

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. John's Episcopal Church  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Little Silver Point Road  not for publication  
city, town Little Silver  vicinity  
state New Jersey code 034 county Monmouth code 025 zip code 07739

3. Classification

| Ownership of Property                       | Category of Property                            | Number of Resources within Property |                  |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|------------------|
|   |   | Contributing                        | Noncontributing  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <u>1</u>                            | _____ buildings  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input type="checkbox"/> district               | _____                               | _____ sites      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | _____                               | _____ structures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | _____                               | _____ objects    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <u>1</u>                            | <u>0</u> Total   |

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
[Signature] Date 7/31/90  
Signature of certifying official  
Administrator, Office of New Jersey Heritage/DSHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet. (SR Date)  
[Signature] Date 7/26/90  
Signature of commenting or other official  
Acting Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. Patrick Andrews 12/27/90  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

religious structure - church

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

religious structure - church

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Stick Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls wood

roof asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

### I. Siting

St. John's Episcopal Church, Little Silver, is situated today in a suburban residential area, sited on a flat piece of land bordering Little Silver Creek. The site retains an undeveloped wetlands character strongly suggestive of its nineteenth century appearance, with tall waving grasses typical of shore area vegetation. The church does not have a cemetery associated with it, since Little Silver was originally primarily a seasonal resort community, and since natural conditions do not favor in-ground interment.

### II. Exterior

Built as a chapel in 1876, St. John's Episcopal Church is an excellent example of the amalgam of Gothic Revival and Stick Style architecture which was popular in New Jersey's shore towns during the period 1865-90. A well-preserved one story frame structure, rectangular in plan, St. John's was designed by architect John E. Sidman, friend and associate of parishioner John H. Bates. The church exhibits a high degree of architectural integrity, and survives as one of only a few strong examples of the Stick Style in Monmouth County.

The exterior wall surfaces of the church are enriched with a variety of textures created by ornamental and structural details executed in wood. Appropriate to an ecclesiastical building, many of the motifs are associated with the Gothic Revival. Primary wall surfaces are finished in vertical board and batten for approximately two-thirds of the wall height, with contrasting fish scale shingle in horizontal bands above.

The cornice line is accented by heavy wooden brackets. Oral history accounts indicate that the original paint colors of the church were shades of yellow with brown trim; the building is now painted white.

A dominant feature of the exterior is its steeply pitched hipped roof with overhanging eaves, surmounted by a small wood-shingled cupola-type steeple capped with a cross. Originally covered in decorative wooden shingle, the roof is now clad with asphalt shingle. A small vestibule projecting from the south end forms the main entry, accessible through a double-leaf panelled door in a Gothic-arched enframing under a gable roof with heavy decorative brackets.

The ornate brass door hardware features Gothic motifs imitative of architectural forms. The original wooden entry steps and railing have been replaced by concrete steps with wrought-iron railings.

See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
architecture

Period of Significance  
1876

Significant Dates  
N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
John E. Sidman

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

St. John's Episcopal Church, built in 1876, is significant under National Register Criterion C as an excellent surviving example of nineteenth century Stick Style architecture in a Gothic mode, retaining a basic integrity of both architectural style and materials. The design for the church is the work of John E. Sidman, thought to have been associated with the firm of Burnham and Root. The church is one of only a handful of strong examples of the Stick Style remaining in Monmouth County, a style which is particularly characteristic of the period of rapid late nineteenth century development in New Jersey's shore towns.

I. Little Silver in the Late 19th Century

The construction of St. John's Episcopal Church coincided with an unprecedented period of development in Little Silver, heralded by the linkage of the village to the New York and Long Branch railroad in 1875. Previously a sleepy village whose economy was centered on fishing and agriculture, Little Silver, like many towns on New Jersey's northern shore, grew quickly to become a popular resort with the coming of the railroad in the late 1860s.

The boarding houses, cottages and small hotels that sprang up in the community from the late 1860s through the 1880s (many of them located near St. John's on Little Silver Point Road) were attractive, easily accessible vacation spots for urban dwellers in New York and Philadelphia.

Despite rapid development, however, Little Silver retained a "small-town" ambience, and became known as a quiet family-oriented resort, unlike busy Long Branch to the south, which had been established as a fashionable watering place by the 1840s and was booming by the 1870s.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Major Sources Consulted

Burr, Nelson. The Anglican Church in New Jersey. Philadelphia: The Church Historical Society, 1954.

Giles, Avery. "Notables at Old Hotels Recalled at Little Silver," Long Branch Daily Record, nd.

Hunton, Gail. Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory. Lincroft, NJ: Board of Recreation Commissioners, 1980-84.

Kennedy, June O. A Sketchbook of Little Silver History. Little Silver, NJ: Little Silver Historical Society, 1980.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data: N/A

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .20 acres Long Branch, NJ Quad

UTM References

A 1,8 5|8,2|1,6,0 4,4|6,5|10,6,0  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies Little Silver Municipal Tax Lot 39, Block 46, and the easterly half of Lot 39, Block 46. The westerly boundary of the nominated property is a line of convenience drawn between Little Silver Point Road and Little Silver Creek, which divides in half Lot 39.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all of Lot 38, which has been associated with the church historically. It also includes the easterly half of Lot 39, solely to avoid running a boundary line through a modern building connected to the original church.

N.B.: Only the 1876 church is a contributing building.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sally Milner  
organization ACROTHERION date \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number 71 Maple Avenue telephone (201) 984-9660  
city or town Morristown state New Jersey zip code 07960

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Fenestration is regular and symmetrical. The front entrance is flanked by narrow rectangular windows containing Gothic-arched stained glass panels. On both the east and west facades, a bank of three narrow windows, also with stained glass, is flanked by a single narrow window. A single large Gothic-arched window appears above the altar on the north facade, mirroring the wooden arch above the entry door.

A single exterior brick chimney decorated with recessed crosses rises from the northeast corner of the church. No longer functional and thought to be vulnerable in high winds, the upper half of the stack was removed in 1984 following a severe storm.

### III. Interior

The interior of St. John's reveals a simple plan, comprised of a small vestibule or narthex measuring 9' x 4', and a 24' x 32'8" nave with vaulted beamed ceiling. Wall surfaces are plaster above painted tongue-and-groove wainscoting; the floor is laid with narrow-board, dark-stained hardwood. Church records indicate that the original decorative scheme included blue walls with gold stencilled trim above dark red wainscoting, and portions of this scheme are apparent in historic photographs. The interior is now painted white.

Two rows of ten simple wooden pews, original to the building, flank the single center aisle. The pews are now painted white and were originally varnished; each is ornamented with a single cut-out Gothic trefoil.

A choir stall with reproduction pews modeled on the originals has been added at the front of the left-hand seating section, and an organ and piano have been placed at the front of the right-hand section, where a woodstove originally sat.

The raised altar at the north end of the church is separated from the nave by a wood and brass rail original to the building, and contains several original pieces of carved walnut furniture in a late Gothic Revival style, including a bishop's chair, priest's chair, credence table, and font, all made for the church ca.1880 by John Hanford Bates, a locally prominent cabinetmaker and member of the St. John's congregation.

Architect John E. Sidman donated a large stained glass window in memory of his daughter, originally installed above the altar; however, the light admitted by the window was uncomfortably bright, and a large portion of it is shown shaded by curtains in historic photographs. Ultimately, the lower portion of the window broke and was covered by a permanent wooden screen, a simplified version of a reredos made by members of the Bates family. The upper portion of the window has been protected on the exterior with an unobtrusive storm window and is still visible above the reredos in the church interior. A small room east of the altar was originally used as a vestry and sacristy. The partition walls separating the space from the altar have since been removed, extending the chancel to the full width of the building.

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Lighting was originally provided by kerosene banner lamps, as well as the considerable amount of natural light admitted by the windows and by a skylight (now removed) which once existed in the center of the nave.

The stained glass windows now in place were added in 1987, replacing the original 1876 windows. The new windows were designed by Marguerite Gaudin of the Willets Stained Glass Studios of Philadelphia. Portions of the original glass have been saved by the church, which also prepared a schematic drawing of the original window placement.

#### IV. Additions

Like many public spaces, churches have traditionally undergone physical changes to serve new and expanded needs of their organizations. Such is the case at St. John's. Twentieth century additions include 1) a parish hall (1928-1929) sited to the rear of the chapel, 2) a parish hall extension (1958-1959) approximately three bays long, recessed to the west of the earlier parish hall block, and 3) an office-education wing (1974). All are modest one-story frame buildings sheathed in horizontal siding. The first two have gable roofs, while the 1974 addition has a steep hipped roof, recalling the roof of the original chapel.

Fenestration on all three additions is simple, regular and symmetrical. Windows are predominantly modern six-over-six sash, arranged in banks of six on the south (primary) facade of the 1958 addition, with three pairs of eight-over-eight windows situated beneath decorative gables on the south facade of the education building.

In addition to the hipped roof on the education building, other features that help link the additions to the chapel stylistically include the use of a bracketed cornice line in the 1958 addition similar to that on the original chapel, and the use of fish scale shingles in the gable trim on the education building, echoing the horizontal bands of shingles on the main body of the church.

The three additions do not contribute to the significance of the church.

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### II. The Beginnings of St. John's

The building of St. John's Church solidified the family atmosphere in the village, and became in effect an important bridge between the "old" hamlet of Little Silver and the "new" resort community, a status which is reflected in its architecture.

The congregation was begun by members of the established population of local farmers and craftsmen and the entrepreneurial boarding house and cottage owners. These co-religionists first met sporadically in members' homes, beginning in 1869. Though Episcopal churches already existed in both Red Bank and Shrewsbury, the Little Silver group desired a local place of worship, and their church was established as a mission church with Trinity Church, Red Bank as its sponsor.

Encouraged by a growing population in Little Silver, due primarily to the advent of direct rail service to New York in 1875, the group began, literally, to build the chapel in 1876. All the materials and skills needed (save the brickmasons) were donated by the congregation. These gifts included the site, a parcel of land on Little Silver Creek given by member John H. Lippincott.

The building of St. John's came at a time when the Episcopal church, too, was experiencing tremendous growth in New Jersey. Between 1859 and 1874, the number of communicants to the church grew from 5,000 to 12,000, and in 1874 the decision was made to split the diocese into two more manageable units.

St. John's was not only a center for worship for summer "boarders" and residents, but a social center as well. Reminiscences of Avery L. Giles from the Long Branch Daily Record note that events like fairs and lawn parties given for the benefit of St. John's were enjoyed by the many residents, both temporary and permanent, of Little Silver Point in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

### III. Architecture of St. John's

Like the site, labor and materials, the design for the church was also donated. Its author was architect John Sidman, a frequent summer visitor to Little Silver and an associate of congregation member John Hanford Bates, a cabinetmaker who designed and made the altar furniture for the church. Local history sources and oral histories associate Sidman with the firm of Burnham and Root; however, extensive research has turned up no evidence to support this, nor any substantial material relating to Sidman, his practice or other commissions. Nonetheless, Sidman's work at St. John's reflects considerable design skill, indicating professional training and experience.

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In his design for St. John's, Sidman combined the signature elements of the fashionable Stick Style with the basic form of a more archeologically "correct" Gothic style found in medieval English parish churches, and promoted in a revival begun in England in the 1830s by a group calling themselves the Ecclesiologists -- tastemakers, architects and Anglican church officials in search of truth in church architecture.

The Ecclesiologists, founded by students at Cambridge University, favored the careful emulation of medieval parish churches as appropriate architectural expressions of the theology of Anglican churches in the English-speaking world. Based on examples in which structure and materials were clearly and appropriately expressed, the Gothic Revival they promulgated was in reaction to a fashion for the Gothic that relied on the application of a few selected motifs to basically classical forms in what the Ecclesiologists perceived as a "sham" style.

In America, the outlook of the Ecclesiologists was evident in the designs of Richard Upjohn, the architect of Trinity Church in New York, as well as in a group of notable smaller frame churches, the designs for which were published in Upjohn's Rural Architecture, a church building guide which remained popular for several decades following its first appearance in 1852. A number of churches inspired by Upjohn's designs were built in New Jersey, including St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Metuchen (1868). St. Luke's is typical of the small, boxy board-and-batten churches in which "correct" Gothic form is combined with elements of the Stick Style, an amalgam that set a clear precedent for St. John's Episcopal Church in Little Silver.

The compact size of St. John's and its basic form recall St. Luke's, as does its steep, sheltering roof. Its interior, dominated by beams that are both decorative and functional, is typical of the frame churches of the earlier Gothic Revival. Yet St. John's is more a product of its time rather than a carryover from a previous generation.

Instead of expressing the soaring verticality of Upjohn's frame churches, St. John's is visually rooted to its site by its broad, hipped roof with deep overhanging eaves. In the variety of textures and structural motifs articulated on its wooden exterior, St. John's asserts itself as a classic example of the Stick Style rather than a pure example of the Gothic Revival.

#### IV. Conclusions

Churches are always symbolic, but St. John's symbolizes even more than the spiritual values of its congregation. Its wood and brick embody a change in the social structure of nineteenth-century Little Silver, when "old" local residents joined with the entrepreneurs of a "new" shore resort to create, with their own hands and means, a new house of worship to be shared by all. The church emerged from the local community in an unusually direct fashion, recalling the pioneer spirit of an earlier era, which had already become impossible to recreate in urban America, but which still flourished in places like Little Silver.

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St. John's today remains an important focal point for the suburbanized community which grew from Little Silver's resort identity. The tradition of personal involvement reflected in the original building campaign continues today in the high degree of maintenance and care which is given to the church by members of the congregation.

St. John's also embodies the vigorous growth of American Episcopalianism after a century's quietus, most notably the vigor and self-determinism of the Episcopalian system of mission chapels, designed to propagate the faith outside urban areas.

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St. John's Episcopal Church Archives, Little Silver, NJ

Wilson, Harold F. The Story of the Jersey Shore. Princeton: D. VanNostrand Co., 1964.

Wolverton, Chester. Atlas of Monmouth County. New York: 1889.

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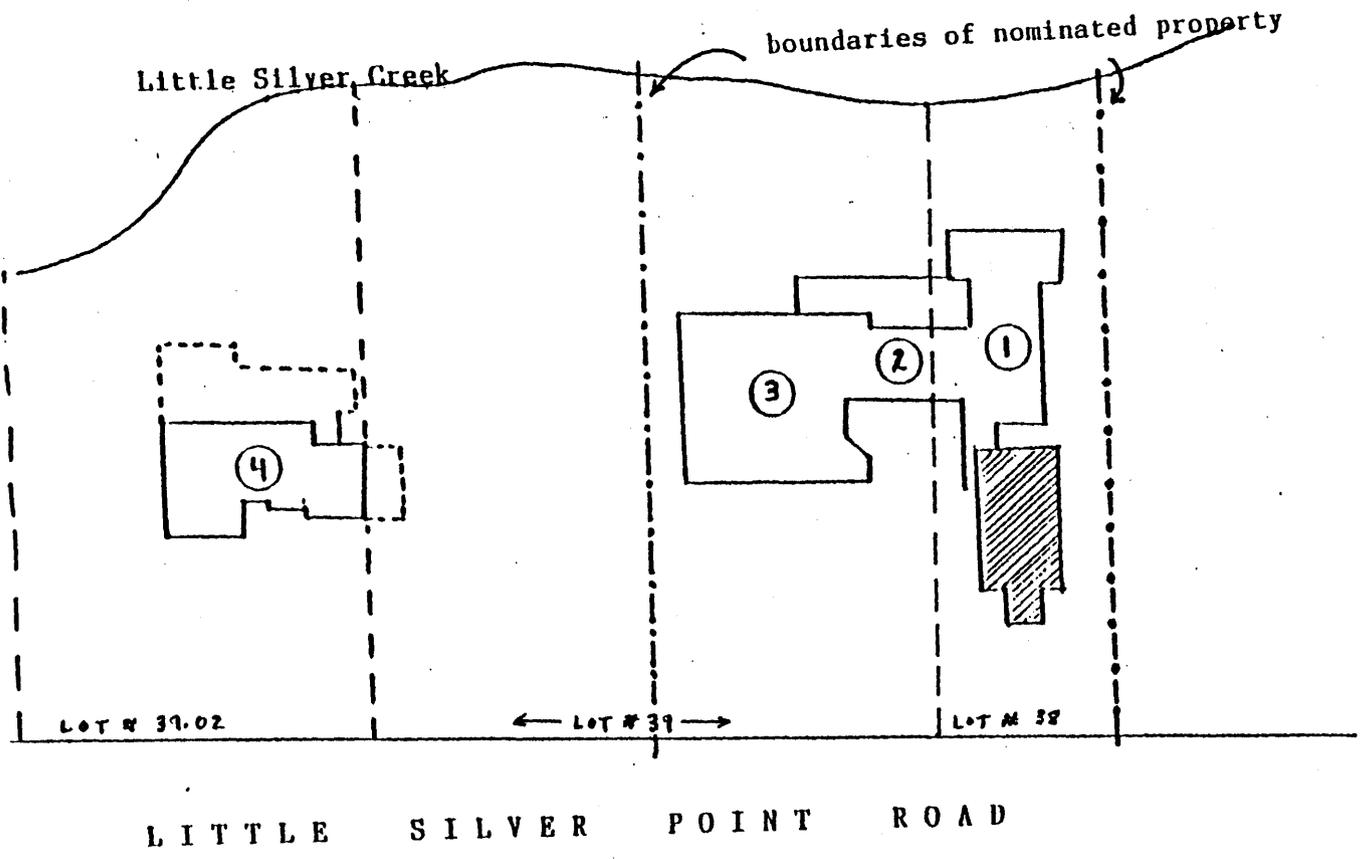
St. John's Episcopal Church, Little  
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Photographs  
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The following photographs of St. John's Episcopal Church, Little Silver Point Road, Little Silver, New Jersey, were taken by James Delguidice of Specialized Photodesign, 150 Main Street, Chatham, New Jersey, who retains the negatives. Photos were taken in May 1989.

1. St. John's Episcopal Church; 6) facing northeast
2. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Entrance; 6) facing north
3. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Entrance, showing bracketed overhang; 6) facing northwest
4. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Historic View, 1887
5. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Historic View, ca. 1895
6. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Historic View, ca. 1920
7. St. John's Episcopal Church; 6) facing north
8. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Chimney Detail; 6) facing south
9. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Altar Wall, Exterior, showing cladding, altar window; 6) facing south
10. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Cornerstone
11. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Doorknob Detail
12. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Interior Door
13. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Interior; 6) facing northeast
14. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Altar
15. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Pew Detail
16. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Priest's Chair
17. St. John's Episcopal Church -- Baptismal Font
18. Little Silver Creek, rear of St. John's Church; 6) facing east

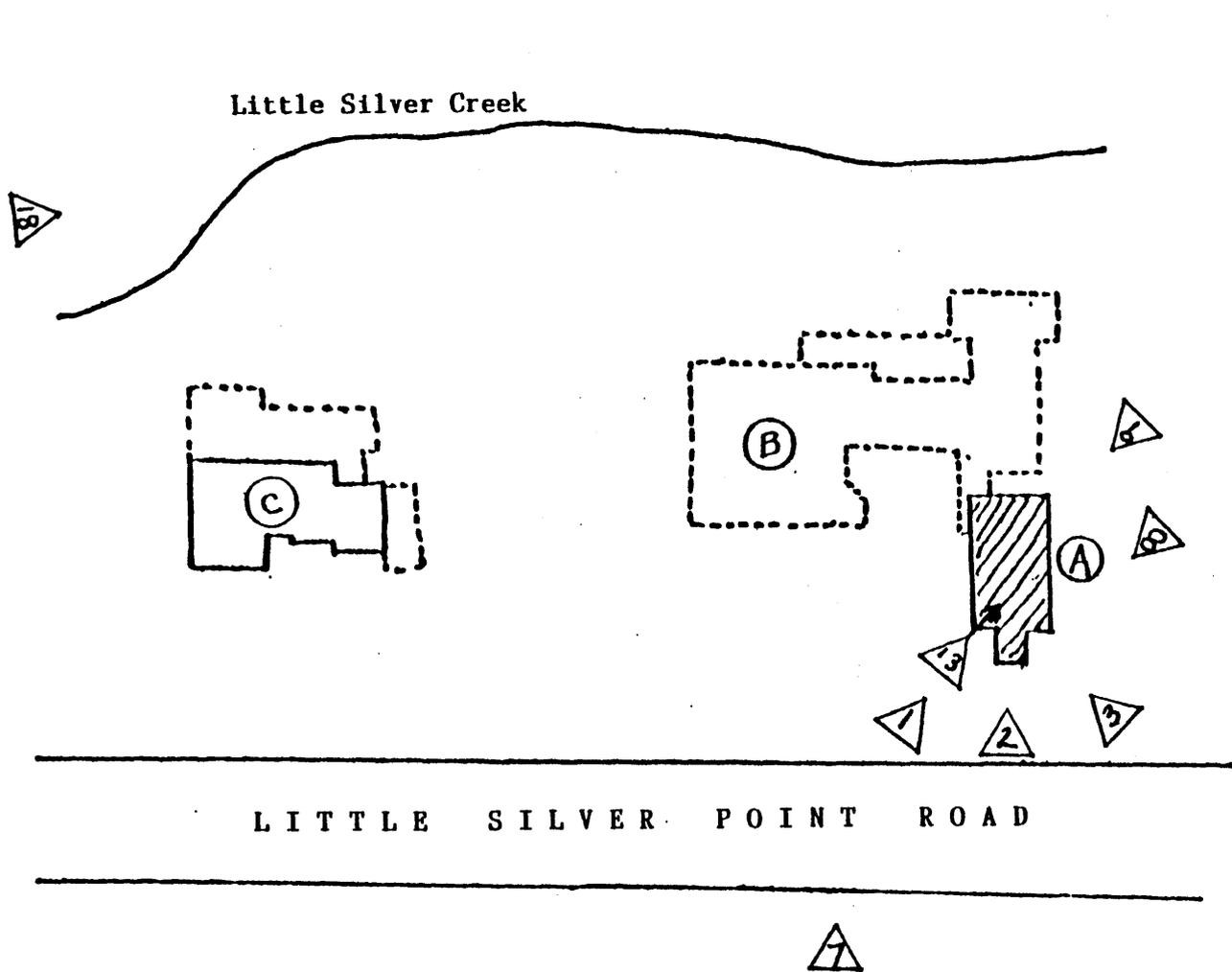


SITE PLAN: ST. JOHN'S  
 EPISCOPAL CHURCH,  
 LITTLE SILVER, NJ  
 (Monmouth County)  
 Tax Block #46

(Not to Scale)

-  St. John's Chapel  
 (1876)
- 1. Parish Hall  
 (1928-29)
- 2. Parish Hall  
 Extension (1954-55)
- 3. Office/Education  
 Wing (1974)
- 4. Modern Rectory

Source: Survey Map by Thomas P. Santry Engineers and Surveyors, 126 East River Road, Rumson, NJ, 12/73



SITE PLAN: ST. JOHN'S  
 EPISCOPAL CHURCH,  
 LITTLE SILVER, NJ  
 (Monmouth County)  
 Scale: 1" = 40'

- A. St. John's
- B. Recent Additions
- C. Modern Rectory

△ Photo Angle

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