

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED	APR 12 1977
DATE ENTERED	JAN 9 1978

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 Second Church of Christ

AND/OR COMMON

South Congregational Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
307 Main St.

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Hartford

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF

First

STATE
Connecticut

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

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 type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Second Church of Christ

STREET & NUMBER
277 Main St.

CITY, TOWN
Hartford

— VICINITY OF

STATE
Connecticut 06106

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Municipal Building

STREET & NUMBER
550 Main St.

CITY, TOWN
Hartford,

STATE
Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

DATE
1976
— FEDERAL STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN
Hartford,
STATE
Connecticut

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Meetinghouse of the Second Church of Christ (South Congregational) is located at 307 Main Street, Hartford, Connecticut. It fronts eastward upon Main Street at the south corner of Buckingham Street, with its long sides north and south and the 1847 Lecture Rooms forming a transept to the rear. Built in 1825-1827 by William Hayden and Nathaniel Woodhouse, active Hartford builders of the period, its interior was remodeled in 1853. The source of the original builders' designs remains uncertain, but records indicate that meetinghouses and builders' guides were studied by the planning committee, and we must assume that they adapted from both.¹

The Meetinghouse is a two-story rectangular brick building, 96 by 63 feet, in the Federal style, with steeple and trim of wood painted white, on a high base of red sandstone. With its columned portico and multi-stage steeple it suggests an adaptation of the classic church by James Gibbs, noted English architect. Tall arcaded windows on north and south, echoed by the round-headed doors and windows of the facade set in tall brick arches, are separated by pilasters, while the pedimented portico rests on four finely pro-portioned Composite (Ionic-Corinthian) columns. The exterior brickwork, laid in the form of Flemish bond, displays meticulous workmanship and incredibly thin mortar joints, averaging 7/32".²

The 1827 exterior of the Meetinghouse, originally 81 feet long, remains virtually unchanged, except for two early additions. The two-story brick building to the west (the Lecture Rooms of 1847) was designed and built by Joseph Camp of Hartford. Measuring 38 by 72 feet, it was carefully integrated with the original architecture. In 1853, the two buildings were joined as part of architect Minard Lafever's Greek Revival remodeling of the meetinghouse interior, an interior which reflects Lafever's sensitive understanding of the elegance and harmony of the Greek Revival style. The Lecture Rooms were extended fifteen feet southward to coincide with the south wall of the church, and the pulpit end of the latter was pushed fifteen feet west with the addition of another window bay.³ Within, the flat coved ceiling was replaced by the present shallow coffered dome, the pulpit platform was lowered and moved westward, and the audience room assumed substantially its present arrangement. Regrettably, the fine old pulpit was banished to the Chapel, not to be restored to its place until 1909. An office and classroom building containing also a chapel, library and large hall was completed in 1960, south of the Lecture Rooms. Architect Henry Schraub Kelly, brother of meetinghouse authority J. Frederick Kelly, designed it to harmonize as closely as possible

¹Manuscript report (1825?) in South Congregational Church archives.

²Kelly, J. Frederick: Early Connecticut Meetinghouses. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948. Vol. 1, p. 208.

³Kelly is in error here (Op. Cit., Vol. 1, p. 211). See Records of the Second Ecclesiastical Society, 1767-1920. Vol. 2, pp. 111, 124-126.

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with the original exterior architecture. At its northern end, firedoors and a short common wall connect the building with the Lecture Rooms, and these, together with a lower roof level, serve also to demarcate the 19th and 20th century buildings.

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The round-headed windows, six to a side, are in a single tall tier of triple-hung sash. Whether the present 28/20/20 arrangement of panes simulates the original is not known; sash and window frames are 1927 replacements in the original openings after a severe fire in 1884 and subsequent Victorian renovation, when stained glass windows were inserted into the original apertures.

The portico is approached by eight steps. Foundations, portico platform steps and water table are all of dressed Portland stone. The three front entrances of the portico are the original matching pairs of three-paneled Federal doors. Above a molded transom, each entrance has a glazed semi-circular fanlight. The wooden columns of the portico are topped by a classic entablature extending on both sides of the building, the detail of which is repeated in the Lecture Room facade. The face of the pediment is of matched horizontal boards, and the roof surfaces are now covered with asphalt shingles.

The steeple has five major stages in which the architectural elements of the portico are restated in classic sequence and in alternating simplicity and elegance of detail. The base, a square brick tower with clock dials, is ornamented on all sides with twin pairs of brick pilasters with wooden Doric capitals and architrave, surmounted by a balustrade of turned balusters and paneled pedestals. From this stage upward the spire is of wood. An octagonal belfry is next, with engaged Ionic columns at the angles separating arched louvered openings beneath Federal-style panels. The typical Ionic entablature leads to the third stage, a plain octagonal drum set off by circular molded casings quartered by key blocks. Three stepped setbacks support the fourth stage, which reflects the second on a reduced scale, but with the use of Corinthian columns.⁴ Its entablature is surmounted by an octagonal balustrade and the final stage, a plain octagon paneled above a heavy band course. From a simple cornice rises the ribbed metal ogee roof with gilded finial and weather-vane. Despite its wealth of detail, the spire is carefully wrought into an expression of harmonious restraint.

From the portico, one enters the vestibule which stretches the width of the building. The original curving stairways at either end lead to the galleries. Three double doors open to the wide audience room, with its impressive mahogany pulpit. Galleries, paneled above a carved frieze, surround the room on the north, east and south. These are supported on the sides by fluted Corinthian columns which extend to the ceiling and are complemented by pilasters and a full entablature. Four large carved wooden brackets extend from the vestibule wall to support the organ gallery.⁵ The chief architectural feature of the interior is Lafever's magnificent domed and vaulted ceiling. Shallow barrel vaults on all sides, octagonally coffered,

⁴The original urns capping the first and fourth stages were removed as hazardous about 1962.

⁵The organ gallery was extended forward six feet to the rear coluns in 1961, to permit use of a full choir.

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repeat the moldings used in the entablature and the corner coffers. From the apex of the cross thus formed rises the great dome on rinceau paneled pendentives. Its fine coffering, set off by egg and dart molding, culminates in the central medallion with its pierced rosette, from which hangs the large brass (1927) chandelier. The whole forms an outstanding example of Lafever's Greek Revival work. Due to three major fires in 1884, 1920 and 1955, much of the interior woodwork has had to be replaced, but the original dado of wide random horizontal boards up to the window level still bears the marks of the original pew slips on the side walls. Above this the walls are plastered and painted gray. The plaster ceiling, which was renewed in 1884 and 1967, and all interior woodwork are painted white, as is the 1927 Palladian motif behind the pulpit. Pew Slips have replaced the box pews in the central portion of the meetinghouse, but the finely crafted mahogany pulpit, pulpit sofa and communion table are original. The total effect of the interior is of spaciousness, light and despite the elaborate detail of the plaster work, of simple dignity.

⁶The Hartford Times. September 19, 1909. (Historical Sermon), p. 13.

8 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 type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The present meetinghouse of the Second Church of Christ in Hartford is the third oldest public building in the city, and one of only four remaining erected before 1830. The third meetinghouse raised for the use of the church since 1670, it is located in almost the same spot as its predecessors on Main Street, south of the Park, or Little River. The present building stands on the house lot of the second minister, Thomas Buckingham (served 1694-1731) which was subsequently deeded to the church's ecclesiastical society by his wife and son.

Established by some of the founders and early settlers of Hartford after a division in the First Church, South Church continues a tradition of free Congregationalism which has endured from its beginning here under Thomas Hooker. After nearly thirteen years of doctrinal dispute during which many of the original withdrawers removed to Hadley, Mass., the church was finally given permission to organize by the General Court in October, 1669. The Covenant to which the founders formally subscribed on February 22, 1670, is thought to be the original written by Hooker, and is still in use today.

The present building has not only served as a place of worship, but quite literally as a meeting house for the people of Hartford and as an auditorium for fine music from the day of its dedication, April 11, 1827. The Rev. Edwin P. Parker (served 1860-1912) regularly enlisted concert talent from Europe for meetinghouse performances. The ensuing musical vesper program continues to the present day. Hartford's first public educational radio station, WSCH/FM, today known as WRCH, had its studios in the meetinghouse basement from 1963-1965. The Fine Arts Foundation of Connecticut, Inc. was housed in the building from 1962-1967, conducting a variety of cultural programs.

Built at the height of what has been termed the Golden Age of New England's artistic development, 1790-1830, the Second Church meetinghouse characterizes not only the renewal of religious interest of that period, but also the excellence of master builders developing new and livelier expressions of architectural beauty. Some of these craftsmen, who like Nathaniel Woodhouse were cabinet makers as well, translated random details from their builder's guides with those noted in their journeyings, into their own innovative designs. This fine brick example is the more notable because most of its New England contemporaries were of wood. A building which has seen continuous service for one hundred fifty years, it is an outstanding instance of Federal architecture, marked by lightness of design, slender vertical lines and wealth of ornament. As is typical of the third type of meetinghouse to predominate in New England soon after 1800, it is oblong in shape, with the entrances at one narrow and the pulpit at the other. More ornate than churches of the older types, it is characterized by harmonious proportions, fine workmanship and careful detail. The steeple rises above the entrance not as a projecting tower but as a more imaginative structure set back over the main roof. Inside, a gallery on three walls flanked the

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high pulpit and pulpit window on the fourth, although the pulpit has since been lowered and the window eliminated. The tall side windows in a single tier are an unusual treatment seldom seen in two-story churches of this type.⁸

Perhaps the most striking feature of this meetinghouse is the interior remodeling done by Minard Lafever in 1853. To him has been most directly attributed the inviting quality of Greek Revival interiors and "the crisp, imaginative character of the wood and plaster detail that so frequently accounts and beautifies them."⁹ Much of the distinction of this meetinghouse is due to the refined elegance of Lafever and his sympathetic feeling for the architectural integrity of the original design, as well as to the creative workmanship of its first builders.

In addition, the meetinghouse represents the historic and cultural traditions of a congregation and a city not only since 1827, but for over three hundred years. At such, it is rightfully a part of our national heritage.

⁷Traces of Lafever's great arched window, bricked up in 1873 and a duplicate of the original may still be seen in the second floor Lecture Room behind the pulpit.

⁸Sinnott, Edmund W. Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963, p. 129.

⁹Hamlin, Talbot, Greek Revival Architecture in America. New York: Dover Publications, 1964, p. 147.

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Parker, Edwin Pond. History of the Second Church of Christ in Hartford. Hartford, Connecticut: Belknap and Warfield, 1892.

Records of the Second Ecclesiastical Society in Hartford, 1767-1920. Deposited in Connecticut State Library.

Sinnott, Edmund W. Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963.