

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Burwell, Ernest R., House
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 161 Grove Street
city, town Bristol
state CT code CT county Hartford code 003 zip code 06010

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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 of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 6/30/92 State or Federal agency and bureau: Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

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 of the Keeper: [Signature] Date of Action: 8/18/92

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

Domestic/Single Dwelling

7. DescriptionArchitectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Neoclassical

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stucco over masonry

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Ernest R. Burwell House, built in 1918, is a large Neoclassical-style residence located on Federal Hill, a residential neighborhood, in the geographic center of Bristol, Connecticut (Photograph 1). The Burwell House is located at the northeast corner of the Oakland and Grove Street intersection. The property is situated one block east of the Federal Hill Historic District's Walnut Street boundary.

Grove Street was once the site of four major Bristol residences. In addition to the Burwell House, only two remain: the Townsend Treadway House (1915, architects: Murphy and Dana, New York) and the Edward Ingraham House (1928, architect: Richard Dana, New York). The DeWitt Page House (1918, architect: Walter Crabtree, New Britain [1]), once located on the adjacent property east of the Burwell House, was demolished in the 1970s.

The Burwell House is on a knoll on the upper slopes of Federal Hill set back from Grove Street and high above Oakland Street. A semi-circular driveway in front of the house echoes the formality of the facade and is a major feature of the landscaping plan. A tier of concrete steps leads to a tier of marble steps abutting the portico. Characteristic of this style, the facade is symmetrical and features a smooth stucco finish over masonry (Photograph 2) and a flat asphalt roof. A colossal tetrastyle portico (Photograph 3) graces the Grove Street elevation and provides a focal point for the symmetrical facade.

The Grove Street facade is three bays wide and features a pedimented portico with Scamozzi columns. The front entrance consists of a paneled door surmounted by a fanlight and flanked by two sidelights, each enhanced by leaded glass (Photograph 4). A modillion cornice enriches the upper stories and dentil molding creates a band below the cornice. The roofline was originally surmounted by a balustrade, now missing. The balustrade of the house was identical to that of the existing garage (Photograph 5).

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Burwell, Ernest R., House, Bristol, CT

Four-over-four double-hung windows are used throughout the house, although the ground-floor facade has eight-over-twelve sash. These windows have marble sills, and all windows have louvered shutters. The facade is flanked by two single-story porches: the Oakland Street porch is open, and the east porch is an enclosed solarium, with 3x5 full-length windows. Both porches have flat roofs, terra cotta floors with marble edging, and paired Ionic columns at the corners.

A second-floor solarium, enclosed by a later owner, projects from the center of the rear elevation. A low-profile third story housing the original servants' quarters is visible only from the rear of the house.

A detached one-story two-bay garage, contemporary with the house in period and style, is situated northeast of the house (Photograph 5). Its roof is surmounted by a balustrade. The garage is considered a contributing building for the purpose of this nomination.

The residence combines a formality of style and dignity on the exterior with a light and open interior (Figure 1). The large entrance foyer is embellished by a parquet floor, eight pilasters, dentil molding, a vaulted ceiling, and paneled wainscoting. A monumental curved staircase ascends from the foyer. The foyer also provides access to the living and dining rooms through raised-panel double-leaf doors. At the rear of the foyer is the entrance to the library. This room is paneled in mahogany and contains a desk alcove and three built-in mahogany bookcases.

The living room has a fireplace with a marble mantel shelf supported by consoles (Photograph 6). Centered beneath the shelf is a raised-relief elliptical motif enriched by garlands. Fluted pilasters flank the entire ensemble. Paneled wainscoting surrounds the room. Double French doors are symmetrically placed on either side of the fireplace, each with a transom. The doors lead to a large open porch.

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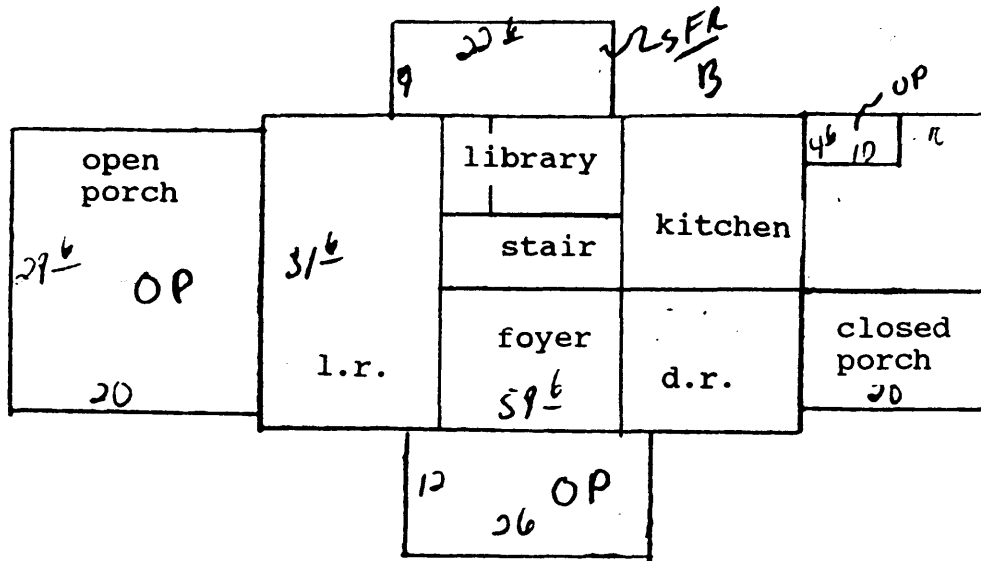
The dining room has crown and picture molding and a fireplace flanked by fluted colonettes and raised plaster ornaments in the form of garlands below the mantelshelf (Photograph 7). The mantel is embellished with dentil molding with a repeating acorn motif. The room is paneled to a height of seven feet. Two china cupboards with leaded and beveled glass are located in the corners of the room. French doors lead to a ground-floor solarium (Photograph 8).

The second-floor solarium is located off the first landing of the main stair. French doors flanked by leaded-glass sidelights give access to the room. On the second floor large archways lead to the master bedroom and secondary bedrooms, located off a simple hallway along the east-west axis of the house. A servants' stairwell is accessed from the foyer and rises to the third floor, with a linen closet at the second level. The third floor contains two small bedrooms and a bath. The house was originally equipped with a central vacuum system.

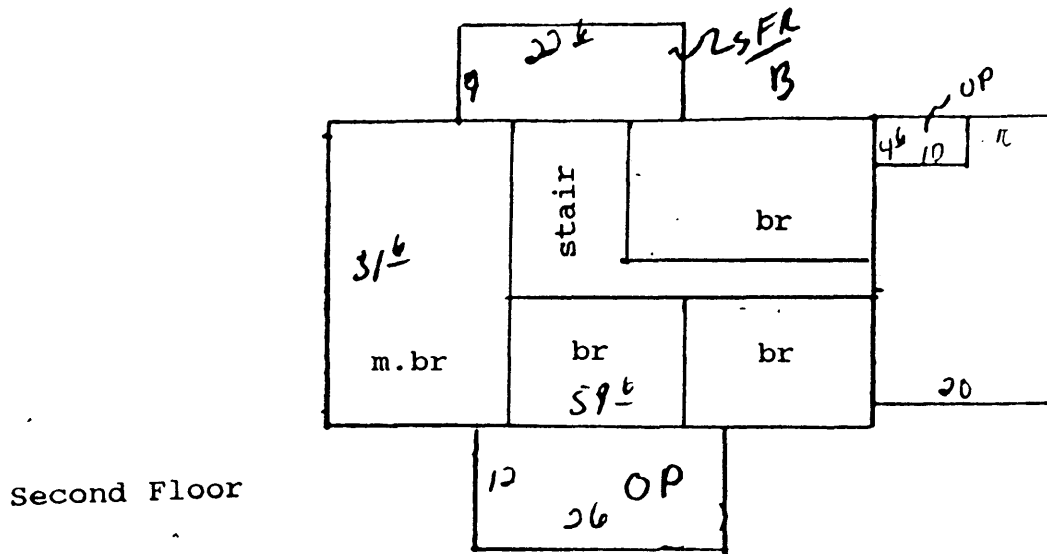
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Building Sketch - Burwell House



First Floor



Second Floor

Figure 1

110 feet

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)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1918

1918

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Significant Person N/A

Architect/Builder

Walter P. Crabtree, architect, New Britain, CT
Central Building Co., Worcester, MA

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

The Ernest R. Burwell House is an outstanding example of Neoclassical domestic architecture in Bristol, Connecticut, as well as the largest Neoclassical residence in town. Designed by Walter P. Crabtree, a leading Hartford County architect, it is one of his larger and more ambitious residential commissions. An expression of the large, formal residence favored by the industrial elite of the early twentieth century, it features graceful proportions, large public rooms, and exquisite custom-designed interior detailing typical of the period's high architectural quality. The Burwell House is well preserved and has been little altered except for the removal of the roof balustrade.

Architectural Significance

Built on Federal Hill, Bristol's most fashionable neighborhood in the early twentieth century, the Burwell House is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of Neoclassical domestic architecture. The stucco finish makes it unusual. Its symmetry, graceful proportions, and formal landscaping are particularly noteworthy. The restrained but finely crafted exterior moldings contrast effectively with the smooth texture of the stucco. The interior appointments are as elegant as the exterior; the large rooms are richly detailed with classically inspired custom moldings and expensive wood paneling in a variety of designs. The use of two large open porches as well as two enclosed porches, one for each elevation, emphasizes the importance of the integration of the natural world into the house's design.

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Section number 8 Page 1 Burwell, Ernest R., House, Bristol, CT

Walter Percival Crabtree (1873-1962), a locally prominent practical architect from New Britain and Hartford, designed the Burwell House in 1918. Crabtree was born in Rochester, New York. During 1901-1904 he was employed in the architectural office of William C. Cadwell of New Britain [2]. Thereafter he opened his own office in New Britain at 272 Main Street (1905-1933), and later practiced with his son, Walter P. Crabtree, Jr., during 1927-1929 [3,4]. He opened his own Hartford office in 1930, continuing in practice for half a century, to 1951. He was a member of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Institute of Architects during 1931-1935.

Crabtree had other commissions in Bristol in addition to the Ernest R. Burwell House and the DeWitt Page Mansion, both located on adjacent parcels on Grove Street. In 1908 Crabtree designed the Beaux Arts-style Bristol Trust Company (now the Bristol Savings Bank, 150 Main Street).

Among Crabtree's most notable works elsewhere in Hartford County, two are located in New Britain: the Neoclassical Elks' Club (1911, 30 Washington Street) and the Art Deco-style Fred Beloin Building (1942, 248-250 Main Street/32 West Main Street). His bank commissions included the Plainville First National Bank (1910, West Main Street), the Suffield Savings Bank (1918, High Street) and the East Hartford Trust Company (1918, 561 Prospect Avenue). Hartford County residential commissions include 52 Thomson Road (1936), 55 Thomson Road (1936), 126 South Main Street (1936), and 638 Park Road (1936) in West Hartford, 66 Bloomfield Avenue (1929) in Hartford, and 68 Forest Street (1907) in New Britain. Although Crabtree worked in a variety of styles, he was particularly comfortable with the Neoclassical idiom. Most of Crabtree's commercial and residential commissions were in Hartford County, although he designed the R. Wallace and Sons Manufacturing Company in Wallingford (1922, 340 Quinnipiac Street) and a residence in Holyoke, Massachusetts (1896, 69 Dwight Street) [5].

Historical Background

Ernest Romaine Burwell (1857-1945), the original resident of the house, was born in New Hartford, Connecticut. He was the son of John S. Burwell, a descendant of John Burwell, who came to New England from Sutton, England, in 1639 [6], and Clarissa Lewis Burwell, of Bristol, Connecticut. He studied under private tutors, one of whom was a Yale professor. He worked in New Haven for six years for the Adams Express Company, then relocated to Bristol.

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An entrepreneur, Burwell began a retail coal, ice, and trucking business in 1893 and later formed a partnership with Clifford S. Barnes of Bristol, as Burwell & Barnes. He married Sally Gregory of North Orange, Massachusetts, in 1899. He took charge of the savings investment department of the General Motors Corporation at the New Departure Plant in Bristol in 1918. The same year he built his house on Federal Hill. Two years later, he was elected president and treasurer of the Bristol Manufacturing Company, a textile mill which knitted woolen garments; it ceased operation in 1923 when the demand for knitted underwear declined [7]. At various times Burwell was a director of the New Departure Manufacturing Company [8] and the Bristol Bank & Trust Company. He was a member of the Free and Accepted Masons.

Burwell retired in 1928 and moved to 34 Ledyard Road in West Hartford, a more modest Colonial Revival-style house. He died September 29, 1945, in Orlando, Florida.

The Burwell House was subsequently occupied by Lester G. Sigourney (1929-1934), Edward W. Mink, M.D. (1935-1950), Philip S. Brezina (1951-1953), and a state senator, Wallace Barnes (1954-1961). It was then purchased along with the adjacent Page Mansion by a junior college, DeWitt Hall [9]. The school re-named the Burwell House "Grove House," and it featured an assembly room and student lounge on the first floor, and a faculty lounge and offices for the President, the Director of Admissions, and the Dean of Students on the second floor. Although DeWitt Hall won a Connecticut Supreme Court case after the State Education Department, in 1962, challenged its right to operate, it was unable to reopen. The Burwell House remained vacant until 1971 when purchased by Frank De Batiste. De Batiste sold the house in 1987 to the present resident, Thomas Read.

Endnotes

- [1]. Modern Connecticut Homes and Homecrafts, American Homecrafts Company (West Haven, Connecticut: Church Press, 1921).
- [2]. David F. Ransom, The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin, 89, 34 (1989); Gregory E. Andrews and David F. Ransom, Structures and Styles, Guided Tours of Hartford Architecture (Hartford, Connecticut: The Connecticut Historical Society, 1988), p. 236. Crabtree's career is reviewed in The Hartford Courant, October 10, 1962, p. 4. Interview with Walter P. Crabtree, III, St. Petersburg, Florida, November, 1991; The Hartford Courant, March 13, 1975, p. 13. Walter P. Crabtree, Jr. designed the Senior Civic Center in Bristol and the Forestville Firehouse.

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Section number 8 Page 3 Burwell, Ernest R., House, Bristol, CT

- [3]. American Architect and Building News, 97, no 1784 (1910); New York Architect, 4, p. 65 (1910); Western Architect, 13, p. 58 (1909); Epaphroditus Peck, A History of Bristol, Connecticut (Hartford, Connecticut: The Lewis Street Bookshop, 1932). Photograph of Crabtree's Bristol Trust Company appears in Peck's book on page 212.
- [4]. Interview with John B. Crabtree, Boston, Massachusetts, November, 1991.
- [5]. New Britain Downtown Architectural Walking Tour, Hartford Architecture Conservancy; American Architect and Building News, 52 (1896); Architectural Review, 14 (1907); American Architect and Building News, 97, no 1784 (1910); American Architect, 113, no 2216 (1918); American Architect, 114, no 2231 (1918); Architecture (New York), 45, February, 1922; House and Garden, 70, September, 1936, p 136; House and Garden, 70, October, 1936, p. 118; House and Garden, 72, July, 1937, p. 42.
- [6]. Encyclopaedia of Connecticut Biography (New York, New York: The American Historical Society, 1919), p. 191.
- [7]. The Bristol Press, October 1, 1945; The Hartford Courant, October 1, 1945, p. 4; The Hartford Times, October 1, 1945, p. 18; The Bristol Press, March 3, 1920, p. 1; Bruce Clouette and Matthew Roth, Bristol, Connecticut, a Bicentennial History, 1785-1985 (Canaan, New Hampshire: Phoenix Publishing, 1984), p. 72.
- [8]. Chichester P. Weldon, The New Departure Classics (Canaan, New Hampshire: Phoenix Publishing, 1986), p. 14.
- [9]. The State Education Department filed an injunction against the school claiming that it violated a statute which denied a school's authority to confer degrees, unless it was sanctioned by the State Board of Education. The State Supreme Court of Errors later ruled said statute unconstitutional, and found the State Education Department in error. See articles regarding the school in The Bristol Press, August 23, 1961, p. 18 (photograph of Page House); The Bristol Press, June 2, 1964, p. 1; The Bristol Press, July 20, 1964, p. 1; DeWitt Hall Founders' Book 1961-1962 (Bloomfield, Connecticut: The Print-Craft Corporation, 1961).

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 1.0

UTM References

A 1 8 | [6 7 1 7 3 0] | [4 6 1 6 3 0 0]
 Zone Easting Northing

C 1 8 | [6 7 1 8 0 5] | [4 6 1 6 2 5 0]

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

D 1 8 | [6 7 1 7 4 0] | [4 6 1 6 2 5 0]

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Bristol Land Records, Vol. 140, p. 538.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the lot which has historically been associated with the Ernest R. Burwell House.

See continuation sheet

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

name/title Kate Ohno and David Reisner, Ph.D.

organization Greater Bristol Preservation Trust date November, 1991

street & number 100 Oakland St. telephone 203-585-1818

city or town Bristol state CT zip code 06010

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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Burwell, Ernest R., House, Bristol, CT

American Homecrafts Company, Modern Connecticut Homes and Homecrafts (West Haven, Connecticut: Church Press, 1921).

Clouette, Bruce, and Roth, Matthew, Bristol, Connecticut, a Bicentennial History, 1785-1985 (Canaan, New Hampshire: Phoenix Publishing, 1984).

Hourihan, C., Federal Hill (Bristol, Connecticut: Bristol Development Authority, 1985).

Peck, Epaphroditus, A History of Bristol, Connecticut (Hartford, Connecticut: The Lewis Street Bookshop, 1932).

Smith, Eddy N., Bristol, Connecticut (Hartford, Connecticut: City Printing Co., 1907).

Burwell, Ernest R., House, Bristol, CT

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1. Grove Street elevation of Ernest R. Burwell House and surrounding landscape. Camera facing N. Photograph by Reisner (11/91).

Photograph 2. Grove Street elevation of Ernest R. Burwell House, closeup. Camera facing N. Photograph by Reisner (11/91).

Photograph 3. Portico detail. Camera facing N. Photograph by Reisner (11/91).

Photograph 4. Front foyer entrance door. Camera facing S. Photograph by Reisner (11/91).

Photograph 5. Rear elevation. Garage in foreground. Camera facing SW. Photograph by Reisner (11/91).

Photograph 6. Living room fireplace and double doors. Camera facing W. Photograph by Reisner (11/91).

Photograph 7. Dining room detail. Camera facing E. Photograph by Reisner (11/91).

Photograph 8. First floor solarium detail. Camera facing E. Photograph by Reisner (11/91).