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RECEIVED	AUG 30 1978
DATE ENTERED	1 1978

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Temple Beth Israel

AND/OR COMMON Calvary Temple

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 21 Charter Oak Avenue

CITY, TOWN Hartford VICINITY OF First - William R. Cotter

STATE Connecticut COUNTY Hartford CODE 13

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: vacant

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Hartford Redevelopment Agency

STREET & NUMBER 550 Main Street

CITY, TOWN Hartford VICINITY OF STATE CT 06103

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Hartford Land Records, Municipal Building

STREET & NUMBER 550 Main Street

CITY, TOWN Hartford STATE CT 06103

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Hartford Architecture Conservancy's Architectural Survey of Hartford

DATE 1976-1978 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS The Stowe-Day Memorial Library

CITY, TOWN Hartford STATE CT 06105

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input 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

Temple Beth Israel, built in 1875-1876, is located in downtown Hartford half a block east of Main Street on the south side of Charter Oak Avenue, one-half mile south of the center of the city. The neighborhood has a mixture of commercial and residential uses. Because of urban renewal a large parking lot faces the Temple across Charter Oak Avenue. East of the Temple on the same block, at the corner of Charter Oak Place, are two early 20th century apartment houses, one with retail stores at ground level, in good condition. An empty lot adjoins the temple to the west, and just beyond it at the corner of Main Street is a 19th century mercantile block that is empty and of uncertain future.

Several other historic structures are in the neighborhood. Next door to Temple Beth Israel to the east is the Hyde-St. John House (National Register, October 6, 1977). At the corner of Charter Oak Place is a monument marking the location of Connecticut's Charter Oak, where the Royal Charter was hidden from the King's emissary in 1687. Half a block north is the Amos Bull House (National Register, November 8, 1968). Half a block west is the South Congregational Church, which as been listed on the National Register. In addition, within a block of the Temple are the borders of three National Register districts: Buckingham Square, Charter Oak Place, and South Green.

Temple Beth Israel is a rectangular red brick building on brownstone foundations 60 feet in width and 85 feet in length set off center to the east on a 94 x 135 foot plot. The overall design is High Victorian eclectic with its major elements drawn from Romanesque architecture. The front (north) facade is dominated by two square towers, capped with octagonal domed cupolas, at the corners of the building. Between them the central composition focuses on an entrance of heavy, double wooden doors six feet above grade and reached by a broad flight of brownstone steps. Above the entrance is a five-section window. Both the entrance and its over window are framed by round stone columns with foliate capitals and molded round stone arches. The central composition is capped by a gabled dormer, originally covered by slate but now by asphalt shingles, that extends forward of the pitched roof. Companion single round-headed windows are at first and second floor levels in the towers. The facade is banded by string courses at sill and springing lines and at the eaves below a low brick parapet.

The side facades (east and west) have round-arched windows, without stone voussoirs, set in panels between brick pilasters below corbelled eaves. Originally the windows had leaded glass in a diamond pattern but this glazing, which was sympathetic to the overall design, has been replaced with rectangular wood muntins and with fanlights at the heads that give a Georgian effect.

In the rear (south) wall the principal element is an apse twelve feet deep, rectangular in plan but with a round-arch opening, flanked by round-headed windows matching those of the side walls.

The interior of the Temple is a large open space seating 600 people in plain wooden pews. At the front (south) in the apse is the recessed altar space. The wall of the altar, again under a round arch, has a stained glass rose window bearing the Ten Commandments in Hebrew,

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Hartford, CT

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with quatrefoil stained glass windows on either side. Under the windows is a blind arcade of three round arches supported by engaged columns that have foliate capitals similar to those on the front facade.

In the rear (north) is a choir loft.

The high ceiling of the center space has a flat center section with straight, sloping sections on either side, supported by three round trusses. The ceiling has been covered by acoustic tiles that are out of place historically but do provide the space with excellent acoustical qualities.

As originally built in 1875-1876 the width of the structure at the towers of the front facade and at the transepts in front of the altar was greater than the width of the nave in between them. In 1898 the seating capacity was increased by moving the walls of the nave out to the line of the towers and transepts. The original walls were replaced with arcades supported by rows of cast-iron columns. At each cast-iron column is a truss of straight and curved wooden members to support the new outboard roof section.

Beneath the sanctuary is a full basement only two or three feet below grade providing floor space, in small rooms, equivalent to that of the first floor.

The building presently is not being used but appears to be reasonably secure. No structural problems are evident.

When the congregation moved in 1935 to a new temple in West Hartford, the door of the ark was removed and taken along. It was built into the wall of the new office of the rabbi.

6 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1876/1899

BUILDER/ARCHITECT George Keller

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Temple Beth Israel is important architecturally because it is an unusual example of the early work of George Keller, Hartford's leading 19th century architect. It is the only church he designed in the High Victorian Romanesque idiom. The building also has significance in the history of the development of Hartford's Jewish community.

Born in Cork, Ireland, George Keller (1842-1935) emigrated with his family to New York City where he attended school to age 16. He received his early architectural training by working as a draughtsman in the offices of several practicing architects. At the end of the Civil War he came to Hartford as designer for the James G. Batterson Monument Works. In 1872, after participating in association with Batterson unsuccessfully in the design competition for Connecticut's New Statehouse, he opened his own office for the practice of architecture.

Keller's first commission of consequence was the Hartford County Jail on Seyms Street in Hartford. Here he used red brick with stone trim over brownstone foundations in 1872 much as he did three years later in Temple Beth Israel. The round attached columns with foliate capitals on either side of the front entrance are similar at both institutions, as are the engaged columns which separate sections of the windows. The same materials and decorative features are to be found in the Phelps House (1880) on Washington Street. The shape of the Temple's octagonal domed cupolas was used by Keller for the top of a tower in his 1883 Hartford Public High School. Thus, Keller used the same Victorian Romanesque materials and decorative features for a jail, residence, school, and temple, although he simultaneously was working in a Gothic style associated with English parish churches for other religious buildings. His Grace Episcopal Church, Windsor (1864?), Elizabeth Chapel (1875) and Northam Memorial Chapel (1882), Hartford, are all built with low masonry walls, steeply pitched roofs, heavy stone tracery in pointed arch windows, and single belfry or tower.

Keller's office buildings of this period, on the other hand, built in downtown Hartford within several blocks of the Temple were closer in appearance to the Temple. While the Phoenix National Bank (1874) and the Hartford City Gas Light Co. (1893) which did have mass similar to the Temple, were of stone, the Hartford Courant building (1880) was of red brick and had the round headed windows. Thus, so far as concerns the design of the front facade, Temple Beth Israel has more affinity with Keller's office buildings than with his churches and has unique interest for this reason. The resourceful way in which the expansion program, also thought to be Keller's work, was carried out is another element of major interest. The system of cast-iron columns and wooden straight and curved braces is not duplicated elsewhere in Keller's work.

The history of Congregation Beth Israel dates from 1843, the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

David F. Ransom, George Keller, Architect, Hartford: The Stowe-Day Foundation, 1978.

Theodore I. Lenn, ed., Binding the Generations Each to Each, One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Anniversary, West Hartford: The Congregation Beth Israel, 1968.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1

QUADRANGLE NAME Hartford North, Conn.

QUADRANGLE SCALE _____

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 69,31,40 4,62,54,30

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property nominated is a rectangular lot 94 x 135 feet bounded on the north by Charter Oak Avenue between Main Street and Charter Oak Place.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom

ORGANIZATION

Hartford Architecture Conservancy

DATE

January 28, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

65 Wethersfield Avenue

TELEPHONE

203 525 0279

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT 06114

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE August 18, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12/1/78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 12/1/78

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year in which the Connecticut General Assembly first made it legal for Jewish congregations to exist in the state. After meeting in a private home and then in several public halls, in 1854 a lot that had been purchased in Pearl Street with a view to constructing a synagogue was exchanged for the North Baptist Church at 942 Main Street. This building was dedicated two years later as Touro Hall, the first synagogue in Hartford. It was remodelled and enlarged in 1865 but damaged by fire in 1875, whereupon the congregation sold the property to the Cheney family. The Cheneys commissioned H. H. Richardson to design the Cheney Block (1876) here, a National Historic Landmark.

The cornerstone for the new Temple on Charter Oak Avenue, a fashionable part of town, was laid September 28, 1875. The Hartford Courant of that day gave this account of the proceedings: "The ceremony was all the more novel from the fact that it was the first time a cornerstone had been laid for a synagogue in the State of Connecticut.... There was a gathering of ten or twelve thousand people. The roofs and windows of buildings in the vicinity were crowded, and many carriages filled the streets around the site."

Completed at a cost of \$35,567, the new Temple was dedicated May 26, 1876. The congregation had a membership of 78. The enlarged Temple was rededicated January 6, 1899, when the membership numbered 125. In 1935 the congregation moved to West Hartford and sold the building to the Calvary Temple for \$31,000. In 1974 the Calvary Temple moved to West Hartford. The structure is now owned by the Hartford Redevelopment Agency.

The building on Charter Oak Avenue testifies to George Keller's sure hand for mass, scale, and proportion. It remains as a distinguished record of his early work, and of the history of its former occupants. Adaptive use proposals thus far have failed of fruition, but the Temple's sound condition and usable space make it eminently available for a new community enterprise.

Temple Beth Israel
Hartford, CT

AUG 30 1978

CHURCH OAK AVENUE

(2) (3) (4)

Temple
Beth
Israel



Scale: 1" = 50'

253

202

433

