1798-1885) and Melville Snell (1804-1877) purchased the land to continue operations of the auger and bit production company created in 1790 by their father, Thomas Snell (1772-1832).<sup>2</sup> Incorporated as Snell Manufacturing Company by 1862, the company was recognized as the first in the country to make spiral augers and the first internationally to produce an improved bight auger.<sup>3</sup> The elder Thomas Snell was possibly involved in the construction of the U.S.S. Constitution in Boston, as his operations included "the only manufacturing of bits and augers adapted to shipbuilding use in the vicinity," and Snell Manufacturing Company products were later used to

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Helen C. Holley, "Snellville." (MHC Inventory Form #STU.C), 1973. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?MhcId=STU.C>, accessed July 2017.

<sup>3</sup> "Snell Tools Used in Rebuilding of 'Old Ironsides'." *Springfield Republican*, September 9, 1928. [Genealogybank.com](http://www.genealogybank.com)

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support the ship's 1928 restoration.<sup>4</sup> The area in Fiskdale surrounding the manufacturing operations became known as Snellville and the company remained in business until the early 1950s as the oldest auger and bit factory in the country.<sup>5</sup> The area's organization of formal education began in 1761 when Sturbridge formed five school districts and by 1825, the first school committee report noted that 560 students had attended school through the past winter at 12 districts.<sup>6</sup>

By the late 1800s, the Fiskdale area had developed as an institutional and commercial center, due to the presence of the Fiskdale mills and the Snell Manufacturing Company. Main Street development continued with further expansion into that area from the center of Sturbridge, as well as into the neighboring area of Southbridge.(Figures 1 and 3)

A Sturbridge town meeting in 1874 resulted in the decision was reached to build a two-story brick school house, 42 x 60 feet, with two first floor rooms and one second floor room, "for the benefit of Snellville and Fiskdale."<sup>7</sup> The new building, ultimately completed under budget at about \$11,000, was dedicated in early December of that same year and was described as providing "excellent accommodations for a grammar and a primary school," and with the upper hall to "be used by the public for any and all purposes for which it may be required."<sup>8</sup> (Figure 2) Education was provided to third and fourth graders, with one teacher per grade.

The new school house became a focal point of the area and was referenced in an 1876 article about a "Flag Raising at Fiskdale," ending with a march to the building, which served as a backdrop for speakers at the event.<sup>9</sup> In 1878, there were 338 students in Sturbridge, including students at the Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse.<sup>10</sup> In 1895, a newspaper article noted that Miss Ioannetta Warren of Ashland and Miss Nellie Nolan of Fiskdale were newly hired to teach at the school.<sup>11</sup> This building became the first of two similarly styled schools, with a second building (with plans drawn by a female architect) erected in Fiskdale by 1896.<sup>12</sup>

In 1939, third and fourth grade students of the Snellville District School sang Christmas carols as part of a live, national radio broadcast, unaware that they were on the air until after the program had ended. The radio station, WBZ-WBZA chose the Snellville school as the setting for the children's performance as it was "a typical New England red school house."<sup>13</sup>

In January of 1952, the Regional School District of Tantasqua was established to provide for the towns of Brimfield, Brookfield, Holland, Sturbridge, and Wales and in December of 1954, the new Regional District School opened in Sturbridge.<sup>14</sup> Burgess Elementary School was built to serve Sturbridge in 1949, eliminating the need for the smaller school houses. The former Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse went on to serve as a meeting place for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Sturbridge Art Association, and Civic Defense for Storage.<sup>15</sup>

Circa 1979, the former schoolhouse was rehabilitated for adaptive reuse for the Sturbridge Council on Aging, serving as a senior center for Sturbridge and Fiskdale. Exterior, rear additions were added in the 1970s and 1990s, and interior rehabilitation also occurred in the 1990s.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Helen C. Holley, "Snellville." (MHC Inventory Form #STU.C), 1973. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?Mhcid=STU.C>, accessed July 2017.

<sup>6</sup> D. Hamilton Hurd, *History of Worcester County, Massachusetts, Volume I*. Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., (1889) 117. *Archive.org* (site). Accessed on-line July 2017, <https://archive.org/details/historyofworcest01hurd>

<sup>7</sup> "County News," *Massachusetts Spy*, January 23, 1874. *Genealogybank.com*

<sup>8</sup> "Sturbridge," *Massachusetts Spy*, December 11, 1874. *Genealogybank.com*

<sup>9</sup> "Flag Raising at Fiskdale," *Massachusetts Spy*, September 22, 1876, *Genealogybank.com*

<sup>10</sup> Marvin, Abijah Perkins. "Town of Sturbridge." *History of Worcester County, Massachusetts, Volume 2*. Boston: C.F. Jewett and Company, 1897(362). *Google.books.com* (site).

<sup>11</sup> "Sturbridge," *Worcester Daily Spy*, August 30, 1895. *Genealogybank.com*

<sup>12</sup> "Sturbridge Town Meeting Warrant," *Worcester Daily Spy*, March 28, 1896. *Genealogybank.com*

<sup>13</sup> "Pupils Sing to Nation But Don't Know It." *Boston Herald*, December 23, 1939. *Genealogybank.com*

<sup>14</sup> "Regional School Enacted." *Springfield Union*, May 20, 1955. *Genealogybank.com*

<sup>15</sup> Helen C. Holley, "Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse." (MHC Inventory Form #STU.113), 1973. <http://mhc-macris.net/Details.aspx?Mhcid=STU.113>, accessed July 2017.

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Viewing by appointment only.\*\*

Figure 1: Unknown author, Sturbridge and Fiskdale, Massachusetts, 1892. *State Library of Massachusetts*, (site). Accessed July 2017, <http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/2452/116152>

Figure 2: Unknown author, Sturbridge and Fiskdale, Massachusetts, 1892. *State Library of Massachusetts*, (site). Accessed July 2017, <http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/2452/116152>

Figure 3: L. J. Richards & Co. "Charlton & Dudley & Southbridge & Sturbridge." Plate 021, *New Topographical Atlas of Worcester County Massachusetts*. 1898. *Ward Maps LLC* (site). Accessed July 2017, <http://www.wardmaps.com/viewasset.php?aid=12391>



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Photo 1: Main, southern facing façade



Photo 2: Southeastern corner perspective

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Photo 3: Eastern facing side elevation



Photo 4: Northeastern corner and northern facing rear elevation



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Photo 5: 6/6 windows, wood trim and segmental arched hooded crowns



Photo 6: Elaborate bracketed eaves

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Photo 7: Granite sill example



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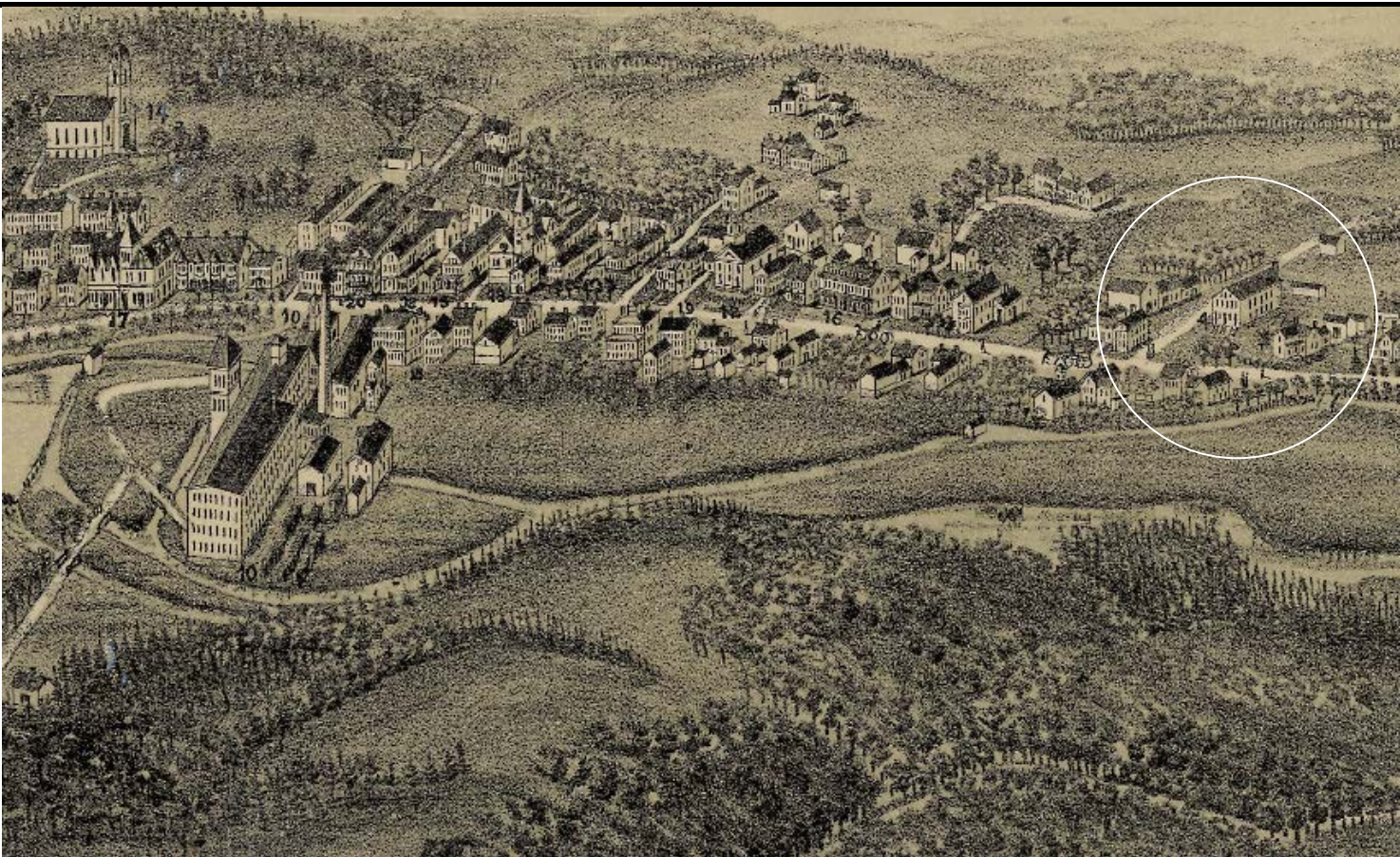


Figure 1: 1892 Map of Sturbridge and Fiskdale, showing school (circled) and development along Main Street in Snellville part of Fiskdale

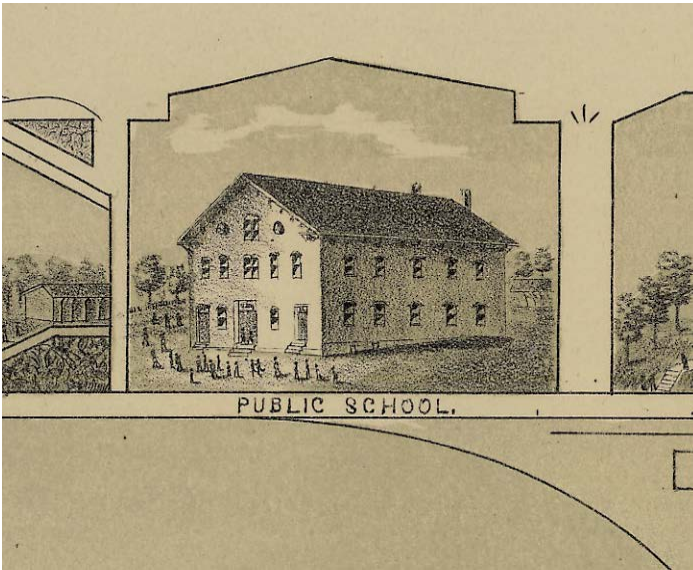


Figure 2: 1892 Map of Sturbridge and Snellville, Fiskdale, with a rendering of the school at 480 Main Street



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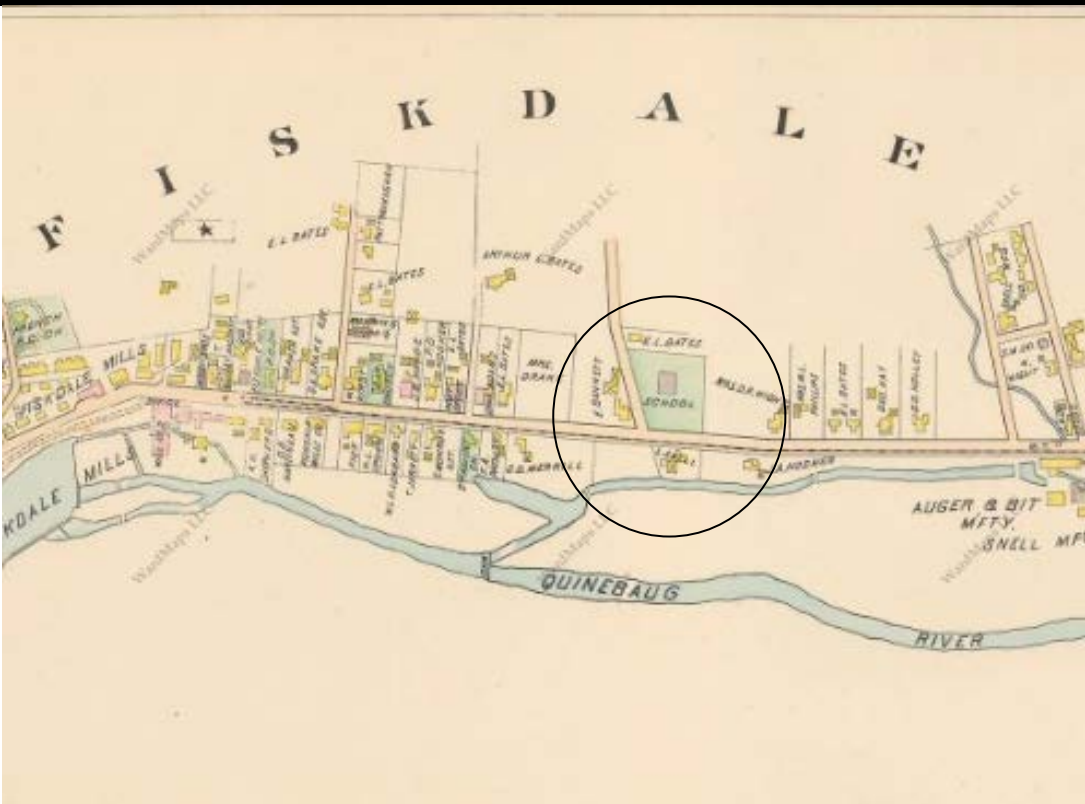


Figure 3: 1898 Map of Fiskdale, showing school along Main Street and continued development

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## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible **only** in a historic district
- ☐ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Statement of Significance by Shannon Walsh, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse is recommended for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places with a period of significance from 1874 (original construction) to 1967 (arbitrary fifty-year threshold), with significance on a local level.

It meets National Register Criteria A in the category of Community Planning and Development. As employment opportunities at the Fiskdale Mills and Snellville Manufacturing Company spurred local population growth, the school was designed and constructed to meet the needs of Fiskdale's growing Snellville community and a portion of the interior space was utilized to provide third and fourth grade elementary education to area children. Prominently displayed on maps during its early period of significance, this building also provides an example of the growth and development of Main Street in Fiskdale between Sturbridge and Southbridge.

Criteria A is also met in the category of Social History, on a local level. The building originally served a dual purpose, as both an institutional facility to support the educational welfare of local youth, as well as a community meeting space for social groups. It was even chosen as a backdrop for an 1876 Fiskdale flag raising.<sup>16</sup>

Criteria C can additionally be applied to this building, with significance on a local level, in the category of Architecture, as it is a well-maintained and fairly intact example of a late nineteenth century Italianate style institutional building which retains many character-defining details, such as its form and massing, overhanging eaves and paired, decorative brackets, tall, narrow arched 6/6 windows with hooded segmental arch-shaped brick crowns, and exterior granite and wood trim from its original design.

In conclusion, the Snellville District School and Meeting Hall building is eligible for National Register listing under both Criteria A and C, with local significance, as a good example of "a typical New England red school house," which retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> "Flag Raising at Fiskdale," *Massachusetts Spy*, September 22, 1876, *Genealogybank.com*

<sup>17</sup> "Pupils Sing to Nation But Don't Know It," *Boston Herald*, December 23, 1939. *Genealogybank.com*