



HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

*** Note:** Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) 300 George Street / SNET Building
 Building Name (Historic) Southern New England Telephone (SNET) Company Building
 Street Address or Location 300 George Street
 Town/City New Haven Village _____ County New Haven
 Owner(s) Winstanley Enterprises Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Commercial - Office Building (Biotechnology & Telecommunications)
 Historic Use: Commercial - Office Building (Telephone Company)
 Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No
 Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain During office hours
 Style of building Modernist Date of Construction 1959

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding | <input type="checkbox"/> Brick | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type <u>Limestone</u>) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>Glass, Stainless Steel</u> | | |

Structural System

- Wood Frame Post & Beam Balloon Load bearing masonry Structural iron or steel
 Other _____

Roof (Type)

- Gable Flat Mansard Monitor Sawtooth
 Gambrel Shed Hip Round Other _____

(Material)

- Wood Shingle Roll Asphalt Tin Slate Asphalt Shingle
 Built up Tile Other Rubber Membrane

Number of Stories: 9 Approximate Dimensions 314' x 155' x 132' height; south wing 266' x 66'

Structural Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Exterior Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Location Integrity: On original site Moved When? _____

Alterations? Yes No If yes, explain: Blue-green porcelain enamel exterior altered; renovation 2001

FOR OFFICE USE: Town # _____ Site # _____ UTM _____

District: S NR If NR, Specify: Actual Potential

PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT'D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

- Barn Shed Garage Carriage House Shop Garden
- Other landscape features or buildings: Landscaped yards along street frontage, paved service drives

Surrounding Environment:

- Open land Woodland Residential Commercial Industrial Rural
- High building density Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings: The structure is located at the southwest corner of George and College Streets. It is bordered on the south by the North Frontage Road and the Oak Street Connector. The SNET building is surrounded by several other Modernist structures, including the Air Rights Garage and the Yale Laboratory of Epidemiology and Public Health (located across the Connector and designed by Philip Johnson with Douglas Orr several years later).

• Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*) Rectangular in plan, the building at 300 George Street reads as a solid mass of limestone, glass and steel. The nine stories are unified by vertical corner piers of sand-colored limestone that grace the north and south facades, rising from the ground up, visually anchoring the building. In between the limestone, thin steel fins soaring vertically support glass and porcelainized steel spandrel panels, lending an air of modernity to the otherwise-traditional structure. On the exterior, each floor reads as two rows of panels - one alternating between glass and steel, the next a continuous line of steel panels. The top floor stands apart due to the placement of three consecutive glass panels separated by one steel panel. This change draws the eye upward and acts as an abstracted cornice. The porcelainized steel panels, originally blue-green, provided a playfulness to the building. A 2-story rectangular wing is attached on the south, and entrance canopies are located to the north and east. A mechanical penthouse projects above the roof.

Architect Douglas W. Orr & R.W. Foote Builder Edwin Moss and Son, Inc., Bridgeport CT

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:

Brown, Elizabeth Mills, *A Guide to Architecture & Urban Design*, Yale U. Press, New Haven, 1976.
 Carley, Rachel D., *Tomorrow is Here: New Haven and the Modern Movement*, (Privately printed by the New Haven Preservation Trust, New Haven CT) June, 2008.
 New Haven Tax Assessor's Record: Map/Block/Parcel: 262/0203/001, Building Department permit files.
 See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock Date 1/29/2010

View Multiple Views Negative on File NHPT

Name Julie Rosen Date 7/15/10

Organization The New Haven Preservation Trust

Address 934 State Street, P.O. Box 1671, New Haven, CT 06507

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Threats to the building or site:

- None known Highways Vandalism Developers Renewal Private
- Deterioration Zoning Other _____ Explanation _____

- Historical or Architectural importance:

Douglas Orr (1892-1966), a prominent New Haven-based architect, practiced in many architectural styles throughout his career, always adapting himself to the latest trends. He served as President of the American Institute of Architects (1947-1949), and “left a stronger architectural imprint on commercial, social, and religious New Haven than any man since Henry Austin.” (Wiedersheim, p. 3) Trained in Beaux Arts architectural principles at Yale, Orr became known for his Colonial Revival designs in the 1920s and for his Art Deco work in the 1930s. By the 1950s much of his work was based on a Modernist philosophy although he continued to work in Colonial Revival styles throughout his career. Orr’s firm worked with a number of out-of-state architects including Louis Kahn and Philip Johnson, functioning as the Architect of Record for prominent structures sponsored by Yale University and the New Haven Redevelopment Agency.

Between 1927 and 1960, Orr designed more than 100 buildings in Connecticut for the Southern New England Telephone Company (SNET), including the structure at 300 George Street and an Art Deco skyscraper on Church Street (1938, also designed with R.W. Foote). In 1957, SNET, the oldest telephone company in the world, decided to build a new office building on the newly-constructed Oak Street Connector. The Connector was originally anticipated to be “an avenue of Modern architecture from one end of the city to the other.”

The SNET building was jokingly referred to as the "Jolly Green Giant" in Orr's office due to the blue-green porcelainized steel panels that once graced the building's facades. At a cost of \$12 million, Orr's SNET building was the most expensive building project undertaken in New Haven since Yale's Sterling Memorial Library was constructed in 1927. It is an early and dramatic example of the use of a curtain wall, a light-weight non-structural cladding enclosing the structural frame, which became a frequent feature of Modernist office buildings.

- Sources (*continuation*):

Winstanley Enterprises, 300 George Street New Haven, CT, http://www.winent.com/cl_ptbiotech_300george.html

Wiedersheim, William A. *Journal of The New Haven Colony Historical Society: Douglas W. Orr, F.A.I.A., Exhibition catalogue*. New Haven: New Haven Colony Historical Society, 1980.

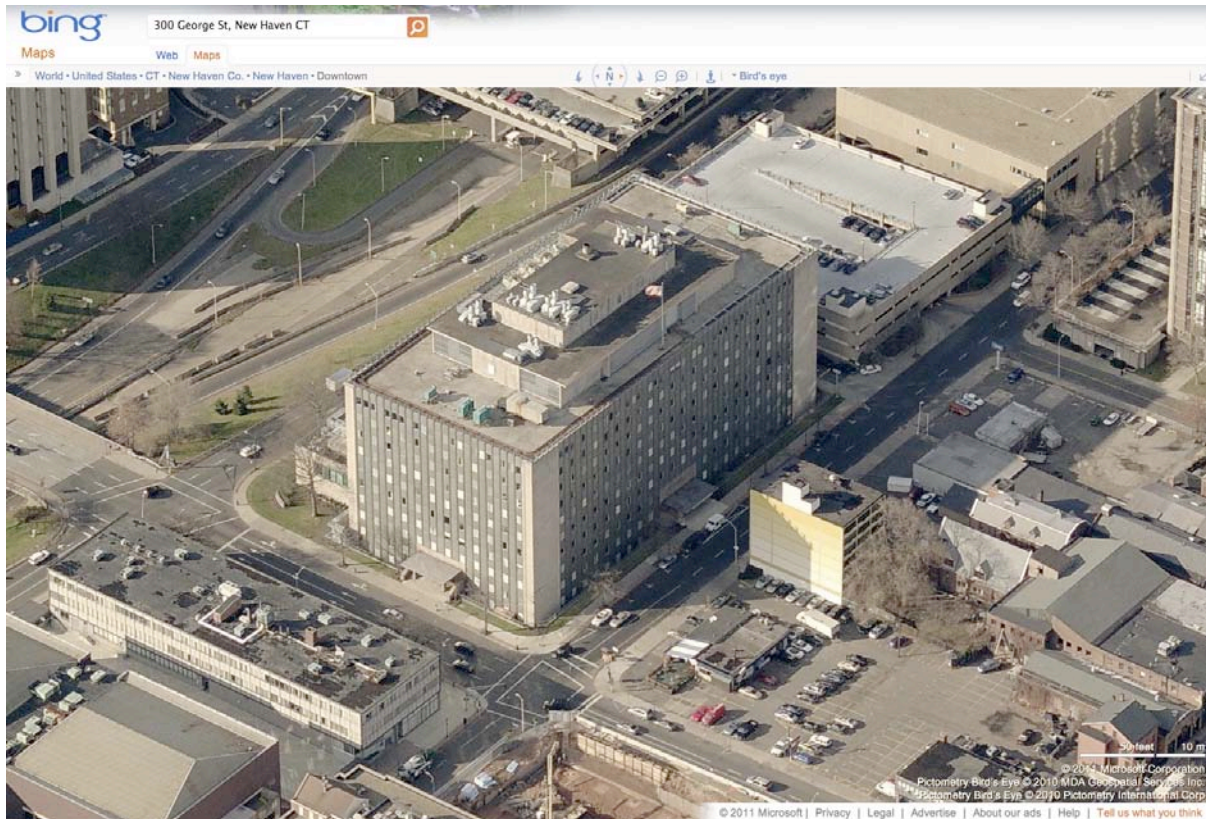


1. Northwest view from High Street, camera facing southeast.

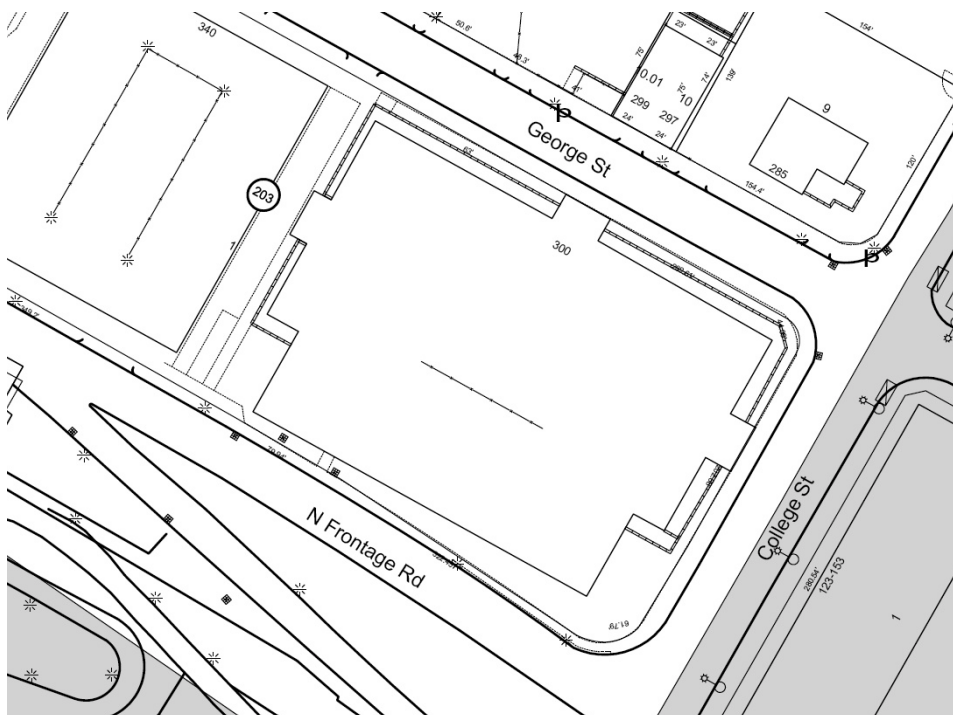


2. Northwest view from street, detail of curtain wall, camera facing southeast.

3. North detail view of entry and canopy, camera facing south.



4. Aerial view from Bing Maps <http://www.bing.com/maps/> accessed 6/05/2011.



5. City of New Haven Tax Assessor's Map detail, Map/Block/Parcel 262/203/001.