

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 53

Item number 7

Page 54

NAME: Saint Mary's Episcopal Church

LOCATION: 83 Warren Avenue

OWNER: Saint Mary's Church
83 Warren Avenue
East Providence, R.I. 02914

DESCRIPTION:

Saint Mary's Episcopal Church is located in a densely built-up residential and commercial area adjacent to an interchange on Interstate Route 195. It stands on a large lot enclosed by an iron fence, in the same block as the Oddfellow's Hall at 63-67 Warren Avenue (see inventory entry). The church, built about 1872, is a rectangular, one-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed, wood-frame structure on a stone foundation. It is three bays wide and five bays long. Several elements project from this mass: a small, one-story, gable-roofed vestibule on the front (north side) of the building; a deep, one-story, hip-roofed bay and a one-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed, transept-like wing on the east side; and a one-and-one-half-story parish hall on the west side which extends around the rear (south side) of the church. The present vestibule is a later addition (probably dating from about 1889); the projecting bay on the east, now a small baptistry, originally served as the entrance. The church roof contains three triangular dormers on each side and is surmounted at the front by an open timber belfry with a tall, pyramidal roof. The windows of the sanctuary have triangular tops and there are small circular windows in the front and rear gables and a pair of pointed windows in the side gable. Exterior wall surfaces were originally sheathed with board-and-batten siding but have been covered with shingles since about 1889. Decorative trim is confined to the front, side, rear, and vestibule gables, which are ornamented with cross-braces with curved brackets below and a trefoil bargeboard design above.

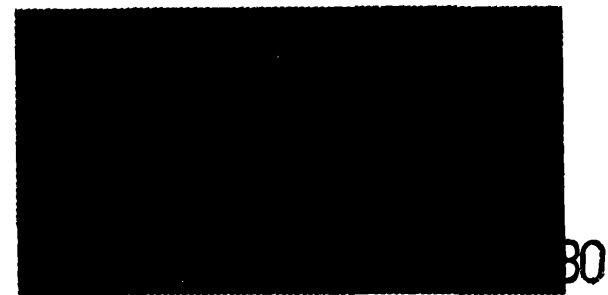
The portion of the parish hall west of the Church was constructed at the same time as the church. It is a plain, shingled, one-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed structure on a stuccoed foundation. A windowless, gable-roofed dormer breaks up through the eaves over a pair of windows at the center of the facade. A new, larger parish hall was constructed south of the church in 1914. It is a one-and-one-half-story, gable-roofed, shingled structure on a brick foundation. A one-story, hip-roofed vestibule with a Palladian window is attached to its facade (east side). A sacristy and corridor connecting the old and new parish halls was constructed in 1965.

The church interior is a single large room open through to the roof. The roof is supported by arched timber trusses and is pierced by the triangular dormers. A gothic arch on the east wall opens into the baptistry, but the larger "transept" contains the organ mechanism and is screened off by a row of organ pipes. Within this unified volume the floor plan and furniture

(See Continuation Sheet # 54).

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 54

Item number 7

Page 55

arrangement--based on standard medieval English practice--differentiate the space functionally and symbolically. The floor of the two bays at the southern end of the building is raised a few steps, subdividing the room into a nave and chancel. The nave contains pews for the congregation. In the chancel, the altar is placed against the rear wall and choir stalls facing in toward the center aisle are set between the altar and the nave. Throughout the church, walls have oak wainscotting with painted plaster above, and a wooden reredos with tracery panels rises behind the altar. The stained-glass windows--some memorials to parishoners--were installed at different times and date from 1872 to 1971. Most of the present interior--pews, altar, wainscotting, and reredos--are not original but date from the early and mid-twentieth century.

The parish hall contains an auditorium, classrooms, offices, and a sacristy. Interiors are plain with no noteworthy decorative features.

DATES: 1872, 1889, 1914

SIGNIFICANCE:

Saint Mary's Episcopal Church is a significant local landmark. Not only is it notable for the quality of its architectural design, but the parish's history reflects the growth and development of the Watchemoket neighborhood as a whole.

Founded in 1871 as a mission of Saint Stephen's Church of Providence, Saint Mary's illustrates the emergence of Watchemoket as a suburb of Providence in the late nineteenth century. Its existence attests to the fact that the majority of the area's early residents were native-born Protestants. The neighborhood is now populated largely by Roman Catholics of Portuguese descent, and Saint Mary's serves as an indicator of the changing ethnic and religious composition of the community. Located near the site of Watchemoket Square, which has been obliterated by twentieth-century road construction projects, Saint Mary's is today one of the last vestiges (together with the Oddfellow's Hall; see inventory entry) of what was once an important, thriving civic center.

Architecturally, Saint Mary's is noteworthy as one of the finest small Late Victorian churches standing in Rhode Island. Designed by G.E. Harvey of Cold Spring, New York, it is a good example of the Carpenter Gothic style. The church has undergone a number of alterations since its completion, but the changes have been handled with sensitivity and contribute to the architectural character of the building.

ACREAGE: less than one acre

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: Assessor's Plat 1, Lots 400 and 403

(See Continuation Sheet #55).

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 55

Item number 7

Page 56

UTM: 19: 302170: 4631980

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

(See Continuation Sheet #56).