



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) Columbus Mall Houses

Building Name (Historic) Columbus Mall Houses

Street Address or Location 158 Wooster Street

Town/City New Haven Village Wooster Square County New Haven

Owner(s) Wooster Square Housing Corporation - Margolis Realty Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Residential - Multi-family Housing

Historic Use: Residential - Multi-family Cooperative Housing

Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No

Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain _____

Style of building Modernist Date of Construction 1964

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type <u>Masonry</u>) | <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 Concrete Masonry Units

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: 2-3 Approximate Dimensions 16 buildings from 26' x 49' to 26' x 161'

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: Spiral stairs replaced by straight runs, fencing, front yard lawns.

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 interior courts, fenced private yards, paved parking areas.

Surrounding Environment:

Open land Woodland Residential Commercial Industrial Rural

High building density Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings: The complex of 16 multi-family townhouse buildings is located facing Wooster Street and in the interior of the block between Brown Street and Warren Street. Buildings are 2- and 3-story structures, matching the scale of surrounding buildings which are 2- to 4-story 19th- and early 20th-century wood-framed or brick residential and mixed use structures. The buildings fronting Wooster Street align with the adjacent street facades while the remaining buildings stand in a more open setting, configured in a series of courtyards.

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

See continuation sheet.

Architect Earl P. Carlin, Peter Millard, Design Associate, Paul Pozzi, Associate Builder Macomber Construction

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources:

Brown, Elizabeth Mills; *New Haven: A Guide to Architecture & Urban Design*, Yale U. Press, New Haven, 1976, p.190.
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 Assessor's Record: Map/Block/Parcel 207/534/007.
See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock Date 12/03/2009

View Various Negative on File NHPT

Name Charlotte Hitchcock Date 12/05/2009

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 _____

- Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and exterior*):

Sixteen buildings are arranged in a loose spiral configuration, to create quadrangles in the interior of the site. Facing Wooster Street, a signature building raises the standard dwelling units one story above grade, to allow four passageways beneath, creating a monumental gateway perforated with views into the site. The 1965 photograph (Metz, p. 57) from Wooster Square along Russo Park and DePalma Court (formerly Brewery Street) to the grand facade emphasizes this relationship with the surrounding environment. Within the site, a series of five quadrangles flow into each other, providing shared open spaces as well as small fenced patios at the apartments' back doors.

The project was designed and built as a 72-unit cooperative housing development for moderate-income families; it included 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom dwelling units. The units were designed with a uniform concrete masonry stair tower anchoring the mass, and the towers visually "bridged" by living spaces framed with light-weight steel joists and clad in vertical aluminum siding that appears similar to board and batten. The exposed split-ribbed concrete block originally was unpainted, and sun-shade awnings were bright yellow (Johnson photo). Windows were aluminum-framed sliding and double hung sash. Variations in the massing were achieved through orientation and by the special treatment of the building facing Wooster Street and Russo Park to provide a gateway. The raised units there have second level balconies, originally with spiral stairs to grade in addition to ground floor entrances into the stair towers.

Parking lots were designed for access from Wooster Street, Brown Street, and Warren Street, the boundaries of the site. Parking was intentionally kept at the perimeter, somewhat remote from the interior residential buildings. This was seen as a progressive feature, since most existing dwellings in the area lacked parking facilities. Stern's article describes the construction and layout in detail.

- Historical or Architectural importance:

Prior to 1960, due to its proximity to the harbor and railroad lines, the area of Wooster Square was a mixed use neighborhood where factories and other industrial uses mingled with residential and commercial buildings. The Redevelopment Plan for Wooster Square aimed to move industrial uses to the east side of the new elevated highway (US Route 5, later to be I-91), to the Hamilton-East Street industrial park. The Plan developed the west side, around historic Wooster Square Park, as a residential neighborhood through a combination of rehabilitation, preservation, and new construction. This project was among the earliest and largest new developments and was intended to showcase the redevelopment process in eliminating blight and providing model new living environments.

The site of the Columbus Mall had held a mix of industrial and residential uses which were cleared away, leaving a substantial but irregular site for new housing. The site fronts on Wooster Street, a focus of the city's Italian-American community, and on a newly cleared open space, Russo Park, along DePalma Court, connecting to Wooster Square itself. The remainder of the site is in the interior of the block, ringed with pre-existing historic houses facing Brown and Warren Streets. Pedestrians could enter from Wooster Street through the gateway formed by the building (now fenced) while vehicle access to the development was created via five parking lots accessed from the nearby streets.

The Redevelopment Authority staff considered it a matter of pride to promote "good design" (Hommann, p. 95) and engaged the architects, who created numerous plan layouts and building designs in the absence of a developer/builder, an exercise which they found frustrating (Stern, p. 192). Once the developer committed to the project, plans were finalized but also economies were effected. The architects' desired butterfly roofs were simplified to flat, although a clerestory extension of the stair towers remained, which enlivened the small living spaces. The overall appearance of the massing is of playful abstract sculptural building block forms, with variations achieved through orientation and by the special treatment of the gateway building facing Wooster Street and Russo Park. The concept, in which a block of Brewery Street was abandoned to create a "superblock" with buildings set among open lawns, was a characteristic feature of Modernist planning beginning with International Style designers.

Architect: The local architectural firm of Earl P. Carlin, with associates Peter Millard, and Paul Pozzi, did not attain the national fame of other designers who were producing high-profile projects in New Haven at the same time, but are notable for a series of new fire stations (see Inventory forms for 120 Ellsworth Avenue, 952 Grand Avenue, 525 Howard Avenue, 352 Whitney Avenue, and 824 Woodward Avenue). Earl P. Carlin had worked as an assistant to Architects Louis Kahn and Douglas Orr on the Yale Art Gallery (1953), and later as an assistant and office manager to Paul Schweiker while he was Dean of the Yale Architecture Department (Stern, p. 183). Peter Millard taught at the Yale Architecture School in addition to his role in the firm.

In recent years, fencing and plantings installed along Wooster St. have blocked pedestrian entry on the axis of Russo Park. Also, an increase in the number of fenced private yards attached to the dwelling units in a random variety of fencing styles, has resulted in a loss of the openness of the original plan. The concrete masonry has recently been painted a gray color; the original exposed concrete was a warmer tone. Otherwise the buildings and site are well maintained and most of the original window hoods are still in place.

• Sources (*Continuation*):

Hommann, Mary; *Wooster Square Design*, The New Haven Redevelopment Authority, 1965, pp. 95-107.

Metz, Don, and Noga, Yugi; *New Architecture in New Haven*, 1966, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 56-7.

New Haven Redevelopment Authority, Redevelopment Plan for the Wooster Square Project Area, 1958-1967.

Stern, Robert A. M.; The Office of Earl P. Carlin, *Perspecta 9/10*, 1965, New Haven, Conn.: Schools of Architecture & Design, Yale University, p. 183ff.

New Haven Museum and Historical Society, Redevelopment collection,

http://www.cthistoryonline.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cho&CISOPTR=13284&REC=16

http://www.cthistoryonline.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cho&CISOPTR=14343&REC=17

http://www.cthistoryonline.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cho&CISOPTR=13537&REC=18

http://www.cthistoryonline.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cho&CISOPTR=13738&REC=20

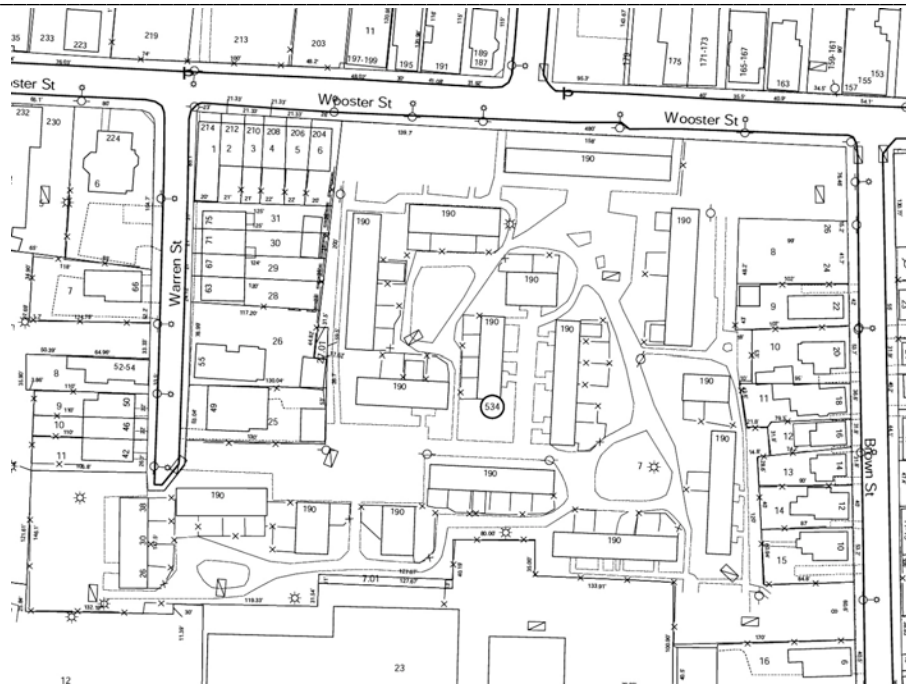
http://www.cthistoryonline.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/cho&CISOPTR=14000&CISOBX=1&REC=1

Yale University Manuscripts and Archives, Richard D. Johnson Slide Collection Manuscript Group, 1964-5, Columbus Mall, <http://images.library.yale.edu/madid/oneItem.aspx?id=1775299&q=&q1=1803&q2=&q3=contains&q4=&q5=subject1&q6=&q7=&q8=&q9=15&q10=31&sid=&qx=1004.2>

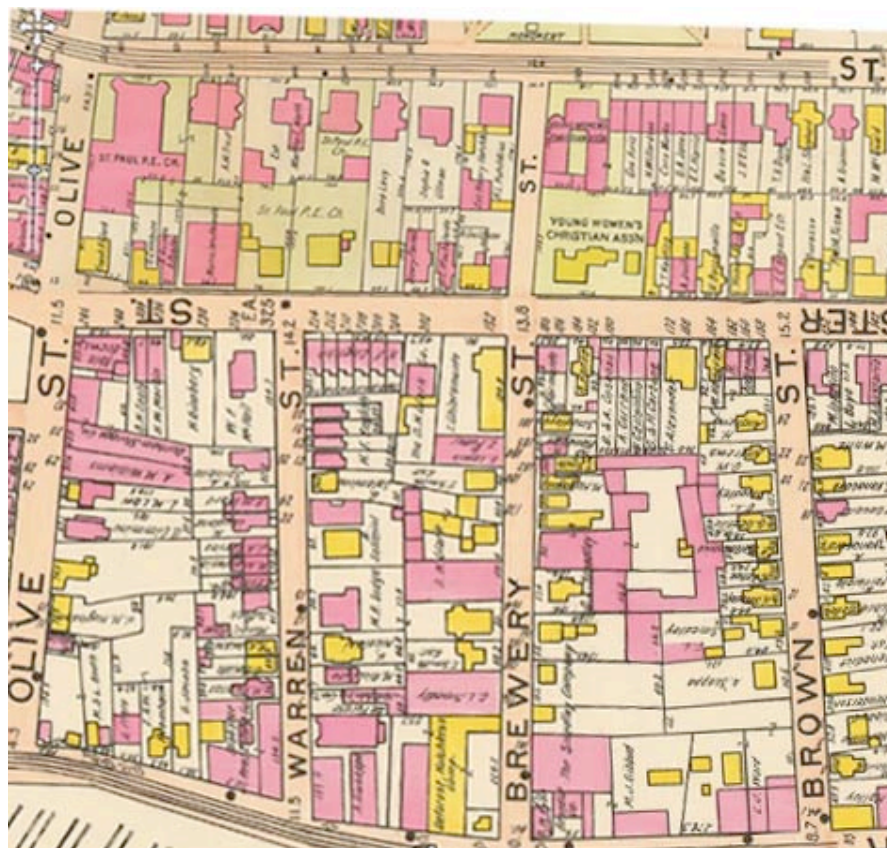
Walker Lithograph & Publishing Co., *Atlas of New Haven Connecticut*: <http://www.wardmaps.com/viewasset.php?aid=1509>



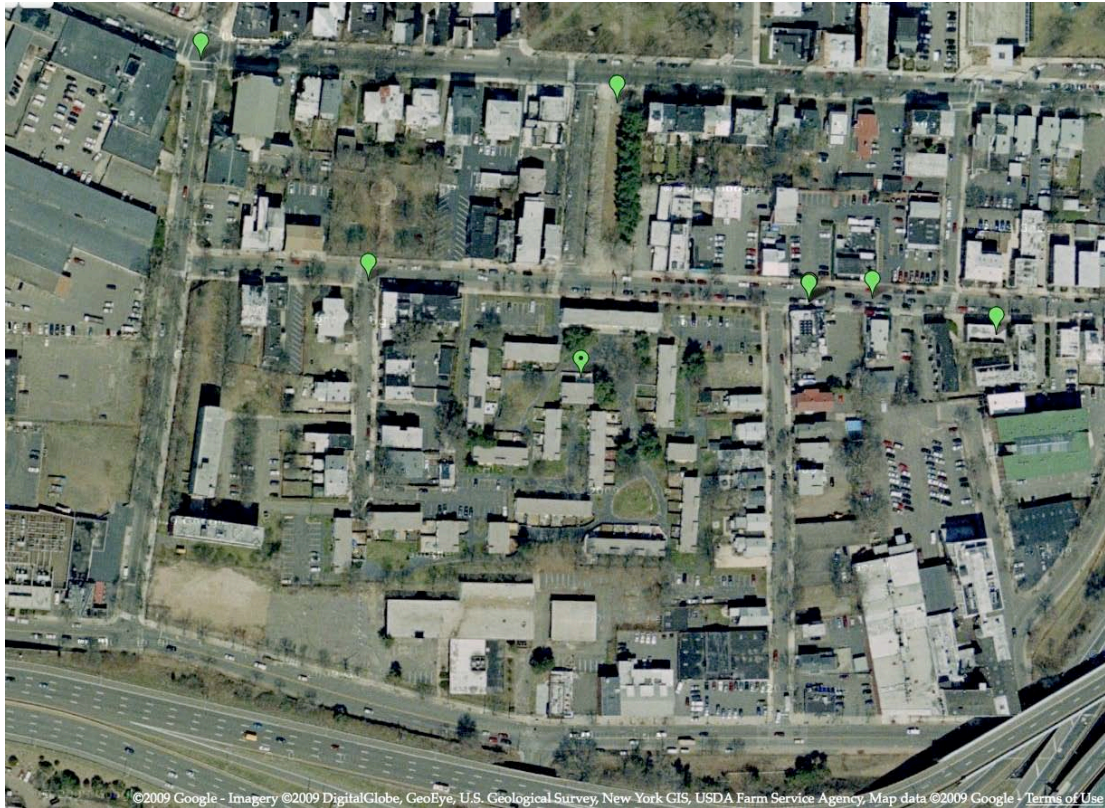
1. Front (west) elevation of four-unit building facing Warren Street parking lot, camera facing east.



2. Site Plan – from City of New Haven Tax Map 207/534/007, not to scale, North ↑ ■



3. Atlas of New Haven 1911, Plates 14 & 25 – <http://www.wardmaps.com/viewasset.php?aid=1509> . The Columbus Mall site is between Warren and Brown Streets. The block of Brewery Street was abandoned and incorporated into the site, while Warren Street has been truncated to access only the Columbus Mall and an elderly housing development.



4. Aerial view of the site – Google Maps <http://maps.google.com/> accessed 12/05.2009.



New Haven Museum and Historical Society

5. Redevelopment Agency photograph of Wooster Street elevation c. 1965, New Haven Museum.



6. Wooster Street elevation 2009.



7. Photograph of Russo Park, designed by Sasaki, Dawson, & DeMay Associates landscape architects, with Columbus Mall's Wooster Street facade in the distance, from Metz, p. 57, c. 1965.



8. Russo Park, 2009, with Columbus Mall beyond, camera facing south.



9. Northwest parking lot entrance from Wooster Street, camera facing south.



10. Wooster Street (north) elevation – New Haven Assessor's photograph, before painting, mid-2000s.



11. Wooster Street (north) elevation detail, after painting, December 2009.



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New Haven Museum and Historical Society



12. View of interior quadrangle showing original spiral stair from second level balcony. Redevelopment Agency photograph, New Haven Museum.

13. Replacement steel stair from second level balcony, camera facing north, 2009.



Source: Manuscripts & Archives, Yale University Library
Produced for reference use only. (msaa.img 004795)

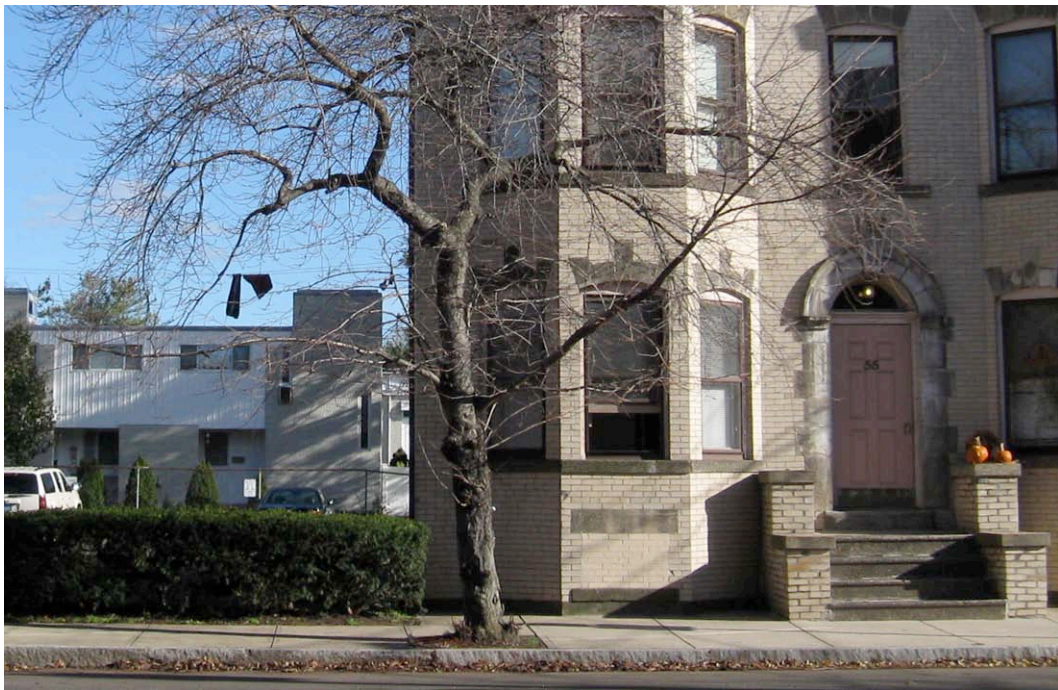
14. Photograph of typical rear building elevation, and original yard enclosure by Richard D. Johnson, c. 1965, Yale Manuscripts and Archives Digital Collection.



15. Typical rear building elevation, 2009.



16. Front (west) elevation of typical two-story building facing interior quadrangle, camera facing east.



17. Neighborhood context: front (west) elevation of typical building seen from Warren Street across the side yard of a preserved nineteenth-century building, camera facing east.