STATE OF CONNECTICUT
CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(203) 566-3005
HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM
For Buildings and Structures

IDENTIFICATION
1. BUILDING NAME: Common: Religious Studies Center Historic: Butler House
2. TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: ____________________________ COUNTY: Middlesex
3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 171 Church Street
4. OWNER(S): Wesleyan University ____________________________ PUBLIC ___ PRIVATE ___
5. USE: Present: Offices Historic: Residence
6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: X yes no Interior accessible: X yes, explain with occupant's permission no

DESCRIPTION
7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Prairie style influence DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: Probably c. 1872, remodelled c. 1917
8. MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
   ___________ clapboard ___________ asbestos siding
   ___________ wood shingle ___________ asphalt siding
   ___________ board & batten ___________ stucco
   ___________ aluminum siding ___________ concrete: type: poured steps and porches
   ___________ other: brick
   ___________ other: fieldstone
   ___________ other: cobblestone
   ___________ other: cut stone: type: appears to be brownstone foundation under stucco
9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
   ___________ wood frame: ___ post and beam ___ balloon
   ___________ structural iron or steel
   ___________ other: load bearing masonry
10. ROOF: type:
    ___________ gable ___________ flat ___________ mansard ___________ monitor ___________ sawtooth
    ___________ gambrel ___________ shed ___________ hip ___________ round X other: rounded, at eaves
    ___________ material: wood shingle
    ___________ roll asphalt
    ___________ asphalt shingle built up
    ___________ other:
11. NUMBER OF STORIES: 2½ APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 49'x30'; rear ell, 26'x26'
12. CONDITION: Structural: X excellent ___________ X good ___________ fair ___________ deteriorated
    Exterior: ___________ excellent ___________ X good ___________ fair ___________ deteriorated
13. INTEGRITY: Location: X on original site Added styling features: tiles, slate roof, stuccoing.
    Alterations: no X yes, explain: X poured concrete porches; interior alterations to plan
14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
    ___________ barn ___________ shed ___________ garage
    ___________ carriage house ___________ shop ___________ other landscape features or buildings:
15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
    ___________ open land ___________ woodlands X residential ___________ scattered buildings visible from site
    ___________ commercial ___________ industrial ___________ rural ___________ high building density
16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: This large asymmetrical structure occupies a key corner at the intersection of Church and High Streets immediately southeast of the Wesleyan University campus. Its bold decoration, and large mass give additional prominence on a conspicuous site between the campus and residential buildings to the south and east. As a former residence now used for offices, it links the campus to the neighboring residential area.
17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior):
   Inlaid tile lozenge decoration over windows
   Bold paired brackets at eaves
   Belt courses at each floor level
   Recessed oval port-hole vents in west frieze

SIGNIFICANCE
Architect: 
Builder: 

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: 171 Church Street was the home of Dale E. Butler, the founder of Butler's Insurance Agency. It is most likely a conversion (c. 1917) of an earlier house of the Second Empire style constructed c. 1872 by his father, Seth H. Butler. Seth H. Butler was an executive of the First National Bank and the People's Fire Insurance Company.

The house retains the asymmetrical massing of a Victorian building; however, with the possible exception of the brackets of the cornice, it presents an early twentieth century appearance. The masonry walls have been stuccoed; a low hipped roof, reminiscent the Prairie Style, extends over the walls, and inlaid tiles decorate the frieze underneath the eaves. Now adaptively used as the Religious Studies Center of Wesleyan University, this substantial building occupies an important site at the intersection of two major roads, Church and High Streets.

PHOTOGRAPH
photographer: Elizabeth Loomis
date: 12/78 view: northwest
negative on file: Roll 56, #19

COMPILED BY:
name: Roger Sherman date: 9/78
organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
address: 27 Washington St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

19. SOURCES: Middletown Tax Records; Middletown City Directories; 1874 Beers Atlas

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS:

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:
   X none known    highways    vandalism    developers    other:
   renewal    private    deterioration    zoning    explanation: ________________