

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Massachusetts	
COUNTY: Worcester	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
First Church of Christ, Lancaster

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Lancaster Church; First Church of Christ, Unitarian

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
facing the Common

CITY OR TOWN:  
Lancaster

STATE: Massachusetts      CODE:      COUNTY: Worcester      CODE:

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <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 (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Reverend Alexander St. Ivanyi, First Church of Christ, Unitarian

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Lancaster 01523

CITY OR TOWN: Lancaster      STATE: Massachusetts      CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Worcester County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:  
on the Common

CITY OR TOWN: Worcester      STATE: Massachusetts      CODE:

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey (4 photos)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1941       Federal       State       County       Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Washington 20540

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D. C.      CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE  
FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

First Church of Christ, Lancaster, is a large two-story rectangular-shaped brick structure fronted by a projecting two-stage brick tower surmounted by a wood cupola, and by a giant arcaded and pedimented portico. The walls are laid in Flemish bond and the windows, arranged in two tiers, are topped by flat arches.

A description of the church, written in 1826, follows:

"The body of the building is 74 by 66 feet, with a porch, portico, tower, and cupola. The portico is 48 by 17 feet, of square brick columns, arched with pilasters, entablature, and pediment of the [Roman] Doric order; the vestibule, or porch, is 48 feet by 19 feet and contains the gallery stairs; the [second stage of the] tower is 21 feet square; the cupola is circular, and of singular beauty; - it is surrounded with a colonade of 12 fluted pillars, with entablature, and cornice, of the [Roman] Ionic order; above which is an Attic encircled with a festoon drapery, the whole surmounted by a dome, balls, and vane. The height from the ground is about 120 feet. [The wood volutes which ornament the corners of tower are another touch that was added by master builder Thomas Hearsey to the original design]. Inside, the front of the gallery is a ballustrade work, and is supported by ten fluted pillars of the Doric order, and has a clock in front, presented by a gentleman of the society. The pulpit rests on eight fluted columns, and four pilasters of the Ionic order: the upper section is supported by six Corinthian columns also fluted, and is lighted by a circular headed window, ornamented with double pilasters fluted; entablature and cornice of the Corinthian order; this is decorated with a curtain and drapery from a Parisian model, which, with the material, were presented by a friend; they are of rich green figured satin. A handsome Pulpit Bible was presented also by a friend, and a bell, weighing 1300 lbs. was given by gentlemen of the town."

From the portico three doors, a tall center entranceway flanked by two lower ones, lead into the vestibule. The treatment of the doors is simple, all have beaded frames and 1 1/2 inch round molding in the angles of the frames and masonry. Set high in the brick wall above each entrance door is a white swag panel.

Inside the vestibule two staircases set near and parallel to the side walls ascend, bend in and meet halfway in a common landing located above the center entranceway that leads into the audience room. At this point a broader stairway ascends towards the front of the tower to the second floor, passing at that level to the right and left and leading into the galleries. A narrow flight of stairs also continues on up to the belfry.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1816

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designed by the noted Boston architect Charles Bulfinch in the Adamesque-Federal style and constructed by the master builder Thomas Hearsay in 1816, First Church of Christ, Lancaster, is probably the finest of Bulfinch's existing New England churches. Its facade, with its two-stage brick tower topped by a beautifully proportioned wood cupola surrounded by Roman Ionic columns, and fronted by a giant arcuated portico, is especially noteworthy. Neither artificial lighting nor central heat have been introduced, and excepting for minor changes in the interior, the church remains substantially as built.

History

Construction of the First Church of Christ was ordered by vote of the town of Lancaster and the money was raised by assessing the pews. A building committee, comprised of three men, engaged Charles Bulfinch of Boston to prepare the plan and contracted with Captain Thomas Hearsay, a master builder of Boston, to construct the church. The cornerstone was laid July 9, 1816; the structure was completed in 151 working days, and dedicated in January 1, 1817. Total cost of construction was \$19,088.66. Hearsay received \$500 for his part of the project. The three coeval arches in the facade of the portico represent an "improvement" introduced by Hearsay to Bulfinch's plan, which had proposed one tall center arch flanked by two lower arches, with prominent swag panels above the lesser arches. Bulfinch's design of the arches was intended to reflect the unequal heights of the three vestibule doors behind them.

In 1867 an organ was installed in the gallery and by this date eight of the nine windows in the north (rear) wall, arranged in group of four in two tiers on either side of the pulpit, had been closed up. In 1881 the existing two-story, half-hexagonal-shaped, brick Thayer Memorial Chapel was added to the North end of the church, making the only alteration to the exterior of the structure. At this time the last window in the north wall, a central arched window located over the pulpit, was closed off, two doors were cut in the north wall to provide access to the new chapel, and four pews on either side of the pulpit were removed.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Charles A. Place, Charles Bulfinch, Architect and Citizen (Boston, 1925), 222-226  
 Ellen S. Bulfinch, The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch (Boston, 1896).  
Massachusetts, A Guide to its Places and People (American Guide Series) (Boston, 1937), 514.  
 Talbot F. Hamlin, The American Spirit in Architecture (New Haven, 1926), 100.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		42	27	20
NE	° ' "	° ' "		71	40	25
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Charles W. Snell, Survey Historian

ORGANIZATION: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service DATE: 6/5/70

STREET AND NUMBER: 801 19th Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE:  

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**  
First Church of Christ, Lancaster  
(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Worcester	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1)

Three doors on the first floor of the vestibule open into the audience room. The gallery, which extends around the east, south, and west sides of the room, is enclosed with an open balustrade and curves in toward the south (front) end. The galleries are supported by fluted columns with Roman Doric capitals, with no bases, 10 feet 11 inches high and well-proportioned. There are no electric lights and the room is still heated by means of two stoves.

The pews are made of pine, stained cherry color. The side pews, 4 by 8 feet, are in the old style of box pews, while those in the middle, 3 by 10 feet, are of the slip type. The windows have inside blinds. The pulpit, painted white and set in the center of the north wall, stands on a platform 4 inches high, with Ionic columns 6 feet 5 1/2 inches high, or with a total height from the platform of 10 feet 8 inches. The paneling and 2 mahogany doors under the pulpit enclose a 25-inch space which contained until 1881 the stairs to the pulpit. The two doors in the north wall were cut in 1881 when the Thayer Memorial Chapel was added to the north end of the church and original arched window behind the pulpit was also closed off at that time.

The plaster walls and ceiling of the audience room were originally unadorned, except for the fine cornice. The existing wall panels with ornamented molding and the decorative plaster work of the ceiling were added in 1900. Except for the minor changes made in the north wall in 1881 and the 1900 work, the interior is unaltered and the workmanship and material original.

In good condition, First Church of Christ, Lancaster, is still used for religious purposes. The structure is opened to visitors upon request.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

First Church of Christ Lancaster  
(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Massachusetts	
COUNTY	
Worcester	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance: from page(1)

Final changes were made to the interior in 1900. Based on the theory that Bulfinch would have provided more elaborate decorations for the interior if money had been available in 1816, the walls and ceiling were ornamented in the style of Bulfinch's Massachusetts State House and in harmony with the pulpit. Existing wall panels with ornamented molding and the decorative plaster work on the ceiling date from this 1900 project.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

First Church of Christ, Lancaster  
(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Worcester	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

9. Major Bibliographical Reference for First Church of Christ, Lancaster:
- Wayne Andrews, Architecture, Ambition and Americans (New York, 1955), 9, 101.
- John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, The Architecture of America, A Social and Cultural History (Boston and Toronto, 1961), 87.
- Aymer Embury, II, Early American Churches (New York, 1914), 133-135.
- George F. Marlowe, Churches of Old New England (New York, 1947), 106-14.
- James M. Fitch, American Building, The Forces that Shape It (Boston, 1948), 45.
- Alan Gowans, Images of American Living (Philadelphia & New York, 1964), 236.
- Edmund W. Sinnott, Meeting House & Church in Early New England (New York, Toronto, and London, 1963), 79.
- Harold Kirker, The Architecture of Charles Bulfinch (Cambridge, Mass., 1969, 300-303)