

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

JUN 19 1979

DATE ENTERED

AUG 21 1979

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC St. Peter's Episcopal Church

AND/OR COMMON St. Peter's Episcopal Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 61, 71, 81 River Street

CITY, TOWN Milford NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Third

STATE Connecticut VICINITY OF CODE COUNTY CODE
09 009 New Haven

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME St. Peter's Episcopal Church Corporation and the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut

STREET & NUMBER 71 River Street

CITY, TOWN Milford STATE
VICINITY OF Connecticut

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. City Clerk's Office, Milford City Hall

STREET & NUMBER River Street

CITY, TOWN Milford STATE
Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE State Register of Historic Places (Connecticut)

DATE 1978 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Hartford STATE
Connecticut

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Peter's Episcopal Church is a Gothic Revival structure erected on the present site at 71 River Street in 1850-1851. It underwent a number of minor alterations during the 2nd half of the 19th century, and 2 major additions in the 20th century (described below). The church is located in the part of downtown Milford occupied by the city's principle municipal buildings and public high school. Although to the north and south (along River Street) the church property is flanked by 1- and 2-story blocks of stores, the architectural theme of the adjacent municipal complex is early 20th-century Colonial Revival, established by such structures as City Hall (River and West River Streets, 1917), the Post Office (6 West River Street, 1931-32), and the Police Department (originally the Court and Office Building, 14 West River Street, 1937). The church property is bounded on the east by the Wepawaug River.

The 1850-51 church building is constructed entirely of rough-cut brownstone blocks from Portland, Connecticut. Its plan consists of nave, chancel and tower-entrance (no side aisles, galleries or transepts). In accordance with the architectural principles of the Ecclesiological Movement which influenced the design of St. Peter's, the chancel is distinguished from the nave on the exterior as a smaller wing with a lower roofline, but is of a length approaching half that of the nave. The main entrance to the church is on its south side, at the base of the tower. The present double oak entrance doors date from 1930, and are deteriorating. The present slate roof, dating from 1873, is also in very poor condition and is projected to last only another 1 or 2 years. Exterior ornamentation is minimal, largely confined to the elaboration of structural or functional features. At each corner of the building and the tower are 2 stepped buttresses set at right angles, with additional single buttresses marking the bays of the nave and chancel. The east and west gables terminate in cross-shaped stone finials. The tower consists of a square lower story, an octagonal, castellated upper story, and a spire devoid of ornament save for 4 trefoil-shaped vents and a latin cross finial. The architect has recorded that the location of the tower was determined by the narrow site and impossibility of placing the tower comfortably on axis with the nave (Wills, Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture, p. 112).

The nave is lit by 5 tall lancet couplets on the north side, and 4 on the south (the 2nd bay of the south side being occupied by the tower). The chancel was originally lit by 4 lancet couplets (2 on the north and south sides, all now blocked up), and by a lancet triplet in the east wall, over the altar (unaltered). The west end of the church contains 2 lancet couplets and a circular window in the gable. The windows on the east wall of the chancel, and several along the north wall of the nave, contain original stained glass manufactured by Carse of New York City. 2 additional windows originally in the south wall of the chancel, including 1 commemorating Reverend Samuel Johnson (1st Rector of the church), have been moved to the new sacristy. The remaining church windows fall in 2 categories: plain, leaded windows carrying monogram designs, probably

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

St. Peter's Episcopal Church
Milford, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER four PAGE one

Milford Historic Resources Inventory
1977 - Local
Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, CT
and
Department of Community Development
City of Milford
Milford, CT

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

ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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ITEM NUMBER seven PAGE two

original, and a row of figurative stained glass windows along the south side of the nave, which appear to date from the early 20th century.

Inside the entrance at the base of the tower is a small octagonal vestibule with multi-colored marble floor (original) and wainscoting matching that of the nave and chancel (installed in 1866). The interior of the nave was originally a single, tall, uninterrupted space. However, the floor was raised beneath the last 6 rows of pews (and these pews replaced) some time in the early 20th century. The chancel is raised 2 steps above the floor of the nave, and opens through a great pointed chancel arch. Although originally a colored paint or paper was intended for the interior walls of the church (see the New-York Ecclesiological Magazine, III, p. 160), the walls throughout are now (as originally) covered in plain, white plaster. This provides a dramatic contrast with the wood floors and fine, dark open timberwork ceiling. Wainscoting matching that of the vestibule was installed in 1866. Original interior fixtures and furnishings are of carved butternut. These include all but the 1st row and last 6 rows of pews, designed by Wills specifically for this church, which are deteriorating. Also original and of Wills' design are the butternut pulpit in the northeast corner of the nave, and the stone baptismal font by the entrance.

Numerous alterations and additions have been made to the church since it was built. Aside from the wainscoting and reroofing already mentioned, the most important changes are:

- (1) the original temporary choir, a frame structure on the south side of the chancel, was replaced with the present brownstone choir room wing on the north side in 1924;
- (2) the original carved butternut rood screen has been removed;
- (3) a new sacristy (brownstone, ca. 1952) and church school (cinderblock and brick with brownstone facing, 1955-56) comprise a long 2-part wing off the south side of the church.

In the mid-1890s a Parish Hall and a Rectory, matching wood frame structures in an abbreviated Queen Anne style, were constructed flanking the church and painted to approximate its brownstone color. The Rectory (south, at 61 River Street) was demolished when the sacristy and church school wing was added. The Parish Hall (north, at 81 River Street) was attached to the church building with a temporary frame connector in 1978.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1850-1851

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Frank Wills

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Peter's, Milford, is an excellent example of the Ecclesiological Movement in American church architecture, a movement which was a major factor in the development of the Gothic Revival style in this country. Further, the church is a representative example of the work of Frank Wills, a leader of this movement in America. Finally, the church is the only remaining 19th-century structure within an important historical area of Milford along River Street, from the town's traditional municipal center at the juncture of West River Street on the north, to the River Street railroad bridge on the south. (Criteria C.)

History

The 1st Episcopal Church in Milford was formally established in 1764, although some services had been held on an irregular basis by missionaries from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel since 1736. Intermittently from 1737 to 1754 Dr. Samuel Johnson, leader of the early Episcopal Church in New England and later president of King's College (now Columbia University) in New York, held services in the homes of several Milford families, and provided a general stimulus for the growth of Episcopalianism in the town. By 1770 donations of money, land and materials led to the erection of a church building (consecrated in 1775) on the approximate site of the present St. Peter's. The church and parish at this time were named St. George's, in honor of St. George Talbot, a major donor. In 1776 Dr. Johnson became the 1st Rector, on a part-time basis, splitting his preaching between the Milford and Stratford churches.

In 1834 St. George's Church, a simple frame hall, was moved from its original position, near River Street, about 20' east and expanded with a gallery across its west end. However, by 1848 the old building was creating serious maintenance problems and a replacement was planned.

Reverend John Dixon Carder, Rector of St. Peter's from 1848, took an active interest in the Ecclesiological Movement, and was already familiar with the plans for a major monument of the movement in North America, Christ Church Cathedral in Canada (see below).¹ In 1848 or 1849 Carder retained the principal architect of the cathedral, Frank Wills, for

¹Phoebe Stanton, The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p. 143.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of Milford, Connecticut, 1639-1939. Compiled by the Federal Writers' Project of the Connecticut Works Progress Administration
 "New Churches." The New-York Ecclesiologist, III (1851), pp. 159-61.
 Phoebe Stanton. The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture.
 Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968, pp. 143, 154, 185-86, 287, 289.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Milford Quadrangle

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 662810 4565250
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property encompasses a lot identified on City Assessor's Map 54 as Block 396, Parcel 5. It is bounded on the east by the west bank of the Wepawaug River, and on the west by the east edge of River Street.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Susan Ryan, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

22 January 1979

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

(203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

Connecticut.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE x

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE June 12, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER


 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 8-21-79

ATTEST: 
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 8/20/79

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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a new Milford church building. According to a sermon given by Rector Paradise at St. Peter's in 1892, Reverend Carder also supervised the construction of the church when the original contractor was unable to complete the task. With the completion of the new church, it and the parish assumed the name St. Peter's.

Criteria C

St. Peter's belongs to a small group of mid 19th-century Episcopal churches in America reflecting the architectural ideas of the Ecclesiological Movement. This High Church reform movement began in England (as the Oxford Movement) in the early 19th century, in reaction to late 18th-century secularism of the church. Also reflecting a growing national interest in gothic architecture, the movement in England gave rise to the revival of the medieval parish church type as a model for new building among Anglican parishes. The Cambridge Camden Society (later the Ecclesiological Society) specifically advocated the 14th-century parish church as the best expression of sacramentality, truth and reality in religious architecture, and the type most adaptable to 19th-century needs. The strong missionary interests of the various Anglican reformist groups made them particularly attuned to American Episcopalianism and its need for guidance in matters of church building. The earliest American churches designed under the direct influence of the English movement were built during the late 1840s, and include Richard Upjohn's St. Mary's Burlington, New Jersey (1846-48), and St. James the Less, Philadelphia (1846-49). In 1848 the New-York Ecclesiological Society was founded as an American counterpart to the English groups. Its magazine publicized reform doctrine and architectural recommendations, much of it communicated from the society's English brethren. Among the principles of church architecture appropriated by the American Ecclesiologists were the correct use of 14th-century English models (thereby encouraging greater archeological authenticity within the Gothic Revival as a whole in America), correct orientation of the church, effective distinction between nave and chancel, honest expression of materials and construction (e.g., the use of veneers, or of plaster vaulting, was severely criticized), and the practice of what Willis himself called "ornamenting construction and not constructing ornament" ("Reality in Church Architecture," The New-York Ecclesiologist, I, p. 11). While not among the earliest American churches inspired by the Ecclesiological Movement, St. Peter's, Milford, is among the best of its mature products and one in which such architectural principles are clearly articulated.

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St. Peter's is the work of the official architect of the New-York Ecclesiological Society, and a major contributor to its magazine. Frank Wills was born and trained in Exeter, England, and came into early contact with Ecclesiological ideas. In 1846 he was invited to develop designs for Christ Church Cathedral in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada (1846-1853, designs later finished by William Butterfield), where he worked until 1848. From 1848 until the mid 1850s Wills established his own practice in New York, working in connection with the New York society, and producing designs for Episcopalian churches throughout the United States (some in association with his partner from 1851, Henry Dudley). He died in 1856 in Montreal, while working on Christ Church Cathedral there. Wills' other large commissions included the Church of the Holy Innocents in Albany, New York (1849-1850), the House of Prayer, Newark, New Jersey (1850-1851), and Trinity Church, San Francisco, California (1849). But his smaller parish churches most effectively illustrate a particular blend of the Ecclesiological associationism emphasized by the English societies, and the structural rationalism of A. W. Pugin, more evident in the writings of Wills and the American Ecclesiologists. St. Peter's, with its simple, correct design based on 14th-century sources and its direct expression of materials and construction, is an excellent example of Wills' own personal style at the peak of his career. The tower and spire represent a type characteristic of his work, appearing first in his church in Burton, New Brunswick, Canada (late 1840s, attribution, tower now removed in the House of Prayer in Newark, and in Trinity Church, San Francisco. St. Peter's also provides excellent examples of interior church furnishings and fittings designed by Wills in connection with a larger architectural program. Wills' own satisfaction with the design of St. Peter's, Milford, is indicated by the fact that he selected it to illustrate his major publication, Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1850, p. 113 and plate).

The church possesses a significant degree of historic integrity despite the construction of 2 additions and a number of interior alterations. The essentials of Wills' design, and many of its important details and furnishings, are still intact. It should also be noted that the Milford church is the only building designed by or attributed to Wills in Connecticut.

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While St. Peter's does not resemble other buildings in its immediate vicinity in Milford stylistically, it does help preserve some of the historic character of this key area of Milford center. When constructed, the church was surrounded by 18th and 19th-century houses, on River Street, and a small 2-story Town Hall (erected in 1831, renovated in 1848, demolished) and Baptist Church (1845, demolished) on the triangle of land between River and West River Streets. By the mid 20th century all of these structures were replaced by Colonial Revival public and municipal buildings and 3 blocks of stores (see Item 7). Thus, St. Peter's is the only remaining structure which recalls the 19th-century appearance of this section of the old town center, between the River Street/West River Street triangle and the River Street railroad bridge. Unfortunately, the intended picturesque relationship between the church and its setting, on the bank of the winding Wepawaug River, has been obscured by more recent building. Still, its quiet and sophisticated design make it one of the finest examples of Victorian architecture, and a rare example of the Gothic Revival style, extant in the city.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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Milford, CT

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Frank Wills. Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture. New York:
Stanford and Swords, 1850.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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MILFORD CT

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ITEM NUMBER ten PAGE seven

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The north boundary commences at a point on the east edge of River Street and proceeds easterly along the south property line of 85 River Street, now or formerly owned by Donna & Martin Edo & Joseph Mager, for 194 feet, to the Wepawaug River. The south boundary commences at a point on the east edge of River Street and proceeds easterly along the north property line of 53 River Street, now or formerly owned by Bruce Kuryla, for 225 feet, to the Wepawaug River.