

CT Trust Resource ID: 2142

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): Lyman Allyn Art Museum

Other Name(s) (Historic): Lyman Allyn Art Museum

Street Address or Location: 625 Williams Street, New London

Town/City: New London

Village:

County: New London

Designation(s):

Owner(s): Lyman Allyn Art Museum

Public/Private: Non-Profit

Latitude: 41.3736 Longitude: -72.1031

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Recreation & culture: museum

Historic Use: Recreation & culture: museum

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

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: during open hours

Style of building: Classical revival Date of Construction: 1932

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

Structural Systems(s): Load bearing masonry

Roof(Type): Flat (Material): Built up

Number of Stories: 2 Approximate Dimensions: 50' x 108' plus additions

Structural Condition: Excellent

Exterior Condition: Excellent

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: Yes If yes, explain: Addition at rear (north)

Related outbuildings or landscape features: Barn, Parking, drive and fountain sculpture

Surrounding Environment: Residential

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The Lyman Allyn Art Museum is sited on a hill overlooking a southern view to Long Island Sound, and is adjacent to the campus of Connecticut College. Also on the property is the Deshon-Allyn House and barn, listed on the National Register. Surrounding the museum are lawns and large-scale sculptures on exhibit.

Other notable features of building or site:

The building is a two-story Neo-classical-style stone masonry-walled structure with a flat roof (originally hipped) and a symmetrical façade featuring a central portico with four doric columns, frieze, and pediment. Behind the portico the building is a solid block with a low first floor of two casement window bays on each side of the portico. The entry door under the portico has a half-circle fan light above a door and sidelights. The upper floor is windowless, with rusticated ashlar masonry walls surmounted by a projecting cornice and a parapet wall at the roof level. The building measures 50' x 108' plus additions at the rear.

Architect: Charles A. Platt Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

The Lyman Allyn Art Museum was founded in 1926 with a bequest from Harriet Upson Allyn (1840 -1926). She was the youngest of Captain Lyman Allyn's (1797- 1874) six children. Allyn had also donated a tract of land to neighboring Connecticut College. Architect Charles A. Platt was hired 'to design an elegant neo-classical granite structure on a hill overlooking New London and the Thames River' to be similar to a Platt design for the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy in Massachusetts. The museum opened in 1932, displaying a small collection built by the first Director, Winslow Ames. From its early years, the museum followed a mission to educate the community both through its collection and exhibitions, and through art classes. Beatrice Cuming taught classes for young people through the 1930s and 1940s. The collection includes works by faculty at the college, including David Smalley, William Ashby McCloy, and Barkley Hendricks. Charles Adams Platt (1861-1933) was a self-taught architect and landscape architect with roots in Connecticut, as his mother was a Cheney from Manchester. He was nationally known for his landscape and country house designs, but also for etchings, paintings, institutional architectural projects (Avery Library). Platt settled at the Cornish Art Colony in New Hampshire established by Augustus St. Gaudens. There

he designed a number of homes and gardens. Platt designed nine museums beginning with the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C. and including the Lyman Allyn Art Museum and the Lyme Art Association in Old Lyme. He worked in campus planning, and did the master plan for Connecticut College.

Winslow Ames (1907-1990) taught art history at Connecticut College and was the first director of the Lyman Allyn Art Museum. Although his academic interests focused on Victorian art, Ames also had a deep interest in modern art. He was director of the Lyman Allyn when he attended Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition (1933), where he witnessed numerous examples of prefabricated houses. Appreciative of their stark International-style appearance, Ames had two houses erected on museum-owned property adjacent to the college, both now restored and listed on the National Register of Historic Places (the Steel House and Winslow Ames House). Although both were intended to be rental houses, Ames and his family lived in one for a brief period. Later, Ames moved on to Brown University, and in 1949 the house was acquired by Connecticut College.

Beatrice Cuming (1903-1974), painter and art teacher, worked in a downtown studio in the 1930s and 1940s. She taught in public schools and at the Lyman Allyn Museum. Cuming had studied with Henry Snell, at the Art Students League, at Pratt Institute, and in France. In the early 1930s she moved to Kairouan, Tunisia with author Dahrir Butterworth Martin. She taught for a time in New York. 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. Cuming painted scenes in the area, including wartime boatbuilding factories. She was active in arts organizations in Essex and Mystic. She exhibited, 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. Her work for the Project depicted the New London area. She worked as a security guard for the Groton shipyard as a way of gaining access to scenes. Cuming designed her own home and studio in 1958 in Uncasville.

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/#

Ames, Winslow, Obituary, New York Times, 10/08/1990.

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

Clouette, Bruce, & Maura Cronin. Winslow Ames House National Register Nomination No. 95000283. National Park Service, 1995.

Lyman Allyn Art Museum. 2009. Historic Buildings of Connecticut web site: accessed at <http://historicbuildingsct.com/?p=1682>.

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.

Lyman Allyn Art Museum, History. Museum web site. Accessed at: <http://www.lymanallyn.org/history-of-laam/>

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

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

Platt, Charles Adams. Archives at Columbia University Avery Library. Finding aid and biographical note accessed at: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/archival/collections/ldpd_3460562/.

Royalty, Douglas. 2013. Steel House National Register Nomination No. 08001379. National Park Service.

Photographer: Historic Buildings of CT Date: 2009

View: South view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock Printed On: May 16, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



Lyman Allyn Museum - south view (Historic Buildings of CT photo)

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ Site# _____ UTM _____

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