

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUL 2 1984  
date entered AUG 2 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic St. John's Episcopal Church

and/or common same

**2. Location**

street & number 768 Fairfield Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Bridgeport N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 001

**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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name St. John's Episcopal Church

street & number 768 Fairfield Avenue

city, town Bridgeport N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk's Office

street & number 45 Lyon Terrace

city, town Bridgeport state Connecticut

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 S. Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input 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. John's Episcopal Church is located on the northwest corner of Park and Fairfield Avenues in Bridgeport. The complex consists of Gothic Revival church (1873-75) with a chapel wing on the north elevation (1886-1888), a rectory on the northeast corner of the parcel (1903), and a parish hall/guild hall complex on the west side of church (1930).

The church is constructed of gneiss from the quarries at Greenwich, Connecticut, and the trim is executed in buff-colored Ohio stone. The roof is sheathed in dark slate tiles with bands of red slate. The church consists of a central gable-roofed nave flanked by side aisles sheltered by shed roofs. (Photograph #1) A large square tower stands on the southeast corner and on the southwest corner is a carriage porch. Octagonal vestry and organ chambers with conical roofs flank the chancel on the east and west elevations near the rear of the church. The nave is 30 feet 6 inches wide and 94 feet 6 inches long to the chancel arch. The aisles are 13 feet 3 inches wide while the chancel is 28 feet 6 inches wide by 24 feet deep. The octagonal vestry and organ chambers are 14 feet by 22 feet.

The three-stage tower is the dominant feature of the main facade; it is flanked at the angles of the tower by boldly projecting buttresses, one of which, on the southeast corner, contains the cornerstone inscribed 1874, with a cross enclosed by a quatrefoil and the words "Laus Deo." The base of the tower is square in section and measures 16 feet 3 inches on each face. The principal entrance to the church is housed in the tower. The paired curved oak doors were carved by George H. Humm and installed in the 1930s. The molded door surround is in the form of a Gothic pointed arch with a molded and traceried panel at the apex. Above the main door is a lancet window. The second stage of the tower houses the bell and consists of tall, Gothic pointed arch windows facing the compass points. The windows have louvered shutters and simple buff-colored stone surrounds. Oriels adorn the four corners of the tower (Photograph #2). They spring from the impost of the window arch and their bases are carved in an elaborate scroll design and executed in buff-colored stone. The second stage is finished by a broad frieze of buff-colored stone with recessed quatrefoil panels. The third stage of the tower consists of a conical steeple. The four oriels also terminate in conical roofs. The main gable is finished with a triangular panel of buff-colored stone with quatrefoil panels surmounted by a stone cross. A tall three-part stained-glass window is located in the upper section of the gable above a pair of smaller shorter, stained-glass windows which illuminate the vestibule. To the left of the main gable is another main entrance into the sanctuary, similar to the paired doors located in the tower. The carriage porch is a square stone extension of the side aisle. The pyramidal slate roof is capped by a lacy iron crest rail. The corners of the porch are buttressed and the Gothic arch opening is surmounted by a steeply pitched gable. A grotesque figure, a gargoyle, is located on each side of the porch at the base of the gable (Photograph #3). A door opens from under the carriage porch into the vestibule (Photograph #4).

The Park Avenue elevation in the main sanctuary is seven bays long (Photograph #5). An octagonal stair turret rising two stages projects from the side of the corner tower. The six bays of the aisle are divided by buttresses and the windows are simply traceried and divided into pairs by mullions. The clerestory of the nave echoes the division of bays in the aisle. Each bay is formed by two triangular equilateral arches. All the windows are

\* Much of description of the original appearance of the church complex was gleaned from local newspaper accounts, most notably the Bridgeport Daily Standard, March 29, 1875, the Bridgeport Post, September 26, 1893, May 19, 1899, September 28, 1899, and June 5, 1903 and the Tudor Town Gazette (Bridgeport), October 28, 1931, and from documentary photographs in the church's collection.

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stained-glass. The octagonal organ chamber projects from the aisle and its roof rises boldly above the aisle roof and terminates in a finial. Gothic pointed arch stained-glass windows illuminate the interior. The cruciform-plan Burroughs Memorial Chapel wing stands at the north end of the sanctuary. Nearly doubling the size of the original church, it was erected in 1886-1888. The main roof of the chapel continues the same line and steep pitch of the sanctuary roof, but it is lower. A lacy iron crest rail surmounts both roof ridges. A large gabled pavilion projects on the Park Avenue elevation. The pavilion is illuminated by a large stained-glass window. Surmounting the roof of the chapel at its intersection with the pavilion is an elaborate cupola. The cupola is octagonal in section with louvered Gothic windows on each face. The windows are separated by engaged Ionic columns and are surmounted by peaked drip moldings with applied rosettes at each apex. The ventilation mechanism is separated from the conical slate roof by a heavily molded cornice.

The rear elevation consists of the north facade of the chapel. It is similar to the Park Avenue elevation of the chapel in that it is dominated by a large projecting gabled pavilion with a stained-glass window.

The west elevation of the church (Photograph #6) is joined to the parish hall wing near the rear of the church at the chapel. The west elevation of the sanctuary is similar to the east elevation except that instead of the large square tower there is the square stone carriage porch on the southwest corner of the sanctuary. A small, private, landscaped courtyard is formed by the junction of parish hall and the sanctuary on this side.

The parish hall is located to the west of the main part of the church (Photograph #7), and is built on a diagonal line from the main block. The front section of the parish hall was originally a frame Queen Anne/Colonial Revival style house built and occupied in the early twentieth century by E.G. Burnham. The house was sold to the church during World War I, and in 1930-1931 it was remodelled in the Tudor style and the guild hall wing, connecting the parish hall with the chapel was built. The parish house was brick veneered and the interior was remodelled.

The interior plan of the church is quite complex; the sanctuary is located on the south end of the main block fronting on Fairfield Avenue, with the chancel on the north end of the nave flanked by the sacristy and organ loft. The north wall of the chancel marks the end of the original church. Burroughs Memorial Chapel, consisting of a chapel, fellowship hall, choir room and central hall is attached to the north wall of the sanctuary (Figure 1). At the west end of the corridor in the chapel wing the parish hall/guild hall wing is joined to the church proper (Figure 2).

The interior of the sanctuary is the largest and most significant interior space in the complex (Photograph #8). The ceiling of the nave is supported by a hammerbeam truss with carved trefoil motifs. The arches which line the nave rest on iron columns with foliated capitals. A broad Gothic arch frames the chancel. The clerestory windows rest on a molded string course as do the three lancet windows on the main gable.

The stained-glass windows are particularly fine; the windows in the side aisle are memorials to the deceased rectors and parishioners of the church and the subjects are all from the

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New Testament. The clerestory windows are also stained-glass. The gable windows which illuminate the vestibule provide the link with the church's name. The three lancet windows in the gable represent St. John the Divine receiving his inspiration to record the visions on the Island of Patmos. The paired window below portrays the Presentation in the Temple. Although the manufacturer of the windows is unfortunately unknown, they are beautifully executed. The jewel-tone colors and construction of the windows mimic the type of glass found in medieval cathedrals in Europe.

Much of the original church furniture is still in use. The ash and walnut pews are contemporary with the 1870s church, as is the altar. The massive altar, of Caen stone, was designed by the architects of the present church and executed by sculptor Robert Ellen. The base of the altar consists of three richly molded and traceried panels separated by engaged marble columns. The mensa is engraved with five crosses.

The focal point of the chancel is the high relief plaster reredos portraying Christ with his arms outstretched flanked by angels (Photograph #9). This reredos was installed in 1913, replacing the original reredos.

The decoration of the sanctuary has undergone several changes since the construction of the church. Originally the ceiling was painted blue with borders separating each bay. The roof timbers were painted a neutral color with red and buff polychrome decoration. The walls of the nave were painted olive with the moldings executed in jewel tones. The chancel was the most richly decorated with diapered walls and a three-part reredos in ash and black walnut surmounted by an elaborate cross. In 1893 the chancel was redecorated in gold and bronze by Tiffany Glass Company\*, but this was severely damaged in 1899 by a fire which destroyed the chancel rail, pulpit and choir stalls. Within several months the damage was repaired and the chancel redecorated (Photograph #10). In 1911 a wrought-iron rood screen was installed in the main sanctuary. This was later removed and placed in the chapel (See below).

The organ chamber and vestry open off the north end of the side aisles. The organ chamber has been altered to accommodate the organs over the years, and the sacristy was handsomely refitted in 1939. In that year handsome carved oak gates were installed in the arched opening between the vestry and the sacristy and oak cabinets enhanced by low-relief carving were installed in the sacristy. The carved oak exterior doors at the Fairfield Avenue entrances date from this same period.

The Burroughs Memorial Chapel's main entrance is on Park Avenue and the side door opens onto a corridor which leads to the parish hall. Opening off the north side of the corridor is the chapel, fellowship hall and choir room. Behind the chapel is a small parlor, and behind the choir room is a creche and small kitchen. Large stained glass windows (Photograph #11) illuminate the chapel and fellowship hall. The chapel has a hammerbeam truss roof and the wrought-iron Mary Crissy Wheeler Memorial rood screen has been installed here (Photograph #12). The small parlor behind the chapel has a corner fireplace with encaustic tiles. Above the mantel is a carving on an oak panel executed by George H. Humm, the designer of the Sherman Memorial Gates and the Curtis Memorial Sacristy (Photograph #13). The fellowship hall has a dropped ceiling and vertical board tongue-and-groove wainscot. Originally, the chapel occupied almost all the space north of the corridor,

\*Bridgeport Daily Standard (Bridgeport), March 29, 1875.

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and in recent years the partitions were erected and the fellowship hall was created.

The main entrance to the two-and-a-half story brick veneer parish hall/guild hall complex is on Fairfield Avenue west of the carriage porch (Figure 2). The porch is partially recessed and the broad double doors give access to a wide corridor. Offices open off both sides of the corridor and a stairwell is located at the rear of front section of the wing. The guild hall wing connects the office wing with the chapel. The corridor from the office wing opens onto a short transverse corridor in front of the door to the guild hall. This corridor forms an L along the east side of the wing, separating the guild hall from the smaller meeting rooms on the east. Behind the guild hall on the northwest corner is the church kitchen. Just to the north of the guild hall the corridor angles east to enter the chapel wing. A door in the angle of the corridor opens onto the courtyard. The interior of the parish hall is simply finished throughout with dark woodwork and rough plaster walls. Three Sunday School rooms are located on the second floor and the caretaker's apartment in the attic. The guild hall is the most elaborate interior space in this wing; the walls are panelled to a height of eleven feet with oak and a hammerbeam truss with polychrome decoration supports the roof. A fieldstone fireplace is located on the north wall.

The rectory, located on the northeast corner of the church property behind the chapel and oriented towards Park Avenue, was completed in 1903. Constructed of stone in the Gothic Revival style, it is two and a half stories tall and three bays wide (Photograph #14). A gabled pavilion projects from the front facade which is also sheltered by a stone porch with a crenellated parapet. The interior of the rectory is still intact, although it is currently used for offices rather than a rectory. The front door opens into a large central hall with a stair rising from the front of the building. Opening off the hall is a parlor, den, study, and dining room. A kitchen, pantry, butler's pantry and stair hall are located at the rear. The hall is finished in Flemish quartered oak with a beamed ceiling while the den is finished in chestnut. On the second floor are two bedrooms and two servants' rooms and three bathrooms. The hall is panelled in weathered oak and the servants' rooms in North Carolina pine. The third floor was originally taken up by the pastor's study. A small surface parking lot is located behind the rectory and on the Laurel Street elevation. A driveway connects Fairfield Avenue and Laurel Street along the west property line.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	XX architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
XX 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
___ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		XX other (specify)

Criteria A & B

Specific dates 1873–1875 Builder/Architect Renwick & Sands, Longstaff & Hurd

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Guy C. Hunt and Henry Howe, Jr.

St. John's Episcopal Church is one of the oldest and most enduring religious institutions in Bridgeport. Founded in the mid-eighteenth century, the church has been actively involved in social and humanitarian efforts for more than two hundred years (Criterion A). The present Gothic Revival church building (1873–1875) was designed by one of this country's leading nineteenth-century architects, James Renwick, Jr. (Criterion B). The church design is typical of many late nineteenth-century Episcopal churches and the plan and decorative elements are largely unchanged (Criterion B). The decorative elements which have been added to the structure only enrich its significance. Most notable of these additions is the reredos designed by prominent American sculptor Gutzon Borglum and installed in 1913 (Criterion B).

Architectural Assessment

St. John's Episcopal Church is one of Bridgeport's most significant religious complexes. It stands in a key location just on the edge of the downtown commercial core. The monumental Gothic Revival sanctuary with its picturesque chapel wing and substantial stone rectory encompasses the entire block along the Park Avenue side while the main facade of the sanctuary and the adjacent parish hall dominate the intersection of Park and Fairfield avenues. The present sanctuary is a good representative example of a late nineteenth-century Gothic Revival church. The nave, flanked by side aisles, with a vestibule at the south end and a chancel, flanked by projecting polygonal vestry and sacristy wings on the north end, is typical of the style. However, the fine masonry, carving and stained-glass windows puts this church far above the average in terms of the quality of the design. James Renwick, the designer, was one of the most able American architects of the nineteenth century, and his Gothic Revival designs were an important factor in the popularization of the style on a nationwide level. Although St. John's Church was not among the pioneer Gothic Revival churches which influenced the direction of church architecture during this period, it is a logical product of earlier designs and exemplifies Renwick's polished technique and his expertise in church design.

Early History 1748–1871

St. John's Episcopal Church was begun as a mission church within Stratfield Parish. Although the congregation was founded and a church was erected in 1748 on Fairfield Avenue, the parish was not formally organized until 1784 and the church until 1789. The first rector of St. John's Church, Reverend Philo Shelton, was the first Episcopal clergyman ordained in this country. By 1801 the congregation had outgrown the eighteenth-century sanctuary and a new church was built in that year on the corner of Broad and State streets. This church was the first built in the Borough of Bridgeport. A third church, of Neo-classical design, was built in 1838 on the corner of Broad and Cannon streets. This third church served the congregation until the erection of the present sanctuary.<sup>1</sup>

The fortunes of the Episcopal Church in America are reflected to some extent in these four

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 1 acre

Quadrangle name Bridgeport

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	1,8	6,5,10,2,0	4,5,5,9,5,6,0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Bridgeport Land Records, V. 43, p. 256.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
state	N/A	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kate Ohno, Preservation Consultant edited by: John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date May 1983

street & number 59 S. 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  local

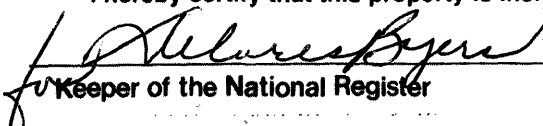
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date 6/25/84

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 8-2-84

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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church buildings; the modest frame 1748 church was not replaced until well after the end of the Revolutionary War because of the association of Anglicism and Toryism. The 1801 church, still a modest structure, was a part of the beginnings of the organization of the American Episcopal Church and its growing influence in New England after a period of disrepute. The third church, built on the heels of the Second Great Awakening, is indicative of national trends in church attendance and church architecture.

The Present Church, 1871-1899

The present church, built between 1873 and 1875 in the Gothic Revival style, is clearly a product of the Ecclesiologist influence on church design. Because of its size and exceptionally fine details, it is also symbolic of the taste, prosperity and social importance of the congregation.

Plans for this monumental edifice were laid as early as 1869. An article in the Bridgeport Standard of 1871 praised the designs for the church and claimed that St. John's would "be one of the handsomest and most imposing church edifices in the State."<sup>2</sup> For this purpose the congregation retained one of nation's leading architects, James Renwick Jr.

James Renwick Jr. (1818-1895) was born and educated in New York City. His early training was in engineering and he was assistant engineer and superintendent of construction on Croton Aqueduct. At the tender age of twenty-three he entered the competition for Grace Church in New York. His plans were selected and his reputation made. In 1846 Renwick won the competition for the design of the Smithsonian Institute. In the years that followed Renwick was recognized as one of the ablest architects in the country and his commissions were numerous. He was architect to the Board of Ten Governors of Charities and Corrections for New York City, and thus designed and supervised many of the hospitals built during the second half of the nineteenth century in the city. Although Renwick designed many churches during his career, his greatest work is held to be St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Begun in 1853 and opened in 1879, St. Patrick's was a combination of French, German and English Gothic elements. It was the first church project in America comparable in magnitude to anything being done in Europe. Other principal works of Renwick include St. Bartholomew's, St. Stephen's, Church of the Covenant, The Second Presbyterian Church, Vassar Female College, the Corcoran Art Gallery and Corcoran Building (Washington, D.C.), the Old Tontine Building, the Fulton Bank, the Bank of the State of New York and the new facade of the New York Stock Exchange. Renwick also designed a number of substantial residences; the D. Willis James House, the Frederick Gallatin House, the Charles Morgan House, the Courtlandt Palmer House, and the Richard Remsen House, all in New York City. On Staten Island he designed houses for W. H. Townsend and David Thompson as well as other residences in Syracuse, Dobbs Ferry, Tarrytown, Lenox (Massachusetts), New London (Connecticut) and Newport. Among his hotel designs the Clarendon, The Albemarle and the St. Denis are the best known. He also was involved in one major restoration, that of an old Spanish cathedral in St. Augustine, Florida.<sup>3</sup>

Renwick's design for St. John's Church is one of many church designs which he executed for congregations all over the United States. In his work on St. John's Renwick was ably seconded by Joseph Sands.

The construction of St. John's occurred while Renwick's major work, St. Patrick's Cathedral,



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was under construction. Although the congregation commissioned plans for the new structure in the late 1860s, it was not until May, 1873, that bids were accepted for the bulk of the construction. The masons for the church were Lyons & Bunn, the carpenters Jennings and Brown, and the mechanical contractors were Gillis & Googhegan. A decorative artist, L.H. Cohn, was employed to carry out the interior paint scheme and the firm of James Baker & Sons were retained as glass painters. The gas fixtures were purchased from Archer and Pancoast Manufacturing Company and the carpeting was supplied by Read Carpet Manufacturing Company of Bridgeport.<sup>4</sup>

The first services held in the new sanctuary were the Easter services of 1875. Contemporary accounts of the church describe it as "14th century Gothic" in style. The architect's plans for the design were built as specified except for a chapel to be built later on the north end of the sanctuary and the completion of the tower.

A little more than a decade later the church received a substantial bequest under the will of Mrs. A.A. Pettengill for the construction of a memorial chapel. It is unknown whether the Burroughs Memorial Chapel followed the original designs of Renwick & Sands, but within two years the large cruciform-plan stone chapel was completed on the north end of the sanctuary. The supervising architects were Longstaff & Hurd, a local firm specializing in architecture, interior decoration and building. The principals of the firm were George W. Longstaff and F.W. Hurd.<sup>5</sup>

The Burroughs Chapel was only the beginning of a series of major improvements made to the church beginning in the 1880s and continuing until the 1930s. In the early 1890s the chancel was redecorated in gold and bronze by the Tiffany Glass Company at a cost of \$1,200. However, the crowning achievement of the congregation in the late nineteenth century was the completion of the tower. The tower was surmounted by a tall steeple presented by Henry Sanford, president of Adams Express and a vestryman of the church. By the end of September, 1893, the work was completed and the church was free of debt. Dedication ceremonies were held on September 29, 1893.<sup>6</sup>

In 1899 a tragic fire occurred and the interior of the chancel and the choir were destroyed at a loss of \$10,000. By September 28, 1899, the interior was redecorated and the church was rededicated.<sup>7</sup>

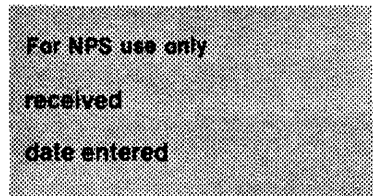
Early Twentieth Century History 1900-1945

In December 1900, Mrs. Caroline Sanford, widow of a former rector of the church, died leaving \$15,000 to the church to build a stone rectory in the same style as the church. This rectory replaced the old wooden rectory on the same site. The plans of a local architect, Guy C. Hunt, were accepted. The contract was let in 1902 to Dowling & Bottomley for \$20,000. The building committee consisted of Reverend W.H. Lewis, Edward W. Harral, F.C. Nichols, F.E. Silliman and D. Fairchild Wheeler. After the death of Guy C. Hunt the building was completed under the supervision of Henry A. Howe, Jr., another local architect. The building was finished by June 1903.<sup>8</sup>

During World War I the church purchased the adjoining E.G. Burnham property and used the Queen Anne/Colonial Revival Burnham house as a parish house. However, the most important focus of attention remained the physical plant of the church itself.

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In 1913 Eleanor Atkinson Read and Muriel Atkinson Read, her daughter, gave the church a new reredos in memory of Charles Barnum Read. The plaster reredos depicted Christ as a shepherd, and was designed by leading American sculptor Gutzon Borglum.<sup>9</sup> Borglum (1867-1941) was trained in Paris and was an exhibitor at both the 1893 Columbian Exposition and the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Borglum's most common subjects were heroic portraits and animals, but he also designed the "Twelve Apostles" for St. John the Divine Church in New York City. His best known work is his design for the heads of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt on Mt. Rushmore, South Dakota. Borglum executed one other commission in Bridgeport just prior to World War I, that of the Nathaniel Wheeler Memorial Fountain, just outside the main door of the church. The fountain was commissioned by the children of Nathaniel Wheeler, a prominent Bridgeport industrialist, in 1912. The Wheelers were leading members of St. John's Church. Nathaniel Wheeler was on the building committee of the present church, and was in large part responsible for negotiating the purchase of the land on which the church stands. Edward W. Harral, the husband of Nathaniel Wheeler's daughter, was also on the building committee of the rectory. It is possible that when Mrs. and Miss Read decided to erect a memorial, they sought the advice of the Wheeler family on the matter of commissioning an artist.

Another major fixture of the church, dating from the same period is the rood screen memorializing Mary Crissy Wheeler, Nathaniel Wheeler's second wife. Unfortunately, the designer of this handsome screen is unknown. The screen was put in place in the main sanctuary in 1911, shortly after Mrs. Wheeler's death.

After World War I, the interior of the church was remodelled. A number of substantial new items of furniture were given by the congregation and a new communion rail and marble sanctuary pavement were installed in 1923 as a memorial to Mr. & Mrs. Clifford Barnum Seeley. New carved ends for the choir stalls were furnished in 1926. In 1931 the parish house/guild hall complex was completed as a memorial to Edmund Chase Bassick and Rebecca Webb Bassick. The former E.G. Burnham house was brick veneered remodelled and enlarged in the Tudor style so popular in the 1920s and 1930s. The building committee consisted of Sanford Stoddard, a local lawyer, William R. Webster, a local businessman, and William Ham, who ran the Bridgeport Housing Company, responsible for Bridgeport's early garden apartment developments.<sup>10</sup> The construction of the extensive parish house/guild hall complex was the product of the institutional church movement, which reflected the church's growing concern with the community.

In the late 1930s the sacristy was remodelled and the heavily carved Sherman Memorial Gates and Curtis Memorial Sacristy installed. The carver and designer of these remarkable features was George Herbert Humm, a parishioner. His hobby from a young age had been wood-carving, and although he carved only for his own pleasure, his skill was consistent with those more formally trained. Humm also executed a large panel which originally was located in the guild hall and is not installed in the small parlor behind the chapel.<sup>11</sup>

World War II brought much activity to St. John's. More than one hundred and fifty men and women of the parish joined the armed forces. The congregation raised money which was donated to the British Red Cross, Aid to British Missions, Chaplains' Fund, Camp and

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Bridgeport, CT

Hospital Fund, Reconstruction and Advance Fund, and Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, the missionary activities of St. John's pre-date the present church. St. John's sponsored a number of area churches. The first of these, Christ Church, was built in downtown Bridgeport in 1850. In 1858 the Church of the Nativity on Sylvan Avenue grew out of a mission for mill workers established in the area by St. John's. St. Paul's Chapel was established on the east side of Bridgeport in the same year. In 1863 Trinity Church was organized and in 1891 St. Agnes' Church was established on State and Hancock streets. In 1962 Christ Church rejoined its mother church. In recent years the missionary efforts have been extended to the Spanish-speaking community of Bridgeport. In 1968 St. John's became the operational base for Reverend G. Stolongo, a missionary priest to the Hispanic residents of town.<sup>13</sup>

End Notes

<sup>1</sup>Historical Records Survey, Inventory of the Church Records of Connecticut Protestant Churches (New Haven: Connecticut Historical Records Survey, September 1940. See also St. John's Parish 1748-1973 (Bridgeport: by the church, 1973) and the Bridgeport Daily Standard (Bridgeport), March 29, 1875.

<sup>2</sup>Bridgeport Daily Standard (Bridgeport), January 5, 1871.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times (New York), June 25, 1895. See also Calder Loth and Julius Trousdale Sadler, Jr. The Only Proper Style Gothic Architecture in America (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975), pp. 66-70 and p. 127.

<sup>4</sup>St. John's Episcopal Church, Vestry meeting minutes, October 1863-April 11, 1885, unpublished manuscript available at the church. See also Bridgeport Daily Standard, May 26, 1873.

<sup>5</sup>Bridgeport Daily Standard, July 16, 1886 and Bridgeport Post, September 26, 1893.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Bridgeport Post, May 19, 1899, and September 28, 1899.

<sup>8</sup>Bridgeport Post, June 5, 1903.

<sup>9</sup>Book of Remembrance (Bridgeport: by the church, October 31, 1948).

<sup>10</sup>Tudor Town Gazette (Bridgeport), October 28, 1931. See also Book of Remembrance.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. See also Bridgeport Post, October 15, 1936.

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<sup>12</sup>Book of Remembrance.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. See also Bridgeport Post, September 16, 1973.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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Bridgeport, Conn.

Book of Remembrance (Bridgeport: By the church, October 31, 1948).

Bridgeport Daily Standard (Bridgeport), January 5, 1871, March 29, 1875, May 26, 1873 and July 16, 1886.

Bridgeport Post (Bridgeport), September 26, 1893, May 19, 1899, September 28, 1899, June 5, 1903, October 15, 1936, and September 16, 1973.

Historical Records Survey, Inventory of the Church Records of the Connecticut Protestant Churches (New Haven: Connecticut Historical Records Survey, September, 1940).

Loth, Calder and Trousdale, Julius Sadler, Jr., The Only Proper Style Gothic Architecture in America (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975), pp. 66-70 and p. 127.

New York Times (New York), June 25, 1893.

St. John's Episcopal Church, Vestry meeting minutes, October 1863 - April 11, 1885, unpublished manuscript available at the church.

Tudor Town Gazette (Bridgeport), October 28, 1931.

Figure 1

Burroughs Complex & Church

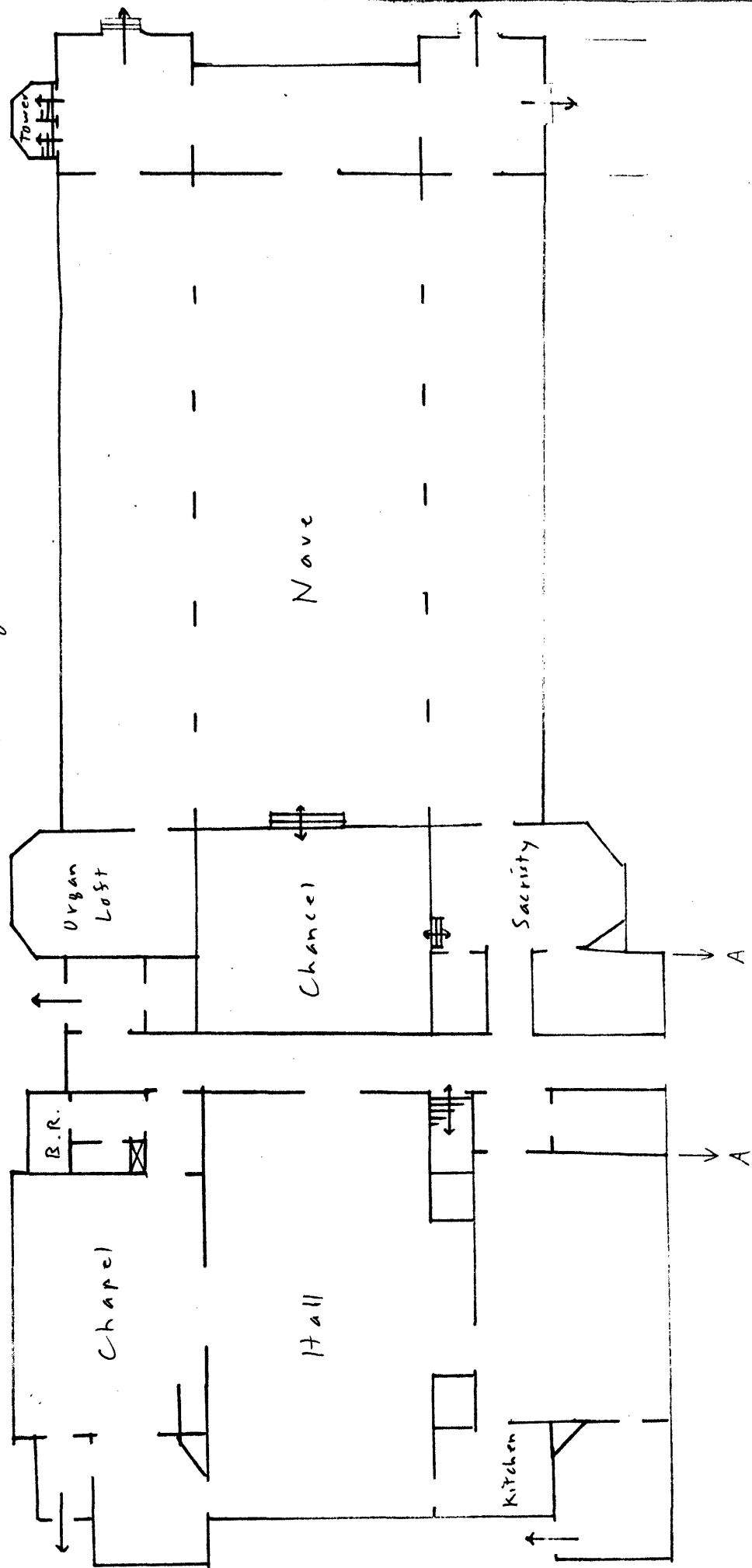
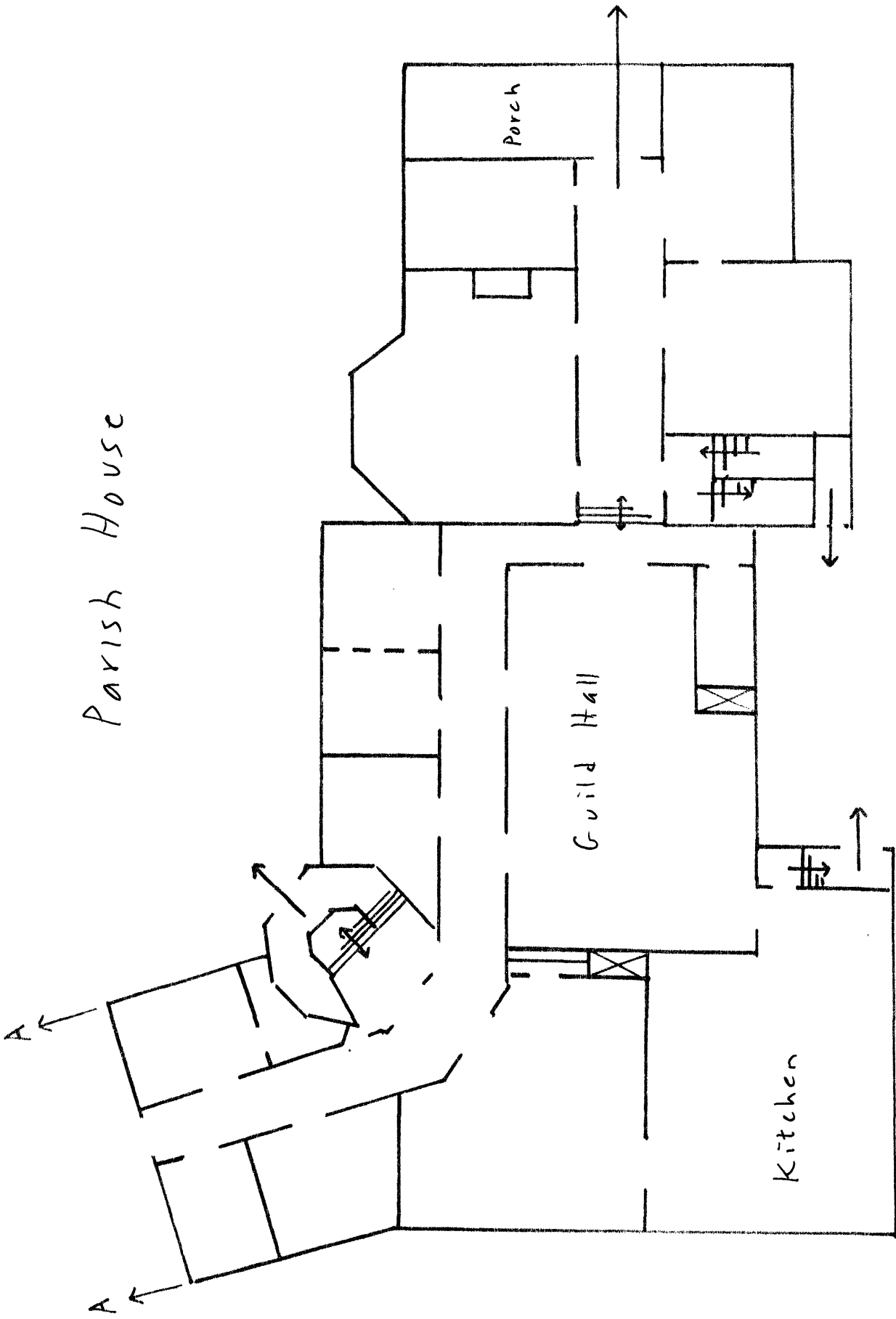
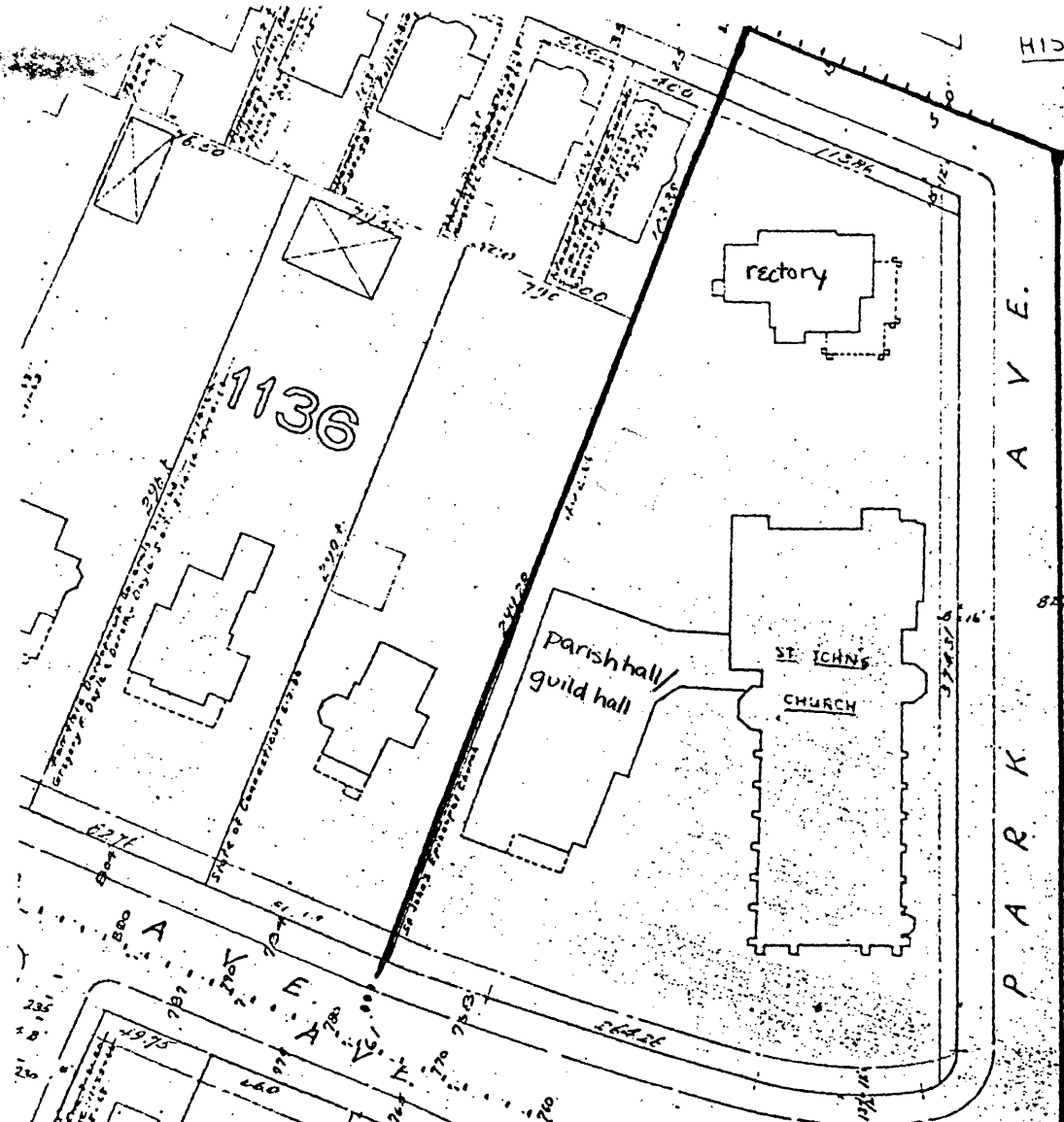


Figure 2

Parish House





1136

rectory

parish hall/  
guild hall

ST. JOHN'S  
CHURCH

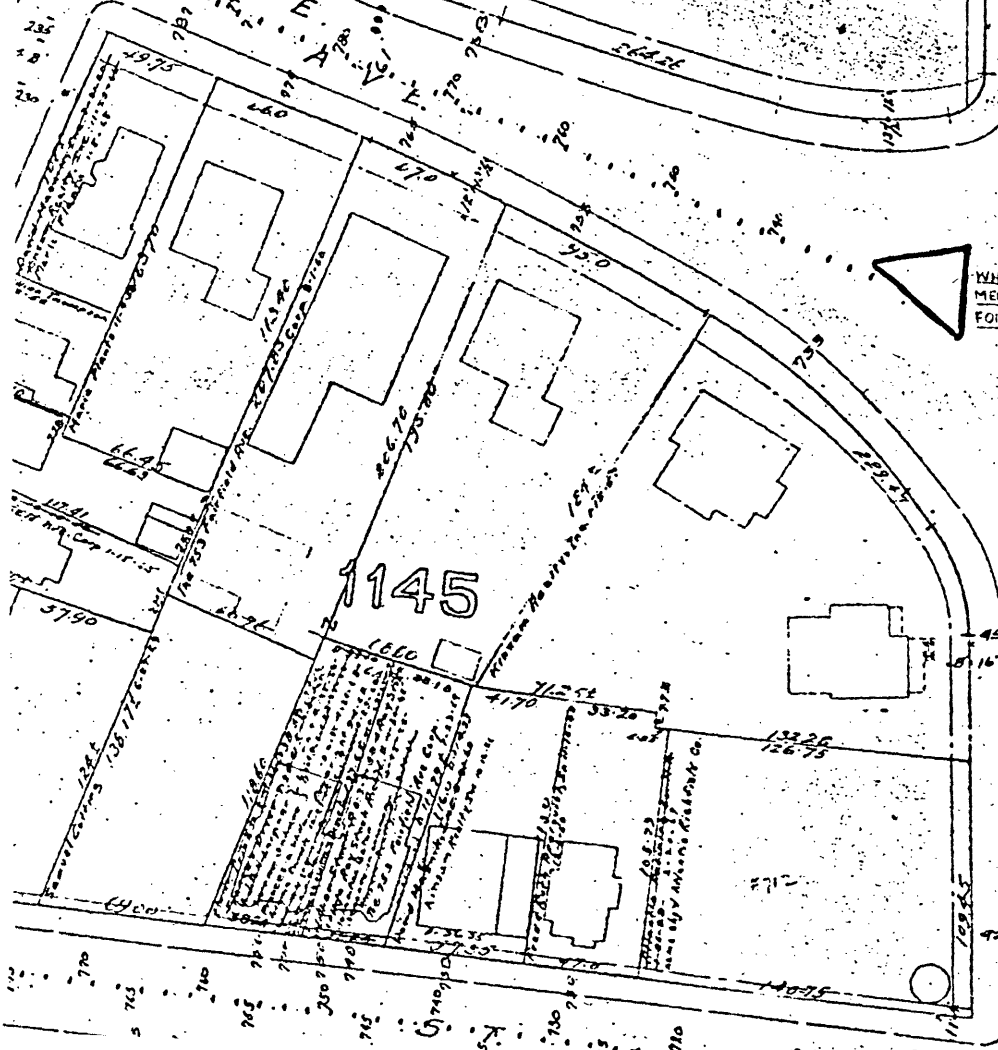
P A R K A V E .

HISTORIC

10-19

WASHINGTON

9-10



1145

WHEELER  
MEMORIAL  
FOUNTAIN

P A R K A V E .

JOHN ST.

9-10