

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

For NPS use only

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

received APR 21 1987
date entered AUG 25 1987

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

1. Name

historic Peyton Randolph Bishop House

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 135 Washington Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Bridgeport N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 001

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"/> 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
	N/A	<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 135 Washington Avenue Associates

street & number 3241 Main Street

city, town Stratford N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bridgeport Town Clerk

street & number City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace

city, town Bridgeport state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date 1987 ___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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 Peyton Randolph Bishop house, built in 1839, is a three-bay, two-and-one-half story brick dwelling with a mansard roof which stands on a corner lot on Golden Hill, an urban residential neighborhood on a ridge overlooking the center of Bridgeport, Connecticut (Photographs 1 and 2; Figure 1). Behind and to the west of the building is a small, paved parking lot. The immediately surrounding architecture consists of altered Shingle- and Colonial Revival-style houses in fair to good condition, a Romanesque Revival brownstone church, and early and mid-20th-century apartment buildings. The Peyton R. Bishop house stands one-half block from the Route 25-8 expressway.

The building, a Greek Revival period structure with Victorian alterations, consists of one two-and-one-half-story block with a subsequently added one-and-one-half story block at the rear (Photographs 1 and 4). This appendage may have been built in two phases. The exterior walls are brick supported by a raised foundation of uncoursed granite (Photograph 5). All the exterior door and window openings have sandstone sills and lintels, except for the flat brick lintels of the basement window openings.

Judging by its date of construction, proportions, the six-light upper sash of the double-hung windows, the side-entry hall, the design of the main stairway, a Greek Revival second floor fireplace, and the presence of ear motif interior door and window moldings, the Peyton R. Bishop house appears to have been originally a two-story urban form of the Greek Revival mode (Photographs 3, 8 and 9).

The facade (south side) is fronted by a one-story late-19th-century transitional Queen Anne-Colonial Revival-style frame porch with square posts and balusters and a pediment centered above the first-bay entry (Photograph 3). The porch extends the entire length of the facade. The pediment, which features the same delicately denticulated entablature as the porch cornice, is decorated with a floriate relief carving sectioned in rectangular and triangular groups. The front doorway, probably rebuilt contemporaneously with the porch, consists of diamond-and-circle pattern leaded glass sidelights surmounted by a tripartite leaded glass overlight containing an elliptical fan pattern (Photograph 8). The first-story front windows are floor-to-ceiling height, and like all the windows contain six-over-one double sash units. The second-story windows are capped by projecting classical drip hoods of similar design to the main entablature, which has small brackets and a blocked frieze crowned by a cornice (Photograph 5). Two dormers with slate-covered side walls and entablatures similar to those of the window hoods are centered in the front roof slope. The lower section of the main mansard roof is covered with alternating grouped courses of multi-colored rectangular and hexagonal slates.

The west side of the building's main block is an asymmetrical three-bay wall, with the central bay located to the left of center to accommodate a chimney (Photograph 4). Below this bay is a basement window with a splayed brick lintel. Two dormers are centered in this side. A stucco-covered chimney stack rises to the right of the right hand dormer. Its symmetrically located twin has been removed.

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Historic and Architectural Resources Survey of Bridgeport (local)

1987 (ongoing)

Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street
Hartford, Connecticut

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The south-half portion of the one-and-one-half-story rear block contains a symmetrical arrangement of two windows flanking a door. These openings lack the classical window hoods of the others in the building. This door and window composition, which probably comprised the entire wall of the first addition, is framed and sheltered by an Italianate style porch with tapered square posts set on high bases. The posts are topped by elongated capital-like forms. The original front stairway access to this porch has been relocated to the rear for handicapped access. Behind this ramp is a single window. Two dormers project from the mansard roof above an entablature similar to that of the main block but without brackets and blocks. The lower section of this roof is covered with a synthetic shingle which appears almost identical to slate.

The rear (north) wall of the rear block has a centered doorway and regularly spaced windows to either side. Two dormers are aligned with the windows. A brick chimney stack rises slightly east of the roof peak (Photograph 6).

The back of the rear block projects approximately two feet to the east. This section of the east elevation contains one centered window and a dormer. The forward section of the east elevation has a tripartite Queen Anne bay window with paired windows on the front and a single window on the angled sides. Centered above the bay unit is a dormer.

The east side of the building's main block consists of stacked, tripartite bay windows in the two stories of the first bay, an off-center middle bay, and a third bay (Photograph 7). The windows and two centered dormers have classical hoods matching those of the front and west sides. Two chimney stacks, one brick and one partially stucco-covered, flank the dormers.

The floor plan, typical of many Greek Revival houses, consists of a side stair hall on the west with living areas stacked toward the east and the back. The stair hall and the layout of the formal spaces on the first and second floors substantially remain. The third-floor plan has been altered. Most of the interior's original functional and decorative woodwork remains, including the stairway, mantelpieces, eight-panel doors, casings, baseboards, and cornice moldings. There are also several later 19th-century features and details.

The entry hall contains a curved Greek Revival staircase with a molded mahogany handrail, turned newel post, and simple square balusters (Photographs 8 and 9). The stringer is a raised panel with an applied sawn scroll motif. The new floor of the stair hall and the other formal first floor rooms is of quartered oak laid in a diagonal pattern. The plaster ceiling medallion in this room features four cherubs' heads, stylized fleur-de-lis, flowers of anemone, narcissus and violets, and acanthus leaves. The front parlor to the east has the lower tripartite bay windows on the east wall, a coved ceiling, and an oval ceiling medallion in addition to original door, window, and cornice moldings.

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The second-story chambers retain much of their similar but simpler versions of these Greek Revival and Victorian finishings, including an original mantelpiece in one of the bedrooms. The third story was entirely gutted in 1985. This floor had no significant original architectural detail.

The property as it appeared in 1916 remains almost perfectly intact. The design of the recent rehabilitation preserved all those interior and exterior architectural features and details that contribute to the building's historic and architectural significance.

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

Criteria A and C

Specific dates 1839-1916 **Builder/Architect** Peyton Randolph Bishop, builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Peyton R. Bishop house is historically and architecturally significant as one of the few well-preserved residences remaining from the 19th-century Golden Hill neighborhood in Bridgeport, Connecticut (Criterion C). The house is also a notable example of a professional's residence remaining from the first period of the incorporated city's development, and is allegedly the oldest brick dwelling in Bridgeport's urban core (Criteria A & C). As were most Golden Hill residences, the Peyton R. Bishop house was owned successively by men prominent in the city's 19th-century industrial, commercial, and political history. The house is also important for its Second Empire and Queen Anne style architectural modifications which reflect the changing tastes of Bridgeport society and are symbolic of the historic owners' desires to keep pace stylistically with the fashionable ongoing residential development of the neighborhood (Criteria A and C).

By 1836, the year building contractor Peyton Randolph Bishop (1810-1886) moved to Bridgeport from Guilford, Connecticut, Bridgeport was a rapidly developing industrial and transportation center with a population of approximately 4,000. Situated on Long Island Sound and within a day's shipping distance from New York City, the newly-incorporated city was engaged in the planning of a rail link inland to New Milford, a farming and mineral-producing town 40 miles north. The construction of the railroad line between 1837 and 1840 drew hundreds of workers, many immigrant Irish, to Bridgeport.

Bishop's acquaintance with the area of Golden Hill may have begun when he was awarded the position of prime contractor for the construction of a railroad workers' housing complex on the north and east slopes of the hill.¹ By 1839, the year Bishop erected his own house on Washington Street atop Golden Hill, this section and the south and west slopes constituted a small, newly established residential enclave of middle- and upper-class professionals. The west slope of Golden Hill, previously farmland, had recently been purchased and subdivided for house lots by Lemuel Coleman (Figure 2). Coleman, who later superintended the construction of the Fairfield County Courthouse and was lauded in the Bridgeport Standard as "a man of fine taste, especially in architecture, as many of our buildings, both public and private, testify",² built his own Greek Revival house (now severely altered) at 309 Washington Street in 1836.

Other early residents of the Golden Hill subdivision were two men involved in the construction of the new rail line to New Milford. Alfred Bishop, a cousin of Peyton, who had supervised the construction of the Morris Canal connecting Philadelphia with Newark and New York City, and Daniel Thatcher, a "wealthy Philadelphian"³ and developer of a large carpet mill and associated workers' housing in Bridgeport,⁴ built Greek Revival houses on Golden Hill Street.⁵

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .228

Quadrangle name Bridgeport

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	5	1	1	3	0	4	5	5	9	7	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries of the nominated property are described in Bridgeport Land Records Vol. 1797 page 343. The nominated property includes that rectangular parcel of land which is historically associated with the Peyton R. Bishop house (Figure 1).

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 Alison Gilchrist and Charles W. Brilvitch, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization 135 Washington Avenue Associates, Inc. date October 1986

street & number P.O. Box 387 telephone 567-8309

city or town Washington Depot, state Connecticut

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

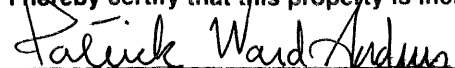
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date April 13, 1987

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

 date 8/25/87
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration

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The Peyton R. Bishop house is historically and architecturally significant as one of the few residences of this once-fashionable neighborhood remaining intact, and as the allegedly only brick dwelling dating from the Greek Revival period in Bridgeport's urban core.⁶ The city's relatively late incorporation in 1836 may have delayed the construction of masonry houses during the earlier Greek Revival period, while ensuing development was already beginning to incorporate elements of the Gothic Revival and Italianate styles.⁷ It is possible, then, that the Peyton R. Bishop house was one of the relatively few brick dwellings constructed in Bridgeport during the Greek Revival period.⁸

The several remodelings of the Peyton R. Bishop house are significant as symbols of the changing trends in 19th-century taste, and of the owners' desires during that period to maintain in the appearance of their residences a stylish public image. The issue of style became especially pervasive after 1845 with the development of the mass production of construction materials and more efficient building techniques, allowing the architect or builder greater freedom to create the eclectic and picturesque architecture which had come into vogue. The intensification of Bridgeport's importance as a manufacturing and transportation center also during this period created the economic conditions conducive to upper-middle and upper-class residential development.

Golden Hill's 80-foot elevation, commanding views of the city and Long Island Sound, provided wealthier Bridgeport society with a setting suited to the time's romantic attitude toward nature and the landscape. Many of the Golden Hill lots were purchased by people of sophistication and means able to hire the architect Alexander Jackson Davis to design their houses. By 1848, many high-style residences had been built in the vicinity of the Peyton Bishop house, including the Henry K. Harral house (demolished) designed in 1845 by A.J. Davis and renowned as an early and outstanding example of the Gothic Revival mode. Another of these is the Billings-Bishop house (359 Washington Avenue) built in 1848, one of the best examples of the Italianate Villa style surviving in Bridgeport. These large and elaborate residences were built and occupied, respectively, by a wealthy leather dealer and a prominent physician.

Like other Golden Hill residents, the owners of the Peyton R. Bishop house had prospered from the city's physical and industrial growth. The additions of the mansard roof, creating a third story, a mansard-roofed rear addition, and classical drip hoods above the windows were probably carried out soon after the sale of the house by its second owner, Henry W. Chatfield, later a president of the Bridgeport Fire and Marine Insurance Company, to Philo Hurd Skidmore in 1864. Skidmore was owner of the Pacific Iron Works in Bridgeport, a "leading industry of the city... (and) in that line of.¹⁰ (the) stationary engine and boiler manufacturing... business throughout the world. Given his status as a leading business man and the fashionable ongoing residential construction in the neighborhood, Skidmore might well have felt pressure to make his own house appear larger and more modern. His mansard roof and classical detailing are among Bridgeport's few remnants of the short-lived Second Empire style.

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When Skidmore transferred ownership of the house to his son, Philo, Jr., twenty years later, the city of Bridgeport was in the grips of the Queen Anne rage. It was probably during the last decade of the century that Philo Jr., who had succeeded his father as owner of the Iron Works, added the transitional Queen Anne-Colonial Revival-style front porch (possibly replacing an original Greek Revival porch and doorway), the Queen Anne-style mahogany living-room mantelpiece, and other interior details, such as the oval ceiling medallions and cornices.

The next owner of the property was Eugene Birmingham, Bridgeport's Superintendent of Police. He and his family lived there from 1910 until his death six years later. Birmingham did not make any apparent alterations to the house. By the 1920's, the demand for housing created by the surging immigrant labor population in Bridgeport, and the migration of Golden Hill residents to newer, more fashionable neighborhoods had brought about the subdivision, rental, or replacement of many of Golden Hill's large houses and the construction of new apartment buildings nearby. The Peyton R. Bishop house became a rooming house. Having survived five decades later the clearance of several blocks of houses in the center of Golden Hill for the construction of Route 8, the Peyton R. Bishop house remains a significant architectural record of Golden Hill's 19th-century social history and physical evolution.

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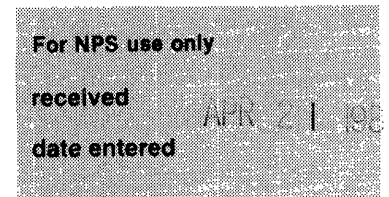
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End Notes:

1. According to William Whitney Cone, author of Descendants of John Bishop (1951), Peyton Randolph Bishop "built many fine buildings which now adorn Bridgeport."
2. Obituary of Lemuel Coleman, The Bridgeport Standard, August 6, 1864.
3. Obituary of Daniel Thatcher, Ibid, October 31, 1867.
4. Charles W. Brilvitch, Bridgeport Historian.
5. Ibid.
6. Brilvitch; Paul Loether, Survey Director, Bridgeport Central Business District Historic Resources Inventory; Edward Mohlyowski, Survey Director, Historical and Architectural Resources Survey of Bridgeport - Phase 2 (ongoing).
7. P.T. Barnum's own residence in Bridgeport, "Iranistan" (demolished), a large and extraordinarily ornate Indian and Moorish style mansion built in 1845, probably influenced the relatively early demise of the Greek Revival, and encouraged the trend thereafter of the picturesque in Bridgeport architecture.
8. Loether, Op. Cit.
9. Brilvitch.
10. Obituary of Philo H. Skidmore, The Bridgeport Post, March 12, 1902.

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Major Bibliographical References:

(Historical research by Charles W. Brilvitch)

Bridgeport City Directories, 1855-1970.

City of Bridgeport Common Council Minutes, 1836-1850.

Map and Atlas collection, Historical Collections, Bridgeport Public Library.

News and Clipping File, Historical Collections, Bridgeport Public Library.

Interviews (by Alison Gilchrist)

September 22 and 29, 1986: Paul Loether, Survey Director, Bridgeport Central Business District Historic Resources Inventory.

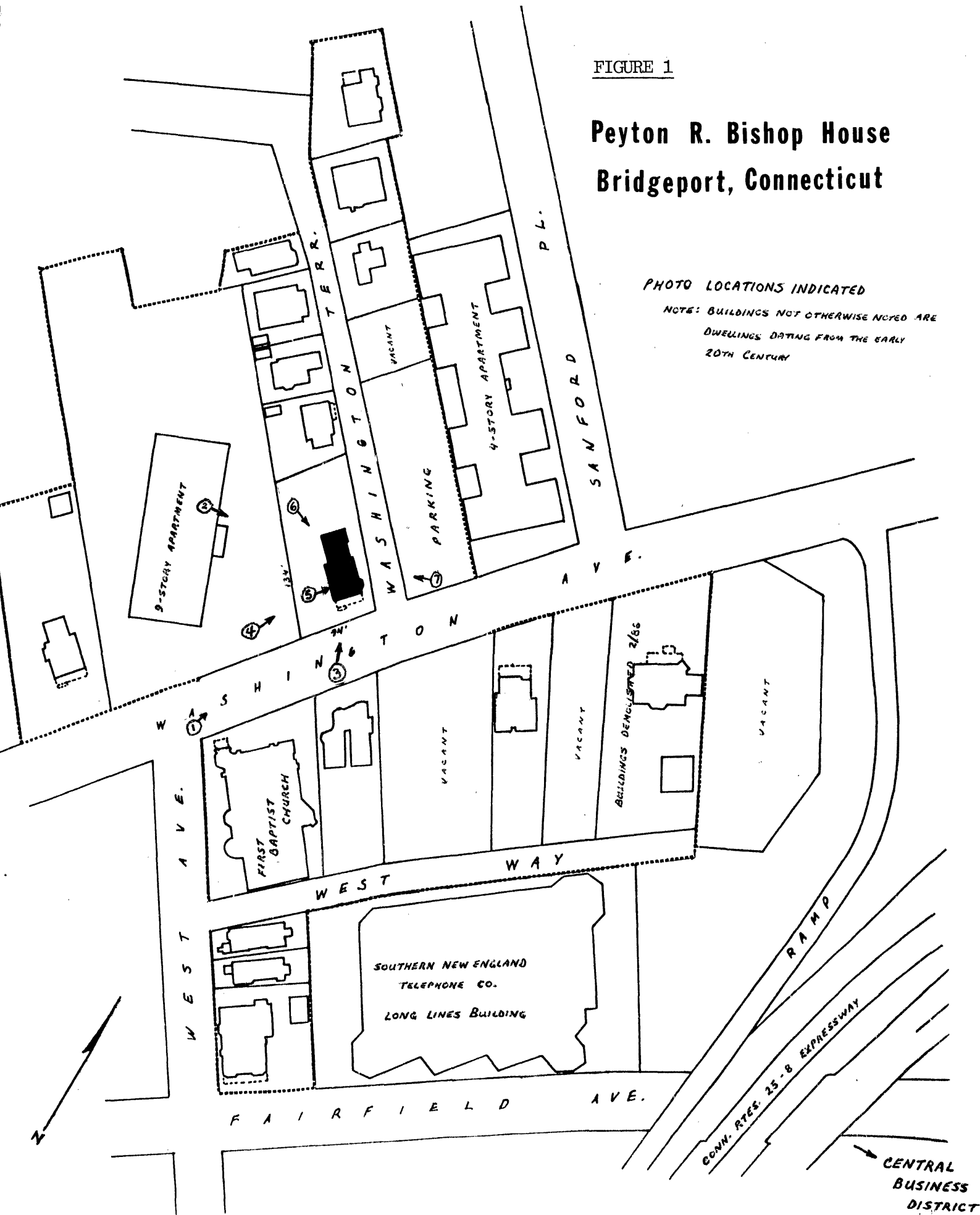
September 24, 1986: Edward Mohlyowski, Survey Director, Historic and Architectural Resources Survey of Bridgeport - Phase 2.

FIGURE 1

Peyton R. Bishop House Bridgeport, Connecticut

PHOTO LOCATIONS INDICATED

NOTE: BUILDINGS NOT OTHERWISE NOTED ARE
DWELLINGS DATING FROM THE EARLY
20TH CENTURY



1" = 100'

NO 21 1967

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