

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

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
 CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
 (203) 566-3005
 HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM
 For Buildings and Structures

IDENTIFICATION

- 1. BUILDING NAME: Common: O'Rourke's Diner Historic: _____
- 2. TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: _____ COUNTY: Middlesex
- 3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 728 Main Street
- 4. OWNER(S): John J. O'Rourke PUBLIC PRIVATE
- 5. USE: Present: Commercial Historic: _____
- 6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: yes no
 Interior accessible: yes, explain _____ public use no

DESCRIPTION

- 7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Diner; Art Deco detail DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: Early 20th century; Erected current site c. 1947
- 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: poured foundation cut stone: type: _____
 other: stainless steel sheathing
- 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
 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: slightly arched
 material:
 wood shingle roll asphalt tin slate
 asphalt shingle built up tile other: painted galvanized steel
- 11. NUMBER OF STORIES: 1 APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 40'x16'
- 12. CONDITION: Structural: excellent good fair deteriorated
 Exterior: excellent good fair deteriorated
- 13. INTEGRITY: Location: on original site moved, when: 1947
 Alterations: no yes, explain: Wooden storm entranceway
- 14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
 barn shed garage other landscape features or buildings: Street clock (moved; predates diner)
 carriage house shop garden
- 15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
 open land woodland residential scattered buildings visible from site
 commercial industrial rural high building density
- 16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: O'Rourke's Diner sits beside the railroad track at the northern head of Main Street. Its distinctive "railroad car" style is especially appropriate to its site adjacent to the tracks, although its appearance differs markedly from surrounding buildings such as St. John's Church to the north on the square, and the nineteenth century commercial buildings to the south.

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

"Glass brick" doorway lights
Art Deco details in pressed steel sheathing

SIGNIFICANCE

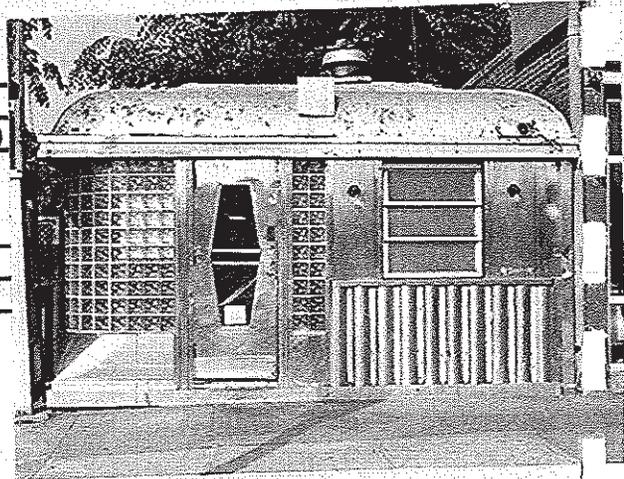
Architect: _____ Builder: _____

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: There has been a dining car on this site since 1930 when "Pete the Greek" Asvestras moved his lunch wagon here from Rapallo Avenue. In the early and middle 1940's James Dunn ran Dunn's Diner at this spot. One of his workers, John F. O'Rourke, put the current O'Rourke's Diner building in place in 1947. Reportedly the dining car was purchased in New Jersey and shipped to Middletown on a railroad flat car. The late nineteenth century street clock in front of the diner originally stood on Main Street (between Court and College Streets). It was moved to its present location by O'Rourke in 1964.

This long, low building patterned after a railway dining car is a piece of vanishing Americana. The exterior features vertical Art Deco designs in the sheet metal, as well as a neon sign on the facade. Somewhat wider than an actual diner car, the interior accommodates a row of booths on the north side and a counter with pedestal stools on the south. The case and single Corinthian column of the street clock is made of cast iron. The clock no longer gives time.

PHOTOGRAPH

photographer: Elizabeth Loomis
date: 5/78 view: west
negative on file: Roll 25A, #24 (clock, Roll 25, #25 north)



COMPILED BY:

name: Roger Sherman date: 12/77
organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
address: 27 Washington St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

19. SOURCES: Middletown Land Records; Middletown Land Records Map #1275; Middletown City Directory; Statements from owner, John J. O'Rourke, 5/16/78

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS:

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: _____ Date: 5/90

O'Rourke's Diner
738 Main Street (formerly #728)
Middletown, CT 06457

