

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Washington	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	JUL 2 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:
Old Narragansett Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:
St. Paul's Episcopal Church; Old St. Paul's Church

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
60 Church Lane, Wickford

CITY OR TOWN:
North Kingstown

STATE: Rhode Island, 02852 CODE: 44 COUNTY: Washington CODE: 009

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island

STREET AND NUMBER:
275 North Main Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island CODE: 44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
North Kingstown Town Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:
80 Boston Neck Road

CITY OR TOWN: North Kingstown STATE: Rhode Island, 02852 CODE: 44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

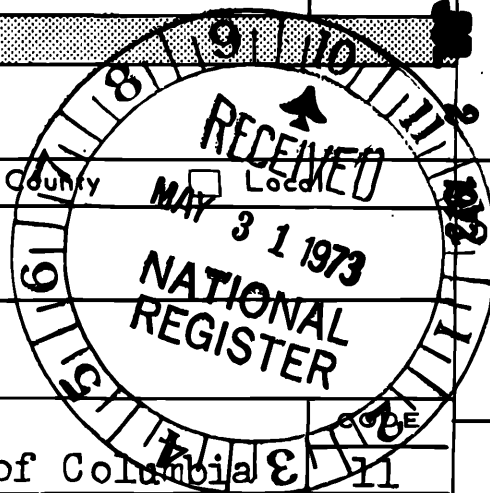
TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1937, 1940, 1957 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:
Independence Avenue and 1st Street, S. E.

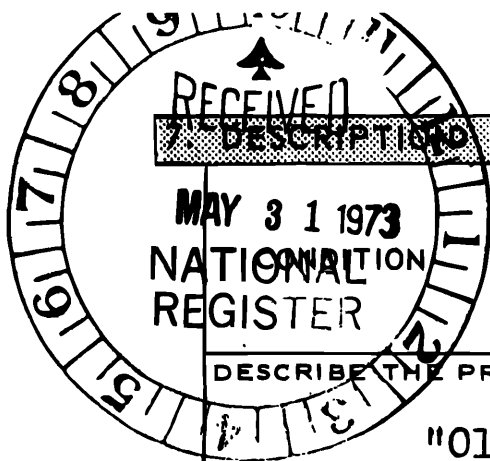
CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY



7. DESCRIPTION

MAY 31 1973
NATIONAL
REGISTER

(Check One)

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

"Old Narragansett Church" was built in 1707 at "the Platform" on Tower Hill in the town of Narragansett and moved in 1800, when that small hill settlement dispersed, to its present location in the village of Wickford. It is now sited at the end of a lane running up and west from the village's Main Street, from which it is plainly visible; and the church to-day has a walk-way approach known as "Greene Way" because its making (which includes stepping-stones inscribed with the names of parsons and persons prominent in the church's history) was the gift of the Greene family, always and still prominent in southern Rhode Island: this walk-way is a creation as recent as the 1960's. Burying-grounds are near the church, but the grave markers have been rearranged in ways which do not always relate them to the buried persons.

The church building itself is a simple, well-proportioned, two-and-a-half-story, timber-framed structure, covered with clapboarding and capped with a gable roof. In spite of Anglican use, the church follows the overall plan of the rectangular Puritan meeting-house, with pulpit and reading-desk placed on the long (northern) wall opposite the entrance doorway. Pews are square and generally simply panelled; a few are finished with horizontal sheathing. As in earlier churches, the sturdy interior framework is exposed; but the ceiling is plastered and barrel-vaulted, a treatment common in baroque public buildings in England. An abbreviated chancel housing the altar is placed unobtrusively between the two lower windows of the eastern wall. A rude gallery added in 1723, horizontally-sheathed and supported on six Doric columns, runs on three sides--west, south and east--of the church auditorium at second-story level. The stairway to the pulpit is typical of the early 1700's, with its square-based banisters, ball finials and torus-molding handrail. Typical for that period also is the wine-glass pulpit. Both stairway and pulpit were designed by Norman Isham to duplicate the original furnishings when the church was restored in the 1920's.

On the exterior "Old Narragansett Church" displays a naive use of classic design, an early example of the architectural influence of late seventeenth-century English work partly introduced in Rhode Island by the Church of England. Characteristic is the symmetrical disposition of openings in the building. On the south front, windows--two on either side--flank the central doorway. At second-story level, four windows just below the roofline are evenly spaced across the elevation. The disposition of windows on the north side is similar. Each end has two windows per story, with a small circular window centered under the peak of the roof. Another sign of the new architectural influence is the use of details or classic derivation: the Georgian rounded heads and keystones of the windows; the classic moldings forming the cornice; and the doorway with its flanking pilasters, highly-arched broken segmental pediment whose principal curved sections are terminated with quaintly-carved Jacobean-looking rosettes.

(See Continuation Sheet 1.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

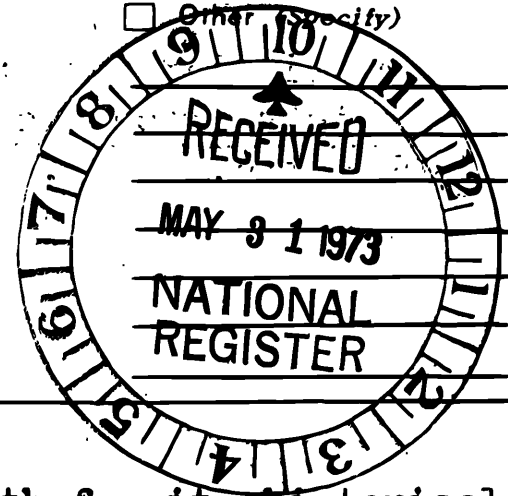
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1707**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"Old Narragansett Church" is significant both for its historical associations and for its architecture. One of the oldest Episcopalian churches in the country, it was the second Anglican church to be established in Rhode Island. The ministry to Narragansett was initiated on a regular basis in 1706 by the Reverend Christopher Bridge, and it was under his guidance that the church building was erected in 1707. Queen Anne in that same year presented the new church ~~was~~ a silver chalice and paten to commemorate its founding.

The Reverend James MacSparran assumed rectorship of the church, given the name St. Paul's, in 1721, and admirably filled that position until his death in 1757. Reverend MacSparran was a man of such forceful and generous character, of an eloquence so moving, and of an intellect so keen, that he was known as "the Dr. Johnson of Narragansett." Under his rectorship St. Paul's Church and its parsonage became the center of social and cultural, as well as religious, life for the people of the town.

Narragansett at this time--and continuing through to the years just preceding the Revolutionary War, when various of the Mercantile Acts began to take their toll on colonial commerce--was a surprisingly well-to-do and cultured community. Several of the "Narragansett planters" possessed libraries of size impressive for the day. The planters also encouraged the work of painters such as Smibert, and in 1756 Reverend MacSparran baptized the future painter Gilbert Stuart in his church. There was much contact by water with Newport, the cultural center of Rhode Island in the 1700's, and Bishop Berkeley from "Whitehall" was a frequent visitor in the MacSparran home.

The Reverend Samuel Fayerweather succeeded in 1757 to the rectorship after MacSparran's death, but he was removed in 1774 for his Tory sympathies. The church served as an American barracks during the Revolution. No religious services were held in it for a period of twelve years until Reverend William Smith accepted the rectorship in 1787. However, Narragansett had never really recovered from the events leading up to and including the Revolutionary War. By 1800 so many members of the parish had moved away from the Tower Hill area that the few re-

(See Continuation Sheet 1.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Downing, Antoinette Forrester: Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia, 1937), pp. 103-107.
 Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, Jr.: Rhode Island Architecture (Providence, Rhode Island, 1939), pp. 17-18.
 White, Colonel Hunter C.: Wickford and Its Old Houses (Wickford, Rhode Island, 1960).
 Miller, William Davis: "The Narragansett Planters," in American Antiquarian Society Proceedings, Vol. 43, Part 1, pp. 49-115 (Worcester, Massachusetts, 1933).

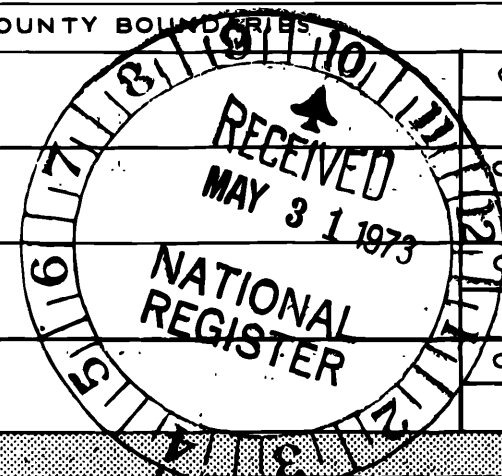
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		41 ° 34 ' 23.08" N	71 ° 26 ' 58.86" W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



417M
 19/234 700
 4/605 060
 CV

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Ancelin V. Lynch, Surveyor-Researcher

ORGANIZATION: **Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission** DATE: **February 4, 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER:
John Brown House, 52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Providence** STATE: **Rhode Island, 02906** CODE: **44**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

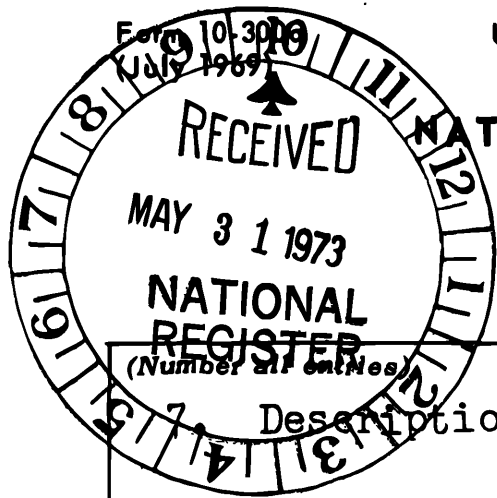
Frederick Williams
 Name **State Historic Preservation Officer**
 Title _____
 Date **5/7/73**

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Robert H. Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
 Date **7/2/73**

ATTEST:
[Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register
 Date **6 19 73**



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) -1

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Washington	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER JUL 2 1973	DATE

Description.

The church underwent a number of changes in its long history. The greatest of these was the addition of a steeple at the western end of the building in 1811, which blocked in the circular window in the gable peak. The stairway to the gallery was then replaced by a stairway in the steeple tower. The steeple collapsed in 1866, but it was not until 1886 that the doorway from the steeple tower to the gallery was filled in and the stairs rebuilt, as before, inside the church auditorium. Other changes included the moving of chancel and altar from their original position on the eastern wall to a place directly in front of the pulpit, in 1822; the splitting of the two square pews on either side of the chancel into three narrow pews each, in 1834; and the replacement of the original reading desk and wine-glass pulpit by more "modern" oak pieces in 1835.

Norman Morrison Isham restored the church in the 1920's, at which time he removed the later alterations, restored the circular window (concealed since 1811) and designed, in the form of the old, the present reading desk and wine-glass pulpit.

8. Significance.

maining vestrymen voted to relocate the church in the village of Wickford, some four miles distant, and it was there moved, drawn by a team of oxen.

"Old Narragansett (St. Paul's) Church" was badly in need of repair by 1847 and in that year was supplanted by a "new" St. Paul's Church in Wickford. The old church was closed, unused, and fell into a state of increasing disrepair. Movements to restore it occurred first in 1885-1886 (it got a cleaning, a coat of paint, and interior stairs to the gallery restored) and again in 1914; but it was not until the 1920's that full-scale restoration was undertaken. Norman Isham, a noted authority on early American architecture, was appointed to the restoration committee in 1923. He made a thorough investigation of the structure and its records in order to determine its original appearance. His measured drawings etc. are in the collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society but not at the moment available.

His exterior restoration included re-clapboarding of the front (south) and western sides of the church, re-creation of the circular window under the roof-peak which the steeple had blocked in, work on window moldings, and re-painting the building in its original shade of white. Interior restoration included complete replastering; installation of a period (c. 1700) English altar rail at the east end and removal of the 1834 oak rail at the north; and redesigning of the lectern, pulpit and pulpit stairway in conformance with descriptions in early church records.

(See Continuation Sheet 2.)

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

(Continuation Sheet) -2

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Washington	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
112	5 2 1973

(Number all entries)

8. Significance.

A classical reredos, designed by Newport artist John Howard Benson, was placed behind the altar in 1930. The most recent addition to the church's interior restoration was the return of the original communion table in 1955, a gift from the Casey family of Saunderstown-Narragansett.

This building is one remarkable both for its history and for its architectural longevity. The story of its disrepair and subsequent restoration came to a happy end because of the thoroughly-researched and finely-executed work of Norman Isham. Today, "Old Narragansett Church" gives the visitor the impression of a quiet place [^] touched by either the hands of time or those of the restorer. **barely**

