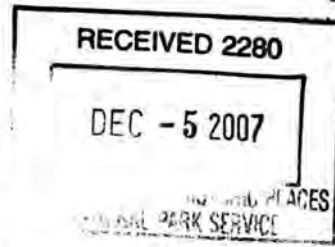
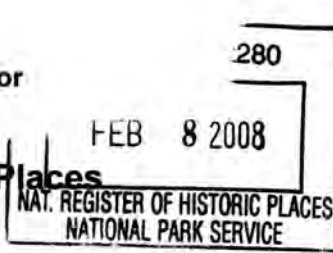


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



1400

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name North Rochester Congregational Church (preferred)

other names/site number Third Parish; Congregational Precinct in Rochester, Middleborough, and Freetown

2. Location

street & number 289 North Avenue not for publication

city or town Rochester vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Plymouth code 023 zip code 02770

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brona Simon November 30, 2007
Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, State Historic Preservation Officer Date
Massachusetts Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I, hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register 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 Patrick Andrews Date of Action 3/21/2008

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 6

Changes since Construction

The North Rochester Congregational Church retains much of its original character, although changes have occurred both during and after the period of significance. Within the period of significance, which begins with the stone walls that are believed to date to 1790 and the parish's first use of this land, the most important change to the building appears to be the reduction in the number of pew boxes. The 1841 "Plan of Pews and Appraisal" shows 40 pew boxes instead of the current 26. Four pew boxes were removed from the northeast corner and four from the northwest corner. Four more pews (the two back pairs) were removed from the back of the center section, apparently to open the broad cross aisle there that currently passes under the balcony. Patched sections in the wall and floor suggest that these pews were built and subsequently removed. The last pew was removed from the back of each of the side sections. These account for the 14 fewer pews, and are also confirmed by comparing the original plan of pews with the current floor plan. The front row of pews, now all open, once had box fronts. The only known date for any of these changes appears in the 1878 minutes, where the precinct votes to remove two of the front corner pews, lower the pulpit, and reassign the pewholders to other vacant pews. The current tin ceiling was installed over the original plaster ceiling in 1905.

Photographs from the turn of the 20th century show several exterior architectural elements that have since changed, although whether those changes took place during or since the period of significance is not precisely known. Around 1900, the carriage barns were still extant, and the church had exterior shutters and some sort of cresting atop its belfry, possible the remains of acroteria. The other four Greek Revival churches which Solomon Eaton designed for historic "Old Rochester" parishes also had this cresting. Large lamps decorated the eastern and western pilasters of the south facade. Two-part folding exterior shutters covered the upper and lower halves of the windows. The church stoves were removed in the 1950s and replaced with a gas heater, which since has been removed. The electric light fixtures currently in the worship hall also appear to date from the middle of the 20th century.

Despite remaining largely inactive during the 1970s and 1980s, the church was kept locked and intact. With renewed use starting in 1990, two major physical changes have been made (since the period of significance). The most important was the moving of the church onto a new foundation in 1992-93. The new foundation was constructed beside the old, and the church building jacked up and moved over onto the new foundation. This move did not significantly affect the architecture of the 1841 building. Moreover, the building remained on the same lot, and on the same hilltop, that a North Rochester Congregational Church has occupied since 1790-91. The directional orientation of the 1841 building was not shifted in the 1992-93 move. On the auditorium interior, the 1950s suspended gas heater was replaced with a gas furnace at this time, and the staircase opened into the new basement. These changes, which included the first indoor bathrooms, kitchen, and reception hall within the new basement, made the building useful once again for community worship and meetings. Minor changes since the period of significance also include the removal (to below roofline) of the two internal chimney stacks on the north end when the roof was reshingled. Efforts to retain the original character of the church are evident in the landscaping completed after the move. Apart from the necessary installation of disabled-access ramps, the landscaping choices were all conservative. They included minimal grading, retaining the drylaid and masonry boundary walls, installing a small wooden signboard and simple pole fence, and using gravel surfaces for parking, rear lane, and front walks.

The replacement of the original belfry by a replica, constructed out of pressure-treated lumber and synthetic materials, is a second change (since the period of significance). The belfry was removed with the intent of repairing it, not replacing it; however, wet rot, dry rot, and powder-post beetle infestation made effective repairs unlikely. Guided by professionals and

(continued)

North Rochester Congregational Church
Name of Property

Plymouth, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
2	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	2	objects
4	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID 19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 1

Summary Paragraph

The North Rochester Congregational Church is a 1½-story wood-frame Greek Revival church dating from 1841. Large wooden double doors in the southern end of the gable-front building provide entry. The facade has a triangular pediment supported by pilasters and surmounted by a squat, square belfry. On the exterior, the building remains largely unchanged from its original 1841 form, including narrow clapboard siding and tall double 18/18 sash windows. The interior of the church retains its rear gallery and bench box pews. The building is located on the eastern end of a long and narrow 1-acre woodlot located along rural North Avenue in Rochester, Massachusetts. The current building is the second meetinghouse on the lot, which since 1790 has been the ecclesiastical and social center for this rural neighborhood. The building was moved in 1992-93, but only fifteen feet, within its historic lot, onto a new basement. Owned by its congregation, the North Rochester Congregational Church is generally in good condition, and is only slightly altered since it was constructed in 1841.

Location and Setting

The setting of the North Rochester Congregational Church is distinctly rural, in the northwest corner of the largely rural town of Rochester. Located on a slight rise (between 100 & 110 ft. above sea level), the building fronts on North Avenue, to the west of Massachusetts State Route 105 and just to the east of North Avenue's intersection with Snipatuit Road. Large bodies of water dot the surrounding landscape; to the south and southeast are Snipatuit Pond, Cedar Swamp, and the Rochester Wildlife Management Area. The wetlands complex to the north includes Long Pond, Assawompsett Pond, Little Quittacas Pond, and directly north, Great Quittacas Pond. Laid out during the Colonial period, North Avenue was the only east-west route between these two wetland complexes, and became the main road between South Middleboro and Freetown. The area immediately surrounding the lot is rocky woodland, interspersed with logging swamps, pastureland, cranberry bogs, and gravel pits. The southern shore of the Quittacas ponds complex, including the lot that abuts directly north and east of the church, is primarily open woodland and owned by the City of New Bedford, as part of its New Bedford Waterworks complex. West of Route 105, North Avenue enters East Freetown, where it becomes Morton Road and passes through the suburban development at Ashley Heights. On North Avenue, just under a mile east of the church, east of Snipatuit Road, is the Old Colony Vocational Technical High School (1972), a large regional public school set back in the woods and similarly isolated in its rural setting, between the Town Forest and the North Avenue hamlet of Bisbee Corner. Old Colony enrolls students from Rochester, Acushnet, Carver, Lakeville, and Mattapoisett. Directly across North Avenue from the church, and west of the church, are individual houses on large lots, both established farmsteads and newer homes. Of the six houses shown on the current USGS topographical maps as nearest the North Rochester Congregational Church, four (including those three south of North Avenue) have been built since 1941. The largest suburban expansion in the neighborhood has been the Old Orchard Estates development, which surrounds the North Rochester Cemetery (MHC# 808) between Snipatuit Road and Bisbee Corner.

The church's rectangular lot is long and narrow, fronting 380 ft. along North Avenue, (381.35 feet long at the rear) and measuring 108 ft. deep on its eastern end near the church (115 ft. deep at its western end). The western 2/3 of the lot is undeveloped woodland with large rocks and/or outcroppings, primarily glacially deposited boulders. The long lot may have been intended to hold both a church and cemetery or parish house; however, no records indicate that excavations for either of the latter were ever made, or that the western 2/3 ever was used for more than woodlot. The sandy eastern third of the lot, including the highest point where the church is located, is defined on the north and east with a stone wall. A dirt trail on the adjoining lot, just beyond the stone boundary wall, further defines both the northern and eastern boundaries of the church's lot.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 2

Exterior: North Rochester Congregational Church

The North Rochester Congregational Church is a 1½-story clapboarded wood-frame Greek Revival church (Photograph 1), which measures 36 feet, 8 inches wide by 44 feet, 8 inches long. The gable-front building has a triangular pediment supported by pilasters and surmounted by a squat, square belfry (a recent replica of the original belfry). Three elevations have three window/door bays, while the northern elevation of the church is not fenestrated. Eight identical double windows light the building, two in the south façade, and three evenly spaced in both the east and west elevations. Entry to the building is through large double doors in the southern facade (**Photograph 2**). The Greek Revival characteristics of the building are most prominent on this symmetrical front facade, including four simplified Doric pilasters, a wide divided trim band below the cornice, and the prominent triangular gable pediment (**Photograph 3**). The evenly-spaced Doric pilasters mark the corners of the front facade (doubling as cornerboards) or visually support the square belfry structure. These unfluted Doric pilasters are simplified to a shaft and capital with a squared abacus that supports the entablature. The three-part wall entablature is an unfigured frieze and architrave, clearly divided by a trim board, supporting a projecting cornice. The triangular pediment has an undecorated, clapboarded tympanum, and prominent raking cornices.

The symmetrical east and west elevations of the building continue the three-part wall entablature of the south facade, with single pilasters/cornerboards on the north and south ends (**Photographs 4 & 6**). Three identical window pairs light the east and the west elevations. The north elevation of the building is nearly blank, with the triangular pediment replaced by a simple facade gable (Photograph 5). On the north elevation, the corner pilasters are half the width of the others on the building, and support stub entablatures capped by cornice returns. The only interruptions in the clapboard surface of the north wall are two small hinged doors with bolt latches, one foot square, about ten feet above the foundation line. These were originally access doors to the twin internal chimneys. These chimney stacks are no longer used, and the brick chimneys now end in the attic, just below the roofline.

Access to the building is primarily through the heavy double wooden doors in the south facade, heavily encased in paint on the exterior. These doors are each four-paneled, the top inset panels longer than the bottom panels. The 10-foot tall window frames each contain paired double-hung sashes, separated by a relatively long and narrow unfigured muntin. The approx. 2 x 5 foot sashes each contain eighteen small rectangular panes, arranged three panes wide by six high, yielding 72 lights per window. Many of these panes appear to be the original wavy glass. The front door and windows are topped with a rustic 3-part lintel, which gives the effect of a keystone and eared architrave. The window architraves have a higher relief than those of the door.

The church is surmounted by a square replica belfry, on a squat square roof collar, on the south end of the building. (**Photograph 3**) On all four symmetrical sides of the belfry, Doric pilasters mark the corners and support the entablature. The three-part wall entablature is an unfigured frieze and architrave, clearly divided by a trim board, supporting a projecting cornice. From the flat roof of the belfry rises a metal rod with a decorative metal weathervane consisting of directional arms (N,S,E,W) topped by a pivoting arrow. In the center of each clapboarded side is a tall louvered opening with a thin frame, topped by a three-part lintel similar to that of the front door and windows. This belfry is a recent copy of the decayed original, fabricated side-by-side with the original, by students at the nearby Old Colony Vocational Technical School. It was constructed with pressure-treated lumber and Azek synthetic siding materials. The keystone above the south louvered opening was inscribed "2003" in small numerals to differentiate it from the original belfry. The belfry roof collar fits atop the gable roof, bolted to support posts protruding from the roof. Through a trap door from the attic, one can gain limited access to these bolts and the underside of the belfry. The bottom of the belfry, though, is sealed, except for the bell rope sleeve; thus the maker of the bell cannot be determined.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 3

The North Rochester Congregational Church building is set upon a poured concrete foundation, which rises to the ground level and is topped with three courses of grey concrete blocks. **(Photograph 6)** The building was moved west fifteen feet in 1992-93 and placed upon this foundation. Since that time, a complex set of access ramps and stairs have been built by classes at the Old Colony Vocational Technical School to provide the disabled access to the historic building.

(Photograph 2) A broad stairs (four treads) of pressure treated lumber and synthetic boarding rises from the gravel front walk to a landing at the front (south) door of the building. This landing is also accessed by a long ramp that begins halfway along the east elevation of the building, reaches a landing at the building's southeast corner, and rises to the front door. The only other access to the building is a doorway in the northern end of the west basement elevation. A staircase leads northward down along the west elevation to this basement door. Disabled access to the basement is by a 3-part ramp, set in a concrete well, which runs west from near the northeast corner of the building, doubles back toward the corner, and ends at the northeast corner near the door. **(Photograph 5)**

The grounds of the North Rochester Congregational Church appear little changed from their original form. The original site of the church building, directly east of the current building, is now a gravel parking lot, the construction site of the 1841 building (and likely the 1790-91 building as well). A stone wall defines the eastern and northern boundaries of the lot, most prominently in the eastern third. For the purposes of this nomination, the **Stone Wall** is a contributing structure. Directly north of the current building, this drylaid stone wall ties into the substantial remnants of a mortared stone wall, which rises to five feet at its highest point, and continues for approximately fifty-three feet **(Photograph 7)**. Late nineteenth century photographs and drawings of the church reveal this to be the rear wall of the western carriage barn, which stood northwest of the original church. No complete view of the entire carriage barn is known to exist; partial views show it simply as an open-sided void, held up by poles with Y-braces, glimpsed far to the rear beyond the southwest corner of the church. This **Carriage Barn Wall** is listed as a contributing structure for the purposes of this nomination. A ca. 1890 view also shows a second smaller carriage barn in the northeast corner of the lot, along the north boundary line. No apparent trace of this building remains. Recent (ca. 1993) additions to the site include a two-post signboard directly south of the church building **(Photograph 2)**, and a Western-style pole fence that generally indicates the southern extent of the parking lot and building lot **(Photograph 3)**. The **Signboard** and the **Pole Fence** are, for the purposes of this nomination, noncontributing objects. The lawn to the west of the church doubles as overflow parking for the church. Just beyond this parking area, in the woodlot, is a stack of large rectangular shaped granite stones. These appear to be the foundation stones from the 1841 building, placed there after the church building was moved. Pieces of mortised wooden beams, possibly original elements from the undercarriage or attic of the church, have been discarded in the poison ivy just north of the north boundary stone wall.

Interior: North Rochester Congregational Church

Apart from the vestibule, stairs, and rear gallery along the south end, the interior of the building is primarily the 1½-story worship hall, which measures approx. 34 ft., 8 inches wide by 37 ft., 7 inches long. The sanctuary faces north, with an L-shaped raised platform, covered with wide boarding, that extends the full width of the north end and south along the west side to the first pew. A raised dais atop the center of this platform holds the movable ecclesiastical furniture (the pulpit and chairs) **(Photograph 8)**. The sanctuary focus is further indicated by a drapery hanging from a decorative valance, framing a simple wooden cross attached to the wall. On either end of the north wall, about eight feet in from the side walls, are the former chimney stacks for the building's stoves. Although the stoves are gone and the chimneys capped and no longer used, the thimble fittings for the stovepipes are still visible in the stacks. A hymn-number board has been attached to the western chimney stack. Four small filled holes in the ceiling in the northeast corner indicate where the former 1950s era heating unit hung down into the hall.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 4

Long slip-like box pews occupy most of the hall (**Photograph 9**), opening onto one of the two side aisles. Unlike slip pews, these pew boxes extend all the way to the floor on three sides, although no physical evidence indicates that these box pews ever had doors. The boxes are grouped in four ranges. One range of pews 6½ feet wide (from window wall to aisle) extends along each side of the hall. A range of two 7½-foot pews, joined together in the center and opening onto each of the two side aisles, occupies the center of the hall. All together, the church currently contains 26 pews: 14 in the center ranges and 6 each along the sides. The aisle ends of the box pew seats each have two inset panels. The backs and arms of the painted box pews are capped with a dark polished railing. The arms have a sinuous curve terminating in a disk- or tendril-like curl. Repairs in the board floors indicate that front row of open pews once had box fronts. Although these box fronts have been removed, they may still be extant, stored in the attic. One of the dismantled pews in the attic shows that the pews were put together with L-headed cut nails. Quilted removable cushions, designed by members of the current congregation, have been placed in the seats.

The floors are covered with medium-width boarding, running north-south in the aisles and east-west under the pews. The white walls of the sanctuary are divided by a varnished chair-rail-like board at 3 feet high, with wide horizontal boarding below and plaster walls above. This rail is at the same height as the varnished top of the pew boxes. The sills of the tall windows rest upon this rail and thus tie the wall units together. The east and west walls are topped with a slightly projecting cornice, which supports the coved plaster ceiling (**photograph 12**). The plasterwork is evident only in the attic; the ceiling of the entire hall, including the coved sides, has been covered in an elaborately patterned tin ceiling. This tin ceiling is in good shape except over the gallery, where leaks from the belfry in the past necessitated replacing some of the tin panels with boarding. Lighting for the sanctuary is provided by five round fixtures with frosted white globes, which hang from the ceiling on long chains.

One important (though moveable) fixture of the hall is the organ encased in a carved wooden console. The organ is marked "Estey Organ Co., Brattleboro, Vermont" and carries a plaque noting that it was "electrified" in 1956 "as a gift of Mrs. Annie B. Cowan."

The vestibule is a 7 x 23 foot rectangular room on the south end of the building, which helps control the entrance of cold air into the hall. Five doorways let into this small room, fitted with what appear to be the original six doors, mounted on pin hinges (**Photograph 10**). All of the doors have four inset panels with molded edges, taller panels on top and shorter panels at the bottom. Heavy double doors centered in the south wall allow entry into the building, while single doors at the east and west ends of the north wall allow entrance from the vestibule into the hall. In the south ends of the eastern and western walls, doors open into the gallery staircases (**Photograph 11**). The walls separating the hall and staircases correspond with the muntins between the double front windows; therefore only the lower, inner quarter of each of the double front windows lights the vestibule. The ceiling of the vestibule slopes down significantly toward the north, to accommodate the gallery above. A single bare light bulb provides night-time illumination. Heavy cork flooring covers the vestibule floor. Panels of tin, each thirty inches wide, cover the walls of the vestibule, impressed with a bold pattern of overlapping vertical lines and fleur-de-lis.

Access to the rear gallery is gained by climbing one of two matching staircases in the southeast or southwest corners of the main hall. These measure 6 feet east to west and 5½ feet north to south. Each staircase has twelve steps: four rectangular treads, then four triangular winders, then four rectangular treads. The outside window of the paired front windows is located in each staircase. A short knee-wall, rising between the two front windows, separates the sides of the gallery from the staircases. A ground floor wall extends the width of the southern end of the hall, forming the northern

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 5

wall of the vestibule and staircases (**Photograph 12**). This wall begins at the southern edge of the southern range of side windows, and extends three-quarters of the way up these windows. The gallery itself is cantilevered as a balcony two feet into the hall, further supported in the center by a single eight-inch-square post. This post is chamfered (with lamb's tongue stops) below the gallery, and boxed above it. The front of the gallery is expressed as a monumental entablature, an architrave and frieze decorated with inset boarding and divided by a prominent applied trim board. Within the gallery itself, a passage wide enough for folding chairs runs across the front of the gallery, with two raised seating platforms behind it, fitted with bench seats, and divided by a narrow central aisle. A trapdoor in the ceiling, along the south wall, allows fold-down ladder access from the gallery into the church's attic. The bell rope extends from a hole in the ceiling and ties off on the front post of the gallery. (**Photograph 12**)

The attic of the church reveals the nature of the building's pinned mortise-and-tenon frame in a five-bay attic. Three center king-post trusses, resting atop the east and west wall plates, carry most of the weight of the roof above and support the ceiling below. Each 8x8 inch king post spades out at its top and bottom and is pinned into its 7x7 inch tie beam below; the 7x7 inch principal rafters rest against (and are tenoned into) the spade above. The king posts and their rafters are each clearly scribed where they meet (II, III, and IIII, from north to south). Side struts rise from the bottom spade of the king-post to the mid-point of the principal rafters, to both strengthen the truss and further support the side purlins. Trusses II & IIII are further strengthened by a double-cable brace at the base of each principal rafter, which attaches to a metal girdle along the tie beam near the king-post and prevents the truss from spreading. The clasped purlins are tenoned into the principal rafters, and further cross-braced into those principal rafters; even the cross-braces are pinned in place with wooden pegs. Two-part secondary rafters rise from the plate to the purlin and from the purlin to the ridgeline, where they are pinned together. The secondary rafters function mostly as nailers for the horizontal boarding above; their bottoms rest on blocks extending outward from atop the wall plates, rather than the plates themselves. The roof has no ridge pole. The north and south ends of the roof are supported by principal rafters pinned together at the top and supported by simple uprights.

From the attic, the original coving of the ceiling on the east and west sides is visible, complete with lathing and plaster. At the northern end of the attic, the brick stacks of the two chimneys remain, along with the wooden braces that allowed them to corbel out. The chimneys are no longer in use and have been roofed over. The southern two bays of the roof have been partially reconstructed over the years to support the weight of the roof belfry, and reinforced with pressure-treated lumber. The kingpost struts for Truss IIII, for example, are recent replacements, probably dating to the repair of the belfry in 2002-04. Numerous architectural elements are stored in the attic, including the rear pews from the side aisles, parts of other pews, and the former pew cushions.

The basement configuration of the church dates from the 1992-93 move. Basement access from the worship hall was provided in the southeast corner of the hall. The last pew on the east side was removed and the flooring from there back to the gallery wall removed. An open dog-leg staircase now leads from the hall down to the new basement, with a door into the basement at the bottom. A balustrade with turned balusters separates the stairwell from the hall. North of the corner staircase along the eastern wall of the basement is a storage closet which also contains the gas furnace. West of the corner staircase along the southern wall is a pair of restrooms and, in the southwest corner, a large kitchen with a wide serving counter. A gas-log fireplace in the middle of the northern wall is the only other fixed element in the basement hall. A door in the northern end of the eastern wall leads directly outside, into the stairwell (and rear ramp access). The basement has four windows, two each in the north and west walls.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 7 Page 7

working with local contractors, several classes of local students studied the original carefully, and attempted to replicate the original belfry as faithfully as possible. The process took over two years; the students worked on the replacement belfry beside the former belfry, using it to guide their efforts. In the process, they learned a great deal about techniques employed by carpenters 160 years before them

Condition

Generally, the North Rochester Congregational Church is in excellent condition. The recent upgrades to the building plant have largely maintained the historic character of the building while fixing water infiltration problems and making the building usable for current needs and expectations. When repairs began in 1990, the building had been vacant for two decades—except for a family of raccoons. People from the neighborhood and beyond have banded together to preserve and restore this building. The level of continuing maintenance for the building is good.

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are known on the church property, sites may exist. Three sites are located in the general area (within one mile), with 26 sites recorded in the town. The area immediately north of the church in the vicinity of Long Pond, Assawompset Pond, and Great Quittacas Pond is also a known locus of Native American settlement from the Paleo Indian through Contact periods. Environmental characteristics of the property represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of Native sites. The church occupies an excessively drained, level to moderately sloping segment of glacial outwash plain. The northern boundary of Logging Swamp lies approximately 1,000 feet southwest of the church. Great Quittacas Pond and the outlet for Snipatuit Brook lie approximately 2,000 feet to the northeast. Given the information presented above, the size of the nominated parcel (1.0 acre), the effects of construction for the 1790 meetinghouse, 1841 church, two carriage barns, and occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells), a moderate potential exists for locating significant ancient Native American resources on the property.

A high potential exists for the recovery of historic archaeological resources on the church property. Structural evidence may survive from the 1790 meetinghouse on the nominated property; the precise location is unknown. Similar evidence may also exist from the original site of the 1841 meetinghouse moved 15 feet to the west onto a poured concrete foundation in 1992-93. Structural evidence may also exist from the western carriage barn directly north of the current building. The rear wall from this barn survives north of the current church. Structural evidence may also exist from outbuildings and a second, smaller carriage barn in the northwest corner of the lot. No visible trace of the latter barn survives. Archaeological evidence of occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may also survive on the property.

(end)

North Rochester Congregational Church
Name of Property

Plymouth, MA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- RELIGION
- COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
- ARCHITECTURE
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Period of Significance

- 1790-1957
- _____
- _____

Significant Dates

- 1790 – surviving stone walls constructed
- 1841 – church construction
- _____

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

- Eaton, Solomon K.
- _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

- Plumb Memorial Library
- Rochester Historical Society

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 1

Summary Statement

The North Rochester Congregational Church, a 1½-story wood-frame Greek Revival church in the North Rochester neighborhood of Rochester, Massachusetts, meets National Register Criterion A at the local level for its importance to the history of religion, and community planning and development in Rochester. North Rochester became a separate civic and ecclesiastical entity in 1748, and built a meetinghouse (not extant) at this location in 1790. During the following two centuries this site has remained as the primary symbol and gathering place of this rural community, especially with the construction of the current meetinghouse in 1841. The building itself meets National Register Criterion C at the local level for its importance to the town's architecture. Designed by regionally important Mattapoissett architect Solomon K. Eaton and built in 1841, the current church building is also an important example of a Greek Revival-style ecclesiastical building. Owned by its congregation, the North Rochester Congregational Church is generally in good condition, is only slightly altered since its construction, and has historic integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Criteria Considerations A and B apply to this religious property that was moved in 1992-93. The period of significance for this nomination begins with the establishment of the North Rochester parish in this location in 1790, as reflected by the surviving stone walls that likely date to the parish's first use of this land; the period extends to the 50-year cutoff, 1957, as the property remains North Rochester's Congregational Church.

The Setting: Rochester

Rochester is a rural town in Plymouth County, 50 miles south of Boston, 49 miles east of Providence RI, and 19 miles northeast of New Bedford. Named after a town in England, Rochester was founded in 1679 and incorporated in 1686. Rochester originally was a very large town that fronted on Buzzards Bay and included most of the coastline between Fairhaven and Cape Cod. Its coastal precincts, though, separated to become the western part of Wareham (in 1739) and the towns of Marion (1852) and Mattapoissett (1857). Bordered today by Lakeville and Middleborough on the north, Freetown and Acushnet (in neighboring Bristol County) on the west, Mattapoissett on the south, and Marion and Wareham on the east, Rochester covers 37 square miles. Topographically, Rochester is classified as coastal lowland, with sandy and gravelly soils and drainage to Buzzards Bay through the Mattapoissett and Sippican Rivers. Heavily forested (oak, pine, and cedar), the town also has a wide variety of wetlands: natural and man-made ponds, swamps, cranberry bogs, and a glacial kettlehole lake. Small linear settlements arose along the roadways, but even Rochester Center, the location of Town Hall, Plumb Memorial Library, and Plumb Corner Mall, is not densely settled. In the 2000 census, Rochester recorded 4,581 residents, or approx. 125 persons per square mile.¹ Although some suburban development is occurring, Rochester remains largely engaged in farming, logging, and recreation. A 21st century town history proudly proclaims, "Rochester continues today to be that rural oasis of the mid-19th century."²

The first English immigrants in the area now known as Rochester arrived from Plymouth and Scituate to herd livestock for the proprietors as early as 1649. During the century before the Revolution, much of the economic development took place largely in the coastal precincts of "Old Rochester:" Marion and Mattapoissett. In present-day Rochester, the first node of settlement was the Town Green and the (First Parish) Meeting House (1699). The earliest extant houses date to ca. 1690, and early industries developing at the same time were tar production and water-powered mills (saw, grist, fulling, and forge). These mills provided nodes for further development, which continued gradually until the secession of Mattapoissett and Marion in the 1850s. With its main economic engines gone, Rochester entered a long period of

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¹ "Rochester," MHC Reconnaissance Survey Report, June 1981; "The Official Website of the Town of Rochester," (<http://www.townofrochester.com/history.htm>); "Final Report Rochester Community-Wide Historic and Architectural Survey Rochester Massachusetts 1997-1998," Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc., July 1998; "Rochester, Massachusetts" DHCD Massachusetts (<http://www.mass.gov/dhcd/ipofile/250.pdf>).

² Judith Hartly MacKinnon, *Images of America: Rochester* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2005), 8.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 2

developmental quiescence, although agriculture, resource extraction, and sawmill operation (particularly for box boards and shingles) continued unabated. Rochester's declining population recovered somewhat in the first decade of the 20th century, spurred by cranberry cultivation and improved transportation networks. Since the town's last mill closed in 1964, cranberry production and marketing have become the main industry of the town. Population increased substantially in the 1970s and continues to grow moderately, with some pressure from suburban development.³

Criterion A: Religion

This site and its current meeting house (built 1841) are important to the development of religion in Rochester. In Rochester as in other early New England towns, the building of a church symbolized the founding of a community. The naming of a "Ministry Woods" (for burying ground and training field; today's Town Green) in 1697 in Rochester Center—and the construction there in 1699 of the first substantial meeting house—established Rochester Center as the combined civic and religious center of the growing town of Rochester.⁴ Seven men signed a church covenant in 1703; by 1709 the church membership listed thirty-five residents, many from the farthest reaches of "Old Rochester," areas which later became Wareham and Mattapoisett. The second meeting house (1717; not extant) was built across from the cemetery gates in Rochester Center, but soon also became crowded. One by one, the isolated outlying neighborhoods appealed for their own separate meeting houses and civic status. Mattapoisett was set off as the Second Precinct of Rochester in 1735, Wareham as a separate town in 1739, North Rochester as the Third Parish in 1748, and Sippican (Marion) as the Fourth Parish in 1798. Those in each new parish/precinct built a new meetinghouse, taxing the members of the precinct for its construction and maintenance. Rochester exempted Quakers from ministry taxes in 1709 and Baptists later in the century, but church taxation remained Massachusetts law until 1836, when church support was ruled voluntary. The precincts of Mattapoisett and Marion later became separate towns (in 1852 and 1857, respectively), but North Rochester did not.

On 17 November 1748, the people of North Rochester raised the frame for their first meeting house (not extant), thus physically marking their ecclesiastical independence. They had begun petitioning the governor for a separate precinct as early as 1744, to serve those who lived "in ye remote corners and parts of the several towns aforesaid:" Rochester, Middleborough, Dartmouth (now Acushnet), and Tiverton (now Freetown).⁵ The first parsonage for the North Rochester parish was located in Acushnet, on the road from North Rochester to Long Plain Village.⁶ The final push for the break from Rochester Center was a disagreement between North Rochester landowner Noah Sprague and the Rev. Timothy Ruggles, who served as minister of the First Parish of Rochester from 1710 to 1768. Besides those in the northwestern

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³ "Final Report Rochester Community-Wide Historic and Architectural Survey Rochester Massachusetts 1997-1998," Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc., July 1998; D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, 1884); Ebenezer W. Peirce, *Historic Sketches of Hanson, Lakeville, Mattapoisett, Middleboro', Pembroke, Plympton, Rochester, Wareham, and West Bridgewater* (Boston, 1873).

⁴ "Rochester Center—Area A," Form A Area, Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1998; Mary Hall Leonard, et al., *Mattapoisett and Old Rochester Massachusetts: Being a History of these Towns and also in Part of Marion and a portion of Wareham* (3rd ed., Mattapoisett: Committee of the Town of Mattapoisett, 1907), 72-74. Chapter V of Leonard's book, "The Early Church and the Precincts," is the most complete and accessible history of the development of religious and social governance in Rochester.

⁵ "Third Parish in Rochester 1744 to 1783." Handwritten secondary history, bound in "Deed from Precinct Agent 1841-1871, North Rochester Congregational Church," Plumb Memorial Library, Rochester.

⁶ Henry B. Worth, quoted by Mrs. Joseph A. Chamberlain, "First Wedding in 40 Years to Be Performed in Rochester Church," *New Bedford Standard-Times* 24 July 1960.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 3

section of Rochester and neighboring areas of Middleborough and Freetown, parish members included some dissidents from Rochester Center. In Middleborough, the territory of the parish included the area south of a line "from Pocksha Pond due east to the town of Carver."⁷ The members officially incorporated the parish in 1753 and hired as their minister the Rev. Thomas West, who served in North Rochester from its 1753 founding until his retirement in 1781.

The 1748 meeting house for the Third Parish stood on the east side of Braley Hill Road in North Rochester, a mile to the southwest of the current site, and served the neighborhood for four decades. It "was a poor structure, built hastily because winter was at hand and a place of shelter for the ark of the Lord was sorely needed."⁸ When the meetinghouse on North Avenue was completed, Abner and Zenas Wood razed the old meetinghouse building in exchange for its timbers. No sign of it exists today. Directly to the north of the first meetinghouse was its cemetery.⁹ Known today as the Old Parish Cemetery (MHC #804), this half-acre plot hosted burials from 1758 to 1857. Containing approximately thirty stones, it is surrounded by a stone wall and bordered by woods on its east and north. Not regularly maintained and filled with mature trees, the cemetery was nominally still the property of the North Rochester Congregational Church until recently; the town is currently in the process of taking it over. However, this discontinuous plot is not a part of this current nomination.

The Establishment of North Rochester Congregational Church on North Avenue

The North Rochester parish moved to its current site on North Avenue in 1790 and began building its second meetinghouse (not extant) there. By that year, the North Rochester parish had been without a minister for nearly a decade, and decided to reorganize. "They negotiated with the first parish [of Rochester] . . . for a division line between that precinct and these by which they relinquished a number [of members] that belonged to the poll parish and took in a larger number by metes and bounds which had belonged to the first parish. They then applied to the Legislature and obtained an act of incorporation making a territorial parish, taking in a part of the first and second parishes in Middleboro and a part of Freetown."¹⁰ The absence of any members from Acushnet may explain part of the reasoning for moving the meetinghouse farther north, closer to Middleborough. Additionally, the North Rochester parish relinquished any claim to the Ministry Lands of the parish in "Old Rochester," in exchange for a cash payment of seventy pounds, six shillings, sixpence. Less than half of the inhabitants of the North Rochester area were Congregationalists, and there was some thought that the new parish might reorganize as Baptists or Friends.¹¹

The choice of the present site was important in defining the new precinct. According to A.W. Bisbee, a disagreement arose over the site of the new meeting house: "A portion of the parish wished it placed on the corner near to Stillwater

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⁷ A.W. Bisbee, "Congregational Church, North Rochester," D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, 1884), 334-335.

⁸ Mary Hall Leonard, et al., *Mattapoisett and Old Rochester Massachusetts: Being a History of these Towns and also in Part of Marion and a portion of Wareham* (3rd. ed., Mattapoisett: Committee of the Town of Mattapoisett, 1907), 80. Leonard bases her account of the founding of the North Rochester Congregational Church (pp. 78-82) on an 1821 article by Abraham Holmes (published in *Massachusetts Historical Collections*, Vol. x, 2d Series), and a sermon by the Rev. John Trowbridge.

⁹ A.W. Bisbee, "Congregational Church, North Rochester," D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, 1884), 334-335.

¹⁰ Abraham Holmes (published in *Massachusetts Historical Collections*, Vol. X, 2d Series (1821)), as quoted by Mary Hall Leonard, et al., *Mattapoisett and Old Rochester Massachusetts: Being a History of these Towns and also in Part of Marion and a portion of Wareham* (3rd. ed., Mattapoisett: Committee of the Town of Mattapoisett, 1907), 79.

¹¹ Mary Hall Leonard, et al., *Mattapoisett and Old Rochester Massachusetts: Being a History of these Towns and also in Part of Marion and a portion of Wareham* (3rd. ed., Mattapoisett: Committee of the Town of Mattapoisett, 1907), 80.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 4

Furnace [near Black Brook, farther east], on land now owned by Luke Perkins. The timber was drawn there and preparations made to build. This movement was not at all pleasing to the Mortons, Haskells, and other families of that portion of the parish, so the timber was quietly conveyed to the lot on which the present building stands. This act caused a few to withdraw and join the Baptist Church at Rock, Middleboro."¹² Although the parish long continued to contain members from Middleborough, this location established it as clearly a site in Rochester that served members from the towns east and west on North Avenue.

The land that became the site of the North Rochester Congregational Church in 1790 is first described in the 1673 Lothrop-Tomson Purchase, and appears to correspond to the extreme SW corner of Plot 7. Owned by Ebenezer Lewis, Plot 7 was a large block of property extending from Snipatuit Brook westward—between Great Quittacas Pond on the north and Old Middleboro Road (North Avenue) on the south—toward Freetown.¹³ The initial agreement to set aside this 1-acre lot for a meeting house was registered in 1789, a long-term lease from Alden and Seth Spooner of New Bedford: "A Lot of Land lying in the Southwest corner of the farm which we bought of Sampson & Shaw, in Rochester, to set an house on for the public worship of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe."¹⁴ The Spooners gave the land to the Society and its descendants, asking only that they "make and maintain a good and sufficient Fence" around the three sides of the property. They also stipulated that the land would revert to them or their heirs if and when the society no longer needed it. This lease may have been followed by a sale of the land in 1790.¹⁵

One of the surviving account books of the parish details the 1790-91 construction of the second meetinghouse—the first on North Avenue. In March of 1790, the proprietors voted to hire five carpenters: one to build the pulpit and two carpenters each to work on each half of the meeting house. The account book then details how each member paid his share to build the meetinghouse, sometimes with cash payments but more commonly through labor, lumber, shingles, glass, hinges, nails, or rum.¹⁶

The Society that sustained the North Rochester Congregational Church is uncommon in that it crossed several town boundaries. That geographical nature, combined with its intermittent character, meant that it repeatedly incorporated. After completing its meeting house on North Avenue, the North Rochester society again incorporated, officially, on 22 March 1793, as the "Congregational Precinct in Rochester, Middleborough, and Freetown," by an act passed by state government and signed by the leaders of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate, as well as Governor John Hancock. This precinct included the Third Parish and "sundry inhabitants" of the First Parish in Rochester, and the Second Precinct in Middleborough, although inhabitants of the latter could opt to join the First Precinct in Middleborough. The Act officially discontinued the Third Parish in Rochester. An 1815-17 ledger for "The Congregational Precinct in Rochester, Middleborough, and Freetown" lists the names of all of those taxed to sustain the precinct, with the amount assessed to each person for a direct tax and for a tax on "furniture and watches." Another legislative Act in 1825 established the "Third Congregational Precinct in Rochester, Middleborough, and Freetown."

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¹² A.W. Bisbee, "Congregational Church, North Rochester," D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, 1884), 334.

¹³ *Rochester Communitywide Historical and Architectural Survey 1997-1998* (Pawtucket, RI: Public Archaeology Laboratory, 1998), Binder 1: 130.

¹⁴ "Leace [sic] from Spooner to Society," rec. 6 July 1789, Plymouth Co. Book 70, Folio 132-33.

¹⁵ "Alden & Seth Spooner to Rochester Parish 1790," fragmentary record bound in "Deed from Precinct Agent 1841-1871, North Rochester Congregational Church," Plumb Memorial Library, Rochester.

¹⁶ "Account Book 1791-1840" (copy), Plumb Memorial Library, Rochester.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 5

However, an 1826 legislative Act dropped “Third” and corrected the name to “The Congregational Precinct in Rochester, Middleborough, and Freetown.” In 1837, another “Act concerning the powers and duties of the Congregational Precinct in Rochester, Middleborough, and Freetown,” was passed, possibly for building the parsonage or as a first step towards building a new meetinghouse. An undated lawyer’s opinion in the records indicates that even this 1837 act did not necessarily alleviate liability for the members of the society if problems developed in rebuilding its meetinghouse. All of these changes in the name of the parish organization (each incorporated an organization independent of the meeting house) bring into question the exact historic name of the meetinghouse building. A set of by-laws passed in 1891 and renewed in 1963 designated the society and the building as the North Rochester Congregational Church. For the purposes of this nomination, the historic name chosen is the North Rochester Congregational Church, which was clearly the designation of the later 19th and 20th centuries and was found on most maps.

The first minister for the relocated parish was the Rev. David Gurney who served 1791 to 1793. Among the people he baptized at North Rochester Church was Marcus Morton, son of Nathaniel and Polly Morton of the East Freetown section of the parish. Marcus Morton served thrice as Governor of Massachusetts (acting 1825; elected 1840-41 and 1843-44). In 1793, the parish hired the Rev. Calvin Chaddock, who served until 1805 and greatly expanded the parish. Chaddock was ordained at North Rochester Congregational Church on 10 October 1793 by his teacher, Dr. Emmons of Franklin, Massachusetts, who preached the ordination sermon. On that same day the parish adopted a new confession of faith. Chaddock was ambitious and founded an Academy in North Rochester in 1795, at the intersection of North Avenue and Snipatuit Road. A.W. Bisbee summarized the story of the Academy, the first private school in Rochester: “Soon after his settlement [Chaddock] conceived the idea of building up the place. Land was purchased, buildings erected, and the academy opened under favorable auspices. The school soon attained such a popularity that students were attracted to it from distant States. This enterprise involved Mr. Chaddock in debt, trouble arose in the church, and at the close of his pastorate, in 1806, the school was discontinued.”¹⁷

The North Rochester Congregational Church then foundered: “After Chaddock’s departure, the society began to decline, and finally regular services were abandoned. The building had never been finished. In the course of time the windows were broken. Owls and bats held possession by night, and when an occasional service was held, to the delight of the little ones, squirrels from the neighboring wood would leap on the beams overhead.”¹⁸ Two brief pastorates are recorded over the next three decades: the Rev. Ichabod Plaisted (1827-ca. 1831), a “blind preacher” from Maine, and Samuel Utley (1833-35).

The Construction of the Current North Rochester Congregational Church Building in 1841

The North Rochester Congregational Church experienced the third of its periodic revivals—and built its third (and current) church building—during the ministry of the Rev. Isaac Briggs, who served the church from 1835 to 1857. The society first raised money to build a parsonage, and then to erect a new meeting house. A committee published a notice to

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¹⁷ A.W. Bisbee, “Congregational Church, North Rochester,” D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, 1884), 334.

¹⁸ A.W. Bisbee, “Congregational Church, North Rochester,” D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, 1884), 334-335.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 6

the inhabitants of the Congregational Precinct of Rochester, Middleborough, and Freetown to meet in their meetinghouse on 14 February 1837 to decide on building a "parish house."¹⁹ Presumably this refers to the parsonage built on Snipatuit Road, which Briggs was the first to occupy. On 25 January 1841 the proprietors voted to turn over the lot and existing meetinghouse to a new set of proprietors, on the condition that they build a new meetinghouse. On March 9, 1841, at the legal precinct meeting, a new set of proprietors took control of the lot and meetinghouse.²⁰ On April, 19 1841 the treasurer produced a receipt for the Rev. Isaac Briggs to acknowledge that he had raised \$400 in subscriptions to build a new meeting house.²¹ Pew sales continued throughout 1841.²²

With funding secured, work progressed rapidly, under the direction of architect and builder Solomon K. Eaton of the Second (Mattapoisett) Parish in Rochester. A receipt in the files of the church, signed "S.K. Eaton," reads "Received Sept. 11 1841 of the Congregational Precinct in Rochester, Middleborough and Freetown by the hand of NC Perkins Two Hundred and Seventy Four Dollars in part payment for building a Meeting House for said Precinct."²³ In 1837, Solomon Eaton had designed and built the Carpenter Gothic-style First Congregational Church in Rochester Center. During the decade afterwards, each of the four historic Rochester parishes (Marion, Mattapoisett, Wareham, and North Rochester) hired Eaton to build them a new Greek Revival meeting house.

History of the North Rochester Congregational Church since Construction

After moving into its new meetinghouse in 1841, the society prospered, built an endowment, and sustained a succession of ministers in the years after the Rev. Briggs' retirement in 1857. Changes to the church building during the period of significance included the gradual reduction of pews from the 40 sold at the time of its construction to the 26 that remain today. Those shown in the original pew plan that have since been removed were the four pews on either side of the pulpit, the four center section pews under the gallery in the rear of the church, and the rear pew on each side. In 1878, for example, the annual meeting voted both to take out one of the front pews on each side of the pulpit, and lower the level of the pulpit. The possessors of the pews would be allowed to take another empty pew in the meetinghouse. In 1905, a parishioner financed the installation of a new tin ceiling in the church. In 1916 the church purchased a two-manual organ—presumably the wood-cased organ in the northeast corner, which is no longer in use—apparently with partial funding from Andrew Carnegie.²⁴ In 1965, the church celebrated the acquisition of pew cushions from the Craigville Congregational Center in Chatham, Massachusetts: "We of the North Rochester Congregational church secured twenty six of them for our pews, which have been bare from 1753 until the present time!"²⁵

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¹⁹ Miscellaneous records copied into a binder titled "Deed from Precinct Agent 1841-1871, North Rochester Congregational Church." Plumb Memorial Library, Rochester, MA. Some of the church records have been photocopied and bound for the library; others remain in a metal box in the attic of the North Rochester Congregational Church.

²⁰ "Account Book 1791-1840" (copy), Plumb Memorial Library, Rochester.

²¹ "Deed from Precinct Agent 1841-1871, North Rochester Congregational Church." Plumb Memorial Library, Rochester, MA.

²² "Account Book 1841-1882" (copy), Plumb Memorial Library, Rochester.

²³ Church records, attic, North Rochester Congregational Church.

²⁴ Mrs. Joseph A. Chamberlain, "First Wedding in 40 Years to Be Performed in Rochester Church," *New Bedford Standard-Times* 24 July 1960.

²⁵ Letter from Marguerite Reed, Clerk, in "The Pilgrim Church Register and Record" Archives of North Rochester Congregational Church, copy in the Plumb Memorial Library.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 7

From 1827 to 1916, the North Rochester Congregational Church managed to employ a full-time minister on an ongoing basis; seventeen ministers served the parish during these 89 years.²⁶ But the continuing rural character of the neighborhood made it inevitable that the parish would struggle to find funding both to maintain its meeting house and parsonage, and to support a minister. After two more years (1917-18) with a supply minister, the parish discontinued regular services. Occasionally the minister from Marion would bicycle up to North Rochester to hold a service in the North Rochester Congregational Church.²⁷

In 1929, discussions began to form a larger parish out of the several small struggling Congregational churches in the area. On 17 July 1930, the Rochester-Lakeville Congregational parish was formed, uniting four parishes in North Rochester, East Rochester, Lakeville, and Taunton, under a church council of twelve (three representatives from each parish). The merger had the full backing of the Massachusetts Congregational Conference and Missionary Society, which even supplied funding. Two ministers were hired to serve the four churches. When it occurred, the merger was seen as an exceptional step: "The forming of a larger parish was a first in Massachusetts at that time."²⁸ The merged parish prospered briefly, but a frequent turnover in ministers led to problems. In 1938 the Taunton church withdrew, and a single minister served all three remaining churches. Still, problems continued, and the merged parish dissolved in 1943 or 1944. The North Rochester Congregational Church resumed holding only occasional services. In 1947, the North Rochester Congregational Church sold its parsonage and barn on Snipatuit Road, which, according to the deed, it had owned and maintained since 1860.

The North Rochester Congregational Church rallied again in 1958, hired Herbert Wilber as its "permanent" minister, and resumed regular services. The members made needed repairs and added the carriage lamps which hang today beside the front doors. When Wilber retired and left in 1963, the church hired retired minister Frederick Bliss to conduct services. The parish struggled until 1970 or 1971, when it disbanded and locked its doors.

The latest resurrection of the North Rochester Congregational Church began in 1990, when ten former parish members, their neighbors, and the Rochester Historical Society teamed up to restore and reopen the church, which had been closed for two decades. After evicting the raccoons, making basic repairs, and painting, the group held a rededication service on 10 November 1990 and began occasional services and secular meetings in the building.²⁹ In August of 1991, they celebrated the 150th anniversary of the church building.³⁰ In 1992-93, they built a concrete foundation next to the church and moved the church onto it, allowing the building to have indoor plumbing, central heat, bathrooms, a kitchen, and a reception space for the first time.³¹ Students from the nearby Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical School then built the disabled access ramps and stairs. In 2002, the deteriorated belfry was removed and taken to Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical School for repairs. The damage from wet rot, dry rot, and powder post beetles, however, was too

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²⁶ The ministers are listed in D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, 1884), 335, and "The Pilgrim Church Register and Record" Archives of North Rochester Congregational Church, copy in the Plumb Memorial Library

²⁷ Mrs. Joseph A. Chamberlain, "First Wedding in 40 Years to Be Performed in Rochester Church," *New Bedford Standard-Times* 24 July 1960.

²⁸ Mrs. Joseph A. Chamberlain, "First Wedding in 40 Years to Be Performed in Rochester Church," *New Bedford Standard-Times* 24 July 1960.

²⁹ "Historic Rochester Church to Reopen after 20 Years," *New Bedford Standard-Times* 10 November 1990.

³⁰ "Rochester Congregation Celebrates," *New Bedford Standard-Times* 3 August 1991.

³¹ "Church's One Foundation Almost Ready," *New Bedford Standard-Times* no date; Rochester Historical Society.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 8

extensive for the program to repair. They decided to fabricate a replica of the belfry, side-by-side with the old one as a model. Installed in 2004, the replica was constructed with pressure-treated lumber and Azek, a PVC-like synthetic material. Robert Francis, the program instructor at Old Colony, told a journalist, "I try to look for something that has value to the kids. Like this project . . . it had post-and-beam, it had new siding, all kinds of joineries that they would normally never get in touch with, so it was a good project. We actually ended up borrowing machines from contractors to do the post-and-beam part of it."³²

Criterion A: Community Planning and Development

The Development of North Rochester

From the construction of its first meetinghouse in 1748, the North Rochester Congregational Church has been the strongest organizing principle of the linear settlement known as North Rochester. North Rochester has always been a diffuse settlement stretched out along North Avenue, once known as Old Middleboro Road, the primary transportation corridor between the Quittacas wetland complex to the north and the Snipatuit wetland complex to the south. North Rochester (MHC# Area D) was defined in a recent survey as a linear area along North Avenue from North Rochester Cemetery westward to Braley Hill Road (now Route 105), with two extensions southward (along Braley Hill Road and Snipatuit Road).³³ The first significant Rochester development outside of Rochester Center, North Rochester was more closely allied to its rural neighbors in towns to the east and north rather than Rochester Center. Because of impassable wetlands, North Rochester was largely cut off from Rochester Center until 1879, when the Snipatuit Causeway opened a direct connection. Over the course of its development, isolated North Rochester built two churches, three cemeteries, a store, sawmill, fulling mill, and iron foundry.

The greatest concentration of historic buildings and sites remaining in North Rochester is within a quarter mile to the east of the North Rochester Congregational Church, near the intersection of North Avenue and Snipatuit Road. On this section of North Avenue are the E. Briggs House at 283 North Avenue (1836; MHC #25), the Protestant Methodist Meeting House at 289 North Avenue (1830, MHC #26), and the Ebenezer and Esther Bennett House and Barn at 339 North Avenue (1727, MHC #27). After serving briefly as a religious structure, the Protestant Methodist Meeting House functioned as a store, post office, telephone office, and house. Just south of North Avenue at 780 Snipatuit Road is Chaddock's Boarding House (1799, MHC #28), the North Rochester Social Union Hall at 765 Snipatuit Road (1880), and the Town Pound (1744, MHC #901), a rare surviving stone pen for stray livestock.

The influence of the North Rochester Congregational Church on the development of this crossroads community can most clearly be demonstrated in the case of Chaddock's Boarding House. Located on the southeast corner of North and Snipatuit, this building is all that remains of the academy established in North Rochester by the Rev. Calvin Chaddock after he came to serve the North Rochester Congregational Church in 1793. The Academy building of 1795, the first private school in Rochester, sat across the street, at the southwest corner of North and Snipatuit. Chaddock "acted as pastor of the church, principal of the academy, and landlord of the boarding house."³⁴ Chaddock also served as a representative to the General Court for Rochester in 1806. After the academy closed, its building served as a grammar

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³² "Building a Better Belfry" *The Wanderer* 16 May 2003; See also, "161-Year-Old Belfry Earns a Rest," *New Bedford Standard-Times* 30 September 2002; and "Students, not Bats, in the Belfry," *Boston Globe* Globe South edition, 21 November 2002.

³³ *Rochester Communitywide Historical and Architectural Survey 1997-1998* (Pawtucket, RI: Public Archaeology Laboratory, 1998), Binder 1: 128.

³⁴ "Chaddock's Boarding House," ROC.28, Massachusetts Historical Commission files.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 9

school for the Town of Rochester until it burned in 1850. The boarding house later became well known as (Asa) Coombs Tavern, a stagecoach stop notorious for selling liquor so diluted that it was stored by the fireplace to keep it from freezing. In the 1880s part of the boarding house was removed and moved elsewhere as a second house. Of the extant commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings in North Rochester, all have been converted to domestic uses; only the North Rochester Congregational Church continues in its original use.

Criterion C: Architecture

The North Rochester Congregational Church is significant for its architecture, both as the design of a regionally important architect, Solomon K. Eaton (1806-1872), and as an excellent example of Greek Revival architecture used for an ecclesiastical building.

Solomon K. Eaton, Architect and Builder

The traditional attribution of North Rochester Congregational Church to Mattapoissett architect Solomon K. Eaton is found in the 1907 "Old Rochester" town history:

Between the years 1837 and 1845 all five of these Congregational churches thus formed out of the old First Church in Rochester had new houses of worship of similar architecture, for which Solomon K. Eaton of Mattapoissett was architect and builder. The one at Wareham was burned in 1904, and has been replaced by a building of different architectural style. The other four of these meeting-houses [Rochester, North Rochester, Marion, and Mattapoissett] are still in use. They all belong to what has been called the Third or Christopher Wren style of New England church architecture, though modified by the fact that all have square belfries instead of the usual pointed spire.³⁵

The attribution of North Rochester Congregational Church as an Eaton design is now confirmed by discovery of the receipt signed by Eaton, in the papers stored in the attic of the church.

Solomon Keith Eaton was born (1 October 1806) and died (9 October 1872) in Middleborough, Massachusetts. He was the son of Solomon Eaton of Middleborough and Polly Keith of Bridgewater, who were married 11 September 1796 in Middleborough. Solomon K. Eaton was a seventh-generation descendant of Mayflower passenger Francis Eaton.³⁶ Solomon K. Eaton married Maria Rogers (1811-1846) on December 29, 1833, in Mattapoissett; they had 2 daughters and a son who died in infancy. Solomon K. Eaton's second wife, Susan M., was born in 1819.³⁷ Solomon K. Eaton died in 1872.

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³⁵ Mary Hall Leonard, et al., *Mattapoissett and Old Rochester Massachusetts: Being a History of these Towns and also in Part of Marion and a portion of Wareham* (3rd ed., Mattapoissett: Committee of the Town of Mattapoissett, 1907), 90-91.

³⁶ "Central New Bedford Historic District," NRHP nomination, 1976. See also *Mayflower Families Vol. 9: Family of Francis Eaton*, 1996.

³⁷ Much of the genealogical information in this paragraph comes from Massachusetts Vital Records to 1851, NEHGS online index. These dates can be traced to the records of the Second Parish of Rochester (Mattapoissett) and gravestone records from Gushing Cemetery, near Mendell's Corner, in Mattapoissett, where Eaton is buried. *The New Bedford Mercury*, 3 January 1834, also confirms the 1833 marriage: "In Mattapoissett, on Sunday evening last, by Rev. Mr. Robbins, Mr. Solomon K. Eaton, of Bergen, N.Y. to Miss Maria S. Rogers, of Mattapoissett." No other New York reference is known. See also Mary Hall Leonard, et al., *Mattapoissett and Old Rochester Massachusetts: Being a History of these Towns and also in Part of Marion and a portion of Wareham* (3rd ed., Mattapoissett: Committee of the Town of Mattapoissett, 1907), 379 and 396. The first draft of this nomination served as the basis for an overview article: Timothy Orwig, "Solomon K. Eaton: New Bedford Architect and Builder," *New Bedford Preservation Society Newsletter* April 2007: 4-5.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 10

while superintending the completion of his last design, the Middleborough Town Hall (NR), which was dedicated in 1873.³⁸ Solomon Eaton was a deacon in the Second Parish (Mattapoissett), and rated as a man “of value to the community as well as the church,” according to the town history:

Mr. Eaton was an architect and the builder of his own and four or more other meeting-houses within the limits of old Rochester territory; the first Lieutenant of Company I, 3d Regiment, M.V.M., in the Civil War; and as organist or choirmaster for fifteen or twenty years he maintained a standard of church music seldom attained in a small community.³⁹

Solomon K. Eaton was a member of the proprietors who raised funds to purchase the building lot for the meeting house in Mattapoissett in 1841. He served as clerk for the Second (Mattapoissett) Parish (1865-70) and for the precinct (1868-72). Beyond the parish, he served as a state assemblyman representing Rochester (1846-47, before Mattapoissett separated in 1857),⁴⁰ and as an agent (1851-54) for the whaling vessels sailing from Mattapoissett.⁴¹ His large Mattapoissett home is a landmark, often mistaken for a captain’s house.

Further information on the architectural career of Solomon Eaton comes from the newspaper in New Bedford, the city closest to Mattapoissett, where Eaton also worked and had an office. In 1837, the *New Bedford Mercury* covered the dedication of the First Parish Meeting House in Rochester, and heaped unusual praise on Eaton:

The edifice was designed by and executed under the superintendence of Solomon K. Eaton of Mattapoissett, and for neatness, taste, and beauty is probably not surpassed by any building of the kind in the Old Colony. The house was built by contract with Mr. Eaton—eight individuals of the parish taking the responsibility and risk upon themselves, with no other inducement than to benefit the society; and it is highly gratifying to the builders to see the people come forward and sustain them in so laudable an enterprise.⁴²

Thirty-five years later the same New Bedford newspaper carried Eaton’s obituary, reporting that “he had a wide reputation as a civil engineer, architect and builder . . . and [was] actively interested in the temperance question and in music. He had an office in this city for many years, and many buildings in this part of the State are of his designing.”⁴³

Solomon K. Eaton is also tangentially significant for training a well-known Boston architect, Willard Sears (1837-1920). Born in New Bedford, Sears interned in the Union Street office in New Bedford that Eaton maintained for many years.⁴⁴

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³⁸ Gretchen Schuler, “Middleborough Town Hall,” MHC Form B, 1985.

³⁹ Mary Hall Leonard, et al., *Mattapoissett and Old Rochester Massachusetts: Being a History of these Towns and also in Part of Marion and a portion of Wareham* (3rd ed., Mattapoissett: Committee of the Town of Mattapoissett, 1907), 251.

⁴⁰ D. Hamilton Hurd, ed., *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis, 1884), 338.

⁴¹ Mary Hall Leonard, et al., *Mattapoissett and Old Rochester Massachusetts: Being a History of these Towns and also in Part of Marion and a portion of Wareham* (3rd ed., Mattapoissett: Committee of the Town of Mattapoissett, 1907), 149, 187, 188, 240, 248, and 294.

⁴² *New Bedford Mercury* 6 October 1837: 3.

⁴³ “Obituary,” *New Bedford Mercury* 10 October 1872; the same date carries an earlier notice of Eaton being struck with apoplexy while working in Middleborough.

⁴⁴ Bruce E. Barnes, “Three Victorian Architects,” *New Bedford Preservation Society Newsletter* October 2004: 5-6.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 11

In 1860 Sears moved to Boston, and eventually entered a highly successful partnership with Charles A. Cummings, designing such landmarks as the New Old South Church (1874) and the South End's landmark Cyclorama Building (1884). After Cummings retired in 1890, Sears continued a solo practice, most notably producing the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum (1902) and the Provincetown Monument (1910).

At least seventeen surviving houses, churches, and other civic buildings in southeastern Massachusetts are attributed to Solomon K. Eaton of Mattapoisett.⁴⁵ His church designs include the First Parish Church (1845, MHC #201) and First Trinitarian Congregational Church (1862, MHC #51) in Bridgewater, First Congregational Church (1841, MHC #39) in Marion, Mattapoisett Congregational Church in Mattapoisett (1842, MHC #32), and Rochester's First Congregational Church (1837, MHC #3) and North Rochester Congregational Church (1841, MHC #24). Eaton was known for domestic designs as well; besides the Rochester First Congregational Church Parsonage (1828, MHC #177), Eaton was responsible for the Abby Taber Hunt House (1855, MHC #1126) in New Bedford⁴⁶ and four houses in Mattapoisett: James W. Dexter House (1856, MHC #204), Jonathan H. Holmes House (1858, MHC #212), Lemuel LeBaron House (1844, MHC #214), and the Solomon K. Eaton House (1855, MHC #31), his own residence. His civic buildings include the Bridgewater Academy (1868, BRD.52), Bridgewater Town House (MHC #53), Middleborough Town Hall (1873, MHC #384), and the New Bedford Public Library (1856, MHC #220). Additionally, Eaton has been credited with the design of the East Bridgewater Bank (ca. 1836, MHC #122), a building designed for commercial and domestic purposes. Not all of these attributions, however, have been conclusively documented.

These buildings cover the variety of architectural styles popular during his long career, from Federal in the 1820s to Greek Revival in the 1830s through the mid 1850s, and Italianate in the 1850s and 1860s. Notable exceptions include the Rochester First Congregational Church, which shades from Greek Revival into Carpenter Gothic. The original stylistic character of the New Bedford Public Library (now City Hall) has been obscured by numerous enlargements and reworkings. Eaton's final project, the large wood-frame Middleborough Town Hall, is a late use of Italianate for a city hall. The building was extensively restored, including "original paint colors and decorative treatments," in 1999-2000.⁴⁷

North Rochester Church and Greek Revival Architecture

Besides its architect Solomon K. Eaton, North Rochester Congregational Church is also significant as an excellent example of Greek Revival architecture used for an ecclesiastical building. The Greek Revival characteristics of the building are most prominent on the symmetrical southern facade, including the four unfluted Doric pilasters, the wide divided trim band below the cornice, and the prominent triangular gable pediment. The Doric pilasters mark the corners of

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⁴⁵ These attributions are primarily from MACRIS records, cross-checked against MHC surveys, as updated to 2 Jan. 2007. MHC numbers for each are enclosed in parentheses here, after the date. MACRIS lists 15 designs for Eaton. The Hunt House in New Bedford is missing from the MACRIS lists, as well as the Marion Church. Survey forms filed by the Marion Historical Commission credit this Solomon Eaton design, as well as two others, to a Seth Eaton of Mattapoisett. No mention of Seth Eaton can be found in Mattapoisett records. Further research may prove all three to be the work of Solomon Eaton. The other two Marion buildings are the First Universalist Church (MHC #49) and First Universalist Church Rectory (MHC #275), both completed in 1833.

⁴⁶ "Swain Buildings," UMASS Dartmouth Swain School of Design—Archives and Special Collections (<http://www.lib.umass.edu/ARCHIVES/swain/bulidings.html>). Accessed 19 December 2006. Note misspelling of "buildings" in web address. In 2006, Swain no longer owned the building; its private owner operated it as a bed and breakfast.

⁴⁷ Middleborough Center Historic District, NRHP nomination, 2000: 7.21. The only Eaton buildings currently on the NRHP are this building and the New Bedford Public Library (City Hall), both as parts of districts. No Eaton building has been individually listed on the NRHP before.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 12

the south facade (doubling as cornerboards) and visually support the square belfry structure. These Doric pilasters are simplified to a shaft and capital with a squared abacus that supports the entablature. The three-part wall entablature is an unfigured frieze and architrave, clearly divided by a trim board, supporting a projecting cornice. The triangular pediment has an undecorated, clapboarded, tympanum and prominent raking cornices. The symmetrical east and west elevations of the building continue the three-part wall entablature of the south facade, with single pilasters/cornerboards on the north and south ends. The belfry repeats these same motifs. The gallery front on the inside of the hall can be read as a single wall entablature.

Although the term “meeting house” was still used by North Rochester when it built this structure, Puritan meetinghouses had evolved significantly over the two centuries since they first were erected. No longer were they the house-like foursquare buildings of the 17th century, or the 18th century’s rectangular buildings with door and pulpit on the long sides.⁴⁸ Beginning early in the 18th century, the post-fire London churches of Christopher Wren had begun to influence strongly the Anglican churches built in coastal New England cities, such as Christ Church (Old North; 1723) in Boston, with its gable roof, tower, and spire. As the 18th century progressed, prominent Puritan meetinghouses such as Old South (1729) in Boston adopted the tower and spire, if not yet the tower main entry. After 1750, James Gibbs’ design of St. Martin in the Fields in London further influenced many of the larger city churches.⁴⁹ After the Revolution, the Federal-style church—developed by Charles Bulfinch and popularized by Asher Benjamin in his subsequent designs and pattern books—solidified this idea of a prominent end entry, through a porch or portico, with a belfry tower and spire atop the tower and/or building roof. The pulpit gradually moved to the far end, even in more conservative rural areas. As the 19th century progressed, “Congregational” places of worship, now often known as churches, adopted Greek Revival style:

The Greek Revival, a much simpler mode than its Federal predecessor, featured a portico of imposing and largely unornamented Doric columns with a similarly plain pediment above. Its inspiration was nothing from Christian history but rather derived from the ‘pagan’ temples of Hellenic antiquity, of which it was a modern-day appropriation. Many, if not most, of these meetinghouses were capped with a steeple, which rests on the body of the church itself rather than extending partly over the portico in the Federal mode.⁵⁰

Smaller and more rural parishes such as North Rochester often dispensed with the portico, steeple, Doric columns, and other stylistic flourishes, expressing their piety in simple plain pilasters, entablatures, and boxy belfry. After the elaborate towers and delicate fanlights of the Federal period, these simple-lined churches of the Greek Revival must have seemed both new and reassuringly traditional.

The Greek Revival in America may be said to have begun in 1818 in Philadelphia, with both the construction of the Second Bank of the United States (designed by William Strickland) and the publication of John Haviland’s *The Builder’s Assistant*, “the first American book to give the Greek orders.”⁵¹ The first Greek Revival church in New England was St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Boston, designed by Alexander Parris. The Greek Revival was “an architectural revolution against which the rock of Boston conservatism would avail nothing. . . . Like the germ of influenza, it swept on across the [Atlantic] ocean, through the East and South, and into the rawest settlements, even beyond the Mississippi.”⁵² Greek

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⁴⁸ Philip D. Zimmerman, “Congregational Churches,” *The Encyclopedia of New England: The Culture and History of an American Region*, ed. Burt Feintuch and David H. Watters (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), 98-99.

⁴⁹ For a sustained discussion of the evolution of the meeting house form in New England, see William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Buildings and their Architects: Volume 1, the Colonial and Neoclassical Styles* (New York: Oxford UP, 1970) and Peter W. Williams, *Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States* (Urbana: U of IL Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ Peter W. Williams, *Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States* (Urbana: U of IL Press, 1997), 12.

⁵¹ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Volume 1: 1607-1860* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1981), 161.

⁵² Walter H. Kilham, *Boston after Bulfinch: An Account of Its Architecture 1800-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1946), 19.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 13

Revival architecture was popular across the United States from 1820 to 1860, and represented a significant departure from British influence for American architects.⁵³ In the second quarter of the 19th century, Americans embraced the Greek Revival as a national style, not only architects but also builders, patrons, and consumers of architecture. Architectural historian William Pierson summarized its importance:

The Greek Revival was the first pervasive and self-conscious nationalistic movement in American architecture. Although its initial impetus came at the professional level, where it was used for government buildings all over the land, the total national character came at the folk level, where it achieved the same fulfillment of aspiration toward architectural independence as Jefferson's idealistic adaptation of Roman architecture did more than a quarter of a century earlier.⁵⁴

Although we know nothing of Eaton's training as a builder and architect, we do know that anyone successfully working in building at that time would have understood and been able to execute the elements of Greek Revival style. Eaton most likely learned the principles of Greek Revival through apprenticeship or architectural guidebooks such as those by Asher Benjamin, two common sources of folk or vernacular architecture.

The North Rochester Congregational Church can be seen as a conservative design even for its architect, Solomon K. Eaton. His Carpenter-Gothic First Parish Church of 1837 in Rochester Center would have been stylistically adventurous; his four other Rochester Churches, although of later date, were all completed in the long-established Greek Revival style. Of these four, the North Rochester appears to be the smallest, the only one where the front portico columns have been reduced entirely to pilasters. The interior was probably a conservative design as well. As the Puritan meeting house gave way to the Greek Revival church, its interior also evolved, as part of a trend toward increased comfort and uniformity in the design and decoration. Jane Nylander has described this process: "The years which saw a gradual architectural change from meeting house to church in New England also saw the dominant interior spaces . . . increasingly warmed with artificial light, stove-generated heat, and decorative textiles. . . . At the very time New England's meeting houses were becoming more church-like, they were also becoming more home-like."⁵⁵ But these changes appear to have come late to North Rochester, possibly long after its construction. In churches in isolated country settlements like North Rochester, this evolution must have taken longer to occur than in city churches.

Archaeological Significance

While several ancient sites have been recorded in the town of Rochester, only small areas of the town have been systematically surveyed, limiting the local and regional value of these archaeological recoveries. Most sites in the town have been identified on the basis of limited collections and the recollections of collectors. Little reliable information relating to site type and function is known on a site-specific basis, and any town-wide patterns or models are, at the best, fragmentary. Given this information, any sites located on church property or in the town could be significant. Artifact or feature recoveries from sites within the district may contribute important information relating to site function and type. That information might in turn enable that site to be integrated into a systematic community wide study of prehistoric subsistence and settlement patterns for the town. Prehistoric sites in the district may contain information that helps

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⁵³ Leopold Arnaud, "Foreword," in Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America*, 1944 (rpt. New York: Dover), xv.

⁵⁴ William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Buildings and their Architects: Volume 1, the Colonial and Neoclassical Styles* (New York: Oxford UP, 1970), 432.

⁵⁵ Jane C. Nylander, "Toward Comfort and Uniformity in New England Meeting House, 1750-1850," *New England Meeting House and Church: 1630-1850*, Ed. Peter Benes and Jane Montague Benes, Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife: Annual Proceedings 1979 (Boston: Boston University, 1979): 86-100; 86.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 8 Page 14

understand the growth of Contact Period core areas in this region, and their relationship to other important core areas within the Taunton River drainage. Lithic materials and other archaeological resources at sites in the district might contain information that helps understand patterns of development in the area, including the growth of the Small Stemmed Point Tradition as an *in situ* development for the southeastern Massachusetts region.

Historic archaeological resources described above may contribute important information related to the early settlement of Rochester, the ecclesiastical history of the town, the architectural history of Rochester's meetinghouses and churches, and the role this site played as the primary symbol and gathering place for this rural community. Additional historic research combined with archaeological survey and testing may locate structural evidence of the 1790 second meetinghouse, and the original site of the 1841 meetinghouse. Both structures are believed to be located on the nominated property. Archaeological resources may identify portions of the 1790 structure, barns, carriage barns, outbuildings, and occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) that were reused at the original site of the 1841 structure and at its present location. At least two carriage barns, no longer extant, have been identified with the 1841 structure. Structural evidence from the second and third meetinghouses, together with detailed analysis of the contents of occupational-related features may contribute important information related to the architectural characteristics and construction materials used for each structure. Archaeological evidence from barns, outbuildings and the contents of occupational-related features may also contribute important evidence related to the activities conducted on the property, and the social, cultural, and economic activities associated with the parishioners and the North Rochester community. The information presented above may contribute important evidence that indicates why and how this location and related structures developed as the primary symbol and gathering place for this community.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 9-10 Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 9-10 Page 2

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number 9-10 Page 3

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10. Boundary Description

The National Register boundary for this property corresponds to the legal boundary of the lot, known as Plot 5 on the Town of Rochester Assessor’s Map 44. This 1.0 acre parcel contains a single building—the North Rochester Congregational Church. This lot, addressed as 289 North Avenue, Rochester, Massachusetts, was set off as the site of the North Rochester meeting house in 1789, and has been legally distinct since 1790. This nearly rectangular lot measures 380 ft along North Avenue, 381.35 feet long at the rear, 108 ft. deep on its eastern end near the church, and 115 ft. deep at its western end.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel associated with the North Rochester Congregational Church.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number photos Page 1

Additional Documentation—Photographs

Timothy Orwig was the photographer for all the photographs, which were taken on 8 December 2006, and the negatives are in his possession. All of the photographs show the North Rochester Congregational Church, Rochester, Plymouth County, Massachusetts.

1. Looking northeast, showing the south and west façades, pole fence, and signboard.
2. Looking north, showing the south façade and signboard.
3. Looking northwest, showing the south and east façades, pole fence, and front steps and disabled ramp.
4. Looking west, showing the east façade.
5. Looking southeast, showing the north façade and disabled access ramp.
6. Looking east, showing the west façade.
7. Looking southeast, showing mortared remnant rear wall from the western carriage barn, and drylaid stone wall beyond. Note the disabled access ramp, at the rear of the church, right.
8. Interior: Front of the sanctuary, showing the platform, pulpit, and organ. Taken from the rear (south) gallery, looking northeast.
9. Interior: Front of the sanctuary, showing the platform, pulpit, and box pews. The hymn numberboard is attached to the western chimney stack. Taken from the rear (south) gallery, looking northwest. Note the profile of the gallery front to the left.
10. Interior: Front vestibule, beneath the gallery (note sloping ceiling). Looking southeast, showing the western stairway into gallery, pressed tin panels on the walls, and western front double door.
11. Interior: Front vestibule, beneath the gallery (note sloping ceiling). Looking east, showing the western door between the vestibule and sanctuary, western stairway into gallery, and pressed tin on the walls.
12. Interior: Rear of the sanctuary, showing the gallery and eastern doorway into the rear vestibule. Note the chamfered (below) and boxed (above) gallery post. Note also the coved ceiling covered with pressed tin panels, and the trap door and ladder leading from the gallery to the attic. Taken from the northeast corner, looking southwest.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number Historic views Page 1



North Rochester Congregational Church and carriage sheds, shown in a ca. 1890 photograph.
Files of the Rochester Historical Society.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number Historic views Page 2

Five Rochester church buildings designed by Solomon K. Eaton. Illustrations taken from Mary H. Leonard, "Church of Rochester: Five Kindred Churches—Echo of the Recent Bicentenary" (ca. 1903, based on internal evidence).



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AT NORTH ROCHESTER.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number Historic views Page 3

men. The names of these signers of a prominent one of interest: Samuel Arnold, Abraham Holmes, Samuel Hammond, Isaac Holmes, Jacob Burdick, John Benson, Thomas Ester, Anthony Coates.

The first of these signers, Abraham Holmes, became also the first deacon of a new church. He and his brother Isaac Holmes lived beside "a little rd." now known as Snow's road. Several generations later another Abraham Holmes, the grandfather of Mr. Charles Holmes, was a young lawyer living Rochester Centre, and the leading light in stirring up revolutionary enthusiasm among the citizens. Samuel Hammond, the second signer, was one of the original proprietors who drew the lots at Mattapoisett. Among the original church members who with-



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AT WARREN.



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AT MATTAPOISETT.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

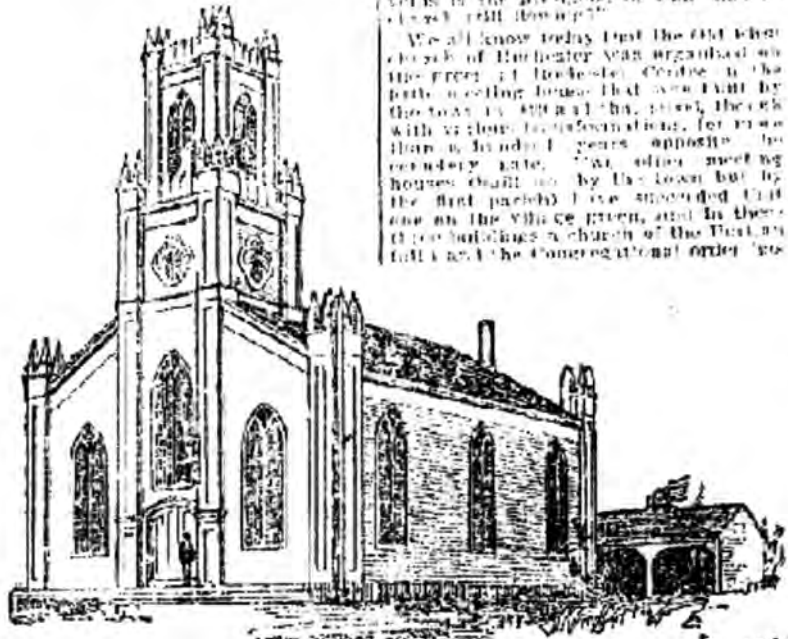
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number Historic views Page 4

views in the Broadway of that ancient
church still remain?"

We all know today that the old New
church of Rochester was organized on
the present site. Centre in the
first meeting house that was built by
the town in 1704 and that stood there
with various improvements for more
than a hundred years opposite the
conventary gate. Two other meeting
houses built up by the town but by
the first parish have succeeded that
one on the village green, and in these
three buildings a church of the Puritan
faith and the Congregational order has



THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AT ROCHESTER.



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AT WAREHAM.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester (Plymouth), MA

Section number Historic views Page 5



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AT ROCHESTER CENTRE.

Site Data Sheet

North Rochester Congregational Church, Rochester, Plymouth County, Massachusetts

Structure/Landscape/Feature	Date of Construction	Type of Resource	Contributing or Not (NC)	Direction from the North Rochester Cong. Church	Architect or Designer (if known)
North Rochester Congregational Church	1841	Building	Contributing		Solomon K. Eaton
Carriage Barn Wall	before 1890	Structure	Contributing	N	
Stone Wall	ca. 1790-91	Structure	Contributing	N, E	
Signboard	ca. 1993	Object	NC	S	
Pole Fence	ca. 1993	Object	NC	S	
Total: 5 1 contributing building, 2 contributing structures, and 2 non-contributing objects.					

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: North Rochester Congregational Church

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Plymouth

DATE RECEIVED: 12/05/07 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/20/07
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/04/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/18/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 07001400

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 1/17/2008 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

See attached Return Sheet for detailed comment.

RECOM./CRITERIA Return

REVIEWER Patrick Andrus

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 1/17/2008

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Property Name: North Rochester Congregational Church
Plymouth, MA

Reference Number: 07001400

Reason for Return:

In consultation with the State this nomination is returned to clarify the defined Period of Significance. In the cover form Section 8, the Period of Significance is defined as starting in 1790, while on two other pages (Section 8, page 1, and Section 7, page 6) it is stated that the Period of Significance begins in 1841. Please amend the nomination form to consistently define the Period of Significance.

Patrick W. Andrus, Historian
National Register of Historic Places
1/17/2008

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: North Rochester Congregational Church

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Plymouth

DATE RECEIVED: 2/08/08 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/23/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 07001400

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 3/21/08 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

on resubmission the State has clarified the opening date
for the period of significance as starting in 1790.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A&C

REVIEWER Patrick Andrews

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 3/21/2008

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



1. North Rochester Congregational Church [S & W facades]
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA
MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - NRoch Cong Church 1.tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



2. North Rochester Congregational Church [S. facade]
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - NRoch Con Church 2.tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



3. North Rochester Congregational Church [S+E facades]
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - N Roch Cong Church 3. tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



4. North Rochester Congregational Church [E. facade]
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - N Roch Cong Church 4. tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



5. North Rochester Congregational Church [N. facade]
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - N Rock Cong Church 5. tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



6. North Rochester Congregational Church [w. facade]
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - N Roch Cong Church 6. tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



7. North Rochester Congregational Church [Carriage House
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA Wa. 11]

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - NRoch Cong Church 7. fjf

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



8. North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - N Rock Cong Church 8. tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



9. North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - N Roch Cong Church 9.tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



10. North Rochester Congregational Church [INT: E stairs]
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - N Rock Cong Church 10.tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



11. North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - NRock Cong Church 11. f/6

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



12. North Rochester Congregational Church
Rochester, Plymouth Co., MA

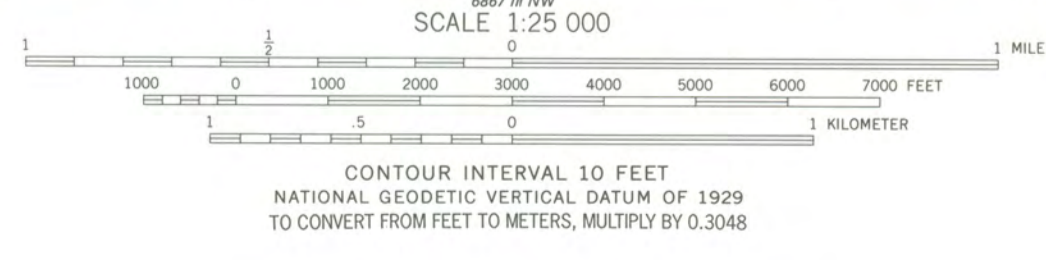
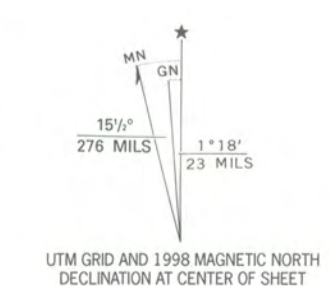
MA - Rochester (Plymouth County) - N Rock Cong Church 12.tif

Photographer: Timothy Orwig
2006



North Rochester Congregational Church, Rochester, MA Zone 19, Easting 342580 Northing 4627140

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1937. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1974 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery dated 1997; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1975. Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 1998
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and 10 000-foot ticks: Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 19
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



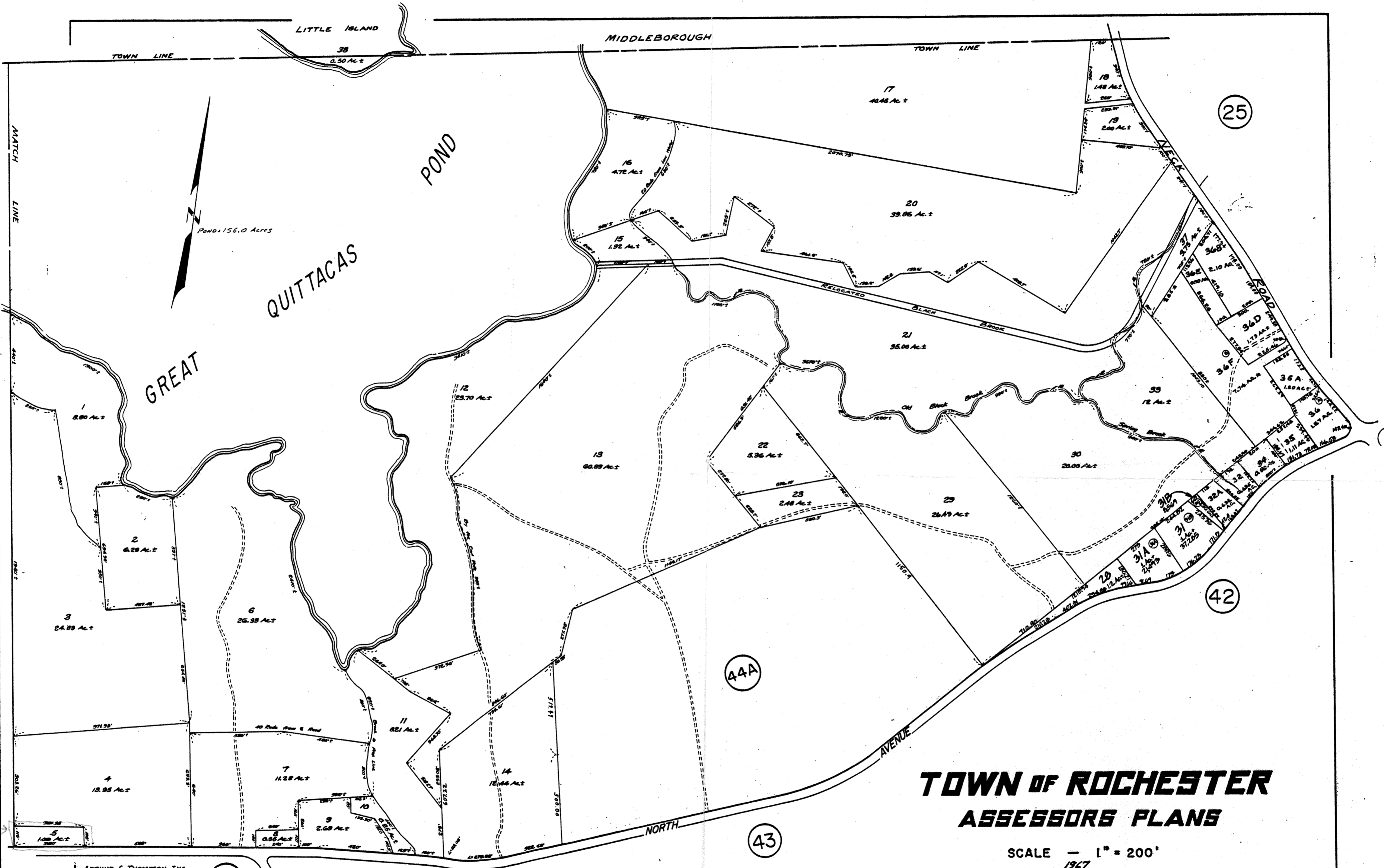
ASSAWOMPSET POND, MASS.

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

North Rochester Congregational Church, Rochester, MA Zone 19, Easting 342580, Northing 4627140

1997
NIMA 8867 IV SW-SERIES V814





ARTHUR C. THOMPSON INC.
 ENG. & SUR. - MARION, MASS.
 ALTERATIONS & ADDITIONS
 DEC. 1966
 DEC. 1974
 DEC. 1977
 DEC. 1988
 DEC. 1988
 DEC. 1988

TOWN OF ROCHESTER ASSESSORS PLANS

SCALE - 1" = 200'
 1967

THESE PLANS ARE FOR ASSESSMENT
 PURPOSES ONLY. DO NOT USE
 FIGURES FOR WRITING DEEDS.

44

REVISED DEC 1968
 TIBBETT'S ENGINEERING CORP.
 NEW BEDFORD, MASS.

Rochester, Plymouth County, MA
 North Rochester
 Congregational Church



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

November 30, 2007
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Mr. J. Paul Loether
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th floor
Washington, DC 20005



Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

North Rochester Congregational Church, 289 North Ave., Rochester (Plymouth), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure

cc: Timothy Orwig, consultant
Betty Beaulieu, Rochester Historical Commission
North Rochester Congregational Church
Richard Nunes, Chair, Board of Selectmen
Chair, Rochester Planning Board
Richard LaCamera, Town Administrator



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

February 4, 2008

Mr. J. Paul Loether
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

North Rochester Congregational Church, 289 North Ave., Rochester (Plymouth), MA

The nomination was returned by the National Register staff on January 17, 2008, for clarification of the period of significance. MHC staff has amended the nomination form as requested to consistently define the Period of Significance. The cover form of section 8, page 1 of section 8, and page 6 of section 7 are now consistent, noting a period of significance beginning in 1790 and ending in 1957.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Fax Transmittal Memorandum

To: Patrick Andrews Fax #: 202-371-2229
From: Betsy Friedberg Date: 3/27/08
Re: North Rochester Pages, including cover sheet: ~~4~~ 5

Comments:

Hi Patrick, Here are the correction pages - hard copies on archival paper will follow shortly by ~~WFF~~ UPS.
Many thanks

Betsy

originals to be mailed

If this communication has been received in error, please notify us immediately.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
Tel: (617) 727-8470 · Fax: (617) 727-5128 · Website: www.state.ma.us/sec/mhc



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

April 4, 2008

Mr. J. Paul Loether
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed are corrected pages for the North Rochester Congregational Church, Rochester (Plymouth), MA nomination. These have previously been faxed to Patrick Andrus on March 27, 2008. Please replace Section 7, pages 1 and 6, and Section 8, pages 1 and 6 with the enclosed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

cc: Betty Beaulieu, Rochester Historical Commission
Timothy Orwig, consultant
North Rochester Congregational Church