

PH0670235

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 28 1977

DATE ENTERED

JAN 3 1978

**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 **Holy Trinity Church**

AND/OR COMMON

Holy Trinity Church Complex *6-11-77*

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

134 Fuller Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Central Falls

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

#1 - Rep. Fernand J. St. Germain

STATE

Rhode Island

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

**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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input 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
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME City of Central Falls - Corp. of the Church of the Holy

STREET & NUMBER

580 Broad Street 134 Fuller Avenue Trinity

CITY, TOWN

Central Falls

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Central Falls City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

580 Broad Street

CITY, TOWN

Central Falls

STATE

Rhode Island

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

P-CF-1 Statewide Historic Preservation Report

DATE

1977

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN

150 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island

STATE

## 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

Holy Trinity Church at the corner of Hedley and Fuller Avenues is the focal point of an architecturally harmonious complex designed to house the activities of the only Irish Catholic parish in Central Falls. On the same block are the Holy Trinity rectory, convent, school, and parish house.

Holy Trinity Church, the centerpiece of the group, was completed in 1897 following the designs of architect James Murphy. Construction began in July, 1889, and was completed in 1891. The spire was built six years later and a bell cast by Blake and Company (Boston) was installed.

The church is a Victorian Gothic structure set on a high basement, executed in red brick, with granite trim and a grey slate roof. The plan is basilican, with a gable-roofed, clerestory-lit nave and flanking shed-roofed aisles.

The principal elevation is dominated by a four-level tower at its northeastern corner, surrounded by pinnacles, and lit by a variety of windows on its second, third and fourth levels; it is capped by a hexagonal spire. The principal entrance is set in the center of the facade, with subsidiary doors on either side, one in the tower and the other under the shed roof of the south aisle. The double oak doors of each entrance are set in a Gothic arch topped by tripartite windows. Over the central entrance is a set of five lancet windows of graduated heights and a trio of smaller windows is set high in the peak of the gable.

The nave is six bays long and ends in a large traceried stained glass window. The clerestory contains six small stained glass lancet windows. The side aisles are buttressed and have stained glass windows with brick voussoirs and granite sills, spring blocks, and keystones. The windows depict a variety of saintly figures and were the gifts of individual parishioners. A small one-story extension from the southwest corner of the church contains the sacristy and a narrow stair to the church basement.

The three main entrance doors open to a narthex panelled in oak, which was added in 1916. From this vestibule, three oak doors open into the body of the church; these doors are separated by two small rooms which serve as a childrens' room and a confession room. Both are enclosed with oak panels carved in Gothic designs which are repeated in the etched glass of the upper part of their walls.

The nave of the church is divided by six pairs of columns which

See continuation sheet 1

# 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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1889, 1893, 1905, 1925

BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Murphy, Murphy & Hindle,  
Irving Gorman

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Set in a densely-developed residential neighborhood in the center of the city of Central Falls, the Holy Trinity church complex is a handsome group of structures designed for the various activities of a late nineteenth century, ethnically-oriented, Catholic parish and is both architecturally and historically significant. The complex includes five structures which occupy the eastern half of a long block surrounded by Hedley Avenue and Fuller, Cowden and Dexter streets. The centerpiece of the complex is the 1889 Victorian Gothic Holy Trinity Church.

Holy Trinity Church was designed by James Murphy, a Providence church architect, who worked almost exclusively for Rhode Island Catholic parishes in a career spanning the years from 1861 to 1890. Among his works are St. Mary's Church, at Broadway and Barton streets, Providence, now included in the Broadway-Armory National Register Historic District, and St. Edward's Church on Branch Avenue, Providence. Murphy's Holy Trinity Church in Central Falls is the principal architectural monument of its neighborhood which is made up largely of closely-packed 2- and 3-family houses. Its steeple, one of the tallest church spires left in Central Falls, is visible throughout the neighborhood and from the western approaches to the city. The auxiliary buildings of the complex--rectory, convent, school, and parish house--although less elaborate, complement the church, repeat its red brick material and create a unified grouping. In architectural terms, the group is a representative and well-preserved example of Catholic parish architecture of the late nineteenth century.

While four of the five buildings in the Holy Trinity complex are owned and used by a religious institution and would thus ordinarily be excluded from consideration for the National Register, the primary significance of the complex derives from its historic role as the center of Irish Catholic community life in Central Falls. In the nineteenth century, the city had a largely foreign-born, Catholic population, and Catholic parishes were formed and developed along national lines. Located in residential neighborhoods and surrounded by the multi-family tenements which housed their parishioners, ethnically-

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

McGuire, John P., History of the Holy Trinity Parish, no. publ., 1939.  
Souvenir of the Parish of the Holy Trinity, 1905.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY about 2

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 31011810 46391910  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Pamela Kennedy Historical Survey Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission June 17, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

277-2678

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

## 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Frederick C. Williamson*

TITLE

SHPO

DATE

June 17-1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ATTEST

*Charles Adams*

DATE

1.3.78

DATE

1.3.78

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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support the shallow clerestory. The side aisles are panelled in oak to a height of three-and-a-half feet. At the west end of the aisles are niches which once contained side altars, now removed. The simple oak pews and the crown-shaped, brass hanging lamps were installed in 1939.

The organ gallery over the narthex is open to the body of the church and is faced with a low, carved, light oak panel. It is reached by narrow stairs in the tower vestibule and contains the original pipe organ.

The sanctuary walls are painted with scenes from the life of Christ and, like the ceiling of the church, with a vine design executed in rose pink and soft grey. The focal point of the sanctuary is the marble reredos set beneath the west window. Elaborately carved with Gothic motifs, it contains three niches enclosing figures of angels on either end and a crucifix over the tabernacle. The main altar, which dates from 1914, is beige marble and is set two steps above the sanctuary floor. As a result of changes in Catholic liturgical practice, a simple altar table has been installed in front of the main altar; the raised sanctuary, originally surrounded by a low railing, is now open to the nave and projects into it. At the southern side of the sanctuary is the door leading to the basement stairs and the sacristy, lined with oak vestment cases.

The basement of the church contains a large assembly hall, simply finished with oak wainscoting to the level of the window sills, with a delicate floral stencil on the plaster walls above.

The 1893 rectory, located directly south of the church and facing Fuller Avenue, is a two-and-one-half story, granite-trimmed, red brick mansard-roofed block, set on a high basement. The center door, set in a shallow projected pavillion, was originally protected by a small entrance portico, now removed. Its square-headed windows are set under brick segmental arches. A one-story, flat-roofed porch with turned railings extends from the north side of the building. The interior consists of simply-finished, residential scale rooms, arranged around a long central hall.

The convent, directly behind the rectory and facing Cowden Street, was designed by Murphy and Hindle and was opened in 1905. It is of red brick

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trimmed in granite, it is a square building whose cross-gable roof is interrupted by a series of gabled dormers. Its most distinctive feature is a heavily-scaled entrance portico set on brick piers and topped by a broken pediment. A one-story, flat-roofed porch extends from the west side. The interior contains residential scale rooms, finished simply with oak woodwork. A single-story extension to the rear of the building contains the convent's chapel with a small altar set in the north niche; carved oak stalls line either side of the chapel.

The Holy Trinity school building, like the convent, was designed by Murphy and Hindle and completed in 1905. It is a rectangular, two-and-one-half story gable end structure flanked on either side by two-story hipped roof extensions and set on a raised basement. Executed in the same red brick and granite trim as the rectory and convent, its principal feature is a round arched entryway, flanked by pilasters and topped by an oriel projecting from the second story. The interior contains several classrooms (arranged on either side of a long corriodr which extends across the width of the building), a library and a small auditorium on the upper floor.

Adjacent to the school and facing Cowden Street is the Holy Trinity parish house, constructed in 1925 and designed by Irving Gorman. Set on a high basement, the two-story, red brick, rectangular building has a red tile hip roof. A long one-story wing on the west side originally housed a bowling alley and is now a game room. A small entrance pavilion extends on either side of the Cowden Street facade. The multi-paned windows have granite sills and, in the pavilions, label molds; a dep bay window extends from the center of the facade. The interior contains a variety of activity and meeting rooms, a swimming pool, and gymnasium. With the four other buildings of the complex, it forms a unified whole; although some of the land on the north side has been paved to create parking and play areas, much of it remains in lawn and is a pleasant green space in the densely developed neighborhood. A simple cast iron fence marks the church property line and a low brick wall surrounds two sides of the parish house.

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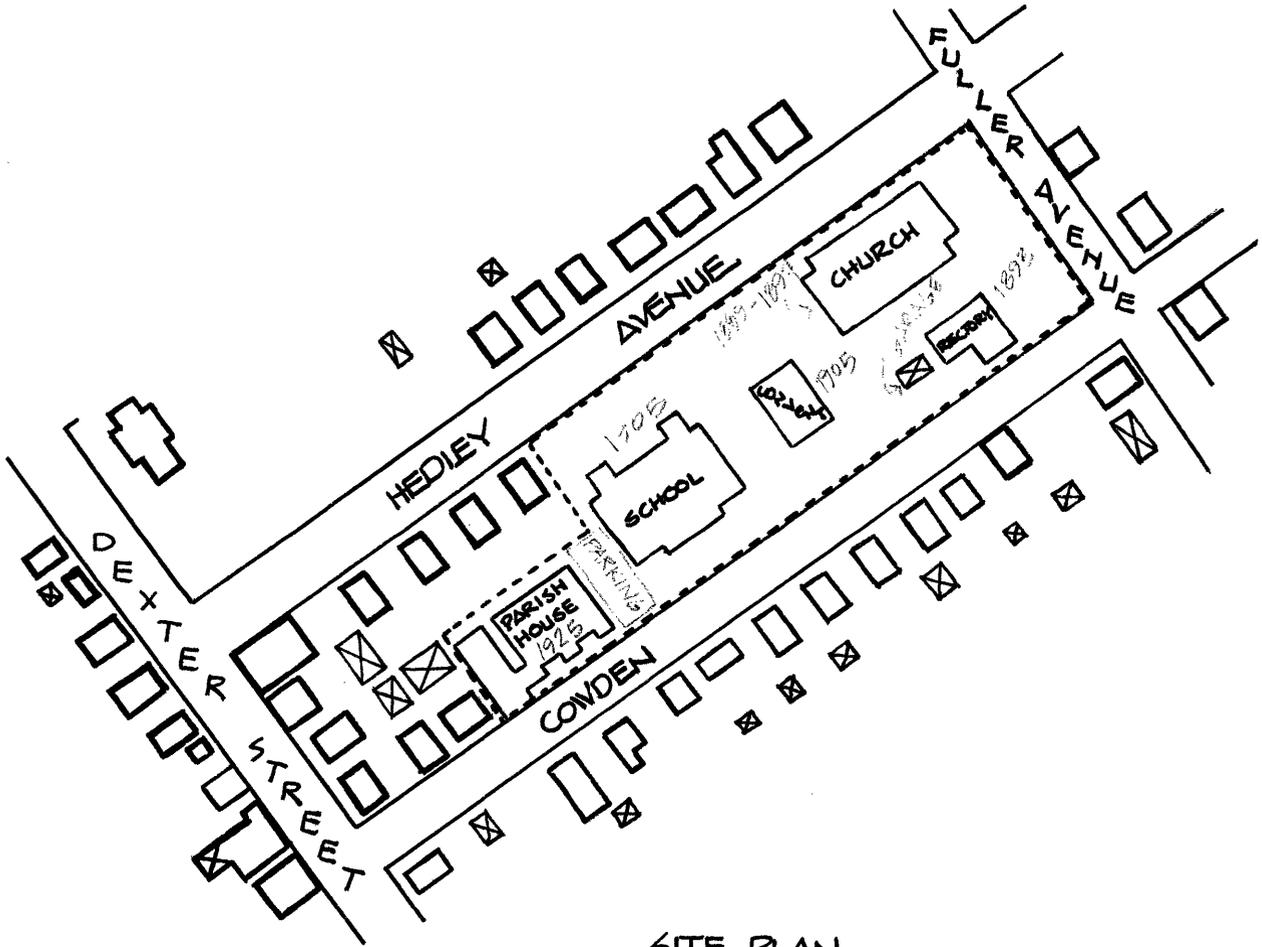
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SITE PLAN  
HOLY TRINITY CHURCH COMPLEX  
CENTRAL FALLS, RHODE ISLAND

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oriented churches played a large role in the life of their immigrant communities and often built several ancillary structures near the church to serve the multiple religious and secular roles of the parish. The Holy Trinity complex is the best-preserved and the most visually unified of several such complexes built by immigrant groups in the city.

The Irish had been a significant part of Central Falls' population since the first half of the nineteenth century, when a large number of Irish came to the area to work on the construction of the Providence and Worcester Railroad and the numerous mills built along the banks of the Blackstone River; they later found work in the expanding textile and metal industries of the region.

Holy Trinity parish was formed in 1888 from parts of nearby Pawtucket and Valley Falls parishes when the Irish population of the city was still increasing. Although numerically outnumbered by French Canadian immigrants, the Irish were still one of the largest ethnic groups in the city and were concentrated in its central neighborhood. The church corporation borrowed \$15,000 to begin building, and construction on the church began in 1889. Services were first held in the roofed-over basement (a common practice), while the parish gathered its resources to complete the edifice. House-to-house solicitations by the Irish-born pastor, Fr. Patrick Farrelly, and his building committee were conducted to pay for construction. The church was completed in 1891 and the steeple finished in 1897.

Holy Trinity quickly became the center of religious and social life of the city's largest Irish neighborhood. Church-sponsored picnics, boat excursions, and theatrical presentations provided much of the social and recreational life of the Irish working-class neighborhood. The continuing importance of the parish and the various roles which it played in the surrounding community are represented by the number of auxiliary buildings constructed over the next three decades as it grew and as its resources allowed. The rectory, providing priests' living quarters and parish offices, was built in 1892 adjacent to the church; its architect is unknown. A school, originally accommodating almost 500 students, still operates. The convent provided living quarters for the Presentation Sisters. Both were built in 1905.

The parish house, completed in 1926 at a cost of \$150,000, housed many of the non-religious activities and functions of Holy Trinity.

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The meetings of many parish social and service organizations (such as the Holy Name Society, the Children of Mary Sodality, the Young Mens' Catholic Club, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and the Knights of Columbus) were held here. The recreational resources included pool tables, bowling alleys, a library, a small gymnasium, and the only swimming pool in the city. The parish house was also used for lectures, shows, dances, and plays; classes in domestic science; and a regular Sunday program of moving pictures. The parish house was, to a large extent, the particular project of Msgr. John Sullivan, the pastor, and an author of noted texts on Catholicism and scientific subjects as well. He intended the parish house to serve the whole community as well as parish members and, indeed, its recreational facilities were used by non-parishioners. The parish house has recently been acquired by the city of Central Falls and is being renovated to serve as the Central Falls Boys' Club/Community Center. It will continue to serve the social and recreational needs of the neighborhood.

Since their construction, Holy Trinity Church and its ancillary buildings have dominated the surrounding neighborhood, both visually and as the institutional center of religious, educational, and social life for a large community of Irish immigrants and their descendants. As it stands today, the complex represents the sacrifices of time and energy expended by a largely working-class Irish-American parish, and is a testimony to their material achievement. Its role as the church of immigrants continues into this decade. Within the last ten years, a new group of immigrants, most of them Spanish-speaking Colombians, have been added to the neighborhood near the church. Like their Irish predecessors, many of these new arrivals work in the textile mills of the city. As it did for the Irish, Holy Trinity now plays a broad role in their lives.

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1. Name: Holy Trinity Church Complex
2. Location: 134 Fuller Avenue  
Central Falls, RI
3. Owner: Corporation of the Church of the Holy Trinity  
134 Fuller Avenue  
Central Falls, RI  
and  
City of Central Falls  
580 Broad Street  
Central Falls, RI
4. Description: Holy Trinity Church Complex is an architecturally harmonious group of buildings -- church, rectory, convent, school, and parish house -- designed for the activities of the only Irish Catholic parish in Central Falls. The Victorian Gothic church (James Murphy; 1889-1897), executed in red brick and dominated by its 4-level tower, is the centerpiece of the group. Complementing and surrounding the church are the red brick, mansard-roofed, 2½-story rectory (1893); a red brick convent (Murphy and Hindle; 1905), distinguished by its heavy entrance portico; the large school building (Murphy and Hindle; 1905); and the parish house (Irving Gorman; 1925) containing a variety of recreational facilities.
5. Dates: 1889, 1893, 1905, 1925
6. Significance: The Holy Trinity Church Complex is a handsome, unified group of structures, the principal architectural monument of its closely-packed neighborhood. Though the complex would ordinarily be excluded from the National Register as a church-owned property, its primary significance derives from its historic role as the institutional center of the city's Irish Catholic immigrant community in the 19th and 20th centuries. The parish was formed in 1888 and its continuing importance as teh religious, educational, and social center of its Irish working class neighborhood is represented by the number of auxiliary buildings added to the church complex in the following decades.

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7. Acreage: about 2 acres.
8. Plat 6, lot 244
9. UTM Reference: 19.301180 4639990
10. Entered on the National Register: January 3, 1978