

CT Trust Resource ID: 4216

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): Rose, Rufus & Margo, HouseOther Name(s) (Historic): Rose, Rufus & Margo, HouseStreet Address or Location: 24 Avery Lane, WaterfordTown/City: Waterford

Village:

County: New London

Designation(s):

Owner(s): Mondy, Larry J.Public/Private: PrivateLatitude: 41.3426 Longitude: -72.1394

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Domestic: single dwellingHistoric Use: Domestic: single dwellingAccessibility to public: No Exterior visible from public road? YesInterior accessible? If yes, explain: NAStyle of building: Twentieth century vernacular; split level Date of Construction: 1943Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate) StuccoStructural Systems(s): Load bearing masonryRoof(Type): Gable (Material): Asphalt ShingleNumber of Stories: 1 1/2 Approximate Dimensions: 40' x 50'Structural Condition: GoodExterior Condition: GoodLocational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NAAlterations?: No If yes, explain: NA

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

Surrounding Environment: Residential

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The property is located on the west side of Avery Lane where it bends eastward, between Rope Ferry Road (Route 156) to the south and the Boston Post Road (US Route 1) to the north. The Rose House, built in 1943, has a circular drive to the east connecting with the road. To the south, a smaller c. 1900 house, having the address of 20 Avery Lane, appears likely to have at one time been part of the same property (Aerial photography, UConn MAGIC). The parcel in the mid-twentieth century was slightly less than five acres, and has been subdivided and the house is now on a 1.71-acre parcel.

Other notable features of building or site:

The house is a 40' x 50', 1 1/2-story gable-roofed building with its east gable facing the road across a circular drive. The south roof slopes down to a one-story height, salt-box style and has a gable dormer at an upper floor level. The house as it was built, was notable for including a 150-seat theater for puppetry performances (Bachman 2000, p. 147). The exterior is stucco and concrete block masonry, with asphalt shingle roofing.

Architect: Rufus & Margo Rose Builder/Maker: Rufus & Margo Rose

Historical or Architectural importance:

The property at 24 Avery Lane was given to Rufus and Margo Rose by Frank B. Rose, the father of Rufus. The site, located just south of the Boston Post Road, was an undeveloped area of farmland near the Jordan Cove historic area of Waterford, now a National Register Historic District. The house was built in 1943 by the Roses as their home and as a studio for the Rufus Rose Marionettes. The Roses included a workshop and puppet theater in the building. The area remained lightly developed until at least 1970, as shown by historic aerial photographs of the area. After the death of Margo Rose, an unsuccessful attempt was made to re-use the house as a teaching facility connected with the O'Neill Theater Foundation. The property was ultimately sold, and the archives of the Rose Marionettes are at the Ballard Institute at the University of Connecticut.

Margo Rose (1903-1997) was a puppet artist, teacher, and performer who worked with marionettes for over 60 years. Interested in puppets from a very young age, she often put on shows in her family's backyard. She attended Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa, where she majored in Fine Arts. After graduation, she joined the famous Tony Sarg Marionette Company in 1927 and met her future husband, Rufus Rose, another puppeteer in the company. Before marrying Rose in 1930, Margo spent a year studying sculpture at the British Academy in Rome.

Rufus Rose (1904-1975), was a native of Waterford who studied business at Antioch College in Ohio before joining the Tony Sarg Marionette Company. In 1931, during the Great Depression, the Roses split off from Tony Sarg and formed their own traveling company, the Rufus Rose Marionettes.

The Roses settled in Rufus's native town of Waterford, where they established their home and studio and raised their three sons. The Roses traveled

the country seasonally with their original shows, appearing all around the country. Margo specialized in design and Rufus in construction. By 1937, when they were featured in a news article (Colby 1937), they were established at their Avery Lane site, though the house with its theater was yet to be built, in 1943 (Bachman 2000, p. 147). Gas rationing and other difficulties brought on by World War II caused the Roses to put their puppet work on hold in the early 1940s. Rufus took a job with the Electric Boat Company in Groton, Conn., and Margo volunteered with the American Red Cross. When the war ended, the Roses resumed touring and, in 1946, hosted the first festival for the newly formed Connecticut Chapter of the Puppeteers of America. On Christmas Eve 1948, they made history by performing Scrooge, Margo's adaptation of Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol, the first full-length marionette production performed live on national television. Rufus joined the Howdy Doody television show in 1952 and worked the puppets, while Margo stayed in Waterford. Rufus convinced the management that other puppets were needed for the Howdy Doody Show, and this was done by Rufus and Margo.

In the 1960s, despite a loss of several hundred of their puppets in a 1961 fire, the Roses continued to tour and to design and build puppets for television films including Treasure Island, Rip van Winkle and Aladdin. Together, Margo and Rufus Rose produced more than a dozen marionette productions as well as numerous films, commercials, and television projects (CT Womens Hall of Fame). Rufus Rose served in the Connecticut Legislature as a State Representative from 1961-1973 and was well known as a motorcycle enthusiast.

The Roses were also instrumental in establishing the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theater and the National Theater of the Deaf as well as the Connecticut Chapter of Puppeteers of America. Until just two weeks before her death at age 94, Margo Rose shared her love for puppetry with students from Connecticut College, the University of Connecticut, the O'Neill Theater, and other venues where her talents could inspire new generations of puppets.

Sources:

Town of Waterford Assessors Records and GIS viewer: <http://www.mapgeo.com/SCCOGCT/#> and Vision Government Solutions.

Interview by C. Hitchcock via email with Christopher Rose, 7/08/2016.

Bachman, Robert L. with William Breadheft. 2000. An Illustrated History of Waterford. Waterford: Bicentennial Committee, Town of Waterford.

Colby, Barnard L. 7/31/1937. Waterford Couple Called Foremost Puppeteers. New London Day.

Clouette, Bruce. 2005. Walnut Grove National Register Nomination No. 05001044. National Park Service.

Decoster, Stan. 5/29/1975. Puppeteer Rufus Rose is dead. New London Day. Accessed at news.google.com/newspapers.

McQuiston, John T. 9/16/1997. Margo Rose Dies at 94; Helped Design 'Howdy Doody'. New York Times. Accessed at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/1997/09/16/arts/margo-rose-dies-at-94-helped-design-howdy-doody.html>.

Rose, Margo, Connecticut Womens Hall of Fame, inducted 1997. Accessed at: <http://www.cwhf.org/inductees/arts-humanities/margo-rose/>.

UConn MAGIC aerial photography for 1951, 1965, 1970. Accessed at: http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/connecticut_data.html#indexes.

Rose Archives. Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry. University of Connecticut. Accessed at: <http://bimp.uconn.edu/education/american-puppeteers/rufus-and-margo-rose/>.

Photographer: Bing Aerial map Date: 2016

View: East view

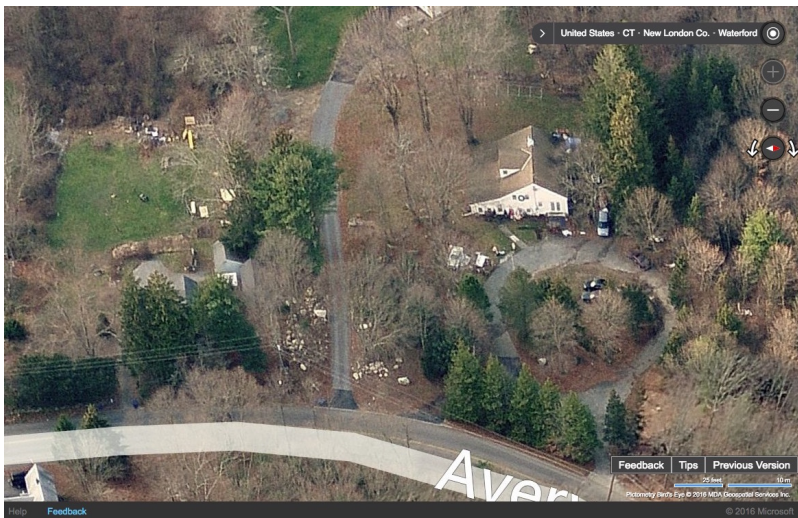
Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock Printed On: July 19, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



24 Avery Lane, Waterford - East aerial view (Bing Maps)

FOR OFFICE USE:

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