

DATA SHEET

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| STATE: Rhode Island | |
| COUNTY: Providence | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| 100-10-1375 | |

1. NAME

| | |
|---|--|
| COMMON: Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul | |
| AND/OR HISTORIC: | |

2. LOCATION

| | | | |
|--|------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| STREET AND NUMBER: Cathedral Square | | | |
| CITY OR TOWN: Providence | | | |
| STATE Rhode Island, 02903 | CODE 44 | COUNTY: Providence | CODE 007 |

3. CLASSIFICATION

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

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------|------------|
| OWNER'S NAME: Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence | | |
| STREET AND NUMBER: Cathedral Square | | |
| CITY OR TOWN: Providence | STATE: Rhode Island, 02903 | CODE 44 |

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

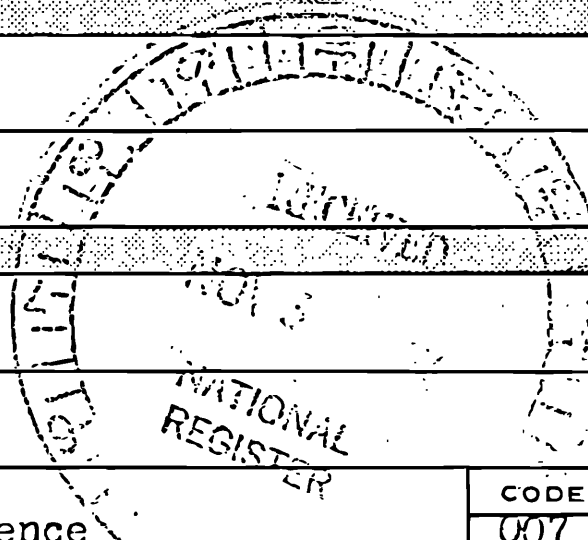
| | | |
|--|-------------------------------|------------|
| COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Providence City Hall | | |
| STREET AND NUMBER: Dorrance Street at Washington Street | | |
| CITY OR TOWN: Providence | STATE: Rhode Island, 02903 | CODE 44 |

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|------------|
| TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey | | |
| DATE OF SURVEY: 1956 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local | | |
| DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress | | |
| STREET AND NUMBER: Independence Avenue and 1st Street, S. E. | | |
| CITY OR TOWN: Washington | STATE: District of Columbia | CODE 11 |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY



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 type="checkbox"/> Altered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered | | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The massive Roman Catholic Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul is sited on a rise of land known as Weybosset Hill just west of the downtown shopping and office core of Providence and faces on re-claimed land which has been formed lately into Cathedral Square. Since its beginnings in 1878 from the designs of Patrick C. Keeley--an Irish-born New York architect prolific in church work--and its consecration in 1889, it has dominated its surroundings. This large, towered structure faced in rough-hewn, reddish-brown sandstone ashlar and trimmed in the same stone, smoothly finished, rises straight and aggressively from pavement level, which was, in fact, originally directly on a busy street which has now been in part closed off to allow for a long plaza in front of the Cathedral, with trees planted at one end.

As one might expect in the decade in which it was planned and built, the Cathedral is externally reminiscent of the north-Italian Romanesque style, though there is some pointed Gothic façade detail and gable ornament. Large and high, this structure has a cruciform plan covered by cross-gabled roofs. Perhaps its most prominent features are the two tall, square, buttressed and crenelated towers which flank its main entrance portals and the nave gable; these vigorously up-thrusting masses are intentionally conspicuous features of the building, making it a visual landmark and certainly proclaiming it as a fortress of God.

The north, or entrance, front is a five-part composition (aBCBa), of which the three central parts are the dominant ones. Here are the two slightly-projected and corner-buttressed six-storey-high towers, machicolated at their tops and banded by string-courses at various levels; each tower was designed with a pointed-arch portal at its base (these are now replaced by windows), paired or single windows on several levels above, then the long, paired, round-headed louvred openings where the bells hang. The western tower has clock faces above the bell-housing, while the eastern one has instead heavily-stone-mullioned round windows. Between these towers is the approximately four-storey-high gabled section indicating the nave; this has three doorway openings with pointed arches, carried on columns of polished grey marble, and a large, shallow, pointed-arch recess in the stonework above them: in this are contained first an arrangement of five narrow, grouped windows, and above these five--and still within the recess--a large "rose-window;" in the peak of the gable are three closely-spaced round-headed windows. Surmounting the gable is a low pinnacle carrying a gilt cross. Projecting laterally like ears from either side of the frontal towers are slim three-storey, half-hipped extensions to the front elevation, completing the five-part arrangement; these contain side entrances and the stairs to the gallery of the Cathedral auditorium.

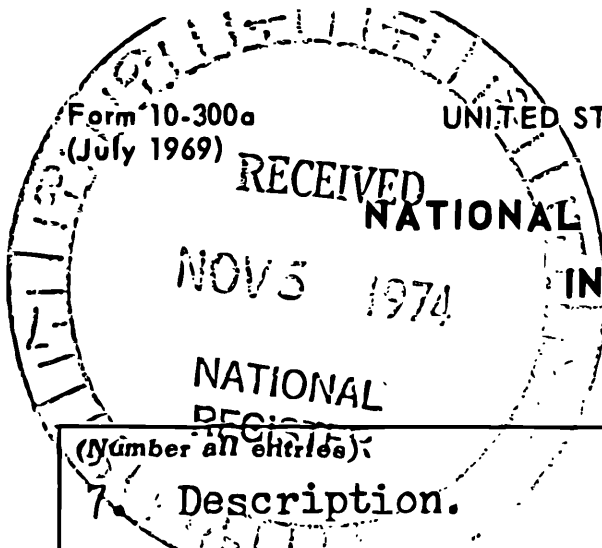
Five bays back from the towers and frontal narthex or vestibule, the projecting transepts are dominant, high-gabled features of the buttressed side (east and west) elevations and echo the centre part of

(See Continuation Sheet 1.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Form 10-300a
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



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

(Continuation Sheet)-1

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| STATE Rhode Island | |
| COUNTY Providence | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | FEB 10 1975 |

Description.

of the north, or frontal, façade--having tall, pointed-arch recesses containing grouped pointed-arch windows below and large rose-windows above. The transept gables are adorned with stone pinnacles at angles and apex, and so are the slightly lower half-gabled flankers of each transept. The five side bays of the nave display single tall pointed-arch windows in each bay at lower level, with smaller, paired, pointed-arch windows above at gallery level. At the rear (south) of the Cathedral is the angular choir or sanctuary projection, which is given much the same treatment as the transepts, except that there are not windows at the lower level, behind the altar. Here, at the rear, have been made some low and innocuous modern additions to the Cathedral to provide better sacristy accommodation; and there is a new glassed passage to the rectory--this last-mentioned building being a good example of the "Ruskinian Gothic" style, topped by a high and angular mansard roof.

While the exterior is Romanesque, monumental, a rather intense and forbidding mass, the Cathedral's interior is quite opposite and can be described as almost completely in European pointed Gothic style, used in a manner to create--once one has entered and traversed the vestibule--a surprising and overwhelming impression of grand, high, open, lighted space. The vestibule within the north front is a shallow one (whose walls have been newly faced with beige marble); it has a flat, compartmented ceiling of dark-stained narrow matched boarding, with the mouldings forming the borders of the compartments accented in colour (mainly red, blue and gold) and with bosses where the members separating the compartments intersect. Up five steps are the three doorways to the Cathedral auditorium's nave, and another two flanking doorways serving its side-aisle spaces.

The main body of the Cathedral, its nave, has a high, pointed-arch wooden roof or ceiling of dark-stained narrow boarding with compartments and ribs decorated in the same manner as the vestibule ceiling, and similar décor is to be found in the low, saucer-vaulted ceilings of the side-aisle spaces below the gallery. This pointed-arch roof of the nave rises above a triforium faced in cream-coloured plaster which is pierced, in the main, five-bay-long part of the nave, by tall pointed arches carried on clustered columns of polished grey marble; these columns are on plinths and have elaborate plaster capitals in which foliate designs and small statuettes are combined. In the upper part of the triforium are diminished pointed-arch openings to the gallery. The lower part of the nave is lighted by large stained-glass windows illustrative of holy personages, while the gallery has smaller paired windows of stained glass with purely decorative designs. At the entrance end of the nave is the former organ-balcony, supported on wooden piers and corbels and having a richly-designed frontal of panelling, again picked out in gilding and colour. Around the body of the Cathedral auditorium runs a wainscot of grey marble with trefoil-headed inset panels of russet marble in its upper portion.

(See Continuation Sheet 2.)

Form 10-300a
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

RECEIVED
NOV 5 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

NATIONAL
REGISTER

(Continuation Sheet)-2

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| STATE Rhode Island | |
| COUNTY Providence | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | FEB 10 1975 |

(Number all entries)

7. Description.

Somewhat unusually, the tall nave arcading is extended by a sixth bay into the transept or crossing area, and here the columns are more robustly clustered. Each of the nave's arches, while tall, is also given generous width, which allows the nave space to combine with that of the side-aisles and give a sense of considerable open area.

The transepts extending to east and west are ostensibly of three bays filled by pointed-arch stained-glass windows at lower level with large rose-windows above, but they are somewhat extended back into the nave area as mentioned in the last sentence of the preceding paragraph. (The east transept is now largely filled by a new organ and its console.) Here, at the crossing of nave and transepts, the otherwise rigidly panelled ceiling is adorned by five large inserts of circular paintings of saintly persons.

South of the transepts is the rectangular choir or sanctuary area, which is raised above the nave level and has a wooden pointed-arch ceiling in conformity with the rest of the interior, and a large rose-window. Here there are newly-stencilled walls and old paintings of saints above wall recesses and rear doorways. Set back in this precinct is the former high altar of white marble with mosaic inserts in its end panels; this is still backed by an elaborate and high reredos of gilt sculpted wood. However, this old high altar has been modified and now forms only a backing for the throne of the bishop and the seats of his aides. A new, marble platform of semi-octagonal shape has been built out into the nave, and on it rests the large oblong of greenish marble which is the new altar, unadorned except for the incised and ancient holy designs of fish on its front. Above the new altar is suspended a large circular lighting fixture of polished golden metal, almost like an enormous wedding ring, which gives the effect, appropriate in a cathedral, of a baldachino.

In recesses to left and right of the sanctuary space are two side-altars with pierced, carved wooden screens enframing them; similarly but more solidly enframed are vestibules for the entrances in the rear corners of the auditorium.

In the years 1968-1973 the Cathedral underwent an extensive program of repair and refurbishment, and at the same time its surroundings were improved by the creation of a large open plaza, designed by I. M. Pei, with a fountain and a small grove of trees, in front of the Cathedral; a new long and low diocesan chancery building discreetly screens the plaza's west side, while one looks down on the city from its east side. The cornerstone, hidden by rises in pavement level, has now been exposed to view. At the north-west corner of the building, on its side, a new railed areaway has been created to provide better access to the lower church, or crypt. Modest additions at the rear have already been mentioned. What has been done

(See Continuation Sheet 3.)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

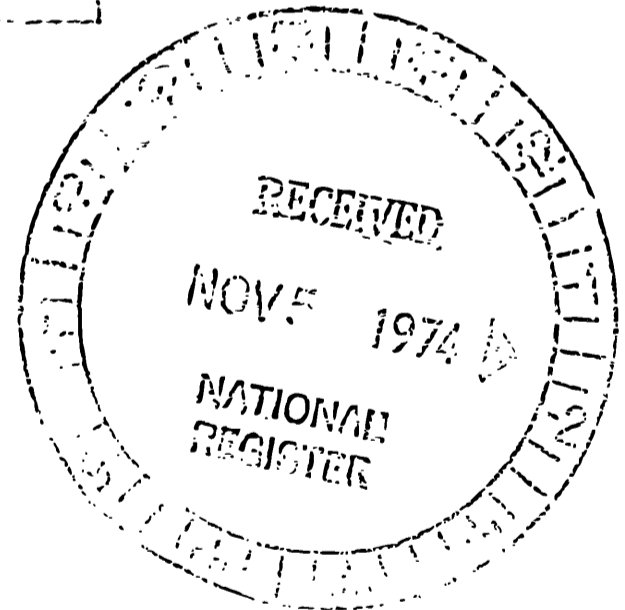
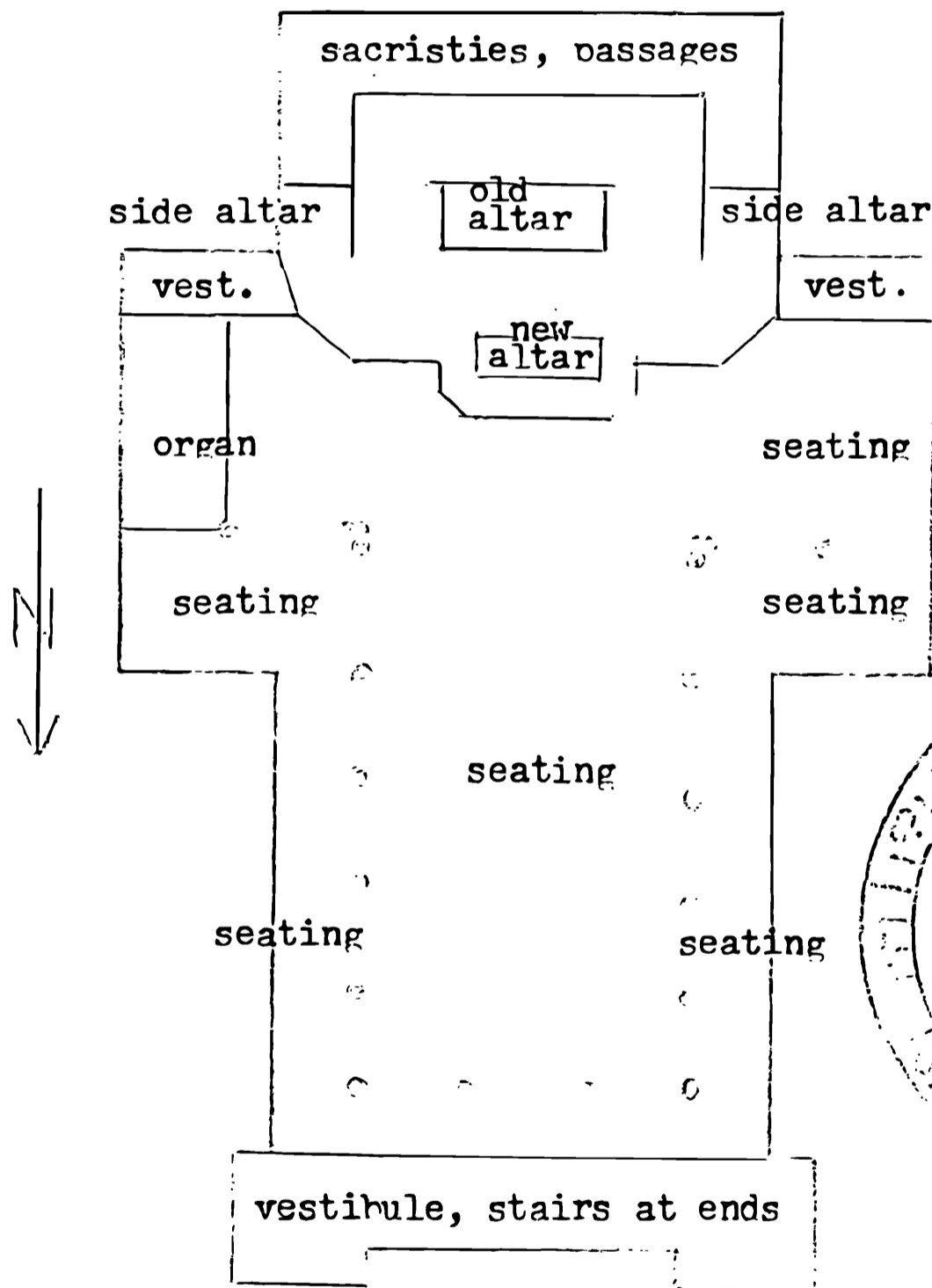
(Continuation Sheet)-3

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| STATE Rhode Island | |
| COUNTY Providence | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | FEB 1 1975 |

(Number all entries)

7. Description.

inside the Cathedral has really not affected the fabric, plan or original decoration: this includes the new marble walls in the vestibule; a marble floor for the entire nave and transept space; new, simply-designed pews; new lanterns suspended from the ceiling; relocation of the organ from its old balcony to the east transept. The most striking change, of course, is the new altar and its placement well out from the depths of the sanctuary, in accord with modern ways of celebrating the mass.



Sketch-plan of interior spaces
(not to scale).

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1878**

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 checked="" 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

Still monumental and conspicuous, even among numerous recent high-rise buildings, the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul must have been even more so when first built near the low XVIII- and XIX-Century domestic structures of old Weybosset Hill. And this display of size and grandeur was surely intentional: to signify the slowly-built but increasingly widespread importance of the Roman Catholic faith in Rhode Island and the dignity of its episcopal seat in Providence. There had been an earlier and small church structure on the site, which had been promoted to "Cathedral" in 1847, when Providence became an independent diocese--having previously been one jointly with Hartford, Connecticut. This small building probably was sufficient for local Catholic needs during its thirty years of existence, since Rhode Island remained generally a stronghold of the more austere forms of Protestantism, though Catholic masses had been said, here or there, in Providence since 1789. The Roman Catholic element in the city and state increased considerably with the immigration of many Irish from the 1830's-1840's onward and of many Italians, French Canadians and Portuguese in decades following. Their numbers, the numerous local parishes they founded, and pride in their own old faith on new "foreign ground" are the basis for the present diocese and the present Cathedral, which was meant to be a religious monument for all to see.

Because of its siting and its size, the Cathedral has long been a landmark in its city, and one of interest to both the casual passer-by and the architectural historian. It was certainly built, proudly, for the ages, and except for the tall and plain towers shows an interesting mixture of styles: on which mixture one can make some conjectures. Its architect, Patrick Keeley (1816-1896) was born in Ireland, the son of an architect, and he presumably observed buildings in the United Kingdom before he emigrated to America at the age of twenty-five (he was to be chiefly a church architect from then until the end of his life). His first church designs--among which was St. Joseph's Church of 1851 on Hope Street in Providence--were largely derived from what he had seen of parish churches in England and Ireland. Twenty-five years later, and onward, he departed somewhat from this frame of mind and of design, probably in keeping with the ideas of his clients as much as with current architectural fashion. While English-style

(See Continuation Sheet 4.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cady, John Hutchins: The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island, 1957), pp. 110, 152.
 Withey, Henry F., and Withey, Elsie Rathburn: Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles, California, 1970), p. 333.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA UTM Coordinates

| 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 | ° ' " | ° ' " | | ° ' " | ° ' " | |

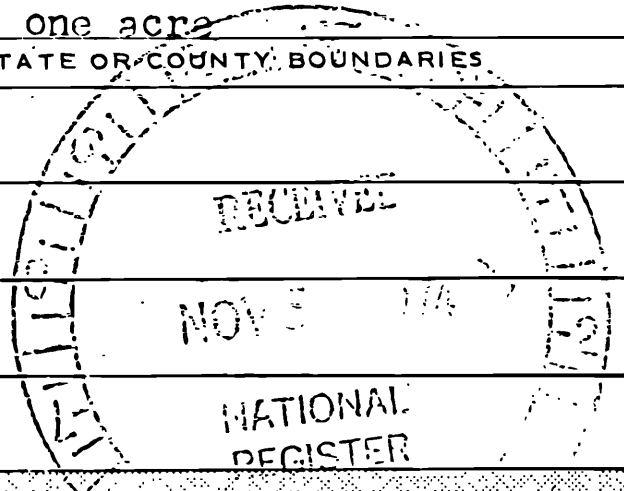
19 ° E 299260 . N 4632310

UTM
OF
CD
SEE INSTRUCTIONS

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

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

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE: July, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:
John Brown House, 52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence

STATE: Rhode Island, 02906

CODE: 111

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>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:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name: <u>Richard B. Harrington</u></p> <p>Title: <u>State Historic Preservation Officer</u></p> <p>Date: <u>October 31, 1974</u></p> | <p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date: <u>2/10/75</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date: <u>2-6-75</u></p> |
|--|--|

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

(Continuation Sheet)-4

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| STATE Rhode Island | |
| COUNTY Providence | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | FEB 11 1975 |

(Number all entries)

8. Significance.

Gothic churches would still for many decades be built for Protestant congregations, such reminders of the Anglican Church were little wanted by Irish-American Catholics and even less suited to the understanding and tastes of immigrants from central and southern Europe. A copy of an English abbey, which Keeley could do well, was not in line, and he took care to vary his style, here and in cathedrals for Boston and Portland, Maine. Nevertheless, he could not forget what he had observed in his youth; so that while one sees at the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul a strong and massive Romanesque silhouette, there is indeed a Gothic interior.

From 1968 to 1973 a complete rehabilitation of the Cathedral, its ancillary buildings and its surroundings was undertaken, including the creation of the plaza stretching before it--across which one can now see, beyond cleared land, the smaller Gothic mass of All Saints Memorial Church (Episcopal) on Westminster Street as a sort of counterfoil. The Cathedral building consequently is to-day better seen, more used and enjoyed--even by non-Catholics when there are concerts and ecumenical events--than ever before. Providence already has a number of churches and downtown buildings listed in the National Register, and the prominent and architecturally valuable Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul deserves to join these others.

