

CT Trust Resource ID: 2429

## 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): WWI Memorial/West River Park

Other Name(s) (Historic): WWI Memorial/West River Park

Street Address or Location: 200 Derby Avenue, New Haven

Town/City: New Haven Village:  County: New Haven Designation(s):

Owner(s): City of New Haven Public/Private: Public

Latitude: 41.2971 Longitude: -72.9487

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Recreational: public park; Public Art: sculpture

Historic Use: Recreational: public park; Public Art: sculpture

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

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: This is a public park. Public are allowed during open hours.

Style of building: Statue Date of Construction: 1937

**Material(s)** (Indicate use or location when appropriate) Cut Stone

**Structural Systems(s)**: Structural iron or steel, Bronze

**Roof**(Type): (Material):

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

**Structural Condition:** Excellent

**Exterior Condition:** Excellent

**Locational Integrity:** Moved **Moved, When:** 1950

**Alterations?:** No If yes, explain: NA

**Related outbuildings or landscape features:** Shed, Barnard Nature Center, basketball court

**Surrounding Environment:** Residential

**Interrelationship of building and surroundings:** This property consists of 119 acres of land on the south side of Derby Avenue. The parcel is at the intersection of Derby Avenue and Ella T. Grasso Boulevard. The entrance to the park is off Derby Avenue, with a driveway extending to the south and terminating in a parking area just to the west of the Barnard Nature Center building and the basketball court. The Nature Center and basketball court are to the south of the Memorial Statue, which is to the east of the entrance. The statue stands in the middle of a grove of trees. Surrounding the property are commercial buildings, institutions, parkland, and residential dwellings both single-family and multi-family.

**Other notable features of building or site:** The resource is a World War I memorial statue of Corporal Timothy Francis Ahearn, a local resident who became a war hero. The statue is made of bronze and stands upon a granite base. As noted by Steve Rajtar and Frances Elizabeth Franks in War Monuments, Museums and Library Collections of 20th Century Conflicts: A Directory of United States Sites, "This is a standing male figure in the uniform and helmet of WWI. He is writing in a tablet with a pen. It commemorates Corp. Timothy Francis Ahearn who, after all officers had become casualties, took over command of his company, and later rescued a wounded officer in the face of heavy machine gun fire. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. It was sculpted by Karl F. Lang and dedicated in 1937" (Rajtar and Franks 2002, 37). The statue was designed and created as part of the New Haven District Works Progress Administration program, a New Deal Program created during the Great Depression. Lang positioned Ahearn writing a letter to his superiors stating he was, "ready for any duty I am called to perform" (Publicartarchive.org 2016). An inscription on the north face of the base of the statue reads, "Corporal Timothy Francis Ahearn D S C Company C-102 US Infantry Twenty-Sixth Division 1898-1925 He best exemplified the spirit of the enlisted men of the Yankee division." The statue was originally located on Route 34 near the Yale Bowl, but was moved to its current location in 1950.

**Architect:** Karl Lang **Builder/Maker:** Maxwell & Pagano, New Haven

**Historical or Architectural importance:**

This work is significant for its place in the work sponsored by the WPA in New Haven, as well as for its commemoration of local citizen contributions to World War I.

Karl Frederick Lang was born in 1897 in Biberach, Germany to a wealthy family. He studied art and English at the Upper Real School in Stuttgart and his instructor, Herr Gansmueller, encouraged him to pursue art.

In 1918, Lang moved to the United States. In 1922, he married Alma Arsenault in Stamford, Connecticut. For five years, he apprenticed with Gutzon Borglum, the noted sculptor of Mount Rushmore. Lang may have helped on such projects as Mount Rushmore and Stone Mountain in Georgia.

By 1926, Lang had established his own studio in New Haven, Connecticut. He worked with the Public Works of Art Project and the Works Project Administration Federal Arts Project during the 1930s. From 1936-1941, Lang produced 18 statues and plaques, three easel works, and a mural. Later in life, he taught art classes in Darien as well as at the Stamford High School. He died in 1952 at the age of 55. In addition to the Timothy Ahearn statue, Lang created the Spring Grove Veteran's Cemetery flagpole monument in Darien.

**Sources:**

Public Art Archive. Accessed 3/16/2016 <http://www.publicartarchive.org/work/timothy-francis-ahearn-memorial>;  
 Connecticut State Library WPA Art Inventory. Lang, Karl (1897-1952). Accessed 3/16/2016 <http://ctstatelibrary.org/lang-karl/>;  
 Rajtar, Steve and Franks, Frances Elizabeth. War Monuments, Museums and Library Collections of 20th Century Conflicts: A Directory of United States Sites. McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers: 2002;  
<http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/Parks/ParksInformation/barnard.asp>;

"Karl Lang, Sculptor and Painter, was 55." New York Times, September 24, 1952. Accessed

3/16/2016 <http://search.proquest.com/docview/112381083?accountid=47114>

Macaluso, Laura. 2010. Survey of Public Works for Works Progress Administration (WPA). New Haven: Department of Cultural Affairs / Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism.

**Photographer:** Charlotte Hitchcock **Date:** 3/18/2016

**View:** Northwest view

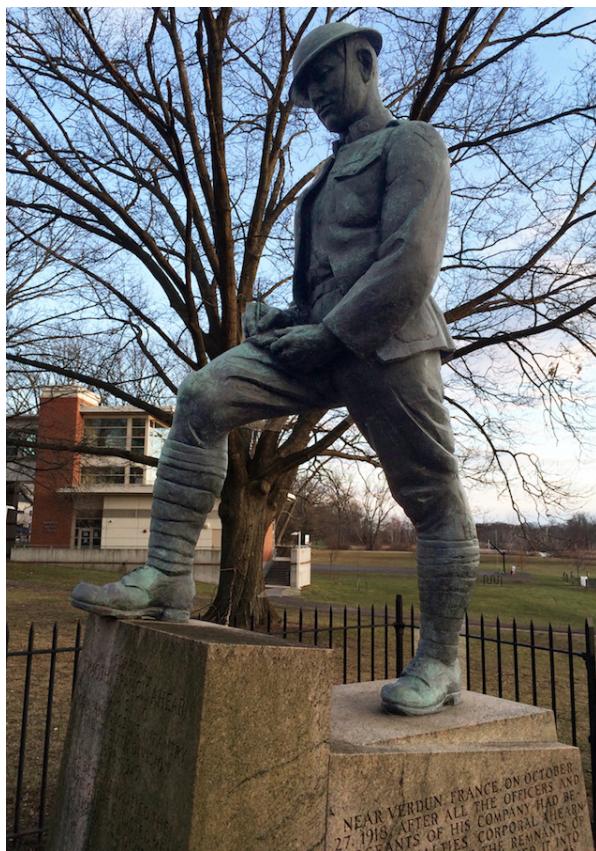
**Form completed by:** Kristen Nietering **Printed On:** March 25, 2016

**Organization:** Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

**Address:** 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

**Threats:** None known

**Subsequent field evaluations:**



World War I Memorial, West River Park - Northwest view

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**FOR OFFICE USE:**

Town # \_\_\_\_\_ Site# \_\_\_\_\_ UTM \_\_\_\_\_

District  S  NR If NR, specify:  Actual  Potential