UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED   APR 1 6 1982
DATE ENTERED   MAY 1 3 1982

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Christ Church

AND/OR COMMON
Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Melendy Road and U.S. Route 5   N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Guilford	N/A VICINITY OF	Vermont

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Vermont	50	Windham	025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	__ENTERTAINMENT	X RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	N/A __IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__ YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	X OTHER: Community hall

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Episcopal Diocese of Vermont

STREET & NUMBER
Rock Point

CITY, TOWN		STATE
Burlington	N/A VICINITY OF	Vermont 05401

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS,ETC.   Office of the Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER
N/A

CITY, TOWN	STATE
Guilford	Vermont

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

DATE
1981   __FEDERAL X STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS   Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN	STATE
Montpelier	Vermont 05602

⑦ DESCRIPTION

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

From its commanding position on a hillside terrace above Broad Brook, Christ Church looks northward through the modest center of Guilford village. The simple rectangular, clapboarded, gable-roofed church was constructed in 1818, its basic temple form dominated by a two-stage bell tower. Gothic Revival decorative elements - added probably in 1837 at the time of an interior renovation - distinguish the tower and gable front of the church, whose current (1981) appearance remains virtually unchanged from that early renovation.

Christ Church occupies an open level site between the intersecting Melendy Road and U.S. Route 5 at the south edge of Algiers, or Guilford village. An irregular line of coniferous trees shelters the simply landscaped grounds of the church from the flanking roads on the northwest and northeast. Immediately behind (south of) the church, a cemetery - corporately separate and excluded from this nomination - extends nearly to the base of a low hill.

The main block of Christ Church consists of a vernacular interpretation of classical temple form, its design copied from an Episcopal church (later dismantled) in Greenfield, Massachusetts, some twenty miles to the south. The one-story building extends three bays (38 feet) across the north gable front and is four bays (50 feet) deep. From a brick foundation, the wood-framed and clapboarded structure rises to a projecting molded cornice with stylized dentils at the eaves of the gable roof, the latter shingled with dark blue Guilford slate (circa 1865) in place of the original wood shingles. The symmetrically arranged window bays are lighted by twenty-over-twenty sash surmounted by semicircular blind arches overhung with ornamental louvers. A small shed-roofed wing containing the sacristy is attached to the rear (south) elevation.

Projecting its full depth from the wall plane, the central bell tower dominates the main (north) facade of the church; a single bay of standard sash flanks each side of the tower. Above the interrupted cornice return, the gable end is sheathed with flush boards carried to the raking edges of the roof; an applied crenelation surmounts the cornice return, terminating in a prominent pinnacle at each lower corner of the roof.

The two-stage tower - with dimensions of 12 feet by 16.5 feet by 60 feet high - contains on its first story the church's main entrance, a double-leaf doorway surmounted by a semielliptical fanlight and enframed by pilasters carrying a molded cornice. The second story of the base stage, lighted by a standard sash on each face, rises to a projecting cornice crowned by a crenelated parapet with corner pinnacles. The diminished upper stage of the tower contains the bell chamber, opened by a slender round-headed louver on each face, and terminates

■8 SIGNIFICANCE

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Christ Church possesses to an extraordinary extent its early nineteenth century architectural characteristics, displayed in a relatively undisturbed physical setting at the south edge of Guilford village. The church's classical temple form with projecting central tower (and meetinghouse-style box pews) was constructed in 1818 by the members of one of Vermont's earliest Episcopal parishes in what was then one of the largest communities in the state. Two decades later (probably in 1837), the church received an overlay of Gothic Revival details, reflecting the emergence of that style in Vermont religious architecture. Subsequent decline of the parish spared Christ Church from any further alteration; the surviving integrity of its transitional design and furnishings make it an important example of religious architectural expression by an early nineteenth century Vermont agricultural community.

Adjoining the Massachusetts border along the major travel route of the Connecticut River valley, Guilford township received the most intensive settlement in Vermont during the late eighteenth century. The first national census in 1791 counted a population of 2432 in Guilford, the largest among the organized towns in Vermont (and, according to Hemenway, about one fifteen-hundredth of the total for the United States!). By the time of the 1800 census, however, Guilford's population fell to 2256, having entered a decline that persisted until the middle of the twentieth century.

The first meetinghouses in Guilford were constructed in the central part of the township. To overcome their disadvantage of access, a number of settlers in the eastern part decided at a meeting early in March, 1817 to build their own church. The initial funds were quickly subscribed, a site was chosen on a terrace just south of Broad Brook, and materials were being assembled by the end of the same month; bricks for the foundation came from the nearby Houghton brickyard and the lumber was sawed in Levi Boyden's mill on Broad Brook.

The plans for the church were copied from an Episcopal church then standing twenty miles to the south in Greenfield, Massachusetts. The task of construction was undertaken by the parishioners themselves, spurred by the emerging

◼9◼ MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hemenway, Abby Maria. Vermont Historical Gazetteer (Vol. 5). Brandon, Vt., 1891.

History of Christ Church. Guilford, Vt., 1980. (Typescript available from Wilma
    Higgins, R.R. #3, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301.)

See Continuation sheet 4

◼10◼ GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY __Approximately 2__

QUADRANGLE NAME __Brattleboro, Vt. - N.H.__   QUADRANGLE SCALE __1:62500__

UTM REFERENCES

A |1,8| |6,9,8|2,2,5| |4,7|4,2|9,5,0| B |__| |__|__|__| |__|__|__|
  ZONE EASTING   NORTHING   ZONE EASTING   NORTHING

C |__| |__|__|__| |__|__|__| D |__| |__|__|__| |__|__|__|

E |__| |__|__|__| |__|__|__| F |__| |__|__|__| |__|__|__|

G |__| |__|__|__| |__|__|__| H |__| |__|__|__| |__|__|__|

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Christ Church occupies a polygonal lot bounded on the
northwest by Melendy Road, on the northeast by U.S. Route 5, and on the south by
the adjacent cemetery; the deed from Ephraim Gale to the Guilford East Parish House

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES See Con-
tinuation sheet 5

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

◼11◼ FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
        Hugh H. Henry

ORGANIZATION   DATE
        Historic Preservation Consultant   December 4, 1981

STREET & NUMBER   TELEPHONE
        Green Mountain Turnpike   802-875-3379

CITY OR TOWN   STATE
        Chester   Vermont 05143

◼12◼ STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___   STATE _X_   LOCAL ___

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer   DATE 9-5-82

GPO 921-803

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

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in another crenelated parapet with corner pinnacles. The 500-pound bronze bell was cast by G.H. Holbrook of Medbury, Massachusetts in 1829, and was hung in the church the following year.

The interior of Christ Church is entered through a vestibule in the base of the tower, above which a small choir loft with a paneled balcony expands to the full width of the sanctuary beneath its deeply coved ceiling. Box pews measuring three feet by 7.5 feet with paneled doors occupy nearly the entire floor area, subdivided into three blocks by the side aisles. At the south front of the sanctuary, a slightly elevated central altar dais is flanked by corner pews arranged perpendicular to the main blocks. Within the curved altar rail stands a small paneled altar flanked on the east by a curved-front pulpit and on the west by a lectern. These furnishings, together with the slightly peaked door and window surrounds and the balcony front, are finished in natural tone with overpainted 'graining' to contrast with the painted pews. Illumination of the interior is provided by nineteenth century wall sconces and central suspended fixture that have been converted from kerosene to electricity.

The present appearance of the interior emerged from a renovation of the church in 1837 (at which time the Gothic Revival details may have been added to the main facade). Four pews were removed from the front to provide space for the altar dais; the original raised central pulpit was lowered to its present position on the dais and the other furnishings were installed. Possibly in the same year, four pews at the rear of the central block were removed to create an opening for a stove (itself removed since 1950 and replaced by a central heating system).

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demands of spring farm work; the structure was raised by the first week of May, 1817.
On the interior, a raised pulpit and full box pews were installed in deference to the
tradition of New England meetinghouse furnishings.

A period of several months ensued during which the organization of the parish
evolved from the original non-denominational union. In February, 1818, the church's
pews were allotted to members by means of an auction, the successful bids ranging
from $46 to $100. The following August, the first Episcopal service was held in the
church, and in November the members decided to adopt that affiliation under the
title of "The Protestant Episcopal Church and Society in Guilford". The Episcopal
Bishop A.V. Griswold consecrated the building on February 18, 1819, and about 60
families joined the new parish.

The decade of the 1830's brought several changes to the building. Early in
1830, the bronze bell - cast by G.H. Holbrook at Medbury, Massachusetts the previous
year - was installed in the tower at a cost of $175. Seven years later, the front
(south) of the interior was altered to suit the Episcopal service. A dais was intro-
duced for the altar and the pulpit was lowered to a flanking position on the dais.
Probably at the same time (1837), the north facade and tower were given crenelations
and pinnacles of the Gothic Revival style then gaining favor in religious architecture.
(The immediate impetus may have been the construction that year of the Guilford Center
church with a similarly crenelated tower.)

Meanwhile the neighboring town to the north of Guilford, Brattleboro, had begun its
ascent towards becoming the dominant cultural, commercial, and industrial center in
southeastern Vermont. In 1853, an Episcopal parish (St. Michael's) was organized in
Brattleboro, diverting several members from Christ Church only four years after the
parish had managed to build a rectory for its clergyman. During the following quarter-
century, both local and national economic forces induced substantial migration away
from Guilford. Christ Church could not remain unaffected; in 1876, declining resources
compelled the parish to relinquish its resident rector in favor of one supplied by the
emergent Brattleboro church.

The membership of Christ Church continued to decrease during the next two decades.
In June, 1893, the few remaining parishioners voted to transfer ownership of the
church property to the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont. The final confirmation of
communicants at Christ Church occurred in February, 1894. During the first half of
the present century, use of the church dwindled to occasional services and special
events.

In 1950, Christ Church was threatened by a plan to move the building to the

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Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont. The community responded by forming the 'Society for the Preservation of Christ Church in Guilford'. The Episcopal Diocese required the group to raise a substantial amount of money for repairs and ongoing maintenance of the church; subsequently the group succeeded in the campaign and kept Christ Church on its original site.

The church now serves the community in a variety of ways; along with the occasional religious activities, the coved-ceiling auditorium provides the setting for musical performances sponsored by the Guilford Friends of Music. The Preservation Society continues to maintain the historic appearance of the building.

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Official History of Guilford, Vermont 1678-1961. Guilford, Vt.: Town of Guilford and
        Broad Brook Grange No. 151, 1961.

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is recorded in Book 8, Page 361 (1818) of the Guilford land records.