

**HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY  
BUILDING AND STRUCTURES**

HIST-6 NEW 5.77

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
**CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
59 SOUTH PROSPECT STREET, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106  
(203) 566-3005

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Town No.:	Site No.: 70
UTM	
QUAD:	
DISTRICT <input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> NR	IF NR SPECIFY <input type="checkbox"/> Actual <input type="checkbox"/> Potential

IDENTIFICATION

1. BUILDING NAME (Common) <b>Durham Academy/Coginchaug School</b>		(Historic) <b>Durham Academy</b>	
2. TOWN CITY <b>Durham</b>		VILLAGE	COUNTY <b>Middlesex</b>
3. STREET AND NUMBER (and or location) <b>50 Main Street</b>			
4. OWNER(S) <b>Venuti, Karen</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private			
5. USE (Present) <b>Vacant</b>		(Historic) <b>School, Fraternal Meeting Hall, Post Office</b>	
6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	EXTERIOR VISIBLE FROM PUBLIC ROAD <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	INTERIOR ACCESSIBLE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	IF YES, EXPLAIN <b>With Permission</b>

DESCRIPTION

7. STYLE OF BUILDING <b>Greek Revival</b>		DATE OF CONSTRUCTION <b>1843-44</b>	
8. MATERIAL(S) (Indicate use or location when appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard	<input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brick	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle	<input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding	<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone	<b>Foundation</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten	<input type="checkbox"/> Stucco	<input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding	<input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Type: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Cut stone Type: _____	
9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wood frame	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Post and beam	<input type="checkbox"/> balloon	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Load bearing masonry	<input type="checkbox"/> Structural iron or steel		
10. ROOF (Type)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gable	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat	<input type="checkbox"/> Mansard	<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor <input type="checkbox"/> sawtooth
<input type="checkbox"/> Gambrel	<input type="checkbox"/> Shed	<input type="checkbox"/> Hip	<input type="checkbox"/> Round <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
(Material)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle	<input type="checkbox"/> Roll Asphalt	<input type="checkbox"/> Tin	<input type="checkbox"/> Slate
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Asphalt shingle	<input type="checkbox"/> Built up	<input type="checkbox"/> Tile	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
11. NUMBER OF STORIES <b>2½</b>	APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS <b>28'x42'</b>		
12. CONDITION (Structural)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated
(Exterior)		<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated
13. INTEGRITY (Location)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On original site	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	WHEN ?	(Alterations) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
			IF YES, EXPLAIN <b>Aluminum Siding</b>
14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES			
<input type="checkbox"/> Barn	<input type="checkbox"/> Shed	<input type="checkbox"/> Garage	<input type="checkbox"/> Other landscape features or buildings (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Carriage house	<input type="checkbox"/> Shop	<input type="checkbox"/> Garden	
15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT			
<input type="checkbox"/> Open land	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood-land	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Residential	<input type="checkbox"/> Scattered buildings visible from site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Indus-trial	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High building density
16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS			

This structure stands on a small .6 acre wooded lot on Durham's Main Street.

17 OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior)

None.

18 ARCHITECT

BUILDER

19 HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

This is one of Durham's most important nineteenth-century public buildings. As built in 1843-44, it was a domestic vernacular structure with Greek Revival features, the most notable of these being a recessed main entry flanked by pilasters and surmounted by a three part entablature and a cornice with a freize. Unlike the churches, however, the use of classical references was restrained, the wide corner pilasters evident on the Town Hall, the Grange Hall, and the United Churches, all of which are more or less contemporary with this structure, being reduced to narrow corner boards and lacking a pediment. The roof of the building was once surmounted by a square louvered bell-tower. This structure has been extensively altered. Its original clapboard sheathing has been replaced with aluminum siding, obscuring the building's original classical ornamentation. It has, moreover, been vacant and deteriorating for many years.

In the spring of 1843, Miles Mervin, Jr., the Rev. Charles S. Mills, Samuel Parsons, the Rev. David Smith and Perez Sturtevant constituted themselves as the Trustees of the Durham Academy. Their plan was to organize a private school offering a higher level of learning than that available in the public common schools of the town. They hoped, in the absence of public high schools in Connecticut (the first one would not be opened until the 1850s), to attract students from all over the state. In 1843, the trustees purchased a lot from Dennis Camp. The school building received its first students in the fall of 1844. The school did well at first, serving as a center of village culture--the place where public lectures were held and plays given--as well as of the higher branches of education. But increasing competition from

SOURCES

Durham Land Records; Durham Vital Records; Middletown Probate Records; Federal Census of 1820, 1850, 1880; Beers, J.B. History of Middlesex County, Connecticut (New York: J.B. Beers & Co., 1884); Durham History Committee Durham, CT, 1866-1980: Century of Change (Durham: 1980); Fowler, William C. History of Durham (Durham: W.C. Fowler, 1866); Whited, Milton Durham's Heritage (Durham: 1976); 1859 Walling Map; 1874 Beers Atlas.

PHOTO

PHOTOGRAPHER P.D. Hall DATE 6/83

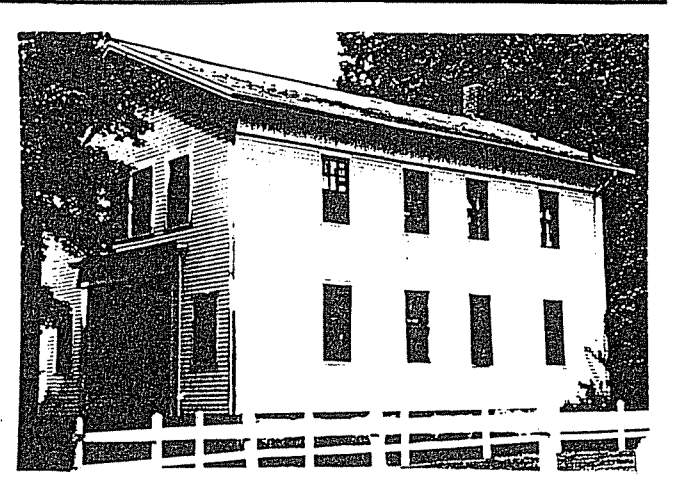
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COMPILED BY

NAME P.D. Hall DATE 8/10/83

ORGANIZATION Greater Middletown Preservation Trust

ADDRESS 27 Washington St., Middletown, Conn. 06457



20 SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS

21 THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE

None know.  Highways  Vandalism  Developers  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal  Private  Deterioration  Zoning  Explanaton \_\_\_\_\_

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM  
For Buildings and Structures

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

TOWN NO.: \_\_\_\_\_ SITE NO.: \_\_\_\_\_  
UTM: 18/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
QUAD: \_\_\_\_\_  
DISTRICT: S NR: ACTUAL  
POTENTIAL

CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: 19 Date: 9/29/83

DURHAM ACADEMY, 50 Main Street, Durham

the public schools, particularly the Middletown High School spelled its doom. In 1884, the Academy defaulted on its mortgage and the building was seized by its creditors. The building passed through several hands until 1891, when it was purchased by the Town of Durham and became the Coginchaug School, a consolidated school which joined together the North and Quarry School Districts. The building served from 1898 to 1923 as Durham's first high school. When the new school was completed, the old academy building was sold to the Knights of Pythias. They used it as their club house until 1973. The building also served as Durham's Post Office from 1935 through 1958, when the present post office was built. The building passed to its present owners in 1973.

Even in its deteriorated condition, this structure is Durham's most important nineteenth-century secular public building. For that reason alone it is worth rehabilitating. Its historical importance as a center of the town's culture, as school, clubhouse and post office, also justifies its restoration.