

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 23 1962
DATE ENTERED	MAR 25 1962

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

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC First Congregational Church of East Haven

AND/OR COMMON
Old Stone Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 251 Main Street

CITY, TOWN —NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

East Haven N/A VICINITY OF 3rd -

STATE Connecticut CODE 09 COUNTY New Haven CODE 009

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input 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 The First Congregational Church of East Haven, Conn., Inc.

STREET & NUMBER 251 Main Street

CITY, TOWN East Haven N/A VICINITY OF STATE CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. East Haven Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER 250 Main Street

CITY, TOWN East Haven STATE CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE 1937 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN Washington STATE DC

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Stone Church, the meetinghouse of the First Congregational Church of East Haven, occupies a prominent position in the town's commercial center. Several busy roads come together at this point, and nearby are the Town Hall, banks, and other businesses. The church, the tallest and largest building at this intersection, is made more visible by its large, open lot. The church consists of a gable-roofed, 2½-story structure, seven bays wide, 50 X 73', with a steeple attached to the west gable end. It was begun in 1772 and dedicated in 1774; George Lancraft was the builder and is credited with the design.

The walls of the church are a coursed ashlar of hewn red sandstone quarried in nearby Fair Haven. The original lime mortar is obscured by repointing in modern cement mortars. There is a projecting base or water table and a belt course at the level of the tops of the first of two tiers of windows. All door and window openings are spanned by stone lintels with splayed ends. The roof is carried on wooden king-post trusses now reinforced with steel, and was redone with new slates in 1935.

The steeple has three stages. The tower is square in plan, and of the same stone as the main building. It has square windows at each level corresponding to those in the church, but the windows are somewhat smaller, as the church's were lengthened during the extensive remodelling of 1850. The tower is higher than the ridge of the church, since it has an additional story with clock faces on threesides. The wooden belfry and tall spire date from 1859. The belfry has arched louvered openings framed by Corinthian columns and elaborate pediments. This steeple is the building's third: from 1774 to 1797 only the stone part was finished. In 1797 a belfry and spire were built, but blew down a few months later, whereupon another, somewhat taller belfry and spire were constructed. In the church is the old copper weathervane from this second steeple.

The main entrances to the church are now in the west wall, on either side of the tower. Originally, the main entrance was in the center of the south wall, the long side of the church, with another on the south side of the tower. Immediately opposite the main entrance, halfway up the north wall, was a pulpit window. In 1850, the church was completely remodelled inside and out. The church was re-oriented by moving the pulpit to the east end, and the old entrance and pulpit window were blocked up. The windows were lengthened at this time, new galleries and seats were installed, and a vestibule was created at the west end. The present pulpit is flanked by Corinthian columns supporting a heavy entablature.

The church shares its lot with several related buildings: a free-standing chapel built to the east in 1874 is 1½ stories high with a gable roof at right angles to that of the meetinghouse. Its walls are constructed of a similar stone. In 1923 the two buildings were connected by a low brick parish house. The latest addition was in 1952, a two-story brick and cinderblock education wing built on the north end of the parish house part. These additions are low and inobtrusive, and in no way obscure the form of the old part of the church. Across the front of the lot is a cast-iron fence, a series of tall, round arches, installed in 1868.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

First Congregational Church of East Haven (Old Stone Church)
East Haven, CT

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

Existing Surveys:

Determination of Eligibility for Inclusion in the National Register

1978 - Federal

Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Washington, DC

State Register of Historic Places

1975 - State

Connecticut Historical Commission
Hartford, CT

6 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES	built 1774 remodeled 1850	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	George Lanecraft, builder
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The East Haven Congregational Church, known as the Old Stone Church, has great architectural significance for Connecticut: only a handful of pre-Revolutionary meetinghouses (all greatly altered or restored) have survived, despite the importance these structures once had in their communities. Although it has been altered over time, the East Haven Church retains much of the characteristic form of the eighteenth-century meetinghouse (Criterion C). Secondly, the church has local historical significance (Criterion A), deriving from the role of the church in 18th-century Connecticut. The architectural value of the site, as well as its historical associations, justify the inclusion of the church on the National Register, even though religious properties are not normally eligible.

Built in 1774, the East Haven Church is the oldest stone meetinghouse in New England.¹ But the material itself had little consequence for the design, which closely followed the pattern used in wooden churches throughout the region: a boxy 2½-story structure, with a steeply-pitched gable roof, having much of the appearance of an outsized dwellinghouse. The entrance was always centered on the broad side, with a pulpit window on the opposite wall. A tower, if present, was not an integral part of the structure, but rather an appendage at one end. The design reflected both the doctrine and the practice of the Congregationalists. Meetinghouses were unconsecrated, practical buildings, suitable for both religious and secular purposes; they were not intended to add to God's glory or overawe the faithful. The interior arrangement, with the pulpit high up on the long side, showed the authority of the minister and the importance of his preaching, with even the back seats and galleries close to the pulpit.

The East Haven Church exemplifies this ideal in several respects. The main block of the building has the clear, simple lines and steep roof characteristic of the 18th-century meetinghouse. The tower is an appendage, rather than part of a unified composition. The most severe alteration, of course, is the rearrangement of the interior and consequent removal of the main (south) entrance and the pulpit window opposite. Like nearly every other of its contemporaries, the East Haven Church was remodelled in the 19th century to accommodate changing tastes and religious practices. The present spire is decidedly Victorian in its overly-elaborate Classicism; the original had a simple open belfry and a plain spire, much like that on the Farmington (Connecticut) meetinghouse. Here again, however, a great number of 18th and early 19th-century churches in Connecticut lost their original towers, either to the Victorian remodellers, or the 1938 hurricane. Despite its alterations, the East Haven meetinghouse remains an important cultural resource, one of barely a half-dozen of its type in the state, and the only one built of stone.

The builder of the church was George Lanecraft (died 1808), an immigrant from Flanders. Lanecraft, who lived in nearby Fair Haven, is credited with building another stone building, a 1767 house in East Haven. Lanecraft was not

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- "Bicentennial, East Haven Congregational Church." Pamphlet, New Haven: n.p., 1974.
 Clark, Daniel J. "Historic Sermon . . . 1911." No imp.
 Eversull, Harry K. The Evolution of an Old New England Church. New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1924.

(continued)

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 2½

QUADRANGLE NAME Branford

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24 000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1, 8 | 6, 7, 8 | 2, 2, 0 | 4, 5, 7, 1 | 6, 0, 0

B | | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | |

D | | | |

E | | | |

F | | | |

G | | | |

H | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is that shown as Parcel 133, East Haven Assessor's Map 122.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Bruce Clouette, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission DATE June 28, 1979

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN Hartford STATE CT

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 

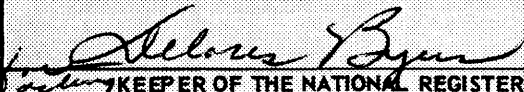
TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission DATE February 9, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Entered in the
National Register

DATE 3/25/82


KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST:
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

First Congregational Church of East Haven (Old Stone Church)

Continuation sheet

East Haven, CT

Item number

8

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precisely the architect, however, as this function was shared with the congregation's building committee. It was the committee who drew up the specifications for materials and dimensions, even adding 13' to the length of the building after it had been started. The ad hoc nature of the design is further illustrated by the controversy over whether the building should have a tower, the congregation voting first one way, then the other even as the walls were rising. Although church tradition says that the committee visited Old South Church in Boston and intended to imitate it, the meetinghouse needed no specific precedent: it was a traditional design, supervised and executed by a masterful builder.

At the time of its construction, Congregationalism was the established religion of Connecticut, and the church served important public purposes, as well it might, since it was financed through property taxes. The church was a rallying point for the militia during the Revolution, as citizen-soldiers gathered to resist the British. In 1779, a British landing party burned several homes and fields and looted the church of its silver.

The remodelling of the church in the 1850s in part reflects changes in the religious outlook of the Congregationalists. The introduction of the organ and more music, the softening of the hard line against elaborate church furnishings, and the less authoritarian position of the minister allowed the church to be remodelled along more conventional (for the Victorian period) lines. The changing of the position of the pulpit, the rebuilding of the steeple in a Classical mode, and the fancier interior treatment are typical of the changes many Congregational churches underwent in the 19th century, and are interesting in their own right for what they reveal about changes in the religious ideas of the congregation.

Finally, some attention must be paid to the building's role as a landmark. For more than two centuries, the Old Stone Church has been a dominating feature of the center of East Haven. Its high tower, impressive stone walls, and its very antiquity have symbolized the town for generations of East Haven's citizenry.

1

By meetinghouse is meant a Congregationalist house of worship. King's Chapel (an Anglican church) antedates the East Haven building.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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- Hughes, Sarah E. History of East Haven. New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1908.
- Kelly, J. Frederick. Early Connecticut Meetinghouses. Vol I. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948.
- Peck, David T. "250th Anniversary History, Old Stone Church." Pamphlet. East Haven: no pub. 1961.
- Sinnott, Edmund W. Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963.