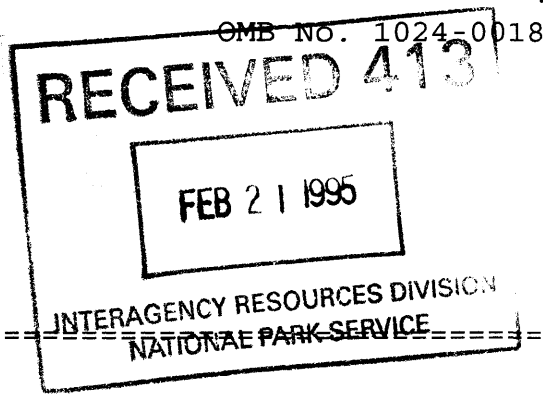


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

=====

1. Name of Property

historic name: WINSLOW AMES HOUSE

other name/site number: N/A

=====

2. Location

street & number: 132 Mohegan Avenue

city/town: New London not for publication: N/A
vicinity: N/A

state: CT county: New London code: 011 zip code: 06320

=====

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> 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 1966, 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.

John W. Shannahan 2/15/95
Signature of certifying official Date
John W. Shannahan, Director
Connecticut Historical Commission

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

Edson H. Beall 3/23/95

other (explain):

Entered in the National Register

Bob Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

Current: EDUCATION Sub: college

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification:

International Style

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation CONCRETE roof METAL
walls STUCCO other GLASS

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: state.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : _____

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1932-1938 _____

Significant Dates: 1933

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Robert W. McLaughlin, Jr., architect

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:

- 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: .1 acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing	
	<u>742315</u>	<u>4584370</u>	
A <u>18</u>	<u>742270</u>	<u>4684160</u>	B _____
C _____	_____	_____	D _____

X See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The nominated property includes the house known as 132 Mohegan Avenue, along with land bounded as follows: north by a campus road, east by Mohegan Avenue, south by a line 10' from the rear of the house, and west by a line 30' from the west side wall.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the house and a reasonable amount of the surrounding land, which forms a setting for the house.

=====

11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Bruce Clouette and Maura Cronin, reviewed by John Herzan,
Conn. Hist. Commission

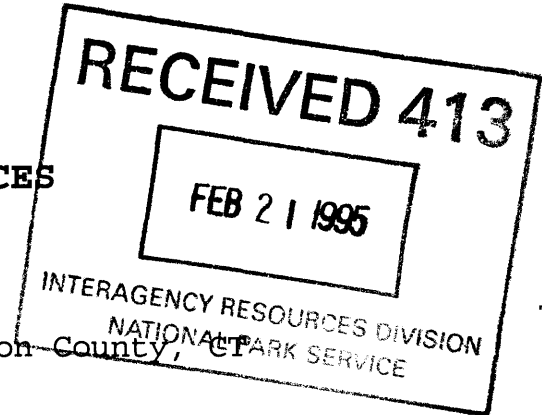
Organization: Historic Resource Consultants Date: September 23, 1994

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

City or Town: Hartford State: CT Zip: 06106

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**



7-1

Description Winslow Ames House
New London, New London County, CT

The Winslow Ames House is a small two-story flat-roofed International style house built in 1933 (Photographs 1-3). The house was pre-fabricated by American Homes, Inc., using their "Moto Home" method of construction. The house has a concrete-block foundation, a welded steel skeleton, and walls of 4'-wide white-painted panels. The panels, which are constructed of asbestos board over an insulating core, have been covered over with non-asbestos panels that duplicate the appearance of the original (an alteration made necessary by asbestos-abatement requirements). The joints between panels are covered by the original gray aluminum extrusions bolted to the frame; the house's simple cornice is also aluminum (Photograph 4).

The house is made up of three rectangular blocks (see accompanying floor plans) offset so as to create an irregular plan. The leftmost block, as one faces the house, accommodates two bedrooms, as well as the main entry and stair hall. The middle and largest block is set back 4' and overlays the left block at one corner. The middle block has the service core at the front, with a bathroom on the hall side and the kitchen opposite; a large living area extends across the rear. The rightmost block continues the plane of the front wall of the middle block and is a one-car garage. The second story is only over the front part of the middle block. A flat-roofed porch, supported on three metal posts, extends across the middle part of the facade, from the main entry to the garage door.

There are three entrances: the main entry, a kitchen entry, and a rear entry for the living area. The only architectural ornament on the exterior of the house is the fluted decoration that flanks each panel-and-glass door. The house has extensive areas of glass created by the use of adjacent panels with windows, particularly at the corners of rooms. The windows are double casements of four horizontal panes, above which is a single long fixed pane.

The interior finishes include carpeted floors, modern acoustical-tile ceilings (originally fiberboard sheets secured with battens), and single-panel plywood doors with molded rails and stiles (Photographs 5-8). Interior walls are simply the inside of the wall panels themselves; they have a plaster-like appearance, with the joints concealed by wide battens. The interior wall of the living room has floor-to-ceiling bookshelves surrounding a now blocked-off fireplace (Photograph 6); photographs of other Moto Home interiors indicate that the fireplace had a simple stuccoed surround with no mantel shelf. The original floor material, dark-stained pressed fiberboard, is currently

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Description	Winslow Ames House New London, New London County, CT	7-2
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visible only on the treads of the steel stairway (Photograph 8).

The Winslow Ames House is no longer used as a residence; instead, it has been restored to serve as offices and meeting rooms for Connecticut College's Center for Arts and Technology. This use has had only a minimal impact on the house, such as new kitchen and bathroom appurtenances. The house is situated at the southeast corner of the college campus, on a corner formed by a campus road (which it faces) and the heavily traveled Mohegan Avenue (Connecticut Route 32). There are several houses belonging to the college nearby. Because of these neighboring houses, as well as the lawn, shrubs, and shade trees that make up its immediate setting, the Winslow Ames House retains its residential ambience.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance Winslow Ames House
New London, New London County, CT

8-1

Summary

The Winslow Ames House is significant as an example of the idealistic concept houses of the 1930s (Criterion C). In this period, new building materials and technologies seemed to offer the hope of revolutionizing the way American homes were built, thereby alleviating the shortage of affordable housing. The Ames House, an example of the prefabricated "Moto Home" sold by American Houses, Inc. of New York City, embodies many of the leading ideas of the period, including the use of prefabricated modular panels that were pre-finished, both inside and out; welded steel structural frame; cellar-less concrete foundation; and central service core. The goal of all these features was to create a relatively inexpensive house, one that would be largely manufactured off-site. In this way, great economies could be achieved through standardization and mass production. The Winslow Ames House's use of the International style, which was derived from the European designs of the Bauhaus school, provided both a futuristic appearance and further cost savings. In this style, the flat roof eliminated costly roof framing, there was no need for architectural ornament, and otherwise-unsightly things, such as exposed bolt heads, actually added to the desired technological-industrial appearance. Moto Homes, named for the "Moto Unit" core that contained plumbing, heating, air conditioning, and electricity, were a relatively successful example of the type. Unlike some concept houses, they were available in many different sizes and configurations, an advantage made possible by their modular construction and the "building-blocks" appearance appropriate to the International style. Although American Houses never achieved its goal of mass production, which might have made the houses truly affordable, the firm completed about 100 homes in the years 1932-1938, chiefly in the New York metropolitan area but also as far away as Florida and Kansas.

Robert W. McLaughlin, Jr. and American Houses, Inc.

The ideas that underlay the Winslow Ames House and other Moto Homes were developed by Robert W. McLaughlin, Jr. (1900-1989). McLaughlin was educated at Princeton ('21; M.F.A., architecture, '26) and for many years was the partner of Arthur C. Holden. McLaughlin formed American Houses, Inc. in 1932 after designing a prototype industrial-worker house for Donald Markle, a coal-mine owner from Hazelton, Pennsylvania. Although Markle did not order additional units, the house became the basis for American Houses' prefabricated Moto Home. American House was soon acquired by Houses, Inc., a General Electric subsidiary, which

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance

Winslow Ames House
New London, New London County, CT

8-2

provided substantial financing for the venture. McLaughlin and his firm were unusually successful in promoting the Moto Home in professional architecture journals, popular home magazines, and the general press. Some of this attention was gained through stunts, such as a cellophane-wrapped home on the floor of Wanamaker's department store in New York, the promise of a specially-built truck to deliver the home, and the inclusion of books on the shelves and a two-day supply of food in the built-in refrigerator. At the same time, the idea of more affordable housing genuinely appealed to the heart of the country, then in the grip of the Great Depression. More than half of all American families at the time were renters; the thousands of those who were suffering eviction from their tenements were undoubtedly in the mind of Sarah Delano Roosevelt, the president's mother, when, at the opening of an exhibition, she proclaimed the Moto Home "science's answer to the housing problem." Moto Homes were intended to attract middle-income buyers looking for a house in the range of \$3,000 to \$7,500.

The Moto Home was a radical departure from traditional house-building. At the time, steel frames were used only in industrial and commercial buildings, even though steel offered significant cost savings over wood because of its great strength. The manufactured modules that were bolted to the steel frame were also an innovation, especially as they provided finished surfaces for both exterior and interior. The use of a single type of window that occupied the whole width of a panel was also an insight, since by using them singly, at corners, and along walls in groups, three different window configurations could result, as evident in the Ames house. In addition to the wall panels, the Moto Home included prefabricated open steel trusses for roof and floor supports, steel staircases, and standard shelving units. In a further effort to hold down costs, the Moto Home used standard plywood doors and plain narrow-board door surrounds. The floor material, similar to that known by the trade-name Masonite, today has connotations of cheapness, but in the 1930s it was undoubtedly still seen as unusual and innovative. Although many of the rooms were small by modern standards, the houses included generous closet space, especially between bedrooms that shared a wall. The Moto Home also had the advantage of being almost completely built of fire-proof materials. Finally, in theory at least, the modular panels could be re-used in new locations to accommodate additions and other remodeling.

The Moto-Unit at the heart of the house was also largely prefabricated. Combining a furnace, hot water heater, refrigerator, air-conditioner,

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Significance Winslow Ames House 8-3
New London, New London County, CT

plumbing, and electricity in a central core, the Moto-Unit was then attached to pre-built bathroom and kitchen assemblies that included their own recessed lighting. Some Moto Homes even had built-in radios and cigarette lighters. Although the original furnace, kitchen cabinets, and kitchen and bathroom fixtures of the Winslow Ames House have been replaced, the core is still clearly evident and functioning as originally intended.

Except for the asbestos wall panels, the Moto Home's ideas were shared by other concept houses of the period. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House (1929, though none were built until after World War II) pioneered the concept of the house as a machine, with a central mechanical core. General Houses, Inc., based in Chicago, marketed an International style house with a steel skeleton and steel modular wall panels that was similar in appearance to the Moto Home. Other affordable-housing proposals of the period, including Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses, used central service cores, flat roofs, and concrete slabs or footings (rather than cellars) to further reduce costs.

The Moto Home never delivered on its promise to provide less expensive housing. The Winslow Ames House cost \$7,500, not including land, which was considerably more than most other comparably sized houses of the period; the other Moto Homes featured in the architectural periodicals of the time also were more expensive than traditionally built homes, to the point where they were probably out of reach for most of the middle class. Because the manufacture of the panels never approached mass production, only modest savings were achieved in materials, and the use of a welded steel frame made erection very expensive. Also, the austere industrial appearance of the Moto Home, devoid of any exterior ornament or warm interior finishes, probably limited the house's appeal to only the most aesthetically advanced tastes. Most of the Moto Home's intended market probably regarded it as singularly unattractive.

Concept houses such as the Moto Home played an important role in American architecture by furthering the ideal of the affordable house. Although apparently a failure, prefabrication continued to evolve, producing at one end of the spectrum the totally prefabricated house, represented by the millions of mobile homes sold after World War II, as well as the introduction of many more modular and pre-made items into ordinary home construction, such as 4 x 8' sheets of plywood and wall board, roof trusses, and bathtub/shower units. Robert McLaughlin and his associates must have learned a great deal from the Moto Home, since American Houses went on to produce a highly successful line of

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Significance Winslow Ames House 8-4
New London, New London County, CT

partially prefabricated wood-frame houses, this time in the "Cape Cod Colonial" style. The firm's first order following its decision to discontinue the Moto Home was for 136 Capes, more than all the Moto Homes built to date. McLaughlin retired from the firm in 1947 and later taught architecture at Princeton.

Winslow Ames

Winslow Ames was a professor of art history and an art-museum director. Although his academic interests centered around Victorian art (he was a scholar of Prince Albert and one of the founders of the Victorian Society of America), Ames also had a deep interest in the art of his own period. He was director of the Lyman Allyn Museum on the campus of Connecticut College at the time of his attendance at Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition (1933), where he witnessed numerous examples of prefabricated houses. Convinced that such houses were the wave of the future, and appreciative of their stark International-style appearance, Ames had two houses erected on museum-owned property adjacent to the college, one a small steel-paneled house made by General Houses (still standing though substantially modified with the addition of a gable roof) and a Moto Home from American Houses. Although both were at first intended to be rental houses, Ames and his family lived in the Moto Home for a brief period. Later, Ames moved on to Brown University, and in 1949 the house was acquired by Connecticut College. After several years of marginal use, its recent restoration has given new life to an architecturally significant 1930s "House of Tomorrow."¹

¹The term "House of Tomorrow," while certainly implied in everything that McLaughlin and American Houses wrote about the Moto Home, is an appellation taken from H. Ward Jandl's Yesterday's Houses of Tomorrow (Washington, 1991).

At least two other Moto Homes in Connecticut appear in the architectural journals of the time, and several are said to have been built in Fairfield County in the towns adjacent to New York State. It is not known how many of these survive intact, if any.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

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New London, New London County, CT

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Photographs	Winslow Ames House New London, New London County, CT	Photos-1
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All photographs:

1. Winslow Ames House
2. New London, New London County, CT
3. Photo Credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
4. September, 1994
5. Negative filed with Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, CT

Captions:

North elevation (facade), garage on left, camera facing northwest
Photograph 1 of 8

North elevation (facade), camera facing southeast
Photograph 2 of 8

West elevation, camera facing east
Photograph 3 of 8

Detail of northwest rear corner, showing aluminum batten, camera facing
northeast
Photograph 4 of 8

Interior, living room, camera facing southeast
Photograph 5 of 8

Interior, living room, camera facing northeast
Photograph 6 of 8

Interior, northwest bedroom, camera facing west
Photograph 7 of 8

Interior, detail of stairway, camera facing west
Photograph 8 of 8