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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED	APR 2 1976
DATE ENTERED	APR 22 1976

**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  Williams, Joseph, Octagon House and Stancliff, Gilbert,  
 Octagon House  
 AND/OR COMMON  Octagon House Pair

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER #26 and #28 Marlborough St. \_\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Portland CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE Connecticut VICINITY OF #2- Anthony Moffett

CODE 09 COUNTY Middlesex CODE 007

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME #26 - Michele Ferrara	#28 - Aziz Ghaussy
STREET & NUMBER 104 Grove St.	547 Main St.
CITY, TOWN Middletown, CT	Middletown, CT
STATE	STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Portland STATE Connecticut

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

DATE 1975 \_\_\_FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Hartford STATE Connecticut

## 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

#26 and #28 Marlborough Street are a pair of identical, adjacent Octagon houses, built of Portland brownstone in the mid-1850's.

Architectural Information - Williams, Joseph House, #26 Marlborough St.

**Architectural Character:** This octagonal dwelling, complete with belvedere and veranda, has detailing in the Italianate-bracketed style. Ornamentation is confined to the brackets under the roof eaves and the porch decoration. The house relies on its masonry construction and polygonal form for its effect of elegance.

**Condition of Fabric:** The brownstone blocks of the exterior walls have been covered with stucco which is now badly cracked and flaking off. Several of the carved wooden brackets have broken off or are gone entirely. The wooden trim is in need of a coat of paint, but the structure appears sound.

**Description of Exterior:** The octagonal structure measures 20 feet on a side and is 48 feet deep from front to rear. The foundations are of brownstone block construction, as are the exterior walls. The latter, however, have been covered over with stucco. There is a wooden porch with some ornamental tracery between the supporting posts that attaches to three sides of the building. There is also an octagonal wooden belvedere on top of the house which has four windows in it, placed on alternating faces. The walls of the house are 18 inches thick and the ceilings of the rooms measure 13 feet high.

There were at least two chimneys on the house to accommodate the four first floor fireplaces, located just outside of the central core of the house. The front doorway is framed by three transom lights and three sidelights, all of fairly large rectangular-paned glass. There are narrow panels below the glass sidelights on either side of the door. The door is centered on the front face of the octagon with one second story window in pine above it. The faces which flank the doorway each have four windows. The two on the first floor are full length with large-paned glass paced six over nine. The second floor windows are smaller and have six over six light sash. All windows have louvered wooden shutters. The roof is just slightly hipped and covered with tar roofing paper.

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Greater Middletown Preservation Trust Survey, Portland, CT

1974

Local

Greater Middletown Preservation Trust  
27 Washington St.  
Middletown, CT 06457

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Description of Interior: The interior of the house was not seen as it is now four private apartments. However, a 1950 article in Connecticut Circle magazine gives a floor plan of the house, as well as two pictures of the interior. This plan appears to be original to the house, but may not be visible today.

The floor plan consists of a central staircase with four squared-off rooms radiating out from it. Although not circular, the staircase does wind upward through the square hallway to the belvedere. The staircase has an open well and open string with turned balusters. Most movement about the house is through the larger rooms, as each has a doorway or opening into the adjacent room. The central stair-hall does allow for circulation among the three front rooms. The triangular spaces between the four square larger rooms are occupied by two entryways (front and rear), a bedroom and a pantry. The corners of these triangles have been cut off by the placement of closets, thus the octagonal shape is barely perceivable inside the house.

The heating of the house was originally done solely by fireplaces, of which one was placed in each of the larger rooms around the central core of the house.

Site:

Walks and Enclosures: A low brownstone wall of about three feet in height runs between the two octagons. The 1874 Beers atlas shows a semicircular drive across the front of this property, although there is no real evidence of this today. An old view of Marlborough Street shows a wooden fence which extends across the front of both octagon houses; this, too, is now gone.

Setting and orientation: The house faces west from its 3/4 acre site on the east side of Marlborough Street. It is placed well back from the street and the wide front lawn echoes the former residential elegance of the street.

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Architectural Information - Stancliff, Gilbert, House, #28 Marlborough St.

General Statement

**Architectural Character:** The character of the Gilbert Stancliff House is enhanced by its sitting adjacent to the Joseph Williams octagon. While the house's brownstone has been stuccoed and has lost its veranda, the structure still presents an impressive silhouette to the street.

**Condition of Fabric:** The exterior walls seem intact and solid, as does the belvedere. Where the original veranda was removed, a decent plaster patchwork was accomplished. A few of the eave consoles have lost their drop pendules, but the woodwork and stucco is well painted relative to the octagon next door. The house and grounds are generally in good repair and upkeep.

Description of Exterior

**Over-all dimensions:** Match those of #26. Each face is about 20' wide and the house is 48' in depth.

**Foundations:** brownstone

**Wall Construction:** The walls are Portland brownstone, but have been stuccoed over and painted dark red. The stucco is coursed slightly to give the impression of 3' x 4' blocks.

**Structural system, framing:** Unable to determine.

**Porches:** Street porch covers first floor of facade face and is not original, but very plain. Side porches are modern.

**Chimneys:** Unable to determine, except one stack is left near the belvedere on the N.W. diagonal (to the street)

**Openings:** The front entrance is plain Greek Revival, with three light transom and sidelights, all large, common panes. There are doors on each side face, first and second floor, the latter two being now blocked. Modern doors are now hung. Street face and opposite have only one second story void, diagonal faces on second floor have two, while faces perpendicular to street have one and a door. Fenestration is repeated on first story, but voids are all elongated. Sash above is six over six and below six over nine. All windows are recessed about 4", have brownstone (painted red) sills, aluminum storms,

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and white-painted louvered shutters. Belvedere has windows every other face.

Roof: The roof is slightly hipped, its eaves carried with moulded consoles with drop pendules, one at each corner and four to a face, and is crowned by an octagonal belvedere with alternative faces of window and clapboard, and smaller consoles under its eave at each joint. The belvedere is painted red also and is surmounted by a gold crucifix. Gutter pipes run down each diagonal face.

Description of Interior

From the veranda, however, it is possible to see that much of the interior spaces remain original. The first floor rooms appear to have interior walls parallel to the exterior faces; the stairwell is cubic and placed in the center of the plan. Probably, a hall jogs between the exterior rooms and stair hall within. It is very possible that the floor plan of this octagon matches that of the Williams House next door (original).

Site:

There are presently no outbuildings on the property. There is, however, a 3' high brownstone block drywall around about one-half of the site. There is a modern paved drive on the south side of the house and modern walks from the drive and sidewalk to the entrance porch steps.

Setting and Orientation: The most important aspect of this structure's original siting is its placement iwth a nearby identical octagon next door. Together the pair of octagons presents a rare story in architectural history. While their good setbacks from the street and sidewalk and good surrounding plantings provide rural setting; the siting and planning of the pair (together with their original fences and street hardware) give the houses an urban characteristic.

Addenda

From the April, 1950 issue of Connecticut Circle magazine: "The odd structure at right is located at Portland, Connecticut (photo shows the Joseph Williams house, however). It is one of two brownstone houses now in the state. The record shows that the house was constructed about 1853, using brownstone from the Portland quarry, in which the then owner, for whom the house was built, Mr. Gilbert

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Stancliff, had an interest. It is understood that Mr. Stancliff also owned a schooner named the "Gilbert Stancliff" that he used in carrying brownstone from his quarry to New York. The walls of the house are eighteen inches thick covered with stucco and the ceilings are thirteen feet high. Original heating in the house was by fireplaces, one in each of the large rooms.

\*Beers 1874 Map of Portland shows the Stancliff octagon with an ell off the rear face and is labelled, "G. Stancliff."

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1853, 1855

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The adjacent octagon houses in Portland, Connecticut are the only such pair of octagonal houses in the state, among the surviving examples of the octagon mode. There is some speculation, based upon research prepared for the National Trust for Historic Preservation<sup>1</sup> that this example is the only surviving octagon house pair in the United States. Additional research is essential to substantiate this theory.

Historical Information: Williams, Joseph, House, #26 Marlborough Street

### Physical History:

Original and Subsequent Owners: Joseph Williams, who ran a grocery store on Main Street in Portland under the firm name of Williams & Clarke, bought a 3/4 acre parcel of land from Joseph Hall in 1853. His wife was Laura Stancliff, sister of Gilbert Stancliff, who built the octagon house at 28 Marlborough Street. In a mortgage of 1855, a dwelling house is mentioned on Joseph Williams' lot, thus making his house contemporary with Gilbert Stancliff's octagon next door.

Date of Erection: 1853-1855

Alterations and Additions: Little appears to have been done to the exterior that would alter the original structure. The inside, however, has been converted to four apartments, which suggests extensive interior remodeling.

<sup>1</sup> Opinion of Carlton Knight, author, expressed to John Reynolds, President, Greater Middletown Preservation Trust, 1974.



# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Sources of Information: Williams, Joseph, House, #26 Marlborough St.

Map History: 1) 1859 Walling map - 26 Marlborough St. is the residence of C. H. Hall. Joseph Williams is referred to in the firm name of "Williams and Clarke, Groceries and Provisions." 2) 1874 Berr's map - Octagon is clearly represented with no ellipses or additions.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY TWO (2)

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>18</u>	<u>696860</u>	<u>4604800</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Stephen J. Raiche, National Register Program Coordinator

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

1/5/75

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect St.

TELEPHONE

203-566-3005

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

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

*John W. Shannahan*  
John W. Shannahan

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

3/2/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting *Leslie J. ...*

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

4/22/76

ATTEST:

*Charles ...*

DATE

4/22/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Historical Information: Stancliff, Gilbert, House, #28 Marlborough St.

Physical History:

Gilbert Stancliff purchased the land only for \$1075.00 and erected the octagon house there in 1855. (According to Beers' History of Middlesex County Commemorative Biographical Record, page 292, "The handsome house which the family uses as a home is an octagonal structure of brown stone, and was erected by Gilbert Stancliff in 1855.")

Date of Erection: ca. 1855

Architect: Unknown. It is likely that Gilbert's brother, Charles Stancliff, might have erected the octagon, for according to Beers, in the Commemorative Biographical Records of Middlesex County, Charles was "a competent architect and builder, and a practical carpenter and joiner." (p. 290)).

Alterations and Additions: The original brownstone has been stuccoed over and painted a dark red. The original veranda is gone and now only a later porch exists on the street face. Two doorways on the second floor side face (probably not original) have been blocked and do not have exterior stairs. The side doors below them are still open, but have modern, concrete steps and railings. A long 1-1/2 story brick ell and end porch have been added to the rear face. From what little could be seen of the interior, it seems likely that room spaces and walls within have not been greatly changed.

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Bibliography:

Dwight, Benjamin, The History of the Descendants of Elder John Strong,  
Albany, Joel Munsell, 1871.

Middletown-Portland City Directories, published by E. King and Son.

Sources of Information: Stancliff, Gilbert House, #28 Marlborough St.

Old Views: There is one old photograph on page 20 of Portland, Connecticut, 125 Years of Incorporation, 1841-1966. (Middletown Case, Russell Library) which very likely is a view of the original fences, hitching posts, and mounting blocks of the two Marlborough Street octagons (#26, #28). If this in fact is the correct site, it is evidence that the two houses might have been erected at the same time by the same builder, for the fence is continuous across both properties and there are two identical sets of street hardware.

Map History:

1859 Walling Map: square and labelled "C. Stancliff."

1880 O. H. Bailey, Map of Portland (birdseye) shows drawn octagon with original three-faced veranda and barn or addition in the rear.

Bibliography:

Beers, Middlesex County Commemorative Biographical Record

Portland, Connecticut; 125 Years of Incorporation, 1841-1966,

Rogers, Sophia Selden, Elizabeth Selden Lane, and Edwin van Deusen

Selden, Selden Ancestry; A Family History, published by E. v. D.  
Selden, Oil City, Penn., 1931.