

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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## 1. Name of Property

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historic name: St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

other name/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 2. Location

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street & number: 5 Chapel Road

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Barrington vicinity: N/A

state: RI county: Bristol code: 001 zip code: 02806

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## 3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>2</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Property name St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria.

     See continuation sheet.

Frederick C. Williamson  
Signature of certifying official

27 June 1991  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria.  
     See continuation sheet.

      
Signature of commenting or other official

      
Date

      
State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register       
     See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register       
     See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

     Signature of Keeper      Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic: RELIGION

Sub: religious structure

Current: RELIGION

Sub: religious structure

Property name St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification:

Queen Anne  
Gothic

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation BRICK roof asphalt  
walls shingle other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

X See continuation sheet.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1891

Significant Dates: 1891

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Walker, William R., & Son

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

X See continuation sheet.

Property name St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet.

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>19</u>	<u>305120</u>	<u>4623670</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:  See continuation sheet.

The nominated property is coextensive with lots 63 and 64 in Town of Barrington Assessor's Plat 2.

Boundary Justification:  See continuation sheet.

The boundary encompasses the church, parish hall, and connecting wing and their immediate surroundings.

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/Title: Robert Owen Jones, Senior Historic Preservation Specialist

Organization: R. I. Historical Preservation Commission Date: March 1991

Street & Number: 150 Benefit Street Telephone: 401-277-2678

City or Town: Providence State: RI ZIP: 02903

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Description

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church is the focus of a parish complex consisting of three contiguous wood-frame, shingled structures occupying the southwest corner of Second Street and Chapel Road in a suburban residential neighborhood which originated as a summer resort community in the late nineteenth century. The buildings are set back from the street and form a "U" framing a paved parking area. The church, built in 1891, stands near the street corner. To the west is a parish hall constructed in 1893. These structures are linked by a long office and classroom wing, built in the 1960s, which runs across the south ends of the church and parish hall.

The church is an idiosyncratic amalgamation of elements derived from medieval English parish church design and Queen Anne stylistic influences. Set on a brick foundation, it comprises a tall one-story, end-gabled nave block fronted by a hip-roofed polygonal apse flanked by an extremely thin, three-story, cylindrical corner tower topped with a tall conical roof. Though apse-fronted churches are typically constructed to allow for the traditional placement of the altar on the east, this building is rather anomalously sited with the apse at the north end. An open entrance porch and the main entrance vestibule are located on the east side of the building, covered by a continuation of the gable roof slope. The entrance porch steps lead up through an arch marked by a wooden key block and carried by a corbel on the exterior nave wall and a squat turned post perched on a solid parapet railing on the porch's outer edge. A secondary entrance, sheltered by a shed hood, is located at the junction of the apse and corner tower. The nave block has three bays on each side, each containing paired rectangular windows except for the vestibule bay, which has a triple rectangular window. Windows in the apse are set high up, with a continuous sill band extending around the apse. The cylindrical tower has narrow rectangular windows at first- and second-story level, the ones above smaller than those below, and a third-story louvered belfry. A break in the shingling marks the line between first and second stories, and the belfry is delineated by cornice bands at both bottom and top. The eaves have cornice trim with returns on the gable ends.

The main entrance leads into a small vestibule which opens into the nave through a double door. The nave is an open rectangular space articulated by four exposed hammer-beam roof trusses, two on each side. The nave ceiling is not open all the way to the gable peak, but instead slopes up part way to a central flat panel parallel to the floor. A modern fan is now mounted in the center of this panel. An elliptical archway opens off the north end of the nave into the polygonal chancel.

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Originally, this was fitted with a moving partition, long since removed, which could be closed to permit use of the nave as a parish assembly hall. Interior finish is simple, with matchboard wainscoting; molded architrave door, window, and archway trim; and hammer beams, braces, rafters, purlins, and collars of varnished wood, contrasting with plain, white plaster walls and ceiling. The floor is now carpeted. Pews are set to each side, leaving a single central aisle leading up to the chancel, which is separated from the nave by a modern altar rail. Just outside the chancel, pews for the choir, on the west side, face a modern organ console on the east. The present pews date from the mid-twentieth century. Original furnishings include a stone baptismal font at the south end of the nave; a Gothic lectern to the right of the chancel arch; and a Gothic style wooden altar, now pulled out from its original position against the chancel wall. Gothic side chairs in the chancel are later in date but complement the original furnishings. Artificial light comes from four early twentieth-century electric globes suspended from the hammer beams, and modern flood lights mounted behind the chancel arch. Originally there were two windows on the south end; their openings were closed in and plastered over when the office-classroom wing was added to the back of the church. The remaining window openings--three paired units on the east, two paired units on the west, and three single units in the chancel, contain leaded plain and stained glass dating from the 1940s. Dedicated as memorials, these windows typify the custom common in Episcopal churches of installing glass over a period of years following the initial construction of the church, as families and friends donate the funds for their installation or replacement. The windows of the nave are composed of translucent glass set in lozenge-pattern comes, accented with stained glass panels in the form of heraldic shields containing symbols of the apostles, saints, sacraments, and other aspects of Episcopal theology or liturgy. The chancel contains figurative stained glass windows depicting St. Matthew, patron of the church (west side); St. George (east side); and Christ (center). On the east side of the chancel, a door leads into a small circular sacristy in the base of the bell tower. It is simply outfitted with cabinets and drawers and finished with matchboard wainscoting, plaster walls, and architrave trim on doors and windows.

The parish office and classroom wing is a one-story, gable- and hip-roofed building on a concrete foundation, connected to the south ends of the church and parish hall. Exterior finish is extremely simple, consisting of plain shingled walls and architrave door and window trim. One entrance is located on the east end, with a small stoop. Another, reached by a ramp from the parking lot, is located in a small, shed-roof vestibule addition on the north side of the wing at its junction with the parish house. The interior follows a single-loaded corridor plan with

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rooms ranged along the south side and broad windows in the north wall, overlooking the parking lot. The corridor links the entranceways and opens into the church vestibule at the east end and the parish hall on the west. Interior finish consists of carpeted and linoleum floors, plywood panel walls, and tiled ceilings. The office and classroom wing, as a structure less than fifty years old without exceptional historical associations or architectural features, is a non-contributing element of the parish complex.

The parish hall is a one-story, cross-gabled structure on a brick foundation, comprising a large rectangular block and a smaller ell on the west side, forming a "T" plan. Its plain shingled exterior is broken by paired rectangular windows in simple frames. The main means of entry is through the office and classroom wing, but there is an emergency exit in the west wall, reached by a ramp. The hall has paired rectangular windows with plain architrave trim and two-over-two double-hung sash. The interior, consisting of an assembly room in the main block and a kitchen in the ell, has been renovated. The assembly room is finished with oak flooring, plywood panel wainscoting, plastered walls, a dropped acoustic tile ceiling, and fluorescent ceiling lights. Despite these interior alterations, the parish hall's age and historical associations make it a contributing structure.

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### Photographs

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church  
Barrington, Rhode Island

Photographer: Robert Owen Jones

Date: December 1990

Negatives filed at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence, RI 02903

- #1 Exterior view of the church facing southwesterly, with the parish hall in the right background.
- #2 Exterior view showing the office and classroom wing (left) and church (right), facing northwesterly.
- #3 Exterior view showing the church (left) and parish hall (right) with a portion of the connecting office-classroom wing, facing southeasterly.
- #4 Interior of the church showing the chancel, facing northwesterly.
- #5 Interior of the church facing south.



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### Significance

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church is architecturally significant as an example of the small-scale ecclesiastical buildings erected in Rhode Island's smaller villages and suburban and resort communities in the nineteenth century. It is particularly notable for its unusual hybrid Queen Anne/Gothic form and style, and its authorship by the prolific Rhode Island architectural firm William R. Walker & Son. Historically, it represents a response to the spiritual and social needs of a growing population in the surrounding community. The story of St. Matthew's origin and development contribute to a greater understanding of nineteenth-century culture and religious life, and the evolution and growth of the Episcopal denomination in the town and state. The church meets National Register nomination criteria A and C, and though religious buildings are normally excluded from nomination, St. Matthew's is eligible because its significance derives from its exemplification of broad patterns of history and its particular architectural qualities.

St. Matthew's was founded in response to population growth in the Drownville section of Barrington. Completion of the Providence, Warren & Bristol Railroad and opening of a depot on today's Alfred Drown Road in 1855 gave impetus to the development of this area. In 1869 Providence civil engineer and landscape gardener Niles B. Schubarth drew a plat of "Villa Lots at Drownville" for the property south of the station, between Washington Road and Narragansett Bay. The waterside location first attracted seasonal summer residents, many from Pawtucket, and later year-round suburban residents who were able to commute to Providence on the railroad.

The Rev. William M. Chapin, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church at Barrington Center, established a mission for the residents of Drownville and vicinity. On 1 June 1891 ground was broken for a combination chapel and guild hall--the present church--and the cornerstone was laid on 26 July. The Providence architectural firm William R. Walker & Son designed the building, which was constructed by H. O. Cotton of Providence, carpenters, and W. R. Martin of Barrington, masons. The Right Rev. Thomas D. Clark, Bishop of Rhode Island, dedicated the building on 20 September 1891, the eve of St. Matthew's Day.

William Merrick Chapin (1852-1921) is a distinguished figure in Rhode Island Episcopal Church affairs. Born in Deep River, Connecticut, he graduated from Trinity College, Hartford, in 1874 and Berkeley Divinity School, Middletown, Connecticut. He then engaged in missionary work in Texas and Illinois before moving to Rhode Island in 1879. That year, he

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was ordained by Bishop Clark and installed as rector of St. John's, Barrington, where he remained until his resignation, for health reasons, in 1920. Esteem for Chapin can be gauged by his forty-one-year tenure at St. John's and the reaction of the community to his death: the Congregational church in town passed memorial resolutions, and a crowd of 600 mourners attended his funeral. In addition to his establishment of St. Matthew's, Chapin played an instrumental role in the founding of St. Mark's Church (mission begun 1880, parish formed 1883) at Riverside, a resort and suburban community in East Providence about two and one-quarter miles north of Drownville; a mission in nearby Swansea, Massachusetts; and St. Andrew's School (1893), an industrial training school for homeless boys, located since 1895 on the former Joshua Bicknell farm on Federal Road, Barrington. This network of church institutions started by Chapin is significant in the religious and social history of the surrounding area.

The Walker firm was one of the most productive and long-lived in Rhode Island. Its founder, General William Russell Walker (1830-1905), trained as a builder and studied architectural drawing before beginning his career as an architect in 1864. His son Colonel William Howard Walker (1856-1922) started as a draftsman in his father's office in 1874. From 1876 to 1881 General Walker practiced in partnership with Thomas J. Gould, formerly a draftsman in his office, in the firm Walker & Gould. In 1881 Gould left to form a partnership with another former Walker draftsman, Frank W. Angell, and William H. Walker joined his father in the firm William R. Walker & Son. William Howard Walker's son William Russell Walker II (1884-1936) joined the firm as a partner in 1922 and continued operations until his own demise. The firm is particularly noted for producing public buildings such as town halls, courthouses, armories, and schools, but also turned out designs for other types of buildings such as mills, commercial blocks, fraternal halls, theatres, residences, and churches. The Walkers' other churches include the Bell Street Chapel (1875), Providence [National Register, Broadway-Armory Historic District]; Union Congregational Church (1877), Providence [demolished]; First Baptist Church (1877), Central Falls [demolished]; First Baptist Church (1879), East Providence [National Register, Rumford Historic District, East Providence Multiple Resource Area]; Hebronville Methodist Church (1881-83), Seekonk, Massachusetts [slightly altered]; St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church (1882-83), Warren [demolished]; First Universalist Church (1882-84), North Attleboro, Massachusetts [demolished late 1980s]; First Freewill Baptist Church (1884), Pawtucket [National Register, Quality Hill Historic District, Pawtucket Multiple Resource Area]; Christ Church, Episcopal (1888), Providence [National Register]; and United Congregational Church (1888-89), East Providence [altered].

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St. Matthew's has a singular place in the Walkers' work. The selection of the firm for this commission--a small Episcopal chapel--is somewhat unusual, given that the Walkers were not generally known as church architects, that the majority of churches that they did design were for non-liturgical denominations, and that other architects in the area were especially noted for working for Episcopal congregations: for example, Howard Hoppin of Providence. The St. Matthew's commission probably came to the firm through social connections: like many of the summer residents of Drownville, General and Colonel Walker were residents of Pawtucket; they designed several houses at Drownville, and General Walker had a residence here himself. Most of the Walkers' churches are wooden structures in the Queen Anne mode; however, most have distinctive Colonial Revival detailing, not the Gothic flavor of St. Matthew's. St. Matthew's has some affinity to the Walkers' other known Episcopal church, Christ Church: both are apse-fronted structures with corner towers, though Christ Church is of brick, with a rectilinear spire-topped tower, and is more strictly Gothic in style. St. Matthew's is also smaller in size and scale than Christ Church and most of the other churches named above. Typologically it is allied to a body of small mid- and late Victorian village churches found throughout Rhode Island. Of the many examples constructed from the 1840s through the 1890s, St. Matthew's is most closely related to a group of Queen Anne churches of the 1880s, among them the Walkers' own United Congregational Church, East Providence (originally a small, gable-roof, wooden Queen Anne structure with a cylindrical corner tower topped with an ogee dome, now enlarged and with a different tower), and a body of village churches designed by Howard Hoppin, including St. Barnabas Episcopal Church (1882), Apponaug, Warwick [burned 1911]; Union Chapel (ca 1885), Buttonwoods, Warwick [National Register, Buttonwoods Beach Historic District]; All Saints Episcopal Church (1887), Pontiac, Warwick [altered]; and St. Mark's Episcopal Church (1888), Riverside, East Providence [destroyed 1950s]. Many churches in this group have not been preserved, making St. Matthew's a somewhat rare survivor of type.

General and Colonel Walker are representative of the older generation of nineteenth-century architects who were not academically trained. With limited knowledge of scholarly theories or principles or little personal experience of the architecture of other places or periods, such men tended to create works of freshness and originality, unconstrained by formal rules, but often with odd characteristics stemming from unconventional use of forms, proportions, or ornamentation. This is seen in the Walkers' work, particularly in structures executed during the 1890s. St. Matthew's, with its hybrid Gothic/Queen Anne/Shingle style and curiously proportioned tower, is an illustrative example of the sort of buildings the Walkers were producing during this period.

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In June 1892 the parish purchased additional land west of the chapel. The parish hall was constructed on the property in 1893.

Despite some structural changes, St. Matthew's Church remains today a significant artifact of nineteenth-century architectural practice and broad patterns of local history.

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### Major Bibliographical References

Bicknell, Thomas W. History of Barrington, R. I. Providence, 1898.

Jordy, William H., Christopher P. Monkhouse, et al. Buildings on Paper: Rhode Island Architectural Drawings 1825-1945. Providence, 1982.

Notes on the history of St. Matthew's Church compiled by the parish History Committee from church records. Typescript on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission.

Notes on the Walker firm compiled from various sources. Manuscript and photocopy. Collection of Robert Owen Jones.

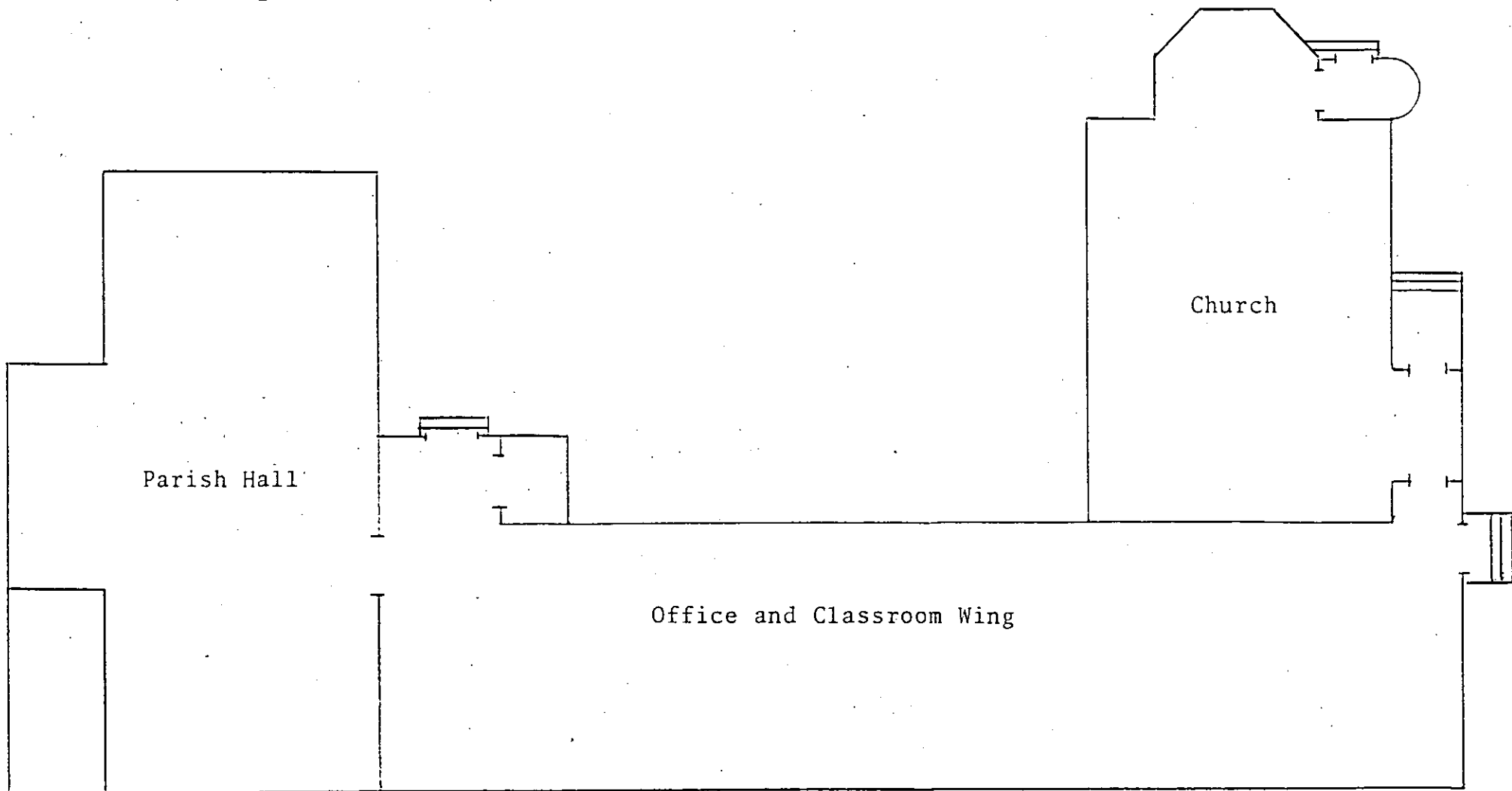
Providence Journal, 9 March 1921, p. 10.

-----, 12 March 1921, p. 10.

Tingley, Samuel Bradford. The 125th Anniversary of St. John's Church. 1982.

ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
Barrington, Rhode Island

Sketch plan -- no scale  
March 1991









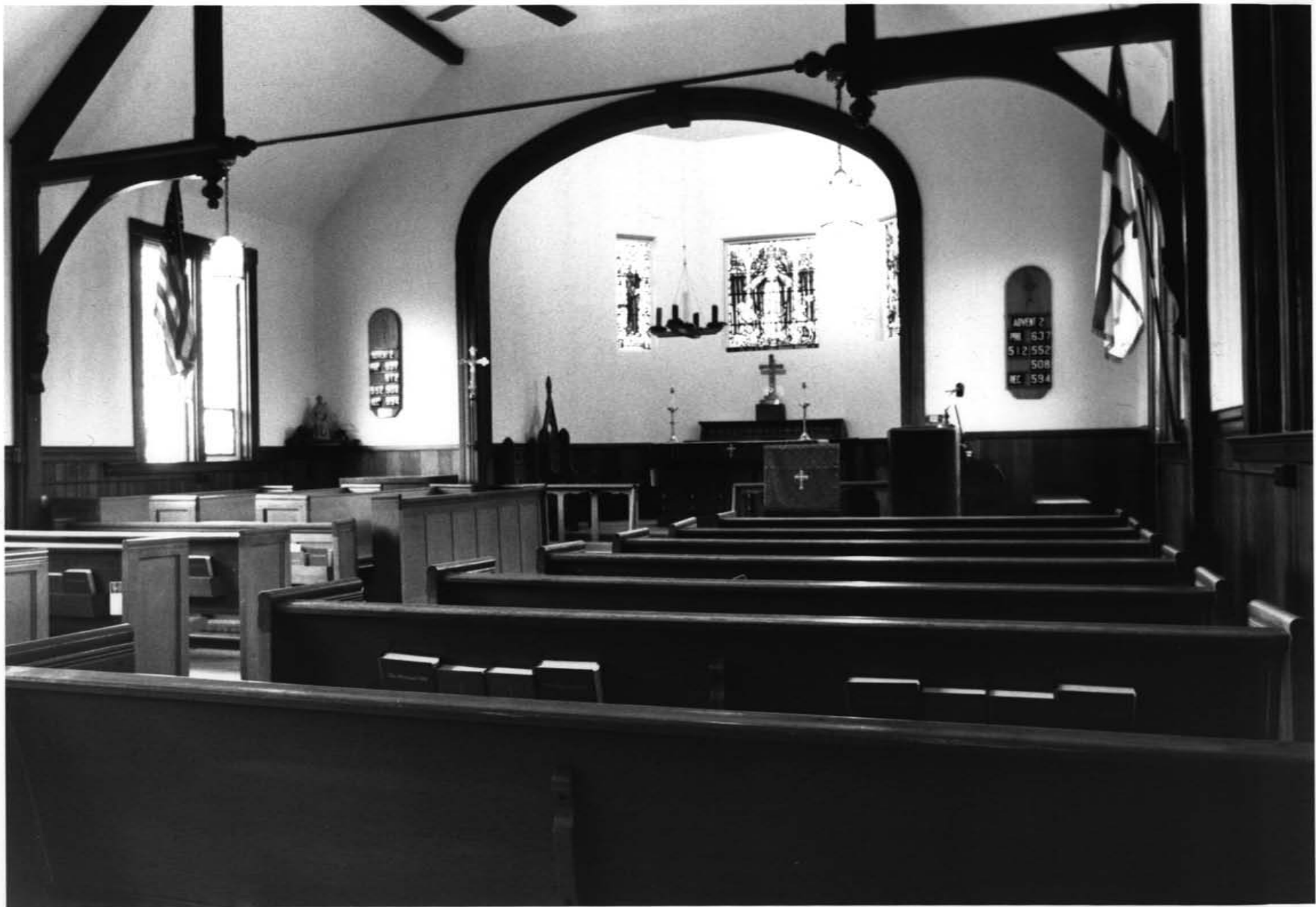
St. Matthews Episcopal Church  
5 Chapel Road  
Barrington, R.I.

photo # 2



St. Matthews Episcopal Church  
5 Chapel Road  
Barrington, R.I.

photo # 3



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St. Matthews Episcopal Church  
5 Chapel Road  
Barrington, R.I.

photo #4



St. Matthews Episcopal Church  
5 Chapel Road  
Barrington, R.I.

photo #5