

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JAN 15 1987

date entered

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

FEB 12 1987

1. Name

historic Fyler-Hotchkiss Estate

and or common Torrington Historical Society, Hotchkiss-Fyler House

2. Location

street & number 192 Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Torrington

N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut

code 09

county Litchfield

code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Torrington Historical Society, Inc.

street & number 192 Main Street

city, town Torrington

N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Torrington City Hall

street & number 140 Main Street

city, town Torrington

state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Reg. of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1986 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 S. Prospect St.

city, town Hartford

state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fyler-Hotchkiss Estate is a complex of two late Victorian houses and a carriage house located on a landscaped lot on the east side of Torrington's Main Street. The houses are set well back from the sidewalk atop a modest slope in a mainly residential and institutional section of Main Street, at the northern edge of the public and commercial center of downtown Torrington (Photographs 1,2,3).

Dominating the property is the Fyler-Hotchkiss House, a two-and-a-half story Chateausque dwelling completed in 1900 (Photograph 1). The house is cruciform in plan, with a prominent asphalt-shingled, hip-on-gable roof that was originally slate, one of the house's few alterations. The ridgeline of the central hip has copper cresting. Three chimneys rise from the roof, with shafts of light brown Roman brick with recessed panels, inset terra cotta tiles, and corbels of Ohio stone with molded brick soffits. The roof slopes flare outward at the eaves and the northwest and northeast corners have copper finials.

The house rests on a foundation of rusticated granite ashlar which rises above ground level to a bevelled water table of smooth granite. The house's masonry walls are of buff and light brown Roman brick on the first story, with rose-red slate on the second story and the towers and in the gables. Window treatment also differs by stories; those on the first are single-hung with transoms, and are recessed in their openings above sills of smooth granite. Windows in the second story are double-hung with molded wooden surrounds which project slightly from the wall. Frieze bands with modillioned wooden cornices (denticulated as well on the first story) separate the house's three levels. The slate walls flare outward above this cornice at the second story and in the top story of the tower.

Exterior woodwork is white pine. Columns and pilasters are square and panelled, with raised diamond and half-diamond motifs and Corinthian capitals, with the exception of octagonal columns used to flank the front steps and to terminate the porte cochere. Heraldic emblems, such as helmets and shields (neither of which are features of the Fyler coat-of-arms) and a cornucopia motif are prominent in the carved ornamentation found in all elevations except the rear.

Each elevation receives a different treatment. The west facade is dominated by the 16' tower at the northwest corner, and by a 29' piazza with cast iron rails and posts, with a grille of wrought iron in a baroque design. The foundation of the piazza is of ashlar and its north end is curved to match the curve of the tower. Its floor is of maroon brick, laid in a herringbone pattern. It has a modillioned cornice topped by a balcony and balustrade with turned balusters at the sides and solid panels in the center. The central panels are filled with carved cornucopias and garlands. Projecting from the roof at this point is a large shaped-gable dormer with a triple window, over the center sash of which is a round arch which encloses a carved helmet. The shaped gable motif is repeated in the surrounds of dormers in the tower (Photographs 1,4).

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Fyler-Hotchkiss Estate
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The main entry is flanked by two small niches, topped by finials and recessed to contain small window lights. The entire entry, door and surround, is of blond natural mahogany. The double doors feature bevelled glass and are panelled, with carved foliate designs, mainly acanthus leaves, within which are concealed fishes and human faces, and cornucopiae. The door hardware is original and includes bronze door handles, escutcheon plates, and doorbells. Inside is a small vestibule with a mosaic tile floor, walls and ceiling of raised, fielded panelling, and double inner doors with no carving, their lights fitted with original filters of Battenberg lace (Photograph 6).

The north elevation consists of a fully pedimented gable which projects over three bays, the outer two of which are bevelled, and in the first story of which is the north side entry. The entry is fitted with a panelled mahogany door, half-glazed with bevelled plate glass, and is protected by a porte cochere which rests on piers of rusticated granite ashlar and which has a gable roof of red slate. On the second story, above the roof of the porte cochere, is a large triple window of art glass which lights the main stairway, and from which projects a balcony which is inaccessible from within. To the west is a large carved oriel surmounted by a basket handle arch formed by its two windows, which is enframed by pilasters with carved gargoyles as capitals (Photographs 1,5).

The south elevation features a rounded projection surmounted by a balustrade, and on the southwest corner are an enclosed, one-story sunroom and an open porch (Photograph 4).

The rear or east elevation contains entries with half-glazed doors to the kitchen and ice room, sheltered by a shed-roofed porch. A small conical-roofed tower at the northeast corner encloses the upper level of a staircase which leads to servants' quarters on the third floor (Photograph 5).

The house's seventeen rooms have original woodwork, door and window hardware, and radiators. On the first floor, each room receives a different treatment, establishing in each a distinct character which is unified by a common motif of fluted Corinthian columns. Flooring, except in the kitchen and dining room, is of quartered white oak laid in a parquet pattern. The front entry opens into the main hall, which has a coffered ceiling, in the center of which is an elaborately carved well from which is suspended a brass chandelier. The walls are wainscoted in panelled, stained mahogany, above which they are hand-stencilled and gold-leafed in the Tree of Life pattern, a 1969 reproduction of the original (Photograph 7). Leading to the second floor from the main hall is a grand mahogany staircase with turned balusters and carved newel posts which feature a torch motif and which are capped by carved globe finials. The panelled wainscoting is carried up the stairs, which are lighted by the triple window in the north elevation, flanked at the landing by two

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small built-in seats (Photograph 8). A row of unusual disc molding runs along the stringer below the risers on the side of the staircase facing the main hall (Photograph 9). Doors to the rooms of the main hall have molded surrounds and are finished on the hall side in mahogany but on the inside correspond to the wood used in the respective rooms.

The tower room in the northwest corner is decorated in Louis XV style, with whitewood walls painted an enamelled white, plaster-bordered wall panels fitted with Italian cotton damask, and a fireplace mantel and crown molding decorated with gold leaf filigree. The ceiling is ornamented with five gold-leafed plaster medallions which wreath painted cherubs who peek from behind clouds (Photographs 10,11).

Also on the north side of the main hall is the library, finished in quarter-sawn oak and with a small study wing lighted by a casement window with foliate designs. The fireplace mantel is decorated with applied carving of floral designs and grotesques against a stippled background. (Photographs 12,13).

To the south of the main hall is the sitting or living room, the entrance to which is flanked by fluted Corinthian columns upon a short, sunken-panel base. Woodwork is of red birch. The fireplace is faced with swirling green onyx marble and carries a frieze with applied garlands, a row of egg-and-dart molding, and a cornice (Photograph 14).

The dining room, which corresponds to the south elevation, has a curved outer wall. The walls have low wainscoting of mahogany, above which they are hand-stencilled in the Pineapple pattern (Photograph 15). Adjacent are a narrow butler's pantry and the kitchen, both finished in brown ash.

There are six former bedrooms on the second floor and six smaller servants' rooms on the third floor. The second-floor bedrooms include a guest room finished in whitewood in the Louis XV style, with plaster-bordered wall panels. An arched opening with panelled door, with sidelights and fanlight with leaded tracery, leads to a bath which overlooks the carriage house. The master bedroom is finished in red birch. The former Hotchkiss bedroom, located in the curving northwest tower, is also finished in whitewood and is lighted by a bank of three large windows. An adjoining bath is located in the shaped-gable dormer above the veranda balustrade (Photographs 16,17,18).

To the north of the Fyler-Hotchkiss House on Main Street is the Carson House, a two-story Italianate dwelling built in 1880. The house is cross-gabled, two-and-a-half stories on a granite block foundation, with clapboard walls accented by Stick-style framing elements, and with a prominent three-stage, bracketed, hip-roofed tower at the southwest corner of its facade. Incised quatrefoils are used extensively in the band courses and in the tower brackets (Photographs 3). In 1975 the architectural firm of Jeter, Jepson and Cook redesigned the interior for exhibit space.

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To the rear of the property is an L-shaped two-story Queen Anne and Colonial Revival-style carriage house built in 1895. The first story of the building is clad in beaded clapboard, while the second is of imbricated wood shingles. A pyramidal-roofed cupola is carried by brackets and a boxed cornice features returns in the gables. The first-floor vehicle bay opening has a molded platform-like cornice carried on consoles and is surmounted by panelled double doors in a crossbuck pattern which is enframed by sidelights and a fanlight and creates a Palladian design. A small one-story garage has been added to the north end, and a glass greenhouse to the south (Photograph 2).

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	X architecture	education	military	social/
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration/settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900-	communications	industry	X politics/government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

(Criteria B,C)

Specific dates 1898-1900

Builder/Architect William H. Allen (architect)

Hotchkiss Bros. Building Co. (builder)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Fyler-Hotchkiss Estate is significant for its historical association with Orsamus R. Fyler, a prominent political figure in Torrington and in state government, and his family, which was also prominent locally (Criterion B). It is significant architecturally as an exceptionally well-preserved and rare example of Chateausque domestic architecture in a small Connecticut city. It possesses almost total integrity of design, materials, and setting. It is significant for the fine craftsmanship evident in its construction and in its exterior and interior ornamental features, particularly the many examples of woodcarving and hand-painted wall and ceiling decoration. (Criterion C).

The house was commissioned in 1897 by Orsamus Roman Fyler (1840-1909), a prominent figure in local and state politics. Fyler was born in Torrington in 1840 into a prosperous farming family descended from original proprietors of the town. After serving in the Civil War in the Second Connecticut Heavy Artillery, during which he suffered a severe leg wound at the Battle of Winchester in 1864 and earned a battlefield commission as first lieutenant, Fyler in 1866 began a career in public service. A term as State Representative was followed by an appointment as postmaster of Torrington, a position he filled until 1885. A staunch, active Republican, he was appointed State Insurance Commissioner by Connecticut's Republican Governor Henry Harrison in 1886. Fyler's investigations into the financial condition of several of the state's largest insurance companies and his subsequent reforms of the industry earned him a statewide reputation. He was reappointed by two subsequent governors, and in 1896 was elected Chairman of the Republican State Central Committee. The following year, in 1897, he was appointed State Railroad Commissioner, a post he retained until his death in 1909. On the local scene, Fyler also played an active political role. In 1878 he spearheaded the organization of the Torrington Water Company and served five terms as burgess of Torrington between 1892 and 1897. After Fyler's death in 1909, the property was inherited by his wife, Mary. Following Mary's death in 1936, the title was transferred to Gertrude, and her husband, Edward H. Hotchkiss. The couple were also original occupants of the house, which was commissioned not long after their marriage in 1896. Each was locally prominent, Gertrude for charitable work, particularly in connection with the Sloan-Kettering Foundation in New York where she established a fund to purchase Christmas presents for terminally ill children, and Edward as State representative from Torrington in 1897, president of the Torrington and Winsted Street Railway Company, and president of Hotchkiss Brothers. The latter was a family business that originated with his grandfather's sawmill on Water Street in Torrington and grew during the late nineteenth century into a major supplier of millwork and a leading builder of houses, factories, and business blocks around the western part of the state.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See attached for text)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.6 acres

Quadrangle name Torrington

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	5	6	0	2	0	4	6	2	9	5	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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E

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Torrington Land Records, Town Clerk's Office, Vol. 216, p. 207

City Lot #22, Block 14, as shown on Torrington's Assessor's Map #118, (attached

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William E. Devlin, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Torrington Historical Society date February, 1986

street & number 192 Main Street telephone 482-8260

city or town Torrington state Connecticut

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date January 8, 1987

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Allouez Byer
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 2-12-87

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The house was commissioned by Fyler shortly after his election to the chairmanship of the State Republican Central Committee and the marriage of his daughter Gertrude to Edward H. Hotchkiss. Fyler's motive in commissioning such a large house may have been a desire to have a suitable environment for receiving and entertaining state political figures, as the family had previously occupied a modest Greek Revival house on the same site. They moved across the street for the two years during which the present house was constructed.

The house's design is Chateausque. The style is plainly evident in the steeply-pitched hip roof, with its shaped-gable dormers, basket-handle arches, and prominent conical towers. The low relief carving found throughout the facade, including the basket-handle arches, the oriel, and the heraldic crest in the central front dormer, feature Renaissance motifs such as glove-cluster finials, a motif also found in the niches which flank the front doorway. The design differs from other examples of the style chiefly in materials, stone being more commonly used. Although Queen Anne was the style of choice for large residences in Torrington's neighborhoods during the 1890s and there were also Shingle-style estates commissioned by several of the town's prominent industrialists on its outskirts, the Hotchkiss-Fyler House is the only mansion of its size and scale on Main Street.

The house's architect, William H. Allen, designed several similar dwellings along Whitney Avenue in New Haven (one, at the corner of Lawrence Street, is virtually identical with the Fyler-Hotchkiss House). There, the houses blend with the streetscape, but in the Fyler-Hotchkiss House's central Main Street setting it becomes a dominant feature, almost symbolic of Fyler's role in community affairs. The house's design can be traced back through Allen's similar earlier designs in New Haven, to the influence of Richard Morris Hunt, particularly to the William V. Lawrence House on Fifth Avenue at Seventy-Eighth Street in New York (1891).

The woodwork in the Fyler-Hotchkiss House includes a number of noteworthy examples of hand and machine carving: in the architrave of the front doorway, the oriel, the second-story balustrade, the front dormers, the mantelpieces, the coffer with carved foliate ornament which surrounds the chandelier in the main hall, and in the Corinthian columns used throughout.

The carriage house on the property is a good example of a Queen Anne and Colonial Revival-influenced carriage house of the 1890s. The Carson House, although a separate dwelling which predates the Fyler-Hotchkiss House, has been a part of this property since 1892, and hence it forms a part of the Fyler-Hotchkiss House's original setting. It was built in 1880 for James Carson, treasurer of the Turner and Seymour Manufacturing Company, on a lot purchased from Orsamus Fyler. In 1892 Carson sold the house back to Fyler and it was occupied by a succession of tenants who included several executives of local companies. A good example of vernacular Italianate,

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it maintains a clear visual and physical relationship to the Fyler-Hotchkiss House. Its history as a rental dwelling owned by the Fyler and Hotchkiss families adds an additional dimension to the property's value as exemplifying the social and cultural history of Torrington's upper class at the turn of the century.

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Fyler-Hotchkiss Estate
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Torrington Register Souvenir Edition, Register Printing Co., 1897.

Torrington Register, Nov. 22, 1909, Obituary of Orsamus R. Fyler, p. 1.

Specifications, blueprints and photographs for Fyler-Hotchkiss House and carriage house, @ Torrington Historical Society.

Interviews:

Mark McEachern, Director, Torrington Historical Society, October 10, 1985.

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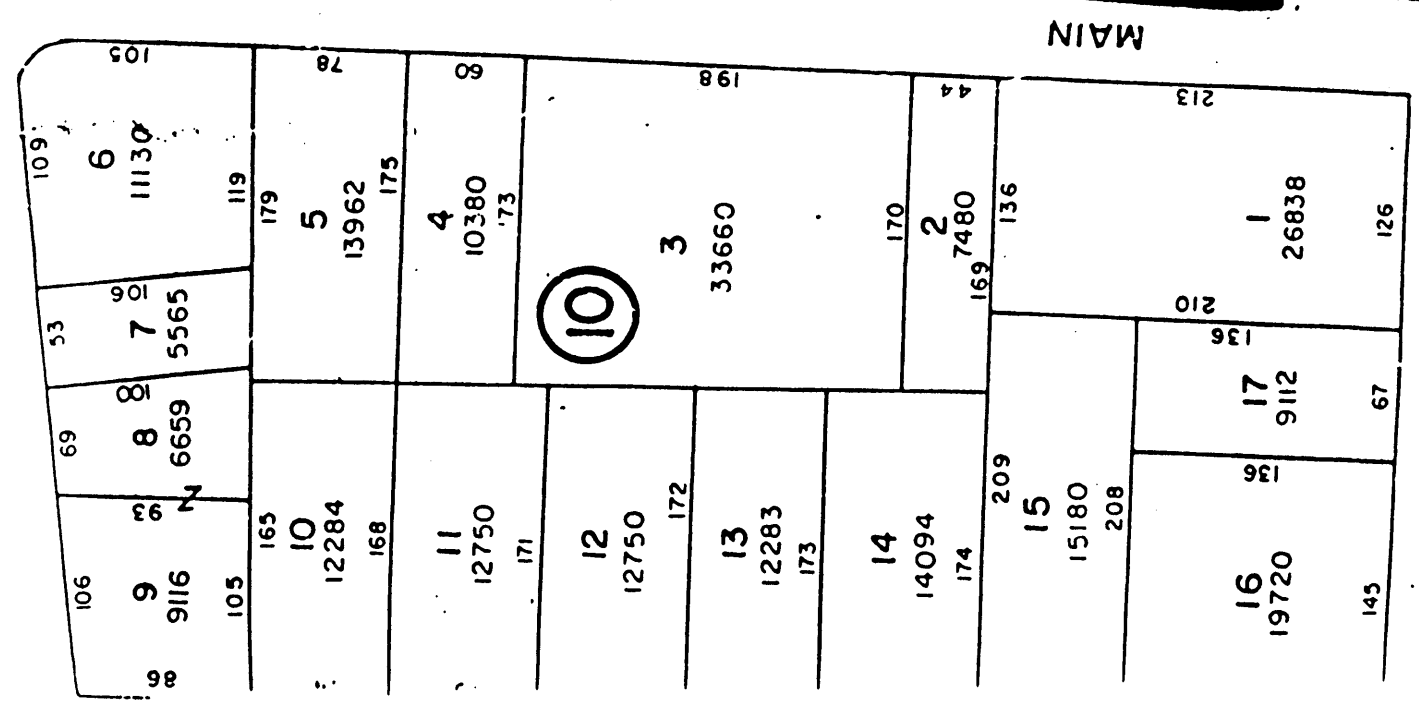
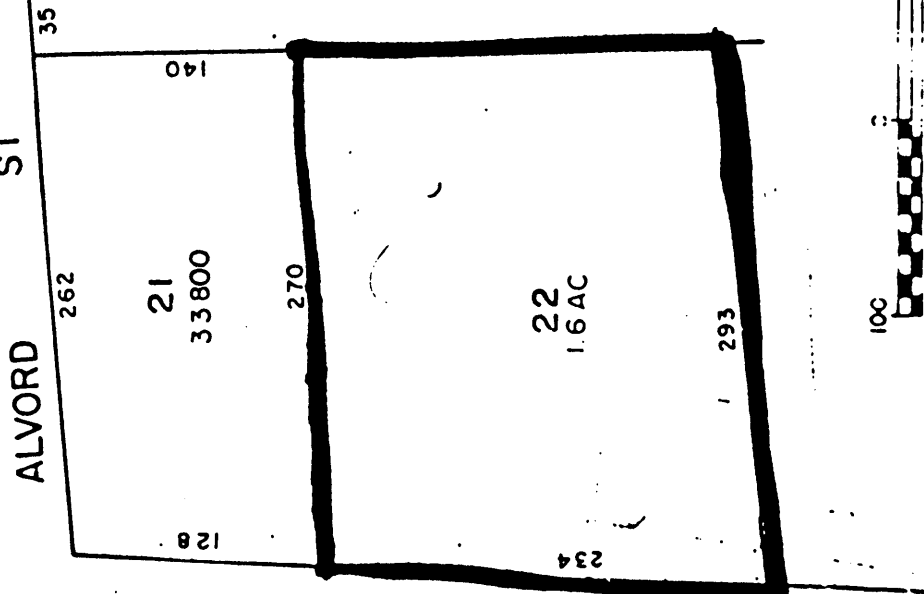
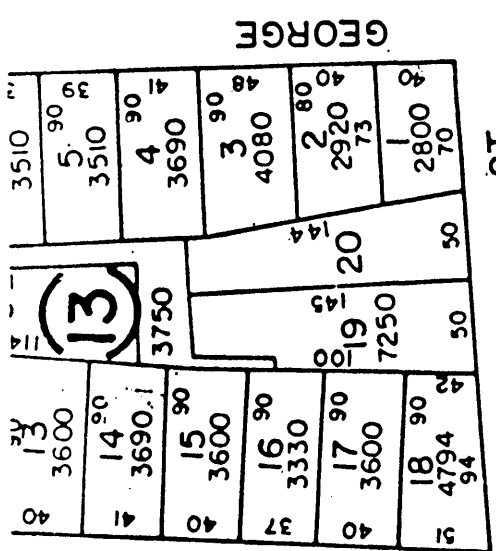
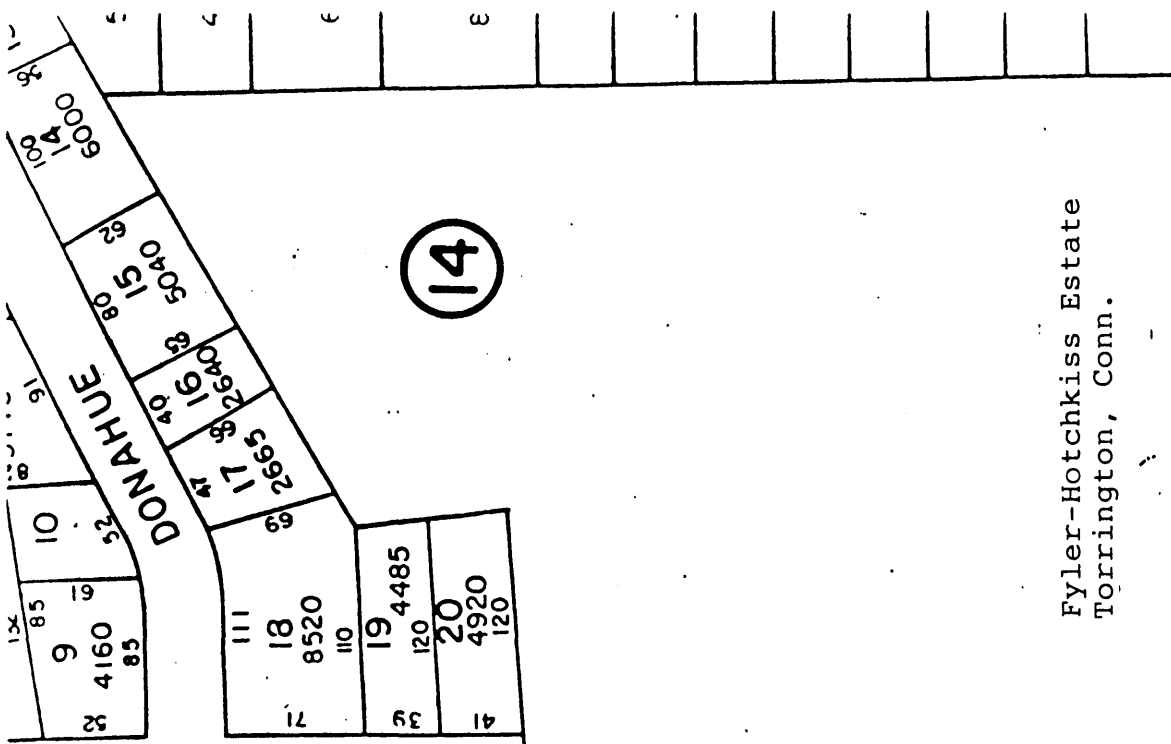
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Main Street Historic Resources Survey

1982 Local

Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street

Hartford, CT



Fyler-Hotchkiss Estate
Torrington, Conn.

