

PH0358959

# DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED MAY 4 1976  
DATE ENTERED JUL 13 1976

## 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  Central Falls Congregational Church

AND/OR COMMON St. Joseph's Parish Center

### 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 376 High Street

CITY, TOWN Central Falls VICINITY OF #1 Rep. Fernand J. St. Germain

STATE Rhode Island 02836 CODE 44 COUNTY Providence CODE 007

### 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input 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 St. Joseph's Church

STREET & NUMBER 39 High Street

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 Central Falls, Rhode Island Statewide Preservation Report  
P-CF-1, 1976

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_ LOCAL \_\_\_\_\_

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN Providence STATE Rhode Island

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Central Falls Congregational Church is a fine example of vernacular Shingle Style architecture. It was erected in 1883 at the junction of High and Jenks Street in the southeastern corner of Central Falls. The church is essentially one story high, although its fenestration is arranged on three levels. The basic plan is rectangular, but the steep cross-gable roof, interrupted by a variety of porches, overhangs, and bays, creates an asymmetry of form and massing. The exterior is clapboarded with various patterns of shingles used in the gable ends.

A three-level, flat-roofed tower rises from the northern Jenks Street facade. West of the tower the roof rises into the high gable of the north/south roof axis, while the length of the east/west axis is visible along the east side. The tower was originally topped by a spire (damaged in the 1938 hurricane and later removed); it has two small windows on the second level; the third level originally held the church bell. A balustrade surrounds the top of the tower. The main entrance to the church is in the tower's first level and is set under a gabled porch. The upper portion of the gable is covered with patterned shingles, the lower with panelling. The porch was originally supported by four heavy posts, but the front two have been replaced by stock, wrought-iron supports, as have the porch railings. This northern facade has two sets of stained glass windows. Six windows line the wall right of the tower. The left side of the facade is divided by a concave band of shingles which form a shallow bay filled by a row of windows, five small squares set over five rectangles. The bay crosses the middle section of the gable and rests on a convex molding. The upper level of the gable contains a small window topped by a semi-circular molding. A row of ground-level basement windows are also visible, as the site slopes up slightly toward the south and west.

At the northeastern corner are the side entrances to the church. Two sets of double doors are set at opposite ends of a porch covered by an extension of the main roof. As in the main entrance, three of the porch posts have been replaced by stock, wrought iron. Above the entrance porch is a gabled dormer with a semi-circular window.

The east side of the building, facing High Street, contains the gable end of the east/west roof axis; six stained glass rectangular windows are arranged on its lower level, four others are set in the gable end.

Two doors are located on the west facade of the church. On the left side is a service door under a small, gabled overhang supported by heavy brackets, and on the right a short, gabled extension covers a door and stairs leading to the basement. Between these two doors

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the roofline rises into a gable under which there is a set of four square and four rectangular windows.

The southern facade of the building has a central door leading into the social room. To the left is a set of triple windows; to the right is a shallow, shed-roofed extension, lighted by a small window with a curved pediment. Above the extension on the second level is a set of Palladian windows. High in the peak of the gable is a small window topped by a wooden sunburst design.

Inside the church, as one enters from the north porch, is a small vestibule with plainly plastered walls. To the left a door opens into a narrow stairway to the basement. On the right are double doors leading into the nave of the church which is simple and restrained. Its lack of ornament is a striking contrast with the exterior. The main framing of the church is visible and forms the principal ornament. Lancet arches of laminated oak rise from the floor to the center of the ceiling where their intersections are filled in by wooden fretwork set on crossbeams. The arches are decorated by simple incised concentric circles. The sanctuary at the southern end of the building is framed by a round arch enclosing three stained glass windows; the wall below the windows is panelled in oak, contrasting sharply with the white plaster walls of the rest of the room. In front of the arch is a raised dais which originally held a lectern. To the right of the sanctuary a door leads into a small dressing room, and to the left is the church's original and still functional organ, decorated with gold floral work.

The northern half of the west wall (which leads into the church's social room) was originally screened with oak panels set under windows all of which could be raised to open the two rooms into one. The panels and windows have been replaced by modern accordion doors. The social room retains its laminated-wood arches, but its ceiling has been covered by acoustical tile. It is lighted by windows on the west and south walls and, at its west end, contains a small stage. Opening off the social room is the service area of the church which originally contained a kitchen, serving room, and coat room. It has been extensively altered to accommodate the changing function of the building from church to parish center. A small serving area now opens into the social room and the kitchen has been shortened to make space for lavatories. At present the serving room (entered from the social room or from the service door through a small vestibule) leads into the kitchen, now being fitted with modern equipment. From the kitchen

(See continuation sheet 2)

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*Continuation of Form 10-300a for National  
Register of Historic Places  
5.4.76*

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one passes through a short corridor onto which open the new coat room and lavatories and through which one arrives at the main vestibule. The stairs to the basement of the church lead into a short corridor, lined on the right with storage spaces and lavatories. The left side of the corridor leads to a roughly finished recreation room which was formerly used as a Sunday schoolroom.

# 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 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 1883

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Central Falls Congregational Church is one of the most handsome buildings in the city of Central Falls and is the focus of one of its oldest neighborhoods. The history of the church reflects the demographic and social changes in the High Street area from its construction by an affluent Yankee congregation to its present use as the parish center of a Polish-American Catholic church.

The church was built in 1883 by a congregation whose history reached back to the beginnings of industrial development in Central Falls. Sparsely settled in the early nineteenth century, the village experienced a rapid growth in the 1820's when the power of the Blackstone River was first fully utilized. The tiny cluster of mills and houses along the river had little institutional life of its own and remained for several years merely an extension of development in Pawtucket. Central Falls' Congregationalists traveled each Sunday to the Pawtucket Congregational Church which they had helped organize in 1820. By 1845, when the congregation had outgrown its church building, however, the village had grown extensively, and the forty members from Central Falls organized their own church. They built a wooden structure on High Street, directly across from the present building.

The early church members included many of the village's small manufacturers, businessmen, and professionals, among them Joseph and Samuel Wood, who manufactured cotton; John Moies, who owned a yarn mill; and Sylvester Pierce, who operated a confectionary. Until the later years of the nineteenth century, the Central Falls Congregational Church continued to serve families of wealth and influence, many of whom built handsome houses in the High Street neighborhood, only a block away from Roosevelt Avenue which was lined with their mills. When the early building was outgrown in the 1880's, the congregation replaced it with the present church. John A. Adams, the treasurer and agent of the Stafford Mills whose house faces the church, donated the land. Adams and Henry A. Stearns, vice-president of the Union Wadding Company and later Lt. Governor of Rhode Island, served as the building committee. The new building was constructed at a fortuitous time in the congregation's history, since its resources were extensive and its purse was full. The church is a fine example

(See continuation sheet 3)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Friends and Neighbors, A Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, Central Falls, R.I., 1975.

Grieve, Robert, An Illustrated History of Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Vicinity, Pawtucket, R.I., 1897.

(See Continuation Sheet 5)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 9	3, 0, 2	1, 2, 0	4, 6	3, 9	5, 1, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING					ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C							D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: Pamela Kennedy, Survey Specialist DATE: April 28, 1976

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 401-277-2678 TELEPHONE

STREET & NUMBER: 150 Benefit Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island 02903

# 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE: *Frederick C. Williamson* DATE: April 30, 1976

TITLE: State Historic Preservation Officer

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
Acting: <i>[Signature]</i>	DATE: 7/12/76
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE: 6-25-76
ATTEST: <i>[Signature]</i>	
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
RBR for WJM 7/8/76	



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of Shingle Style architecture and may well have been designed by one of Rhode Island's leading architectural firms. To date, however, no record has been found of its architect. The handsome structure, a contrast in mass and height with the houses that surround it, rises above the neighborhood landscape and dominates it. One of the finest buildings in the city, it was the visual focus of the neighborhood as well as its institutional center.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the character of the High Street neighborhood began to change. As Central Falls became a full-fledged industrial city, it attracted large numbers of immigrants who sought work in its textile and metals industries, and High Street became the center of Central Falls' Polish community. Immigration quickly altered the demography of the neighborhood. It was now more densely populated, its residents were less affluent, and most of them were Catholic. Fewer of Central Falls' industrialists lived in the area, as many moved to other sections of the city or to other cities, and the Congregational Church lost its members. Polish Catholics built their own church, St. Joseph's, across the street in 1919. They later added a rectory and acquired the Stafford House for use as a school. With its variety of educational and social functions, St. Joseph's became the institutional focus of the neighborhood, as the Congregational Church had once been.

In response to the continually declining residential base, the Congregational Church abandoned its building in 1973 when its membership merged with two Pawtucket churches. Convinced that their handsome building should be maintained and used, they sought a buyer who would make appropriate use of the structure and eventually sold it to St. Joseph's for use as a parish center. The Congregational Church is now one of five buildings on High Street owned by St. Joseph's and completes the church complex.

Work on the conversion of the church is now underway. The nave of the church will serve as a banquet room; the social room will be used for small gatherings; and the basement schoolroom will become a recreation room. Some alterations in the building have been required by its new function. The addition of new service facilities is virtually completed and new oak floors have replaced linoleum. Where architectural elements have been removed (such as the wood panels and windows separating the nave and the social room), they have not been discarded, but have been carefully stored. The parish center will soon be a model for the re-use of churches for the rest of the city. The acquisition of the Central Falls Congregational

(See Continuation sheet 4)



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Church by St. Joseph's ensures that the building will once again become part of the institutional center of the neighborhood.

Recent changes in the physical fabric of this area make preservation of the structure imperative. While Central Falls avoided the wholesale demolition of urban renewal which many other cities experienced during the last two decades, the High Street area has lost several of its most important buildings. Within a short radius of the Congregational Church, several structures have been demolished, including a handsome commercial block and one of the earliest remaining mill houses. Their replacement by unsightly parking lots makes the protection of the remaining legacy of the neighborhood all the more important.

The renovation of the Central Falls Congregational Church into a parish center and its preservation as the principal visual ornament of the area could be a catalyst for the regeneration of the neighborhood.

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Haley, John, The Lower Blackstone River Valley, Pawtucket, R. I.  
1936.

Interview with Rev. Maxwell Clough, former minister, Central Falls  
Congregational Church, April 20, 1976

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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1. Name: Central Falls Congregational Church
2. Location: 376 High Street  
Central Falls, RI
3. Owner: St. Joseph's Church  
391 High Street  
Central Falls, RI
4. Description: Central Falls Congregational Church is a fine example of the Queen Anne style. The church is essentially one story high, although its fenestration is arranged in three levels. The basic plan is rectangular, but the steep cross-gable roof, interrupted by a variety of porches, overhangs, and bays, creates an asymmetry of form and massing. The exterior is clapboarded, with various patterned shingles and stained glass windows. A 3-level, flat-roofed tower (originally capped by a spire) rises from the northern facade.  
  
The interior of the church is simple and restrained - its lack of ornament a striking contrast with the exterior. The main framing of the church is visible and forms the principal ornament; arches of laminated oak rise from the floor to the ridge of the ceiling where their intersections are filled in by wooden fretwork. The arches are decorated only with incised concentric circles. The sanctuary at the south end is framed by a round arch.
5. Significance: The Central Falls Congregational Church is one of the most handsome buildings in the city of Central Falls and is the focus of one of its oldest neighborhoods. The history of the church reflects the demographic and social changes in the High Street area from its construction by an affluent Yankee congregation to its present use as the parish center of a Polish-American Catholic Church.

The church was built by a congregation whose history reaches back to the beginnings of industrial development in Central Falls and whose members have included many of the city's manufacturers, businessmen and professionals. When its earlier building was outgrown in the 1880s, the congregation replaced it with this handsome structure which became the visual focus of the High Street residential neighborhood.

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In the early 20th century, the High Street neighborhood became the center of Central Falls' Polish community -- densely populated, less affluent, and Catholic. The Congregational Church, its population declining, merged with two Pawtucket churches and sold its church to the Polish Catholic St. Joseph's Church for use as its parish center.

7. Acreage: Less than one acre
8. Plat 1, lot 44
9. UTM Reference: 19.302160 463530 4639530
10. Entered on National Register, July 12, 1976

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE      RHODE ISLAND

Date Entered      JUL 12 1976

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Central Falls Congregational Church	Central Falls Providence County

Also Notified

Hon. John O. Pastore  
Hon. Claiborne Pell  
Hon. Fernand J. St Germain  
Regional Director, North Atlantic  
Region

PR      Mott      7/14/76

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mr. Frederick C. Williamson  
Director, Rhode Island Department of  
Community Affairs  
150 Washington Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903