

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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: National Guard Armory Historic: John R. Watkinson House
- 2. TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: _____ COUNTY: Middlesex
- 3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 70 Main Street
- 4. OWNER(S): State of Connecticut PUBLIC PRIVATE
- 5. USE: Present: Armory Historic: Residence
- 6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: yes no
Interior accessible: yes, explain building open to public no

DESCRIPTION

- 7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Federal DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: north wing c. 1810; drill shed and south wing 1921
- 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
 other: _____ lintels and sills
- 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 _____
material:
 wood shingle roll asphalt tin slate
 asphalt shingle built up tile other: _____
wings 48'x31'
- 11. NUMBER OF STORIES: 2½ APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: drill shed 75'x143'
- 12. CONDITION: Structural: excellent good fair deteriorated
Exterior: excellent good fair deteriorated
- 13. INTEGRITY: Location: on original site moved, when:
Alterations: no yes, explain: North wing turned to face south; original kitchen wing removed
- 14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
 barn shed garage other landscape features or buildings: Courtyard
 carriage house shop garden formed by two wings; iron fence, cannons
(mortars) in front
- 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 armory complex is on the east side of Main Street south of William Street. With a courtyard formed by two wings and the connecting facade of the drill shed, it presents a formal arrangement of buildings and grounds atypical of the neighboring commercial structures dating from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

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

- Bronze memorial tablets west wall of each wing
- Panelled door frame north wing
- Entrance porch north wing with flushboarded coved ceiling

SIGNIFICANCE

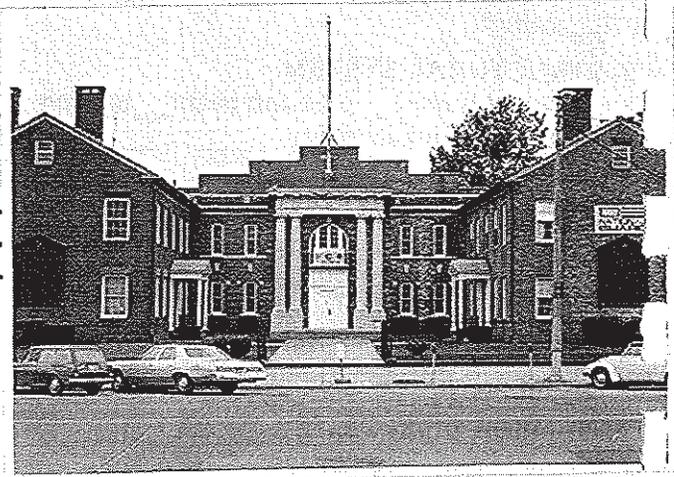
Architect: _____ Builder: _____

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: The north wing of this armory was built around 1810 as a residence facing Main Street for John R. Watkinson. Watkinson was a prominent merchant and the founder of a woolen manufactory on the Pameacha River in 1814. A Federal style house of five bays with a center hall, it is nearly identical to the nearby Mather-Mansfield House (151 Main Street) of the same date. In 1836 the house descended to John H. Watkinson, later president of the Middletown National Bank. The property was acquired in 1919 by the State of Connecticut for the purpose of constructing an armory. In an interesting demonstration of adaptive use, the original house was turned on its foundation (minus a rear wing) to face south. An exact duplicate was constructed to face the original, across a court, and the facade of a large drill shed was joined to the east wall of each wing. Although this classical revival facade has coupled full height columns carrying a high and prominent entablature, the use of brick and the continuation of the wing cornices across the facade is sympathetic to the appearance of the wings. Moreover, the details of this facade echo the classically inspired Federal details of the wings.

An archeological excavation of the Watkinson house's original foundation revealed many ceramic artifacts which demonstrated the prosperity of the period when it was built.

PHOTOGRAPH

photographer: Elizabeth Loomis
 date: 6/78 view: west
 negative on file: Roll 25, #10



COMPILED BY:

name: John E. Reynolds date: 6/78
 organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
 address: 27 Washington St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

19. SOURCES: Middletown Land Records; Middletown Probate Court Records; History of Middlesex County (Chicago: J.B. Beers, 1884); 1825 Barnum Map; 1851 Clark Map; 1874 Beers Atlas; 1877 Bailey Map; 1915 Aeroview Map

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: 1/90

John R. Watkinson House
70 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457

