

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: First Universalist Church  
Other names/site number: American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of related multiple property listing: n/a  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 78 Earle Street  
City or town: Woonsocket State: RI County: Providence  
Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

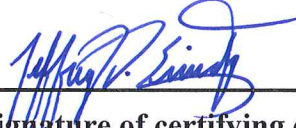
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national     statewide     local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A     B     C     D

 <hr/> <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <u>RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION + HERITAGE COMMISSION</u> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	<u>2-5-2020</u> <hr/> <b>Date</b>
--	--------------------------------------

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/> <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<hr/> <b>Date</b>
<hr/> <b>Title :</b>	<hr/> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

---

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

---

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local:
- Public – State:
- Public – Federal:

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s):
- District:
- Site:
- Structure:
- Object:

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property \_\_\_\_\_

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register n/a

---

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility

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

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: civic

EDUCATION: research facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

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

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

---

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Late Gothic Revival  
MODERN MOVEMENT

---

---

---

---

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; STONE: limestone

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

---

### Summary Paragraph

The former First Universalist Church (1924, 1957) in Woonsocket, Rhode Island – now the headquarters for the American-French Genealogical Society – is located on a .35-acre parcel (Plat/Lot 13C-093-024) north of the city’s civic and commercial center. The buff-colored brick and stone church at the corner of Earle and Snow Streets is set within a residential neighborhood that consists mostly of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century single-family houses. The neighborhood is also home to the monumental High Victorian St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church (1862-1871, Patrick C. Keeley) and its Second Empire-style convent (c. 1865) and parish house (1881), which were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.<sup>1</sup>

The northeast-facing First Universalist Church is located at the southeast corner of its lot, with a large asphalt parking lot off the rear, southwest elevation. The church was constructed in two campaigns: a 2-story building with Gothic Revival influences designed by architect Gorham Henshaw in 1924 and a 1-story, addition of comparable height designed by architect Arland A. Dirlam in 1957 that extends from the northwest elevation. Both designs utilize buff-colored brick walls and limestone drip-molding and stringcourses. A central tower on the façade added as part of the 1957 addition unifies the two blocks. Although some original wood window sash has been replaced with vinyl, overall the church is a good example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century

---

<sup>1</sup> National Register of Historic Places. “Historic Resources of Woonsocket, Rhode Island: Partial Inventory, Historic and Architectural Resources.” Woonsocket, Providence County, Rhode Island.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

church building that exhibits elements of both the Gothic Revival and the Modern movement and retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

---

### **Narrative Description**

The former First Universalist Church (1924, 1957) is a masonry building with a raised, buff-colored brick foundation, buff-colored brick walls, and membrane and asphalt shingle roofs. The church consists of three blocks: an approximately 39' x 86' 2-story block with a flat roof and short parapet and an approximately 34' x 27' 2-story rear ell, both constructed in 1924; and an approximately 83' x 49' 1-story addition to the main block's northwest elevation, constructed in 1957. The northeast-facing façade comprises both the original 1924 main block and the new sanctuary space and central tower added in 1957. The main block and ell were part of a larger, more elaborate Gothic Revival design that was never fully executed.

The 1924 main block is located at the southeast corner of the lot. Walls are buff-colored brick, and fenestration is orderly and asymmetrically balanced. Ornament and trim are limestone, including stringcourses delineating the raised basement and the parapet. The principal entrance is located in the third bay of the three-bays-wide façade and is accessed via a single run of limestone steps with simple metal railings; double-leaf, glazed and paneled wood doors are recessed within a segmental-arch opening that is emphasized with limestone drip molding terminating in a cluster of pommels on each end. The arch sits beneath a crenellated and rusticated surround, ornamented on each end with a panel containing a pointed arch with rounded shoulders. Modern, Gothic-style metal sconces adhered to the limestone surround flank the doorway. A 4/4, double-hung, vinyl replacement sash window with heavy limestone trim and a shield keystone is centered directly above the principal entrance.

The façade of the 1924 main block is dominated by a 2-story central grouping of eight 6/6, double hung, vinyl replacement sash windows – arranged four above four – separated by spandrel panels of paired pointed arches with rounded shoulders that match the ornament on the door surround at the principal entrance. The stringcourse that defines the parapet extends into a drip molding for this grouping of windows. This grouping articulates the building's original church assembly space and choir loft on the interior. On the first story, there are three windows – one in the first bay and a pairing of two in the center bay: all three are composed of 6/6, double hung, vinyl replacement sash beneath 3-light, fixed, original wood sash transoms. Windows have limestone drip molding and sills. Three window openings filled with textured glass block – which replaced 3/3 double hung, wood sash sometime in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century – are located on the raised basement story, centered beneath the first-story windows. A c. 1934 drawing of the façade shows a slightly steeper, stepped parapet and double-hung wood sash windows on the basement level; the alterations that survive today may have been made c. 1957 at the time of the addition.

The southeast elevation, facing Snow Street, is six bays wide with fenestration mostly arranged in groups of two or three. The window groupings on the first story are arranged 3-2-3-2-3, with a

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

single window occupying the sixth bay. Each first-story window opening is filled with a 6/6, vinyl replacement sash beneath a 3-light, fixed, original wood sash transom. On the second story, the first and sixth bays are blank and the window groupings that occupy the four central bays are arranged 2-3-2-3. The second-story window openings, considerably taller than those on the first story, include 6-light, fixed, original wood sash transoms above infill panels and 6/6, double hung, vinyl replacement sash. Window trim is simple on the first story, with unornamented limestone lintels and sills, while the second story features limestone drip molding and rectangular sills. Like at the façade, textured glass block windows are centered beneath the first-story windows on the raised basement story. Above the second-floor windows on the southeast elevation, the length of the stringcourse is broken up by small, rectangular plaques embellished with shield reliefs. Lettering reading “AMERICAN-FRENCH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY” has been added between the stringcourse and the roofline. Additional lettering reading “FRANCO-AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER,” along with that organization’s seal, have been applied to the brick wall surface in the first bay on the second story.

The rear, southwest elevation of the 1924 main block consists of a buff-colored brick wall with a centered, buff-colored brick chimney. The limestone string course denoting the parapet extends onto the wall surface of the chimney. The original design of a taller and higher-pitched, gabled parapet is intact on this elevation. One 6/6, double hung, original wood sash window with a rectangular, unornamented limestone lintel and sill is located on either side of the chimney on the second story. A projection in the northwest bay on the first story has a hipped, slate roof with patinated copper flashing and a pair of window openings, each filled with 3-light, fixed, original wood sash transoms above two 6/6, double-hung, vinyl replacement sash. The limestone lintels and sills are unornamented. Like on the façade and the southeast elevation, textured glass block windows are centered beneath these windows on the raised basement elevation.

The 1924 rear ell, which historically housed classrooms and office space, is four bays wide, extending off the northwest elevation of the main block. The first three bays are set within a 2-story section, and the fourth bay is set within a 3-story section that contains a stair hall. In 2018, the secondary entrance on the ell was reconfigured and enclosed within a 1-story, projecting vestibule. The vestibule is accessed via a low-grade concrete ramp and consists of a concrete foundation, medium density overlay (MDO) plywood walls, and a flat, membrane roof. A centered, glazed, fiberglass door is flanked by 6/6, double-hung, fiberglass sash. Three rows of PVC lumber trim between the roofline and the tops of the windows form a cornice, and similar trim and rectangular, MDO panels are applied beneath the windows.

Above the vestibule on the second story of the fourth bay, a pair of two 4/4, double-hung, original wood sash beneath 2-light, fixed, original wood sash transoms denote the original alignment of the secondary entrance below. This window pair features a limestone drip molding and sill. Other windows on this elevation have straight, unornamented limestone lintels and sills. They include two 4/4, double hung, vinyl replacement sash in the third story of the fourth bay; three 6/6, double hung, original wood sash in the first three bays of the second story; and two

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

6/6, double-hung, vinyl replacement sash beneath 3-light, fixed, vinyl replacement sash transoms and a 3/3, vinyl replacement sash in the first three bays of the first story. The basement level is defined by a limestone stringcourse; the first bay now contains a metal air vent, and the second bay is filled with glass block.

The northwest elevation of the 1924 ell consists of a buff-colored brick wall and a buff-colored brick raised foundation. A rectangular, buff-colored brick fluted chimney with copper flashing and coping extends from the northeast corner of the ell's roof. The northeast elevation of the ell is now only 11' from the southwest wall of the 1957 addition, creating a narrow alleyway between the two blocks.

The 1957 addition is a 1-story, gable-roofed, rectangular, 6-bay wide block that extends from the northwest elevation of the 1924 block; the sixth bay, which houses the chancel, is slightly recessed from the remainder of the wall plane. A square, buff-colored brick tower with a low-pitched pyramidal roof, part of the 1957 campaign, is located at the juncture of the 1924 block and the 1957 addition; the tower contains wood louvers set within a slightly recessed brick section above a 4/6, double-hung, vinyl replacement sash window with a straight, unornamented limestone lintel and sill. The 1957 addition complements the original design by utilizing similar massing, buff-colored brick foundation and walls, limestone drip molding and sills, and roughly symmetrical fenestration. Window bays are separated by vertical, full-height, buff-colored brick buttresses with cast stone caps. The five bays on the northeast façade and the four bays on the southwest rear elevation of the 1957 block contain 9'7" x 3' stained-glass windows designed by S. Janowski and Associates, depicting Biblical scenes. Basement windows centered in each bay consist of 1/1 metal sash.

Much of the southwest elevation of the addition is obscured from view due to the proximity of the 1924 ell. A 2-bays-wide sacristy, located at the western corner of the southwest elevation with its gable-end facing southwest towards the parking lot, is the most visible section of the addition from this vantage point. The sacristy contains a single-leaf metal door, partially below grade, that is used as a secondary entrance into the basement and two 6/6, double-hung, original wood sash windows spaced symmetrically on the first story. A metal vent breaks the wall surface above the window in the second bay. The stained-glass windows on the southwest elevation, designed by S. Janowski and Associates, are only partially visible from the southwest, though all receive natural light from the alleyway between the building's blocks. The location of the sacristy precluded the addition of a fifth stained glass window on the southwest elevation; the corresponding fifth bay on the façade is hidden from view when within the nave due to the position of the organ loft.

Physical and visual access to the northwest elevation are difficult due to the close proximity to the lot line and neighboring property. The elevation consists of an unbroken, buff-colored brick wall that serves as the northwestern wall of the chancel.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

The interior of the building retains a high degree of integrity and reflects its two periods of construction. In the 1924 building, central hallways on each floor, running northeast-to-southwest, connect rooms in the main block and the ell and provide access to both the principal stair hall on the northeast façade and the secondary stair hall on the rear, southwest elevation of the ell. An elevator, installed in 2018 within former classroom space in the ell, provides additional access to the interior.

The second story of the 1924 main block is dominated by the original sanctuary space, which was designed as a multi-purpose assembly room with a stage. The room includes a richly paneled ceiling and corbels with shields in high relief. The altar, designed as a raised stage and located at the southwest end of the room, is framed with a curved and paneled surround. Wood floors are original. A choir loft is located at the northeast end of the room and is accessed via a corner stairway; the balcony rail is embellished with panels of pointed arches with rounded shoulders as well as plain, rectangular panels. A small office is located off the room's northwest wall.

The first story of the 1924 main block contains meeting and classroom space. A "Living and Junior Room" in the main block of the first story is the largest room, which presently contains industrial carpeting, plaster walls with a chair rail and picture rail, and modern fluorescent light fixtures. The room's principal feature is a wood fireplace surround with Gothic-style paneling and a mantel supported by octagonal pilasters, which occupies much of the room's southwest wall.

A door on the northeast wall of the Living and Junior Room provides access to a small vestibule with a coat room and a lavatory at its end. The vestibule is adjacent to the main children's classroom that contains asphalt tile flooring, wood wainscoting, and plaster ceilings with modern fluorescent light fixtures. The character-defining feature of the space is an original chalkboard, bulletin board, and closet set within a paneled wood casing. The remainder of the room is divided into three smaller classrooms with glazed and paneled accordion doors. Paneled wood doors provide access to the central hallway.

The first story of the 1924 ell contains a church office and a pastor's study as well as the ell's most handsome space, a Reception Room and Library. The Reception Room and Library contains original wood floors, plaster ceilings and walls with paneled wood wainscoting and a picture rail, and Craftsman-style, built-in bookcases with leaded glass doors. A fireplace with a bracketed mantel and pointed arch hearth opening is located on the room's northwest wall. The second story of the 1924 ell contains classroom spaces that retain their original finishes, including one (located in the northeast part of the ell) that includes a fireplace with a bracketed mantel and buff-colored brick walls and hearth.

The 1957 addition is accessed from the first story of the 1924 main block via a narthex off the central hallway, near the principal entrance. The narthex contains plaster walls with a chair rail



First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

and crown molding, and built-in metal radiators. A stained-glass window on the southwest wall depicts a waterfall and mountain scene in vibrant colors. Double-leaf, wood doors with inset stained-glass panels of crossed keys (left door) and crossed torches (right door) on abstract backgrounds provide access to the rear of the nave in the 1957 church addition.

The addition consists of a nave designed to seat 234 people and a chancel in its northwest end. The northeast and southwest interior walls of the nave are constructed of irregularly coursed ashlar and each contains four stained glass windows; the northwest and southeast walls are plaster, and the southeast wall includes a modern wood cross suspended from the wall. The ceiling is paneled wood with Douglas fir rafters and ties that extend onto the walls between window bays. Floors are now carpeted on the side and center aisles and the altar; under the pews, the original wood flooring remains. Two rows of hanging brass, Gothic-style lanterns illuminate the sanctuary. The nave includes pews measuring 13.5' long by 2'10' high with curved ends and Greek crosses in high relief.

The chancel is accessed via three stairs aligned with the central aisle, and the altar is set behind a monumental pointed arch that terminates in quoin molding. Oak pulpits are located on either side of the central aisle. A central oak retable with a five-panel oak canopy introduces modern-Gothic imagery with pointed arches at the bottom of each panel. An organ by the M. P. Möller Pipe Organ Company of Hagerstown, Maryland and oak pews are located on the northeast side of the chancel; organ bellows behind wood grilles are located on either side of the chancel, near the ceiling. A fifth stained glass window on the façade, not visible from within the nave, is located within the chancel and partly obscured by the organ loft.

Two paneled oak doors — with distinctive geometric lintels with an H-shaped molding above — flank the chancel on the northwest wall. The door to the right of the chancel provides access to the rear of the altar, near the choir space and the organ. The door to the left of the chancel opens into a stair hall that provides access to the basement and the parking lot at the basement level.

The nine stained glass windows measuring 9'7 tall x 3' wide (five on the façade and four on the rear, southwest elevation) were installed between 1958 and 1962.<sup>2</sup> Designed by S. Janowski and Associates, the windows depict traditional Biblical motifs that include the Good Shepherd, Mary presenting the Christ Child, Christ in Gethsemane, the Resurrection, the Magi, Christ with children, angels, and a portrait of a young man at the helm of a ship with the inscription "Faith, Hope, Love."

The basement level of the building is used as a research center and library by the building's owner, the American-French Genealogical Society. Because many finishes have been updated recently, the clear division that exists between the 1924 blocks and the 1957 addition on the upper floors is less visible here. However, many original finishes survive. The central hallway in

---

<sup>2</sup> "Survey of Stained Glass Windows: Woonsocket, First Universalist Church, 78 Earle Street." September 21, 1995. RIHPHC Survey Files.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

the 1924 block retains its plaster walls, wainscoting, kick molding, and glazed and paneled doors, though the floors are now tiled and drop ceilings have been installed. A handsome kitchen, located off the southwest wall of the 1924 main block and accessed via a Dutch door, retains its full-height cabinetry, wainscoting, dumbwaiter, soapstone sink, and some countertops, as well as 6/6 double-hung interior service windows that opened into the former dining hall. Now used as library space, the adjacent former dining hall presently includes industrial carpeting, plaster walls with wainscoting, and drop ceilings but retains its original glazed, double-leaf doors.

Two modern restrooms have been installed across from the kitchen. The basement of the 1957 addition serves as the American-French Genealogical Society's principal library space; it includes modern asphalt tile flooring, concrete walls, and painted plaster ceilings with fluorescent light fixtures.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
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.)

- A. Owned by a 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1924-1962

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

**Significant Dates**

1924

1957

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Henshaw, Gorham

Dirlam, Arland A.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The former First Universalist Church (1924, 1957) is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A for Religion. The building served as the cradle of Universalism in Woonsocket for over eighty years and represents the denomination's evolution in the city. The First Universalist Church is the only surviving building associated with the religion in Woonsocket, which was an important city in the New England regional network of Universalists. The building is also significant under Criterion C for Architecture as a good example of the work of two established architects, Gorham Henshaw and Arland A. Dirlam. Designed by Henshaw in 1924 and expanded by Dirlam in 1957, the building represents the changing aesthetics of 20<sup>th</sup> century ecclesiastical architecture and presents an interesting case study in the merger of the Gothic Revival and the Modern movement.

*Period of Significance Justification:*

The period of significance corresponds with the construction of the church in 1924, encompasses the completion of the 1957 addition, and ends with the installation of the final stained-glass windows in 1962.

*Criteria Consideration:*

Criteria Consideration A applies to the First Universalist Church property, which was originally owned by a religious organization and used for religious purposes. However, the property is no

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

longer owned or used for religious purposes. It derives its primary significance from its ability to illustrate the history of Universalism in Woonsocket; its associations with the “Father of Universalism,” Hosea Ballou; and its architectural significance.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The history of Universalism in Woonsocket, Rhode Island is rooted in the legacy of the Ballou family, notably Hosea Ballou (1771-1852) who has been called a “Father of Universalism” in the United States.<sup>3</sup> The Ballou family descended from patriarch Maturin Ballou (1627-1661), who emigrated from England c. 1645 and settled in Providence, Rhode Island.<sup>4</sup> Among Maturin’s children were two sons: John Ballou (c.1650-1714), who settled in present-day Lincoln, Rhode Island and James Ballou (c.1652-c.1741), who settled in Cumberland, Rhode Island.<sup>5</sup> Descendants of both John and James Ballou were influential to the spread of Universalism throughout New England in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as the development of the First Universalist Church congregation in Woonsocket.

The parallel familial lines of John and James Ballou produced numerous influential businessmen and religious leaders that shaped the development of northern Rhode Island. John Ballou fought and was wounded in King Philip’s War before settling near his brother in northern Rhode Island. His grandson Maturin Ballou (1722-1804) – called “Elder Ballou” – became a prominent Baptist minister for whom a meetinghouse and cemetery in Cumberland, Rhode Island were named. Several of Elder Ballou’s children, most notably Hosea Ballou (Figure 1), converted to Universalism and became prominent religious leaders. John’s brother James also contributed to the formation of modern Cumberland, Rhode Island with the purchase of hundreds of acres of land near the Massachusetts border. James’ descendants were prominent members of their communities: James’ great-grandson Oliver Ballou (1763-1843) and Oliver’s son Dexter Ballou (1789-1849) spurred the development of the textile industry in Cumberland and Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and James’ great-great-grandson Latimer Whipple Ballou (1812-1900; Figure 2) held a prominent role in the administration of the First Universalist Church for over forty years.

Though many members of the Ballou family were influential on the local level, Hosea Ballou had a national impact. Following his father’s relocation to rural Richmond, New Hampshire, Ballou was raised as a Baptist. In his early twenties, Ballou converted to Universalism under the influence of preacher Caleb Rich. Also raised as a Baptist, Rich lived in Sutton and Warwick, Massachusetts as a young man and began preaching after experiencing several religious visions.

---

<sup>3</sup> “Hosea Ballou – Son of Richmond [NH] – Father of Universalism.” <https://catholicism.org/hosea-ballou-universalism.html>. (Accessed November 6, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas William Bicknell. *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations – Biographical*. (New York, NY: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1920): 455.

<sup>5</sup> “The Ballou Family.” Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography. <http://uudb.org/articles/ballofamily.html>. (Accessed November 6, 2019).

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

While preaching in Richmond, New Hampshire, he established a mentoring relationship with Hosea Ballou. Rich promoted the ideas of a benevolent God and unconditional universal salvation that would become fundamentals of Universalist doctrine and stood in direct contrast to the hardline predestination of Calvinism popular prior to the Second Great Awakening.<sup>6</sup>

Hosea Ballou expanded upon the work of his mentor by publishing his sermons and religious theses, which allowed his own preaching to reach a wider audience. *A Treatise on Atonement* (1805), which espoused the concepts of religious reason and an eternally loving God; the serial *Universalist Magazine* (1819-1828); *An Examination of the Doctrine of Future Retribution* (1834); and others established Ballou as one of the visionaries of the still young Universalist Church in the United States. His *Universalist Magazine* also printed submissions from ministers and followers, creating a sense of community and opportunities for theological debate.<sup>7</sup> Ballou was often at the center of that debate, particularly as one of the leading figures in the “Restorationist controversy.” This pedagogical schism divided Universalist followers into two camps – the “Ultra Universalists” led by Ballou, who believed salvation after death was immediate and without condition, and the Restorationists, who believed in a purgatorial period of penance and meditation. Ballou represented the minority position, and by the 1830s the issue was considered settled in favor of the Restorationists, which included Ballou’s cousin Adin.<sup>8</sup>

Despite this controversy, Hosea Ballou remained well-respected and continued to preach throughout New England. He visited Woonsocket numerous times in the first half of the nineteenth century. He concurrently pursued non-religious business ventures, and in 1828 established a cotton mill at 15 Main Street in Woonsocket. The Hanora Mills, later known as the Ballou-Harris-Lippitt Mills (NR 1979), was established during the nascent period of Woonsocket’s reign as a textile manufacturing center. Ballou erected a water-powered brick mill before selling his interests to his cousin Dexter Ballou (1789-1849), who dramatically expanded the complex. Dexter Ballou would become one of the city’s most prominent textile manufacturers and developers.

Around the same time, a group of Universalists began meeting in locations throughout Woonsocket. A congregational history prepared by the First Universalist Church in 1986 states, “As early as 1828, some people who were interested in the Doctrine of Universal

---

<sup>6</sup> The “Second Great Awakening” refers to a period of widespread religious revivalism and Protestant evangelization in the United States from the 1790s-1840s, with its peak in the 1820s and 1830s. The proliferation of new Protestant denominations during this period led to a shift away from the rigidity and emphasis on sin and damnation proscribed by Calvinism in the eighteenth century. Although the formation of the Universalist denomination predates the Second Great Awakening, its spread through New England and its arrival in Woonsocket can be considered in the context of period’s emphasis on reason and the possibility of personal salvation.

<sup>7</sup> “Hosea Ballou.” Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography.  
<http://uudb.org/articles/balloufamily.html>. (Accessed November 6, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> “Restorationist Controversy.” Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography.  
<http://uudb.org/articles/restorationist.html/>. (Accessed November 6, 2019).

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

Salvation began to hold meetings in the Groton Mill..." Given that the Groton Mill was not constructed until 1831, it is possible that the group actually met at the Hanora Mills on Main Street, though this is not confirmed.<sup>9</sup> Regionally important Universalist ministers including Hosea Ballou, his cousin Adin Ballou, William Stevens Balch, and David Pickering visited Woonsocket to preach to the group.<sup>10</sup> The Ballou family's longstanding relationship with northern Rhode Island led to Woonsocket becoming part of a Universalist circuit in New England, alongside Boston, Providence, and other major cities.

John Burnham, Lewis B. Arnold, Aaron Rathbun, Melville Knapp, William J. Holder, Jervis Cooke and others among the group of worshippers formally organized as the Woonsocket Universalist Society of Young Men in 1834 and incorporated with the State of Rhode Island in October 1839. One year later, the group erected its first purpose-built church building at the corner of Main and Church Streets (demolished; Figure 3) in downtown Woonsocket. Hosea Ballou attended the service and preached the inaugural sermon.<sup>11</sup>

Reverend John Boyden (1809-1869), mentored and trained by Hosea Ballou, served as the church's first minister from 1840 until his death in 1869. Boyden witnessed Ballou preach in Massachusetts in the 1820s, and in 1829 boarded at Ballou's home in order to study religious doctrine and learn to preach. Boyden was ordained in Connecticut in 1830 and served as a pastor in Berlin, Connecticut and Dudley, Massachusetts before arriving at the First Universalist Church in Woonsocket, where he would spend the remainder of his life and career. Described as "the spiritual son of Hosea Ballou," Boyden's ministry was based on Ballou's concepts of earnestness and love as evangelizing forces. An abolitionist and advocate for public school reform and temperance, Boyden also ran for statewide office several times before being elected to the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1854.<sup>12</sup>

Members of the Ballou family were also directly involved with the First Universalist Church. Honorable Latimer Willis Ballou (1812-1900) served as the Superintendent of the First Universalist Church Sunday School for over fifty years, beginning in 1842.<sup>13</sup> Like Reverend Boyden, Ballou was active in the community and a prominent politician who represented Rhode Island in the United States House from 1877-1881. His service and contributions (Ballou

---

<sup>9</sup> J. D. Van Slyck. *Representatives of New England – Manufacturers. Illustrated by Portraits and Views on Steel in Two Volumes: Vol II.* (Boston, MA: Van Slyck and Company, 1879): 443.

<sup>10</sup> The First Universalist Church of Woonsocket. "A Brief History of the Church and a Description of the Manse." (Woonsocket, RI: Unpublished, 1986). [First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society]

<sup>11</sup> "Universalism in Woonsocket." *The Universalist Leader*. Vol CXLI. (1959): 228.

<sup>12</sup> Oscar F. Safford. *Hosea Ballou: A Marvelous Life Story*. (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1890): 201-204. and "John Boyden." *Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography*. <http://uudb.org/articles/johnboyden.html>. (Accessed November 6, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> The First Universalist Church of Woonsocket. "The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the dedication of our first Church building and the installation of our first minister, Rev. John Boyden, Jr." (Woonsocket, RI: Unpublished, c. 1990). [First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society]

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

donated \$6,000 to the church in 1901 alone, the equivalent of more than \$150,000 in 2019) were widely celebrated by his peers and students.<sup>14</sup>

The mantle of community engagement and dedication to education were shared by the church's second minister, Reverend Dr. Charles J. White, who served from 1871 to 1905. White expanded the congregation during his 34-year pastorate, and at the time of his retirement it counted approximately 500 members. He was politically active in educational causes, working as the first Superintendent of Public Schools in Woonsocket,<sup>15</sup> coordinating the procurement of a truant officer for the city, helping pass a law governing the enforcement of school attendance for children, and serving on the State Board of Education. Like his predecessors, he also championed temperance, which he called "the leading issue."<sup>16</sup>

White's pastorate (Figure 4) coincided with a period of demographic change in Woonsocket, as French-Canadian Catholic immigrants flocked to the city's textile mills.<sup>17</sup> White recounted, "I have seen the city grow and change in character and have seen the churches increase from the eight Protestant churches that were here when I came, while the one Catholic church I found here has increased until there are now six large, strong Catholic parishes." The First Universalist Church was the only Universalist Church in the city's history, enabling a steady churchgoing population.

The church celebrated its semi-centennial in 1890, and pastors from around the northeast participated in a celebration in Woonsocket on April 8 of that year. Reverend Henry Warren Rugg of the Second Universalist Church of the Mediator in Providence presented an address entitled, "Some Grounds of Confidence in the Growth and Permanence of the Universalist Church," a reminder of the relative youth of the denomination. Other topics included "Universalism in Literature" and a Universalist publishing house in Boston, reflecting the church's continued commitment to intellectual concerns.<sup>18</sup> The involvement of pastors from Valley Falls, Pawtucket, East Providence, and as far away as Brooklyn, New York illustrated the

---

<sup>14</sup> Rev. C.J. White, D. D., pastor. "Woonsocket Universalist Church Christmas Greeting, 1901." (Woonsocket, RI: Unpublished, 1901). [First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society]

<sup>15</sup> Laura Hoag. "Memories of 100 Years: The Woonsocket Universalist Church, 1843-1943." (Woonsocket, RI: Unpublished, 1943): 2). [First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society]

<sup>16</sup> "Long Pastorage: Rev. Charles J. White Talked About His Useful Career Here." *The Woonsocket Evening Call*. November 29, 1904.

<sup>17</sup> For additional information and statistics about French Canadian migration to Woonsocket, see National Register of Historic Places, "L'Union Saint Jean Baptiste d'Amerique," Woonsocket, Providence County, Rhode Island, #100002194. For additional information about the early history of the Catholic Church in Woonsocket, a clipping from the uncatalogued First Universalist Church Archival Collection entitled, "Catholic Church History: Rise, Progress, Wealth and Population, 1828 to 1897" was also referenced.

<sup>18</sup> The First Universalist Church of Woonsocket. "Semi-Centennial of the Dedication of the Universalist Church at Woonsocket, R.I., April 8, 1890." (Woonsocket, RI: Unpublished, 1890). [First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society]



First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

prominence of Woonsocket and the First Universalist Church in the broader Universalist community.

In 1899, the Woonsocket Masonic Building Association sought to purchase the First Universalist Church building on Main Street for its new headquarters.<sup>19</sup> The group's interest centered on the value and visibility of the land, which was centrally located in the city's commercial downtown. *The Providence Telegram* reported "it would not be surprising if a conference...should result in the transfer of the entire property to the association, the demolition of the present Universalist church...as well as a new Universalist church in some other locality in the city."<sup>20</sup> A committee that included former Reverend John Boyden, Latimer Ballou, and other church elders formed to consider the sale, which ultimately did not occur.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, church attendance by Universalists broke records across the state.<sup>21</sup> The financial stability of the First Universalist congregation allowed for increased charitable work and, in 1911, the construction of a pastor's house less than a mile away from the church at 103 Woodland Road, in the "most beautiful residential section of the city."<sup>22</sup> The 2-story, four bedroom house, which survives, was of simple design that drew on Colonial Revival and Craftsman sources. Rev. Dr. Samuel Gilbert Ayres, pastor from 1909-1919, raised his young family at the house.

A publication from the national Universalist Church entitled "What the Universalist Church is Doing, 1907 to 1909" detailed the church's priorities at this time. The publication began with a recounting of the original principles of Universalism adopted in 1803 and stated that "Temperance, Peace, Prison Reform, Social Service, S. S. Interests and the like" were of primary importance. The church, at a national level, also expanded missionary activities in Cuba and established a mission in Japan. In 1919, Rev. Dr. Ayres resigned from the First Universalist Church to travel to Japan as a missionary. The congregation furnished a "most substantial sum of money to accompany Dr. Ayres and family on their long journey," as well as contributing additional charitable donations to the mission in Japan. Rev. E. Dean Ellenwood succeeded him in 1919.

It was under the pastorate of Rev. Ellenwood that the construction of the present church was carried out. Although there had been consideration of selling the church and relocating in 1899, it was not until c. 1919 that this came to fruition. The congregation purchased a lot at the corner of Earle and Snow Streets north of downtown Woonsocket and commissioned architect Gorham Henshaw (1879-1963) to design a new building. Henshaw was born in Providence in 1879 and educated at the Rhode Island School of Design. He trained as a draftsman at well-known

---

<sup>19</sup> "Site Found in Woonsocket for a New Masonic Building: Purchase of Universalist Church Estate Proposed, Which Would Mean a New House of Worship." *The Providence Telegram*, April 19, 1899.

<sup>20</sup> "Site Found..."

<sup>21</sup> "Memories of 100 Years...", p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> "Universalism in Woonsocket."

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

Providence firms – including Hoppin & Ely (1900-1905); Stone, Carpenter & Willson (1905-1908); Angell & Swift (1909-1913); and Clarke, Howe & Homer (1913) – before opening his own practice in 1913. Before accepting the commission for the First Universalist Church, he designed the Elmwood Christian Church on Elmwood Avenue in Providence (1915), St. Paul’s Church Parish House on Park Place in Pawtucket (1915), and the Church of the Mediator on Rounds Avenue in Providence (1924).<sup>23</sup>

Henshaw’s original watercolor rendering (Figure 5) for the First Universalist Church depicts a much larger, more high style church than what was ultimately constructed. The block that was constructed (Figure 6) is depicted as it survives today; in the rendering, a four-bay cloister extends from its principal entrance to connect a larger, Gothic Revival block with a steeply pitched roof, a dominant stained-glass window grouping with Gothic tracery on the façade, and buttressed walls on the side elevations. Henshaw’s biographical entry in the 1956 AIA Member Directory describes this commission as a church and school. The use of ornament and scale in the rendering also indicate that the completed block was intended to be a school and multipurpose space rather than the primary sanctuary, which would have been housed in the unbuilt, gable-roofed section.

As constructed, the building references Henshaw’s commission for the St. Paul’s Church parish house (Figures 7 and 8) in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, which was profiled by *The National Builder* in 1920 (Figure 9).<sup>24</sup> The exterior utilizes a similar 2-story grouping of windows separated by spandrel panels as well as limestone belt courses, lintels and sills, and a Gothic-inspired door surround. Henshaw simplified these elements at the First Universalist Church, creating a more austere effect. The interiors of the two buildings were also strikingly similar. The second-floor auditorium of the First Universalist Church includes a stage with a curved surround (Figure 10) nearly identical to St. Paul’s parish hall, and a similar rear balcony, which is illuminated by the 2-story grouping of windows articulated on the façade. Exposed trusswork and paneled ceilings are important features in both spaces. Both rooms used chairs, rather than permanent pews, to allow the room to be converted to different uses. Period images of St. Paul’s parish hall show that the design similarities extended to secondary spaces, like paneled reception rooms and offices with fireplaces, and the kitchen. These commonalities, and the siting of the First Universalist Church building at the extreme southeast corner of the lot, indicate that congregation did plan to build a dedicated sanctuary space in the future.

The new building was dedicated on April 8, 1925, the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the congregation’s founding. The building allowed for continued expansion of the congregation, which had experienced steady growth since its inception; under Rev. Ellenwood, the congregation added “more persons, especially the younger ones of the parish...than during any previous pastorate.” Rev. Ellenwood led services in the “auditorium of the parish house” for over thirty years, and

---

<sup>23</sup> George S. Koyl, ed. *American Architects Directory*. (New York, NY: R. R. Bowker Company, 1956): 242.

<sup>24</sup> “A Parish House.” *The National Builder* 63. (1920): 21-23.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

during this time the “most ardent hope” of the congregation was to “[lead] the people in the building of a new edifice.” As the congregation grew internally, it also expanded its public charitable activities. Support of the Japanese mission and donations to local hospitals and community emergency funds were noted in parish records.<sup>25</sup>

The congregation celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 1943. A parish history prepared that year noted the long pastorates and multi-generational relationships with local families, especially the Ballou family, described as “an honored name in our Church.”<sup>26</sup> In 1950, Rev. John P. Christensen was appointed pastor and immediately began a fundraising campaign to construct the long-desired sanctuary space.

By 1950, over thirty years had passed since Gorham Henshaw’s original plans for a Gothic Revival sanctuary building. Henshaw was then 71 years old, and prevailing architectural tastes had shifted. Woonsocket’s textile industry had weakened, and the city addressed commercial challenges by constructing a “new downtown” with modern municipal buildings that were more accessible by automobile.<sup>27</sup> The flurry of construction and use of modern styles may have influenced the First Universalist Church to commission a more contemporary addition than Henshaw’s original plans.

The church commissioned architect Arland A. Dirlam (1905-1979) to design a modern addition to its 1924 building. Born in Somerville, Massachusetts, Dirlam graduated from Tufts University and Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design before opening his own architectural practice in Malden, Massachusetts in c. 1929.<sup>28</sup> He received an honorary doctorate from Tufts University in 1953 and relocated his practice to Boston in 1955.<sup>29</sup> Dirlam was an award-winning architect registered in thirteen states, though most of his recorded church commissions were in Massachusetts or Connecticut. Dirlam also designed the Colonial Revival style Park Place Congregational Church in Pawtucket, Rhode Island in 1935 and renovated the Mathewson Street Methodist Church in Providence in 1951.<sup>30</sup>

In 1956, *The Providence Journal* quoted Dirlam in an article on the trend towards more modern church design. Dirlam credited “the flight to the suburbs” with the shift, and the article’s author stated that “churchgoers [prefer] churches that are less expensive than traditional types and meet

---

<sup>25</sup> “Memories of 100 Years...”, pg. 5.

<sup>26</sup> “Memories of 100 Years...”, pg. 6.

<sup>27</sup> National Register of Historic Places, “L’Union Saint Jean Baptiste d’Amerique.”

<sup>28</sup> Historic New England, “Arland A. Dirlam architectural collection.”

<https://www.historicnewengland.org/explore/collections-access/capobject/?gusn=180993>. (Accessed November 6, 2019).

<sup>29</sup> Harvard University Graduate School of Design. “Architectural drawings of Arland A. Dirlam, 1929-1867 (inclusive).” <https://hollis.harvard.edu>.

<sup>30</sup> National Register of Historic Places. “Trinity Square Historic District.” Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island. #80000011.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

cultural, recreational, and religious needs.”<sup>31</sup> Dirlam’s design for the First Universalist Church addition reflected these principles.

Dirlam’s watercolor rendering for the addition (Figure 11) portrays a buff-colored brick, horizontally massed addition off the northwest elevation of the existing building. Though modern, the addition references more traditional ecclesiastical architecture through the use of prominent stained-glass windows and streamlined buttressing between each window bay. It borrows from Henshaw’s original design, utilizing similar buff-colored brick and limestone drip molding. In the rendering, Dirlam also relocated the principal entrance, creating a buff-colored brick tower with a centralized column of stained glass and a three-bay-wide entry. As proposed, the tower introduced a vertical element to unite the two blocks of the building.

Ultimately, the addition was constructed according to Dirlam’s rendering, with one major exception. The tower was designed at a slight setback, in line with the wall plane of the addition, in order to preserve the façade and principal entrance of the original church block. As constructed, the tower is somewhat squatter than the rendering and utilizes a wooden louvered panel in place of the proposed stained glass. The tower unites the two blocks while positioning the 1957 addition deferentially to the original block. The tower originally included a modern, conical steeple, which does not survive (Figure 12). Additionally, the parapet of the 1924 block was pared down, with limestone trim and a central cross removed, and double-hung, wood sash basement level windows were replaced with glass block, likely at the time of renovations. The overall design is similar to, though slightly more traditional than, Dirlam’s 1952 commission for the University Lutheran Church of Cambridge in Massachusetts.<sup>32</sup>

The completion of the long-awaited addition in the church’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary year was widely celebrated (Figure 13). Rev. Philip R. Giles, the General Superintendent of the national Universalist Church, led the formal dedication services on March 24, 1957. The event program noted the addition as a crowning achievement of the parish, stating “...the climax is upon us with the Consecration and Dedication of a new Church with the Rev. Mr. Christensen as our Minister.”<sup>33</sup>

Between 1958 and 1962, the congregation added nine stained glass windows to the nave (five on the northeast façade and four on the southwest elevation, Figure 14). The windows were dedicated in memory of parishioners and portray Christian scenes like the Good Shepherd, Mary presenting the Christ Child, Christ in Gethsemane, the Resurrection, the Magi, Christ with

<sup>31</sup> “Architects Weigh Modern Trends.” *The Providence Journal*, March 17, 1956: 10.

<sup>32</sup> University Lutheran Church. “About Our Building.” <https://www.unilu.org/about/sharing-our-space/>. (Accessed November 6, 2019). Dirlam received the Boston Society of Architects’ 1952 Harleston Parker Medal, which recognized “the single most beautiful building or other structure” built in the previous ten years, for this commission.

<sup>33</sup> The First Universalist Church of Woonsocket. “Dedication Services Program, The First Universalist Church, Woonsocket, Rhode Island, March 24-31, 1957.” (Woonsocket, RI: Unpublished, 1957) [First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society]

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

children, and angels. Two windows differ from this scheme: one depicts a young man at the helm of a ship, and one depicts a waterfall.<sup>34</sup> The Rhode Island Stained Glass Survey credits the windows to S. Janowski & Associates, of which very little is known. Further research could uncover more information about this firm and its works (Figure 15).

The addition to the First Universalist Church achieved a longstanding goal for the congregation. In the years following, the church remained an important presence in Woonsocket. By the 1980s, however, the congregation faced challenges of aging parishioners and declining church membership. In 1986, over 65% of the congregation was over the age of 60 and only three children attended Sunday School regularly. Despite this, the congregation remained financially solvent and noted that the church building was “in excellent condition...[and] the sanctuary is attractive...with stained glass windows depicting Biblical scenes and one of the finest organs in the state of Rhode Island.”<sup>35</sup> The congregation described itself as “old-time Universalists” who were “middle-of-the-road in their religious beliefs.”<sup>36</sup> Even as the composition of the congregation changed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the church building was considered “a fitting tribute...revealing the truth of the words of Adin Ballou, ‘the present is the parent of the past and the child of the future.’”<sup>37</sup>

The congregation eventually disbanded in 2007 and the property was purchased by the American-French Genealogical Society (AFGS), a non-profit based in Woonsocket that provides historical and genealogical research assistance and maintains special collections on the topic of the French-Canadian diaspora. In an agreement with the congregation, the AFGS assumed control of the First Universalist Church archival collection. Since 2015, the original church space on the second floor of the 1924 block has also been home to the Veterans Memorial Museum, which displays a collection of military-related artifacts, many of which have special connections to Woonsocket residents.

---

<sup>34</sup> “Survey of Stained Glass Windows...”

<sup>35</sup> The First Universalist Church of Woonsocket. “Greetings from the Ministerial Search Committee.” Spring 1986. [First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society]

<sup>36</sup> “Greetings from...”

<sup>37</sup> “Greetings from...”

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

### Books and Journals

- Ballou, Adin, ed. *An Elaborate History and Genealogy of the Ballous in America*. Providence, RI: E. L. Freeman & Son, State Printers, 1888.
- Bicknell, Thomas William. *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations – Biographical*. New York, NY: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1920.
- Koyl, George S., ed. *American Architects Directory*. New York, NY: R. R. Bowker Company, 1956.
- Safford, Oscar F. *Hosea Ballou: A Marvelous Life Story*. Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1890.
- Stanton, Phoebe B. *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968.
- van Slyck, J. D. *Representatives of New England – Manufacturers. Illustrated by Portraits and Views of Steel in Two Volumes: Volume II*. Boston, MA: Van Slyck and Company, 1879.
- Whittemore, Thomas. *Life of Rev. Hosea Ballou with Accounts of His Writings and Biographical Sketches of His Seniors and Contemporaries in the Universalist Ministry*. Boston, MA: James M. Usher, 1854.
- The National Builder* 63. (1920).

### Articles (arranged chronologically)

- “Site Found in Woonsocket for New Masonic Building: Purchase of Universalist Church Estate Proposed, Which Would Mean a New House of Worship.” *The Providence Telegram*. April 19, 1899.
- “Long Pastorage: Rev. Charles J. White Talked About His Useful Career Here.” *The Woonsocket Evening Call*. November 29, 1904.
- “Architects Weigh Modern Trends.” *The Providence Journal*, March 17, 1956: 10.
- “Universalism in Woonsocket.” *The Universalist Leader*. Vol. CXLI (1959).

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

National Register of Historic Places nominations

“Historic Resources of Woonsocket, Rhode Island: Partial Inventory, Historic and Architectural Resources.” Woonsocket, Providence County, Rhode Island.

National Register of Historic Places nominations, continued

“L’Union Saint Jean Baptiste d’Amerique,” Woonsocket, Providence County, Rhode Island, #100002194.

“Trinity Square Historic District.” Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island. #80000011.

Selected online resources

Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography. <http://uudb.org/>.

Historic New England, “Arland A. Dirlam architectural collection.”  
<https://www.historicnewengland.org>

Harvard University Graduate School of Design. “Architectural drawings of Arland A. Dirlam, 1929-1867 (inclusive).” <https://hollis.harvard.edu>.

Unpublished resources

First Universalist Church Archival Collection, passim.  
*The unprocessed collection is held by the American-French Genealogical Society at 78 Earle Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island.*

“Survey of Stained Glass Windows: Woonsocket, First Universalist Church, 78 Earle Street.”  
September 21, 1995. RIHPHC Survey Files.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property \_\_\_\_\_

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State \_\_\_\_\_

---

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property:** 0.356 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Latitude: 42.007406 Longitude: -71.512249

Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_



First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property \_\_\_\_\_

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**  
**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927      or       NAD 1983

1. Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ Easting: \_\_\_\_\_ Northing: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ Easting: \_\_\_\_\_ Northing: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ Easting: \_\_\_\_\_ Northing: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ Easting: \_\_\_\_\_ Northing: \_\_\_\_\_

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the former First Universalist Church property, now owned and operated by the American-French Genealogical Society, encompasses 0.356 acres that conform to Plat/Lot 13C-093-024 in the City of Woonsocket.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries represent the historic boundaries associated with the First Universalist Church property beginning in 1924 and include all buildings and land associated with the property.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

---

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Elizabeth Warburton Rochefort, Principal Architectural Historian  
organization: Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
street & number: 150 Benefit Street  
city or town: Providence state: Rhode Island zip code: 02903  
e-mail: elizabeth.rochefort@preservation.ri.gov  
telephone: 401-222-4132  
date: February 5, 2020

---

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property:	First Universalist Church
City or Vicinity:	Woonsocket
County:	Providence County
State:	Rhode Island
Photographer:	Elizabeth W. Rochefort or Jeffrey D. Emidy or Roger Beaudry
Date Photographed:	June 28, 2019 (EWR), December 29, 2019 (JDE), February 5, 2020 (RB)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo #1	RI_Providence Co._Woonsocket_First Universalist Church_0001. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), three-quarter view of the northeast
----------	--

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

- façade (1924 block on the left in the foreground, 1957 addition to the right) and southeast elevation. Photographer facing northwest. (EWR)
- Photo #2 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0002. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), southeast elevation. Photographer facing northwest. (EWR)
- Photo #3 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0003. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), three-quarter view of southwest and southeast elevations. Photographer facing north. (EWR)
- Photo #4 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0004. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), southwest elevation of both 1924 block and 1957 addition. Photographer facing east. (EWR)
- Photo #5 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0005. First Universalists Church (1924, 1957), north wall of 1957 addition. Photograph facing north. (JDE)
- Photo #6 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0006. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), three-quarter view of northeast façade (1957 addition in the foreground, 1924 block in the background). Photographer facing south. (JDE)
- Photo #7 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0007. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), interior of 1924 parish hall auditorium. Photographer facing southwest. (EWR)
- Photo #8 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0008. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), interior of the 1924 parish hall auditorium. Photographer facing northeast. (EWR)
- Photo #9 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0009. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), interior of the 1924 parish hall. Photographer facing north. (EWR)
- Photo #10 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0010. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), interior of principal meeting room in 1924 block. Photographer facing southwest. (EWR)
- Photo #11 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0011. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), interior of principal meeting room in 1924 block; fireplace detail. Photographer facing southwest. (EWR)

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

- Photo #12 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0012. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), interior of principal meeting room in 1924 block; original doors detail. Photographer facing northwest. (EWR)
- Photo #13 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0013. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), interior of pastor's office. Photographer facing northwest. (EWR)
- Photo #14 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0014. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), interior of pastor's office; built in bookcase detail. Photographer facing southwest. (EWR)
- Photo #15 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0015. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), representative example of main stairhall in 1924 block. Photographer facing west. (EWR)
- Photo #16 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0016. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), interior hallway for parish offices, 1924 block. Photographer facing northwest. (EWR)
- Photo #17 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0017. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal interior hallway, 1924 block. Photographer facing northeast. (EWR)
- Photo #18 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0018. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal entrance, 1924 block. Photographer facing southwest. (JDE)
- Photo #19 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0019. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal entrance interior doors, 1924 block. Photographer facing southwest. (EWR)
- Photo #20 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0020. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal entrance interior doors hardware, 1924 block. Photographer facing southwest. (EWR)
- Photo #21 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0021. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal entrance interior doors and tower stair detail, 1924 block and 1957 tower. Photographer facing northeast. (EWR)
- Photo #22 RI\_Providence Co.\_ Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0022. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), basement kitchen, 1924 block. Photographer facing south. (EWR)

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

- Photo #23 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0023. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), basement kitchen, 1924 block. Photographer facing southwest. (EWR)
- Photo #24 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0024. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), basement kitchen, soapstone countertop detail. Photographer facing southwest. (EWR)
- Photo #25 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0025. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), basement kitchen, dumbwaiter detail. Photographer facing northeast. (EWR)
- Photo #26 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0026. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), representative example of basement hallway. Photographer facing northeast. (EWR)
- Photo #27 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0027. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), original wood doors in basement research library. Photographer facing northwest. (EWR)
- Photo #28 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0028. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), basement library. Photographer facing west. (EWR)
- Photo #29 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0029. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal sanctuary space in 1957 addition. Photographer facing northwest. (EWR)
- Photo #30 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0030. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal sanctuary space in 1957 addition; detail. Photographer facing northwest. (EWR)
- Photo #31 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0031. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal sanctuary space in 1957 addition, rear. Photographer facing southeast. (EWR)
- Photo #32 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0032. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal sanctuary space in 1957 addition, stained glass on northeast wall. Photographer facing southeast. (RB)
- Photo #33 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0033. First Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal sanctuary space in 1957

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

addition, stained glass on southwest wall. Photographer facing southwest.  
(EWR)

Photo #34 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0034. First  
Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal sanctuary space in 1957  
addition, interior door detail. Photographer facing northwest. (EWR)

Photo #35 RI\_Providence Co.\_Woonsocket\_First Universalist Church\_0035. First  
Universalist Church (1924, 1957), principal sanctuary space in 1957  
addition, original light fixtures detail. Photographer facing north. (EWR)

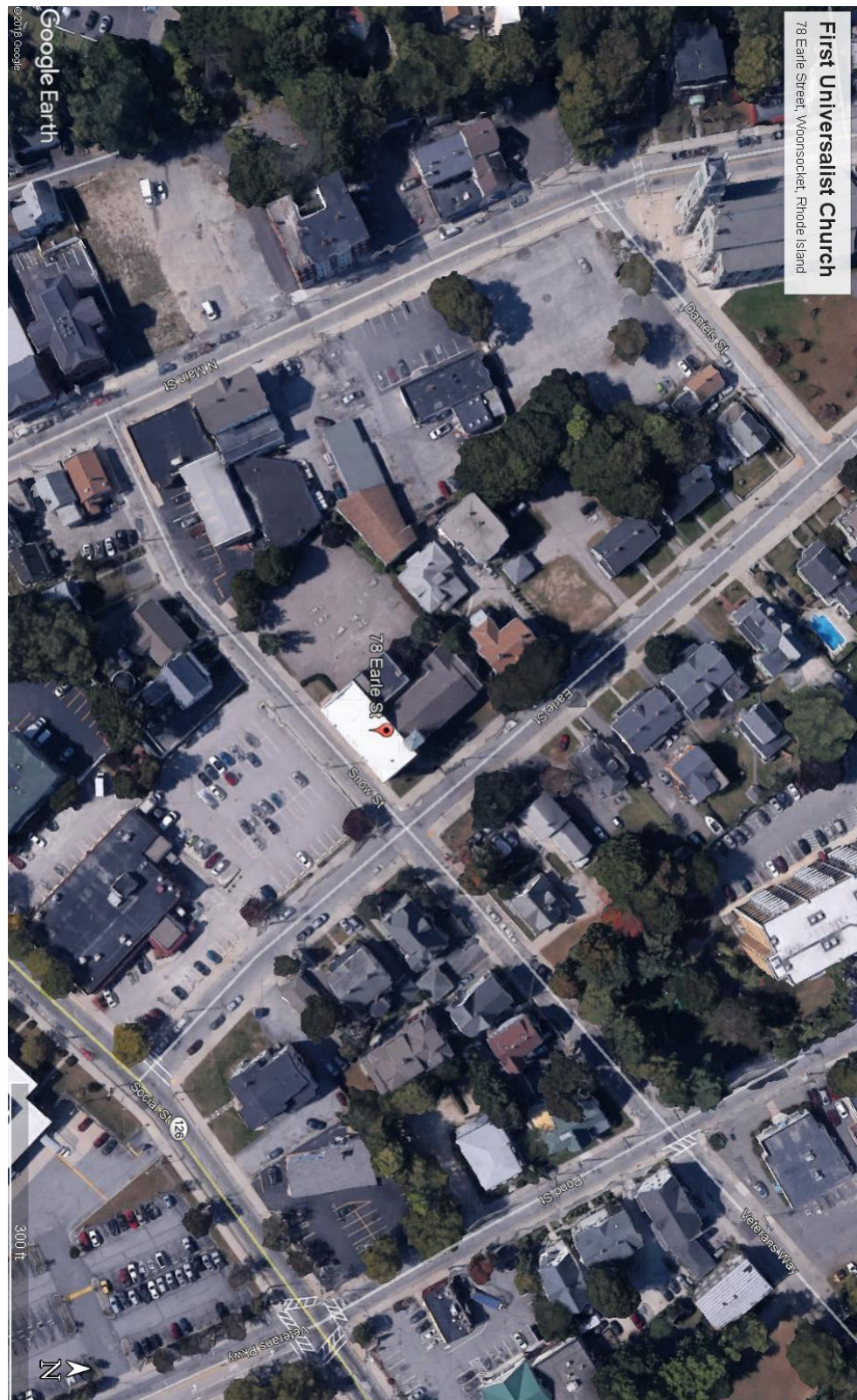
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

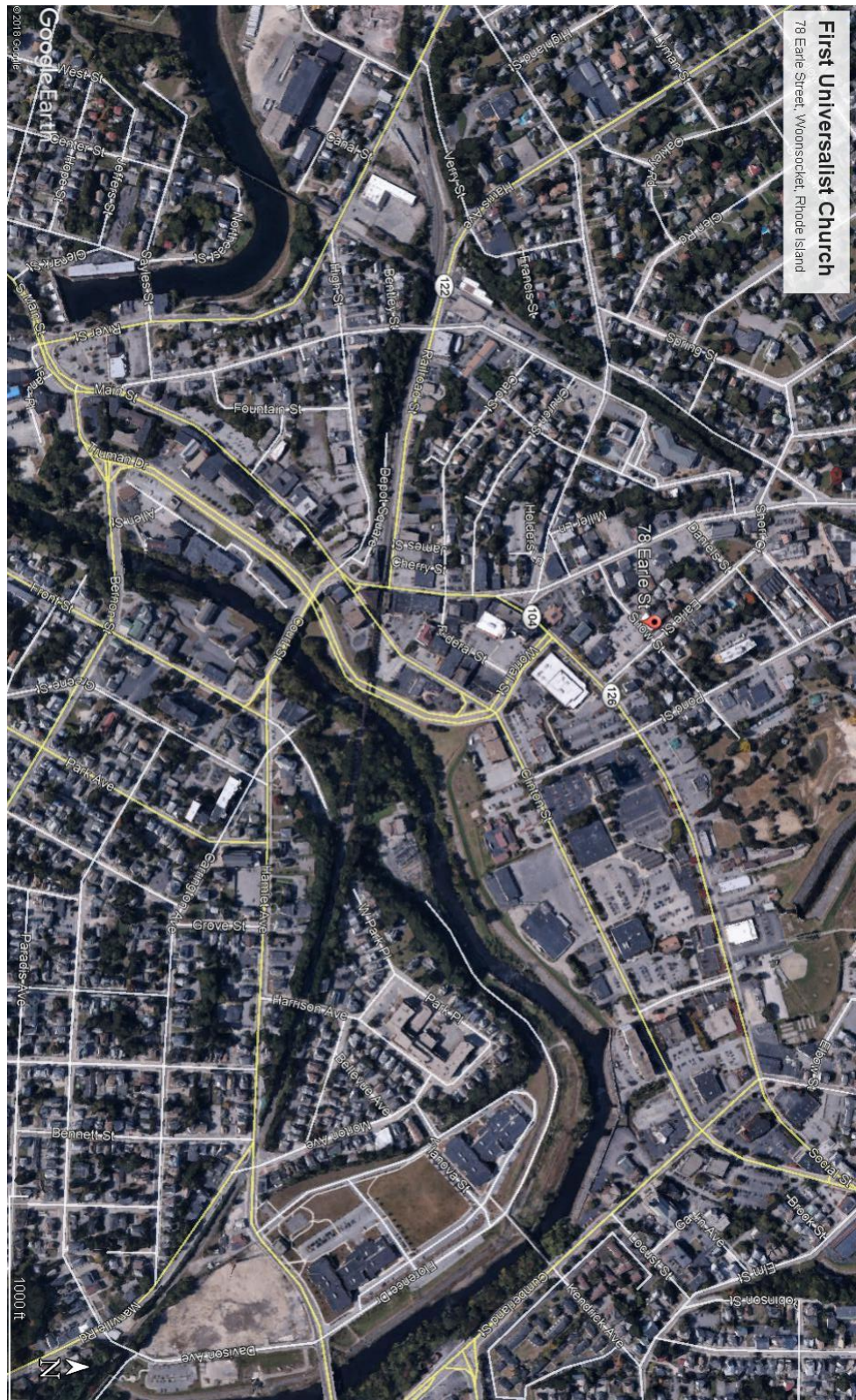
First Universalist Church, 78 Earle Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island  
Latitude: 42.007406 Longitude: -71.512249



First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

First Universalist Church, 78 Earle Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island  
Latitude: 42.007406 Longitude: -71.512249

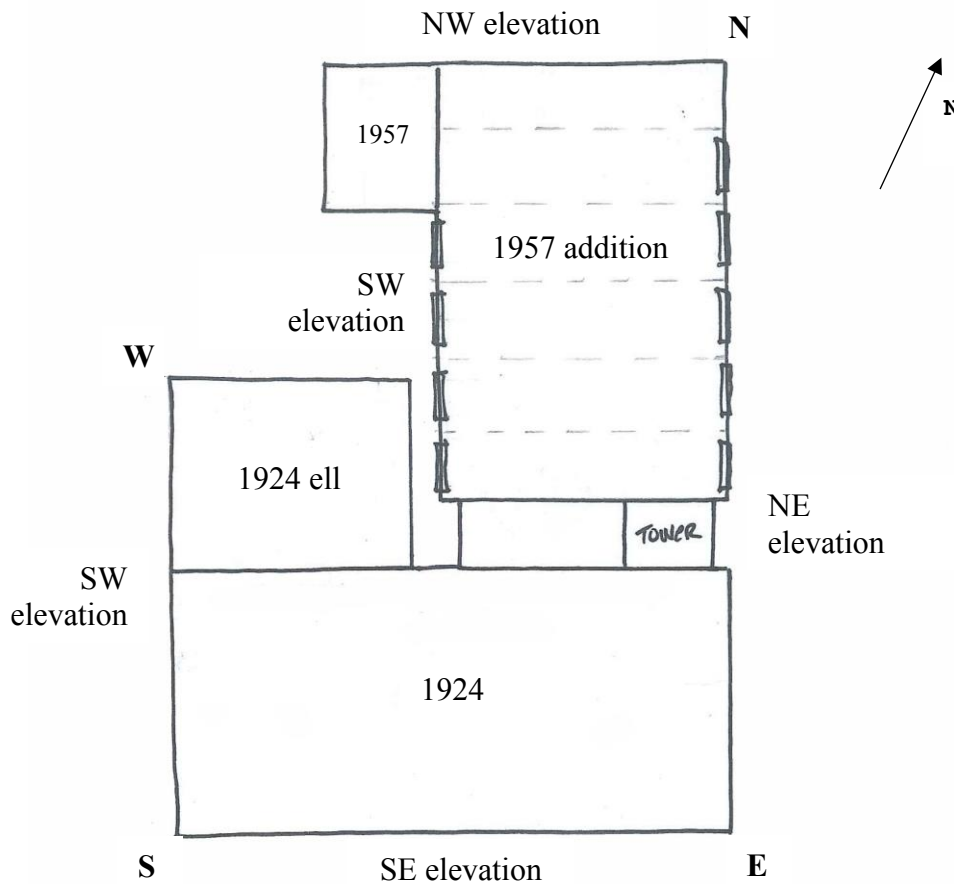




First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

First Universalist Church, 78 Earle Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island  
Sketch Plan – NOT TO SCALE



First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

### Additional Documentation

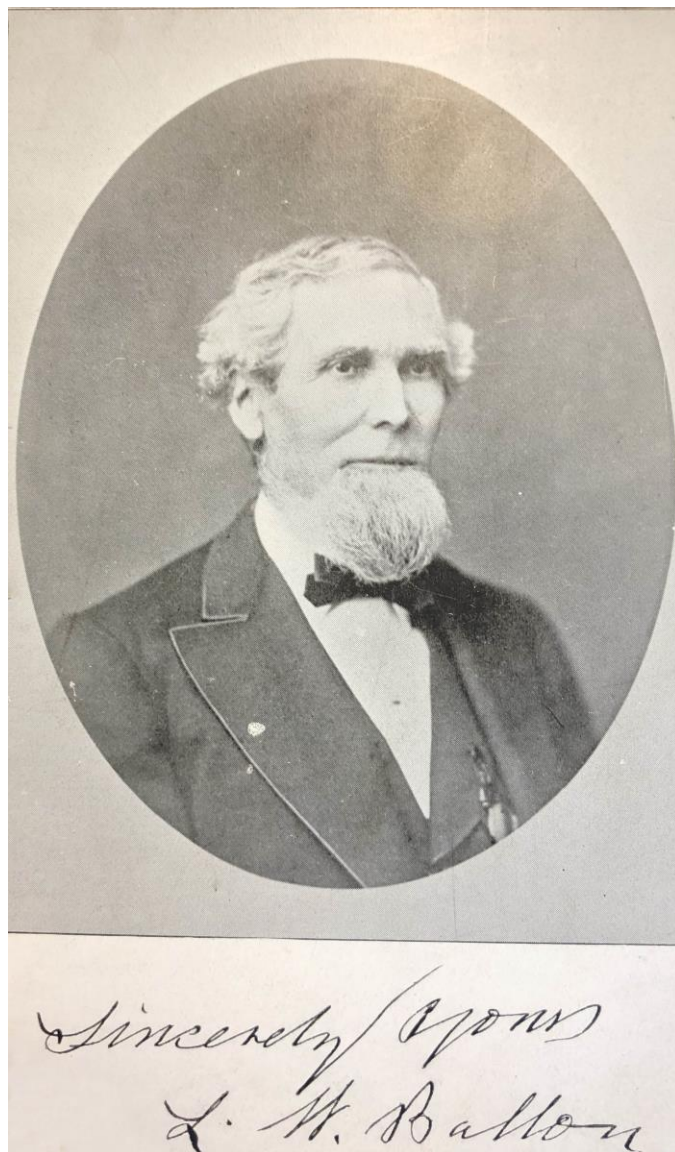


Figure 1 (left)

Portrait of Hosea Ballou.

Thomas Whittemore. *Life of Rev. Hosea Ballou with Accounts of His Writings and Biographical Sketches of His Seniors and Contemporaries in the Universalist Ministry.* (Boston, MA: James M. Usher, 1854).

Figure 2 (right)

Portrait of Latimer Whipple Ballou.

First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State



Figure 3 Original First Universalist Church building (1840) at the corner of Church Street and Main Street in Woonsocket, RI (demolished).  
First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

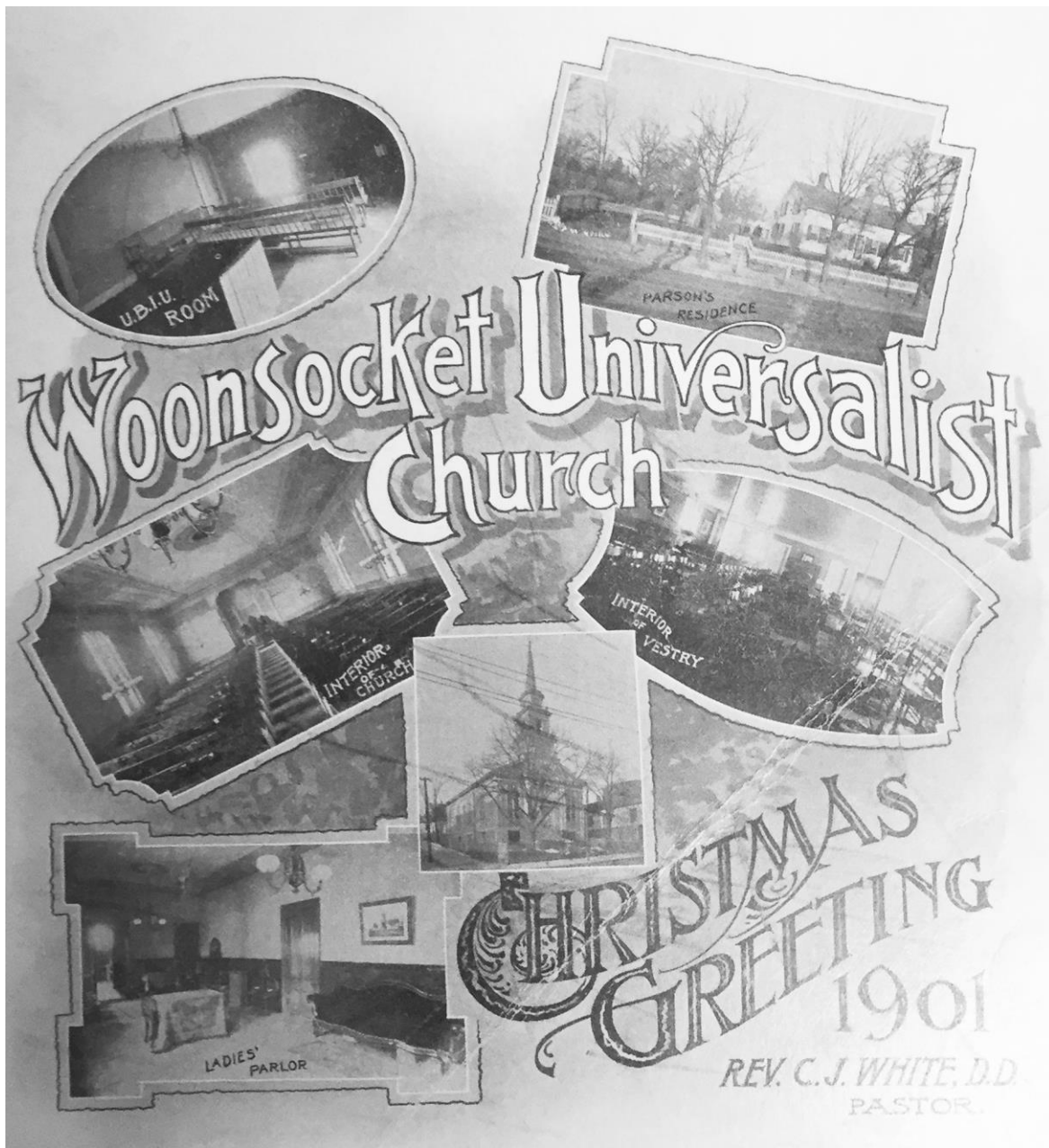


Figure 4 Christmas Greeting, 1901. Woonsocket Universalist Church.  
First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

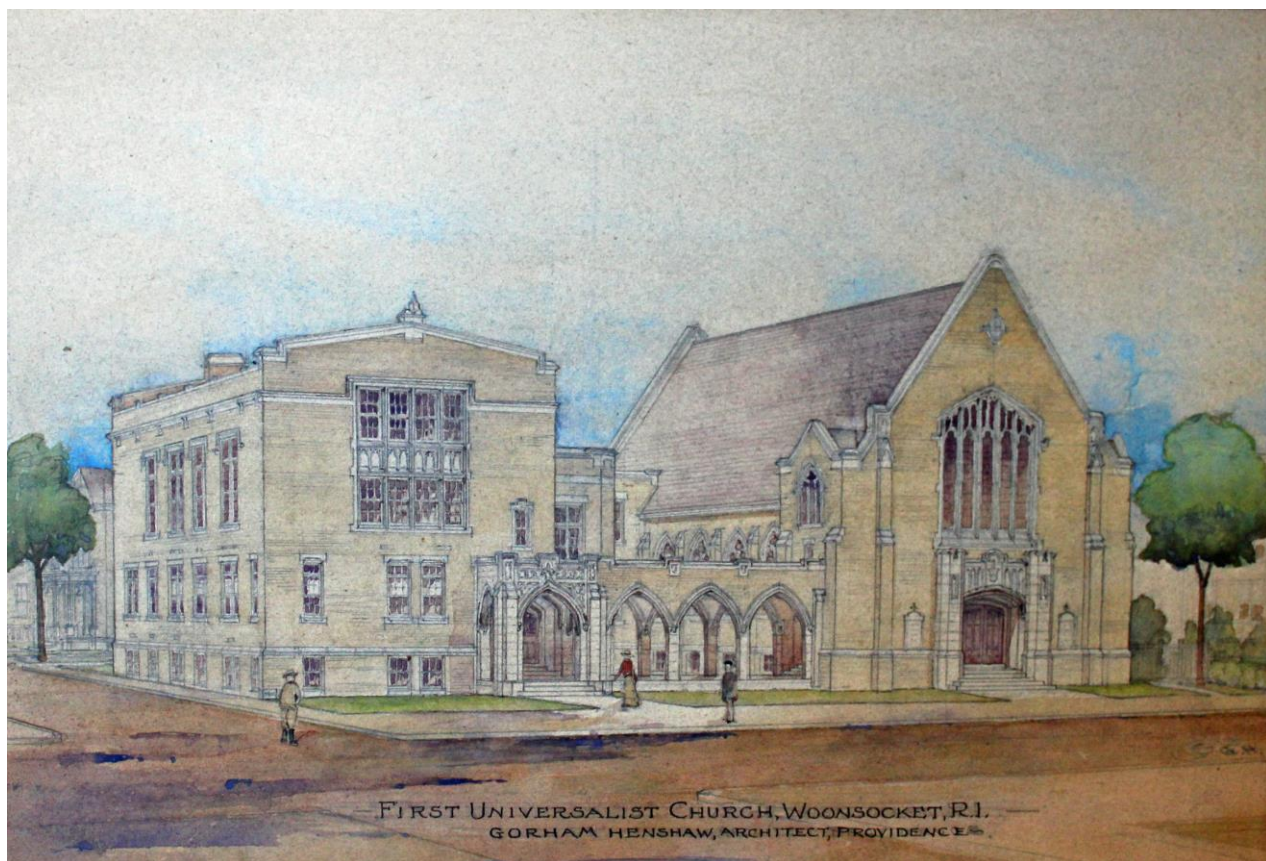


Figure 5 Gorham Henshaw watercolor rendering for First Universalist Church, c. 1924. First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

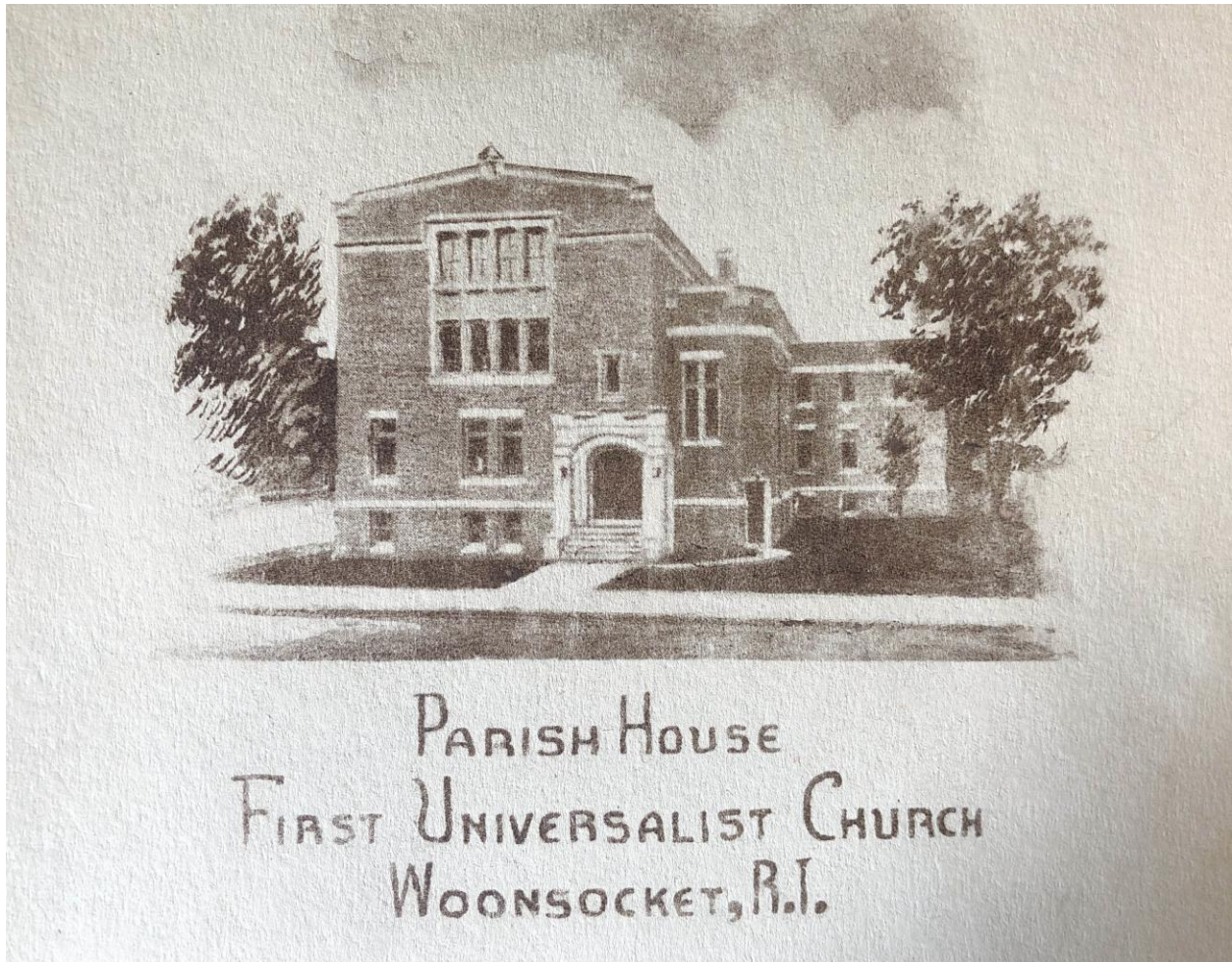


Figure 6 Charcoal drawing of First Universalist Church, 1948.  
First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State



Figures 7 and 8

Interiors of parish hall at St. Paul's Church in Pawtucket, RI, designed by Gorham Henshaw, which appears to have influenced the design for the First Universalist Church in 1924. Glass plate negatives in the First Universalist Church archival collection were published in *The National Builder* in 1920. Compare to Photo #7 in this nomination. First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

## A Parish House

A PARISH HOUSE for St. Paul's church at Pawtucket, Rhode Island, is here illustrated and described. The architect, Gorham Henshaw has designed a number of buildings of this character.

The parish house was built at the end of an existing church building, and it was of course necessary to arrange for good circulation or communication between the two buildings, while at the same time preserving certain features of lighting and

atings. The pitched roof is covered with slate, while the flat portion is of felt and gravel.

The church and the parish house are connected by a two story wing. The entrance leads through a vestibule into a small hall which contains the stair to the second story. At the right of the hall is the reception room which has a high, paneled wainscot, and contains a mantel flanked with built-in seats. Bookcases are

The guild room contains three large closets which are useful for storing sewing machines and other supplies used by the women's guilds.

Facing the entrance doors are doors which open into a passage which leads to the rear hall. The entrance to the guild room is from the passage. The passage is lighted from the coat room by means of a glazed partition.

The coat room overlooks a light well

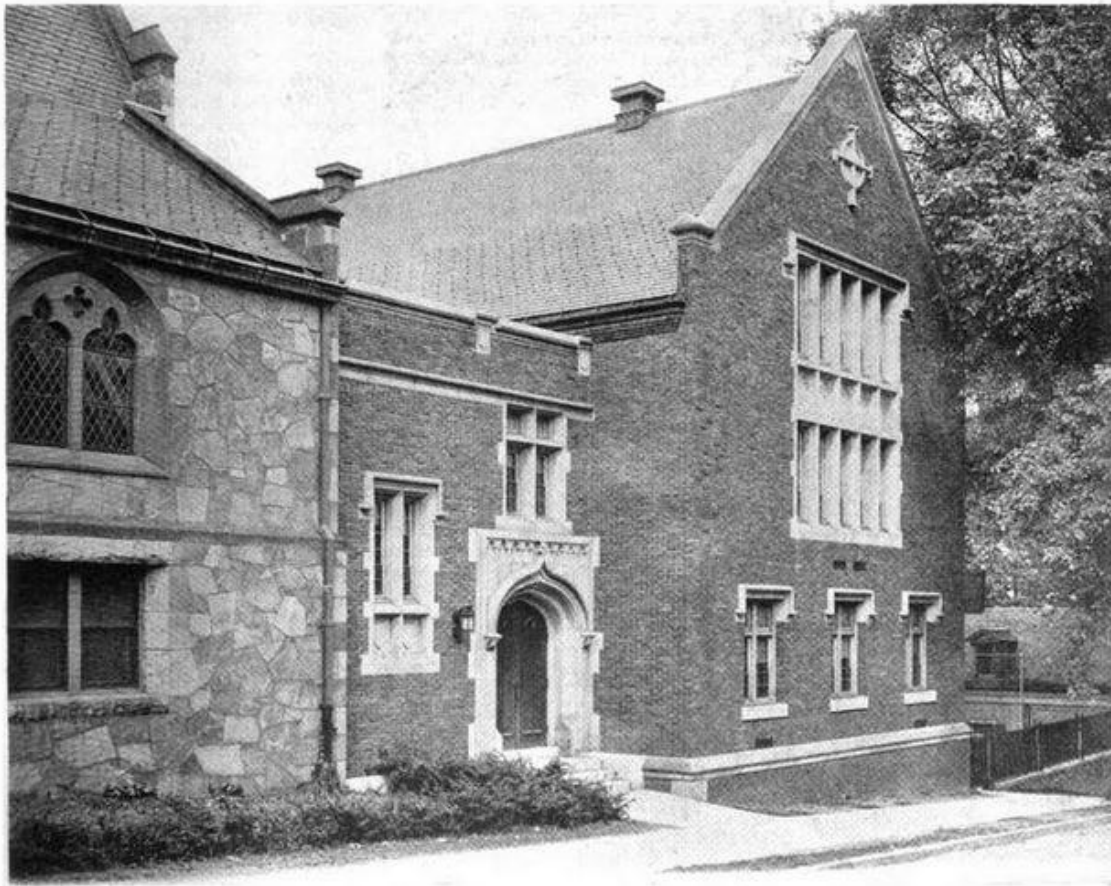


Fig. 1—Exterior of St. Paul's Parish House, Pawtucket, R. I. Gorham Henshaw, architect

Figure 9

Image of parish hall at St. Paul's Church in Pawtucket, RI, designed by Gorham Henshaw, which appears to have influenced the design for the First Universalist Church in 1924. Image from article in *The National Builder*. *The National Builder* 63. (1920).



First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State



Figure 10 Interior of parish hall at First Universalist Church, Woonsocket, designed by Gorham Henshaw. First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State



Figure 11 Arland A. Dirlam rendering for First Universalist Church addition, c. 1957. First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State



Figure 12 Photograph of the First Universalist Church following the completion of the 1957 addition. Undated, c. 1957.  
First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State

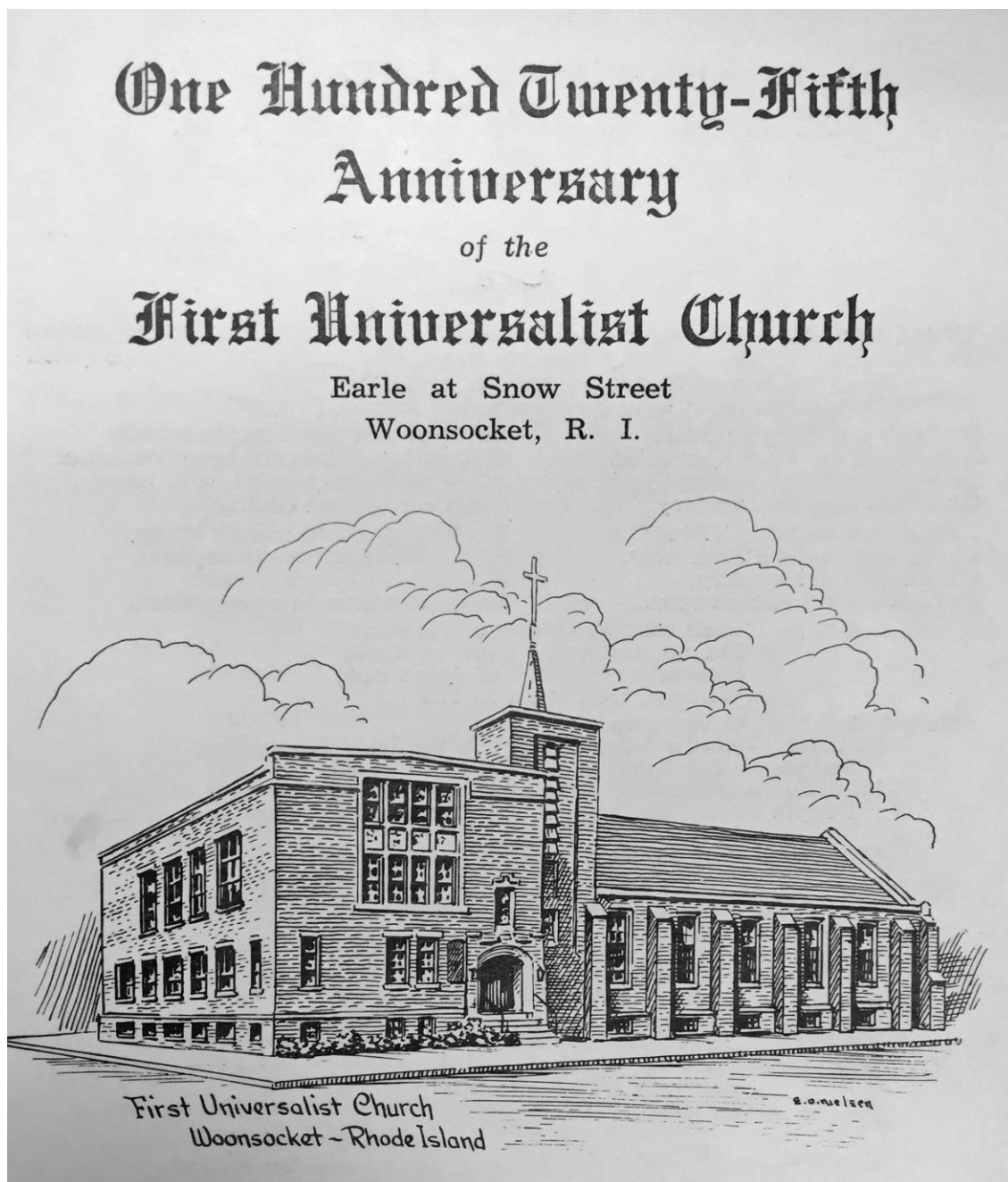


Figure 13 Drawing of the First Universalist Church for the One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Anniversary celebrations c. 1968. First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State



Figure 14 Interior of First Universalist Church sanctuary space in 1957 addition.  
First Universalist Church Archival Collection, Uncatalogued, American-French Genealogical Society.

First Universalist Church/  
American-French Genealogical Society  
Name of Property

Providence County,  
Rhode Island  
County and State



Figure 15 Installation of memorial stained glass window in the addition, 1958.  
*The Woonsocket Call*, 1958.