

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received JUN 2 1983

date entered

**1. Name**

historic Saints Cyril and Methodius Church

and/or common " " " " "

**2. Location**

street & number 63 Governor Street N/A not for publication

city, town Hartford N/A vicinity of congressional district 1st

state Connecticut code 09 county Hartford code 001

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name SS Cyril and Methodius Church of Hartford

street & number 55 Charter Oak Avenue

city, town Hartford N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City and Town Clerk, Municipal Building

street & number 550 Main Street, Room 104

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

State Register of Historic Places  
title

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Saints Cyril and Methodius Church is a Roman Catholic Church of Romanesque design on Governor Street in Hartford. An isolated structure, it faces eastwards on Governor Street, on a lot rising to the west. The building is rectangular in plan, about 75' by 150', the facade three bays in width, the nave five bays in length. Foundations of granite ashlar with a limestone water table support brick masonry constructed in a variant of the stretcher bond. The gable roof terminates in a large tower which dominates the facade. (Photograph 1). A transept with gable roof intersects the nave, as does a smaller, though similar, narthex. The nave is one story in height, the narthex two. (Photograph 2).

The facade consists of the central tower flanked by the extended wings of the narthex. Polygonal buttresses separate the tower from the narthex wings. A molded limestone belt course defines the stories of the narthex. Granite stairs lead to three front entrances. (Photograph 1). Compound rounded arches over the doors are supported by Corinthian columns. Archivolts are decorated with modelled foliate designs and incised geometric designs. A semi-circular transom over each door has circular moldings with glass panes. Doors are panelled with round headed arches set into the central panel and a circular design in the upper panel. (Photograph 3).

The central tower, projecting slightly from the facade, has an inset within which two rounded arches contain paired windows. The lowest windows are bricked in. Above these are round headed windows with circular windows immediately above. The upper windows are also round headed and contain a circular window in the spandrel between each pair. Beneath the cornice is an arcaded corbel table formed of intersecting round arches. The tower is surmounted by an octagonal spire. Gables with finials are applied to the base of the spire on four sides. Pedestals for pinnacles are found at each corner of the tower, although none are present. (Photograph 1).

The nave windows are round headed with labelled hood molds of limestone. Semicircular transoms are of similar design to those above the front door. An arcaded corbel table is carried throughout the length of the nave. Two dormers with Romanesque style windows are let into either side of the gable roof. The gabled ends of the transept are flanked by pinnacled buttresses. (Photograph 2).

The interior of SS Cyril and Methodius Church is that of a basilica, with a transept intersecting the nave to form a latin cross (see drawing of floor plan). Groin vaulted aisles flank either side of the nave. (photographs 4 and 5). Columns supporting the aisles have steel cores and are treated to appear like porphyry. Capitals are of gilt plaster in a foliate pattern of Romanesque inspiration. (Photograph 6). Spandrels above the arches contain murals of Polish saints executed by artist Vincent Mundo of New Haven in 1937.

The nave terminates in a semicircular sanctuary with round arched stained glass windows. (Photograph 7). Spandrels are painted in foliate designs with

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medallions bearing religious portraits. The spandrels on either side bear the images of the patron saints of the church, Cyril and Methodius, above which are painted the heraldic emblem of Poland, gules, an eagle displayed argent, crowned or. This is repeated above the choir loft. Stenciled decoration is utilized throughout the church on vaults, walls, and other members, Polish folk motifs as well as more conventionally derived designs being used. These and the rest of the interior decoration were damaged in the flood of 1936 and restored.

Interior doors are similar to the exterior doors. Gilt plaster moldings over arched door openings have foliated stops. (Photograph 8). Lighting fixtures were replaced in 1937, but are of an appropriate medieval revival design. Renovations in 1937 and 1976 resulted in few alterations to the fabric of the interior. Indeed, the effectiveness of the church interior, with its elaborate plasterwork and stenciling, has been carefully respected by the occupants. The exterior of the church, however, was sandblasted in 1976. The brick was given a weatherproof coating, and the limestone trim coated with thorseal.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1914-1916 **Builder/Architect** Timothy G. O'Connell

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

As an integral part of the Polish community in the Hartford area, and as a distinctive work of architecture, Saints Cyril and Methodius Church is locally significant. While a religious edifice, the church has served to provide a cohesive influence on Polish immigrants and their descendents in Hartford. A focal point for national feeling and pride, it has been instrumental in the adjustment of this immigrant group to its new surroundings, while maintaining its own cultural identity. (Criterion A). The church's function as an expression of Polish identity is manifested particularly in the iconography of the interior decoration. A unified and harmonious composition, the church building displays quality workmanship in both interior and exterior. (Criterion C). Comparative analysis of both decorative motifs, iconography, and architectural design with Polish antecedents, have the potential for yielding information on cultural change and assimilation. (Criterion D).

To understand the position of the Roman Catholic Church among the Polish immigrants to America, it is necessary to review briefly the Polish experience in Europe. In contrast to other Slavic groups, which accepted Greek Orthodox Christianity, Poland embraced Roman Catholicism in 966 A.D. Under the leadership of the Jagellon dynasty during the 14th-16th-centuries, the Kingdom of Poland expanded at the expense of neighboring states, including Russia. In the 17th- and 18th-centuries, however, Poland lost both territory and status, culminating in complete loss of independence through partition between Prussia, Russia, and Austria in 1795. Catholicism, deeply rooted in the Polish consciousness, was perceived by both Russian and Prussian authorities as inimical to their interests. The persecution which resulted reinforced the identification of Catholicism with Polish Nationalism. 1.

Economic and political instability in the late 19th and early 20th centuries lent impetus to large scale migration from the area of the former Polish state. Although from predominantly rural and agricultural areas, the Poles settled in large numbers in urban centers in America, seeking employment in industry. Invariably, a Roman Catholic parish would be organized among the Polish immigrants. Educational services in the form of parochial schools soon followed. Fraternal and benevolent societies were often formed under the aegis of the local parish. These developments were furthered by the establishment of the Polish Roman Catholic Union in 1874, a nationwide organization.

The Polish community in Hartford began with an influx of Poles into the Charter Oak Avenue and Governor Street area in 1889, drawn by employment opportunities in nearby factories. By 1897, Reverend Wladyslaw Kisielewicz

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Brown, F.J., and Roucek, M.S. One America. N.Y.: Prentice-Hall, 1945.  
 Fisher, H.H. America and the New Poland. N.Y.: The MacMillan Co., 1928.  
 McKenna, Anthony F. "A Block Survey with Supplementary Interviews of Hartford Poles," WPA Ethnic Groups Survey, July 24, 1940. In Archives, Ct. State Library  
SS Cyril and Methodius Church, 1902-1977. New Britain, Ct.: Art Press, Inc., 197

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 0.507

Quadrangle name Hartford North

Quadrangle scale 1: 24,000

### UMT References

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Commencing at a point on the east side of Governor Street located 225 feet from the intersection of Governor St. and Charter Oak Ave., NW 200 feet at 90°, Thence SW for 100' at 90°, thence SE to Governor, NE to start.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

N/A

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dale S. Plummer, National Register Nominations Consultant, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator  
 organization Connecticut Historical Commission date June 24, 1980

street & number 59 South Prospect Street

telephone 566-3005

city or town Hartford

state Connecticut

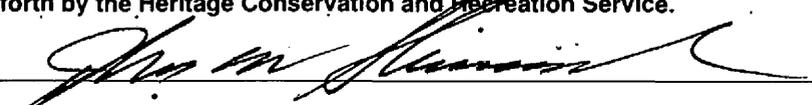
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service:

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

date May 16, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 6/30/83

Keoper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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was appointed to serve the Polish Catholic community, meeting in the lower hall of Saint Peter's Church at 180 Main Street. In 1902, under the leadership of Reverend Stanislaw Lozowski, a one-story church was built at 64 Charter Oak Avenue to house the 400 member congregation. A clapboarded building with triangular pediments above paired windows, it was reminiscent of the rural wooden churches of Poland. The name of the new church commemorated the brothers Cyril and Methodius, the first apostles to the Slavs in the 9th century, later canonized.

The phenomenal growth of the parish- from 400 in 1902 to 6,000 by 1916- the result of a new wave of immigrants from Poland, soon rendered the small church obsolete. A new building, the present Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, was commenced in 1914, and completed in 1916. A recruitment center for the Polish contingent of the American army being sent to France in World War I, the old church was sold to the Polish National Corporation. Remodelled into the White Eagle Hall, it was later demolished for parking. The site of the church grounds was used for construction of the Polish National Home in 1930.

As in other Polish settlements throughout the country, educational facilities followed. The SS Cyril and Methodius Parochial School was built on Governor Street in 1904. The Felician Sisters, a Polish religious order, were assigned as instructors. In 1912, a separate convent for their use was acquired on Charter Oak Place. A new school was provided on Groton Street in 1922, and a new convent, also on Groton Street, in 1964.

The design of SS Cyril and Methodius Church, by Boston architect Timothy G. O'Connell, may have been intended to reflect the East European origins of its congregation. By its distinctive brand of Romanesque architecture, the church is clearly differentiated from others in Hartford. Although it does not resemble any Polish prototype, a similar Church, St. Stanislaus, was erected in 1912 to serve a Polish parish in New Haven. The detailing and use of red brick contrasted with white stone is very similar, although the tower is placed asymmetrically to one side. SS. Cyril and Methodius with its central tower and spire possesses considerable visibility and a high degree of artistic merit. The presence of the central tower and of red brick and white stone is similar to usage in the contemporary Georgian Revival churches. In combining a number of disparate elements into a coherent whole, O'Connell displays an individualistic flair worthy of note.

The interior of the church, richly embellished with gilt plaster, stenciling, and religious figures, proclaims its identity as a Polish church much more strongly than the exterior. The Polish eagle and Polish saints adorn various surfaces. Folk designs of Polish origin, such as the heart-shaped motif, may be discerned in some of the stenciled decoration. The use of stenciling in itself may be an indication of cultural preference. The impact of the entire church interior invokes a sense of a different culture.

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As a cultural artifact, SS Cyril and Methodius Church offers the potential of further insight into the development of a distinctive Polish-American cultural entity. The introduction of a people from a rural and agricultural society into an urbanized and industrialized setting has important implications which have not been adequately explored. Replication of a village context in the new environment was not possible. The wooden, one-story church of the Polish countryside was inadequate for the growing numbers of immigrants. New institutions, too, different from those of rural Poland, had to be created. Only careful examination of the iconography and design of the new church building can reveal if these changes were also reflected in the church itself.

Footnotes.

1. H.H.Fisher. America and the New Poland. N.Y.: The MacMillan Co., 1928. On nationalism and religion in Poland, see pages 9-10. Also Czarnomski, Francis Bauer, The Polish Handbook. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1925, page 114.

SS CYRIL & METHODIUS CHURCH  
HARTFORD, CT. FLOOR PLAN  
NOT TO SCALE

