

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name N/A
other names/site number Downtown Torrington Historic District

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheet N/A not for publication
city, town Torrington N/A vicinity
state Connecticut code CT county Litchfield code 005 zip code 06790

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>75</u>	<u>20</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>81</u>	<u>22</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 4

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] October 25, 1988
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Connecticut Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

[Signature] 12/27/88
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/department storeGOVERNMENT/city hallRELIGION/religious structureSOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/specialty storeCOMMERCE/professionalRELIGION/religious structureGOVERNMENT/city hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

MODERN/Moderne, Art Deco20TH CENT. REVIVALS/Classical Revival,Colonial RevivalLATE VICTORIAN/Gothic, Romanesque, Queen Anne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone, concretewalls Brick, granite, limestone, concreteroof flat, composition; hip, slateother _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Downtown Torrington Historic District is a large cohesive central business district located on 56 acres along U.S. Route 202 and adjacent local streets in southeast Torrington. It is comprised of 95 buildings, two sites, five objects, and one structure, all of which date from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1950s. In addition to buildings, an historic cemetery, a park in which stand four war monuments of different periods, a fountain, and a bridge are included within the district's boundaries.

The district is geographically compact and densely developed. It's physical appearance is defined by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial blocks which form a large majority of its buildings. These are flat-roofed, two and three stories in height, and of brick, limestone, or concrete with defined cornices, regularly-spaced fenestration, and plate glass storefronts at ground level, facing the sidewalks. Interspersed among them and concentrated near the boundaries of the district are larger and taller institutional buildings, which act as visual focal points. These include five churches, all but one of which have a tall tower or spire; present and former government buildings; and the halls of social organizations. A small number of houses, most of which have been converted to commercial or institutional use, are also included. Renaissance Revival, Queen Anne, Chateausque, Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, Art Deco, and Moderne, are the prevalent styles in the district.

The character and uses of its buildings set the district off distinctly from the markedly different residential and strip commercial areas which it borders on the north, west and east. To the south the large open expanse of Coe Memorial Park, which contains all but one of the five commemorative objects in the district, creates a strong visual buffer. (Photograph 20) Another open space, Center Cemetery, occupies seven acres within the district and, with the East Branch of the Naugatuck River, separates the rear of properties on Main and East Main Streets.

The district's principal streets - Litchfield, East Main (both of the former comprise part of U.S. Route 202), Main, and Water - fan out from a wide common intersection at Center Bridge, which crosses the West Branch of the Naugatuck River. This pivotal intersection, known historically as Center Square, is split by a series of traffic islands and functions as the city's commercial hub. The terrain is flat at the intersection and to its east and south and the streets are wide, especially Main and East Main. Streetscapes are densely built up and buildings, uniformly commercial, are flush with the sidewalk, and are flushwalled or separated from neighboring buildings by narrow alleys. The district follows the gradual northward slope of Main Street and the more dramatic slope to the west of the narrow streets of Water Street, Mason Street, and Maiden Lane, which continue the business

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Alvord Street: 26, 32

Church Street: 8, 24, 42, 51, 68

City Hall Avenue: 32A, 32B

Daycoeton Place: 12

East Main Street: 14-18, 20-22, 24-26, 32-34, 33-39, 38-42, 46-48
50-52, 57, 68-70, 75, 80, 81-83, 99, 104, 107,
109-111, 110-116, 118-120, 137, 142, 151-157,
152-154, 158-160, 159, 164, 167-169

George Street: 4

Litchfield Street: 50, 70, 101

Maiden Lane: 17-21, 25

Main Street: 11-21, 25, 27-33, 41-49, 42, 52, 53-59½, 55, 59,
56-66, 61, 68-82, 69, 73-83, 84-94, 93, 98-100,
104-108, 111, 115, 123, 129, 140, 155, 160, 168,
174, 192, 208, 224

Mason Street: 9, 18, 19, 24, 30

Prospect Street: 220, 236, 239, 257-259, 258, 342

St. John's Place: 25, 28, 30

Water Street: 15-23, 22, 25, 29-57, 40, 63, 69

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district and are lined with commercial buildings. The termination of this westward slope is marked by Prospect Street, which runs north and south parallel to Main Street. Prospect Street is dominated by a few large institutional buildings which include Trinity Episcopal Church, the Southern New England Telephone Company offices, a bank, and the YMCA. As a rule, separations between buildings increase with distance from the Center Square intersection, and density decreases as commercial buildings give way gradually to large institutional buildings and complexes which occupy the northern, southern, and western peripheries of the district. These institutional buildings tend to be prominently sited, and set back from the sidewalks on large, landscaped lots. (Photographs 2,3,4,11,12,13,18)

Buildings in the district tend to be well-preserved, with the greatest instance of alterations evident in storefronts and signage. Remodellings of facades have been common in the district, particularly during the 1920s when four older buildings were re-faced with colored brick and two-story storefront cornices. (Photograph 14) Several other buildings have been expanded significantly by additions. The overall proportion of non-contributing structures is low, however, about one in five. Non-contributing buildings have little discernible impact except on East Main Street, where in some cases contributing buildings are separated by parking lots which serve newer buildings.

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INVENTORY:

Map

Alvord Street:

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | 26 | C: Charles Johnson House, c. 1888;
Queen Anne. |
| 2 | 32 | C: John T. Beach House, 1892; Stick. |

Church Street:

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 3 | 8 | C: Former Torrington Post Office, 1935;
Classical Revival with Art Deco
influence, William E. Hunt, architect. |
| 4 | 24 | C: Dr. John Johnson House, 1901;
American Foursquare. |
| 5 | 42 | C: Charles McNeil House/Calvary Baptist
Rectory, 1896; Queen Anne. |
| 6 | 51 | C: Wetmore School, 1917; Classical Revival
William E. Hunt, architect. |
| 7 | 68 | C: Vogel School, 1914; Classical Revival
Wilson Potter, architect. |

City Hall Avenue:

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 8 | 32A | NC: A.A. Smith Furniture Showroom, c. 1926;
an older building concealed behind a recent
storefront addition. |
| 9 | 32B | NC: A.A. Smith Colonial House, c. 1850;
Cape Cod, altered significantly with
siding, interior remodelling. |

Daycoeton Place:

- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 10 | 12 | C: Torrington Public Library, 1901; Ernest
Greene, architect; 1926 addition, William
E. Hunt, architect. |
|----|----|--|

East Main Street:

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 11 | 14-18 | C: 1924 commercial block; Colonial Revival
influence. |
| 12 | 20-22 | C: Lyford Hardware Building, 1924;
Classical Revival, William E. Hunt, architect. |

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Map

East Main Street:

- | | | |
|----|---------|--|
| 13 | 24-26 | C: 1924 commercial block; Italian Renaissance Revival with Moderne storefront. |
| 14 | 32-34 | C: 1924 commercial block; Italian Renaissance Revival, bracketed cornice. |
| 15 | 33-39 | C: Allen Block, 1896; Italianate with wide pressed tin cornice. |
| 16 | 38-42 | C: Ashborn Block/ Red Men Hall, 1900; Italian Renaissance Revival. |
| 17 | 46-48 | C: Germania Hotel, 1888; Italianate, E.C. Hotchkiss, architect. |
| 18 | 50-52 | C: Hosea Case Store, 1844(rear), Witzke & Stoeckert Saloon, 1898(front); Classical Revival with glass block infill; Carl D. Janssen, architect of front section. |
| 19 | 57 | NC: Extensively altered gas station, 1931. |
| 20 | 68-70 | C: Meyer & Rickert Saloon, 1900; Italian Renaissance Revival. |
| 21 | 73 | C: Kubina Block, 1900; Romanesque/Renaissance Revival. |
| 22 | 80 | NC: A & P Grocery, 1942; Modern. |
| 23 | 81-83 | NC: Wolcott House, 1947; Late Moderne. |
| 24 | 99 | C: St. Peter Roman Catholic Church, 1927; Gothic Revival with lancet windows, rose window. |
| 25 | 99 | NC: St. Peter Rectory, 1958; Gothic. |
| 26 | 104 | NC: International, 1946. |
| 27 | 109-111 | C: Rialto Hall/St. Peter Parish Hall, 1925; Commercial style. |
| 28 | 110-116 | C: 1917 commercial block; Classical Revival. |
| 29 | 118-120 | C: McCarthy Block, 1901; Romanesque/Renaissance Revival, Carl D. Janssen, architect. |
| 30 | 137 | C: Toce Brothers Tire Dealership, 1923; Classical Revival. |

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Map

East Main Street:

- 31 142 NC: One-story brick commercial building, 1948.
- 32 151-155 C: Tate Building, c. 1898; Italian Renaissance Revival, row of early twentieth century storefronts.
- 33 152-156 C: Wolf Block, 1906; Renaissance Revival, T.A. Racheter, architect.
- 34 158-160 NC: Early twentieth century house ; altered by vinyl siding and recent storefront.
- 35 159 C: Italian Renaissance Revival, c. 1898.
- 36 164 C: Bartram Auto Electric Co., 1930; Commercial.
- 37 167-169 C: Colonial Revival multi-family house c.1898; well-preserved early twentieth century storefront.

George Street:

- 38 4 C: Wolcottville School, c. 1835; Greek Revival.

Litchfield Street:

- 39 50 NC: First Federal Savings & Loan, 1965; International.
- 40 70 C: Elks Club, 1915; Classical Revival, Edwin H. Waterbury, architect.
- 41 101 C: Coe Memorial Park, 1908; laid out by Thomas McClunie, landscape architect, Hartford.
- 42 101 C: Civil War Monument, 1879.
- 43 101 C: Besse Monument, 1920.
- 44 101 NC: Vietnam War Memorial Fountain, 1978.
- 45 101 C: War Memorial Plaza, 1924.
- 46 101 C: Carriage House, c.1880; Italianate.
- 47 101 NC: Coe Park Community Center, 1975; International.

Maiden Lane:

- 48 17-21 C: Lilley Block #5, 1902; Neo-Classical and Colonial Revival, Joseph T. Smith, architect.

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Map

- Maiden Lane:
- 49 25 C: Lyons Garage, 1924; Commercial.
- Main Street:
- 50 11-21 C: Lilley Block #2, 1897; Renaissance/
Romanesque Revival.
- 51 25 C: Meara Building, 1896; Classical Revival.
Remodelled in 1920s; William E. Hunt,
architect.
- 52 27-33 C: Lilley Block #1, 1935; Moderne.
- 53 41-49 C: Agard Building, 1903; Renaissance
Revival.
- 54 42 C: Allen Building, 1930, 1935; Art Deco.
- 55 53-59½ C: Hanchett Block, 1880, c. 1925; well-
preserved 1920s storefronts; Classical
Revival, William E. Hunt, architect of
remodelling.
- 56 52 NC: Opperman Pharmacy, 1960; Colonial Revival.
- 57 55-59 C: Woolworth's, 1938; Art Deco.
- 58 56-66 C: Chamber of Commerce Building, 1916;
Classical Revival and Colonial Revival.
- 59 61 NC: Brooks Bank, 1949; International style
and Classical Revival.
- 60 68-82 C: Warner Theater, 1931; Art Deco theater
designed by Thomas Lamb, individually listed
on National Register.
- 61 69 NC: 1949 International-influenced commercial
building.
- 62 73-83 C: Lilley Block #4, 1902; Renaissance Revival
commercial building, Joseph T. Smith, architect
- 63 84-94 C: W.W. Mertz Building, 1883, 1931; Art Deco,
William E. Hunt, architect.
- 64 93 C: Conley Inn, 1893; Italianate, 1920 addition
with Colonial Revival ornament.
- 65 98-100 C: Torrington Co-operative Building, 1883;
Classical Revival, remodelling during 1920s.

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Map #

Main Street:

- | | | |
|----|---------|---|
| 66 | 104-108 | C: Beers Block, 1870; Classical Revival, remodelled in 1920s. |
| 67 | 111 | NC: Y.M.C.A. Building, 1893; severely altered. |
| 68 | 115 | C: Burns Block, 1921; Commercial. |
| 69 | 123 | C: Joyce Clothing Store, 1927; Commercial. |
| 70 | 129 | C: Torrington Savings Bank, 1938; Colonial Revival, Carl Victor Johnson, architect. |
| 71 | 140 | C: City Hall, 1936; Colonial Revival with Art Deco details, Carl Victor Johnson, architect. Relief carving on facade by Paolo Abbate. |
| 72 | 140 | C: D.A.R. Fountain, 1921; Olmstead Brothers, Brookline, Mass. Originally stood in Center Square, then moved to Coe Park. Moved to present location in 1985. |
| 73 | 155 | C: Center Congregational Church, 1867; Gothic Revival, interior rebuilt after 1979 fire. Attached parish house built in 1899. |
| 74 | 160 | C: St. Francis of Assisi Rectory, 1888; mansard roof added c. 1900. Originally Italianate. |
| 75 | 168 | C: St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church, 1887; Victorian Gothic. |
| 76 | 174 | C: St. Francis of Assisi Convent, 1891; High Victorian Italianate. |
| 77 | 192 | C: Fyler-Hotchkiss House, 1899; Chateausque house individually listed on National Register with associated outbuildings. |
| 78 | 192 | C: Fyler-Hotchkiss Carriage House, 1895; Queen Anne, associated outbuilding with Fyler-Hotchkiss House, individually listed on National Register. |
| 79 | 208 | C: Carson House, c. 1880; Italianate, associated with Fyler-Hotchkiss House, individually listed on National Register. |

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Map #

Main Street:

80 224 C: Torrington Aerie, 1938; Classical Revival and Moderne, Carl V. Johnson, architect.

Mason Street:

81 9 C: First Federal Building, 1924; Classical Revival.

82 18 C: Gates Cleaners, 1937; Georgian Revival, Joseph E. Cravanzola, architect.

83 19 NC: Colonial Revival office building, 1947; Joseph E. Cravanzola, architect.

84 24 C: Professional Building, 1928; Classical Revival.

85 30 NC: 1940 Art Deco office building.

Prospect Street:

86 220 C: Trinity Episcopal Church complex. 1897-1917; High Victorian Gothic with Tudor Revival details.

87 236 C: Torrington National Bank & Trust, 1917; Colonial Revival.

88 239 C: Southern New England Telephone Co. Building, 1930; Colonial Revival.

89 257-259 C: Y.M.C.A., 1922; Classical Revival, International style addition, c. 1969. William E. Hunt, original architect.

90 258 C: Allen G. Brady House, 1867; Italian villa.

91 342 C: Calvary Baptist Church, 1897, addition 1920; Romanesque Revival, addition Romanesque and Gothic.

St. John's Place:

92 25 NC: St. Peter Convent, 1942; Colonial Revival.

93 28 C: Lumberyard, c. 1920; Colonial Revival.

94 30 NC: St. Peter School, 1956; International.

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Map #

Water Street:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--|
| 95 | 15-23 | C: Lilley Block #6, 1912; Renaissance Revival. |
| 96 | 22 | NC: 1940 commercial building; one story. |
| 97 | 25 | C: Vroom Block, 1912; Romanesque. |
| 98 | 29-57 | C: Lilley Block #3, 1896; Romanesque/
Renaissance Revival, Theodore S. Peck,
architect. |
| 99 | 40 | NC: Wickwire Block, 1894. Much altered
Italianate block, missing its cornice and
added to at storefront level. |
| 100 | 63 | C: Morrison Building, 1894; Italianate. |
| 101 | 69 | C: Torrington Electric Light Co. Building,
1911, 1930 addition; Classical Revival. |
| 102 | Center Cemetery | C: 1851; seven-acre cemetery behind Main
Street properties. |
| 103 | Center Bridge | NC: 1958 concrete and iron bridge with
pipe railing. |

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Torrington's industrial development continued through the early decades of the twentieth century, accompanied by a dramatic rise in population in the area in and immediately surrounding the district. However, as population advanced from 600 in 1860 to 23,000 in 1923, frequently doubling each decade, new residential neighborhoods were established surrounding the district, and what had been the village of Wolcottville, where factories were intermixed with churches, stores, and a substantial number of residences, became increasingly commercial. The Center Square intersection became Torrington's commercial heart by the 1880s, and the business district gradually expanded to absorb sections of residential streets such as Prospect Street. Other streets, such as Mason Street, Maiden Lane, and St. John Place, were laid out during the early twentieth century as adjuncts to the business district. Water Street, the south side of which had been occupied first by the Wolcott Woolen Mill and later by the extensive factory of Turner & Seymour, became a major business street after the latter plant burned in 1896.

The district became Torrington's institutional center as well. Beginning with the Center Congregational Church in 1831, major Protestant denominations and two Roman Catholic parishes constructed churches in the district. The district became the seat of local government as well when town meetings were transferred to the Center Church in 1836. A town hall was established on Main Street in 1866, and a further layer of local government was added in 1886 when the General Assembly chartered the Borough of Torrington to address issues in the urbanized district area and its surroundings. After further decades of urbanization, the entire town was incorporated as the City of Torrington in 1923.

Economic and population growth slowed during the Depression. Massive floods in August, 1955, and subsequent urban redevelopment resulted in the construction of a new Center Bridge and the replacement of commercial and residential areas on and to the south of the bridge with expanded state highways and a shopping center.

COMMERCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Torrington's downtown business district has served as the principal retail center not only for Torrington but for surrounding rural towns in Litchfield County. The earliest stores and taverns were replaced after the Civil War by three-story Italianate multi-use blocks with stores on the ground floor. Several good examples survive, particularly the Morrison Building at 63 Water Street. (Photograph 5) During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a wave of expansion commenced after Waterbury developer and later Governor of Connecticut George Lilley commissioned six large architect-designed commercial blocks which for decades dominated the Center Square intersection on Main Street, Water Street, and Maiden Lane. Successful local merchants also expanded during the early twentieth century, building large new facilities or remodeling to emulate the newest trends. The most striking example of this process of remodeling and expansion is the W.W. Mertz Co. at 84-94 Main Street, which originated as a general store in one of Torrington's rural hamlets and evolved into the city's leading department store. The firm constructed a series of stores on the same Main Street site, culminating in the present Art Deco block of 1935 which incorporates an earlier building of 1883. (Photographs 9, 10, 16)

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Hotels, a feature of the district since its beginnings, are represented by the Conley Inn, an 1893 Victorian structure with a 1920 Colonial Revival addition at 93 Main Street. (Photograph 7). Torrington's first bank was established in 1872, but its first bank building was the Torrington National Bank and Trust at 236 Prospect Street, a Classical Revival building of 1917, followed by the stylistically similar Torrington Savings Bank in 1938, at 129 Main Street. Early automobile-related businesses were common on the fringes of the downtown business district, as represented by the Toce Brothers tire dealership of 1923 at 137 East Main Street and the Bartram Auto Electric Co. at 164 East Main Street. (Photograph 19)

GOVERNMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

The district has been the only permanent seat of local government in Torrington. For a century following initial settlement in the 1730s, town meetings were held alternately in Congregational meetinghouses in the two hill settlements on the east and west sides of the town. In 1836, the newly erected meetinghouse of the Third Congregational Society on Main Street in the district, a point roughly equidistant from each of the two hill settlements, was designated as the permanent site for town and electors' meetings. In 1866 a former Methodist church, also on Main Street, was purchased by the town and converted for use as the first town hall. It was replaced by a Beaux Arts building on the same site in 1899. The present City Hall in turn replaced it on the same site in 1936 and continues to house all municipal government functions except the fire department.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

In its progression from the manufacturing village of Wolcottville to the urban downtown of Torrington, the district evolved from a homogenous grouping of Greek Revival-influenced vernacular buildings into a collection of buildings of many styles and periods, broadly unified by relationships of shape, scale, materials, and details.

The Wolcottville Center District School is a good, modest example of its style and of the district's earliest buildings. Its simplicity, straightforwardness of form, and Classical details are hallmarks of the Greek Revival style. (Photograph 1)

Three of the district's churches, the largest of its earliest buildings, display phases of the Gothic Revival. The earliest, the Center Congregational Church of 1868, is medieval English in inspiration, a feeling reinforced by a battlemented stone tower and chapel addition of 1900. St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church, built in 1887 and similar in plan, reflects the Victorian Gothic in its use of natural bichromatic elements - granite accents contrasting against red brick - and its ambitious use of buttresses and terra cotta insets in the steeple. The same influence is also visible in Trinity Episcopal Church, which not only physically dominates the corner of Prospect and Water Streets, but is an excellent example of High Victorian Gothic with Tudor Revival details, an unusual combination. (Photographs 2,3,4)

There are numerous well-preserved Italianate and Renaissance Revival commercial buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the district. The best-preserved of these is the Morrison Building at 63 Water Street, which has such mass-produced metal trim elements as a bracketed cornice, round window hoods, and cast-iron storefront columns. A noteworthy hand-crafted variation on these elements is found in the Germania Hotel at 46-48 East Main Street, where frieze, cornice, and decorative panels above the windows are created by corbelling. (Photographs 5,6) The same local

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local builders, the Hotchkiss Brothers, were responsible for both these buildings. Five large commercial blocks constructed for Waterbury businessman George Lilley are prominent landmarks not only because of their size and location around the Center Square intersection, but also because of their design qualities and use of boldly colored brick facades. Lilley's architects, Theodore Peck and Joseph T. Smith of Waterbury, each produced distinctive designs which influenced other parts of the streetscape. Peck's buildings, like many of the period, feature modillioned cornices but utilize Romanesque round arches with molded impostes to divide the facade, creating a vertical orientation. Smith's buildings, in contrast, such as 73-83 Main Street, show a horizontal orientation created by long, segmentally arched windows with molded brick lintels and horizontal banding. Smith used similar treatments in his design for the Agard Building of 1903, built for a Torrington hardware merchant at 41-49 Main Street. (Photographs 9, 10)

Also dating from the late nineteenth century, the McNeil House at 42 Church Street is an excellent example of Queen Anne domestic architecture, well-preserved and with a richly appointed interior with an elaborate staircase and panelling. (Photograph 8)

The Classical Revival was introduced in Torrington by Ernest Greene's 1901 design for the Torrington Library, an excellent example of the symmetrical massing, emphasis on proportion and form, and typically restrained detailing of the style, including precisely carved moldings and fluted Ionic columns. (Photograph 11) The Classical Revival influenced several other prominent buildings in the district, including the Vogel and Wetmore Schools, near mirror-image designs facing one another across Church Street, and the Torrington National Bank and Trust at 236 Prospect Street. (Photograph 12)

The Colonial Revival is well-represented in the district by the Southern New England Telephone Company Building at 239 Prospect Street. Built in 1929, it has a Classically influenced, symmetrical composition but features fine period revival ornament. (Photograph 13)

The district's seven Art Deco and Moderne buildings of the 1930s represent an unusual concentration of these styles in a city of Torrington's size. Their appearance climaxed a trend of modernization reflected in numerous facade remodellings by downtown businessmen during the 1920s, apparently set off by Torrington's achievement of city status in 1923. New construction downtown also flourished during this period, and during the latter part of the decade several large new commercial and office buildings were commissioned for sites occupied by old wood-frame buildings. These were constructed despite the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, and are overwhelmingly Art Deco or Moderne. The Warner Theater at 68-82 Main, designed by Thomas Lamb, may have influenced this trend, although a precedent had already been set with the construction of the first section of the Allen Building at 42 Main Street in 1930, a year before work on the Warner commenced. Torrington architect William E. Hunt, who was responsible for designing the Allen and Mertz Buildings and who also worked extensively in the Classical and Colonial Revivals, demonstrated a particular affinity for Art Deco.

The impact of the buildings of these styles on the streetscapes of the district is immediate and striking. The size and positioning of the Allen Building, the Warner Theater, and the W.W. Mertz Department Store at 84-94 Main Street, all on the east side of Main Street facing the Center Square intersection, create a powerful impression at the visual gateway to the district. Each of these two- and three-story buildings covers over 100 feet of street frontage, united in an almost unbroken row by such common elements as their limestone color, abstracted pilasters, ziggurat shapes, and square, recessed

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window openings. Hunt's buildings flanking the tall Warner Theater share stepped shapes created by stylized fluting in the pilasters, an overall emphasis on spare, geometric detail, and rich surfaces at storefront level - pigmented glass in the Allen Building and dark green marble in the Mertz Building. The Mertz Building also features the chevron motif, created by triangular wedged scorings in the frieze. The Allen Building and Lilley Block #1 at 27-33 Main Street, the latter an excellent example of the Moderne with its smooth streamlined facade and curved corner, are particularly effective as corner buildings. (Photographs 15,16,17) The trend also influenced several otherwise restrained, Classical Revival buildings in the district, notably City Hall, the Post Office Building, and the Torrington Aerie at 224 Main Street, where abstract forms and relief carving are used in the entries. Art Deco features were applied liberally to older buildings in the district, notable examples of which include the Moderne storefront of Dick's Restaurant at 24-26 East Main Street and a beautifully etched pigmented glass panel with an abstract lotus over the secondary entry to Lilley Block #2 at 11-21 Main Street. (Photograph 18)

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Commerca
Government

Period of Significance

1800 - 1938

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Downtown Torrington Historic District is historically significant as the business district and urban center of Torrington, where its commerce and primary governmental and other institutions have been concentrated since the first half of the nineteenth century. (Criterion A) The district is significant architecturally for its good, well-preserved examples of many architectural styles of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Downtown Torrington is particularly noteworthy among Connecticut downtowns for the concentration of Art Deco and Moderne style buildings of the 1930s in its streetscapes. (Criterion C)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area in which the district is located was uninhabited during the settlement of Torrington in the eighteenth century, but was economically significant as a source of pine timber for local needs and for export as ship's masts. After 1800, roads through the district were incorporated into major inland turnpike routes, providing the impetus for commercial and industrial development which gathered momentum through the nineteenth century. In 1800, what is now Main Street became part of the Waterbury Turnpike, which connected Waterbury and Winchester, and East Main Street became the terminus of the Torrington Turnpike, which originated in Canton in central Connecticut. Industrial development began in 1813 when Guy and Frederick Wolcott of Litchfield established a successful woolen mill on the West Branch of the Naugatuck. A village began to develop around the mill and stores and taverns built earlier which acquired the name Wolcottville. The village name disappeared after its post office was re-named Torrington in 1881, but is recalled in the Wolcottville Center District School at 4 George Street and by the Wolcottville School Society, which owns Center Cemetery in the district.

The village developed a diversified industrial base, particularly after the completion of the Naugatuck Railroad in 1849. Several manufacturers had a direct impact on the district through their philanthropic activities. Elisha Turner of Turner & Seymour, a major national supplier of hooks and eyes and brass household ornaments, financed the construction of the Torrington Library, and Coe Memorial Park was donated to the town of Torrington by the estate of Lyman Coe, president of Coe Brass Company. A number of manufacturers were among the incorporators of Center Cemetery in 1851, which was landscaped with winding paths and tree-topped knolls and is a modest example of a mid-nineteenth century garden cemetery.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bailey, Bess, and Merrill, The Formative Years: Torrington, 1723-1852.
Torrington Historical Society, 1976.

Bailey, Bess, and Merrill, The Growth Years: Torrington, 1852-1923.
Torrington Historical Society, 1976.

Orcutt, Reverend Samuel, History of Torrington, Connecticut. Albany: J. Munsell, 1878.

Miscellaneous newspaper articles, photographs, and building plans on file at the Torrington Historical Society.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

- Primary location of additional data:
- State historic preservation office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other

Specify repository:
Connecticut Historical Commission
59 S. Prospect St., Hartford, CT 06106

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 56

UTM References

A 1 8 | 6 5 5 8 0 0 | 4 6 2 9 5 6 0
 Zone Easting Northing

C 1 8 | 6 5 6 4 0 0 | 4 6 2 9 3 0 0

B 1 8 | 6 5 6 3 2 0 | 4 6 2 9 7 0 0
 Zone Easting Northing

D 1 8 | 6 5 6 0 6 0 | 4 6 2 8 8 0 0

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

For district boundaries, please refer to Figure 1, an attached copy of the Torrington Tax Assessor's Map. The boundaries enclose whole properties in all cases.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Boundaries have been drawn to include all of the compact downtown area of Torrington which historically has been urban in character and devoted to commercial and institutional uses. The boundaries have clear visual edges, marked by changes in use to residential, or, in the case of boundaries on East Main and Water Streets, to a decline in the concentration of contributing resources.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By Revised by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

name/title William E. Devlin
 organization Torrington Historic Preservation Trust date May 1988
 street & number 192 Main Street telephone (203) 482-8260
 city or town Torrington state Connecticut zip code 06790

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Downtown Torrington Historic
District
Torrington, Connecticut

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UTM REFERENCES:

	Zone	Easting	Northing
E	18	655 860	4628 790
F	18	655 800	4629 220
G	18	655 800	4629 360

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National Park Service

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Downtown Torrington
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PHOTOGRAPH LABELS

For All Photographs:

Downtown Torrington Historic District
Torrington, Connecticut
Photo - Mark McEachern, January 1988
Negative on file - Connecticut Historical Commission

Photograph 1 - Wolcottville School
4 George Street
looking southeast

Photograph 2 - Center Congregational Church
155 Main Street
looking west

Photograph 3 - L to R: St. Francis of Assisi Convent,
Church, Rectory
160-174 Main Street
looking east

Photograph 4 - Trinity Episcopal Church
220 Prospect Street
looking north

Photograph 5 - W.H. Morrison Block
63 Water Street
looking south

Photograph 6 - Left: Germania Hotel
46-48 East Main Street
looking south
Right: Ashborn Block
38-42 East Main Street

Photograph 7 - Conley Inn
93 Main Street
looking northwest

Photograph 8 - Charles McNeil House
42 Main Street
looking northwest

Photograph 9 - Lilley Block #3
29-57 Water Street
looking east

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Torrington
Historic District
Torrington, Connecticut

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- Photograph 10 - Lilley Block #4
73-83 Main Street
looking southwest
- Photograph 11 - Torrington Library
12 Daycoeton Place
looking north
- Photograph 12 - Vogel School
68 Church Street
looking northeast
- Photograph 13 - Southern New England Telephone Co. Building
239 Prospect Street
looking northwest
- Photograph 14 - Left: Beers Block
104-108 Main Street
Right: Torrington Co-operative Building
98-100 Main Street
looking east
- Photograph 15 - Allen Building
42 Main Street
looking northeast
- Photograph 16 - Mertz Department Store
84-94 Main Street
looking southeast
- Photograph 17 - Lilley Block #1
27-33 Main Street
looking southwest
- Photograph 18 - City Hall
140 Main Street
looking southeast
- Photograph 19 - Toce Brothers Building
137 East Main Street
looking west
- Photograph 20 - Coe Memorial Park
R to L: Soldiers Monument, Besse Monument
and War Memorial Plaza
looking south