

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only  
received **MAY 11 1982**  
date entered  
**JUN 14 1982**

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

**1. Name**

historic Seaside Institute

and/or common Bridgeport Herald Building

**2. Location**

street & number 299 Lafayette Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Bridgeport, N/A vicinity of congressional district 4th

state Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 001

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name University of Bridgeport, Dr. Leland Miles, President

street & number Waldemere Hall

city, town Bridgeport N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bridgeport Town Clerk, City Hall, Room 124

street & number 25 Lyon Terrace

city, town Bridgeport, state Connecticut

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

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

date 1981  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Bridgeport state Connecticut

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>    N/A    </u>

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Seaside Institute is a structure of eclectic design built in 1887. Located at the corner of Atlantic and Lafayette Streets in Bridgeport, the Institute is directly across Atlantic Street from the brick factory buildings of Warner's International, formerly the Warner Brother's Corset Manufactory. To the south, the campus of the University of Bridgeport extends to Seaside Park on the Long Island Sound shoreline. The building is square in plan, approximately 70 feet on each side, and two stories in height with a raised basement and an attic. A round turret or tower is placed on the corner facing the intersection. The raised basement is constructed of rock-faced granite ashlar. The turret is comprised of brick in the header bond, the remainder of the building of brick in the stretcher bond. Belt courses and other trim are of brownstone, with some terracotta decoration. The hipped roof has two projecting gables facing Atlantic and Lafayette Streets. These, together with the turret, create three bays in each elevation. (Photograph 1). Attached to the original structure is a two-story addition on Lafayette Street with a one-story motor entrance for newsprint deliveries, dating from the 1930s. (Photograph 2).

The Lafayette Street facade once featured an entry to a basement-level restaurant. Only one cast-iron column of the original entry remains. (Photograph 3). The rest of the opening has been altered and enclosed. Basement window openings have been reduced in size and cement sills added. These changes date from the occupancy by the Bridgeport Herald in 1930. A short flight of steps leads to the main entrance of the building, located on the left of the central section of the Lafayette Street facade. Double doors with glass blocks forming a transom above were installed by the Bridgeport Herald, replacing the original. A portico over the entrance is supported by two square, fluted columns with simplified Ionic capitals, the whole of brownstone. The parapet above the portico bears the date 1887 in Roman numerals on a central panel. On either side, panels bear Greek crosses. (Photograph 4). Paired casement windows overlooking the parapet are replacements of the original double-hung sash. Single casement windows are placed to the right of the main entry and parapet on the first and second floors. All lintels and sills are joined by horizontal brownstone courses which continue around both the facade and the Atlantic Street elevation. The space between first floor lintels and second floor sills is filled by square, rock-faced blocks of brownstone, forming a broad band which extends from the portico parapet around the turret to the projecting gable on Atlantic Street, but not including either gabled section. Plywood has been placed over the frieze, located below the molded cornice. The condition of the frieze cannot be determined. To the left of the turret, a modern brick chimney has been installed. (Photograph 1).

The projecting gable to the left of the entrance has paired casement windows on the first floor. Brownstone quoins form the window surround. The lintel is embellished with a foliate design, above which a brownstone relieving arch extends to the sill of the second floor windows. (Photograph 5). The second floor has three double-hung, 6-over-6 sash set between brownstone quoins. Transoms above these have been removed and filled in with brick. Brownstone quoins at each corner rise to the second story level. In combination with brownstone belt courses and window surrounds, these enclose rectangular panels of brick. In the gable end are paired 6-over-6 double-hung sash. The peak is faced with square brownstone blocks. A finial crowns the point of the gable.

The turret has steel industrial awning-sash on each floor. A third story sur-

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mounted by a conical roof has been removed. The brownstone belt courses and brownstone infill between first and second floors continue to the adjacent portions of the building. Above the second floor windows is a frieze on which a panel with terracotta molding bears the raised inscription "Seaside Institute." A boldly executed foliate relief surrounds the panel. (Photograph 6).

The central section of the Atlantic Street elevation continues the broad brownstone band from the turret. Two casement windows on each floor are set closely together. The frieze below the molded cornice has been covered with plywood as on the Lafayette Street facade. The gable end, which projects slightly from the center, has a one-story polygonal bay. Each facet of the bay contains one window with modern sash. The second story has three grouped windows with a brownstone quoin surround. The gable has a pair of windows, one of which has been altered to receive a door to the fire escape. A projecting steel beam above this door is for the transfer of heavy materials to the attic, and was installed by the Bridgeport Herald. The treatment of the gable is similar to that on Lafayette Street: square brownstone blocks are used to fill in the peak above the windows, and the whole is capped by a finial. Brownstone quoins on the corners divide the surface into rectangular brick panels in concert with brownstone courses and window surrounds. (Photograph 7).

The west elevation, which is not visible from the street, presents an almost featureless brick wall. At least one window opening has been removed, and what appears to have been a basement level entry has been converted to a window. The south elevation has been obscured by the addition: window openings have been closed, and steel girders to support the addition inserted into the wall. The addition itself is a plain brick structure with casement windows, and dates to the 1930s when extensive alterations were undertaken to the original building to adapt it to newspaper publication. (Photograph 2).

The interior plan of the Seaside Institute was altered to accommodate the needs of the Bridgeport Herald. Inside the front doors, an entrance hall with a second flight of stairs leads to another set of doors, now removed. Bevelled glass sidelights and transom remain, however. A panelled wooden dado in the entrance hall has suffered minor fire damage. Ornamental terracotta tile relieves the brick surface above the dado. From the second pair of doors a central hallway extends to the opposite side of the building, where a stained glass window by the English firm of Ward and Hughes was once placed. The window, which represented industry, has been removed. The portion of the central hallway near the entry has been enclosed with plasterboard partitions. The remainder of the hallway retains a plaster frieze with garlands.

To the right of the central hall, on the side of the building facing Atlantic Street, were a reading room and library. Folding doors, now removed, separated the two rooms. A panelled dado and window moldings are original, as are the panelled doors leading into the room. To the left of the hall, opposite the library and reading room, a parlor, music rooms, and toilet rooms were located. This room layout has been modified substantially by the addition of new partitions. Next to the entrance on the left a staircase has been inserted. The parlor, which faced Lafayette Street, remains relatively intact.

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On the second floor, a large concert hall has been divided by a partition and an office cubicle added. The two classrooms and the sewing room which once occupied the remainder of the floor, were altered when the Bridgeport Herald added the addition on Lafayette Street. The concert hall, on the Atlantic Street side of the building, retains its panelled dado. Stamped sheet metal ceilings also remain in portions of the building. 1.

**Footnotes.**

1. For a detailed description of the interior of the Seaside Institute, see "Seaside Institute Erected for the Benefit of the Employees of Warner Brothers," Bridgeport, Connecticut: Warner Brothers, 1887.

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" 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 1887 Builder/Architect Warren R. Briggs

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Seaside Institute was created for the benefit of the female employees of of the Warner Brothers Corset factory in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Dr. Lucien C. Warner and Dr. I. DeVer Warner, physicians who founded the company in 1874, were innovative pioneers in the corset manufacturing industry. The Seaside Institute is illustrative of 19th-century philanthropic ideals and the relationship between employers and employees. (Criterion A). Designed by Warren R. Briggs, a noted local architect, the building is an excellent example of an eclectic design influenced by the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Horizontal belt courses of brownstone, the broad band of brownstone dividing the first and second floors, the rounded tower at the corner, the quoin window surrounds, are characteristic of the style. The front entrance, with its stylized Ionic columns, is unusual, as the arched entry found in most Richardsonian Romanesque buildings is more typical. The corner tower is balanced by the gabled dormers at either end of the building. (Criterion C).

In 1874, Dr. I. DeVer Warner and Dr. Lucien C. Warner began manufacturing corsets of their own design in McGraw, New York. Intended to provide female patients with corsets which would impair neither health nor comfort, their products enjoyed great popularity. 1. By 1876, having outgrown their quarters in McGraw, the brothers relocated to Bridgeport, Connecticut. A brick factory building erected in 1876 was doubled in size by an addition in 1878. By 1887, the plant had increased four-fold in size. The author of the History of Bridgeport, Rev. Samuel Orcutt, reported that in 1887 between 1,000 and 1,200 workers, the majority women, were employed in the manufacture of corsets at the Warner factory. The factory complex occupied a frontage of 537 feet on Lafayette, Atlantic, and Warren Streets in Bridgeport. Within were two 40 horsepower engines supplying power to 500 sewing machines. In addition, eye-let machines, steam presses, and 200 machines designed for the manufacture of a whalebone substitute, "Coraline," were also powered through the same engines. The output of the factory was about 6,000 corsets daily. About 1/6 of the factory workspace was devoted to the production of baseballs, about 3,000 of which were produced daily by a workforce of 300. 2.

The Warner Brothers were innovative in their search for improved materials and designs for corsets. Their introduction of spring steel in place of whalebone in 1912, doomed the right whale fishery, which depended on its sale to corset manufacturers. 3. Responsive to changes in fashion and demands for comfort and health, the Warner brothers were also effective advertisers and promoters, accounting for their remarkable growth and expansion. By 1887, they were the foremost corset manufacturers in the United States. 4.

In 1882, Century Magazine reported that the Warner Brothers planned to erect a building for the welfare of their employees. 5. These plans reached fruition on November 10, 1887, when the Seaside Institute was dedicated by Mrs. Grover

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Briggs, Warren R. Modern American School Buildings. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912.

"Opening of the Seaside Institute at Bridgeport, Connecticut," Harper's Weekly Vol. XXXI, No. 1616, November 19, 1887.

Orcutt, Rev. Samuel. A History of the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property Approximately 1/10

Quadrangle name Bridgeport

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

1	8	6	5	1	8	9	0	4	5	8	5	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

A description of the property boundaries may be found in Section 5, Map 8, Block 532, Lot 16A in the tax maps at the Tax Assessor's Office, City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dale S. Plummer, National Register Nominations Consultant

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date September 8, 1980

street & number 59 South Prospect Street telephone 566-3005

city or town Hartford, Connecticut state Connecticut

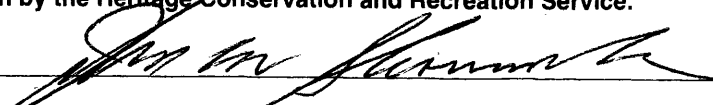
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 May 4, 1982

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date

6/14/82

*for* 

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Cleaveland, wife of the President. The basement of the building was occupied by a restaurant. On the first floor, a central hall divided a reading room and library on the right from a parlor, music rooms and toilet facilities on the left. The second floor contained a concert hall seating 500, two classrooms, and a sewing room. 6.

In a pamphlet prepared for the opening of the Seaside Institute, the Warner Brothers declared:

In establishing Seaside Institute we have had no model and no experience of similar enterprise for our guidance. It will not be surprising, therefore, if at first we make some mistakes which, with more experience, we shall be able to correct. Our object is to contribute to the enjoyment and welfare of the 1,100 women in our employ, and with this end in view we shall hold ourselves free to make such changes and modifications in our plans as experience may prove to be necessary.

It is our ultimate purpose to endow this Institute and turn it over to a Board of Trustees for the permanent use of working women. It seems wise, however, that we should first work out the problem of how this Institute is to be managed to accomplish the greatest good so that we may avoid encumbering it in a deed of trust with restrictions which might afterwards prove a hindrance to its usefulness. 7.

Contrary to this statement, the Seaside Institute was not an isolated phenomenon. A similar organization, supported by millowners in Lowell, Massachusetts- the People's Club- had been in existence for some years prior to the establishment of the Seaside Institute in Bridgeport. 8. The underlying principle of the Institute was paternalism- the concept that the relations between employer and employee should be as those between father and child. Implicit in the statement above is the employer's prerogative of deciding what is best for the welfare of his employees. The Warner's philanthropy was not wholly disinterested, either, as Dr. I. DeVer Warner's remarks indicate:

If this fancy shall become a reality, if our enterprise shall contribute something towards the solution of the great problem of the interrelations between employer and employee, the purpose of the founders of Seaside Institute will have been fully accomplished. 9.

In return for the munificence of their employers, the workers were expected to respond with gratitude and affection. The Bridgeport Daily Advertiser summarized these expectations well in their report of the opening ceremonies of the Seaside Institute:



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These beneficent provisions for their special benefit have already induced the 1,100 persons connected with the factories to thank their stars that employers with hearts so full of goodness are looking to their welfare, and if indications are worth anything, each carries a heart swelling with emotions of appreciation and gratitude. 10.

A product of 19th-century attitudes and philanthropy, the Seaside Institute did not survive to the present-day as an institution. Changing relations between employer and employee, and economic upheaval, resulted in its dissolution in 1929. The building was sold to the Bridgeport Herald newspaper, which made extensive modifications. 11.

The Seaside Institute building is an excellent example of the eclectic approach to building design as interpreted by an architect familiar with 19th-century architectural abulary. Warren R. Briggs, the designer of the building, studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in France and had received training with several architectural firms in Boston, including that of Peabody & Stearns. 12. As many young architects of his generation, Briggs was deeply influenced by the work of H.H. Richardson. The general form of the Seaside Institute, with a hipped roof and projecting gables, a round turret dominating the corner of Atlantic and Lafayette Streets, is unmistakably Richardsonian Romanesque. The use of rock-faced granite, brick, brownstone, and terracotta to provide a rich variety of textured surfaces is also in the Richardsonian Romanesque tradition. Horizontal belt courses connecting window sills and lintels, together with quoins around window openings, are typical of the style. Window placement, in groups of two or three, is similar to that in many of Richardson's works.

The Seaside Institute also bears the impress of Briggs' individuality as an architect. Rather than the typical round-arched entry favored by Richardson, Briggs substituted a portico supported by square, fluted columns with Ionic capitals of extreme simplicity. (Photograph 4). A surviving cast-iron column at the basement level entrance has been rendered in an abstract manner. (Photograph 3). The Fairfield County Courthouse, also in Bridgeport, has similar highly abstracted capitals in its entrance. The courthouse was designed by Briggs in 1888. The frieze which adorns the turret of the Seaside Institute is decorated in large, foliate forms readily visible from street level. Rather than creating small surface enrichment difficult to observe, Briggs concentrated on designs easily visible to the onlooker. Despite alterations, the Seaside Institute building retains many of its distinctive characteristics. As an important example of Warren R. Briggs' style, it is architecturally significant.

Footnotes.

1. Warner, Lucien T. Always Starting Things Through Seventy Eventful Years.



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- Bridgeport: The Warner Brothers Company, 1944, page 6.
2. Orcutt, Rev. Samuel. A History of the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut. Bridgeport: The Fairfield County Historical Society, 1887, pages 275-6.
3. Warner, op.cit., page 19.
4. Orcutt, op.cit., page 277. Also, Warner, op.cit., page 20.
5. Warner, op.cit., pages 8-9.
6. Seaside Institute Erected for the Benefit of the Employees of Warner Brothers. Bridgeport: Warner Brothers, n.d., no pagination.
7. Ibid.
8. Kenngott, George F. The Record of a City: A Social Survey of Lowell, Massachusetts. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912, pages 20, 223.
9. "Working Women Honored," The Bridgeport Daily Advertiser, November 11, 1887.
10. Ibid.
11. Conversations with Mr. Charles Brilvitch, architectural historian, and David W. Palmquist, head of the historical collections at the Bridgeport Public Library, indicate that the Seaside Institute had already dwindled in membership by the time of its dissolution and that little is known about the circumstances. The writer surmises that worker rejection of the paternalistic values of the founders may have been an important factor. Regretfully, neither were familiar with any documentation regarding the last years of the Seaside Institute.

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Bibliography (continued)

Bridgeport: The Fairfield County Historical Society, 1887.

Kenngott, George F. The Record of a City: A Social Survey of Lowell, Massachusetts. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912.

Seaside Institute Erected for the Benefit of the Employees of Warner Brothers.

Bridgeport: Warner Brothers, n.d. (1887)

Warner, Lucien T. Always Starting Things Through Seventy Eventful Years.

Bridgeport: The Warner Brothers Company, 1944.

"Working Women Honored," The Bridgeport Daily Advertiser, November 11, 1887.