STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Historical Commission
South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(203) 566-3005

Historic Resources Inventory Form
for Buildings and Structures

ENTIFICATION

1. BUILDING NAME: Common: National Guard Armory
   Historic: John R. Watkinson House

2. TOWN/CITY: Middletown
   VILLAGE: 
   COUNTY: Middlesex

3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 70 Main Street

4. OWNER(S): State of Connecticut
   X PUBLIC PRIVATE

5. USE: Present: Armory
   Historic: Residence

6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: yes no
   Interior accessible: yes, explain building open to public no

DESCRIPTION

7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Federal
   DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: north wing c. 1810; drill shed and south wing 1921

8. MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
   _x_ brick
   _x_ fieldstone
   _x_ cobblestone
   _x_ cut stone: type: brownstone

9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
   _x_ load bearing masonry
   _x_ structural iron or steel

   material:
   _x_ wood shingle
   _x_ roll asphalt
   _x_ tile

10. ROOF: type:
    _x_ gable
    _x_ shed

    material:
    _x_ asphalt shingle
    _x_ built up

11. NUMBER OF STORIES: 2½
    APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: drill shed 75'x143'

12. CONDITION: Structural:
    _x_ excellent
    _x_ good
    _x_ fair
    _x_ deteriorated

    Exterior:
    _x_ excellent
    _x_ good
    _x_ fair
    _x_ deteriorated

13. INTEGRITY: Location: _x_ on original site _x_ moved, when:
    Alterations: _x_ no _x_ yes, explain: North wing turned to face south; original kitchen

14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
    _x_ barn
    _x_ carriage house

    _x_ shed
    _x_ shop

    _x_ garage
    _x_ garden

    _x_ other landscape features or buildings: Courtyard formed by two wings; iron fence, cannons
    (mortars) in front

15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
    _x_ open land
    _x_ woodland
    _x_ commercial

    _x_ residential
    _x_ rural

    _x_ scattered buildings visible from site

16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: This armory complex is on the east side of Main Street south of William Street. With a courtyard formed by two wings and the connecting facade of the drill shed, it presents a formal arrangement of buildings and grounds atypical of the neighboring commercial structures dating from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior):

Bronze memorial tablets west wall of each wing
Panelled door frame north wing
Entrance porch north wing with flushboarded coved ceiling

SIGNIFICANCE

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: The north wing of this armory was built around 1810 as a residence facing Main Street for John R. Watkinson. Watkinson was a prominent merchant and the founder of a woolen manufactory on the Peamecha River in 1814. A Federal style house of five bays with a center hall, it is nearly identical to the nearby Mather-Mansfield House (151 Main Street) of the same date. In 1836 the house descended to John R. Watkinson, later president of the Middletown National Bank. The property was acquired in 1919 by the State of Connecticut for the purpose of constructing an armory. In an interesting demonstration of adaptive use, the original house was turned on its foundation (minus a rear wing) to face south. An exact duplicate was constructed to face the original, across a court, and the facade of a large drill shed was joined to the east wall of each wing. Although this classical revival facade has coupled full height columns carrying a high and prominent entablature, the use of brick and the continuation of the wing cornices across the facade is sympathetic to the appearance of the wings. Moreover, the details of this facade echo the classically inspired Federal details of the wings.

An archeological excavation of the Watkinson house's original foundation revealed many ceramic artifacts which demonstrated the prosperity of the period when it was built.

PHOTOGRAPH

photographer: Elizabeth Loomis
date: 6/78 view: west
negative on file: Roll 25, #10

COMPILED BY:

name: John E. Reynolds date: 6/78
organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
address: 27 Washington St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

19. SOURCES: Middletown Land Records; Middletown Probate Court Records; History of Middlesex County (Chicago: J.B. Beers, 1884); 1825 Barnum Map; 1851 Clark Map; 1874 Beers Atlas; 1877 Bailey Map; 1915 Aeroview Map

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS:

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:

X none known   highways   vandalism   developers   other: __________________________
renewal   private   deterioration   zoning   explanation: ________________________
John R. Watkinson House
70 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457