

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only  
received MAR 31 1982  
date entered APR 29 1982

**1. Name**

historic Edward Augustus Russell House

and/or common Kappa Nu Kappa House

**2. Location**

street & number 318 High Street

N/A — not for publication

city, town Middletown

N/A vicinity of

congressional district Second

state Connecticut

code

09

county

Middlesex

code 007

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Offices

**4. Owner of Property**

name Wesleyan University

street & number none

city, town Middletown

N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Town Clerk, Municipal Building

street & number 152 DeKoven Drive

city, town Middletown

state Connecticut

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title State Register of Historic Places (A)  
Middletown, Connecticut; Historical and Architectural Resources (B)  
date 1979 (B); 1981 (A)  
has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
 federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Middletown

state Connecticut

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This Greek Revival style residence was built in 1841-2 for Edward Augustus Russell. A three story wood frame flushboarded structure, 47' X 47', it has a three bay facade, a shallow pitched hip roof, four interior chimneys and rests on a random coursed ashlar brownstone foundation. Set back 30' from the east side of High Street, it appears from the street to be situated on a level lot. However, the site drops sharply to the east at the rear of the building and more gradually to the north and south.

It is part of a group of distinguished and well maintained residences built in the nineteenth century along this portion of High Street which today borders the Wesleyan University campus. The property immediately adjacent to the north is the Samuel Russell House, a Greek Revival building listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Across the street to the west are the Gothic Revival Duane Barnes House and another National Register property, the Richard Alsop IV House, a transitional Greek Revival Italianate residence. The Italianate style is also well represented by the Vinal House and the Coite-Hubbard House (also on the Register) further along High Street to the south.

Alterations which took place about 1900 and again in 1934 give the structure its present appearance.<sup>1</sup> The original cornice and its egg and dart moulding were lowered to their present position, 4.6' below the roof line, on the facade (see photo #1) and along the rear and side elevations. A plain board frieze was added at this time.

The central focus of the facade is the original recessed doorway. Its symmetrical arrangement of Tuscan style pilasters and free-standing Ionic columns support a simplified full entablature, also with egg and dart moulding, and a terne roof (see photo #4). With the exception of the double leaf door, which is not original, the doorway is very similar to a design by Minard Lafever.<sup>2</sup> The brownstone entrance porch has three steps up from grade and is flanked by large projecting brownstone blocks with a simple carved border.

The windows of the facade are six-over-nine at the first story. Extending almost to the level of the first floor they are protected with iron grilles across the bottom quarter. Six-over-one sash at the second story and modern casement windows above the cornice complete the fenestration.

As originally designed and constructed, the severity of the three bay flushboard facade was relieved and enhanced by projecting window heads, and the heavy projecting cornice was located just below three attic "eyebrow" windows covered with anthemion motif metal grilles.<sup>3</sup> This cornice, which extended completely around the building, was supported by heavy convex moulding with a decorative band of egg and dart moulding, an architectural detail repeated elsewhere in the building (see photocopy #1).

The present four bay south elevation contains six-over-one sash at both the first and second story with the exception of the lower southwest corner, which has an elliptical leaded stained glass window at the first story. Five additional eight-over-eight windows are located in the exposed foundation wall. Above the cornice are five modern windows of varying dimensions.

At the rear of the structure the original Tuscan style porch with a terne roof, supported by five brick piers, extends across the width of the building and is partially enclosed leaving both ends open exposing two of the original cast iron open work columns,

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

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The Edward Augustus Russell House  
 Continuation sheet 318 High Street, Middletown Item number 7

Page 2

one at each outside corner. A three story fire escape extends over the porch roof and down to grade. The original lattice work between the piers has been removed as has most of the brick paving under the porch at grade level which laid in a herring bone pattern.

The north elevation is similar to the south except for a small projecting ell at the center of the first story. Just behind the line of the facade an original brownstone retaining wall extends out from the building which allows the placement of a door and two windows in the exposed foundation wall, one on each side of the ell.

Originally the fenestration pattern on both the north and south elevations included two six-over-six sash at both the first and second story and two eyebrow windows with grilles below the roof line. Small windows located between these windows at the second level on the north elevation and at the first floor on the south elevation still remain in place.<sup>4</sup>

Major modifications to the interior floor plans took place in 1934.<sup>5</sup> As originally designed the first floor plan contained an entrance hall with a staircase flanked by a double parlor to the north and two rooms to the south. These rooms contained fireplaces in the exterior walls. The northwest parlor remains intact with its original black marble fireplace mantelpiece. The room in the southwest corner has been partitioned into several smaller rooms and the fireplace removed. The interior staircase which divided this right half was removed providing for a full width room across the rear of the building with the original fireplaces at either end still in place with black marble mantelpieces. Access to the rear porch is provided by two doors in the rear wall. Both the second and third floors were extensively remodeled into nine bedrooms. A white marble fireplace mantelpiece is still in place in the northeast chamber on the second floor. Access to the third floor was provided by extending the original center staircase an additional flight.

Despite these changes in plan, most of the original, relatively simple, architectural details remain (see photo #8). They include simple door and window surrounds with corner blocks, interior shutters, a combination of plain and louver, at the original windows and two panel doors. Evidence of a kitchen hearth and a root cellar with a vaulted ceiling can be found in the southeast portion of the basement.

The most notable original feature of the interior, the free standing staircase in the entrance hall, is basically unaltered. Its graceful curved balustrade with simple turned balusters, two to each tread, ends in a simple volute (see photos #6 and #7). The cornice of the entrance hall has original egg and dart moulding and a wide frieze board. Originally plain, the frieze has been embellished with applied classical detail, probably at the turn of the century (see photo #8).

The architectural plans drawn in 1934 document all the alterations to the exterior and interior of the building.<sup>6</sup> The modifications made to the facade in particular are reversible and have not irrevocably compromised the architectural integrity of the structure.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1841–2

**Builder/Architect** attributed to A.J. Davis and/or Ithiel Town

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Edward Augustus Russell House is significant because of its associations with a prominent nineteenth century Middletown merchant and civic leader (Criteria B). As part of the nineteenth century residential development of this section of Middletown, it is an essentially well preserved example of late Greek Revival style domestic architecture and as such makes a significant major contribution to the historic streetscape (Criteria C).

This house was built for Edward Augustus Russell (1797–1874) in 1841–2. He was a member of a distinguished family that had resided in Middletown since the 17th century and a direct descendant of Noah Russell, the second pastor of the first Congregational Church. The second son of Captain John and Abigail Warner Russell, his career in business paralleled that of his older and better known brother Samuel. Following the early death of his father, Edward was also apprenticed to Samuel Wetmore, a Middletown merchant and clerked for Edward Carrington and Company of Providence, East India traders. In 1825 he joined his brother in China where he worked for Russell and Company, a firm founded by Samuel Russell and Philip Amidon of New York. Unlike his brother, however, after returning to Middletown to live in 1838, Edward became active in local affairs: serving as mayor of Middletown from 1859–61, State Representative and a delegate to the National Convention. His business interests outside of Middletown included the directorship of several railroads and the presidency of the Charles River Railroad in Massachusetts. Since his two sons predeceased him, the house passed to his widow and his two maiden daughters upon his death in 1874. The house was occupied by Edward's grandson, Richard deZeng, the son of the eldest daughter Mary and Edward deZeng, who lived here until his death in 1932. Two years later the property was purchased by Wesleyan University from the Edward Augustus Russell Estate and sold that same year to the Alpha Sigma Delta Alumni Association.

An outstanding example of the Greek Revival style, the Edward Augustus Russell House has been attributed to both A.J. Davis and Ithiel Town: to Town on the basis of Edward's contact with the firm during the construction of his brother Samuel's house to the north and to Davis because of its stylistic similarity to the DeRham Brevoort House in New York, also attributed to Davis.<sup>7</sup> Although Edward's contact with Town's architectural firm is definitely established, his letters to Town's firm relate only to the construction of the Samuel Russell House and there is no mention of his own house in this or any other of his business correspondence.<sup>8</sup>

However, Town's influence may be demonstrated by comparing the original floor plans of several neighboring buildings, either designed by him or attributed to him, the Richard Alsop IV House as well as the Samuel Russell House, with the original floor plan and layout of Edward's house. This comparison reveals similar design characteristics: double parlors separated by sliding pocket doors, a feature which Talbot Hamlin considers to be "definitely a New York practice."<sup>9</sup> In addition, both of the Russell brothers' houses contain enclosed interior staircases. More remarkable is the fact that their first floor layouts, as originally designed and constructed are mirror images of each other with the double parlors, as well as the interior staircases on opposite sides of the buildings.<sup>10</sup> (See Continuation Sheet...)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

AGREEMENT NOTED

See Continuation Sheet

UMT NOTED

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .33 acres

Quadrangle name Middletown

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	8	6	9	5	5	2	0	4	6	0	3	2	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jan Cunningham, Executive Director

organization Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

date August 7, 1981

street & number 27 Washington Street

telephone 346-1646

city or town Middletown

state Connecticut

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date March 16, 1982

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date

4/29/82

for Keeper of the National Register

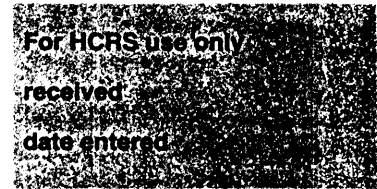
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet The Edward Augustus Russell House  
318 High Street, Middletown Item number 8

Page 2

While these similarities do suggest Town or one of his associates may have designed the Edward Augustus Russell House, it is also possible that the building was not professionally designed directly and that a master builder, not an architect, was involved using the Samuel Russell House as a model. This possibility seems less remote as one becomes aware that the exterior differences are quite deceptive. The temple front and colonnaded portion of the Samuel Russell House conceal the fact that the main block of both buildings is identical in size (within inches), square in plan, forty-seven feet on a side.

A careful review of A.J. Davis' day and account books failed to confirm that he designed the building. His diary does contain, however, a suggestive but not definitive entry. In 1832, Davis records that he drew a "plan" for the sum of \$10.00 and a sketch of an antae capitol for \$1.00 for a Mr. Russell of Boston.<sup>11</sup> As the city was later corrected to Middletown, presumably these services were performed for Edward Russell whose house does have a distyle portico in antis. Davis, apparently did not prepare any further plans or elevations based on this "plan" as there were no additional services performed for "Mr. Russell" in his records.

Although attribution to a known architect cannot be established with any degree of certainty, the building is still architecturally significant. This significance relies on a spare, almost abstract sense of geometry. Uncompromised by alterations to the facade, the planometric simplicity of the building remains, the essence of this form of late Greek Revival domestic architecture.<sup>12</sup> Reflecting the changing cultural tastes of the period, and owing more to the Regency style or the Italian villa, this transitional style established a wholly different esthetic than the grand porticoed elegance of the Greek Revival temple style, a form which is exemplified by the neighboring Samuel Russell House. Together these two structures provide a tangible record of the diversity of the Greek influence on nineteenth century domestic architecture in America.

NOTES

1. For this and the following see Towner and Sellev, "Plans and Elevations KNK" 1934. (Wesleyan University Archives, Box 14).
2. LaFever, Minard. The Modern Builder's Guide. (1833) Plate 80.
3. The original appearance of the building has been established from photographs taken in 1934 now in Archives of Wesleyan University Library.
4. Towner and Sellev 1934.
5. Towner and Sellev.
6. Towner and Sellev.
7. For Edward Augustus Russell correspondence with Ithiel Town see "Samuel Russell House Correspondence, Compiled and transcribed by Alain D. Munkitterick from the originals in the Library of Congress." May 1972. (on file with Greater Middletown Preservation Trust and Wesleyan University).

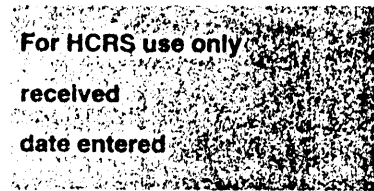
**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Edward Augustus Russell House

Continuation sheet 318 High Street, Middletown Item number 8

Page 3



Notes (continued)

7. (continued)

For deRham Brevoort House see Green, Samuel, American Art: A Historical Survey.  
(New York:1966), p. 193.

8. Russell, Edward Augustus, Papers. Archives of the Middlesex County Historical Society,  
Middletown, CT.

9. Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in America, (New York:1944), p. 176,fn 32.

10. Towner and Sellew (Wesleyan University Archives:1934)

11. Davis, Alexander J., Diary 1827-1853. MS. New York Public Library, Manuscript Division,  
Alexander J. Davis Papers. "Volumes," p. 129.

12. Plans have been drawn to restore the facade to its original appearance as documented  
in the 1934 photographs in Kappa Nu Kappa files, Wesleyan University Archives.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

The Edward Augustus Russell House

Continuation sheet 318 High Street, Middletown, CT Item number 9

Page 1

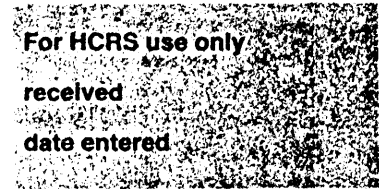
Major Bibliographical References

Beers, J.H., Commemorative Biographical Record of Middlesex County, Connecticut (Chicago: 1903); Davis, Alexander J. Papers. New York Public Library Manuscript Division; Green, Samuel M., American Art: A Historical Survey (New York:1966); Hamlin, Talbot, Greek Revival Architecture in America (Dover Publications New York:1944); Kappa Nu Kappa Files, Wesleyan University Archives; Mayors of Middletown (Mimeo. Russell Library, Middletown Case); Middletown City Directories; Middletown Land Records; Munkittrick, Alain. "Calendar: Papers Relating to Samuel Wadsworth Russell (1789-1862)" (Russell Library, Middletown, unpublished); Munkittrick, Alain, Samuel Wadsworth Russell (1789-1862): A Study of Ordered Investment Middletown:1973 (unpublished); Newton, R.H., Town and Davis Architects Columbia University Press (New York:1942); Notes by Alain Munkittrick in Greater Middletown Preservation Trust Files; Richter, Alice B., "History of the Church of the Holy Trinity" (Middletown: 1963); Russell, Gurdon Wadsworth, Descendants of John Russell Cambridge, 1635 (Hartford:1910); Towner and Sellw, "Plans and Elevations KNK," 1934 (Wesleyan University Archives, Box 14).



**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



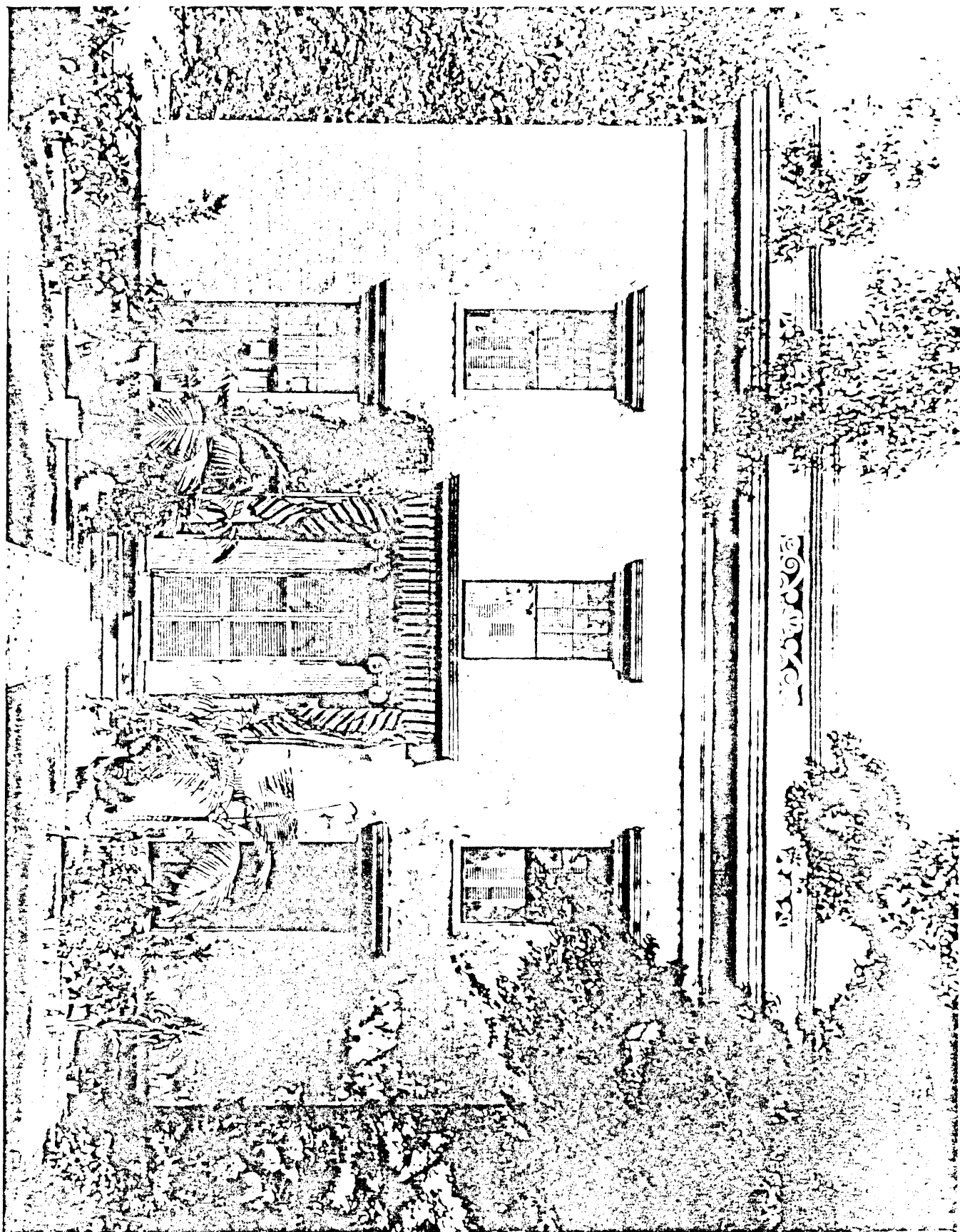
The Edward Augustus Russell House  
Continuation sheet 318 High Street, Middletown Item number 10

Page 1

Verbal Description and Justification

Commencing at an iron stake situated in the line of a picket fence running along the easterly side of said High Street; thence running easterly and slightly north along land of Wesleyan University (formerly of Thomas M. Russell, Jr.) a distance of 135 ft.; thence running southeasterly on a straight line to the westerly boundary line of a 15 fy right of way over property now or formerly of Thomas M. Russell, Jr., to a point on the said westerly boundary line of said right of way from an iron pipe (said iron pipe is set where the said westerly line of said right of way intersects the projection easterly in a straight line of the course first above mentioned); thence running southerly 90 ft., more or less, along the said westerly line of said right of way to an iron stake at the northeasterly corner of land of the Phi Gamma Building Association of Alpha Chi Rho; thence westerly along the land of the Phi Gamma Building Association of Alpha Chi Rho to an iron stake set in the line of the aforesaid picket fence and the easterly boundary line of said High Street a distance of 150 ft; thence running northerly along said picket fence and the easterly boundary line of said High Street to the iron stake marking the point of beginning a distance of 83 and 9/12 feet. Right to pass and repass with vehicles and on foot over the strip of land 15 feet in width lying between Court Street on the south and a line drawn perpendicular to the easterly line of the premises above described at the northeast corner thereof.

The property herein described from the deed is the site to be nominated. It is part of the undivided one acre parcel which Edward Russell inherited with his siblings upon the death of his mother. It was bounded on the south by Court Street and the west by Upper (now High) Street and was a portion of the original Nodiah Russell homelot. Prior to the building of his house in 1841-42 his brothers and sisters released their claim on .33 acres and the boundaries have remained the same since that time.



EDWARD AUGUSTUS RUSSELL HOUSE  
318 High Street  
Middletown, CT

Photocopy #1