

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

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

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

For NCRS use only

received MAR 29 1985

date entered MAY 1 1985

1. Name

historic Boothe Homestead

and/or common Boothe Memorial Park

2. Location

street & number Main Street Putney

N/A not for publication

city, town Stratford

N/A vicinity of

congressional district 3rd

state Connecticut

code 05

county Fairfield

code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Stratford

street & number 2725 Main Street

city, town Stratford

N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk

street & number 2725 Main Street

city, town Stratford

state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 Prospect Street

city, town Hartford

state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Boothe Memorial Park is a publicly owned park of 34 acres in the Putney section of the town of Stratford, Connecticut. The park is bounded on the east by the Housatonic River and on the west by Main Street. Sloping downwards to the riverbank on the east, the park contains twenty-eight structures, including outbuildings. These are arranged roughly in two lines paralleling Main Street on a north-south axis. Buildings on the grounds range in date from circa 1840 to 1961. The earliest buildings are in the Greek revival style. Later buildings are constructed in the Queen Anne style, the Shingle Style, and in a highly individualistic eclectic style developed by two brothers, David and Stephen Boothe. A variety of materials are used in the construction of buildings and other structures on the property. Most are of frame construction, although a number of masonry structures are also present. One building, the Technocratic Cathedral, is of an unusual construction using interlocking redwood beams. The grounds are landscaped with ornamental plantings of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs.

Boothe Memorial Park was originally the farm of the Boothe family. Several 19th-century buildings in the complex reflect this original use. The Boothe family homestead, the earliest extant building in the park, was built about 1840 in the Greek Revival style (Photograph 1). Both the main body of the house and a smaller, attached ell to the southeast, have open-bed pediments in the gable ends and rectangular attic windows. Porches and a one-story ell were added later, probably about 1914, when the house was extensively remodelled by David and Stephen Boothe. Colored glass windows were added at this time with inscriptions proclaiming the house "the oldest homestead in America" (Photograph 2). Two or three outbuildings of 19th- or early 20th-century date also remain. These include a carriage shed or barn which was extensively rebuilt after a fire in the early 20th century. Evidence of its original post and beam construction remains, however. (Photograph 3).

The Putney Chapel of 1844 is an excellent example of the Greek Revival style (Photograph 4). Although moved to the site in 1968 because of road construction, it formerly stood nearby on Main Street. The chapel has flush tongue and groove siding in front and clapboard siding on the sides and back. Four plain pilasters in front support an entablature above which is a full pediment in the gable end. A square belfry has corner pilasters. A parapet on the belfry is crenellated and has pinnacles on each corner with crockets cut from a flat board in an undulating pattern.

The summer cottage, built about 1910, is a 2½-story frame house constructed in the Shingle Style (Photograph 5). Constructed as a summer house, it was first located to the southeast of its present location. It was moved to the current site prior to 1928. The house has a gambrel roof and a one-story porch across the front supported by Tuscan columns. A balustrade on the porch roof forms a balcony. A two-story bay window in front has a gambrel roof faced with fishscale shingles. An oval recess in the end of this roof has a semi-circular window within it. An entablature with dentils is used in window and door surrounds and also on the porch.

The 1920 garage is derived from the Colonial Revival (Photograph 6). This is constructed of brick and brownstone, and has a slate-covered gambrel roof. Brownstone used in the construction of the building was salvaged by the Boothe brothers from a bank in Bridgeport. The foundation is of large brownstone blocks. Buff-colored brick is used for the masonry walls, while windows and doors have brownstone lintels and surrounds of red brick and brownstone. The roof projects boldly from the building and has a glass skylight built into it.

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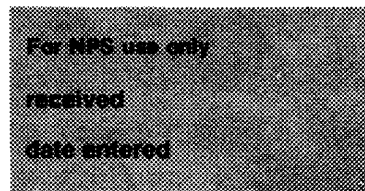
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The most common architectural style used in the park is the Queen Anne style as interpreted by the Boothers. Buildings constructed in this style include the present caretaker's house, built in 1921-2 as a second house, a former trolley station, a garage, and the organ house for the outdoor basilica. The octagonal trolley stop is sided with clapboard and fishscale shingles. The octagonal tent roof is furnished with a finial and has a pent roof below (Photograph 7). A garage, probably contemporary with the caretaker's house, has a roof with projective eaves supported by corner brackets (Photograph 8). The roof itself is a combination of a gable end and a hip roof and is covered with fishscale shingles. Paired windows in the gable end have applied pierced ornament above them. The Organ House, built in 1931, is also influenced by the Queen Anne style (Photograph 9). This has an open-bed pediment on the gable ends, molded brackets under the eaves, and siding of clapboard and two different types of wooden shingle. A porch on the south side is supported by Tuscan columns, while the roof overhang on the east side forms a porch supported by large braces.¹

In 1914, the Boothe brothers adapted an earlier outbuilding, a haybarn, for exhibit purposes (Photograph 10). The original building was a gable-roofed structure of post-and-beam construction, probably contemporary with the farmhouse. Vertical flush siding is probably original. The Boothers added a clock tower obtained from a church in Massachusetts, altering the original building in the process. Large brackets support the overhanging eaves of the building and the two balconies built around the tower. Circular windows were added in the gable ends, which also feature an open-bed pediment. A one-story entrance portico has Doric columns.

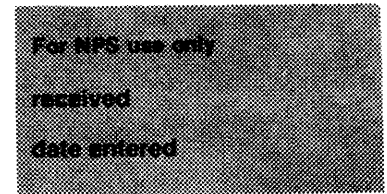
Beginning in 1929, the Boothe brothers initiated a large-scale building program which transformed the former farm into the complex which is now Boothe Memorial Park. To the museum building mentioned above, a number of other buildings for public use were added. These included the Coliseum, a kitchen and dining facility built from 1929-30, a sunken garden which was soon converted to an outdoor basilica for religious services in 1931, the Organ House, associated with the basilica and several other structures. Of these, the most impressive is the Technocratic Cathedral, built from 1933 to 1934 (Photographs 7 and 11). The Technocratic Cathedral is very idiosyncratic in design. Construction is of large redwood beams separated by one-inch strips of the same material. Constructed in two tiers, the building has flared roofs supported by elaborate corbels formed by the protruding ends of redwood beams. Window openings use glass blocks to admit light.

Another building intended for exhibit purposes was the Blacksmith Shop, built in 1935 (Photograph 13). A frame building with clapboard siding, the blacksmith shop is unusual in having 44 sides. The interior contains an exhibit of blacksmith tools and equipment as well as material from allied crafts. The exhibit is non-functional, however, and was never intended for craft demonstrations. The three flues or spires were attached to the roof after 1938.

A number of smaller structures were built by the Boothers in the 1930s and 1940s. Most were intended for ornamental display. These include a miniature lighthouse of cobblestone and brick set in a small outdoor pool, built between 1940 and 1942 (Photograph 14) and a miniature windmill near the entrance to the park. A leaning octagonal bell tower constructed in 1938 near the outdoor basilica is no longer extant. To the east of the Technocratic Cathedral, the Boothers constructed two bunkers made of granite paving blocks during the Second

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World War. One is in the form of a blockhouse with an overhanging second floor. The second bunker is a two-tiered structure with flaring roofs similar to the Technocratic Cathedral (Photograph 15).

After the deaths of Stephen and David Boothe in 1948 and 1949, respectively, the property was deeded to the town of Stratford in accordance with the wishes of the two brothers. The town has maintained it to the present as a public park. While some changes have been made, the overall appearance of the park is much as it was at the death of the last Boothe brother. The Putney Chapel, moved onto the site in 1938, is congruent with the Greek Revival style of the Boothe homestead. Other buildings added to the park are inconspicuously placed. These include a greenhouse moved to the park in 1960, public toilets constructed in 1958, and an astronomical observatory built in 1955 (Photograph 16). Only one structure associated with the Boothers has been lost: an octagonal leaning bell tower. This was replaced in 1974 by the top of a lighthouse which once stood in Stratford harbor (Photograph 17). The circumspect nature of these intrusions has had little effect on the visual integrity of the site, which is remarkably intact (see Photograph 7).

Endnotes

- ¹A trolley line operated on this route from 1899 to 1937, when present Route 110 was laid out along the line. The trolley was undoubtedly a factor in the development of the park.
- ²Souvenir Program Annual Easter Sunrise Service and 275th Anniversary Boothe Homestead, 1938. This program has a cover photograph of the three crosses with the four-story model of the Technocratic Cathedral superimposed behind the crosses, illustrating vividly the effect intended by the Boothers.

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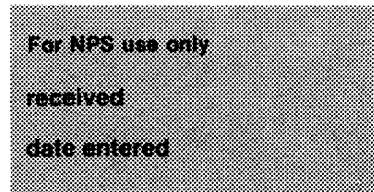
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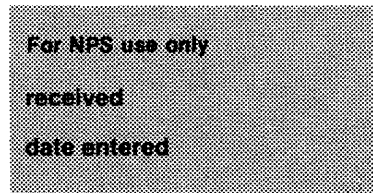


Inventory of Structures in Boothe Memorial Park

Name	Contributing /Noncontributing	Description
Boothe Homestead	C	2½-story frame Greek Revival style house, circa 1840, with alterations by David and Stephen Boothe in 1914.
Putney Chapel	C	1-story frame chapel in the Greek Revival style, 1844. Moved to present site, 1968.
Carriage Shed/Barn	C	2-story frame outbuilding of 19th century date rebuilt c.1920
Storage Shed	C	1-story frame storage shed, 1910.
Summer Cottage	C	2½-story frame Shingle style c1910, gambrel roof. Moved to present site from elsewhere on property by Boothe brothers.
Museum/Clock Tower	C	2-story frame haybarn, mid-19th century, converted into museum in 1914, with the addition of a clock tower from a 19th century church in Massachusetts.
Garage	C	2-story masonry garage in the Colonial Revival style with a gambrel roof. Constructed c 1920 of brick and of brownstone salvage from a Bridgeport bank.
Caretaker's House	C	2½-story frame house in the Queen Anne style built from 1921-22. Has an octagonal tower, enclosed porch, cobblestone foundation.
Workshop	C	1-story frame workshop, gable roof c1920
Garage	C	1-story frame garage, c1920, adapted Queen Anne style.
Trolley Shelter	C	1-story octagonal frame shelter in the Queen Anne style. Moved from Route 110 in 1936.

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Inventory (continued)

Name	Contributing/Noncontributing	Description
Bunker	C	2-story masonry bunker built of granite paving blocks. The two roofs are similar to those of the Technocratic Cathedral, c1941-5.
Windmill	C	Miniature windmill built in 1941 at entrance of park.
Cooking Pavillion	C	Open pavillion with flared pyramidal roof supported by rustic wooden posts
Observatory	NC	1-story observatory with observa-tion dome for telescope, built c1955.
Post Building	NC	1-story cinder block public restrooms built 1958.
Greenhouse and Potting Shed	NC	1-story greenhouse moved to site in 1960.
Stratford Lighthouse Tower	NC	Lighthouse top moved to Boothe Park in 1974.

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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates circa 1840 to 1961 **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

(Criterion C)

Boothe Memorial Park is a complex consisting of a 19th-century farmhouse and associated out-buildings together with a series of structures erected from 1914 until 1949 by two eccentric brothers, David and Stephen Boothe. The brothers operated a family business selling farm equipment. They also sold insurance and, in addition, realized profits from numerous investments in nearby Bridgeport. Good examples of the Greek Revival style on the grounds include the Boothe Homestead and the Putney Chapel. The Shingle Style is well represented by the 1910 summer cottage. The majority of the buildings on the grounds are late, retardetaire examples of the Queen Anne style as interpreted by the two brothers. These are characterized by the application of late 19th-century details in an idiosyncratic manner typical of folk architecture. The Technocratic Cathedral of 1933 is the culmination of the brothers' work. Its unusual construction method, using redwood beams, and the unusual character of its design are both highly original and possess considerable aesthetic merit. The complex is clearly intended to center on this structure, and the grounds are laid out to create a striking visual impression. (Criterion A) The Boothe Memorial Park is the result of a unique amalgam of early 20th-century movements as interpreted by a pair of eccentric, reclusive brothers in the context of an outdoor museum. The Boothe brothers' fascination with local history and genealogy began as early as 1914 with the remodelling of the family home and the creation of an historical exhibit in a converted haybarn. During the era of the Depression, the two brothers built a large kitchen and dining facility to dispense their largesse, followed shortly by an outdoor basilica for nondenominational services. The Technocratic Cathedral was begun during a brief national obsession with technocracy, although the relation of the Boothes to the movement is unknown. A series of whimsical structures built on the grounds attest to the humor and imagination of the Boothe brothers.

Boothe Memorial Park contains a number of good specimens of conventional American architecture characteristic of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Greek Revival style is well represented by two examples, the Boothe Homestead (Photograph 1) and the Putney Chapel (Photograph 4). The Boothe Homestead, built about 1840, is a well-preserved local example of the Greek Revival style with open-bed pediments on the gable ends. Extensive remodelling in 1914 consisted of the addition of a porch, a one-story ell, and stained glass windows bearing the inscription "the oldest homestead in America" (Photograph 2). The Putney Chapel, although moved from a nearby location, is an excellent example of a vernacular interpretation of the Greek Revival style. The flush siding in front, pilasters and the full pediment are all typical of the Greek Revival, and display good design qualities and workmanship. The belfry has an embattled or crenellated parapet which derives from Gothic Revival models, as do the pinnacles with their undulating crockets, probably inspired by crocketed Gothic Revival spires. This is an excellent example of the adaptation of "high style" characteristics by local builders.

The Shingle Style is also represented at the Boothe Memorial Park. The most impressive example of this style is the summer cottage built as a summer house about 1910 (Photograph 5). The gambrel roof, the use of entablatures with dentils for door and window surrounds, and the front porch with its balustrade are all typical of this style. The two-story bay window with its gambrel attic roof is reminiscent of Queen Anne treatment, especially in the use of fish-scale shingles. The asymmetrical placement of the bay is also more characteristic of the

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Bachelors Plan New 'Cathedral'," The Times-Star, Bridgeport, Ct., March 30, 1933, page 1.
 "Boothe Home's Dawn Services Attract 1,510," New York Herald Tribune, April 18, 1938, page 13.
Bridgeport Post, September 29, 1933, page 21.
 Burton, Elizabeth W., Interview, January 7, 1983.
 CHO Technocracy, Letter, January 27, 1983. (continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 34

Quadrangle name Milford Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1: 24,000

UMT References

A	<u>118</u>	<u>658160</u>	<u>45615230</u>	B	<u>118</u>	<u>6583210</u>	<u>4561561610</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>118</u>	<u>6586660</u>	<u>456155510</u>	D	<u>118</u>	<u>6585610</u>	<u>456150910</u>
E	<u>118</u>	<u>6582220</u>	<u>456151610</u>	F	<u>118</u>	<u>6582410</u>	<u>456152110</u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification A map of Boothe Memorial Park by Codespoti & Associates, Surveyors, April 5, 1983, is on file at the office of the Town Clerk, Stratford, Connecticut. The portion listed on the National Register includes Parcel A and Parcel C. Parcel B was not associated with the Boothers. Vol. 352, Pg. 271.

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dale S. Plummer, John M. Plummer, National Register Nomination Consultants

organization Boothe Memorial Park Trustees edited by: John Herzan, National Register Coordinator
 date September 8, 1984

street & number _____ telephone _____


city or town Stratford, state Connecticut

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

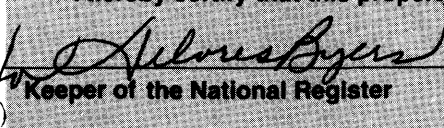
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date 3/14/85

For HCERS use only

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

 **Keper of the National Register** Entered in the National Register date 5/1/85

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

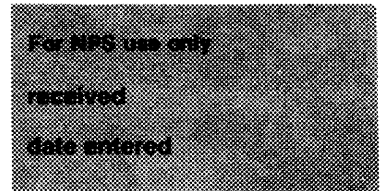
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Queen Anne style. Despite its small scale, the summer cottage is well designed, creating a picturesque, cottage-like effect. The garage, built about 1920 of brick and brownstone salvaged from a Bridgeport bank, is also Colonial Revival in style, although further removed from the typical designs of the period. (Photograph 6). Again, the general form of the building, with its slate-covered gambrel roof, is Colonial Revival in nature. The use of different colored brick and of brownstone is more characteristic of late 19th-century practice, however. Red brick and brownstone are used to create surrounds with quoins around window openings. The effect differs greatly from that of either colonial or colonial Revival practice. The garage is probably one of the earlier buildings on the grounds to reflect the deviation of the Boothe brothers from standard contemporary practice.

Buildings constructed by the Boothes as late as the 1920s and 1930s continue to reflect the influence of the Queen Anne style. The two brothers, born in 1867 and 1869, were in their fifties by 1920. The retardataire nature of their work was undoubtedly influenced by the styles prevalent when David and Stephen Boothe reached maturity in the late 19th century. The caretaker's house, built as a second home for the brothers, is a very typical Queen Anne style residence except for the date of its construction from 1921-22. Other examples include the trolley shelter of about 1920 (Photograph 7), a garage of about the same period (Photograph 8), and the 1932 Organ House (Photograph 9). The octagonal trolley shelter is of interest for its use of a pent roof, a recurring theme in later buildings constructed by the Boothes. The garage utilizes an interesting roof form combining a gable and hip roof, the brackets at the corners of the eaves, and pierced wooden trim applied over the attic window. Fishscale shingles on the roof are another Queen Anne influence, although it was more usual to apply such shingles to siding. The Organ House is of interest for its application of earlier details such as the open-bed pediment, brackets, and differing types of siding to a building which in form resembles a Bungalow style structure, with one porch formed by the overhang of the roof. In each of these buildings, the Boothes display originality of design with good results.

The building program, initiated by the Boothes in 1929 with the construction of the Coliseum, was to depart even more dramatically from the norms of architecture. The most original accomplishment of the Boothes was the Technocratic Cathedral, built from 1933 to 1934. (Photographs 7 and 11). Fortunately, the existence of two models of the building, several newspaper articles and statements by the Boothes themselves reveal more about the design by David Boothe early in 1933. He first constructed models from which the actual construction was based. It is clear from numerous photographs that the Boothes intended the cathedral to be the centerpiece of their park, best viewed from the outdoor basilica with three wooden crosses in the foreground (see Photograph 12).¹ The plans called for a three- or four-tiered, pagoda-like structure surmounted by triple spires. Although it is never explicitly stated, it is obvious that the triple spires were intended to echo the theme of the three crosses before the cathedral. The interior of the building was intended to house exhibits of art and mechanical achievement, according to a contemporary newspaper article.²

The design and construction of the Technocratic Cathedral is unique, as described in Section 7. The structure is built of pieces interlocking together in a manner reminiscent of log cabin construction. Redwood was chosen as a building material due to its durability and to avoid

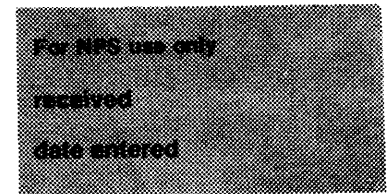
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the necessity of painting the building.³ Unfortunately, the building was only completed to the second-story level. As late as 1938, the Boothes stated their intention to complete the project.⁴

Two other buildings near the Technocratic Cathedral are also related to it. The 44-sided Blacksmith Shop has three flues or spires atop the roof (Photograph 13). These are non-functional and were added several years after the construction of the building. Comparison of the building with the design of the Technocratic Cathedral (Photograph 12) suggests that the cathedral design inspired that of the Blacksmith Shop. It is likely that the Boothes were experimenting with the design while still contemplating completion of the Technocratic Cathedral. A granite bunker was added by the Boothes during the Second World War to hoard gasoline in defiance of rationing laws (Photograph 15). This has a roof form very similar to that of the Technocratic Cathedral. The popularity of this stylistic characteristic with the Boothes can be traced from the trolley shelter, moved in 1936, through the Technocratic Cathedral, constructed in 1933-34, to the granite bunker. The design of all three is carefully thought out and is emphasized by the visual juxtaposition of the buildings (Photograph 7).

Another series of structures on the Booth grounds can only be described as architectural whimsies or follies intended for amusement. These include a miniature windmill, an octagonal leaning bell tower (demolished), and a cobblestone and brick lighthouse (Photograph 14). Most were deliberately constructed to be claimed as a one-of-a-kind exhibit. For example, the lighthouse, which is set in a small artificial pond, was claimed by the Boothes to be the only lighthouse in the U.S. not regularly receiving supplies from the government.⁵

The architecture of the Boothe Memorial Park shows the gradual evolution of the Boothe brothers from the accepted standards of style to a distinctive, idiosyncratic architectural idiom of their own. In some respects, the Boothe brothers' work might almost be classified as folk architecture. The lack of architectural training, use of varied stylistic elements, and what might be described as a sense of humor are all similar to folk architecture. The quality of the Boothe brothers' work is high and displays a good sense of design and proportion. One building, the Technocratic Cathedral, is monumental in character and attractive in proportions and massing. The overall effect of the complex also seems to have been carefully considered by the two brothers. Buildings are placed to deliberately complement one another, and in two distinct north-south lines. The result is striking, as revealed by various vistas of the property (Photographs 7 and 11).

The Boothe Memorial Park also represents several early 20th-century movements as interpreted through the eyes of the brothers, David and Stephen Boothe. Starting as a small exhibit on local history on the family farmstead in 1914, the Brothers evolved their estate into a complex serving a variety of purposes, including religious services, relief for the poor during the Depression, education and entertainment. All of these aspects bear the unique stamp of the Boothe brothers' secretive and eccentric character.

In 1914, David and Stephen Boothe opened their historical exhibit in the converted haybarn with its attached clock tower (Photograph 10). Simultaneously, they remodelled their house,

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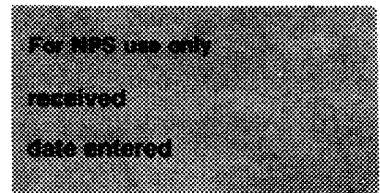
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the statement, "The Oldest Homestead in America" on several colored glass windows. Although the claim was spurious, the Boothes continued it as a cornerstone of their park in later years. Fortunately, a monumental granite entrance arch for the park bearing the same inscription was never erected. This intense, if inaccurate, interest in local history and genealogy continued throughout the remainder of the brothers' lives. It is noteworthy that the two brothers did not seek to move or replicate historic buildings as they expanded their facilities into a park. Although aware of outdoor historical museums based on the European idea of the folk museum, the Boothes did not choose to emulate them.

David and Stephen Boothe continued the family business of dealing in agricultural equipment and supplies inherited from their father, as well as dealing in insurance. Following the death of their mother in 1919, they began a new building program unfettered by parental restrictions. A number of buildings were constructed on the grounds shortly after 1919, including the caretaker's house, which was built from 1921 to 1922 as a home for David, who had married Ruth Norton shortly before. The marriage was dissolved after only a few years, in 1924.⁶ This phase of the Boothes' activity was fairly conventional, if not conservative, in the style of buildings constructed.

The third phase of building at the Boothe homestead started in 1929, coinciding with the Depression. The construction of the Coliseum in 1929-1930 was inspired by philanthropic motives on the part of the two brothers. Kitchen and dining facilities were open to the public on a low-cost basis. To the north of the Coliseum, the Boothes constructed a sunken garden which was soon converted to an outdoor basilica for nondenominational religious services. The basilica, its Organ House, outdoor crosses, and the Technocratic Cathedral were all conceived of as a unit by the Boothes. Outdoor Easter services were loosely patterned after colonial services, with the Boothes supplying a program outlining what they felt were the salient features of colonial worship. Minister and other participants were clothed in costumes of the Puritan era.

The Technocratic Cathedral, while intended as a backdrop for services in the basilica, was not apparently intended for religious observances within the building. In 1933, when the building was constructed, the Boothes stated their intention to use the building for exhibits of art and mechanical invention. The relationship of the Boothes to Technocracy, a movement initiated by a group of scientists and engineers after the First World War, is obscure. Technocracy proposed applying scientific and technical methods to the solution of social problems. Although it continues as an organization to the present, it enjoyed a brief vogue in 1933, when hundreds of articles and publications appeared. It is probable that the Boothes were attracted to the idea briefly, although there is no evidence that they were ever in contact with the leaders of Technocracy or grasped the concepts advocated by Technocracy.⁷ The inspiration for the term Technocratic Cathedral is probably found in the book Life in a Technocracy, published in January, 1933. In a chapter of religion, education, and amusement, Harold Loeb, the author, stated, "Meeting places, edifices for religious purposes, would still be needed... and the churchgoers could erect a monument, even a cathedral."⁸

Later, in 1938, David Boothe stated that the title was simply a joke.⁹ This may be accurate, or reflect the brothers' embarrassment over participating in the fad-like popularity

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of Technocracy. In an undated flyer, they referred to the building tongue-in-cheek as Depression style:

EVERY stick of timber, piece of board in this ENTIRE structure will lay FLAT and be fastened with half inch galv. dowels ... absolutely flat... therefore metal windows will be used.

F-L-A-T YES... Depression Style, and being built of California Redwood... RED... Depression Color as per your ledgers of the past few years.

Remember... FLAT...and RED. We know all about it. Well, you commemorate disasters and conflagrations...Why not have a MONUMENT to DEAD DEPRESSION. ^{10.}

In the same humorous vein, the Boothes announced their intention to pave the floor of the cathedral with genuine marble, yet not containing any marble. Instead, they were to imbed thousands of marbles in a cement floor. This whimsical and jocular approach is characteristic of the Boothes, who apparently enjoyed architectural puns.

The Boothe Memorial Park complex is a well-integrated park developed over a period of approximately forty years by David and Stephen Boothe. Although borrowing freely from various architectural styles and incorporating a variety of philosophies in the creation of the complex, the Boothe brothers succeeded in creating a monument to their own idiosyncratic and highly individual outlook. The resulting pastiche is nonetheless an important statement of that outlook. As an example of folk architecture and what might be termed an architectural folly, it is unique within the state of Connecticut.

Endnotes

¹"Souvenir Program, Annual Easter Sunrise Service and 275th Anniversary Boothe Homestead, Putney Gardens; The Oldest Homestead in America," no imprint, 1938, has a composite photograph of the grounds in which a photograph of the crosses has the four-story scale model of the Technocratic Cathedral superimposed in the background, together with a radiant image of the rising sun.

²"Bachelors Plan New 'Cathedral'," The Times-Star, Bridgeport, Ct., March 30, 1933, page 1.

³Bridgeport Post, September 29, 1933, page 21.

⁴"Boothe Home's Dawn Services Attract 1,510," New York Herald Tribune, April 18, 1938, page 13.

⁵Undated flyer, probably c 1938: "... you may visit THE ONLY LIGHTHOUSE IN THE U.S. that the Government does not send supplies to... yes, a real lighthouse equipped with an electric light and standing on an island with the Keeper's Castle near by and all surrounded by water which is more or less navigable, except in the winter season, when ice bound."

⁶"County Tradition Broken First Time by Stratford Pair," Sunday Herald, Bridgeport, Ct., page 3.

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Endnotes (continued)

⁷Communication from CHQ Technocracy Inc., Savannah, Ohio 44874, January 27, 1983:

"During the chaotic years of the thirties, following the great publicity surrounding Technocracy, many so-called "technocracy groups" were formed clear across the country. These had nothing whatsoever to do with Technocracy, Inc as conceived by Howard Scott. It just may be that the people who were instrumental in having this building constructed were just such a splinter group.

Just a cursory study of the economic conditions of that time will reveal many panaceas being offered. When Technocracy burst upon the scene (without, incidentally, the consent or wish of Howard Scott and his engineers), it was seized upon by various and sundry groups and incorporated into their own ideas without any study or research into what Technocracy really stood for."

It is the opinion of the writer that the Boothe Brothers may very well have had a serious interest in technocracy, or been influenced by popularized versions of Technocracy. Given the sudden popularity of the movement and the equally sudden rapidity with which it disappeared from the public view, it seems likely that they were later embarrassed by the episode and explained it as a joke. Until further research can be done in the vast body of uncatalogued material left by the Bothes, this must remain speculation.

⁸Loeb, Harold, Life in a Technocracy, New York: Viking Press, 1933, page 109.

⁹New York Herald Tribune, op. cit., April 18, 1938.

¹⁰Undated flyer, probably c1938, n.p.

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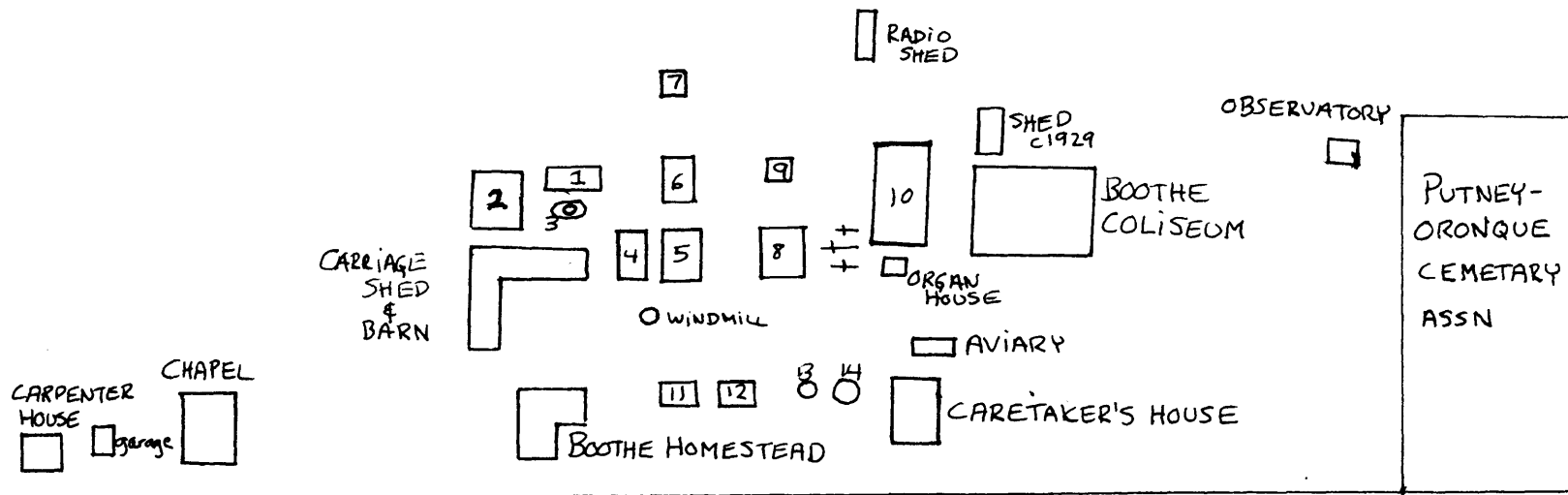
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HOUSATONIC RIVER

ROUTE 110 (RIYER ROAD)

○
SITE OF TROLLEY
SHELTER

CHAPEL PLACE



- KEY TO NUMBERED BLDGS
- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 STORAGE SHED | 8 TECHNOCRATIC CATHEDRAL |
| 2 GREENHOUSE | 9 GRANITE BUNKER |
| 3 LIGHT HOUSE | 10 BASILICA |
| 4 BRICK GARAGE | 11 GARAGE |
| 5 MUSEUM/CLOCK TOWER | 12 WORKSHOP |
| 6 BLACKSMITH SHOP | 13 TROLLEY STOP |
| 7 BLOCK HOUSE | 14 LIGHTHOUSE TOP |

MAIN STREET PUTNEY
 BOOTHE MEMORIAL PARK
 STRATFORD, CONNECTICUT
 - NOT TO SCALE -