

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91001615 Date Listed: 11/14/91

NAMCO Block _____ Windsor _____ VT
Property Name County State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for Beth Savage
Signature of the Keeper

11-14-91
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

3. Classification: Number of Resources within Property

The property consists of one contributing apartment building.

This information was discussed with Elsa Gilbertson, VTSHPO, by telephone.

=====
DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without attachment)

1615

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name NAMCO Block
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1-17 Union Street N/A not for publication
city, town Windsor N/A vicinity
state Vermont code VT county Windsor code 027 zip code 05089

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>9</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>9</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 9/27/91
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. 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] 11-14-91
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls Brick

roof Rubberother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1920-22

Significant Dates

1920

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

LaFrance, L. A., Company

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.29 acres

UTM References

A

1	8	7	1	1	1	2	5	4	8	1	6	7	2	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of the intersection of Main Street (Route 5) and Union Street in Windsor running south along Main Street to the north bank of Mill Brook. Then proceeding west following the north bank of Mill Brook as it turns north to Union Street. Then proceed east along Union Street to the point of origin.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is the historical site boundary of the NAMCO Block and presently includes a parking lot at the rear of the building.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Leslie Donovan, Historic Preservation Consultant
organization _____ date May 1991
street & number 102 South Street, Second Floor telephone (617) 482-0910
city or town Boston state MA zip code 02111

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The NAMCO Block is a four-story, brick apartment block composed of nine attached apartment buildings containing 72 apartments. Constructed in 1920-22, the NAMCO Block exhibits basic Colonial Revival features and is said to be the largest apartment block in the State of Vermont. The block is prominently sited at the corner of Union and Main Streets in Windsor on the north bank of Mill Brook. It possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials and workmanship. The building was rehabilitated in 1989 for low-income housing.

The NAMCO Block is a four-story, flat-roofed brick structure with bow fronts and concrete detail. The structure sits on a concrete foundation and is punctuated by single and paired sets of windows containing 6-over-1 and 8-over-1 wood, double-hung sash. The entire block is topped by a brick parapet with concrete coping.

The front elevation faces Union Street at the corner of Main Street in Windsor. The block is sited parallel to Mill Brook with the rear of the block facing south across the brook to the former Robbins & Lawrence Armory. A paved parking lot covers the area between the building and a concrete retaining wall at the edge of the river bank. The block is set back approximately 8-10 feet from the sidewalk along Union Street and the site slopes up slightly from east to west.

The NAMCO Block is actually composed of nine identical, attached apartment buildings, each containing a central stair with two apartments on each floor. A fire wall separates the buildings and each has a full basement. At the rear of the block a wing projects from the center of each building making each building T-shaped in plan. At the end of each wing, wood frame porches rise the full height of the building. The concept of a row of individual buildings is read clearly at the rear facade where each wing is separated from the adjacent buildings by a narrow courtyard.

The predominant features of the main facade are the repeating bow fronts which create an undulating effect along this elevation and

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serve to break up this extremely long facade into smaller units that are more residential in scale. Simple concrete detail, which adorns the main (north), east and west elevations, includes the window sills and lintels, a water-table, sill-courses at the second and fourth stories, a string-course above the fourth story and coping at the parapet.

The most ornate features are shouldered window lintels at the first story and the fluted Tuscan pilasters with entablature at each entry. The rear of the building has only simple concrete sills and lintels at the windows and doors.

Each of the identical nine buildings has a symmetrical facade with a central entrance bay framed on either side by a bow front. Each building is five bays wide with paired windows on the floors above the entry denoting the stair hall. The basement windows contain a single four light sash with vertical mullions.

Concrete stairs with simple pipe railings lead up to each entry. Fluted pilasters supporting an entablature, all concrete and in the Tuscan order, frame each entrance. Within the opening is a wood and glass entry. A single wood door with a full length glass panel is framed by narrow fluted Tuscan pilasters that support a glass block transom. The side lights also contain glass block with wood panels below.

Inside each building, the entrance vestibule is decorated with white glazed tile wainscoting and a hexagonal tile floor. A second glass panel door with sidelights leads into the stair hall and above each interior door is a leaded glass transom.

A straight-run stair runs up to the next floor along the west wall of the stair hall on each floor. A simple wood banister with narrow square wood balusters runs along the stairs. The newel posts and strings are decorated by simple wood panels. At the rear of the stair hall on each floor are two apartment entries. Each entrance contains an unembellished wood door surround. All of the apartment entry doors are new. Inside a typical unit, the living room is located at the front, the kitchen is at the rear, the dining room is next to the kitchen and the bedroom and bathroom are located toward the center of each unit. The plan of the end units is slightly different with two bedrooms at the center and a bathroom at the rear next to the kitchen. Four units on the first floor of Bldgs. 15 & 17 have been adapted for handicap access.

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The rear door leading out to the porch from each kitchen contains a two-light transom sash which is divided at the center by a vertical mullion.

Except for its size, the NAMCO Block is a relatively modest example of a Colonial Revival building with typical features of the style. The red brick walls with bow fronts and simple classical entries represent a characteristic Colonial Revival form. In addition, the molded string course above the first story and simple string courses on the upper stories, the flat-arched windows with multi-light upper sash and single-light lower sash are all common to the Colonial Revival vocabulary. Except for the rather simple parapet, the NAMCO building is faithful to the accepted formula for the Colonial Revival apartment block described by Marcus Whiffen in American Architecture Since 1780, which was "... to concentrate the Georgian detail at top and bottom and leave the middle stories to look after themselves".

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NAMCO Block
Windsor, Windsor County, Vermont

The NAMCO Block is an excellent and intact example of a large scale company housing project. It exhibits sophisticated planning concepts for creating a comfortable, healthy and yet economical living environment for workers and their families. The NAMCO Block is unique in Windsor and is a rare model of company apartment housing in Vermont. It was called the largest apartment house in northern New England at the time it was completed in 1922, and is particularly unusual as a well-conceived urban solution to company housing in a country town. A second apartment block in Springfield, Vermont, by the same builder, L. A. LaFrance, is less than one-third the size of NAMCO's building. The NAMCO Block is significant as a notable example of company housing built by the National Acme Company. As Windsor's largest employer from 1915 to 1930, NAMCO's success was dependent on, among other things, its ability to attract labor from outside of Windsor and to house those workers in proximity to the factory. Construction of the apartment block signified the emphasis of employment among the local population in the machine tool industry and at NAMCO in particular. As a direct result of the need for the National Acme Company to staff the Windsor plant, the town's population doubled during World War I. Just as factories are built to suit the process they shelter, so too this specialized form of housing was brought to Windsor because it served the needs of industrial workers. The rents were inexpensive, the units were economical to heat and it provided satisfactory housing near the plant for many small families.

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The NAMCO Block was built during a period of post-war prosperity at the National Acme Company (NAMCO) in Windsor. NAMCO and its predecessor, the Windsor Machine Company, were Windsor's largest employers through the first three decades of the 20th century. The NAMCO Block represented a progressive concept in company housing for Vermont. Guy Hubbard, a local industrial historian writing in 1923, called it "a very interesting experiment in housing". Unlike the typical single-family and two-family houses, or the dormitories and lodging houses which could accommodate only single men, the apartment block was an urban approach to company housing which could also be used for families. Although transplanted from nearby Holyoke, Massachusetts, the apartment block was ahead of its time in Windsor in 1922 and represents the impact the company had on the town. This building continues to represent an unusually large housing project of this period.

The history of the National Acme Company in Windsor is linked to the beginning of Windsor's machine tool industry. The Windsor Machine Company was a successor to the Robbins and Lawrence Company machine shops, one of Windsor's first machine tool companies. The Windsor Machine Company eventually became part of the National Acme Company. The only remaining building from the Robbins and Lawrence complex sits on the south bank of Mill Brook facing the rear of the NAMCO Block.

Robbins and Lawrence was noted for its aggressive approach by which a small-town shop in the 1840s acquired two government contracts to produce 25,000 rifles with interchangeable parts. The success was short-lived, however. By 1857 the Robbins and Lawrence Company was in foreclosure. A subsequent tenant in the Robbins and Lawrence shops in Windsor completed the remaining contract for the manufacture of Enfield rifles and then began the manufacture of sewing machines. Successor firms also manufactured sewing machines here until the former Robbins and Lawrence property on the north side of Mill Brook was purchased by the Windsor Machine Company in the late 1880s.

The old shops were vacated when the Windsor Machine Company constructed a new plant nearby in 1909. With a major boom during World War I, a lack of workers' housing prompted the company to convert the old shop buildings into a club and dormitory for the men with social and function rooms. The facility was filled immediately and became the center of social life for the town.

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The Windsor Club, as it was known, was badly damaged by fire toward the end of World War I. Once again, this caused a severe housing shortage. The National Acme Company demolished the damaged buildings and constructed their new apartment block on the site.

The origins of the National Acme Company began with two men in a small machine shop in Hartford, CT. Edward C. Henn and Reinhold Hakewessell conceived of the idea of a multiple spindle automatic lathe. With some local backing, their company was incorporated under the name of the "Acme Machine Screw Company of Hartford, Connecticut".

Henn's brother, A.W. Henn, soon joined the venture. Their continuous search for capital brought them to A.W. Henn's former employer in Cleveland. As a result of this contact, a group of Cleveland businessmen formed the National Manufacturing Company in 1897. This company obtained the rights to the exclusive use of Acme's automatic lathes in Cleveland and the vicinity. The machines were purchased to manufacture and sell "articles, special or staple, made from metals such as screws, bolts, rivets, nuts, nails and kindred articles." Opened in Cleveland in 1898, this was the first screw machine products plant using multiple spindle machines.

In 1899, the National Acme Manufacturing Company was organized and purchased both the Acme Machine Screw Company in Hartford and the National Manufacturing Company in Cleveland.

At the same time, the Windsor Machine Company was developing along a parallel course. Founded by George Hubbard in 1888, the Windsor Machine Company filled a void created when the Jones and Lamson Machine Company, Windsor's only machine industry at the time, decided to move to Springfield, Vermont. Hubbard already operated two successful ventures in Windsor. One involved the manufacture of coffee percolators and the second the development and manufacture of a diamond-shaped glazier's point and driver. With a group of local mechanics, Hubbard obtained backing for the Windsor Machine Company to make improvements to the turret lathe.

In the late 1890s, George O. Gridley approached the Windsor Machine Company with a proposal to build an automatic lathe. Gridley was hired in 1898 and the following year developed the Gridley Automatic. Some members of the board were skeptical, but the fortunate purchase of a controlling interest in stock in

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1902, by Maxwell Evarts, ensured the success of the new invention. The shop was equipped for quantity production of the Gridley Single Spindle Automatic Lathe. Gridley soon followed, in 1907, with a design for a four spindle automatic lathe. The production of this machine brought the Windsor Machine Company great financial success and brought the company into direct competition with the National Acme Manufacturing Company.

Maxwell Evarts was the son of Senator William M. Evarts, who was Secretary of State in the cabinet of Rutherford B. Hayes. Born in Windsor and graduated from Yale in 1884, Maxwell Evarts continued to spend summers in Windsor. He was employed as general counsel to the Southern Pacific and several other railroads, but also maintained interests in Windsor. In addition to his involvement as President and controlling shareholder in the Windsor Machine Company, Evarts was one of the founders of the State National Bank in Windsor in 1905, and was its first President.

The Windsor Machine Company continued to prosper under the enlightened encouragement of Maxwell Evarts. In 1909 when a new plant was built, Evarts presided over the ground breaking. To raise additional capital for the growing concern, a controlling financial position was acquired in 1911 by the Potter and Johnson Machine Company of Rhode Island. Evarts died in 1913 and business slowed early in 1914. Fortunately, in September of that year, an order for Gridley Automatics to produce shells set off a period of war-time expansion.

During this period of war-time prosperity several firms were interested in buying the Windsor Machine Company. After a few unsuccessful attempts, The National Acme Manufacturing Company was able to purchase all of the interests in the Windsor Company in December 1915. Following the acquisition of the Windsor Machine Company, the enlarged company reincorporated as the National Acme Company (NAMCO).

National Acme continued to produce multiple spindle automatics at Windsor and in their Cleveland plant until 1926. Following a reorganization of the management of the company in 1925, it was decided to consolidate the manufacture of machines at the Windsor plant. The Cleveland operations were then limited to the manufacture and sale of automatic screw machine products rather than the machines themselves. At Windsor, later models of six-

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and eight-spindle machines were developed bringing continued prosperity. However, during the Depression National Acme decided to consolidate everything in Cleveland, where the executive offices were located. In 1933, the Windsor facility was closed. The company continued to produce machines at Cleveland and eliminated a major portion of the products business.

Housing had become critical to the continued growth of the company in Windsor before National Acme came on the scene. Employment had grown from approximately 400 in 1914 to 1,200 by the time the Windsor Machine Company was purchased in December of 1915. The Windsor Machine Company first responded to the housing shortage by converting the old shops to dormitories. Additional housing and a second lodging house were built and the Windsor House was purchased. The rear section was renovated for a worker's rooming house. National Acme soon doubled the size of the Windsor plant, increasing the work force to 1,600. NAMCO then started buying and building additional housing for its workers. Windsor's population grew in response. After remaining steady at approximately 2,500 from the mid-19th century until just prior to the war, the population jumped to 5,000 by the end of the war.

The National Acme Company continued to thrive. Except for a brief closing in 1921, the company was able to sustain peak employment through the end of the 1920s. Post-war work, which included orders such as equipment and products for automobile factories, kept the company going and the National Acme Company was able to fulfill its promise to rehire returned soldiers who had left to fight in the war. In the meantime, the dormitory space in the old shops had been lost due to a fire. To replace the lost housing, NAMCO built the new block of apartments on the site. Guy Hubbard explained that with no trolley lines and the use of automobiles restricted during Vermont's severe winters, company housing had to be located within easy walking distance of the plant. Since there were no large sites available for several small houses, the apartment block was ideal.

Following the build-up of its war-time work force, when many men lived in boarding houses and dormitories and two men on opposite shifts would trade off sleeping in the same bed, NAMCO obviously decided to provide more suitable accommodations for their workers. Unlike the dormitory which it replaced, the NAMCO apartments provided much more comfortable housing which could serve the needs of married workers. This was a significant departure from the typical single-family and two-family houses or

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rooming houses and dormitories which the company had previously built in Windsor. Although simple, the apartments were clearly intended to be attractive to the workers. According to Hubbard, the rents were "so low as to fairly astonish a city apartment dweller". The amenities included steam heat, electricity for lighting and cooking, unlimited hot water and mechanical refrigeration which was provided by a central power and heating plant behind the building (since demolished). Reasonable rents and the excessive cost of heating fuel in the winter of 1922-23 caused several families to close their homes for the winter and move into the NAMCO apartments, which filled quickly.

The contract was awarded to the L.A. LaFrance Company of Holyoke, MA in the spring of 1920. Work was halted due to an economic slump that year, but the building was completed when business picked up in 1922. The design and plan of the NAMCO Block are most likely attributable to the builder. With extensive experience in building apartment blocks, L.A. LaFrance was undoubtedly well-qualified for the job. The NAMCO apartment buildings exhibit restrained detail indicative of their intended use as workers' housing. However, the plan with bow fronts, courtyards between the rear wings, and access to porches from each unit exhibit careful planning to provide ample light and ventilation. The T-shaped plan of each building permits generous window area in all rooms, even those at the center of the block. There is a window in the bathroom, a single oversized window in the bedroom and a double window in the dining room. The bow fronts enhance ventilation of the living rooms, while rear doors with operable transoms take advantage of cross breezes through the apartments from front to back. The rear porches, which face south and overlook Mill Brook, provide an ideal (though small) outdoor living space for each unit and are excellent for drying laundry. The apartments are particularly efficient in terms of space (the block contained 64 1-bedroom and 8 2-bedroom units), yet provided adequate living area to accommodate a small family.

Despite its notoriety for Vermont, the NAMCO Block was typical of many buildings constructed by the LaFrance Construction Company. LaFrance was credited with building 126 "blocks" in Holyoke containing 1,796 apartments and 32 stores. A smaller project constructed by LaFrance in Springfield, Vermont is built of yellow brick in an L-shaped plan consisting of three connected three-story buildings.

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In addition to the many residential, mixed-use and commercial blocks in Holyoke, LaFrance Construction built the H.B. Lawrence School, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, the old Immaculate Conception Church and parish buildings, and the The LaFrance Hotel (later named the Hotel Grand). Outside of Holyoke, LaFrance constructed several churches in Rhode Island, and a school in Williamsburg. In Windsor Heritage, Katherine Conlin credits three other structures in Windsor to LaFrance: the Union Street Grammar School (1921), the band stand on the Common, and the NAMCO Club (1917).

The LaFrance Company was founded by Louis A. LaFrance, who moved to Holyoke from Canada with his family in 1869. In 1889, Mr. LaFrance joined Gilbert Potvin as a partner in his construction business. LaFrance realized that the expanding industrial city of Holyoke did not have enough space to house the growing work force that was coming to work in the mills, so LaFrance started to build apartments.

In 1892, when Potvin retired, LaFrance joined Octave A. LaRiviere in the construction firm of LaFrance and LaRiviere, located in nearby Indian Orchard. According to the directories, the two men were involved in both construction and real estate. LaFrance also married LaRiviere's daughter. By the end of World War I, LaFrance was the sole proprietor of the business. The LaFrance Construction Company continued its involvement in real estate as well as construction. Some of LaFrance's projects were considered speculative at the time, but proved to be extremely successful. At the time of his death in March 1938, Louis LaFrance was the largest landowner and largest individual taxpayer in the City of Holyoke. He also owned several properties in Chicopee. It was mentioned that LaFrance saw the same opportunity in Windsor in the 1920s that he had anticipated in Holyoke a few decades earlier.

It is interesting to note, that at the time LaFrance began working with LaRiviere in Indian Orchard, George O. Gridley was trying to start up his own business venture in Indian Orchard. Gridley soon left for the Windsor Machine Company. The connection between the two men is unknown. However, it is clear that they knew each other in Windsor. In March 1922, Gridley stood up at town meeting to request payment of an overdue bill from the LaFrance Construction Company for work on the Union Street School.

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Major Bibliographical References

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Vermont Journal (Windsor, VT), 2 April 1920, 10 March 1922, 3
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PROPERTY OWNER:

Armory Square Limited Partnership
c/o Marken Properties
667 Main Street
Holyoke, MA 01040

Tax I.D. No. 04-2871727