

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

For NPS use only

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

received FEB 14 1986  
date entered

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

MAR 13 1986

**1. Name**

historic Charles N. Fowler House

and/or common Vail-Deane School

**2. Location**

street & number 518 Salem Avenue

NA not for publication

city, town Elizabeth

vicinity of

state New Jersey

code 034

county Union

code 039

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<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 City of Elizabeth

street & number 50 Winfield Scott Plaza

city, town Elizabeth

vicinity of

state New Jersey

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Union County Court House

street & number Broad Street

city, town Elizabeth

state New Jersey

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Elizabeth Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984-1985  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Office of New Jersey Heritage, CN404

city, town Trenton

state New Jersey

## 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 Charles N. Fowler House, more generally known as the Vail-Deane School, is a large Georgian Revival mansion, set well back from the street on an ample urban lot. The front of the house is two stories high, with a flat roof; set back from the front is a gabled attic story. The house sits on a high basement of random rock-faced ashlar. The walls are brick, with stone trim consisting of rusticated quoins, belt course between the first and second stories, swag-carved plaques above the first floor windows, and wide cornice.

The front is dominated by a demi-lune portico in the Roman Doric order (The block capitals of its columns are replacements). This gives access to a central entry with an elaborate frontispiece. Attached Tuscan columns carry a broken pediment surmounted by a richly embellished cartouche. The spandrels of the arched doorway are decorated with foliated swags.

To the left (south) is a flat-roofed, two-story sun porch, with triple windows framed by pilaster strips of rusticated ashlar. It is balanced on the north by a second colossal Roman Doric portico, which forms a porte-cochere.

A small two-story service wing extends to the rear. To this has been added a relatively modern addition that served for school purposes. Also on the property, north of the house, is a Quonset-type structure erected by the school.

The interiors, especially of the first floor, are extremely rich and, considering their adaptive use by the school, remarkably little altered.

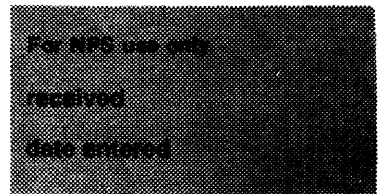
The central doors give access to a small marble-floored vestibule, which has a paneled dado and molded plaster cornice. Light is supplied by a pair of sconces consisting of hands holding torches. The vestibule is separated from the hall by a wrought-iron and glass door of Renaissance inspiration.

The large entrance/stair hall is also marble-floored. This multi-functional space is divided and articulated by columns and pilasters in an enriched Ionic order, which carry an elaborate cornice. There is a paneled dado, and the upper wall surfaces are enlivened with recessed panels; those in the entry frame pier mirrors. The fireplace in the reception area has a wooden mantel, with carved consoles, and a framed circular mirror set in the overmantel. The marble open well staircase, also richly ornamented, rises to the third floor. Its Renaissance-style rail is iron and bronze.

To the right (north) of the entrance hall, the drawing room features plaster moldings outlining recessed panels, an ornamental painted ceiling, and a marble mantel incorporating paired Ionic columns with bronze mounts and mirrored overmantel. An office has been partitioned off in one corner and a fluorescent fixture hangs from the ceiling, but these additions are readily reversible.

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Charles N. Fowler/Vail-Deane School, Elizabeth,  
Union County, New Jersey

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

The reception room, to the left of the entrance hall, is relatively simple, with trim confined to the mantel, a wooden cornice and molded door and window surrounds, and recessed-paneled piers framing the mantel. The large dining room, behind the reception room, is Jacobean with full-height paneled walls, a strapwork cornice, and beamed ceiling. A "secret" door in the paneling of the north wall leads to a plate room with safe. The fourth major room on the first floor is a library in the northwest corner. Wood-paneled, it features an impressive fireplace with Atlantis carrying a richly carved shelf surmounted by a plaque framed in C scrolls and topped by a pediment.

There are four bedrooms on the second floor, one in each corner, with a small sitting room at the south end of the broad central corridor. Decorative motifs are simpler than on the first floor although the major rooms have elaborate plaster cornices and fireplaces. Between the bedrooms, on the east and west sides of the corridor, are dressing rooms, closets, and bathrooms. Although these spaces were modified for the use of the Vail-Deane School, the bathrooms retain some original fixtures.

The third floor, evidently originally intended to house servants, has a series of simply finished small rooms on either side of a central corridor. The interiors of both the two-story sun porch and the rear service wing have been remodeled for school use.

On either side of the Fowler House and along most of lower Salem Avenue are stand apartment buildings, erected since the 1920s, that have replaced the substantial dwellings that once lined the street. They include massive blocks of several stories and low-rise garden apartment complexes. Behind the Fowler House, Westminster Avenue is fronted by late 19th/early 20th century houses of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival style derivation. Mostly of frame construction, they are smaller and decidedly less grand than the Fowler House.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1909 **Builder/Architect** Carrere & Hastings

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The former Vail-Deane School is architecturally significant as a good example of an early 20th-century Georgian Revival mansion, designed by the New York firm of Carrere and Hastings, perhaps best known as the architects of the New York Public Library. Historically it derives significance from its association with Charles N. Fowler, prominent banker and politician, and with its long service as the Vail-Deane School, one of northern New Jersey's best-known private schools for girls.

The house was built by Charles N. Fowler (1852-1932), who occupied it from its construction in 1909 until he sold it to the Vail-Deane School in 1930. Born in Illinois, Fowler graduated from Yale University and the Law School of the University of Chicago. He left the law for banking, however, helping to organize the Equitable Banking Company in 1886, and becoming its president in 1887. Within five years the paid up capital of the company increased from \$50,000 to \$2 million. To pursue his business interest, Fowler came east, first settling in Cranford, New Jersey, but moving to Elizabeth in 1891.

Fowler was elected to Congress on the Republican ticket in 1894. He was a member of the House Banking and Currency Committee, serving as its chairman from 1902 to 1910. While in Congress, he attracted national attention for his pronounced opinions on financial matters and as a relentless and uncompromising advocate of currency reform. He had acrimonious disagreements over the latter issue with such figures as New York Senator Nelson H. Aldrich and New Jersey Senator John Kean. His most continuous combat, with the powerful Speaker of the House, "Uncle" Joe Cannon, eventually led to his deposition from the chairmanship of the committee.

After an unsuccessful bid for the Senate in 1911, he was also defeated for re-election, leaving the House in 1911. On his return to Elizabeth, he once again became active in banking. He also successfully developed marble quarries in Vermont, where a town is named for him. In 1918 he published a comprehensive book on all phases of the currency question.

In Elizabeth he was active in public affairs, serving as president of the board of trustees of the Pingry School, and purchasing (for \$100,000) a plot of land for construction of a free public library.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Elizabeth

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	8
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5	6	6	3	6	0
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4	5	0	2	9	2	0
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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 11, Lot 1361 City of Elizabeth Tax Map

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dennis Bertland/Architectural Historian & Constance M. Greiff/President

organization Heritage Studies date August, 1985

street & number Box 864 Mapleton Road telephone 609-452-1754

city or town Princeton state New Jersey

# 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.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature *William R. Deuche*

title Assistant Commissioner for Natural Resources date February 5, 1986

### For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

*Melora Byer*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 3-13-86

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Charles N. Fowler House/Vail-Deane School, Elizabeth,  
Union County, New Jersey Item number 8 Page 1

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The Fowler House is a good example, outstanding in the City of Elizabeth, of the substantial mansions, of classically-inspired design that were built at the turn of the century for wealthy individuals. Typical of the best of such dwellings, it combines amplitude of design with the best of materials and fine craftsmanship.

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Charles N. Fowler House/Vail-Deane School, Elizabeth,

Continuation sheet Union County, New Jersey Item number 9

Page 1

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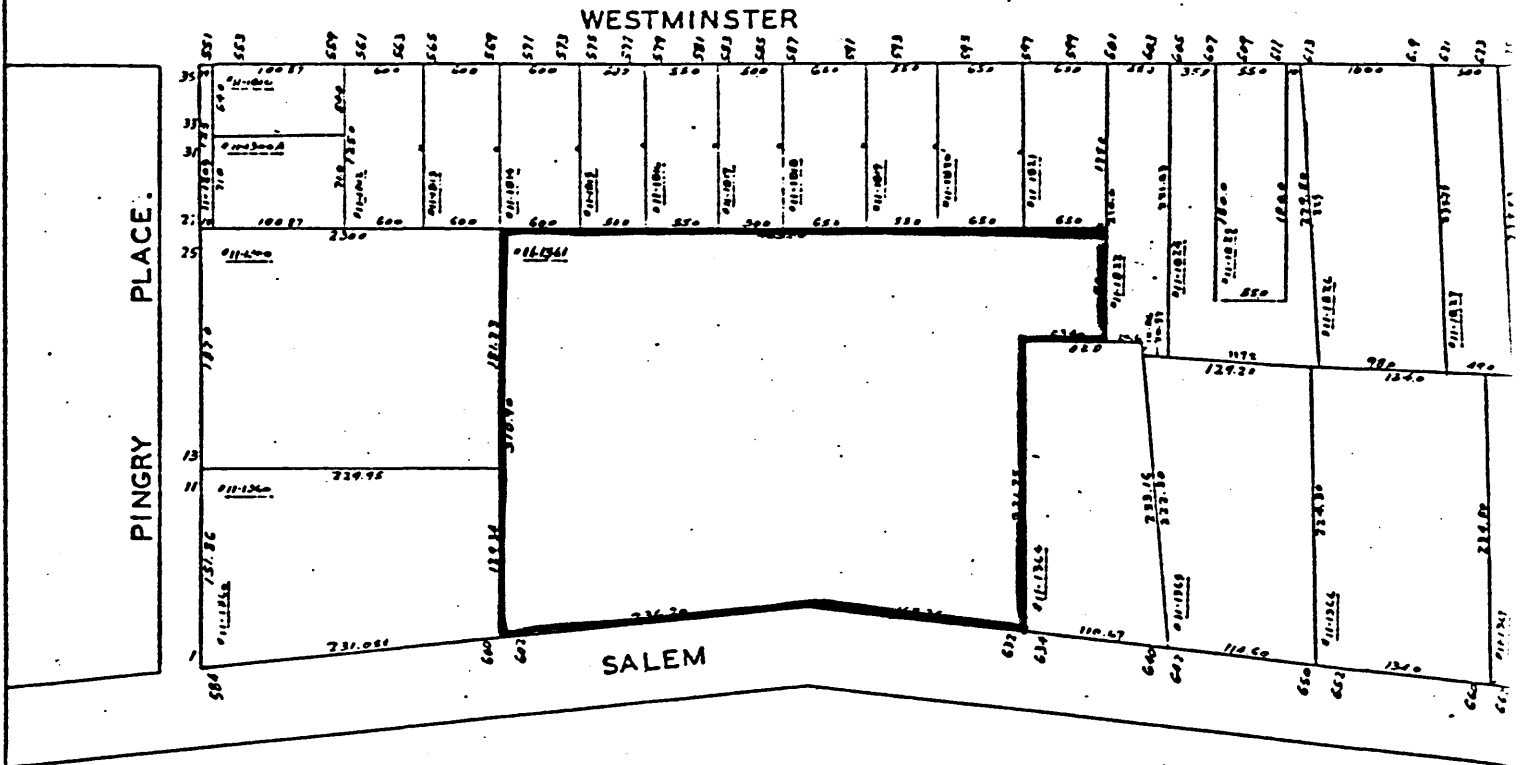
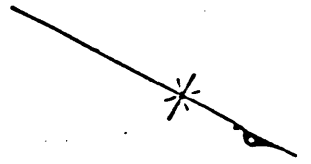
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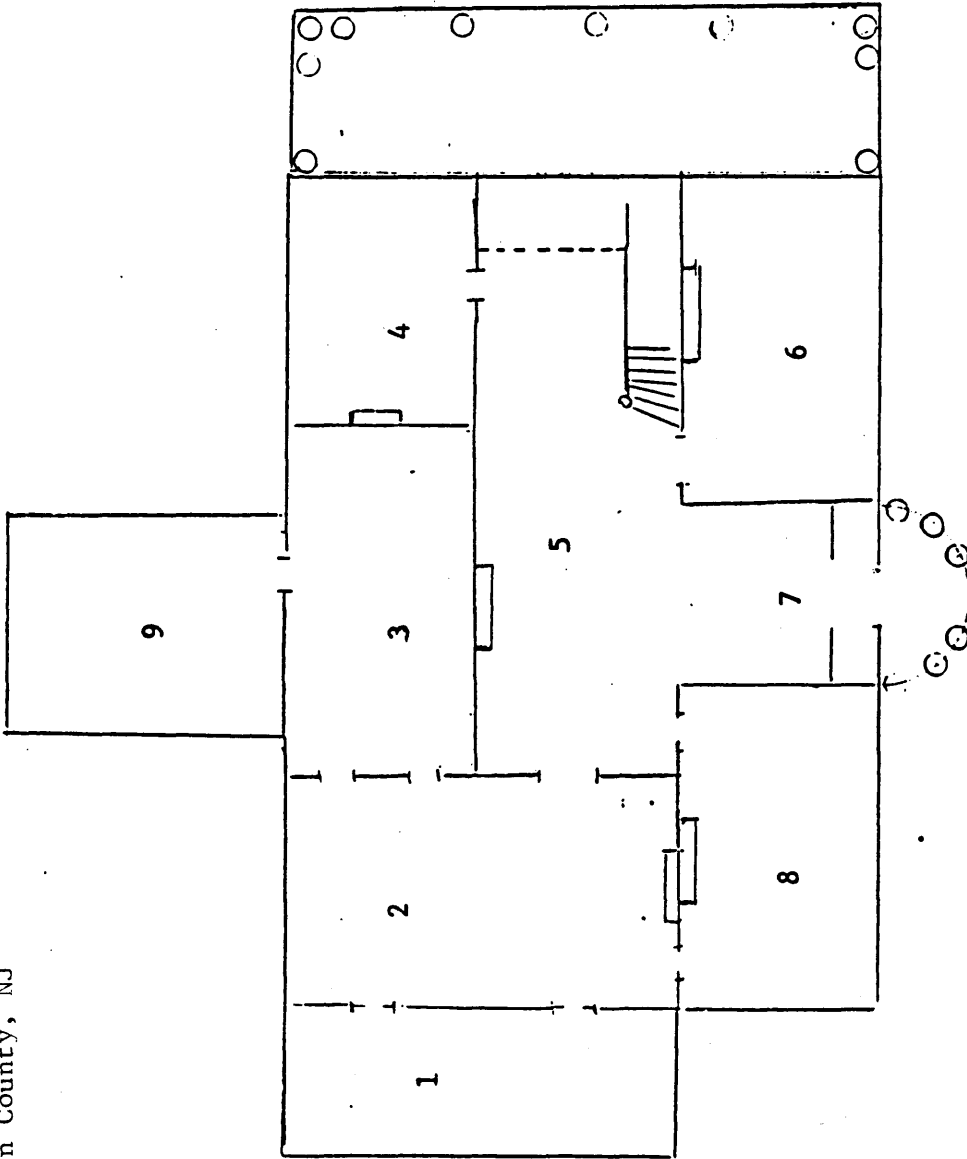
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Charles N. Fowler/Vail-Deane School  
Elizabeth, Union County, NJ





Charles N. Fowler/Vail-Deane School  
Elizabeth, Union County, NJ



- 1. Sunroom
- 2. Dining Room
- 3. Plate safe, pantry, closets
- 4. Library
- 5. Hall
- 6. Drawing Room
- 7. Entry
- 8. Reception Room
- 9. Service Wing

