



## 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) Start Bank (opening 2011) / First Community Bank of New Haven  
 Building Name (Historic) Tradesmens National Bank, later Connecticut Bank and Trust  
 Street Address or Location 299 Whalley Avenue  
 Town/City New Haven Village \_\_\_\_\_ County New Haven  
 Owner(s) Global Investors Corporation  Public  Private

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Commercial - Bank  
 Historic Use: Commercial - Bank

**Accessibility to public:** Exterior visible from public road?  Yes  No  
 Interior accessible?  Yes  No If yes, explain During business hours  
 Style of building Modernist - Bauhaus - International Date of Construction 1956

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

- |  |   |  |                                       |  |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type <u>Limestone Veneer</u> ) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>Metal Spandrel Panels</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 \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Stories:** 2 **Approximate Dimensions** 50' x 85'

**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: Minor upgrades, interior renovation

**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: Asphalt paving at rear parking, landscaped yard along east side.

**Surrounding Environment:**

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

## • Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

Whalley Avenue is a major commercial street connecting the city center with towns to the northwest. During the 1950s it was known as "automobile row." Lower Whalley Avenue featured automotive businesses while further west were other businesses including grocery stores, banks, churches, a movie theater, and numerous small storefront businesses. This bank occupies a corner site at a major cross street, Sherman Avenue.

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

The structure occupies a corner site where both the south and east elevations are visible. The basic 2-story box is enlivened by a taller stair tower projecting forward of the facade at the southeast corner, and upturned entry canopies at the north and south entrances. The east side elevation is a curtain wall, consisting of vertical aluminum-clad fins and mullions crossed by horizontal bands of glazed hopper windows and blue porcelain enameled metal spandrel panels. This open-feeling curtain wall is wrapped on the front, across the top, and down the rear wall, by a cladding of stone panels. A brick base and brick west wall infill contrast with the buff stone, blue enamel, and glass. The corner tower repeats the theme of wrapping around the front, top, and rear, but in brick, with the side infills being a grid of metal mullions and pale blue infill panels. Drive-up banking windows were designed for both sides of the building. Signage in applied letters was designed for the stone and brick portions of the facades.

Architect Bank Building Corp. of America, St. Louis MO    Builder Joseph F. Kelly Company, Inc., West Haven CT  
 Charles F. Jost, Registered Architect

## • 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.

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: 332/0297/028, Building Permit No. 54057, \$207,000; drawings on file.

Start Bank website: <http://www.startbank.com/about.html>

NYTimes Archives, July 6, 1969. City Directories, New Haven Public Library.

Bank Building & Equipment Corporation information from: <http://midcenturybanks.com> accessed 12/23/2010.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock    Date 10/14/2010

View Multiple views    Negative on File NHPT

Name Charlotte Hitchcock    Date 12/23/2010

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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• Historical or Architectural importance (*continuation*):

Tradesmens National Bank of New Haven had been in business since the 19th century, with headquarters at 179 Church Street in the early 1950s. It later merged into Connecticut Bank and Trust in 1969. This Tradesmens Bank branch design blended elements of Bauhaus and International Styles with festive touches of "Googie," a festive commercial stylistic trend popular in auto-oriented commercial architecture, especially in Southern California, in the 1950s and 1960s. The brick corner tower and the up-turned entry canopy are asymmetrical counterpoints to the expanse of the stone facade.

The east curtain wall expresses the steel supporting structure with its three glazed bays accented by metal-clad columns. The structure occupies a prominent corner location and became a sculptural signature structure advertising the modernity of the Tradesmens Bank as it expanded beyond its original downtown location toward the auto-oriented suburbs. In much the same way, the First National Bank built a branch on Broadway (see Inventory form for 86 Broadway) at around the same time to relieve congestion at a downtown site and provide convenience for clients who increasingly lived outside the city center and shopped along Whalley Avenue. The classical solidity of pre-Depression bank style was giving way to images suggesting cutting edge technology and informal popular culture as banks competed for customers in the prosperous post-World War II decades.

The Bank Building and Equipment Corporation of America, headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, began in 1913 as a cabinet shop and grew to pioneer the design-build methodology in which one firm had on staff architects and builders, and simplified the process for the client by completing all phases of design and construction. This linkage was initially opposed by the American Institute of Architects as a conflict of interest but grew increasingly common as a development procedure. In its peak years, the decades after World War II, when banks were expanding rapidly to provide mortgage loans, the company built thousands of bank buildings in 32 states.

Architect: Charles Jost graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with a degree in architecture. Jost joined Bank Building & Equipment Corporation in 1940 and was with the firm until 1977. He was also a musician and artist. Charles Jost died in 2004. Jost was registered as an Architect in numerous states and oversaw design work and construction drawings. His seal and signature appear on the drawings for 299 Whalley Avenue.

The building was out of use as a bank for more than two decades and its space was rented as offices. In 2011 the Start Bank, a new community bank, re-opened the building as a banking space again, substantially retaining its original appearance.

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES continuation sheet

299 Whalley Avenue, New Haven CT



1. South view, camera facing northwest.



2. East view, camera facing north.



3. West elevation, camera facing northeast.



4. North elevation with rear entry, camera facing west.





5. East view, camera facing west.



6. Aerial view from Bing Maps <http://www.bing.com/maps/> accessed 12/11/2010.



7. Site Plan – from City of New Haven Tax Map 332/0297/028, not to scale, North ↑.