

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 716,44,0014	DATE 6/21/71

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Congdon Street Baptist Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
17 Congdon Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE  
Rhode Island, 02906

CODE  
44

COUNTY:  
Providence

CODE  
007

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Congdon Street Baptist Church

STREET AND NUMBER:  
17 Congdon Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE:  
Rhode Island

CODE  
44

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Dorrance and Washington Streets

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE  
Rhode Island, 02903

CODE  
44

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
College Hill Demonstration Grant Study. Project R. I., D--1.

DATE OF SURVEY: 1959  
 Federal  
 State  
 County  
 Local

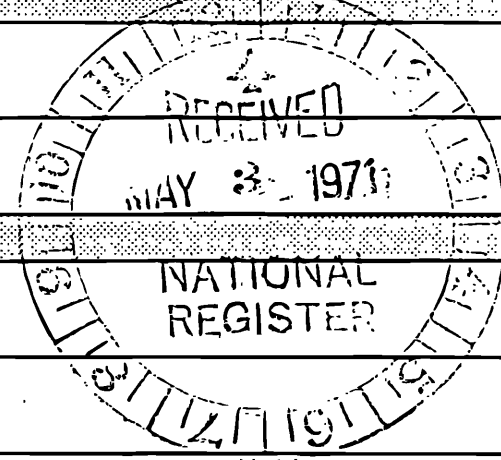
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Providence Redevelopment Agency

STREET AND NUMBER:  
10 Dorrance Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE:  
Rhode Island, 02903

CODE  
44



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

716,44,0014  
6/21/71

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Congdon Street Baptist Church, erected in 1874-1875, is a fine and well preserved example of simple Victorian ecclesiastical architecture. Exterior detailing is in the (North-Italian) Romanesque Revival manner and imitates, in wood, the masonry or brick architecture of the original style. The work strongly reminds one of that of Thomas A. Tefft (1826-1859), prominent Providence architect, although Tefft had died well in advance of the construction of this building.

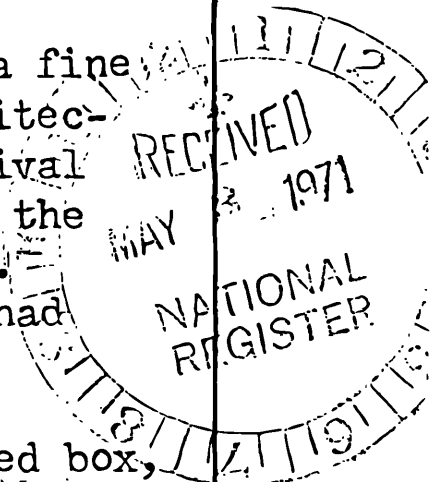
The structure is basically a one-story rectangular clapboarded box, set on a high brick foundation, with gable roof and tall corner tower. Windows along the length of the structure are tall, nine-over-nine, double-hung sash with segmental arches. They are embellished by flat, wooden label mouldings and very flat, sawn label stops. Sills are projected slightly and rest on simple wooden corbels. (A narrow band of raspberry-colored etched glass lights surrounds the pale yellow glass in the sashes. Some of the original etched glass has been replaced.) At the gable-end of the building to the south, a large, tripartite, rounded-arch window is similarly adorned with wooden label mouldings and corbelled sills. The opposing wall to the north is pierced by a single bull's-eye window, now boarded-in; and the wall itself has been extensively rebuilt. There is a small modern ell attached at this end.

The eaves and gables of the main structure are decorated with a sawn wooden cornice resembling a brick corbel table; This feature also seems reminiscent of mediaeval machicolations. It is repeated in a double band at the top of the hip-roofed bell tower at the south-west corner of the church. This square tower, pierced by segmentally-arched windows, is three stories tall and projects slightly outside and well above the basic structure. The stylistic influence of such mediaeval Italian buildings as the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence is strong. The upper, wooden exterior of the church has been painted white for some years; one feels, however, that it was originally painted in one color or another imitative of stone, and it is strongly suggested that this treatment be resumed at the next time of painting.

As the church is on the side of a very steep hill, its brick foundation or basement is a full story in height in the front (west). Entrance to the church is gained at this level through a simple recessed double-door at the base of the corner tower. The front wall of the basement is broken by paired, four-over-four, double-hung sash windows set beneath single segmental arches.

Above church-school rooms and a kitchen at ground-level, the interior of the church is basically one large main room, its ceiling a continuous segmental "vault" (achieved in plaster). A stairway from

(See Continuation Sheet.)



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

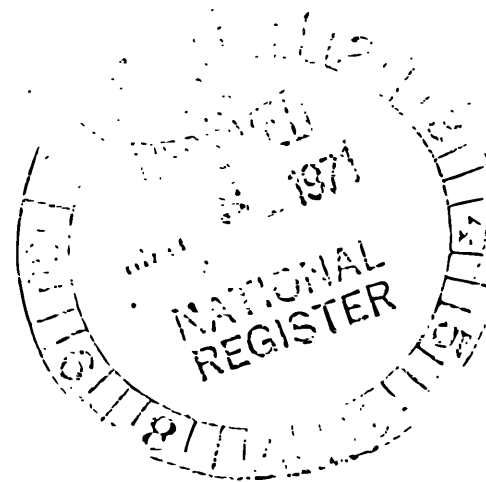
STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 716144-0014	DATE 6/21/71

(Number all entries)

7. Description.

tower entrance on the sidewalk leads up to a narrow hall which runs across the southern end of the church and to a narrow balcony above this hall and overlooking the main room. At the opposite end of the main room a raised platform in front of a large, recessed, segmentally-arched niche serves as the altar and preaching area.

A rich decorative effect has been produced through simple details. The plain Victorian wainscot, window mouldings and doors are stained and treated to imitate rich wood-grain, as are all the woodwork and furniture. Like the other furnishings, the organ-case which projects into the main room, next to the altar, is carved with Gothic detail. The stencilled patterns on the organ pipes, the floral designs etched into the border lights of the windows and the painted mural adorning the niche behind the altar give color to the otherwise soberly-shaded interior.



**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

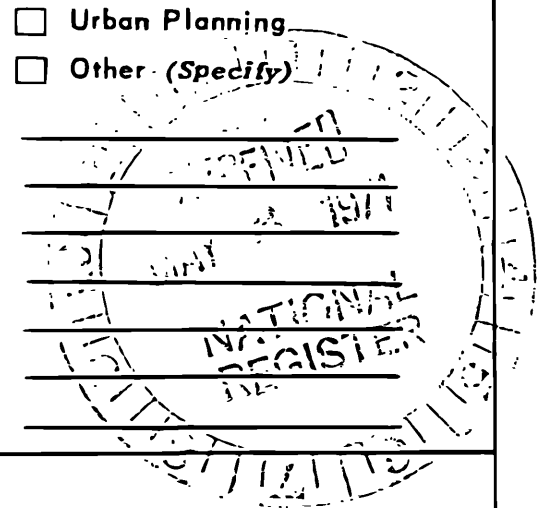
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1871-1875

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The design of the Congdon Street Baptist Church is an excellent example of the Italianate-Mediaeval Revival style, effected with great simplicity of plan and detail. The church suggests the work of a local carpenter or builder working from architectural drawings and designs of a slightly earlier period. Details such as the corbel table, the label mouldings, and the window sills are seen in drawings by Tefft done in the 1850's, as well as in surviving structures in the area which are known to date from that decade. In 1874 these details were repeated on this church, but their extreme flatness indicates that the builder was perhaps more influenced by drawings, only, than by existing buildings.

The place of the church in the history of Providence is important and should be remembered. In 1819, Moses Brown gave land on College Hill to "the people of color" for a school-house and meeting-house. The original building stood slightly north of the present structure, just off Meeting Street and a little above Congdon Street; it was built in 1821 and provided the first school-house for black children in Providence. In 1869 this was torn down, without the approval or knowledge of the congregation, by white neighbors because its proximity displeased them.

The congregation then had to meet wherever it could while an exchange of land was effected and a new meeting-house built. The courts allowed a land exchange in 1871, and the present building at the corner of Congdon Street was undertaken. The vestry was dedicated on April 21, 1874, and the church was completed by July, 1875. The total cost of the structure was approximately \$15,000.

The church is an appreciated landmark in its area, inserted neatly into its carved-out niche in the slope of College Hill. It is in scale with the XIX-Century residential structures facing it and beyond it on Congdon Street, and is a picturesque part of the city scene--especially when it and its tower are seen at an angle as one enters or looks up Congdon Street. It is even more a landmark as a physical or visual reminder of independent achievement, high purposes, tenacity and stability (and excellent architectural taste) in the old black community of Providence, a part of whom form this church's long-established, dignified and respected congregation. They take pride in their building and give it both constant use and very good care.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Johnson, Rev. Leardrew L.: A Brief Historical Sketch of the Congdon St. Baptist Church of Providence, Rhode Island, from 1819-1965 (Mimeographed manuscript, Providence, Rhode Island, 1965), 7 pp.

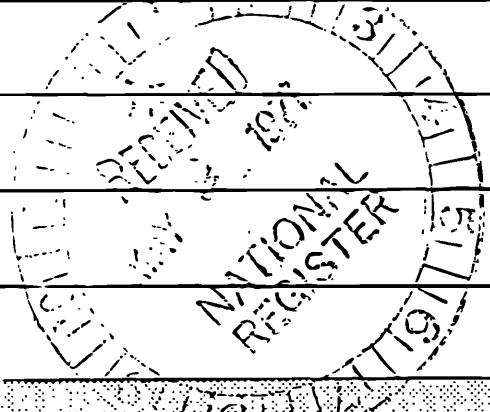
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		41° 49' 39" N	71° 24' 25" W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Clifford M. Renshaw, III, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission      DATE: April 5, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
State House, 90 Smith Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence      STATE: Rhode Island      CODE: 44

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Fredrick C. Williams

Title State Liaison Officer

Date April 29, 1971

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert A. Connally  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

JUN 21 1971

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:  
William J. [Signature]  
Keeper of The National Register

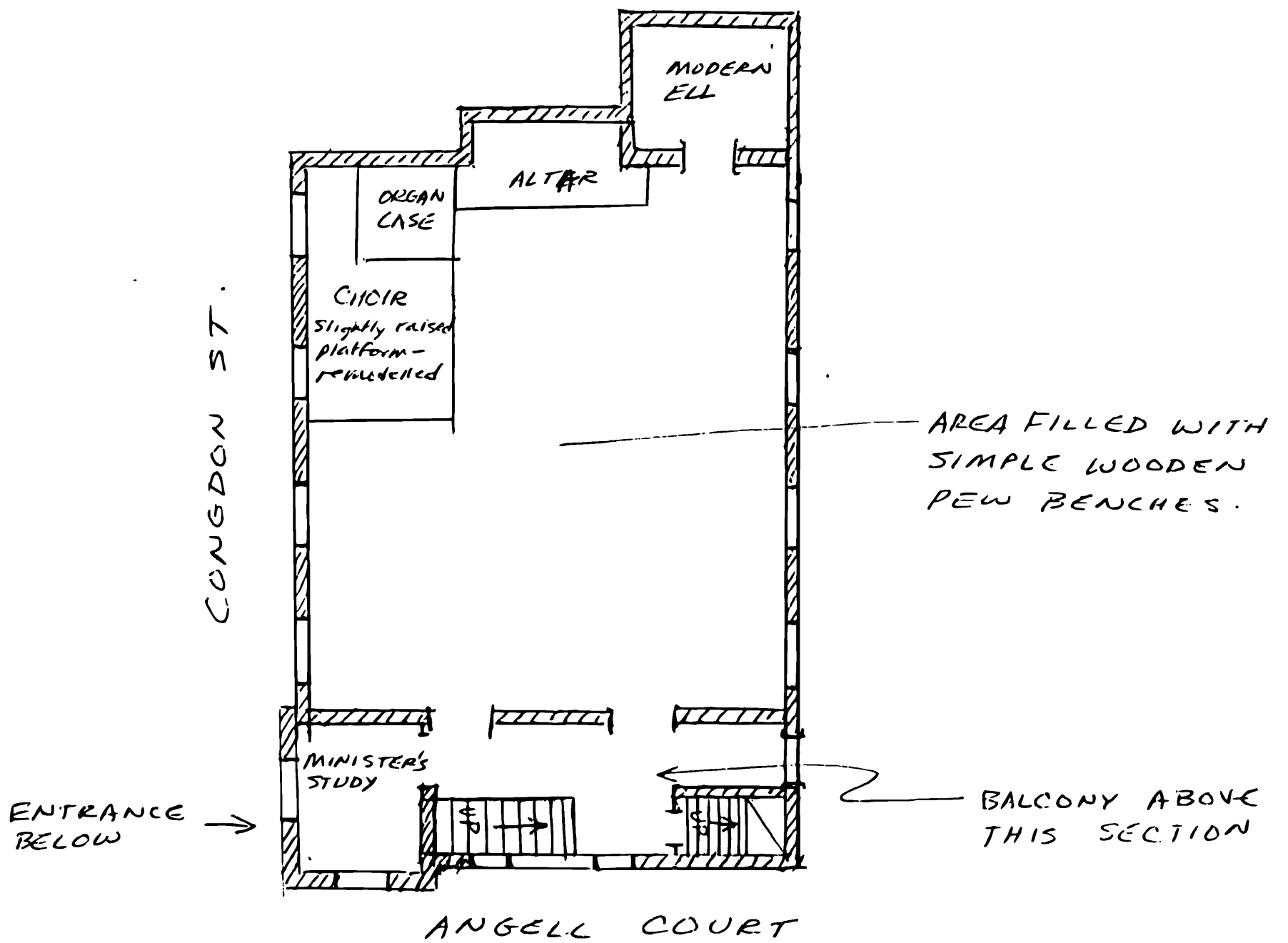
Date MAY 27 1971

19/300269/1633380

01171 112-750 W

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

CONGDON STREET BAPTIST  
CHURCH, 15 CONGDON ST.  
PROVIDENCE.



PLAN. MAIN FLOOR

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 71.6.44.0014	DATE 6/21/71

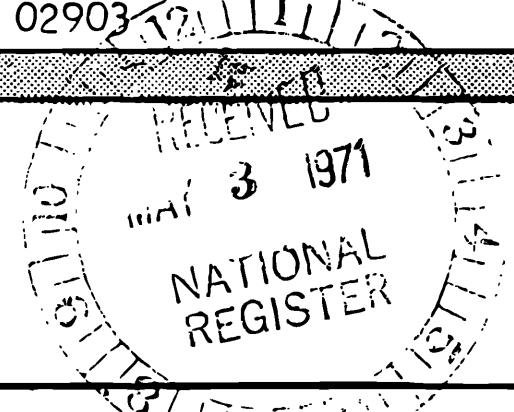
SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**1. NAME**  
COMMON: Congdon Street Baptist Church  
AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
17 Congdon Street  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence  
STATE: Rhode Island      CODE 44      COUNTY: Providence      CODE 007

**3. PHOTO REFERENCE**  
PHOTO CREDIT: Clifford M. Renshaw, III  
DATE ~~OR PHOTO~~ March, 1971  
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Xerox copy at Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission,  
State House, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

**4. IDENTIFICATION**  
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.  
Sketch-plan (not to scale) of main floor.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

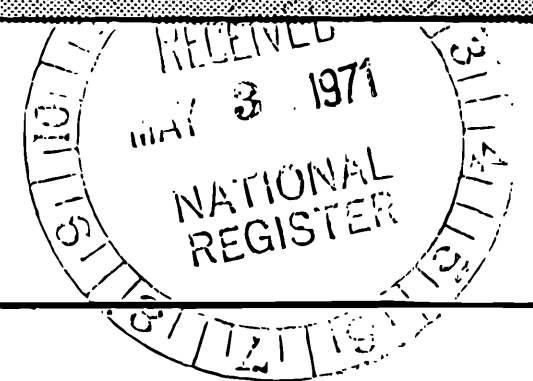
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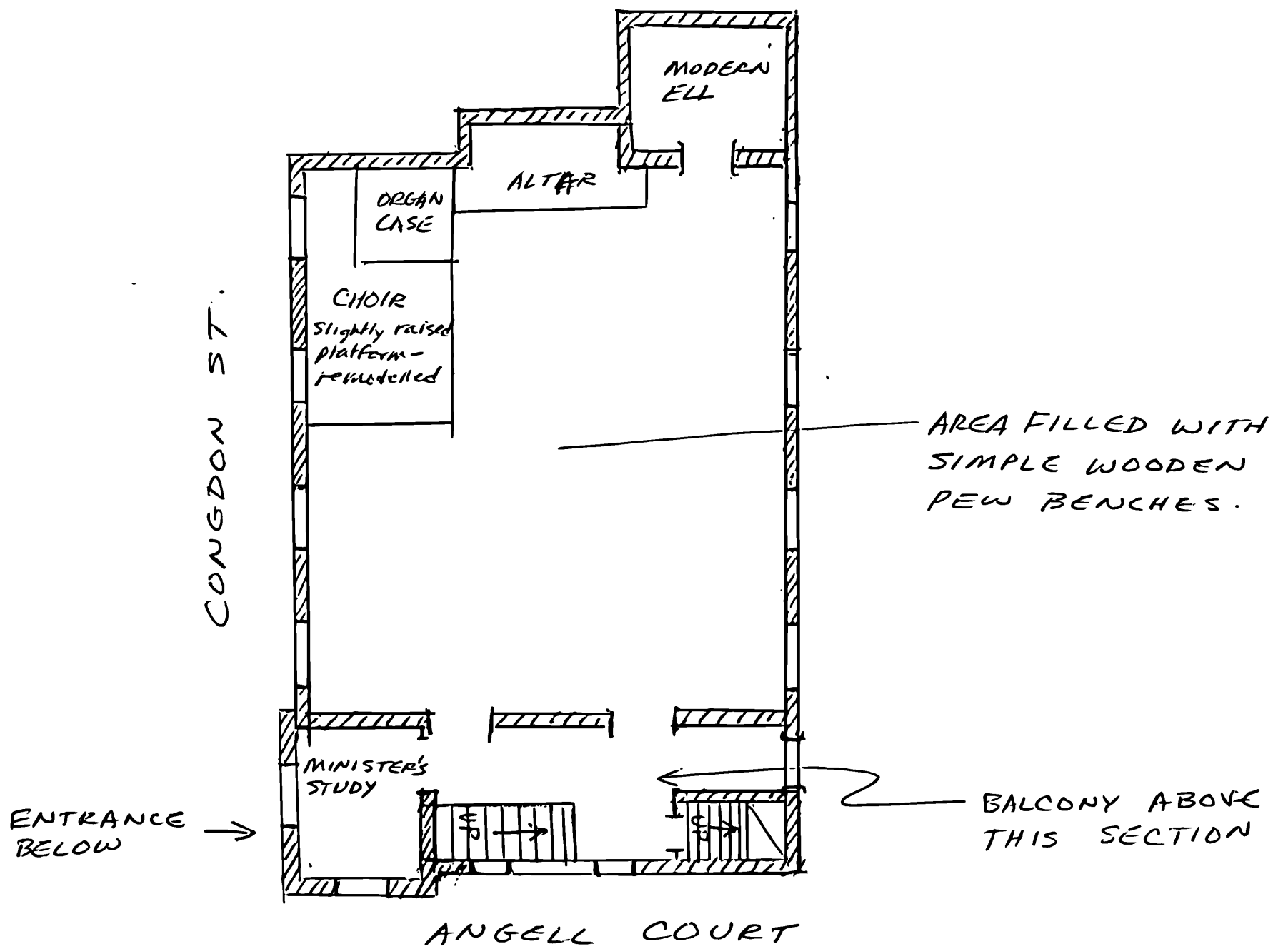
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COMMON: Congdon Street Baptist Church			
AND/OR HISTORIC:			
<b>2. LOCATION</b>			
STREET AND NUMBER: 17 Congdon Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence			
STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Providence	CODE 007
<b>3. PHOTO REFERENCE</b>			
PHOTO CREDIT: Clifford M. Renshaw, III			
DATE <del>XXXXXX</del> March, 1971			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Xerox copy at Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903			
<b>4. IDENTIFICATION</b>			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. Sketch-plan (not to scale) of main floor.			





CONGDON STREET BAPTIST  
CHURCH, 15 CONGDON ST.  
PROVIDENCE.



PLAN. MAIN FLOOR