



Due for distinction

The "Octagon House," located at 21 Spring St., Danbury, opposite St. George's Church on Elm Street, is in the process of being nominated to the National Register of Historical Places. Once the process is completed the unique building will be protected from urban renewal. The view is from the Spring Street entrance to the house.

City to spare 8-sided home

By Craig Howe
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DANBURY — The "Octagon House" will be saved from the menacing jaws of urban renewal.

The Connecticut Historical Commission is starting procedures to have the unique house located at 21 Spring St., Danbury nominated to the National Register of Historical Places.

The house, which was built by Daniel Starr, in 1852, is one of three octagonal houses left in the country. The Connecticut Historical Society feels that the eight-sided house in Danbury is unique enough to preserve.

The commission began the nomination process in 1969 by sending a distinguished review board made up of two historians, two architects and an archeologist to survey and grade the property for possible nomination to the National Register of Historical Places.

Their report to the commission was that the house "was unusual and an outstanding example of octagonal architecture." The review board gave the Spring Street property a grade of B-plus, which qualified the house for the nomination.

At that point, the nomination process got bogged down in bureaucratic red tape. Susan Bixby, an administrative assistant to the Connecticut Historical Commission, said she did not know what had held the application up for the last three years.

"We certainly did not realize that the house was located in the middle of an urban renewal tract. Now that we know this we can speed up the application. The National Register is very receptive to the need."

Once the house is accepted to the National Register of Historic Places, it

will be protected under the Historical Preservation Act of 1966. The act says that any construction project which is federally funded cannot take properties which have been listed in the Register without first consulting the owner.

Under the act, the owner is placed under no restrictions. He is responsible for maintaining the house and can sell it without consulting with anyone. Nomination to the Register simply protects him from eminent domain, the process by which developers take large tracts of land for public works.

Even though the octagonal house will only be protected from developers who will use federal funds by the 1966 Act, Susan Bixby says that being listed in the National Register of Historical Places usually carries enough weight to protect it from local developers who do not want to fall into disrepute for destroying a national monument.

The "octagon house," as it is known in the area, is built so sturdily that an unscrupulous developer might have a difficult time leveling it. The white walls of the house are solid concrete, about 12 inches thick.

The house contains three floors, each of which contains an apartment. Each of the two upper floors is surrounded by a porch. A street level entrance leads to the basement apartment. The main apartment, which is occupied by the owner, Mrs. Nedema Attick, is located on the second floor and is reached by stairs leading to the porch or by a ground level entrance at the rear of the house.

A stairway to the third floor is at the side of the house. All three apartments are accessible from an enclosed stairway which spirals upward to an octagonally shaped room on the nearly flat roof.