

CT Trust Resource ID: 2494

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): A. Wallace Chauncey '10 Courtyard at Henry B. du Pont '16 Library, Pomfret School

Other Name(s) (Historic): A. Wallace Chauncey '10 Courtyard at Henry B. du Pont '16 Library, Pomfret School

Street Address or Location: 398 Pomfret Street (Rte 169 & 44), Pomfret

Town/City: Pomfret

Village:

County: Windham

Designation(s):

Owner(s): Pomfret School, Inc.

Public/Private: Private

Latitude: 41.8845 Longitude: -71.9638

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: EDUCATION: secondary school; LANDSCAPE: courtyard; MONUMENTS: sculptures

Historic Use: EDUCATION: secondary school; LANDSCAPE: courtyard; MONUMENTS: sculptures

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

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: NA

Style of building: Modern movement Date of Construction: c. 1969

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

Structural Systems(s): Structural iron or steel. Load bearing masonry

Roof(Type): (Material):

Number of Stories: n/a Approximate Dimensions: 70' x 90'

Structural Condition: Excellent

Exterior Condition: Excellent

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: No If yes, explain: NA

Related outbuildings or landscape features: Academic buildings, Shed

Surrounding Environment: Residential

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

Locations at the Pomfret School that are associated with sculptor Alice Walton Dunbar include the A. Wallace Chauncey '10 Courtyard (adjacent to the Henry B. du Pont '16 Library) where her Boy with Falcon sculpture is featured, a studio addition to the Monell Science Building (demolished), and a cottage at Eastover House, 431 Pomfret Street, where Alice Dunbar lived in a cottage at the rear of the Head's residence. Work by Dunbar is also located at the front of Christ Episcopal Church, 521-529 Pomfret Street. Eastover and Christ Church are contributing resources in the Pomfret Street Historic District. The A. Wallace Chauncey Courtyard is at the south end of the main school campus, southwest of Hard Auditorium and north of the du Pont Library.

Other notable features of building or site:

The courtyard is a brick-paved rectangle approximately 70' wide, adjacent to the north wall of the du Pont Library building, and extending 90' northward. It forms an outdoor plaza bounded by the library, Monell Science Building, and the corner of the Hard Auditorium building. Two additional smaller staggered rectangles of brick paving at the southeastern corner form the transition up a slight grade to a lawn to the east. Matching the construction of the library building, cast-in-place concrete walls form the edges of the courtyard. They act as retaining walls along the grade change, which slopes down toward the west, and as low enclosures to the paved spaces. The west side of the courtyard has a flush stone edge and blends into a sloping lawn along the east side of Monell Science Building. Two flights of steps, at the north and south corners of this edge, lead down to the science building.

The sculpture Boy with Falcon by Alice Walton Dunbar is a bronze casting approximately five feet tall, set on a rough-cut granite base roughly the same height as the concrete walls of the courtyard in which it is a prominent feature. The semi-abstract figure is kneeling, faces south, and carries the falcon on his right wrist. The falcon, like the human figure, is abstracted, with elongated wings extending vertically, expressing a sense of its aerial nature. A bronze strip set into the stone on the east side reads 'Given in Memory of the Mother of a Pomfret Boy.'

Architect: Cambridge Seven Architects: Bankanowsky, Louis J. Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

Alice Dunbar created the Boy with Falcon sculpture as the new du Pont Library and Chauncey Courtyard were in the process of design and construction (Pomfret School archives) and the sculpture is an integral feature of the landscape design. The sculpture echoes the verticality of the arcade-like piers in the building façade while softening the severity of the design. At the time the school facilities were newly expanding beyond an original single row of buildings and the campus plan added circulation and gathering spaces to the west framed by a second group of structures. The design philosophy broke with the Neo-classical revival styles of the earlier buildings and embraced modernism. The du Pont Library was designed by Cambridge Seven Architects, a Boston-based firm known for thorough investigation of the clients' usage patterns in developing program and site, and for modernist design. The building incorporates exposed concrete and glass, asymmetrical rectilinear forms, and flat roofs. The courtyard design followed the Post-war theme of the outdoors as an extension of the interior, using a similar design vocabulary to that of the building.

Alice Walton Dunbar (1923-1996) was a sculptor and teacher at the Pomfret School from 1957-1991. She grew up in Kingston, NY in a family of six children. Dunbar studied at the Boston Museum School from 1940-45 majoring in sculpture. She taught briefly at Concord Academy in Concord, Massachusetts and then at Spelman College of Atlanta University until 1948. Following a fellowship from the Boston Museum School to study in Europe, Dunbar established a studio in Lomontville, New York near Kingston, where she worked from 1948-1956. In 1957, Dunbar joined the faculty of Pomfret School, where she taught and worked until her retirement (askART). Headmaster of the school Joseph K. Milnor was a supporter of arts education and backed the hiring of Alice Dunbar. She lived on campus in a cottage behind the Headmaster's residence (see Eastover House, 431 Pomfret Street). A studio was constructed as an addition to the west side of the then-new Monell Science Building and Dunbar taught there through her career (demolished, late 1990s).

Alice Dunbar exhibited through New England and New York State. She traveled to Afghanistan and Turkey (1958), around the world with her aunt, philosopher Dr. Suzanne Langer (1961), and to Africa (1963), Mexico (1969), and Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii (1983-84). The perspectives of travel informed her teaching and her artwork (Sloat 2014 interview).

Sources:

Interview by C. Hitchcock with Caroline and Robert Sloat, 8/22/2014, at the site; tour of campus and historic district.

Email from Mark Simon, Pomfret alumnus, 9/04/2014.

Town of Pomfret Assessor's Records <http://gis.vgsi.com/pomfretct/Parcel.aspx?pid=584> Parcel ID: Map 14/ A/ 008.00.

Historical aerial photography and maps accessed at UConn MAGIC: http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/mash_up/1934.html.

Boyd, T. K. "Dunbar, Alice W.: Sculptor, teacher, friend." Web site accessed 8/22/2014 at <http://sheepdogsoftware.co.uk/biog/dunbar-alice-w.htm>.

Cunningham, Jan. 1998. Pomfret Street National Register Historic District Nomination No. 98000372. National Park Service.

Dunbar, Alice, Biography from the Archives of askART. Accessed 9/30/2015 at

http://www.askart.com/artist_bio/Alice_Walton_Dunbar/11160805/Alice_Walton_Dunbar.aspx#.

Pomfret School campus map. Accessed 9/30/2015 at <http://www.pomfretschool.org/Page/Visit>.

Pomfret School archives. Articles and photographs including: 10/18/1969. 'Cambridge Seven Associates Designs New Building.' Pomfret School publication. 2003. 'Alice Dunbar Sculptures Available for Sale.' Pomfret School Bulletin, Winter/Spring.

Photographer: Charlotte Hitchcock Date: 8/22/2014

View: East view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock Printed On: May 24, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



East view of Pomfret School courtyard, Boy with Falcon by Alice Dunbar

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ Site# _____ UTM _____

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