

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
5 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: St. Johns R.C. Church Historic: same
- 2. TOWN/CITY: Middletown VILLAGE: \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY: Middlesex
- 3. STREET & NUMBER (and/or location): 9 St. John's Square
- 4. OWNER(S): Diocese of Norwich PUBLIC PRIVATE
- 5. USE: Present: Church Historic: same
- 6. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: x yes no  
Interior accessible: x yes, explain religious services no

DESCRIPTION

- 7. STYLE OF BUILDING: Gothic Revival DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: Church: 1852  
Spire: 1864

- 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: \_\_\_\_\_      random ashlar

- 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       round       other Spire  
material:  
 wood shingle       roll asphalt       tin       slate  
 asphalt shingle       built up       tile       other: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. NUMBER OF STORIES: 3 APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS: 112'x40' (sacristy 30'x40')

- 2. CONDITION: Structural:  excellent       good       fair       deteriorated  
Exterior:  excellent       good       fair       deteriorated

- 3. INTEGRITY: Location:  on original site  moved, when: \_\_\_\_\_  
Alterations:  no  yes, explain: Three renovations (See #18)

- 14. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS OR LANDSCAPE FEATURES:  
 barn       shed       garage       other landscape features or buildings: Low brownstone  
 carriage house       shop       garden      parapet around entrance grounds; Cemetary  
(rear); Auxiliary buildings

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

16. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS: St. John's Church dominates St. John's Square, which, in turn, is the northern terminus of Main Street. The church with its tall spire is flanked by auxiliary buildings that are related to the church in architectural details such as slate roofs, brownstone lintels, and low parapets around the small front lawns. Taken as a whole, these four buildings devoted to religious use form an impressive visual boundary for Middletown's chief thoroughfare.

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

- Tower and spire
- Compound Gothic arch doorways
- Ornate stained-glass windows in gable end and tower base (from Innsbruck, Austria)
- Gabled brick entrance arch to cemetery; connects church to school
- Heavy paneled wood entrance doors

**SIGNIFICANCE**

Architect: \_\_\_\_\_ Builder: \_\_\_\_\_

18. HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: Middletown had few Roman Catholics until the middle 1830's. Since many of the communicants were Portland quarry workers, a small building there was set up as a Catholic Church. In 1841 two acres of land on the current site were purchased. Barzillai Sage, prominent Middletown builder, built a brick church here, completing it in April, 1843. Almost immediately it was apparent that a larger sanctuary was needed. Portland quarry owners donated the brownstone, and sales of cemetery lots to parishioners added to the building fund. This larger edifice, the current church, was dedicated for worship services in the fall of 1852.

The parish grew fast with the influx of Irish immigrants. The chronology of the building process goes as follows:

- 1843: first brick church (now sacristy) built
- 1852: current brownstone church blessed
- 1864: tower and spire completed; rectory built
- 1873: convent finished
- 1888: parochial school dedicated

The complex was essentially completed by 1888. (see continuation sheet)

**PHOTOGRAPH**

photographer: Roger Sherman  
 date: 10/78 view: south  
 negative on file: Roll 43, #2



**COMPILED BY:**

name: Roger Sherman date: 4/78  
 organization: Greater Middletown Preservation Trust  
 address: 27 Washington St., Middletown, Ct. 06457

19. SOURCES: H.F. Donlan, Middletown Tribune: Sou-  
venir Edition (Middletown: 1896); J.B. Beers, His-  
tory of Middlesex County, (New York: 1884); Edward  
J. McKenna, "Centennial Booklet (Middletown: 1943);  
 See also "Parochial School," "Rectory," and "Con-

**20. SUBSEQUENT FIELD EVALUATIONS:**

**21. THREATS TO BUILDING OR SITE:**

none known  highways\*  vandalism  developers  other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 renewal  private  deterioration  zoning  explanation: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Vibrations from the heavy rail and road traffic, as well as pollution from these sources, have been an ongoing problem for St. John's.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY FORM  
for Buildings and Structures

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

Form number: 18 Date: 4/78

St. Johns R.C. Church  
9 St. John's Square, Middletown, Ct. 06457

The present sanctuary is constructed of roughly squared brownstone laid in a random-coursed ashlar pattern. The building is done in the ecclesiastic Gothic Revival style. The 1852 completion date makes it the earliest building of this style in Middletown.

Exterior features include compound Gothic arches over doors and windows, a cut brownstone water-table, and buttresses strengthening the outer walls. A nearly freestanding tower at the southwest corner supports a tall, slate-roofed spire.

Inside, the building plan is simple but commodious -- the main auditorium seats one thousand worshippers. There is an aisled nave delineated by molded cast stone pillars supporting lofty groined arches. The interior walls were frescoed in 1864 by William Borgett of Middletown. The paintings were renewed in 1962 during a renovation under the direction of Monsignor Edward J. McKenna, the current pastor. On the west wall the Twelve Stations of the Cross are set off in arched niches containing figurines in low relief. With walls of light tan and ceilings of sky blue, the effect is one of light and airiness embellished by artistic renderings of religious symbols.

The church is the largest and most important of the four buildings in the St. John's complex. With its towering spire and impressive mass, it functions as the focal point of the religious, educational and residential buildings grouped along St. John's Square. Further, the structure serves as a dramatic architectural marker for the north end of Main Street.