

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

CONTINUATION SHEET 53

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1. Name: Trinity Square Historic District; 80000011
2. Location: Broad Street and Elmwood Avenue at Trinity Square.
3. Owners: See enclosed list
4. Description: The Trinity Square Historic District is a small district flanking the south and west sides of Trinity Square. The triangular "square" is located at the north end of Elmwood, where Elmwood Avenue splits from Broad Street. On the west side of Broad Street, the district contains an imposing Queen Anne mansion, an Italianate double house, and a fine Late Victorian Gothic-style church. The large, nineteenth-century Grace Church Cemetery extends southward from the south side of the square between Broad Street and Elmwood Avenue. A level piece of ground with many large, old trees it possesses a visual focal point for the entire area in the Gothic style superintendent's cottage which faces the very center of Trinity Square.

The structures and sites herein nominated are a remnant of the nineteenth-century Trinity Square streetscape; on the east side of Broad Street and to the north of the district the housing, churches, and other structures have given way to nondescript twentieth-century commercial structures. Nevertheless, it is for the most part those structures which remain (and are to be nominated), particularly Trinity Church and Grace Church Cemetery, rather than the ones which have been lost, that have always given the square its distinctive visual quality and flavor. That which remains, despite some sloppy highway engineering in the square itself and the unkempt condition of the cemetery (Grace Church is now beginning a rehabilitation program), still provides a cogent sense of time and place.

Photographs 24 and 25.

Trinity Square Historic District Inventory.

The following structures and sites contribute to the historic character and visual definition of the Trinity Square district. There are no non-contributing structures.

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BROAD STREET

- 359 James A. Potter House (c. 1889): Opulent, 2½-story, Queen Anne structure, designed by the prominent Providence architectural firm of Stone, Carpenter & Willson. The Potter house has a first floor of brick, trimmed in brown-stone, a pink-slate-clad second floor, and gray slate gables with gable ornaments. Its handsome Colonial Revival interior finish includes classical mantelpieces, staircases with varied baluster types and intertwining-vines-motif newel posts, and paired-Ionic-column doorway openings. James A. Potter was one of the proprietors of James A. Potter & Company, the city's largest lumber yard. See photograph 24.
- 369-371 Clifton A. Hall Duplex (c. 1856): Two-story, brick, Italian palazzo structure, with a symmetrical front. Its slightly recessed central portion containing two entrances is fronted by a wide door porch upheld by paired, cast iron, Ionic columns. Hall, in the 1850s and 1860s a member of the architectural firm of Morse & Hall, lived in the south half until about 1909. One of the city's most prominent architects, he designed many of Elmwood Avenue's finest Victorian structures, including the nearby Trinity United Methodist Church and the Robert Knight mansion which once stood behind 297 Elmwood Avenue. See photograph 24.
- 389-393 Trinity United Methodist Church (church, 1864-1865, designed by Clifton A. Hall; parish house, 1914-1915, by George W. Kramer of New York): Patterned after English parish churches, Trinity is a red-brick Gothic Revival-style structure, with a nave and side aisles, and a spired, wood tower at one corner. Its chancel was redesigned with Gothic furnishings in 1949 by Arland A. Dirlam of Boston, a prominent mid-twentieth century New England church architect. The 1915 parish house building, with its round auditorium, is the only part ever constructed of a proposed unified church-parish house complex designed in 1910-1911 by Kramer, one of the nation's leading church architect at the turn of the century. Cost limitations forced the abandonment of the new church project and compelled the substitution of cheaper brick construction and institutional Georgian styling for the stone construction and Gothic styling originally contemplated. Presiding over the intersection of Broad Street and Elmwood Avenue which was named Trinity Square in its honor in 1875, Trinity Church was founded in 1859 through the missionary activities of the Mathewson Street Methodist Church (located in the central business district of Providence). In 1899 the Trinity Church merged with the Chestnut Street Church, the city's original Methodist parish. Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Trinity had

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the largest congregation and Sunday school of any church in the Southern New England Conference of the Methodist Church. More recently, the Parish house auditorium gained significance as the first home of the nationally-known Trinity Square Repertory Company, founded here in 1964. See photograph 24.

ELMWOOD AVENUE

- 10 Grace Church Cemetery: Level, triangular, nine-acre burial ground located in the angle between Broad Street and Elmwood Avenue. The Corporation of Grace Episcopal Church purchased four acres running southward from the Broad Street-Elmwood Avenue intersection in October, 1834. By 1842 this purchase was completely laid out, divided symmetrically into diamond-shaped sections separated by avenues named after trees. In the center a small diamond-shaped area was set aside as an open space known as "Cemetery Square." A second purchase, including the remainder of the tract, occurred in November, 1843. This southern section was laid out in May, 1848, by Cushing & Walling, Providence surveyors, in a simple grid pattern. A receiving vault, built into a raised mound in the southern section, probably was erected c. 1850. Its granite front, consisting of ramped retaining walls flanking a pedimented central section with paneled pilasters and a richly carved paneled door, is a handsome piece of Greek Revival architecture. In 1859 or 1860 the gate lodge or superintendent's cottage at the Trinity Square end was built. A modest, Gothic Revival cottage of the type popularized by A. J. Downing's The Architecture of Country Houses (see Design IV, which this resembles), it is now clad in wood shingles. See photographs 24 and 25.
5. Significance: Despite a variety of twentieth century intrusions, Trinity Square retains many of its original qualities as a Victorian urban space; it is still a visual landmark of major importance in a city-wide context. Grace Church Cemetery, not significant by itself despite its handsome Gothic lodge, Greek receiving vault, and several notable monuments, acquires great importance as a key element of the Trinity Square streetscape. The cemetery, especially the tree-framed lodge standing at the apex of the triangle between Broad Street and Elmwood Avenue and fronting on the square, is the visual focal point of the area.

The Trinity Square Historic District contains several structures of state-wide architectural importance. Trinity Methodist Church is a large and well designed structure planned by a well known local architect, and one of the first thoroughly Gothic churches in Rhode Island erected by any Protestant denomination other than the Episcopalians. With the exception of several

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structures in Newport and a few in Providence, the Potter house is one of Rhode Island's most elaborate Queen Anne dwellings.

The Trinity Square Historic District also possesses the homes of several locally prominent persons. Clifton A. Hall, for over forty years an architect, lived at 371 Broad Street from about 1856 until 1909. James A. Potter, the owner of Providence's largest lumberyard, resided at 359 Broad Street.

6. Acreage: about 12 acres
7. Plat: The district contains all of lots 452, 511, and 510, and part of lot 505, in plat 30.
8. UTM reference:

A	19	298720	4631700	C	19	298840	4631280
B	19	298820	4631700	D	19	298600	4631300

Trinity Square Historic District boundary

The boundary begins at a point in the center of Broad Street in line with the north line of lot 511 in plat 30; thence west to the north line of lot 511 and along the north line of said lot; thence west on the west line of lots 511 and 510 and, in the same course as the west line of lot 510, to the center of Central Street; thence northwest in the center of Central Street to a point corresponding with the rear line of lot 505 in plat 30; thence southwest to the rear line of lot 505 and along said lot line to the point where said line turns northwest; thence southward across lot 505 in a direction perpendicular to the course of Bridgham Street next to Trinity Church and, in the same course, to the center of Bridgham Street; then east in the center of Bridgham Street to the center of Elmwood Avenue; thence southwest in the center of Elmwood Avenue to a point in line with the south line of Grace Church Cemetery; thence eastward along the south line of said cemetery and, in the same course, to the center of Broad Street; thence northward in the center of Broad Street to the place of beginning.

TRINITY SQUARE
HISTORIC DISTRICT
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

