

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hillhouse Avenue Historic District is located in New Haven, Connecticut, a medium-sized New England city located on the northern coast of Long Island Sound approximately 100 miles northeast of New York City. The district includes 24 major structures on 18 acres of land lying roughly one-half mile north of the New Haven Green. All but one of these major structures were erected between 1800 and 1929 and contribute to the historical and/or architectural significance of the district.

The district encompasses roughly two large city blocks flanked by four heavily trafficked thoroughfares: Whitney Avenue to the east, Trumbull Street to the south, Prospect Street to the west and Sachem Street to the north. The principal focus of the district is Hillhouse Avenue. Originally laid out in 1792 under the auspices of James Hillhouse in anticipation of the area's development as a fashionable, upper-class residential locus, the northern half of this extremely broad, quarter-mile long stately boulevard bisects the district on a basically north/south axis.

The landscape in the district rises gradually from Trumbull Street toward a prominent knoll overlooking the northern side of Sachem Street, which is currently dominated by Yale University's twentieth-century Pierson-Sage complex, dominated in turn by Philip Johnson's 1964 Kline Biology Tower. Near the mid-points of the lots fronting the eastern and western sides of Hillhouse Avenue, the landscape begins to slope gradually downward toward Whitney Avenue and Prospect Street respectively.

The district's structures form an unusually well-preserved assemblage of major nineteenth- and early twentieth-century revivalist and Picturesque architectural modes. Styles represented include Greek Revival, Italian Villa, High Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne, Richardsonian Romanesque, Neoclassical and Colonial Revival. The grand scale and siting of the majority of these buildings, in conjunction with the careful attention to proportion, massing and detailing exhibited in the design of their various components, clearly mark them as the works of professional architects. Most buildings are set well back from the street and each other on generous, well maintained lots; most Hillhouse Avenue lots continue to run the full depth of their respective blocks. Surviving landscape features, such as broad lawns and cast-iron fences set atop low-cut stone walls along much of Prospect Street and Whitney Avenue help to maintain the district's nineteenth- and early twentieth-century aura of gracious opulence.

Brick and stucco form the principal exterior finish materials for buildings in the district, although significant examples of buildings featuring exteriors executed in cut stone and wood are also present (see photographs 8 and 12, for examples). A wide variety of decorative exterior features survive on district buildings, including prominent, classically derived, columned entry porticos; bracketed cornices, window sills, and pediments in cut stone or wood; and decorative cornice moldings. Late nineteenth-century brick buildings often feature significant examples of terra-cotta and/or polychromatic brick detailing on their exterior walls. When considered as a group, and because of the wealth of variation in massing, detailing and color, the district's buildings provide the viewer with an unusually rich collage depicting the full range of development of high-style American residential architecture between the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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Location (cont.)

The Hillhouse Avenue Historic District includes properties with the following street addresses and tax lot numbers. Street numbers and tax lot numbers were derived from the New Haven Assessor's Records and Maps. Street numbers were field checked.

Tax Lot Number (Map/Block/Lot)

Street Number

Hillhouse Avenue

244-332-3	24
244-365-1	27
244-364-8	28
244-364-7	30
244-365-2	31
244-364-6	34
244-365-3	35
244-365-4	37
244-364-5	38
244-365-5	43
244-364-4	46
244-365-6	47
244-365-7	51
244-364-3	52
244-365-8	55
244-364-2	56

Trumbull Street

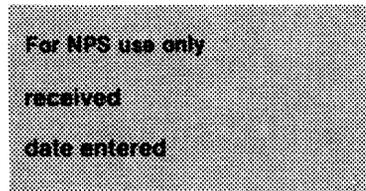
244-365-13	79
244-365-14	83
244-365-15	85
244-364-9	87
244-364-10	89
244-364-1	91

Whitney Avenue

244-365-12	110
244-365-11	114
244-365-10	122
244-365-9	158

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Owner of Property (cont.)

<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Tax Lot Number</u>	<u>Owner and Mailing Address</u>
24 Hillhouse Avenue	244-332-3	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
27 Hillhouse Avenue	244-365-1	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
28 Hillhouse Avenue	244-364-8	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
30 Hillhouse Avenue	244-364-7	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
31 Hillhouse Avenue	244-365-2	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
34 Hillhouse Avenue	244-364-6	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
35 Hillhouse Avenue	244-365-3	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
37 Hillhouse Avenue	244-365-4	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
38 Hillhouse Avenue	244-364-5	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520

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Owner of Property (cont.)

<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Tax Lot Number</u>	<u>Owner and Mailing Address</u>
43 Hillhouse Avenue	244-365-5	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
46 Hillhouse Avenue	244-364-4	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
47 Hillhouse Avenue	244-365-6	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
51 Hillhouse Avenue	244-365-7	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
52 Hillhouse Avenue	244-364-3	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
55 Hillhouse Avenue	244-365-8	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
56 Hillhouse Avenue	244-364-2	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
79 Trumbull Street	244-365-13	Elliott H. Perlman 100 Whitney Avenue New Haven, CT 06510
83 Trumbull Street	244-365-14	John C. Flanagan 45 Brookhaven Road Hamden, CT 06514
85 Trumbull Street	244-365-15	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520

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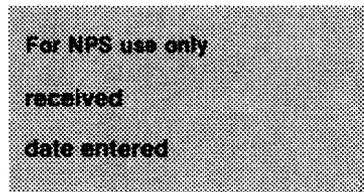
Page 3

Owner of Property (cont.)

<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Tax Lot Number</u>	<u>Owner and Mailing Address</u>
87 Trumbull Street	244-364-9	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
89 Trumbull Street	244-364-10	Yale University 1 05 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
91 Trumbull Street	244-364-1	Yale University 105 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
110 Whitney Avenue	244-365-12	James J. Resnik, et al Grove Hill Road Woodbridge, CT 06525
114 Whitney Avenue	244-365-11	New Haven Colony Historical Society 114 Whitney Avenue New Haven, CT 06511
122 Whitney Avenue	244-365-10	Yale University 1 05 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520
158 Whitney Avenue	244-365-9	Yale University 1 05 Wall Street New Haven, CT 06520

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Representation in Existing Surveys (cont.)

Title: New Haven Historic Resources Inventory, Phase I; Central New Haven

Date: 1982

Depository: Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, CT

Type of Survey: Local

Title: Historic American Buildings Survey

Date: 1966

Depository: Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Type of Survey: Federal

Title: James Dwight Dana House, 24 Hillhouse Avenue, New Haven, CT (National Register Inventory/Nomination Form)

Date: Listed on National Register as an individual structure: 1966

Depository: Connecticut Historical Commission, Hartford, CT

Type of Survey: Federal

Title: Russell, Henry Chittenden House, 83 Trumbull Street, New Haven, CT (National Register Inventory/Nomination Form)

Date: listed on National Register as an individual structure: 1975

Depository: Connecticut Historical Commission, Hartford, CT

Type of Survey: Federal

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Description (cont.)

Virtually all buildings retain the bulk of their exterior as well as interior historic fabric. Many exterior alterations were executed prior to 1935 and are generally not only compatible to a given structure's original design but in some cases are themselves significant representations of the work of important later architects, such as Henry Austin. In virtually all cases, the alterations contribute to the evolutionary character which typified development of the district's architecture through the early decades of the twentieth century.

The district has suffered a few notable losses to demolition, including the 1840 Benjamin Silliman Jr. House at 34 Hillhouse Avenue (demolished 1936 - now a vacant lot) and the 1862 Second Empire-style James M. Hoppin House at 47 Hillhouse Avenue (demolished 1941 - now a vacant lot). Significant new construction is limited to the Yale Computer Center and the addition designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes in 1977-79 at the rear of the Apthorp and Norton Houses (52 and 56 Hillhouse Avenue). Built to house Yale University's School of Organization and Management, this modern steel and glass structure features a low-profile design which is highly sensitive to its historic setting.

With the exception of the Henry Farnam House (43 Hillhouse Avenue), Russell Chittenden House (83 Trumbull Street), William Lyon Phelps House (110 Whitney Avenue) and New Haven Colony Historical Society (114 Whitney Avenue), all buildings within the district are currently utilized by Yale University for institutional purposes. Since 1937, the Farnam House has served as the residence of Yale's presidents. The Chittenden House is currently used as an apartment house, while the Phelps House provides commercial office space. The Historical Society building retains its original museum-oriented usage. However, despite extensive usage conversion, especially on the part of Yale, the dominant nineteenth/early twentieth-century residential appearance of the district has been preserved through adaptive reuse of structures in a manner compatible with their size and interior arrangements, by limiting the encroachment of parking facilities, and through a lack of extensive new construction.

The district forms the surviving middle portion of a larger fashionable nineteenth-century residential neighborhood, the southern and northern portions of which were systematically redeveloped between the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the 1970s. With the exception of the Dana House and lot at 24 Hillhouse Avenue, the blocks flanking the entire southern half of Hillhouse Avenue were excluded from the district since the residences built here in the nineteenth century were demolished and replaced by later structures designed solely for institutional use. To the north, on the knoll which rises above the northern side of Sachem Street, stands Yale University's twentieth-century Pierson-Sage complex dominated by Philip Johnson's 1964 Kline Biology Tower. Formerly the site of James Abraham Hillhouse's expansive Sachem's Wood estate, the square flanked by this complex designed for institutional use fortunately remains open at its southern end, preserving the green space at the northern terminus of Hillhouse Avenue which fronted James A. Hillhouse's 1829 mansion prior to its demolition in 1942. The district's eastern edge is visually

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Description (cont.)

defined by the change in scale, siting and/or usage which takes place between district buildings and those found along the eastern side of Whitney Avenue. The western boundary of the district is defined by a similar transition which takes place along Prospect Street.

A list of individual building descriptions and locations is provided on the following pages. Descriptions are organized on the basis of the following format:

Tax Lot Number	Construction Date.	Historic Name.
Street Address	Architect (if known).	Builder (if known).
(Contributing or Non-contributing)	Description of Structure.	Condition of Structure.
	Photograph Reference Number.	

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Description (cont.)

- 244-332-3
24 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)
- Built: 1849. James Dwight Dana House. Architect: Henry Austin. 2-story, stuccoed-brick Italian Villa. Added 2-story north wing and bay windows on north and west walls. Notable features include bracketed cupola, scallop and drop moldings under eaves and fluted porch columns with Indian bases and square, turned-down capitals. (National Historic Landmark; individually listed on National Register) Photo #2
- 244-365-1
27 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)
- Built: 1865. Reverend George Park Fisher House. Architect: unknown. 2½-story, stuccoed-brick modified Italian Villa. Notable features include slight gabled projections on south, north and west walls. Corinthian porch-windowheads.
- 244-364-8
28 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)
- Built: 1884. Charles Henry Farnham House. Architect: attributed to J. C. Cady. 2½-story brick Queen Anne-style residence with elaborate exterior detailing. Additions to north and rear elevation designed by architect Leoni Robinson date from 1898. Photo #3
- 244-364-7
30 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)
- Built: 1884. Edwin S. Wheeler House. Architect: unknown. 2½-story brick residence. Major renovation sometime after 1908 under auspices of later owner Lewis H. English removed most original Romanesque- and Queen Anne-style exterior details and incorporated stucco finish surface to exterior walls. Despite these alterations, original massing and some original details, such as trefoil carvings on buttresses, remain intact. Photo #4
- 244-365-2
31 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)
- Built: ca. 1827. Abigail Whelpley House. Architect: unknown. 2½-story frame house with clapboard exterior. Originally designed in the Federal style; flared mansard roof, eave brackets, and roof dormers added as part of renovation in the 1860s designed by architect Henry Austin for Yale President Noah Porter. Austin also added 2 side porches as part of his design; removed when house was re-Federalized. Photo #5
- 244-364-6
34 Hillhouse Avenue
(Non-contributing)
- Vacant lot.

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Description (cont.)

244-365-3
35 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1836. Mary Prichard House. Architect: Alexander Jackson Davis. Builders: Ira Atwater and Nelson Hotchkiss. 2-story brick and stucco Greek Revival-style residence. Notable features include 2-story distyle front portico with fluted Corinthian columns and slightly recessed front entry bay. Original antefixes around portico roof edges removed. Unobtrusive later additions to side and rear elevations. Photo #6

244-365-4
37 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1866. Graves-Gilman House. Architect: unknown. 2-story brick and stucco, Italianate-style residence. Notable features include segmental window pediments with carved floral crests, projecting front entrance bay with semicircular-arch wall openings beneath a main pediment, projecting 2-story semicircular bays on side elevations. Photo #7

244-364-5
38 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1892. Henry Fowler English House. Architect: Bruce Price. Builder: Sperry and Treat. 3-story Neoclassical-style residence with Greek motifs built of brick faced with limestone. Notable features include rusticated first story walls, quoins on upper story wall corners and symmetrical, elaborately detailed facade with a projecting central 2-story bow window. Photo #8

244-365-5
43 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1871. Henry Farnam House. Architect (original): Sturgis, Jr. 2½-story brick residence originally designed in the High Victorian Gothic mode; major Colonial Revival-style features date from 1934 remodelling designed by Kimball and Husted, architects. Photo #9

244-364-4
46 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1832. Aaron N. Skinner House. Architect (original): A. J. Davis. Builder: Nahum Hayward. 2-story stuccoed-brick Greek Revival-style residence. Remodelled ca. 1859 on design attributed to Henry Austin, and again in 1907 on design provided by Hoggson Brothers, architects. Notable features include four-columned Ionic portico with full entablature and pediment, decorative Italianate-style window trim, cruciform plan. Photo #14

244-365-6
47 Hillhouse Avenue
(Non-contributing)

Vacant lot.

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Description (cont.)

244-365-7

51 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1862. Graves-Dwight House. Architect: unknown. 2½-story frame house with elaborately detailed clapboard exterior reflecting the combined influence of the Italian Villa and Second Empire modes. Photo #12

244-364-3

52 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1848-49. John P. Norton House. Architect (original): Henry Austin. 2½-story brick and frame Italian Villa-style residence with stuccoed exterior and projecting 3-story tower. Notable features include combined use of flat and semicircular-arch motifs in window openings, bracketed cornices, and recessed front entry behind arcade with semicircular arches. Original canopies, balconies and railings removed following purchase by Yale University in 1923. 1979 remodelling - Edward Larrabee Barnes, architect. Photo #15

244-365-8

55 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1860. Pelatiah Perit House. Architect: Sidney Mason Stone. 2½-story Italian Villa-style residence with strong Renaissance Revival influence. Notable features include cupola, elaborate scroll brackets supporting window pediments and single-story front entry portico with paired Corinthian columns sheltering a semicircular-arch doorway with rope molding bordering the frame, large room addition on rear. Photo #10

244-364-2

56 Hillhouse Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1837. Elizabeth Apthorp House. Architect: Alexander Jackson Davis. 3-story brick and stucco Italian Villa-style residence with Egyptian Revival-style front entry portico and numerous eclectic accretions. Wings on northern and southern elevations, polygonal bay on rear elevation and solarium over original single-story front portico. Fluted Corinthian pilasters applied to south elevation in 1928-29. Photo #16

244-365-13

79 Trumbull Street
(Contributing)

Built: between 1888 and 1910. Thomas H. Russell House. Architect: unknown. Large 2½-story brick Richardsonian Romanesque-style residential structure. Notable decorative exterior features include cut-stone trim, rounded southeastern corner tower with range of four first-story windows set below rectangular transoms, corbelled chimney stack, recessed front entry fronted by large brick Roman arch, large projecting roof dormer on south side, and turret-like projections on southern corners. Photo #20

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Description (cont.)

244-365-14
83 Trumbull Street
(Contributing)

Built: 1882. Russell H. Chittenden House. Architect: unknown. 2½-story brick and frame Queen Anne-style residence. Notable exterior features include cross gables, projecting window bays, squared corner tower, and elaborate detailing in wood, terra-cotta and brownstone. (National Historic Landmark; individually listed on National Register) Photo #20

244-365-25
85 Trumbull Street
(Contributing)

Built: 1836. "Maple Cottage." Architect: Alexander Jackson Davis. Builder: Nahum Hayward. 2½-story Italian Villa-style frame house. Exterior alterations include stucco wall surfaces, removal of original rafter ends from beneath eaves. Despite such modifications, house continues to be related visually and historically to neighboring Greek Revival- and Italian Villa-style structures designed by Davis during this era. Photo #19

244-364-0
87 Trumbull Street
(Contributing)

Built: shortly before 1807. Benjamin Silliman, Sr. House. Architect: unknown. Originally built on site of Charles Henry Farnam House (28 Hillhouse Avenue); moved to present site and extensively rebuilt in 1871. 2-story brick wing on western elevation is also later addition.

244-364-10
89 Trumbull Street
(Contributing)

Built: ca. 1885. Architect: unknown. 2½-story brick Queen Anne-style residence with Romanesque-style influence. Decorative features include cut-stone trim, projecting cantilevered multi-story tower with conical roof, corbelled cornice, segmental-arch window openings. original double-leaf front doors and prominent facade dormer with pediment and semicircular-arch window opening.

244-364-1
91 Trumbull Street
(Contributing)

Built: 1884. Wolf's Head (Yale Senior Society). Architect: McKim, Mead and White. 2½-story Richardsonian Romanesque-style structure with stepped end gables, vertically attenuated tripartite first and second story windows, and exterior bearing walls of random-coursed, rock-faced brownstone. Recessed main entry on building's southwestern corner fronted by large Roman arches composed of alternating courses of brownstone and limestone. Photo #22

244-365-13
110 Whitney Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1908-09. William Lyon Phelps House. Architect: unknown. 2½-story Colonial Revival-style brick house with Federal and Georgian-style exterior detailing. Photo #17

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Description (cont.)

244-365-13
114 Whitney Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1908-09. William Lyon Phelps House. Architect: J. Frederick Kelly. Builder: Berlin Construction Company. Large 2½-story I-shaped Colonial Revival-style brick structure featuring front elevation with arcaded portico set between gable-to-street end wings. Decorative exterior details include quoins, semicircular-arch first-story windows adorned with keystones and centrally placed Georgian Revival-style cupola atop main wing's dormered hip roof. One of New Haven's finest Colonial Revival-style structures. Photo #17

244-365-10
122 Whitney Avenue
(Non-contributing)

Vacant lot.

244-365-9
158 Whitney Avenue
(Contributing)

Built: 1836. John North House. Architect: unknown. Builder: Sidney Mason Stone. Large 3-story, stuccoed-brick Greek Revival-style structure with projecting wings on northern and southern ends of facade and added 2-story wings on the northern and southern elevations. Decorative exterior details include trabeated windows, broad projecting roof eaves, and Doric-columned front entry porch. Major exterior alterations include addition of third story in 1909 and removal of "Tuscan-style" front corner tower. Photo #18

8. Significance

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

Criteria B, C

Specific dates See Item #7 **Builder/Architect** See Item #7

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hillhouse Avenue Historic District encompasses the most complete and best-preserved contiguous array of high-style nineteenth- and early twentieth-century suburban villa architecture surviving in the City of New Haven. The district also ranks as one of the finest extant examples of its type in the State of Connecticut. A high proportion of the buildings included within the district stand as examples of the work of architects of national and local renown. (Criterion C) The district's development was both conceived and initiated under the auspices of James Hillhouse, one of the most prominent civic leaders and urban programmers in late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century New Haven. (Criterion B)

Historical and Architectural Summary

James Hillhouse (1754-1832) was a well-educated man of means who travelled in the post-Revolutionary world of the movers and shakers of his day. Heavily involved in local real estate speculation, he eventually owned and fostered the initial modern development of vast tracts of land throughout the city. Known throughout the state as cagey, he was also highly active in politics at all levels. During the 1780s, he served as a representative for New Haven in the Connecticut General Assembly. In 1790, he was elected to the U. S. House of Representatives, a post which he continued to hold until his election to the U. S. Senate in 1796. "When Mr. Jefferson, after being elected President, withdrew from the presidency of that body, Mr. Hillhouse was made President pro tempore of that body."¹ In the tradition of the true eighteenth-century amateur, Hillhouse was also extremely active locally as an urban programmer and real estate developer.

The planning and initial development of the modern Hillhouse Avenue area is but one example of James Hillhouse's driving ambition to transform New Haven into one of the nation's most beautiful cities through personal involvement in both public and private improvement projects. For example, through his extensive planting of elm trees on the New Haven Green and nearby right-of-ways, he established the city's modern image as a bucolic community of tree-lined streets and parks that gave New Haven its nickname "the Elm City." In the late eighteenth century, it was Hillhouse who spearheaded the transformation of the New Haven Green from an undistinguished 17-acre reserve into a formally shaped urban square. He was also the driving force behind the establishment of Grove Street Cemetery, a "garden for the dead" incorporated in 1797 and believed to be the first corporately owned and maintained cemetery in the country.² Although maturation, disease and/or storms have claimed the elm trees originally set out by Hillhouse in many areas of the city, the character which he created for New Haven survives.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 18

Quadrangle name New Haven

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References See Continuation Sheet

A

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 Zone Easting Northing

B

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

Edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

Mary McCahon/Architectural Historian, Connecticut Historical Commission; Revised

name/title by J. Paul Loether/Director, Technical Services, New Haven Preservation Trust

organization New Haven Preservation Trust

date Revised: December 17, 1984

street & number P. O. Box 1671

telephone 203-562-5919

city or town New Haven

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 August 12, 1985

For NPS use only

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


Keeper of the National Register

date 9/13/85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Significance (cont.)

The genteel character of the Hillhouse Avenue Historic District was predestined by Hillhouse when he laid out the subdivision in 1792 along both sides of the majestic boulevard which today bears his name. Following the laying out of this street and the subdivision of the land along both its sides, Hillhouse immediately began to set out elms along the boulevard in anticipation of the lush green canopy for which the street would later gain great renown. However, further development in the area proceeded very slowly over the next several decades. The lack of rapid development was probably due in some measure to financial reverses suffered by Hillhouse and men of similar social and financial stature as a result of the Embargo of 1807 and the ensuing War of 1812.

In 1823, Hillhouse transferred title to his still-extensive holdings in the area to his son, the poet James Abraham Hillhouse (1789-1841), on the occasion of the younger Hillhouse's marriage to a wealthy New York City heiress. At the time of this transaction, only three houses were standing in the district.

James A. Hillhouse's efforts to further his father's goal of developing the area as a fashionable residential locus combining idyllic beauty with the convenience of metropolitan living were stimulated by the construction of the Farmington Canal, an enterprise which, not surprisingly, involved the Hillhouse family. Begun in 1825, the waterway traversed the family's subdivision on its way toward its terminus at New Haven Harbor. Though the canal itself failed to meet its commercial expectations, it did create a new era of optimism among members of New Haven's social and financial hierarchy; lot sales and the construction of houses in the Hillhouse subdivision picked up significantly after 1825. (A portion of the canal cut still borders the southwestern edge of the district.)

While the concept and initial development of the Hillhouse subdivision were the product of James Hillhouse, the single most important factor in the specific architectural development of the district proved to be James Abraham Hillhouse's large mansion, Sachem's Wood. Built in 1829 atop the knoll rising above the northern side of Sachem Street, the house was one of the finest Grecian Villas in the state. Originally known as Highwood, this expansive and highly elegant structure situated on generous park-like grounds introduced the large villa house form that would come to dominate the district, and instantly became the standard for all subsequent development. The younger Hillhouse, an enthusiastic patron of architecture, continued to work closely with A. J. Davis, one of Sachem's Wood's designers, to plan and shape the appearance of the neighborhood until his death in 1841. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that most of the pre-1840 villas standing in the district were designed by Davis and that, as a group, they form an important early record of Davis' development as one of the country's leading proponents of the Picturesque and villa house forms. Unfortunately, Sachem's Wood was demolished.

Davis was responsible for the Mary Prichard House, a stately two-story, three-bay-wide stuccoed brick Greek Revival-style dwelling with a flat roof and slightly embellished Greek Corinthian-order front portico, built in 1836 (see photograph 6). His 1835 Elizabeth Apthorp House, with its bracketed overhanging eaves, elongated coupled fenestration, and bracketed window hoods, was described by Davis as an "Etruscan Villa," although its cubic massing, symmetry and flat-roofed front-entrance portico are strongly Greek Revival in character (see photograph 16). The Aaron Skinner House, designed by

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Significance (cont.)

Davis in 1830, is one of the most significant antebellum structures in the district (photograph 14). Highly similar in massing and style to Sachem's Wood, this elegant villa with its pedimented, giant Ionic-order portico, is a quintessential Grecian suburban villa featuring later additions designed by Henry Austin in 1859.

By the 1850s, the relatively chaste serenity of the Greek Revival mode had begun to give way to the more decorative Italianate style. One of the most significant Italianate residences in the district is the well-preserved Pelatiah Perit House designed by Sidney Mason Stone in 1861 (see photograph 10). A relatively rare example of Stone's work, the basic box-like, symmetrical massing of this palazzo-form house is richly embellished with bold, classical frontispieces and projecting eaves elaborated with modillions and denticulated moldings. The more flamboyant bent of the Italianate is well-represented by the Graves-Dwight House (photograph 12). Built in 1862, this house is the most exuberant and picturesque in the district, with its bold, classically inspired detailing and varied roof silhouette. The 1848-49 John P. Norton House designed by Henry Austin is perhaps the most studied example of the Italian-Villa form, featuring a projecting four-story front tower, arcaded front entry, and coupled semicircular-arch window openings (photograph 15). Austin's predilection toward exotic, oriental detailing applied to Italian villa house forms is well-represented by the plant-like front porch columns and a main cornice "...imitating the fringe of some lavish oriental canopy..." found on his 1849 James Dwight Dana House, which was individually listed on the National Register in 1966 (photograph 2).³

Seven residences were constructed in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the last period of substantial building activity in the district. While those structures fronting Trumbull Street are representative of the flamboyant eclecticism and picturesque massing of the Queen Anne Style, those built on Hillhouse Avenue generally defer to the conservative restraint established by Davis' earlier villas. The 1884 Charles Henry Farnam House reflects more of an academic than eclectic approach in its design, placing it well within the conservative genre of Hillhouse Avenue. The street's conservative bent was reinforced in the twentieth century when the impressive Edwin Wheeler House (1884) and the great pile designed for Henry Farnam by Russell Sturgis, Jr. in 1871 were both remodelled by later owners in more restrained modes (see photographs 3 and 4). The ca. 1882 Russell Chittenden House, however, continues to retain virtually all of its original Queen Anne-style exterior features, and stands as an excellent and well-preserved example of the massing and detailing combinations which typify the style as it appears locally (see photograph 20).

The last residence built in the district prior the the early decades of the twentieth century was the 1892 Henry Fowler English House, designed by Bruce Price in the restrained Neoclassical mode, marking the full-circle triumph of classicism. The handsome, classically inspired detailing of this expansive building's exterior is matched

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Significance (cont.)

by its gracious and opulent interior (see photograph 8). Like many other late nineteenth-century structures in the district, the English House in its first floor rooms features rich panelling, marble mantels, parquet floors and elaborately detailed staircases. Both the 1908-09 William Lyon Phelps House and the 1929 New Haven Colony Historical Society (designed by J. Frederick Kelly), which front on Whitney Avenue, are well-designed and well-preserved examples of the Colonial Revival style which mark the end of the district's historic architectural development (see photograph 17).

End Notes

1. Edward E. Atwater, ed., History of the City of New Haven to the Present Time, p. 99.
2. Elizabeth Mills Brown, New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design, p. 128.
3. Brown, New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design, p. 138.

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- New Haven Architecture: Selections from the Historic American Buildings Survey, Number 9. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of the Interior/National Park Service, 1970.
- "New Haven Assessors Records." Tax Lot Maps and Grand List, 1983-84. On file at the New Haven Assessors Office, Kennedy Mitchell Hall of Records, New Haven, CT.
- New Haven Historic Resources Inventory, Phase I: Central New Haven. New Haven: The New Haven Preservation Trust, 1982.
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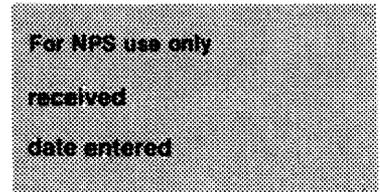
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Geographic Data (continued):

UTM References

Point	Zone	Easting	Northing
a)	18	674000	4575650
b)	18	673940	4575480
c)	18	673900	4575400
d)	18	673765	4575425
e)	18	673760	4575390
f)	18	673725	4575405
g)	18	673730	4575440
h)	18	673660	4575470
i)	18	673700	4575710

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Geographic Data (continued):

Verbal Boundary Description

North: From the junction of the eastern line of Prospect Street and the southern line of Sachem Street; proceed east along the southern line of Sachem Street to the western line of Whitney Avenue.

East: From the junction of the southern line of Sachem Street and the western line of Whitney Avenue; proceed south along the western line of Whitney Avenue to the northern line of Trumbull Street.

South: From the junction of the western line of Whitney Avenue and the northern line of Trumbull Street; proceed west along the northern line of Trumbull Street to the western line of Hillhouse Avenue; then south along the western line of Hillhouse Avenue to the southernmost property line of 24 Hillhouse Avenue; then west along the southern most property line of 24 Hillhouse Avenue to the eastern line of Prospect Street.

West: From the junction of the southernmost property line of 24 Hillhouse Avenue and the eastern line of Prospect Street; proceed north along the eastern line of Prospect Street to the southern line of Sachem Street.

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Geographic Data (Continued):

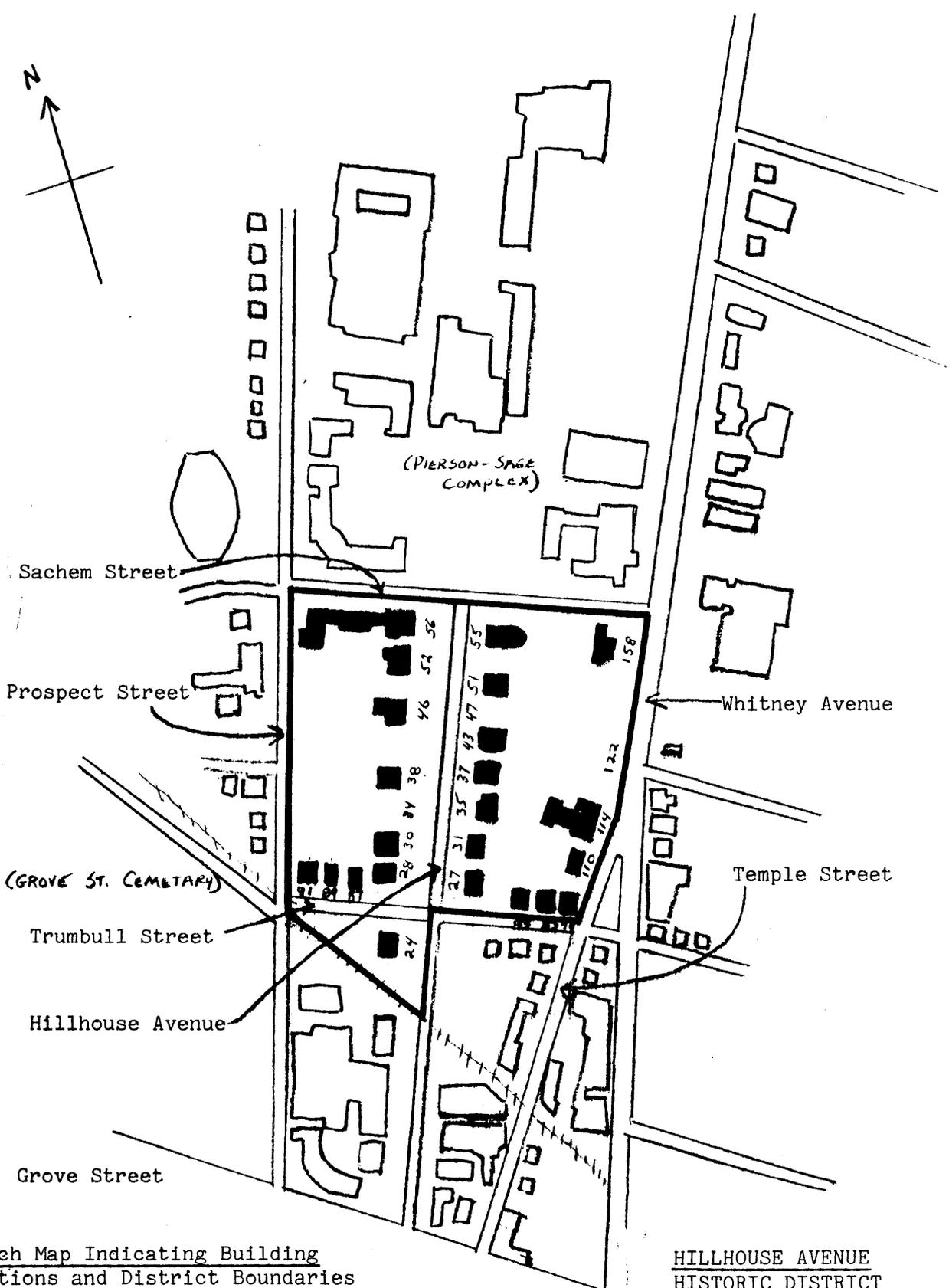
Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Hillhouse Avenue Historic District were delineated on the basis of those current physical characteristics which visually distinguish the district from the surrounding portions of the city in conjunction with the thematic criterion of the district's historical development as a fashionable, upper-income residential neighborhood during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

The district encompasses the surviving middle portion of the subdivision laid out by James Hillhouse in 1792. The northern boundary is defined by the northern side of Sagem Street, which is dominated by large institutional structures built for Yale University between the early 1900s and the 1970s in styles ranging from Collegiate Gothic to International and Modern. The district's eastern perimeter is defined by the shift which occurs in scale and/or design quality between the buildings on the western side of Whitney Avenue, which fall within the district (79 Trumbull Street and 110, 114, 158 Whitney Avenue) and those on the eastern side of this street, which include several modest nineteenth-century residences dominated by twentieth-century commercial structures. The broad width of this portion of Whitney Avenue itself also helps to form a strong visual terminus for this side of the district, particularly at the southern end, where the avenue forks off to either side of a small, triangular park which extends northward from Trumbull Street.

The western edge of the district is defined by the western ends of the Hillhouse Avenue lots (eastern line of Prospect Street) and the distinctly different visual character of the building stock along the western side of Prospect Street, which includes several modest nineteenth-century residential structures and Yale University's modern David S. Ingalls Hockey Rink, designed by Eero Saarinen and Associates in 1957.

The southern edge of the district is defined by the shift in scale and/or original design usage (multi-family) which occurs along the eastern end of the southern side of Trumbull Street, and by the institutional character and scale of the extant buildings in the blocks flanking either side of the southern half of Hillhouse Avenue. The only structure included within the district to the south of the northern line of Trumbull Street is the James Dwight Dana House, a National Historic Landmark building which stands on the southwestern corner of Hillhouse Avenue and Trumbull Streets across from the Charles Henry Farram House. The Dana House was included within the district because its architectural and historic background clearly place it within the context of the district's historical and architectural significance.



Sketch Map Indicating Building Locations and District Boundaries

HILLHOUSE AVENUE
HISTORIC DISTRICT
 New Haven, CT

District Boundaries: **—————**
 Contributing Buildings: **■**
 Street Numbers: **24**
 Approximate Scale: 1" = 400'



**HILLHOUSE AVENUE
HISTORIC DISTRICT**

New Haven, Connecticut

UTM Reference Points

Pt. Zone/Easting/Northing

- a. 18/674000/4575650
- b. 18/673940/4575480