

CT Trust Resource ID: 2108

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): Burtch Block; Merrill, James, House

Other Name(s) (Historic): Burtch Block; Merrill, James, House/Burtch Block

Street Address or Location: 107 Water Street, Stonington

Town/City: Stonington

Village:

County: New London

Designation(s): NR, NRHD, SRHD, SR

Owner(s): STONINGTON VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT ASSOC., INC

Public/Private: Non-Profit

Latitude: 41.3337 Longitude: -71.9066

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Domestic: single dwelling; Commerce/trade: specialty store

Historic Use: Domestic: single dwelling; Commerce/trade: specialty store; Social: meeting hall

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

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: Some areas during open hours

Style of building: Late Victorian; Victorian eclectic Date of Construction: 1906

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

Structural Systems(s): Wood Frame

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

Number of Stories: 3 Approximate Dimensions: 39' x 46'

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: Shed

Surrounding Environment: Commercial

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The 1901 James Merrill House is a late-Victorian commercial-residential block located on Water Street in Stonington Borough, a picturesque maritime village set on a narrow, 170-acre peninsula in the southeastern corner of Connecticut near the Rhode Island border. The eclectically styled, shingle-clad building, known as the Burtch Block, originally contained street-level retail space, second-floor clubrooms and third-floor living quarters. In 1956 the property was purchased by noted American poet James Ingram Merrill (1926-1995) and his partner David Noyes Jackson (1922-2001), who used the third floor as their private living and guest space. Adding an attic studio and rooftop deck, the men transformed their quarters with a distinctively quirky decor that remains largely intact. The structure is currently owned by the Stonington Village Improvement Association (SVIA), which inherited the building from Merrill in 1995 The property is in good condition and has undergone relatively few alterations since its construction (Carley, Section 7 Summary Paragraph). The building is a contributing resource in the Stonington Borough Historic District (listed in 1978) and individually listed on the National Register in 2013.

Other notable features of building or site:

For description, see Carley 2013, National Register Nomination for the James Merrill House at: <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/13000618.pdf>

Architect: Unknown Builder/Maker: Unknown

Historical or Architectural importance:

The James Merrill House is nationally significant for its close, forty-one-year association with James Ingram Merrill (1926-1995), one of his generation's most acclaimed poets considered peerless among his contemporaries who were writing in meter and rhyme (Criterion B). Over the course of his extraordinary career, this erudite and accomplished writer produced twenty-five volumes of poetry, along with three plays, two novels, numerous essays and a memoir. The multilingual author also translated dozens of works of other poets into French, Portuguese, Dutch and modern Greek, and contributed countless introductions, forewords and afterwords to the publications of his colleagues. Merrill's impressive canon of work garnered nearly every major award in his field, including the Pulitzer Prize; two National Book Awards in Poetry;

the National Book Critics Circle Award; the Library of Congress's first Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry; Yale's Bollingen Prize for Poetry; and the Medal of Honor for Literature from the National Arts Club (NPS weekly search page; significance summary).

Merrill's apartment in Stonington was the site of Merrill's social and literary gatherings, which included his friends Grace Zaring Stone and Eleanor Stone Perenyi (see entry for 53 Main Street). Merrill was named the first Poet Laureate of Connecticut for the period 1985-95.

Sources:

Town of Stonington Assessor's Records. Accessed at: <http://gis.stonington-ct.gov/> .

Carley, Rachel. 2013. Merrill, James, House National Register Nomination No. 13000618. National Park Service. Accessed at: <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/13000618.pdf> .

Connecticut: U.S. State Poets Laureate. Library of Congress web site. Accessed at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/main/poets/connecticut.html> .

Zimmerman, Sarah J. 1978. Stonington Borough National Register Historic District No. 08000497. National Park Service.

Photographer: Charlotte Hitchcock **Date:** 8/25/2104

View: West view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock **Printed On:** May 25, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



107 Water St., Stonington Borough - west view

FOR OFFICE USE:

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