

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received FEB 2 1984  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Ridgebury Congregational Church

and/or common Ridgebury Congregational Church

2. Location

street & number Ridgebury Road, and  
Corner of George Washington Highway # 401 1/2 NA not for publication

city, town Ridgefield Ridgebury NA vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 001

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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	NA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name United Church of Christ

street & number 602 Ridgebury Road

city, town Ridgefield NA vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ridgefield Land Records

street & number 400 Main Street

city, town Ridgefield state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See continuation sheet has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> poor	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Ridgebury Congregational Church, located in the semi-rural northern part of the town of Ridgefield, is a small, frame, Greek Revival style structure covered with clapboards and built, c. 1851, on the foundations of an earlier church edifice. It faces east, behind a row of tall trees, on Ridgebury Road at the intersection with George Washington Highway. (Photographs 1 and 2)

The front elevation of the 32 x 45-foot church is composed of a central entrance flanked by tall windows under a plain pediment and two-stage tower. The double door of the entrance has vertical, recessed panels as do the flanking pilasters that support a plain architrave and frieze under molded cornice. The tall windows to left and right of the entrance are in three sections, glazed with lights 20-over-20-over-25. The vertical sections of the window frames and the sills are plain, while the lintel is paneled. Paneled pilasters at the front corners of the building support a plain architrave and frieze under the pediment's molded cornice. The tympanum of the pediment is flush boarding without fenestration.

The square tower rises behind the apex of the pediment. Its low first stage, covered with clapboards, has paneled corner pilasters that support a plain architrave, frieze and cornice. The second stage, somewhat smaller in plan and without clapboards, has similar pilasters and entablature and louvers set in plain frames in its four faces. The tower is surmounted by a paneled parapet with pinnacles at the four corners. (Photograph 3)

The plain entablature continues along each of the side elevations to a single pilaster at the back. There are three of the tall windows, with shutters, on each side. The rear wall has no entablature or pilasters. The eaves return briefly, over a solid wall of clapboards. Grade falls off toward the rear, making possible a basement door in the stone foundations. An exterior brick chimney rises near the southwest corner of the building, and there is a rectangular attic window under the apex of the roof.<sup>1</sup> (Photograph 4)

On the interior, the white pews or slips are divided by two aisles. In general, the interior of the church, including the front wall, is free of embellishment, except for some paneling similar to that found on the exterior. The window surrounds are paneled, and have eared architraves, and the front of the balcony is paneled. The balcony, at the rear of the church, is supported by two square, wooden, paneled posts that continue up to the ceiling. There is also paneling at the front of the platform in the front of the church. (Photographs 5 and 6<sup>2</sup>)

The chief accoutrement of interest in the church is the central metal chandelier. It is a single tier of lights under a round flat surface supported by chains. Originally fueled by oil, it was adapted to gas and is now wired for electricity.

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Ridgebury Congregational Church, Ridgefield, CT  
Continuation sheet Surveys Item number 6

Ridgefield Architectural Resources Survey

1979 x local

Connecticut Historical Commission  
59 South Prospect Street  
Hartford Connecticut

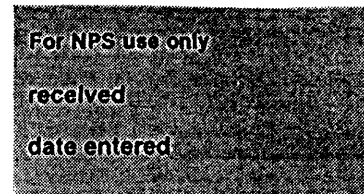
State Register of Historic Places

1983 x state

Connecticut Historical Commission  
59 South Prospect Street  
Hartford Connecticut

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet Description Item number 7

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1. The land to the rear of the church, unattended, falls off toward a brook. In the midst of the trees there is a small cottage in poor state of repair. It is a 1-room, frame, rectangular structure on concrete foundations with wood shingle siding and gable roof. The central door facing the rear of the church is flanked by windows. There is a window in the south elevation and two small apertures that may have been windows are located near the eaves on the rear elevation. Door and sash are missing.

2. On the day Photograph 6 was taken, the pulpit had been moved to the right because of a special program. Normally it is located in the center, in front of the cross.

# 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input 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** 1851 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

### Criterion C (Architecture)

The Ridgebury Congregational Church is a fine example of a simple, country Greek Revival style church. Its straightforward lines, modest exterior embellishment and stark interior are in the great tradition of early American ecclesiastical architecture. Both the exterior and interior are little changed from the day the church was built, and are in a good state of preservation.

### Historical Background

The origin of the Ridgebury church goes back to a town meeting held in Ridgefield on December 11, 1742, at which time the people of Ridgebury were authorized to hold religious services four months of the year. Presumably, these were the four winter months when the seven mile journey from Ridgebury to Ridgefield was most difficult. The Connecticut General Assembly established a separate ecclesiastical society for Ridgebury in 1761, with the effect that tax revenue collected in Ridgebury could be used to support the Ridgebury church, instead of going to Ridgefield, enabling the Ridgebury congregation to take on a life of its own.

The church's first full time minister was called on November 23, 1768, and was installed January 18, 1769. He was the Rev. Samuel Camp, who had graduated from Yale in 1764. He was given a settlement of 150 pounds, payable in three annual installments, and a salary of 75 pounds per year. Rev. Camp served as pastor for 40 years.

The Society had acquired the land on which to built a church in 1762 from John Whitlock, who said in the deed that he conveyed the land in consideration for "The love and respect I have and do bear unto said Discenting /sic/ Society of Ridgebury."<sup>1</sup> The nature of the dissent between the Ridgebury congregation and the church in general is not recorded. Construction of the new edifice did not get under way until 1768, coincident with calling the first permanent minister. A building of approximately the same dimensions as the present church was constructed. The walls were not plastered, there was no stove, and wooden benches served as seating, instead of pews. The church was repaired and improved on 1816, 1834 and 1838. There is no record of the appearance of the structure, but mention that the 1838 work included closing the doors on the north and east leaving but one entrance, presumably on the south, suggests that it was a traditional meetinghouse design with the pulpit in the middle of the long north wall so that the north light flooded in behind the minister as he preached to the congregation.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Peach Lake

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	8	6	2	3	3	4	0	4	5	7	9	6	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property is identified on the Ridgefield assessor's map as lot 24, map C3. The land was conveyed October 19, 1762 and the deed is recorded in the Ridgefield Land Records, volume 4, page 222.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code NA county NA code NA

state NA code NA county NA code NA

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom, Consultant - edited by John Herzan, National Register Consultant

organization Connecticut Historical Comm. date July 25, 1983

street & number 59 South Prospect Street telephone 203 566-3005


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

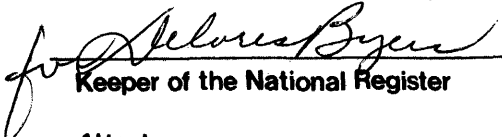
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date January 27, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
Entered in the  
National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

date 3/1/84

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Ridgebury Congregational Church, Ridgefield, CT  
Continuation sheet      Significance      Item number      8

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The present structure was built in 1851 on the foundation of the earlier church, re-using much of the original fabric. The motivation for the 1851 building program is not recorded, but as the present building is no larger than its predecessor, it was not a matter of needing an edifice with greater seating capacity. Conjecture suggests that the deteriorating physical condition of the old building and/or a desire to have a church building of more up-to-date design may have been controlling.

The church was an important center of community life in Connecticut history and in Ridgefield for many decades, especially during the years until 1818, when it was taxpayer-supported. In Ridgebury, the importance of the church's location as the activity center was strengthened by the fact that the general store and the post office were next door, to the north. The corner of Ridgebury Road and George Washington Highway both religiously and commercially was the center of the community.

Criterion C - Architecture

The Ridgebury Congregational Church is a small, late, Greek Revival style, country church of unusual integrity. Both the exterior and interior appear to be substantially unchanged since it was built. The church adheres closely to the basic characteristics of the Greek Revival style in scale and proportions with appropriate pilasters, entablatures, pediment and windows to form a remarkably restrained and chaste example of the style. The square, 2-stage tower with paneled parapet and pinnacles complements the design as a whole, being part of the characteristic format. In addition, the country site retains its rural appearance without nearby intrusions.

The simplicity of the ornamentation is an important feature of the church. There is no portico. The pilasters of the front elevation are without carved capitals and the pediment is without any window at all, either rectangular or semi-elliptical. The cornice moldings have convex or concave profiles, rather than cyma reverse-curve profiles. On the interior, the front wall is perfectly plain. Paneling is the chief embellishment on both the exterior, in the doors and pilasters, and on the interior, in the window surrounds, balcony front and balcony posts. The tall 20-over-25 windows are an important component of both the exterior and interior design.

In overall effect, the white church on its country corner location with low tower rising behind the trees makes an important contribution to the historic and architectural character of the community.

1. George Lounsbury Rockwell, The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut, Ridgefield, 1927, p. 254.

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Ridgebury Congregational Church, Ridgefield, CT  
Continuation sheet Bibliography Item number 9

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Bedini, Silvio, Ridgebury in Review, Ridgefield: 1958.

Rockwell, George Loundsbury, The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut, Ridgefield: 1927.

"200th Anniversary Services," September 11 and 18, 1960, Ridgebury Congregational Church, Ridgefield, Connecticut.