STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106
(203) 566-3005

STORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM
for Buildings and Structures

ENTIFICATION

1. BUILDING NAME: Common: Catholic Charities Bldg. Historic: Sisters of Mercy Convent
2. TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: ____________ COUNTY: Middlesex
3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 33 St. John's Square
4. OWNER(S): Diocese of Norwich ____________ PUBLIC x PRIVATE
5. USE: Present: Office: parish hall (rear) Historic: Nunnery
6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: x yes no Interior accessible: x yes, explain administrative offices no

DESCRIPTION

7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Victorian Italianate
8. MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
   __ clapboard __ asbestos siding x brick
   __ wood shingle __ asphalt siding __ fieldstone
   __ board & batten __ stucco __ cobblestone
   __ aluminum siding __ concrete: type: __ cut stone: type: brownstone foundation
9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
   __ wood frame __ post and beam __ balloon
   x load bearing masonry __ structural iron or steel
   __ other: __ other:
0. ROOF: type:
   __ gable __ flat __ mansard __ monitor __ sawtooth
   x gambrel __ shed __ hip __ round __ other
   __ material:
   __ wood shingle __ roll asphalt __ tin __ x slate
   __ asphalt shingle __ built up __ tile __ other:
1. NUMBER OF STORIES: 3
2. APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 50'x50'; Chapel, rear 70'x30'
3. CONDITION: Structural: x excellent __ fair __ deteriorated
   Exterior: __ excellent __ fair __ deteriorated
4. INTEGRITY: Location: x on original site __ moved, when:
   Alterations: __ no __ x yes, explain: Gothic Revival chapel added (rear) c. 1905; belfry enclosed
5. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
   __ barn __ shed __ garage __ x other landscape features or buildings: Religious
   __ carriage house __ shop __ garden
6. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
   x open land __ woodland __ residential
   __ commercial __ industrial __ rural
   __ scattered buildings visible from site __ high building density
7. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: The easternmost of the four St. John's buildings at the north end of Main Street, the Catholic Charities building overlooks the highway, railroad tracks, and distantly, the river. It is related in style and function to the other three church buildings, which, taken together, form an impressive terminus for Main street.
17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior):
A Pyramidal-based cupola surmounted by a Celtic Cross carries the vertical lines of the pavilion upward through the cornice.
Ornate columned entrance porch

SIGNIFICANCE

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: In 1872 a priest was sent to Ireland to solicit the help of the Sisters of Mercy order in re-establishing St. John's parochial school (first begun in 1855). They arrived in the same year, even before this convent building, being prepared for their use, was completed. The sisters also established St. Elizabeth's Academy, a private school that was conducted in the convent with success for nineteen years. A Gothic Revival chapel was added to the rear of the convent around 1905. The building today houses the Sisters of Mercy nuns; is the office for Catholic charities; and is used as a parish hall and community center.

The building is a three-story brick structure, square in plan. A variety of Victorian-era stylistic details are used: the bracketed roof cornice is Italianate; the ornate entrance porch features a balustrade and sets of triple columns; the chapel added in the rear shows Gothic elements. The Catholic Charities building, along with its sister structures, forms a coordinated religious and educational complex that is important to Middletown's historical and architectural heritage.

PHOTOGRAPH
photographer: Elizabeth Loomis

date: 2/79 view: southwest

negative on file: Roll 59, #22

COMPILLED BY:

name: Roger Sherman date: 6/78
organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
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See also "St. John's Church," GMPT Survey Report, 1978

20. subsequent field evaluations:

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:

none known X highways vandalism developers other:
renovation private deterioration zoning explanation: Nearby road and rail traffic cause vibrations harmful to masonry construction. The retaining wall has required frequent rebuilding.