

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

 NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

 SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS
1 NAME

HISTORIC Knightsville Meeting House

AND/OR COMMON Knightsville-Franklin Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 67 Phenix Avenue

CITY, TOWN Cranston

-- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

2 - Hon. Edward Beard

STATE Rhode Island

CODE 44

COUNTY

Providence

CODE 007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Knightsville-Franklin Congregational Church

STREET & NUMBER 67 Phenix Avenue

CITY, TOWN Cranston

VICINITY OF

STATE Rhode Island 02910

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
 COURTHOUSE,
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Cranston City Hall

STREET & NUMBER 869 Park Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Cranston

STATE

Rhode Island 02910

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Cranston, Rhode Island: Statewide Historic Preservation Report

DATE

1977-1978

 --FEDERAL STATE --COUNTY --LOCAL

P-Cr-1

 DEPOSITORY FOR
 SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN

150 Benefit Street, Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Knightsville Meeting House is a two-story, wood-frame, gable-roofed, clapboarded structure, five bays wide and two bays deep. It was constructed in the Federal style in 1807 and altered several times during the course of the nineteenth century. The building is set back sixty feet from Phenix Avenue on a sparsely landscaped lot measuring approximately one hundred by one hundred feet. The structure is both larger than and set back farther than the surrounding residential buildings, which include one house in the Federal style and three in the Greek Revival, a largely altered octagon house across the street, and several contemporary homes. Behind the Meeting House -- which was also built to serve as a church -- is the associated cemetery, which contains gravestones from the nineteenth century. Overgrown and untended, it occupies an approximately triangular lot, whose base is the northern boundary of the meeting house lot. The property line opposite measures only thirty-nine feet. The eastern boundary of the cemetery is 384 feet long and the western is 300. The cemetery is included in this nomination.

Set on a stone foundation, the original part of the building dates two 1807 and measures forty feet by thirty-five feet; a two-story 1952 addition, two bays wide, sixteen feet by thirty-five feet, adjoins the building to the west (see photograph 2 and sketch plan). The Meeting House is entered by two identical doorways placed symmetrically between the windows. Each door has a simple Greek Revival architrave with a wide lintel supported by paneled pilasters. The three first-story windows have splayed lintels, as do the windows on the east and north facades. The original sash throughout the building were replaced in 1886 by two-over-two frosted panes surrounded by narrow strips of colored glass. The western and northern facades are sheathed in modern composition shingles, as were the other facades until 1964 when they were recovered with wood clapboards, the original material.

The principal interior of the Meeting House - Church (see photograph 4 and sketch plan) is one open two-story space with a U-shaped balcony or gallery around its west, east, and south sides. The balcony is supported by chamfered posts and is reached by stairways in the southern corners of the building. There are, presently, no pews in the balcony, which is faced with wide boards painted to match the rest of the walls and woodwork. The stair railing is composed of simple turned balusters and slightly more elaborate newel posts. A small brick chimney abutting the inside of the west wall of this space formerly serviced heating stoves which have been removed.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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Three banks of pews extend toward a platform 9 feet by 16' 18" probably constructed in the early 20th century. Two rows of pews were removed to accommodate it. The windows on the north facade, behind the platform, are all blocked including a central window placed above the others to admit light for a pulpit which is no longer in place. A small room, 5' x 8' 6", stands in the north-west corner of the church, and is entered by a doorway from the platform. There is an identical room above it on the balcony level.

Interior decoration is sparse: very simple painted wainscoting lines the first story walls and the central window in the north facade has more colored glass than the others--two narrow strips forming a simple cross in its center. The pews are built of wide boards capped with a simple molding. The lectern, pulpit and altar are each simply fashioned of wood and painted white, ornamented with a central gold cross. A Victorian cabinet five feet tall and five feet wide with a cornice of Italianate pendants stands against the west wall of the balcony.

The addition, which consists of two large rooms on each floor, does not intrude on the original interior space.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1807

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Knightsville Meeting House is the oldest public building in the City of Cranston, and one of the few remaining early structures in the Knightsville section, which served as the civic center of Cranston almost continuously from the early 19th century until the 1930s. The building itself was the town meeting house from 1808 to 1854. It is one of a small member of such meeting house type structures built to serve both civic and religious purposes still surviving in Rhode Island, and with its splayed lintels, pilastered doorways, and colored glass windows, represents the changing architectural tastes of the 19th century. The Knightsville Meeting House has throughout its history served a variety of congregations -- from the original Six Principle Baptists to present day Congregationalists -- and thus manifests religious changes common to rural areas of Rhode Island.

The Benevolent Baptist Society, which erected the original structure, was organized by thirty-five men in 1806 and incorporated by the General Assembly that year; it was an outgrowth of an earlier church in western Cranston which had been closed during the Revolution. In June of 1806 the Assembly authorized the congregation to raise \$2,500 by lottery for the erection of a meeting house to be used both by members of the church and by the citizens of Cranston for town meetings.

On April 11, 1807, an advertisement for the Cranston Meeting House Lottery was placed in the Phenix newspaper. Andrew Knight, a member of the family that had settled in western Cranston a century earlier, deeded a quarter acre lot to the church in August of that year and construction began that fall. Joseph Searle, a church member who owned a sawmill on Hope Road further west in Cranston, was the builder. Another lottery was held in December, 1807, indicating that either construction or payment was not yet completed.

In 1812, Andrew Knight died and in his will recommended that his heir set aside land behind the meeting house as a church burial ground. His son Earl, donated 20 rods of land, the width of the meeting house lot, and Andrew Knight was the first person buried there.

The congregation underwent a series of reorganizations in the course of the 19th century. In June, 1816 the congregation was reorganized under Reverend Henry Tatem and membership reached 71. Three years

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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later the congregation split when Reverend Tatem advocated open communion. Sixteen church members who lived at Natick, Rhode Island, formed a branch of the church there in 1838. The church was reconsecrated in 1841 following general repairs and alterations. Although the years immediately following were prosperous ones for the congregation, with 60 to 100 members attending the Sunday School and 84 members leaving to join the Natick Church, the congregation succumbed to internal dissension shortly thereafter and dwindled in size steadily throughout the 1850s.

On April 17, 1864, three men from the old Richmond Church in Providence organized the Knightsville Mission Sabbath School, the direct ancestor of the present congregation. Despite an enthusiastic beginning, including 21 conversions and an average attendance of 112 the first year, the congregation found it necessary to become a branch of the Union Congregational Church in 1878. In the 1880s revival meetings flourished at the church and in the last decade of the 19th century student ministers from Brown often preached here. The building was renovated in 1886 and "made more comfortable" in 1899. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Sunday School, the building was repainted inside and out and electric lights installed, in 1914.

The congregation merged again, in 1928, with the Plymouth and Union Churches. Wilfred E. Stone, a reporter for the Providence Journal served as minister from 1928 until his death in 1957. The most recent merger occurred in 1961 with the Franklin Church of Pettacaonsett.

Cranston has from the 17th century been characterized by continuing tension between the eastern sector, relatively densely settled and identified with the Providence metropolitan economy, and the western region, which to this day remains largely rural. The city's history is thus a microcosm of the conflicts characteristic of Rhode Island's political history. The location of the Meeting House in the approximate geographic center of Cranston, but more easily accessible to the western settlement sites, reflects both the effort to mitigate internal tensions and the relative balance of power in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Town meetings were held in the building until 1854, except for a brief period in the autumn of 1815 when the structure had been damaged by the famous gale of that year. As the population of eastern Cranston grew throughout the first half of the nineteenth century (in what is now the Elmwood section of Providence), considerable pressure grew to move the town meeting place further east, and in 1854 the town hall was relocated in Elmwood. After the annexation by Providence of much

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

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of eastern Cranston in 1868, town meetings were again held in Knightville, although no longer at the meeting house.

Standing on a larger lot than most of its neighbors, today the Knightville Meeting House, though in need of some restoration and structural work, serves not only as a visual reminder of the times when Knightville dominated the politics of Cranston, but also as a witness to the various social and religious changes that occurred in rural Rhode Island throughout the 19th century.

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"An Unpaid Pastor Who Runs the Whole Church" in the Boston Transcript,
November 30, 1929.

"New Face on Old Church" in Providence Journal, March 9, 1965.

"Officers of Congregational Church of Rhode Island recognize Church
at service" in Providence Journal, April 14, 1928.

"Pastor's Study named in honor of Andrew Smith" in Providence Journal,
April 27, 1964.

"Two Mission Branches Want to Separate" in the Providence Journal,
April 7, 1928.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brayton, Gladys W. "The Knightsville Meeting House" in The Hinterlander, Vol., #3, October, 1964.
 Stone, W. E. "The Knightsville Meeting House," 1927.
 Stone, W. E. "The Knightsville Meeting House," 1928.

(See Continuation Sheet #4)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3/4 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	29,482,0	4,612,812,6,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Church Plat 12, lot 125
 Cemetery Plat 12, lot 124

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert E. Freeman, Consultant

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission	December, 1977
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
150 Benefit Street	401-277-2678
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Providence	Rhode Island

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Richard Williamson

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 1-11-78

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

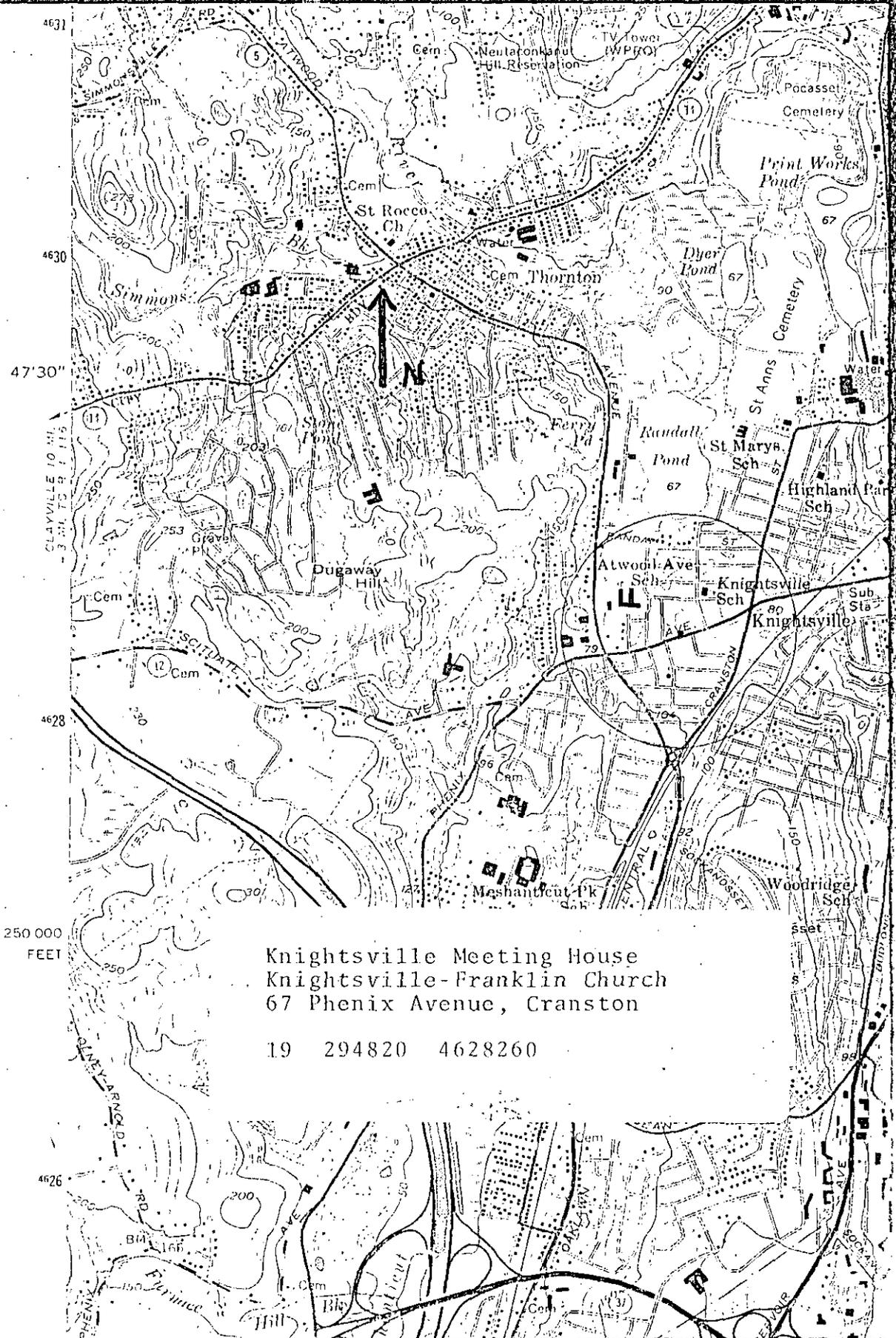
DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



250 000
FEET

Knightsville Meeting House
Knightsville-Franklin Church
67 Phenix Avenue, Cranston

19 294820 4628260



Knightsville Meeting House
Prov. County, Cranston, R.I.

View from southeast.

Photo # 1 of 5



Knightsville Meeting House
Providence City, Cranston, R.I.
View from southwest.

Photo # 2 of 5



Knightsville Meeting House
Prov. County, Cranston, RI

View from west door looking north.

Photo # 3 of 5



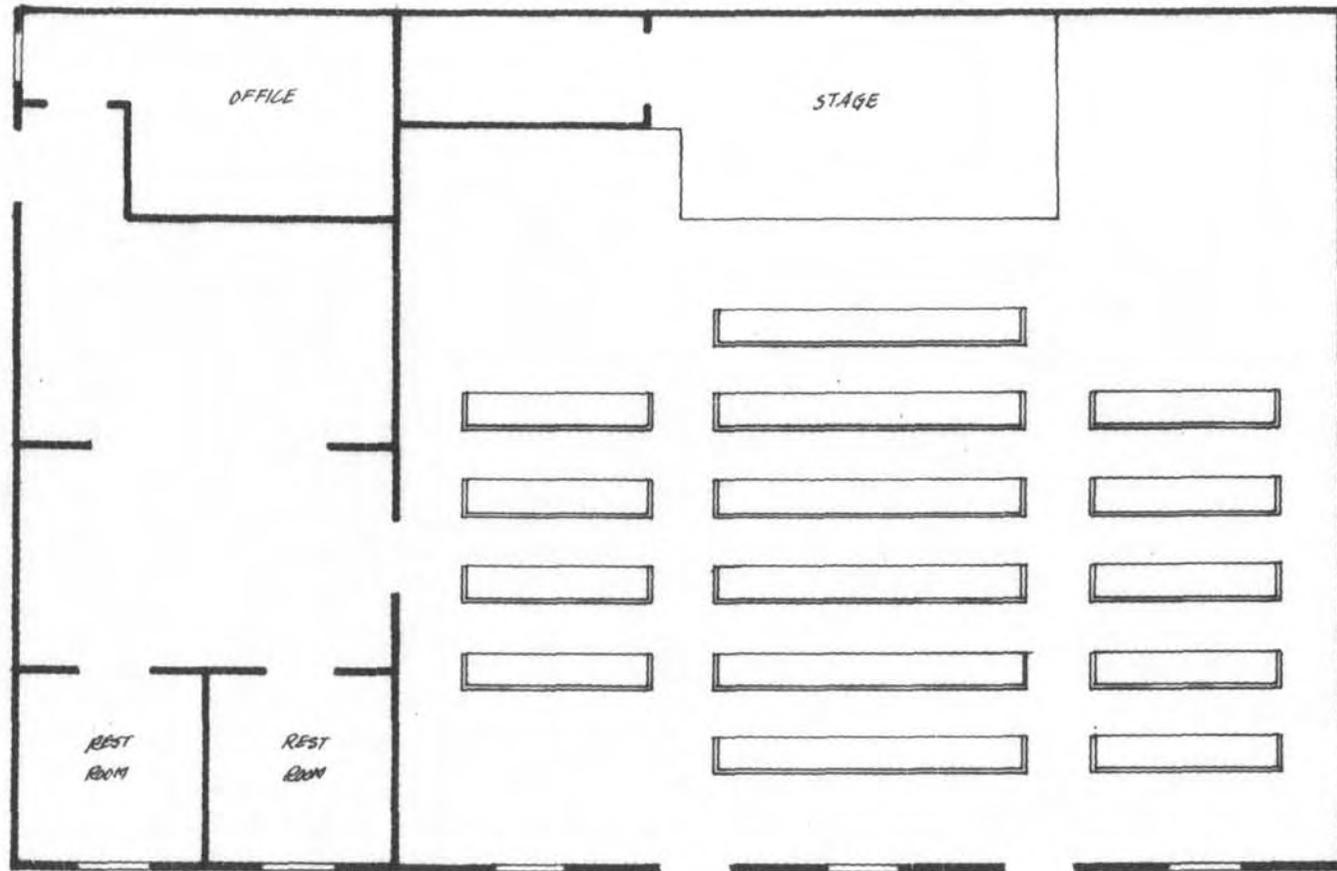
Knightsville Meeting House
Providence Cranston, RI
View from stage looking south.

Photo # 4 of 5



Knightsville Meeting House
from County, Cranston, RI
View from southeast corner
of balcony.

photo # 5 of 5



SKETCH PLAN
NOT TO SCALE



KNIGHTSVILLE - FRANKLIN CHURCH
CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND