

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0685534

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RECEIVED OCT 2 1978

DATE ENTERED

DEC 20 1978

**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

Coite-Hubbard House

AND/OR COMMON

President's House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

269 High Street

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Middletown

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

__ VICINITY OF Second - Christopher J. Dodd

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

COUNTY

Middlesex

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Wesleyan University

STREET & NUMBER

North College, High Street

CITY, TOWN

Middletown

STATE

__ VICINITY OF

Connecticut 06457

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Middletown Land Records, Municipal Building

STREET & NUMBER

De Koven Drive

CITY, TOWN

Middletown

STATE

Connecticut 06457

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

See continuation sheet.

DATE

__ FEDERAL __ STATE __ COUNTY __ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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The Coite-Hubbard House
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CONTINUATION SHEET Existing Surveys ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

Connecticut Register of Historic Places
April 14, 1970 State
Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, Connecticut

Old Houses of Connecticut (Federal Economic Recovery Act)
1935
State Library
Hartford, Connecticut

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE	
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED	DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED			

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Coite-Hubbard House of 1856 is an imposing Italianate structure at the southwest corner of High Street and Wyllis Avenue on the Wesleyan University Campus in Middletown, Connecticut. Set on a small rise above High Street, Middletown's grand avenue, it occupies a spacious lot 204 feet wide by 272 feet deep.

In mass the house is a square block 49 by 51 feet with a rear ell 22 by 32 feet. It displays the Italianate style of architecture, fashionable in the mid-19th century, with bracketed roof overhang, cupola, Renaissance Revival detail at the windows, elaborate entrance portico, and shallow front pavilion with low pediment. The exterior walls are covered with stucco, painted sand color.

The front portico was initially a porte-cochere over a carriageway that curved in from the street to the house. At each front corner of the porte-cochere are three fluted columns with foliate and volute capitals on high boxed and panelled wood pedestals. Another one of these columns and an engaged half column are placed next to the house on either side of the front door. The columns support a plain frieze with dentil course and a cornice that are surmounted by a heavy balustrade.

The doorway itself has a molded round arch springing from engaged colonettes with anthemion capitals. The two-leaf doors are set back, providing for a panelled reveal and soffit. The half-round light under the arch is divided from the doorway by a molding that has a dentil course. There are two sets of doors separated by a small foyer. The outside doors have rectangular panels and the inside pair have panels with round heads.

The floor-to-ceiling windows on the first floor have two-over-two-over-two sash. On the front of the house, which has three bays, the two first-floor windows have balconies with balustrades that are similar to the balustrade of the porte-cochere. The windows have heavy, flat, molded caps supported by heavy, carved consoles, those on the front carrying ornate crestings. There is a rectangular glassed-in porch toward the rear of the south side, added in 1923. Its original balustrade at second-floor level has been removed. On the north side of the house there is a long, narrow veranda, again with a heavy balustrade. The roof of the veranda is exceptional for its convex shape, for its triangular support brackets that incorporate an O motif, and for its sawn and pierced valence, an early example of the type.

Second-floor windows are two-over-two with the same bracketed flat molded caps, except for the window over the porte-cochere, which has a segmental pediment. The treatment at the roof line is exceptionally well developed. The wide roof overhang has elaborate scrolled brackets with the frieze between them panelled and defined at its lower edge by a continuous molding. The wide overhang of the cupola roof is handled in similar fashion. The roof itself is a low hip.

A wrought-iron fence with cast-iron posts runs along Wyllis Avenue. The fence returns only briefly along High Street, although initially it ran across the full frontage and included gates for the carriageway. In the back of the house a modern wing has been added at the rear of the ell.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

The front door leads into a wide central hall that runs the full length of the main block. A wide stairway with handsome balustrade and carved step ends is placed toward the back of the hall on the left. On the right of the hall are a reception room and a long drawing room. On the left of the hall are a library, a sitting room, and the dining room. All of these rooms except the dining room have open work, pierced, foliate pattern, plaster cornices, and elaborate plaster moldings that form Adamesque ceiling patterns. The dining room was re-designed in the 1920s and has little decorative trim but does have a large, rectangular glass porch, introduced to improve the lighting.

Every room has a carved, round-arched, marble fireplace surround, with the exception of those rooms from which the fireplaces have been removed as noted below. The fireplace wall in the drawing room has a tall, gilded mirror over the mantel, and on the mantel a bronze clock and two crystal candelabra. This elegant fireplace ensemble at the east end of the long room, the tall windows, decorative plaster ceiling, and central crystal chandelier all contribute toward making the drawing room an exceptionally handsome interior space. The mirror, clock, candelabra, and chandelier are thought to be original furnishings in the house.

The stairway from the first to the second floor is lighted by a double skylight. The oval skylight of leaded, frosted glass visible from the stairs is in turn protected from the weather by a skylight at roof level, the space between the two forming an interior well. The landing at the top of the principal run of the stairs leads back to the service wing while a further short flight of steps toward the front of the house leads from the landing up to the principal second floor. Here a central hall provides access to four bedrooms that do not have the decorative embellishments found on the first floor. There is a full third floor with high ceilings, but without architectural distinction.

A full cellar shows the stone foundations and brick, load-bearing, partition walls. The brick walls are pierced by round-arched openings.

In the 1960s the house had deteriorated to the point where serious consideration was given to ceasing to use it as the President's House. After deliberation, however, it was decided instead to mount a major renovation program. The renovation was carried forward under the supervision of the university engineer. In this program the structure of the house was securely shored up, for instance by introduction of steel beams under the first floor, and the new wing was added at the rear. The stucco was replaced. Central air conditioning was installed, using, in part, chimney stacks for duct conduits. This arrangement led to the removal of three fireplaces from the house, including the one in the dining room. The interior trim was also painted white at this time.

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Addendum

The new wing added at the rear in 1967 was a one story addition running south from the rear (west) of the original ell. It has a low hipped roof, windows similar in scale and frequency to those of the original house, and is covered with the same stucco. The interior provides for a two car garage, two bedrooms, a sitting room, and a bath. The overall effect is to provide additional space to the house in a relatively unobtrusive manner. The work was carried out as part of the general \$70,000 program of renovations in 1967 under the supervision of the University engineer.

6 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1856

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The exquisite decorative detail and fine proportions of the Coite-Hubbard House, both inside and out, make it an outstanding example of the Italianate style that was fashionable in the mid-19th century. The house today dominates the neighborhood from its fine site as it did a century and a quarter ago, an imposing, skillfully executed, and pretentious example of the building arts of mid-19th century.

The site has historic interest pre-dating the Coite-Hubbard House because Simeon North's house was here. North was the first official pistol maker to the United States and is credited with developing the concept of interchangeable parts simultaneously with Eli Whitney.

North's heirs sold the house and land to Gabriel W. Coite in 1855 (Middletown Land Records, volume 83, page 38). North's house presumably was either demolished or moved to make way for Coite's new structure. Gabriel W. Coite was born in 1810 in Philadelphia. In 1831 he entered into partnership with his father in an unspecified business in New York, and in 1853, at the age of 43, retired to Middletown. In 1860 he was elected State Senator and in 1862 State Treasurer, an office he held for four terms. Coite is listed in the Hartford city directories for the years 1862 through 1867 and then drops from sight.

The identity of the architect Coite engaged in 1856 for his new house is unknown. Effort has been made to attribute the house to Henry Austin (1804-1891) of New Haven, but most of Austin's work was in the Classic and Gothic Revival styles. An Italianate design that is attributed to Austin is the 1859 Morse-Libby House in Portland, Maine, but that is brownstone and two stories high, quite different from the three-story, stucco house designed for Coite by an as yet unidentified architect.

In 1863 Coite sold his Middletown home, only seven years after building it, to Mrs. Jane Miles Hubbard (MLR 94/172), widow of Samuel D. Hubbard. Her husband, a prominent member of an old, land-owning, Middletown family, had been a Congressman and Postmaster General in President Fillmore's cabinet. He built the long Mansion House Block on Main Street.

Mrs. Hubbard lived alone with her servants in the big house. Stories are told about her comings and goings; she was a force and personality in the town. The drawing room mantel mirror, clock, candelabra, and the chandelier are known to have been in the house when she lived there, and may have been there when she arrived.

The property passed from the heirs of Mrs. Hubbard to Wesleyan University. On April 15, 1904, the Wesleyan Board of Trustees voted to purchase the house and land for \$30,000. The Hubbard heirs then established a scholarship fund in the amount of \$10,000 in honor of

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Samuel D. Hubbard. Title was transferred that year (MLR 134/294) and the house has been the residence of the president of the university ever since.

The architect Henry Bacon (1866-1924), best known for designing the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D. C., made his influence felt on the house in 1923. Bacon had several commissions in Connecticut, including the railroad station in Naugatuck and the General Hospital and Citizens' and Manufacturers' National Bank in Waterbury. At Wesleyan he did a campus plan, astronomical observatory, dormitories, and other buildings. In the President's House Bacon re-designed the dining room, adding a large rectangular glazed porch, presumably to improve the lighting of this otherwise rather dark room. Contemporary photos show that on the top of the porch he placed a balustrade similar to the one on the porte-cochere. The balustrade on the dining room porch has been removed.

The house existed for almost 70 years without change until Bacon altered the south facade in 1923. The subsequent removal of the balustrade from Bacon's porch destroyed his effort to tie in his design with the overall design of the house. The 1960s program did more severe damage to the integrity of the house by removal of three fireplaces and by painting the interior white. At least the painting is reversible. These negative elements are minor when compared to the strength of the features that do remain, including the fine basic proportions, and excellence of decorative detail both inside and out. The Coite-Hubbard House continues to be an important architectural asset to the university, town, and state.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

F.W. Chapman, The Coit Family, Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard Co., 1874.

Mrs. Victor L. Butterfield, "The President's House -- Wesleyan University," 1955. Typescript in files of Greater Middletown Preservation Trust.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY One

QUADRANGLE NAME Middletown

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24 000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 695520 4603070

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is lot 9, map 24, block 23-17, as described in Middletown Land Records, volume 134, page 294.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

June 5, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

203 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

Connecticut 06106

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

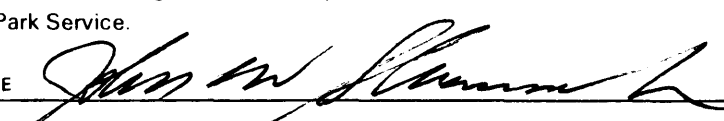
NATIONAL

STATE x

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

September 21, 1978

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

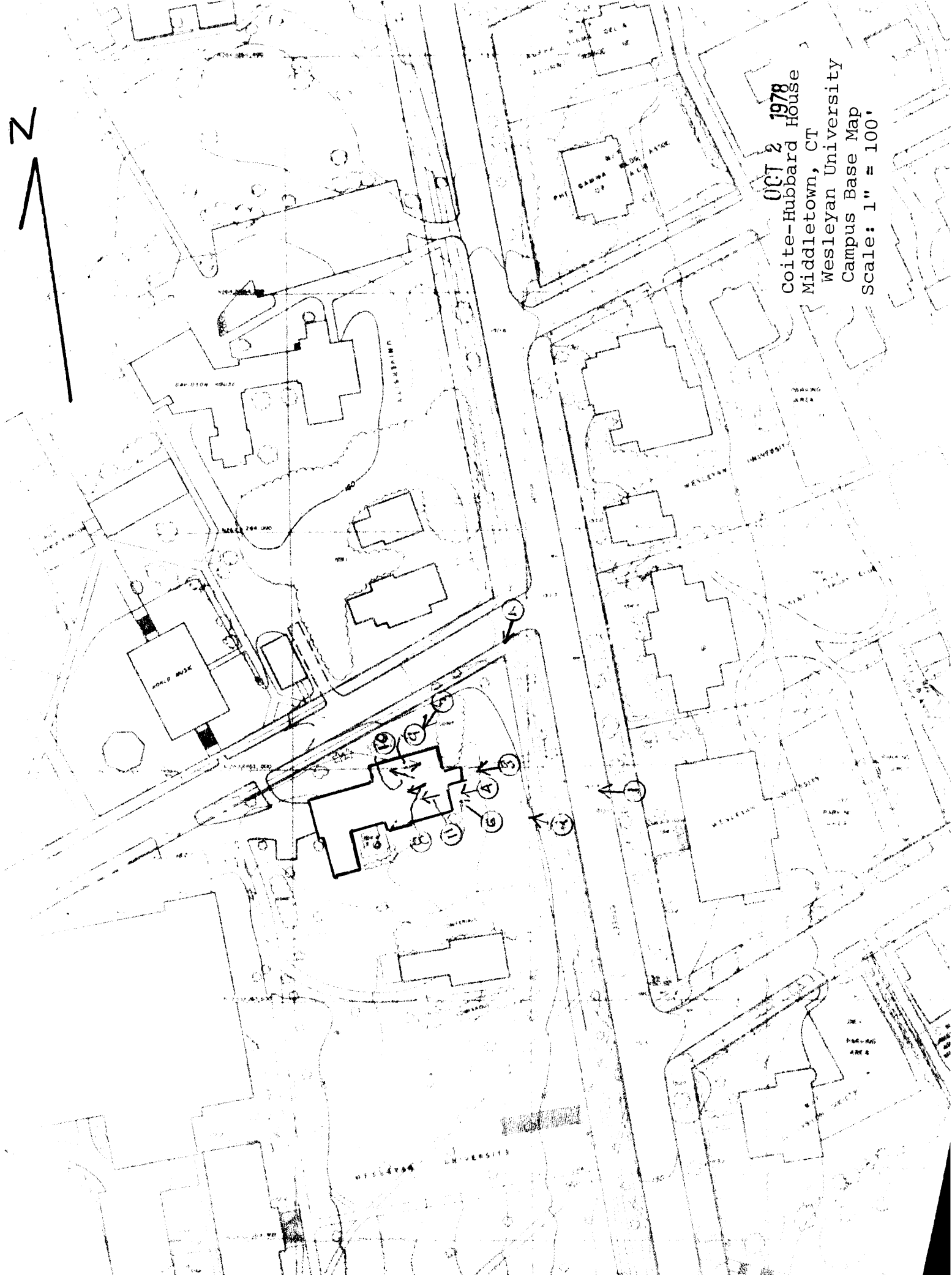
DATE 12-20-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE 12/19/78

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION



OCT 2 1978
Coite-Hubbard House
Middletown, CT
Wesleyan University
Campus Base Map
Scale: 1" = 100'