

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

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

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

For HCRS use only

received **SEP 20 1983**

date entered

1. Name

historic Polish National Home

and/or common Polish National Home

2. Location

street & number 60 Charter Oak Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Hartford N/A vicinity of congressional district 1st

state Connecticut code 09 county Hartford code 003

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: social club

4. Owner of Property

name Polish National Home of Hartford, Inc.

street & number 60 Charter Oak Avenue

city, town Hartford N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City and Town Clerk, Municipal Building

street & number 550 Main Street

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

State Register of Historic Places
title

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect St.

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 Polish National Home, constructed in 1930, is a three-story building in the Modernistic or Art Deco style. Located at the northeast corner of Governor Street and Charter Oak Avenue in Hartford, the building is at the edge of the downtown. Nearby on Governor Street is the Church of Saints Cyril and Methodius, a Roman Catholic church with a Polish-American congregation. The Polish National Home functions as a community center for various Polish societies in the Hartford area. Rectangular in plan, the building rests on a concrete foundation. The facade and south elevation, facing Governor Street and Charter Oak Avenue respectively, are constructed of a buff-colored brick in the stretcher bond. The north and east elevations, which do not front on any public streets, are of red brick. (Photograph 1).

The facade of the Polish National Home features a projecting central section. (Photograph 1). Constructed of coursed ashlar cement blocks, this section contains the main entrance, which is enclosed in an aluminium and glass porch added about 1955. The entrance doors are bronze double doors with octagonal panels. (Photograph 2). The doors are framed by highly abstract pilasters, capitals, and a pediment. Classical motifs such as egg and dart molding are executed in a stylized, art deco manner. Above the door, a white Polish eagle bears the initials PNH, and is emblazoned on a stylized shield with a crest above. (Photograph 3). Recessed casement windows with wrought iron grills flank the main entrance. (Photograph 4). To either side of this central section, two casement windows are set closely together. A door at the north side of the facade has an art deco surround of simpler design than the main entrance.

The transition between the first floor and the second floor of the facade is defined by two belt courses of brick. In the central section of the facade, the space between these courses is filled with an art deco frieze. In the remainder of the facade and in the south elevation, this space is occupied by brick in the header bond, the upper course of which is cut brick. Above this decorative band in the central section of the facade are three narrow, recessed window openings, with wrought iron grills at the bottom. The casement windows of the second and third floors are separated by polychromed terra cotta spandrels with art deco ornamentation. The pylons which divide the vertical windows are also embellished with terra cotta panels at their heads. Above the windows, Polish National Home is set in large letters into a rectangular panel. A simple parapet crowns the central section of the facade. (Photograph 1).

On either side of the central section at the second floor level are two octagonal windows. Above these on the third floor, recessed niches contain two more octagonal windows each. The lower edges of these niches have applied strips of polychromed art deco terra cotta. At the north side of the facade, a large rectangular window is placed on the second floor above the side doorway. Directly above this on the third floor are two octagonal windows. The facade is somewhat asymmetrical owing to the addition of the door on the north side of the facade. (Photograph 1)

The south elevation facing Charter Oak Avenue is balanced symmetrically. A five-bay wide central section projects slightly from the remainder of

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1930

Builder/Architect Henry F. Ludorf

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Polish National Home is an excellent local example of the Modernistic or Art Deco style. Designed by Hartford architect Henry F. Ludorf, both the interior and exterior of the building exhibit a high level of both design and workmanship. (Criterion C). As a focal point for community activities of the local Polish population, the Polish National Home has played an important role. The Governor Street area was colonized by Poles in the late 19th-century. These immigrants soon organized their own Roman Catholic parish and numerous societies filling political and social needs. The Polish National Home was the result of a cooperative effort between a number of local societies. Like similar institutions in other centers of Polish population, it has been important in maintaining community identity. (Criterion A).

Henry F. Ludorf, the architect of the Polish National Home, had recently graduated from the Columbia University School of Architecture when selected to design the new building. The design of the Polish National Home reveals his familiarity with the Modernistic or Art Deco style, then at the zenith of popularity. The design first contemplated for the Polish National Home, a style similar to that of the Hartford Municipal Building, was rejected in favor of the Modernistic style. The motives for this are unclear, although it is likely that the leaders of the Polish National Home wished to build in the most modern style possible. 1.

Ludorf was charged with designing not only the exterior of the building, but also the interior decoration, furniture and equipment. The result is a remarkably cohesive building in which the latest materials and designs were utilized. The repetition of a few basic themes serves to unify the work. The octagonal shape of many of the exterior windows is thus repeated in door panels and surrounds, and in the lighting fixtures. The exterior door surrounds with their abstract classical motifs are echoed by the interior door surrounds. The quality of workmanship is excellent throughout. The lighting fixtures, octagonal in form with simple designs in colored glass, are particularly worthy of note.

As the name of the building implies, it is specifically Polish in identity. The eagle, a symbol of Polish nationalism, is displayed prominently above the main entrance and in the auditorium. Further identification is provided by the use of the initials PNH on both eagles and also on the glass of the entrance lights.

The Polish community in the Governor Street area of Hartford began in 1889, when the first immigrants began to settle in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the present site of the Polish National Home. Employment opportunities were found in local factories, and the area soon became preponder-

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Hartford Poles Complete New \$175,000 Clubhouse," Hartford Courant, October 10, 1930.
 "Hartford Poles Plan Institute for Activities," Hartford Courant, March 10, 1918.
 (Continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1
 Quadrangle name Hartford North

Quadrangle scale 1: 24,000

UMT References

A

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4	6	2	5	4	4	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

A boundary description may be found in Volume 460, page 46 of the Hartford Land Records at the Office of the City and Town Clerk, 550 Main St., Hartford.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundariesN/A

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dale S. Plummer, National Register Nominations Consultant,
 edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date May 23, 1980

street & number 59 South Prospect Street telephone 566-3005

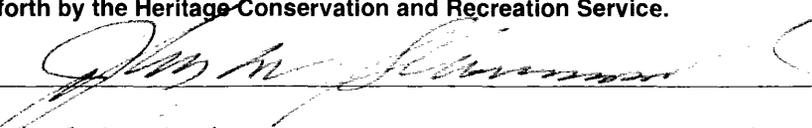
city or town Hartford state Connecticut

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

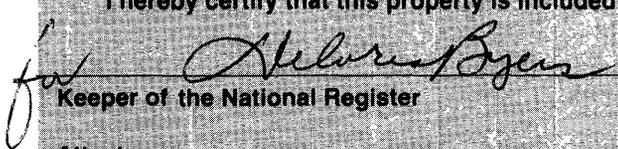
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date September 12, 1983

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
Entered in the	date
	<u>10/20/83</u>
Keeper of the National Register	date
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	date

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Representation in Existing Surveys (continued)

Hartford Architecture Conservancy Survey. Hartford Architecture, Volume One: Downtown. Hartford: Hartford Architecture Conservancy, 1978.
Survey records are deposited at the Stowe-Day Foundation Library,
77 Forest Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

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the elevation. To either side, additional bays provide entrances to the building. The central section of this elevation has five casement windows on the first floor. Above these, the brick belt courses and band of brick in the header bond continue from the facade. Pilasters with narrow polychromed terra cotta strips heading them, divide the second and third floors into five bays. The second floor windows consist of narrow rectangular casement windows. On the third floor, between the heads of the pilasters, octagonal windows are set. (Photograph 1).

On either side of this central section, entrances are placed. These are surrounded by iron fences and gates. The metal doors have rectangular panels, with an octagonal window placed in the upper panel. The door surrounds consist of stylized pilasters and capitals, between which is an elaborate panel bearing art deco designs. Metal and glass lanterns bearing the initials PNH are suspended on either side of the doors. (Photograph 5). The second floor above each door has a rectangular casement window, while the third floor has a pair of octagonal windows.

The north and east elevations are utilitarian in design. A service entrance in the east elevation permits deliveries to the kitchen. A large brick block rising above the level of the remainder of the building on the east side contains necessary equipment to serve the auditorium stage. Casement windows are used in both the north and east elevations.

The interior of the Polish National Home is arranged efficiently. (see Plan 1). The first floor is entered from Governor Street by the main entrance. Inside, a lobby gives access to either a bar or a banquet room, which together occupy the center of the building. Offices are placed on the periphery of these. To the rear, a kitchen serves both the bar and the banquet hall. Stairs to the upper floors are placed at each corner of the building. That from the entrance lobby has an art deco railing.

The decorative scheme is consistent throughout. The lobby has woodwork carved in art deco motifs repeating the exterior door surrounds. These are executed in red birch stained in a deep red known as circassian walnut. Octagonal lighting fixtures in the lobby are constructed of strips of colored glass and white translucent glass. (Photograph 6). The bar and banquet hall are lined with glazed tile, a molded course and change in color defining a dado. The bar features an unusual coffered ceiling of concrete, and a Georgian Revival counter. (Photograph 7). The ceiling of the banquet hall is distinguished by large beams which appear to be steel beams cased in wooden panelling. New lighting fixtures have been installed in both rooms.

The second floor is occupied almost entirely by an auditorium and stage. A lobby or foyer provides access to the auditorium from the main staircase. The proscenium of the stage is framed by pilasters and capitals in the stylized form found throughout the building. Above the proscenium is an eagle of abstract design bearing a plaque with the monogram initials PNH. (Photograph 8). A polychromed plaster cornice surrounds the auditorium.

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The balcony is suspended from the ceiling of the auditorium by slender supports with capitals of simple, though abstract design. (Photograph 9). A large octagonal lighting fixture admits light to the auditorium through translucent glass panels embellished with art deco curvilinear designs. (Photograph 10).

Little alteration has been made to the Polish National Home since its construction in 1930. The only exterior change of note is the addition of an aluminium and glass enclosure around the Governor Street entrance in 1955. This has had little effect on the fabric of the building, however. Installation of new lighting in the auditorium in 1965 did not replace the original recessed lighting, but supplemented it. The plaster cornice molding in the auditorium has been replaced with a duplicate of the original, which had been damaged by water. Vinyl wall coverings have been added recently. The net effect of these changes, however, is minor. New material added is relatively unobtrusive and does not disturb the effect of the whole.

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antly Polish. Desiring to have their own church where services would be conducted in the Polish language, the immigrants soon organized a Roman Catholic church, Saints Cyril and Methodius, named for the first missionaries to the Slavic peoples of Poland. In 1902, a one-story frame church was erected near the corner where the Polish National Home now stands. Since the partition of Poland in 1795, the Roman Catholic church had been one of the few institutions where Poles found an identity in the face of domination by the Austrian, Prussian and Russian governments. In Hartford, as in numerous other communities throughout the United States, Polish neighborhoods found their focal point around the church and its yearly round of festivities.

In the first decades of the 20th century, numerous local societies were founded by Hartford's Polish community. Some were concerned with aiding the struggle for Polish independence in Europe, others with providing mutual assistance for members, and several more with fulfilling the need for social contacts. On November 14, 1917, Reverend Stanislaus Musiel, pastor of SS. Cyril and Methodius church, organized the Polish National corporation with ten lay leaders of the Polish community in Hartford.

The new corporation intended to erect a building to house cooperative mercantile stores. In 1918, the old frame church of SS. Cyril and Methodius was purchased by the corporation after construction of a new church nearby. Lack of funding prohibited the demolition of the old church, however, and community activities were instead held there. Under the leadership of Frank Kusiak, the goals of the organization shifted towards providing community services to the Polish societies in the area. "White Eagle Hall," rechristened after the Polish national emblem, was available to Polish religious, fraternal and civic organizations without charge.

In 1927, the Polish National Corporation changed its name to the Polish National Home Corporation, in conjunction with plans to erect a new building to be called the Polish National Home. Three architects of Polish origin were approached to design the new building jointly. Eventually, only one, Henry F. Ludorf, was awarded the commission. The cost of the new building was defrayed by loans from members of the Polish community and the sale of shares of stock. Rev. Musiel urged members of the parish of SS. Cyril and Methodius to contribute. It was estimated that 90% of the Polish community contributed financially to the building fund. The new building was dedicated on Pulaski Day, October 12, 1930.

The close association of the Polish National Home with SS. Cyril and Methodius church and the Polish community, is evidenced in this 1937 statement:

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From its opening on October 12, 1930, the Polish National Home has always been devoted in its activities exclusively to the promotion of the social welfare of the Polish community of Hartford supplementing the Polish tradition of religion at nearby SS. Cyril and Methodius church with the Polish tradition of nationalism and community cohesion. The two charitable organizations have always worked side by side for the promotion of the religious and social welfare of the Polish community or Polish people of Hartford. The clannish nature of the Polish people in their religion and nationalism is best exemplified by these two organizations living side by side for the religious and social welfare of our people. 2.

It was also noted that testimonials for Polish cergy, social functions for the church, and other events associated with SS. Cyril and Methodius take place at the Polish National Home. Weddings at the church are almost always followed by a reception at the Polish National Home. In addition, events specifically connected with the Polish community are celebrated annually at the Polish National Home:

1. The Christmas "Oplatek" or breaking of the Christmas wafer, traditional at the Polish Christmas Eve supper.
2. The Easter "Swieconka," or the traditional Easter observance of sharing blessed eggs and kielbasa, or Polish sausage.
3. The commemoration of Polish Constitution Day on the Sunday nearest May 3rd.
4. The community shower for the Felician Sisters at SS. Cyril and Methodius School.
5. The Pulaski Day celebration on the Second Sunday in October. Casimir Pulaski was a Pole who played an important role in the American Revolution. 3.

The Polish National Home has provided facilities for recreation, entertainment, and the celebration of special events within the Polish community of Hartford for over fifty years. The construction of the building itself required widespread support among the members of this community. The existence of the Polish National Home, combining several functions within the building, and providing a meeting place for community groups, has served to strengthen the sense of community identity within the Hartford Polish-American community. Despite the dispersion of Polish-Americans to other neighborhoods of Hartford and to outlying suburbs, the Polish National Home remains an important institution in the lives of many of Hartford's Polish community.

1. On the design choice, interview with Frank Pottorak, President, and Edward Kostek, manager, Polish National Home, April 12, 1980.
2. Bieluch, William C. Brief of the Polish National Home of Hartford, Incorporated. February 22, 1967, page 11.
3. Ibid, page 19.

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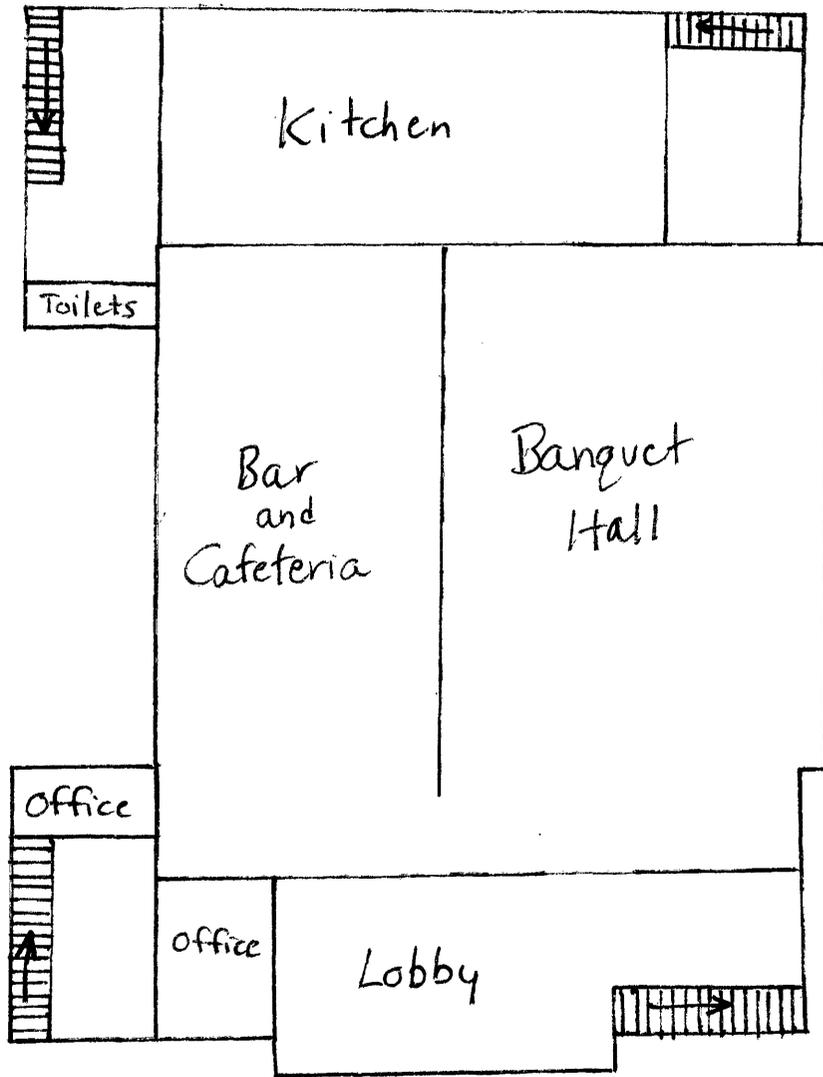
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Major Bibliographical References (continued)

McKenna, Anthony F., "A Block Survey with Supplementary Interviews of Poles in Hartford, Conn.," July 24, 1940. Records of the Works Project Administration, Ct., 1935-1944. Register Group 33, Box 123 in Archives Collection, Connecticut State Library, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut.

Bieluch; William C. Brief of the Polish National Home of Hartford, Incorporated. February 22, 1967. Typewritten manuscript prepared for the Exempt Organizations Branch of the Internal Revenue Service.



Polish National Home
First Floor Plan
Not to scale