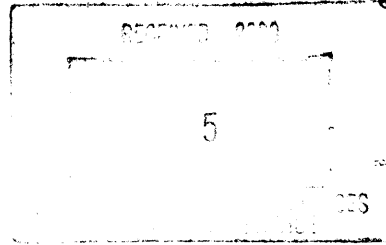


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hamden Memorial Town Hall

other names/site _____

2. Location

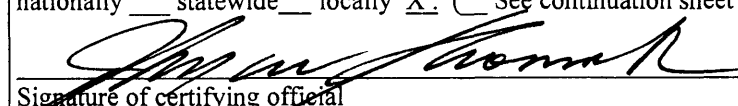
street & number 2372 Whitney Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Hamden vicinity N/A

state Connecticut code CT county New Haven code 009 zip code 06518

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally . (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 _____ 02/27/01
Signature of certifying official Date
John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission
Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Hamden Memorial Town Hall

Name of Property

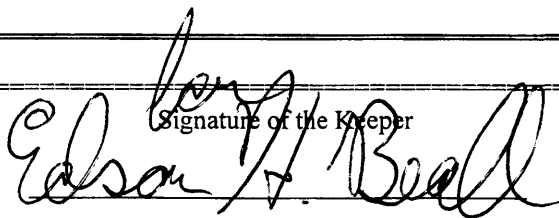
New Haven, CT

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the
National Register
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper


Date of Action

4-12-01

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
—	— sites
—	— structures
—	— objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/town hall
RECREATION/CULTURE/commemorative

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/town hall
RECREATION/CULTURE/commemorative

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival/
Neo-Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
walls brick
stone
roof built-up
other cast stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Hamden Memorial Town Hall, New Haven County, CT

Section 7 Page 1

The Hamden Memorial Town Hall straddles the northwest corner of Whitney and Dixwell avenues and dominates this major downtown intersection (Photograph #1). Constructed in 1924 of load-bearing masonry with brick and concrete exterior walls reinforced with structural steel, the two-story building encompasses approximately 4900 square feet on the first floor (see schematic diagram). At the center of the façade is a colossal semi-elliptical colonnade, flanked by two long angled wings that have matching projecting pavilions at either end (Photograph #s 2, 3). Three sets of modern double doors with decorative original transoms are accessed by full-width curved stone steps and three pathways. The path in the center is bordered by hedging and floral plantings. The metal balustrades are a modern addition.

The colonnade, which features four fluted Ionic columns with Scamozzi capitals, terminates in full-height wall pilasters on either side. At the second story, there is a band of five, nearly square stained-glass windows just below the coffered ceiling. The columns support a full entablature, surmounted by a curved balustrade, with the building name inscribed on the frieze. Centered above is an ornate three-stage clock tower, which rests on a square base with round-arched windows with tracery and paired Ionic columns at the corner. The clockfaces in the second stage have molded surrounds with tall footed scrolls for large urns. The paneled drum above has a gilded dome and finial.

The cast-stone detailing of the wing facades, which also wraps around the end elevations, includes a deep molded entablature with a solid brick parapet, a watertable above a partially exposed granite ashlar foundation, and a belt course. The pavilion on the left next to the colonnade contains the stair tower. The end pavilion of the right-hand wing incorporates the Hamden Fire Station (Photograph #4). The lot drops away at the end of the left wing, where there is a full-height exposed foundation and a corner entrance at grade (Photograph #5).

The fenestration of the wing facades features large first-story windows set in round-arched openings. The blind arches are detailed with swags and key blocks. Secondary entrances have similar features. A brick access ramp runs along the face of the right-hand wing. Second-story double-hung windows, arranged in groups of three in the pavilions, have key blocks and flared brick lintels.

The rear elevations are more simply detailed (Photograph #s 6, 7). Except for a slightly lower addition behind the firehouse and possibly the one-story sections on either side of the two-story projection for the auditorium wing, which appear to be later additions, these elevations are original construction and display plain brick parapets with tile or concrete copings. Among the types of fenestration used there are awning windows set in bands, and single and paired double-hung windows with segmental arches. Tall tripartite multipaned windows on either side of the auditorium are set within broad segmental-arched openings.

The interior plan features a two-story oval lobby with polished limestone walls and granite floor (Photograph #s 8, 9). A ceremonial space honoring the memory of Hamden veterans in eight wars, it has a paneled ceiling that

(8-86)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET****Hamden Memorial Town Hall, New Haven County, CT****Section 7 Page 2**

reflects the inlay pattern of the floor. Trabeated doorways with pilastered jambs in the northwest (rear) wall, which mirror the location of the entrance doors, lead to a curved perimeter hallway beyond that provides access to the rest of building; hallways extend out along each wing, and a shorter one in the center provides access to the auditorium. Full-height pilasters frame the doorways and the five openings above that overlook the rotunda from the second floor. The doorway at the west end, which leads to the stairwell, is balanced by the small partially enclosed information office on the east.

Limestone panels between and above the doorways are inscribed with the memorials. Centered in the rear wall is the memorial inscription consecrating the building to the Hamden heroes who fought and died in the War of Revolution (Photograph #8). Just below is the Korean Theatre memorial. The panel to the right (northeast) is dedicated to the war dead of the Civil War (Photograph #10). The front wall honors those who served and died in both world wars. The second-story stained-glass windows above were installed in 1939 to honor Hamden native Major A. Frederick Oberlin for his heroism in World War I (Photograph #11). Above the stairwell doorway at the west end is the panel for the War of 1812. Directly opposite is a similar panel for the Spanish American War (Photograph #9). The 12 intermediate panels at mid-level are inscribed with the signs of the zodiac, an unusual detail.

The auditorium, another two-story space, has a curved balcony along the southeast wall, which has a semi-elliptical form (Photograph #12). Accessed from the second floor, the balcony faces a raised stage fronted by a full-width curved dais (Photograph #13). Except for the two full-height pilasters that flank the stage, little remains of the original interior finishes. Acoustical tile installed on the ceiling here is also found throughout the offices in the building. A wood-paneled courtroom, which once was located in the west wing, has been divided up into smaller spaces.

Hamden Memorial Town Hall

New Haven, CT

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1924 – 1954

Significant Dates

1924; 1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Richard Williams

M. J. Gibbud Company

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Hamden Historical Society

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National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Hamden Memorial Town Hall, New Haven County, CT

Section 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

The Hamden Memorial Town Hall is a significant expression of institutional Colonial Revival architecture, which is enhanced by its exceptional Neo-Classical features and forms. One of the few public buildings in the state that incorporates a war memorial, this handsome, generally well-preserved building was designed by Richard Williams, Hamden resident and partner in Allen & Williams, an architectural firm with a large practice in New Haven. His design is distinguished by the historically and architecturally significant formal ceremonial lobby that honors the memory of Hamden residents who served in the nation's wars.

Historical Background and Significance

A parish of New Haven in the eighteenth century, Hamden became a separate town in 1786. It was one of four parishes on the outskirts to achieve political independence soon after the City of New Haven was chartered in 1784. Like most of the satellite villages that ringed New Haven, Hamden was primarily an agricultural community. Although all these communities depended on the New Haven market, their interests had diverged. In fact, Hamden's memorial to the General Assembly for incorporation expressed the rural-urban dichotomy of post-Revolutionary society in Connecticut, flatly stating that "merchants, professional men [of New Haven]...have notions...and modes of conducting business [that are} very different" from... the "petitioners who are all farmers."¹

Hamden really came into its own in the early twentieth century, largely due to suburbanization. The unprecedented urban growth in the state created by the industrialization and foreign immigration of the late nineteenth century was reversed. People began to move out of the crowded cities as early as 1900. By the 1920s, a period of rapid residential growth, the town asserted its new identity as a modern suburban town and proclaimed its prosperity by building the Town Hall at a cost of \$164,000, an extraordinary sum for this period, of which \$3000 was designated for architect's fees. As was the case with other New Haven suburbs, such as Woodbridge, that had a similar history, the building was designed in the Colonial Revival style, the most popular style for municipal architecture in this period. As shown in a contemporary birdseye view of town, the scale of the building easily dominated what was then the nucleus of an emerging commercial center, then known as Centerville. Although typically a multipurpose building with space provided for municipal offices, a courtroom and holding cells, an auditorium, and fire station, it was the ceremonial function that was foremost in the minds of the architect and town officials. Hamden citizens had expressed a desire for their own war memorial ever since 1887, when New Haven's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument was erected in East Rock Park. Thirty-seven years later, this dream was realized. Launched with a dedication ceremony on Monday, February 23, 1924, which was followed by a ball in the auditorium, this civic landmark continues to be a center for public life.

¹ See Bruce C. Daniels, *The Connecticut Town* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), p. 40.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Hamden Memorial Town Hall, New Haven County, CT

Section 8 Page 2

Architectural Significance

In the skillful hands of architect Richard Williams (d. c. 1926), the Hamden Memorial Town Hall achieved an exceptional sophistication and coherence. Nominally a Colonial Revival building, the design rises above the conventions of this style. While employing standard Colonial Revival motifs and materials commonly found in many municipal buildings of this period...arched fenestration, key blocks, and red brick with heavy contrasting moldings...it is the Neo-Classical elements that produce a level of significance rarely found in this genre.

A prolific architect with a number of distinguished commissions to his credit, Richard Williams was a member of the prestigious New Haven Architectural Club and a partner of William H. Allen from at least 1900. Given his local prominence, it is somewhat surprising that no information has come to light about his professional background or professional training.² His practice included residential, commercial, and institutional architecture, and several of his major buildings in New Haven have survived. Among them is the New Haven County Courthouse that faces the New Haven Green from the corner of Elm and Church streets. A collaboration with his partner, this Neo-Greco Roman structure, now the State Circuit Court, is one of the major early twentieth-century buildings in downtown New Haven. Like the Hamden Town Hall, this building has a notable interior and expresses a considerable classical fluency, which the *Saturday Chronicle*, a New Haven weekly, attributed to Williams' artistic genius.³

Williams also did some fine turn-of-the-century residential and ecclesiastical work. Two of his houses on upper Whitney Avenue demonstrate the architect's versatility, especially the picturesque English country cottage of 1902 at #592. Among religious structures designed by Williams are the French Renaissance Revival Church of St. Louis (no longer extant) and its companion rectory that still stands on Chapel Street, and the memorable St. Anthony's Church erected in the Hill section of the city south of downtown, which recalls the native church left behind by the immigrant Italian parishioners.

When Williams' plans for the Hamden Memorial Town hall were featured in an exhibit at the New Haven Architecture Club in 1923, his professional contemporaries surely recognized the progressive, even modern approach of Williams' design. Anticipating architectural theories of a much later period, the building has a coherent design, one that reveals the interior plan by its exterior form and layout. Such an integration is most obvious from the convex curve of the entrance colonnade which anticipates the shape and height of the lobby. Suitably monumental in scale and surmounted by an exuberant clock tower, these elements focus attention on the entrance.

Exterior pathways and internal corridors all converge in the formal, almost austere lobby, where Williams reinterpreted the Federal Revival in Neo-Classical terms. The oval plan, strict axial balance, and especially the

² Williams does not appear in any of the standard published biographical sources or in on-line data bases such as the Avery Index. City directories indicate that he may have died in 1926 but no obituaries can be found to confirm that date. His work in New Haven is cited in Elizabeth Mills Brown, *New Haven: A Guide*....., 1979.

³ December 12, 1914, p. 17.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Hamden Memorial Town Hall, New Haven County, CT

Section 8 Page 3

subtle flattening of the decorative elements are well suited to its ceremonial purpose. The neutral palette that reinforces the formality of this room suggests that the painted ceiling grid was once less obtrusive. The simplicity of Williams' design is deceptive. The proportions of this space direct the eye upward and around the room, making even the casual visitor aware that it is not simply a lobby, but a consecrated space. In addition, instead of limiting how visitors move through the room, Williams used multiple entrances and exits, creating a complex traffic pattern that does much to ensure that all memorial panels receive attention.

(8-86)

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Hamden Memorial Town Hall, New Haven County, CT

Section 9/10 Page 1

9. Major Bibliographic References

Annual Report of the Town of Hamden, 1924, 1925.

Architectural Club of New Haven: Yearbook and Exhibition Catalog, 1923.

Architectural Survey of Hamden. Town of Hamden and Connecticut Historical Commission, 1985.

Becker, Martha May, and Nancy Davis Sachse. *Hamden: Our Architectural Heritage*. Hamden Historical Society, 1986.

Brown, Elizabeth Mills. *New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design*. New Haven and London: Yale Univeristy press, 1979.

Hamden Connecticut. Hamden Historical Society Archives.

Ransom, David F. "Civil War Monuments." *The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin* (58:1-4), 1993, pp. 219, 221..

"Richard Williams, Architect." *Saturday Chronicle*, New Haven, December 12, 1914.

"Town Hall to be Dedicated Tomorrow." *New Haven Register*, February 22, 1935.

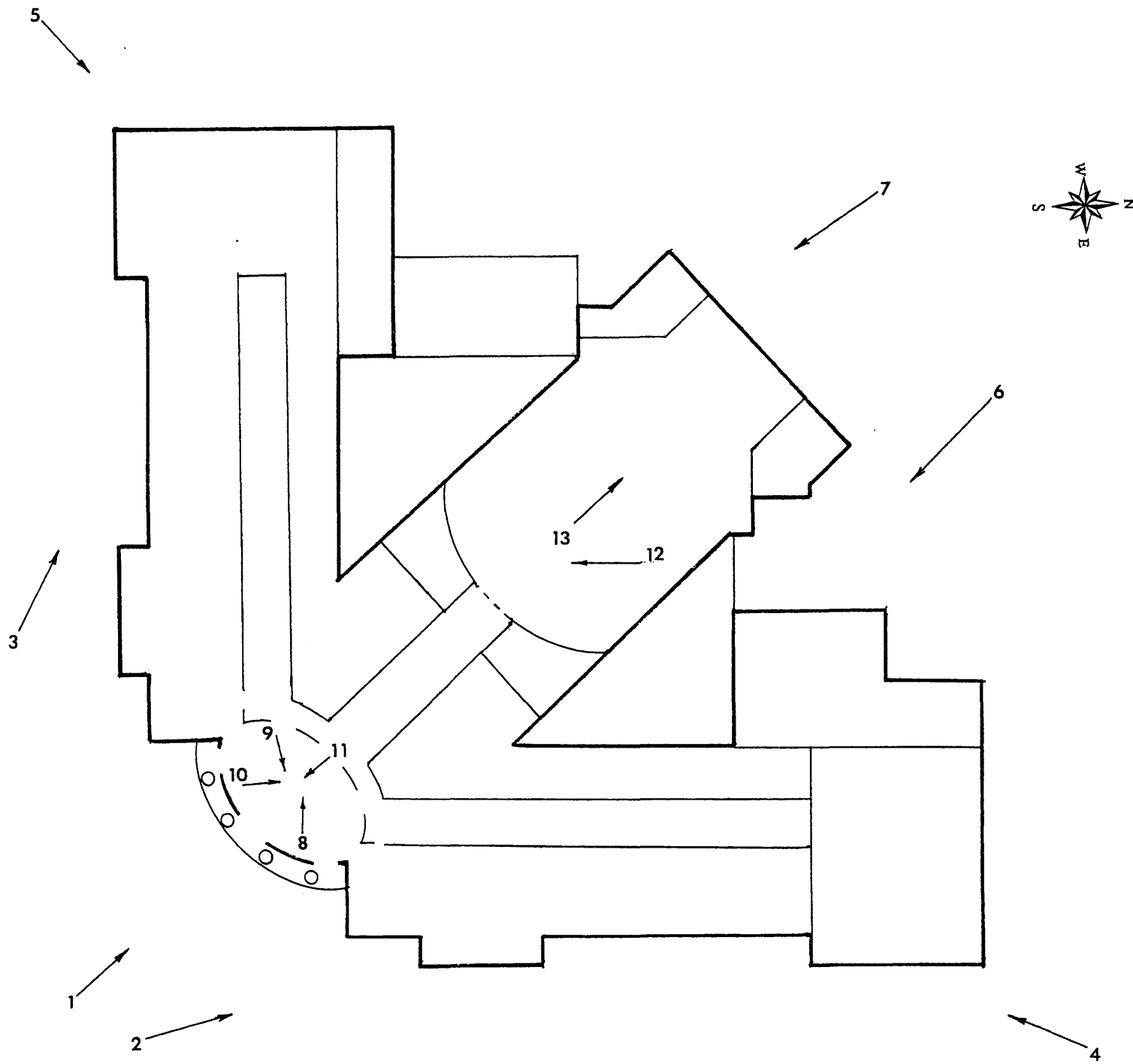
10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property is described in the Hamden Tax Assessor's Records as parcel 2730-049.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the above described parcel encompass all the property historically associated with the Hamden Memorial Town Hall.



HAMDEN MEMORIAL TOWN HALL
New Haven County, CT

SCHEMATIC FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Approximate Scale: 1" = 15'
Arrows indicate photograph views

Cunningham Preservation Associates, 10/00

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Hamden Memorial Town Hall, New Haven County, CT

Section Photo Page **1**

List of Photographs

Photographer: Cunningham Preservation Associates

Negatives on File: Connecticut Historical Commission

Date: 7/00

1. Façade, camera facing NW
2. East wing facade, camera facing N
3. West wing façade, camera facing NW
4. Fire station, camera facing SW
5. End elevation west wing, camera facing NE
6. Rear elevation left side, camera facing E
7. Rear elevation center and west wings, camera facing SE
8. Lobby, camera facing NW
9. Lobby from second floor, camera facing E
10. Lobby, camera facing NE
11. Memorial windows in lobby, camera facing SE
12. Auditorium, camera facing SW
13. Auditorium, camera facing NW