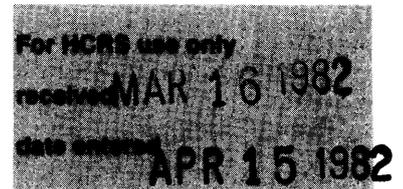


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 James Alldis House

and/or common James Alldis House

2. Location

street & number 355 Prospect Street N/A not for publication

city, town Torrington N/A vicinity of congressional district 6th

state Connecticut code 09 county Litchfield code 005

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name John P. Febroriello and Peter C. Herbst

street & number 355 Prospect Street

city, town Torrington N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Torrington Land Records, Municipal Building

street & number 140 Main Street

city, town Torrington state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1981 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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

General Description and Setting

The James Alldis House is a comfortable, roomy, Queen Anne structure built just before the turn of the century. Covered with clapboards and shingles, it is roughly oblong in plan, 32 feet wide by 60 feet deep, and is sited a few feet back from the bluestone sidewalk. Its irregular plan and massing, three-story corner tower with conical roof, and elaborate porch of sawn and turned woodwork are characteristic of the Queen Anne style. (Photograph 1)

The house and its carriage house stand on the west side of Prospect Street, near downtown, in Torrington, Connecticut. Already an established, residential neighborhood when the house was built, Prospect Street today, with its shade trees still in place, continues its residential character, although a church and school are now present among the well spaced frame dwellings. The close proximity to the business district has encouraged adaptive use of the Alldis House, and others, for commercial purposes, but the neighborhood ambience has been maintained.

Exterior

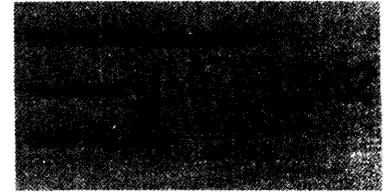
In the asymmetrical massing of the house the large round tower at the left front corner of the facade is balanced by the wrap-around porch on the right. Above, the complex roofline, which is typical of the Queen Anne style, in addition to the cone of the tower has multiple gables projecting from a central gable-on-hipped roof, and has tall brick chimneys with panelled sides and molded tops. The house is supported by granite ashlar foundations.

Broad front steps, positioned off center to the right, lead up to a porch under a pedimented porch gable. The steps have heavy balustrades with round finials on the newel posts. The porch railing is a continuation of the balustrades. The narrow clapboards of the first story exterior walls contrast with the shingles, which are laid in an irregular pattern at the second story and in a fish-scale pattern at the third. The second story is slightly flared over the first, and includes a recessed upstairs porch at the right front corner, over the first-floor porch. At the third floor there is a central, pedimented gable rising to the same height as the apex of the tower's conical roof. Windows in the house have 1-over-1 double-hung sash, and flat molded caps. Some of the windows have blinds, thought to be original, that have two rows of movable louvers. The attic window in the gable above the third floor is half round, with a keystone and interlacing Gothic tracery. (Photograph 2.)

The south side of the house, facing the driveway that leads back to the carriage house, is equally irregular in profile (Photograph 3). Behind the corner tower there is a two-story bay capped by a pedimented gable, and then, at the back, another, smaller porch similar to the front porch. The careful attention devoted to detailing throughout the house is evident in this facade. For example, the round-headed window in the tower, a single piece of glass, has quarter sunbursts in its spandrels. This quarter-sunburst motif is used repeatedly for both exterior and interior decorative effect. At the bay, the first-floor corners are chamfered and have a window in the oblique wall plane recessed under a round-arched hood with central pendant. Such intricacy of detail is an important component of the Queen Anne style.

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The woodwork of the hallway is oak. The five-panelled oak door that opens into the front parlor has maple veneer on the parlor side. The doorway surround, on the parlor side, includes a molded cornice with dentil course and a molded architrave. The ceiling height is 9 feet 4 inches. A 7-inch, three-tier cornice of cavetto and ovolo moldings encircles the room. There is an 8-inch baseboard. The ceiling is decorated with an attenuated, raised bellflower plaster decoration in the manner of Robert Adam, the late 18th-century English architect and designer. The original brass chandelier is in place. The southeast corner of the front parlor is the interior of the tower. This curved portion of the room has three windows, the central one being a single piece of curved glass 68 inches tall, round headed and with quarter sunbursts in its spandrels. There is a panelled dado under the windows, and the ceiling of the bay has a reed-and-ribbon motif in raised plaster. The bay is set off from the rest of the parlor by attached, fluted, half columns that have capitals formed by acanthus leaves and volutes. (Photograph 7)

Sliding doors, in working order, connect the front parlor with the back parlor. The back parlor has a less elaborate cornice at the ceiling and a less elaborate bay in the south wall. The chief decorative element of this room is the fireplace on the north wall. The cast-iron firebox depicts a medieval domestic scene. The tile surrounding the firebox are lavender color with a flower petal pattern.² The hearth is tile in a checkerboard pattern. Pilasters decorated with acanthus leaves and volutes support the mantel shelf. In the overmantel structure there are shelves to left and right, three beveled-edge mirrors, and, at the top under the cornice, a band of vertical reeding flanked by a further acanthus leaf and volute motif, this time horizontal. (Photograph 8)

The dining room is located behind the front hall. It has a less elaborate Lincrusta wainscotting than the hall, 31 inches high. Its ceiling cornice is less elaborate than the parlors'. Its bay, in the north wall, has a large, central window with a fixed, three-part transom. There is a fireplace in the south wall, back-to-back with the fireplace already described. It, too, has an embossed, cast-iron firebox. The fireplace surround and hearth are glazed, yellow-brown tile. The mantelpiece consists of round free-standing columns, a shelf, and mirror.

A passage, lined with drawers and cupboards, runs to the rear behind the dining room, and connects with the kitchen to the south. In front of the kitchen, on the south side of the house between the kitchen and the back parlor, there is a back hallway with door to the rear porch. This hallway has a dado of vertical, narrow, beaded boards, and has doors to the cellar stairs and to the service stairs to the upper floors.

Interior, Second Floor

On the second floor of the house, there is a hall over the first-floor hall. Original brass chandeliers are in place in both the first- and second-floor halls. The second-floor hall is smaller in floor area because of the space occupied by the stairwell. There is a door in the front wall to the second-floor front porch. The upper section of the door is glazed with a large central pane that is surrounded by a border of small, bevelled lights.

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The front bedroom enjoys, as a bay, the second floor of the tower. At this level the tower has four 1-over-1 windows. The upper sash have leaded glazing in a pattern of vertical rectangles with pointed ends under a band of diamond-shaped pieces.

The second bedroom, over the back parlor, has woodwork in darker color, and flat molded caps over the door and windows, while a third bedroom behind the hall, over the dining room, has bead-and-reel moldings over its windows and door. The windows in the bay of this room are 2-over-1.

There is a lavatory, located about in the middle of the second floor, that appears to have its original fittings. The wash basin has a marble top and wood surround. (Photograph 9). A similar bathroom on the first floor has a floral design in its wash basin.

A central hall runs back from the south end of the front hall, and then, behind the back stairs, there is an odd transverse hall, apparently for the purpose of providing service access to the north bedroom. An additional room to the rear on this floor and further quarters on the third floor presumably served as additional family and servants' bedrooms.

Summary and Present Status

In general, the house has been very little changed since the time it was built. Original hard-wood flooring and most of the original lighting fixtures are in place. The original hot-air heat distribution system is still being used. Doors and windows have their original hardware. The first two floors now serve as offices of a law firm, and the third floor is an apartment.

1. An appraisal dated April 5, 1977 by the Morris Seigal Agency of Torrington states that the first of these windows is a product of the Tiffany Studios and the second of the Bigelow Studios. Neither window is signed.
2. The tile pattern is identified by John Curtis, Director of Curatorial Services at Sturbridge Village as being one manufactured in the early 1880s by J.E. & J.G. Low of Chelsea, Massachusetts.

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 c. 1895 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion

The James Alldis House displays many of the characteristics of the Queen Anne style of architecture on both its exterior and interior. The fact that so few changes have been made over the years has served to safeguard these architectural features and the integrity of the site as a whole to an unusual degree. (Criterion C.) The close association of the first owner of this fine Queen Anne house with Torrington's principal industry enhances its local interest.

Among the chief characteristics of the Queen Anne style of architecture are irregularity of plan and massing and variety of texture. In the James Alldis House the round tower at one front corner, the wrap-around porch at the other, and the entrance off center to the right are clearly defined elements of irregularity of plan and massing, while the narrow, smooth clapboards of the first story contrast with the wider spacing and patterns of the rough-textured shingles above. The windows of the house have the variety associated with the Queen Anne, rectangular in most cases but round headed in the tower and attic and with three-sided heads in the third floor where the upper sash only, again a Queen Anne feature, have small lights. The prominent, two-story bays on the sides of the house exemplify another important ingredient of the style.

The roof of the James Alldis House is high and multiple with its ridges meeting at right angles, as typically found in the Queen Anne style. The cross gables and porch gable and crowning gable-on-hip carry the roof configuration to a degree of complexity seldom exceeded in the style. The tall, brick chimneys are an important element. In this house they are oblong in plan and have vertical panels in their wide sides and thick moldings near their tops, in accordance with good Queen Anne practice.

On the interior, small scale Classical detail, another element often found in Queen Anne houses, is carried out in this house in the Adamesque bell-flower ceiling decoration of the front parlor and the reed-and-ribbon motif in the ceiling of the tower section. Other interior features, such as the Lincrusta wall covering and colored-glass windows, are not limited in their use to houses designed in the Queen Anne style, but are characteristic of the late-19th-century period, as is the elaborate fireplace mantel and chimney piece of the rear parlor. The beveled glass in the doors and mirrors and especially the bathroom with a floral design in the wash basin, round out the authenticity of the interior of the house James Alldis built for himself in 1895.

James Alldis (1839–1910)

James Alldis was born in Grays, County Essex, England, on October 12, 1839. At age 14 he came to New York, and at age 19 was at work at the Meriden Needle Company in Cheshire, Connecticut. In 1866, when the Excelsior Needle Company was formed in Torrington the new firm recruited its superintendent, George Isbell, from the Meriden Needle Company. Alldis went along with Isbell to Torrington, and three years later, when the older man

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Torrington

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>6</u> <u>5</u> <u>5</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is described in the Torrington Land Records, volume 308, p. 1160.

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

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
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state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
-------	------------	------	------------	--------	------------	------	------------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom

organization Architectural Historian

date March 30, 1980

street & number 33 Sunrise Hill Drive

telephone 203 521-2518

city or town West Hartford

state Connecticut

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date February 23, 1982

For HCERS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date

4/15/82

Keeper of the National Register

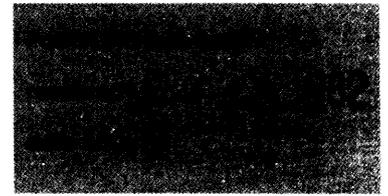
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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retired, Alldis became superintendent, continuing in the job until he retired in 1899, after 33 years of service with the company.

A Democrat in a Republican town, Alldis served on the school board 27 years, was elected to the Connecticut General Assembly in 1873, and was a delegate to the 1896 Democratic National Convention. When the Torrington and Winsted Street Railway was formed in 1897 he was a principal stockholder, and he held the office of president from 1899 until the company was sold in 1906 to the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad.¹ Alldis died March 13, 1910.

Excelsior Needle Company

The impetus for formation of the Excelsior Needle Company was the industrial application of a new process called "cold swaging", i.e., forming the needles with their pointed ends while the metal was cold. The 1866 Excelsior Company's building was a two-story, gable-roofed, frame structure. At first, the only product was sewing machine needles, but as time went on knitting machine needles, hook needles, spokes, and other products were added. The name of the firm was changed to the Torrington Company and by 1905 the factory occupied a complex of four-story industrial buildings. Today the Torrington Company is a unit of the Ingersoll-Rand Corporation, and continues to be Torrington's largest employer.²

Discussion

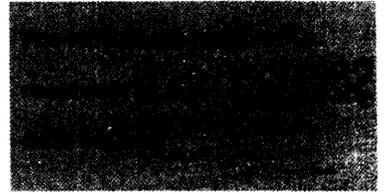
As James Alldis neared the end of his career as superintendent of the needle factory, he chose a prominent location and a fashionable style for his substantial new house. He bought the quarter acre of land and buildings on Prospect Street May 9, 1895 from an estate,³ and presumably demolished the existing house in order to build his own. The site was close to downtown, but on a fine residential street.

The frame house that he built is a fine example of the Queen Anne style of architecture, executed in wood. There are brick Queen Anne houses in Torrington, and Queen Anne houses built of brick for the ground floor with clapboards or shingles above, which presumably were more costly to construct because of the use of masonry building materials. Some houses of the period on Main Street are larger, and are set on larger lots; the Alldis lot is 102 feet wide by 145 feet deep. While it is not the largest or grandest Queen Anne structure in Torrington, the James Alldis House has charm and significance because of the presence of so many characteristics of the Queen Anne style in a structure that, with its carriage house, is complete and substantially unchanged from the day it was built. A 1905 picture⁴ shows the house very much the same as it exists today. The only apparent changes are on the roof. The lighting rods and roof cresting present in the picture no longer are in place. The roof cresting had a low profile, and appeared to be made of terra cotta.

Overall, the house, inside and out, and its carriage house and site, display with integrity the many aspects of the Queen Anne style and contribute a sense of time and place that is especially meaningful to Torrington because of the close association of the original owner with the city's principal industry.

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1.
Cutter, pp. 1521-1523.
2.
Eaton, pp. 122-131.
3.
Torrington Land Records, volume 36, page 383.
4.
Welch, p. 115.

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Bibliography Item number 9 Page 1

William R. Cutter, Geneological and Family History of the State of Connecticut, v. 3, New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1911.

Edward Bailey Eaton, "The Industrial History of Torrington," Connecticut Magazine, v. 9 (1905) no. 1, pp. 122-131.

Gideon H. Welch, "The Growth of Torrington," Connecticut Magazine, v. 9 (1905) no. 1, pp. 97-121.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

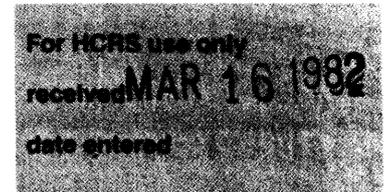
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An additional source of information about the James Alldis House has recently come to hand.¹ Primarily a biographical account of James Alldis' career, it includes two items of interest with respect to the house.

First, the article notes that the residence is a credit to Alldis and to the town "and more particularly to the artistic taste and inherited talent of Mrs. Alldis, who almost solely designed and planned it."² This statement would seem to bring to an end the quest for information as to who was the architect of the house.

Second, the article includes a picture of the house that is notable because the round tower with its conical roof, on the left front corner of the house, is not there. Instead, this corner of the house is a conventional right angle, with first-floor level chamfered and containing a window in the oblique wall plane, like the corner of the bay behind it. This picture demonstrates that the tower was not original but was added between 1897, the date of this picture, and 1905, the date of the picture cited in Item 8. As can be seen in the sketch plan, the tower did not replace any pre-existing fabric; it simply was added on.

The knowledge that the tower was added helps explain the difference between its interior finish and that of the principal front room to which it is an adjunct. The panelled dado under the windows, the attached half-columns, and the reed-and-ribbon ceiling plaster decoration are not found elsewhere. It is interesting to observe, however, that the quarter-sunbursts, so prominent throughout the house, are used on the exterior and interior of the tower.

1. H.F. Donovan, comp., The Torrington Register - Souvenir Edition, Torrington: Register Printing Company, 1897, pp. 7, 8.

2. Donovan, p. 8.

August 17, 1980

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On the north side of the house, the wrap-around porch continues and runs back to a two-story bay corresponding to the south-side bay. The turned porch posts support an arcade of wide, low arches under a horizontal row of short spindles. The quarter-round sunburst motif is repeated in the spandrels of the arches. In the bay the chamfered corners are at the second floor instead of the first, the opposite of the arrangement on the south side. (Photograph 4.)

The rear elevation has a simple two-story porch under a fourth gable, and a one-story, hipped-roof, projecting ell (Photograph 5).

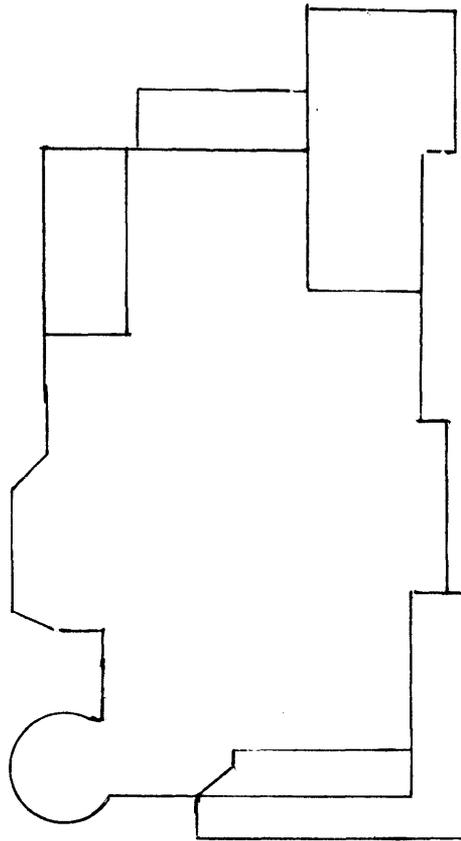
In contrast to the irregular plan of the house, the 2 1/2-story carriage house is a simple 21 x 33-foot rectangle. Its walls are covered with clapboards and shingles, like the house, but it has a plain gable roof, with a central cupola. The first floor of the facade is now given over to three overhead garage doors, but above them the original hay door, for loading hay into the loft, is still in place. There is a gable in the roof above the hay door. The window in the gable has a three-sided head and is glazed with a central pane surrounded by small lights, repeating the arrangement of the attic windows in the house. The crowning square cupola has paired, round-headed louvers on each face, and a pyramidal, bracketed roof. (Photograph 1.) The other three elevations of the carriage house have vertical, flush boards, with 2-over-2 windows. A fence of vertical, flush boards runs across the back of the lot.

Interior, First Floor

The two-leaf, front doors have rectangular glazing at the top and panelled lower sections. The embossed word LETTERS appears on the original mail slot in one door. The entrance leads to the front hall from which doors open on the left to the parlors and at the back to the dining room. The stairway to the second floor rises on the right in three runs. The first run is three risers, north, to a landing, the second is 11 risers, east, along the north wall (toward the front of the house) to a second landing, and the third is three risers, south, to the second-floor hall. The stairway balustrade has two turned balusters per tread, a molded hand rail, and a newel post composed of a square pedestal with raised diamond pattern, an octagonal, reeded column and a spherical finial. (Photograph 6.)

The hall is embellished by its Lincrusta wall covering and by its three windows. Lincrusta in a bold, embossed pattern of half circles is used as wainscoting, 71 inches high. The top, four-inch section is a strapwork border. The Lincrusta, 37 inches high, continues up the wall of the stairway, opposite the balustrade, and also is used to cover the soffit of the stairway. The most striking of the three windows in the hall is on the first landing of the stairway (Photograph 6). It has a heavy surround with fluting in the jambs and quarter sunbursts in the corners. This Tiffany-style window is 30 inches square, of leaded glass in several shades of orchid, pink, yellow and blue. A second leaded window 38 x 44 inches, is in the front wall, north of the entrance. It has a pattern of flowers and leaves in amber and yellows with six amber bullseyes¹. The third window, under the stairs, has casement sash with diamond-shaped glazing.

James Alldis House
355 Prospect Street
Torrington
Litchfield County, CT



Sketch Plan

Scale: 1" = 17' prox.

Photo key

