

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
57 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(203) 566-3005

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM
For Buildings and Structures

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY			
TOWN NO.:	SITE NO.:		
UTM: 18/	/	/	/
QUAD:			
DISTRICT:	S	NR:	ACTUAL POTENTIAL

IDENTIFICATION

- 1. BUILDING NAME: Common: Wilcox, Crittenden & Co. Historic: Pameacha Manufacturing Co.
- 2. TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: _____ COUNTY: Middlesex
- 3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 234 South Main Street
- 4. OWNER(S): Gulf and Western Precision Engineering Company PUBLIC PRIVATE
- 5. USE: Present: Vacant Historic: Woolen factory; marine hardware factory
- 6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: yes ___ no
Interior accessible: ___ yes, explain _____ no

DESCRIPTION

7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Early 19th Century Industrial DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: c. 1814; addition, late 19th century

- 8. MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
 clapboard asbestos siding brick
 wood shingle asphalt siding fieldstone
 board & batten stucco cobblestone
 aluminum siding concrete: type: _____ cut stone: type: brownstone foundation
 other: _____

- 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: interior framing
 wood frame; post and beam ___ balloon
 load bearing masonry structural iron or steel
 other: _____

- 10. ROOF: type:
 gable ___ flat ___ mansard ___ monitor ___ sawtooth
 gambrel ___ shed ___ hip ___ round ___ other _____
 material:
 wood shingle ___ roll asphalt ___ tin ___ slate
 asphalt shingle ___ built up ___ tile ___ other: _____

11. NUMBER OF STORIES: 2 1/2 APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 40'x30'

- 12. CONDITION: Structural: ___ excellent good ___ fair ___ deteriorated
 Exterior: ___ excellent good ___ fair ___ deteriorated

13. INTEGRITY: Location: on original site ___ moved, when: _____
 Alterations: ___ no yes, explain: Cupola replaced; early interior adjustments; win-
dows altered; south addition

- 14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
 barn ___ shed ___ garage other landscape features or buildings: two forges;
 carriage house ___ shop ___ garden two warehouses; two dams located nearby

- 15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
 open land ___ woodland residential ___ scattered buildings visible from site
 commercial ___ industrial ___ rural high building density

16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: This building is sited on the north bank of Pamecha Creek. It is located in a commercial and industrial area and faces the busy intersection of Warwick and South Main Streets. Nearby are related, later factory buildings. A modern solar-energized bank is located across the intersection to the west.

17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior):

Affixed to the facade of a neighboring building is a section of millstone from a grist mill which stood on the site in 1650.

SIGNIFICANCE

Architect: _____ Builder: _____

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: The main part of this structure was erected in 1814 by John Watkinson as a woolen factory. Pamecha Creek was a prime source of water power in Middletown; a mill had occupied this site since the 1650's. Following Watkinson's death in 1836, this building was occupied by another woolen business, known as The Pamecha Manufacturing Company.

In 1849 William Walter Wilcox, a young and aggressive factory worker, went into business with Ira Penfield, his employer. Together they continued manufacturing Penfield's recently patented grommet (a small metal device used in the raising and lowering of sails) in the basement of this building, and established the firm of Penfield and Wilcox. Wilcox then went on the road, successfully selling this new device, and established a coast-to-coast reputation. When Penfield retired in 1857, Wilcox took in Joseph Hall, Jr. as a partner and the firm known as Wilcox and Hall was established. Hall left the business in 1867. In 1869 the firm acquired the name by which it has been known for over one hundred years, The Wilcox, Crittenden and Company. The firm's prominent managers at this time were William Walter Wilcox, Albert R. Crittenden (a former Middletown mayor), E. Bound Chaffee, and (see continuation sheet)

PHOTOGRAPH

photographer: Elizabeth Loomis
date: 10/78 view: west
negative on file: Roll 46, #11



COMPILED BY:

name: Elizabeth Loomis date: 9/78
organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
address: 27 Washington St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

19. SOURCES: "A Century of Dependability" (Middletown: Wilcox and Crittenden and Co., Inc.); "Middletown Tercentenary" (Middletown: 1950); Middletown Press (Nov. 14, 1947); 1825 Barnum Map; 1851 Clark Map; 1874 Beers Atlas; 1877 Bailey Perspective Map

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS:

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:

none known highways vandalism developers other: _____
 renewal private deterioration zoning explanation: Building and

complex are for sale; development plans are unknown.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Form number: 18 Date: 9/78

Pamecha Manufacturing Co.

234 South Main St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

Homer Churchill. This firm brought force and strength to the ships' chandlery business. They constructed additions to the existing structures to meet their rapidly growing needs. Their success was attributed to honesty, paying close attention to the business and having a good understanding of maritime needs.

On a summer night in 1907 a devastating fire attacked the premises. Virtually every building and its contents on the Pamecha ravine was destroyed, except for this small brick structure and the addition to the south. This determined firm rebuilt within two years, without losing a customer or laying off an employee. Except for this building and a slightly larger and later structure on the south side of the Pamecha Creek, all the structures related to the firm were built after the 1907 fire.

This two and one half story brick structure displays some of its early exterior features; brownstone sills and lintels, and two corbelled chimneys. The windows on the west facade were lengthened, the brownstone lintels removed and replaced by segmental-arched brick lintels. The cupola (which appears on an 1825 map) was replaced. The wing, attached to its south wall, probably dates from the late 19th century. More decorative, it displays corbelled brick work and an unusual arched window on the west facade. A large mural of a clipper ship is painted on the south wall.

The Pamecha Creek played an important role in Middletown's early manufacturing operations. The many water-powered factories located on its banks were largely responsible for this city's industrial prosperity in the early nineteenth century. This building is one of the few survivors of that prosperous era.

The site is additionally significant as an archeological site. Not only has it been in continuous use since 1650, but documents indicate that much of the machinery and tools damaged in the 1907 fire were not removed from the steep ravine.