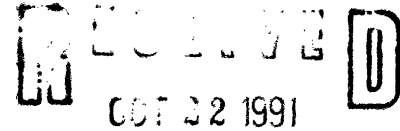


1739

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

**NATIONAL
REGISTER**

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: LEWIS, ISAAC HOUSE

other name/site number: N/A

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number: 50 Paradise Green Place

city/town: Stratford

not for publication: N/A

vicinity: N/A

state: CT county: Fairfield code: 005 zip code: 06497

=====

3. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See cont. sheet.

[Signature] 10/17/91
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:

National Register

- 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] 11/21/91

[Signature] Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic:	<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub:	<u>single dwelling</u>
Current:	<u>FUNERARY</u>	Sub:	<u>mortuary</u>
	<u>DOMESTIC</u>		<u>single dwelling</u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Italianate

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation	<u>STONE</u>	roof	<u>ASPHALT</u>
walls	<u>METAL: Aluminum</u>	other	<u>WOOD (porch)</u>
	<u>WOOD</u>		

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: c.1858

Significant Dates: c.1858

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Lewis, Isaac (probable)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

X See continuation sheet.

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 #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- X State historic preservation office Connecticut Historical Commission
- Other state agency 59 South Prospect Street
- Federal agency Hartford, Connecticut 06106
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property: approx. one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Table with 4 columns: A, B, C, D. Values include 18, 656640, 4563460.

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The nominated resource consists of the property known as 50 Paradise Green Place, as described in Stratford Land Records, Volume 215, page 470.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes only the Isaac Lewis House and the lot on which it stands.

=====
11. Form Prepared By Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator
=====

Name/Title: Matthew Roth and Bruce Clouette

Organization: Historic Resource Consultants Date: July 9, 1991

Street & Number: 55 Van Dyke Avenue Telephone: 203-547-0268

City or Town: Hartford State: CT ZIP: 06106

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description Isaac Lewis House 7-1
Stratford, Fairfield County, CT

The Isaac Lewis House (Photographs 1 and 2) is a large frame 2 1/2-story Italianate-style house built in the last two years of the 1850s. Measuring 46' by 44' in plan, with a 20' by 30' rear ell (c.1895) and a 32' by 36' modern rear infill addition (1956), the house faces south on Paradise Green Place, which defines the northern edge of a small triangular park at the junction of Main Street and Huntington Road. This park, known as Paradise Green, features a bandstand and landscaping of mature trees and shrubs (Photograph 3), and is approximately one mile north of Stratford's principal commercial and institutional concentration. Along Main Street to the east and south of Paradise Green is a mix of commercial and residential use; the area to the west and north is predominantly residential.

The house is set on a high foundation of granite in random ashlar; the original clapboard siding was covered with aluminum siding in 1978, but virtually all the decorative woodwork was retained. The south-facing facade contains five symmetrically placed bays with a central recessed double-entry (Photograph 1). The entry surround features paneled pilasters rising to a wide frieze that is surmounted by a molded cornice resting on large scroll consoles with leaf-carving. First-floor windows, which are oversized to extend to the level of the floor, have molded lintels on enriched consoles (Photograph 7). The porch's flat roof rests on four Corinthian columns (with cast-iron capitals) rising from squat pedestals; a molded rail on urn-shaped balusters runs between the columns (Photograph 6). A short frieze appears above the columns, followed by a course of dentils and then a modillion course directly beneath the molded cornice (Photograph 8). Second-story windows have molded lintels on enriched consoles and paneled stiles and are fitted with six-over-one sash (which sash is typical for the entire building). The main cornice overhangs on widely spaced pairs of jigsaw brackets, with shallow rectangular attic windows between the brackets at the two end bays (Photograph 8). In the center of the shallow-pitched hip roof is a square-plan lantern; each side contains two pairs of round-arched windows set in deeply recessed, molded surrounds. The lantern roof rests on simple jigsaw brackets (Photograph 10).

Side elevations (Photographs 4 and 5) each have four bays, with the center pair grouped tightly together to provide clearance for the chimneys. Window details are similar to those on the second story of the facade, except for the southernmost window on the east side, which is a lower, double-width opening with a round-arched, stained-glass transom. The c.1895 rear ell is gable-roofed, four bays deep and one

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description

Isaac Lewis House
Stratford, Fairfield County, CT

7-2

bay wide. Its molded cornice overhangs on simple modillions, and features a partial return at the gable end. Windows in the ell have molded lintels (Photograph 5).

Inside, the first story of the main body consists of two double parlors to either side of a wide stairhall. The wide curving staircase features an octagonal newel of "fiddleback" mahogany and applied scrollwork on the string (Photograph 11). The west parlor retains its triple archway set off by Corinthian columns with gilded capitals (Photograph 12). The second-story room division is similar to the main floor, except that two rooms appear to either side of the central hall. Important original details include paneled hall doors and a marble fireplace in the southwest room (Photograph 13). The first floor of the rear ell has been converted to the mortuary's preparation room. The second floor contains a bedroom and a kitchen, the latter featuring pressed-metal walls and ceiling (Photograph 14).

The Isaac Lewis House retains a considerable degree of historic integrity. The 1956 rear addition did not compromise the older portions of the building. The exterior decorative treatments are fundamentally untouched, the only exception being the window above the main entry, which appears to have been reduced in size. The interior retains many of its distinctive features.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance

Isaac Lewis House
Stratford, Fairfield County, CT

8-1

Summary

The Isaac Lewis House has architectural significance as a relatively well-preserved example of the mid-19th-century Italianate-style house (Criterion C). With its cube-like massing, near-flat roof with lantern, profusion of brackets and deeply molded surrounds, and use of round-arched shapes, it embodies many characteristics of that type of architecture. Although fundamentally typical of the Italianate house, the Isaac Lewis House is a notably large example of the style. The overall opulence of the house is also anomalous for its neighborhood, which in the mid-19th-century was an outlying area removed from the center of Stratford and the town's greatest concentration of formal architecture. The background of Isaac Lewis -- a New York City builder with a wealthy clientele -- helps to explain the somewhat distinctive size and elegance of the house.

Architectural Significance

The Isaac Lewis House is important because it illustrates one of the primary styles of the mid-19th century, the Italianate. In its principal features it is an archetype of the style: the massing, roofline, overhanging cornices, generous application of moldings, and details such as the round-arched openings and the brackets with relief-carving. Such houses, which first appeared in the United States in the late 1830s, represented an American interpretation of the Picturesque movement in Europe; this type of house drew inspiration from the vernacular buildings of rural Italy, in a reaction against the Classicism of the prior two hundred years. Exotic and exuberant, the Italianate (like the contemporaneous Gothic Revival) clearly stood apart from the restraint and formality of the Greek Revival style that had previously prevailed.

The Italianate style achieved a significant measure of its initial popularity for precisely the application employed by Lewis -- the country estate. Soon after building the house, if Lewis lingered on his front porch and cast his eye southward, he would have seen a few scattered houses and the Curtis general store to the southeast, but mostly open fields. It is likely that Lewis himself began the landscaping of the triangular parcel that became the town-owned Paradise Green. As residential and commercial development pushed north along Main Street, particularly during Stratford's World War I boom, Paradise Green remained an oasis of green in an increasingly built-up

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance

Isaac Lewis House
Stratford, Fairfield County, CT

8-2

neighborhood. Today, the Isaac Lewis House is a visual focal point for the north side of the park, the country manor in its manicured grounds.

Historical Background

The area around the junction of Main Street and Huntington Avenue became known as Paradise Green only in the late 19th century. For two centuries before that, the area was an outlying cluster of settlement, where successive generations of the Curtis and Lewis families made their homes. One of thirteen children born to James and Mary Lewis, Isaac Lewis (1807-1892) belonged to the fifth generation of Lewises to live in the area. Even in Isaac's parents' generation, continual subdividing of the family holdings had made it impossible for all the Lewises to make a living from the land; James Lewis was able to market his skills as a skilled woodworker to supplement his agricultural livelihood. Faced with the prospect of a bare living from his small share of the family land, Isaac chose instead to move away and exploit the skills at building that he had learned from his father. His move to New York in the mid-1820s came at a propitious time, when that city was rapidly ascending to national commercial supremacy, and a clever builder could find a ready market among growing businesses and wealthy individuals.

Lewis managed to sell his talents to the wealthiest New Yorker of his generation, John Jacob Astor, who had parlayed leadership in the fur trade into a diverse commercial empire based on transportation and real estate. Although contemporary records of specific contracts have not been discovered, the New York Times obituary for Lewis described him as "an old-time builder, well known among New-Yorkers of the last generation. . . . A great deal of his work was done for John Jacob Astor and his descendants." (1) The extraordinarily active Astor must have employed more than one builder, and it can only be speculated as to the houses, commercial blocks, hotels, libraries and other institutional buildings that Lewis may have worked on; it is clear, however, that constructing for Astor exposed Lewis to the work of the leading architects of his day, the most up-to-date styles, and the best materials. The Times also credited Lewis with substantial work for other dynasties of commerce, such as the Wolfes and the Taylors. He may well have worked on the William Taylor house in Staten Island's famed Temple Row, a line of ten Greek Revival mansions, built in the 1830s, overlooking Kill Van Kull.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance

Isaac Lewis House
Stratford, Fairfield County, CT

8-3

By the time his father died in 1858, Isaac Lewis was himself a wealthy man; the Times reported that "Mr. Lewis retired from the building business . . . with a fortune." Lewis bought the family homestead from his brothers and sisters, and built the Italianate house that stands there today. He never moved back to Stratford, but used the house for weekend and summer sojourns. After Lewis's death in 1892, the house continued to serve as a residence (for a succession of owners). Around 1946 it was converted to a convalescent home. The current owners acquired the property and converted it to its present use in 1976.

NOTES

1. New York Times, February 3, 1892, p. 1.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Bibliography Isaac Lewis House 9-1
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National Park Service

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Photograph captions Isaac Lewis House Photos-1
 Stratford, Fairfield County, CT

All photographs:

1. Isaac Lewis House
2. Stratford, Fairfield County, CT
3. Photo Credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
4. June, 1991
5. Negative filed with Connecticut Historical Commission
 Hartford, CT

Captions:

South elevation, camera facing northwest
Photograph 1 of 14

South elevation, camera facing northeast
Photograph 2 of 14

South elevation and adjacent park, camera facing northwest
Photograph 3 of 14

West elevation, camera facing east
Photograph 4 of 14

East and north elevations, camera facing southwest
Photograph 5 of 14

Porch columns and rail, camera facing east
Photograph 6 of 14

Entry and front window detail, camera facing northeast
Photograph 7 of 14

Detail of porch and main cornices, camera facing northeast
Photograph 8 of 14

Side-elevation window, camera facing southwest
Photograph 9 of 14

Lantern, camera facing northeast
Photograph 10 of 14

