

PH0352557

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

APR 22 1976

**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   Long Society Meetinghouse

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER E of Norwich off CT 165 on  
Long Society Road

CITY, TOWN

Norwich  
Preston

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

2nd - Christopher Dodd

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

09

COUNTY

New London

CODE

011

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Second Ecclesiastical Society

STREET & NUMBER Long Society Road

CITY, TOWN

Preston

VICINITY OF

STATE

CT

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Norwich City Clerk

STREET & NUMBER City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Norwich

STATE

CT

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Connecticut Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

DATE

1975

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE :

The Long Society Meetinghouse, built in 1817, is located on a rural road opposite the former town hall in the village of Long Society, Preston, Connecticut. Surrounded on three sides by its cemetery, the church is set back about 35'. It is a two-story gable-roofed rectangular building, about 29' by 33', with its long side placed parallel to the road. This front facade is three bays wide and contains the only entrance, which is sheltered by a small vestibule added in the middle of the 19th century. The entrance is flanked by a window on each side, and on the second-level there are three windows above the corresponding first-story elements. On the gable ends are two rows of three windows, symmetrically placed, but on the rear facade there is only the pulpit window, a large round-arched opening placed in the center of the wall. There is no tower nor other appendages. The cemetery contains many 18th-century sandstone markers with angel motifs, as well as 19th-century willow designs. Interesting is the vault built in 1779 by one Captain John Smith: a sod-covered mound, it is faced on one side with plain dressed stone.

The meetinghouse is built upon a foundation of gray gneiss rubble, with roughly dressed entrance steps. The building is sheathed with clapboards, not the original, which stop against plain corner boards and window trim. The original double-hung 12/12 windows, having long disappeared, have been simulated for security reasons by single 24-pane sash. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles, and the cornice, very simply molded, returns slightly on the gable end.

The interior is equally severe. Opposite the entrance are the pulpit and its platform; although in their original position, these are later renovations. On either side within the entrance, and separated from the audience room by a partition of wide vertical boards, are stairs leading to a gallery which extends along three sides. The gallery is supported by slender columns with turned capitals and a ring turning somewhat below. The audience room is filled with five rows of primitive seats, probably original, and built of wide pine boards, with slightly sloping backs and curved end supports. Several Windsor settees offer other seating.

A dado of matched hard-pine sheathing, later work, extends up to the window stools on all but the south side. Above this the walls are plastered and painted white, as is the ceiling. The gallery railing is built of wide horizontal boards, and is plain except for simple moldings at the top and bottom. The trim around the windows, which consists of plain casings, is original. The corner and center posts are all visible and show a pronounced flare. Much of the interior woodwork, including the uncovered medium-width floorboards, has been painted shades of pink, red and green, but aside from the color scheme, the interior retains substantially its original appearance, and is marked by an austere beauty.

The building is used by the local historical society which has exhibits in the galleries. Otherwise the audience room is intact and is used occasionally for meetings. The Society itself declined during the 19th century, not making any records after 1927, but has been recently reactivated for the express purpose of renovating and maintaining the church.

# 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 1819 - built

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Long Society Meetinghouse is one of about a dozen meetinghouses of this form still in existence, and it is the only one of its kind in Connecticut. In the 18th century most New England churches outside of the large towns were built according to a simple plan - a plain two-story building without steeple or even tower, with the gable roof's ridgeline parallel to the road. The main entrance was always on this side, with the pulpit directly opposite, lighted by a window, usually of different design from the others, halfway up the rear wall. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, most interiors were rearranged so that the pulpit was at the end of the long axis, and consequently the main entrance and pulpit window were boarded over. At the same time, many churches underwent exterior changes, including enlargement of the building and the addition of towers and steeples. The Long Society meetinghouse was the only one of these simple buildings in Connecticut to escape these changes.

This meetinghouse exhibits the original 18th-century design in every detail: the placement of the pulpit, the simple lines, the pulpit window, the plain interior. Ironically, it was built in the years 1817-1819, and is the only 19th-century example of this form. The society, an elongated parish set off from Norwich, built its first meetinghouse in 1726, but by 1817, this structure was beyond repair, and it was voted to replace it with a new one on the same lot. Many of the framing members of the old church were reused, and it is apparant that little attempt was made to build a modern church. The large flared posts are typical of much earlier construction technique. The construction, design and even materials of the 18th century were used, suggesting that this building is primarily a reconstruction of the first church.

Such plain meetinghouses reflect the nature and position of religion in early America. The church building was not a consecrated place, since it had both political and religious functions. For this reason, and because of the desire to avoid a Papist emphasis on outward form, the meetinghouse was constructed much like a secular building, and the interior was sparsely furnished. At the same time, the power of the ministers was made obvious by having the pulpit on the long side: even the back rows are remarkably close, especially in these small churches. In its plain lines, its austere furnishings and the retention of its original floor plan, the Long Society Meetinghouse recaptures both the external appearance and the interior atmosphere of early New England meetinghouses.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Kelly, J. Frederick. Early Connecticut Meetinghouses. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948.

Interview with Mary Peckham, Preston Historical Society, July 23, 1975.

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

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY two

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1, 8 | | 7, 4, 7 | 2, 8, 0 | | 4, 6 | 0, 2 | 1, 2, 0 |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Bruce Clouette, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

July 23, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

(203) 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

## 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 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

DATE 12/12/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Noting

DATE 4/22/96

ATTEST:

DATE 4.21.76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER