

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received OCT 27 1983

date entered NOV 28 83

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

1. Name

historic St. John's Episcopal Church

and/or common St. John's Episcopal Church

2. Location

street & number 1160 Main Street NA not for publication

city, town East Hartford NA vicinity of NA

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"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name St. John's Parish

street & number 1160 Main Street

city, town East Hartford NA vicinity of NA state CT 06108

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. East Hartford Land Records, Town Hall

street & number 740 Main Street

city, town East Hartford state CT

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

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

Overview

St. John's Episcopal Church, East Hartford, is located north of the center of town on the southeast corner of Main Street and Burnside Avenue, a heavily traveled intersection. The one-acre plot is bounded by Main Street on the west, Burnside Avenue on the north, Rector Street on the south, and neighborhood houses on the east. There are two structures on the site, the church itself and a hall. (Photograph 1.) A house on the site was demolished in 1970. (See Sketch Map A.)

The church, a rectangle 34x80 feet in size, occupies the southwest corner of the plot, near Main Street, with its axis parallel with Rector Street. It was designed in the High Victorian Gothic style by Edward T. Potter, constructed in brownstone, and dedicated June 22, 1869. The one-story hall, a rectangle of 40 x 80 feet, is east of the church and perpendicular to Rector Street. Constructed in 1912 in an early concrete block building material, the hall imitates the church both in material and style. The former house stood north of the hall, near Burnside Avenue.

The Church

The dominant features of the exterior of the church are the brownstone masonry, the high gabled roof covered with multi-colored slate, the Gothic lancet windows, and the projecting entrance tower at the southwest corner that serves as a porch. The tower, almost free-standing, rises as a truncated pyramid under open belfry, trumpet spire and weathervane finial. (Photograph 2.) The walls of the church are laid up in quarry-faced brownstone ashlar, presumably from nearby Portland, Connecticut, where much brownstone was quarried. The water table, door and window arch voussoirs, and a string course at the spring line of the window arches are dressed brownstone.¹

There is a heavy, wooden double door in each of the three sides of the entrance tower, with that facing Rector Street the most used. Corner buttresses of the church and the tower flank the west doorway. The sides of the doorway are chamfered and its arch is supported on consoles. A recessed doorway surround, in which the heavy wooden doors are set, also has chamfers that are embellished with a raised quatrefoil and foliate motif. The wooden double doors, shaped at the top to fit the arched opening, have a raised pattern of diagonally crossed chamfered boards. There is a small central triangular opening in the gable above the doorway. The other two doorways are similar. The slated tower rises behind their gables. (Photograph 3.)

The front, or west, elevation toward Main Street, is filled by five tall, narrow windows with lancet arches. They are graduated in height, following the slopes of the gable, with the tallest in the center. A small

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

St. John's Episcopal Church, East Hartford, CT

Continuation sheet Surveys

Item number 6

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Page 1

State Register of Historic Places

1975

x state

Connecticut Historical Commission
59 S. Prospect St.
Hartford

Connecticut

East Hartford Historic Preservation Survey

1980

x local

Connecticut Historical Commission
59 S. Prospect St.
Hartford

Connecticut

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

St. John's Episcopal Church, East Hartford, CT

Continuation sheet

Description

Item number

7

Page

1

lancet window is in the gable end above. The lapped brownstone coping of the gable edges leads up to a finial at the peak, while at the eaves level the incised year numerals "18" (to the left) and "67" (to the right) are carved as parts of foliate designs in the footstones. The corners of the window and door surrounds are chamfered.

Each side elevation has four windows under an eaves cornice supported by modillion blocks. The south elevation has a low buttress, off center toward the rear, while the north elevation has a small vestry projecting at the east end, diagonally opposite the tower. The vestry has a door on the west, three small windows of even height in its north wall and a single window to the east, under a hipped roof with cresting. There are oblique buttresses at the two outside corners of the vestry and at the corners of the church.

The east elevation has three tall lancet-arched windows stepped in height with the tallest in the center and a small lancet window above.

The side walls of the church under the slightly flared eaves are low compared to the height of the roof that rises above. The polychromatic roof slate, six sides exposed to the weather, is mostly grey with the pattern picked out in red and cream. There are four rows of red tile, one at the eaves, one at the ridge line and two in between. They divide the roof into three horizontal bands that are embellished with circles of cream-colored tile. Spiked iron cresting, once painted gold and blue, runs along the ridge line. The brownstone cross finial in the front is a Latin cross and the one at the back a Celtic cross.

The first section of the tower is covered with polychromatic slate as the main roof is. Its corners are sheathed with exterior copper flashing, apparently original, an unusual detail. The second section is an open belfry of wood, with trefoil arches at the top. The bell is visible. The top section of the tower, with a trumpet flare at the eaves, is pyramidal and has a weathervane finial.

The interior of the church is well lighted by its many windows, and in this respect differs from many of its contemporaries. The sense of openness was enhanced in the early decades of the church when the rood screen that initially divided the nave from the chancel was removed. There is a central aisle with oak pews on either side. The high ceiling is decorated with gold stars. The grey limestone baptismal font is at the rear. Polygonal in plan, the font has recessed quatrefoil side panels and brass cresting on its wooden cover. (Photograph 4.) A new stairway to the basement at the back of the church was introduced in the 1970s.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

St. John's Episcopal Church, East Hartford, CT				
Continuation sheet	Description	Item number	7	Page 2

Most of the decorative interest of the church interior is concentrated in and around the chancel. (Photograph 5.) Trefoil arches are repeated in the carved oak woodwork as part of the support for the lecturn and to divide the chancel from the organ loft on the right. (Photograph 6.) Extensive stenciling, renewed in 1961, surrounds the east windows and the organ pipes. (Photograph 7.)

The Hall and the House

Corning Hall, or Corning Gymnasium as it was sometimes known, was the gift of a friend, Miss Mary Isabell Corning. The pre-cast concrete blocks with which it is constructed closely resemble in appearance the brownstone of the church, in a lighter shade of tan. Most of the blocks have a rough finish, but some are smooth, as in the church, for window surrounds and belt courses. The hall has diagonal buttresses similar to the church's at the corners and buttresses along the side walls. The roof is hipped rather than gabled, and is not covered with slate, but does have a small central spire that closely resembles the top stage of the church tower. Windows in the hall are rectangular rather than Gothic, but do have Gothic hood molds over their transoms. (Photograph 8.)

Constructed as a recreational building, the hall originally had a basketball court on its main floor. It was the town's first gymnasium. This feature no longer remains and the building is used for general parish purposes.

The house and lot to the north, not part of the original premises, were purchased in 1906.² The house was a 2½-story, Georgian, gable-roofed, 5-bay, central entrance, structure, perhaps dating from the late 18th century. It was used as the parish house. In 1970, when the house was considered to be generally unsatisfactory and in need of more maintenance and repairs than were warranted, it was demolished.³

1. Rev. John J. McCook, who was the first and long-time rector of St. John's is credited by the reminiscences of "Old Days at St. John's, East Hartford," for seeing to it that the brownstone was cut and laid with bed courses horizontal and the grain of the stone exposed to the weather. Hence its good condition today.

2. The church purchased the property from Eliza Shelden (Butler) McCook, wife of the rector.

3. The front portico with handsome entablature, raking cornices, and cornice returns was removed by the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society and continues in possession of the Society. For photograph of the house, see the cover of The Connecticut Antiquarian, XXII (June 1970) 1.

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/ 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) local history
Specific dates 1867-69	Builder/Architect Edward Tuckerman Potter			

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criteria C and A

St. John's Episcopal Church, East Hartford, is an excellent example of a small church in the High Victorian Gothic style of architecture, designed by Edward Tuckerman Potter, and one of the few in the state. (Criterion C.) The Reverend John James McCook's service for 62 years as rector of St. John's gives the church's history added interest and a strong relationship to the prominent McCook family of Hartford. (Criterion A.)

Criterion C - Architecture

Edward Tuckerman Potter (1831-1904) worked as a draughtsman in the office of Richard Upjohn. It was there that he gained his first insights into church architecture. Upjohn was the most prolific practitioner of Gothic Revival church architecture in the country, working in the English tradition. While early in his career Upjohn was influenced to some degree by the English Ecclesiological Society's dictum that medieval parish churches should be replicated, most of his work, as reflected by his influence on Potter, post-dates the height of the Ecclesiologists' activity.¹ In St. John's, East Hartford, the absence of a separate, extended chancel section of the building is a carry-over in Potter's work of Upjohn's post-Ecclesiological influence.

Other sources of inspiration for Potter included the writings of John Ruskin, who proclaimed the excellence of North Italian architecture. Potter combined Venetian stone treatment with English ecclesiastical tradition with the influence of the current fashion for vigorous contrasts in colors and textures that came to be known as the High Victorian Gothic style. Richard Upjohn's practice peaked before the impact of High Victorian Gothic became widespread, but in the work of his apprentice, Potter, and of his son, Richard M. Upjohn, the influence of the elder Upjohn is modified by the new fashion. Hartford has examples of fully developed work in the High Victorian Gothic style by both men: the Church of the Good Shepherd (1867-69) by Potter and the Connecticut State Capitol (1872-1878) by R. M. Upjohn. Both of these structures exploit to the fullest degree, and at great expense, contrasts between colors of stone and between polished and quarry-faced surfaces in a bold and successful manner.

But St. John's construction budget was small; only \$5,000 was authorized. Potter made the necessary adjustments for economy. For example, he omitted polychromy from the stone work. Portland sandstone is used throughout, with dependence for contrast on the difference between quarry-faced and smooth finishes. There are no polished columns flanking the apertures; instead, window and door surrounds are chamfered. By husbanding

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property one

Quadrangle name Hartford North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	6	9	6	0	8	0	4	6	2	7	1	1	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 boundary of the site is shown by the lot line on Sketch Map A, drawn at a scale of 1" = 35'. This is the original plot of 1867 plus the property purchased in 1908. The site is city lot 360.

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 Coordinator

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date March 7, 1983

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

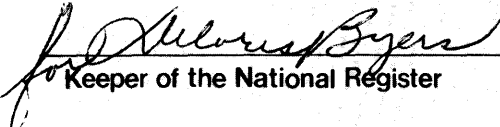


title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date October 20, 1983

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


Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 11/28/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

St. John's Church, East Hartford, CT

Continuation sheet

Significance

Item number

8

Page

1

For NPS use only

received

date entered

his resources, Potter was able to make no compromises in the roof which is large in size, covered in polychromatic slate and crowned with blue and gold cresting -- a full statement of the High Victorian Gothic.

The overall result was a success. In the words of Potter's biographer, "St. John's, East Hartford, is the most charming of Potter's smaller churches By advanced English standards of the 1850s and early 1860s, Potter's work may seem timid, yet in many particulars, such as (the west tower) doorway, it rivals the best English work of the period."² Grace Episcopal Church, Allentown, PA (1865), is nearly identical to St. John's except that the former is constructed in brick. Such similarity in design of country churches by prominent architects was not unusual, and no doubt helped to meet budget constraints.³

In addition to the Church of the Good Shepherd, Potter designed in the Hartford area Trinity Church, Wethersfield (1871-74), the Mark Twain House (1874) and the Caldwell Hart Colt Memorial Parish House, for the Church of the Good Shepherd (1894-96).

History

An Episcopal mission, conducted by students from Trinity College, Hartford, an Episcopal institution, existed briefly in East Hartford in 1842. Ten years later other Trinity students resumed the mission, reaching immigrant mill workers of English origin whose background in the Church of England predisposed them toward the Episcopal church. Two years later the group organized as the parish of Grace Church, holding services in several different buildings over the next dozen years. 1865 brought a change in name to St. John's Chapel, and in 1868 the name was changed to St. John's Church. Early membership included people from beyond the limits of East Hartford. An important decision was taken in 1866 when John James McCook (1843-1927), a Trinity graduate who had been a lay reader at the mission, was invited to take charge of the parish from the time of his ordination on March 18, 1866. He proceeded to serve for 61 years, without pay.⁴

McCook was born in 1843 in Lisbon, Ohio, a third-generation Irish-American. He attended school in Ohio, then in 1858 entered Jefferson College, Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania, from which he, and other students, were dismissed in 1860 for a lampoon. After reading law briefly in Ohio, he served three months in the Union army before entering Trinity in 1861. After graduating from Trinity, he studied medicine briefly at Columbia University, then attended Berkeley Divinity School, Middletown, Connecticut. One year after becoming rector of St. John's he left to become rector of St. John's, Detroit, Michigan, but in another year returned to his first church.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

St John's Episcopal Church, East Hartford, CT

Continuation sheet Significance Item number 8 Page 2

In 1866, the year that he was ordained and became rector of St. John's, East Hartford, McCook married Eliza Sheldon Butler, daughter of an old Hartford family of some means. The newlyweds lived in the Butler family home on Main Street in Hartford, now known as the Butler-McCook House, a museum and the headquarters of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society. In 1882 McCook was appointed to the faculty of Trinity College where he taught languages until he retired in 1923, when he was elected to the Board of Trustees. Widely traveled and a man of many interests, McCook was particularly concerned with social conditions and reform. For many years he conducted investigations into the life of tramps, alcoholism and related problems. His notebooks and papers concerning this work have been published.⁵

Upon becoming rector of St. John's, East Hartford, one of McCook's first responsibilities must have been the building program for the new church, but little information is at hand. It would be interesting to know the nature of the relationship between McCook and Potter. The years when St. John's was under construction, 1867-69, were the same as for the construction of Potter's larger and more important commission, the Church of the Good Shepherd. The coincidence suggests that Potter's availability for St. John's was dependent on the more important work. Potter kept up his interest in St. John's, and in later years when he returned to Hartford attended church there and sang in the choir.

¹. For a full discussion of the relationship between standards of the Ecclesiological Society and Upjohn's work see Phoebe B. Stanton, The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968.

². Sarah Bradford Landau, Edward T. and William A. Potter, American Victorian Architects, New York: Garden Publishing, Inc., 1979, p. 139.

³. In Connecticut, for example, Trinity Church, Thomaston, a frame edifice by R. M. Upjohn is quite similar to his Church of the Reconciliation, Webster, Massachusetts.

⁴. James Watson Lord became assistant minister in 1907, carrying much of the day-to-day load. He was rector 1927-51, devoting 44 years to the Church.

⁵. See Adela Haberski French, ed., The Social Reform Papers of John James McCook, a Guide to the Microfilm Publication, Hartford, Antiquarian & Landmarks Society, 1977.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

St. John's Episcopal Church, East Hartford, CT

Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 1

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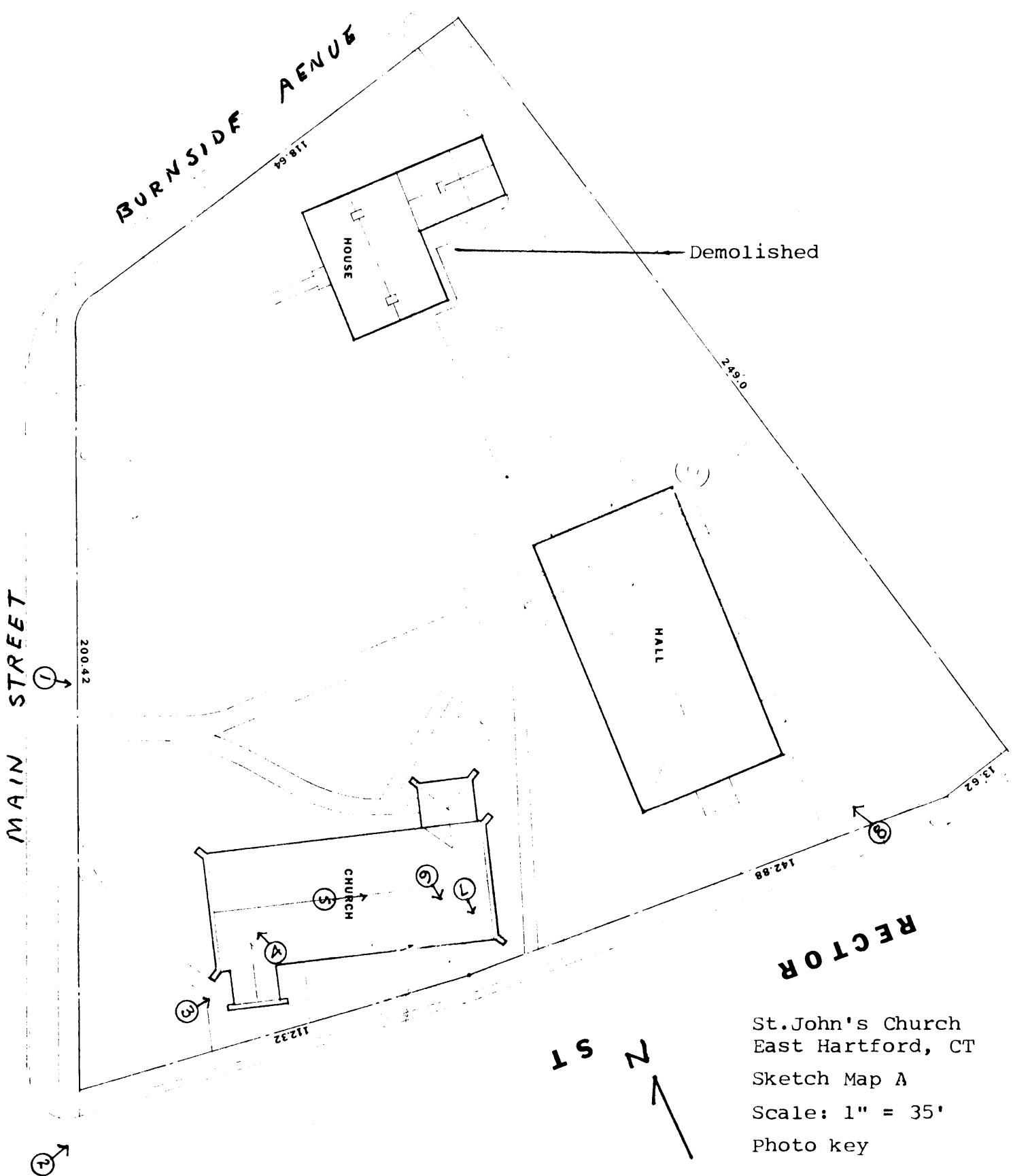
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St. John's Church
 East Hartford, CT
 Sketch Map A
 Scale: 1" = 35'
 Photo key

