

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only DEC 1 1983

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received ~~DEC 1983~~

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Christ Church

and/or common Christ Church Cathedral

2. Location

street & number 955 Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Hartford

N/A vicinity of 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input 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
	N/A	<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 Christ Church Cathedral

street & number 955 Main Street

city, town Hartford

N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City and Town Clerk, Room 104, 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 1975

federal state county local

Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street
depository for survey records

city, town Hartford

state Connecticut

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Christ Church is a Gothic Revival church constructed between 1827 and 1829. The tower was completed in 1839, and an addition containing chancel, chapel, and parish offices constructed in 1879. The church is located at the corner of Church and Main Streets in Hartford, facing Main Street to the east. High-rise stores and offices surround the building on Main Street. At the rear of the church property, facing Church Street, is a 2½-story chapter house built in 1917. The church is rectangular in plan with a square tower attached to the east end. The building rests on a heavily molded brownstone water table and is constructed of random-coursed brownstone ashlar. The gable roof is covered with dark slate (Photograph 1). Because of its urban setting, the church property is limited in extent. A cast-iron fence separates the church property from the public sidewalk to the north and east of the church. This replaced an earlier wooden fence in 1853. It was cast to the design of a Mr. Althouse. The fence is comprised of a series of pointed arches with Gothic tracery. The corner posts and gateposts are in the form of battlemented turrets (Photograph 2).

The facade of the church is symmetrical (Photograph 1A). The central tower creates three bays, corresponding with the internal division of the church. Each bay, including the central tower, has an entrance. The side entrances are set in a two-story recess with a window above each door. These are double doors with two vertical panels containing Gothic tracery in each. The doors are framed in a molded four-centered or Tudor arch. Spandrels and the transom above the doors exhibit tracery. Equilateral or pointed arched windows above each doorway have perpendicular tracery derived from English 15th-century with a heavy bowtell or roll molding. Above this is a hood mold terminating in stops sculpted in the form of human faces (Photograph 2).

The entry at the foot of the tower is similar. The original doors have been replaced with modern glazed doors, rectangular in form, with a new transom above, in conjunction with the remodelling of the tower vestibule in 1911. A deeply modelled brownstone course divides the entrance from the window immediately above. This is deeply set in an equilateral arch with heavy bowtell molding. Reticulated tracery is used for this window opening. Above this is a blind rectangular panel divided into three sections by vertical mullions and featuring Gothic tracery. The side faces of the tower at this level have a small rectangular window with tracery and a hood molding. A belt course of molded brownstone separates this level from the belfry opening. The belfry has arched openings on all four sides of the tower with perpendicular tracery. These openings are not glazed, but are occupied by louvers. The tower is supported on each corner by buttresses which rise the full height of the tower, terminating in crocketed brownstone finials. At the top of the tower is a molded brownstone cornice. At each corner arise crocketed pinnacles, with smaller pinnacles between them. A balustrade runs around the edge of the tower. The upper portion of the tower was not completed until 1839. The pinnacles and balustrade were added in 1902 (Photograph 1).

The south elevation of the church is not visible due to the presence of a large commercial building immediately south of the church. One of the windows

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

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

Christ Church,

Continuation sheet

Hartford, Connecticut Item number

7

Page

1

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

has been altered to accommodate a door from the gallery level inside to an exterior fire escape. Otherwise, this elevation is identical to the north elevation. The north elevation of the church, which faces Church Street, is five bays in length, corresponding to the interior nave (Photograph 3). Each bay is defined by side buttresses and a window with an equilateral arch. The buttresses terminate in crocketed pinnacles which rise above the roofline. The buttresses were extended and the pinnacles added in 1902. A brownstone belt course parallels the roofline, defining a frieze decorated with modelled brownstone ornaments. The windows have perpendicular tracery. Modern protective window sashes installed over these have mullions patterned after those of original windows. Above each window opening is a hood mold with a label stop.

The west end of the church was altered in 1879 by the addition of a recessed chancel, chapel, and parish offices in a 2-story, 42' by 92' structure (Photograph 4). This replaced a separate chapel built in 1839 on the same site. The addition is comprised of random-coursed brownstone ashlar. Molded brownstone belt courses define the first and second stories. Casement windows with leaded glass panes occur tripled or in pairs, some with transoms. The east wall of the addition protrudes to the north of the nave and has a large four-centered arched window on the second floor. A brownstone hood mold above this window terminates in sculpted heads. A brownstone fleur-de-lis surmounts the hood mold. At the center of the gable roof is a copper-roofed cupola. The chimney at the west end of the addition has a brownstone cap and bears the date 1879 in raised letters. Raised from the side of the building, this chimney forms a decorative element.

The interior of the church is closely related to the exterior division of the facade into three bays (See floor plan). Inside, the space in the church is divided into a nave and two side aisles, defined by an arcade of clustered piers. The central door, located in the base of the tower, gives access to a vestibule which opens on the nave. This vestibule was remodelled in 1911, and repaved with marble and tile. The doors to either side of the tower have subsidiary vestibules corresponding to them. These contain a staircase in each leading to the galleries above the aisles, and a door which opens to the side aisles. These vestibules are intact, with original staircases and interior doors.

The nave is relatively intact. Although the pavement has been replaced with modern tile, the original pews with applied Gothic tracery are still in evidence. The clustered piers which support the rib-vaulted ceiling are of wood and are the original. The ceiling itself is of plaster with intersecting ribs crossing it. Plaster bosses of foliate design cover the intersections of the ribs. One bears the letters IHS in an English Gothic script, a symbol of Christ (Photograph 5).

At the west end of the nave, a recessed chancel was added in 1879. A stained glass window with perpendicular tracery, executed by Heaton & Bayne of London, occupies the chancel. The original window was removed together with a portion of the west wall in 1879. On either side of the recessed chancel are wall

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

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Christ Church,

Continuation sheet Hartford, Connecticut Item number

7

Page

2

paintings by Heaton, Butler & Bayne of London which depict incidents in the life of Christ. These were installed in 1856 (Photograph 6). The chancel floor is paved in tile with reproduced medieval designs of high quality. The choir, pulpit, and accessory furniture are of dark-stained wood and are contemporary with the chancel (Photograph 7). Lighting fixtures throughout the church are of sheet metal pierced with quatrefoil designs. These are probably of early 20th-century date (Photograph 8).

The side aisles have ribbed groin vaults with plaster oak leaves and acorns covering the intersection of the ribs (Photograph 9). The galleries retain the original wooden railings with Gothic tracery, stained dark. The western end of the side aisle has been altered by the placement of a new window in 1879, and the installation of the Chapel of the Nativity in 1907 in the westernmost bay. The window at the western end of the north aisle was removed in 1879 owing to the addition placed at this end. The westernmost bay now contains the baptistry with the organ above on the gallery level. Stained glass throughout the building is of late 19th and early 20th-century date.

The upper portions of several windows are filled with translucent glass panes.

A large 2½-story chapter house at the rear of the church was completed in 1917. This is constructed of random-coursed brownstone ashlar. Multiple window arrangements with lead glass casements and transoms parallel the earlier addition to the church. Above the entry with its four-centered arch is a canopied niche with a sculpted figure of a bishop. The gable roof has gable dormers and is covered with slate. An octagonal cupola is set on the roof (Photograph 10).

8. Significance

(Criteria C,A)

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/
<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 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 1827-9, 1839, 1879, **Builder/Architect** Ithiel Towne, Henry Austin, F.C. Withers
 1902-1907 George Keller, Ralph Adams Cram

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

(Criterion C) Christ Church is an important early Gothic Revival church (1827-9), designed by Ithiel Towne, a noted early 19th century American architect also responsible for the Gothic Revival Trinity Church in New Haven (1815). Both churches display evidence of Towne's classical background. Christ Church, however, reveals a more thorough adaptation of Gothic characteristics. As a predecessor of the more correct Gothic Revival churches of Upjohn and others, the church is significant. Later additions to the church have enhanced its architectural character, being carefully planned to complement the original design. These additions were carried out by several distinguished architects of the 19th and early 20th centuries: Henry Austin, Frederick Clark Withers, George Keller, and Ralph Adams Cram. Christ Church, with its various additions and alterations, encompasses virtually the entire span of the Gothic Revival in America, reflecting the increasing expertise of later generations of architects with medieval forms. A chapter house in the rear of the property, designed by Delano and Aldrich and completed in 1917, relates well to the Church in material, scale and style.

(Criterion C). Christ Church is representative of the expansion of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut after the disestablishment of the Congregational Church in 1818. Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton, rector of the church, played an important role in founding Trinity College, intended to provide theological training for Episcopal priests. A journey to England in 1823 inspired Wheaton to construct the new church building in the Gothic Revival style. The design and construction of the church, utilizing English models, reflects the identification of the church with its English origins. Continued alterations and additions to Christ Church were intended to refine its Gothic revival nature in accordance with changing tastes. Members of the church included many prominent Hartford families, who contributed generously to the improvement of the building. Most significant was the Goodwin family, major figures in the financial and social community in Hartford.

Ithiel Towne, the architect of Hartford's Christ Church, was a noted American architect of the early 19th century. Towne, trained in the classical tradition, designed many buildings in the Federal and Greek Revival styles. He was also the inventor of several trusses used in bridge construction, one of which was applied to support the roof of Christ Church. Trinity Church, built to Towne's plans on the New Haven Green in 1815, was a widely-acclaimed example of Gothic revival architecture. Christ Church in Hartford, although built twelve years later, is very similar in its overall conception. The bilateral symmetry of the respective facades reflects Towne's early training and experience with classical design. The basic plan, a rectangular, gable-roofed nave with a square tower applied to the gable end, is the same in both churches. The proportions of Trinity and Christ Church are also similar, the facades being three bays in width, the naves five bays in length.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Clark, Thomas M., D.D., "Commemorative Sermon," pages 15-31 in Celebration of the Semi-Centennial Anniversary of the Consecration of Christ Church, Hartford. Hartford: The Case, Lockwood, & Brainard Co., 1880.

Hoadley, Charles J. "Annals of the Episcopal Church in Hartford to the Year 1829," pages 39-83 in Celebration of the Semi-Centennial Anniversary of the conse-

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 0.68 1: 24,000
 Quadrangle name Hartford North Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References

A	1 8	6 93 3 4 0	4 6 2 6 4 5 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Verbal description of the property boundaries may be found by reference to Map 421, Block 007, Lot 006 in the City Assessor's Office, Hartford.

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

state	code	county	code

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 January 11, 1981
 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date November 29, 1983

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 12/29/83


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Christ Church

Continuation sheet

Hartford, Connecticut

Item number

8.

Page

1

The interior space of both churches was divided into a nave and side aisles by compound piers, and featured galleries above the side aisles. Most of the original interior fabric at Christ Church has survived; that of Trinity Church was replaced in the late 19th-century. No chancel was present at first in either Christ Church or Trinity. Protestant churches of the time rejected the chancel due to its association with Roman Catholicism. Instead, the pulpit was the central feature. The existing chancels at both Christ Church and Trinity were added in the late 19th century as a result of the revival of older liturgical forms inspired by the Ecclesiological movement in both the Church of England and its American counterpart, the Episcopal Church.

Another similarity between the two churches is the use of a dark local stone, varied in hue, and laid in a random-coursed ashlar. The effect is a deliberate one, as expressed by Towne in his description of Trinity Church:

... . the walls are raised 38 feet, with a hard granite, quarried from a rock about two miles northwest of the city and layed with their natural faces out, and so selected and fitted as to form small but irregular joints, which are pointed. These natural faces present various shades of brown and iron-rust; and when damp, especially, the different shades appear very deep and rich, at the same time conveying to the mind an idea of durability and antiquity which may be very suitably associated with this style of architecture.

Although brownstone from the Portland quarries is used for Christ Church, the resultant effect is the same.

While similar in many respects to Trinity Church, Christ Church also displays significant differences. The New Haven church has the suggestion of a pediment at the gable end; a link to the classical tradition more frequently employed by Towne. This is absent in Christ Church. Side and corner buttresses not present at Trinity Church, are conspicuous in the Hartford Church. The elaborate window tracery of Christ Church, derived from the English perpendicular Style, contrasts with the simpler V-tracery of Trinity Church. Hood molds over window openings are found on all exterior windows of Christ Church, while Trinity has hood molds only on the windows of the facade.

Christ Church explicates the Gothic Revival more fully in its design than New Haven's Trinity Church. Attention to detail is more thorough-going, anticipating the later Gothic Revival. Christ Church was also planned to be constructed entirely in stone, while Trinity was originally built of stone with a wooden tower. Details of the building were inspired by a variety of English models. These were apparently obtained by Rev. Nathaniel Shelton Wheaton on a trip to England in 1823, where he made careful observations of English architecture. An 1830 description of the building, attributed to

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormChrist Church
Hartford, Connecticut

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page 2

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Wheaton, gives the derivations of some of the detailing. The tower window above the central entrance was copied, "with considerable enrichment," from one in the Chapel of Magdalen College, Oxford. The nave windows were inspired by those of St. Mary's Church in Oxford, "acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful specimens of the perpendicular style which England affords." Designs in the tracery in interior spandrels were taken "with slight variations," from Tattershall Church, Lancashire.²

Wheaton and Towne worked closely together on the project. It is evident that while Wheaton provided some of the source material, the ultimate responsibility for the church's design lay with Towne. English models were not slavishly copied. They were adapted carefully to the requirements of the Hartford Congregation and subordinated to the overall design of the church. The result was a well-integrated structure of considerable architectural merit. Towne, the inventor of several bridge trusses, also gave his own unique stamp to the building through the use of a bridge truss to support the roof, perhaps the first such application of the new support system.³

Although the design of the new church was an advance over that of Trinity Church in New Haven, and a radical break with the austere church architecture of the Congregationalists, it was soon outmoded by the later Gothic Revival and by liturgical changes within the Episcopal church. In response to changing needs and taste, Christ Church was continually added to and altered over the course of the years. In many respects, this evolution of the church building itself paralleled that of its English medieval counterparts. Changes to the church fabric were carefully designed to harmonize with the original structure. Distinguished architects were retained for this purpose. The result is that Christ Church embodies high quality work spanning virtually the entire period of the Gothic Revival in America.

New Haven architect, Henry Austin, a former student of Ithiel Towne, supervised the completion of the tower in 1839. In 1879, a chancel, chapel, and parish offices were added to the west end of the church by architect Frederick Clark Withers. A native of England, Withers was a noted exponent of the High Victorian Gothic Style. In the addition to Christ Church, however, he rejected this style in favor of a Tudor style more sympathetic to the older building. Rev. Francis Goodwin, whose family donated the funds for the addition, drew the floor plan for the addition. The major interior change was the substitution of a chancel with a new altar and other furnishings for the original west end of the church. These improvements enhanced the Gothic Revival character of the church interior.⁴

In 1902, through the gift of George Hoadley, the distinguished Hartford architect, George Keller added pinnacles to the towers and buttresses. Towne's original design called for pinnacles, but they had never been constructed. Keller's description of his work reveals how the original intent was carried through and improved:

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

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

Christ Church
Hartford, Connecticut

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

For NPS use only

received

date entered

On carefully examining the exterior and some of the old drawings still in existence, I was struck with the familiar appearance of some of the architectural features...and then discovered that the architect had studied the design for the exterior of Christ Church from York Cathedral for the parapet on the tower, and that indicated on the drawings is almost a literal copy of details from York Cathedral, although executed in a rather crude manner.

With this to guide me, I designed the pinnacles in the style of York Cathedral; but as the work was of the simplest kind, devoid of any architectural character, it was necessary to introduce an ornamental cornice under the eaves, so as to tie the whole together, but so managed as to seem a part of the original design that there should be no incongruity between the old and the new work.

Keller succeeded in integrating the new work with the original fabric. Stone for the new construction was carefully selected to match that of the old. Now that the stonework has weathered, it is virtually indistinguishable from the original.

The installation of the Chapel of the Nativity at the west end of the south aisle in 1907 was the last major alteration to the fabric of the church itself. Ralph Adams Cram, one of the last American architects to produce Gothic Revival works, was commissioned to design the chapel. Cram was noted for his attention to detail and close relationship with craftsmen. The red tile flooring of the chapel and other detailing reveal this concern.

A high standard of workmanship is evident throughout the church. Wheaton was responsible personally for some of the plaster bosses covering the intersection of ceiling ribs, and for the stone heads serving as stops for hood molds over the side entrances. Later decorative work, such as the mural paintings flanking the chancel and the stained glass window of the chancel, part of the 1879 addition, was executed by the London firm of Heaton & Bayne, later Heaton, Butler & Bayne. This work shows the influence of William Morris, the English writer and artist who attempted to revive the medieval arts and crafts and was very influential on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Chapter House of 1916-17, by New York architects Delano and Aldrich, is

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

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Christ Church Item number 8 Page 4
Hartford, Connecticut

executed in an appropriate material, scale and design in relation to the church. Casement windows are in multiple groupings separated by stone mullions. The entrance is recessed within a Tudor or four-centered arch. Above this is a niche containing the statue of a bishop. The roofline is broken by gabled dormers, the faces of which are flush with the facade. An octagonal cupola is located in the center of the slate roof. The stonework has been carefully matched to that of the church proper.

Christ Church is significant in the history of the Episcopal Church in Hartford and Connecticut. In the colonial period, the Congregational Church was the dominant church in Connecticut, enjoying the official sanction of the colonial government. In the early 18th century, however, Anglicanism was introduced to the colony through the efforts of the Ministry for the Propagation of the Gospel. Although many early members were recent immigrants from England, growth also occurred through conversions from Congregationalism. This success may be partially attributed to dissatisfaction with the orthodox, rigid theology of Congregationalism.

In 1762, an Episcopal congregation was formed in Hartford to erect a church. Thirty years later, in 1792, construction of a replacement structure was begun. The new church was not consecrated until 1801. This church, the immediate predecessor of Christ Church, was of frame construction with round-arched upper windows and a spire. In design, it was very similar to other protestant churches in the area.

The new state constitution of 1818 disestablished the Congregational Church in Connecticut. The Episcopal Church and other denominations grew rapidly in the favorable atmosphere created by the disestablishment. Christ Church, built within a decade of the new religious freedom in Connecticut, reflects the changing religious order in the state. While earlier churches had been similar to those of the Congregationalists, Christ Church represents a radical departure. The Gothic Revival style, with its use of medieval forms and the variegated texture of its stonework, contrasts vividly with the Federal and Greek Revival style churches the Congregationalists and other denominations were still constructing. To the Congregationalists, the Gothic Revival was too suggestive of Roman Catholicism. To the Episcopalians, it suggested the medieval origins of their church. The attitude of the Episcopalians was well expressed in the Commemorative Sermon preached by Thomas M. Clark on the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of Christ Church.

At the time when this church was built, ecclesiastical architecture in our country was at a very low ebb. There were a few seemly and some stately edifices scattered here and there over the land, copied for the most part from English models of the Sir Christopher Wren School, but there was not a pure and unadulterated specimen of Gothic to be seen anywhere. American architects, or those who called

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

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

Christ Church

Continuation sheet Hartford, Connecticut

Item number

48

Page 5

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

themselves by this name, were inflicting on the church copies of the temple of Bacchus, with bacchanalian adornments; modified Puritan meeting-houses, buildings that were sometimes mistaken for banks; mixtures of pseudo-Gothic, Ionic, Egyptian, and native, at the sight of which we still continue to groan. Some of these edifices have been deliberately removed or converted to other uses, and others have been destroyed by a timely conflagration.⁶

The rector of Christ Church from 1821 to 1831, Reverend Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton, was an important leader in the Episcopal Church in the state. Concerned that Yale University offered theological training only to Congregationalists, Wheaton incorporated Washington College, now Trinity College, with several other individuals in 1823. He was sent to England and the Continent in 1823-4 to procure books and other material for the college. During this journey, Wheaton carefully studied the church architecture of England and France. His observations were of importance for the future Christ Church, for which ground was broken in 1827. Evidently, it was on this tour that Wheaton collected the details later to be incorporated into Christ Church. Wheaton's romantic view of architecture is well expressed in his remarks on an early 15th-century stained-glass window at York Minster.

Such an object, beheld in any place, would strike the dullest imagination with wonder and awe, but when seen by the "dim religious light" of a Gothic fane, among fretted canopies and ancient carved oak, between a double colonnade of clustered pillars springing aloft into air, and spanned above by a richly-ribbed and knotted arch, the emotions excited are of the most sublime description which human art is capable of producing.⁷

It was this effect that Wheaton sought to reproduce in Christ Church. Subsequent modifications and additions were intended to enhance this effect and provide a suitable atmosphere for a liturgy increasingly affected by medieval forms. The Ecclesiological movement in the Episcopal Church strove to reform both church architecture and liturgy. Later changes to the fabric of Christ Church, notably the addition of the chancel in 1879, were influenced by this movement. The use of English craftsmen to embellish the interior of the church

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

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Christ Church

Continuation sheet Hartford, Connecticut

Item number

8

Page

6

reinforced the identification of the church with the mother country.

The continued adaptation of Christ Church to changing tastes and liturgical requirements was made possible by the patronage of wealthy church members. By the mid-19th century, the Episcopal Church had attracted many of the elite of Hartford society. These in turn improved the church itself through generous gifts, often given in memory of deceased family members. Thus, the church reflects not only the religious values of the Episcopal Church, but also the wealth and prestige of its membership.

The most prominent members of the church in the 19th century were the Goodwin family. James Goodwin, a descendant of the early settlers of Hartford, had converted to the Episcopal Church from the Congregational Church about 1820, only two years after the disestablishment. His son, James, 1803-1878, and other members of the family, continued to attend Christ Church. The younger James Goodwin had a remarkable career. Advancing from a stagecoach agent to an owner of a stage line, he later became a director of the Hartford & New Haven Railroad Company, 1837-1841. In 1847, he was one of the founders of the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company. This was to become his major business activity, although he served on many other boards. From 1848 until his death in 1878, he was President of the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company, except for a brief hiatus between 1866 and 1869. His wife, Lucy Morgan, was from a prominent family later to produce the famous financier John Pierpont Morgan. Goodwin was a staunch member of Christ Church, serving as a vestryman for many years. On his death in 1878, Lucy Morgan Goodwin donated the new addition dedicated in 1879. Rev. Francis Goodwin, James son, drew up the preliminary floor plans for the addition. Later, Francis served as rector of Christ Church. His son, James, also entered the Episcopal ministry.

Other members of Christ Church included the poetess Lydia Huntley Sigourney, "the sweet singer of Hartford," and the Hoadley family. George Hoadley, a noted philanthropist, gave money to complete the town design and buttresses in 1902, in memory of Charles J. Hoadley, the state librarian. The Goodwin and Hoadley Memorials, as well as numerous other lesser gifts, inextricably link the social history of Christ Church to its religious and architectural history.

Footnotes

1. Kelley, J. Frederick. Early Connecticut Meetinghouses, Volume Two. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948, pages 28-29.
2. Russell, Gurdon W. History of the Parish of Christ Church, Volume II. Hartford: Belknap and Warfield, 1908, pages 13-14.
3. Ibid, page 16.

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

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

For HCERS use only

received

date entered

Christ Church

Continuation sheet Hartford, Connecticut

Item number 8

Page 7

Footnotes (continued)

4. Celebration of the Semi-Centennial Anniversary of the Consecration of Christ Church. Hartford: The Case, Lockwood, & Brainard Co., 1880, pages 96-100.
5. Russell, op.cit., page 18-19.
6. Clark, Thomas, "Commemorative Sermon," in Celebration of the Semicentennial Anniversary, op.cit., pages 18-19.
7. Wheaton, Nathaniel Sheldon. A Journal of a Residence During Several Months in London; Including Excursions Through Various Parts of England; and a Short Tour in France and Scotland; in the Years 1823 and 1824. Hartford: M. & F.J. Huntington, 1830, page 411.
8. Goodwin, James Junius. The Goodwins of Hartford. Hartford: Brown and Gross, 1891, page 694, pages 700-701.

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

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

Christ Church,
Hartford, Connecticut

Continuation sheet

Item number

9

Page

1

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

creation of Christ Church, Hartford. Hartford: The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1880.

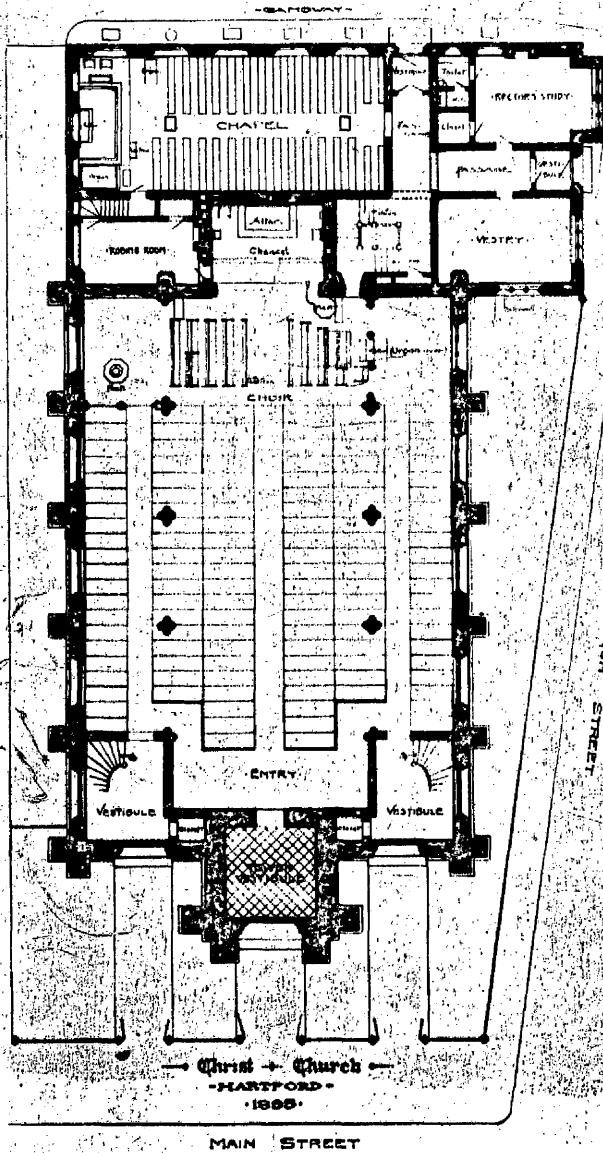
Kelly, J. Frederick. Early Connecticut Meetinghouses, Volumes One and Two. New York: Columbia University Press, 1948.

Wheaton, Nathaniel Sheldon. A Journal of a Residence During Several Months in London; Including Excursions Through Various Parts of England; and a Short Tour in France and Scotland: in the Years 1823 and 1824, Hartford; H. & F.J.

Addenda:

Goodwin, James Junius. The Goodwins of Hartford. Hartford: Brown and Gross, 1891.

Russell, Gurdon W. History of the Parish of Christ Church, Volume II. Hartford, Belknap and Warfield, 1908.



Christ Church
-HARTFORD-
1865

MAIN STREET

CHURCH STREET

P.S. Recently sent you a query in Joseph's records