

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Historic Resources of Asylum Hill  
Hartford, Connecticut

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Description:

Laurel and Imlay Streets, running north-south, form the center of this district. The district is bounded westerly by the rear property lines along Laurel Street, southerly by Hawthorn Street and easterly by Sigourney Street and Imlay Street's eastern rear property lines. Both Laurel and Imlay Streets were laid out as part of John Hooker's and Francis Gillette's original Nook Farm development. In contrast to the spacious lots which mark the western half of the area, included in the Nook Farm-Woodland district, the Imlay-Laurel portion of Nook Farm developed as closely spaced middle income housing.

Asylum Hill and Nook Farm initially attracted Hartford's wealthier residents who sought the space and picturesque atmosphere Hartford's older residential neighborhoods could no longer provide. So it is that Forest Street, despite later construction, retains much of its original spacious character. Later though, as Farmington Avenue began to develop as a commercial area, Laurel and Imlay Streets witnessed increasingly dense residential construction. Whereas, in 1869, just after the streets were accepted by the city of Hartford, only seven houses dotted the two block section, by 1880, there were eighteen houses on Laurel, Imlay, and Sigourney, and, sixteen years later, in 1896, the area had peaked at a density of eighty-three buildings.

Rapid development of Imlay, Laurel and Sigourney Streets from 1880 to 1896 occurred at a time when Nook Farm's prestige as an enclave of Hartford's wealthy literati had begun to wane. Thus, though a part of the Imlay farm, Imlay-Laurel records a very different evolution from that of Nook Farm, of a later and more thoroughly middle class tone. Today, shifting demographics and demolition have left twenty-six contemporaneous structures interspersed with seven 1960's multiple unit apartment buildings. Of the fifteen houses on Sigourney Street in 1896, only a fifth remain.

As elsewhere in Hartford, brick construction predominates in the Imlay-Laurel Streets district. Two solid Italianate double houses side by side at 36-38 and 44-46 Imlay Street represent the only remaining examples of that popular Hartford idiom in the district. Identical twins save for their porch detail, the two are brick, four bays wide, three stories tall with broad horizontality. Squat round-head windows at the third floor (the right two windows at 36-38 have been replaced by conventional square sash) are repeated on the second floor's central two bays. All sash are topped by heavy ashlar lintels or surrounds. Of particular note is the porch treatment at 36-38. Here the porch

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piers and brackets are elaborate sawn wood rather than the restrained classical square piers found on the porch at 44-46. Both of these houses appear on the 1869 street atlas and were probably constructed shortly after the Hooker-Gillette transaction was completed, ca. 1855. Across the street, 57 Imlay, an Italianate single family of somewhat later construction (ca. 1860) displays greater verticality and elegance in the portico with its sawn wood brackets. Three bays wide, the brick building resembles many of Hartford's remaining simple Italianate houses, though it is the only example within the Imlay-Laurel district.

Otherwise, the structures in the district display the varied and evolving motifs of the Queen Anne style. Encapsuled on Laurel Street are a variety of Queen Anne houses. 23248 Laurel is a transitional Italianate/Queen Anne house, which even includes certain Gothic details. Highly vertical with a gable roofline, the house is ornamented with paired brackets at the roof, incised ashlar lintels and a particularly elaborate veranda. Turned wood balusters, turned wood spool details arranged in a sunburst motif on the porch gable, and sawn wood trim along the porch roof line decorate the L-shaped porch of this eclectic house. It retains its slate roof.

A more restrained Queen Anne two family house stands at 236-238 Laurel. Here, detail is worked into the brick walls of the house rather than applied to their surface. A double bay, two stories tall, topped by a dormer gable, exhibits a common decorative scheme in the district. Radiating out from the two windows of the bay is a "lintel" of angled bricks which form a subtle sunburst. This sunburst effect can be seen in several other houses in the district and is particularly ornamental at 63 and 65 Imlay Street where it is combined with a band of stained glass in the window below.

Another later Queen Anne at 217 combines shingling on the second floor and in the gable with brick below. Rippled shingles in the gable form the sole ornament. A similar brick and shingle two family at 214-216 Laurel adds a Colonial Revival porch with clustered columns and pediment on the second floor. The brick first floor and a high foundation of rough faced stone contribute to give a strong horizontality to the house.

205 and 207 Laurel are both early wood frame Queen Annes. 207 survives with a full complement of outbuildings, a barn with cupola and two sheds still standing to the rear of the property, and is the plainer of the two. Of particular interest is the porch on 205. Here a battery of

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of turned and sawn wood trim forms an almost Eastlavian veranda. The curved L of the porch softens the linearity of the house. Again, a sunburst motif is formed by turned spools, but here, a cluster of sunbursts ornament the porch gable, along with small carved floral plaques and a scalloped, lace-like edging along the porch roof line.

At 204 and 202 Laurel, two identical wooden Queen Annes, one aluminum sided and the other in relatively unaltered state, testify to speculative interests at work. An exuberant scallop shell bas relief carving in the porch pediment and scalloped porch brackets decorate 202. Next door, 196-194 and 188-186 are the surviving pair of four wood frame Queen Annes built on speculation. Inexpensively constructed, the two stand unadorned on the corner of Laurel and Hawthorn.

Around the corner on Imlay Street, the terrain rises slightly and construction becomes uniformly brick. A cluster of related brick Queen Anne apartment units stand at the corner to the south-east of Imlay and Hawthorn. Several variations on a basic three story structure with projecting bay exist at 24-26 Imlay and 10-12 and 14-16 Hawthorn. All are flat-roofed with modest turned wood porches and string coursing of projecting angled brick.

Several apartment buildings (ca. 1900) with classical detail exist at 15, a brick three story unit with a massive two story porch and swagged cornice, and 20-22. A brick double structure whose three stories anticipate triple decker construction. The facade at 20-22 is dominated by a three story porch with pediment. Modern apartment buildings intrude at 27 and 33. 35 Imlay is a brick and shingle Queen Anne, 2½ stories tall with much ornamental detail. The similarly styled stable survives to the rear. An early twentieth century Georgian Revival apartment complex of three buildings stands at 45 and another at 61. 63 and 65 Imlay are two similar Queen Annes, again with decorative brick string coursing and the sunburst of angled bricks radiating from the stained glass windows.

One of the three surviving structures on Sigourney Street south of Farmington, 47 Sigourney is a modest Queen Anne brick house with a slate roof, decorative brick string coursing and Georgian porch, appended at a later date. An indication of the original porch can be gained by examining the detail at the gable edge of the roofline where exuberant wood turning still exists. Another, 83-85, an Italianate double is inventoried separately.

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Significance:

Although a part of the Nook Farm development, the Imlay-Laurel Streets district documents the life style of Hartford's growing middle class. Within the confines of Nook Farm, the elite and the bourgeoisie co-existed in a milieu both picturesque and cosmopolitan. In the Imlay-Laurel district, the middle class ideals of comfort and space find expression in the numerous Queen Anne dwellings there.

The location of the American Asylum for the Deaf nearby on Asylum Avenue provided impetus for the early development of Imlay and Laurel Streets. One of Imlay Street's earliest residents was the Reverend John Keep, a teacher at the Asylum. His house at 57 stands. Later, the growth of a commercial "strip" along Farmington Avenue supported and was supported by residents of the Imlay-Laurel district. Several local grocers made their homes on Imlay Street as did William B. Smith, a Hartford horse-shoer who lived at 35. The houses of enterprising citizens indicate something of their shared ideals. Though far from articulate, standards of bourgeois comfort, family living and leisure time were evolving for the middle classes. These standards began to be reflected in changing modes of domestic architecture. Symmetry and formalized living spaces began to give way to a more organic flow of rooms to suit the demands of a bourgeois existence. The Queen Anne house, with its asymmetrical and irregular massing, anticipated the day when form would follow function.

The people living in Imlay-Laurel were not the avant garde; their houses reflect their economic limits in the relative simplicity of their structural components. Yet in another real sense, many of those living in the district were prototypical suburbanites. Following their wealthier neighbors, they left the old center city for the greener pastures of less developed reaches. During the most intense period of the Imlay-Laurel Streets development, from 1880 to 1896, Asylum Hill retained much of its fashionable tone and prestige as a desirable neighborhood in which to live, even though some of the wealthiest of its residents had begun to move elsewhere.

In contrast to the more severe Italianate houses they had once occupied in Hartford's older residential neighborhoods, the brick and wood houses these fledgling suburbanites built reflect a greater plasticity of detail. Flat brick surfaces here are interrupted by jagged string courses, or appear at ground level surmounted by shingled second stories. Ashlar lintels are incised rather than smooth; brick lintels are often angled in a radiating pattern or laid unevenly

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replicating string coursing. In later houses, massive rough-hewn stone lintels begin to appear. Everywhere an exuberant variety of detail surfaces. A number of intricately crafted turned and sawn wood porches in the district are particularly notable.

Thus, the Imlay-Laurel Streets District records the ambience of middle class life at the end of the nineteenth century. It preserves a group of highly crafted and varied residential structures in the Queen Anne style. Another period in the Nook Farm development is documented in Imlay-Laurel. Nook Farm's early significance as a literary enclave is established; no less a part of the area's history is its later growth as a desirable middle class residential neighborhood.

Geographical Data:

Acreage of nominated property:

Quadrangle name: Hartford North

UTM references:

- A. 18/692540/4626280
- B. 18/692480/4626260
- C. 18/692320/4626140
- D. 18/692450/4626000
- E. 18/692580/4625920
- F. 18/692740/4626000
- G. 18/692680/4626120

Verbal Boundary Description: Beginning at 217 Laurel Street, the line proceeds south to 205 Laurel, crosses east to 186 Laurel to include its borders, east along Hawthorn Street and then north to the southern property line of 15 Imlay Street. From there, the boundary crosses Imlay Street to the southern property line of 12 Imlay, then south to Hawthorn and proceeds east and north on Sigourney to the northern property line of 47 Sigourney. The boundary then runs west and then north to include the property lines of 44-46 Imlay. Then, crossing Imlay, the boundary follows the northern and western lines of 57 Imlay and proceeds south to the northern boundary of 248 Laurel. There it crosses Laurel Street, continuing south to include the property lines of 217 Laurel Street.

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Imlay-Laurel

Imlay Street-

08-10	Aetna Life and Casualty Inc	151 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
NC11	" " " "	" " " "
12-14	" " " "	" " " "
15	Gertrude M. Cole	same
16-18	Aetna Life and Casualty Inc.	151 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
20-22	Mary Bobinski/Chester Bobinski, Exec.	22 Imlay Street, Hartford
21	Helen S. Garabedian	same
24-26	Aetna Life and Casualty Inc.	151 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
NC25-27	George A. Silvester, Trustee, and Paul Panebianco	5 Ronald Drive, Cromwell, CT
28	Aetna Life and Casualty Inc.	151 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
32	" " " "	" " " "
NC33	Edith B. Schatz	2 Candlewood Dr., W. Hartford
35	Gerald N. Smith	815 Mountain Road, W. Hartford
36-38	Aetna Life and Casualty, Inc.	151 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
NC39	Israel Grody and Frank Novick	799 Prospect Ave., Apt. B1, WH
42-46	Aetna Life and Casualty Inc.	151 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
45-47	Surob Apartments Inc/Gerald N. Smith	815 Mountain Rd., W. Htfd.
50	Aetna Life and Casualty Inc.	151 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
51-53	Pauline Weinstein-B.T. Linwood Realty Co.	99 Pratt Street, Hartford
52	Aetna Life and Casualty Inc.	151 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
55	Louis Weinstein	99 Pratt Street, Hartford
57	John H. Zele and Arthur W. Forte	same
58	Aetna Life and Casualty Inc.	151 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
61	Harry Hyman/George S. Hyman, Atty.	1 Constitution Plaza, Hartford

Laurel Street-

205	Acorn Realty Co. Inc./Laurel Beef	160 South Marshall St., Hartfor
207	" " " " " "	" " " " " "
217	Eugene Volpi, Jr. and Jean A. Volpi	same
186-188	Louis Garzone, Trustee	110 Back Lane, Wethersfield, CT
194-196	Sylvio Vaillancourt	same
202	Sylvio J. Vaillancourt	same
NC212	Israel Grody and Frank Novick	799 Prospect Ave., Apt.B1, WH
215	Arrow Hart Inc	103 Hawthorn Street, Hartford
216	Lucienne and Aime Ruel	206 Laurel Street, Hartford
206-204	" " " "	" " " "
NC218	Hartford Home Savings and Loan	108 Farmington Avenue, Hartford
236-238	Thomas S. II and Cynthia A. Purrington	33 Brown Street, Hartford

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NC 240	Herbert L. Tisler	79 Sumner Street, Hartford
NC 246	Harry S. Melnick	160 Steele Road, W. Hartford
248	Frances Chofre	same
Hawthorn Street-		
10-12	Clifford J. and Mary M. Lavoie	12 Hawthorn Street, Hartford
14-16	Patrick C. and Jennie A. Camerato	14 Hawthorn Street, Hartford
Sigourney Street-		
47	Sarah Hoffman Est/Alan Greenwood, Adm.	same

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### Errata

The Imlay-Laurel Street Verbal Boundary description, Accompanying Documentation, Page 33, should read as follows:

Starting at the northwest corner of 217 Laurel Street, the line proceeds east to Laurel Street, north on Laurel Street to the northwest corner of 248 Laurel Street, east along its northern boundary, north to the northwest corner of 61 Imlay Street, east along its northern border, south along Imlay Street, east along the northern border of 44-46 Imlay Street, south along the rear property lines to the northwest corner of 47 Sigourney Street, and east along its northern border to Sigourney Street. The line then runs south and west along Sigourney and Hawthorn Street to the corner of Imlay and Hawthorn, and across Imlay to the southeast corner of 15 Imlay Street, then east to the northeast corner of 204 Laurel Street, south along the rear property lines of the Laurel Street houses to Hawthorn Street, west on Hawthorn Street, north on Laurel Street, east on the south border of 205 Laurel Street, west, north and east along the boundaries of 207 Laurel Street back to Laurel Street, north on Laurel Street, west on the southern line of 215 Laurel Street, and north on the rear property lines of 215 and 217 Laurel Street to the point of beginning. The map should be corrected to reflect this if it does not.

One change should be made on the verbal boundary description to the Laurel-Marshall Streets district, Accompanying Documentation, page 20. The words on line 2, "east border of 362 Laurel Street" should be changed to "southeast corner of 47 Niles Street." The map is correct.