

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings

New Haven Green Historic District, bounded by Chapel,  
College, Elm, and Church Streets, New Haven, Connecticut

Between 1812 and 1816, three impressive churches were erected on the east side of the New Haven Green. Two of the churches, Center Church (1812-14) and United Church (1813-15), are outstanding examples of Federal architecture, while Trinity Church (1814-16) is one of the earliest expressions of the Gothic Revival style in America. Boston architect Asher Benjamin drew the initial plans for Center Church, whose graceful spire still dominates the green, but it was Ithiel Town--a former student of Benjamin's--who was responsible for the final design. When his work on the brick, neo-classic Center Church was finished, Town turned to the design of Trinity Church, built of local granite in the incipient Gothic mode for New Haven's Episcopal congregation. The design of United Church, the third structure on the east side of the green, shows the influence of John McComb, an early New York architect, although it was Ebenezer Johnson, a local builder, who was responsible for its construction. All three churches preserve their original exterior appearance and, together with the adjacent public buildings, form an impressive urban complex distinguished in the development of American architecture and town planning. Open to visitors upon request.

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NSHSB: 1/8/71  
R S G

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Connecticut</b>	
COUNTY: <b>New Haven</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**New Haven Green Historic District**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION** (See Continuation Sheet)

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Bounded by Chapel, College, Elm, and Church Streets**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**New Haven**

STATE: **Connecticut** CODE: **09** COUNTY: **New Haven** CODE: **009**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**City of New Haven**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**161 Church Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **New Haven** STATE: **Connecticut** CODE: **09**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Hall of Records**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**200 Orange Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **New Haven** STATE: **Connecticut** CODE: **09**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Historic American Buildings Survey (17 sheets and 6 photos)**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1934, 1936**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Division of Prints and Photographs**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Library of Congress**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington 20540** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: **11**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	<i>(Check One)</i>					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	<i>(Check One)</i>			<i>(Check One)</i>		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The New Haven Green's three historic churches are ranged equidistantly along Temple Street, between Elm and Chapel Streets on the sixteen-acre common. United Church, at the corner of Temple and Elm, is distinguished by the four engaged fluted Ionic columns which adorn the projecting central portion of the facade, supporting a full entablature and pediment with a modillioned cornice. The belfry of the church is crowned by an ornate round cupola pierced by arched windows and topped with a large weathervane. In 1967, after successive remodelings had marred the restrained beauty of the original interior, a restoration program returned it to approximately its mid-nineteenth century appearance. While the circular pulpit apse was added in 1850, the low saucer dome in the ceiling, from which hangs a large cut-glass chandelier, is part of the 1815 structure.

Like United Church, the adjacent Center Church is a brick structure with wood trim. It boasts, however, a full tetrastyle Tuscan portico bearing in the tympanum a large asymmetrical rinceau motif of carved acanthus ornament. A tapering steeple rises in five stages above the portico to a height of about 210 feet. The lateral walls of the church, with their double tier of windows are enriched by a balustraded cornice. Externally, the structure conveys the lightness and classical grace of James Gibbs' Georgian masterpiece, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, the prototypal church which undoubtedly influenced the design of Center Church. The interior dates largely from 1842, when renovation resulted in the lowering of the galleries and the replacement of the original high box pews and pulpit by more modern fixtures. The first pulpit is now in the Kawaiho Church of Honolulu, Hawaii.

Although described by its architect as "Gothic" in style, Trinity Episcopal Church at the corner of Temple and Chapel Streets illustrates the naiveté with which the style was first handled in America. The proportions of the nave, with its low-pitched roof and modified cornice, are essentially those of the traditional New England meetinghouse, transformed by the somber ashlar walls, the tall pointed windows, and a relatively academic Gothic entrance tower. In 1870, the present stone belfry replaced the wooden pinnacles and crenellation which formerly capped the tower. The addition of a chancel and other alterations have considerably changed the character of the interior; the galleries, however, date from 1814-16.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**3. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1812-1816**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the New Haven Green Historic District lies in the presence on the green of three remarkably fine churches which, because of their architectural merit as well as their setting, compose an outstanding urban ensemble of nineteenth century America. Center Church (1812-14) whose tall, graceful spire still dominates the green, was the first of the three to be completed. The Boston architect Asher Benjamin drew the initial plans for Center Church, but it was Benjamin's former student, Ithiel Town, who prepared the final design and supervised the construction. Both Town and Benjamin greatly influenced nineteenth-century American architecture, disseminating their ideas through the publication of builders' handbooks and articles. The exterior of Center Church has remained unchanged and it ranks today as one of the country's most imposing Federal-style edifices.

The second of the churches, United or Old North Church (1813-15), is also an elegant if less exuberant expression of the Federal style. The plans, attributed by some sources to David Hoadley, were apparently modified by the builder, Ebenezer Johnson, Jr., and the structure reflects the influence of both Benjamin as well as John McComb, Jr., architect of the New York City Hall (1911). It is possible that the design of Center Church played some part, too, in the final plan of United Church.

The third church on the New Haven Green represents a departure both in style and materials from the other two, although the architect was Ithiel Town. Built of seam-faced local trap rock in the incipient Gothic style for New Haven's Episcopal congregation, Trinity Church (1814-16) was one of the first large Gothic structures in America, and forms a striking contrast to the neo-classical Center and United Churches.

As a fortunate convergence of taste and circumstance, and as a very successful combination of noble architecture and pleasing ambience, the New Haven Green Historic District is a highly significant aesthetic achievement in urban landscape design.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Historic American Buildings Survey. New Haven Architecture. Washington, 1969.  
 Kelly, John Frederick. Early Connecticut Meetinghouses. 2 vols. New York, 1948. II, 2-21, 22-31, 32-44.  
 Reps, John W., The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States. Princeton, 1965, 128-130.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	41 ° 18 ' 33 "	72 ° 55 ' 40 "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	41 ° 18 ' 29 "	72 ° 55 ' 29 "				
SE	41 ° 18 ' 21 "	72 ° 55 ' 35 "				
SW	41 ° 18 ' 26 "	72 ° 55 ' 46 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 16

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Staff, Historic Sites Survey

ORGANIZATION Division of History, Office of Archeology and  
 Historic Preservation, National Park Service

DATE  
 June 6, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 801 - 19th Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:  
 Washington,

STATE  
 D.C. 20006

CODE

**12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____  <i>Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____  <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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8. Significance                      Continued                      page 1

were also made in grade. Center Church was ready for use in the fall of 1814. Total cost of construction amounted to \$34,323.46.

In 1842-43 the entire interior of the church, except for the frame and front of the galleries, was removed. The galleries were lowered two feet to their present position. The original high pulpit and pews were removed. New slip pews of pine were installed on the main floor and in the galleries, the aisles were carpeted, and the new seats upholstered. The walls and ceiling were frescoed. These interior alterations were planned by the New Haven architect Henry Austin. In 1845 the exterior brickwork and woodwork was painted a drab color. This paint was removed from the exterior by sandblasting in 1912. In the 1890's a total of 10 stained-glassed windows were installed. In 1959-60 the interior of the church was generally restored to its mid-19th century appearance.

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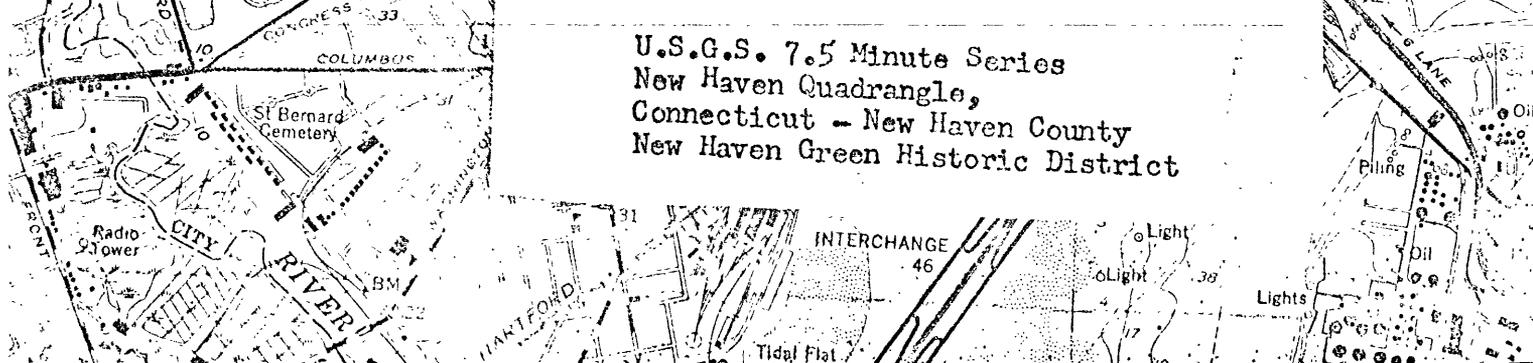
*(Number all entries)*

2. Boundaries of New Haven Green Historic District:

The Historic District is bounded by College Street on the northwest, by Elm Street on the northeast, by Church Street on the southeast, and by Chapel Street on the Southwest. The Green contains about 16 acres of land and three churches: Center, Trinity, and United Churches.



U.S.G.S. 7.5 Minute Series  
New Haven Quadrangle,  
Connecticut - New Haven County  
New Haven Green Historic District





U.S.G.S. 7.5 Minute Series  
 New Haven Quadrangle,  
 Connecticut-New Haven Co.,  
 1954.  
 United (Old North) Church.