

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

For NPS use only

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

received **MAY 30 1984**  
date entered **JUN 28 1984**

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

**1. Name**

historic N/A  
and/or common ELM STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

**2. Location**

street & number 71-166 Capitol Avenue, 55-97 Elm Street,  
20-30 Trinity Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Hartford N/A vicinity of N/A  
state Connecticut code 09 county Hartford code 003

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" 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
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple ownership - see continuation sheets  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_  
city, town N/A vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hartford City and Town Clerk  
street & number Room 104 Municipal Building, 550 Main Street  
city, town Hartford state Connecticut

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1984  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission  
59 South Prospect Street  
city, town Hartford state Connecticut

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

The Elm Street Historic District is a concentrated collection of historic buildings in the southwest part of Hartford's downtown area. The district gets its character from the large and stylish early 20th-century institutional buildings which make up the majority of the fifteen major structures. Buildings are mostly three to six stories high, with brick and stone the dominant exterior materials. Georgian, Renaissance and Classical revival styles predominate, often with a Beaux-Arts influence, and most of the buildings are on a monumental scale appropriate to their origins. Most have a strong horizontal massing, are fairly widely spaced apart, and include lawns, curbing, fencing, or other site features which define the building's setting. Five of these were built as home offices for insurance companies, one was built as a major performing arts center, and one was built for state government offices. In addition to the seven institutional buildings, the district includes one church, a former factory, a short row of Italianate brownstones, and three early 20th-century apartment buildings.

The architectural qualities of the district's buildings are augmented by the park-like environment along Elm and Trinity Streets. To the north of the district is Bushnell Park and to the west are the landscaped grounds of the Connecticut State Capitol and Supreme Court-State Library building, all sites listed on the National Register. The trees, plantings and expanses of lawn complement the columns, pediments, and classical cornices found on the buildings and make Elm and Trinity Streets seem more like European avenues than the typical Hartford street.

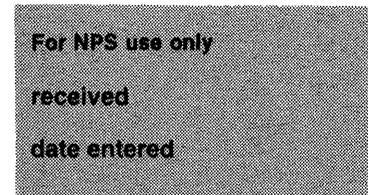
The buildings display a high degree of architectural integrity. Additions are mostly confined to rear expansions where most of the buildings were plainly finished when built. Interior modernization has in most cases left some detail in place in the lobby or other public area, and in at least four cases the interiors are so elaborate and well preserved as to constitute major architectural features. The chief exception is the Orient Insurance building, presently the State Treasury, which has been thoroughly renovated inside. The structural and cosmetic condition of the buildings appears generally good: the Presbyterian Church, however, has a severe brownstone spalling problem imperfectly rectified with concrete patching, and the Phoenix Mutual building (former State Health Services Department) has deteriorated to the point of requiring major renovation of the interior and service systems.

Of the fifteen major buildings, fourteen were judged to contribute to the character of the district. One of the brownstones (Photograph 17) has been almost completely modernized but was called contributing because of its age, remnant of its original entrance treatment, and its similarity in material and scale to its neighbor. Judged noncontributing was the small office building at the east rear of the church, 130 Capitol Avenue, a building which appears as a minor addition and does not intrude upon the streetscape (Photograph 10).

The district's boundaries are visually defined by the previously mentioned park-like areas, by modern high-rise construction and acres of parking lots to the south, and by vacant lots on the east. The buildings which face Capitol Avenue, while somewhat isolated from the Elm-Trinity axis of the district, were included because of their proximity to other buildings in the district (see Boundary Justification). Detailed descriptions of the buildings follow.

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

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



Elm Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Hartford, Connecticut Item number 4

Page 1

Owners of Property (Hartford Grand List, 6/83):

Street Address & Parcel Number	Owner's Name & Address	Contributing/ Noncontributing
CAPITOL AVENUE		
71 Capitol Avenue 423-2-7	Charles H. Blackall 12 West Street Hartford, CT 06106	Contributing
78-80 Capitol Avenue 423-3-2	Aetna Insurance Company (CIGNA) 55 Elm Street Hartford, CT 06106	Contributing
126 Capitol Avenue 417-4-6	Sumner Realty Company c/o Bernard Dubin 10 Middlefield Drive West Hartford, CT 06107	Contributing
130 Capitol Avenue 417-4-8	First Presbyterian Church 136 Capitol Avenue Hartford, CT 06106	Noncontributing
136 Capitol Avenue 417-4-7	First Presbyterian Church 136 Capitol Avenue Hartford, CT 06106	Contributing
165 Capitol Avenue 417-2-1	State of Connecticut State Office Building 165 Capitol Avenue Hartford, CT 06115	Contributing
166 Capitol Avenue 417-3-1	Horace Bushnell Memorial Hall Corporation 166 Capitol Avenue Hartford, CT 06106	Contributing

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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 4

Page 2

ELM STREET

55 Elm Street	Aetna Insurance Company (CIGNA) 55 Elm Street Hartford, CT 06103	Contributing
71 Elm Street 417-4-4	Taylor Stirling Company 71 Elm Street Hartford, CT 06106	Contributing
75 Elm Street 417-4-3	State of Connecticut Judicial Department 75 Elm Street Hartford, CT 06115	Contributing
79 Elm Street 417-4-2	State of Connecticut (vacant) 79 Elm Street Hartford, CT 06115	Contributing
93 Elm Street 417-3-6	Edwin Ray Maher 91-93 Elm Street Hartford, CT 06103	Contributing
95 Elm Street 417-3-5	FWP Corporation 95 Elm Street Hartford, CT 06106	Contributing
97 Elm Street 417-3-4	Raynald B. Cantin 97 Elm Street Hartford, CT 06103	Contributing

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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 4

Page 3

TRINITY STREET

20-22 Trinity Street  
417-3-3

State of Connecticut  
State Treasury  
20-22 Trinity Street  
Hartford, CT 06115

Contributing

30 Trinity Street  
417-2-1

State of Connecticut  
State Capitol Annex  
30 Trinity Street  
Hartford, CT 06115

Contributing

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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

Continuation sheet

Item number

For NPS use only

received

date entered

6

Page

1

Representation in existing surveys (continued):

Historic Theaters of Connecticut: Historic Resource Inventory

(Bushnell Memorial)

1983 - State

Records deposited with Connecticut Historical Commission  
59 South Prospect Street  
Hartford, Connecticut

Hartford Architecture  
Volume One: Downtown

1978 - local

Published survey by the Hartford Architecture Conservancy

Records deposited with Stowe-Day Foundation  
77 Forest Street  
Hartford, Connecticut

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

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

Elm Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Hartford, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 1

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Description (continued):

CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

Capitol Avenue

Apartment Building, 71 Capitol Avenue, George Zunner, Hartford, architect, 1911, Georgian Revival (Photograph 1). Three stories with brick walls heavily overgrown with ivy. Three bay facade, with recessed entry on the right balanced by shallow projecting bay window on the left. Cornice with dentils and modillions; quoins around entry. Interior modern except for original wood stair rail and newel.

CAPITOL COURT APARTMENTS, 78-80 Capitol Avenue, Berenson & Moses, Hartford, architects, 1924, Tudor Revival (Photograph 2). Two three-story tan brick buildings joined together to form a deep center courtyard, where the Tudor-arched entryway serves both parts. Each has a two-bay elevation facing Capitol Avenue with wide three-part windows fitted with small-pane upper sash. The stepped parapet has sections of cast-stone balusters.

PLAZA APARTMENTS, 126 Capitol Avenue, Berenson & Moses, Hartford, architects, 1924 (Photograph 3). Three-story brick building with a central recessed entry set off by pilasters; there are odd elongated urns above the entrance cornice. Five-bay facade has a group of three windows to either side of the central bay. Insets in the form of traceried Gothic arches decorate the parapet, which has an ogee-shaped center part with five tall urns similar to those above the entry.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 136 Capitol Avenue, James Renwick, New York, architect, 1870, Romanesque Revival (Photograph 3). Granite with limestone and brownstone banding and other trim. The nave's facade has three entrances set within round-arched openings, above which are bluntly pointed arches and peaked drip molds. An arcade of seven round-arched openings on the second story and an elaborate wheel window in the gable have similar banding. A small baptistry is located at the southeast corner, in front of the east aisle, and at the southwest corner there is a square-plan four-story tower with decorative corbelling below both the belfry openings and the elaborate parapet. The interior features original woodwork, including the pews and the exposed arches which support the roof of the nave.

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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

2

STATE OFFICE BUILDING, 165 Capitol Avenue, Smith & Bassette, Hartford, architects, 1930, Neo-Classical with Art-Deco influence (Photograph 4). Four stories tall over a high basement story. Bays are demarcated by three-story pilasters with stylized anthemion carving in the capitals. Between the third and fourth stories is a cornice with large blocky dentils. Window openings run a full three stories in height with metal panels between levels and engaged turnings separating the parts of the small-pane casement sash. On the Capitol Avenue elevation the building has a shallow projection at each end. The single opening within the projection is covered by a tall grill featuring stylizations of oak leaves and grape vines; above is a bas-relief panel on the theme of industry (Photograph 5). The public parts of the interior are largely original with Art-Deco lighting fixtures, marble walls and columns, and iron grills over the entrances to offices (Photograph 6).

HORACE BUSHNELL MEMORIAL HALL, 165 Capitol Avenue, Corbett, Harrison & MacMurray, New York, architects, 1930, Georgian Revival (Photograph 7). Brick with limestone trim. Appears as two stories on a high rusticated limestone basement story. The building has a T-shaped plan, with the axis of the auditorium extending back from Capitol Avenue, parallel with Trinity Street, and the principal facade in the Trinity Street gable end of the part which runs along Capitol Avenue. That elevation features a tall Ionic portico with three round-arched openings in the basement story, an arched window with interlaced glazing on the first story, and octagonal windows and an elaborate cartouche on the second. Epigrams are carved into the stone of the typanum and below the pilars. The Capitol Avenue (box-office) elevation features an arcade of five tall round-arched openings (the end ones are blind) with prominent carved keystones and balconies on the middle three. Centered on the ridge of the shallow-pitched roof is a multi-stage tower with an eight-sided brick base, a lantern stage with round-arched and elliptical openings and elaborate broken scroll pediments, and a round gold dome with finial. Other decorative effects include brick quoins and round-arched small-pane windows on the Trinity Street elevation. There is a fountain sculpture at the southwest corner of the lot (Photograph 8). The interior of the auditorium (Photograph 9) is Art-Deco in style, with stylized Georgian elements and geometric motifs. The ceiling painting includes figures of a cameraman and Al Jolson.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Elm Street Historic District Item number 7 Page 3  
Hartford, Connecticut

Elm Street

CONNECTICUT GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING (CIGNA Group Pension), 55 Elm Street, James Gamble Rogers, New York, architect, 1926, Renaissance Revival (Photograph 12). Stony Creek granite street-facing elevations with yellow brick rear walls. Six stories high, with seven bays on Elm Street, ten bays on Hudson Street, and the entrance in the cut-away corner within a two-story round-arched opening. The first two stories are rusticated, with the rounded edges of the stones deeply cut back to about six inches. On the first story the windows are round-arched, with paired rectangular openings on the upper stories. Denticular cornices run above the second and fourth stories, while the building's prominent main cornice has dentils, egg-and-dart molding, and large modillions. The lobby features a coffered ceiling, marble walls, and tall marble Ionic and Corinthian columns (Photograph 13). Early addition and garage in rear.

J.M. NEY BUILDING (vacant), 71 Elm Street, 1917. One-story brick former factory with seven round-arched openings facing Elm Street (Photograph 14). Decorative effects include herringbone brick panels beneath the windows and a raised section of parapet above the central entrance. Rear part has large windows with small-pane industrial sash.

SCOTTISH UNION AND NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING (Superior Court Record Center), 75 Elm Street, Edward T. Hapgood, Hartford, architect, 1917, Georgian Revival (Photograph 15). Two-story red brick building with granite trim. Three-bay facade with colossal Ionic paired pilasters demarcating the bays. Denticular cornice is carried up into a pediment over the slightly projecting central bay. The entry is recessed within this pavilion and has a panel above the doors with the arms of the company and the motto "Unitate Fortior." First-floor openings are round-arched in shape and have prominent stone moldings and keyblocks. Second-story openings have three-part windows and crosssetted stone moldings. Windows are fitted with small-pane sash. Stone balustrade. Interior features a small lobby with marble walls and an elaborate plaster ceiling ornament.

PHOENIX MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING (Former State Health Department), 79 Elm Street, Benjamin W. Morris, New York, architect, 1920, Renaissance Revival (Photograph 11, background). Brown tapestry brick exterior in English Cross bond. Six stories high, with a tiled hip roof. Richly embellished cornices run above the third and fifth stories, and the prominent main cornice features large carved mutules and a variety of classical decorative moldings. Tall round-arched openings are found on the first and second stories and on the fourth and fifth stories, with simple rectangular openings on other levels. The

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

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

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet Elm Street Historic District Item number 7 Page 4  
Hartford, Connecticut

central entrance on Elm Street has a cornice over the extra-height doorway. Other decorative elements include a cartouche over the middle second-story arch, iron grills with gold phoenixes on the first-story windows, and colorful tiles laid in geometric designs to form panels between windows (Photograph 16). The interior has a long marble-walled lobby with a dramatic tiled floor and arched coffered ceiling (Photograph 17).

HUNTINGTON-CALLENDER and CHAPMAN-TAFT HOUSES, 91-97 Elm Street, Italianate brownstone rowhouses, 1861-63, Andrew West, Hartford, builder-architect (Photograph 18). Presently three separately owned properties, the three-story row was originally built as two houses, 91-95 and 97 Elm Street; both were probably intended as two-family houses. The eastern part is three bays wide with a central entrance recessed within a round-arched opening. The entrance, reached by brownstone steps, is enframed by paneled pilasters supporting a pediment. Windows are narrow and paired and have pilasters and prominent hoodmolds; the second story center window is round-arched in shape and has elaborately carved consoles below its hoodmold. To the right of the entrance is a two-story bay window. The bracketted cornice has been removed from the eastern third of the house (91 Elm Street).

The house at 97 Elm Street has been extensively altered, with modern windows and most of the architectural detail either removed, as with the cornice, or simplified by being stuccoed over, as with the window surrounds. It retains much of its original recessed entry.

Trinity Street

ORIENT INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING (State Treasury), 20-22 Trinity Street, Davis & Brooks, Hartford, architects, 1905, Beaux-Arts Classical (Photograph 19). White marble Classical facade with three-story plain gray-brick office structure to the rear, enlarged in 1923. Three-bay facade has rusticated quoins and piers marking the bays and two-story paired Ionic columns supporting a pediment over the central entrance (Photograph 20). Above the doorway are richly carved festoons and a keystone and a broken pediment with an elaborate cartouche. Windows openings are two stories in height with marble panels between levels, simple keystones, and garland carving outlining the tops of the openings. There are small windows in the frieze for the top story. The building's denticular cornice is surmounted by a balustrade. The interior has been completely modernized.

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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

5

For NPS use only

received

date entered

PHOENIX FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING (State Capitol Annex), 30 Trinity Street, Benjamin W. Morris, New York, architect, 1917, Georgian Revival (Photograph 19). Red brick (Flemish bond) with limestone trim. Three stories tall over a high basement story of rusticated limestone. Seven bays with a central entrance on Trinity Street and eight bays along Elm Street. First-story windows have molded surrounds and cornices, while second-story openings have splayed lintels and keystones. Elm Street windows are round-arched in shape. Other limestone trim includes a stringcourse below the top story. The paneled parapet has festoon-motif insets and a central tablet with side scrolls. Original cast-iron balconies and Trinity Street fence; stone railing along Elm Street (Photograph 11). Interior has a remnant of ornamental plasterwork in the lobby's ceiling.

NONCONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE

First Presbyterian Church Office, 130 Capitol Avenue, small modern one-story, ell-shaped office set back toward the rear of the adjacent church (Photograph 10).

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** See Inventory, Item 7 **Builder/Architect** See Inventory, Item 7

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Elm Street Historic District represents an important collection of historic buildings. Not only are they individually significant as impressive examples of the major styles of the period, but also taken together the buildings along Elm and Trinity Streets present coherent streetscapes of monumental architecture (Criterion C). Nowhere else in the city is there such a concentrated grouping of large, stylish institutional buildings from the early 20th century. The district includes major designs by both local Hartford architects and by New York architects of national renown. The buildings' significance goes beyond their architectural qualities, however, for these structures were intended as symbols for the institutions which built them. Hartford's insurance companies enjoyed unprecedented prosperity in the early years of this century, and the growth of insurance, so important to Hartford's development, is nowhere more evident than in the home offices built on Elm and Trinity Streets (Criterion A). Even those buildings in the district not directly related to the expansion of insurance companies are important, for they reflect the transformation of this area from a residential district to one dominated by insurance headquarters, government offices, and Hartford's principal performing arts center.

### Architectural Importance

The dominant styles represented in the district -- the Neo-Colonial, Second Renaissance and Georgian Revivals -- share many concepts and actual details, giving the district's buildings a certain harmony. All three had the potential for grandiosity and monumental massing. All three call for stone, textured brick, and other expensive materials. Classical details such as columns, pediments, and denticular cornices are proper to all three. And by re-creating the temples of Greece, the palaces of the Medici, or the manor houses of the 18th century, the three styles all conjure up an image of wealth, substantiality, and timelessness. These were undoubtedly qualities which appealed to the insurance companies and other institutions which built these structures.

They were also qualities which appealed to the architects of the early 20th century. The buildings of that period were in part a reaction to the extremes of Victorian architecture, with its excessive eclecticism, busy exteriors, and gaudy use of color. Within the district, the Italianate rowhouses and the Presbyterian Church remain as examples of the kinds of buildings which had gone out of style in the 20th century. Renwick's church is especially noteworthy, not only for his importance as an architect (he designed St. Patrick's in New York and buildings for the Smithsonian Institution), but also for its richly detailed exterior, combining Gothic and Romanesque elements, and its polychromatic use of contrasting stone, particularly in the banded arches. The architects of the new century were more interested in simplicity and order, and in using historical models, they borrowed features which had more dignity, proportion, and elegance than the Romantic medievalisms of Renwick's church.



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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

1

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Significance (continued):

The first of the district's 20th-century buildings was the Neo-Classical Revival office for the Orient Insurance Company, erected in 1905 according to a design by the Hartford firm of Davis & Brooks (Photographs 19 and 20). It incorporates the symmetry, massiveness, and Classical portico which were hallmarks of the style. Although the form of the building is fairly simple, it shows a Beaux-Arts influence in the use of sculptural ornament above the windows and in the cartouche and pediment over the entranceway. It formerly included a dome as well. The Classical design, stone exterior, and balustrade prefigured Davis & Brooks's work for the Hartford Municipal Building, one of the city's most imposing public buildings.

The next monumental structure in the area was the Scottish Union and National Building on Elm Street (Photograph 15). It incorporates many of the same elements as the Orient building: central pedimented bay on paired colossal columns or pilasters, Classical cornice, and balustrade. However, the red-brick exterior, round-arched windows, three-part window scheme, and small-pane sash suggest a Georgian inspiration. The architect was Edward T. Hapgood, the Hartford associate of Donn Barber in the masterful designs for the Travelers Tower and the State Library-Supreme Court Building. Like many of the district's buildings, the Scottish Union design encompasses the entire site, with the stone piers and steps running right down to the sidewalk, where curbing defines the grounds of the building. The Georgian design is picked up in the round-arched windows of its neighbor to the east, the J.M. Ney building, the district's only industrial structure (Photograph 14). The company made dental gold and precision products. In building its new factory in 1917, it was obviously sensitive to the developing architectural character of the street.

Another building which went up in 1917 was the home office of the Phoenix Fire Insurance Company at the corner of Elm and Trinity Streets (Photographs 11 and 19). It shares with the Scottish Union the use of red brick, a rusticated stone base, a denticular cornice, and fancy stone window surrounds. It also defines its setting with a stone railing and an iron fence which run along the street lines. Yet because of its greater height and lack of pillars or pilasters, it is a more restrained and perhaps more dignified example of Georgian Revival architecture. It was designed by Benjamin Wistar Morris. Morris had studied at Columbia before finishing his training at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Among his early designs are many important buildings in Hartford, including the State Armory. In his practice in New York he prepared plans for the Cunard Building on Broadway and for the 1928 addition to the Morgan Library.

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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

2

Significance (continued):

The district includes two buildings in which the architects adapted Italian Renaissance palazzi for their corporate clients. Both the Phoenix Mutual (Photograph 11, background) and the Connecticut General (Photograph 12) buildings follow the Renaissance division of the facade into a base, highly ornamented main floor, and plainer upper stories, separated by stringcourses or cornices, with a heavy, projecting main cornice completing the building. However, in both cases, the six-story buildings are far larger than their precedents, so that the levels occupy two or more floors. In both cases the Renaissance motif is carried into the interior, where marble walls and coffered ceilings create sumptuous lobbies. The Phoenix Mutual building is another design by Benjamin Morris and is notable for the variety and subtlety of surface materials. In addition to the gray-brown tapestry brick, there are panels with many different geometric designs in colored tiles and numerous bands of terra-cotta or stone cornice ornament. It too has a stone wall surrounding the site and urns flanking the entrance steps, thereby carrying the building's grandeur down to the street line. The Connecticut General building is by James Gamble Rogers, a New York architect trained at Yale and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Rogers is perhaps best known for the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York and Harkness Quadrangle (Sterling Library) at Yale. His design, based upon the Medici-Riccardi palace in Florence, echoes the round arches and strong cornice of the Phoenix Mutual building, but it is the dramatic rustication of the lower stories that makes this building so outstanding. The siting of the building on the corner and the use of the corner to provide the entrance are also significant, for instead of two elevations the building presents one massive facade when viewed from Pulaski Circle. These two are the largest and most stylish buildings in the genre in Hartford.

The district's two buildings from 1930 follow the patterns laid down in the previous three decades, at least for the exteriors. The State Office Building (Photograph 4) follows the Neo-Classical mode with simple lines, pilasters demarcating the facade, and a bold, denticular cornice. The ornament, however, particularly the capitals and the grills, reveals a stylization of detail which is in the Art Deco movement, a stylization made clearer in the interior fixtures, such as lamps, iron grills, and the wave-form brass frieze in the lobby. It is Smith and Bassette's most impressive Hartford building. The Bushnell Memorial (Photograph 7) likewise has a grand but not atypical Georgian Revival exterior, with the red brick, arched small-pane windows, quoins, and details like the broken scroll pediment drawn from high-style Colonial architecture. The interior, however, represents a major Art-Deco theater design, with complex geometric and floral abstract motifs in the doorway surrounds, lighting fixtures, and bands of ceiling decoration (Photograph 9).

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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

3

Significance (continued):

One factor contributing to the meaningfulness of the district's architecture is the interesting iconography found on several of the buildings. In some cases, the elements are obvious, such as the heraldry of the Scottish Union and National Insurance Company, whose motto "Stronger Through Merger" might well be regarded as a prescient watchword for the whole industry, which in recent years has undergone considerable consolidation. Like the arms of the Scottish Union, the gilded Phoenixes at 79 Elm Street (Photograph 16) also serve to indicate the building's origin as the home office of a particular institution, the Phoenix Mutual Insurance Company. The symbolism on the State Office Building is less obvious but it too expresses the entity for which the building was constructed: the grapes vines in the grills (Photograph 5) are taken from the state seal and represent the transplanted colonists, while the oak leaves refer to Connecticut's royal charter, the basis of its first government, hidden in a dramatic moment in history in a hollow oak tree.

The Bushnell Memorial is also a building with strong symbolic overtones. Georgian Revival architecture was deliberately chosen to reflect Bushnell's Connecticut origins and his service as a Congregational minister. The architects intended to recall the early buildings of New England, and the resemblance of the hall to Hartford's brick Federal-period churches is no coincidence. And although the carved epigrams now appear rather cryptic and out-of-context ("Power moves in the direction of hope"), the words serve as a reminder that Horace Bushnell's significance lies beyond his role as simply a civic and religious leader of Hartford: he was a major 19th-century theologian, one of the people responsible for the liberalization of Protestant thought. Bushnell challenged the prevailing view of the world and human nature, introducing what we would regard as modern humanism into what was still a largely Calvinist outlook. Perhaps the stark contrast of the traditional exterior with the modernistic interior was also meant to reflect Bushnell's life: personally conservative and reactionary on many of the leading social issues of his day, Bushnell nevertheless anticipated in his philosophy a more modern outlook. And of course, the hall's interior painting commemorates an important entertainment milestone from the period of its construction: the first "talkie," Al Jolson's Jazz Singer (Photograph 9).

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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Elm Street Historic District

Continuation sheet

Hartford, Connecticut

Item number

8

Page

4

Significance (continued):

Historical Development of the Elm Street Area

In 1850 this area was Hartford's shantytown, a mixed neighborhood of rundown factories, the homes of poor Irish and black families, and somewhat incongruously, the buildings of Washington College, the forerunner to Trinity College. In 1853, the city began buying up much of the property in the area and laid out Bushnell Park, named for the religious leader who had done much to initiate and bring to fruition the park project. Elm and Trinity Streets were re-aligned and were built up as upper-class neighborhoods whose residents could afford the amenity of living opposite the city's central park. The Italianate rowhouses at 91-97 Elm Street (Photograph 18) are a vestige of this period. Their elaborate entries, bay window, cornice enrichment, and brownstone facades suggest the upper-class lifestyle of their early owners, among whom were Rev. John Huntington, professor of Greek at the college; W.H.D. Callender, cashier of the State Bank; and Dr. Cincinnatus Taft, one of the city's leading physicians and a close friend to Samuel Clemens. By 1876 the college had given way to the State Capitol, whose landscaped grounds furthered the park-like atmosphere of the neighborhood.

In 1905 the Orient Insurance Company became the first to build its new headquarters in the Elm-Trinity area, and their re-location was viewed as a radical departure. Prior to this time Hartford's insurance companies had all been located downtown in the city's commercial core; many simply occupied the upper floors of buildings whose street level storefronts accommodated retail businesses. Hartford was by then known as the Insurance City. Its companies, renowned for having paid all claims even in the face of major disasters such as the Chicago Fire of 1871, had a significant share of a growing national market for insurance. By the turn of the century, population growth, building booms in the major cities, and industrial expansion were creating increased demand for the product of Hartford's insurance industry. And like other financial institutions, those companies, as major investors, were the direct beneficiaries of the country's economic growth. It is not surprising, then, that insurance companies were outgrowing their downtown office space and looking for new ways to accommodate their operations. Several companies ultimately followed the Orient's example, with the Phoenix Fire Insurance Company building next door in 1917, Scottish Union and National relocating on Elm Street that same year, and Phoenix Mutual and Connecticut General building large new headquarters in the 1920s. Other companies located in the Asylum Hill section, notably the Hartford and Aetna Life and Casualty, while Travelers alone stayed downtown, expanding upward with Hartford's first skyscrapers.

**United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet      Elm Street Historic District      Item number      8  
                                 Hartford, Connecticut      Page      6

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Significance (continued):

The growth of state government has continued and today, when most of the insurance companies have again relocated, this time in the suburbs or in downtown high-rise towers, the state has taken over most of the office space in the district's buildings. One need of modern office space is parking, and the rear sides of the blocks facing Elm and Trinity Streets, as well as most of Capitol Avenue, have been transformed into parking lots, effectively isolating the remaining buildings from other built-up areas in the vicinity.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet      Elm Street Historic District      Item number      8      Page      5  
                                 Hartford, Connecticut

Significance (continued):

The companies which located in the Elm-Trinity area are typical of the mix of insurance organizations which made Hartford the Insurance City. In addition to large stock companies of long-standing national dominance, such as Connecticut General and Phoenix Fire Insurance, they include large mutual companies such as Phoenix Mutual, which grew out of a temperance organization; and smaller companies such as the Scottish Union and National and the Orient, part of London and Lancashire Indemnity after 1900 and later renamed Safeguard Insurance. Together with other Hartford companies these organizations employed hundreds of Hartford residents and gave the city one of the earliest substantial white-collar workforces. Although there were large insurance companies in other American cities, none could compare to Hartford in the total share of the market, nor has any other city had its economy so heavily dependent upon the insurance business.

Partly as a result of the growth of insurance and other service industries, the character of residential neighborhoods in Hartford changed in the early 20th century. Middle-class apartment houses were built in many areas to accomodate bookkeepers, clerks, and other white-collar workers. The apartments on Capitol Avenue are typical of this trend and are artifacts of a distinctive twentieth-century lifestyle. Many of these workers were single men and women or people with small families. The decline of the 19th-century custom of boarding, as well as the modern emphasis on personal independence, made apartment living desirable for members of the middle class, especially when these buildings offered amenities such as good neighborhoods, closeness to employment, and attractive names like "Capitol Court" and "Plaza."

At the same time as the insurance companies were expanding, the needs of state government were growing, and new buildings were added near the State Capitol: the Armory in 1909 and the State Library-Supreme Court building in 1910. Like the insurance headquarters, these were monumental buildings with classical detailing and Beaux-Arts sculptural enrichment. In 1930 the State reached across Trinity and Washington Streets and built a new office building to accomodate executive branch departments.

That same year, a private foundation selected the area as the site for the Bushnell Memorial, a facility intended to be Hartford's foremost center for the performing arts. Performers of national renown who have appeared at the Bushnell include Duke Ellington and Lena Horne. In choosing the Elm-Trinity neighborhood for the Bushnell Memorial, the foundation confirmed the area's role as a focal point for the city's formal institutional functions, the home of Hartford's major financial, governmental, and cultural entities.

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

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

Elm Street Historic District

Continuation sheet Hartford, Connecticut Item number 10

Page 1



UTM References:

- A: 18/692770/4625960
- B: 18/693080/4625860
- C: 18/693120/4625800
- D: 18/693100/4625720
- E: 18/693060/4625730
- F: 18/693060/4625660
- G: 18/693030/4625660
- H: 18/693040/4625790
- I: 18/692860/4625840
- J: 18/692850/4625810
- K: 18/692900/4625790
- L: 18/692880/4625740
- M: 18/692830/4625750
- N: 18/692780/4625650
- O: 18/692680/4625690
- P: 18/692710/4625790

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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

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received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

10

Page

2

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

Beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of Elm and Trinity Streets, the district boundary runs easterly along the southern line of Elm Street, rounding the corner and continuing southerly along the western line of Hudson Street. At a point in a line with the northern property bound of Parcel 423-3-2 (78-80 Capitol Avenue) it runs westerly to the northeast corner of that lot, then follows the eastern line of that lot southerly to Capitol Avenue. It crosses the avenue to the northeast corner of Parcel 423-2-7 (71 Capitol Avenue), then runs southerly along the eastern line of that lot. It turns westerly and continues at a distance of 10' from the rear wall of the building on that lot and then follows the western property line northerly to Capitol Avenue. It crosses the avenue and continues northerly at a distance of 10' from the western walls of the building at 78-80 Capitol Avenue and the west rear building at 55 Elm Street. It then turns westerly so as to run in a straight line parallel to and at a distance of 10' from the rear wall of the building at 71 Elm Street until meeting the eastern line of Parcel 417-4-3 (75 Elm Street). It runs southerly along that line and then turns and runs westerly so as to follow a straight line parallel to and at a distance of 10' from the rear wall of the building at 75 Elm Street. Upon meeting the western line of Parcel 417-4-3 (75 Elm Street), it turns and follows that line northerly. Next, it turns westerly and runs parallel to and at a distance of 10' from the rear wall of the building at 79 Elm Street until it comes to Clinton Street. It follows the eastern line of Clinton Street southerly until it comes to the northwest corner of Parcel 417-4-7 (136 Elm Street). It then follows the northern property bounds of Parcels 417-4-7, 417-4-8 (130 Capitol Avenue) and 417-4-6 (126 Capitol Avenue) easterly, then continues southerly along the eastern property bound of Parcel 417-4-6 to the southeast corner of that lot. It then proceeds westerly along the northern line of Capitol Avenue to the southeast corner of the intersection of Capitol Avenue and Clinton Street. From there it crosses the avenue and runs southerly in a line parallel to and at a distance of 10' from the rear or east wall of the State Office Building until reaching Buckingham Street. It then follows the property line of the State Office Building (Parcel 417-2-1) westerly along Buckingham Street, northerly on Washington Street, and easterly along Capitol Avenue. It then turns and continues northerly along the eastern line of Trinity Street to the first point.

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

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

Elm Street Historic District  
Hartford, Connecticut

Continuation sheet

Item number

10

Page

3

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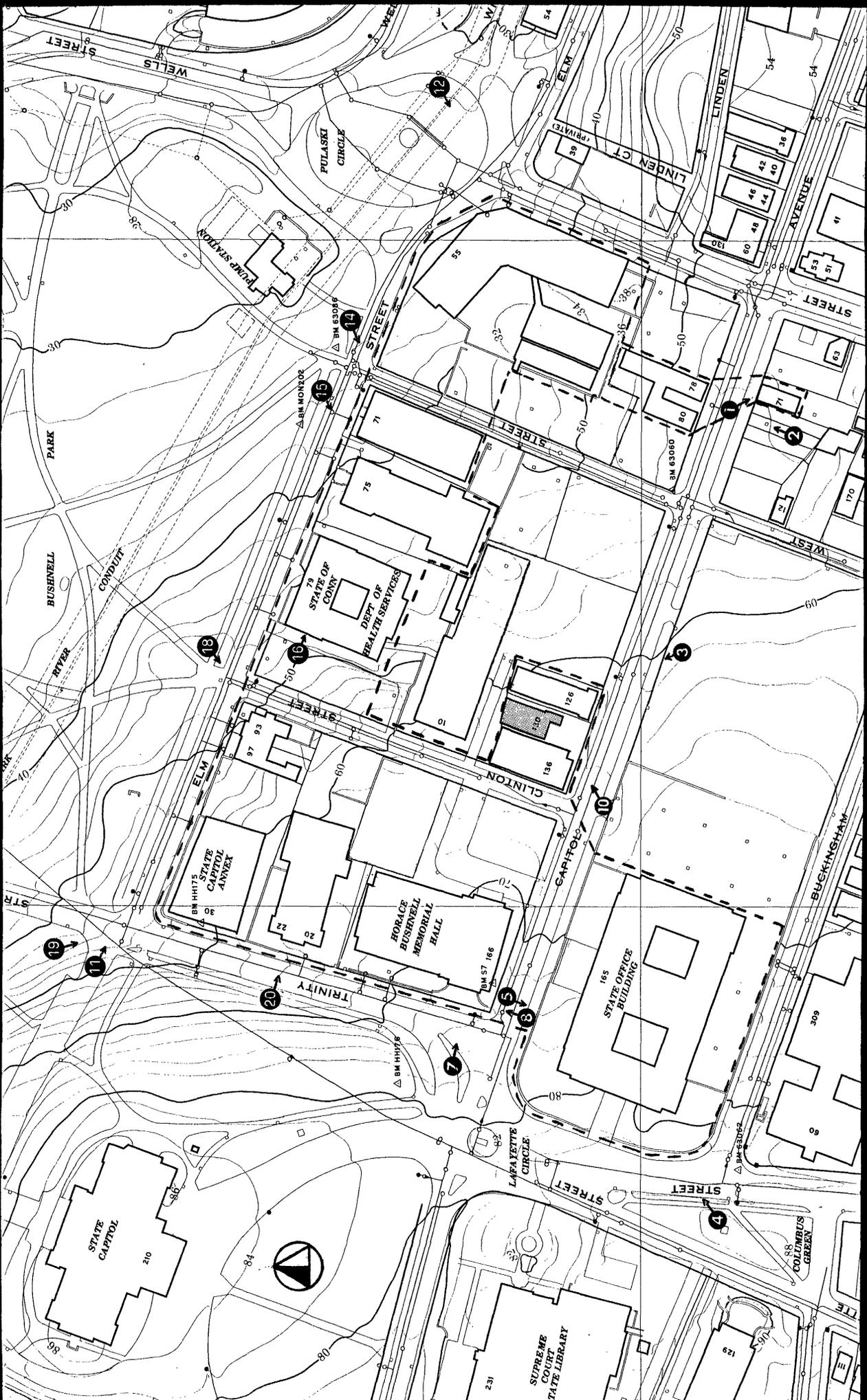
Verbal Boundary Description and Justification (continued):

The delineation of the boundary was based upon two criteria: the strong visual breaks which set this group of buildings off from its surroundings, and the thematic unity possessed by the district as primarily a collection of early 20th-century institutional buildings. To the west are the State Capitol and Supreme Court/State Library, buildings already listed on the National Register, and to the north is Bushnell Park, another listed site. The eastern boundary is marked by mostly vacant land: Pulaski Circle to the northeast, a large traffic circle beyond which are the modern Bushnell Tower apartments; and on Hudson Street, a gas station and parking lots, with the Buckingham Square National Register Historic District at the eastern end of Capitol Avenue. The southern boundary of the district is defined on Buckingham Street by the high-rise office tower and garage which stand opposite the State Office Building.

On Capitol Avenue are extensive open lots which serve as parking areas for the buildings in the district. These lots separate the district from the area of 19th and early 20th century residences which lies to the south. The district excludes these parking areas wherever possible. Property lines are used to define the district boundary where feasible, but in other cases a standard and arbitrary perimeter of 10' is used to separate an included historic building from excluded parking area on the same parcel of land.

The State Health Services Department Laboratory, 10 Clinton Street, was excluded because it makes no contribution to the historic character of the district. A large five-story building built in two stages, c.1970 and c.1980, it represents a massive modern presence on the south edge of the district. Like the parking areas, it is in the interior of the block and is not visible from Elm or Trinity Streets.

Although the church and apartment buildings on Capitol Avenue do not directly embody the main theme of the nominated area, they were included because of their proximity to included buildings: the church and Plaza apartments (126 Capitol Avenue) stand diagonally opposite the main entrance to the State Office Building and are clearly visible across the parking lot from the box-office entrance to Bushnell Memorial Hall. The two apartment buildings in the south-east corner of the district (71 and 78-80 Capitol Avenue) are more visually isolated from the other structures. They were included because 78-80 Capitol Avenue is directly adjacent to the rear of the buildings at 55 Elm Street. Although West and Buckingham Streets have similar residential structures, the district was not extended because to do so would not only detract from the thematic unity of the district but would necessitate inclusion of still more parking lots.



--- District Boundary

④ Photo Positions

■ Noncontributing Structure

SCALE



# Elm Street Historic District

HARTFORD  
CONNECTICUT

HRC 10/83