

STATE: <b>Rhode Island</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Newport</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)  
(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Trinity Church**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Trinity Church**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**141 Church Street at Spring Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Newport** **1st Congressional District**

STATE: **Rhode Island** CODE: **44** COUNTY: **Newport** CODE: **005**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <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	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
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) _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Episcopal Church**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**27 Church Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Newport** STATE: **Rhode Island** CODE: **44**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Newport City Hall**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Washington Square**

CITY OR TOWN: **Newport** STATE: **Rhode Island** CODE: **44**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: **Historic American Building Survey (photocopies of 3 1936 and 2 pre 1925 measured drawings, HABS form 1959 and 8 data pages 1972).**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1936, 1959, 1972**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Library of Congress/Annex**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Division of Prints and Photographs**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: **011**

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Trinity Church, Newport is a two story rectangular frame and clapboard building with gable ends and a low pitched roof. Two rows of round-headed windows run along the north and south sides and a larger arched window of similar form marks the central nave on the eastern end. The steeple on the western end is formed by a tall square wooden tower topped by a narrow modillioned cornice. From this rises an arcaded belfry framed by Doric pilasters with a modillioned cornice and triglyph frieze, a lantern with round-headed windows framed by Ionic pilasters supporting another cornice and plain architrave, and a slender spire. Tall slender cones, similar in form to the spire, rest at the corners of the first stage. The second and third stages are marked by urns, diminishing in size to correspond to the graduation of the steeple sections.

Although it lacks the variety of forms found at The First Baptist Meeting House in Providence, which is about forty years later, the steeple at Trinity has a soaring graceful form achieved by the slender, almost delicate proportions of its parts. The tower itself is somewhat awkward in the spacing of its openings which are unrelated by proportion, spacing, or architectural features, such as the use of a stringcourse on the tower at Old North.

The entrances on the north are framed by fluted pilasters on pedestals which support a segmental arch with a semicircular depression. This naive divergence from classical forms, almost as if a drawing in a pattern book had been misunderstood, provides a provincial freshness to the building, suited to the regional wooden construction.

The building, including the steeple was designed in 1725, but the steeple spire was not constructed until 1741. In 1768 the first top was blown down and replaced in its original form. It is therefore earlier than Old North, its model, which was redone by Bulfinch in 1807. The only other major structural alteration occurred in 1762 when the building was lengthened by two bays.

The interior also bears a close resemblance to Old North, Boston. These two buildings are the only Colonial churches which use superimposed piers to support the balcony and ceiling, rather than the one large order. This feature relates the design to Wren's St. Stephens Holborn and St. Andrews Wardrobe. In both churches these piers are paneled below and fluted on the second level. Trinity, however, differs in ceiling construction. The lateral cross vaults of the aisle bays are lifted to the level of the main vault, thus forming a system of quasi-groin vaults over the nave. This creates a unifying lateral sweep which gives reposeful dignity to the austere simplicity of the interior. The effect is heightened by the large arched window set within a deep arched plaster reveal in the wall which forms a frame for the altar and pulpit.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century            |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1725-26, 1768

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 type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input 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

Trinity Church, Newport, was begun in 1725 by Richard Munday, a local craftsman who also was responsible for the Colony House, Newport, another national historic landmark. Very similar in design to Old North (Christ Church) Boston, it seems likely that William Price, a Boston print dealer and one of the founders of Trinity, as well as the designer of Old North, obtained the plans. This would explain the close relationship to the Boston church. Both churches are closely related to the designs of Sir Christopher Wren for his London Churches, indicating access to his plans which Price might have had. The elegant classical correctness of the spire contrasts with the curious segmental pediments broken at the top by inverted semicircles over the eastern doors and the awkward proportions of the tower openings, giving an unorthodox yet distinctive character to one of the most beautiful of colonial churches. Trinity is also one of the very few church buildings which retains its original interior furnishings and has never required restoration. With its steeple and interior intact, Trinity remains a rare survival and important example of Georgian church design in the American colonies.

HISTORY

The present Trinity Church was erected in 1725-26 by Newport's master carpenter, Richard Munday, designer of the Colony House and some of the finer private houses of the period. Both the interior and the steeple of Trinity are considered to be more closely related to Wren's London churches than any other Colonial building with the exception of Old North. Old North in Boston had been begun two years earlier from essentially the same plans. Both are associated with William Price, a Boston print dealer, who could have had access to prints or plans of Wren's churches.

Wren designed over fifty-two churches for London after the Great Fire of 1666 and these had an unmistakable effect on all subsequent church design.

The London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was founded in 1701 and they are known to have commissioned the architect to draw plans for several churches proposed to be erected in the Colonies.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Downing, Antoninette F., Early Homes of Rhode Island, Richmond, Va., 1937.  
 . and Scully, Vincent J. Jr., The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915, New York, 1967.  
 Marlowe, George F., Churches of Old New England, New York, 1947.  
 Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture, New York, 1952.  
 Pierson, William H. Jr., American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial and Neo-Classical Styles, Garden City, N.Y., 1970.  
 Place, Charles A., "From Meeting House of Church in New England," Old Time New England, Vol. XIII, No. 4, April, 1923.

**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	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

19.306820.4595240

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **2 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Patricia Heintzelman, architectural historian, Landmark Review Project**

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey** DATE: **1/10/75**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1100 L. Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: **11**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**      **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Landmark Designated: **Nov 24 1968**

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation Date \_\_\_\_\_

Boundary Certified: **Patricia Heintzelman 7-1-75**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

Boundary Affirmed: **Patricia Heintzelman 7/2/75**

Keeper of The National Register Date \_\_\_\_\_

Director, OAHPS date \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description: (1) Trinity Church

There are also a few seventeenth-century overtones in the raised paneling for the gallery breasts and the Jacobean "Union Jack" paneling under the warder's pew. This design was a favorite of Munday's who repeated it in the balcony of the Colony House and the Sabatarian Meeting House.

The great, triple-decked wineglass pulpit in its original center aisle position is a unique survival of a typical colonial form. The massive sounding board over the pulpit and the iron-work are fine examples of colonial craftsmanship.

The chancel table, made in England in 1680, is the original altar of the church. Trinity also possesses the second chalice and paten sent to the Colonies by the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG); this set has been in continuous use since 1702. There is also a bell, the gift of Queen Anne in 1702, and the original casework and a few pipes of the Bridge organ given by Bishop Berkeley. The royal crown and Bishop's mitre which ornamented it fortunately survived the Revolutionary War. Flemish brass chandeliers were first hung in 1728 and the painted altarpiece was a gift from the SPG in 1733. The high backed box pews are also a rare survival of the original. Trinity is one of the few early American churches which has never required restoration.

Boundary

Trinity Church is located on a long narrow block closely surrounded by other church buildings, period houses and warehouses. The landmark boundary has been drawn to exclude all but the church itself in the landmark designation, beginning at the northeast corner at the intersection of Spring and Church Streets, continuing south along the west curb of Spring Street to Frank Street, then west along the north curb of Frank Street to a point in line with the hedge at the rear of cemetery, then north along this hedge to Church Street, then east along the south curb of Church Street to the point of beginning as shown in green on the sketch map.

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8. Significance second page

Since none of these plans have been found it is speculation to link Trinity or Old North directly to them, but they are specifically related to Wren's designs in general and particular comparisons can be made to his churches. The spire for example relates to St. Lawrence Jewry and the use of superimposed piers on the interior, used nowhere else in Colonial church building, related to St. Stephens Holbron and St. Andrews Wardrobe.

The spire, designed in 1726, was not actually constructed until 1741. In 1768, when it was found to be defective it was taken down and rebuilt to follow the original design. In 1762, the church was lengthened two bays (30 feet) by dividing the building in half, moving back the rear portion and joining the sections with matching fabric.

The church still possesses the original altar table, a bell sent by Queen Anne to the parish in 1702 and an organ given by Dean Berkeley in 1733. The building has been in continuous service since 1726 and still maintains an active parish today.

SPRING STREET

OLD GARAGE  
NOW OWNED BY  
CHURCH

Cemetery

TRINITY  
CHURCH

PARK

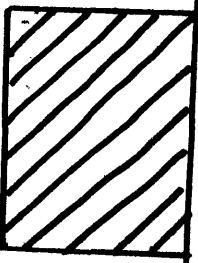


Cemetery

Hedge

1955  
CHURCH  
BUILDINGS

OLD  
WAREHOUSE




FRANK STREET


MILL STREET


CHURCH STREET

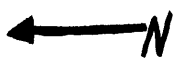
27 CHURCH  
STREET  
OFFICE

Sketch map of  
Trinity Church,  
Newport, Rhode  
Island, 1975

 church property

 Landmark bound-  
ary

 TO BE  
OR DEMOLISHED



THAMES STREET