

CT Trust Resource ID: 4048

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): The EmporiumOther Name(s) (Historic): The EmporiumStreet Address or Location: 15 Water Street, GrotonTown/City: GrotonVillage: Mystic RiverCounty: New LondonDesignation(s): SRHD, NRHD, LHDOwner(s): Mystic Art Association, Inc.Public/Private: Non-ProfitLatitude: 41.3527 Longitude: -71.9720

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Commerce/trade: restaurant; Education/culture: museum; Domestic: multiple dwellHistoric Use: Commerce/trade: retail storeAccessibility to public: Yes Exterior visible from public road? YesInterior accessible? If yes, explain: NAStyle of building: Italianate Date of Construction: 1859Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate) Fieldstone. ClapboardStructural Systems(s): Load bearing masonry, Wood FrameRoof(Type): Hip (Material): Asphalt ShingleNumber of Stories: 2 1/2 Approximate Dimensions: 32' x 40'Structural Condition: ExcellentExterior Condition: ExcellentLocational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NAAlterations?: Yes If yes, explain: Rehabilitation in 2015Related outbuildings or landscape features: BarnSurrounding Environment: Commercial

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

This building is located on the east side of Water Street at the corner of New London Road in the village of Mystic River on a .14-acre site. Directly east behind the site is the Mystic Museum of Art (formerly the Mystic Art Association) which now owns the property. The building is a contributing resource in the Mystic River National Register and Local Historic Districts.

Other notable features of building or site:

This is a 2 1/2-story hip-roofed wood-framed Italianate-style commercial building, with a six-bay west facade facing Water Street. The south side is a four-bay elevation. The ground floor has two store fronts opening at the west side, with double doors and over-sized six-over-six double-hung windows. A single door off-center toward the north provides access to the upper floor. The upper floor is residential and has six-over-six windows. The roof has deep overhangs with brackets. The roof has gable dormers with Italianate details in each pitch. Siding is clapboards, the foundation is stone. The building has been fully rehabilitated in 2015 under the new ownership of the Mystic Museum of Art.

Architect: Unknown Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

Research (Mystic Museum of Art) suggests that the building was erected in 1859, by Isaac Randall. Randall was a successful businessman who owned several properties in the Mystic area, and operated the Reliance Machine Company, a cotton gin manufacturer located in what is now Factory Square. The alleyway adjacent to 15 Water Street was also part of Randall's property and served as a channel to load cotton gins onto ships destined for the South. The building was an adjunct to Randall's mercantile endeavors, serving as a general store and post office early into the 20th Century and also a hub of village activity, displaying casualty and Missing in Action lists during the Civil War. The building has been a central gathering point through the decades. In 1965, the building was transformed into the Emporium store after its purchase by Paul Lowell White and Leland (Lee) Howard (MMoA web site). White and Howard's successors kept the store open until 2013, after which it was acquired by the Mystic Museum of Art.

Paul Lowell White (1917-2012) grew up in Ohio, though his family had migrated from Essex, Connecticut. Classes at Ohio State University sparked his interest in art, and he later studied at the Chicago Art Institute. After a time working and exhibiting in New York, White and his partner, the actor Lee Howard, moved to Mystic in 1965 and opened the Emporium at 15 Water Street. White had his painting studio on the upper floor. When 2 New London Road, directly across the street, came up for sale, White purchased it and moved his studio there. He spent the remainder of his life painting and exhibiting. He supported the Mystic Art Association by hosting meetings in his home, and was president of the Association for a time.

Sources:

Curbstones Clapboards & Cupolas: Four Self-guided Walking Tours. 1995. Mystic: Mystic River Historical Society.
King, Noelle Warden. 2013. Mystic as Muse: 100 Years of Inspiration, Exhibit catalog. Mystic: Mystic Art Association, p. 72-73.
Mystic Local Historic District inventory, accessed at <http://lhdct.org/district/list/mystic-historic-district/P50> .
Mystic Museum of Art web site. Accessed at <http://www.mysticmuseumofart.org/support/15-water-street/>
Ransom, David F. 1979. Mystic River National Register Nomination No. 79002718. National Park Service.
Town of Groton Assessor's Records & GIS viewer: <http://maps.groton-ct.gov/apps/GrotonViewer/> .

Photographer: Mystic Museum of Art **Date:** undated

View: West View

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock **Printed On:** June 13, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



Historic photo, southeast view (Mystic Museum of Art)

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ **Site#** _____ **UTM** _____

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