

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

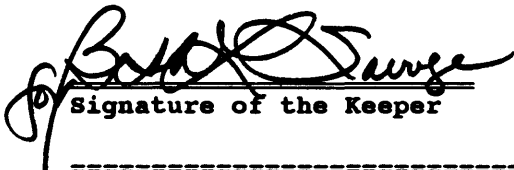
SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 00000325 Date Listed: 04/21/00

<u>Birmingham Green</u>	<u>New Haven</u>	<u>CT</u>
<u>Historic District</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>State</u>
Property Name	County	State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

4/21/00
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

3. Classification: Category of Property
The single appropriate category for the property is "district."

8. Statement of Significance: Significant Person

Criterion B is not indicated and the significance of Phelps and Smith as individuals has not been justified; thus, they have been removed as significant person(s).

This information was discussed with CTSHPO staff by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without attachment)

PROPERTY NAME

Birmingham Green Historic District, Derby, CT

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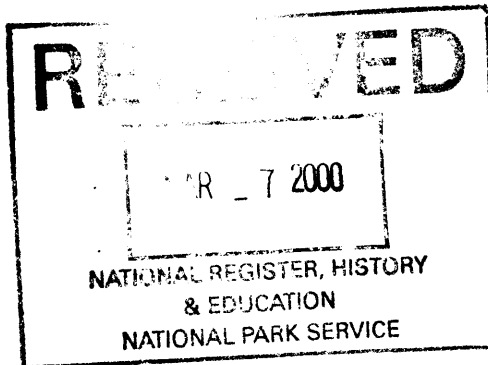
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Birmingham Green Historic District

Other Name/Site Number: Derby Green Historic District

325



2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 106, 128, 136, 148, 160 Elizabeth Street, 17 Fifth Street, 105, 109, 127-129, 135, 139-141, 149 Minerva Street

Not for publication: NA

City/Town: Derby

Vicinity: NA

State: CT

County: New Haven

Code: 009

Zip Code: 06148

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Category of Property

Private: x
 Public-local: x
 Public-State:
 Public-Federal:

Building(s):
 District: x
 Site: x
 Structure: x
 Object: x

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	objects
<u>14</u>	<u>4</u>	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed on the National Register: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

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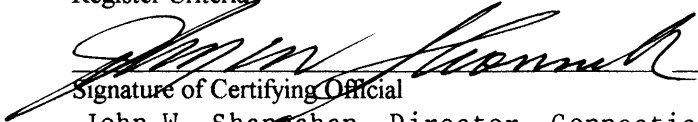
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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties on 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria

 03/01/00
 Signature of Certifying Official Date
 John W. Shamahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

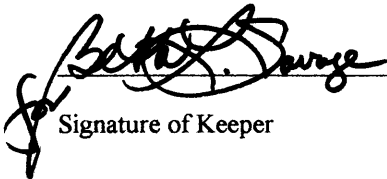
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered on the National Register _____
- Determined eligible for the National Register _____
- Determined not eligible for the National Register _____
- Removed from the National Register _____
- Other (explain): _____

 4/21/00
 Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: <u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>single dwelling</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>city hall</u>
<u>RELIGION</u>	<u>religious facility</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	<u>theater</u>
<u>LANDSCAPE</u>	<u>park</u>
Current: <u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub: <u>single dwelling</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>city hall</u>
<u>RELIGION</u>	<u>religious facility</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	<u>theater</u>
<u>LANDSCAPE</u>	<u>park</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	<u>business</u>

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:

19C/Greek Revival, Gothic Revival
LATE VICTORIAN/Second Empire,
Queen Anne, Romanesque,
MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials:

Foundation: BRICK, STONE
Walls: WOOD/weatherboard, shingle; BRICK
SYNTHETICS
Roof: ASPHALT

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance

The Birmingham Green Historic District in Derby, Connecticut, lies just north of the central business district. The historic district consists of the Green and the buildings surrounding it on the east, north, and west sides. (See Figure 2, District Map.) The Green is defined on the east by Minerva Street, on the north by Fifth Street, and on the west by Elizabeth Street. Minerva and Elizabeth Streets run uphill to the north from downtown. The block between them forms a knoll at the Green, with grade falling off to east and west in the backyards of the properties on these streets. Their basements are at grade.

The Green is a rectangular open space with shade trees, crisscross diagonal walks, a Civil War Monument, and other structures. (See Figure 3, Diagram of Green.) Buildings surrounding the Green are dominated by three churches, Episcopal, Congregational, and Methodist, and their three parsonages/rectory, and the Sterling Opera House. Four private homes on Minerva Street north of the Episcopal Church complete the roster of 19th-century buildings, while the district's two 20th-century commercial buildings face each other across Fifth Street at the corner of Elizabeth Street. The south side of the Green is delineated by a large 20th-century retail building, not included in the district, which replaced historic structures along this block of Fourth Street.

Each of the buildings around the Green is sited close to the street and occupies a large part of its parcel. While there are spaces between the buildings, the spaces are narrower than the buildings. The overall setting is distinctly urban, an effect which is heightened by contrast to the Green's open space.

Details about the Green and its surrounding buildings are given in the Inventory which follows.

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Inventory

Dates are taken from the Derby Central District Survey and/or Assessor's field cards; when the two differ, the difference is noted. The letter C at the start of an entry indicates the resource is considered to be contributing to the historic and architectural significance of the district, the letters NC that it is non-contributing. All non-contributing resources are less than 50 years old. At Item 3, above, the Green is counted as a site, the gazebo as a structure, and the monuments as objects.

C The Green Rectangular square block bounded by Minerva, Fifth, Elizabeth, and (formerly) Fourth Streets ca. 1836 Town records indicate Green is owned by Town of Derby, but no relevant land records entries are at hand. Presumably, it was given to town by Smith and Phelps (see below). Dimensions are 400' in north-south direction by 200' east-west (1.8 acres). Terrain slopes upward to highest point at northwest corner. Low stone retaining walls on east and west. Mature shade trees, mostly maples, dot Green, augmented by shrubs at edges and along concrete paths that radiate from mid-point. Paths with their concrete benches are major feature. Flagpole is located at center of Green where paths converge in paved esplanade. Streetlights on tall black poles are situated throughout. Water fountain dedicated to local citizen Albert Yudkin is at southwest corner at historic location of public drinking fountain. Time capsule buried in 1975 at north end of Green under flush granite marker is to be opened in 2025. Program of alterations to Green completed in 1999 was designed by Milone & McBroom. (See Figure 3, Photograph 1)

C Civil War Monument on the Green Dedicated July 4, 1877; July 4, 1883 Supplier and possibly fabricator of stone: M.J. Walsh Supplier and foundry of sculpture: Maurice J. Power Faces west at northwest corner of Green, which is its highest elevation. Monument is composed of high granite pedestal and surmounting life-sized bronze figure. Dedicated to all men from community who served in Union forces.

According to contemporary newspaper account, overall height of monument is 21', 4".¹ Sub-base of Quincy speckled dark gray granite is 8', 4" square by 2', 6" high. Balance of stone is Westerly light tan granite. Statue is 7' tall. Pedestal is elaborately decorated with bronze plaques suitably inscribed. Name of battle in polished raised capital letters is on each face of pedestal base. Each corner of base of figure is supported by small sphere. Above, five layers of horizontal curved surfaces are joined by vertical lines just inside corners, creating effect of horizontal fascies. Figure stands with his left foot forward and musket butt between his feet perpendicular to direction of feet. He wears overcoat with cape. Both arms are bent, bringing forearms to horizontal position and both hands on rifle barrel, left over right. Four 11' cannon are mounted diagonally at corners of monument.

Monument is symbol of honor afforded by citizens of Derby to their sons who served in Union forces. Its creation took many years, as was not unusual. Elisha S. Kellogg Post, No. 26, of Grand Army of the Republic appointed monument committee in 1875 which was successful in raising \$1,475. Its leather-bound subscription book, at Harcourt Wood Memorial Library, lists names of donors and amounts of contributions, which generally were \$10 or \$25, but ranged upwards to \$200 and \$500. These funds made it possible to proceed with erection of pedestal in 1878 by person unknown at cost of \$1,500. Base of contemplated monument was dedicated July 4, 1877, with suitable ceremonies which included procession headed by Bristol Brass Band. Several years later, when additional \$3,200 was pledged, Maurice J. Power of New York City was given contract to remodel substructure and erect bronze statue. Dedication on July 4, 1883, on Green was attended by 8,000 people. Principal oration was delivered by Captain Wilbur F. Osborne, 1st Connecticut Volunteer Heavy Artillery, who declared that "patriotism which conquered the great rebellion...lies in the heart of every soldier, sailor, and patriotic citizen of this village."²

NC Firefighter's Monument. Dedicated 1974. Faces west close to Elizabeth Street at southern mid-point in Green. Concrete base with large bronze bell cast in 1887 in Baltimore.

¹(Derby) *Daily Transcript*, July 7, 1883.

²(Derby) *Daily Transcript*, July 7, 1883.

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- NC Korea and Vietnam Monument ca. 1980s Faces west close to Elizabeth Street at northern mid-point in Green. 7' stele of stone with flanking stone wall. Carries inscription, "Dedicated to the memory of the Veterans of Derby, Connecticut, World War One, World War Two, Korean War and Vietnam".
- NC Gazebo/Bandstand ca. 1980s Faces north at south end of Green. Open frame hexagonal structure with plain railing and posts, and pointed roof. Half-round paved audience area in front. Dedicated to those who served and died in Korea and Vietnam.
- C 106 Elizabeth Street Sterling Opera House 1889 H. Edwards Ficken, architect Faces east toward Green. 3-story brick, stone, and stucco Renaissance Revival/Federal Revival 61' x 98' gable-roofed building. In brick first floor 16'-wide gabled central front entrance projects 3' under pedimented gable which is supported by round columns and half-round columns. Low square tower at southeast front corner has round-arched doorways in front (east) and south side elevations of its base. Brick double dentil course separates first floor from second. Stucco second floor has central Palladianesque window of 2-over-2 sash under leaded transom and swags flanked by round-arched windows in Gibbs surrounds. Sills are sandstone; lintels and quoins are brick. Third floor is similar but without swags and with arched central radially glazed transom in tripartite window and flanking elliptical windows with four keystones. Above, round window occupies center of deeply recessed tympanum of gable-end pediment. Small console brackets support main roof overhang. Square tower features paired round-arched 8-over-8 windows in each face under low pyramidal roof. Dominant design feature of side elevations, three pairs of round-arched windows at third floor level, conveys strong sense of Italian Renaissance influence. Rear elevation is solid plain brick wall. (See Figure 4, Photograph 3)
- Auditorium seating for 1,250 people with exceptionally good acoustics includes two balconies and boxes toward front. Stage is 64' wide by 30' deep; there are 10 dressing rooms underneath it.³
- Architect H. Edwards Ficken is listed in New York City directories 1900-1925.⁴ He is credited with contributing to design of Carnegie Hall. Two lower levels of Sterling Opera House served as city hall and police station to 1965. During years from 1889 to 1933, celebrities who performed on stage included John Philip Sousa, Donald O'Connor, Red Skelton, Harry Houdini, George Burns, Amelia Earhart, John L. Sullivan, and Lionel, John, and Ethel Barrymore. Silent-film producer and director D.W. Griffith used Sterling Opera House for pre-release showings of several of his films. Was first Connecticut property to be listed on National Register of Historic Places. (See Figure 4, Photograph 3)
- Structure was built for \$45,000 by city and Charles Sterling, president of local Sterling Organ Company,⁵ as city hall and opera house. Served as city hall to 1965. Opera house was leased to tenant. Final performance in theater was piano recital held in 1944.⁶ In 1973, campaign was mounted to rehabilitate and re-use facility with assistance of Vivian Kellems, who was instrumental in rebirth of Goodspeed Opera House. Ownership was turned over to Sterling Opera House Foundation, Inc., at that time.⁷ Funding by State of Connecticut in amount of \$1,000,000 is in hand for rehabilitation of building.
- C 128 Elizabeth Street Second Congregational Church 1845 Faces east across street from Green. Frame gable-roofed, two-story, originally Greek Revival church dominated by two-story front portico and Colonial Revival/Federal Revival alterations. Covered with clapboards; 42' x 92'; on high granite ashlar foundation. Ground slopes down sharply from sidewalk; entire basement at grade. Two in antis two-story Ionic columns in 6' x 20' recessed portico formed by tongue-in-groove boarding. Most architectural details, added, not original, are in Federal style, including second-floor Palladian window over panels of swags with wreaths to sides, and elliptical leaded window in pediment tympanum. Octagonal tower covered with fishscale shingles. Former spire with weathervane finial, which existed at time of 1979 survey, is no longer in place. Fleur de lis design in front wrought-iron fence has heart motif between pickets at top and

³Gillespie, p. 13.⁴Ficken is not listed in the *Avery Obituary Index*.⁵Image of Sterling Organ Company factory appears at *Derby Supplement to the (Shelton) Suburban News*, November 24, 1971, p.

1.

⁶Hall.⁷"Foundation to Receive Title to Sterling Opera House," *The Hartford Courant*, July 14, 1973.

circle-in-square design at bottom rail. Cast-iron posts have ball finials. Granite front steps of eight risers. Tall segmentally arched side windows have hoods with keystones in molded window caps over carved garland panels. (See Figure 5, Photograph 4)

Birmingham Congregational Society, as it was known originally, was organized in 1845. Edifice raised same year by Hotchkiss, Clark & Company at cost of \$6,000.⁸ Rear extended 17' in 1859, again in 1889 to accommodate organ. Memorial windows added 1895. Federal alterations may have been carried out during renovations executed in 1915, which falls within period when Colonial Revival movement was at its height. 1924 image⁹ demonstrates that Adamesque changes had been made by that year.

- C 136 Elizabeth Street Second Congregational Church Parsonage 1866 Faces east toward Green. Two-story frame gable-roofed 25' x 55' irregular L-shaped Queen Anne house covered with clapboards, on painted brick foundation. Front picket fence connects with church iron fence. Separated from church by yard, with trees, which slopes down to rear. Flat-roofed front porch with round columns at front southeast corner. Paired tall 4-over-4 windows in first and second floors of projecting front elevation. Other windows are 6-over-6, all with plain surrounds. Window sills supported by impost blocks. South side features round-arched windows in 5-sided bay at basement and first floor, which has scrolled corner brackets. Semi-octagonal window above in jerkinhead gable end defined by pierced bargeboard. Drop finial at peak of front gable. Plain bargeboard on north side. One-story ell at northwest rear corner. Built at cost of \$6,000.¹⁰ (See Figure 5, Photograph 5)
- NC 148 Elizabeth Street, at southwest corner of Fifth Street 1975 Faces north toward Fifth Street. 65' x 32' 1-story brick commercial building. Ridge line of 65'-long side is parallel with Fifth Street, with cross gables projecting at ends. Bay windows in projecting cross gable ends. (Photograph 5)
- NC 160 Elizabeth Street, at northwest corner of Fifth Street Vic's Super Service, Inc. 1928 Faces east diagonally across intersection from Green. One-story cinderblock, stucco, and brick, 48' x 29', 2-bay contemporary gas station with nearly flat shed roof. In what may be an alteration, plate glass shop windows meet at southeast corner in manner characteristic of Modern Architecture and consistent with plain lines and absence of embellishment of building as whole. (Photograph 6)
- C 17 Fifth Street, at northeast corner of Elizabeth Street Derby United Methodist Church George Washington Kramer (1847-1938), architect. Cornerstone laid on May 27, 1894; dedicated on February 19, 1895 Faces south, across Fifth Street from top of Green. Romanesque Revival rectangular 75' x 105' church with high hipped and multi-gabled roof. Long 105' dimension is front elevation, asymmetrical. Materials are brick with red mortar; brownstone block ashlar foundation, and brownstone string courses at springlines of windows. Central square tower with pyramidal roof is location of arched central entrance in middle of south elevation, which leads to sanctuary to right and Sunday School to left. Large stained-glass windows to right, for sanctuary, and to left for Sunday School. Large gables over each stained-glass window. Overall view is tower flanked by cross gables. Second door to narthex of sanctuary at far right (east). Second door to Sunday School to left. Front elevation terminated at east by small round tower with conical roof. Doors have stained-glass round-arched transoms with central circle designs. Door and window arches are formed by multiple brick soldier courses. Quarter-round wall section left of central entrance adds weight to left half of front elevation, balancing it against larger right half. Almost all windows are stained-glass or leaded. (Photograph 7)
- West elevation facing Elizabeth Street, symmetrical, is also principal elevation. It is dominated by another large stained-glass window. Basement is at grade, where there is entrance to meeting rooms and offices. (Photograph 8)
- In sanctuary, which occupies east half of building, two central aisles diagonally to northwest from far east entrance door, making plan of sanctuary diamond-shaped with pews arranged in semi-circles in front of segmental altar. Floor is pitched down. Pews are dark wood. Organ in north wall, in dark wood, is track model with wooden bellows, older than church. Balcony is half-round, on east and south sides. West wall of sanctuary is in sections hung on track,

⁸Orcutt, p. 378.

⁹Sherwood, p. 125.

¹⁰Orcutt, p. 378.

permitting it to be pulled back out of way so sanctuary and Sunday School-auditorium volumes can be combined, making seating capacity of 1600. Stained-glass windows of mostly non-representational designs in bright shades of green and beige using small circles as accents were produced by Boston studio at time church was constructed. Walls are stenciled in abstract pattern (see Figure 6). Ceiling is painted in restrained manner with Christian symbols, such as chalice and cup. (Photograph 9)

Church constructed in 1894 on site of 1837 wooden edifice, which was first church erected in Birmingham section of Derby, and was demolished as being inadequate to make way for present edifice. Construction time between laying cornerstone and dedication was only eight months. Present congregation numbers 50 people; sanctuary and Sunday School are under used.

Church and parsonage next door are on single .52-acre site.

- C 17 Fifth Street, at northwest corner of Minerva Street Derby United Methodist Church Parsonage ca. 1850s Faces south toward Green. Two-story frame Second Empire 38' x 32' house on granite ashlar foundation. Classical trim details lost to synthetic siding. Central 1-story 9' x 12' pedimented portico supported by round posts in front of shallow projecting pavilion is flanked by tall 6-over-9 replacement windows with muntin grids in sandwich. Second-floor tripartite window flanked by 6-over-6s. Mansard roof above wide overhanging roof has three gabled dormers, central one with paired arched windows. Rear stair enclosure addition. (Photograph 10)

House bought by church for parsonage in 1858; continues to serve as residential facility for church. Now occupied by Yale Divinity School student.

- C 105 Minerva Street, at northeast corner Fourth Street Immanuel St. James Episcopal Church Rectory ca. 1853 Faces west toward Green. Two-story frame gable-roofed frame L-shaped Italianate 44' x 38' house, with character-defining architectural details lost to synthetic siding. Wide arcaded front porch is only remaining architectural decorative feature; segmental arches are tangential to corresponding reverse-curve members suspended from porch soffit; posts are chamfered with brackets. Porch railing of square pickets between upper and lower rails. Windows diminish in height from floor-to-ceiling 6-over-6s at first floor, to conventional 6-over-6s at second, and 3-over-3s in attic. Wide roof overhang. Porch wraps around L to north and around full depth of south side elevation facing Fourth Street, where grade falls off to side yard and brick basement wall is exposed. (Photograph 11)

- C 109 Minerva Street Immanuel St. James Episcopal Church 1842 Johnson & Hinman, builders, according to Orcutt; Hubbell was builder according to Sherwood. Faces west toward Green. Gothic Revival 45' x 84' masonry church. Basic features of rectangular shape, gable roof, and customary massing with projecting square front tower are as found in Federal/Greek Revival churches, but executed in random granite ashlar with pointed-arch openings. Lancet-arched central front entrance has double door, while flanking lancet-arched entrances have single doors. Paired lancet windows at second-floor level display leaded diamond glazing. Round window at third-floor level over central front entrance. Circular window has circle and star tracery. Roof gable end forms tympanum which is bisected by projecting tower. Band or course of pointed arches marks transition to belfry of tower. Scalloped louvers in belfry are topped by course of trefoils and by battlements. Four tall lancet windows on each side elevation. (Photograph 12)

Original wooden tower was replaced by present stone tower in 1853 (in preview of similar change at Trinity Church, New Haven in 1870), at which time church was enlarged. Engraving ca. 1880 shows belfry open (see Figure 7).

15' x 46' section on south connects to 1-story 37' x 37' ca. 1980s parish house addition of cinder block and stucco designed in Modern Architecture. 1997 18' x 30' addition at rear north is leased to commercial tenant.

Interior is finished in dark wood. Central aisle divides rows of dark pews. Chancel railing has trefoil openings. Double-sloped ceiling is paneled. Doors are pointed-arched. Balcony front is covered with trefoil panels. Stained-glass windows exhibit figural designs in rich dark colors below square sections with curved corners. Windows do not appear to be signed. One is dated 1899. (Photograph 13)

Removal of Episcopal Church from East Derby to Birmingham in 1840s was significant in history of town because it strengthened shift in location of business and residential focus. Lot for church was donated by Anson G. Phelps and Shelton Smith.

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- C 127-129-131 Minerva Street 1890 Faces west toward Green. Two-story frame Queen Anne 38' x 45' gable-roofed T-shaped house with strong cross gables, covered with synthetic siding. One-story porch which wraps around stem of T has round posts connected by railing of square pickets between upper and lower rails. Three floor-to-ceiling windows at first floor are glazed in 2-over-4 pattern; conventional windows at second floor are 2-over-2, with paired narrow vertical 1-over-1 attic windows above. Two-story 3-sided bay with apsidal roof on each side elevation. Roof of front gable slopes to first-floor level over stepped-back section on each side as transition to side elevation bays. Wide eaves overhang at main roof. (Photograph 14)
- C 135 Minerva Street ca. 1840, visual Moved to this site ca. 1885. Faces west toward Green. Two-story 3-bay 24' x 35' frame hip-roofed rectangular Greek Revival/Italianate-style house covered with synthetic siding, on brick foundation. Raised areas of siding at corners of house suggest pilasters underneath. First- and second-floor windows are 1-over-1; third-floor frieze windows are horizontal 6-pane. Front elevation dominated by added wide 2-story porch which has four large square posts connected by Chinese Chippendale-inspired railing at both levels. Front entrance flanked by narrow sidelights of four narrow panes. Frieze projects slightly, equivalent to one wythe in brick Italianate house. Interior door frames channeled with corner blocks. (Photograph 15) House was moved to this site by present owner's grandfather.
- C 139-141 Minerva Street, at southeast corner of Fifth Street, on same parcel (8-5-92) as 135 Minerva Street 1875 Faces west toward Green. Triple-gabled 2-story 6-bay frame Gothic Revival cottage in manner of A.J. Davis. Double house with three steeply-pitched front gables, on random coursed stone foundation. 40' x 45'. Wide 1-story front porch with square posts is approached by central wide wooden stair, bisected by railing, which leads to two glazed front doors. Doors are flanked by two 2-over-2 windows, giving each half of house three bays. Second floor has six evenly spaced 2-over-2 windows. Roof behind three gables is both low and low-pitched on east-west ridge perpendicular to street, in contrast to high gable roof with ridge parallel with street as is customary in Davis mode. North basement elevation along Fifth Street has 6-over-6 windows. Picket fence and stone hitching post in front of house. Present roof structure altered, not original. (Photograph 16)
- C 149 Minerva Street, at northeast corner of Fifth Street 1886 in concrete panel at attic level in chimney Faces west diagonally across intersection from Green. Two-story frame Queen Anne 28' x 53' house with unusually diverse and elaborate features in highly articulated example of style. Front elevation divides into two halves, secondary and primary. Secondary half to north (left) features 2-story entrance porch, with second floor now enclosed, under dentil course of strong pedimented dormer that has half-round window in its tympanum. To south is 2-story bay with apsidal roof in front of which is prominent exterior corbelled and paneled pressed brick and terra-cotta chimney that surrounds central leaded window at first floor and has corbelled cap at top. Chimney flanked by quarter-round windows at roof line. Saw-tooth courses in chimney. Vertical orientation of two halves joins and terminates in high gable-on-hip roof with multiple cross gables. Walls covered with clapboards and imbricated shingles. Another 3-sided bay on south elevation has brackets with incised scroll design. Similar 3-sided bay on north. Walls are covered with variety of planes, textures, surface rectangles, sunbursts, medallions. Jerkinhead-shaped recess on south. Window descriptions include stained-glass, 2-over-1, 2-over-2, 20-over-1, 24-pane (two tiers of 12), quarter-round, semi-circular, small panes in border surrounding large pane, leaded, and round (in end of gable on hip, fourth-floor level). Rear porch additions 1980s. Cut-stone retaining wall along south (Fifth Street) edge of property. In excellent state of historic preservation. (Photograph 17)

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: ___ Statewide: x Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A x B ___ C x D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

Areas of Significance:	Period(s) of Significance	Significant Dates
ARCHITECTURE	<u>1843 1895</u>	_____
COMMUNITY PLANNING	<u>1836 1949</u>	_____

Significant Person(s): Anson G. Phelps (1781-1853); Sheldon Smith (1791-1867)

Cultural Affiliation: NA
Architect/Builder: H. Edwards Ficken, George Washington Kramer (1847-1938)

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary

The Birmingham Green Historic District is significant historically because it is a good example of successful 19th-century private urban planning which created a new neighborhood and religious, cultural, and civic center in an established town. The buildings and spaces around the central public square planned by the developers continue to exhibit the integrity initially contemplated. The district is significant architecturally because it is made up of characteristic examples of 19th-century architectural styles, now in a good state of preservation.

History

Derby was settled in 1651, named in 1675, and incorporated as a town in 1775. It extended some 10 miles up both sides of the Naugatuck River from its junction with the Housatonic River. Oxford was the first spin-off from this large area, in 1798. Naugatuck and Beacon Falls were formed in part from Oxford. In 19th-century political and tax-related developments, Seymour and Ansonia were also divided from Derby, making Derby the smallest town in Connecticut, 55 square miles. The town became a city as well in 1893.

One of the events in this continuum of activity was the 19th-century development of the area in Derby called Birmingham by Sheldon Smith and Anson G. Phelps. Sheldon Smith (1791-1867), a Derby resident, owned land at the point where the Naugatuck and Housatonic Rivers come together, then called Smithville (see USGS map). He enlisted the cooperation of Anson G. Phelps (1781-1853), a Connecticut native who lived in New York City, to develop his holdings. Phelps already was interested in the area because he owned copper processing plants in the Naugatuck Valley which became a unit in the Phelps, Dodge Company. The area was in need of economic development because Derby had not recovered from the loss of the West Indies trade, which had

brought prosperity to Derby, Hartford, and other river and coastal sea-trading centers in Connecticut until coming to an end in the years just before the War of 1812. Smith and Phelps' plan was to rescue Derby from the depression by encouraging participation in the industrial revolution, a pattern that was followed elsewhere in Connecticut as well.

The two men embarked on the development of a new community within Derby on the Smith land, which they called Birmingham. While the initiative for the development was private, not a municipally conceived plan, local government did cooperate by laying out streets. As noted by Orcutt, "At request of Anson G. Phelps of New York City and Sheldon Smith of Derby selectmen laid out a highway through their land at a place called the Point (Smithville) in April 1836." In June 1836 another road, now Second Street, two blocks south of the Birmingham Green Historic District, followed.¹¹ The southern portion of the area was set aside for factories and metal-processing facilities, many of which still stand. Two blocks to the north of Second Street, the surveyors laid out a Public Square, so designated on an 1846 map.¹² Minerva Street on the east side of the Green and several square blocks north of the Green became a fashionable residential area.

Original designation of what is known today as the Green as a Public Square on the mid-19th-century map is informative as to the intent of the plan for Birmingham Green. The intent was to have an urban public space, as found in cities such as Boston and New York and in England. The buildings ranged around the open space and focused on it were spaced with urban density. The developers sought a 19th-century city ambience, not the rural atmosphere of a colonial green.

Phelps and Smith endeavored, with success, to make the Public Square the center of the town's religious and civic institutions, at the expense of the existing center located on the east side of the Naugatuck River, sometimes called Derby Landing, now known as East Derby (see USGS map). First to come to Birmingham was the Methodist Church at the top of the green with its 1837 wooden building, which was replaced by the present edifice in 1895. Next was the Episcopal Church, 1843, on the east side of the Green, while the Congregationalists soon followed in 1845 on the west side. Since each church had an adjoining parsonage or rectory, religious property took up more than half the street frontage facing the Green.

By 1847 a post-and-rail fence was in place around the Green, but there were no paths and no trees. The terrain was rough; the soil was poor. In 1857, footpaths of dirt, in the present pattern, had taken their place.¹³ The need for trees was recognized and discussions were held on whether it was possible to plant trees. Would they grow? The decision was made to try maples, which exist today.¹⁴

Then, in 1877, the highest point in the Green was chosen as the location for the all-important Civil War monument, and in 1889 the seat of government came to the Green in the city hall part of the Sterling Opera House building, while its auditorium became the venue for concerts and other public events, in culmination of the developers' aim to make the Green the city's civic, cultural, and religious center.

During the 20th century, the physical features of the Birmingham Green Historic District have maintained their integrity. The Green is well cared for and the important buildings are standing. The general level of activity, however, has declined. The Opera House is vacant, the Methodist Church is under used, and the Congregational Church is open only for Sunday service, while residences on Minerva Street are well-maintained and the Green is regularly patronized. The Birmingham Green Historic District continues as a demonstration of the success of private mid-19th-century urban planning.

¹¹Orcutt, p. 348.

¹²*Derby Savings Bank*, p. 20. The only two buildings around the square on the 1846 map are the Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church.

¹³The present pattern of walks shows in the 1876 Bailey view.

¹⁴Sherwood, p. 74.

Architecture

The 19th-century architectural styles in the Birmingham Green Historic District include the Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Romanesque Revival, all surrounding the oldest resource, which is the Green itself, ca. 1836. The Green was planned as a simple rectangular Public Square without features that could be called landscape architecture. To a degree the square was a formal space in that it was regular in size and shape, marked only by rising grade from south to north. Its landscape architecture has been articulated by walks, trees, other plantings, and monuments. The Green continues to be a regular space of straight lines and modest features dependent for its significance largely on the important fact that it is there.

The oldest building still standing in the district is the Episcopal Church, 1843, which is an example of the contemporary influence of the Church of England and the Ecclesiological movement in support of the belief that the Gothic Revival is the only appropriate style for a Christian house of worship. In New England the boxy rectangle with square projecting tower of the Congregational meetinghouse was modified to meet the new standard by using pointed-arch doors and windows, characteristic Gothic motifs such as trefoils, and medieval features such as battlements, all imposed on the New England model. A similar approach was taken elsewhere, for example, at Trinity Church, New Haven; Christ Church, Hartford; and Union Church, Riverton in Barkhamsted. The interior, however, was unrelated to the meetinghouse, being finished in dark wood, even to the ceiling, with many of the available surfaces used for Gothic and, in the church's view, therefore religious symbols.

The Congregational Church followed two years later in 1845, toward the end of the period of the traditional New England Greek Revival style. Its simple, strong proportions and well-designed classical features are characteristic of its building type, while its Colonial Revival/Federal Revival early-20th-century added Adamesque trim makes it a good example, as well, of the Colonial Revival movement.

The Greek Revival style was followed by the Italianate style in mid-19th century as demonstrated by the residence at 135 Minerva Street, which was moved to its present location ca. 1885. The house is a boxy three-bay building with hipped roof in the Italianate mode, but with a frieze and frieze windows as often found in the Greek Revival style. The Episcopal rectory, 1853, is another Italianate-style frame residence and is a dramatic demonstration of adapting a building to the sloping terrain.

The district's example of the Second Empire style is the Methodist minister's residence of the 1850s, which has lost some of its character-defining features to synthetic siding but which continues to exhibit the typical Mansard roof and dormers.

As the century drew closer to its end, more imaginative and irregular designs, asymmetrical but balanced, came into vogue under the sobriquets of Gothic Revival and Queen Anne. The Gothic Revival cottage identified by its trio of tall front gables at 139 Minerva Street, 1875, reflects an awareness in Birmingham of the widely accepted work of Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852), arbiter of good taste who espoused what he thought of as rural villas, from which this design is derived. The Queen Anne style served to carry on and embellish the principles of asymmetry, elaborate decorative features, and open floor plans, as seen in the district in the Congregational Parsonage, 1866, and in 127 Minerva Street, 1890. An ultimate expression of the Queen Anne style carrying diversity and elaboration to the extreme, yet in a unified, contained, and consistent design, is seen at 149 Minerva Street, 1886.

The Sterling Opera House, 1889, did not follow customary architectural style parameters, but rather is an eclectic statement drawn from the Italian Renaissance. It has the square mass, low pitched roof, corner tower with pyramidal roof, and arcaded range of side windows of north Italy, to which many Palladian decorative features such as the pedimented entry, Venetian window, swags, and elliptical windows with four keystones have been introduced. It is the only 19th-century building in the district to employ stucco as one of its building materials.

The Methodist Church, 1895, brought the century to a resounding close with the largest and perhaps most elaborate building in the district. Its large round arches, tall square tower, and heavy detailing in brick and brownstone place it in the Romanesque Revival mode. The extensive stained glass throughout the building and tall round-arched panels of the sanctuary are consistent with the style. The church building articulates the up-to-date doctrine of contemporary evangelical Protestantism in both

its overall architectural style and use of interior spaces. The architectural style is Romanesque Revival, a late-19th-century mode popularized by H.H. Richardson (1838-1886), and therefore welcomed by Methodists in contrast to the medieval precedent so important in Gothic Revival-style designs of Roman Catholic and Protestant Episcopal edifices. On the interior, the sanctuary and Sunday School are balanced in the amount of space they command with the Sunday School having its own large auditorium, an arrangement that was originated in the First Methodist Church of Akron, Ohio (1866-1870) and known as the Akron Plan. The sanctuary, instead of resembling a rectangular nave, is treated as a theater with pitched floor for seating in pews of segmental rows and rounded balconies above, all facing a segmental altar. Essential to the plan was the movable wall separating the two spaces, enabling them to be thrown together for the large crowds drawn by the invariably charismatic minister.¹⁵

The architect of the district's United Methodist Church, George Washington Kramer (1847-1938), was America's leading practitioner in designing Methodist churches in conformance with the contemporary preference for Romanesque Revival style and Akron plan.¹⁶ Born in Akron, Ohio, Kramer practiced there before moving to New York City in 1894 where he was joined by his son George in 1912. He is said to have designed more than 2,000 buildings, of which Methodist churches were by far the largest single category.¹⁷ In Connecticut, there are 28 Kramer-designed churches in such cities as Bridgeport, Bristol, Waterbury, New Haven, Winsted, and Hartford.¹⁸

The United Methodist Church is one of the many good examples of 19th-century architectural styles in the Birmingham Green Historic District which assert the success of the development of the center of Birmingham in architectural terms. The district is significant architecturally because of the continued presence and integrity of this related group of buildings

¹⁵Jaeger, pp. 141-153.

¹⁶The Birmingham church is included in a list found in the Kramer unpublished autograph catalog and scrapbook.

¹⁷Withy, p. 354.

¹⁸The Hartford example is St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church, 1886 Park Street (1900). It is a red brick Romanesque Revival building composed of characteristic square towers, high hipped roof, large stained-glass windows, and Akron Plan interior complete with sliding wall and pitched-floor sanctuary. St. Paul's was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 2, 1984. (See Ohno.)

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PROPERTY NAME

Birmingham Green Historic District, Derby, CT

United States Department of the Interior

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed on the National Register. Sterling Opera House

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark.

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # _____

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other: Specify Repository: _____

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreeage of Property: 6.6

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A 18 45761 ³⁹⁵ 70 659980	B 18 45760 ²⁸⁵ 00 660000
C 18 45759 ⁶²⁰ 90 65986 ⁸⁰ 0	D 18 45761 ³⁸⁰ 60 65984 ⁷⁰ 0

Verbal Boundary Description:

The east, north, and west boundaries of the district are the rear lot lines of properties facing the Green, including 149 Minerva Street and 160 Elizabeth Street. The southern boundary is the concrete sidewalk north of the commercial building that replaced Fourth Street. The Connecticut Superior Courthouse property is excluded from the district.

Boundary Justification:

The district boundary is drawn to include the Green and properties facing the Green. The Connecticut Superior Courthouse property is excluded because the physical presence of the 1984 building is on Olivia Street, next to the west, even though a ramp connects to its front door from Elizabeth Street between the Sterling Opera House and the Congregational Church. (See Figure 1, District Map).

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: David F. Ransom, Consultant, reviewed by John F.A. Herzan, National Register Coordinator
Org.: Architectural Historian
Date: August 1999
Street/#: 83 Avery Heights
City/Town: Hartford
State: CT
ZIP: 06106
Telephone: 860 953-862

List of Maps and Figures

Figure 1. USGS Map
Figure 2. District Map
Figure 3. Diagram of Green
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Figure 7. Historic View of Episcopal Church

List of Photographs

Photographs were taken by David F. Ransom in August 1999. Negatives are on file at the Connecticut Historical Commission.

Photograph 1

The Green
View northeast

Photograph 2

Civil War Monument
View northeast

Photograph 3

Sterling Opera House
View northwest

Photograph 4

Congregational Church
View northwest

Photograph 5

148 Elizabeth Street
Congregational Church
Parsonage to left
View southwest

Photograph 6

160 Elizabeth Street
View northwest

PROPERTY NAME

Birmingham Green Historic District, Derby, CT

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United States Department of the Interior

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Photograph 7

Methodist Church

View north

Photograph 8

Methodist Church

View east

Photograph 9

Methodist Church

Interior, view northwest

Photograph 10

Methodist Church Parsonage,

Church to left

View northwest

Photograph 11

Episcopal Church Rectory

View northeast

Photograph 12

Episcopal Church

View northeast

Photograph 13

Episcopal Church Interior

View southwest

Photograph 14

127-129-131 Minerva Street

View northeast

Photograph 15

135 Minerva Street

View northeast

Photograph 16

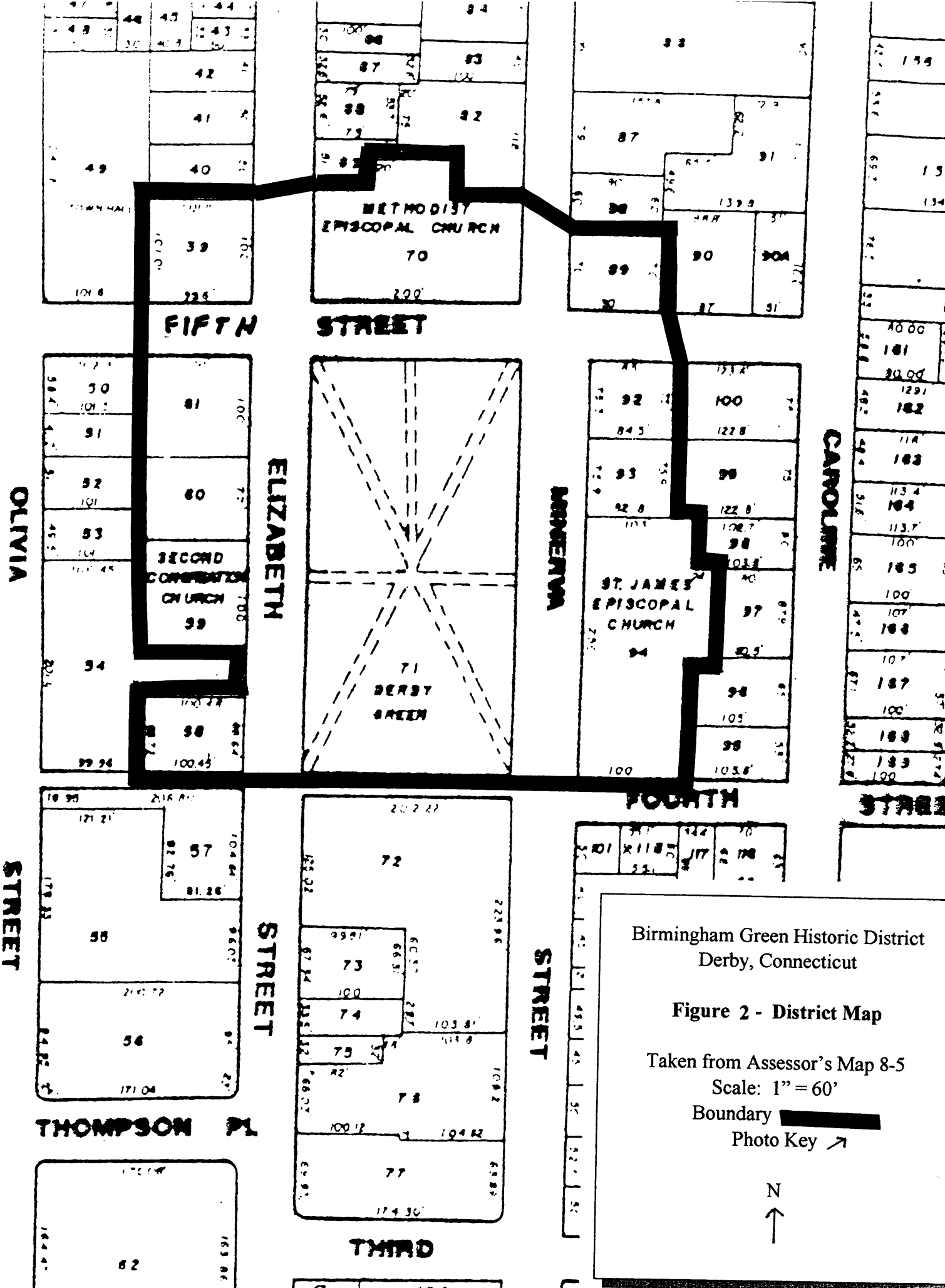
136 Minerva Street

View southeast

Photograph 17

149 Minerva Street

View northeast



Birmingham Green Historic District
 Derby, Connecticut

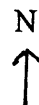
Figure 2 - District Map

Taken from Assessor's Map 8-5

Scale: 1" = 60'

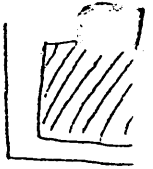
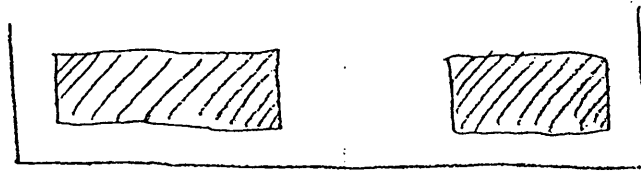
Boundary 

Photo Key 

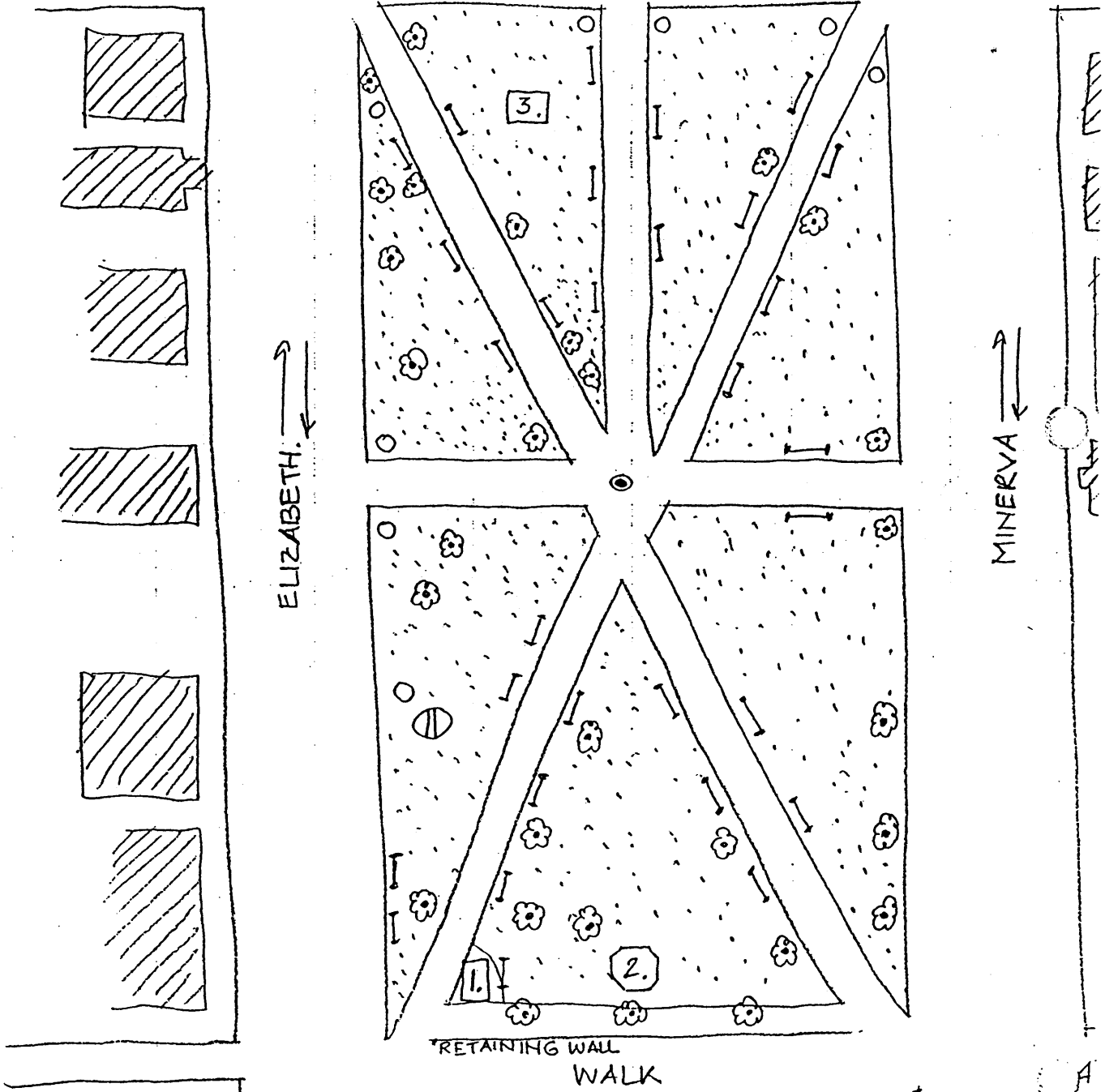


JERBY BIRMINGHAM GREEN. DERBY. (NEW HAVEN).

- 1. WATER FOUNTAIN.
- 2. BAND STAND.
- 3. CIVIL WAR MONUMENT
- ⊖ BELL
- ⊙ FLAG POLE
- ⊥ BENCH.
- ⊕ MAPLE
- OTHER TREE.



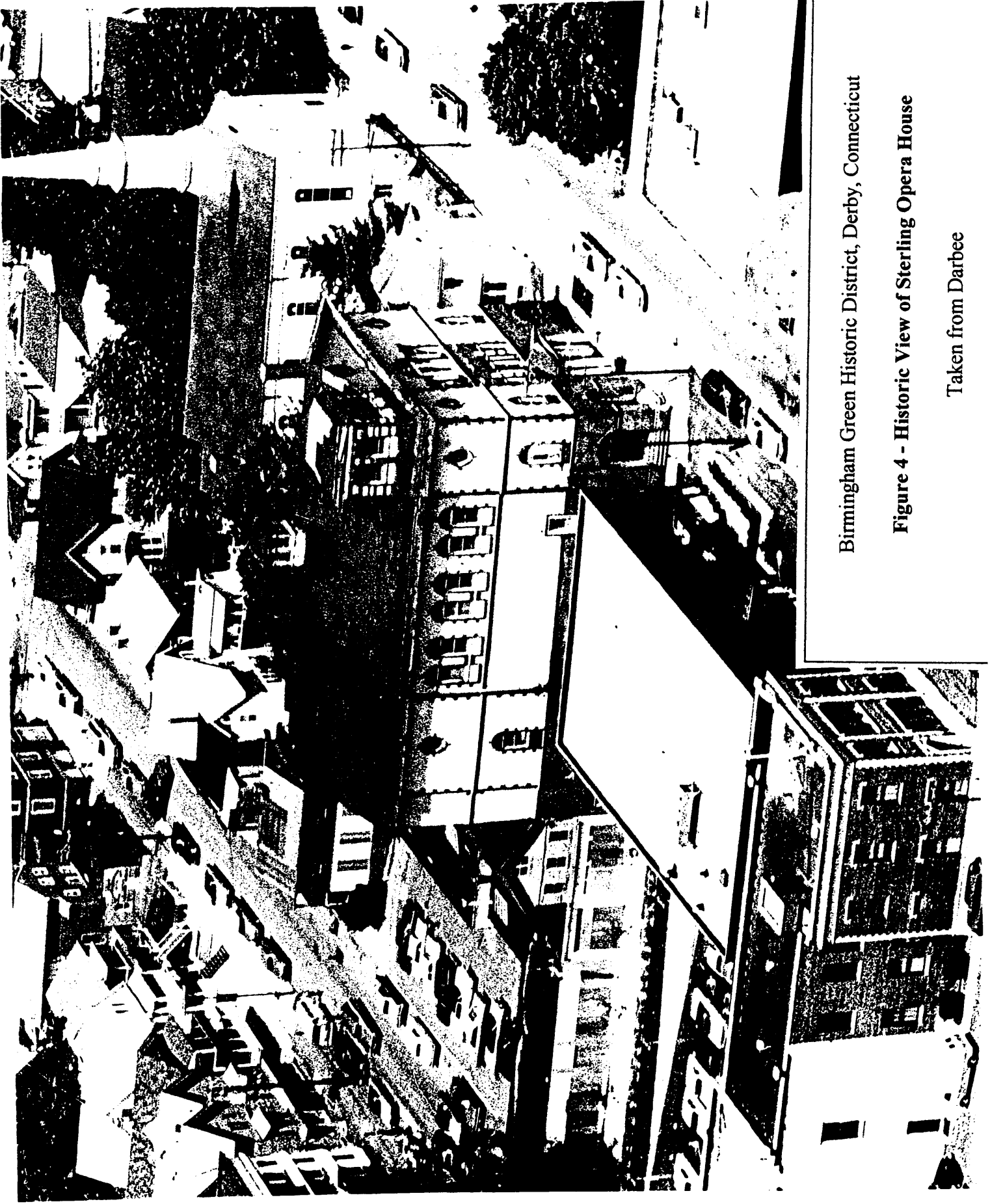
FIFTH ST. ⇌



Birmingham Green Historic District, Derby, Connecticut

Figure 3 - Diagram of Green

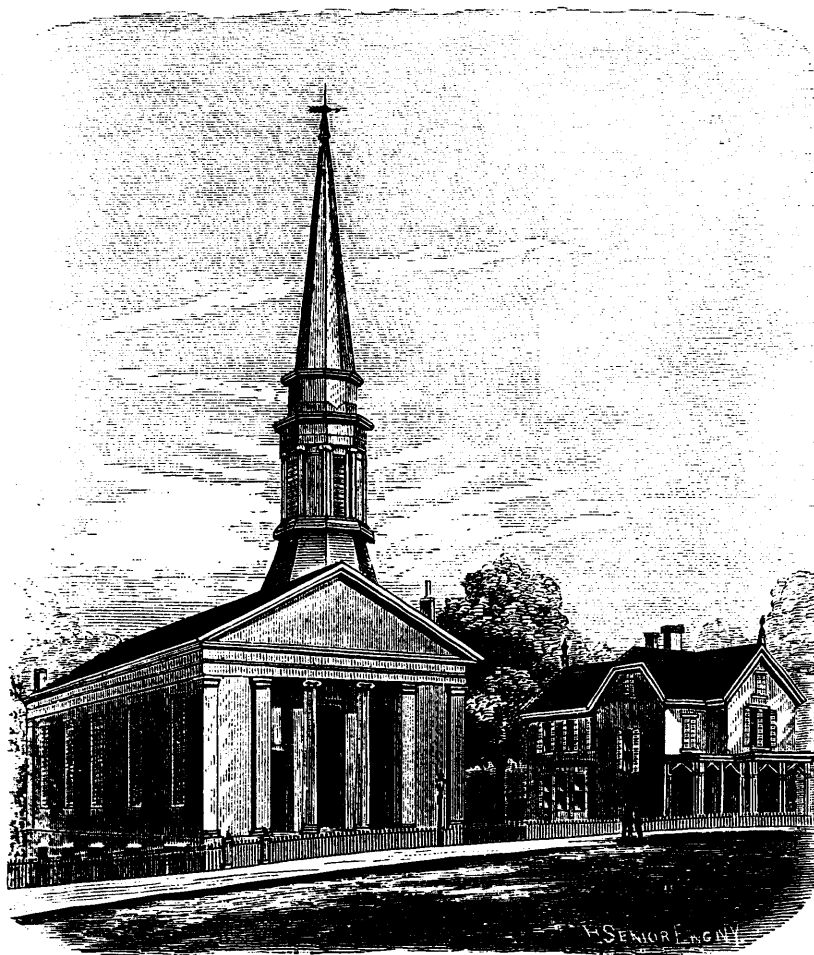
Taken from Neustadter



Birmingham Green Historic District, Derby, Connecticut

Figure 4 - Historic View of Sterling Opera House

Taken from Darbee

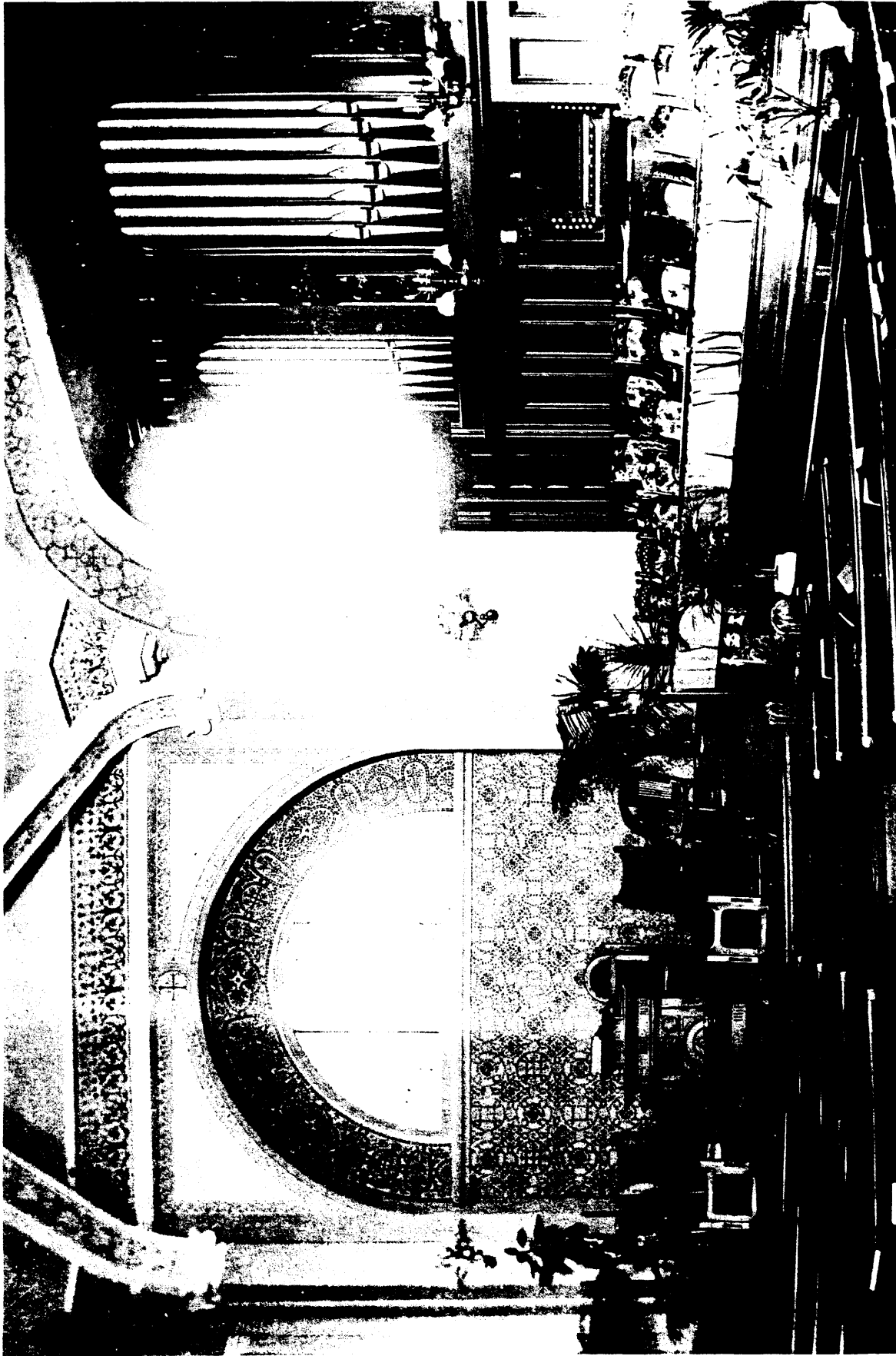


CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND PARSONAGE.

Birmingham Green Historic District
Derby, Connecticut

**Figure 5 - Historic View of Congregational Church
and Parsonage**

Taken from Orcutt

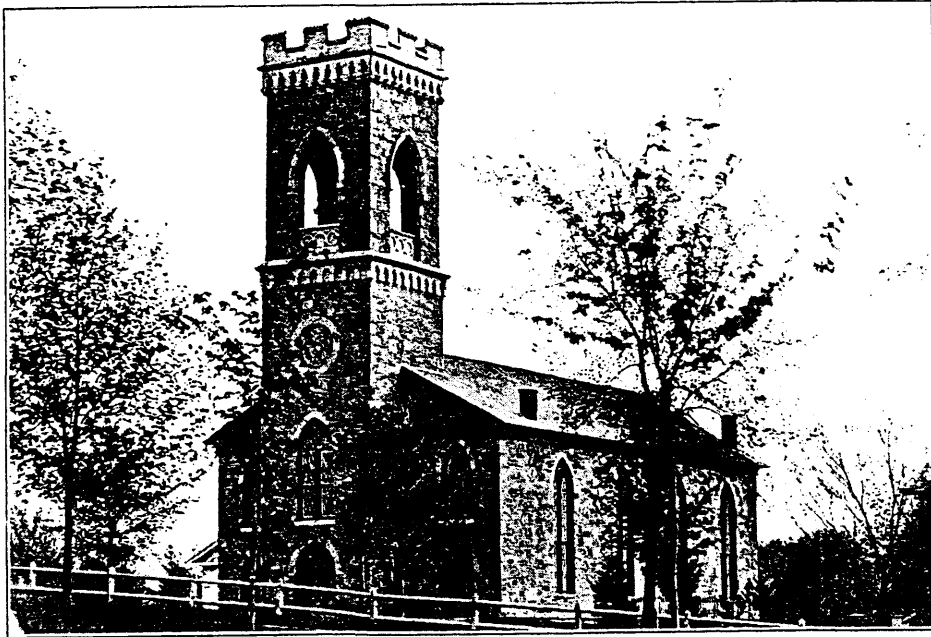


Interior of Derby Methodist Church

Birmingham Green Historic District, Derby, Connecticut

Figure 6 - Historic View of Interior of Methodist Church

Taken from Malloy, p. 38



SAINT JAMES'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Built in 1842

Birmingham Green Historic District
Derby, Connecticut

Figure 7 - Historic View of Episcopal Church

Taken from Sherwood, opp. p. 103