

**United States Department of the Interior**  
 National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 3580 Main Street

City or town: Hartford State: CT County: Hartford

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_A \_\_\_B \_\_\_C \_\_\_D

_____ <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>Title :</b>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

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#### 4. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object



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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex is the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century headquarters for the Fuller Brush Company, a leading manufacturer of cleaning brushes. Located in the City of Hartford, Hartford County, Connecticut, approximately four miles north of the downtown, the factory was initially developed in 1922 and expanded with secondary lofts, warehouses, and additions constructed through the mid-twentieth century. The last building sections in the complex were constructed c. 1962 after the Fuller Brush Company vacated the property. The complex consists of five connected contributing buildings, including: the Main Factory and Office building (Buildings #1 and 2, 1922), Garage (Building #3, 1922); Boiler House (Building #4, 1922); Factory Building (Building #s 9, 10, and 11, 1937 to c. 1962); and Warehouse (Building #s 6, 12, and 13, 1935 to c. 1962). The buildings names are derived from Sanborn Maps and available historical documentation.

The complex consists of masonry, with a three-story Main Office and Factory Building serving as the primary visual feature along Main Street. As such, that building prominently displays a higher level of design ornamentation, complete with its centrally located stair tower on the primary, west, elevation, a raised parapet, patterned brickwork, and concrete ornamentation. All

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secondary buildings are simple in design, one-story in height, and are situated behind the Main Office and Factory Building at the east end of the site. The complex retains its integrity as a high-producing twentieth-century industrial facility.

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## **Narrative Description**

### **Setting**

The Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex is located in Hartford, approximately four miles north of the city's downtown (Figure 1). The property is situated on the east side of Main Street, in a mixed industrial and residential neighborhood. The area is bounded by Interstate-91 to the north and east, single-family residential properties to the west, and industrial/commercial buildings to the south along Main Street. Directly north of the complex is a surface parking lot and neighborhood of early-20<sup>th</sup> century single-family residences. To the east, beyond the former New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad tracks, are unrelated industrial and manufacturing buildings that date to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century period. Immediately south of the subject complex are additional unrelated industrial buildings, as well as commercial and retail stores along Main Street. Buildings to the south of the Fuller complex date to both the early- and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century periods, as evidenced on historic aerial images. Single-family residential properties to the west of Main Street, including the elderly housing complex fronting Main Street, date to the early-21<sup>st</sup> century.

The complex occupies the majority of a flat, 8.5-acre, rectangular parcel (Figure 2). The north portion of the site is defined by the historic extent of developed land by the company, marking the former location of a fence bisecting that portion of the property (Figure 12). The west end of the site including sections of lawn, shrubbery plantings, concrete walkways, light posts, and a brick-paved entrance turnaround, which separate the west elevation from Main Street. At the south end of this section is a small asphalt surface parking lot. Additional sections of lawn are located directly adjacent the north elevation along with paved surface parking. The south and east portions of the site primarily consist of hardscaping surrounding the various factory and warehouse buildings. In between the Garage/Factory Building and the Factory/Warehouse Building is a curved, paved road that follows the alignment of a former railroad spur. No rails are extant on the surface.

### **Main Office and Factory Building (Buildings 1 and 2, one contributing building)**

The Main Office and Factory Building is a three-story, L-shaped, pier-and-spandrel, brick and concrete loft, constructed in 1922 with Gothic Revival style ornament, designed by Buck and Sheldon, Inc. The building consists of two integrated sections, Building #s 1 and 2. Building #1 consists of 24-structural bays that run parallel with Main Street and the first five-bays of the north elevation. A prominent, exterior stair tower is centered on the façade (west elevation) and rises above the remainder of the complex. Building #2 is a small square-shaped segment that makes up the remainder of the north (side) elevation, extending an additional five-bays to the east. The Main Office and Factory Building displays a red brick exterior, laid in the common bond with a Flemish bond every seven courses, with concrete banding. Architectural elements of

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the Gothic Revival style are evident throughout, most notably at the central projecting bay of the west elevation which features a primary entrance enclosed in a cast stone arc-en-tudor surround with slight reliefs from the face of the elevation. The top of the stair tower features castings of ornate tri-partite windows at each façade, with typical stylistic tendencies found in the Gothic Revival style. Above, the cornice line features more Classical Revival elements, but with some stylistic tendencies found in Gothic Revival with pointed features and projecting rounded elements. Fenestration and entrances throughout have been largely replaced and consist of modern features. Windows, consist of aluminum fixed and hopper sash that date to late-20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> century renovations. The roof is flat with a modern synthetic membrane and contains nine east-west running utilitarian metal-framed skylights, eight of which are centrally located at the Building #1 segment of the building. Rooftop mechanical equipment is located throughout the roof. A brick elevator overrun is located at the Building #2 portion of the roof.

### *Exterior*

West Elevation: The west elevation is the facade of the building, fronting Main Street. The elevation consists of 24 bays with a concrete foundation and brick exterior (Photos 1-2). At center, the primary stair tower projects a full structural bay from the remainder of the building, as well as extends in height over two-stories. Similarly, the final three bays at each side of the elevation slightly project from the remainder of the building, resulting in an enlarged pilaster with stepped brick elements. The basement level is largely hidden in lightwells and is comprised of the concrete foundation with thirteen window openings. The first and second floor levels of the elevation, flanking either side of the stair tower, consist of simple red brick pilasters and bulkheads with window openings marking the individual bays. Window openings at the first and second floor level contain concrete sills and lintels. At the third floor level, similar design elements to the lower floors exist at the projecting segments at the north and south end of the building. At those locations the concrete lintels are arched and the brick pilasters feature concrete capitals. The middle portions of the third floor are slightly different. At these bays, the fenestration is divided into three singular windows per bay, separated by smaller brick pilasters. Like the north and south segments, the middle bays feature concrete lintels, and the pilasters feature concrete capitals. Also in these bays, decorative square-shaped brickwork is located at the bulkheads. At the ends and center of the sections flanking the stair tower, segments of raised parapet result in gables and crenellation-like features at the roof line.

Fenestration at the west elevation and stair tower consists of modern aluminum-framed picture and hopper windows that date to late-20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> century renovations. These modern windows are installed within the historic masonry openings which remain intact. The west elevation features four entrances. The historic primary entrance is located at center of the stair tower. This entrance consists of wood paneled double-leaf doors with central glazing, flanked by wood paneled multi-lite sidelights and multi-lite wood-framed transom above. The is not original to the building, as seen in historic video and photographic evidence, though it does generally match the historic configuration and appearance. Secondary entrances at the west elevation consist of modern aluminum-framed storefront entrances at the north and south ends of the building, and a modern flush metal single-leaf door directly south of the stair tower.

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North Elevation: The north (side) elevation is ten-bays wide and inclusive of both Buildings 1 and 2. The raised parapet at Building #1 displays a central gabled section flanked by crenellation-like features. Unlike the west elevation, the third floor level does not feature decorative bulkheads or additional brick pilasters. At the westernmost end of the elevation, a one-story brick and concrete entrance portico extends off the elevation and provides access to the northwest stair tower at the interior. Adjacent to the entrance portico, a covered entrance is located in the first three bays of the elevation. The entrance, formerly a loading dock, is raised and accessed by modern concrete stairs and a modern concrete ramp and is enclosed in brick walls to the east and west. The ramp features a modern canopy system and functions as the building's ADA-accessible, barrier-free entrance. The entrance itself consists of a modern aluminum-framed storefront system. Modern billboard signage is located at the entrance's roof. Due to the change in grade at the site, which declines to the east, the basement level of the Main Office and Factory Building is visible at the eastern portion of the elevation. One secondary entrance is located at the basement level, within the protruding stair tower at the elevations easternmost end. The entrance is a double-leaf flush metal door that features a wood-framed, asphalt-shingle covering.

South Elevation: The south (rear) elevation is five bays wide (Photo 5). At the roofline, the raised parapet displays a central gable flanked by Gothic style features. At the westernmost bay, a one-story brick and concrete entrance portico provides access to the southwest stair tower at the interior. A second entrance is located in the fourth bay from the west, and consists of a modern, flush metal single-leaf door cut into the former window opening. Like the north elevation, the south elevation illustrates the changing of grade within the site and displays the concrete foundation at the basement level.

At the basement level, fenestration consists of industrial steel, multi-light windows. The windows display heavy amounts of rust. At the easternmost end of the elevation, a one-story concrete bump-out extends the basement level one additional bay. The bump-out features one window, matching the industrial steel multi-light of the other basement windows, and red brick at the parapet level.

A second segment of the south elevation is located at the Building #2 portion of the Main Office and Factory Building. This elevation largely mirrors the north elevation of this portion of the building. At the west end, however, two smaller bays exist. The basement level features a covered one-story loading dock whose roof features two east-west running skylights.

East Elevation: The east (side) elevation is utilitarian and contains various bump-outs that access mechanical spaces and the freight elevator at the interior (Photo 6). It is a secondary elevation, which faces the interior of the site and is not visible from the public right-of-way. Like the south elevation, the east elevation contains two segments, one at the Building #1 portion and the second at the Building #2 segment. At the south end of the elevation, is a one-story concrete bump-out. The bump-out is utilitarian in design and features two industrial steel windows with a single-leaf flush metal door. Adjacent the bump-out is a brick freight elevator tower that protrudes off the building. The elevator tower contains historic multi-light steel windows. The windows, however, exist in poor condition, with heavy rusting on the frame and muntins and

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broken/missing glazing. Adjacent to the elevator tower is another projecting segment, that extends even further off the elevation. This segment is two-bays wide and features modern replacement windows. At center of the Building #1 portion is a one-bay extension, with two small punched openings at the second and third floor levels. Some basement windows consist of historic industrial steel multi-lite windows. These windows generally exist in a deteriorated state, showing signs of heavy rusting.

### *Interior*

The interior of the building is largely characterized by two sections: the stair tower, and former office/factory space. The primary stair tower, is located centrally along the west perimeter of the building. At the first floor, it features the buildings' main entrance lobby, providing both vertical access throughout the upper floors with a stair comprised of terrazzo treads, painted concrete risers, a wood railing and painted metal balustrade, and a small elevator bank which features two elevator cabs, both utilitarian in character with simple metal doors and surrounds. Finishes within the stair tower at all floors are generally consistent, featuring flooring comprised of ceramic tile with accents of terrazzo, and painted plaster and gypsum board walls and ceilings. Specific to the first floor, upon entrance is the "FULLER" insignia transcribed in terrazzo (Photo 7).

The former office/factory space encompasses the remainder of the floorplans at all floors (1-3). At each floor, the layout is generally the same, with large areas of open space as much of the former finishes and partitions within have been removed. Remnants of finishes include non-historic carpet tile flooring, limited areas of plaster and gypsum board walls (with some columns wrapped in said material), and acoustic tile drop ceiling/aluminum grid.

Specific to the third floor, finishes within this space are slightly differentiated as this floor historically housed the executive offices of the Fuller Brush Company at the west end. As such, the entrance hall from the primary stair tower and the west perimeter wall contain remnants of ornamental finishes, though these remain in place in limited areas and are not fully intact. In the entrance hall, wood wainscoting and trim remains at the plaster wall, with plaster detailing remaining above the dropped ACT ceilings (Photo 13). At the ceiling in this space, the same decorative plaster ceiling that is found in the stair tower exists. At the west perimeter wall, the windows contain wood trim and remnant sections of wood paneled wainscoting under a select number of windows. Directly north of the primary stair tower are the remnants of a former fireplace. The brick fireplace has been infilled and the plaster wall has been partially removed. The third floor also features skylights throughout both sections of the building. Due to the later installation of MEPs and the dropped ACT ceiling, the skylights have been covered over with insulation and the glazing no longer visible.

Three additional stair towers are situated at the northwest, northeast, and southwest corners of the building. All three stairs are identical and are utilitarian in design, with concrete treads, metal risers, and simple metal pipe railings. The stair towers also feature painted brick walls and painted wood ceiling structure. The primary freight elevator is located at the north portion of the building at the intersection of Building #s 1 and 2. The freight elevator opens to both building

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sections and features a simple painted metal roll up door (Photo 16). The second freight elevator is located at the southeast end of the Building #1 section. The elevator is similar to the primary freight elevator, and contains a simple painted metal roll up door. At the upper floor levels, the freight elevator is set behind a double-leaf door at a furred-out section of wall.

The basement of the Main Office and Factory Building has been completely renovated and consists entirely of modern finishes and subdivided office spaces (Photo 15). The primary stair tower provides access to an east-west running corridor, with secondary corridors running to the south and north, as well as providing access to the Building #2 section of the building. Finishes throughout the floor level consist of carpet flooring, painted gypsum board walls, and dropped ACT ceilings.

### **Garage (Building 3, one contributing building)**

Exterior: Building 3 is located at the northwest portion of the complex, attached to Building 9. The building features a simple red brick and concrete exterior, with multi-lite industrial steel sash windows on all sides. At the north and south ends, the exterior is predominantly concrete with either enlarged windows or overhead doors set within former window openings (Photo 17). The roof is flat, with a modern synthetic membrane.

Interior: The Garage is predominantly open in plan and utilitarian in finish. The building remains in active use, and interior access was limited. Finishes include exposed concrete flooring, exposed brick perimeter walls, and exposed ceiling structure.

### **Boiler House (Building 4, one contributing building)**

Exterior: The Boiler House is a small rectangular, one-story red brick building situated to the north of the Garage (Photo 18). The foundation, window sills and lintels are concrete. Window openings contain original multi-lite steel sash. A covered walkway, alongside the former rail spur extends from the north elevation. The Boiler House has a flat roof with a modern synthetic membrane.

Interior: The Boiler House is generally open in plan with typical finishes of the complex's rear warehouse and factory buildings. Finishes include concrete flooring, painted brick perimeter walls, and exposed ceiling structure.

### **Warehouse (Buildings 6/12/13, one contributing building)**

The Warehouse is comprised of three one-story sections, Building #s 6, 12, and 13. The building sections are interconnected and were constructed in 1935, c. 1962, and 1940, respectively.

#### *Building 6*

Exterior: Building 6 is located at the west end of the block of buildings. Due to the building's location in between the Main Office and Factory Building and Buildings 12 and 13 of the

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Warehouse, only the north and south elevations are exposed on the exterior. Both elevations feature a red brick exterior. A modern aluminum-framed storefront with a double-leaf entrance is located at the north elevation (Photo 19). To the east of the entrance is an elongated modern canopy above the modern aluminum-framed fenestration. The easternmost section of Building 6's north elevation consists of a two-bay loading dock set within a brick enclosure. The south elevation includes a wood-framed covered walkway alongside the former rail spur. The roof of Building 6 is flat with a modern synthetic membrane. The center of the roof features a small roof monitor.

Interior: Building 6 is currently (2024) in use as a day care center. As such, interior access was limited to only the loading bay portion of the building. The interior has been updated and largely resembles the Main Office and Factory Building's interior, with gypsum board demising walls creating office and classroom spaces. Finishes within the day care center are contemporary, and include carpet and LVT flooring, painted gypsum board walls, and dropped ACT ceilings. In the loading bay portion of the building, which is currently used as storage for the day care center, finishes include exposed concrete floors, painted brick perimeter walls, painted gypsum board demising walls, and a concrete ceiling with a spray foam insulation applied (Photo 20).

### *Building 12*

Exterior: Building 12 is located at the northeast portion of the site and is clad in modern, painted wood siding (Photo 21). Fenestration is limited to single door openings with various flush metal single-leaf doors. The roof is flat and features a modern synthetic membrane. Two east-west running steel-framed utilitarian skylights are located on the roof.

Interior: Building 12 is in active use as a manufacturing facility. The interior is open in plan. Finishes include concrete flooring, painted CMU block perimeter walls, painted wood columns, and painted wood ceiling structure (Photo 22).

### *Building 13*

Exterior: Building 13 is located at the southeast portion of the Factory/Warehouse Building. Building 13 is defined by the curved shape of its south elevation, which conforms to the former rail access at the interior of the site (Photo 23). The building consists of a similar, simple red brick design to that of the remainder of the complex. The building is largely fenestrationless, save for five windows, three at the east elevation and two transom windows. The building also features a modern aluminum-framed storefront entrance system within the south elevation's curved wall. Two additional entrances are located at the west end of the building and include an overhead door and a flush metal single-leaf entrance. At the south elevation, along the former rail access, is a wood-framed covered walkway. Like the remainder of the complex, the building features a flat roof with a modern synthetic membrane. The building also features one east-west running steel-framed utilitarian skylight.

Interior: At the interior, Building 13 is open in plan with typical finishes of the complex's rear warehouse and factory buildings. Finishes include concrete flooring, painted brick perimeter

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walls, painted steel columns, and exposed wood ceiling structure (Photo 24). The skylight is visible at the interior.

### **Factory Building (Buildings 9/10/11, one contributing building)**

The Factory Building is comprised of three one-story brick building sections that are fully interconnected. These sections were constructed in 1937, 1938, and c. 1959, respectively. Based on the available historic maps, the specific use of this building was not provided.

#### *Building 9*

Exterior: Building 9 is located directly east of Building 3, at the north end of the Factory Building. Building 9, alongside other building sections in both the Factory Building and the Factory/Warehouse Building, displays a simple red brick exterior, with a concrete foundation, and concrete sills and lintels, and multi-lite steel sash windows (Photo 25). Due to Building 9's location within the site, its primary design element is its angled wall at the northeast, which follows the angle of the former rail spur. That elevation also includes a covered, concrete loading dock. Building 9 contains a flat roof with modern synthetic membrane.

Interior: Building 9 is completely open in plan. Finishes include concrete flooring, painted brick perimeter walls, painted steel columns, and exposed steel ceiling structure (Photo 26). The monitor is visible at the interior.

#### *Building 10*

Exterior: Building 10 is located at the southeast portion of the Factory Building. It resembles Building 9, with a red brick and concrete exterior. Unlike Building 9, Building 10's fenestration is located higher up on the elevation and is set within a slightly longer bay. The windows, however, are a similar multi-lite steel sash (Photo 27). Building 10's location on the site results in its irregular shape with a similar angled wall that corresponds with the former location of rail spur. Additional design elements include the north elevation's shared corner entrance with Building 9, and a second angled elevation at the southwest corner of the building section. Directly in between Buildings 10 and 11 is a shared, covered loading dock, which opens to the upper floor level on the north side of the building. The roof is flat roof with modern synthetic membrane. At center are three elongate east-west monitors.

Interior: Building 10 is in active use as a manufacturing facility. As such, interior access was limited. The interior is subdivided into space for multiple office tenants. Each suite is open in plan. Finishes include concrete flooring, painted brick perimeter walls, painted steel columns, and exposed steel ceiling structure (Photo 28). The monitor is visible on the interior.

#### *Building 11*

Exterior: Building 11 is the last building section of the Factory Building to be constructed. It is located at the southwest portion of the building and largely resembles Buildings 9 and 10 with a

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simple red brick and concrete exterior, as well as similar multi-lite steel sash windows (Photo 29). On the north elevation, the central three bays project west from the remainder of the building, resulting the building's irregular shape. Unlike the remainder of the building, the projecting segment features smaller, rectangular-shaped window openings. At center are three monitors, oriented east-west.

Interior: Building 11 is in active use as a manufacturing facility. As such, interior access was limited. The interior, however, contains a similar appearance to that of Buildings 9 and 10 with subdivided sections for office and tenant use. At the interior, Building 11 is generally open in plan with typical finishes of the complex's rear warehouse and factory buildings. Finishes include concrete flooring, painted brick perimeter walls, painted steel columns, and exposed steel ceiling structure. The skylights are visible at the interior.

### **Integrity**

The Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex remains in its original location and retains its setting within the Main Street corridor and alongside the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad line. All five contributing buildings retain their early- and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century design components, materials and workmanship, including decorative brick bulkheads, extended brick parapets, concrete banding, and roof monitors. Character defining elements of the Gothic Revival style as applied to an industrial building are evident, specifically at the Main Factory and Office Building. This includes design elements found at the primary entrance (and secondary entrances), windows within the stair tower, and cast stone ornamentation throughout. The rear factory and warehouse buildings continue to display their simple, brick exterior designs. Alterations are limited to window and door replacements and the introduction of new entrances to accommodate the building's use as office space. The Main Office and Factory Building has undergone the most interior alterations, with the building having been updated for use as office space in the late-20<sup>th</sup> century. Historic interior spaces, most importantly the stair tower and ornamental entry area, remain fully intact. Most buildings retain their open floorplans, with exposed concrete floors, masonry perimeter walls, exposed ceiling structure, and exposed columns. The complex continues to express its feeling and association as a large, early twentieth-century manufacturing facility.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1922 - 1959  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1922, 1935, 1937,  
1938, 1940: Building construction  
1959: Fuller Brush Company ceased operations at the site

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Buck & Sheldon, Inc. (Architects/Engineers)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex is locally significant under Criterion A in the category of Industry for its association with America's household cleaning market during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The company was founded in 1906 by Alfred Fuller, a door-to-door salesman that developed a more durable cleaning brush by twisting wires in a small vise of his own design. Fuller moved to Hartford in 1906, and quickly expanded the company's output and salesforce, necessitating construction of the subject complex in 1922. Throughout the early- and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century period, the Fuller Brush Company expanded exponentially, increasing output, workforce, and overall distribution. The Fuller Brush Company, led by its door-to-door salesmen known affectionately as the Fuller Brush Man, had become engrained in American popular culture. References to the Fuller Brush Man or the Fuller Brush Company were routinely made in movies, television, and printed media throughout that time, with two major motion pictures, 1948's "Fuller Brush Man" and 1950's "Fuller Brush Girl," centered around the company. The complex at Main Street in Hartford was purpose-built as the company headquarters. The period of significance extends from 1922, when the Main Office and Factory Building was constructed, to 1959, when the Fuller Brush Company ceased operations at the complex.

The building is also locally significant under Criterion C as an excellent and intact example of the Gothic Revival style applied to an industrial building. Specifically within the context of the complex, the Main Factory and Office building promotes this type of architectural style with key elements located at the exterior, inclusive but not limited to the stair tower and the entrances. This includes the primary entrance enclosed in a cast stone arc-en-tudor surround with slight reliefs from the face of the elevation, and the top of the stair tower which features castings of ornate tripartite windows at each façade. The building is also an excellent example of the architectural firm of Buck & Sheldon Inc. The period of significance for Criterion C is 1922, the date the Main Factory and Office building was constructed.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

## Developmental History

### Criterion A: Industry

The Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex is locally significant under Criterion A in the category of Industry. Throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Fuller Brush Company grew to become the largest brush manufacturer of its kind in the United States. From their purpose-built headquarters in north Hartford, the company expanded its facilities and increased production to meet the ever-increasing demand for the products sold by the local Fuller Brush Man, the company's door-to-door salesman. Example products associated with the company included the following: the fuller broom, various sized cleaning brushes for bathrooms and kitchens, aerosols, and various polishing oils and sprays. As the company continued to increase

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profit annually in the early- and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it also expanded its facilities, effectively illustrating the growth of the company. During that time, the Fuller Brush Company served as one of Hartford's leading industrial enterprises, employing thousands of people in the city. Additionally, the company played a large role in the greater Hartford community, with company outings, a company baseball team, and other efforts. All the while, the Fuller Brush Man continued to knock on doors and make Fuller Brushes a household name that etched its way into American popular culture.

## **“Brush with Destiny” – The History of the Fuller Brush Company**

### *Alfred Fuller and the Founding of the Fuller Brush Company*

Early in the first decade of the 1900s, Alfred Carl Fuller moved from his family's hardscrabble<sup>1</sup> farm in Berwick, Nova Scotia, Canada to live with his sister in the Boston suburb of Somerville, Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup> In 1905, the young Fuller began work with the Somerville Brush and Mop Company, serving as a salesman.<sup>3</sup> During his time with Somerville Brush and Mop, Fuller sold a “twisted-in-the-wire” cleaning brush (Figure 3). In selling the product, he devised ideas to improve the brush. With these ideas in mind, and \$375 dollars to his name, he established his own company, making the initial Fuller brushes at a 15-foot-long bench in the basement of his sister's Somerville home.<sup>4</sup>

Just as Walt Disney fondly remembered the founding of the Disney empire by stating “it was all started by a mouse,” the Fuller Brush company had its own humble beginnings with a simple cleaning brush made with one end of a wire caught in a vise and the other twisted by a small machine of Fuller's own creation.<sup>5</sup> In 1906, Fuller moved his company to Hartford, Connecticut, which he noted “was in the center of a territory that had not been worked by brush salesman as much as Boston and its suburbs.”<sup>6</sup> Once in Hartford, Fuller rented a shed located at 78 Park Street in the South Green neighborhood, just south of the city's downtown; this building is not extant. It was reported in the *Hartford Courant*, that in the early days of the company in its new Connecticut home that Fuller himself served as the “entire inner organization.”<sup>7</sup> The article expanded, “He superintended manufacture, took care of shipments and credits, hired new salesmen, and in his spare time invented new devices for the manufacture of his products.”<sup>8</sup> Fuller also served as one of the primary salesmen. Fuller himself recalled that he “worked afternoons and evenings making the brushes to sell the next morning.”<sup>9</sup> It was due to immediate

<sup>1</sup> “Hardscrabble” in relation to farming means the land was challenging to cultivate or had poor soil.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred C. Fuller and Hartzell Spence, *A Foot in the Door: The Life Appraisal of the Original Fuller Brush Man* (New York City, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960).

<sup>3</sup> Alden Whitman, “Alfred C. Fuller, 88, Founder of Brush Company, Is Dead,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 5, 1973.

<sup>4</sup> “Fuller Brush Business Started 16 Years Ago,” *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1922; “Beginnings and Development of the Fuller Brush Company,” *Hartford Courant*, June 17, 1923; Whitman, “Alfred C. Fuller.”

<sup>5</sup> “Fuller Brush Business Started 16 Years Ago,” *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> “Beginnings and Development of the Fuller Brush Company,” *Hartford Courant*, June 17, 1923.

<sup>7</sup> “Fuller Brush Business Started 16 Years Ago,” *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1922.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> “Beginnings and Development of the Fuller Brush Company,” *Hartford Courant*, June 17, 1923.

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demand that Fuller was forced to hire an employee to manufacture the brushes, so that he could devote his time to selling and other administrative duties.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the Fuller brush itself, Fuller also meticulously perfected the art of door-to-door salesmanship. This is perhaps his most impactful invention, as the company's salesforce were nationally recognized and grew to become pop-culture phenomena. In his autobiography, astutely titled *A Foot in the Door*, Fuller recounted the development of his sales approach, which was applied by thousands of salesman throughout North America. Fuller explained:

“I started out by trying to be helpful, I would knock on the door and say, ‘Good morning madam, if there is anything wrong in your house that a good brush could fix, perhaps I could help you...’ After that, I studied a housewife’s needs, and we made a brush for every need.”<sup>11</sup>

Fuller also developed other tactics to make the selling process more efficient and effective. He instructed his salesman to wear shoes one size too big so that on rainy days the shoes would slip off quickly when entering a home. Fuller Brush Men, as they were called, also handed out a free sample of a vegetable brush, called “The Handy.”<sup>12</sup>

By 1910, the Fuller Brush Company had quickly grown and employed 25 salesmen and six factory workers.<sup>13</sup> Included among this workforce was the company's first female employee, Fuller's wife Evelyn. In the first few years of the company, Evelyn outsold Alfred every day.<sup>14</sup> Evelyn Fuller was also listed as one of the three directors of the company at the time of its official incorporation in 1913.<sup>15</sup> Growth of the company remained important to its founder, who sought to turn the simple brush manufacturing enterprise into a nationally known product.

### *Early-20<sup>th</sup> Century Growth of the Fuller Brush Company*

By the 1921, the company had grown at an exponential rate from its original employee capacity of 25 salesmen to 2,500 salesmen by 1921.<sup>16</sup> This rise in salesforce also attributed to a total industry value of \$14.2 million in 1921.<sup>17</sup> As such, the need for an expanded and new factory complex to provide the necessary parts and products for the company in salesforce was required. In 1921, the Fuller Brush Company purchased 20-acres of land on what was then known as Windsor Avenue, today Main Street.<sup>18</sup> A March 1922 article in the *Hartford Courant* explained that due to the “vast growth” of Fuller's business over the previous years, “the future

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<sup>10</sup> “Beginnings and Development of the Fuller Brush Company,” *Hartford Courant*, June 17, 1923.

<sup>11</sup> Whitman, “Alfred C. Fuller.”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Whitman, “Alfred C. Fuller.”

<sup>14</sup> “The Fuller Brush Story,” *fuller.com*, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://fuller.com/pages/fuller-brush-history>.

<sup>15</sup> “Fuller Brush Business Started 16 Years Ago,” *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1922.

<sup>16</sup> *Brooms, Brushes & Handles*. Trade Press Publishing Company, 1921. Pages 32 and 33.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Details within the journal do not specify exact numbers for competitors, though it can be strongly inferred that the Fuller Brush Company was one of the leading manufacturers and sales representatives in the industry at this time.

<sup>18</sup> “Beginnings and Development of the Fuller Brush Company,” *Hartford Courant*, June 17, 1923.

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development was given considerable thought and study and the new building was designed to take care of future growth.”<sup>19</sup> That same article announced that plans for the \$400,000 Main Office and Factory building were completed by the prominent Hartford-based engineering and architectural firm of Buck & Sheldon, Inc. (Figure 4). Included within their plans were “an electric passenger elevator and ornamental stairs,” that served as “the main entrance to the office.”<sup>20</sup> Also included within the plan was a separate boiler house and train access.<sup>21</sup>

The 1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance map again illustrates the planned Main Office and Factory Building, as well as the Boiler House and the Garage Building. At the rear of the site, train access from the adjacent New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad, extended northwest to the east elevation of what is now the Building 2 section of the Main Office and Factory Building.<sup>22</sup>

When the Fuller Brush Company announced plans for its “new” manufacturing headquarters in 1922, the *Hartford Courant* appropriately and poetically likened the company’s immense growth since its establishment in 1906. As the paper reported, it “resembles the growth of an acorn to a young oak tree. As great as the development has been, it only indicates the time when the two branches will spread out in all directions, even over foreign lands.”<sup>23</sup> Throughout the 1910s, the company introduced new products, welcomed additional salesmen, and expanded its manufacturing facilities, which were at that point in time stretched out across Hartford.

At the beginning of that decade, Fuller placed an advertisement in the nationally distributed magazine “Everybody’s Magazine.” “Everybody’s,” as it was commonly called, had a circulation of over 500,000 in the period before World War I.<sup>24</sup> Fuller’s advertisement resulted in 260 new salesmen across the country.<sup>25</sup> This salesforce grew exponentially and by 1921, it included 2,500 salesmen.<sup>26</sup> The national growth of the company resulted in Fuller providing various brushes, mops, and dusters to independent dealers, who bought the products from the company at wholesale prices and sold them at retail for a profit.<sup>27</sup> It was noted in news articles that the incomes and profits of the independent dealers varied, depending upon their enterprise.

With the advent of the United States’ involvement in World War I, the Fuller Brush Company did their part in the war effort, manufacturing specialized hair brush kits for expeditionary forces. The company would similarly support its nation in the Second World War. At this time, the company employed over 1,000 Fuller Brush Men nationally.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “Plans Now Complete For \$400,000 Factory Here,” *Hartford Courant*, March 27, 1922.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Hartford, Hartford County, Connecticut, 1922.

<sup>23</sup> “Beginnings and Development of the Fuller Brush Company,” *Hartford Courant*, June 17, 1923.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Luther Mott, “Everybody’s Magazine,” in *A History of American Magazines, Vol. V: 1905-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 72-87.

<sup>25</sup> “The Fuller Brush Story.”

<sup>26</sup> *Brooms, Brushes & Handles*. Trade Press Publishing Company, 1921. Pages 32 and 33.

<sup>27</sup> Whitman, “Alfred C. Fuller.”

<sup>28</sup> “The Fuller Brush Story.”

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Construction of the new complex was completed in 1923, though complications in the construction were evident shortly after completion. Most notably was one month after, in March 1923, when the primary stair tower of the Main Factory and Office building collapsed due the water tank at the top of the tower weighing too much (Figure 5). Casualties resulted in the collapse with eleven construction workers having been killed.<sup>29</sup>

By the time the Hartford complex was constructed in 1923, sales continued to rise and remain above \$10 million (\$183,361,403 in 2024) annually.<sup>30</sup> The need for the new building was immense, with the company largely renting space, first in the Park Street shed, then in a larger space on Headley Place. As the *Hartford Courant* reported in 1923, “the need for more space was apparent.”<sup>31</sup> At that time, the Fuller Brush Company had dealers, salesmen, and product representatives in over 200 cities. In New England, the Fuller Brush Company maintained offices in various locations, including Boston, the company’s first branch office; and Worcester, Massachusetts; Manchester, New Hampshire; Portland, Maine; and Providence, Rhode Island.<sup>32</sup> With the completion and subsequent expansion of the subject complex, the company was able to consolidate their office and various manufacturing divisions spread throughout Hartford.

The company’s rise in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century is illustrated in the annual financial growth of sales at the company. In 1920, just prior to the construction of the subject building sales for that year were roughly \$5 million.<sup>33</sup> In 1922, \$10 million in sales were reported.<sup>34</sup> The completion of the new building continued to attribute to the sales growth, evidenced by the first ten months of operation totaled an increase of 30.7% from the previous year, setting a mark of \$11,997,750.<sup>35</sup> Increased production for the company was also evident with the completion of the new factory, producing a staggering 23,305,624 products with over 100 different varieties, including brushes, mops, brooms, etc.<sup>36</sup> This increased production resulted in the ability to make 5,000 brooms in eight hours.<sup>37</sup>

As the Depression hit in the 1930s, the company continued to be a source of employment both in Hartford and throughout the country, with a legion of Fuller Brush Men at its disposal. *The New York Times* reported that the company “did poorly” in 1932. The Great Depression, however, did not keep the company down. In 1937 alone the company recorded sales of \$10 million, making a profit of \$208,000.<sup>38</sup> This number was up from \$169,027 in profit from \$7,751,790 in sales in

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<sup>29</sup> “Fuller Brush building following collapse of tower, 1080 Windsor Avenue, Hartford,” [CT Digital Archives: CT Images Collection](#). Accessed July 29, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> [usinflationcalculator.com](#)

<sup>31</sup> “Beginnings and Development of the Fuller Brush Company,” *Hartford Courant*, June 17, 1923.

<sup>32</sup> “Fuller Brushes,” *The Boston Globe*, April 20, 1922; “Fuller Brush Business Started 16 Years Ago,” *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1922.

<sup>33</sup> Whitman, “Alfred C. Fuller.”

<sup>34</sup> “Fuller Brush Business Started 16 Years Ago,” *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1922.

<sup>35</sup> *Brooms, Brushes & Handles*. Trade Press Publishing Company, 1923. Page 16.

<sup>36</sup> “Handling Diverse Products Through Many Operations: The Fuller Brush Company,” *Industrial Management*, *The Engineering Magazine*. Volume 70. 1925.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Whitman, “Alfred C. Fuller.”

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1936 and \$6,486,223 in 1935.<sup>39</sup> Economic growth in the late-1930s was further illustrated through the growth of the complex with the construction of the Factory/Warehouse Building and Factory Building between 1935 and 1941.

By the 1930s, Fuller expanded their product base beyond cleaning and grooming brushes. Product catalogs from the era further illustrate the updated product offerings to include waxes and polishes, mops, and dental care products (see Figures 6 and 7). While it is unknown if specific items were invented or perfected at the Hartford factory, the expansion into other products such as waxes and dusters was likely possible thanks to the large manufacturing and testing area allowed on site.

According to one survey conducted later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Fuller Brush Man knocked on 85 out of every 100 doors in America.<sup>40</sup> As a result, the Fuller Brush Man etched his place, and therefore the brand name, in American folklore. By the 1930s, the Fuller Brush Man appeared in newspaper cartoon strips. In 1933, the Big Bad Wolf disguised himself as the Fuller Brush Man in an attempt to fool the Three Little Pigs in one of Walt Disney's Silly Symphony's (see Figure 6). "The Three Little Pigs" won an Oscar for Short Subject (Cartoon) at the Sixth Annual Academy Awards in 1934 (Figure 8).<sup>41</sup>

Further supplanting the Fuller Brush Man's status in American popular culture, at the end of the 1940s, the Fuller Brush Man, as well as a "Fuller Brush Girl," had additional opportunities to advertise on the silver screen. In 1948, Walt Disney's Donald Duck took a turn as a door-to-door brush salesman that struggled to conduct sales due to difficulty in understanding his voice, though Donald stopped short of specifically stating he was the Fuller Brush Man (see Figure 9). That same year, comedian Red Skelton starred in the Columbia Pictures production of "The Fuller Brush Man," in which Skelton routinely struggled to sell his Fuller Brush products. Two years later, in 1950, Columbia Pictures turned to Lucille Ball to take her turn selling Fuller cosmetics in "The Fuller Brush Girl," in which she attempts to gain some much needed money (see Figure 10). Ball's portrayal as a Fuller saleswoman illustrated the company's newest sales force, women.

By the advent of the 1940s, the Fuller Brush Company continued to see increased economic growth. In the 1940 fiscal year, the company brought in total sales of \$11,491,973 - \$441,332 of which was net profit. Total sales increased 20.8% in 1941 to \$13,880,784, with net profit earnings of \$512,570. Fuller proudly explained in his 1941 report to stockholders that increase in sales "can be partially attributed to more money in circulation due to the war program... when it is viewed in light of consecutive increases each year since 1933, it must be concluded that it is largely due to the greater productivity of our field organization and better merchandising methods."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> "Fuller Brush Net \$169,027, Sales Higher," *Hartford Courant*, Jan. 28, 1937.

<sup>40</sup> Whitman, "Alfred C. Fuller."

<sup>41</sup> "The 6<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards, 1934," *Oscars.org*, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/1934>.

<sup>42</sup> A.E. Magnell, "Fuller Brush Is Engaged In Defense Work," *Hartford Courant*, Jan. 30, 1942.

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Much like they did during World War I, the Fuller Brush Company did their part to support the American war effort during World War II. In addition to continuing their manufacture of brushes, the company was engaged in defense work. In 1942, the company announced that it had been “engaged in substantial production for the government.”<sup>43</sup> During the war, the company continued to manufacture their “famous line of Household and Personal Brushes,” but also developed “brushes, machines, tools and parts required by our armed forces.”<sup>44</sup> Specifically, the company produced gun cleaning brushes, “using the Fullergrasp method of brush construction,” as well as “bomb supports for Corsairs, radar mechanisms and parts, gun stabilizer elements and other vital war products.”<sup>45</sup> During the war, however, Alfred Fuller stepped down as president of the company, turning over operations to his eldest son, Howard. Alfred Fuller remained with the company, serving as chairman of the board.<sup>46</sup> This continued production was made possible due to the hiring of women to replace male dominant roles within the factory, producing the products so that the company could continue to operate at full capacity.<sup>47</sup>

In the post-war period, sales at the factory continued to expand with the post-war economic boom. By 1947, sales reportedly rose to \$30 million.<sup>48</sup> The company continued to produce their primary products, cleaning brushes, but also looked to acquire and produce additional products to present to prospective buyers. In 1948, the company purchased the cosmetics division of Daggett and Ramsdell, who produced the Debutante line of beauty products. With the announcement of Fuller’s acquisition, Howard Fuller announced that the company’s plan was “to market cosmetics and soaps everywhere in America through women dealers, who will be known as Fullerettes.”<sup>49</sup> Hiring of the Fullerettes was twofold: 1). the company witnessed the success of the female workforce during the wartime period, thus understanding that they could provide valued service to the company, and 2). that the hiring women dealers within the cosmetic field made it easier to relate to possible women buyers and sell them beauty products. Prior to the formal announcement of sales job opportunities for women, about 100 women had already been recruited in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and the greater New York City area, though by the official implementation of the role, the number was stationed at 4,000.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the Fuller Brush Company acquired the Mohawk Brush Company of Albany, New York in the 1940s. Like the Debutante cosmetics line, Fuller maintained Mohawk’s manufacturing facilities in Albany, curbing any potential production issues at the subject complex.

In 1956, the Fuller Brush Company celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The *Hartford Courant* expressed its congratulations with a write-up about the company. In their conclusion, they succinctly and accurately described the importance of the Fuller Brush Company to Hartford. As the article read, “The result [of Fuller Brush’s success] has been thousands of jobs, millions of dollars in newly created wealth, and a firm and friendly niche in the community, Hartford is

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<sup>43</sup> Magnell, “Fuller Brush Is Engaged In Defense Work.”

<sup>44</sup> “Fuller Brushes Are Doing Their Part To Speed The Day Of Victory,” *Hartford Courant*, Jan. 28, 1945.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Whitman, “Alfred C. Fuller.”

<sup>47</sup> “Fuller Brush Men Aren’t Men Now,” *The Sunday Times*, October 3, 1948.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> “Fuller Brush Acquires Line Of Cosmetics,” *Hartford Courant*, July 8, 1948.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

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proud of the Fuller Brush man.”<sup>51</sup> The article also lauded the company’s effective use of the door-to-door sales method, stating:

“Before the Fuller Brush man became a by-word, door-to-door selling was a hit or miss proposition, with the hits being on the salesman’s noggin as often as not. New techniques, applied psychology and the desire to give the customer the full value for the money spent have transformed the entire picture. For years now the Fuller Brush man has been a welcome caller. Indeed, there are many housewives who wish he would call oftener, for his products are good.”<sup>52</sup>

Through their gold anniversary celebration, Fuller continued to produce and expand their product lines. A 1956 Fuller catalog displays the various products offered by the company in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Included among the new products were a line of aerosol sprays and clocks. (see Figures 11 and 12)

In 1959, the Fuller Brush Company moved out of the Hartford headquarters, where the company had consolidated its administrative and manufacturing efforts. For nearly 40 years, the building was synonymous with one of Hartford’s most prominent, well-known, and highly regarded companies. At that time, total sales for the company were reported as “in excess of \$100 million.”<sup>53</sup> A *Hartford Courant* retrospective perfectly summed up the company’s success, calling it a “Brush with Destiny.”<sup>54</sup> Even though the company moved into a “modern” facility in East Hartford, it remained tied to the Fuller Brush Company with local advertisements identifying the Main Street complex as “Formerly Fuller Brush Building.”<sup>55</sup>

Following Fuller’s departure from the headquarters, it spent the next 13 years in East Hartford. In 1968, the company was sold to the Consolidated Foods Corporation. Consolidated later moved the company to Great Bend, Kansas in 1973, the same year Alfred Fuller died.<sup>56</sup> In remembering Fuller’s departure from Hartford after 67-years in the city, *Courant* staff writer, Constance Neyer aptly summed up the general feeling within the city, writing, “When the company left Connecticut for Kansas in 1973, it was like a favorite uncle had died.”<sup>57</sup>

### *Social Life at the Fuller Brush Company*

Included within the original purchase and plan for the Hartford headquarters in 1922, Fuller also planned for amenity space for the company’s employees. In the *Hartford Courant* article announcing the plan, that report also explained that “space will be available for tennis courts, a baseball diamond, handball courts, and other features of a complete athletic and recreation

<sup>51</sup> “Fuller Brush is Fifty Years Old,” *Hartford Courant*, April 13, 1956.

<sup>52</sup> “Fuller Brush is Fifty Years Old,” *Hartford Courant*, April 13, 1956.

<sup>53</sup> “53 Years Old, Expansion And New Products Mark Colorful Fuller History,” *Hartford Courant*, Jan. 17, 1960.

<sup>54</sup> Neyer, “Brush with destiny.”

<sup>55</sup> “Choice Vend,” *Hartford Courant*, July 8, 1960; Monica Carroll, “Ames Will Move To Rocky Hill,” *Hartford Courant*, Nov. 20, 1975.

<sup>56</sup> Whitman, “Alfred C. Fuller;” Neyer, “Brush with destiny.”

<sup>57</sup> Neyer, “Brush with destiny.”

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field.”<sup>58</sup> In 1941, this portion of the original plan became a reality with the acquisition of the former Sage Homestead, located across the street from the complex, in the present-day location of the St. Monica’s Elderly Housing facility.<sup>59</sup> In presenting the recreational field and clubhouse building to his employees, Fuller exclaimed, “Here is an attractive playground for you and your families.”<sup>60</sup> The clubhouse building and recreational fields were demolished prior to 1992, according to historic aerial imagery. (See Figure 13)

Fuller created a community-based environment at the company, which included social and athletic clubs. In the early portions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, the Fuller Brush Company included a baseball team that competed in the local Industrial League, and later in the Northern Connecticut League.<sup>61</sup> The company also fielded a basketball team in that sport’s Industrial League.<sup>62</sup> In addition to athletic activities, the company held social events including picnics and dances that were open to employees and their families.<sup>63</sup> The work environment developed by Fuller is perhaps best illustrated through his employee’s appreciation of him. In 1931, during the company’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Fuller was presented with a plaque by the entire company, including all 600 employees of the subject complex and the 24 district supervisors from across the United States and Canada.<sup>64</sup>

### Criterion C: Architecture

The Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex is locally significant under Criterion C in the category of Architecture for its expression of the Gothic Revival style as designed by the architectural firm of Buck & Sheldon Inc.

The Gothic Revival style was introduced to the American built-environment in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, with inspiration derived from medieval design. Buildings typically utilized for stylistic inspiration were generally religious type buildings. Similar to the Classical Revival style, architects of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century looked to the past for inspiration in distinct architectural features to apply to buildings of both municipal and of course religious affiliation. Later iterations of the style, around the early-20<sup>th</sup> century, shifted to buildings associated with more educational use, a sub-category of the style called Collegiate Gothic.<sup>65</sup> Universities during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century focused on this style, with evidence located at campuses such as the University of Pittsburgh, Duke University, and Princeton University to name a few. More practical means of the style were also applied to more industrial buildings during the early-20<sup>th</sup> century. While these designs were sometimes pared down versions, decorative details like an arched and recessed entryway or a prominent stair tower were clearly part of the Gothic Revival tradition as applied

<sup>58</sup> “Plans Now Complete For \$400,000 Factory Here,” *Hartford Courant*, March 27, 1922.

<sup>59</sup> “Clubhouse Presented By Fuller,” *Hartford Courant*, Sep. 13, 1941.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> “Fuller Brush Team To Receive Tickets To World’s Series,” *Hartford Courant*, Sep. 8, 1924; “Bloomfield AC Topples Fuller Brush Team, 5-3,” *Hartford Courant*, Sep. 6, 1948.

<sup>62</sup> “Six Teams Open Schedule Tonight in Dusty League,” *Hartford Courant*, Dec. 8, 1932.

<sup>63</sup> “Clubhouse Presented By Fuller,” *Hartford Courant*, Sep. 13, 1941.

<sup>64</sup> “Employees Give Plaque To Fuller On Anniversary,” *Hartford Courant*, May 7, 1931.

<sup>65</sup> “Gothic Revival Style 1830-1860,” Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

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to more practical type buildings. Brick masonry construction was also the primary base material for these types of buildings.<sup>66</sup>

Identifiable features associated with the Gothic Revival style as applied to non-residential buildings constructed in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century include the following Gothic arch window and door openings, masonry (brick or stone) construction, bas relief decorative panels or plaques, porticos or recessed porch entryways, buttresses, tracery windows, crenulated parapets, towers or spires.

The Fuller Brush Company's Main Factory and Office building exhibits key attributes of the style are evident, particularly at the primary west elevation, which features the prominent stair tower. The primary entrance, located on the stair tower, is enclosed in a cast stone arc-en-tudor surround with slight reliefs from the face of the elevation. The top of the stair tower features castings of ornate tri-partite windows at each façade, with typical stylistic tendencies found in the Gothic Revival style. Above, the cornice line features more Classical Revival elements, but with some stylistic tendencies found in Gothic Revival with pointed features and projecting rounded elements. The remainder of the exterior of the Main Factory and Office building is more utilitarian in character, though secondary entrances located at the north and south elevations feature a projecting cast stone arc-en-tudor surround.

The Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex's Main Office and Factory Building was designed by the prominent and prolific Hartford-based architectural and engineering firm of Buck & Sheldon, Inc. Buck & Sheldon, Inc. was established in 1909 by Henry Robinson Buck and Paul Sheldon. Henry Robinson Buck (1876-1934) was an assistant civil and sanitary engineer for the Hartford City Engineer's Office. During his tenure, he was in charge of all sewer construction in Hartford and oversaw sewer construction in many Connecticut towns. Buck also represented the state in a land survey which remarked the New York and Massachusetts state lines.<sup>67</sup> Paul Sheldon (1881-1931) was also an assistant civil engineer for the City and was in charge of heavy construction projects with masonry and structural steel.<sup>68</sup> Both men worked in Hartford's City Engineer's under Frederick L. Ford (1871-1940), who was the head City Engineer for fifteen years. Ford, a Yale graduate, started work at the office of Albert B. Hill of New Haven working on trolley surveys and construction as well as sewage and highway work. In 1896 he became assistant City Engineer, and in 1902 he became head City Engineer.<sup>69</sup> 1909, the Buck and Sheldon established a private practice, later bringing in Ford to serve as the company's president and operated under the name of Ford, Buck & Sheldon until 1920, when Ford left the company.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> "Collegiate Gothic Style 1890-1940," Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

<sup>67</sup> John William Leonard, *Who's Who In Engineering: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporaries*, 2nd ed. (799 Broadway, New York City, New York: Who's Who Publications, Inc., 1925).

<sup>68</sup> Roysin Younkin with Nina Caruso, "Hartford Special Machinery Company Complex," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2021.

<sup>69</sup> "Fredrick L. Ford," *Municipal Engineering XL* (January-June 1911).

<sup>70</sup> Roysin Younkin with Nina Caruso, "Hartford Special Machinery Company Complex," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2021.

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In Hartford, the firm designed various buildings including an addition to Trinity Church in 1911, the Pope Manufacturing Company Building in 1912, the Capitol City Lumber Company complex in 1914, the Hartford Special Machinery Company Complex in 1915, and buildings for the M.S. Little Manufacturing Company in 1917 and 1922. The company also designed buildings outside of Connecticut, including the plant for the Walker and Gibson Company in Albany, New York in 1915.<sup>71</sup> The firm's various projects throughout Connecticut and the surrounding states led to them being highly regarded for their engineering and design work, contributing to the firm's regional significance in New England.

Buck & Sheldon's work on the Fuller Brush Company Complex is significant as an intact example of a "industrial Gothic" factory that represents the Fuller Brush Company's success from a startup business to an expanding company in the early twentieth century. Aesthetically, the applied Gothic Revival style to the factory is similar to work done by George C. Nimmons, notably his work on the C.P. Kimball Company works in Chicago in 1916 (see Figure 14). Defining features such as brick masonry construction, pronounced tower with buttressed corners and gothic detailing, and portal-style entrance can be found on both buildings. As C. Matlack Price described in regard to the C.P. Kimball Company Works, the building had a "...free and colloquial sort of brick and stone Tudor-Gothic style...", which is true for the Fuller Brush Company Factory as well. Many architects at the turn of the twentieth century applied Gothic-style detailing to industrial buildings due to its practical yet beautiful structural expression.<sup>72</sup>

The Fuller Brush Company Factory stands out as aesthetically unique among their work, since similar factory buildings like the Hartford Special Machinery Company complex, the M.S. Little Manufacturing Company buildings, and the Capitol City Lumber Company complex are more utilitarian in their design language (see Figures 15 and 16). Buck & Sheldon's "industrial Gothic" design also symbolizes the success and wealth of the Fuller Brush Company. Instead of constructing a simple, utilitarian factory with minimal aesthetic vision, the Fuller Brush Company spent considerable time and money on the stylistic design of its factory—symbolizing the company's continued wealth and growth. As mentioned in Betsy Hunter Bradley's *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States*:

Nevertheless, industrialists also had a real interest in the appearance of their works, which represented considerable financial investment and hopes for continued economic success. Works that appeared substantial and commodious also implied technological and organizational mastery. Interest in an attractive factory was coupled with pride in ownership and the desire for a prominent position in the community.<sup>73</sup>

Buck & Sheldon's involvement in the design of the Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex and their use of the "industrial Gothic" applied style qualify the building as eligible under Criterion C for its distinctive characteristics of type, and its association with a well-known engineering and design firm in Connecticut.

<sup>71</sup> Younkin and Caruso, "Hartford Special Machinery Company Complex."

<sup>72</sup> Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (198 Madison Avenue, New York City, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 218.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 8.50 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 41.800323

Longitude: -72.660058

**Or**

**UTM References**

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Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex boundary is consistent with the limits of the Parcel identified as 304074005 in the City of Hartford's assessment and GIS data (2024). The boundary is formed by Main Street at the west, City of Hartford Parcel ID#s 283074169, 283074171, 304074007, and 304074006 to the south, and the National Railroad Passenger Company railroad tracks to the east. The north boundary extends 111 feet north of the Main Office and Factory Building, 25 feet north of the Factory/Warehouse Building's Building 12 section, and runs east-west approximately 643 feet from Main Street to the railroad tracks.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the extent of developed area utilized by the Fuller Brush Company during the complex's period of significance. The boundary is inclusive of all contributing buildings associated with the Fuller Brush Company's administrative and manufacturing processes, as well as the narrow parking area directly to the north of the buildings. The large parking area to the north is not included within the boundary as it was separated from the factory proper.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Cindy Hamilton/Michael LaFlash  
organization: Heritage Consulting Group  
street & number: 15 W. Highland Ave.  
city or town: Philadelphia state: PA zip code: 19118  
e-mail chamilton@heritage-consulting.com  
telephone: (215) 248-1260  
date: July 31, 2024

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### GRAPHICS

**Figure 1: Location of Fuller Brush Factory Complex in Hartford, Connecticut**



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**Figure 2: National Register Boundary, Site Plan, and Building Section Chronology**



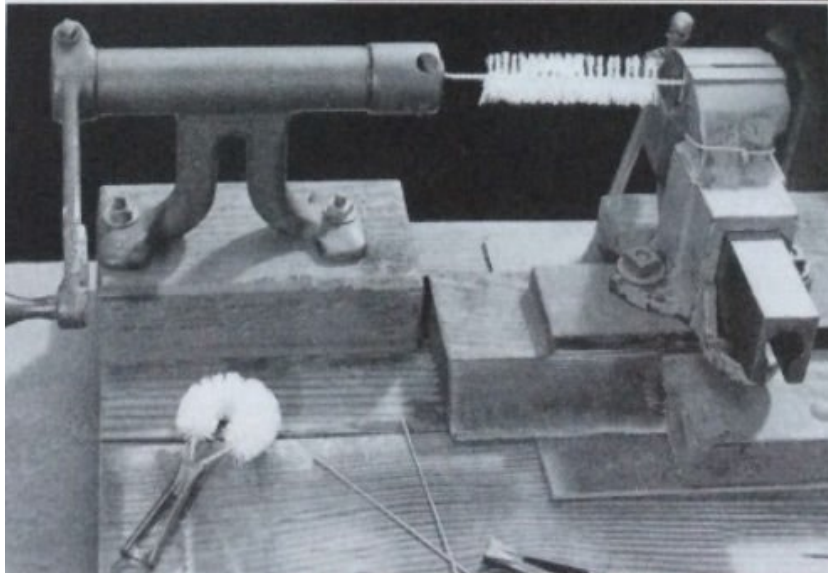
**Building Section Chronology:**

- #1 – 1922
- #2 – 1922
- #3 – 1922
- #4 – 1922
- #6 – 1935
- #9 – 1937
- #10 – 1938
- #11 – c. 1959
- #12 – c. 1962
- #13 – 1940

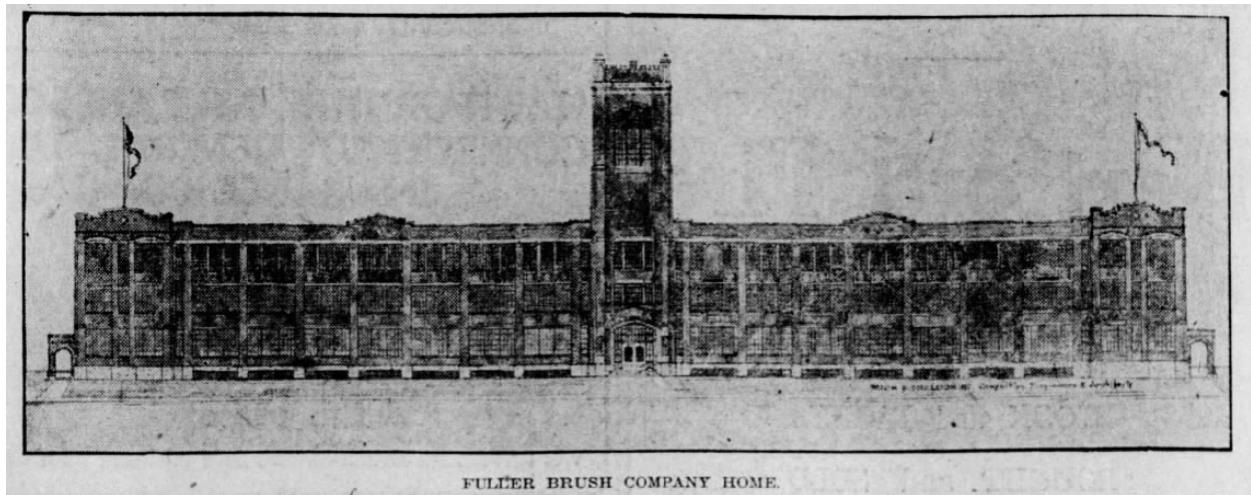
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**Figure 3: Original Fuller Brush manufacturing process and products. Source: fuller.com**



**Figure 4: 1922 Fuller Brush Company Plant rendering. Source: Hartford Courant**



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Figure 5: 1923 Fuller Brush Company Plant photograph of collapse of the stair tower at the Main Factory and Office Building. Source: CT Digital Archives



Figure 6: 1938 Fuller Brush Company catalogue.

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Figure 7: 1938 Fuller Brush Company catalogue.



Figure 8: 1933's Silly Symphony "The Three Little Pigs, produced by Walt Disney.



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**Figure 9: Walt Disney Picture’s “Donald’s Dream Voice,” 1948.**



**Figure 10: Movie posters for Columbia Pictures’ “The Fuller Brush Man” from 1948 (left) and “The Fuller Brush Girl” from 1950 (right).**





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**Figure 13: 1956 image, showing the Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex with the company's club building and athletic fields at the foreground on the west side of Main Street. Source: Hartford Courant.**



**Figure 14: Historic photograph, exterior of the C.P. Kimball Company works, constructed in 1916 and designed by George C. Nimmons. Source: Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)**



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**Figure 15: Contemporary picture, showing the part of the exterior of the Hartford Special Machinery Company, designed by Buck & Sheldon. Source: Connecticutmills.org**



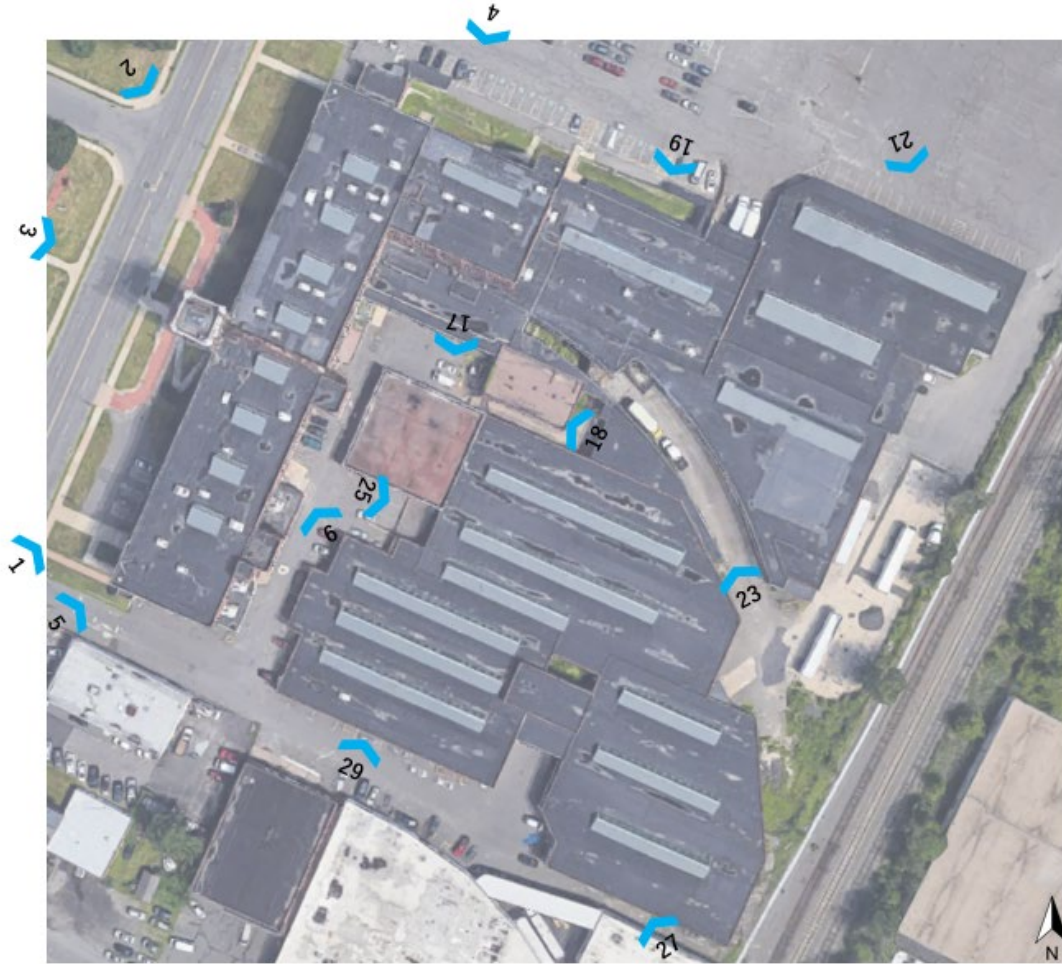
**Figure 16: Aerial photograph showing the exterior of the M.S. Little Manufacturing Company Complex, designed by Ford, Buck & Sheldon. Source: Connecticutmills.org**



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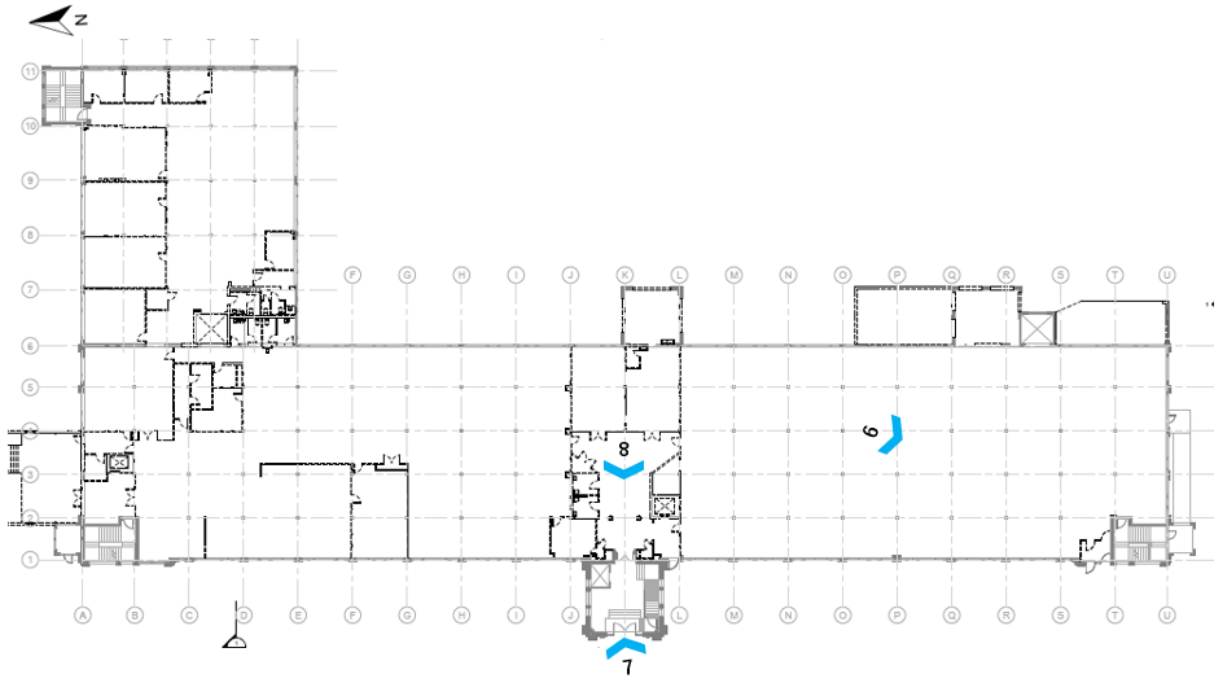
**Figure 17: Photo Key Plan – Exterior**  
Photos – 1-6, 17-19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29



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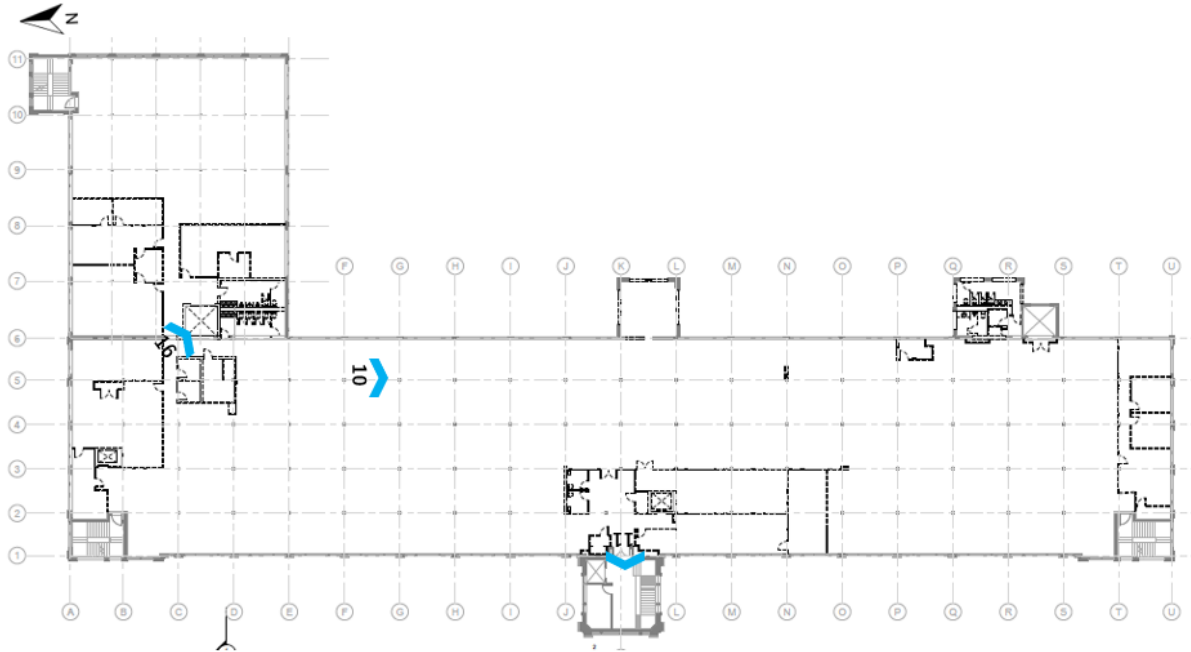
**Figure 18: Photo Key Plan – Main Office/Factory Building – First Floor**  
Photos – 7-9



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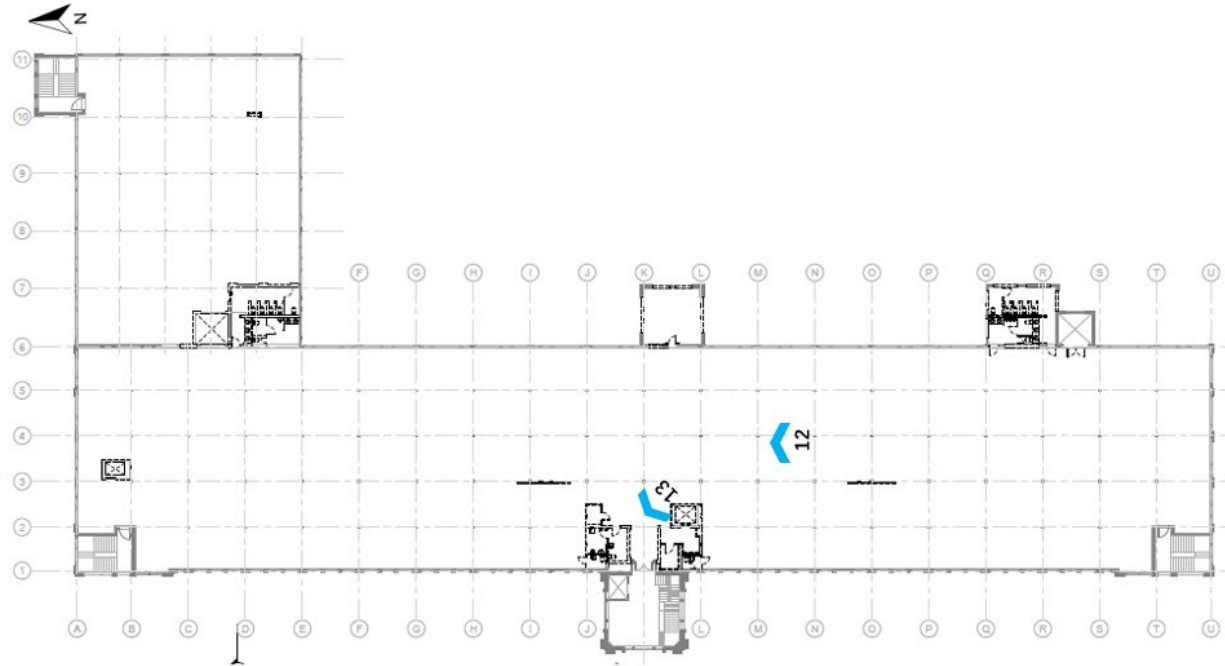
**Figure 19: Photo Key Plan – Main Office/Factory Building – Second Floor**  
Photos – 10-11, 16



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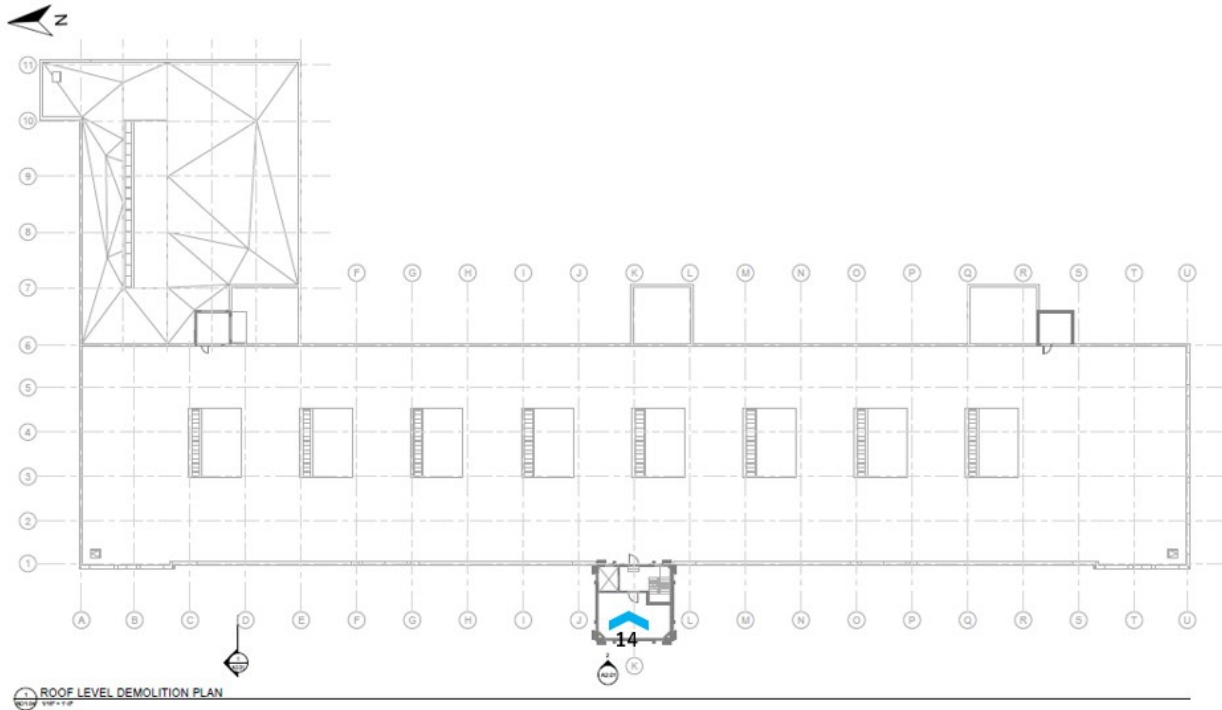
**Figure 20: Photo Key Plan – Main Office/Factory Building – Third Floor**  
Photos – 12-13



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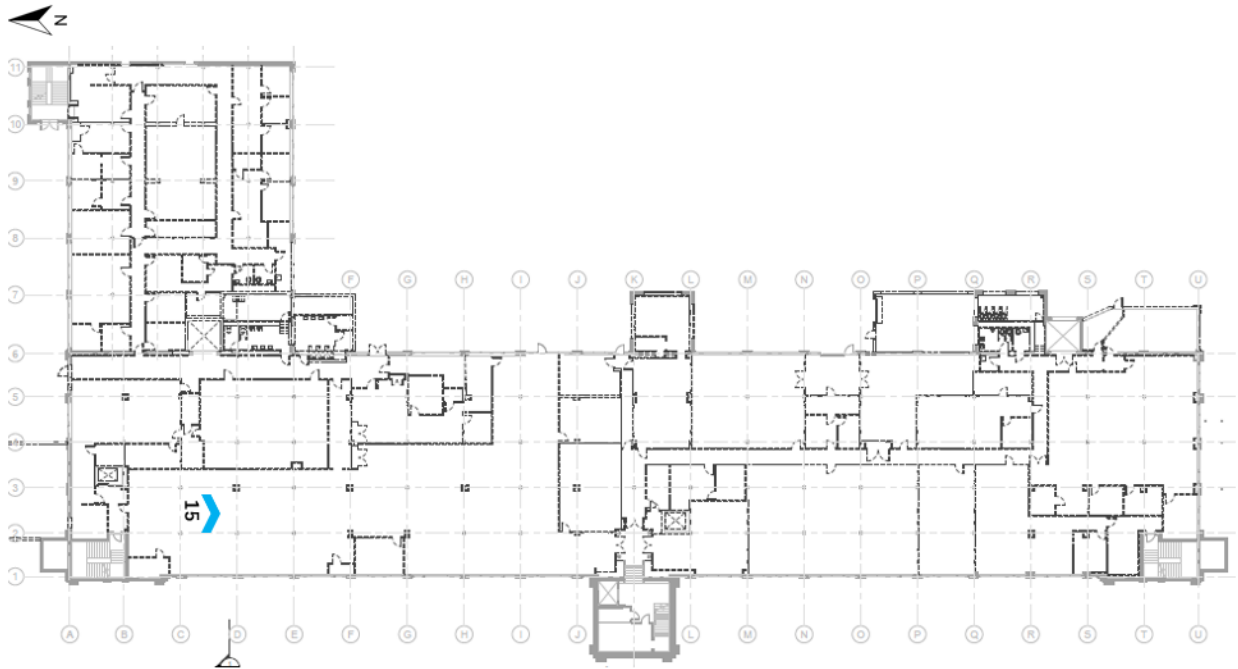
**Figure 21: Photo Key Plan – Main Office/Factory Building – Stair Tower**  
Photo – 14



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**Figure 22: Photo Key Plan – Main Office/Factory Building – Basement**  
Photo – 15



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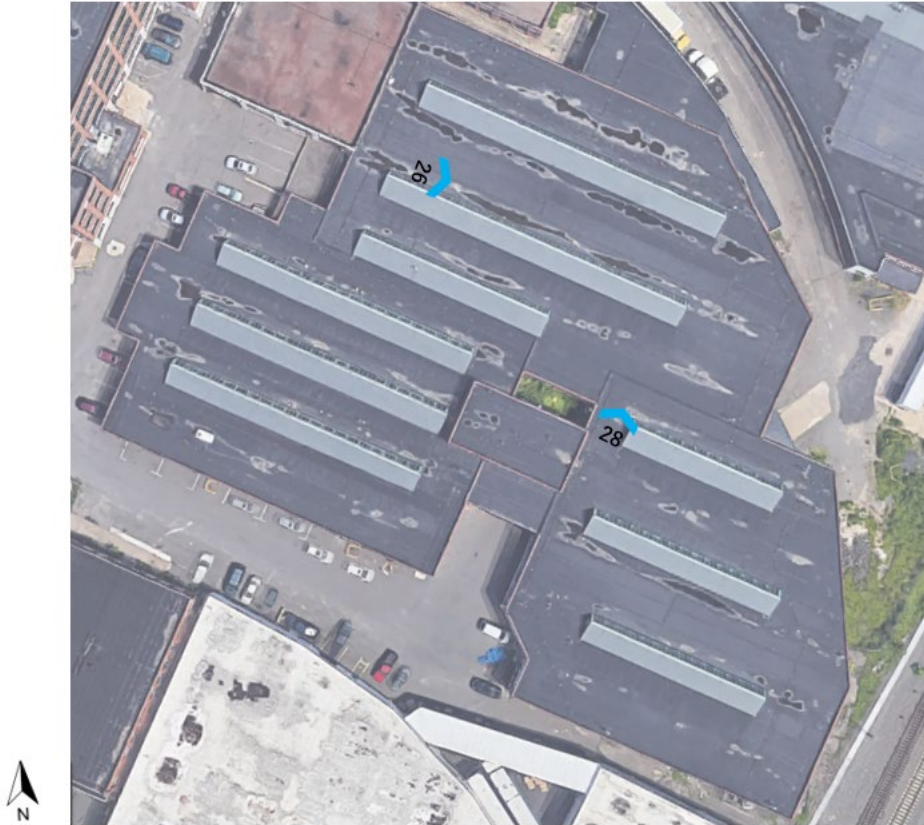
**Figure 23: Photo Key Plan – Factory/Warehouse Building – Interior**  
Photos – 20, 22, 24



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**Figure 24: Photo Key Plan – Factory/Garage Building – Interior**  
Photos – 26, 28



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## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log

Name of Property: Fuller Brush Company Factory Complex

City or Vicinity: Hartford

County: Hartford

State: Connecticut

Photographer: Michael LaFlash

Date Photographed: February 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, West Elevation, looking southeast.
- 2 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, West Elevation, looking northeast.
- 3 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, West Elevation, looking east.
- 4 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, North Elevation, looking south.
- 5 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, South and West Elevations, looking northeast.
- 6 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, East Elevation, looking northwest.
- 7 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, First Floor, Entrance Vestibule, looking east.
- 8 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, First Floor, Reception Lobby, looking west.
- 9 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, First Floor, looking southwest.
- 10 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, Second Floor, looking south
- 11 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, Second Floor, stair tower, looking west.
- 12 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, Third Floor, looking north.
- 13 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, Third Floor, Lobby, looking northwest.
- 14 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, Stair Tower, looking east.
- 15 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, Basement, office, looking south.
- 16 of 29. Main Office/Factory Building, Second Floor, looking southeast at freight elevator.
- 17 of 29. Factory/Garage Building, looking south.
- 18 of 29. Boiler House, looking west.
- 19 of 29. Factory/Warehouse Building, Building 6, North Elevation, looking south.
- 20 of 29. Factory/Warehouse Building, Building 6, looking south.

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- 21 of 29. Factory/Warehouse Building, Building 12, North Elevation, looking southeast.
- 22 of 29. Factory/Warehouse Building, Building 12, looking north.
- 23 of 29. Factory/Warehouse Building, Building 13, South Elevation, looking northwest.
- 24 of 29. Factory/Warehouse Building, Building 13, looking southeast.
- 25 of 29. Factory/Garage Building, Building 9, West Elevation, looking east.
- 26 of 29. Factory/Garage Building, Building 9, looking east.
- 27 of 29. Factory/Garage Building, Building 10, South Elevation, looking northwest.
- 28 of 29. Factory/Garage Building, Building 10, looking northeast.
- 29 of 29. Factory/Garage Building, Building 11, South Elevation, looking north.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.