

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
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Asylum-Trumbull-Pearl Streets Historic District

District G

Description and Boundary Justification

The Asylum-Trumbull-Pearl Streets Historic District consists of 13 buildings sited on a U-shaped street pattern. The north stem of the U is part of the block on Asylum Street west of its intersection with Main Street. The base of the U is Trumbull Street on the west, and the south stem is a section of Pearl Street parallel with Asylum. The buildings of the district are mercantile, office and banking structures built over the years from mid-19th to early 20th century. Constructed of brick and stone with frame infill, they vary in height from one to seven stories. Their architectural styles include Italianate, Neo-Classical Revival and Art Moderne.

The district encompasses approximately 3 acres. All but four of the buildings are considered to contribute to the historical and architectural character of the district.

Asylum, Trumbull and Pearl streets all are old thoroughfares. Trumbull Street shows on the 1840 map. Asylum Street was part of the Litchfield Turnpike. Pearl Street was called Prison Street because it ran westward from Meetinghouse Square, now Thomas Hooker Square and the site of the Old Statehouse, to the prison which was located approximately on the southwest corner of Trumbull Street, which for a time was known as Back Street. These names and functions indicate that from the first the district was not in the center of activity but rather was a secondary location as compared to Prospect Street, the early residential street that led to Meeting House Square, Central Row and State Street, that ran along the square and were the prime location between Main Street and the river for commerce, and Main Street itself.

Asylum, Trumbull and Pearl streets retained their residential character until well into the 19th century as indicated by the houses built c. 1840 and still standing on Lewis Street half a block south of Pearl Street and by the fact that the Goodwin home on Asylum Street was replaced by the Goodwin Building as late as 1881. Asylum Street from Main to Trumbull, however, was mercantile in character from mid-19th century and the district's buildings on this street date from that period. The district's single building fronting on Trumbull Street is a Neo-Classical Revival structure from the turn of the century, and the buildings on Pearl Street are early-20th-century structures representative of the classical revival trends then fashionable and of the Art Moderne.

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The district is bounded on the north by the rear lot lines of properties facing Asylum Street and on the north abuts the Pratt Street Historic District, on the east by modern office and commercial structures that lie between the district and Main Street, on the south by Pearl Street which has modern office buildings on its south side and on the west by Trumbull Street. The Hartford Civic Center and other modern buildings are on the west side of Trumbull Street.

The Asylum-Trumbull-Pearl Streets Historic District contains historic buildings that have fulfilled commercial, office and banking functions in the area west of Main Street and south of the Pratt Street District in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and continue to do so. Most of the buildings are four stories high but the heights differ nonetheless. On one side of Asylum Street 82 Asylum Street and the Charter Oak Bank are higher than their neighbors while on the south side Stackpole, Moore & Tryon's store roof line is lower than Cone's Building and 93 Asylum Street.

Descriptions of the individual buildings follow.

- C ✓ Flagg Brothers Building
76-80 Asylum Street

Photograph 31

Built c. 1860 in the Italiante style, 76-80 Asylum Street is a 4-story brick building faced with brownstone. The building is divided into two sections of three bays each. The two street-level store fronts have been altered. At the second floor of the east section there are show windows in a cast-iron frame. The introduction of this cast-iron feature may have been an alteration, or, as the two sections of the building are different depths, this may originally have been two separate buildings now joined under a common front cornice. In the upper floors the wall plane is flat as the windows have no projecting sills, lintels or caps. It may be that these details have been removed but visual evidence to support such a hypothesis is missing. At the roof line there is a heavy, projecting sheet-metal cornice supported by large and small brackets. Seven single large brackets define the six bays. Six pairs of small brackets are placed over the windows, between the large brackets.

- C Bassok's Building
82 Asylum Street

Photograph 31

The first two stories of this 6-bay structure, dating from c. 1860, are covered with a modern surface. In the brownstone facing of the third and fourth floors there are no projecting details around the windows, repeating the condition found in 76-80 Asylum Street. The cornice is wooden, and is supported by modillions.

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- C Lions' Heads Building
94-110 Asylum Street

Photographs 31, 35, 36

94-110 Asylum Street, a 4-story brick building from the same era, c. 1860, as its neighbors, is divided into four sections. Each section has a store front at the ground floor, a tripartite show window at the second floor and three 1-over-1 windows at the third and fourth floors. While the store fronts are modern, two original pilasters framing the store fronts remain in place. The visible surface of the pilasters is sheet metal formed in long, vertical panels under a cast-iron egg-and-dart molding and capital of a single volute. The second-floor tripartite window enframingent is cast iron with raised pendants and lions' heads. Cass Gilbert used such lions' heads on the G. Fox Main Street store half a century later. Third-and fourth-floor windows have dressed brownstone lintels and sills. At the roof line the cornice is sheet metal, with corbeled brackets.

Usually, the side and rear elevations of buildings in the district cannot be viewed because they abut other buildings or the alleys between them are closed off. It is possible, however, to walk behind 94-110 Asylum Street where its rear elevation and a portion of the west elevation of 82 Asylum Street are visible. As seen from the rear, the buildings are strictly utilitarian. The wall surfaces are brick. 82 Asylum Street has solid iron shutters left in some of its windows, an original precaution against fire and theft. One window has a low sill and double doors in the aperture, presumably a goods door. Above it there is indication of a hook or stud for a hoist, used in the days before elevators to bring goods to and from the door. 94-110 Asylum Street has a central projecting rear tower, with windows, perhaps a stair tower, flanked by plain iron porches.

- C Charter Oak Bank Building
114-124 Asylum Street
a/k/a 190 Trumbull Street

Photograph 31

The 4-story, 1861, brownstone bank building at the northeast corner of Asylum and Trumbull streets has Renaissance Revival elevations, above the first floor, facing both streets. The first floor has been altered. The building is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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NC Art Moderne Building
81 Asylum Street

Photograph 32

Most of the front of the 1-story building at 81 Asylum Street, c. 1925, has been obliterated by addition of a modern surface, but Art Moderne detailing remains visible on its parapet. The top and bottom of the parapet are defined by Mayan zig-zag string courses. The horizontal recessed panel between them is embellished by two flat, stylized anthemion crests.

C Cone's Building
89 Asylum Street

Photographs: 32, 34

Cone's Building of 1873 is a 4-story, brick structure in the Italianate style. Its first two stories have been covered with a modern material but the upper two stories are unchanged. In the fourth floor there are four windows with stilted brownstone lintels. Rising above the fourth floor is a roof line composition of pediment flanked by horizontal cornice sections. Each of the horizontal sections is supported by four brackets separated by panels, with a heavy dentil course and modillions. The dentils and modillions continue in the raking cornices of the pediment, over the raised lettering of the building's name. The entire ensemble probably is sheet metal. This strongly 3-dimensional cornice and pediment are typical of the High Victorian era.

NC Cone's Building Annex
93 Asylum Street

Photograph 32

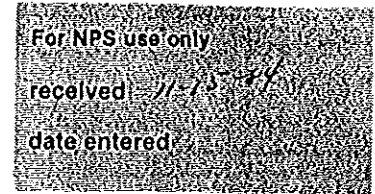
Because brick veneer entirely obscures the original appearance of 93 Asylum Street, it is considered a non-contributing structure although it now works as a unit with the Cone's Building. An early photo shows that the building had a 2-story front of simple, slender cast-iron members with shop windows at both floors.

C Horsefalls Building
103 Asylum Street

Photograph 32

The first and second floors of the brick building at 103 Asylum Street are covered, but the upper two floors retain original features from the time of its construction, c. 1860. The brownstone lintels of the windows are stilted, giving a Neo-Grec touch to its basic Italianate style. The

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roof line cornice is supported by a large bracket at the right and three smaller brackets across the front but without a heavy bracket at the left to correspond with that at the right. This circumstance suggests that the building has been altered; perhaps it originally was wider. Rectangular raised panels with central diamonds occupy the spaces between the brackets. Horsefalls, a fine men's clothier, occupied the ground floor space from about the turn of the century to the 1960s. The store was ell-shaped, connecting to space in 140-150 Trumbull Street where there was another storefront and entrance.

- C Stackpole, Moore & Tryon Store
105-115 Asylum Street

Photographs: 32

The 4-story brick building at the southeast corner of Asylum and Trumbull streets, probably built c. 1850, has been a men's clothing store since the 19th century. The 2-story, cast-iron front in the Neo-Classical Revival style was added in 1896. The store is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

- NC Mechanics Savings Bank Annex
60 Pearl Street

Photographs 33

The front elevation of the building at 60 Pearl Street has been severely altered and modernized. The structure is included in the district, but considered non-contributing, because it now works as a unit with 80 Pearl Street. 60 Pearl Street is the site of the 1872 Phoenix Insurance Co. Building designed by H. H. Richardson.

- ✓ C Mechanics Savings Bank
80 Pearl Street

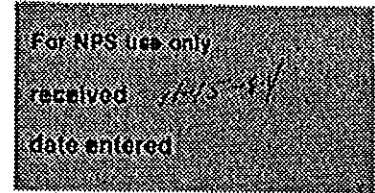
Photographs 33, 37

The 3-story granite facade of the Mechanics Savings Bank, built in 1924, has fluted Greek Doric columns in antis. The edges of the flanking piers are raised, with the effect carried up into the molded capitals of the piers, causing them to break out slightly left and right. The piers and columns support a plain frieze and molded cornice with mutules and guttae in the soffit of the entablature. The plain parapet above is incised with the name of the bank, flanked by raised discs, and is surmounted by a central stepped section.

In the recessed front wall the central entrance and flanking first-floor windows are framed by pilasters under panels carved with crests and Greek key motives. The door and first-floor windows are not original. At the

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second floor, windows are 12-over-12 and at the third floor are 8-over-8 original metal sash.

The volume of interior space originally created by the 2-story main banking floor has been reduced by a dropped ceiling.

The Mechanics Savings Bank is one of Hartford's older financial institutions. Organized in 1861, the bank occupied rented quarters in Central Row until constructing its own building on Pearl Street.

Architects for the Mechanics Savings Bank were Morris & O'Connor.

NC 90 Pearl Street

Photograph 33

Due to the fact that its front elevation has been severely and insensitively altered, the 1919 building at 90 Pearl Street is considered not to contribute to the architectural and historic character of the district.

C Corning Building
100 Pearl Street

Photographs 33, 38

The Corning Building was constructed in 1934 in an avant-garde design that is unique in Historic Downtown Hartford. The architect relied for effect on fine materials, varied planes and sensitive massing rather than on architectural embellishment. In the front elevation a central recessed section of polished black granite is flanked by projecting limestone masses on a black granite base. A third, intermediate wall plane is introduced in the center, at the top. The bottom of this upper wall is on a line with cornices in the projecting masses and the wall and the mass behind it carry up in a dimension wider than the central recessed section. There is a plain raised disc in the center with peripheral lettering stating that the building was erected by the John J. Corning Estate. The site was the location of the former John J. Corning home.

The doors, windows and spandrels of the building, executed in satin-finish aluminum, form three vertical groupings. In the central recessed section there is a panel with the building's address over double doors. The horizontal address panel is flanked by vertical panels with stylized foliate motifs. Above is a vertical section of glazing broken up by horizontal and vertical aluminum mullions into four tiers, each with a central horizontal area of glass flanked by smaller vertical glass areas.

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Each of the flanking, projecting masses has a central vertical range of three windows and two spandrels. The windows are divided into three vertical sections. The upper and lower windows have operable, horizontal awning sections below them.

The building is two stories high. There is an interior mezzanine in the front. Inside the entrance an aluminum stairway rises to the right to the mezzanine and the second floor with polished stainless steel bands forming a closed string. The component parts of the railing are cylindrical and at the landing the railing curves; there are no right angles. The second floor is lighted by skylights. The building was air conditioned at the time it was constructed.

The Corning Building was designed by the Hartford architect Lester B. Scheide (1897-1953). Scheide, after fighting with the French army in World War I, graduated in 1920 from the Yale School of Architecture. His Hartford practice included a number of large homes in the western part of the city and western suburbs in a variety of fashionable styles, all designed in a suave, facile and sophisticated manner. Scheide's firm also drew plans for the Dutch Point Colony and Charter Oak Terrace housing projects. None of his other works is as bold and austere as the Corning Building.

C Shoor Brothers Building
140-150 Trumbull Street

Photograph 39

The 7-story Shoor Brothers Building was constructed in 1908-1909 to the design of Hartford architect Isaac A. Allen, Jr. Its yellow brick Trumbull Street elevation is an elaborate statement in the Neo-Classical Revival style, although the street level shop windows have been altered, the central entrance closed and the second and third floors covered. Plain pilasters at the corners of the building are still visible, rising to a third-floor plain frieze and simple molded cornice with small central pediment. The next three floors are arranged in tall arched openings, three on either side of narrow central windows. At the fourth floor the windows under the arches are divided into nine sections and have a peaked cap. At the fifth floor the scheme is the same without the peak and at the sixth floor the arches dictate a 1-over-1 window flanked by single sections. The vertical muntins carry up through the spandrels between floors, giving vertical thrust to the design.

The arches spring from the ornate capitals of the pilasters that rise from granite bases between the windows. The capitals are formed of pendants and cartouches under projecting moldings. Brick and raised granite sections alternate as voussoirs of the arches. Above the arches an elaborate

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flat cornice projects below the seventh floor. The cornice is supported by paired brackets over the pilasters and modillions between the brackets. In the center, there is a small pediment below the cornice and a balcony above it. The seventh floor has rectangular windows divided into nine sections under consoles that support a modest cornice and parapet. The parapet is divided into sections corresponding with the windows, with panels in each section.

An early photo of part of the ground floor shows a store front with central pocket entrance flanked by shop windows. At the second floor are four large, plate glass windows each with a 2-pane transom, the total effect being one of almost 100% glazing at both first and second floors.

Shoor Brothers abuts the Stackpole, Moore & Tryon store, which in turn is across the street from the Charter Oak Bank. The Shoor Brothers front elevation and the Trumbull Street elevations of Stackpole's and the Charter Oak Bank form a Trumbull Street streetscape within the district of architectural components sensitively related to one another in scale, styles and materials.

Significance

Criterion C - Architecture

The Asylum-Trumbull-Pearl Streets Historic District contains buildings from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries that individually are good examples of the commercial architectural styles of their era. Collectively they form streetscapes that accurately depict 19th- and early 20th-century practices with respect to building set-backs and the relationship of one building to others.

Asylum Street in the district is lined on both sides with solid rows of buildings with stores at the first and sometimes second floors, without change in the physical circumstances in a century and a quarter. The width of the street and the placement and number of the buildings has not changed. The block gives an excellent sense of a 19th-century commercial street. The bracketed cornices and brownstone-faced wall surfaces with cast-iron and sheet-metal features are authentic architectural components that contribute to the significance of the district as effectively as does the lettering "Cone's Building" in the high pediment of 89 Asylum Street.

