

CT Trust Resource ID: 3167

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): Yankee Expressway (I-84) viaduct at Asylum Avenue

Other Name(s) (Historic): Yankee Expressway (I-84) viaduct at Asylum Avenue

Street Address or Location: 000 I-84, Hartford

Town/City: Hartford

Village:

County: Hartford

Designation(s):

Owner(s): Connecticut Department of Transportation

Public/Private: Public

Latitude: 41.7667 Longitude: -72.6840

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Transportation: Highway viaduct

Historic Use: Transportation: Highway viaduct

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

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: NA

Style of building: Modern - highway viaduct Date of Construction: 1960s - 1980s

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

Structural Systems(s): Structural iron or steel

Roof(Type): (Material):

Number of Stories: n/a Approximate Dimensions: n/a

Structural Condition: Fair

Exterior Condition: Fair

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: No If yes, explain: NA

Related outbuildings or landscape features: Shed

Surrounding Environment: High building density

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The Yankee Expressway, Interstate 84, cuts through the northern edge of downtown Hartford and runs on an elevated viaduct for most of its route through the city. It roughly parallels a pre-existing railroad right-of-way and forms a barrier between the downtown and areas to the north. The viaduct is significant to the arts of the twentieth century as it formed a subject of artwork for artist Richard Welling.

Other notable features of building or site: The siting of the highway was controversial at the time of its planning and construction; as first envisioned it would have taken a larger part of Bushnell Park with a substantial ramp system connecting eastward to I-91. The interstate highway was planned during the 1940s and 1950s, with the general route approved in 1957 (Kurumi.com). Construction of the elevated Hartford portion occurred during the mid-1960s, with additional ramp construction occurring through the 1980s. Artist Richard Welling frequented the construction areas during those years, producing drawings which recorded the highway construction and the demolition or preservation of nearby buildings and sites. Welling's art recorded the progress of urban renewal and at the same time interpreted the impact of urban renewal on the city environment.

Architect: Unknown Builder/Maker: Unknown / drawing by Richard Welling

Historical or Architectural importance:

The viaduct that carries the Yankee Expressway (I-84) through downtown Hartford was a frequent subject for Richard Welling during the years of its construction. Welling recorded the destructive and constructive sides of urban renewal from the 1960s onward; his drawings of the highway viaduct are iconic examples of his long series portraying Hartford's built environment.

Richard Welling (1926-2009) was a native of Hartford, and grew up in West Hartford. After military service in World War II, he studied art at Parsons School of Design. He came back to work as a commercial artist in Hartford, and during the 1960s Welling experienced urban renewal at close range. He was forced to move his studio multiple times as the older buildings where he found rental space were demolished to make room for the Bushnell Tower, Civic Center, and other new developments. He made a habit of recording the urban renewal process in drawings. He observed but he also expressed his opinions, liking the best modernist design but also treasuring the historic buildings: 'he loved the Old State House, the Connecticut State Capitol, and Union Station. His last apartment and studio were located in Union Place'

(Finlay 2014). Welling's archives are at the Connecticut Historical Society, and examples of his work can be viewed online. Drawings include memorable events of the urban renewal period. Among them are views of the construction of the I-84 viaduct adjacent to Bushnell Park, the Capitol building (built in the 1870s and rehabilitated 100 years later), the 1978 Civic Center roof collapse, demolition of the Garde Hotel, and construction of Constitution Plaza.

Sources:

Finlay, Nancy. 2014. Richard Welling: Hartford's Artist Historian. Connecticut Explored, Vol. 12/No 4.

Welling, Richard, archives at the Connecticut Historical Society. Accessed at <http://emuseum.chs.org/emuseum/view/objects/asimages/443?t:state:flow=cafeeee4-1adf-422f-82bb-2e4645758346>

Off-ramp I-84 drawing accessed at: <http://emuseum.chs.org/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/443/735/title-asc?t:state:flow=dc543b07-c48f-495d-988d-e060d35da8c1>

Kuckro, Anne C. 1978. Hartford Architecture Volume One: Downtown. Hartford: Hartford Architecture Conservancy.

Welling, Richard, obituary. 11/5/2009. Hartford Courant.

Connecticut Roads/Kurumi.com. Accessed at <http://www.kurumi.com/roads/ct/i84.html>.

Photographer: Richard Welling pen and ink drawing - CHS Date: 8/16/1987

View: West view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock Printed On: April 20, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: Highways, Renewal

Subsequent field evaluations:

emuseum.chs.org/emuseum/media/view/Objects/21188/22799?t:state:flow=8fd7eba2-41fc-42ee-a629-a025dd25a9b7

Gift of the Richard Welling Family, 2012.284.5653 © 2014 The Connecticut Historical Society.



Off-ramp construction I-84, Richard Welling (CHS archive)

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ Site# _____ UTM _____

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