

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

DEC 11 1980

date entered

MAY 13 1982

1. Name

historic

The Unitarian Society in Fall River

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 309 North Main Street

NA not for publication

city, town Fall River

NA vicinity of

congressional district 10th

state Massachusetts

code 025

county Bristol

code 005

3. Classification

Category

☐ district
☒ building(s)
☐ structure
☐ site
☐ object

Ownership

☐ public
☒ private
☐ both
Public Acquisition
☒ in process
☐ being considered

Status

☒ occupied
☐ unoccupied
☐ work in progress
Accessible
☐ yes: restricted
☒ yes: unrestricted
☐ no

Present Use

☐ agriculture
☐ commercial
☐ educational
☐ entertainment
☐ government
☐ industrial
☐ military
☐ museum
☐ park
☐ private residence
☒ religious
☐ scientific
☐ transportation
☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Unitarian Society in Fall River

street & number 309 North Main Street

city, town Fall River

NA vicinity of

state Massachusetts 02720

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

Registry of Deeds

street & number

441 North Main Street

city, town

Fall River

state Massachusetts 02720

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of the Historical Assets
of the Commonwealthhas this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1978

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town

Boston

state Massachusetts

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☐ good
☒ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☐ original site
☒ moved date 1860

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Unitarian Society of Fall River, founded in 1832, constructed their Gothic Revival style church in 1835 at the southeast corner of Borden and Second Streets. The aftermath of Fall River's 1843 fire, which changed the character of the area surrounding the church, resulted in its removal, in numbered pieces, to its present site at 309 North Main Street in 1860.

The church of the Unitarian Society in Fall River is wood frame construction with clapboard sheathing. In form it is a simple rectangular block topped by a broad pitched roof and fronted by a square central tower divided horizontally into three stages. In overall design, therefore, the church adheres closely to the New England tradition of colonial meeting house construction which preceded it. In detail, however, it is Gothic Revival. Double and triple lancet windows both in the body of the church and in the tower are capped by Gothic label, or hood, moldings. The corners of the square tower are defined by smaller, engaged polygonal towers topped by crocketed spires. The first stage of the tower contains a slightly recessed center entrance framed by a 4-centered, pointed arch supported on clustered, engaged colonettes. Above this arch a flat label moulding joins with the projecting molded course above it to define the upper limit of the first stage and the base, or sill, of the second stage of the tower. This is occupied by a triple lancet window which rises to a point above the ridge of the church roof. A belfry in which hangs a Paul Revere bell comprises the uppermost stage of the tower. Tripartite louvered panels in each wall of the belfry are Gothic-arched and capped by a flat label molding. Gothic ornamentation also comprises the base of each panel. The tower is capped by a crenellated parapet above a wooden cornice ornamented with diminutive Gothic arches. The tops and spires of the four corner towers sweep up to a point well above the parapet.

Much of the original interior detailing of the Unitarian Society's Fall River church remains in place although some changes were made during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The original pews were, for instance, replaced by the existing ones shortly after the turn of the century. A vestry was built in the previously unfinished basement of the church in 1895.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1835, 1860

Builder/Architect NA

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The church of the Unitarian Society in Fall River possesses integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship, and with its traditional colonial meeting house form overlaid with Gothic Revival detail, is a very good example of the type of church structure which began to be built in New England during the late 1820s. This church, with the others like it, looked both backward and forward stylistically when it was constructed in 1835. Said to be a copy of the Pilgrims' Church in Plymouth, Massachusetts (destroyed by fire in the late nineteenth century), the Unitarian Society's meeting house is the oldest church building in Fall River that continues to be occupied by the denomination which erected it.

The Unitarian Society in Fall River was founded in 1832 by people dissatisfied with the narrowness and spiritual orthodoxy of the five churches already existing in the community. Many even walked as far as Newport, Rhode Island to hear Dr. William E. Channing speak. Noteworthy among the ministers to the Unitarian Society's Fall River church was the Reverend Samuel Longfellow, brother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. During his ministry from 1848 to 1851, Longfellow was also chairman of the Fall River School Committee and influential in the establishment of the city's public high school. The Reverend Joshua Young, minister from 1868 to 1875, was known for having preached John Brown's funeral sermon after he was executed at Charlestown, Virginia in 1859. Some of the great preachers of New England have also spoken from the Unitarian Society pulpit: the Reverend James Freeman Clark; the Reverend Edward Everett Hale; and Harvard's Dr. Samuel Eliot.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Fuller, Ethel. History of the Unitarian Society of Fall River, 1930.
"Historical Reminiscences," scrapbook of the Unitarian Society of
Fall River, compiled 1860-1895.
Oral tradition by senior members of the Unitarian Society, 1979.

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property 18,715 sq. ft.

Quadrangle name Fall River

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	9	3	2	0	7	3	0	4	6	1	9	1	7	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

Please refer to the attached city engineering map.

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

state MA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Booth, Consultant, with Reverend Bruno J. Visco, Unitarian Society in Fall River

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date September 1980

street & number 294 Washington Street telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts

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

Patricia Weslowski

title Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission

date 11/19/80

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 5/13/82

for *Delores Byers*
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

EVALUATION / RETURN SHEET

Property: Unitarian Society, The
State, County: MA, Bristol
Federal Agency: _____

Working No. 12-11-80-2964

Fed. Reg. Date: 3/1/83

Date Due: 5/12/82 5/15/82

Action: ☒ ACCEPT 5/13/82

☐ RETURN

☐ REJECT

☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Entered in the
National Register
photos 1
maps 4

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____

Reviewer _____

Discipline _____

Date _____

☐ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☐ technical corrections cited below
☐ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ moved
☐ fair	☐ unexposed	☐ date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

For NPS use only

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- _____ summary paragraph
- _____ completeness
- _____ clarity
- _____ applicable criteria
- _____ justification of areas checked
- _____ relating significance to the resource
- _____ context
- _____ relationship of integrity to significance
- _____ justification of exception
- _____ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UNIT References

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Title _____ date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272 - 3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



The Unitarian Society In Fall River.
309 No. Main Street
Fall River, Mass. 02720

Photographer: Richard Hood.
26 Caroline Ave.
Somerset, MA 02786
672-3676.

FALL RIVER, MA
The Unitarian Society in
Fall River

Bristol Co.

DEC 11 1980

West elevation
Photo by Richard Hood, 1979
Negative with photographer,
26 Caroline Ave, Somerset MA

//

Hood

RM Hood



NAME: Unitarian Church

LOCATION: 309 North Main Street
Fall River, ^{MA} Mass. 02720

PHOTO CREDIT: Pamela Shields (1981)

NEGATIVE FILED AT: Fall River Office of Historic
Preservation
One Government Center
Fall River, Mass. 02722
(PSNR-12-14)

IDENTIFICATION: Unitarian Church
photo 1 of 2 Front View, looking east



INST. 2-14A

UNITARIAN CHURCH

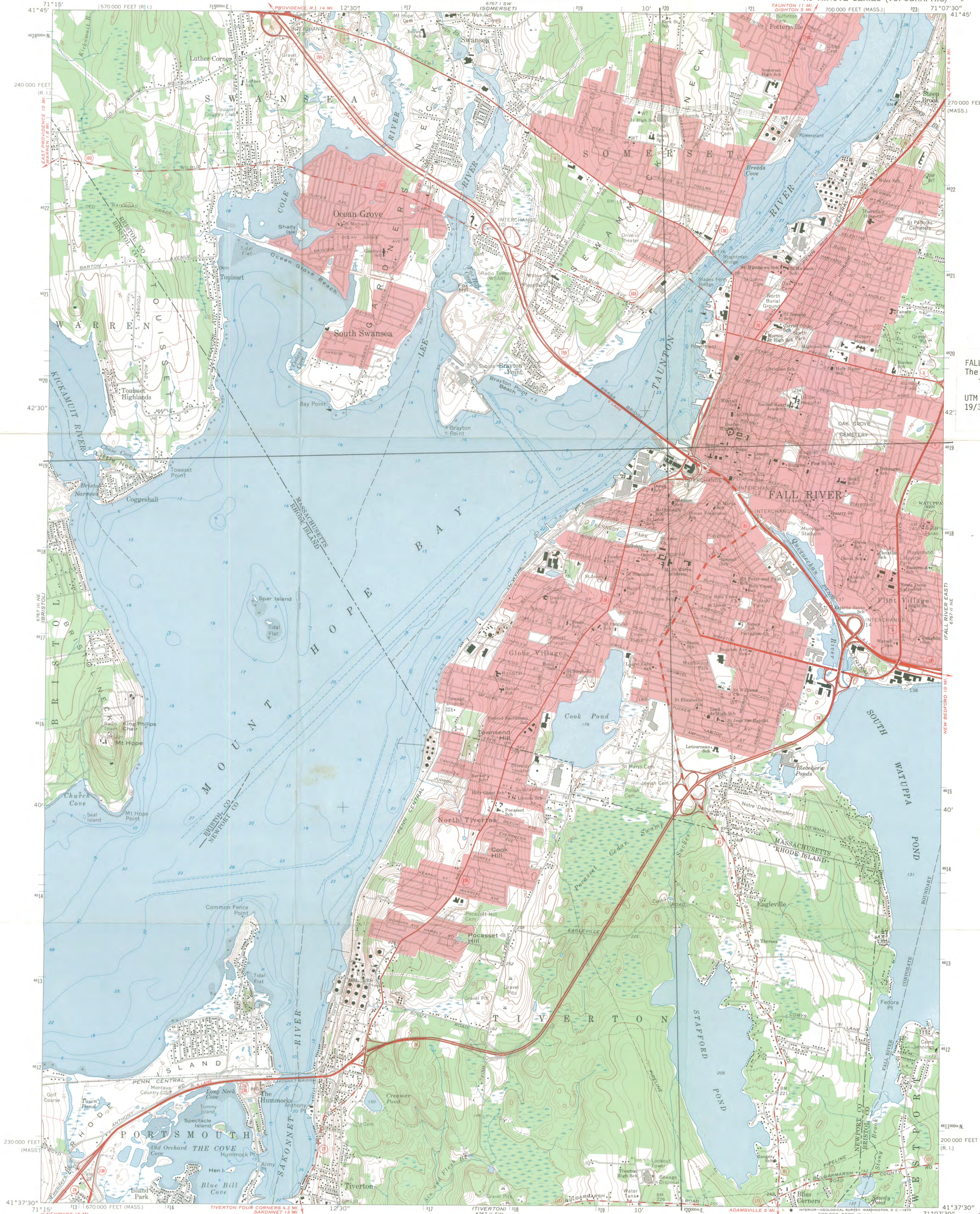
301 No. MAIN

Fall River MRA, Ma

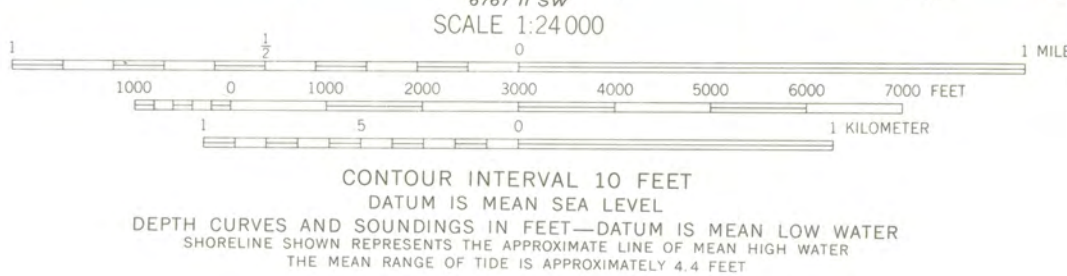
Unitarian Church

FALL RIVER, MA
The Unitarian Society
in Fall River

UTM Reference:
19/320730/4619170

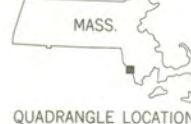


Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1938-1939. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 350 (1966)
and 353 (1967). This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grids based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone, and Rhode Island coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 19,
shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Boundaries in tidewater areas in Massachusetts from information furnished
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

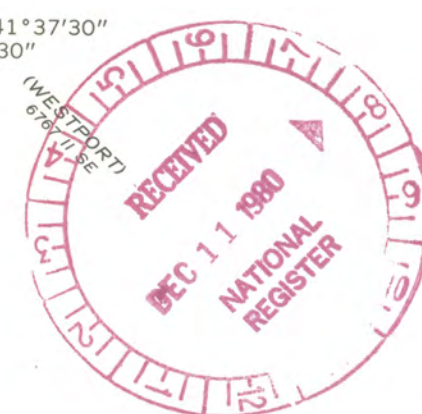
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface	Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface	Unimproved road, fair or dry weather
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



FALL RIVER, MASS.—R.I.
N4137.5—W7107.5/7.5

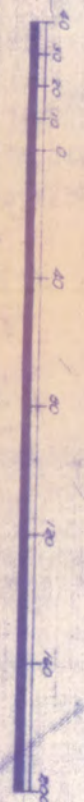
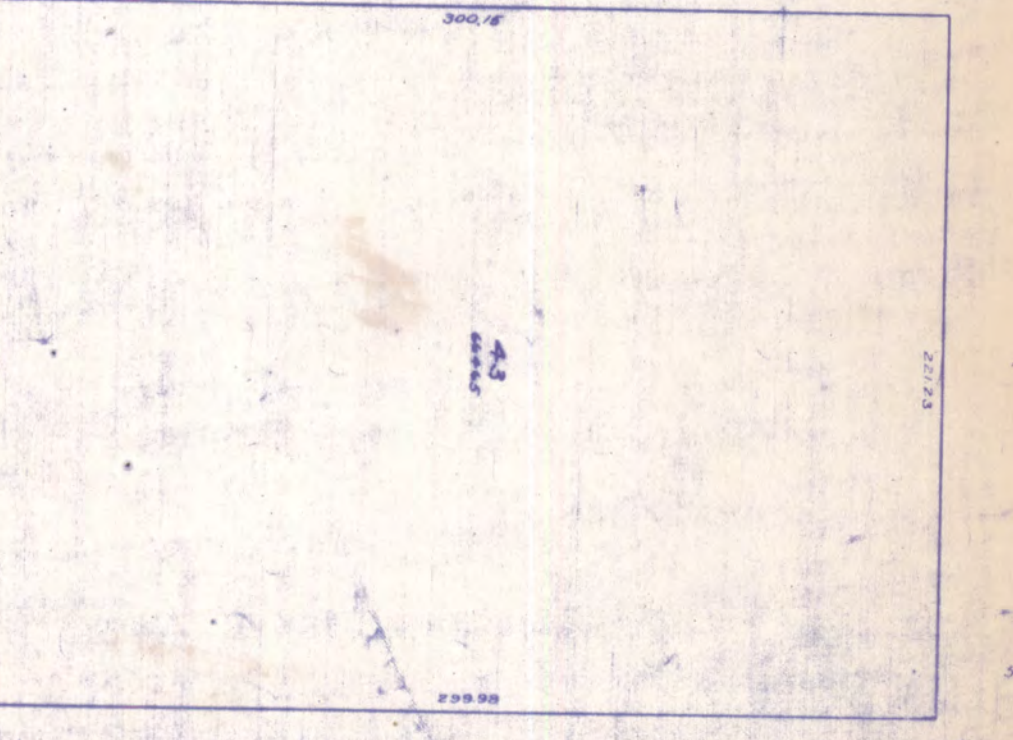
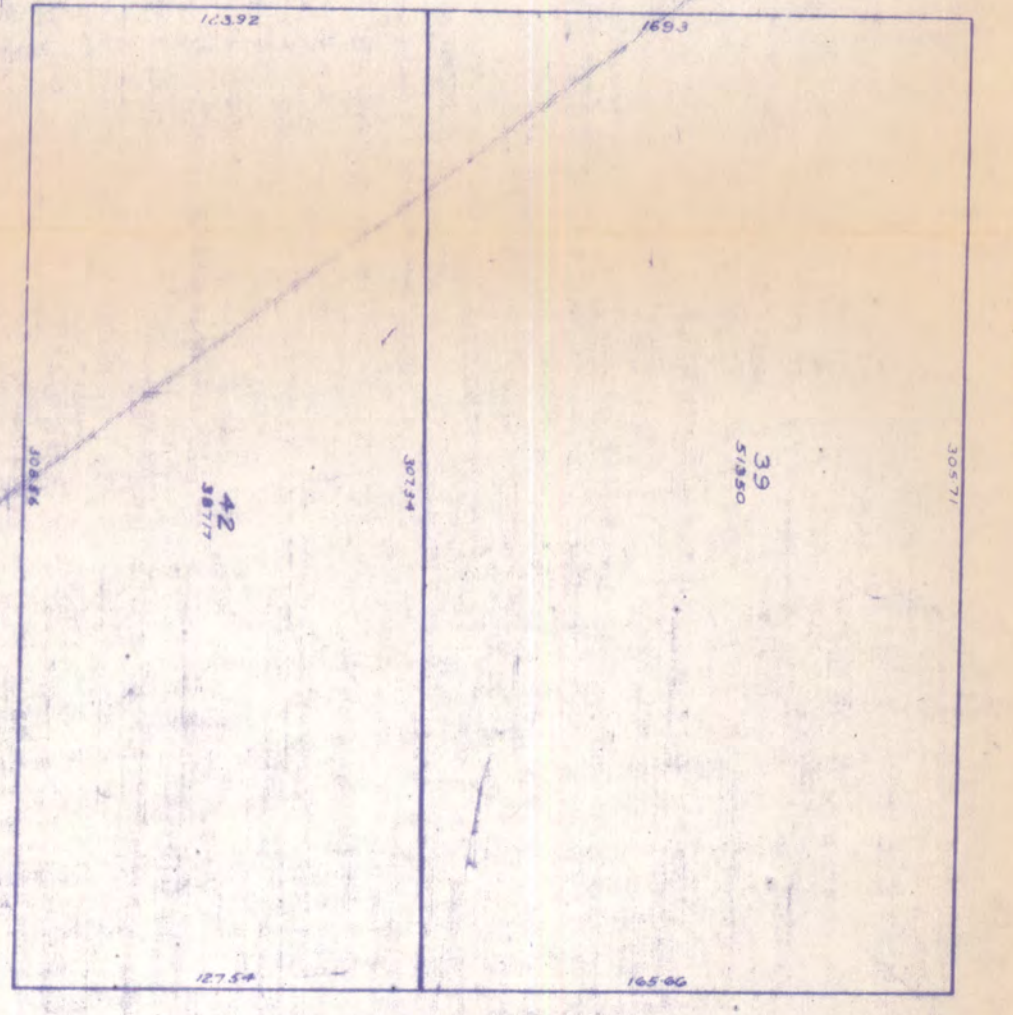
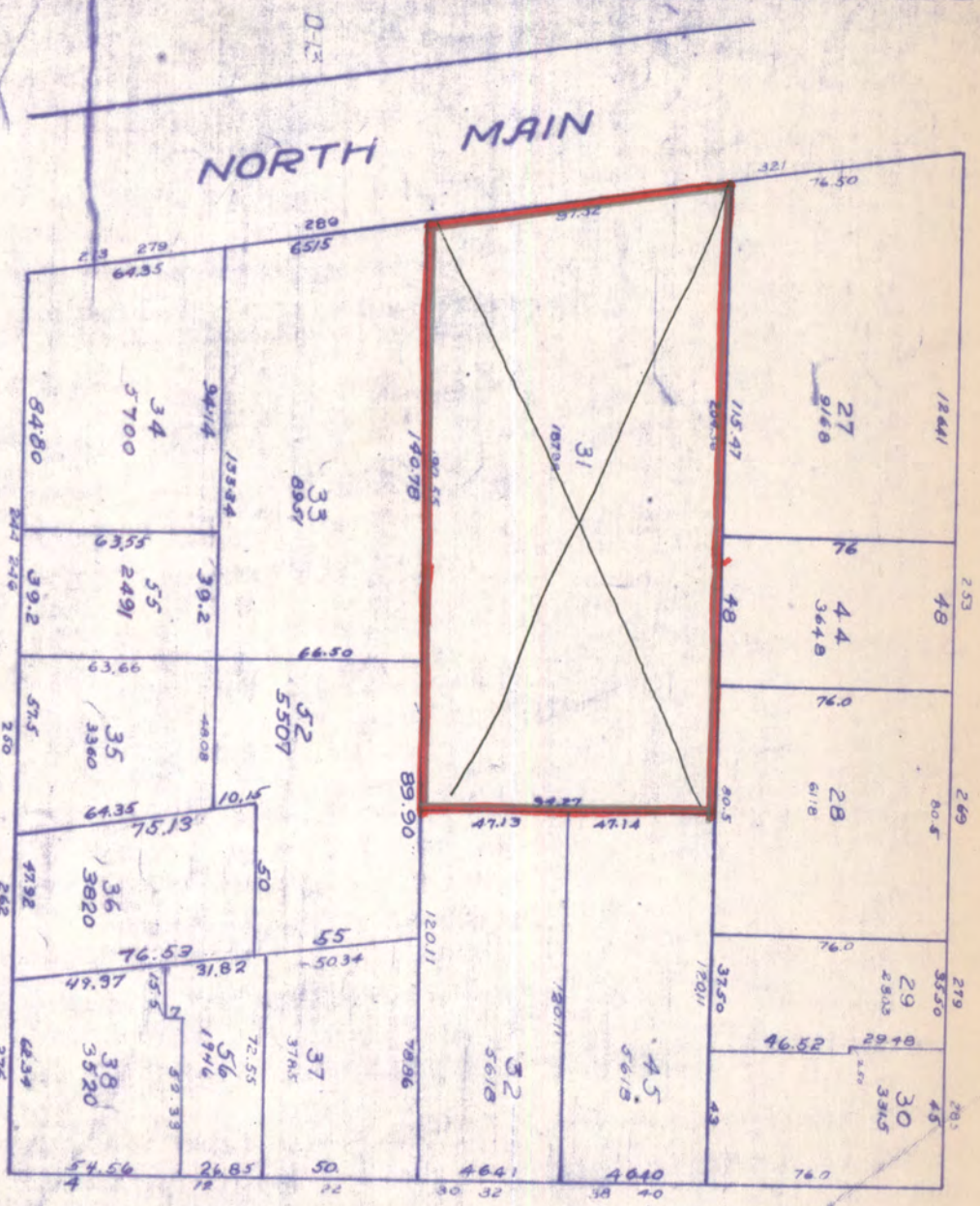
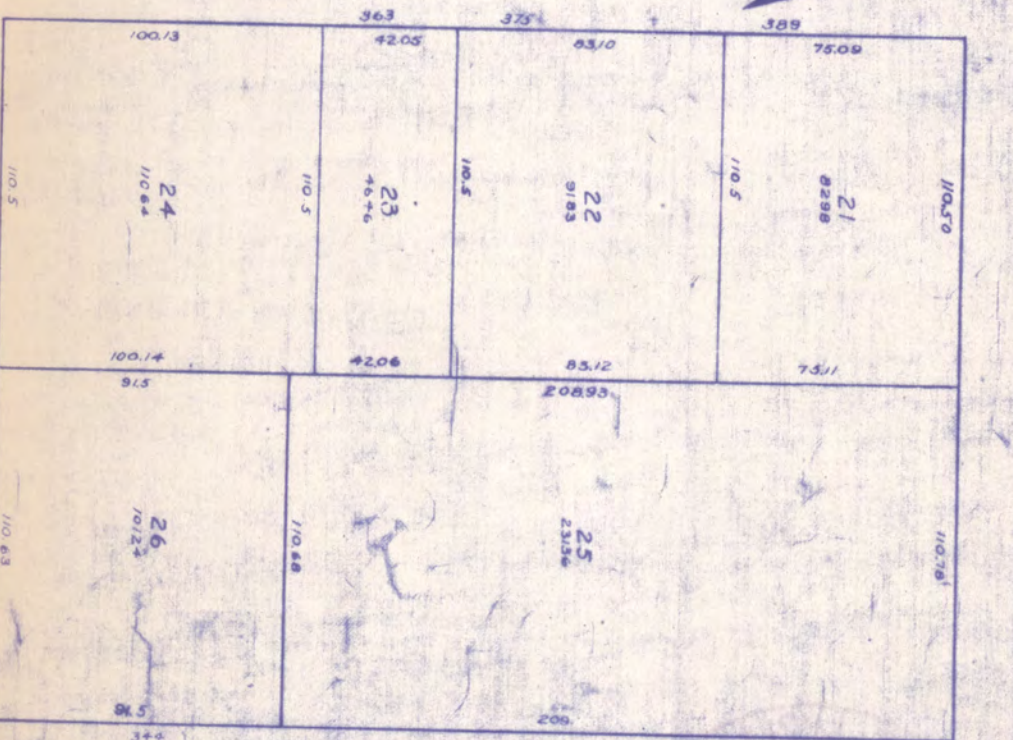
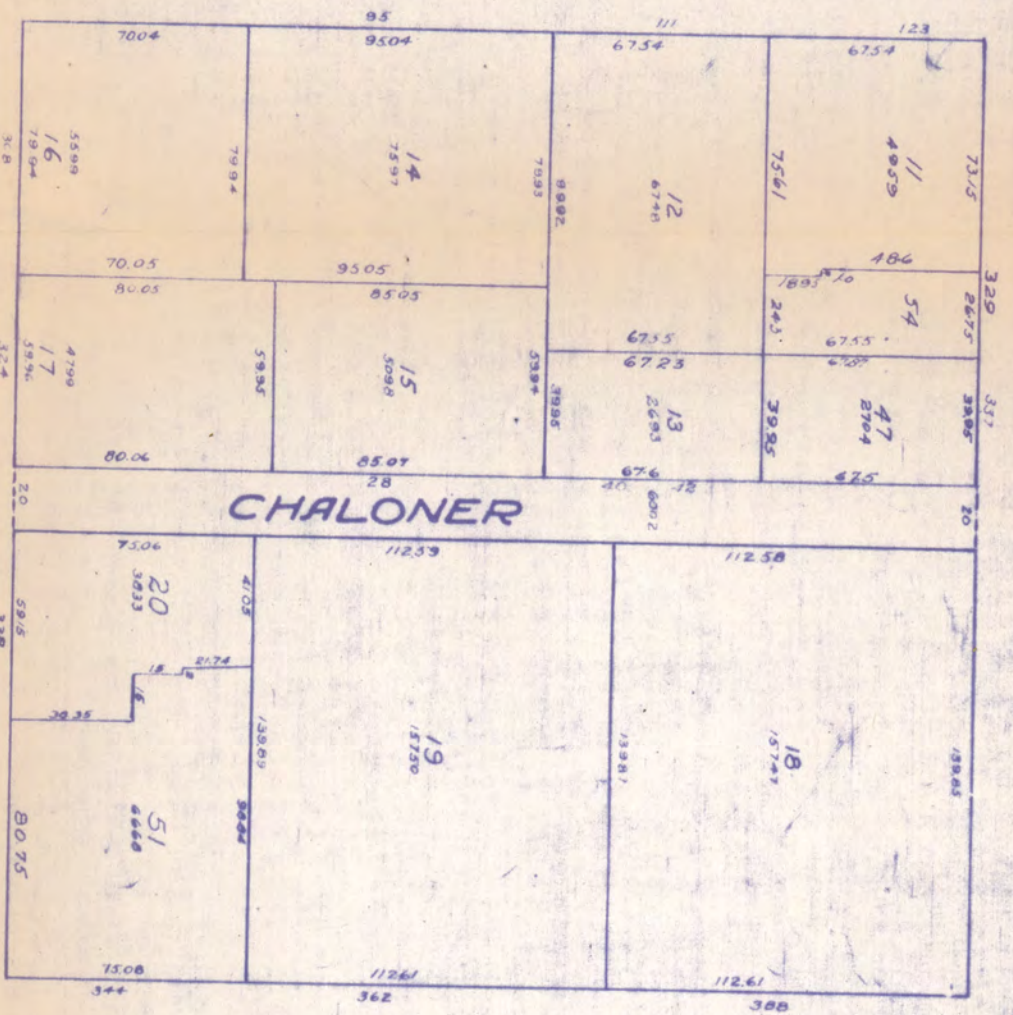
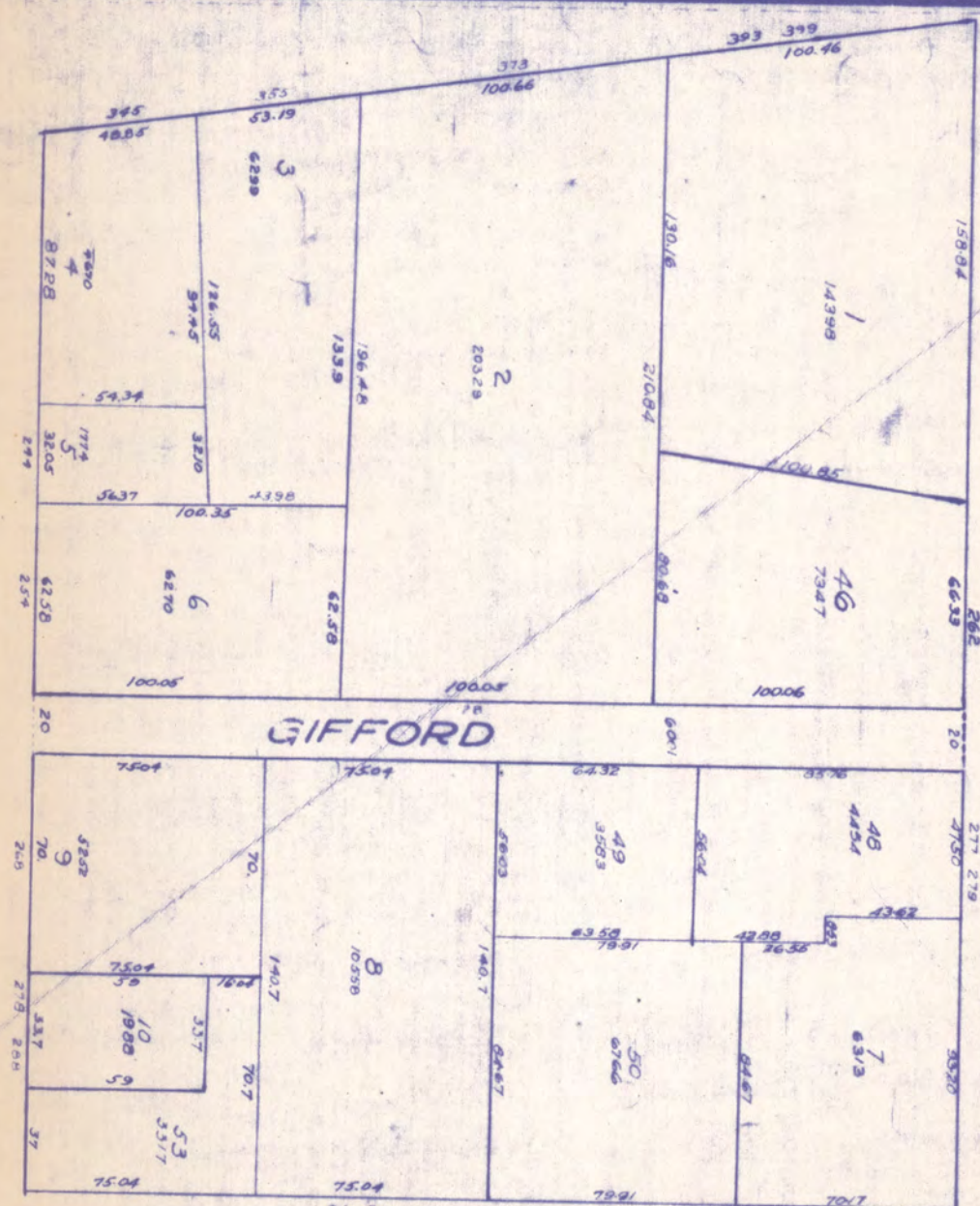
1967

AMS 6767 II NW—SERIES V814



N

0-12



Scale 1/4" = 100'



The Unitarian Society In Fall River
309 N. Main Street
Fall River, Mass. 02720

Map Secured from the Dept. of Engineering
City Hall, Fall River

Plot # 01-31



City of Fall River, Massachusetts

Office Of Historic Preservation

CARLTON M. VIVEIROS
MAYOR

One Government Center
Fall River, Massachusetts 02722
(617) 675-6011

W. R. Hargraves

CO-ORDINATOR

RECEIVED

October 16, 1980

OCT 20 1980

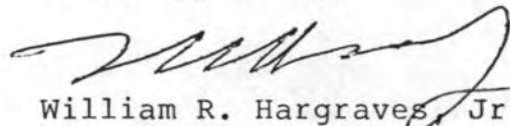
MASS. HIST. COMM.

Patricia L. Weslowski
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Dear Pat:

This office is in full support of the nomination of the Unitarian Church in Fall River to the National Register. The church group has strived over the years to maintain this structure's majestic integrity. This structure is presently the oldest standing house of worship in the City. The nomination of this structure to the National Register is appropriate due to it's architectural and historical properties.

Sincerely Yours,


William R. Hargraves, Jr.
Coordinator

WRH/dm

cc. Mayor's Office
Fall River Historical Commission
Historical Society

DEC 11 1980



City of Fall River, Massachusetts

Historical Commission

One Government Center, Fall River, Ma. 02722

October 22, 1980

RECEIVED

OCT 23 1980

MASS. HIST. COM.

Patricia L. Weslowski
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

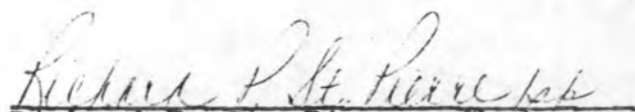
Dear Ms. Weslowski:

This letter shall serve to support the nomination to the National Register of the Unitarian Church located in the City of Fall River.

The nomination of the Unitarian Church to you from the local Commission is one of the first structures that the Commission officially acted upon and therefore the Commission is more than anxious to see the progress for nomination continued as it has been nearly two years since the Commission's vote.

Therefore, as chairman of the local Commission I urge nomination without reservation.

Very truly yours,


Richard P. St. Pierre, Chairman
Fall River Historical Commission

RPStP:sp

DEC 11 1980



City of Fall River, Massachusetts

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

CARLTON M. VIVEIROS
MAYOR

BARBARA E. SULLIVAN
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

ALAN A. SILVA
SPECIAL ASSISTANT
TO THE MAYOR

RECEIVED

February 22, 1982

MAR - 2 1982

Mrs. Patricia L. Weslowski
State Historic Preservation Officer
Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

MASS. HIST. COMM.

Dear Mrs. Weslowski:

The City of Fall River is pleased that the Unitarian Society's church structure is gaining the recognition it justly deserves, being the oldest church building in Fall River under continuous use. Placement of this structure in the National Register of Historic Places would help celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the organization of the Unitarian Society in Fall River, (1832-1982).

Personally, and speaking for the citizens of Fall River, we wholeheartedly support this nomination.

Very truly yours,

Alan A. Silva
Special Assistant to the Mayor

AAS:er

cc: The Unitarian Society
The Office of Historic Preservation
Fall River Historical Commission