

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



358

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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Congregational Church of Plainville

other names/site number Congregational Church of Plainville, UCC

2. Location

street & number 130 West Main Street

	not for publication
	vicinity

city or town Plainville

state CT code _____ county Hartford code 003 zip code 06062

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

Stacy Vaino / DSHPO 5.9.12
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

DECD / STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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:)

Jon Edson H. Beall 6.27.12
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19TH CENTURY/ Gothic Revival

foundation: Stone, brick, concrete block

walls: clapboard

roof: asphalt shingle

other:

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Congregational Church of Plainville was built in 1850 in the Gothic Revival style with Romanesque influences. The building encompasses 13,666 square feet on two levels, including all additions, and faces north on a 1.13 acre level lot in an urban residential neighborhood located three blocks from the center of town (Figure 1.) There are asphalt parking lots behind the building to the south and in front of it to the northwest. A few commercial buildings and several churches, along with single and multi-family residences line West Main Street in this area. There is also former factory, a one-story, brick building with a flat roof, directly across West Main Street from the church. Most of the homes in the area were built after the church was constructed in a variety of styles including most prominently the Italianate, Prairie, Folk Victorian and Craftsman styles.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The church building is a three-bay, timber-framed, clapboarded structure with a steeply-pitched roof and a belfry tower topped with a spire on its west elevation. It rests on a brownstone foundation. (Photograph 1). Brackets line the wide, overhanging eaves of the roof and a brick chimney is located along the ridge of the main block. The façade of the original building is virtually unchanged since its construction. The first story of the main block has a central doorway with a double-leaved door surmounted by a Federal-style fanlight, probably added during renovations in the 1950s,¹ surrounded by a hooded molding which terminates in fluted bosses. It is reached by a flight of three concrete stairs with modern metal hand rails. A metal lantern flanked by scrolls is set above the doorway, which is flanked by two, three-over-six double-hung round-headed windows. They both have hood molds which end in bosses identical to those used on the doorway. (Photograph 2). On the east corner of the façade, there is a wooden buttress which rises to the height of the central doorway. There are six lancet windows grouped above the main entrance in the center of the façade. Two taller, twenty-two light center sections are flanked by two seven-light, windows on each side. The entire grouping is capped by a lancet hood mold with six peaks that ends in square bosses scored with a diagonal channel. The window has a wide trapezoidal sill. Above it is a small oculus with rose patterned glazing.

The belfry tower and spire on the northwest corner dominates the façade and rises to approximately double the height of the main block. It is supported by two-stage wooden buttresses on the northeast and southeast corners, which rise to about twice the height of those on the northwest corner of the façade. Chamfered edge shafts extend from the tops of the buttresses to the cornice below the spire and a similar edge shafts define the division between the belfry tower and the main block of the church. The octagonal spire is covered in painted wooden shingles and it is topped by a weathervane patterned after an archer's arrow. It has four narrow dormers near its base with trefoil lancet windows, steeply pitched roofs and wide sills. The spire sits atop a projecting cornice, which is supported by a bracketed table. The body of the bell tower below the spire is square and covered in clapboard. All four elevations of the belfry are pierced with groups of three lancet openings containing louvers; each group has trapezoidal sills and hood molds. On the façade, the hood molds end in fluted bosses while those on the other elevations end in square bosses. (Photograph 3.) Below these openings on the façade and east elevations, is a

¹ Austin's drawings for the building show solid, vertical plank, double leaved doors at the main entrance. The current Colonial Revival doors and fanlight were probably added in 1954, at the same time as the Colonial Revival chandeliers were installed in the interior.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

large, round clock set into a diamond shaped frame edged with foliated molding (Photograph 4.) Below the clock on the façade and east elevation is a pair of lancet windows surmounted by a small quatrefoil window. Both window groupings have hood molds and trapezoidal sills. The hood mold on the façade ends in fluted bosses while the hood mold on the east elevation ends in square bosses (Photograph 5.) Below these windows on the façade and east elevations is a single lancet window with a hood mold and trapezoidal sill. Like the windows above them the hood molds on the façade end in fluted bosses, while those on the east elevation end in square bosses. A rectangular brass plaque below the window on the façade reads, "The Congregational Church, Plainville, Conn. 1840." (Photograph 6).

Fenestration on the side elevations of the building consists of three sets of paired lancet windows. They each have trapezoidal sills and lancet hood molds with double peaks that end in plain bosses (Photograph 7). A recessed doorway at the end of the original main block connects it with the 1886 additions. A strip of molding with a pierced quatrefoil design runs across the top of this doorway.

The first change to the exterior of the original church was a small chapel added to the south elevation in 1859, but this room was enclosed by the construction of a larger addition, now known as the "Green Room," to that elevation ca. 1883. About 1886, a new structure, now known as the Music Room, was added to the east elevation of the Green Room (Photograph 8.)² One or both of these additions may originally have been used as a chapel.³ It is unknown when they were converted to their present uses or when the kitchen was added to the Green Room. In 1968, the U-shaped Education Wing was added. It joins the south elevation of earlier structure at the west elevation of the Green Room and the north elevation of the original church building on the west elevation of the façade.⁴ . The section which abuts the 1850 main block at the facade includes three double leaved doors which now serve as the main entrance to the church (Photograph 9)

The Music Room (added ca. 1886) extends east from the south edge of this doorway and has a brick foundation which rises three feet above the ground to meet the clapboard-covered walls of the addition. The north elevation has two fixed windows corbelled into the brick foundation wall and two sets of windows, which are similar to those on the west elevation of the main block, in the clapboard walls. The west elevation of the Music Room has a doorway on its northwest corner which is covered by a small roof supported by brackets pierced with a quatrefoil. It has two windows in the foundation wall that are similar to those on the north elevation. In the center of this elevation is a large lancet window group which includes an arcade of twelve small inset lancet arches along its bottom, a row of five lancet windows above them, and tracery consisting of four inset quatrefoils above the windows and a single quatrefoil window in the peak of the arch (Photograph 10).

The south elevation of the building includes, from west to east, the Music room, the Green Room and the Education Wing. There are thirteen foundation windows on this elevation. The Music Room and the Green Room each have two pairs of lancet windows which are identical to those on the north elevation of the Music Room. A large section of the Education Wing on this elevation collapsed during the winter of 2010-2011 and had not been repaired by September of 2011 The east elevation of the Education Wing has five foundation windows and two sets of narrow rectangular windows in the clapboard the north elevation of the building. The north elevation of the Education Wing has three sets of windows in its eastern half which are identical to those on its east elevation(Photograph 11.)

² Steve Vastola, "Renovation History of Plainville Congregational Church," Plainville: monograph, 2011

³ Henry Allen Castle and Mildred Amidon Bell, *From the Founding of Farmington, 1640-1975*, (Plainville:The Congregational Church of Plainville, 1976), 38

⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

Interior

The original building of the Congregational Church of Plainville is constructed with a timber frame and the roof is supported by scissors trusses. The Green Room addition (ca. 1883) is timber framed, but the Music Room addition (ca. 1886) is balloon framed. The Green Room roof is supported by a kingpost truss, while the Music Room roof is supported by a queen post truss. The building is entered through double-leaved doors centered on the facade. The narthex runs the full width of the building and it is an unadorned space with entrances to the two aisles of the nave on its south wall. There are winding staircases at the east and west ends of the narthex. The east staircase leads to both the belfry and the gallery while the west staircase only provides access to the gallery. The bell rope is located near the east staircase is still used to ring the church bell, which was installed in 1893.⁵

The sanctuary is double-height with galleries on the north, east and west walls. Beams with corbeled ends, which express the scissor truss system supporting the roof, span the ceiling. Decorative trusses in the center of each beam are pierced with lancet arch and quatrefoil patterns (Photograph 12). The gallery on the North wall appears in Austin's original drawings for the church and this section of the gallery is supported by columns which match the design shown in the drawing. It is probably part of the original church building but the design of the breastwork of the gallery does not match Austin's drawing. It may have been changed in 1859, when the galleries on the east and west walls were added (Photograph 13.) These galleries are supported by round cast iron columns with stylized Doric capitals.. The breastwork or arcature of the entire gallery is now a repetitive range of molded lancet arches interspersed with small trefoils between the peaks of the arches. The arcature is surmounted by a modern wooden balustrade. The north section of the gallery contains two rows of three pews, while the east and west galleries each contain two rows of four pews. The pews have straight backs and low ends topped with volutes like those on the floor of the nave. There are staircases at the south ends of the east and west galleries. Above the gallery on the north wall, the interior of the large central window is surrounded with moldings using lancet arch and quatrefoil designs (Photograph 14). The sanctuary is lit by six multi-light chandeliers installed in 1954⁶. Electricity replaced gas light in the building in 1915.⁷ A center section of double-width slip pews is flanked by aisles in the nave. A row of narrower slip pews under the gallery in the nave arcade line the east and west walls. The pews have straight backs and low ends volute armrests. (Photograph 15).

The Chancel in the center of the south wall of the sanctuary is raised three steps from the floor of the nave and divided from it by low, paneled partitions on each side with a wide carpeted opening between them. A table, which serves as the altar, is centered on the south wall. The pulpit is on east side of the chancel, just behind the partition, and there are two short pews facing west behind it. The organ manual is behind them, facing north. Two pews for the choir face east on the west side of the chancel behind a low paneled partition. The pews are of the same design as those in the nave. The south wall of the sanctuary behind the chancel is paneled in painted wood. Above the paneling, a large lancet arch opening with a wide band of wooden trim contains exposed organ pipes. The interior of the church is currently painted pink with white trim, but a 1925 photograph of the chancel shows that the wall and the chancel arch were painted in *trompe l'oeil* to resemble stone (Figure 6). That paint scheme may have been original. Stone was the preferred building material for churches in the 1850s, but many wooden churches were painted to imitate it.⁸ It may have been painted over during major renovations to the sanctuary during 1953-54.⁹ The first organ was installed in 1874 and the 1859 chapel, which is directly behind the chancel, was used to house its works.. The original organ was replaced in 1923 and that organ was superseded in 1959 by

⁵ The Congregational Church United Church of Christ, *2000 Membership Directory*, (Plainville: 2000), 3.

⁶ Castle, *Founding*, 54

⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸ Gwen W. Steege, "The "Book of Plans" and the Early Romanesque Revival in the United States: A study in Architectural Patronage," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 46, no. 3 (September, 1987): 215-227.

⁹ Castle, *Founding*, 54.

Congregational Church of Plainville

Hartford, Connecticut

Name of Property

County and State

the current instrument.¹⁰ Organ works are still housed in the former chapel. The chancel arch is flanked by doors which lead to the later additions to the church (photograph 16.)

The Green Room was added to the south elevation of the original building ca. 1883 and it enclosed the 1859 chapel addition.¹¹ It now includes a kitchen with built-in cabinets (Photograph 17.) and an adjoining room for church events (Photograph 18.) By about 1886, the space now known as the Music Room was added to the east elevation of the Green Room (Photograph 19).¹² There is a wall between the rooms which can be raised into the ceiling to create one large space, or lowered to provide two separate rooms. Moldings used on the interior windows and doors of the Green Room and Music room are identical. They are still Gothic and all of them use the lancet arch motif, but their design is of a later period and more elaborate than moldings in the original church building (Photograph 20).

In 1945, the Church needed more room for its education programs and \$1000, all that was allowed by the War Production Board, was spent to build classroom space in the basement of the Green Room and Music Room. Much of the construction work was done by church members because of the limited budget. The space now known as The Fireplace Room, in the basement of the Green Room (Photograph 21) was built at that time.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 55

¹¹ Vastola, "Renovation."

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Louise Collella, "In Commemorations of the 150th Anniversary of the Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, 1840-1990," (Congregational Church of Plainville: Plainville, 1990), 10.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1850-1961

Significant Dates

1850, 1859, 1883, 1886

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- 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.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Austin, Henry

Period of Significance (justification)

The Congregational Church of Plainville was built in 1850 and it has been in continuous service as a church since its construction.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Congregational Church of Plainville

Hartford, Connecticut

Name of Property

County and State

Properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes are usually not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. However, the Congregational Church of Plainville is a remarkably well-preserved example of a pivotal period in the nineteenth century church architecture. It is also a significant work of Connecticut architect Henry Austin. His original drawings for this building still exist in the collection of Yale University and they attest to the building's high degree of architectural integrity. This church derives its primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Congregational Church of Plainville is significant statewide under Criterion C as a rare integration of the Gothic Revival and Romanesque styles expressed in a frame building and as an excellent example of the eclectic expression of a master architect. The Congregational Church of Plainville was designed by the renowned Connecticut architect Henry Austin (1804-1891) and built in 1850 in the Gothic Revival style with Romanesque influences. This exceptional example of Austin's ecclesiastical work retains a very high level of integrity. Despite some additions to the rear of the building, the original 1850 structure is in excellent condition and retains nearly all of its original architectural detail. Austin designed many significant buildings in the last half of the nineteenth century and developed a distinctive eclectic style. He began his career by working with nationally-known architects Ithiel Town and A. J. Davis. Austin collaborated with them on several projects even after he had opened his own office.

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

Origins of Plainville

The Town of Plainville was originally part of Farmington. Settled as Tunxis in 1640 and chartered in 1645, Farmington's settlers originally worshiped in private homes but eventually built their first meeting house by 1672. The current meeting house, still in use as a church, was built in 1771.¹⁴ The population of Farmington increased rapidly between 1712 and 1783 and as a result six outlying districts (present day Kensington, Southington, Bristol, New Britain, Burlington and Avon) had established their own churches; yet the village of Plainville remained part of the larger town.¹⁵

The area that is now known as Plainville not settled until after 1657 and at that time only five families had established homes there. Residents of the "Great Plain", as the area was then known, continued to travel at least five miles each way to attend weekly services at the Farmington meeting house. These journeys were especially difficult in cold, rain and snow, so outlying communities, including Plainville, were granted "Winter Privileges," which allowed them to hold local preaching services during the worst weather of the year.¹⁶ Plainville continued to be only sparsely settled until the opening of the Farmington Canal in 1826.¹⁷ The canal linked New Haven to Massachusetts by means of a 56 mile- long waterway. It was an engineering marvel which brought prosperity and improved communication to many

¹⁴ "History of Farmington," Farmington Historical Society, http://www.farmingtonhistoricalsociety-ct.org/fh_farmhist_pg2.html., accessed March 8, 2012.

¹⁵ Louise Collella, "In Commemorations of the 150th Anniversary of the Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, 1840-1990," Plainville, 1990, 13.

¹⁶ Henry Allen Castle and Mildred Amidon Bell, *From the Founding of Farmington, 1640-1975*, (Plainville: The Congregational Church of Plainville, 1976), 17-19.

¹⁷ Simon Tomlinson, "Plainville," In *The Memorial History of Hartford County, Connecticut, 1633-1884*, ed. J. Hammond Trumbull, vol. 2, (Boston: Edward L. Osgood, 1886), 337.

Congregational Church of Plainville

Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut

County and State

of the small communities along its route including the Great Plain.¹⁸ Economic growth brought with it a sense of identity and in 1831, residents voted to adopt the name "Plainville" for the village.¹⁹ Plainville was not incorporated as a town until 1869.²⁰

The Congregational Church of Plainville

In 1839, the residents of Plainville decided to establish their own ecclesiastical society. The forty-seven men present at a meeting on January 10 of that year, unanimously voted to, "...form a Congregational Society." As their first order of business, they voted, "That it is expedient that this Society proceed as soon as may be, to build a meeting house for public worship for the Use of this Society."²¹ This first Plainville meetinghouse was built in 1840 at the corner of West Main and Canal Streets, a short distance from the present church. The congregation had outgrown its first building by 1849 and a few wealthy members of the church offered money for the building fund early that year. The society voted in October, 1849 to accept donations. They authorized a budget of \$3500 and appointed a committee of three to make arrangements for the construction of the new building. There was some dissention among the congregation after this vote, but by November, 1849, the committee had been reinstated and the budget was raised to \$4500. At that same meeting the society agreed to continue to raise money for the project and to construct the new building on land owned by William A. Ives if he were to donate it to the society. Ives deeded the property to the society on July 13, 1850 with the provision that one acre be used only for a meeting house. Construction of the building had evidently begun before the property was transferred, because the present church building was dedicated on July 31, 1850.²² There is no record of how or why the society chose Henry Austin as their architect.

Evolution of New England Church Design

The general plan of the building follows that of the New England meeting house as it had evolved from Colonial beginnings to the 1840s. Most meeting houses were originally square or rectangular, timber frame structures with hipped roofs. Their size was limited by their construction and the need for the entire congregation to be able to hear, if not see, the minister during long weekly services. The interiors of these buildings usually had a pulpit centered on one wall with box pews arranged around it on three sides. By the mid-1700s, the square plan had evolved into a rectangle with a gabled roof and a side entrance on one of the long walls. Bell towers were added later in the eighteenth century to call the congregation to prayer, but the side entrance was still common and the location of the pulpit was unchanged. By the end of the eighteenth century, traditional meeting house designs were no longer adequate to accommodate new forms of worship. Music was added to the service and congregations, especially in cities, were getting larger. Pattern books like James Gibb's *Book of Architecture* (1739) and Asher Benjamin's *Country Builder's Assistant* (1797) were beginning to be widely distributed by this time. The plans in these books moved from the "meetinghouse" design toward the "church" form it has taken since then: a rectangular building with an entrance at the gable end, often through or beneath a fully integrated bell tower. These new designs featured interiors with a long nave and a pulpit or smaller raised chancel at one end.²³

¹⁸ Michael S. Raber, "Farmington Canal (New Haven and Northampton Canal)," National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1985, Section 8, 3.

¹⁹ Tomlinson, "Plainville," 338.

²⁰ Ibid., 335.

²¹ Ibid., 20.

²² Castle and Bell, 'Founding', 30-31.

²³ Brett Donham, "Lessons from the New England Meeting House," Faith and Form; The Interfaith Journal on Religion, Art and Architecture 40, no. 2, (2007): 1-10.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

Styles of preaching rooted in the Great Awakening required that the preacher be seen as well as heard. Low pews were arranged in rows divided by one or two central aisles on the main floor. Additional seating in similar pews was sometimes provided in galleries along the walls. All pews faced the minister, which was a departure from the older plan in which some congregants had their backs to the pulpit in a "subdivided warren of box pews."²⁴ Attitudes toward the perception of church architecture had also changed by the 1830s and beautiful, well designed and appointed church buildings were becoming linked to spirituality. Interiors were painted, more elaborate woodwork and appointments appeared; pews became more comfortable and stoves were added to ease the rigor of winter services. The design of church buildings had moved from the austerity of early Puritan meetinghouses to churches which were intended to promote religious feeling through their aesthetic atmosphere.²⁵ The Congregational Church of Plainville is a reflection of these contemporary design principles.

The Architect and the Building

Henry Austin was born in Hamden, Connecticut, in 1804, but little is known of his early life. He probably began his career working in the building trades, possibly as a bricklayer. There is no record of his receiving formal training, but by 1836 he was a practicing architect and had opened an office in New Haven. The influential architect Ithiel Town and his associate Alexander Jackson Davis were also working in New Haven and Hartford at that time and they sometimes collaborated on projects with Austin.²⁶ Austin was influenced by the work of both men, especially in his many homes in the Italian Villa Style, which were rooted in Davis's designs.²⁷ Austin worked as an architect for more than fifty years and designed many notable buildings in Connecticut, including, in New Haven: the Austin Bristol House, (1845)²⁸ the James Dwight Dana House (1849),²⁹ the John P. Norton House (1849),³⁰ New Haven City Hall (1860-62),³¹ Yale Library (now Dwight Hall) (with A. J. Davis, 1842-47), in New Haven³² the Egyptian Revival gateway at the Grove Street Cemetery (1839-47)³³ and many, many others. In Hartford, he is known for the Hartford Athenaeum (now the Wadsworth Athenaeum, 1842-44), designed with A. J. Davis³⁴; and in Portland, Maine the Morse-Libby House (1857-60) which is a National Historic Landmark.³⁵ His ecclesiastical work includes churches in both Gothic and Romanesque styles for several Protestant denominations. These churches included: Congregational Church, Portland, Connecticut (1850)³⁶ Methodist Episcopal Church, Waterbury, Connecticut (1853-54)³⁷ and Trinity Episcopal Church in Seymour, Connecticut (1857-58).³⁸

Austin's work was characterized by his extravagant use of stylistic elements taken from many traditions. His eclecticism often resulted in buildings with a relatively simple, conventional Italianate or Second Empire form with

²⁴Carl Lounsbury, "God Is in the Details: The Transformation of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Early Nineteenth-Century America," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2006), pp. 1-21.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶James F. O'Gorman, *Henry Austin*, (Wesleyan University Press: Middletown, 2008), 2-6.

²⁷Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America*, New York: Dover, 1944, 161.

²⁸O'Gorman, *Henry Austin*, 28.

²⁹Ibid., 34.

³⁰Ibid., 61.

³¹Ibid., 150.

³²Ibid., 129.

³³Ibid., 118.

³⁴Ibid., 122.

³⁵Ibid., 68.

³⁶Ibid., 101.

³⁷Ibid., 111.

³⁸Ibid., 113.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

interiors that were enhanced by elaborate details of Moorish, Egyptian or Indian origin. His New Haven Union Station (1847-48, burned 1894) was both stylistically and technically innovative. It was the first train station to include a tall clock tower, the first to depress the tracks and its extravagant exterior included Chinese, Indian, Romanesque and Italianate elements.³⁹ His 1845 residential design for businessman Willis Bristol in New Haven at first appears to be a conventional Italianate home. A closer look at the facade reveals extravagant use of Moorish and Indian Revival motifs as well as other decorative elements. He employs the multifoil arch on three sides of the portico as well as on windows and doors. The portico roof is supported by candelabra columns and cast iron balconies for first story windows employ Gothic designs. The interiors of this house are equally eclectic.⁴⁰

Austin's ecclesiastical work is much more restrained than his designs for other types of buildings. His first church design was his 1841 building for St. John's Episcopal Church in Hartford. It was a distinctly Gothic building, built in stone with pointed arches and with an interior strongly influenced by medieval cathedrals.⁴¹ He continued to work in stone and the Gothic style, based on the ideas of the English architect, A. W. Pugin, as seen in his designs for the Northford, Connecticut Congregational Church (1845) and St. John's Episcopal Church in Waterbury, Connecticut (1846-48).⁴²

There was a considerable amount of controversy about Protestant church design in the 1840s. Some authors from England advocated the Gothic as the only true style for Christian churches. Others in the United States, especially those from the nonliturgical denominations (Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist) thought that the Gothic spoke too much of Roman Catholicism and they began to propose another style that would replace the Gothic pointed arch with the rounded arch of the Romanesque.⁴³ The first church built in this style was Richard Upjohn's Church of the Pilgrims (Congregational) in Brooklyn, New York in 1844, followed by James Renwick's Church of the Puritans (Congregational) in Manhattan in 1846. Austin attempted to follow this style in his church designs after 1846 and his Third Presbyterian Church for Trenton, New Jersey shows a successful design using a central spire and rounded windows and hood molds.⁴⁴ However, Connecticut congregations may have proved resistant to the new style. His initial rounded arch design for the First Congregational Church in Kent, Connecticut from the same year was built with trabeated windows in their place. Only the large tripartite window on the facade above the main entrance retains its original design. This could have been the result of revisions by the congregation, or a builder's decision.⁴⁵

The Congregational Church of Plainville

The Congregational Church of Plainville illustrates the tension between the Gothic and the Romanesque styles. Its single spire is to the east of the entrance and, while Austin uses rounded arches for the main entrance and windows on the first story, those on the upper level, tower and side elevations are pointed. His characteristic eclecticism appears in a tower clock set in a diamond-shaped Baroque frame. He also uses fluted bosses at the ends of the rounded hood molds on the entrance and first story windows. A different boss pattern is used on the lower tower window on the facade, but there are none on the west elevation of the tower. All other hood molds end in simple blocks. All interior windows have pointed arches and that motif is repeated in moldings and other ornamentation throughout the sanctuary. An eclectic

³⁹Ibid., 132.

⁴⁰Ibid., 30-32.

⁴¹Ibid., 79-81.

⁴²Ibid., 82-88.

⁴³Gwen W. Steege, "The 'Book of Plans' and the Early Romanesque Revival in the United States: A study in Architectural Patronage," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 46, no. 3 (September, 1987): 215-227.

⁴⁴O'Gorman, *Austin*, 90-92.

⁴⁵Ibid., 94-97.

Congregational Church of Plainville

Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut

County and State

touch on the interior is Austin's use of Greek Revival volutes at the pew ends, while common in American churches, may show the influence of his early association with Ithiel Town.

Austin was clearly following the movement to create spiritually inspiring church buildings. The steeply pitched roofline of the façade as well as the exuberant tower reaches for the heavens. The interior also fits into the movement to connect the minister with his congregation by providing a low central platform for the preacher, rather than a high pulpit. The soaring ceilings of this church, together with its tall, Gothic windows create an interior space that is filled with light. Its architectural details are restrained and elegant. The overall impression of both the exterior and interior is one of exhalation.

Three of Austin's architectural drawings still exist in the Austin Drawing Collection at Yale University and show how little the main block of the building has changed over time (Figures 2-4). It was enlarged by the addition of a gallery and small chapel in 1859; the Green Room, kitchen and Music Room were added to the south elevation in the 1880s; and a classroom addition (the Education Wing) incorporating a new entrance vestibule was added in 1968.⁴⁶ Figure 5 illustrates the evolution of the building over time.

Church designs after Plainville

It was not until his next church commission in Portland that Austin managed to design and build a church with entirely Romanesque fenestration in Connecticut. This design employs elements similar to some of those in the Plainville church, including an almost identical main entrance and fenestration on the façade, but he was no longer required to use a pointed arch.⁴⁷

Austin's next series of church designs expanded his reputation beyond Connecticut. Working with his young assistant, David Russell Brown, he contributed drawings to the one of the most influential books of Protestant church designs of the nineteenth century, *A Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages*, published by the Congregational Church in 1853.⁴⁸ Most other architects contributing to the book, including Richard Upjohn, James Renwick, Jr., Gervase Wheeler and Sidney Mason Stone, already had national reputations. The book presented designs for churches ranging from the humblest to the most elaborate. While some of the designs were still Gothic, all of those presented by Austin and Brown were Romanesque.⁴⁹

After the publication of his work in the *Book of Plans*, Austin, sometimes still working with Brown, continued to design Connecticut churches in the round-arched style he had mastered. They included a masonry Methodist church in Waterbury, which was influenced by the German *Rundbogenstil*⁵⁰ and a wood frame Congregational church in Danbury with Federal influences.⁵¹

Henry Austin continued to practice architecture in New Haven until the 1890s, but his son took over management of the office in the 1880s. His office designed a series of private homes, stores, banks, churches and public buildings in a variety of styles until it closed after his death in the 1890s. Since Austin practiced almost entirely in Connecticut, he was outside the mainstream of New York, Chicago and Boston architects. As a result, he was free to explore his own interpretation of world art and architectural styles without the constant evaluation of established critics. In an eclectic era, Austin was able to forge a personal style that, "...shaped the built environment of his native region."⁵²

⁴⁶ Vastola, "Renovation"

⁴⁷ O'Gorman, *Austin*, 100.

⁴⁸ Steege, "The 'Book of Plans'"

⁴⁹ O'Gorman, *Austin*, 103-104.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 177.

Congregational Church of Plainville

Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut

County and State

Tower Clock

Henry Austin included two prominent clock faces in his design for the tower of the Congregational Church of Plainville. However, it is unclear whether a clock was actually installed when the building was constructed. The existing instrument was installed, "...in the place provided for a clock"⁵³ in 1916, when congregation member and noted industrialist Charles Hotchkiss Norton (1851-1942) donated a Connecticut-made Seth Thomas tower clock to the church. Norton was a native of Plainville who started his career as a designer and mechanical engineer at Seth Thomas in Thomaston, Connecticut. Norton designed many public clocks for the Thomas Company and after designing the first precision grinding machine he founded his own company in 1900.⁵⁴ He also donated clocks to the Plainville Public Library. The clock mechanism at Plainville also controlled a carillon in the belfry and a smaller clock on the north face of the gallery in the sanctuary. The original mechanism is still in use and it is installed in a glass case on the west side of the gallery near the tower (Photograph 22). The carillon is now electronic, but the gallery clock is still controlled by the tower clock mechanism.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

"Charles H. Norton Dies in Plainville," *New Britain Herald*, October 27, 1942.

"History of Farmington," *Farmington Historical Society*, http://www.farmingtonhistoricalsociety-ct.org/fh_farmhist_pg2.html, accessed March 8, 2012

Castle, Henry Allen and Mildred Amidon Abell, *From the Founding of Farmington 1640-1975*, The Congregational Church United Church of Christ, Plainville:1976

Colella, Louise, "In Commemorations of the 150th Anniversary of the Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, 1840-1990," Plainville, 1990.

Donham, Brett, "Lessons from the New England Meeting House," *Faith and Form; The Interfaith Journal on Religion, Art and Architecture*, 40, no. 2, (2007): 1-10.

Lounsbury, Carl, "God Is in the Details: The Transformation of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Early Nineteenth-Century America," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2006), pp. 1-21.

Meeks, Carroll L. V. "Romanesque Before Richardson in the United States," *The Art Bulletin*, 35, No. 1 (March 1953): 17-33.

O'Gorman, James F., *Henry Austin*, Wesleyan University Press: Middletown, 2008.

Raber, Michael S. "Farmington Canal (New Haven and Northampton Canal)," National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1985.

Steege, Gwen W., "The "Book of Plans" and the Early Romanesque Revival in the United States: A study in Architectural Patronage," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 46, no. 3 (September, 1987): 215-227.

⁵³ Colella, "Commemoration" 9.

⁵⁴ "Charles H. Norton Dies in Plainville," *New Britain Herald*, October 27, 1942.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

The Congregational Church United Church of Christ, *2000 Membership Directory*, Plainville: Olan Mills, 2000.

Tomlinson, Simon, "Plainville," In *The Memorial History of Hartford County, Connecticut, 1633-1884*, ed. J. Hammond Trumbull, vol. 2, Boston: Edward L. Osgood, 1886.

Vastola, Steve, "Renovation History of Plainville Congregational Church," monograph, 2011.

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): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.13
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18T 676969 4615284
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

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

The boundaries of the property are on file at the Plainville, Connecticut Tax Assessor's office as:
Map 28, Block B, Lot 4

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This nomination includes only the Plainville Congregational Church building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tod Bryant
organization Heritage Resources date 3/8/2012
street & number 23 Morgan Avenue telephone 203-852-9788
city or town Norwalk state CT zip code 06851
e-mail tod@heritageresourcesct.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ____

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Figure 1. Satellite map of part of Plainville, Connecticut, showing location of the Congregational Church of Plainville.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

159.

Design XXXV Plate 1



Figure 2. Henry Austin, original drawing for façade of Plainville Congregational Church. (Austin Drawing Collection, Yale University)

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Figure 3. Henry Austin, original drawing for west elevation of Plainville Congregational Church.
(Austin Drawing Collection, Yale University)

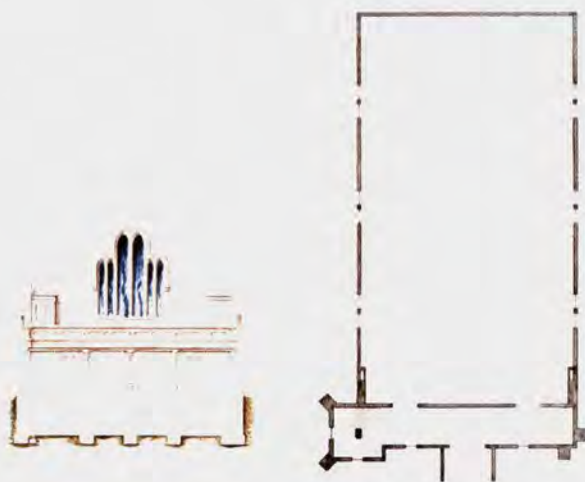


Figure 4. Henry Austin, original drawing for interior of Plainville Congregational Church.
(Austin Drawing Collection, Yale University)

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

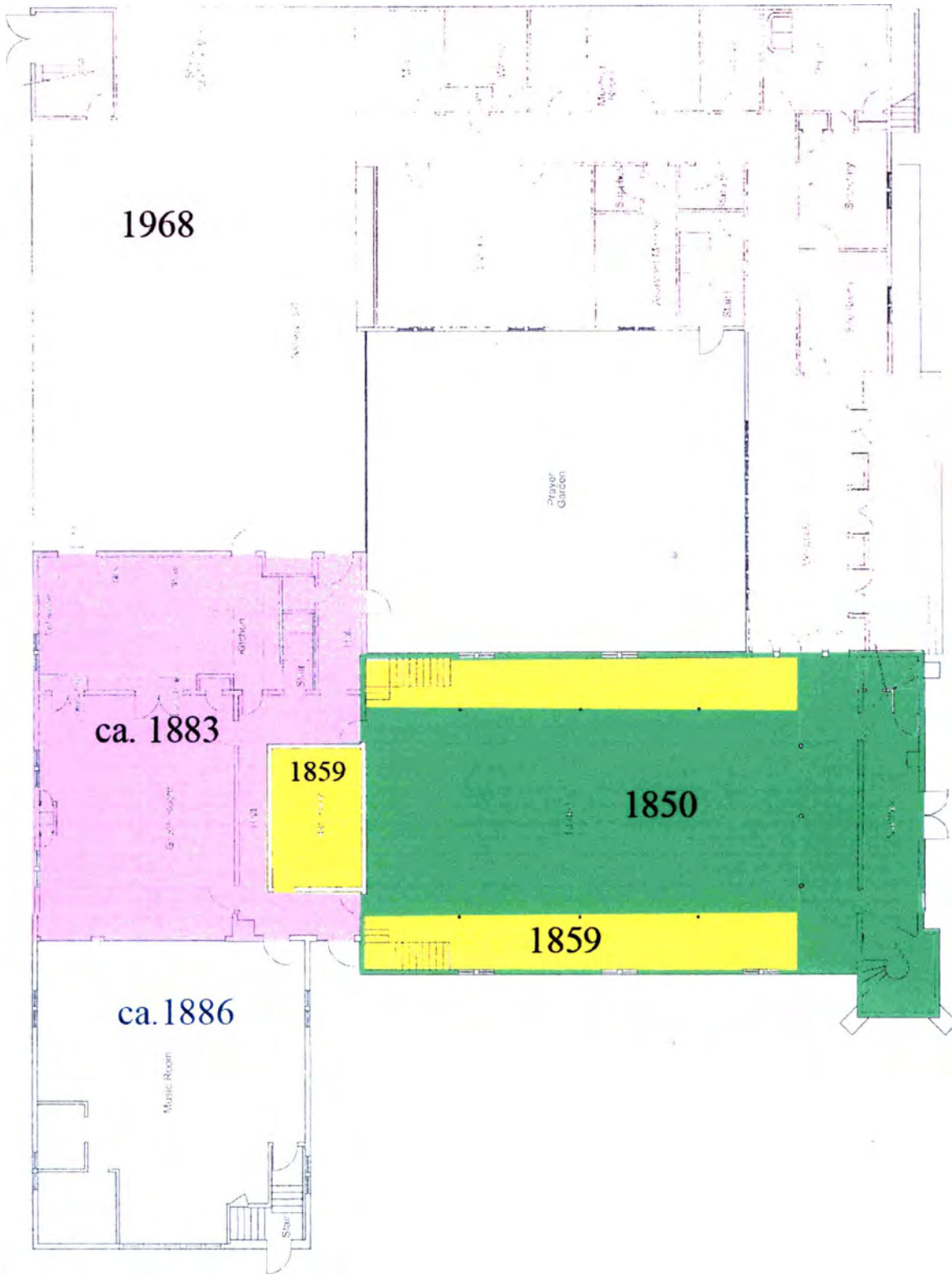


Figure 5. Evolution of Plainville Congregational Church. (Plainville Congregational Church.)

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Figure 6. Chancel, view south, showing *trompe l'oeil* painting of walls to resemble stone, 1925.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Photo 1. Facade, view south.



Photo 2. Facade, view south, showing main entrance and flanking windows with rounded arches and rosettes and fanlight.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Photo 3. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view south, tower, August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 4. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view south, tower, showing clock, August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Photo 5. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view southwest, showing tower windows, August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 6. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view south, tower, north elevation, showing round headed window and fluted bosses. August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.

Congregational Church of Plainville
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Hartford, Connecticut
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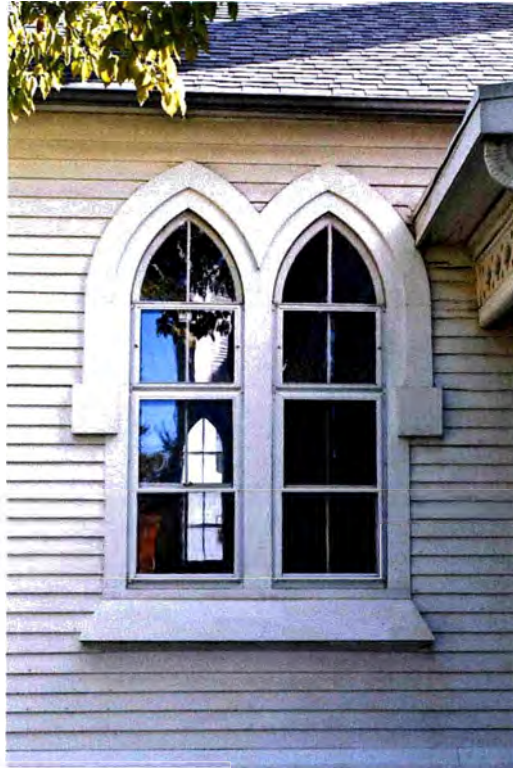


Photo 7. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view south, tower, showing clock, August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 8. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view west showing east elevation, August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant..

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Photo 9. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view southeast, showing facade of new entrance, October 28, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 10. Music room addition, west elevation, view southeast, showing large lancet arch window group.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

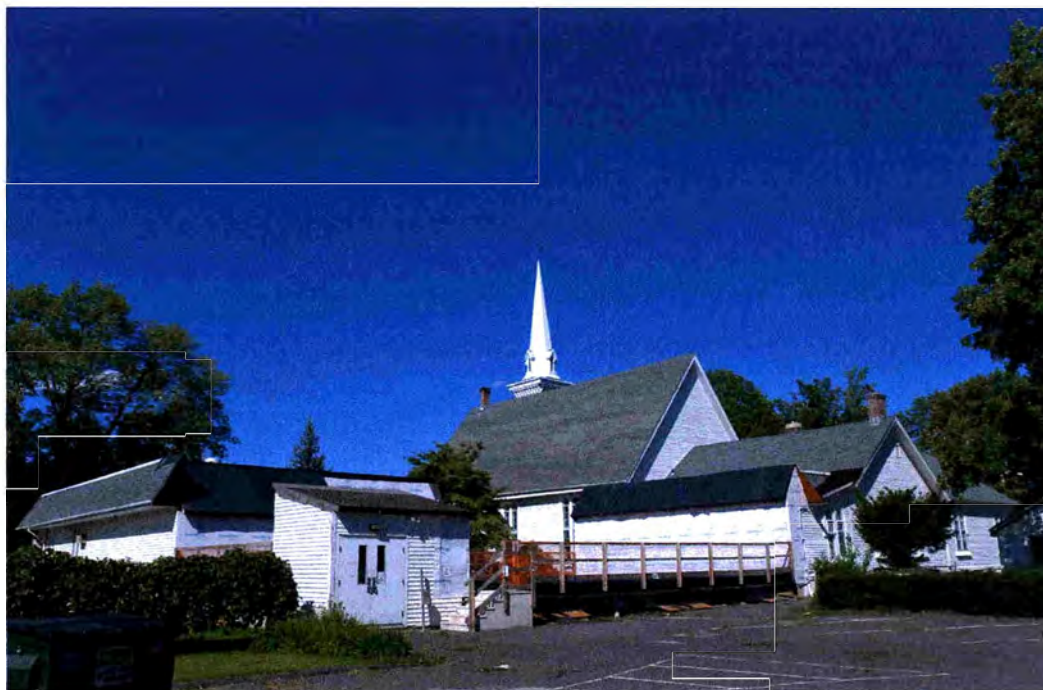


Photo 11. Southwest elevation, view northeast.



Photo 12. Sanctuary, view southeast from gallery.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

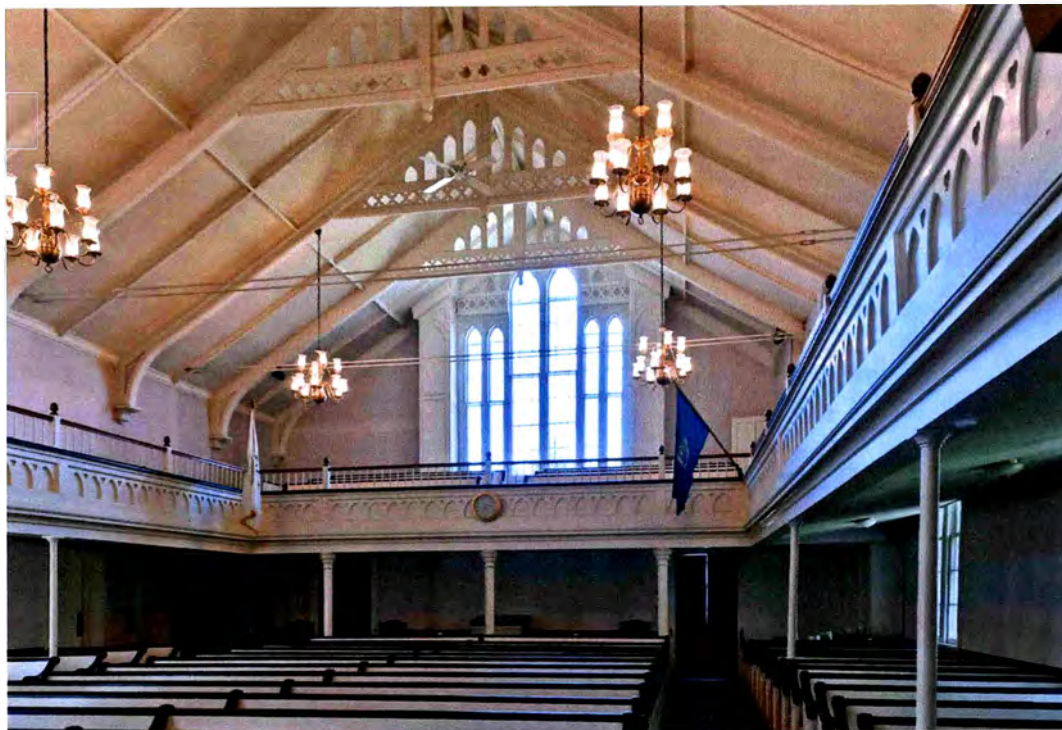


Photo 13. Sanctuary, view North. October 29, 2011. Tod Bryant.



Photo 14. Interior view north of large window above gallery.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Photo 15. Pews showing volutes. view northwest.



Photo 16. Sanctuary, view south. showing organ and chancel. October 29, 2011. Tod Bryant

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Photo 17. Green Room Kitchen , view southeast, showing cabinets.



Photo 18. Green Room addition interior view west.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Photo 19. Music Room addition, interior view east.



photo 20. Music room addition interior, view south showing pointed arch windows and moldings.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State



Photo 21. Fireplace room, view southwest showing fireplace.



Photo 22. Tower clock mechanism. Tod Bryant, 2011.

Congregational Church of Plainville
Name of Property

Hartford, Connecticut
County and State

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name The Congregational Church of Plainville, UCC
street & number 130 West Main Street telephone 860-747-1901
city or town Plainville state CT zip code 06062

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications 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.).

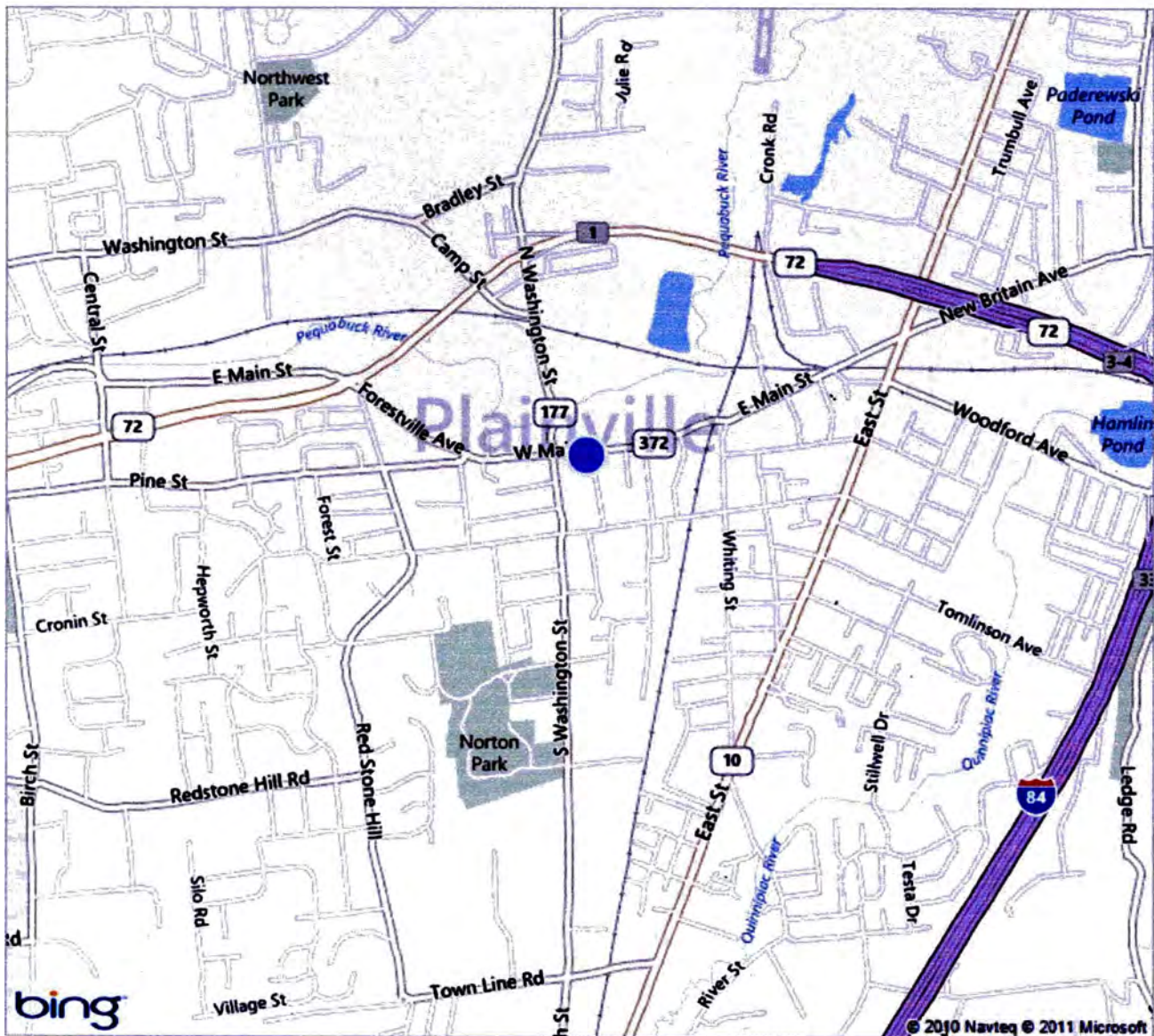
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



130 W Main St, Plainville, CT 06062

Blue dots show the location of the Congregational Church of Plainville.

On the go? Use m.bing.com to find maps, directions, businesses, and more



NR Nomination Photograph Log Page

Name of Property:	Congregational Church of Plainville
City or Vicinity:	Plainville
County:	Hartford County
State:	CT
Name of Photographer:	Tod Bryant
Date of Photographs:	August and October, 2011
Location of Original Digital Files:	23 Morgan Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851

Photo 1. View south, showing facade.

Photo 2. View south, showing main entrance and flanking round headed windows with fluted bosses and fanlight over front door.

Photo 3. View southwest, showing tower.

Photo 4. View southwest, showing tower clock,

Photo 5. View southwest, showing tower windows and buttresses.

Photo 6. View south, tower, north elevation, showing round headed window and fluted bosses.

Photo 7. View south, Music Room addition, north elevation, showing paired lancet windows.

Photo 8. View west showing east elevation.

Photo 9. View southeast, showing facade of new entrance.

Photo 10. Music room addition, west elevation, views southeast, showing large lancet arch window group.

Photo 11. Southwest elevation, view northeast.

Photo 12. Sanctuary, view southeast from gallery.

Photo 13. Sanctuary, view North.

Photo 14. Interior view north of large window above gallery.

Photo 15. Interior view northeast showing volutes on pew ends.

Photo 16. Sanctuary, view south. showing organ and chancel.

Photo 17. Green Room Kitchen , view southeast, showing cabinets.

Photo 18. Green Room addition interior view west.

Photo 19. Music Room addition, interior view east.

Photo 20. Music room addition interior, view south showing lancet windows and moldings.

Photo 21. Fireplace Room, view southwest showing fireplace..

Photo 22 Tower clock mechanism.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Congregational Church of Plainville

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CONNECTICUT, Hartford

DATE RECEIVED: 5/11/12 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/11/12
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/26/12 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/27/12
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000358

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 6-27-12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Photo 1. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view south, showing facade. August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 2. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view south, showing main entrance and flanking round headed windows with fluted bosses and fanlight over front door. August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 3. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view southwest, showing tower. August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 4. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view southwest, showing tower clock, August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



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Photo 8. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view west showing east elevation. August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 9. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, view southeast, showing facade of new entrance, October 28, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 10. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, Music room addition, west elevation, view southeast, showing large lancet arch window group. August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 11. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut. Southwest elevation, view northeast. August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 12. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, Sanctuary, view southeast from gallery. August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 13. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, Sanctuary, view North. October 29, 2011. Tod Bryant.



Photo 14. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut Interior view north of large window above gallery. October 29, 2011. Tod Bryant.



Photo 15. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, Interior view northeast showing volutes on pew ends. August 29, 2011, Tod Bryant.



Photo 16. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut, Sanctuary, view south. showing organ and chancel. October 29, 2011, Tod Bryant



Photo 17. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut Green Room Kitchen , view southeast, showing cabinets. October 29, 2011, Tod Bryant



Photo 18. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut. Green Room addition interior view west. October 29, 2011, Tod Bryant



Photo 19. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut. Music Room addition, interior view east. October 29, 2011, Tod Bryant



photo 20. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut. Music room addition interior, view south showing lancet windows and moldings. October 29, 2011, Tod Bryant



Photo 21. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut. Fireplace Room, view southwest showing fireplace. October 29, 2011, Tod Bryant



Photo 22. Plainville Congregational Church, Plainville, Hartford County, Connecticut. Tower clock mechanism. October 29, 2011, Tod Bryant



TO: J. Paul Loether, Chief
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Stacey Vairo, National Register Coordinator

SUBJECT: National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this 9 day of May
2012, for nomination of the Congregational Church of Plainville
Connecticut

to the National Register of Historic Places:

- Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- Multiple Property Nomination form
- Photographs
- Original USGS maps - *alternative mapping used w/ LAT/LONG*
- Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s) *Please advise.*
- Pieces of correspondence
- Other CD of images

COMMENTS:

- Please insure that this nomination is reviewed
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objections do _____ do not _____
constitute a majority of property owners.
- Other: _____