

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

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

For NPS use only
received OCT 22 1986
date entered DEC 2 1986

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

1. Name

historic John Fitch School
and/or common John Fitch High School

2. Location

street & number 156 Bloomfield Avenue N.A. not for publication
city, town Windsor N.A. vicinity of
state Connecticut code 09 county Hartford code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<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 checked="" 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
	<u>N.A.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name John Fitch Court Associates (Christopher Carr)
street & number 200 North Main Street
city, town East Longmeadow N.A. vicinity of state Massachusetts 01028

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Windsor Town Hall (Town Clerk's Office)
street & number 275 Broad Street
city, town Windsor state Connecticut 06095

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

See continuation sheet

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1986 federal state county local
depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street
city, town Hartford state Connecticut 06106

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The John Fitch School is a load-bearing masonry building (120'x150') constructed in 1921 of buff brick and sandstone in the Beaux Arts Classical style (Photographs #1, 2). It is one-and-one-half stories high with a raised brick foundation and a sandstone water table. A one-and-one-half-story annex (50'x150'), located on the east side of the main block, also of buff brick, was added in 1929. The school is located on the north side of Bloomfield Avenue in a predominantly residential neighborhood composed of single-family dwellings generally dating from the early 1900s. The seven-acre level site of the school contains playing fields to the west and north and asphalt parking lots. The former H. Sidney Hayden School (now vacant) lies immediately to the north.

The most distinctive feature of the original school is a hip roof covered with green terra cotta tile of the Spanish type. The projecting eaves of the roof have a modillioned cornice supported by paired sandstone consoles. A polygonal cupola with a dome projects above the ridge at the center of the facade (Photograph #3). It displays louvered blinds and a balustrade.

The focus of the symmetrical seventeen-bay facade of the main block is an elaborate pavilioned entrance at the center (Photograph #4). The pavilion has a Flemish gable, a circular medallion, and corner blocks supported by consoles, all of sandstone. The double door entrance has a transom and a molded sandstone surround. In the center of the Flemish gable the medallion contains a bas-relief of John Fitch, for whom the school was named. The windows of the facade are clustered in groups of two or three, with each grouping separated by a vertical pier, or pilaster, of rusticated sandstone. The wood sash are double-hung with nine-over-nine lights. Recessed panels of brick or sandstone are substituted for windows in the slightly projecting wings at either end of the facade, with the exception of the third recess from the west end, which contains an operating sash. All the surrounds of the windows and the recessed panels contain contrasting small corner blocks of sandstone. The west and east elevations have larger sections of windows with wider multi-paned sash. The pilastered "girls" entrance at the west end remains; the matching "boys" entrance is incorporated into the connector between the original school and the 1929 addition (Photograph #5). Both of the rear entrances to the 1921 main block remain in place. They have distinctive matching door hoods with green-tiled, docked gable roofs, supported by sawn brackets (Photographs #5,6).

The 1929 masonry addition, built of matching brick and sandstone, has flat parapeted roof (Photographs #8, 9, 10). It also has a central doorway which echoes the form of the main entrance, and a symmetrically balanced facade (Photograph #8). The last addition to the school was made in 1934 to the rear of this addition. Two stories in height, with a flat roof, it provided eight additional classrooms. The side entrances on the west elevation of these additions have door hoods similar to the originals. They display copper-clad hip roofs and are supported by sawn brackets (Photograph #10).

Classrooms are clustered around the outside of the auditorium and gymnasium on the interior of the main block with corridors providing access to the rooms (Photograph #14). Most of the original interior finish has been covered with gypsum board to meet fire codes. As part of the same remodeling, new interior steel doors have been hung in steel jambs, but the original, simply detailed door frames and wood jambs remain in place. Apparently the interior was always quite plain, particularly when compared to the elaborated exterior. There is no evidence to suggest that wainscot or other architectural embellishment was removed from the classrooms when the building was upgraded to

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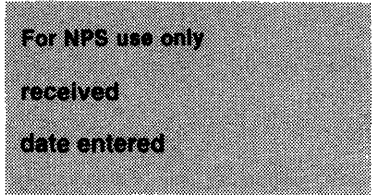
Representation in Existing Surveys

Survey of the Town of Windsor, 1981

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

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meet modern safety codes. Although most of the classrooms now have asphalt tile floors, wooden floors still exist in the corridors as do the original wooden staircases with simple wood balustrades (Photograph #13).

The auditorium and gymnasium, the central core of the main block area, open directly onto each other with the gymnasium floor apparently serving as a stage when the auditorium was in use (Photographs #11, 12). The 16-20 foot high vaulted ceiling of the auditorium is supported by steel framing. High windows on the east and west sides of the room provide limited illumination to the level floor with its rows of attached metal and wood seats. The gallery, or balcony, across the rear of the auditorium on the south side is repeated in the west and east walls of the gymnasium. The gymnasium, located directly behind the simple proscenium of the auditorium, is illuminated by high clerestory windows and skylights. A vertical beaded wainscot stained with a dark varnish extends around the room.

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 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 1922, additions 1929 1934 **Builder/Architect** Schwarz Brothers, Bridgeport, Connecticut
William Henry McClean (architect), Boston

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The John Fitch School located in Windsor, Connecticut, is architecturally significant for its distinctive design, state of preservation, and exceptional exterior craftsmanship (Criterion C). Designed by William Henry McClean of Boston, it was the first modern high school in the town of Windsor and commemorates the seventeenth-century Windsor hero, John Fitch, who died in King Philip's war. His bequest to the town helped finance higher education in Windsor for over 200 years.

Architectural Significance

The John Fitch School is one of the most unusual school buildings constructed in the state of Connecticut in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Eschewing the more typical red brick Georgian Revival style, an institutional cliché in this period, it utilizes a ceramic tile roof, buff brick, and applied classical detailing to achieve an exceptionally well-integrated design in the Beaux Arts Classical style.¹ The overhanging eaves and the low hipped roof suggest a Mission Style influence, another distinctive feature. The classical influence is, however, evident in the use of balanced facade and tripartite divisions. The interior is less notable with a more conventional plan, although the combination gymnasium/auditorium is an unusual feature.

William Henry McClean (1870-1942) was a practicing architect in Boston for almost forty years (1895-1942).² The firm of McClean and Wright, established by his father Henry McClean, maintained an office in Boston at 110 Tremont Street.³ The father, a residential architect known to have designed several houses in the Beacon Hill area of Boston, was associated with A. H. Wright until about 1915, at which time William Henry, the son, became a full partner, and the firm became known as McClean and McClean. In 1926, the firm moved to 88 Tremont Street. W. H. McClean designed a number of public buildings in New England, including the Provincetown High School in Massachusetts, the Bellows Free Academy in St. Alban's, Vermont, and the public libraries in North Attleboro, Massachusetts, and Wilton, New Hampshire.⁴

History

The history of education in Windsor followed a typical pattern, commencing with the establishment of the first school in 1676. The dame school system remained in place until 1796, when the first school society was formally established, with district schools built for the elementary grades. Windsor was quite progressive, however, and also built one of the first secondary schools in the state. The Union School, commonly called the Academy, was built in 1799 and provided an education for forty students, age 12 to 18. It was funded primarily from the interest derived from the Union School fund established from the estate left by John Fitch in the seventeenth century. In lieu of tuition, students were required to provide their share of the firewood to heat the school. Fitch, who was wounded in the Great Swamp Fight in King Philip's War and returned to Windsor to die in 1676, left his "land and goods" to the town for the purpose of "promoting of a

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet..

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 7

Quadrangle name Hartford North

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification Windsor Land Records 79:427 (8/8/1919)

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant, National Register Coordinator edited by John Herzan,

organization Cunningham Associates date 6/2/86

street & number 98 Washington Street telephone (203) 347-4072

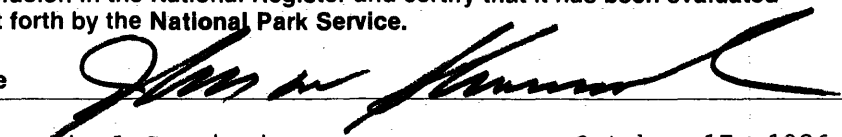
city or town Middletown state Connecticut 06457

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 October 17, 1986

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
Patrick Andrews date 12/2/86
Keeper of the National Register
Attest: John R. Swasey date 12/2/86
Chief of Registration

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schoole heere in Windsor".⁵

By the end of the nineteenth century, Windsor had twelve school districts, most with a one-room school house.⁶ An exception was the fifth district school, an Italianate-style building which still stands on Palisado Avenue, now used as American Legion Post #59. A new academy for secondary education was erected to replace the Union School in 1854 and continued in use until the Roger Ludlow School was built in 1893 on Bloomfield Avenue near the center of town. This latter school, now a parochial school owned by St. Gabriel's Church, was built of brick in the Romanesque-Revival style. The upper floors were used for the high school; the first floor for the elementary grades.

Although the establishment of the Loomis Institute, a private academy, in 1915, cut into the public high school population after World War I, the selectmen of Windsor were considering the need for a new high school because of overcrowding. Seventy-six high school pupils attended the Roger Ludlow School in 1919. By 1920, 107 pupils were taking advantage of four main courses of study: college preparatory, academic, commercial, and domestic science. The records indicate, however, that only a small percentage of students actually completed four years of high school and graduated in the post-war period, never more than ten percent of the total high school population.

A seven-acre lot on Bloomfield Avenue was purchased in 1920 and plans were drawn for a two-story school. The bids for building the school were \$200,000, exceeding the amount appropriated the town by \$50,000. William Henry McClean was authorized to draw new plans for a one-and-one-half-story school of the "bungalow type." Other areas of cost-saving called for were the reduction of space normally devoted to corridors, stair wells, and light shafts. The contract for the new school was awarded to Schwarz Brothers of Bridgeport in March of 1921. One hundred and ninety six students were enrolled when the school was completed the following year. It contained two classrooms, seven recitation rooms, two laboratories, a work room, a library, and a domestic science room, all located around the central core of the combined gymnasium/auditorium. The basement level was used for locker rooms, shower rooms, storage, and the heating system of the building. The new high school proved to be quite popular and by 1929 the first annex was required. Five years later, in 1934, eight more rooms were added to the rear of the annex.

Notes:

1. Only one other similar school in the state is known to the author, the Gilbert & Bennett School in Wilton, Connecticut. It utilizes similar materials and is constructed in the same style.
2. Obituary, Boston Herald, January 12, 1942.
3. Evelyn Wong, personal communication. March 21, 1986. Fine Arts Department, Boston Public Library. The history of the firm is established from a review of the Boston City Directories, 1895-1945.
4. H.F. Withey and E.R. Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased, p. 413.

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5. Daniel Howard, A New History of Old Windsor, Connecticut (Windsor Locks: Journal Press, 1935), p. 259.
6. Ibid., pp. 135-149. See also Daniel Howard, Glimpses of Ancient Windsor (Windsor: Herald Press, 1933), pp. 84-86.
7. Reports of the Town of Windsor, 1913-1920.
8. Town Report, 1921.

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Boston City Directories, 1895-1945. Boston, Massachusetts.

Boston Herald. Boston, Massachusetts.

Howard, Daniel. Glimpses of Ancient Windsor. Windsor, Connecticut: Herald Press, 1933.

_____. A New History of Old Windsor, Connecticut. Windsor Locks, Connecticut: Journal Press, 1935.

Reports of the Town of Windsor, 1894-1896; 1911-1930.

Town of Windsor Historic Survey, 1981.

Windsor Land Records.

Windsor Tax Records.

Withey, H. F. and E. R. Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased.

Wong, Evelyn. Personal communication March 2, 1986. Fine Arts Department, Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts.