United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic Winchester Soldiers' Monument

Winchester Soldiers' Monument and/or common

2. Location

Crown Street street & number

code

county

Litchfield

Winchester

NA vicinity of

09

Connecticut state

XCHXX town

Classification

3. Clas	sification			
Category district building(s) X structure site object	Ownership _X_public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered NA	Status occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible yes: restricted yes: unrestricted yes: unrestricted	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	<pre> museum park private residence religious scientific transportation tother: monument</pre>

Owner of Property 4.

name	Town of W	inchester, Town Hall		
street & number	338 Main	Street		
city, 1999/11	Winsted	<u>NA</u> vicinity of	state	СТ
5. Loca	tion of	Legal Description		
courthouse, regis	try of deeds, etc.	Winchester Land Records,	Town Hall	
street & number	338 Main	Street		
city, town	Winsted		state	СТ
6. Repr	esenta	tion in Existing Surv	/eys	
title State R	egister of	Places Historic has this property be	en determined eli	gible? yes _X no
date 1983		·	federal <u>x</u> state	e county local
depository for su	rvey records Co	nnecticut Historical Commis	ssion, 59 S	· Prospect St.
city, town H	artford		state	СТ

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<u>NA</u> not for publication

code 005

7. Description

Condition	<u>X</u> deteriorated	Check one
good fair	ruins unexposed	altered

Check one <u>X</u> original site moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Overview

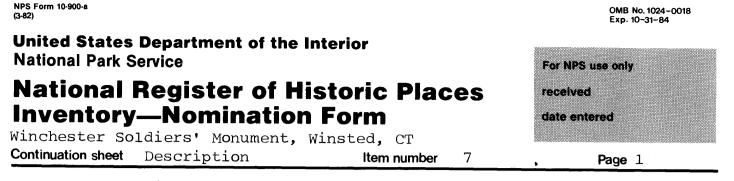
The Winchester Soldiers' Monument, commemorating men of the town who served in the Civil War, is a square, granite tower with a military air sited on a hill overlooking Winsted, Connecticut.¹ Built in 1889-90 to the design of Robert W. Hill at a cost of \$13,000, it has a tourelle at one corner that supports a bronze figure of a soldier sculpted by George E. Bissell. The wall that runs in front of the site and the central entrance structure in the wall, over steps leading up to the monument, repeat the material and details of the monument, giving the two-acre site a sense of overall integrity. (Photograph 1) A modern fountain has been added near the base of the tower.² (Photograph 2)

Monument, Exterior and the second concentration and subscribe and and a second state of the second state of 10.000.00 The granite for the monument was supplied from Stephen Hurd's guarry on nearby Highland Lake. The first stone was laid without ceremony late in October 1889. The granite is an uncommon color said at the time to be a "pinkish cast when viewed close up" but to appear "greenish grey" from a distance.³ The walls are laid up in rock faced ashlar with a battered slope at the Some of the individual stones are as large as 56" long, 15" first story. high and, at the base, 26" deep. The tower is 20 feet square at the base, 15 feet square at the top, and is surrounded by a chain link fence. Two cannon, within the fence, flank the door on the west elevation, toward the city. الموجود والارتياج المراجع والراجع والترية المراجع والترية والترية والترية والترية والترية والترية والترية والت . : . . .

At the first floor a paneled wooden door, now metal clad on the exterior, faces west toward Main Street, some 400 feet away.⁴ Each of the other three elevations has a single window comparable in size to the door, now with iron bars. At the second floor instead of being rectangular as at the first, the two windows of each elevation have Gothic arches. Oak paneled transoms under the arches are part of the window frames. (Photograph 6) There are three such windows at the third floor on the north and east elevations; on the west and south sides one window is displaced by the tourelle. The windows now are sheet plastic; they were planned to be stained glass. A castellated parapet rises above the roof line, with the embrasures and merlons of its battlement capped by dressed granite slabs. The roof is covered with bitumen.⁵ The top of the parapet is 44 feet above the ground. (Photograph 3)

The tourelle is corbelled out at the southwest corner, toward the center of the city. It supports an 8' 3"-tall bronze figure of a soldier bearing colors. (Photograph 4) The top of the color staff is 63' 10" from the ground. The 2000-pound statue, 88% copper and 12% tin and zinc, cost \$2500, and was cast by the Henry Bonnard Bronze Co., New, York.⁶

The walls are bulging outward. Steel cables have been placed around the monument in two places, about half way up and under the parapet, in an effort to stabilize the masonry. (Photograph 2)



Monument, Interior

The three floors of the monument are 15 x 15 feet, of concrete. Concrete also lines the walls. On the first floor there is a fireplace in the northeast corner. It has a brick firebox with wooden mantel in simple classical design of round columns (one is missing), plain frieze and molded shelf. (Photograph 5) A marble dedication tablet is fastened to the east wall. Wooden stairs in a single run with winders at bottom and top rise against the south wall of each floor.⁷ (Photograph 6) Five marble tablets on the walls of the second floor are incised with the names of almost 300 men from the town who served in the Union forces. (One of the tablets may be seen in Photograph 6.)

The third floor is plain but is of interest because the construction of the roof may be observed. It is shallow brick arches on steel beams. (Photograph 7) Such technique often was used in the latter part of the 19th century when fireproof construction was an objective. The stairway continues along the east wall to a trap door to the roof. The trap door is made of simple wooden boards with gaps between them that allow water to cascade down the stairs. (Photograph 9) Indication of water damage around the windows suggests that the windows, also, are not tightly fitted in the masonry openings.

Site

A wall made of the same granite as the monument runs along Crown Street, the front of the site. The piers of the wall are battered as the monument is. The entrance to the site is accented by a small, castellated structure that resembles the monument in details. It has large, pointed-arch apertures, and low buttresses on the front. Granite steps run from the street through this structure and on up to the monument. (Photograph 9) Across Crown Street from the entrance, Summit Street is laid out, according to town maps, leading to Hillside Avenue, but Summit Street never was built and is simply open land. West of Hillside Avenue is a right of way, shown on the map as Hillside Place, leading down to Main Street. At one time, the grand scheme was to have steps leading from Main Street up to the monument, using the right of way and Summit Street. The difference in elevation is 400 feet.

A macadam drive runs in a U from Crown Street to the east, around the monument and back to the street. The area to the east of the monument, and below it in elevation, is woodland, while house lots abut the site on the other three sides.

In 1978 a fountain was built near the monument, to its south, to the design of Andrew Coppola, sculptor, of Hartford. The basin of the fountain is

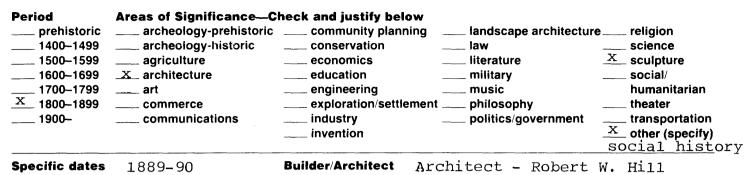
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18 feet in diameter and three feet high. In its center a truncated cone supports a section of a sphere on which rests a crescent. The cone and sphere are fashioned of Westerly (khode Island) red mahogany granite and the crescent from grey/black basalt. The basin is concrete. In the hydraulics planned for the fountain, a nozzle in the crescent was designed to spray an aerated ball of water/mist, but the hydraulics system never has been fully operational. Landscaping and walkways radiating from the fountain, designed to integrate it with the monument and site as a whole, never were executed.⁸ Less than fifty years old, the fountain is considered to be noncontributing to the historic and architectural significance of the site.

8. Significance



Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Sculptor - George E. Bissell Mason - Stone & Wooster Carpenter - E.B. Parsons

Criteria C (Architecture and Sculpture) and A (Social History)

In their successful collaboration at Winsted, Robert W. Hill, architect, and George E. Bissell, sculptor, produced a Civil War monument that is unique in Connecticut, and perhaps in the nation. The military tower with color bearer above its battlements is proudly sited above the city in effective commemoration of its 300 sons who fought to save the Union. (Criterion C) Through the involvment of interested citizens who planned the monument, the participation of the crowd of 15,000 who came to see it dedicated and the voluntary efforts of many community organizations now working for its restoration, the monument has played an important role in the social history of the town. (Criterion A)

Criterion C - Architecture and Sculpture

The success of the Winchester Soldiers' Monument as a war memorial derives from the skillful use of a picturesque architectural style, the Gothic Revival, with a picturesque site. The castellated parapets are most appropriate for the military theme. The site is outstanding for its hill top topography and for its location above but close to the city. The size of the site, two acres, called for a large structure, and the square, 3-story, granite tower eminently fulfills the requirement.

In working out the relationship of site, building mass and architectural style, the designer used the wall along the front of the site to knit the components together. The stone fence with its fanciful entrance structure establishes the site as an integral part of the memorial as a whole. The use of this picturesque approach to the design problem appropriately drew on military architecture associated with armories to achieve a successful solution. The result appears to be the right monument in the right place.

The foregoing considerations of site plan, mass and style presumably were the contributions of the architect, Robert W. Hill (1828-1909), although there is no record of the deliberations in the matter. Apparently, the design decisions were taken in the spring of 1887 by or for the Winchester Soldiers' Memorial Park Association (see Criterion A, below) whose records are not at hand. In selecting Hill as the architect, the Association turned to a man in the neighboring city of Waterbury who conducted a long and active

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(3-82)

1. The Town of Winchester was incorporated in 1770. The Borough of Winsted was formed within the town in 1859. The borough became the City of Winsted in 1917. The seat of the city government is in the Town Hall.

2. Winsted has a second Civil War monument located on the Green at the eastern end of the business district. More conventional in design, it is a granite figure holding a rifle standing on a high pedestal. This monument was given to the town by Charles H. Pine in 1904.

3. The Hartford Courant, September 12, 1890, 1:7, 2:2. In this extensive account, the Courant describes the monument and gives details including dimensions and names of architect, sculptor and contractors, but this portion of the article is much shorter than the description of the Dedication Day parade and ceremony.

4. A bronze door was installed in 1905. It promptly became a target for small boys throwing stones. (Frank H. De Mars and Elliott P. Bronson, <u>Winsted and the Town of Winchester</u>, Winsted, 1972, p. 147.) When the bronze door was removed is unknown. Vandalism has been a continuing problem at the monument.

5. Apparently, the roof was troublesome from the first, as a new copper roof was built as early as 1908 due to deterioration of the first roof. The architect had been concerned about moisture problems in his original planning. The <u>Courant</u> in its September 12, 1890 article noted, "Precaution was taken by the architect to guard against the gathering of moisture: the structure was lined with hollow tile and it is thought that this will always keep the interior dry."

6. The Bonnard mame is lettered in the base of the statue.

7. An iron stairway was planned, but "due to failure of the contractor to live up to agreement" a temporary wooden stairway was put in. (<u>Courant</u>, September 12, 1890.) It is still there.

8. Letter, June 18, 1983, from Andrew J. Coppola to author.

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practice. Hill spent his entire life in Waterbury except for several years as a young man when he studied architecture with Henry Austin in New Haven, who was a leading practitioner in the 19th-century picturesque styles, and then worked briefly in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Hill's many commissions included Connecticut state armories at Waterbury, New London, Bridgeport, Norwalk and New Britain, the City Hall at Waterbury (no longer standing), the Court House at Litchfield, the Opera House at Thomaston and Taft School in Watertown. Winchester clearly reflects Hill's experience in designing armories, but is his only known monument. George E. Bissell (1839-1920), on the other hand, himself a Civil War vet-

eran, designed several Civil War monuments, including those at Waterbury, Salisbury and Colchester, Connecticut. His monuments always displayed individuality; he never resorted to the standard figure of a soldier with rifle standing on a pedestal. The Waterbury monument (1884) is quite large, consisting of a stepped plinth leading up to bas relief bronze panels, above which rises a tall pedestal with sculpture on each face, the whole surmounted by a colossal female figure. Bissell is credited with the entire concept,² and it therefore may be that he had input in the Winsted concept, but this is conjecture. In any event, his stylish figure of a color bearer, arm akimbo and sword at an angle in what is almost a swashbuckling stance, fits well the romantic and picturesque theme of the Gothic Revival tower.

Bissell was born in New Preston, Connecticut, lived in Waterbury as a youth, and then moved to Poughkeepsie, New York, where he was engaged with his father and brother in a marble quarry business. He began to model the stone, and in 1875 went to Europe, to study sculpture, where he lived for some years. But he was in Winsted on September 3, 1890, to oversee the placing into position of his statue, just a week before the dedication ceremony. Among his long list of works are the fountain at Hudson, New York, statues in Trinity Churchyard, Bowling Green and Madison Square, New York City, and a statue in Edinburgh, Scotland, of Abraham Lincoln and a slave.

Criterion A - Social History

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In the decades following the Civil War a great many communities erected memorials to their sons who had joined the armed forces. The selection of site and choice of design for the monument often involved acrimonious local debate among various elements in the community that dragged out over many years. The eventual culmination of this effort in a grand ceremony on dedication day brought together thousands of people for a civic celebration of great size and importance. The history of the Winchester Soldiers' Monument fits this pattern, with the added recent development that widespread community interest has been raised once again concerning the monument's forthcoming restoration.

As often was the case, initial impetus for the Winsted monument came from the local unit of the Grand Army of the Republic, Palmer Post #33.4 As early

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as 1870 the Post held a fair that raised \$1,078.09 toward the monument and inaugerated "much bickering" over its eventual location. A bequest of \$1000 was largely responsible for increasing the fund to \$2,574.05 by the mid-1880s.⁵

Then, in the spring of 1887, after years and years of discussion but little action in the community, the program for construction of the monument suddenly fell into place. The crucial development was the offer of William L. Gilbert, proprietor of the Gilbert Clock Co., Winsted's largest industry, to donate \$4000 to the monument fund. His offer was declined, for reasons unknown, but the offer and its refusal must have been the subject of much local comment. In any event, John T. Rockwell, who operated a tannery on Main 6 Street, was moved to make a challenge gift of two acres of hill top land, contingent on the building fund being increased to \$7,000. Henry E. Gay, cashier of the Hurlbut National Bank, promptly met the challenge; others gave an additional \$3000, and the contract was let for construction of the tower.⁷ Proposed cost was \$7500.

The organization to which Rockwell gave the land was the Winchester Soldiers' Memorial Park Association. It appears that this Association took active charge of getting the monument built. Palmer Post #33 at their April 5, 1887 meeting appointed a committee of eight to confer with a "committee of citizens" and authorized the trustees of the Post's monument fund "to subscribe the amount in their care to a subscription for a monument when the same may be presented to them."⁸ Thus, the G.A.R. turned over the project to the Memorial Park Association, although many of the individuals in the two organizations may have been the same.

Unfortunately, the records of the Winchester Soldiers' Memorial Park Association have not come to hand. How much discussion of the monument design had taken place over the years since 1870 is unknown; nothing is shown in the available record. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the idea of a tower, so well suited to the hill top site, would have been forthcoming in advance of the gift of the site early in 1887. Consequently, the conjecture is that the design decision and selection of architect and sculptor were actions taken by the Winchester Soldiers' Park Association in the spring of 1887.

Dedication Day was September 11, 1890, and a great day it was indeed. The town was extensively decorated for the event. Four professional decorating firms from Hartford, New Haven, Springfield, Massachusetts, and Brooklyn, New York, for fees ranging from \$5.00 to \$30.00 per structure, "fairly smothered" the buildings for two miles along Main Street "with festoons of banners, bannerets, with flags and shields" in the national colors of red, white and blue.⁹ The crowd on hand for the event was variously estimated at 10,000 to 20,000 people, many of them brought to town by special railroad

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trains. Before the ceremony, lunch for 3000 was served in the roller skating rink by the collation committee of eighty ladies.

The delgation of visiting dignataries was led by Governor Morgan Bulkeley. In the parade the position of honor was accorded to veterans of the Second Connecticut Heavy Artillery, "The Old Litchfield County," 450 strong. Other participants in the line of march included eight G.A.R. posts, military units bands, guests, town officials and 100 carriages. The principal oration at the dedication ceremony was delivered by the Honorable Samuel Fessenden of Stamford¹⁰ who discoursed at length on the debt due those who fought in the holy cause against the slave-holders' rebellion that sought to destroy the Union. The final third of the dedication ceremony had to be cancelled because of rain. In newspaper accounts of the event, the <u>Courant's headline</u> was "WINSTED'S GLORIOUS DAY," while the <u>Herald</u>'s report began with the words, "Well, it's all over now..." It is probable that the monument's dedication was the best attended and most elaborate civic event in the history of Winsted.

The Winchester Soldiers' Memorial Park Association continued to own and maintain the monument until 1909, when the Association gave the real estate and remaining funds on hand to the town.¹¹ A further important event was held at the site on Sunday, August 14, 1920, when "an immense crowd" gathered there for a program in connection with the 150th anniversary of incorporation of the town.¹²

Construction of the fountain in 1977-1978 made use of funds accumulated from an 1890 bequest for the purpose. The \$1000 left by Marie Brown in that year "for erecting a suitable fountain to supply water to preserve the natural beauty of the (Memorial) Park grounds"¹³ had earned \$18,000 in compounded interest over the years. These funds were augmented by a \$3000 grant from the Connecticut Commission on the Arts.

In 1983 a campaign to rehabilitate the tower has awakened renewed widespread community interest in the Winchester Soldiers' Monument. In retail establishments throughout the city containers for donations are marked with the legend "Help Save Our Soldeirs' Monument." The fund-raising campaign is being led by the Winsted Lodge No. 844, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks with the help of such organizations as Kehow Tribe of Red Men, Winsted Fire Department, Girl Scouts, Italian-American Women's Club, Winchester Volunteer Fire Department, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, Crystal Rebeckah Lodge, Greenwoods Garden Club, Conservation Commission, Catholic Women's Club, Clifton Lodge, Garibaldi Society Auxiliary and American Association of Retired People. The Winchester Soldiers' Monument once again has become the focus of civic interest and widespread community support.

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1. The only record associating Hill with the project is the <u>Courant</u> September 12, 1890, article which reads, "The archiect was Hills <u>/sic</u>/ of Waterbury."

2. See Joseph Anderson, <u>History of the Soldiers' Monument in Water-</u> bury, <u>Conn.</u>, Waterbury, 1886.

3. The Winsted Herald, September 5, 1890, p. 3.

4. The Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) was an organization of Civil War veterans formed in 1866 and disbanded in 1956. The G.A.R. Department of Connecticut dates from 1867. Nationally, the G.A.R. had a membership of 400,000 in 1890. The mebership of the Palmer Post #33 in Winsted was 73 in 1892. The Post disbanded in 1926. See Record Group 113, Connecticut State Library Archives.

5. De Mars, pp. 70, 104.

6. The land donated by Rockwell was 2.04 acres. See Winchester Land Records (WLR), 28/549. C.J. and W.L. Camp, merchants, gave an adjoining 1/8 acre at the same time. See WLR 28/551. The area had been known as Camp's Hill. It is difficult to find precise conformity between the cited entries in the landrecords and the plot as shown on present day town map.

7. See De Mars, pp. 104, 109, 113 and <u>The Winsted Herald</u>, April 8, 1887, p. 3.

8. Palmer Post #33, Grand Army of the Republic, Minute Book, at Winchester Historical Society.

9. The Hartford Courant, September 12, 1890, 1:7.

10. Fessenden was a Civil War veteran, lawyer, politician active at state and national levels, and a renowned orator.

11. See WLR 48/51, June 1, 1909 and Town Meeting Records 5/107.

12. De Mars, p. 182.

13. Undated, unidentified newspaper clipping, c. 1978, in author's possession.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

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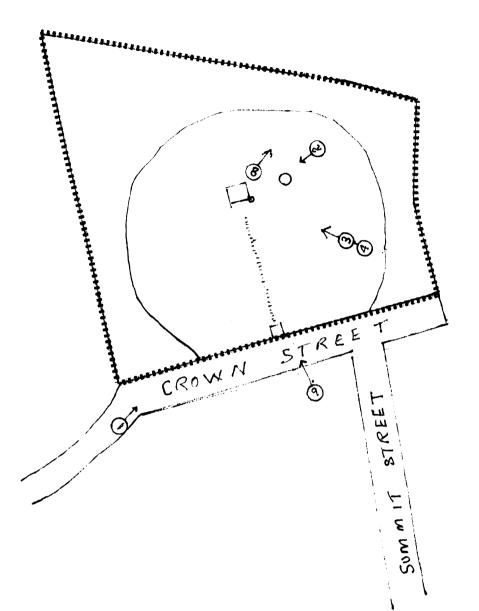
Winchester Town Meeting Records 5/107.

"Winsted Fountain Dedication Today," unidentified, undated (c. 1978) newspaper clipping in possession of author.

The <u>Winsted Herald</u>, April 8, 1887, p. 3, September 5, 1890, p. 3, September 12, 1890, p. 1 illustration, p. 2 article.

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Winchester Soldiers' Monument Winsted, CT

Sketch Map, traced from Assessor's map 711-129 Scale: 1"=100'

Photo Key Y

