Between 1812 and 1816, three impressive churches were erected on the east side of the New Haven Green. Two of the churches, Center Church (1812-14) and United Church (1813-15), are outstanding examples of Federal architecture, while Trinity Church (1814-16) is one of the earliest expressions of the Gothic Revival style in America. Boston architect Asher Benjamin drew the initial plans for Center Church, whose graceful spire still dominates the green, but it was Ithiel Town—a former student of Benjamin's—who was responsible for the final design. When his work on the brick, neo-classic Center Church was finished, Town turned to the design of Trinity Church, built of local granite in the incipient Gothic mode for New Haven's Episcopal congregation. The design of United Church, the third structure on the east side of the green, shows the influence of John McComb, an early New York architect, although it was Ebenezer Johnson, a local builder, who was responsible for its construction. All three churches preserve their original exterior appearance and, together with the adjacent public buildings, form an impressive urban complex distinguished in the development of American architecture and town planning. Open to visitors upon request.
**1. NAME**

**COMMON:** New Haven Green Historic District

**AND/OR HISTORIC:**

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET AND NUMBER:** Bounded by Chapel, College, Elm, and Church Streets

**CITY OR TOWN:** New Haven

**STATE:** Connecticut

**CODE:** 09

**COUNTY:** New Haven

**CODE:** 009

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

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<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
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**PRESENT USE** (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Museum
- Private Residence
- Religious
- Scientific

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**OWNER'S NAME:** City of New Haven

**STREET AND NUMBER:** 161 Church Street

**CITY OR TOWN:** New Haven

**STATE:** Connecticut

**CODE:** 09

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:** Hall of Records

**STREET AND NUMBER:** 200 Orange Street

**CITY OR TOWN:** New Haven

**STATE:** Connecticut

**CODE:** 09

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

**TITLE OF SURVEY:** Historic American Buildings Survey (17 sheets and 6 photos)

**DATE OF SURVEY:** 1934, 1936

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:** Division of Prints and Photographs

**STREET AND NUMBER:** Library of Congress

**CITY OR TOWN:** Washington

**STATE:** D.C.

**CODE:** 11
The New Haven Green's three historic churches are ranged equidistantly along Temple Street, between Elm and Chapel Streets on the sixteen-acre common. United Church, at the corner of Temple and Elm, is distinguished by the four engaged fluted Ionic columns which adorn the projecting central portion of the facade, supporting a full entablature and pediment with a modillioned cornice. The belfry of the church is crowned by an ornate round cupola pierced by arched windows and topped with a large weathervane. In 1967, after successive remodelings had marred the restrained beauty of the original interior, a restoration program returned it to approximately its mid-nineteenth century appearance. While the circular pulpit apse was added in 1850, the low saucer dome in the ceiling, from which hangs a large cut-glass chandelier, is part of the 1815 structure.

Like United Church, the adjacent Center Church is a brick structure with wood trim. It boasts, however, a full tetrastyle Tuscan portico bearing in the tympanum a large asymmetrical rinceau motif of carved acanthus ornament. A tapering steeple rises in five stages above the portico to a height of about 210 feet. The lateral walls of the church, with their double tier of windows are enriched by a balustraded cornice. Externally, the structure conveys the lightness and classical grace of James Gibbs' Georgian masterpiece, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, the prototypal church which undoubtedly influenced the design of Center Church. The interior dates largely from 1842, when renovation resulted in the lowering of the galleries and the replacement of the original high box pews and pulpit by more modern fixtures. The first pulpit is now in the Kawaiaho Church of Honolulu, Hawaii.

Although described by its architect as "Gothic" in style, Trinity Episcopal Church at the corner of Temple and Chapel Streets illustrates the naivety with which the style was first handled in America. The proportions of the nave, with its low-pitched roof and modified cornice, are essentially those of the traditional New England meetinghouse, transformed by the somber ashlar walls, the tall pointed windows, and a relatively academic Gothic entrance tower. In 1870, the present stone belfry replaced the wooden pinnacles and crenellation which formerly capped the tower. The addition of a chancel and other alterations have considerably changed the character of the interior; the galleries, however, date from 1814-16.
The significance of the New Haven Green Historic District lies in the presence on the green of three remarkably fine churches which, because of their architectural merit as well as their setting, compose an outstanding urban ensemble of nineteenth century America. Center Church (1812-14) whose tall, graceful spire still dominates the green, was the first of the three to be completed. The Boston architect Asher Benjamin drew the initial plans for Center Church, but it was Benjamin's former student, Ithiel Town, who prepared the final design and supervised the construction. Both Town and Benjamin greatly influenced nineteenth-century American architecture, disseminating their ideas through the publication of builders' handbooks and articles. The exterior of Center Church has remained unchanged and it ranks today as one of the country's most imposing Federal-style edifices.

The second of the churches, United or Old North Church (1813-15), is also an elegant if less exhuberant expression of the Federal style. The plans, attributed by some sources to David Hoadley, were apparently modified by the builder, Ebenezer Johnson, Jr., and the structure reflects the influence of both Benjamin as well as John McComb, Jr., architect of the New York City Hall (1911). It is possible that the design of Center Church played some part, too, in the final plan of United Church.

The third church on the New Haven Green represents a departure both in style and materials from the other two, although the architect was Ithiel Town. Built of seam-faced local trap rock in the incipient Gothic style for New Haven's Episcopal congregation, Trinity Church (1814-16) was one of the first large Gothic structures in America, and forms a striking contrast to the neo-classical Center and United Churches.

As a fortunate convergence of taste and circumstance, and as a very successful combination of noble architecture and pleasing ambience, the New Haven Green Historic District is a highly significant aesthetic achievement in urban landscape design.
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 16

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Staff, Historic Sites Survey
ORGANIZATION: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service
DATE: June 6, 1971
STREET AND NUMBER: 801 - 19th Street, N.W.
CITY OR TOWN: Washington,
STATE: D.C. 20006

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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 ________________________________

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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 ________________________________
were also made in grade. Center Church was ready for use in the fall of 1814. Total cost of construction amounted to $34,323.46.

In 1842-43 the entire interior of the church, except for the frame and front of the galleries, was removed. The galleries were lowered two feet to their present position. The original high pulpit and pews were removed. New slip pews of pine were installed on the main floor and in the galleries, the aisles were carpeted, and the new seats upholstered. The walls and ceiling were frescoed. These interior alterations were planned by the New Haven architect Henry Austin. In 1845 the exterior brickwork and woodwork was painted a drab color. This paint was removed from the exterior by sandblasting in 1912. In the 1890's a total of 10 stained-glassed windows were installed. In 1959-60 the interior of the church was generally restored to its mid-19th century appearance.
2. **Boundaries of New Haven Green Historic District:**

The Historic District is bounded by College Street on the northwest, by Elm Street on the northeast, by Church Street on the southeast, and by Chapel Street on the Southwest. The Green contains about 16 acres of land and three churches: Center, Trinity, and United Churches.