STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM
or Buildings and Structures

IDENTIFICATION

1. BUILDING NAME: Common: Skull and Serpent
   Historic: same

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

3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 16 Wyllys Avenue

4. OWNER(S): Skull and Serpent Senior Society
   PUBLIC X PRIVATE

5. USE: Present: Secret Society
   Historic: same

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

DESCRIPTION

7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Academic Classicism
   DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1914

8. MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
   __clapboard
   __wood shingle
   __board & batten
   __aluminum siding
   __other: wood details

   __asbestos siding
   __asphalt siding
   __stucco
   __concrete: type: 

   __brick
   __fieldstone
   __cobblestone
   __cut stone: type: brownstone
   __rubble walls; ashlar foundation; trim

9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
   __wood frame:
   __post and beam
   __balloon
   __load bearing masonry
   __structural iron or steel
   __other:

10. ROOF: type:
    __gable
    __gambrel
    __shed
    __roll asphalt
    __asphalt shingle
    __built up
    __other:

    __flat
    __hip
    __taper
    __x slate
    __tile
    __other:

11. NUMBER OF STORIES: 1
    APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 22'x40'

12. CONDITION: Structural:
    __excellent
    __good
    __fair
    __deteriorated

    Exterior:
    __x excellent
    __good
    __fair
    __deteriorated

13. INTEGRITY: Location: x on original site moved, when:
    Alterations: no x yes, explain: Interior partially altered

14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
    __barn
    __shed
    __carriage house
    __garage
    __x other landscape features or buildings: college
    __shop
    __garden

15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
    __open land
    __woodland
    __residential
    __scattered buildings visible from site
    __commercial
    __industrial
    __rural
    __high building density

16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: This classically designed temple
    is one of two "secret society" buildings on the Wesleyan University campus. These structures
    are similarly sited on Wyllys Avenue, a quiet side street that joins High Street a short dis-
    tance away. Both have ivy covered walls and resemble small monuments. One of the modern
    Center for the Arts buildings, a larger grey rectangular structure, is situated between these
    two temples.
17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior):

Small wooden portico of the Ionic order: capitals constructed of lignum; full entablature with cresting
Interior contains a fresco portraying "Saint George Slaying the Dragon", Olin Dows (1929)
Plaque beneath the pediment exhibiting the "Skull and Serpent" insignia

SIGNIFICANCE

Architect: Henry Bacon
Builder: Interior, possibly C. O. Stone

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: This small building, built in 1914, is the headquarters of the Skull and Serpent. Founded in 1865, this "secret society" is Wesleyan University's oldest senior honorary organization.

Henry Bacon, whose most prominent work is the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., designed this temple while he was employed as Wesleyan’s campus architect. Skull and Serpent, together with other campus buildings (notably Eclectic 1907, Van Vleck Observatory 1916, Clark Hall 1915), form the highest concentration of Bacon's architecture in the country.

This simple Academic Classicism temple displays a small elaborate portico and a pediment (made of cypress) on the main facade. Two large round-arched windows with Gothic mullions are also featured on opposite sides of the building. These windows, incorporated into the structure's primarily classical design, reflect Bacon's practice of combining various stylistic elements. The interior contains an entrance hall, another device extensively used by Bacon.

Before the recent construction of the Center for the Arts, this building and that of another secret society, the Mystical Seven, stood side by side. These organizations in past years exercised much influence in campus affairs. Their temples, resembling small monuments, evoke a significant aspect of Wesleyan's heritage and traditions.

PHOTOGRAPH
photographer: Roger Sherman
date: 9/78 view: south
negative on file: Roll 31, #36

COMPiled BY:
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date: 7/78
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19. SOURCES: Wesleyan Archives

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS:

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:

- [x] None known
- [ ] Highways
- [ ] Vandalism
- [ ] Developers
- [ ] Other:

- [ ] Renewal
- [ ] Private
- [ ] Deterioration
- [ ] Zoning

EXPLANATION: