STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(203) 566-3005

TORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM
For Buildings and Structures

IDENTIFICATION
1. BUILDING NAME: Common: O'Rourke's Diner Historic:

TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: 
COUNTY: Middlesex

3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 728 Main Street

OWNER(S): John J. O'Rourke PUBLIC X PRIVATE

5. USE: Present: Commercial Historic:

ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: X yes no
Interior accessible: X yes, explain public use no

DESCRIPTION
1. STYLE OF BUILDING: Diner; Art Deco detail

2. MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
   - clapboard __ asbestos siding ___
   - wood shingle __ asphalt siding ___
   - board & batten __ stucco ___
   - aluminum siding __ concrete: type: poured
   - X other: stainless steel sheathing foundation

3. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
   - wood frame: __ post and beam ___ balloon
   - load bearing masonry X structural iron or steel
   - other:

4. ROOF: type:
   - gable __ flat ___ mansard __ monitor ___ sawtooth
   - gambrel ___ shed ___ hip ___ round ___ other ___ slightly arched
   - material: __ wood shingle ___ roll asphalt ___ tin ___ slate
   - asphalt shingle ___ built up ___ tile ___ other: painted galvanized steel

1. NUMBER OF STORIES: 1

APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 40' x 16'

12. CONDITION: Structural: X excellent ___ good ___ fair ___ deteriorated
   Exterior: X excellent ___ good ___ fair ___ deteriorated

3. INTEGRITY: Location: X on original site moved, when: 1947
   Alterations: X on original site moved, when: 1947
   X yes, explain: Wooden storm entranceway

4. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
   - barn ___ shed ___ garage ___
   - carriage house ___ shop ___ garden ___ other landscape features or buildings: Street clock
   - moved; predates diner

5. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
   - open land ___ woodland ___ residential ___ scattered buildings visible from site
   - commercial ___ industrial ___ rural ___ high building density

6. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: O'Rourke's Diner sits beside the railroad track at the northern head of Main Street. Its distinctive "railroad car" style is especially appropriate to its site adjacent to the tracks, although its appearance differs markedly from surrounding buildings such as St. John's Church to the north on the square, and the nineteenth century commercial buildings to the south.
17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior):
"Glass brick" doorway lights
Art Deco details in pressed steel sheathing

SIGNIFICANCE
Architect: Builder:

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: There has been a dining car on this site since 1930 when "Pete the Greek" Asvestras moved his lunch wagon here from Rapallo Avenue. In the early and middle 1940's James Dunn ran Dunn's Diner at this spot. One of his workers, John F. O'Rourke, put the current O'Rourke's Diner building in place in 1947. Reportedly the dining car was purchased in New Jersey and shipped to Middletown on a railroad flat car. The late nineteenth century street clock in front of the diner originally stood on Main Street (between Court and College Streets). It was moved to its present location by O'Rourke in 1964.

This long, low building patterned after a railway dining car is a piece of vanishing Americana. The exterior features vertical Art Deco designs in the sheet metal, as well as a neon sign on the facade. Somewhat wider than an actual diner car, the interior accommodates a row of booths on the north side and a counter with pedestal stools on the south. The case and single Corinthian column of the street clock is made of cast iron. The clock no longer gives time.

PHOTOGRAPH
photographer: Elizabeth Loomis
date: 5/78 view: west
negative on file: Roll 25A, #24 (clock, Roll 125, #25 north)

COMPiled BY:
name: Roger Sherman date: 12/77
organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
address: 27 Washington St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

19. SOURCES: Middletown Land Records; Middletown Land Records Map #1275; Middletown City Directory; Statements from owner, John J. O'Rourke, 5/16/78

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS:

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:
X: none known __: highways __: vandalism __: developers __: other:
: renewal __: private __: deterioration __: zoning __: explanation:
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CONTINUATION SHEET
Item number:     Date:    5/90

O’Rourke’s Diner
738 Main Street (formerly #728)
Middletown, CT 06457