

CT Trust Resource ID: 2983

HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY – BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

State Historic Preservation Office, DECD, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

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

Inventory form modified for the Creative Places - Arts & Letters Project

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common): Mygatt, Henry / Hooker, Elizabeth, House; Soby, James Thrall, House

Other Name(s) (Historic): Mygatt, Henry / Hooker, Elizabeth, House; Soby, James Thrall, House

Street Address or Location: 29 Mountain Spring Rd., Farmington

Town/City: Farmington

Village:

County: Hartford

Designation(s):

Owner(s):

Public/Private: Private

Latitude: 41.7291 Longitude: -72.8162

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Domestic: single dwelling

Historic Use: Domestic: single dwelling

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

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: NA

Style of building: Greek Revival; Modernist addition Date of Construction: 1830, 1935

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

Structural Systems(s): Wood Frame

Roof(Type): Hip, Flat (Material): Asphalt Shingle, Built up

Number of Stories: 2 Approximate Dimensions: 40' x 50' with additions

Structural Condition: Excellent

Exterior Condition: Excellent

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: Yes If yes, explain: Renovation and additions in 1935

Related outbuildings or landscape features: Barn

Surrounding Environment: Residential

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The property is on the west side of Mountain Spring Road, north of the center of Farmington. The house is located near the northeast corner of the 4.69-acre parcel which slopes down toward the west. A detached garage is north of the house and an in-ground pool is to the west. To the west of the site beyond Waterville Road is the Farmington River and to the east is the Metacomet Ridge.

Other notable features of building or site:

The main block of the house is a two-story three-bay hip-roofed Greek Revival-style building with the façade facing east toward the road. A central entry porch has a pair of columns and two attached pilasters at the building wall, supporting a frieze and cornice. Windows flanking the entry on the ground floor are full-height six-over-nine double-hung sash. Above are six-over-six double-hung windows. A two-story flat-roofed ell extends north and is attached to a one-story porte-cochère. A two-story flat-roofed addition at the rear comprises the 1935 art gallery addition constructed as part of the complete renovation of the building by James Thrall Soby. Siding is painted flush-boards with wood-trimmed cornices and porch.

Architect: Hitchcock, Henry-Russel (1935) Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

This house was historically known as the Henry Mygatt House, but by the 1930s it had been owned by Elizabeth Hooker for many years and was known locally as the Hooker House.

James Thrall Soby purchased the Greek Revival-style Hooker House at 29 Mountain Spring Road, Farmington, in 1935 from the estate of Elizabeth Hooker. Soby remodeled the entire house, adding four bathrooms, a garage, and an enlarged dining room. A notable addition was an art gallery designed by the art historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, who was at that time the head of the art department at Wesleyan University (Hartford Courant 1935; Weber 1992 p. 306). The gallery addition was designed in the International Style (Zafraan 2000) and may be

Hitchcock's only work as an architectural designer.

James Thrall Soby (1906-1979) was born into a wealthy Connecticut family, attended Williams College, and became interested in modern art. He was an early collector of modern art, became a friend of Chick Austin, Director of the Wadsworth Atheneum, and worked as an unpaid curator at the Hartford museum and later at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City.

Soby was an important influence at the Atheneum during much of Austin's tenure. As a pioneering collector, Soby played a notable role by lending his art works to the museum for its exhibitions (Carley 2014). In 1935 Soby and his first wife, Mimi, moved from West Hartford to Farmington, where they purchased the historic c. 1830 Hooker House. Shortly after, Soby and his wife divorced, and by 1938 he had married Eleanor (Nellie) Howland, assistant to Chick Austin at the Wadsworth Atheneum and subsequently to Alfred Barr at MOMA (Weber 1992, p. 310). Soby was an art critic and photographer in addition to his activities as curator and art patron. His friend Alexander Calder created one of his first large-scale moving art pieces (mobiles) as a well-head ornament at the Soby house in Farmington (Weber 1992, p. 307).

Sources:

Carley, Rachel. 2014. "Creative Places: Modern Arts and Letters in Connecticut." Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation & State Historic Preservation Office. p. 14.

Falk, Peter Hastings. 1999. Who Was Who in American Art 1564-1975. Madison, CT: Sound View Press.

Gaddis, Eugene. 2000. Magician of the Modern: Chick Austin & the Transformation of the Arts in America. New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc.

Mygatt, Henry, House. Blog post 1/21/2008. Historicbuildingsct.com blog accessed 2/12/2016 at <http://historicbuildingsct.com/?p=279>.

'Old Farmington House is Bought by J. T. Soby.' 9/08/1935. Hartford Courant.

Leach, Charles, M.D. 2008 'Farmington Artists and Their Times.' Farmington Historical Society Newsletter. Farmington Historical Society.

Accessed 12/06/2013 at <http://www.farmingtonhistoricalsociety-ct.org/farmingtonartists2.html>.

Town of Farmington Assessor's records and GIS viewer: <http://www.propertyrecordcards.com/PropertyResults.aspx?towncode=052&uniqueid=13050029>

http://farmington.mapxpress.net/ags_map/default.htm?UNIQUE_ID=13050029

Weber, Nicholas Fox. 1992. Patron Saints: Five Revels who Opened America to a New Art 1928-1943. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Zafran, Eric M. with Elizabeth M. Kornhouser and Cynthia Roman. 2000. Calder in Connecticut. Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art & New York: Rizzoli International, Inc.

Photographer: Historicbuildingct.com Date: 2008

View: East view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock Printed On: February 12, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



29 Mountain Spring Rd Farmington (historicbuildingsct.com)

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ Site# _____ UTM _____

District ☐ S ☐ NR If NR, specify: ☐ Actual ☐ Potential