

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1090
JUL 12 1989

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 Suburban Club
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 6 Suburban Avenue/ 580 Main Street not for publication
city, town Stamford vicinity
state Connecticut code CT county Fairfield code 001 zip code 06901

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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.

John W. Shannahan July 7, 1989
Signature of certifying official John W. Shannahan, State Historic Preservation Officer Date

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:) _____

Alvina S. [Signature] 8/10/89
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/clubhouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/office building

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)20TH-CENTURY REVIVAL/Neo-Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation granitewalls brick

roof asphalt (built up)other limestone trim

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Suburban Club is a large brick Neo-Federal-style building located in downtown Stamford, Connecticut, at the corner of Main Street and Suburban Avenue. When it was constructed in 1914, the building was located at the east end of the downtown business district in a neighborhood of historic residential and commercial buildings of similar mass and scale. Today it is surrounded by modern high-rise development. Only one other building of similar age and scale is still standing in the neighborhood; it is located across Main Street to the south.

Three stories in height, the Suburban Club is rectangular in shape (30' x 70'). It has a broad modillioned cornice and a balustrade bordering its flat roof on the three main elevations and the outside bays of the rear (west) elevation (Photographs #1, 2, 3, 4). The middle bays at the rear are surmounted by a brick parapet with a terra cotta coping. The walls are all red brick laid in an English bond with a high curved brick watertable. Brick soldier courses and limestone define the separation between the stories, with the second level taller than either the ground or attic level.

The principal elevation, oriented to the east and facing Suburban Avenue, is symmetrical with nine bays and a centrally located main entrance. The first floor displays rectangular 12-over-12 double-hung windows surmounted by limestone keystones. Blind arches of header brick are used at the second level over recessed 16-over-16 double-hung windows, also with keystones, as well as imposts. Above the central window at this level is a limestone lunette with a carved festoon and rosette. Brick lunettes are found above the remaining windows at this level. Smaller flat-arched 8-over-8 windows are used at the third story. The end elevations (north and south) are similar except that the north elevation is asymmetrical and incorporates a four-story service wing (without an increase in the height of the building) that also includes the three northwestern bays of the rear elevation. Originally the south elevation contained an open loggia at the second level, a feature often found in Renaissance palazzi; it was closed in about 1978. Five round-arched openings which faced south and one larger arched opening in the facade at the eastern end now have bricked-in blind arches and windows.

The main entrance consists of a flat-roofed portico of the Roman Doric order supported by Tuscan columns with tall boxed plinths and engaged pilasters (Photograph #5). The entablature has a plain frieze of triglyphs and metopes with mutules underneath the cornice. The door is framed by wooden piers in a rusticated stone pattern. The double-leaf panelled door is surmounted by a rectangular transom, which has a boldly stylized pattern of feather and circle shapes incorporating a center lantern. There is a wrought-iron balustrade above the portico.

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The main lobby of the building displays all its original detailing, including a beamed ceiling and panelled wainscot (Photograph #6). The ceiling is elaborated by a modillioned cornice of the Corinthian order and ornate consoles. The flat-arched doorway with a fanlight on the north side is original (Photograph #7); the matching doors on the south are a recent installation. The open-string main staircase rises on the center of the rear (west) wall of the lobby in an open well to the third floor and is reputed to be a copy of the staircase in the Old Short House in Newburyport, Massachusetts (Photograph #8). It displays stepped panelling along the string and panelled wainscot along the outside walls. The balustrade has turned balusters, with newels at each change of level, along with a broken-curved mahogany handrail. A wood and wire glass partition, installed at the head of the stairs at the third floor about 1985 for fire protection, is held back from the balustrade. The service stair to the northwest, which encompasses four stories, is also in an open well but has a closed string and plain balusters.

Several of the rooms on the first and second floors display classical detailing and individually styled fireplaces, some influenced by the Italian Renaissance. Two of these are located at either end of the second floor. On the south end, the large room opening off the hall displays floor-to-ceiling stained oak panelling throughout (Photograph #9). It is not original on the north wall. The two original French doors with transoms which formerly opened onto the loggia remain in place on the south wall. The Neo-Renaissance limestone fireplace surround which remains on the west wall of this room is intricately carved with floral and griffin motifs and a leaf-and-tongue cornice molding. Two acanthus-pattern consoles support the mantel (Photograph #10). At the other end of the same floor, the northwest corner room displays detailing of the Composite order (Photograph #11). Consoles with an acanthus-scroll design support the window cornices and the fireplace mantel. The fireplace has a black marble surround framed by a wide wooden molding. Another distinctive fireplace is found in the small office at the northeast corner of the first floor (Photograph #12).

The remaining interior detailing is less elaborate. The other fireplace surrounds consist of wooden moldings in the Neo-Federal manner. Many of the rooms on the first floor have double cornice moldings in cable and egg-and-dart patterns, particularly on the south side. The second-floor hallway has retained its double architrave molding, plastered ceiling, and panelled wainscot, but most of the rooms have dropped or applied acoustical tile ceilings over the original plaster. The third floor, originally used as dormitory space, is plainly detailed; most of the window and door trim now in place was installed during the 1984-1986 rehabilitation of the building, as was the dropped ceiling in the hallway.

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)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1914 - 1935

1914

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Stearns, Frederick B.; Shepard, George F.

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

The Suburban Club is an architecturally significant, well-preserved masonry building designed in the best tradition of the Neo-Federal style by Frederick B. Stearns and George F. Shepard, Boston architects. It is not only one of the few buildings from this period remaining in downtown Stamford, but it is also one of the the best stylistic examples extant in the city.¹ It is historically significant as a fine representative example of a building constructed as a social club for the upper class, one of many such urban institutions that flourished in the first half of the twentieth century in the major cities of the Northeast.

Architectural Significance

The Suburban Club was one of the first commissions of Shepard & Stearns of Boston.² Although their architectural firm was not officially established until 1921, the two architects practiced together starting in 1913. They continued their association until 1950 when Stearns retired. Frederick B. Stearns (1874-1959) began his career as a draftsman with Winslow & Bigelow of Boston after graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Following a brief period as a building superintendent with Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, also of Boston, he became a partner of George F. Shepard. Less is known about Shepard. He also began his career at Winslow & Bigelow before becoming a partner with Derby, Robinson & Shepard in 1910, an association that continued until 1913 when he went into practice with Stearns.

A number of institutional and commercial buildings were designed by Shepard & Stearns in the greater Boston area.³ They included public and private secondary schools, as well as buildings for major firms in Boston such as the Walter Baker Company, the Carter Pen Company, and Union Wool. The firm also designed additions for state hospital buildings in Massachusetts and a number of private residences in New England and Pennsylvania. Only one other residential club was designed by the firm, the Phi Epsilon House in Cambridge.

Built during the height of the popularity of the Neo-Federal style, the Suburban Club, which is characteristically eclectic in its design and relatively non-traditional, displays many notable architectural features. What distinguishes this building from

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Architectural Survey of Stamford. Renee Kahn Associates, Stamford Community Development Program, 1977-1979.
Boston Public Library. Art Department, Architect File.
Stamford Advocate. Tercentenary Edition, 1941.
Stamford Advocate. 150th Anniversary Edition, April 7, 1979.

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

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

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Zone Easting Northing

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is described on Page 43, Volume 534 of the Stamford Land Records in a deed from the Stamford Trust Company to the White Tower Management Corporation, dated March 27, 1944.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the building and all the land associated with the Suburban Club as described in the above deed.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant, Reviewed by John Herzan, National
organization Cunningham Associates Ltd. date 9/8/88 Register Coordinator
street & number 98 Washington Street telephone (203) 347 4072
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the many commercial or institutional buildings of this style built in the period is its urban residential scale and exceptionally fine interior detailing. The exterior design is clearly appropriate to the original function of the building. Conservative, even understated, it has a residential, but clearly urban character. The interior, while primarily classical in feeling and detail, draws on many diverse stylistic sources, predominately that of the Italian Renaissance. The result is not pure Adamesque Revival, despite the common Roman antecedents.

The interior is more boldly interpreted than would be expected in a purely Federal building. Utilizing Greek as well as Roman classicism, it is almost Georgian Revival in style. The entranceway sets the tone for the scale of the classical orders of the interior. Instead of the delicate leading often associated with the Federal style, the transom makes an imposing architectural statement with its design. Again, in the large well-proportioned lobby, the scale of the detailing is heavier than is common to the Federal period, clearly identifying this building as "Neo-Federal," a new interpretation of a historic style, rather than a revival. Of special note are the finely detailed fireplace surrounds, ranging from the elegant Adamesque to the Florentine. Their design and scale were carefully executed to reflect the graceful proportions and classical tone of each of the principal rooms.

Historical Significance

The formation of men's clubs for all class levels was a common social phenomenon of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Suburban Club was one of a special type which flourished prior to World War II, a private and exclusive social club for elite urban businessmen. This upper-class institution was commonly found in Eastern cities until the development of suburbia in the postwar period. Although private clubs of this type continued to operate in major cities such as New York and Boston, as they do today, the need for a centralized urban club in places such as Stamford diminished in the 1930s. In the more mobile society of this period generated by the automobile, the social and business function of these clubs was taken over by the country clubs which proliferated outside the cities.

The Suburban Club was founded in 1890 with ten charter members meeting at the Stamford Savings Bank.⁴ The following year the club rented space in the Florence Block, a downtown commercial building, followed by a brief period in another leased building on the corner of Greylock Place and Main Street. In 1914, with 240 members, the club expanded into the present building. Club facilities there included bowling in the basement, several billiard rooms, a men's grill, and two dining rooms, one for men and the other for women guests. Rooms were available for club members on the third floor. The building was hailed by the Stamford Advocate as a "clubhouse which is going to make the City of Stamford cling in the memory of every non-member who visits it." From 1914 to 1935, when the club disbanded, the Suburban Club was the center of social activity

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for Stamford's elite. Clients were entertained at lunch; gala events were held in the reception rooms in the evenings.

Following a six-year interval when the building stood vacant, it was leased in 1941 by a Pittsburgh-based company, the White Tower Management Corporation, one of the first corporations to be headquartered in Stamford, a city that has become known for the number of national companies that have located there. The firm purchased the building in 1944 and renovated it for office use. A family corporation founded in 1926, the company, which officially became the Tombrock Corporation in 1977, owns and operates a number of restaurant chains in the East and holds the franchises on several in Virginia and the Washington, D.C. area.

A second rehabilitation of the Suburban Club begun in 1984 has been completed by the Tombrock Corporation. It was sympathetic in nature and has maintained the integrity and architectural significance of the building.

Notes:

1. Architectural Survey of Stamford. Renee Kahn Associates. 1977-1979.
2. Biographical information on the architects was drawn from the Architect File at the Boston Public Library. An obituary for Stearns appeared in the National Cyclopedia of American Biography. Shephard's obituary notice is not on file.
3. In addition to a listing of buildings done by the firm that appeared in Stearns' obituary, which included the Suburban Club, four of their buildings were identified in the Central Business Survey of Boston. Personal communication, Norma Mosby, Fine Arts Department, Boston Public Library, September, 1988.
4. The origin of this rather curious name for a city club has not been established. It is not known whether the street name preceded or followed the building of the club.