CITY, TOWN

Hartford

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 20 1362

STATE CT

	-	Y NOMINATIO		DATE ENTERED MA	R 2 5 1982	
	SEE			ATIONAL REGISTER FOI LICABLE SECTIONS	RMS	
1	NAME					
	_	irst Congregationa	1 Church of Eas	t Hartford and Pars	sonage	
	AND/OR COMMON Fi	rst Congregational	Church of East H	artford and Parsonage	2	
2	LOCATION					
		829-837 Main Stre	et	NA NOTEON DURINGA	TION	
	CITY, TOWN				NOT FOR PUBLICATION CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT	
		East Hartford	NA VICINITY OF	1 st		
	STATE	Connecticut	CODE 09	COUNTY Hartford	CODE 003	
3	CLASSIFIC					
	CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	P	RESENT USE	
	DISTRICT	PUBLIC	X_OCCUPIED	AGRICULTU		
	X_BUILDING(S)	X_PRIVATE	_UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIA	L _PARK	
	STRUCTURE	BOTH	WORK IN PROGR	RESSEDUCATION	ALPRIVATE RESIDENC	
	SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITI	ON ACCESSIBL	EENTERTAINN	MENT X_RELIGIOUS	
	OBJECT	IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTE	DGOVERNMEN	NTSCIENTIFIC	
		BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRIC	CTEDINDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION	
		N/A	NO	MILITARY	OTHER:	
4	OWNER O	F PROPERTY				
	NAME	First Congregati	onal Church of	East Hartford, Con	necticut	
	STREET & NUMBER	831 Main Street		·		
	CITY, TOWN		N/A VICINITY OF	STATE		
	Tr o C + Mrox			CT		
5	LOCATION	N OF LEGAL DES	CRIPTION			
	COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS	East Hartford	l Town Clerk			
	STREET & NUMBER	740 Main Stre	eet - Town Ha			
	CITY, TOWN	East Hartford	l	STATE	r	
6	REPRESEN	NTATION IN EXI	STING SURVI	EYS		
	ΤΪΤLE	State Registe	er of Historic	Places		
	DATE					
	1975		FED	ERAL X STATECOUNTYL	OCAL	
	DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS	Connecticut H	istorical Commi	ission		

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

__EXCELLENT

__DETERIORATED

__UNALTERED

X_ORIGINAL SITE

XGOOD

__UNEXPOSED

__RUINS

___MOVED

DATE____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE
THE First Congregational Church of East Hartford is a large frame
Greek Revival Church built in 1835. It sits close to the street on a
busy corner, the intersection of Main Street and Connecticut Boulevard,
a major route across the river to Hartford. Most of the nearby buildings
are low 20th-century commercial blocks, but sharing the large lot with
the church is the parsonage, built sometime in the 1850's.

The main part of the church is rectangular in plan 60 \times 76, the equivalent of 2½ stories high, with the ridge of the roof perpendicular to Main Street. The east gable end is brought forward to form the pediment of a portico, supported by six fluted Ionic columns on stone bases. The columns rest on a platform which is constructed of large granite blocks, as are several steps leading up to the portico. The rest of the foundation is brick. The main facade within the portico is five bays wide, with three entranceways flanked by a window at either end and five corresponding windows on the second level. The side facades show two tiers of four windows, and the rear or west gable has two quarterround windows. Above the asphalt-shingled roof rises a square two-stage tower, positioned just behind the portico. The first stage is a belfry with corner pilasters and two plain columns in antis within a louvered opening on each side. The second stage is similar but smaller, and has four clock faces. Both stages terminate with wooden Greek parapets. The entire exterior of the church, including part of the tower, has been covered with aluminum siding, completely obscuring the clapboards, window and door moldings, plain corner pilasters, and flush boarding which appear in old photographs. The seriousness of this alteration is lessened somewhat by the application of the siding over the details, rather than removing them altogether. Other exterior modifications include aluminum shutters on the sides, and a round ocular window in the front gable, where old prints show a plain tympanum.

The church has several additions to the rear. These are all smaller and lower than the main building and are not obtrusive. The first of these is the 1888 chapel, now used for offices. Herein is a stained-glass rose window in memory of Samuel Pitkin, a deacon and first superintendent of the Sunday School. Immediately west, and also used for offices, is an earlier 1867 chapel, moved back when the later one was built, and lastly is the present modern chapel.

In 1876 the interior was severely damaged by fire and completely redone, so that everything inside, with the possible exception of the gallery seats, dates from that year or later. There is a gallery on three sides supported on fluted Ionic columns (1937), and a pilastered and pedimented backdrop (dating from 1910) to the sanctuary. The church originally had box pews, but these were replaced by curved—arm seats with dark wood trim, some of which remain in the gallery. The interior of the attic shows heavy king—post trusses carrying the roof (reinforced by later diagonal planking), and separate framing for the support of the tower.

The parsonage just south of the church is a two-story frame house, cubical in form with a nearly flat roof. The main facade is three bays wide with a central entrance lighted by sidelights and transom. There is a flat-roofed entrance porch carried on square columns, with panelled

FHR-8-300A (11/78)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

bases and large capitals. The roof has a wide overhang at the eaves. Apparently, the house was in the Tuscan Villa style, but it, too, has been completely aluminum-sided, so that other than the entrance porch, there are no stylistic details visible. It is now used as the sexton's residence and for other parish purposes.

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

—PREHISTORIC —1400-1499 —1500-1599 —1600-1699 —1700-1799 —1800-1899 —1900-	—ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC —ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC —AGRICULTURE **ARCHITECTURE —ART —COMMERCE —COMMUNICATIONS	COMMUNITY PLANNING CONSERVATION ECONOMICS EDUCATION ENGINEERING EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT INDUSTRY	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE LAW LITERATURE MILITARY MUSIC PHILOSOPHY POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	X_RELIGIONSCIENCESCULPTURESOCIAL/HUMANITARIANTHEATERTRANSPORTATIONOTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1833 - built

1860 - parsonage

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Chauncey Shepard, builder

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The East Hartford Congregational Church is important locally for its historical associations as a community institution (Criterion A) and also for its architectural merit. Although many of its features are hidden behind the aluminum siding, it nevertheless is typical of the many Greek Revival churches built throughout the state in the 1830's and 40's (Criterion C). Although larger than most, it has the key features: a full portico across the front (the Ionic order was common), and the multi-stage tower of blocks stacked one on another. The thin moldings, tall columns, and elaborate steeples which characterized the churches of the earlier Federal period are here replaced by the bold proportions and limited ornament of the Greek Revival.

The architectural value of the church is enhanced by the extensive archival material relating to the building. The church may be said to have been designed by the building committee, who chose all the materials, specified the form of the building including the number and order of the columns, and directed that the tower not be carried by the roof trusses. Their painting directions included the interior woodwork, which was to be grained in imitation of oak. Their model was the recently-completed Second Church of New London (destroyed 1868), and to ensure the similarity they hired Chauncey Shepard, a New London builder. His crew of joiners included three from that area, four from Suffield, Connecticut, three from Massachusetts, and but one from East Hartford. Shepard's East Hartford church itself became the model for the Somers (Connecticut) Congregational Church (1842). The church records show that the building committee was familiar with architectural developments outside of their own area. This interest, as well as the varied backgrounds of the workers, helps account for the essential similarity of churches in this period.

The East Hartford Church is closely connected with local history. Although the Congregationalists were no longer the established church, the town did contribute \$1,000 to the building, on the provision it could use the basement for town meetings. Thus, despite disestablishment, the church building was the scene of town business until 1880. Moreover, the Congregational minister was an influential person. The Reverend Samuel Spring (died 1877) was minister when the present church was built, served as the pastor until 1861, and was pastor emeritus until his death. Reverend Spring frequently preached his favorite cause, temperance, a major ante-bellum social issue. Spring was also for years the only school visitor, examining teachers and having the public schools under his sole supervision. The Parsonage was built for Reverend Spring by his congregation when his first house and all his belongings were consumed by fire. It continued as the parsonage until the 20th century and was included in the nominated property because of its close functional relation to the church, as well as its proximity.

The landmark status of the church must also be noted. For nearly 150 years,

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGR				
First Congregational	Church, East Hart	tford. Reco	ords, State L	ibrary, Hartford.
Goodwin, Joseph O. <u>Lockwood & Br</u>	East Hartford: Its cainard Co., 1879.	History and	d Traditions.	Hartford: Case,
Tuthill, William B. <u>1702-1902</u> . F	The First Congred Hartford: Elihu Geo (continued)	gational <u>Chu</u> er Sons, 190	urch, East Ha	rtford Compecticut,
10 GEOGRAPHICAL D	ATA		AURITOI	
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G VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCR	PTION	нЦЦЦ	ا لىلىا	<u> </u>
The nominated pronext to it, both on Ea	operty includes bot ast Hartford Assess			rmer parsonage
LIST ALL STATES AND	COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES	S OVERLAPPING	STATE OR COUNTY	BOUNDARIES
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	•	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
III FORM PREPARED	BY			
NAME/TITLE Bri	ice Clouette, Consi	ultant		
ORGANIZATION	··		DATE	
	nnecticut Historica	al Commission	on TELEPHONE	June 25, 1979
STREET & NUMBER 59	South Prospect St	reet	(203)	
CITY OR TOWN			STATE	
На	rtford		CT	
12 STATE HISTORIC	PRESERVATION	OFFICER (CERTIFICAT	ION
THE EVALU	JATED SIGNIFICANCE OF TH	IIS PROPERTY W	ITHIN THE STATE IS	:
NATIONAL	STATE_		LOCAL X	<u>.</u>
As the designated State Historic Pr hereby nominate this property for criteria and procedures set forth by	inclusion in the National Reg			
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OF	ICER SIGNATURE	y m	Mhons	
	ticut Historical Con	mmission	DATE	February 5, 1982
FOR NPS USE ONLY I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS LELEN Y KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL	I	THE NATIONAL I Intered in th Iational Regi	10	3/25/82
ATTEST!			DATE	
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION				

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

the "Old White Church," as it is sometimes called, has stood on this prominent site at one of the busiest intersections in the town. Barber in 1836 described it as "beautifully situated at the entrance of the principal avenue to Hartford," and it has been the symbol of the center of East Hartford since its construction.

¹ John W. Barber, Connecticut Historical Collections (New Haven: 1836),

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

9

PAGE 3

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