

PROPERTY NAME

Faith Congregational Church, Hartford, CT

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United States Department of the Interior, NPS

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Windsor Avenue Congregational Church

Other Name/Site Number: Faith Congregational Church

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 2030 Main Street Not for publication: NA

City/Town: Hartford Vicinity: NA

State: CT County: Hartford Code: 003 Zip Code: 06120

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: x

Public-local:

Public-State:

Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s): x

District:

Site:

Structure:

Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

 1

 1

Noncontributing

 buildings

 sites

 structures

 objects

 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

PROPERTY NAME

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

February 9, 1993 Date

Director, Connecticut Historical Commission State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
Determined eligible for the National Register
Determined not eligible for the National Register
Removed from the National Register
Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

PROPERTY NAME

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: RELIGION Sub: religious structure

Current: RELIGION Sub: religious structure

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:
Romanesque Revival

Materials:
Foundation: brownstone
Walls: brick

Roof: asphalt, concrete
Other Description: _____

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Romanesque Revival brick building now known as Faith Congregational Church was built for the Windsor Avenue Congregational Church in 1871-1872 to the design of Samuel J.F. Thayer of Boston. The 62' x 75' structure faces west close to the sidewalk in the north end of Hartford on a street that was named Windsor Avenue, now Main Street. In the 1870s the area was developing as a desirable residential neighborhood north of Hartford's downtown. Many of the contemporary houses remain standing, as seen in Photograph 1, which shows an Italianate-style house close by to the north and a Queen Anne house to the south. There has been some commercial intrusion as well.

The facade of the church is dominated by a strong central gable which is flanked by a square tower to the north and an apsidal-shaped wall to the south. The composition is asymmetrical but balanced. In the wall under the central gable is a two-story recessed wall arch which contains the front entrance aedicule, second-story windows, and diaper work. (Photograph 2) Steps with three risers approach the heavy double wooden door of horizontal and diagonal battens on diagonal flush boards under a blind transom with quatrefoil. There are corner stones left and right of the doorway, that to the left reading "1871," the date of construction of the church, that to the right reading "Talcott Street Congregational Church," the name of the church from which the present congregation is descended. The round-arched doorway has brick voussoirs alternating in colors black and red. The use of black brick for accent continues throughout the exterior. Horizontal lines are provided by the stone water table, short stone belt courses about two feet above the water table which connect left and right with a black brick belt course, and a black brick belt course partially obscured by the gable of the doorway.

At the second floor paired round-arched windows are contained in three round-arched apertures. The windows are defined by engaged colonnettes. A black brick belt course connects their capitals. Above the windows a bold black brick diaper pattern fills the wall arch. The voussoirs of the arch repeat the alternating red and black brick pattern of the arch over the doorway. In the center of the tympanum an oculus is glazed with a quatrefoil, repeating that in the doorway transom.

North of the doorway there is a round-arched window in the section under the gable, then a second round-arched window, separated from the first by buttresses, in the tower. South of the doorway there is a narrow vertically oriented rectangular window under the gable, then two round-arched windows in the wall which is finished as an apse. At the second floor, one pair of vertically oriented rectangular windows is in the tower and two pair in the apsidal section. The third-floor level of the tower is pierced by a tiered opening of four louvers on each face under a round arch with black and red voussoirs. The pyramidal tower roof rises from a cornice of fine corbeling, and is topped by a metal finial that reaches 110 feet above ground. Fenestration on the side elevations consists of three pair of tall round-arched windows separated by buttresses. The pitch of the roof decreases as the slope approaches the eaves above these windows. (Photograph 3)

On the interior, the front spaces close to the street are used for community rooms. The sanctuary, which seats 600, is behind them. The sanctuary suffered a severe fire 22 January 1959, but the four walls were saved. The pulpit, choir loft, organ pipes, and paneling associated with them also were saved (Photograph 4), as well as the arcade of round-arched windows at the back of the sanctuary and door surrounds in this wall. (Photograph 5) The pews, ceiling (37 feet high in the center) and roof, and finishes were rebuilt and renewed after the fire. The present appearance, generally, is plain; what the original

appearance may have been is not known. The paired tall round-arched windows of the side elevations (23 feet high) and the lofty ceiling are dominant features of the auditorium. (Photograph 6)

The front room inside the apsidal wall originally was the parlor. It is now used for day care. Its round-arched windows feature diamond-pane leaded pebble glazing within a narrow border of green and blue stained glass, the whole set in a deep reveal. The dado in this room is beaded boards, as it is throughout much of the church. (Photograph 8) The room adjacent to the tower may have been the Sunday School originally, since the Windsor Avenue Congregational Church grew from a Sunday school. Now it is a meeting room. On the second floor, most of the space in the front section of the building is given over to what is now known as the former gymnasium, although that may not have been its original use. (Photograph 9) The roof rebuilt after the 1959 fire is a steel frame that supports concrete panels. (Photograph 10) The full basement in the building is partitioned like the first floor. Front rooms under the parlor in recent decades were used for Boy Scout activities, while the large main space has been open. Curious pointed-arch openings connect the two sections. (Photograph 11) In the main space multiple brick piers support massive timbers.

The parish house, known as Hillyer Hall, Isaac A. Allen, Jr., architect, was built behind the church in 1904. It is a two-story 55' x 84' brick building with corner buttresses, round-arched fenestration, and diamond glazing, in these respects taking its cue from the church, but at the same time the parish house clearly has its own identity. (Photographs 3 and 12) Independently of the church design, Hillyer Hall has first-floor windows which are rectangular, a one-story three-sided bay in the south elevation, and a roof overhang. The roof is hipped with a central gable flanked by small triangular louvered dormers. Yet the second-floor recessed wall arch over the bay is reminiscent of its counterpart which frames the front entrance of the church. The parish house has no black-brick diaperwork or belt courses.

The principal interior space of Hillyer Hall is the assembly room on the second floor. Its high coved ceiling is supported by a paneled arch in front of a balcony whose balustrade repeats the diamond pattern from the diaperwork over the church front door. A large arched window made up of two smaller arched windows with a circle in the tympanum is behind the balcony. (Photograph 13) The stairway from the first to second floors is enclosed with a pierced paneled railing, an Arts-and-Crafts motif (Photograph 14), while the brick mantel in the pastor's study features a broad low arch against plain background in the same mode. (Photograph 15) The kitchen, rehabilitated in the 1920s, is substantially intact. (Photograph 16) Dining room space is in the basement, together with two bowling alleys, now deteriorated.

The church complex is sited tightly with respect to the neighbors. A narrow driveway leads in from the street on the north to a small parking area which occupies all the land behind the church on the 0.6-acre lot, which measures approximately 104' x 255'. The parcel runs west-east from Main Street to Wooster Street.

~~8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE~~
8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally:___ Statewide:___ Locally: x

Applicable National Register Criteria: A x B___ C x D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A x B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

Areas of Significance:	Period(s) of Significance	Significant Dates
<u>ARCHITECTURE</u>	<u>1871 - 1942</u>	<u>1871, 1904</u>
<u>SOCIAL HISTORY</u>	<u>1870 - 1906</u>	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Significant Person: Clara E. Hillyer

Cultural Affiliation: _____

Architect/Builder: 1872, S.J.F. Thayer/Clement & Creesy
1904, I.A. Allen, Jr./Stoddard & Caulkins

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Faith Congregational Church is significant architecturally because it is a good example of an 1872 Romanesque Revival building with a sensitively designed 1904 parish house addition, the whole now in a good state of preservation. The church has a significant social history which spans the 19th-century era of private philanthropy to the capable stewardship in the mid-20th-century of the city's oldest African-American congregation.

Architecture

The late Romanesque Revival-style Faith Congregational Church is bold, asymmetrical, and polychromatic with black brick patterning. In these respects it reflects the vigor and vitality of the High Victorian Gothic. In his letter of 6 May 1871 to the building committee, the architect clearly stated his intentions, writing, "I have studied to give great force to the design with simple details." The structure as built amply demonstrates his intent. The strong central gable, great doorway, bulky tower on the north, and apsidal wall on the south are a daring composition that, due in large part to the simplicity of the components, works well. The apsidal end was no happenstance, for Thayer, continuing in his 6 May 1871 letter, said, "You will observe that I have made the end of the parlour circular -- my reasons are that it gives more room both in the first and second floor, is common in ecclesiastical architecture and can be made unique and beautiful...."

The decorative features which define and enhance the strong architectural masses are equally vigorous. Use of black brick in a red brick building for diaperwork and black bands had been effectively introduced by William Butterfield at All Saints, Margaret Street, London, in 1859 in a manner termed by Sir John Summerson as "startling."¹ Only 12 years later Thayer brought the "startling" motifs to Hartford.

Butterfield was an architect approved by the Ecclesiologists, and his All Saints, Margaret Street, was a High Victorian Gothic design as favored by the Ecclesiologists. Thayer, however, eschewed the pointed arch for the round arch, but in other ways followed the asymmetric features of All Saints. It is to be noted, however, that the Ecclesiologists were well represented across the street from the Windsor Avenue Congregational Church at Saint Thomas Episcopal Church (now Union Baptist Church), also of 1871. It was designed by Henry Martin Congdon, a founding member of the American Ecclesiological Society for an Episcopal congregation who not unexpectedly elected to follow strictly the Ecclesiologists' Gothic Revival dicta. Saint Thomas has the low massing and grey stone material of a medieval English parish church, as prescribed by the followers of the Church of England. It is noteworthy that the North End of Hartford had two such sophisticated ecclesiastical buildings under construction simultaneously across the street from one another. Both have apsidal rounded ends on the front of the church, but are markedly different in materials, massing, architectural style, and decorative features.

Samuel J.F. Thayer (1842-1 March 1893), a life-long resident of Boston, began his architectural career soon after the Civil War. His other known work in Connecticut was the 1892 County Building/City Hall in Middletown (demolished). He also designed the Town Hall in Brookline, Massachusetts, and won by competition the commission for the Second Empire 1878 Providence City Hall. His libraries included that of Dartmouth College and the Nevins Memorial Hall and Library, Methuen, Massachusetts. Thayer designed other buildings for

Dartmouth as well. How he was selected for the Hartford church is unknown. The contractors, Clement & Cressy, of Boston and Lawrence, were suggested by Thayer. Their bill was \$34,927.10

Isaac A. Allen, Jr. (1859-1953), designer of Hillyer Hall, practiced architecture in Hartford prolifically for more than 50 years. He was facile in a wide variety of styles, readily adapting his practice to changing architectural trends and fashions. His comfort and capability in going from style to style stood him in good stead in designing the parish house, where he successfully drew plans for a new building sensitive to the old but which clearly has identity and significance in its own right. The materials, buttresses, wall arch, round-arched windows, and diagonal glazing repeat features of the church, but Hillyer Hall's conventional two-story massing, rectangular windows, three-sided bay, overhanging eaves, hipped roof, and fine interior with some Arts-and-Crafts influence are its own. The overall style label for the parish house is difficult to define, but it perhaps falls under the Renaissance Revival umbrella. The Crosthwaite Building (1911), Hartford, which displays some of the same characteristics, is the structure in Allen's large oeuvre most comparable. Hillyer Hall, however, has a better sense of unity; its complex parts fit together to form a fine whole. Hillyer Hall's hidden position behind the church means that few people are aware of its existence; few appreciate its fine quality.

The carpenter and mason work for Hillyer Hall was carried out by Stoddard & Caulkins at a cost of \$18,548. Complete specifications for the job, some 43 pages in length, are deposited in the church archives.

Social History

The mid-19th century brought rapid growth in the population of the City of Hartford. The downtown area of original settlement, adjacent to the Connecticut River, no longer could contain the burgeoning prosperous population. To meet the demand for new desirable living areas, development occurred south, west, and north of downtown. Charter Oak Place, Wethersfield Avenue, and Washington Street to the south saw the construction of a number of fine houses, but development tapered off toward the end of the 19th century. The area to the north enjoyed wider development and more construction, but lost its social cachet toward the end of the 19th century, leaving the West End (Asylum Hill) to enjoy the largest area and longest period of popularity as the fine residential area of the city.

Churches were built along North Main Street, known also as Windsor Avenue, as part of the general development of the North End because it was the neighborhood's most prominent avenue. A Sunday School organized 10 June 1864 in a house on the corner of Wooster and Pavilion streets developed into the Pavilion Ecclesiastical Society, which built the Windsor Avenue Congregational Church half a block northwest of the original location.² At a 28 December 1869 meeting held at the Wooster Street chapel to consider formation of the new church, Appleton R. Hillyer (1833-1915) acted as secretary.³ The first minister was ordained and installed at Wooster Street on 31 October 1871. At the ceremony, the Reverend Dr. Horace Bushnell acted as moderator and gave the charge.⁴

Hillyer family interest in, and financial support of, the church continued and grew. In 1892 Johnson & Son of Westfield, Massachusetts, entered into a contract with Clara E. Hillyer (1837-1906), Appleton's sister, who lived on Windsor Avenue, in the amount of \$4,250 to furnish a three-manual organ for the church. In 1896 Appleton R. Hillyer and Clara E.

Hillyer⁵ deeded to the church for use as a parsonage the property next door to the south, 894 Main Street.⁶ A principal benefaction of Clara's was Hillyer Hall of 1904. She also bequeathed \$25,000 to the church in her will. In 1916 Mrs. Appleton R. (Dotha Bushnell) Hillyer endowed the church with \$50,000.

The Windsor Avenue Congregational Church was the neighborhood family church of the Hillyer family. While the church was by no means the only philanthropy supported by the Hillyers, it was a major effort and no doubt their support was a critical element in the church's financial picture. Such personal philanthropy was not uncommon in the 19th century. Other examples in Hartford include the Church Homes for indigent widows financed by George Beach, the Webster Memorial, which was a congregated office of private social services, and many others. Such wide-ranging private financial support of good causes is rare in today's climate of tax laws and revised standards of social responsibility. Substantial funds that in the 19th century would have been individually allocated now are funneled through the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, which assures professional management.

Times changed financially and socially for the Windsor Avenue Congregational Church. In 1954 the congregation merged with the Fourth Congregational Church to form the new Horace Bushnell Congregational Church at the corner of Albany Avenue and Vine Street. The new owner of the Main Street property was the Faith Congregational Church, formed by the merger of the Talcott Street Congregational Church, organized in 1819, and the Mother Bethel Methodist Church, which had its beginnings on Clark Street in 1916.

The Talcott Street Congregational Church held its first meetings in the First (Center) Congregational Church. In 1820 it established an independent Sunday School at the foot of State Street, which led in six years' time to the organization of the congregation and the erection of the first church building on the corner of Talcott and Market streets. The building was paid for by subscription. The congregation changed names several times but continued uninterruptedly at the Talcott Street location. A second building was constructed on the site in 1906. It, too, was a brick Romanesque Revival structure with a square tower under pyramidal roof at one corner (see picture over fireplace, Photograph 15).

Over its long history the Talcott Street Congregational Church was associated with a variety of civil rights initiatives under the leadership of a series of devoted pastors. The Reverend Dr. James W.C. Pennington (1809-1870) stands out among his peers. Born a slave in Maryland, he came North and negotiated his freedom with the help of Hartford's John Hooker. Dr. Pennington was ordained in 1838 before serving at Talcott Street from 1840 to 1847. In 1840 he established at the Talcott Street church a school which was the only place in Hartford where African-Americans could learn to read and write. A pioneer in Christian missions to Africa, Dr. Pennington spent several years in Europe where the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the University of Heidelberg. The Reverend James A. Wright, D.D., began a 44-year ministry in 1916. On 19 October 1944 he presided over a mortgage-burning ceremony symbolic of the church's strong financial position, which enabled the congregation to join with Mother Bethel in establishing Faith Congregational Church. Faith Congregational Church continues as the active owner and user of the buildings constructed for the Windsor Avenue Congregational Church.

PROPERTY NAME

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¹John Summerson, Heavenly Mansions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 165.

²The Pavilion Ecclesiastical Society was dissolved and consolidated with the church when the church was incorporated in April 1908.

³Appleton R. Hillyer long served as treasurer of the church. For years he lived next door but one to the south. He was an officer of the Aetna Bank and Aetna Life Insurance Company.

⁴Dr. Bushnell's daughter Dotha (1843-1932) married Appleton R. Hillyer. She presented the city with Bushnell Memorial Hall (1930), the city's performing arts center, in memory of her father. The Hillyer family also gave the land for the Y.M.C.A. (1899) and supported there the establishment of Hillyer Institute, later Hillyer College, which became a chief module in the merger creating the University of Hartford.

⁵Clara E. Hillyer and Appleton R. Hillyer were children of Charles T. Hillyer (1800-1891), who left his native East Granby in 1853 to come to Hartford where he organized the Charter Oak Bank. A successful investor in western lands, he was said by his obituary to be the wealthiest man in Hartford if not Connecticut at the time of his death. His Hartford residence (demolished), an estate, occupied most of the square block on Windsor Avenue/North Main Street from Main to Clark streets and Elmer to Westland streets, two blocks north of the church.

⁶Hartford Land Records, volume 243, page 236, 27 January 1896.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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- Culver, Grace M., historian of Windsor Avenue Congregational Church. Notes on history of Windsor Avenue Congregational Church, 1957. Connecticut State Library, microfilm reel 545.
- Faith Congregational Church. Program for 150th Anniversary, 1826-1976 (containing history of the church).
- Hartford Assessor's records. Field card.
- The Hartford Courant, 23 January 1959, p. 1.
- Hartford Land Records, volume 243, page 236, 27 January 1896.
- The Hartford Times, 7 May 1949, p. 17 il.
- Morris, Mary, Obituaries Scrapbook. At Connecticut Historical Society, microfilm 81886, reels 2, 20, 32.
- Murray, Cora. Connecticut Historical Commission Historic Resources Inventory Form, 24 September 1991.
- Springman, Mary Jane, and Guinan, Betty Finnell. East Granby: The Evolution of a Connecticut Town. Canaan, New Hampshire: 1983.
- Windsor Avenue Congregational Church/Pavilion Ecclesiastical Society Archives. Connecticut State Library, microfilm reels 545, 546.
- Stewart, John B., Jr., Chief, Hartford Fire Department (Ret.). Interview 8 July 1992. (Chief Stewart, a member of Faith Congregational Church, was on duty and fought the fire of 22 January 1959.)
- Trumbull, J. Hamond, ed. The Memorial History of Hartford County. Boston: Edward L. Osgood, 1886.
- Withey, Elsie R., and Henry F. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970 (reprint of 1956).

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency (Connecticut State Library)
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other: Specify Repository: Connecticut Historical Society

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreeage of Property: 0.6

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A	<u>18</u>	<u>4628000</u>	<u>693150</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____
E	_____	_____	_____	F	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated propety is described at Hartford Land Records, volume 1036, page 91.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the parcel is now the same as it was when purchased for construction of the church in 1871.

PROPERTY NAME

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: David F. Ransom and Cora Murray
Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

Org.: Connecticut Historical Commission

Date: 12 October 1992

Street/#: 59 South Prospect Street

City/Town: Hartford

State: Connecticut

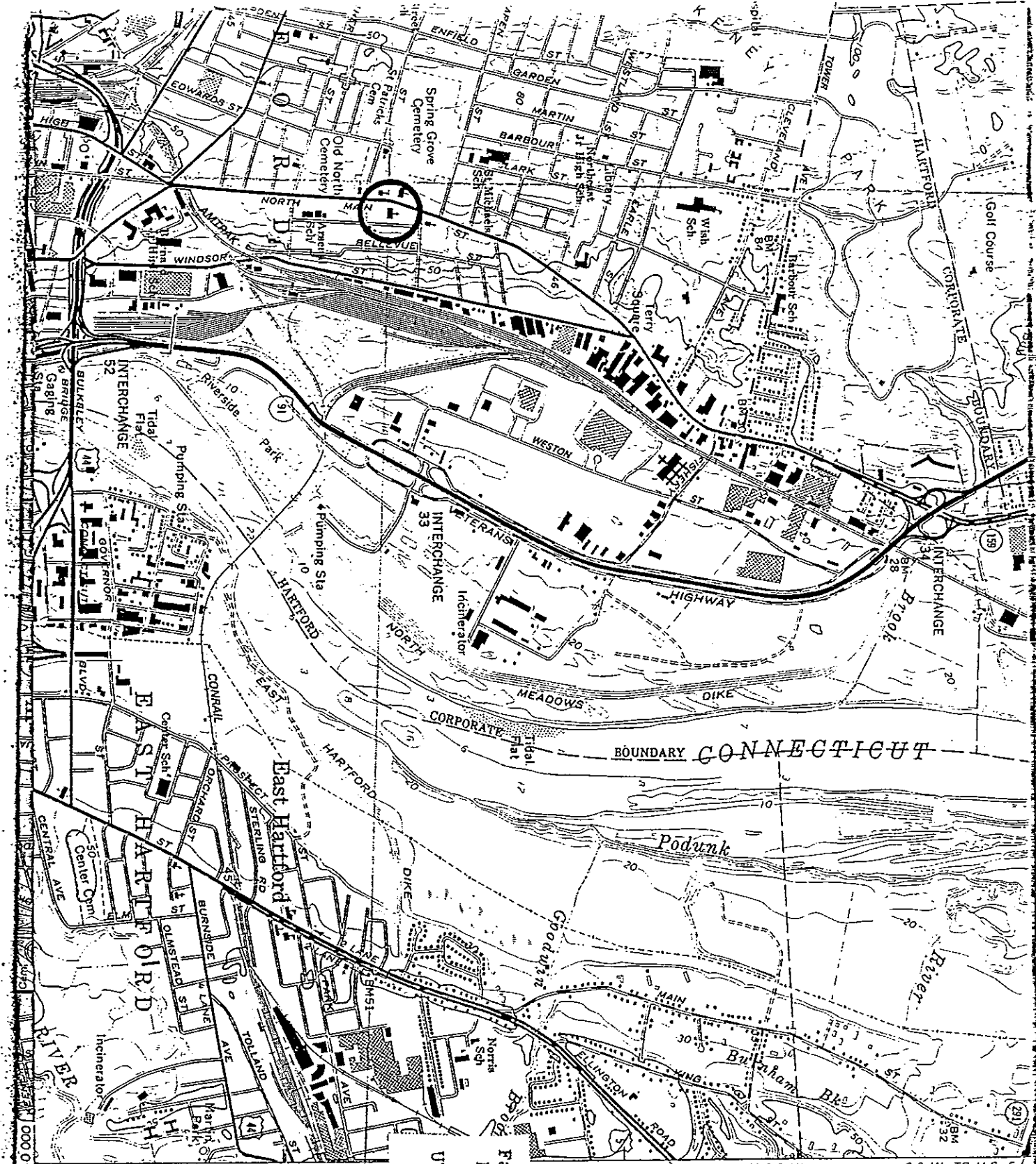
ZIP: 06106

Telephone: 203 566-3005

Photographs

Photographs were taken by Cora Murray in September 1991 except for numbers 7, 10, and 12, which were taken by David F. Ransom in July 1992. Negatives are on file at the Connecticut Historical Commission.

1. Facade and general view northeast
2. Doorway, view east
3. South elevation, view northwest
4. Sanctuary, view east
5. Sanctuary, view northwest
6. Sanctuary windows
7. Parlor, view south
8. Parlor window
9. Gym, view southwest
10. Roof, view east
11. Basement, view southwest
12. Hillyer Hall, view northwest
13. Hillyer Hall auditorium, view north
14. Hillyer Hall, stair, view southeast
15. Hillyer Hall study, view southwest
16. Hillyer Hall kitchen, view southwest



UTM Reference:
 18/4628000/693150
 Faith Congregational Church
 Hartford, CT

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 TICUT TURNPIKE 42 ML

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 9 MI. TO INTERSTATE 91
 0.6 MI. TO U.S. 5

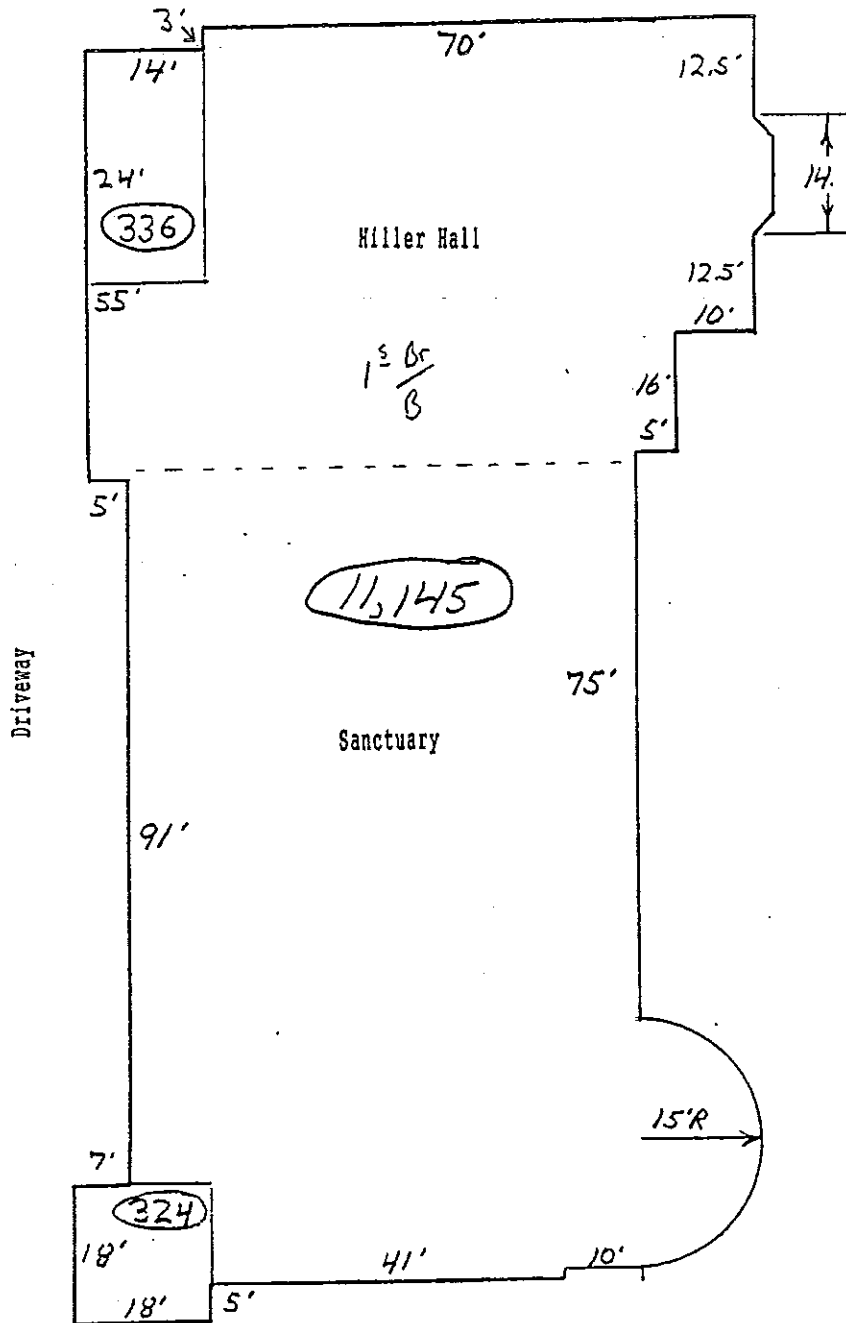
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4629

4628

Wooster Street

Parking

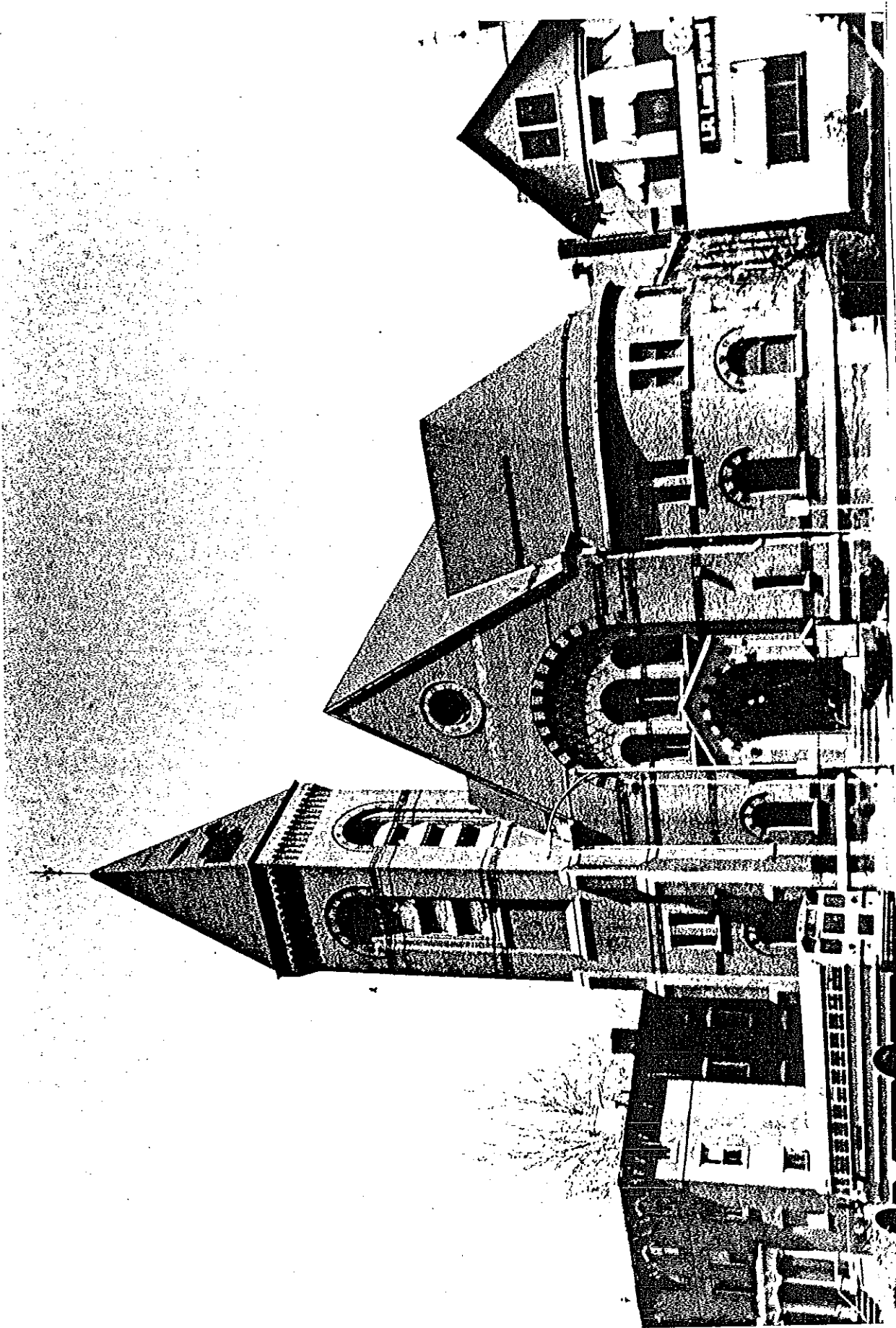


Main Street

Faith Congregational Church
Hartford CT

Ground Plan

Figure 1



1. Facade and General view northeast