

CT Trust Resource ID: 2599

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): Mystic Art Association; Mystic Arts Center; Mystic Museum of Art

Other Name(s) (Historic): Mystic Art Association

Street Address or Location: 9 Water Street, Groton

Town/City: Groton

Village: Mystic

County: New London

Designation(s): SRHD, NRHD

Owner(s): Mystic Art Association, Inc.

Public/Private: Non-Profit

Latitude: 41.3539 Longitude: -71.9714

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Recreation & Culture; Museum; Education; art school

Historic Use: Recreation & Culture; Museum; Education; art school

Accessibility to public: Yes Exterior visible from public road? Yes

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: During gallery and class hours

Style of building: Colonial revival Date of Construction: 1931

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

Structural Systems(s): Wood Frame

Roof(Type): Gable (Material): Asphalt Shingle

Number of Stories: 1 Approximate Dimensions: Original: 30' x 60', 17' x 30', 20' x 33'

Structural Condition: Excellent

Exterior Condition: Excellent

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: Yes If yes, explain: Several expansions and additions

Related outbuildings or landscape features: Parking lots west, north and south, Barn

Surrounding Environment: Commercial

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The building sits on a 1.2-acre site on the west bank of the Mystic River a short distance south of West Main Street where a historic bridge connects the two parts of Mystic on opposite sides of the river. The address is on Water Street where a driveway leads east to the rear of a row of commercial buildings. The museum building is between a large outcropping of granite bedrock and the shore of the river. Paved parking lots surround the building on three sides, while the east side has a lawn and garden facing the river.

The property is identified in the Mystic River National Register Historic District but is not in the Local Historic District inventory of addresses.

Other notable features of building or site:

The museum is a one-story gable-roofed Colonial revival-style building. It was constructed in 1931 as a principal gallery approximately 30' x 60' with a high skylit roof, which remains the central focus of the facility. In place before 1934, a shed-roofed extension along the east side has an additional smaller-scale gallery. To the southeast, a wing projects eastward and is approximately 17' x 30' in size. Another wing measuring 20' x 30' projects south from this space, and also has a large skylight. Additional extensions have been added in subsequent building campaigns. The exterior is clad in wide horizontal clapboards and flushboard siding with rather severe neo-Colonial details including arched openings in the east façade infilled with clapboard siding, multi-pane double-hung windows, and an arched window in the west gable.

Architect: Fraser, George; Jackson, Robertson, & Adams Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

The Mystic Art Association began in 1913 as a gallery organized by members of an informal artist colony in Mystic and Noank. Led by Charles H. Davis, the founding artists also included Gladys Edgerly Bates, Kenneth Bates, Earnest H. Barnes, Murray Bewley, Beonne Boronda, Lester Boronda, Robert Brackman, Beatrice Cumming, G. Victor Grinnell, Julian Joseph, Walt Killam, Carl Lawless, Nat Little, J. Olaf Olson, Y.E. Soderberg, Harve Stein, Herbert M. Stoops, G. Albert Thompson, Lars Thorsen, George E. Tingley, David Birdsie Walkley, J. Alden Weir, and Charles H. Woodbury (Mystic Museum of Art 2016).

The building was built in 1931 as an art gallery and a space for teaching and sharing by the member artists. It was designed by architect George Fraser of the Providence, Rhode Island firm of Jackson, Robertson and Adams. The site was a former town dump on the west bank of the Mystic River south of West Main Street (U.S. Route 1) and adjacent to a trolley barn. The building was unheated in its early years, with activity only during the summer season (King 2013).

Later known as the Mystic Arts Center, and since 2015 as the Mystic Museum, the gallery evolved to show the work of modernists as well as the figurative painters of its early years. Davis remained a figurative painter, but his leadership allowed the Mystic Art Association to become an important center for painters of both modernist and traditional approaches who enjoyed living or summering in the Mystic area. Artists associated with the Mystic Art Association after World War II included modernists John Gregoropoulos (1921-2012), Anthony Terenzio (1923-2000), and Paul Zelanski (b. 1931), all of whom taught at the University of Connecticut and spent summer seasons painting in Mystic (Mystic Arts Center 2014). The Mystic Art Association played an important role in the arts in the Mystic region, as a place where artists created and showed their work, and taught others.

Charles Harold Davis (1856-1933) was a principal founder of the Mystic Art Association. Davis was born in Massachusetts, studied at the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and then continued his study of art in Paris in the 1880s. In 1890, Davis returned to the United States where he settled in Mystic, Connecticut. Along with other artists, an artist colony formed in the Mystic area. Davis shifted his painting style from Tonalism to Impressionism, and later in life explored aspects of modernism (Cooley). He became a full member of the National Academy of Design in 1906. His work is represented in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; the Pennsylvania Academy, Philadelphia, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Following his death, his art collection was donated to the Mystic Art Association and formed the nucleus of its holdings.

Sources:

Cooley, Jeffrey W. Davis, Charles H. biography.

Antiques & Fine Art Magazine web site. Accessed 1/23/2016 at: <http://www.antiquesandfineart.com/articles/article.cfm?request=318> .

The Cooley Gallery web site. Accessed at: http://www.cooleygallery.com/d_inv/charles_harold_davis.htm .

Colville, Thomas. 1995. Charles H. Davis: Painter of Poetic Moods, Antiques Magazine (November 1995), 677.

King, Noelle Warden. 2013. Mystic as Muse: 100 years of inspiration. Mystic: Mystic Art Association.

Mystic Arts Center Quarterly Newsletter. Fall 2014. MAAAd Men: John Gregoropoulos, Anthony Terenzio, and Paul Zelanski: Abstract Art at The Mystic Art Association. Mystic: Mystic Art Center.

Mystic Museum of Art (formerly Mystic Arts Center) web site (history, mission, permanent collection). Accessed at <http://www.mysticmuseumofart.org> .

Town of Groton Assessor's Records & GIS viewer: <http://maps.groton-ct.gov/apps/GrotonViewer/>

University of Connecticut Libraries Map and Geographic Information Center - MAGIC. (2013). 1934 Connecticut Aerial Photography Index. Retrieved from http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/mash_up/1934_aerial_index.html

Photographer: Charlotte Hitchcock **Date:** 10/20/2014

View: East view

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock **Printed On:** January 24,2016

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



Northeast view - 9 Water Street, Mystic

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ **Site#** _____ **UTM** _____
District ☐ S ☐ NR **If NR, specify:** ☐ Actual ☐ Potential