NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY — NOMINATION FORM

(TYPE ALL ENTRIES — COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS)

1. NAME

COMMON:
Wadsworth Atheneum

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Wadsworth Atheneum

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
25 Atheneum Square, North

CITY OR TOWN:
Hartford

STATE:
Connecticut

CODE:
06

COUNTY:
Hartford

CODE:
003

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (CHECK ONE)

District
Site
Object

Ownership

Public
Private
Both

Public Acquisition:

In Process
Being Considered

STATUS

Occupied
Unoccupied

Preservation work in progress

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC

Yes:

Restricted

No:

Unrestricted

PRESENT USE (CHECK ONE OR MORE AS APPROPRIATE)

Agricultural

Commercial

Educational

Entertainment

Government

Industrial

Military

Private Residence

Religious

Museum

Scientific

Transportation

Other (Specify)

Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME:
Board of Trustees — Hugh Campbell, President

Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company

1 American Row

CITY OR TOWN:
Hartford

STATE:
Connecticut

CODE:
06

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Municipal Building

STREET AND NUMBER:
550 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Hartford

STATE:
Connecticut

CODE:
06

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:
2

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Connecticut Historic Structures & Landmarks Survey

DATE OF SURVEY:
1969

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Connecticut Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
75 Elm Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Hartford

STATE:
Connecticut

CODE:
06
The building was begun in April, 1842, and completed in the most thorough manner in July, 1844. It was designed by Ithiel Town, of New Haven, in the castellated Gothic style. The material employed is a cream-colored granite, obtained from Glastonbury. The central section is eighty feet in depth, the wings seventy, and the whole frontage is one hundred feet. The cost was nearly $35,000.

Memorial History of Hartford County, 1886

The Atheneum was this nation's first free art museum, thanks to the large fortune of Hartford's first great merchant, Jeremiah Wadsworth. Its original portion built in 1842, the Wadsworth today is among the ten best art museums in the country. Its wealth of art treasures, colonial furniture, and painting of all periods, its 65 galleries of permanent displays and its rotating exhibits are free to public viewing.


The building was reopened to the public early in 1969 after a renovation of the interior that left only the 1842 facade and adjacent side walls standing, and greatly expanded available space to the rear.
In the year 1841 Daniel Wadsworth, having conceived the idea of founding a gallery of the fine arts in Hartford, took steps for carrying it into effect by placing in the hands of trustees his valuable lot of land on Main Street for that purpose. His gift was conditioned upon the formation of an association and the erection by it of a suitable building to contain the proposed art-gallery, and at the same time to furnish rooms for the uses of the Connecticut Historical Society and the Hartford Young Men’s Institute. In accordance with these terms a subscription was at once set on foot to raise the required money, and over $30,000 was soon subscribed, Mr. Wadsworth himself being the first and largest subscriber in the sum of $4,000, which he subsequently increased to $6,500. The subscribers obtained an act of incorporation (approved June 1, 1842), and organized as a stock concern, under the name of Wadsworth Atheneum, with two classes of shares, those of $100, which were transferable, and those of $25, conferring a life interest simply. Following the plan marked out by Mr. Wadsworth in his original proposition, a building was erected in three principal divisions, the central one for the proposed art-gallery, and the north and south wings for the Young Men’s Institute and the Connecticut Historical Society respectively. The latter Society was also to provide a room in its portion of the building for the Natural History Society of Hartford, then in a flourishing condition, so that under the same roof art, literature, and science should be cultivated.

Memorial History of Hartford County, 1886

Daniel Wadsworth was born in Hartford, and in early life married Faith Trumbull, daughter of Gov. Jonathan Trumbull, of Connecticut. From childhood Daniel Wadsworth had delicate health. He possessed great wealth, being probably the wealthiest man of his day in Connecticut, was generous, and gave liberally to all good purposes, using his estate as though it was a gift of Providence. He did much for the growth and prosperity of Hartford. The Wadsworth Atheneum, on Main and Atheneum Streets, is a lasting monument of his desire to promote library and institute objects. He gave the ground, valued at $20,000, on which the Atheneum building stands, for that purpose, it being the site of his birthplace and the family home.

(continued)
### 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY**

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<tr>
<th>CORNER</th>
<th>LATITUDE</th>
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**LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE**

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<th>LATITUDE</th>
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<tr>
<td>41° 45' 48&quot;</td>
<td>72° 40' 26&quot;</td>
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**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
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### 11. FORM PREPARED BY

**NAME AND TITLE:**
Herbert C. Darbee, Associate Director

**ORGANIZATION:**
Connecticut Historical Commission

**STREET AND NUMBER:**
75 Elm Street

**CITY OR TOWN:**
Hartford

**STATE:**
Connecticut

**DATE:**
August 25, 1969

### 12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

- National [X]
- State [ ]
- Local [ ]

**Name:**
Eric Hatch

**Title:**
State Liaison Officer and Chairman, Conn. Historical Comm.

**Date:**
August 25, 1969

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

**Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation**

**Date:**
October 23, 1969

**ATTEST:**
William C. Woodworth

**Keeper of The National Register**

**Date:**
August 24, 1970
for three generations. He also contributed largely to the building. He died in 1848, and his wife passed away in 1846. Commenorative Biographical Record of Hartford County, Connecticut, 1901
Latitude 41° 45' 53"  
longitude 72° 40' 31"