STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM
for Buildings and Structures

IDENTIFICATION
1. BUILDING NAME: Common: Old Middlesex Building Historic: Middlesex Mutual Assurance Building
2. TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: COUNTY: Middlesex
3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 179-181 Main Street
4. OWNER(S): City of Middletown _X PUBLIC __PRIVATE
5. USE: Present: Offices of Redevelopment Agency Historic: Offices & Fraternal Hall
6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: _x yes_ no
   Interior accessible: _x yes, explain: publicly owned_ no

DESCRIPTION
7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Renaissance Revival DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1867
8. MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
   _x clapboard_ _asbestos siding_ _brick_ 
   _wood shingle_ _asphalt siding_ _fieldstone_
   _board & batten_ _stucco_ _cobblestone_
   _aluminum siding_ _concrete: type:_ _cut stone: type: brownstone_
   _other:_ _facade & Foundation_
9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
   _wood frame: post and beam_ _balloon_ 
   _load bearing masonry_ _structural iron or steel_
   _other:_
10. ROOF: type:
    _x gable_ _light: flat_ _mansard_ _monitor_ _sawtooth_
    _gambrel: Pitch_ _shed_ _hip_ _round_ _other_
    _material:_ _wood shingle_ _roll asphalt_ _tin_ _slate_ _other:_
    _asphalt shingle_ _built up_ _tile_ _other:_
11. NUMBER OF STORIES: 3½ APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 131' x 50'
12. CONDITION: Structural: _x excellent_ _good_ _fair_ _deteriorated_ 
    Exterior: _x excellent_ _good_ _fair_ _deteriorated_
13. INTEGRITY: Location: _x on original site_ moved, when:
    Alterations: _no_ _x yes, explain: Rear addition 1891; theater addition 1892; store-
14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
    _barn_ _shed_ _garage_ _x other landscape features or buildings: Theater at-
    _carriage house_ _shop_ _garden_ tached to rear of building_
15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
    _open land_ _woodland_ _residential_ _scattered buildings visible from site_
    _commercial_ _industrial_ _rural_ _x high building density_
16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: This three story commercial building faces east from the west side of Main Street on a block of 19th century buildings between College and William Streets. It is sited close to the street with passways on either side. The west side of Main Street in this area is included in a proposed historic district, while the east side is currently undergoing redevelopment.
17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior):

Heavy denticulated cornices
Rusticated pavilion with pediment

SIGNIFICANCE

Builder: Caleb Johnson & D.N. Arnold

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: The Middlesex Mutual Assurance Co. was organized in 1836. It is one of Middletown’s oldest and most firmly established institutions. This building was erected in 1867 to house its offices and provide space for commercial tenants. These included the First National Bank, Farmers & Mechanics Bank, Peoples Fire Insurance Co., and several small businesses. The third floor was rented to fraternal organizations as a meeting hall. In 1891 an addition to the rear was built to accommodate the Southern New England Telephone Co., and a year later a large theater was constructed at the rear of the new addition. (See Survey Form, 109-111 College Street.) The entrance to this theatre was originally through the Middlesex Building from Main Street, and the third floor was converted for use as lounges for theater patrons. Middlesex Mutual Assurance Co. vacated the premises in 1927 when their present building on Court Street was constructed.

This building originally had five entrances from Main Street; a large raised central entrance flanked on either side by a raised and a basement entrance. The large central doorway was distinguished by a heavy pediment supported on elaborate consoles. This Main Street front is now covered by a glass and metal facade on the first floor.

PHOTOGRAPH

photographer: John E. Reynolds
date: 7/78 view: east
negative on file: Roll 29, #10A

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 City Directories; David R. Ransom, National Register Nomination Form, "Metro South National Register District"; Centennial Middlesex Mutual Assurance Co. (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1973); H.F. Donlan, Middletown Tribune; (see continuation

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS: sheet

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:

X none known  highways  vandalism  developers  other:

X renewal  private  deterioration  zoning  explanation:
For many years this Renaissance Revival building was "the pride of the city" due to its high style elegance and prominent tenants. A key architectural element on the block, it is now slated for restoration and rehabilitation.

Souvenir Edition (Middletown: 1896); See also Survey Form, 109-111 College Street, "Middletown Theatre Entrance" (1978)
Middlesex Mutual Assurance Building
179-181 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457