National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form

1. Name
   Historic - Jonathon Newton Harris Residence
   Common - Palmer Hall, St. Albert's Hall
2. Location
   130 Broad Street
   New London, CT
3. Classification
4. Owner
5. Location of Legal Description
6. Representation in Existing Surveys
7. Description
8. Significance
9. Major Bibliographical References
10. Geographical Data
11. Form Prepared By
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

   Building Plan
   Geological Survey
   Photographs
**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

### 1. Name

historic  Jonathan Norton Harris Residence  
and/or common  Palmer Hall, St. Albert's Hall

### 2. Location

| street & number | 150 Broad Street | N/A  
| city, town | New London | N/A 
| state | Connecticut | code 09  

### 3. Classification

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### 4. Owner of Property

| name | The United Methodist Church of New London |
| street & number | 76 Huntington Street |
| city, town | New London | N/A 
| state | Connecticut |

### 5. Location of Legal Description

| courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. | New London City Clerk, Municipal Building |
| street & number | 131 Captain's Walk |
| city, town | New London | state Connecticut |

### 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

| title | State Register of Historic Places |
| has this property been determined eligible? | yes | no |
| date | 1975 |
| depository for survey records | Connecticut Historical Commission |
the color of a structural unit the greater is apparent resistance
to strain. In the times ranging from white to black are innumerable,
we have here again an unlimited gamut of color treatment for different
degrees of mechanical work to be expressed. 5.

Structural members should, in Bidlitz's opinion, be designed to reveal
their load-bearing function. On Corinthian capitals, he observed, "there
are too many leaves ... they are weak, drooping— not strong at all—and
so are its values." By contrast, the successive capitals of the Harris
residence have "tulip" leaves suggestive of strength. This was
further emphasized by the dark color of the brownstone set against the
stucco background. 7.

The Harris residence offers the opportunity of studying the application
of Bidlitz's principles to a domestic building. Most of his commissions
were ecclesiastical or commercial in nature. Of the domestic architecture
produced by Bidlitz, the most famous was the home of F. Parmly, Trenton,
a fanciful ecclesiastic structure. Other homes designed by Bidlitz included
a Stick style house in New Jersey, little of which is comparable to the
Harris residence. Rather, the commercial and public buildings designed by
Bidlitz are closer in feeling to the Harris residence. The Brooklyn
Academy of Music, also built in 1859, utilized similar window treatment.
The character of the building is monumental in nature, intended to impress
the onlooker with the dignity and status of the owner. It is this monu-
mentality which distinguishes the Harris residence and relates it to the
other works of Bidlitz.

The Jonathan Newton Harris residence is one of a group of Bidlitz-designed
buildings in New London which span the greater part of his working career
and a wide range of uses. The First Congregational Church, built in the
Gothic Revival style in 1850, was one of his early independent commissions.
In 1859, the Harris residence was designed in the Italian Villa style. The
Gothic Revival Bulkeley School followed in 1857. The First New London build-
ing Bidlitz was responsible for, the Harris Building, was constructed in the
Romanesque manner in 1854. In addition to buildings, Bidlitz designed the
monument for Jonathan Galt in 1856, still extant at Cedar Grove Cemetery.
Each of these exemplifies in a different manner the aesthetic principles of
Bidlitz, and reinforces the value of the remainder.

Footnotes:
H.D. Utley, 1895, page 677, written in 1860:

On a commanding eminence in Broad Street, J. Harris, Esq., the
present mayor of the city, has recently erected an elegant family
mansion, which is the highest and most conspicuous building in the
place, towering first into view from sea and land, and from all
points of the horizon. From its cupola, Sandy Hook Point and the Atlantic
ocean beyond Montauk, may be discerned.

& Co., 1850, plate XXVIII, opposite page 317, "A Villa in the Italian
United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet Item number Page

eliot Wright D. Cooly, a personal friend, in founding the Mount Hermon School and the Northfield Seminary in Massachusetts, and donated generously to support the establishment of the first hospital in New Boston in 1837.

With a will of $100,000, Harris bequeathed a school of science at Bowdoin University in Brunswick, Maine in 1855. At his death in 1866, Harris bequeathed funds to a charitable trust which continues to the present day.

Leopold BIDLITZ, who designed both Harris’ home in 1855 and a large Richard-senian Romanesque commercial structure for Harris in 1864, was a major figure in 19th-century American architecture. A native of Czechoslovakia, Bidlitz immigrated to the United States as a young man and found employment as a draftsman with Richard J. Ogden in 1852. In 1855, Ogden designed an Italian Villa in Newport, Rhode Island for Harris. Harris’ Villa was still employed in this capacity. Published in 1897, “The Architecture of Country Houses,” the King, review received widespread publicity. The Harris Villa, designed by Bidlitz, is similar in its proportions to the villas of its components. The Villa, however, both is and are a striking contrast, both Neoclassical and Renaissance, create a balance.

The central core of the Harris residence, Bidlitz was strongly influenced by Ogden. 2.

While indebted to Ogden’s work, however, the Harris Villa bears Bidlitz’s own stamp. In contrast to the Renaissance detailing of the King Villa, Bidlitz drew upon medieval forms for door and window surrounds. In 3.

The Nature and Function of Art, Bidlitz referred the architectural heritage of the Greeks and Romans in their ideal. To express ideas, according to Bidlitz, architectural mass must be possible. The Gothic style of the Villa was, in his view, the only one which has succeeded in attaining this ideal. 3. The charmed and deeply molded window and door surrounds of the Harris residence are clearly derived from Bidlitz’s preoccupation with medieval architectural technique.

In Gothic or Christian architecture, states Bidlitz,

... all modelling of masses is accomplished by cutting away portions of these masses; by chamfering the corners of piers, jambs, arches, copings, bases, corbels, and other structural parts; or by modelling these chamfers into projecting and receding members, which by their form and arrangement express the function performed by the part so modelled. 4.

Although enamored of Gothic architecture, Bidlitz was not unaware of other traditions such as the Islamic. His attitude was eclectic, scornning those who sought to produce only pure versions of particular styles. The Italian villa he designed for Harris, combining Italian vernacular form with Gothic and even Islamic elements, manifests the eclectic methods of its creator.

Other features of the building also reflect Bidlitz’s theories. As constructed, the brickwork of the Harris residence was covered with white stucco, contrasting vividly with the brownstone surrounds of windows and entrances. The effect intended in a psychological one, relying on Bidlitz’s theory concerning color:

... the more coarse and prominent the crystallization of matter the deeper are the shadows on its surface, and the darker its general tone. This gives us a clue to the relation existing between the apparent virility of matter and its color. The deeper
8. Significance

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Specific dates 1859-60  [Further details about the specific dates are not provided in the image.]

Builder/Architect Lewis Crandall, builder, Leopold Eidlitz, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Jonathan Newton Harris residence was the home of a prominent businessman, political leader, and philanthropist, reflecting the status of its owner by its ostentatious style and location. Jonathan Newton Harris was a local merchant who became associated with the marketing and sale of patent medicine on an international scale. Harris also invested in coal mines, railroads, and steamships. After New London from 1855 to 1860, he was later a state representative and senator until personal scandal forced his retirement from politics in 1865. Harris was also a noted philanthropist, and gave generous contributions to various local, national, and international organizations. (Criterion E). The Harris residence is an important example of the work of Leopold Eidlitz, a major 19th-century American architect. It displays an influence with the Newport residence in Newport, Rhode Island, designed by Richard Upjohn while Eidlitz was in his employ. The design of the Harris residence, however, incorporates only of the aesthetic principles expected by Eidlitz in the nature and function of art. In its eclectic design, in the use of color to emphasize structural function, and in the powerful modelling of architectural details, the Harris home expresses the aesthetic ideals of its architect. The presence nearby of other buildings— a church, a school, and a commercial building—by Eidlitz, Lewis added value to the Harris residence. (Criterion C).

The career of Jonathan Newton Harris is a remarkable example of social mobility. Born to a large and impoverished farm family in Salem, Connecticut in 1815, Harris entered the grocery business in 1838, at the age of 23, with a capital investment of $100. Expanding his merchandising into the sale of farm equipment and supplies, hardware, iron, and steel, Harris amassed a considerable fortune in the retail trade by his retirement in 1865. Harris' major success, however, was in the patent medicine field. In 1848, Harris established, with Perry Davis, the firm of J.J. Harris & Co. at Cincinnati, Ohio, to market the Davis Pain Killer. He is also organized with others The Holloway's Radical Manufacturing Co. of Montreal and served as director of the Davis & Lawrence Co. of Montreal. Other investments included partnership in the Hill & Harris coal mine at Johnson City, Pennsylvania and large shareholdings in local banks, railroads, and steamboat companies.

From 1856 to 1862, Harris served as Mayor of New London. It was during this period that he purchased the highest point in the City of New London and constructed his Italian Villa. 1. After serving as a state representative and then state senator, Harris' political career was destroyed by a sensational divorce trial in 1865, when both Harris and his wife countersued for divorce. The National Police Gazette published front-page illustrations of both parties and of the Harris' Italian Villa, dubbed the "Pain Killer Villa."

Harris' subsequent career focused primarily on his international business activities. He was active in the VMI movement, organized the Comp
Most of the original interior doors survive. Doors have oak panelled arches and are inset in molded surrounds. (Photograph 10). Walls and ceilings are plastered and have covered cornice moldings. (Photograph 11). The ceiling of the tower has a plaster ceiling, with Gothic ornamentation in relief. Conversion of this room to a sanctuary has entailed the loss of this feature. Traces of gold leaf applied to panelling under the bay windows remains in this room.

The second floor rooms correspond in location to those of the first floor. Originally bedrooms, these rooms have been converted to church use.

The attic story contained servant’s quarters. The upper floor of the tower has an observation room from which New London Harbor and Long Island Sound are visible to the southeast. The ceiling of this room retains its original vaulted plaster ceiling with ribs and a central boss in plaster.

The interior of the J. R. Harris residence retains significant elements of the original room layout and decorative scheme, despite numerous alterations. The exterior appearance has changed little, but for the removal of the stucco finish. The outbuildings once associated with the estate, a large conservatory on the Williams Street side and a carriage house and gate house behind the house at the corner of Gibson and Harris Streets, have both disappeared. Gibson Street, which once connected to Harris Street, was blocked by the construction of Buell Hall in 1891. The shortened street was renamed Buell Place. The elm trees which once lined Gibson Street are gone, victims of disease. Yet the broad front lawn which slopes down to Broad and Williams Streets remains. The lawn is divided from the public sidewalk by a granite retaining wall. Several trees clustered loosely together on the Williams Street side of the estate represent part of the 19th-century landscaping. The only intrusion is a 2-story bell tower being constructed near the Harris building. This, however, will have arched windows and a low-pitched roof to match as closely as practical the design of the tower of the Harris residence.

Footnotes.

1. This combination of a drop arch and round arch is sometimes termed a Florentine arch.


3. The stained glass rosette window being fitted into the J. R. Harris residence is from the Methodist Church at 76 Huntington Street, built in 1921, scheduled for demolition for an addition to the New London County Courthouse.
removed together with the brick exterior wall in order to enlarge the parlor for worship services. These windows were separately arched, but without the elaborate surrounds of the facade. The cornice has also been removed. This was a simplified version of the other entrance doors. The second floor windows also featured segmental arches, although without surrounds. These have been rebuilt in the course of present rehabilitation of the building. The brownstone belt course has also been interrupted by the new construction, and no longer continues across the rear of the building. A large, round-arched window above the entrance, which limits light to the interior staircase, will be removed and a new opening made for a rose window with stained glass from another building. Projecting from the rear of the building on the west side is a two-story classroom wing added soon after 1917, when the property was acquired by the Williams Memorial Institute. This replaced an earlier service wing which was three stories high. It is probable that portions of the masonry walls of the earlier wing are incorporated into the newer wing. To the rear of this wing, a two-story staircase with iron posts in brick is under construction.

The northeast elevation is dominated by the tall, two-story classroom addition. (Photograph 6). Windows are placed in groups of four and five, with 6-over-6 double hung sash. From this side, only very little of the original portion of the building is visible. The first floor window is a brownstone surround with columns and capitals identical to that of the facade. This window is in the process of being altered for a handicapped entrance. The sill will be lowered, but the window surround is being retained. The second floor window consists of paired sash within a segmentally-arched surround, of similar design to the other second floor windows.

The interior plan of the Harris residence is organized around a central hallway with entrances at both the front and rear of the building (see Plan). As originally conceived and constructed, a stairway led from the central hallway on the first floor to a second floor landing with a balcony overlooking the hallway. A skylight admitted light to the first and second floors. The skylight has been enclosed, but is still extant. The open balcony has been removed, but the stairway remains, with elaborate pierced quatrefoil and trefoil patterns. (Photograph 7). The large, round-arched window mentioned earlier lights the stairs from the rear of the house. The plaster reveals are painted with an interlaced design of Islamic inspiration, which has been covered by later coats of paint. (Photograph 3). This will be removed to install a rose window.

To the right of the hallway was located the dining room. To the rear of this, the service wing contained pantry, kitchen, and laundry facilities. This wing was removed with the addition of the classroom wing. To the left of the hallway were located the drawing room, a hall with an entrance facing Gibson Street, now Well Place, and the formal parlor. Sliding doors between the hall and drawing room have been removed, probably in 1934. The drawing room still retains a mirror with Gothic tracery, placed within the apex of the triangular bay. (Photograph 9). A similar mirror in the central hallway near the main entrance was destroyed by vandals.
of equal sized round arches resting on brownstone columns. A brownstone railing with fretwork surrounds the base of the columns. A double door with a semicircular transom gives access to the lobby.

The southeast elevation, which faces south, is also divided into three bays. (Photograph 5). The components of this elevation are the tower, a recessed central bay, a projecting bay at the south end. At the base of the tower, a one-story, triangular bay has windows identical to those of the first floor of the facade. At the apex of the triangular bay, a brownstone column is placed in a recessed niche. The cornice of this bay continues the molded brownstone belt course of the facade. The second floor windows of the tower are also identical to those on the second floor of the tower's facade side: brownstone segmental arches supported by columns contain paired sash with Gothic tracery. The third floor window of the tower has paired, round-arched windows which repeat the design of the triple-arched opening on the other side. Immediately above these windows is a round window with six-curved Gothic tracery set in a triangular brownstone surround with round-headed corners.

The center bay of the southeast elevation has a porch between the out-thrust bays at either side. This was revised about 1934 and the first floor window altered to a round-arched window with 2-over-2 double-hung sash. There is no brownstone surround. The brickwork of the opening is chamfered, with a brownstone stop. The second floor window has a segmental arch and also features chamfered brickwork with a brownstone stop. The cornice with supporting brackets and attic windows is continued around this side to the rear of the building.

At the south of this elevation a two-story polygonal bay projects from the side of the building. Originally, this was only one-story in height with a brownstone balustrade above. In the 1970s or 1980s, the second floor and attic story were added. The first floor of this bay features windows with segmental arches. Lintels and sills are of brownstone. The inner edges of the lintels are chamfered as well as the sides of the window openings, which have brownstone stops. A projecting cornice of brownstone, supported by molded corbels of the same material, is a continuation of the belt course dividing the first and second floors. Second floor windows are similar in design to those of the first floor, although not chamfered. The brownstone lintels are connected by a belt course of brownstone. Three sides of the polygonal bay have no windows, being decorated with two rows of cut bricks instead. The attic story is constructed of wood and continues the cornice and brackets of the remainder of the building. Lancet window are used between the brackets. Beneath these are large rectangular panels. The two nearest the building are blinder with applied wooden molding consisting of a pointed arch and Gothic tracery. The next two panels have small rectangular windows with fixed sash of two lights each. Above each window are two rectangular transoms. The central panel has a 2-over-2 double-hung sash extending to the cornice.

The rear, or southwest elevation, is currently undergoing extensive modification. A wooden porch, enclosed about 1917 for classroom purposes, has been removed. In addition to provide space for a church sanctuary is in the process of being added. (Photograph 6).
7. Description

Condition
- excellent
- good
- fair
- deteriorated
- unaltered
- unexposed

Check one
- original site
- moved
- date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Jonathan Newton Harris residence is a former dwelling in an eclectic style, constructed between 1859 and 1860. In 1917 and 1934, the building was remodeled for classroom use by the Williams Memorial Institute. It is presently (1961) being altered for use as a church. Situated on a prominent knoll at the intersection of Broad and Williams Streets in New London, the building faces Broad Street to the northeast. To the southeast on the same height of land are two former school buildings, the Williams Memorial Institute (1931), a Richardsonian Romanesque structure listed on the National Register, and...<br>

Puell Hall (1934), a Georgian Revival building. "Puell Place," once a carriage-way for the Harris residence, provides access to the complex from Broad Street. A convent, built in 1937, is nearly to the west. The Harris residence is rectangular in plan, broken into an asymmetrical massing by a tower at the eastern corner, and by projecting sections at each of the other corners. The building rests on a coursed ashlars foundation of rock-faced granite, and is constructed of brick laid in the American or stretcher bond. A light-colored stucco finish originally covered the brick, but was removed about 1934. A molded brownstone course defines the separation between the first and second floors. Sill and window surrounds are site-details of brownstone. The building is 2-stories high with a low-pitched hipped roof. The tower rising an additional story. The chimneys with the first brownstone cap pieces in the roof, although not visible from the street.<br>

The Broad Street facade is three bays in width, two-tiered, arced loggia in the center is flanked by the tower and a slightly projecting section opposite. (Photograph 1). The first floor windows are round-arched, with 2-over-2 double-hung sash. The outer edge of each window surround describes a drop-arch, or slightly pointed arch. The inner edge of each surround is round-arched with bowtell or roll molding. 1. Arched brownstone columns and capitals support the arched surrounds. (Photograph 2). Brownstone sills are steeply pitched. The second floor windows of the tower are set in a brownstone surround of two segmental arches supported by columns of the same material. Beneath each arch, paired 1-over-1 double-hung sash are set in round-arched frames with wooden columns. The upper sash are decorated with trefoil tracery. At the northern side of the facade, a triple-arched opening has paired sash of similar design in the center, with a single double-hung sash to either side. The third floor of the tower has round-arched windows with 2-over-2 double-hung sash, also with Gothic tracery. The projecting cornice is supported by molded wooden brackets. Small attic windows are inserted between alternating pairs of brackets. Attic windows in the tower are round-headed, the remainder being rectangular.<br>

The central bay of the facade is occupied by a two-tiered, arced loggia. The main entrance on the first floor is recessed within a triple-arched arcade. (Photograph 3). The front doors were replaced about 1934 to conform with fire codes. The glazing of the semi-circular transom has been replaced by plywood, although quatrefoil and trefoil tracery remain. Planking the doors on either side are round-arched windows with 1-over-1 sash. Planking the doors on either side are round-arched windows with 1-over-1 sash. The blue and white tile pavement of double-hung sash with trefoil tracery. The blue and white tile pavement of double-hung sash with trefoil tracery. The blue and white tile pavement of double-hung sash with trefoil tracery. The blue and white tile pavement of double-hung sash with trefoil tracery. The blue and white tile pavement of double-hung sash with trefoil tracery. The blue and white tile pavement of double-hung sash with trefoil tracery. (Photograph 4). The inner curve of each arch is deeply chamfered and round-arched. The outer curvature forms a drop arch. The center arch is larger than the others. The second tier of the loggia is a covered balcony consisting...

"The only style which modelled all its monumental power is the Gothic style of the thirteenth century. From it alone can we learn the principle upon which this may be done, but we need not look to it for the method, "How it is to be done."

4. Ibid., page 338.

5. Ibid., page 370:

When a man enters upon the practice of architecture as a dealer in forms, keeping forms of different styles in the separate pigeon-holes of his brain, setting up structures as a child sets up blocks, being careful always to use blocks only out of the same box, he soon begins to think, and his thinking becomes a faith, that the essence of architecture is in the keeping of styles separate, and in studying how to increase the number of pigeon-holes wherein to keep his forms judiciously divided.

(see also page 79).

6. Ibid., page 332.

7. Ibid., page 438.
9. Major Bibliographical References

  in possession of Jean Cone, 10 Persun Place, New London.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: approximately 12 acres

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| Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000 |

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries are shown in Map 36, Block 1, Lot 3001, 00 in the office of the Assessor of Real Estate, Municipal Building, 1st Captain's Walk, New London.

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

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dale S. Flummer, National Register Nominations Consultant

organization: Connecticut Historical Commission

date: 2/25/81

street & number: 52 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
- [X] 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:

[Signature]

date: March 8, 1982
Major Bibliographic References (continued)


Plan of
Jonathan Newton Harris
Residence, 1859-60
showing later alterations
not to scale.
D.S. Plummer 3/81
Budweiser Hotel & Brewery Residence
New London, Ct. 12/81
D.S. Plummer, Photograph 1
facade
Hartford, Ct.
Jonathan Newton Harris Residence
New London, Ct. 2/31
D.J. Flummer, Photograph 2
Detail, first floor window and surround
Hartford, Ct.
New London, Ct. 2/31
D.S. Plummer, Photograph 5
Southeast elevation
Hartford, Ct.
Jonathan Newton Harris Residence
New London, Ct. 2/31
D.J. Plumer, Photograph 8
Detail, plaster reveal
Hartford, Ct.
Jonathan Newton Harris Residence
New London, Ct. 2/61
D.C. Flumner, Photograph 10
Interior door and surround, drawing room.
Hartford, Ct.