United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking 'x' in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Church Home

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 123 Retreat Avenue

city, town Hartford

state Connecticut code CT county Hartford code 003 zip code 06106

3. Classification

Ownership of Property
☑ private
☑ public-local
☑ public-State
☑ public-Federal

Category of Property
☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

1 buildings

1 sites

1 structures

1 objects

1 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination [x] 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. See continuation sheet.

October 17, 1988

Signature of certifying official

Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

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.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☒ determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain) ______________________________________________________

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/institutional housing

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/institutional housing

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival/Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brownstone
walls Brick
roof Asphalt/slate
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Church Home is a brick structure built in two sections, 1898 and 1928 (Photograph 1), by the Episcopal Church to provide care for the elderly. It is located on Retreat Avenue, a busy street south of Hartford's central business district, in a neighborhood dominated by Hartford Hospital and the Institute of Living. The integrity of the Church Home is excellent. It continues to fulfill its original function, accommodating 24 residents.

The 1898 section of The Church Home is a 2½-story ell-shaped block designed by George Keller in the Classical Revival style, with a 2-story portico, quoins, and roof-line balustrade. (Photograph 2) Aside from the loss of the balustrade and the addition of the 1928 wing to the west, the building remains substantially unchanged.

The Church Home's great projecting 2-story wooden porch has Tuscan columns at the first floor, Scamozzi columns above, with ramped railing and dentil course at both levels. (Photograph 3) The cornice and raking cornices are enriched by mutules while the center of the tympanum is occupied by a semi-elliptical window surrounded by enframement with key block. The capitals of the upper columns are decorated with Maltese crosses at the echinus. (Photograph 4) The entrance at the first floor is off center to the right under a semi-elliptical transom and leads to a foyer and wide glazed front door. An elliptical window is to the left.

The 6-over-6 windows are regularly spaced above a high brownstone basement. Shed dormers have been added in the front slope of the hipped roof and a 1-story addition projects on the east elevation, but generally the original effect continues. The big gable-roofed dormer has a triple window with arched central transom between the eaves returns. (Photograph 5)

At the north elevation is a hipped-roof porch with square columns. Since it has a standing-seam metal roof like the roof of the addition on the east elevation, the porch may not be original. (Photograph 6) The main roof is now covered with asphalt shingles.

The 1928 addition designed by Smith & Bassette in the Colonial Revival style extends to the west. Its windows continue the 6-over-6 sash, here with key blocks, in seven regularly spaced bays. The central group of three recessed bays at the first floor features French doors under arched fanlights.
that open onto a narrow terrace now obscured by shrubbery. Steps from the
terrace come down to a serpentine walk leading to the garden west of the
building. Peaked dormers in the slate roof have small-paned double case-
ment windows and slate siding. (Photograph 1) Fenestration continues regu-
larly around the building to the rear elevation where an altered 2-story
porch protects an arched rear entrance. (Photograph 7)

The front entrance leads to a large central hall whose chief feature is
a gracious central stairway framed by an Ionic screen. (Photograph 8)
A side hall to the left has on its front wall a tier of cupboards and 32-
inches deep drawers for the residents' use. (Photograph 9) An identical bank
of cupboards and drawers is located directly above on the second floor.

To the right of the front hall is the drawing room, which has a
large fireplace with a Colonial Revival mantel, and, at the north end
behind an Ionic screen and sliding doors, an altar. This space serves
as the chapel. (Photo 10) The dining room is to the rear of the drawing
room in the beginning of the ell. Its fireplace is flanked by free-standing
columns. The dining room was enlarged in 1928. The new section is identi-
fiable by its grouped windows and by its china cupboards with arched glaz-
ing. (Photograph 11) The kitchen at the rear of the ell still displays
its original pressed metal ceiling. Between the ceiling and the dining
room is the butler's pantry with original cupboards and dumb waiter (still
operable). (Photograph 12)

On the second floor, over the first-floor hall, there is a central
hall or community room, that opens onto the porch. Bedrooms are large
and well appointed. (Photograph 13)

On the first floor of the 1928 addition is a large room called the libra
It is lighted by the three arched French doors and has a fireplace with
bolection moldings at each end. (Photograph 14) The basic floor plan of
both floors of the wing is a conventional central corridor with rooms on
either side. (Photograph 14) The bedrooms are small. (Photograph 15)

Third-floor rooms of both sections may originally have been occupied
by residents and/or staff. Now they are apartments, not used by residents.
The basement of the original building has a high ceiling. Under the front
block the space is divided by two brick bearing walls pierced by segmental
arches. (Photograph 17) The laundry room, with original tubs, is still in
place under the kitchen (but not used).
The Church Home is significant architecturally because the original building was a successful institutional design in the Colonial Revival style by George Keller, Hartford's leading 19th century architect, and because it was later expanded with a complimentary Colonial Revival-style addition by Smith & Bassette, who were the most prominent firm in the city in their time. The Church Home possesses a high degree of architectural integrity.

Historical Note

The Church Home of Hartford was chartered by special act of the Connecticut General Assembly in 1876¹ "for the purpose of encouraging and administering charities...under the direction of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Connecticut." The Bishop of the Diocese of Connecticut is the chairman of The Church Home. The mission statement has been refined over the years and now reads, "The purpose of The Church Home of Hartford is to provide a dignified and congenial residence for elderly persons." After more than a century when the "persons" were required to be female, both men and women now reside on the premises.

Operations were started promptly in June of 1876 with the rental of a house at 103 Elm Street. This soon proved to be inadequate, and a larger home on Bellevue Street was purchased in June 1880. During these 19th-century years the affairs of The Church Home were looked after by a Board of Trustees, who managed financial matters, and a Standing Committee, which oversaw day-to-day operations. Members of the Standing Committee expressed their interest and commitment by making practical gifts, as noted in the annual reports, of such items as 3½ dozen eggs and six yards of linen for making towels. Now, a Board of Directors, of which the president, a layman, is chief executive officer, is in charge of all aspects of operations. The bishop continues as chairman.

The question of further improvement in physical facilities claimed the attention of the Standing Committee, as recorded in the minutes, in 1895. After due deliberation, the Barnard property² on Retreat Avenue was pur-
West Hartford. Their addition to the Church Home fits well into this genre.

The gambrel-roofed 1928 building respects the original by maintaining its height and by continuing the cornice line with dentil course. The setback of its front elevation consciously positions the new structure as the addition, avoiding any challenge to the original facade. The two work well together, each being clearly identifiable. The central arched openings to the library give focus to the design of the elevation while articulating the first-floor plan. The key blocks of these openings and of the windows, the row of peaked dormers, and the line of four tall chimneys all successfully evoke their Georgian precedents. On the interior the library is a gracious room in an otherwise conventional but eminently functional plan.

1General Assembly, May Session, 1876, House Joint Resolution No. 169.

2A photograph of the John Barnard House hangs in the hall of the Church Home. It was a 5-bay, central-chimney, central-doorway saltbox built in 1673. At the time of its demolition to make way for the Church Home, it was considered to be the oldest house standing in Hartford.

3The Wethersfield building is also in the Colonial Revival style, designed by Carl J. Malmfeldt.

4George Beach built and maintained the home as an individual. Only by his will did title to the property pass to a board. This arrangement is a further example of the personal nature of 19th-century philanthropy.

5In 1941 the George Beach Home moved to 370-374 Wethersfield Avenue but again suffered the experience of demolition, this time for Bulkeley High School, in the late 1960s. The present building on Allyn Place was constructed at that time.
9. Major Bibliographical References


The Church Home. Annual Reports and Minutes of Standing Committee.

☐ See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.24

UTM References

| A 18 | 8 9 2 8 6 0 | 4 6 2 4 6 0 |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |

| B | | |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |

| C | | |
| Northing |

| D | | |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is city parcel No. 414-001-003.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The bounds of the property are the same as those that existed when the building was built, except for a few square feet at the north sold to Hartford Hospital in 1941.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

Name/title: David F. Ransom, Consultant

Organization: Connecticut Historical Commission

Street & number: 59 South Prospect Street

City or town: Hartford

Date: April 22, 1988

Telephone: 203 566-3005

State: CT

Zip code: 06106

☐ See continuation sheet