

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY			
TOWN NO.:		SITE NO.:	
UTM:	18/	/	/
QUAD:			
DISTRICT:	S	NR:	ACTUAL POTENTIAL

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM
For Buildings and Structures

IDENTIFICATION

- 1. BUILDING NAME: Common: Russell Library Historic: Christ Church
- 2. TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: _____ COUNTY: Middlesex
- 3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 119 Broad Street
- 4. OWNER(S): Russell Library Company PUBLIC PRIVATE
- 5. USE: Present: Public Library Historic: Church
- 6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: yes no
Interior accessible: yes, explain public library no

DESCRIPTION

- 7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Gothic Revival DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1833, remodelled 1874
- 8. MATERIAL(S) (indicate use or location when appropriate):
 clapboard asbestos siding brick
 wood shingle asphalt siding fieldstone
 board & batten stucco cobblestone
 aluminum siding concrete: type: _____ cut stone: type: brownstone
 other: iron porch columns random cut rubble
- 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
 wood frame: post and beam balloon
 load bearing masonry structural iron or steel
 other: _____
- 10. ROOF: type:
 gable flat mansard monitor sawtooth
 gambrel shed hip southwest tower round other cupola on main roof
material:
 wood shingle roll asphalt tin slate cupola
 asphalt shingle built up tile other: _____
- 11. NUMBER OF STORIES: 2 (tower 3) APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 60'x116' (northwest wing 30'x41'; entrance porch 25'x30'
- 12. CONDITION: Structural: excellent good fair deteriorated
Exterior: excellent good fair deteriorated
- 13. INTEGRITY: Location: on original site moved, when:
Alterations: no yes, explain: Gothic Revival renovation 1874 see #18 ; north-west wing added 1930
- 14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:
 barn shed garage other landscape features or buildings: affiliated children's library to north
 carriage house shop garden
- 15. SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:
 open land woodland residential scattered buildings visible from site
 commercial industrial rural high building density

16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: Russell Library occupies the north-west corner of the intersection at Court and Broad Streets. Its substantial Gothic appearance is unique to the small scale residential character of the area; this singularity is emphasized by the prominent corner site.

17. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING OR SITE (interior and/or exterior):

Russell Family Arms in stained glass window east facade

SIGNIFICANCE

Architect: _____

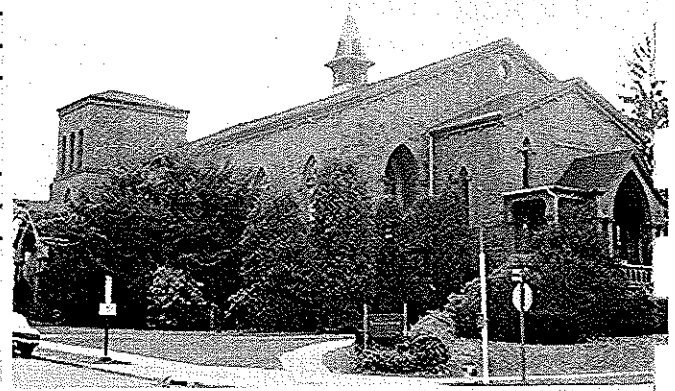
Builder: Barzillai Sage (original structure)

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: This building was erected in 1833 as an Episcopal Church. It originally was of a Greek Revival temple form, with a steeple, and east portico of four Doric columns supporting a heavy entablature. A subsequent Gothic renovation in 1874 created a new building stylistically and functionally. The portico was enclosed, a new entrance porch was added, a tower was built at the southwest corner of the building, and the window frames were topped with Gothic arches. At the same time the interior was converted to library use, including a public auditorium (removed 1918). Despite the thoroughness of the stylistic adaptation much of the symmetry of the original Greek Revival form is retained. The property was remodelled, endowed, and donated to the city by Frances Ann Russell to commemorate her husband Samuel Wadsworth Russell. It continues to operate according to her wishes.

The decade of the 1870's witnessed the construction of a number of monumental Gothic Revival structures in Middletown. Stylistically the adaptation of this building was part of that trend. Through its massive appearance and atypical function, the Russell Library maintains a relationship to its neighborhood similar to that of the old Middletown High School to the upper Court Street area. (see continuation sheet)

PHOTOGRAPH

photographer: Robert Svec
date: 12/77 view: southeast
negative on file: Roll 4, #32A



COMPILED BY:

name: John E. Reynolds date: 3/78
organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust
address: 27 Washington St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

19. SOURCES: Middletown Land Records; Middletown Tribune: Souvenir Edition (Middletown: 1896); Jesse Alsop, "Russell Library", "Church of Holy Trinity", Old Houses of Connecticut Series (FERA, 1935); Connecticut State Historical Commission Survey (1970)

20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS:

21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:

none known highways vandalism developers other: _____
 renewal private deterioration zoning explanation: _____

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: 18 Date: 3/78

Russell Library
119 Broad St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

#18

Although a library was established in Middletown as early as 1797, it was not until Mrs. Russell's memorial gift in 1874 that a free library was provided to serve the citizens of Middletown. The Russell Library's location in the center of town was chosen partly to provide convenient services for Middletown citizens and to encourage the use of the library's facilities.

Since 1835 this large and imposing building has visually anchored its corner of Broad and Court Streets. The structure's stylistic transformation from Greek Revival to Gothic Revival illustrates the changing tastes of succeeding generations in choosing an appropriate appearance for a public building.

The Russell Library has operated continuously for over a century. In its role as an institution of public service it is a familiar landmark with sentimental attachment to generations of Middletown's citizens.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Item number: _____ Date: 1/90

Russell Library
123 Broad Street (formerly #119)
Middletown, CT 06457

