

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUN 27 1983

date entered JUL 28 1983

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

1. Name

historic BURRITT HOTEL

and/or common Burritt Hotel

2. Location

street & number 67 West Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town New Britain N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Hartford code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input 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 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 Burritt House Associates Limited Partnership

c/o Devcon Construction Corp.
street & number 609 Farmington Avenue

city, town Hartford N/A vicinity of state CT 06105

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New Britain Town Clerk

street & number City Hall - 21 West Main St.

city, town New Britain state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Hartford state CT

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Burritt Hotel is a large six-story building in the heart of New Britain's downtown commercial area. Erected in 1924, it has a reinforced-concrete structural system with red-brick exterior walls. It is L-shaped in plan, with an air shaft at the rear between the hotel and its neighbor to the east, the Gothic-detailed New Britain National Bank, with which it shares a party wall. The buildings in this area are mostly commercial buildings dating from about 1880 to 1930, though the hotel's rear elevation faces a large modern parking garage. The Burritt Hotel was built in the Georgian Revival style and presents elaborately detailed elevations toward the two important streets which form a corner there, West Main Street and Washington Street, with the principal entrance on West Main. The rear and east elevations, in contrast, have plain brick walls and simple segmental-arched window openings with no ornamentation.

The West Main Street facade (Photograph 1), or south elevation, is dominated by the four large pilasters which rise from a stringcourse above the second story to the full height of the facade, where they support a Classical entablature featuring a frieze with triglyphs. On the upper stories the facade is nine bays wide, and the middle five bays which contain the pilasters are brought forward to form a very shallow pavilion. Window openings are mostly rectangular and are fitted with eight-over-two sash, but there are numerous variations. On the second story, for example, there are seven windows: four three-part windows at the ends, two openings fitted with a pair of eight-over-two windows, and a single eight-over-two window in the center. The third story features five windows with blind round-arched heads and keyblocks, as well as two others which have splayed lintels with exaggerated key and impost blocks. The latter decoration is repeated in four of the sixth-story windows. The facade is further elaborated by festoon-carved panels above two of the third-story windows; a "balustrade" above the second story, formed from a series of short sections of engaged cast-concrete balusters; copper cornices with anthemion crests over the storefronts on ground level (Photograph 3); and a parapet with plain inset panels above the modillioned sheet-metal main cornice. Raised brickwork forms quoins at the corners of the building and suggests rustication on the first two stories. Except as noted, the decorative features are all formed from cast concrete.

The west elevation (Photograph 2), facing Washington Street, is similarly detailed, but the pilasters on that side support a triangular pediment, within which is an ocular light. The main part of the hotel is recessed behind the plane of a one-story projection which comes forward to the street line. This projection is surmounted by a balustrade and contains secondary entrances, an arcade of three tall round-arched windows, and a large Palladian window. There is an extensive use of festooned panels on the west elevation. The west rear entrance has double doors set within a tall round-arched opening with a fan in the arch, whereas the west front entrance has a triangular pediment over the doorway.

(continued)

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New Britain, CT

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Description (continued):

The interior features a corridor running back from the entrance between the commercial spaces which occupy the ground floor on West Main Street. The corridor has a tiled floor in a geometric pattern (Photograph 4), wainscot halfway up the walls, and fanlighted entrances to the stores on either side. The corridor leads to the lobby which is about a third of the way back from West Main Street. The lobby also has a paneled wainscot and a tiled floor and it has paneling running up the piers which support the beams for the high ceiling (Photograph 5). The ceiling cornice is elaborately molded and enriched with a row of dentils. In the southwest corner of the lobby there is an Adamesque mantelpiece, with dentils below the molded shelf, patera applied to the frieze above the fireplace opening, and paneled pilasters. The main desk area is enclosed by a modern natural-wood partition, and the grill, dining room and ballroom areas to the rear of the lobby have been extensively modernized: linoleum covers the tile floor, dropped ceilings conceal the cornice, and only remnants of the paneled wainscot remain.

The upper floors are reached by a stairway of marble steps at the south end of the lobby (Photograph 6). The curving wooden rail is original and is supported on straight and twisted wrought-iron balusters. The mezzanine level contains rooms only at the front of the hotel: these are large open function rooms with simply molded window surrounds as their chief decorative elaboration. On the remaining floors the numerous hotel rooms open off central corridors. The rooms are extremely plain in finish (Photograph 7), with no exceptional woodwork or other ornament other than brass escutcheons around the doorknobs.

Other than the modernization of the secondary public areas on the ground floor, noted above, the hotel has not been extensively altered up to this year. The exterior retains nearly all of its historical appearance, as can be seen from the postcard view included herein (Photograph 8). The major alterations to the exterior are the modern marquee over the steel-and-glass-door main entrance and the plate-glass windows in the west storefronts, which lack their original transoms. As of this date, however, the interior is undergoing extensive renovation. The upper floors are being re-partitioned into apartment units, as are the more modernized rooms on the ground floor. The central corridor and main lobby area, however, are being retained with all their original features intact.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1924 - built **Builder/Architect** H.L. Stevens Company, New York

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Burritt Hotel has stood on the corner of West Main and Washington Streets as a New Britain landmark for more than a half century. For many years the leading hotel in that city, it has historical significance as part of the civic improvement movement of the early 20th century (Criterion A). It was built as a result of a community-wide effort to provide New Britain with a first-class hotel, in order to remedy what was seen as a deficiency not proper to a progressive city. The Burritt Hotel is also significant as a large and prominent example of the Georgian Revival style: with its red-brick exterior, small-pane sash, Palladian window, and other decorative elements both interior and exterior, the Burritt illustrates in a grand way many of the characteristic features of that style (Criterion C).

In the early 1920s New Britain business leaders were concerned that their city was losing commercial opportunities to other Connecticut cities with better hotel facilities. Together with civic organizations such as the Lions and Rotary Club, the leaders of New Britain's major industrial and mercantile enterprises banded together to form a corporation to build a large, modern hotel. The hotel was intended not only to accomodate visitors to the city, but also to be an imposing symbol of New Britain as a progressive community. New Britain was widely known as a manufacturing city, the center of Connecticut's important hardware and other metalworking industries. While acknowledging this past, the people who were behind the construction of the Burritt also wanted to project an image of New Britain as a place with modern amenities, commercial vitality, and aesthetic good taste. The hotel was seen as a way to accomplish these goals, and upon its opening was heralded as an epoch-marking event.¹

The hotel was given the name Burritt early in the planning stages as a way of honoring New Britain's most famous native son, Elihu Burritt, the nineteenth-century blacksmith and scholar who became a world-renown peace advocate. However, a close runner-up as a name was "Bildware," a name thought by some to conjure up the fine hotels of New York such as the Biltmore, while recalling New Britain's fame as the Hardware City.

The city's leaders contracted with the H.L. Stevens Company to build a hotel that would be both modern and stylish. H.L. Stevens, which both prepared the plans and constructed the building, was a New York firm specializing in hotel construction. Many of their commissions, which included hotels for cities in Pennsylvania, Illinois, South Dakota and Connecticut, were built in the same Georgian Revival style as the Burritt and seem to have had similar decorative features. The Burritt was very up-to-date for 1924. It was constructed with all its materials fire-proof, including the strong and almost indestructible re-inforced concrete structural system. Interior partitions of concrete and tile also reflected fire-proof design, a key consideration in an age when hotel

9. Major Bibliographical References

Burritt Hotel file, New Britain Public Library Historical Collections.
"Elihu Burritt Hotel to be a Most Imposing Structure," New Britain Daily Herald, September 21, 1922, 1.
Fowler, Herbert E. A History of New Britain. New Britain: New Britain Historical Society, 1960.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property c. one-third acre

Quadrangle name New Britain

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	8	4	5	1	0	4	6	1	5	0	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property includes the entire lot at the corner of West Main and Washington Streets known as 67 West Main Street. This includes only a narrow passageway and an airshaft at the rear of the building beyond the land occupied by the building itself.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bruce Clouette, Partner, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Historic Resource Consultants date March 11, 1983

street & number The Colt Armory
55 Van Dyke Avenue telephone (203) 547-0268

city or town Hartford state CT 06106

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 June 16, 1983

For NPS use only

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

date 7/28/83

for Melores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Burrirt Hotel

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Significance (continued):

fires were justifiably a great fear. Beyond its safety, however, the Burrirt offered all the modern amenities of the time, including separate freight and passenger elevators, complete plumbing in every room, and separately piped-in iced drinking water.

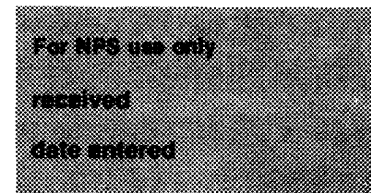
The architecture of the Burrirt was intended to illustrate its role as the leading hotel in the city. Large and imposing, it immediately became a downtown landmark. The elaborate Georgian stylistic motifs furthered its grand appearance: the monumental pavilions on each of the main elevations, the balustrades, the round-arched and Palladian windows, the panels with festoon carving, the "Colonial" sash, and even the red brick itself are Georgian Revival features typical of the style but carried out in the Burrirt on an exceptionally large scale. The lobby, with its fine mantel and other original details, is especially notable in that it retains a high proportion of its historical fabric. By the year 1924 the Georgian Revival, along with Neo-Classicism and to a lesser extent, the Renaissance Revival style, had become the standard mode for large quasi-public buildings where a visual impression was important: banks, high schools, government buildings, and hotels were commonly designed with Georgian detailing in that period. In the case of the Burrirt Hotel, however, the use of Georgian architecture went beyond the simple function of creating a monumental appearance. Not only was the exterior architectural ornament drawn from high-style 18th-century buildings, but the whole hotel was operated on a Colonial theme: grays, blues and creams were chosen as Colonial interior colors, and maids, bellboys and other hotel employees wore early American costumes and uniforms!

As New Britain's largest and most stylish hotel, the Burrirt became a center for the city's social affairs. The New Britain Club had its headquarters on the mezzanine level, and the Burrirt was the locus of numerous dinners, dances, and other formal occasions. Nor did the hotel simply serve New Britain "society:" its restaurant and coffee shop were frequented by generations of New Britainites from all walks of life. And of course, for many years before it came to suffer from the competition of cheaper motels, the Burrirt performed its primary function of accomodating visitors to New Britain in style.

¹New Britain Daily Herald, February 29, 1924, 10.

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Bibliography (continued):

"New Britain's New Modern Hotel," prospectus pamphlet, 1922; copy at
New Britain Public Library.

"New Hotel Marks Epoch in Development of New Britain," New Britain
Daily Herald, February 29, 1924, 10.

Verbal Boundary Description (continued):

The reference to the New Britain Land Records is Volume 767, page 353,
dated June 2, 1981.