

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

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Continuation sheet 48

Item number 7

Page 48

NAME: Elizabeth Spring

LOCATION: off north side of Forge Road east of a railroad viaduct on
the Conrail Northeast Corridor main line.

OWNER: State of Rhode Island
Department of Transportation
State Office Building
Providence, R.I. 02903

CONDITION: Fair; Altered; Original Site

DESCRIPTION:

Elizabeth Spring is a fresh-water spring located in a wooded area between the head of Greenwich Cove, a tidal inlet of Narragansett Bay, and Forge Road, a short distance east of the Conrail Northeast Corridor main line. It is at the bottom of an embankment, invisible from the road, without any sort of marked or cleared path providing access to it. The spring itself is marked by a circular granite stone, similar in form to a millstone, with a rectangular marble slab set into it. The marble slab, placed here in 1858, has a long inscription weathered to the point of illegibility. The marker is set flush with the ground across a small hollow containing the spring and water flows out from under the marker through this hollow.

PERIOD: 1600-1699, 1700-1799, 1800-1899, 1900-

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Exploration/Settlement, Literature, Transportation,
Folklore

SPECIFIC DATES: 17th century, 1858

BUILDER/ARCHITECT: Not applicable

SIGNIFICANCE:

Elizabeth Spring is significant for its association with prominent historical figures and with a rich body of tradition and literary references concerning it. The spring was a waystop on the Pequot Path, the chief route from Providence to the Narragansett Country of southern Rhode Island and the English settlements of southeastern Connecticut. Travellers on foot or horseback frequented the spot and used the water to refresh themselves and their mounts. Elizabeth Spring was visited by Roger Williams and is mentioned in his writings, which serve as the source of the spring's name. In a letter to John Winthrop, Jr., governor of Connecticut, written after Winthrop's wife Elizabeth had died, Williams recounts a recent trip during which he had stopped at this spring. The event reminded Williams of previous stops he had made here with Mrs. Winthrop. He wrote: "Here is the spring, say I, but where is Elizabeth? My charity answers: she is gone to the Eternal Spring and Fountain of Living Waters." Thus the site came to be known as

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Continuation sheet 49

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Page 49

Elizabeth Spring. This poetic anecdote made Elizabeth Spring a well known historical site from an early date. The existing marble marker, placed by Dr. James Eldredge of East Greenwich in 1858 and now barely legible, is inscribed with an account of this tale and with Williams' quote, attesting to the importance accorded Elizabeth Spring in local residents' perception of Rhode Island history.

ACREAGE: less than one acre
QUADRANGLE NAME: East Greenwich, R.I.
UTM: 19 295390 4613360

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property falls within the state highway line of Forge Road and is bounded as follows: beginning at a point on the northeasterly curb of Forge Road; thence northeasterly along the bottom edge of a railroad embankment, on the southeasterly side of the railroad right-of-way, passing in part along a stone retaining wall, a distance of 75 feet more or less, to a point; thence southeasterly in a straight line a distance of 35 feet more or less, to a point; thence southwesterly in a straight line, perpendicular to Forge Road, a distance of 75 feet more or less, to the northeasterly curb of Forge Road; thence northwesterly along said curb to the point of beginning. This parcel measures approximately 2625 square feet and encompasses the cultural resource together with its immediate surroundings, including a foot path leading from Forge Road to the spring.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: LOCAL

(See Continuation Sheet #50)