

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

TOWN NO.: SITE NO.:
UTM: 18 / - / - / - / - / -
QUAD:
DISTRICT: S NR: ACTUAL POTENTIAL

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION

29 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(203) 566-3005

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM

For Buildings and Structures

IDENTIFICATION

- 1. BUILDING NAME: Common: Winchester House Historic: C.G.R. Vinal House
TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: COUNTY: Middlesex
3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 281 High Street
OWNER(S): Wesleyan University PUBLIC X PRIVATE
5. USE: Present: Anthro Department Offices Historic: Residence
ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: yes no
Interior accessible: yes, explain with University's permission no

DESCRIPTION

- 7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Victorian Italianate Villa DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1875-1876
8. MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
clapboard asbestos siding X brick
wood shingle asphalt siding fieldstone
board & batten X stucco cobblestone
aluminum siding concrete: type: X cut stone: type: brownstone foundation
other:
9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
wood frame: post and beam balloon
X load bearing masonry structural iron or steel
other:
10. ROOF: type:
gable X flat mansard monitor sawtooth
gambrel shed hip round other
material:
wood shingle roll asphalt X tin slate
asphalt shingle built up tile other:
11. NUMBER OF STORIES: 2 APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 28'x56' (rear 22'x24')
12. CONDITION: Structural: excellent X good fair deteriorated
Exterior: excellent X good fair deteriorated
13. INTEGRITY: Location: X on original site moved, when:
Alterations: X no yes, explain:
14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
barn shed garage X other landscape features or buildings: Wooden fence
carriage house shop garden Wyllys Avenue side
15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
open land woodland X residential scattered buildings visible from site
commercial industrial rural X high building density
16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: This house faces east to the Connecticut River from the northwest corner of High Street and Wyllys Avenue. On the opposite corner is the Italianate Coite-Hubbard House (269 High Street). High Street during the 19th century was the most prestigious residential area in Middletown. The corner site and the high elevation of the street add to the imposing architectural qualities of this house.

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

Elaborately carved entrance doors
Original overmantel mirror in dining room

SIGNIFICANCE

Architect: possibly Henry Austin Builder: _____

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: This house was built c. 1875 by Charles Green Rich Vinal and his wife Minnie Amelia (Hotchkiss) Vinal on land given to them by Mrs. Vinal's mother. C.G.R. Vinal was one of Middletown's most prominent citizens. A lawyer, Vinal was chosen Mayor in 1894, State Senator in 1896, and Connecticut Secretary of State in 1900. The Vinals occupied the house until 1934 (Charles died in 1926) when Wesleyan acquired it from the estate of Minnie A. Vinal for use as offices and renamed it "Winchester House" in honor of English Professor Caleb Winchester.

This house is an Italianate villa of asymmetrical plan without the characteristic tower (campanile). The south and east street elevations have similar bay projections. Triangular pediments at the roofline over these bays emphasize their projection, and well integrated design elements, such as the second floor balconies with canopies, draw attention to the irregularity of the plan. The asymmetrical arrangement sets this house apart from the nearby Coite-Hubbard and Starr Houses of a slightly earlier period.

(see continuation sheet)

PHOTOGRAPH

photographer: Elizabeth Loomis
date: 11/77 view: southeast
negative on file: Roll 2, #25



COMPILED BY:

name: John E. Reynolds date: 4/78
organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
address: 27 Washington St., Middletown, Conn. 06457

19. SOURCES: Middletown Land Records; Middletown Tribune; Souvenir Edition (H.F. Donlan 1896); Merle Kummer, "Winchester House" (unpublished report, 1974), Greater Middletown Preservation Trust; Vinal-Winchester House File, Wesleyan Archives.

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
Form number: 18 Date: 4/78

C.G.R. Vinal House
281 High Street, Middletown, Ct. 06457

This house is nearly identical in the treatment of its facades to the Oliver B. North House on Wooster Square in New Haven (ca. 1865) designed by Henry Austin. The Vinal House continued the tradition of high style architecture already established on High Street by the mid-nineteenth century.