

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) Valley Street-Victory Drive Housing
 Building Name (Historic) West Hills War Workers Housing
 Street Address or Location Bounded north by Mountain Road, west by Valley Street, & east by West Rock Ridge
 Town/City New Haven Village West Hills County New Haven
 Owner(s) Various owners Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Residential - Single- and Multi-family
 Historic Use: Residential - Single- and Multi-family
Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No
 Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain _____
 Style of building Vernacular Modernist Date of Construction 1942

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

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clapboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | |

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 _____

Number of Stories: 1 and 2 **Approximate Dimensions** Various

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: Many units have pitched roofs added over flat roofs, other additions

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: Driveways, fencing, lawns, landscaping

Surrounding Environment:

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

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings: The West Hills neighborhood of New Haven east of Whalley Avenue, and the Beverly Hills neighborhood to the west, were among the last large undeveloped areas in the city. On rolling land sloping off the cliffs of West Rock Ridge, a series of streets including Victory Drive, Hilltop Road, Rock Creek Road, and Valley Place, were laid out in curving patterns, giving a suburban feel to the terrain. A large number of small-scale single- and multi-family homes were constructed in 1942, for families working in local defense industries.

• Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*)

The typical house is a simple 1-story home of 800-975 square feet, with a flat roof, an overhanging horizontal fascia giving some protection to the walls, and a window pattern of 4/4 double hung sash pushed close to the corners creating a Bauhaus-like effect of openness. The development also includes semi-detached 2-family homes with hipped or gable roofs and 8/8 double hung windows, a playground, and a school at 311 Valley Street (see Inventory form). Although the curving streets appear to cater to the automobile, there is also provision for the pedestrian. Public walkways between the house lots connect the cul-de-sac streets with Hilltop Playground and with West Hills School.

Architect Office of Douglas Orr Builder Fusco-Amatruda Corporation

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources: Brown, Elizabeth Mills; *New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and 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: 402/ 1183/ 05300, 423/ 1185/ 01200, others.

Dana Collection, New Haven Museum & Historical Society, v. 58, pp. 34, 55-8 (news articles, Housing Authority Annual Reports).

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.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock Date 8/28/2009

View Multiple views Negative on File NHPT

Name Charlotte Hitchcock Date 11/29/2010

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 Remodeling

- Historical or Architectural importance:

The Office of Douglas Orr designed this development of 300 dwelling units for the West Hills area, to be constructed rapidly in 1942 to house families working in New Haven-area World War II defense industries. Suburban-style curving streets were laid out including Victory Drive, Hilltop Road, Valley Place North and South, and Rock Creek Road. Although the structures were small and simple, touches of Modernist style included flat roofs and glazed corner windows in some units, and stripped classical forms with hipped roofs on others. The simplified Modernism of this group of homes contrasts with the post-World War II development of the Beverly Hills neighborhood, which follows the "Cape Cod" style typical of Levittown and other post-war subdivisions. The site plan included an elementary school, a community center, and a playground, with land for pedestrian path connections reserved between the house lots. After the war, houses were sold to owner occupants, and much customizing has gone on ever since.

Douglas Orr (1892-1966), a prominent New Haven-based architect, practiced in various architectural styles throughout his career, adapting 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 Colonial Revival designs in the 1920s and for Art Deco work in the 1930s. By the 1950s much of his firm's work was based on a Modernist philosophy, although the firm continued to work in Colonial Revival styles. Orr's firm also 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 during the Redevelopment period of the 1960s.



1. Northeast view of Victory Drive and Mountain Road, camera facing south – 57 Victory Drive at center.



2. 3 Hilltop Road, camera facing south.



3. 57 Victory Drive, camera facing north.



4. 19 Hilltop Road, camera facing southwest



5. 2 Victory Drive, camera facing northeast.



6. Victory Drive south of Mountain Road, bird's eye view looking south, from Bing Maps, <http://www.bing.com/maps> accessed 8/28/2010.



7. Partial Site Plan – Victory Drive, Valley Place, Rock Creek Road, from City of New Haven Tax Map 402.
The development continues on Tax Map 423. Not to scale, North ↑ ■