

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

For NPS use only

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

received **OCT 24 1986**
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Meriden Curtain Fixture Company Factory

and/or common Meriden Curtain Fixture Company Factory

2. Location

street & number 122 Charles Street NA not for publication

city, town Meriden NA vicinity of

state CT code 09 county New Haven code 009

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Bijan-Sara Corporation

street & number 129 Lydale Place

city, town Meriden NA vicinity of state CT 06450

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Meriden Land Records, City Clerk's Office

street & number 122 East Main Street

city, town Meriden state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register 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 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state CT

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>NA</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Meriden Curtain Fixture Company factory is a group of five 1- to 6-story buildings located on a 2-acre site at the northwest corner of Charles Street and Parker Avenue in central Meriden, several blocks south-east of City Hall. The buildings, all but one constructed c. 1892, run in the east-west direction. The four buildings used for manufacturing, originally free-standing, are connected to one another, while the power-house/generating room continues to be free-standing. (See Site Plan and Photographs 1 - 4.) *

All buildings are visually and structurally related to one another through the use of brick as the principal building material, with brownstone foundations and sills, and all share a common decorative feature, which is a distinctive band of terra cotta tile below the eaves. (Photograph 5) The four manufacturing buildings have uniform apertures of about 5x7' for windows under segmental arches of three courses of headers. The windows are 4-over-4 wooden, double-hung sash divided by central wooden mullions. Interior construction is frame of the "slow-burning" type encouraged throughout New England during the 19th century by fire insurance companies. The posts and beams are massive timbers and the floors are thick planks, all designed to char instead of flame in case of fire. (Photograph 6) There is uniformity of construction throughout the complex.

The largest structure is Building 1, 42 x 256' and five stories high. It is the only building in the complex with a mansard roof. (Photograph 7) The lower slope of the mansard is covered with metal shingles and the upper slope is hipped. Shed-roofed dormers in the mansard are also covered with metal shingles on both their roofs and sides. (Photograph 8) On the interior, each floor has a central line of posts at 8' intervals (Photograph 6), except the top floor which has no posts in the center due to a truss roof support system. (Photograph 9)

Building 2 is a smaller, 25 x 98' 2-story structure, running parallel with Building 1. The beams for the second floor rest on brick supports corbelled out from the walls. There is a central north-south wall that once was an exterior wall, indicating the building was doubled in size subsequent to original construction.

Building 3 is an early 20th-century, 6-story structure, 20 x 39'. It is part of the link connecting the three large buildings. A 12 x 15' freight elevator shaft was built, c. 1920, west of Building 3 and south of Building 2. Further linkage between Buildings 1 and 4 is provided by 2- and 3-story sections adjoining Building 3 to the south. (Photograph 10) The north surface of the 2-story brick section looks like an exterior wall and is thought to be the north wall of the small building with mansard roof seen in historic Photograph 11. The third story of the section behind it, between it and Building 3, is frame. The third-story south wall is covered with metal shingles painted dark red, probably the original color of the

* All buildings contribute to the historical significance of the factory complex.

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date entered

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Historic and Architectural Survey, City of Meriden

1978

x local

Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street
Hartford

CT

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shingles on the mansard of Building 1. This third-story frame section obscures the original gable end of Building 4. (Photograph 12)

Building 4, three stories high, is wider than the others, 53', and is 176' long. A keystone in a window arch in the east elevation is incised with the date 1893. In general, details of this building are the same as the details of Buildings 1 and 2. Its top floor is free of posts due to the use of a truss system in the roof framing, without the side posts found in Building 1's top floor. (Photographs 13 and 9) The gable ends of Buildings 2 and 4, with cornice returns and brick dentil courses (Photograph 5), are their distinctive features, as contrasted to the mansard roof of Building 1.

Building 5, the powerhouse and generating room, is similar to the others but more elegant. The same materials are used, the same band of terra cotta tile runs below the eaves, and the powerhouse has the same gable end treatment as Buildings 2 and 4. In the powerhouse side elevations, however, there is a second row of smaller tile below the principal row, and the flat window arches are made of pressed brick laid with vertical stretchers, and splayed. There is a vertical panel of decorative tile on the exterior of the south wall. The generator room has a rounded or arched roof, consistent with the shape of a generator, supported by rounded wooden beams. (Photograph 14) It has a rose window in the east elevation. (Photograph 15) As originally built, the powerhouse was 45' square. Then the generating room, 20x34', was added. The south wall of the generating room has the bands of decorative tile and splayed lintels, indicating that it originally was the north exterior wall of the powerhouse. Later additions to the powerhouse are a dormer on the south roof slope and a frame shed extension on the west elevation, made to accommodate new larger boilers.

The Beers 1868 atlas¹ shows no buildings at the nominated location. Pierson's 1891 map² shows a long, narrow building close to the road, with a protuberance at the south end of the east elevation. The long narrow building was the frame structure seen behind the powerhouse in historic Photograph 11. It was demolished by 1900. The powerhouse that exists today is too large to be the small protuberance shown on the 1891 map. Photograph 11 obviously dates from before 1893, since Building 4, which has that date in a keystone, is not yet in place. The building program continued until at its height the complex reached the appearance seen in historic Photograph 16. Date of demolition of the buildings north of those now standing is unknown.

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All original machinery was removed from the buildings decades ago, as the complex has been occupied by a series of tenants during the 20th century. The boiler house still has two large cylindrical boilers, but they are not original. The generator is gone from the generator room, but extensive brick foundations, below grade, to support the generator are still in place.

1. Atlas of New Haven County, Connecticut, F.W. Beers: New York, 1868, plate 50.
2. Pierson 1891 map of Meriden, hanging in Engineer's office at Meriden Municipal Building.

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/ 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates c. 1892 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Meriden Curtain Fixture Company Factory is significant architecturally because it is an excellent example of late 19th-century mill construction with the exceptional features of decorative tile banding on all buildings and metal-shingled mansard roof on the largest structure. (Criterion C) The factory is significant historically because of its association with Charles Parker, Meriden's leading 19th-century industrialist, and because of its contribution to the city's economic base. (Criterion A)

Criterion A - Architecture

The factory complex exhibits the construction features commonly found in late 19th-century mill buildings, plus decorative features that are uncommon. The fact that the buildings are largely unaltered since the time they were built establishes a high degree of integrity.

Brick masonry was the commonly used building material for 19th-century New England mill buildings. Together with the slow-burning frame interior, it constituted typical mill construction. The exterior often was given some distinctive architectural feature as a statement of the importance of the factory in the community. Often a projecting stair tower with a clock at its top fulfilled this purpose. At Meriden Curtain Fixture Co. a different approach was used with the decorative features of terra cotta tile and mansard roof establishing the identity of these buildings. The tile banding helps to relate the structures one to another as a cohesive complex. Also, it demonstrates the desire of the owners to construct something more than straight utilitarian buildings. The gable ends with eaves returns and brick dentil courses of Buildings 2, 4 and 5 are a further expression of this purpose, while the rose window of the generator room carries the intent further than is seen in most factory buildings.

The mansard roof of Building 1 was both architecturally decorative and utilitarian, as it provided more usable space to the fifth floor than a gable roof of comparable height. The use of a shed roof on the dormers is not common.¹ Cladding the lower slope of the mansard and the roofs and sides of the dormers with metal shingles is unusual, and to have this entire roof system intact is fortunate indeed.

On the interior, the slow-burning wooden construction again is common. The fact that the posts are necessarily close together, on 8' centers, was

9. Major Bibliographical References

Encyclopedia of Connecticut Biography, New York: American History Society, 1919.

Rockey, J.L., ed., History of New Haven County, Connecticut, New York: W.W. Preston & Co., 1892

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2

Quadrangle name Meriden

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 18 684230 45998510
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is described at Meriden Land Records, volume 1070/page 180.

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

state NA code NA county NA code NA

state NA code NA county NA code NA

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom/ Consultant, edited by John Herzan,
National Register Coordinator

organization NA date October 27, 1985

street & number 33 Sunrise Hill Drive telephone 203 521-2518

city or town West Hartford state CT

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 October 17, 1986

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

Patrick Andrus
Keeper of the National Register

date 12/4/86

Attest: Beth L. Savage
Chief of Registration

date 12/4/86

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one of the disadvantages of the method of construction, characteristic of the era. Another characteristic was the narrow widths of the buildings, which was dictated by the need to provide natural light to the entire work area. The windows of the Meriden Curtain Fixture Co. are different from most. Most mill buildings of this era used larger apertures and double-hung sash of small lights, say, 20-over-20. The paired 4-over-4 of this complex are different. Since they furnished less light, it is difficult to understand why they were used.² They are, of course, easier to install and maintain than the larger sash.

Criterion A - History

The Meriden Curtain Fixture Company was a unit in a larger industrial enterprise known as the Charles Parker Co. Charles Parker (1809-1902) was an aggressive industrial innovator who dominated the manufacturing scene in Meriden for much of the 19th century with a variety of factories and products.

Charles Parker was born in Cheshire but came to Meriden in 1829 to work in a factory making coffee mills. By the end of that year he was in business for himself. In 1831 he bought land on Broad Street to build his first factory building. This site is about one block west of the Meriden Curtain Fixture Company Factory. By 1844 Parker was using steam for power, the first in Meriden to do so.² He added factory buildings westward from Broad Street and in nearby communities for the production of a variety of products, including coffee mills, hardware, plated silverware, shot guns, vises and clocks. In 1860 Parker's factories employed 1000 hands. In 1867 he was elected the first mayor of the City of Meriden.

The manufacture of curtain fixtures was begun by Sawyer & Buckley in 1869. Charles Parker Company took over the business, moved it to Parker Street and expanded it into the largest firm of its kind in the country. Products included curtain rollers, fringes, and cloth. By 1891, when the building program was initiated, Charles Parker being 82 years old, the affairs of the Charles Parker Co. were in the hands of his son, Wilbur F. Parker, and his son-in-law, W.H. Lyon. In 1905, when the company employed 500 people, it was absorbed into the Columbia Shade Cloth Company. Later in the 20th century a series of tenants leased space in the complex but it is now almost entirely vacant.³

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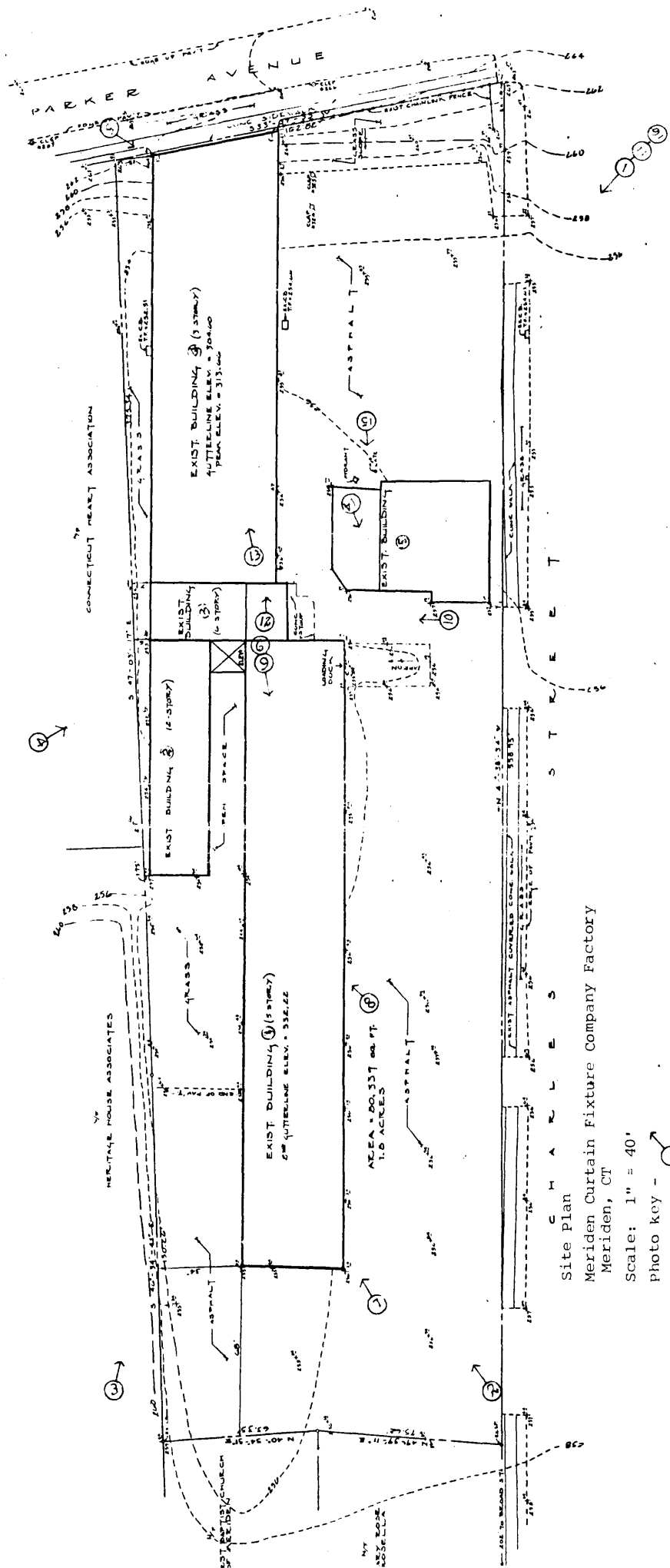
received

date entered

1. The home of the president, Wilbur F. Parker, son of Charles Parker, located at the top of a hill across the street to the east of the factory, has a mansard roof with similar shed-roofed dormers.
2. Earlier Charles Parker Co. factory buildings west of Broad Street have the same windows. Their use here may simply have been a carryover of past practice.
3. This account of Charles Parker and his enterprises is taken from J.L. Rockey, ed., History of New Haven County, Connecticut, New York: W.W. Preston & Co., 1892, pp. 611, 612 and from Encyclopedia of Connecticut Biography, New York: American History Society, 1919, v. 4, pp. 262-264.

PROPERTY TO BE CONVEYED TO
 BIJANI - SAKA CO/CP
 CHARLES STREET & PARKER AVENUE
 SEPTEMBER 9, 1983
 CONNECTICUT
 SCALE: 1" = 40'

Nomination
 North



Site Plan
 Meriden Curtain Fixture Company Factory
 Meriden, CT

Scale: 1" = 40'
 Photo key -

W. J. ...

NOTE:
 LOT 4 BUILDINGS PRESENTS EASMENT