

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received OCT 27 1983
date entered NOV 28 1983

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

1. Name

historic Wethersfield Avenue Car Barn

and/or common The Trolley Barn

2. Location

street & number 331 Wethersfield Avenue¹ NA not for publication

city, town Hartford NA vicinity of NA

state Connecticut code 09 county Hartford code 003

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name H. W. Nannen, R. H. Chase & R. G. W. Pitchford

street & number 331 Wethersfield Avenue

city, town Hartford NA vicinity of NA state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number 550 Main Street

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Hartford Architecture Conservancy's
title Survey of Hartford Architecture has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records The Stowe-Day Library, 77 Forest Street

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

Overview

The Trolley Barn, facing east on Wethersfield Avenue, a north-south artery running through south Hartford, was built in 1902-03 by the Hartford Street Railway Co. The front section is a narrow, rectangular office building of 2, 3 and 4 stories in the Second Renaissance Revival style. The rear section is a high, 1-story open space, initially used to store and service trolleys and later as a sports arena.

Present Appearance

Chief architectural interest in the Trolley Barn relates to its front office block. The 2-, 3- and 4-story components of this block are arranged symmetrically with respect to heights and projections, planes and masses. Flanking the central 3-story, 5-bay section are 4-story, 1-bay, projecting towers that in turn are flanked by 2-story, 4-bay sections leading to the final 2-story, projecting pavilions. (Photographs 1 and 2, Sketch B.) A unifying feature of the facade design is the arcade of recessed, 2-story, round-headed window arches of the three main sections. This arcade simultaneously pulls the diverse elements of the front elevation together and is interrupted by the similar but 4-story window arches of the towers.

Further unity is provided by the horizontal line of the cornice and parapet of the 2-story section, carried across the central section by the corbeling below the sills of the paired, third-story windows. The cornice is composed of a brick dentil course and terra cotta molded cymatium. The same cornice crowns the central section and the towers. (Photograph 3.) The central focus and weight in the design established by the mass and height of the middle section and projecting towers are enhanced by the flanking wings that terminate, with emphasis, in their projecting pavilions.

In the fenestration of the facade, the tympana of the 2- and 4-story window arches are glazed with radial muntins. Their spandrels, between stories, are paneled. The main front door is in the central arch. The end pavilions, at the first floor, have large openings, that once accommodated trolleys, and above them three rectangular windows at the second floor. Pilasters divide the bays across the width of the front elevation and define the corners of the end pavilions, but not of the towers. The shallow north and south elevations of the office block have rectangular windows and a continuation of the cornice and parapet. The north and south elevations of the towers are treated similarly.

The interior of the office block is relatively plain. Some of the brick walls are painted above a high wainscotting of vertical, beaded boards. Some window surrounds of the front wall are molded and there is an occasional molded cornice where wall meets ceiling. Perhaps there was more of this trim at an earlier date. The central stairs have a sturdy railing of

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State Register of Historic Places

1983

State

Connecticut Historical Commission

59 S. Prospect St.

Hartford

Connecticut

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wrought iron in S curves with a heavy oak handrail in asymmetric profile, to accommodate the grasp of a hand. The original, 3-story, fire-proof records vault remains in place. (Photographs 4, 5 and 11.)

The front wall of the office block is parallel with Wethersfield Avenue but its rear wall is not. The depth of the building increases from 20 to 42 feet, south to north. (Sketch C.) The depth of the rear car barn section, however, is fixed at just less than 100 feet; its front and rear walls are parallel to one another. Its height is equivalent to 1½/2 stories.

The rear elevation of the car barn is primarily a solid brick wall. (Photographs 6 and 7.) Its central parapet is related to a raised section of the roof behind it, the middle of the roof being raised as a monitor to admit light. At the southwest corner of the building there is a 1-story projection that was the boiler room. The northwest corner of the car barn has a curved wall. The steel truss of the rear wall continues straight north, as the wall curves, to a short free-standing east-west wall that once was connected by roof to the main building. (See Photograph 8 and Sketch Map A.) The purpose of the curved wall and the adjoining roofed, open space is unknown.

On the interior of the car barn the six steel columns that support the roof are visible in the open space. There are small rooms at the south end of the building, and there is one east-west interior wall located behind the office block's south tower. The use of steel beams and 6-inch concrete floor in construction of the building was modern practice for its day. Overall square footage for the building is 42,000, 15,000 in the office block.

Former Appearance

The Hartford and Wethersfield Horse Railway Co., predecessor of the Hartford Street Railway Co., purchased the land on Wethersfield Avenue in 1862.¹ The lot was much deeper (472 feet) than it is now (234 feet), but the Wethersfield Avenue frontage (266 feet) has not changed. Presumably the company constructed the first structure on the site soon after buying the land and certainly by 1866, as the building shows in the city atlas of that year. A picture of the early building exists.²

Over the ensuing years, the site was developed by construction of additional buildings. The 1896 atlas shows nine structures, some brick, some frame, with ten tracks leading into the buildings from Wethersfield Avenue. All was changed in 1902-03 when most of the earlier buildings were replaced by the present structure. Tracks led into the building only at the north and south end pavilions. A third track, north of the building, led to the yard in the rear, through the roofed open space. Tracks, for storage, filled

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the rear yard. This arrangement persisted until 1941. (See Sketch Map D.) The building originally had a central, 1-story wooden porch with columns. (Photograph 9.)

By 1941 the property had become surplus to the requirements of the Connecticut Company, successor to Hartford Street Railway Co. Accordingly, the Connecticut Company leased the property for ten years to the Hartford Auditorium, Inc., who revamped it into an arena. Drawings by Hartford architect Joseph E. Kane³ show a boxing ring, surrounded by seating, located in the "pit area" of Sketch Map A. An alternate arrangement showed a dance floor north of the "pit area" with tables set up around it. Another drawing shows an outdoor boxing arena in the yard back of the building. According to these plans the central entrance received a marquise and the former trolley doors in the end pavilions became entrances to the arena. The first floor of the office block housed dressing rooms for male performers and female performers. Capacity was 3,500 for boxing, 2,500 for other events.⁴

The interior rear wall of the arena was used for bill-board type advertisements as typically found in sports emporiums. Several of these ads are still in place; one extols the advantages of joining the U.S. Army and Air Force. (Photographs 10⁵ and 12.)

According to contemporary newspaper accounts,⁶ the building was constructed to plans by Lieutenant Thomas C. B. Snell, engineer of the Hartford Street Railway Company. The space he planned of office building in the front and trolley barn in the back remains today much the way it was originally built, the chief difference being removal of the tracks.

1.

Hartford Land Records (HLR) 110/257, August 30, 1862. The grantors were Henry Barnard and Edmund D. Tiffany. Barnard presumably was Hartford's famous educator whose house at 118 Main Street is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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2.

See Transportation Bulletin, No. 77 (September 1969/August 1970), Connecticut Valley Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Warehouse Point, Connecticut, p. 13. The picture is an 1872 view of the depot and stables of the Hartford & Wethersfield Horse Railway Co., a 2½-story, brick, gable-roofed building with two tracks running through separate doors into the center of the building.

3.

Blueprints of the drawings are on file at the Department of Licenses and Inspection, Municipal Building.

4.

Hartford Times, January 22, 1942.

5.

As the ad refers to the U.S. Army and Air Force, post use of the term Air Corps and pre establishment of a separate Air Force, it probably dates from about 1948.

6.

Hartford Courant, July 11, 1902, p. 8. The source of Snell's military rank is not given.

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While the contemporary newspaper account states that the Trolley Barn was constructed to the design of the Hartford Street Railway Co.'s engineer, Thomas C. B. Snell (1871-1937), the matter nonetheless may be open to question. Snell graduated in 1891 from the Sheffield School of Yale University, was listed in the Hartford city directories as a civil engineer, and after leaving Hartford in 1906 spent most of the balance of his career as an engineer with the National Board of Fire Underwriters and New York Fire Insurance Exchange.¹ His education and professional work do not suggest that he had the training and expertise to design the sophisticated plan for the Trolley Barn office building. Perhaps Snell was responsible for the overall concept of the dual use of the structure and for construction methods, while using an unknown designer for the architectural features of the office building.

In any event, the structure, as a combination of office building and car barn, was built to reflect several architectural styles as seen from the street and to provide a large storage space in the back. It served two functions in a utilitarian manner with architectural design interest limited to the front section. In the car barn, the curved wall at the northwest corner remains unexplained; its shape suggests a roundhouse with turntable for trolleys, but mention of a roundhouse facility has not come to hand. Extension of the roof trusses to the free-standing wall also is unexplained.

Criterion A - History

When the Hartford and Wethersfield Horse Railway Co.² began providing service in 1862, its base of operations was its Wethersfield Avenue depot and stables. Providing for the care of the horses no doubt was a more demanding task than providing for the care of the cars they pulled. The Wethersfield Avenue facility was soon joined by two others, on State Street and Vernon Street. The State Street location (just south of the present Phoenix Mutual building) continued as a yard for electric trolleys before being phased out in the early 20th century, while the Vernon Street location, with some of its turn-of-the-century buildings standing, continues active today as a terminal and barn for Connecticut Company buses.

The first horse car was converted to electric power in 1888. The rapid trend away from horsepower was recognized in 1893 by the change of name in the company from Hartford & Wethersfield Horse Railway Co. to Hartford Street Railway Co., and by the complete demolition of the Wethersfield Avenue stables and associated facilities and replacement thereof by the new car barn in 1902-03.

The dominant personality in the development of public transportation in Hartford was Elizur S. Goodrich (1834-1926). Born in nearby Wethersfield, at age 20 he became employed in the office of the chief engineer of the Hartford, Providence and Fishkill Railroad. In 1864 he became manager of

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the new Hartford & Wethersfield Horse Railway Co., and in 1865 was made president. He served as president for 40 years, to 1905, when the Hartford Street Railway Co. became part of the Consolidated Railway Co.

The development and growth of electric street railways was accompanied by steady corporate reorganization and issuance of new securities. In Connecticut the field was dominated by the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. The New Haven created the Consolidated Railway Co. as a holding company for most of its street railways, water, gas and electric companies. The Hartford Street Railway Co. was conveyed to the Consolidated Railway Co. September 19, 1905. Consolidated's existence ceased on May 31, 1907, when it was merged into the New Haven. On that same date the name of the Thomaston Tramway Co. was changed to the Connecticut Co. In 1910 the New Haven let or sub-let all its street railway properties³ to the Connecticut Co. in return for Connecticut Co. capital stock. Another Hartford line, the Hartford and West Hartford Horse Railroad Co. (later the Farmington Street Railway Co.), was incorporated in 1863, sold by foreclosure in 1899, conveyed to the New Haven in 1909 and conveyed to the Connecticut Co. in 1910.⁴ Thus was born a single street railway system not only for Hartford but for all of Connecticut. All cars were painted canary yellow.

The development of the trolley network throughout the state brought a great improvement in public transportation convenience. Travel by trolley from city to city and town to town made easy connections between discrete points to an unprecedented degree. Substantial social and economic consequences ensued. For example, trolley transportation was helpful to development of city suburbs, and amusement parks and beach resorts depended on trolleys to transport their patrons.

The peak of activity was reached in 1924 when the Connecticut Co. operated 1640 passenger cars on 834 miles of track. It was possible to get from almost anywhere to almost anywhere by trolley in Connecticut. In that same year, 1924, the first street car line was converted to motor coach operation. In 1935 the New Haven and the Connecticut Co. filed for reorganization under Section 77-B of the Bankruptcy Act. The last trolley operated in Hartford on July 27, 1941.

The Wethersfield Avenue Car Barn was built at the time that horse stables no longer were needed but the requirement for facilities to store and maintain street cars was growing rapidly. When street cars were replaced by buses, the Vernon Street barn in Hartford was selected to be the storage and maintenance facility. The Wethersfield Avenue barn became surplus. The name "Trolley Barn" for the Wethersfield Avenue building is appropriate because it was built for trolleys when they replaced horse cars and it ceased to have a transportation function when buses replaced street cars. It is identified with the trolley era, and the trolley era only, of public transportation in Hartford.

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The end of the trolley era coincided with the advent of World War II and the need for recreational facilities for defense workers. Hartford lacked a suitable building for sporting and similar public events. The Governor's Footguard Hall (John C. Mead, 1888) on High Street, once advertised as the largest hall between Boston and New York, was inadequate and out of date.

The Car Barn was pressed into service. Name bands, the Boston Celtics basketball team and the circus performed there, but the most successful events were the fights. The Featherweight Champion, Hartford's own Willie Pep, is well remembered for his appearances at the arena. The Car Barn was one of several boxing arenas in the area, others being located in East Hartford and Agawam, Massachusetts. There was a sub-culture of practitioners, hangers-on and fans then important in the community that has now almost entirely disappeared. The fights were an important chapter in the history of Hartford sports.

While local residents recall going to fights and dances at the arena during the 1940s, the frequency of events and financial success of the operation are unknown. Activity did not continue beyond expiration of the original lease; the Car Barn was a make-shift arena that did not survive the war years. In 1952 the property was sold to the Wethersfield Avenue Corporation,⁵ who leased the office building for light industry and the car barn for warehouse use. The rear yard was sold in 1969 for construction of an apartment house. The present owners, who acquired the property (Sketch Map E) in 1981,⁶ are rehabilitating the office block for use as offices.

¹ Thomas C. B. Snell, obituary, New York Times, September 4, 1937, 15:5.

² Apparently, an earlier entity, the Hartford Horse Car Railway, existed only briefly and only on paper, never becoming operational.

³ The fact that ownership of some properties rested with other than the operator, who had a lease or sub-lease, added to the complexity at the time obligations were sorted out under the bankruptcy act.

⁴ See R. Patrick Stanford, Formation and History of the Connecticut Co. and the Connecticut Railway and Lighting Co., 2nd edition, 1979, for an account of these corporate developments.

⁵ HLR 881/163, April 18, 1952.

⁶ HLR 1862/323, May 1, 1981

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Atlas of the City of Hartford, Connecticut, Springfield, Massachusetts,
L. J. Richards, 1896.

Atlas of the City of Hartford and Town of West Hartford, Connecticut,
Springfield, Massachusetts: L. J. Richards, 1909.

Atlas of Hartford City and County, Hartford: Baker & Tilden, 1869.

Hartford Land Records, 110/257, 881/163, 1862/323.

Hartford Courant, July 11, 1902.

Hartford Times, July 28, 1941, January 22, 1942, February 25, 1942,
July 27, 1971.

Kane, Joseph E., Drawings for alterations of Wethersfield Avenue Car
Barn, 1942, 1944, 1945, at Department of Licenses and Inspection, Muni-
cipal Building, Hartford.

New York Times, September 4, 1937.

Stanford, R. Patrick, Formation and History of the Connecticut Co. and the
Connecticut Railway and Lighting Co., 2nd edition, 1979.

Transportation Bulletin, No. 77 (September 1969/August 1970), Connecticut
Valley Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Warehouse Point,
Connecticut.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
				Local history

Specific dates 1902-03 **Builder/Architect** Thomas C. B. Snell

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criteria C and A

The front section of the Wethersfield Avenue Car Barn, now familiarly known as the Trolley Barn, is an office building of considerable architectural pretension in the Second Renaissance Revival style, unlike any other building in Hartford. Its rear section is a large storage shed, strictly utilitarian in purpose and appearance. Fortunately, as it has been little altered, the structure retains its integrity. (Criterion C.) Because of its association with the development of street railways in Hartford and its later function as the scene of wartime sports and recreational events, the building has an important place in local history. (Criterion A)

Criterion C - Architecture

The sophistication of the design of the office building is striking. The balance and counter-balance of the central mass and extended wings, and of the vertical and horizontal lines of the towers and roofs, are skillfully handled. The fact that the towers and end pavilions project adds an important third dimension of depth to the facade.

There are several stylistic influences present in the Trolley Barn. The principal design statement is one of simplicity and order, in reaction to the extremes of the recent High Victorian period, thereby placing the building in the Second Renaissance Revival style, stripped of the classical ornament that had been integral to the earlier Renaissance Revival. The construction of red brick with red sandstone trim is straightforward, while the terra cotta moldings and the dentil course in the roof line are classical in origin. In the central section, the paired arched windows of the third floor over the large single arched window below reflect the influence of the Richardson Romanesque style of two decades earlier that still was popular, while the radial muntins of the large windows acknowledge the later impact of Colonial or Georgian Revival, brought into prominence by the World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago of 1893.

In plan and massing the Trolley Barn is also different from most Second Renaissance Revival buildings, which tend to be compact, rectilinear structures. With its high central section, flanking wings and end pavilions, the Trolley Barn has elements of a Palladian design, albeit without the pediments that are standard in Palladio's work. Nonetheless, the similarity is present. Such schemes are rare in Hartford. The feature adds to the architectural interest of the Trolley Barn.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.4

Quadrangle name Hartford South

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	9	3	2	2	0	2	6	2	4	0	9	0
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 at Hartford Land Records, volume 1862, page 323. This is the parcel purchased in 1862 by the Hartford & Wethersfield Horse Railway less the rear portion sold for development in 1969.

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

state NA code NA county NA code NA
state NA code NA county NA code NA

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom, Architectural Historian - edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization _____ date March 27, 1983

street & number 33 Sunrise Hill Drive telephone 203 521-2518

city or town West Hartford state Connecticut

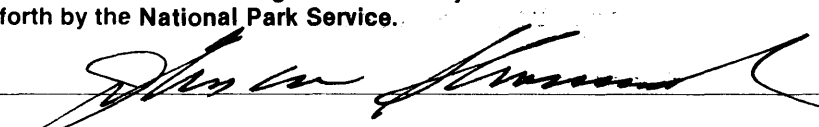
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

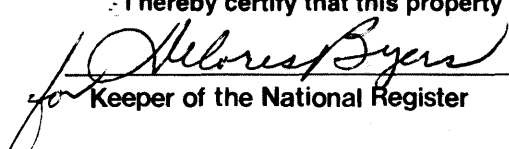


title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date October 20, 1983

For NPS use only

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



Keeper of the National Register

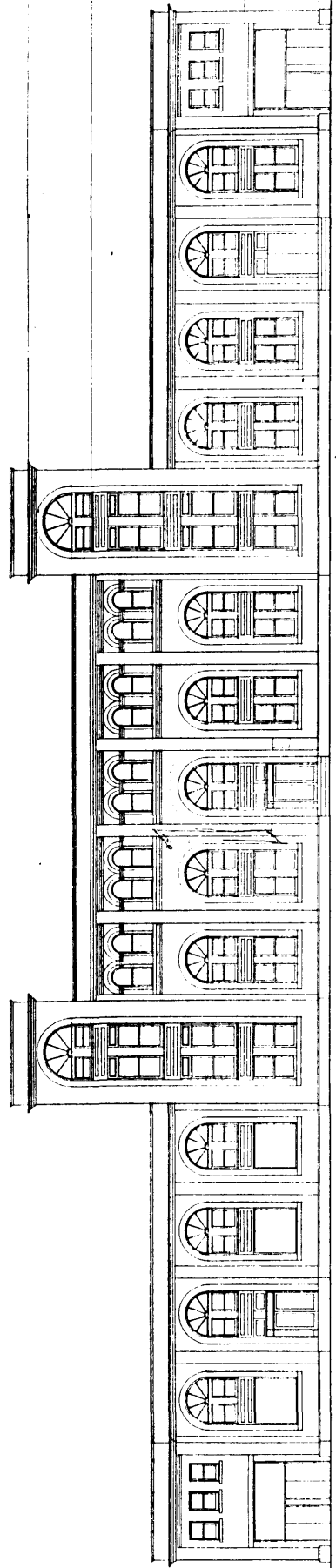
Entered in the National Register

date 11/28/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



TOWER ROOF

2ND FLOOR (WETH. AVE.)

1ST FLOOR (WETH. AVE.)

2ND FLOOR

1ST FLOOR (WETH. AVE.)

EAST (WETHERSFIELD AVENUE) ELEVATION

SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

Sketch B

ELEVATIONS

THE TROLLEY BARN
 331 WETHERSFIELD AVENUE
 HARTFORD, CONN.

SMITHEDWARDS ARCHITECTS.

Project No. C. 1982

DATE

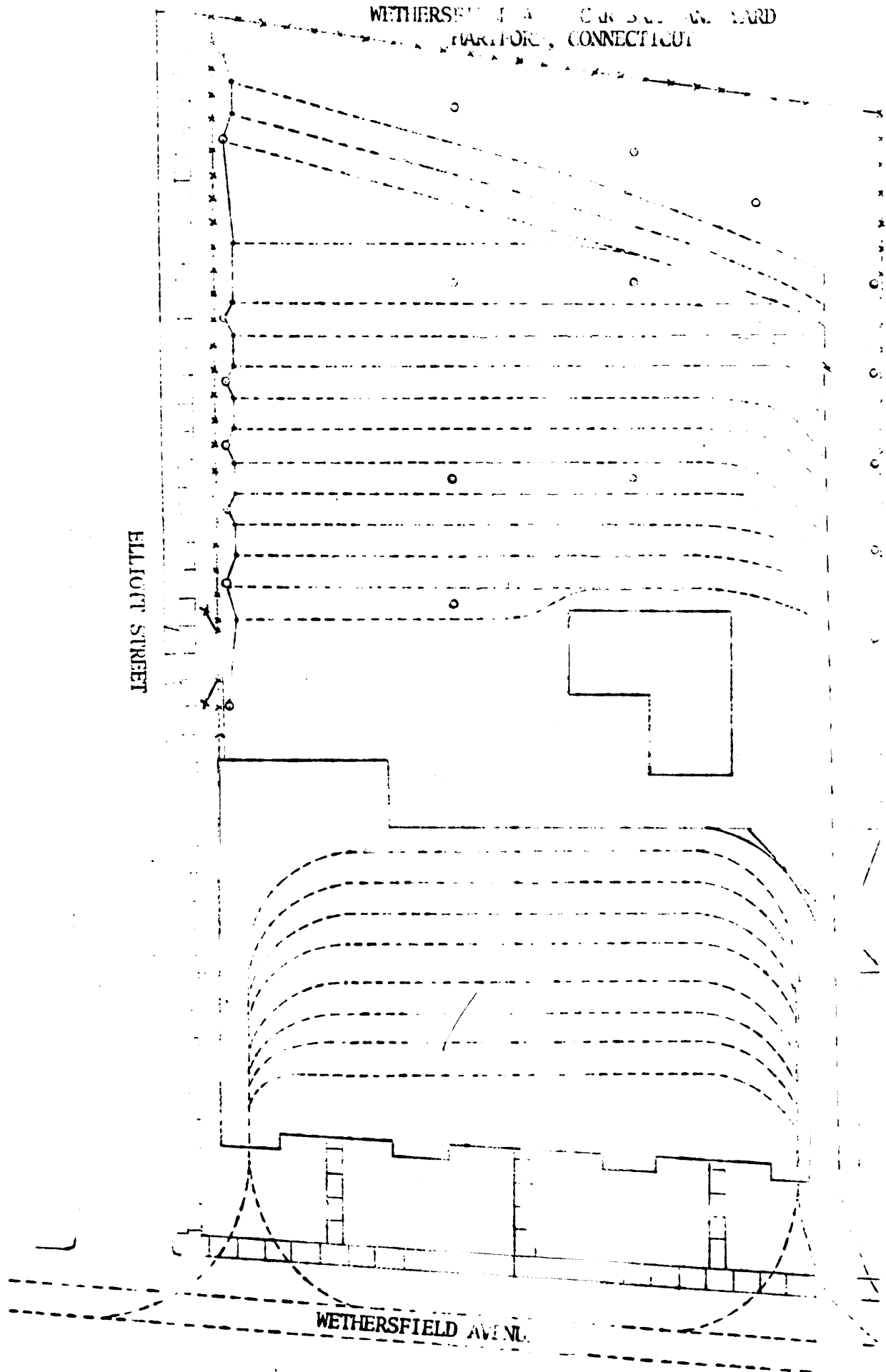


FIRST FLOOR PLAN
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Sketch C

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
THE TROLLEY BARN 331 WETHERFIELD AVE HARTFORD, CONN.
SMITHEDWARDS
Project No. _____ Date _____ Drawn by _____ 11 WASHINGTON AVENUE, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06115

WETHERSFIELD CAR SALE YARD
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT



ELLIOTT STREET

WETHERSFIELD AVENUE

YEAR: 1941

DRAWN: SEPT. 1969 BY EDWARD L. STEVENS

1" = 50 FT

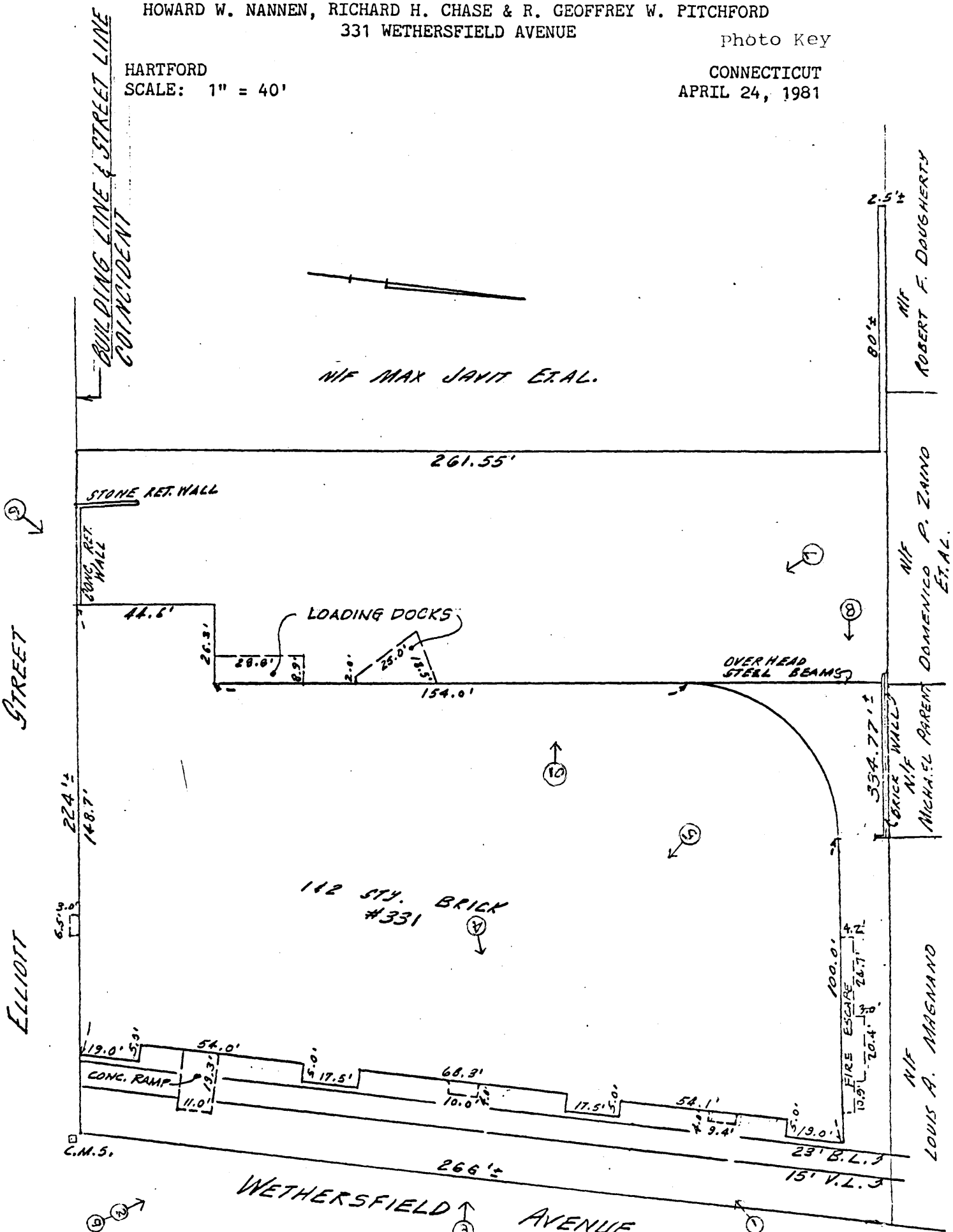
The Trolley Barn
Hartford, CT
Sketch Map D

PROPERTY OF
HOWARD W. NANNEN, RICHARD H. CHASE & R. GEOFFREY W. PITCHFORD
331 WETHERSFIELD AVENUE

photo Key

HARTFORD
SCALE: 1" = 40'

CONNECTICUT
APRIL 24, 1981



NOTE: Side yard at overhead beams

The Connecticut Bank and Trust Company