CONNECUT

HICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
8th Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
56 3005

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
TOWN NO.: 18
QUAD:
DISTRICT: 5
NR: ACTUAL
POTENTIAL

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM
buildings and Structures

TIFICATION
LDING NAME: Common: Old North Church Historic: Fourth Meeting House of First Church of Christ
TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: COUNTY: Middlesex
SHEET & NUMBER (and/or location): 706-712 Main Street
OWNER(S): Edward J. Bransfield et al. PUBLIC X PRIVATE
USE: Present: Apartments and storefronts Historic: Church
ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: X yes no Interior accessible: X yes, explain with owner's permission no

CIPTION
STYLE OF BUILDING: Federal DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1799
MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
- clapboard under asphalt - asbestos siding
- wood shingle siding - asphalt siding
- board & batten
- aluminum siding
- other:

STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
- wood frame: X post and beam - balloon
- load bearing masonry - structural iron or steel
- other:

ROOF: type:
- gable - flat
- gambrel
- shed
- hip
- mansard
- monitor
- round
- sawtooth
- other

material:
- wood shingle
- roll asphalt
- tin
- slate
- other:

APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 45' x 70'

NUMBER OF STORIES: 3

CONDITION: Structural: X excellent - good - fair - deteriorated
- excellent
- good
- fair
- deteriorated

EXTERIOR: X

INTEGRITY: Location: on original site X moved, when: 1822; 1873
Alterations: no X yes, explain: Steeple removed; interior divided into apartments; asphalt siding

RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
- barn
- shed
- garage
- carriage house
- shop
- garden
- other landscape features or buildings: alley on south side to parking area in rear (east)

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
- open land
- woodland
- residential
- scattered buildings visible from site
- commercial
- industrial
- rural
- high building density

INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: This former meeting house was originally located on the west side of Main Street between College and Court Streets. It was moved in 173 to its present site on the east side of the north end of Main Street. The rear of the original structure is now the front or street facade. Storefront additions and brick patterned asphalt siding have altered the original appearance so that it blends inconspicuously with the
17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior):

Bevelled wooden quoins
Palladian window west facade (visible from interior only)
Main columns visible in attic
Original clapboards under asphalt siding

SIGNIFICANCE
Architect: probably Lavius Fillmore  Builder: probably Lavius Fillmore

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: This building was erected in 1799 as the fourth meeting house of the First Ecclesiastical Society in Middletown. This Congregational society was formally established in 1668, and is one of the oldest in the State. Enoch Huntington, a scholar and a leading local patriot during the Revolution, was pastor at the time this structure was built. He served as pastor for 47 years.

The overall design of the church is derived from Asher Benjamin's Country Builder's Assistant, a popular architectural copybook of the period. In its original form it was of the type with its major axis perpendicular to the street, a high pulpit at the narrow end opposite the entrance, and the steeple tower arising from the roof. Architectural historian J. Frederick Kelly attributes the "greater delicacy and refinement of scale" and "an improved feeling for mass and proportion" exhibited by churches of this type in part to the "remarkable ability of men of the builder-architect school." The design of this church bears close similarities to churches in East Haddam and Norwich, Connecticut, and in Middlebury and Bennington, Vermont, which are attributed to the important builder-architect Lavius Fillmore. There is a strong possibility that he was (see continuation sheet)

PHOTOGRAPH
photographer: John E. Reynolds
date: 7/78  view: east
negative on file: Roll 29, #23A

COMPILED BY:
name: J.E. Reynolds  date: 5/78
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19. SOURCES: Middletown Land Records; Middletown City Directories; A.W. Hazen, A Brief History of the First Church of Christ in Middletown, Connecticut (Middletown: 1920); Jesse Alsop "First Church," Old Houses of Connecticut Series (FERA 1935); Records (see continuation sheet)

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS:

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:

X none known  __ highwyaes  ___ vandalism  ___ developers  ___ other:
___ renewal  ___ private  ___ deterioration  ___ zoning  ___ explanation:
neighboring commercial buildings on the block.

This church has been moved twice; the first time in 1822 when it was moved back eight feet from its original site as it was thought to be too close to Main Street. The steeple was removed and the building moved to its present site in 1873. It was placed with its original entrance at the rear of the new site. The audience room was used as a meeting hall for St. Mary's Total Abstinence and Benevolent Society. It later housed small businesses and part of the interior was converted into apartments. It presently is a tenement with commercial space on Main Street.

Much of the original fabric remains, including the denticulated/modillioned cornices, wooden quoins, and clapboards underneath the present asphalt siding. A Palladian window (now boarded up) behind the original location of the pulpit can be seen from the interior.

This is the last public building from the 18th century remaining in Middletown. It is a building of great architectural distinction and is probably the work of one of New England's most important builder-architects, Lavius Fillmore. Present City plans for its restoration and reuse are a key to the revitalization of the north end of Middletown.
Fourth Meeting House of First Church of Christ
710-712 Main Street (formerly #706-712)
Middletown, CT 06457