

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JAN 25 1985

date entered FEB 21 1985

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

1. Name

historic N/A

and/or common EAST MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

2. Location

street & number 371-377 to 741-747 and 388-394 to 774
East Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Bridgeport N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 001

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership - see continuation sheets

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bridgeport Town Clerk

street & number City Hall, Room 124

city, town 45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town 59 South Prospect Street
Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The East Main Street Historic District is a concentrated collection of historic buildings in the south end of East Bridgeport. East Main Street was built up, starting in the mid-19th century, as Bridgeport's second commercial center. (To the west, across the Pequonnock River, lies downtown Bridgeport, the earlier and larger of the city's commercial areas.) The district includes only properties on East Main Street, and gets its character from its streetscape of closely spaced, stylish buildings erected between 1855 and 1920. The buildings are mostly two to four stories high. Brick buildings slightly outnumber those of wood-frame construction. The prevailing style is Italianate, which is represented in the full range of its historic applications. There are early Italianate Villa-influenced residences, later commercial buildings that embody the High Victorian Italianate, and still later commercial buildings that follow essentially utilitarian design precepts while using applied details such as window caps and cornice brackets drawn from the Italianate. Other styles include Second Empire and Queen Anne, and there are some examples of highly eclectic Victorian architecture. Several early 20th-century buildings display the influence of the Georgian Revival or of Neo-Classicism. The buildings stand either connected in rows or very closely spaced with no substantial open space to their sides. For the most part there is no setback between buildings and sidewalks. Of the 36 buildings in the district, most originally held retail businesses, many of which featured rental housing on the upper floors. There are also four single-family houses, four multi-family houses, two apartment houses, and one factory.

The architectural qualities of the district once characterized much of East Main Street, but modern highway construction to the south and demolition to the north have cut the district off from the rest of the street. Beyond the district to the south an electric-generating station, built in the 1930s, transformed the formerly commercial character of the area. And beyond the demolished areas to the north of the district, new construction continued for a longer period than it did in the nominated area. As a result, this district remains as East Main Street's most distinct and cohesive enclave of historic buildings, with the repetitive pattern of richly textured facades that is typical of older urban commercial areas.

The buildings exhibit a substantial degree of architectural integrity. Alterations to the commercial blocks are mostly limited to the storefronts, but even the altered storefronts retain their original cast iron or masonry, obscured behind the modern materials. The few upper-floor alterations that have occurred appear for the most part to be reversible, such as the covering of window openings with plywood. Many of the frame structures now feature modern siding material over their original clapboards, a treatment

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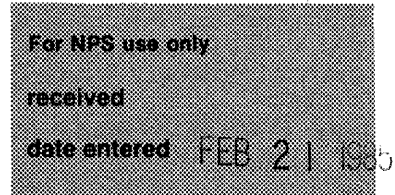
Continuation sheet EAST MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
Bridgeport, CT Item number 4 Page 1

LIST OF PROPERTY OWNERS

Street Address & Parcel Number	Owner's Name & Address	Contributing/ Noncontributing
371-377 East Main Street 10-808-2	Dennis Yaremich 44 Calhoun Avenue Bridgeport, CT	Contributing
379-395 East Main Street 10-808-2A	William and Joseph Miko 103 Clark Street Bridgeport, CT	Contributing
388-394 East Main Street 11-825-20	Liberty Plumbing Supply 388-394 East Main Street Bridgeport, CT	Contributing
410-416 East Main Street 8-824-5	Angel Santiago 47 Benson Street Bridgeport, CT	Noncontributing
411-419 East Main Street 8-809-10	Jesus & Sarah Torres 411-425 East Main Street Bridgeport, CT	Contributing
420-428 East Main Street 8-824-4	Angel Santiago 47 Benson Street Bridgeport, CT	Contributing
425 East Main Street 8-809-10	Jesus & Sarah Torres 411-425 East Main Street Bridgeport, CT	Contributing

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432-438 East Main Street Rose Spata Contributing
8-824-3 434 East Main Street
 Bridgeport, CT

440-442 East Main Street Rose Spata Contributing
8-824-3 434 East Main Street
 Bridgeport, CT

444-446 East Main Street Pedro and Miquel Mestre Vacant Lot
8-824-2 175 Jackson Avenue
 Bridgeport, CT

439-449 East Main Street Four Star Enterprises Inc. Vacant Lot
8-809-11A 443 East Main Street
 Bridgeport, CT

453-457 East Main Street Miquel & Pedro Mestre Contributing
8-809-12A 459 East Main Street
 Bridgeport, CT

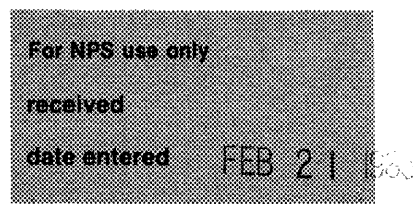
458-464 East Main Street Caribe Royal Corp. Contributing
8-824-1 c/o Caguas Grocery
 464 East Main Street
 Bridgeport, CT

484-496 East Main Street Caribe Royal Corp. Contributing
8-822-7 c/o Caguas Grocery
 464 East Main Street
 Bridgeport, CT

487-489 East Main Street Charles Schoppmann Noncontributing
8-809-15 22 Shamrock Drive
 Brookfield, CT

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498-504 East Main Street Phillip Sciuto Contributing
8-822-6 510 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

505-519 East Main Street Howe Realty Corp. Contributing
8-811-3 40 Powell Terrace
Bridgeport, CT

510-512 East Main Street Phillip Sciuto Contributing
8-822-5 510 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

520-522 East Main Street Max Velenchik Vacant Lot
8-822-4 532 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

523-529 East Main Street John Brown Contributing
8-811-4 138 Garden Street
Bridgeport, CT

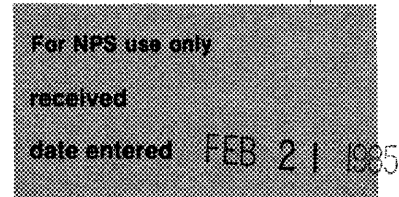
528-534 East Main Street Max Velenchik Contributing
8-822-3 532 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

533-539 East Main Street Barbara Kopcsó Contributing
8-811-5 100 Ashley Street
Bridgeport, CT

540-546 East Main Street Herbert L. Cohen Contributing
8-822-2 Cohen and Wolf, P.C.
10 Middle Street
Bridgeport, CT

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549-551 East Main Street 8-811-6	Nicholas Maraglino 7 Brookfield Street Norwalk, CT	Vacant Lot
548-562 East Main Street 8-822-1	Irma Hernandez 128 Emerald Street Stratford, CT	Contributing
563-585 East Main Street 2-812-7, 8	Trading Mart Inc. 2600 Post Road Bridgeport, CT	Contributing
587-593 East Main Street 2-812-9	Joseph & Harriet Quint 240 Ferndale Avenue Stratford, CT	Contributing
588-612 East Main Street 3-821-7,6,5,4	Jean DeFilippo 986 Thorme Street Bridgeport, CT	Contributing
601-603 East Main Street 2-812-10	Joseph & Harriet Quint 240 Ferndale Avenue Stratford, CT	Contributing
614-616 East Main Street 3-821-3	Randi Epstein 268 Autumn Ridge Road Fairfield, CT	Contributing
618-620 East Main Street 3-821-2	John Tedesco 141 High Ridge Drive Bridgeport, CT	Contributing, but probably too fire- damaged to remain standing
624 East Main Street 3-821-1	Hamilton Chevron Inc. 624 East Main Street Bridgeport, CT	Noncontributing

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619-625 East Main Street Leventhal Furniture Co. Vacant Lots
2-813-7,8 P.O. Box 2235
Bridgeport, CT

635-643 East Main Street James E. White Vacant Lot
2-813-9 637 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

651 East Main Street Lilly S. DiSesa Vacant Lot
2-813-10 57 Sabina Road
Trumbull, CT

652-654 East Main Street Jose & Mary Figueroa Contributing
3-819-8 652-654 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

657-667 East Main Street Henry & Angelius Johnson Contributing
2-813-11 132 Maple Street
Bridgeport, CT

660-662 East Main Street Jose & Mary Figueroa Vacant Lot
3-819-7 660-662 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

666-672 East Main Street La Rosa Del Monte Express Inc. Vacant Lot
3-819-6 682 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

681-689 East Main Street Man-Jul Realty Co. Contributing
2-814-8 681 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

682 East Main Street La Rosa Del Monte Express Inc. Noncontributing
3-819-5 682 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT

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690-700 East Main Street 3-819-4	Hnat Peleponcik Estate John Luckart, Exec. 188 Eaton Street Bridgeport, CT	Contributing
691-699 East Main Street 2-814-9	Nicholas Mainiero Box 247 Stratford, CT	Vacant Lot
703-713 East Main Street 2-814-10A	Harry Freedman 2370 North Ave., #5A Bridgeport, CT	Vacant Lot
704-708 East Main Street 3-819-3	City of Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terr. Bridgeport, CT	Vacant Lot
716-722 East Main Street 3-819-2	City of Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terr. Bridgeport, CT	Vacant Lot
724-732 East Main Street 3-819-1	City of Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terr. Bridgeport, CT	Vacant Lot
727-735 East Main Street 2-815-10,11,12,13	Toribio & Betty Lizardo 727 East Main Street Bridgeport, CT	Contributing
741-747 East Main Street 2-815-14	Marjorie McPadden c/o Coughlin 1188 Main Street Bridgeport, CT	Contributing

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774 East Main Street
3-818-1C

City of Bridgeport
City Hall, 45 Lyon Terr.
Bridgeport, CT

Contributing

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Existing Surveys (continued):

Historic Resource Survey of East Main Street, Bridgeport

1983 - State

Records deposited with Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

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Description (continued):

also deemed to be reversible. The structural condition of the buildings is not uniformly good. Several buildings have suffered fire damage in recent years, but in nearly every case their essential fabric remains in place.

Of the 36 buildings, 33 were judged to contribute to the character of the district. In no case has a building been deemed not to contribute because of alterations. For example, 505-519 East Main Street (Photograph 9) is sided with asphalt shingles and has lost its original sash and parts of its oriel windows. But it was called contributing because it retains its distinctive cornice and original storefronts (partially hidden), because of its similarity in scale and materials to the rest of the district, and because of its integral position in the commercial streetscape. Judged non-contributing were two gas stations and two small, recently built commercial/warehouse buildings.

The district's boundaries are defined to the north and south, respectively, by the visual breaks of the aforementioned vacant lots and highway. Thematic considerations determined the district's extent to the east and west. The area east of the district is devoted to residential use, and to the west is an area of mixed residential and industrial use. While residential and industrial buildings are also found within the district, the commercial use that distinguishes East Main Street did not extend to the east and west (see Boundary Justification). Following are descriptions of the individual buildings in the district.

INVENTORY OF CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

Format of description blocks:

HISTORIC NAME (if any), common name (if any), address, date, style.
Descriptive text.

Apartment building, 371-377 East Main Street, c.1915, Late Gothic Revival details. Four-story, grey-brick structure with cast-concrete trim. The upper floors are divided into seven symmetrical window bays. Window openings are fitted with six-over-one and one-over-one sash; end-bay windows have narrow sidelights. Fourth-floor windows have flat-arched lintels with keystones; all windows have cast-concrete sills. The wall surface is decorated with ornamental brick spandrels featuring concrete corner blocks and

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Description (continued):

diamond motifs. An elaborate parapet with corbelled openings, polygonal pilasters, gabled peaks over the end bays, and cast-concrete details, crowns the structure. The first floor features two altered storefronts with an exposed cast-iron pier at the left corner of the building, and a recessed apartment entry. An entablature with a paneled brick frieze and a molded concrete cornice separates the commercial space on the first floor from the residential space on the upper floors (Photograph 1).

Apartment building, 379-395 East Main Street, c.1915, Late Gothic Revival details (Photographs 1 and 2). A four-story, yellow-brick apartment building with commercial space on the ground level. The front elevation is divided into three sections by vertical bands of recessed brickwork. The center and left sections are identical, each being four bays wide with a center entry flanked by storefronts which are obscured by recently applied materials. The right section of the facade is three bays wide and has an entry in the left bay. Each entrance is accented by a shallow-peaked pediment with corbelled rakes; a recessed brick panel with diamond motifs, below the pediment; jambs with alternating bands of brick and stone; and a transom with metal muntins in a lattice pattern. The six-over-one windows are symmetrically arranged on the facade; in the end bays of the center and left sections and the middle bay of the right section, the windows have sidelights. Recessed brick spandrels with cast-concrete diamond patterns decorate between floor levels. The structure is topped by a parapet featuring corbelled openings, gabled peaks, polygonal pilasters, and decorative brick panels.

CHARLES A. NICHOLS MEAT MARKET (Liberty Plumbing Supply, Inc.), 388-394 East Main Street, Abram Skaats, Bridgeport, architect, c.1869, Second Empire (Photograph 3). Three-story brick structure with a mansard roof. There are six window bays on the upper floors of the front elevation. Each window has two-over-two sash; a cast-iron segmental-arched pediment which is enhanced by a leaf-and-tongue molding and an applied scroll; and a sill on consoles. The mansard roof has one central dormer with a round-arched pediment on brackets, and two narrow window openings which are now filled in with plywood. A set of three brick chimneys is on both the right and left sides of the roof. The cornice has weathering stains that suggest the former presence of brackets. The first floor features a cast-iron storefront which has an entablature with a molded cornice, modillions, and dentils; paneled cast-iron columns with stylized anthemion capitals; and cast-iron piers composed of paneled blocks. The display windows are filled in with concrete blocks, a recent alteration.

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Description (continued):

FRAENZA BLOCK, 411-419 East Main Street, c.1910, Italianate (Photograph 1). Four-story, red-brick building with cast-concrete trim, flat roof, and a rounded wooden bay at the left corner of the facade. The wooden bay has three narrow windows on each floor and recessed wooden panels with cross-brace appliques. The upper floors are divided into five bays of alternating window and recessed-porch openings. The second- and third-floor windows have plain concrete lintels and sills. Surmounting the fourth-floor windows and porches are caps in the shape of four-centered or Moorish arches, which are an integral part of the yellow-brick frieze. The cornice is highlighted by broad overhanging eaves and sharply tapered corbels. A concrete panel with the molded words "Fraenza Block" is located between the third and fourth floors. The first floor has three storefronts. Modern paneling obscures the original cast-iron storefront treatment, which is in evidence only at the right corner of the facade, where one pilaster is visible.

Ralph's Barber Shop, 420-428 East Main Street, c.1870, Italianate (Photograph 3). Three-and-one-half story, flat-roofed frame building with modern asbestos siding. The upper floors have six window bays grouped into three sets of two. Some of the openings are fitted with two-over-one sash while others have one-over-one sash. Four small, square attic windows appear below the cornice, which is enhanced by brackets with pellet-detailed faces. There are three storefronts with recessed entries and a nearly intact apartment entrance featuring a transom, sidelights, and pronounced corner-block detailing. A three-story, one-bay addition, which dates from the 20th century, is located on the left corner of the facade.

RODNEY CURTIS HOUSE, 425 East Main Street, c.1860, Italianate (Photograph 4). This house has been extensively altered; many of the original features are either removed or obscured. It is two-and-one-half stories high with asbestos-covered walls and a flat roof. The three-bay facade has two modern entrances located in the left bay. The original window arrangement has been preserved on the facade, although all of the sash is modern; small eyebrow window openings in the attic are now fitted with plywood panels.

SAMUEL G. NICHOLSON HOUSE, 432-438 East Main Street, c.1885, Italianate (Photograph 3). Two-and-one-half stories high, aluminum-sided, multi-family frame house. A two-story, three-sided bay window appears in each end bay; there are four apartment entries grouped closely between the end bays. Victorian-period doors have border-pane windows above wooden panels. Sash is predominantly two-over-two. A gabled peak is centered on the front elevation, between broadly overhanging eaves; two small attic windows, with sixteen-pane sash, appear below the peak.

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Description (continued):

440-442 East Main Street, c.1915, Triple-Decker. Three-story, multi-family frame house with a flat roof. Three-bay facade with a double-entry in the left-end bay and porch entries in the corresponding upper bays. Windows are symmetrically placed and have one-over-one sash. Three-story porch in left-end bay has Tuscan columns, gabled pediments at the first and third levels, a plain rail with simple uprights on the first level, and a solid rail with aluminum siding on the upper levels. The exterior is covered with aluminum siding, a recent alteration.

PARKER AND WELLER BUILDING (Almacenes), 453-457 East Main Street, c.1885, Italianate (Photographs 5 and 6). Three-story, brick structure with elaborate cast-iron and wooden trim. Six-bay facade has a recessed apartment entry flanked by modernized storefronts. Window openings have cast-iron lintels detailed with bands of leaf-and-tongue moldings, on consoles with acanthus-leaf faces; wooden sills on consoles; and modern replacement sash. The cornice features a field of white-painted brick with jigsaw brackets, and bead-and-reel, cyma, and rope-turned moldings.

KAESMANN BUILDING (Caguas Grocery), 458-464 East Main Street, c.1885, Italianate with Romanesque influence (Photographs 7 and 8). Three-story, brick structure embellished with brownstone, terra-cotta, cast-iron and pressed-metal trim. Symmetrical seven-bay facade; left corner of the building is cut away and decorated by brownstone quoins and a corbelled brick spandrel. The window openings have lintels and sills of rusticated brownstone, and one-over-one sash. The elaborate cornice has a central gable peak with denticulated rakes above a nameblock "KAESMANN BUILDING" (the name Kaesmann is missing several letters); and a pressed-metal frieze accented by large consoles and panels. A course of terra-cotta tiles exhibiting various abstract floral motifs appears below the cornice. The first floor has a cast-iron storefront divided into four bays by piers with abstract incised motifs and floriated capitals. Above the storefront is an

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entablature consisting of a molded cornice and a frieze of triglyphs, metopes, and ornamental knobs.

MARKS BROTHERS VARIETY STORE (Lechonera La Caguena), 484-496 East Main Street, c.1918, Georgian Revival details (Photograph 7). Three-story, brick structure with cast-iron storefronts on the first floor. The facade is divided into two large sections by three two-story brick piers with cast-concrete trim. Also featured are four two-story, recessed, round-headed arches, with basket-weave brickwork in the spandrels, enframing windows on each floor. Most windows have cast-concrete corner blocks and sills; some have six-over-one sash, others have one-over-one sash. Decorative brick panels with cast-concrete star-like patterns appear below the simple main cornice, which consists of a single soldier course and concrete coping.

Gonzalez Amusement, 498-504 East Main Street, c.1870, Italianate (Photograph 7). Three-story, five-bay frame residence with asbestos siding; storefront addition on the left side of the facade. Three apartment entries are centered on the first floor, each with a Victorian-period glass-and-wood-paneled door. The entries are sheltered by modern canopies on stick supports. Most windows have simply molded frames and two-over-two sash; original paired windows with one-over-one sash appear in the center bay. The cornice has broad overhanging eaves, corner brackets, a chip-edged frieze, and a centered gable peak above a now-blind fanlight with a keyblock detail. Oblong window grills appear in the attic. Alterations to this house include the modern replacement sash on the third floor, the entry shelters, and the siding.

505-519 East Main Street, c.1893, Italianate (Photograph 9). Three-story, frame apartment building with commercial space on the ground floor. This building has been altered but retains its original eight-bay facade arrangement and some of the original storefront details, such as paneled pilasters, and denticulated and bracketed cornice. Other important stylistic features which remain are the tops of four two-story octagonal oriel windows and the bracketed cornice. The building is now clad with asphalt siding and has modern one-over-one sash.

SAMUEL WILEMAN HOUSE (Helado de Coco), 510-512 East Main Street, c.1870, c.1910 storefront addition, Italianate (Photograph 10). Two-and-one-half story frame residence in a box-like form with a five-bay facade. The central entry is protected by a hip-roofed enclosure on square posts with simple jigsaw brackets. The simply framed windows have six-over-six or six-over-one sash. Eyebrow windows in attic are fitted with three-pane

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Description (Continued):

sash. This house has a flat roof, broad overhanging eaves, and two inside-end chimneys with flared tops. Alterations to the exterior include asbestos siding on the main house, and a one-story addition on the left side which is used for commercial purposes.

FRANK M. BULKLEY HOUSE, 523-529 East Main Street, c.1890, Queen Anne (Photograph 9). Two-and-one-half story, wood-frame, multi-family dwelling. The facade is dominated by two cross-gabled wings with cutaway corners below jigsaw brackets. Window openings are symmetrically arranged, and most contain their original twenty-over-one sash; attic windows have border-pane sash. There are two entries in the center and one in each end bay; all feature 19th-century wood-paneled doors. Each entry has a porch with ornamental millwork: three-sided center porch has a front-facing gable peak and turned posts; end-bay porches have solid arched valances, turned posts, and plain rails on square uprights.

Sanitary Plumbing Supply, 528-534 East Main Street, c.1915, Neo-Classical details (Photograph 11). Three-story commercial building with yellow-brick facade, cast-concrete and pressed-metal trim, and red-brick side and rear walls. Five-bay facade; window openings have cast-concrete lintels and retain their original one-over-one sash. Among the Classically inspired ornamental features of this building are cast-concrete quoins, string-courses, and a richly embellished pressed-metal cornice with a paneled frieze, dentils and modillions. Three recessed apartment entrances are grouped in the center; the walls of the foyer have ornamental pressed-metal panels. Two storefronts with a new signboard and plate-glass display windows are on the first floor.

SAMUEL REID HOWE HOUSE (Noble Shoe Repair), 533-539 East Main Street, c.1889 Queen Anne rear, c.1910 front. Front addition: three-story brick building with an aluminum-sided exterior and a six-bay facade. This addition has modern replacement sash; broad overhanging eaves; and modern storefronts. The rear portion of this building is a cross-plan house with intersecting gable roofs. It is covered with asphalt siding, and retains many of its original stylistic features, such as fish-scale shingles and a border-pane attic window in the gable on the right elevation; a cutaway corner beneath a jigsaw bracket on the left elevation; and bargeboard with wood-block appliques.

540-546 East Main Street, c.1915, Neo-Classical details (Photograph 11). Three-story commercial structure with a five-bay yellow-brick facade and red-brick side and rear walls. Window openings are symmetrically placed on the facade and feature cast-concrete sills, lintels with key stone details,

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Description (continued):

and one-over-one sash. This building is finished at the top with a fancy pressed-metal cornice over a paneled frieze with stylized triglyphs and metopes, dentils, and modillions with floriated faces. Two storefronts on the ground level have modern paneling in the window areas and an ornamental pressed-metal entablature with a plain frieze and a molded cornice. Between the two storefronts is an apartment entry.

MAURICE O'DONOVAN BUILDING, 548-562 East Main Street, c.1895, High Victorian Italianate (Photograph 12). Three-story commercial building constructed of brick with an array of contrasting trim materials, such as granite, pressed-metal, and terra-cotta. The facade is divided into four major bays, each bay demarcated by a vertical band of alternating blocks of dark- and light-colored stone. The storefronts on the first floor are obscured by modern paneling. A denticulated cornice separates the first-floor level from the upper floors. Above the first story, each bay has a two-story wooden oriel window with paneled spandrels, and windows with rough-faced stone lintels and sills. Stone stringcourses accent the front elevation. The top of this building is enhanced by a band of checkerboard-pattern brickwork, terra-cotta tiles, and a pressed-metal cornice which features a paneled frieze, small brackets, and large brackets with acanthus-detailed faces and finial knobs.

GEORGE E. SCHOFIELD BUILDING (Luis Furniture and other stores), 563-585 East Main Street, c.1895, Eclectic (Photograph 13). A large, three-story, brick commercial block with eighteen bays on the front elevation. Simple rectangular window openings are symmetrically arranged and have rough-faced granite lintels and sills, and one-over-one sash. The wooden cornice features a band of dentils and sits atop a brick corbel table. The storefronts on the first floor have a new brick veneer on the walls and modern aluminum display windows.

CHARLES RUPERT'S SECOND BUILDING (Antioch Church of God), 587-593 East Main Street, c.1890, Italianate (Photograph 13). Three-and-one-half story, wood-frame structure with clapboarded side walls and an asphalt-sided facade. Six-bay facade; windows have heavy, flat, molded lintels and old two-over-two sash. Eyebrow windows are tucked under the eaves. This building has a hip roof and a front-facing center gable peak, a molded wooden cornice, and broad overhanging eaves. A centered double entry is flanked by two storefronts obscured by wood paneling.

BARRS BLOCK (Buy-Rite Supermarket), 588-612 East Main Street, c.1874, High Victorian Italianate (Photograph 14). Four-story, brick commercial block whose facade has a rich display of textural detailing. The front elevation

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Description (continued):

is divided into six bays. Each bay is framed by full-height brick piers with alternating recesses that imitate quoins. The verticality of this building is emphasized by the use of superimposed Classical orders, a different window style per floor: flat-arched on the second floor, segmental-arched on the third floor, and round-arched with keystones on the fourth floor. All windows feature brownstone sills, slender pilasters on the sides, and two-over-two sash. Recessed brick panels mark the intermediate floor levels. Friezes of herringbone-pattern brick and brick corbels appear beneath the molded wooden cornice. The original cast-iron storefronts are partially obscured by modern materials. Visible storefront details include piers with stylized floral capitals and a guilloche molding in the cornice.

CHARLES RUPERT'S FIRST BUILDING (Jackson Brothers 3), 601-603 East Main Street, c.1885, Italianate (Photograph 13). Three-and-one-half story, wood-frame structure with clapboarded exterior. A center double-entry is flanked by two storefronts which are obscured by new wood paneling. Upper floors are divided into six bays. Windows appear with molded flat lintels, some two-over-two and one-over-one sash. Plain frieze with wood-block appliques above the third-floor windows. Broad overhanging eaves; center gable peak on front elevation; hip roof.

614-616 East Main Street, c.1883, Italianate (Photograph 14). Three-story brick building with a three-bay front elevation. Window openings have stone lintels and sills and are fitted with plywood panels. Elaborate pressed-metal frieze with brackets, bosses, and panels is located beneath a molded wooden cornice which has sawtooth edging. A transomed entry is to the right of a storefront with new brick walls and a roll-down security door.

Took's Restaurant, 618-620 East Main Street, c.1884 main body, c.1915 rear ell, Italianate (Photograph 14). Three-story, wood-frame structure with asphalt siding. The first floor of the front elevation is covered with imitation stonework panels and has modern entries in each end bay. The upper floors each have three window bays, some two-over-two sash. The cornice has large jigsaw brackets at the ends and small brackets in between. Multiple fires, Winter of 1984-84, have all but destroyed the building.

REINECKE BUILDING (Calypso Cafe), 652-654 East Main Street, 1886, Queen Anne (Photographs 15 and 16). Two-and-one-half story brick structure with an asymmetrical facade and terra-cotta trim. Window openings have splayed brick lintels, stone sills, and old sash with border-pane uppers. Ornamental brick patera with checkerboard and abstract floral patterns on second floor. The top of the building is enriched by two courses of terra-cotta tiles and a molded wooden cornice. The hip roof has a front-facing gable-

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Description (continued):

roofed dormer surmounted by a pedimented parapet on corbelled brick bases. A sunburst-shaped name stone ("Reinecke Building"), and a shallow, round-arched, four-part window filled with multi-pane sash appear on the dormer. A second multi-gable dormer with terra-cotta tiles and corbelled brick piers is located on the right elevation facing Hamilton Street. The brick chimneys have corbelled tops. The altered storefronts now feature brick-veneer and wood-paneled walls.

Caribe Furniture and Appliances, 657-667 East Main Street, c.1880, Italianate. Two-story, wood-frame building with an eight-bay facade. Windows are plainly framed and have mixed sash, some six-over-six, some one-over-one. The wooden cornice has jigsaw brackets and large corner consoles. Three storefronts on the first floor have recessed entries; an apartment entry is located off-center to the right.

681-689 East Main Street, c.1888 Italianate rear, c.1915 front addition. Three-story frame building with flat roof. The rear portion of this structure has aluminum siding and features paired two-over-two windows, eyebrow windows, and broad overhanging eaves. The front addition has aluminum siding, an asymmetrical facade with modernized display windows, recessed porch bays on the upper floors, and predominantly one-over-one sash.

ENGELMANN BLOCK (Palace Pool Room and other stores), 690-700 East Main Street, c.1910, Italianate (Photograph 17). Four-story, flat-roofed commercial building with yellow-brick facade featuring cast-concrete and pressed-metal ornamentation, and red-brick for side and rear walls. Windows appear in pairs and are trimmed with flat-arched, cast-concrete lintels and spandrels, and one-over-one sash. Two archways with cast-concrete quoins extend the full height of the building and enframe recessed porches. Intricately detailed iron porch railings are on each floor. A large pressed-metal cornice, with a plain frieze, dentil course, and brackets with pyramid-shaped finials, crowns this structure.

DENNIS COLGAN BUILDING (Carniceria Latina Meat Market), 727-735 East Main Street, c.1885, Eclectic (Photographs 18, 19 and 20). Three-story brick building with a nine-bay facade. The window openings have stone lintels with incised vine-like and circular patterns; one-over-one sash. The wall surface is ornamented by stringcourses, including one with guilloche patterns on the third floor, and by floriated terra-cotta tiles. The elaborate cornice features a combination of Classical moldings, including egg-and-dart and the Greek meander. There are exposed sections of the original cast-iron storefronts on the first floor. Some of the cast-iron details include piers with incised floral motifs, floriated capitals, and a frieze of bosses.

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Description (continued):

HENRY LONG HOUSE (El Mezon), 741-747 East Main Street, c.1855, Italianate. Three-story, wood-frame structure in a box-like form and with storefronts on the first floor. Five windows appear on the second floor and four on the third floor; modern two-over-two sash with horizontal muntins. Broad overhanging eaves; flat roof. The exterior is now covered with aluminum siding.

BRIDGEPORT BRASS COMPANY (City of Bridgeport Welfare Department), 774 East Main Street, c.1900, Industrial (Photograph 21). That portion of the complex that fronts on East Main Street is three stories in height and constructed of brick. The building has an overall grid design with full-height brick piers, three-part window infill, soldier courses and a corbel table along the cornice line. The right elevation (facing Walter Street) is dominated by horizontal brick curtain walls which alternate with uninterrupted window bands. The rear portion of the complex faces Pembroke Street and is also constructed of brick. It is one-story in height and has three street-facing gables, segmental-arched windows in the gables, concrete trim, and monitor roofs. On the same lot but excluded from the district is a one-story modern factory with metal sash.

NONCONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

A & S Auto Parts, 410-416 East Main Street, small, 1966 two-story yellow-brick commercial building, metal sash.

487-489 East Main Street, 1942 one-story gas station which has been remodelled into a commercial establishment.

Hamilton Chevron, 624 East Main Street, 1953 gas station.

La Rosa Del Monte Express Inc., 682 East Main Street, small one-story brick building, with small fixed window to left of entry. Built in 1940.

END OF DESCRIPTION

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" 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

Criteria A, C

Specific dates See Inventory, Item 7 **Builder/Architect** See Inventory, Item 7

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

The East Main Street Historic District is significant because of the architectural quality of its buildings (Criterion A). Some of the district's buildings are among the finest examples of Victorian commercial architecture in Connecticut. Among these are the stylish High Victorian Italianate Barr's Block (Photograph 14) and polychrome-masonry O'Donovan Building (Photograph 12); the handsome Italianate Parker and Weller Building (Photographs 5 and 6); the Kaesmann Building, an eclectic blend of Italianate features and the corbels and rough-surfaced masonry suggestive of a Romanesque influence (Photographs 7 and 8); and the Queen Anne-style Reinecke Building (Photographs 15 and 16). The district also includes buildings which are less striking than these outstanding examples but which are nevertheless significant as representatives of their type: the buildings at 587-603 East Main Street (Photograph 13), which illustrate a transitional step between residential and commercial Italianate architecture; the Second Empire-style Nichols Building (Photograph 3); the buildings at 528-534 and 540-546 East Main Street, which have Neo-Classical cornices (Photograph 11); and the two early 20th-century apartment buildings at 371-377 and 379-395 East Main Street which utilize Gothic-inspired detailing (Photograph 1). Another factor contributing to the architectural significance of the district is the extent and diversity of elaborate architectural ornament, ranging from decorative terra cotta tiles (Photographs 8, 16, and 19) to rich wooden cornice moldings (Photograph 6) to cast-iron storefront elements (Photograph 20). These details illustrate how Victorian builders exploited a variety of materials to fulfill that period's aesthetic taste for complex ornament. Finally, the district's architectural significance goes beyond the strength of individual details or buildings: with its high overall concentration of historic buildings, the district exhibits the visual qualities and spatial arrangements that are characteristic of nineteenth-century commercial areas. The large, diversely detailed, closely spaced commercial and apartment buildings, taken together, recreate in part the appearance of a Connecticut city's business center of a hundred years ago.

The district also is significant because its buildings illustrate the historical development of East Bridgeport (Criterion A). Unlike most of Connecticut's urban commercial areas, East Main Street did not evolve from a colonial-period town center, but rather grew quite suddenly as the result of P.T. Barnum and William Noble's ambitious scheme to create an industrial center east of the Pequonnock River. As factories located in the area, the workers who sought employment there required both housing and places to shop. East Main Street became the commercial spine of this industrial community, and the buildings which stand there today reflect one aspect of the area's ethnic workingclass heritage.

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Barnum, P.Y. Struggles and Triumphs. Buffalo, New York, 1882.

Bridgeport Board of Fire Underwriters. Tariff of Rates and Rules Adopted.
Bridgeport, 1892.

(continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 16

Quadrangle name Bridgeport

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References see continuation sheet

A

Zone	Easting			Northing			

B

Zone	Easting			Northing			

C

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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheets

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

N/A

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bruce Clouette & Matthew Roth, Partners Edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Historic Resource Consultants date April 1, 1984

street & number The Colt Armory
55 Van Dyke Avenue telephone (203) 566-3005

city or town 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 1/10/85

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date

2-21-85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

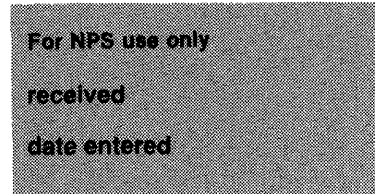
date

Chief of Registration

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Significance (continued):

Historical Development

The development of East Bridgeport was largely brought about by General William Noble and Phineas T. Barnum, Bridgeport's most famous and influential citizen of the 19th century. Together these ambitious businessmen were able to create and capitalize upon an industrial community in East Bridgeport. East Bridgeport has relatively flat terrain which was well-suited for agriculture. It remained sparsely settled farmland while Black Rock Harbor, with its good natural port features, helped to concentrate coastal trade, business and residential centers to the west of East Bridgeport. Gradually Black Rock Harbor lost its dominant position as a port facility to Bridgeport Harbor, which is just east of Black Rock Harbor and was able to accommodate large steamships in its deeper waters. The Pequonnock River was for a long time a natural barrier, but East Bridgeport could not defend its rural character against the increasing demand for developable real estate, which spilled over the boundaries of Bridgeport and into East Bridgeport.

By 1836 Reverend Birdsey G. Noble had purchased approximately fifty acres for development purposes, bounded by what are now Pulaski and East Main Streets and Barnum Avenue. Realizing the importance of overcoming the travel barriers between Bridgeport and the East Side, the Rev. Noble sought a charter from the State Legislature to build a bridge extending East Washington Avenue on the West Side over the river to his property on the East Side. The charter was denied, temporarily halting the Rev. Noble's plans. After the death of Reverend Noble in 1849, his son William H. Noble conquered the problem of isolation by securing a charter to erect a footbridge that would hang alongside of the New York and New Haven Railroad bridge across the river; he built the bridge in 1850. Land owned by Noble and others then became marketable as building lots. Noble subdivided his property into streets and houselots and had sold several parcels before entering into a business partnership with Phineas T. Barnum.

Barnum greatly influenced the shape and character East Bridgeport was to take. Whereas Noble's attitude toward the East Side seemed to be that its value lay in its proximity to the prospering West Side, Barnum saw the opportunity to create a new community in its own right. Barnum schemed to increase the value of land on the East Side, and thus his profits, by encouraging manufacturers to locate there. With an industrial base of its own, East Bridgeport could attract an even larger population and consequently increase the demand for his property.

The first phase of Barnum's plan called for building a factory and finding tenants for it. His new factory (not extant) on Williams Street was com-

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Significance (continued):

pleted in 1852 and leased to a group of carriage-makers. The second phase was to finance the relocation of manufactories. The first company that Barnum attempted to relocate was a clock producer, Terry and Barnum Company, but the financial collapse of the company intervened. Barnum then entered into a venture with the Jerome Clock Company of New Haven, but this firm also failed. Barely escaping personal bankruptcy from the Jerome involvement, Barnum finally met with success when he induced the Wheeler and Wilson Sewing Machine Company to occupy the buildings that had been intended for clock production. Wheeler and Wilson's move in 1856 marked a turning point in the development of East Bridgeport: the first establishment of a large manufacturer.

Following Wheeler and Wilson, another sewing machine maker was convinced to move to the area -- Elias Howe and his Howe Sewing Machine Company. Howe purchased from Barnum a parcel of land between what are now Howe and Burroughs Streets. Thus began the concentration of sewing machine producers in East Bridgeport, soon to be accompanied by other types of industry. Primary-metal production and hardware manufacture were represented by Bridgeport Brass Company, included in this nomination as the building at 774 East Main Street. Bridgeport Brass began as a manufacturer of hoop-skirt frames for then-fashionable apparel designs. It manufactured kerosene lamps after improved petroleum distillation made that fuel available in the 1850s and 1860s. Bridgeport Brass continued to expand its product lines in response to new market opportunities. The factory building in the district dates from c.1900 and suggests the long-time presence and importance of the company in East Bridgeport. Other manufacturers of metal products included the Consolidated Ashcroft Hancock Company (another brass producer), the Union Metallic Cartridge Company and Winchester Arms. Winchester responded to Barnum's blandishments by relocating from New Haven in 1866, only to return to New Haven after just four years.

The earliest buildings in the district date from the years when Barnum and Noble's scheme had not yet met full success. The Henry Long House, 741-747 East Main Street, was erected in c.1855 by a coachmaker who probably had come to work in Barnum's first factory. Rodney Curtis, who built his house (Photograph 4) in c.1860, was a shoemaker who came to East Bridgeport in response to the growing market there for his trade. The later dwellings at 523-529 East Main (c. 1890, Queen Anne; Photograph 9, right) and 440-442 East Main (c.1915, Triple Decker) illustrate the continuing suitability of multi-family housing in this industrial neighborhood. In addition to these purely residential structures, the people of East Bridgeport could find lodging in the upper-floor apartments that were above all the stores.

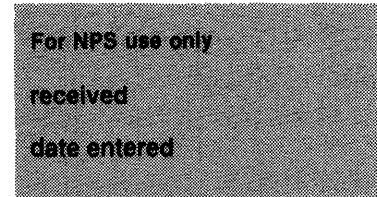
The thousands of new residents in East Bridgeport represented a promising retail market. Downtown Bridgeport was too far away for convenient shop-

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Significance (continued):

ping, so markets and dry goods stores flourished along East Main Street. At the same time, businesses on East Main Street remained tied to the immediate local market, and the new commercial area never vied with downtown for commercial pre-eminence. Thus, development pressures were not so great as to eliminate completely the residential use along East Main. And the upper floors of the commercial blocks did not hold offices, company headquarters and stores, as in most downtowns, but instead, as stated above, housed workers and their families. The secondary status of the East Main Street commercial area also permitted easier entry into trade, and many of the retail businesses and speculative housing ventures were started by people who worked in other jobs most of the time. For instance, Dennis Colgan, who built the block at 727-735 East Main (Photograph 18), was a bridge tender for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. The successful merchants were able to replace their original frame buildings with large, brick commercial blocks. The Kaesmann Building (Photographs 7 and 8), for instance, replaced an earlier frame structure which had housed George Kaesmann's saloon.

The buildings in the district also illustrate the changing ethnic character of East Bridgeport. The earliest businesses, such as Curtis' cobbler shop and Nichol's meat market (Photograph 3, right), were run by Yankees. But most of the factory jobs were filled by Irish and German immigrants, the largest groups among a multi-ethnic population. In 1887 the Bridgeport Standard claimed that "Barr's Block on East Main Street teems with representatives of all nations."¹ Expanding opportunities for retail trade, along with the tendency of the immigrants to patronize the establishments of their co-ethnics, soon gave rise to new businesses run by non-Yankees. Besides Kaesmann's saloon, the businesses run by German-Americans included George Reinecke's meat market (Photographs 15 and 16, 652-654 East Main Street) and Charles Ruppert's bakery. Ruppert built two buildings (Photograph 13, 587-593 and 601-603 East Main Street), profiting as a landlord as well as a baker. In addition to Dennis Colgan's building, evidence of Irish-American entrepreneurship is found in the Maurice O'Donovan Building (Photograph 12, 548-562 east Main Street), which housed O'Donovan's furniture store, and the building at 505-519 East Main (Photograph 9), where John H. Colgan operated a meat market. The late 19th century brought further ethnic diversity as people from southern and eastern Europe came in search of factory jobs, and the businesses of East Main Street continued to reflect the makeup of the neighborhood. Antonio Fraenza, an Italian-American saloonkeeper, erected in c.1910 the commercial block that bears his name (Photograph 1, 411-419 East Main Street).

The East Main Street commercial area flourished through the early decades of the 20th century, as industry continued to prosper and provide employment for the local residents. Marks Brothers Variety Store (Photograph 7, 484-

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Significance (continued):

496 East Main Street), is the latest store/apartment building in the district, erected in 1918. The 20th century also brought a new type of development to East Main Street. The two buildings at 371-377 and 379-395 East Main Street (Photographs 1 and 2), both c.1915, were built as apartment houses, without any ground-floor retail component as found in all the other large brick structures of the district.

Since World War II East Bridgeport has experienced the loss of much of its industry. The Bridgeport Brass building at 774 East Main now contains city offices instead of industrial production. The Howe sewing-machine complex, which stood one block west of East Main Street, was razed to accommodate a jai-alai fronton. The lack of post-war economic dynamism has caused hardship for much of the community, and it has also brought a stop to the construction of new buildings on East Main Street. As a result, many fine structures remain on which to build a new, post-industrial community that will retain tangible reminders of its past.

Architectural Significance

Although the name of only one architect responsible for a building in the district has come down to us, several of the district's structures are of such striking appearance that they must be considered outstanding works by master designers. The building at 453-457 East Main Street (Photograph 5), built c.1885 as a replacement for Parker & Weller's earlier wood-frame drugstore, is a fine example of an Italianate business block. It exhibits some key elements of that style -- the bracketed cornice, window hoodmolds, and the use of the segmental-arched shape -- yet it goes beyond the ordinary Italianate commercial structure in several respects. The symmetry and overall simplicity of the facade forms a pleasing contrast to the complex, fine-scale detailing in the window and cornice trim (Photograph 6); the use of acanthus-leaf carving on the hoodmold consoles, as a continuous band in the hoodmolds themselves, and on the cornice brackets gives a unity to the ornamental scheme; and the repetition of design elements in two different scales (the bead and rope-turn moldings) indicate that the building was the product of a concept and not just the random accumulation of detail.

Barr's Block (588-612 East Main Street; Photograph 14), c.1874, is a vigorous example of the more ornate, more three-dimensional High Victorian Italianate mode. Recessed panels, brick corbels, quoins, deep window reveals, prominent window hoodmolds, and engaged columns create the sculptural effect which was so central to the style. The combination of round, segmental, and flat-arched shapes (the latter two in their stilted-arch form) introduces a complexity and variety distinct from earlier Italianate modes and is typical of the Victorian taste for intricate decorative treatments.

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Significance (continued):

Departing even further from historical precedence is the c.1895 O'Donovan Building (Photograph 12) at 548-562 East Main Street. Although the building has a bracketed cornice which refelects the pervasive Italianate influence in late 19th-century commercial buildings, the principal architectural effect comes from the polychrome surfaces: the alternating light and dark stone in the piers and the contrasting brick, terra cotta, and painted wood and sheet metal. The Victorian aesthetic is exemplified in this building by color, materials, and diversity of ornamental sources. The bay windows reflect the residential use of East Main Street's upper floors: along with the bay windows and recessed porches (Photographs 1 and 17) in other district buildings, they give the district a slightly different character from those commercial areas where halls or offices predominated as upper-story uses.

The Kaesmann Building, c.1885, at 458-464 East Main Street (Phs. 7 and 8) is a similar though less colorful design. It has the bracketed cornice and shallow pediment of Italianate inspiration, but its strong architectural statement has more to do with the rough-surfaced masonry in the quoins and window trim, the large scale of the highly stylized cornice elements, and the terra cotta enrichment. The special treatment given to the corner bay, such as the corbelling below the window, shows that this building was designed for this specific location.

The last and perhaps most unusual of the district's outstanding designs is the Queen Anne-style Reinecke Building (652-654 East Main Street; Photographs 15 and 16), erected in 1886 as a replacement for George Reinecke's earlier wood-frame meat market. The building is significant because it so thoroughly incorporates essential Queen Anne features, not only in the detailing, but in the overall asymmetric massing of the structure as well. Combined with a variety of surface textures (brick walls, ornamental brick patterns, terra cotta panels and moldings) is the irregularity of the facade (with a surprising large brickwork medallion where one might expect a window) and the complexity of the roofline, created by various dormers, the parapet, and odd-placed chimneys.

These distinguished buildings may have the most individual architectural presence, but what makes the district a coherent whole is that the structures in between are also interesting, either as examples of particular styles or as buildings with especially notable details. Most of the houses which are interspersed among the commercial buildings illustrate the Italian Villa influence: flat or near-flat roofs with protruding eaves, a block-like

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Significance (continued):

form, eyebrow attic windows, and an occasional bay window or shallow-peaked pediment (Photographs 3, 4, and 10). Because all of these Italianate residences are somewhat altered from their original appearance, cornice brackets do not appear. That this house design could be scaled up for commercial buildings is illustrated by Charles Rupert's c.1885 buildings at 587 through 603 East Main Street (Photograph 13), large, 3 1/2-story wood-frame Villa-style structures which housed businesses such as Rupert's bakery and the Farrell Saloon on the ground floor with tenements above.

Typical thoroughly commercial Italianate blocks are found throughout the district, with their bracketed cornices and repetitious facades representing the most common type of Victorian commercial structure (Photographs 3, 9 and 14). Two late examples (Photograph 1 and 17) are distinguished by their use of recessed porch bays, with the Fraenza Block's pointed-arch openings a relatively unusual feature.

The Second Empire style is well-represented by the building at 388-394 East Main Street (Photograph 1), with its characteristic mansard roof and fancy window hoodmolds. It was designed by Abram Skaats, whose primary occupation was patternmaker, perhaps for one of Bridgeport's architectural ornament firms. Other styles represented in the district include Neo-Classical (or possibly Georgian Revival-derived) cornices (Photograph 11) and Late Gothic Revival-inspired features (Photographs 1 and 2).

Three of the district's buildings (371-377, 379-395 and 484-496 East Main Street; Photographs 1 and 7) are typical of the commercial architecture of the 1910s and 1920s, when historical style became almost entirely subordinate to decorative masonry. Although these three have clear Gothic or Georgian Revival allusions, their distinctive appearance is derived principally from the texture and pattern of the bricks and the contrasting concrete trim. Aside from the geometric patterns in the brickwork and the minimal stylistic reference in the parapets, these three are plain and utilitarian designs.

The presence of examples of several particular historical styles adds to the district's architectural importance in a further way: the resulting variety is characteristic of 19th-century commercial areas. Diversity in style, together with richly varied details, the close-together siting of the structures, the minimal set-back from the street, and the fairly consistent three or four story height of most of the buildings define streetscapes (Photographs 3 and 7 in particular) which produce a distinct sense of time and

(continued)

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Significance (continued):

place. These streetscapes not only recreate in part the historic appearance of East Bridgeport but also something of the appearance of the many similar downtown areas which once were found throughout urban Connecticut.

The single factor which most distinguishes this group of buildings from the state's other historic commercial areas may well be the quality and extent of architectural detail found throughout the district. Rare cast-iron storefront columns are found on some of the district's buildings (Photographs 7 and 20) and are clearly apparent beneath later accretions on others. Highly decorative sheet-metal cornices, terra cotta (Photograph 19), cast-iron hoodmolds, and cast-concrete trim are among the other forms of architectural ornament found in abundance in the district, illustrating the taste for diverse and intricate enrichment which was in some ways the hallmark of late 19th-century design. What made such elaborateness possible, however, was not only the aesthetics of the period but also changes in technology and manufacturing which led to relatively inexpensive machine-made ornament. Power woodworking machines which mass-produced elements from jigs or other patterns allowed fancy details like cornice moldings to be produced far cheaper than hand sawing or carving. Similarly, cast iron provided an easily assembled, inexpensive and partly off-the-shelf alternative to stone storefronts or window heads, and machine-molded sheet-metal cornices and terra-cotta tiles and moldings could add low-priced variety to any building.

Bridgeport itself was a major center for mass-produced architectural ornament. Paliser & Paliser produced freight-car loads of bargeboard, brackets, and porch turnings like those at 523-529 East Main Street (Photograph 9, right), and Pacific Ironworks was one of the leading manufacturers of cast-iron storefronts, including at least two in the district. Even East Main Street itself had a firm involved with architectural ornament: one early tenant at 379-395 East Main Street was the Intercity Cornice and Roofing Company. But whether produced locally or not, the rich details on the buildings along this stretch of East Main Street constitute a valuable historic resource, one which provides variety and enjoyment for the passerby and insight into the tastes and building conventions of the late 19th and early 20th century.

1. Bridgeport Standard, August 22, 1887.

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- C: 18/652560/4560620
- D: 18/652560/4560080
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Geographical Data (continued):

Verbal Boundary Description:

The district boundary is as shown on the accompanying map, which is based upon the lot lines and numbers shown on the maps in the Bridgeport Assessor's records. In the following description, the notation Map-Block-Lot Number is used to describe individual parcels.

Beginning on the west side of East Main Street at the northeast corner of Parcel 2-815-14 (741-747 East Main Street), the district boundary runs westerly to the northwest corner of that lot, then runs southerly following the rear property lines of all the lots which front on the west side of East Main Street until encountering Evitts Lane (371-377 through 741-747 East Main Street), crossing in a straight line the intervening streets: Clarence Street, Pulaski Street, Burroughs Street, Seymour Street, Howe Street, the I-95 Access Road, and Nichols Street.

The boundary runs easterly along the northern edge of Evitts Lane to East Main Street, then turns and runs northerly along the western edge of East Main Street to a point opposite the southwest corner of Parcel 11-825-20 (388-394 East Main Street). It crosses East Main Street to that corner and continues easterly along the southern line of Lot 20 to the southeast corner of that lot.

From the southeast corner of Lot 20 the boundary runs northerly along the rear property lines of all the lots which front on the east side of East Main Street until reaching Water Street (388-394 through 724-732 East Main Street), crossing in a straight line the intervening streets: Nichols Street, Cedar Street, Steuben Street, and Hamilton Street.

The boundary crosses Water Street and then runs easterly, northerly and westerly along the perimeter of the larger former Bridgeport Brass building at 774 East Main Street (Parcel 3-818-1), continuing across East Main Street to the first point.

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Geographical Data (continued):

Boundary Justification:

The delineation of the district boundary was based upon the visual and spatial isolation of this group of historic structures from other historic resources in East Bridgeport. To the north and south, the four-track elevated railroad right-of-way and the I-95 highway corridor form wide barriers which set the district apart from other commercial areas along East Main Street. The presence of adjacent vacant lots make these physical breaks even more decisive. On the east side of East Main Street two buildings of relatively recent construction which lie on the northern and southern edges were excluded because they made no contribution to the historical or architectural significance of the district.

Vacant lots also interrupted the district along the side streets which run off East Main Street to the east and west. The district's concentration of distinguished buildings would be lost if the boundary were enlarged by leaping over intervening vacant lots and noncontributing structures so as to link the district to the extensive areas of nineteenth and early twentieth-century housing which characterize all of East Bridgeport. Moreover, since the significance of this district primarily derives from the quality of its commercial architecture and its historical associations with the commercial development of the area, the thematic coherence of the district would be lessened by such an enlargement.

East Main Street Historic District

Bridgeport, Connecticut

