

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received JUL 23 1985

date entered AUG 23 1985

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

1. Name

historic Old Middletown High School

and or common Old Middletown High School

2. Location

street & number Pearl and Court streets _____ not for publication

city, town Middletown N.A. vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Middlesex code 007

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Michael A. Interbartolo (Old Middletown High School Associates)

street & number 108 Maverick Street

city, town East Boston _____ vicinity of state Massachusetts 02128

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number deKoven Drive

city, town Middletown state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys See continuation sheet.

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1985 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford 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

The Old Middletown High School, built between 1894 and 1896 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, is a load-bearing brick and stone building located at the southwest corner of Court and Pearl streets in Middletown, Connecticut. In use as a school for seventy-six years, this monumental building is composed of three parts: the original section (50' x 109'), a south wing added in 1912, and a west wing added in 1931, additions which more than doubled the size of the original building (138' x 207'; see exhibit A for schematic diagram of floor plan). The original section, a gable-roofed brick building with slate shingles, designed by Curtis and Johnson of Hartford, is rectangular in plan with an octagonal tower incorporated into the northeast corner, creating the asymmetrical massing typical of the Richardsonian Romanesque style (Photograph #1). The tower and a three-bay, hip-roofed pavilion, located slightly off-center in the north elevation, rise a full three stories, while the rest of the building, including the smaller, gable-roofed pavilion on the east elevation, is only two stories in height. The south wing is three stories in height with a built-up flat roof. The 1931 addition on the west end is two stories high capped by a slate-covered hip roof with dormers.

The school, converted to elderly housing in 1979, is located in a modest nineteenth-century neighborhood just two blocks west of the commercial district on Main Street, and one block east of High Street, a more fashionable residential street that borders the Wesleyan University campus and also developed in the nineteenth century. Court Street, an east-west street, originates just west of Route 9 at deKoven Drive; both of these roads run parallel to the Connecticut River. A steeply sloping street, Court Street rises 150 feet above the river and terminates at High Street. Pearl Street is one of several cross streets that run parallel with Main Street and cut across the slope of the hill.

A variety of textures and materials were used in the original exterior construction. The building rests on a poured concrete foundation below ground, but has an exposed, rock-faced, brownstone foundation set in an ashlar bond running its full length and width. At the tower corner the brownstone is exposed a full half story because of the slope of the lot. Rusticated Potsdam red sandstone is used on the three-foot belt course above the brownstone water table that delineates the base of the building. It is also found in the first story of the tower and around the original main entrance, which was located in the projecting pavilion on Court Street. The walls are constructed of glazed, yellow Pompeian brick.

Triple-hung, single-paned, wooden sash were used throughout the first floor, set singly or in pairs with smooth stone lintels, to form a horizontal band. During the 1979 remodeling, the upper section of these windows was blocked in with a bronze-colored metal plate, and single-paned, double-hung metal sash were installed below. At the second floor all the windows are double-hung with a fixed-glass, round-arched head, each set with a keystone. On the third floor of the pavilion, three sets of tripartite windows are used, and also surmounted by fixed, glazed transoms. These windows are much smaller in scale than those used elsewhere on the building. The middle grouping is flanked by colonnettes and surmounted by a small pediment, which is decorated with intertwined, foliated terra-cotta ornament (Photograph #4). A similar band of terra cotta is used in the frieze. Half-round pilasters are found at the corners of the pavilion and extend from the first-floor plate level to the cornice. Above the roofline both the pilasters

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Representation in Existing Surveys (continued).

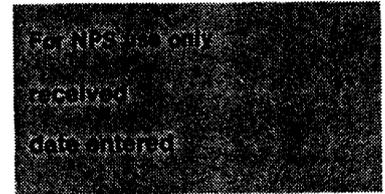
Middletown, Connecticut: Historical and Architectural Resources, 1979
Connecticut Historical Commission
59. So. Prospect Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Eligibility (continued)

Old Middletown High School was determined to be eligible for the National Register by the U.S. Department of the Interior, October 14, 1977.

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and colonettes are capped with decorative finials. The third floor of the tower has pairs of double-hung windows with rounded arches on the four exterior faces, decorated with terra-cotta ornament (Photograph #7). The east pavilion has a similar treatment (Photograph #5). The tent roof of the tower is covered with slate, as are the other roof surfaces of this original section. Small, purely decorative gable-roofed dormers extend from the tower roof. Each has a large rondelle of brick with a terra-cotta rosette.

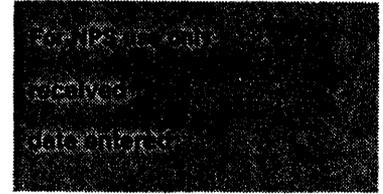
The south addition, added in 1912, was designed by Charles Scranton Palmer of Meriden, and generally repeats the stylistic elements and materials of the original. The same yellow Pompeian brick is used on the facade, as well as on the other elevations, and brownstone is used both in the foundation and surrounding the compound-arched openings of the projecting entrance to this addition at the basement level. The window treatment of the Pearl Street facade of the addition is much simplified, however, consisting of continuous bands of straightforward, double- and triple-hung sash. Originally made of wood, these windows were also replaced with metal sash in 1979, and again at the second floor, the top third was blocked in.

The west wing, added in 1931 to house a new auditorium (architect not known), is also rectangular in plan and perpendicular to the main block, but set forward on the lot within a few feet of Court Street (Photograph #2). It is joined to the original building by an angled section which extends back to the facade of the original building and is embellished by a terra-cotta frieze (Photograph #8). A new main entrance to the building was located in this connecting section. The original doors were removed from the recess behind the arched loggia, and the arched openings were converted to windows. Again an attempt was made to blend the addition with the original style and design of the original. The result was less successful; not only does the mass and location of this addition tend to negate the original asymmetrical balance, but, despite the use of rounded brownstone arches, set in a frame of brownstone on the north elevation, and the use of similar brick, this addition appears to be of more modern construction. Here, too, the windows are quite functional and devoid of any decorative stone work or terra-cotta tile. Several shed-roofed dormers are set into the slope of the west roof. A long shed-roofed dormer was also added to the west of the central pavilion on the gable roof of the original building during this alteration. Another matching shed-roofed dormer was added to the east of the pavilion in the 1979 conversion. The original sash on the second and third floors of this addition were also replaced in 1979.

The original floor plan of the 1894 building was quite typical for schools of the period.¹ The main corridors extended the length of the building providing access to the classrooms and offices on each floor and egress from the building. In the basement were a gymnasium for the boys and a "playroom" for the girls, as well as the rooms for the steam boilers of the heating plant, for coal storage, and toilets. In addition to classrooms the second floor contained the science laboratories. An unusual feature of the third-floor plan was a "drawing room" in the tower. The third floor of the pavilion housed the auditorium, which was flanked by corridors on either side. Throughout the building, ventilating ducts, made of brick, circulated fresh air propelled by a large fan in the basement that was powered by a gas engine.

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No expense was spared to fireproof the interior of the original building. The steel beams which carried the floors were cased in terra-cotta tile. The floors and the underside of the stairs were lined with asbestos. The few interior walls that were of wood construction had double, brick fire stops in each story. A two-and-one-half-inch water pipe, which extended from the basement to the roof, supplied fire hoses on each level.

With the exception of the changes to the windows noted above and a handicapped access ramp to the main entrance, the conversion of the building to elderly housing in 1979 was accomplished with minimal change to the exterior of the building. On the interior the remodeling, designed by architect Michael Interbartolo of the development firm of Calderelli Interbartolo Associates of East Boston, generally utilized existing classroom spaces for apartments and retained the principal corridors. The tower room on the third floor was retained intact as the living room of an apartment. In the 1912 section a two-story atrium was introduced, necessitating the removal of part of the floor in this area. Apartments, formerly classrooms, open off the balconies of the atrium, which is illuminated from above by skylights. An elevator, housed in glass, which provides handicapped access from the basement to the second floor, is located in the north end of the atrium.

8. Significance

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

Criteria A and C

Specific dates 1894-1896 **Builder/Architect** Curtis and Johnson of Hartford, Connecticut
Charles Scranton Palmer of Meriden, Conn.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Old Middletown High School, one of the few monumental civic buildings remaining in the City of Middletown, has both architectural and historical significance. A well-preserved building designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, it is an excellent example of nineteenth-century school architecture that possesses all the major characteristics distinguishing this style: the use of asymmetrical massing and rustication, a variety of polychrome stone and brick work, compound, rounded arches, and a tower (Criterion C). Because the construction of this high school in 1894-1896 was the culmination of over one hundred years of the development of public education in Middletown and marked the establishment of a modern educational system in the city, it has considerable local significance (Criterion A). As one of the first high schools built in central Connecticut, with a student population drawn from Middlesex, Hartford, and New Haven counties, it also has regional significance.

Architectural Significance

The Old Middletown High School is a very successful interpretation of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. It was designed by Curtis and Johnson of Hartford. Their design makes liberal use of rustication and broad, round-arched openings, the hallmarks of this style. Less typically, however, they combined rock-faced masonry with a variety of other materials to create a richly textured surface. In less skillful hands this treatment would be purely decorative. But here, careful placement of contrasting brick, stone, and terra cotta is used to distinguish and emphasize the major architectural features and tie them together into a sophisticated, asymmetrical design.

Even though the weight and placement of the later additions tend to compromise the architects' original intent, the pronounced asymmetrical massing of their design is quite evident. A broad horizontal rhythm is established and played off skillfully against the vertical thrust of the tower. With a full half-story exposed foundation to accommodate the slope of the lot, the tower is the most dominant feature of the building, one that is most noticeable to the casual observer.

Several devices are used to establish the horizontal mass of the building as a counterbalance to the imposing tower. The north and east elevations are treated as one continuous facade, anchored by the broad horizontal sweep of the sandstone belt course. In addition, the height of the building is reduced visually by a classically-derived architectural method. Individually massive, rough-cut stones are used throughout the building at the first level; but each succeeding story receives a more subtle and refined treatment. Individual elements, such as window openings, are reduced in size. Decorative details become more intricate and elaborate, ending in the intertwined, foliated pattern of the terra-cotta frieze. This reduction is most apparent in the design of the pavilion on the north elevation. It is there also that the architects were the most successful in their use of contrasting materials.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Special Report of the Board of Education: New High School (1896, 1912, 1931); Annual Reports of the Board of Education, Middletown, CT; Connecticut State Statutes, 1860-1930; Federal Census of the United States, 1850-1930; "Report to the Common Council," Study Committee on the Old Middletown High School, 1975.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1

Quadrangle name Middletown Quad

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	D	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>7</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>
E	<u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	F	<u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification The boundary of the property is substantially the same as it was when the school was built in 1894-1896 and is described as follows in the deed (6/13/78; 513:265): Commencing at a point which marks the northeasterly corner hereof (See continuation sheet.)

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Jan Cunningham, Preservation Consultant	Edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator
organization	Cunningham Associates	date 10/84
street & number	98 Washington Street	telephone (203) 347-4072
city or town	Middletown	state CT 06457

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Director; Connecticut Historical Commission

date July 2, 1985

For NPS use only

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


Keeper of the National Register

date 8/23/85

date

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

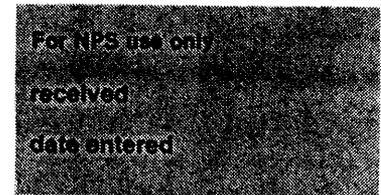
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History

The construction of the Old Middletown High School was an event of major importance to the city and to the region. It was built at the end of a century which had witnessed the transformation of the Middletown school system from the "common schools" supported by the church societies to an integrated, city-wide, public school system supported by local and state taxes. Although an earlier "high school" was part of the old Central School on College Street one block away, this building was the first school built in the city to be used exclusively for secondary education (grades nine through twelve).

Universal public education was a popular goal in the post-Civil-War period. Prior to 1870 very few children had the opportunity to attend school past the elementary level. Secondary education was generally limited to private schools and reserved for those children who expected to attend college. Public high schools, a phenomenon of the last quarter of the century, were established in many industrial cities of the Northeast. They were promoted by "progressive" reformers in the belief that education would help alleviate the social problems generated by the Industrial Revolution.² This trend was accompanied by legislative reform. In Connecticut school attendance and child labor laws became more stringent to encourage and finally require more children to continue their education.

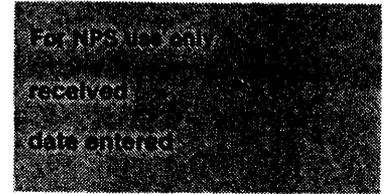
By the end of the century even the smaller industrial cities, like Middletown, were trying to cope with a number of social problems. The city had experienced a rapid population growth, largely due to immigration from Europe.³ Middletown's resources were being overwhelmed by escalating rates of crime, poverty, and disease. Her factories were heavily dependent on an immigrant labor force, which included many children. Children who worked in the factories received only a minimal education, at best, three months of the year.

As events were to prove, although Middletown's reformers were able to build the high school, public secondary education was not universally accepted in the city. The new school was promoted as "intensely democratic" where no "sharp distinction [will be made] between an educated and an uneducated⁴ class," but few children took advantage of this opportunity to continue their education.⁴ There is no record that the school was boycotted by the working class, or forced to close, as happened in other New England cities, but it generally failed to attract many Middletown children, especially children from immigrant families.⁵ For most children, their education was complete at the end of the eighth grade, a situation that prevailed for at least thirty more years.⁶

From the beginning Middletown High School, the first public high school in the county, had to draw upon a regional student population to fill the classrooms. Pupils who lived in the town (outside the City District), or in neighboring towns, attended school on a tuition basis, providing a substantial income for school maintenance.⁷ So successful was this policy that the school was enlarged in 1912, primarily to accommodate more tuition students. By 1926, with an enrollment of 467, only 183, or 39 percent, were Middletown residents. The majority of the students lived in other towns in Middlesex County, and at least fifty-five came from Hartford and New Haven counties.⁸

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In 1931 the school was again enlarged. This was also the year that a second high school, Woodrow Wilson High School, was built in the southern part of town to house 750 pupils in response to the industrial and residential growth of this area. Many of the former tuition students at the old Middletown High School transferred to the new facility. The old school continued to function for another forty-one years. During this time it primarily served the densely populated immigrant neighborhoods which surrounded the downtown commercial district. By 1972 another new high school was built outside of town, also called Middletown High, making the old high school obsolete. In 1979, following the recommendation of the Old Middletown High School Study Committee, the building was sold to a developer for conversion to elderly housing.

Footnotes

1. "Special Report of the Board of Education of the Middletown City School District: New High School" (Middletown, 1896), p. 7.
2. See James S. Coleman, "The Concept of Equality of Opportunity," Harvard Educational Review 38 (1968):200).
3. Federal Censuses of the United States, MS, 1870-1900.
4. From the dedication speech by Professor W. N. Rice in "Special Report," 1896, p. 26.
5. For an account of the boycotts and forced closure, see Michael Katz, The Irony of Early School Reform (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 84 ff.
6. See the statistical data compiled in Janice P. Cunningham, "The Development of American Public Education and the Middletown Experience: 1870-1920," unpublished, 1976 (on file at the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust).
7. Enabling legislation was passed by the State in 1897 (Chapter 249) allowing towns without a high school facility to send their pupils to another town for their secondary education on a tuition basis. Tuition was paid, in whole or in part, by the property taxes of the town where the pupil resided.
8. "Report of the Board of Education of the Middletown City School District, 1925-1926.

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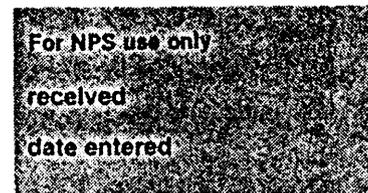
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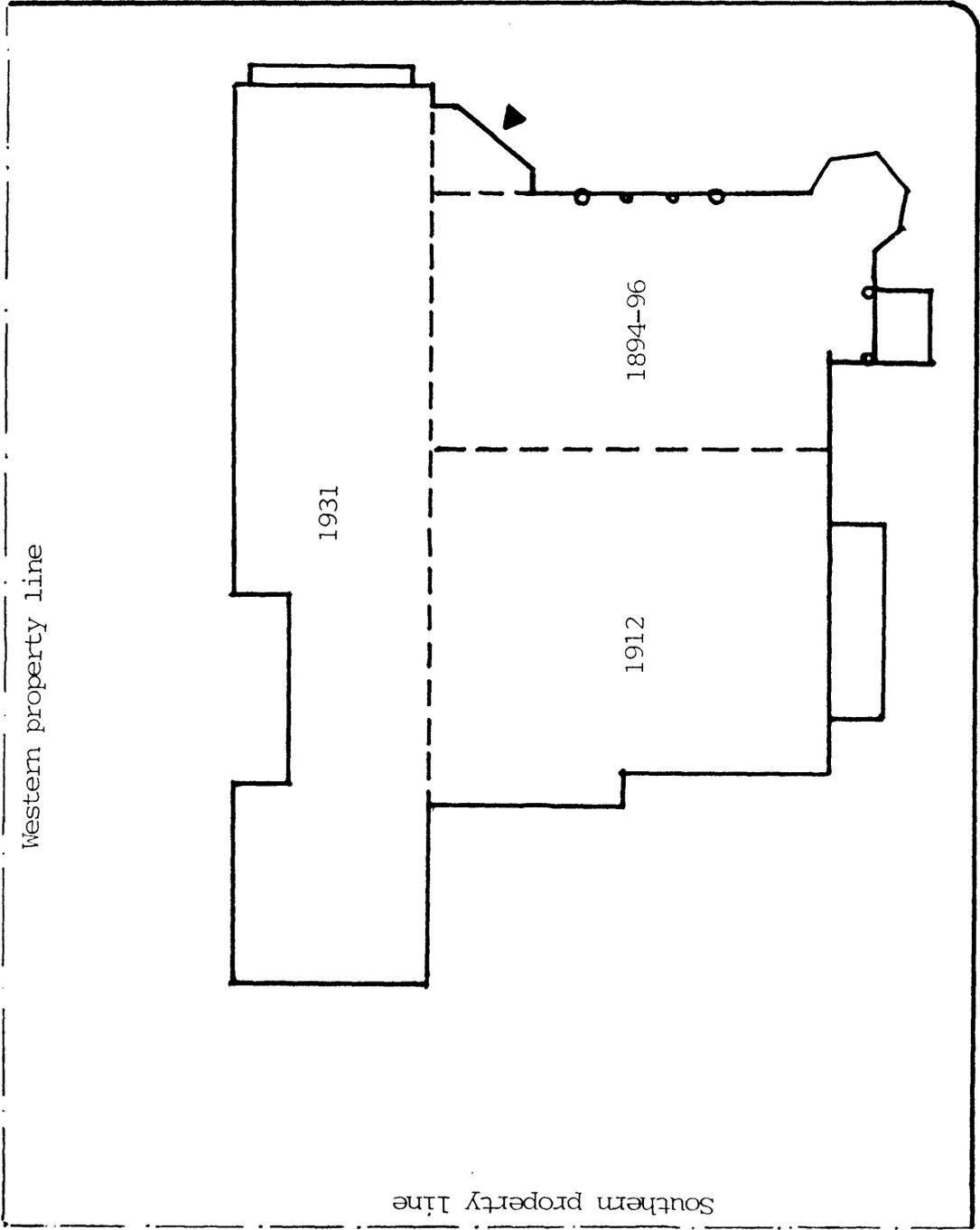
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and which point marks the intersection of the southerly side of Court Street and the westerly side of Pearl Street in said City of Middletown; continue thence a distance of 190.23 feet, S 27 49' 48" E along the westerly side of Pearl Street to a point; continue thence a distance of 137 feet, S 62 28' 13" E along land now or formerly of Wesleyan University of Middletown, Conn., to a point; continue thence a distance of 63.65 feet S 26 10' 15" E along land now or formerly of Wesleyan University, to a point; continue thence a distance of 100.65 feet, S 68 06' 13" W along land now or formerly of Rosario and Sebastian Morello and land now or formerly of Carmelo S. and Carmela F. Milardo, partly by each, to a point; continue thence a distance of 242.39 feet, N 26 10' 54" W along land now or formerly of Wesleyan University, to a point marked by a monument along the southerly side of Court Street; continue thence a distance of 231.98 feet, N 62 03' 30" E along the southerly side of Court Street to the point of beginning.



COURT STREET

Exhibit A: Schematic Diagram
 OLD MIDDLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL
 Court and Pearl Streets
 Middletown, CT

PEARL STREET