

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED MAR 31 1982  
DATE ENTERED APR 29 1982

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

William A. Buckingham House

AND/OR COMMON

Buckingham Memorial Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

307 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Norwich

N/A VICINITY OF

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

CT

CODE

09

COUNTY

New London

CODE

011

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

United War Veterans Grand Army of the Republic  
Buckingham Memorial Association

STREET & NUMBER

307 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Norwich

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Norwich Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Norwich

STATE

CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1975

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input 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 Buckingham Memorial Building is a 2½-story brick residence built in 1847 in a simplified Italianate style. It stands in the heart of downtown Norwich, on the southeast corner of Main Street and Railroad Avenue (Fig. 1). It is surrounded by commercial buildings with the exception of its nearest neighbor, a 2½-story Second Empire residence which has also survived the city's expansion over the last one hundred years. On the north side along Main Street the most prominent buildings are several large banks, to the west are blocks of three and four story commercial buildings, and to the south is a diner, the old railroad station, and the Shetucket River.

The form of the building is a large rectangular block with a recessed wing to the east (Fig. 2). Because of the slope of the land southwards, the basement becomes a fully exposed story at the rear (Fig. 3). The foundation is cut granite blocks with a course of cut brownstone at the top. The walls are brick (common bond in Flemish variation), and the rear wall is painted light brown. The hipped roof (covered with asphalt shingles) over the main block has a steeply-pitched attic gable at the center of the main (north) facade, and three small peaked-roof dormers across the rear (south). The front facade of the wing has a shallow projecting two-story bay which terminates in a shallow-pitched attic gable. To the west, between this gable and the roof of the main block, is a small peaked-roof dormer.

The decorative features of the exterior are subdued. Under the wide eaves are large cornice brackets. All of the windows (except in the dormers) have brownstone lintels and sills; but their sizes vary. The lower openings are larger and are filled with modern steel sash in a 3-over-6-over-6 configuration. In the projecting bay of the wing, the windows are narrow and paired, but are also filled with similar modern sash. The second story windows are smaller and the sash is slowly being replaced. The attic gables and dormers have small rectangular windows except for the round-headed window in the gable of the wing's projecting bay. There are two veranda-like porches, one on the western side of the house and one across the front facade of the wing. They have steeply curving metal roofs supported by open-fretwork posts, between which are plain rails and balusters. These porches are recently constructed reproductions of the originals.

In front of the house on the small lawn, there is a tall flagpole and a cannon.

The inside of the house has been considerably modified to serve as the Norwich Senior Citizens' Center. Most of these changes have occurred in the basement and on the first floor, but work continues on the second floor and will eventually reach the attic. Walls have been moved to make the space available more useable, and

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

FOR HCRS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Buckingham Memorial Building

Norwich, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

---

Determination of Eligibility for Inclusion  
on the National Register

1976 Federal

Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service,  
Department of Interior

Washington DC

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Buckingham Memorial Building

Norwich, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

the original configuration of the house's public rooms on the first floor is difficult to discern.

However, the interior does retain a number of decorative features worthy of note. The house has two main entrances which are **located** under the porches on the north and west facades. The north (Main Street) entrance has a large panelled door surrounded by a transom and sidelights with panes of frosted glass containing a floral motif. The west (Railroad Avenue) entrance has a similar door, transom and sidelights. The glass panes, however, are painted (the lower pane of each sidelight is missing) with floral motifs and, in the center pane of the transom, a view of a waterfall. The Railroad Avenue entrance opens into a large central hall with a wide staircase along the south wall. This consists of a wide rail, turned balusters and a simple newel post, all executed in black walnut (Fig. 5). In every room there are interior window shutters which fold into the surrounding frames. The windows are deeply recessed into the walls because of their thickness; for the house was built using the double-wall-with-cavity method of construction (that is, two brick walls separated by an air space with studs, lath and plaster applied to the inner side of the "second" wall (Fig. 6). Finally, there are five marble fireplaces throughout the house. That in the south parlor, now an office, is particularly fine and has its original iron firescreen in place (Fig. 4).

In conclusion, the Buckingham Memorial Building is in good condition. The conversion of the structure to its new use has led to some necessary interior changes; but its exterior has been carefully restored, and its overall historical character has been maintained.

# 6 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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1847 - built

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Buckingham Memorial Building is significant because of its association with William A. Buckingham, Governor of Connecticut from 1858 until 1866 (criterion B).

William A. Buckingham was born in Lebanon, Connecticut in 1804. He attended nearby Bacon Academy in Colchester; and, after graduation, he returned to Lebanon where he worked for several years on the family's farm. Ambitious and restless, however, he left Lebanon about 1822 for Norwich to take up a position in his uncle's dry goods store. In 1826, he opened his own store; and in 1830, he became involved in the manufacture of carpets. In 1848, Buckingham made a sizeable investment in the fledgling Hayward Rubber Company of Colchester, a pioneer in the rubber industry. This concern quickly prospered; and Buckingham's financial interest led him to become manager and treasurer of the company, positions of great responsibility and substantial pecuniary rewards as well.

Buckingham's political career began with his election as Mayor of Norwich in 1849, a post to which he was returned in 1850, 1856 and 1857. A staunch abolitionist, Buckingham was chosen to carry the banner of <sup>the</sup> youthful Republican party in the gubernatorial contest in 1858. He was narrowly elected and was returned for a second term the following year. In 1860, the Democrats made a vigorous effort to unseat him. The election was one of the most momentous in the state's history, mirroring the national struggle which pitted Abraham Lincoln against three opponents. So close was the election in Connecticut, that Lincoln shared the campaign platform with Buckingham and gave six speeches on a tour of the state's major cities. When the votes were counted, Lincoln had carried Connecticut and won the presidency while Buckingham had won the governorship by 541 votes.

Buckingham was reelected in each of the next five years with increasing margins as his prominence grew directing the state's energies to meet the crisis of the Civil War. One of Lincoln's most ardent supporters, Buckingham was particularly zealous in meeting the state's quota of military volunteers. In his proclamation of 1862 asking men to come forward, he expressed his belief in the immediacy and importance of the struggle with direct and eloquent words:

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Encyclopedia of Biography of Connecticut. Chicago: The Century Publishing and Engraving Company, 1892

Modern Norwich: The Rose of New England. Norwich, CT: Modern Norwich Publishing Company, 1895.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .215 QUADRANGLE NAME Norwich, Conn. QUADRANGLE SCALE 1 : 24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	744	100	46	008	80	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				
C							D			
E							F			
G							H			

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is Lot 2, Block 174, as shown on Norwich Assessors Map 56.

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Hal Keiner, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission DATE Sept. 29, 1979

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005

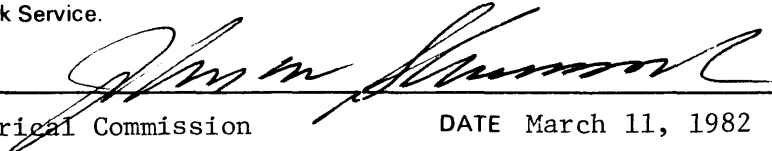
CITY OR TOWN Hartford STATE CT

# 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 March 11, 1982

<b>FOR NPS USE ONLY</b>	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
	Entered in the National Register
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE <u>4/29/82</u>
ATTEST:	DATE
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION	

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Buckingham Memorial Building

Norwich, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

3

By our delay the safety of our armies, even of the nation may be imperilled....close your manufactories and workshops, turn aside from your farms and your businesses, leave for a while your families and homes, meet face to face the enemy of your liberties.<sup>1</sup>

With the surrender at Appomattox, Buckingham decided to give up the governorship and retire to Norwich. In 1868, however, he was elected to serve his state as U. S. Senator. During his term in Washington, he supported Reconstruction, and also served as the Chairman of the committee which investigated the U. S. Customs House Frauds, one of the great scandals of the Grant administration. Worn out by his labors, he returned to Norwich in 1874 and died there quietly the following year.<sup>2</sup>

Buckingham ranks with Jonathan Trumbull as Connecticut's most famous governor. Like Trumbull, who served during the Revolution, he led the state with a firm hand through a period of crisis. Well liked and remembered, he was honored by the state's citizens through the erection of a large statue in his likeness which stands on the main floor of the capitol building in Hartford.

Throughout the second half of his life, Buckingham lived in the house now known as the Buckingham Memorial Building. As early as 1837, according to the Land Records, he was acquiring property between Main Street and the strip of land belonging to the Norwich and Worcester Railroad along the Shetucket River. The house was built in 1847, for a deed transferring ownership of a lot from his brother, Israel Buckingham, to his wife, Elisa, mentions "...the West wall of the brick house now building..."<sup>3</sup> in its boundary description. The house was a center of Norwich society, and Buckingham entertained Lincoln and Grant in its rooms during their campaign visits to the city.

After Buckingham's death, his executors sold the property for \$14,000 to Mrs. Sarah Avery. After her demise in 1898, it came into the possession of Walter S. Wilcombe. About this time, the Sedgwick Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, which had been renting accommodations in a Norwich office building, was hoping "...to purchase a lot and erect a Grand Army Memorial building in which, for preservation, may be placed many articles and relics of the Post and its individual members...."<sup>4</sup> When the members of the Sedgwick Post learned that Mr. Wilcombe was interested in selling the Buck-

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

Buckingham Memorial Building  
Norwich, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

4

ingham house, a concerted effort was made to raise the necessary funds to buy it. This drive was successful; and, in 1898, the Sedgwick Post acquired title to the property which was then dedicated to the memory of the Governor and the troops he had raised so zealously. In 1909, as part of the celebrations commemorating the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Norwich, President Taft was entertained there at a reception.

Like all veterans' organizations, the G. A. R. began to decline as its members passed away. In the twentieth century the organization was transformed into the United War Veterans, honoring those who have served in all of the nation's wars. Unfortunately, since the 1960s, the United War Veterans has been dwindling in membership and the house had slowly fallen into disrepair. This led the organization to allow the City of Norwich to rehabilitate the building for use as a Senior Citizens' Center; and the City is presently in the process of acquiring full ownership.

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Frederick Calvin Norton, The Governors of Connecticut (Hartford, CT: The Connecticut Magazine Company, 1905), p. 253.

<sup>2</sup>This account of Buckingham's life and political career is drawn from the following sources: Norton, Governors, pp. 250-254; Encyclopedia of Biography of Connecticut (Chicago: The Century Publishing and Engraving Company, 1892), pp. 65-68; and Samuel G. Buckingham, The Life of William A. Buckingham, War Governor of Connecticut (Springfield, MA: The W. F. Adams Company, 1894).

<sup>3</sup>Norwich Town Clerk, Land Records, Vol. 54, 1847, p. 447.

<sup>4</sup>Modern Norwich: The Rose of New England (Norwich, CT: Modern Norwich Publishing Co., 1895), p. 16.

<sup>5</sup>William G. Gilman. The Celebration of the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Settlement of the Town of Norwich, Connecticut.... (Norwich, CT: n. p., 1912), p. 13.



FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Buckingham Memorial Building

Norwich, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 5

Buckingham, Samuel G. The Life of William A. Buckingham, War Governor of Connecticut. Springfield, MA: The W. F. Adams Company, Publishers, 1894.

Gilman, William G. The Celebration of the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Settlement of the Town of Norwich, Connecticut.... Norwich, CT: n. p., 1912.

Norton, Frederick Calvin. The Governors of Connecticut. Hartford, CT: The Connecticut Magazine Company, 1905.

O'Keefe, Marion K. and Catherine Smith Doroshevich. Norwich Historic Homes & Families. Stonington, CT: The Pequot Press, 1967.