

CT Trust Resource ID: 2775

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): Bacon's Marble Block

Other Name(s) (Historic): Bacon's Marble Block; Cuming, Beatrice, Studio

Street Address or Location: 128-138 State Street (Captains Walk), New London

Town/City: New London Village:

County: New London

Designation(s): NRHD, SRHD

Owner(s): Cornish Contracting & Real Estate LLC
Dummy Owner

Public/Private: Private

Latitude: 41.3543 Longitude: -72.0957

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Commerce: specialty store, apartments

Historic Use: Commerce: specialty store, office

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

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: NA

Style of building: Victorian Second Empire Date of Construction: 1868

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

Structural Systems(s): Load bearing masonry

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

Number of Stories: Four Approximate Dimensions: 68' x 136'

Structural Condition: Excellent

Exterior Condition: Excellent

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: Yes If yes, explain: Storefronts, conversion to residential use.

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

Surrounding Environment: High building density

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The building is a 4-story commercial block located on the south side of State Street (Captain's Walk) in downtown New London. It is a contributing resource in the Downtown New London Historic District.

Other notable features of building or site:

The building is a four-story brick masonry commercial building with a seven-bay facade faced with ashlar stone masonry. The ground floor is storefronts, with recessed entries and transom glazing. The second and third floors have paired windows in wide openings with projecting cornices above each. The fourth floor is a Mansard-roofed level with seven dormers with alternating gable and segmented arch roof lines. In each dormer there is a single double-hung window.

Architect: Sweeney, James Builder/Maker: Bacon, Morris W.

Historical or Architectural importance:

Bacon's Marble Block was built in 1868 by Morris W. Bacon, manager of the Pequod and Ocean Transit Steamship Co. Bacon introduced a new grandeur to the growing commercial district along State Street in the mid-1800s. The Bacon Building's Second Renaissance Style with elegant, tall windows, a facade of ashlar stonework and rusticated quoins, provided ground-floor space for high-quality retail. The upper floors housed offices along with a luxurious billiard hall (New London Landmarks). The building originally was three stories with a cornice, replaced before 1901 by a fourth story behind a Mansard roof. In the post-World War II period, the building sat empty for decades. It has been rehabilitated as commercial space and apartments (Historic Buildings of CT).

Beatrice Cuming (1903-1974), painter and art teacher, lived and worked on the building's upper floors in the 1930s and 1940s, managing the building in lieu of rent. She taught private students in this studio, in addition to teaching in public schools and at the Lyman Allyn Museum. Beatrice Cuming studied with Henry Snell and at the Art Students League, at Pratt Institute, and in France. In the early 1930s she moved to Kairouan, Tunisia with her companion, author Dahrís Butterworth Martin. In Tunisia, Cuming studied Arabic. She taught for a time in New

York at the Parsons School of Design and the School of Visual Arts. According to tradition (WPA Art Project), she was on a train heading toward Boston when she looked out the window, liked what she saw of New London, got off the train, and stayed. She became director of educational programming at the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London. She painted scenes in the area, including the mammoth machines in the town's WWII boatbuilding factories. She was active in numerous arts organizations, especially in Essex and Mystic. She exhibited frequently in the 1930s and 40s, won a number of prizes, and had several solo shows. Her work is in the Regionalist tradition, representational but deriving expressive power from a degree of abstraction. In 1934 Cuming joined the WPA Federal Arts Project. Many of Cuming's works for the project were etchings depicting the New London area. She worked as a security guard for the Groton shipyard as a way of gaining access to the scenes she would depict. Cuming designed her own home and studio in 1958 in the Uncasville section of Montville, where several other artists and writers were living (see HRI for Montville, William Ashby McCloy).

Sources:

Interview by C. Hitchcock with Barbara Zabel, Connecticut College, 3/13/2015.

New London Tax Assessor's Records and GIS Viewer. Accessed at www.mapgeo.com/SCCOGCT/#

Tyl, Cecile. Research material on Beatrice Cuming. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, at <http://sirir-archives.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?uri=full=3100001~!212485~!0>;

Bacon's Marble Block. 2014. Historic Buildings of Connecticut web site: accessed at <http://historicbuildingsct.com/?p=18510>

. Cuming, Beatrice. WPA Art Project web site. Connecticut State Library. Accessed at: <http://ctstatelibrary.org/cuming-beatrice/> Note: includes additional sources.

Cuming Archives. Joslin Foundation, Boston.

King, Noelle Warden. 2013. Mystic as Muse: 100 Years of Inspiration, Exhibit catalog. Mystic: Mystic Art Association, p. 72-73.

Mattatuck Museum: <http://www.mattatuckmuseum.org/ArtForEveryone>

New Deal Art Along the River. 2015. Connecticut River Museum. Essex, Connecticut.

Pride of Place: Architecture Along State Street, New London, Connecticut. New London Landmarks web site. Accessed at: <http://www.newlondonlandmarks.org/arch.htm>

Ransom, David F. 1979. Downtown New London National Register Historic District Nomination No. 79002665. National Park Service.

Photographer: Charlotte Hitchcock Date: 3/13/2015

View: North view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock Printed On: May 14, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



Bacon's Marble Block, 128-138 State St. (Captains Walk)

FOR OFFICE USE:

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