1. Name of Property
   Winslow Ames House
2. Location
   132 Mohegan Avenue
   New London, CT
3. Classification
4. State/Federal Agency Classification
5. National Park Service Certification
6. Function or Use
7. Description
8. Statement of Significance
9. Major Bibliographical References
10. Geographical Data
11. Form Prepared By

Floor Plan
Geological Survey
Photographs
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: WINSLOW AMES HOUSE

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: 132 Mohegan Avenue

city/town: New London

county: New London

code: 011

state: CT

not for publication: N/A

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing</th>
<th>Noncontributing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 buildings</td>
<td>0 Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 structures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 objects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. ___ See cont. sheet.

Signature of certifying official:  
John W. Shannahan, Director  
Connecticut Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. ___ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register  
___ determined eligible for the National Register  
___ determined not eligible for the National Register  
___ removed from the National Register  
___ other (explain): __________

Signature of Keeper  
Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: DOMESTIC  
Current: EDUCATION  

Sub: single dwelling  
Sub: college
USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

   International Style

   ----------------

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation CONCRETE roof METAL

   walls     STUCCO other   GLASS

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: ___ state _________.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : ___

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

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Period(s) of Significance: 1932-1938

Significant Dates: 1933

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Robert W. McLaughlin, Jr., architect

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.
9. Major Bibliographical References

_X_ See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_X_ State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University

Other -- Specify Repository: ________________________________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: ___.1 acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A 18 742270 4684160 B [blank] [blank] [blank] D [blank] [blank] [blank]

_X_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: __ See continuation sheet.

The nominated property includes the house known as 132 Mohegan Avenue, along with land bounded as follows: north by a campus road, east by Mohegan Avenue, south by a line 10’ from the rear of the house, and west by a line 30’ from the west side wall.

Boundary Justification: __ See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the house and a reasonable amount of the surrounding land, which forms a setting for the house.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Bruce Clouette and Maura Cronin, reviewed by John Herzan.

Organization: Historic Resource Consultants

Date: September 23, 1994

Street & Number: 55 Van Dyke Avenue

Telephone: 203-547-0268

City or Town: Hartford

State: CT

Zip: 06106
The Winslow Ames House is a small two-story flat-roofed International style house built in 1933 (Photographs 1-3). The house was prefabricated by American Homes, Inc., using their "Moto Home" method of construction. The house has a concrete-block foundation, a welded steel skeleton, and walls of 4'-wide white-painted panels. The panels, which are constructed of asbestos board over an insulating core, have been covered over with non-asbestos panels that duplicate the appearance of the original (an alteration made necessary by asbestos-abatement requirements). The joints between panels are covered by the original gray aluminum extrusions bolted to the frame; the house's simple cornice is also aluminum (Photograph 4).

The house is made up of three rectangular blocks (see accompanying floor plans) offset so as to create an irregular plan. The leftmost block, as one faces the house, accommodates two bedrooms, as well as the main entry and stair hall. The middle and largest block is set back 4' and overlays the left block at one corner. The middle block has the service core at the front, with a bathroom on the hall side and the kitchen opposite; a large living area extends across the rear. The rightmost block continues the plane of the front wall of the middle block and is a one-car garage. The second story is only over the front part of the middle block. A flat-roofed porch, supported on three metal posts, extends across the middle part of the facade, from the main entry to the garage door.

There are three entrances: the main entry, a kitchen entry, and a rear entry for the living area. The only architectural ornament on the exterior of the house is the fluted decoration that flanks each panel-and-glass door. The house has extensive areas of glass created by the use of adjacent panels with windows, particularly at the corners of rooms. The windows are double casements of four horizontal panes, above which is a single long fixed pane.

The interior finishes include carpeted floors, modern acoustical-tile ceilings (originally fiberboard sheets secured with battens), and single-panel plywood doors with molded rails and stiles (Photographs 5-8). Interior walls are simply the inside of the wall panels themselves; they have a plaster-like appearance, with the joints concealed by wide battens. The interior wall of the living room has floor-to-ceiling bookshelves surrounding a now blocked-off fireplace (Photograph 6); photographs of other Moto Home interiors indicate that the fireplace had a simple stuccoed surround with no mantel shelf. The original floor material, dark-stained pressed fiberboard, is currently
visible only on the treads of the steel stairway (Photograph 8).

The Winslow Ames House is no longer used as a residence; instead, it has been restored to serve as offices and meeting rooms for Connecticut College's Center for Arts and Technology. This use has had only a minimal impact on the house, such as new kitchen and bathroom appurtenances. The house is situated at the southeast corner of the college campus, on a corner formed by a campus road (which it faces) and the heavily traveled Mohegan Avenue (Connecticut Route 32). There are several houses belonging to the college nearby. Because of these neighboring houses, as well as the lawn, shrubs, and shade trees that make up its immediate setting, the Winslow Ames House retains its residential ambience.
Significance

The Winslow Ames House is significant as an example of the idealistic concept houses of the 1930s (Criterion C). In this period, new building materials and technologies seemed to offer the hope of revolutionizing the way American homes were built, thereby alleviating the shortage of affordable housing. The Ames House, an example of the prefabricated "Moto Home" sold by American Houses, Inc. of New York City, embodies many of the leading ideas of the period, including the use of prefabricated modular panels that were pre-finished, both inside and out; welded steel structural frame; celler-less concrete foundation; and central service core. The goal of all these features was to create a relatively inexpensive house, one that would be largely manufactured off-site. In this way, great economies could be achieved through standardization and mass production. The Winslow Ames House's use of the International style, which was derived from the European designs of the Bauhaus school, provided both a futuristic appearance and further cost savings. In this style, the flat roof eliminated costly roof framing, there was no need for architectural ornament, and otherwise-unsightly things, such as exposed bolt heads, actually added to the desired technological-industrial appearance. Moto Homes, named for the "Moto Unit" core that contained plumbing, heating, air conditioning, and electricity, were a relatively successful example of the type. Unlike some concept houses, they were available in many different sizes and configurations, an advantage made possible by their modular construction and the "building-blocks" appearance appropriate to the International style. Although American Houses never achieved its goal of mass production, which might have made the houses truly affordable, the firm completed about 100 homes in the years 1932-1938, chiefly in the New York metropolitan area but also as far away as Florida and Kansas.

Robert W. McLaughlin, Jr. and American Houses, Inc.

The ideas that underlay the Winslow Ames House and other Moto Homes were developed by Robert W. McLaughlin, Jr. (1900-1989). McLaughlin was educated at Princeton ('21; M.F.A., architecture, '26) and for many years was the partner of Arthur C. Holden. McLaughlin formed American Houses, Inc. in 1932 after designing a prototype industrial-worker house for Donald Markle, a coal-mine owner from Hazleton, Pennsylvania. Although Markle did not order additional units, the house became the basis for American Houses' prefabricated Moto Home. American House was soon acquired by Houses, Inc., a General Electric subsidiary, which
Significance

The Moto-Unit at the heart of the house was also largely prefabricated. Combining a furnace, hot water heater, refrigerator, air-conditioner,
plumbing, and electricity in a central core, the Moto-Unit was then attached to pre-built bathroom and kitchen assemblies that included their own recessed lighting. Some Moto Homes even had built-in radios and cigarette lighters. Although the original furnace, kitchen cabinets, and kitchen and bathroom fixtures of the Winslow Ames House have been replaced, the core is still clearly evident and functioning as originally intended.

Except for the asbestos wall panels, the Moto Home’s ideas were shared by other concept houses of the period. Buckminster Fuller’s Dymaxion House (1929, though none were built until after World War II) pioneered the concept of the house as a machine, with a central mechanical core. General Houses, Inc., based in Chicago, marketed an International style house with a steel skeleton and steel modular wall panels that was similar in appearance to the Moto Home. Other affordable-housing proposals of the period, including Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian houses, used central service cores, flat roofs, and concrete slabs or footings (rather than cellars) to further reduce costs.

The Moto Home never delivered on its promise to provide less expensive housing. The Winslow Ames House cost $7,500, not including land, which was considerably more than most other comparably sized houses of the period; the other Moto Homes featured in the architectural periodicals of the time also were more expensive than traditionally built homes, to the point where they were probably out of reach for most of the middle class. Because the manufacture of the panels never approached mass production, only modest savings were achieved in materials, and the use of a welded steel frame made erection very expensive. Also, the austere industrial appearance of the Moto Home, devoid of any exterior ornament or warm interior finishes, probably limited the house’s appeal to only the most aesthetically advanced tastes. Most of the Moto Home’s intended market probably regarded it as singularly unattractive.

Concept houses such as the Moto Home played an important role in American architecture by furthering the ideal of the affordable house. Although apparently a failure, prefabrication continued to evolve, producing at one end of the spectrum the totally prefabricated house, represented by the millions of mobile homes sold after World War II, as well as the introduction of many more modular and pre-made items into ordinary home construction, such as 4 x 8’ sheets of plywood and wall board, roof trusses, and bathtub/shower units. Robert McLaughlin and his associates must have learned a great deal from the Moto Home, since American Houses went on to produce a highly successful line of
partially prefabricated wood-frame houses, this time in the "Cape Cod Colonial" style. The firm's first order following its decision to discontinue the Moto Home was for 136 Capes, more than all the Moto Homes built to date. McLaughlin retired from the firm in 1947 and later taught architecture at Princeton.

Winslow Ames

Winslow Ames was a professor of art history and an art-museum director. Although his academic interests centered around Victorian art (he was a scholar of Prince Albert and one of the founders of the Victorian Society of America), Ames also had a deep interest in the art of his own period. He was director of the Lyman Allyn Museum on the campus of Connecticut College at the time of his attendance at Chicago’s Century of Progress Exposition (1933), where he witnessed numerous examples of prefabricated houses. Convinced that such houses were the wave of the future, and appreciative of their stark International-style appearance, Ames had two houses erected on museum-owned property adjacent to the college, one a small steel-paneled house made by General Houses (still standing though substantially modified with the addition of a gable roof) and a Moto Home from American Houses. Although both were at first intended to be rental houses, Ames and his family lived in the Moto Home for a brief period. Later, Ames moved on to Brown University, and in 1949 the house was acquired by Connecticut College. After several years of marginal use, its recent restoration has given new life to an architecturally significant 1930s "House of Tomorrow."

1The term "House of Tomorrow," while certainly implied in everything that McLaughlin and American Houses wrote about the Moto Home, is an appellation taken from H. Ward Jandl’s Yesterday’s Houses of Tomorrow (Washington, 1991).

At least two other Moto Homes in Connecticut appear in the architectural journals of the time, and several are said to have been built in Fairfield County in the towns adjacent to New York State. It is not known how many of these survive intact, if any.
Bibliography

Winslow Ames House
New London, New London County, CT


McLaughlin, Robert W., Jr. "Will This Be the Interior Decoration of the Future?" American Home (October 1932): 239.


SECOND FLOOR PLAN
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Photographs: Winslow Ames House
New London, New London County, CT

Photos-1

All photographs:

1. Winslow Ames House
2. New London, New London County, CT
3. Photo Credit: HRC, Hartford, CT
4. September, 1994
5. Negative filed with Connecticut Historical Commission
   Hartford, CT

Captions:

North elevation (facade), garage on left, camera facing northwest
Photograph 1 of 8

North elevation (facade), camera facing southeast
Photograph 2 of 8

West elevation, camera facing east
Photograph 3 of 8

Detail of northwest rear corner, showing aluminum batten, camera facing northeast
Photograph 4 of 8

Interior, living room, camera facing southeast
Photograph 5 of 8

Interior, living room, camera facing northeast
Photograph 6 of 8

Interior, northwest bedroom, camera facing west
Photograph 7 of 8

Interior, detail of stairway, camera facing west
Photograph 8 of 8
North elevation (facade), garage on left, camera facing northwest
Photograph 1 of 8
North elevation (facade), camera facing southeast
Photograph 2 of 8
West elevation, camera facing east
Photograph 3 of 8
Detail of northwest rear corner, showing aluminum batten, camera facing northeast
Photograph 4 of 8
Interior, northwest bedroom, camera facing west
Photograph 7 of 8
Interior, detail of stairway, camera facing west
Photograph 8 of 8