Form 10-360 (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF INSTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Erected in 180°, the Beneficent Congregational Church received an extensive Greek-Revival remodelling in 1836 by James Bucklin, eminent Providence architect. While the plans for the original building were drawn up by Barnard Eddy and John Newman (the latter supervising construction), legend has it that the pastor of the time, James Wilson (who had been apprenticed to a Dublin cabinetmaker in his youth) had his hand in the design.

The structure is basically a two-story, rectangular box set on a high basement, with a hipped roof supporting a central dome (now gilded). foundation of stone laid in random ashlar, the walls, also of stone, are faced with brick laid with narrow mortar joints and are slightly recessed above the basement story. While most of the brick is English, the brick at the rear of the west façade is of local manufacture and was laid where it originally would be least conspicuous. The straight, vertical division is still visible.

According to an old drawing of the structure, before Bucklin's remodelling, the wall surfaces above the basement level were pierced by two tiers of twelve-over-twelve-sash windows of uniform size, with five bays across the front and the same along each side. Triple, central front entrances were protected by a projecting flat portice of colossal order, supported by four tall, slender columns. The structure was crowned by a balustrade of turned posts. A central dome, set on a high, clapboarded, decorated and fenestrated ocational base, capped the hipped roof and carried a cupola of tall proportions. It has been suggested that Pastor Wilson was inspired by Dublin architecture for the design of this dome, but the design is actually much more similar in style and proportion to that of Bulfinch's State House which had only recently been creeted in Boston.

Though the basic 180° structure remains, James Bucklin's design for the 1836 renovation is responsible for the present exterior appearance. On the front, Bucklin removed the earlier attenuated porch and added a heavy tetrastyle Doric portice of colossal order, with fluted wooden columns supporting a fully-developed Doric entablature and pediment. The triple entrances were retained, but the central doorway was made slightly taller than the others and capped by a rectangular lintel. This doorway has since been remodelled. The high base of the portice, with broad steps flowing down on three sides, has recently been restored.

To reduce the visual verticality of the original church and to reinforce the effect of the simple volumes, Bucklin enlarged the drum of the dome into a solid, austere, stuccoed octagon (the original clapboarded drum is still intact beneath the present one). A wooden replica of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens replaced the old cupola of

(See Continuation Sheet)

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UNITED STATES OF PARTIENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SHEVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF INSTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NORMATION FORM

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7. Description.

similar dimensions. The new wooden dome was adorned with gold leaf in 1857, and it and its drum have since been protected by metal sheathing. A closed, panelled balustrade replaces the original opened one, thus emphasizing the building's cubical form. A large-scale Greek-key motif decorates the balustrade where it rises above the portico and is also used in the slightly peaked, central panels above each side façade.

Bucklin's ingenious remodelling of the original windows adds significantly to the monumentality of the church. The twelve-light sashes were replaced by new ones of six lights, and to the top of each of the first-story windows a third, blind sash was added. Thus, while the windows retain their original dimensions on the interior, the lower windows of the exterior have been made visually taller. As an alternative to Greek Revival motifs, Bucklin applied battered and crossetted architraves of Egyptian inspiration over the original simple stone window trim. To emphasize further the box-like mass of the building, the walls were whitewashed. In recent years this has been removed, exposing the original brickwork.

Originally tall in proportion and delicate in detail, the church now seems low and massive as a result of the Fucklin renovation. Little-changed on the exterior since 1836, the church maintains a commanding presence on its site atop Weybosset Hill.

Unlike the exterior, the interior retains its original plan and much of the feeling of its 1809 appearance, despite many alterations in detail. At each end of the shallow, full-width entrance vestibule on the north front a triple run of stairs rises to the gallery. Entrance to the main auditorium is gained through three doorways at the top of a short flight of steps within this vestibule. The doors are of recent date but are framed by moulded, crossotted architraves. The side aisles of the main auditorium are separated from the center portion by four tell, fluted Tonic columns on either side. These columns, which rise through, and support, theterraced callery curving around three sides of the church, also support the Greek Revival entablature of the shallow plaster barrelvault of the ceiling. Because of their slender proportions, it is probable that these columns are original and that Bucklin's 1836 remodelling enclosed them in new fluted encasements and provided them with new Ionic capitals. Bucklin is also responsible for enclosing the gallery balustrade and for remodelling the pilasters, entablature and cornice of the altar wall in simple Greek Revival style. The wainscot, the panelled window reveals containing louvred shutters, and the box-pews apparently date

(See Continuation Sheet 2)

Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - ROMINATION FORM

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7. Description.

from 1809, although the pew backs have since been slanted for comfort. The south end of the church has been extensively remodelled. The raised and recessed choir and pulnit area was built out in 1857 over a low, one-story chapel which was extended to the rear in 1833. At this time, gold leaf was used to decorate the entablature and the balcony balustrades and has never been renewed. The central chandelier of Austrian crystal dates from 1890. In 1923 the present organ was installed; William Aldrich, Boston architect, designed its magnificent carved wooden case. For structural support, concealed steel beams have been installed to reinforce the old timber framing.

9. Major Bibliographical References.

Beneficent Congregational Church, Providence, Rhode Island: Original building contracts preserved in the church.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Both historically and architecturally, the Beneficent Congregational Church is a monument of much local significance. The church, erected in 1809 and dedicated on January 1, 1810, was the second meating-house of the second Congregational church organized in Providence. It is the oldest church in the city on the west side of the Providence River, both in organization and in age of structure, and its presence was highly influential in developing the surrounding Weybosset Hill area into the most important commercial and residential section of Providence in the early nineteenth century.

The pastor of the church at that time, James Wilson, was an early voice in supporting the development of mill industries in Rhode Island and was influential in spreading confidence in this new economy of textile and other manufacture. Indeed, the erection of the church in 1809 coincided with the beginning of a new age of presperity and of civic pride not only locally, but throughout all New England.

Though the church is architecturally significant for its early use of the classical dome, following Fulfinch's example in Boston, its greater distinction is as an outstanding example of Greek Revival architecture, and it notably displays the great carecities of James Bucklin as an architect. Tacklin's solution to the problem of remodelling an older structure, tall in proportion and delicate in detail, into the then-fashionable Greek Revival style in 1836 was ingenious. By adding the heavy portice, rebuilding the drum of the dome, the lantern and the balustrade, and remodelling the windows, he achieved an imposing Greek Revival design through broad geometry of forms, planes and volumes. Though today standing in the midst of a rather chaotic urban scene, this handsome structure maintains a permanent, menumental and dominating presence on Weyborset Hill.

7.	HAJOR DIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES							
'	Cady. John Hutchins: The Civic	and A	ro	chitectural Development of Provide	ence,			
1	Gady, John Hutchins: The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island, 1957).							
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	1937). Hamlin Talkot F : Greek Reviva	3 Arci	hi	itecture in America (New York, 19	ы). I			
	Rhode Island History, Swemer and	Fall	٠,-	1970 (Providence, R. I., Rhode I	sland			
ļ	Historical Society).							
	Wilson, Arthur E.: Paddy Wilson	's Me	<u>ct</u>	ting House in Providence Plantati	ons,			
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Form 10-300 (July 1989)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Form 10-300a (Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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(See Continuation Sheet 2)

Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 2

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(Number all entries)

7. Description.

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9. Major Bibliographical References.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Both historically and architecturally, the Beneficent Congregational Church is a monument of much local significance. The church, erected in 1809 and dedicated on January 1, 1810, was the second meeting-house of the second Congregational church organized in Providence. It is the oldest church in the city on the west side of the Providence River, both in organization and in age of structure, and its presence was highly influential in developing the surrounding Weybosset Hill area into the most important commercial and residential section of Providence in the early nineteenth century.

The pastor of the church at that time, James Wilson, was an early voice in supporting the development of mill industries in Rhode Island and was influential in spreading confidence in this new economy of textile and other manufacture. Indeed, the erection of the church in 1809 coincided with the beginning of a new age of prosperity and of civic pride not only locally, but throughout all New England.

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Form 10-300 (July 1969) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Erected in 180°, the Beneficent Congregational Church received an extensive Greek-Revival remodelling in 1836 by James Bucklin, eminent. Providence architect. While the plans for the original building were drawn up by Barnard Eddy and John Newman (the latter supervising construction), legend has it that the pastor of the time; James Wilson (who had been apprenticed to a Dublin cabinetmaker in his youth) had his hand in the design.

The structure is basically a two-story, rectangular boxiset on a high basement, with a hipped roof supporting a central dome (now gilded). foundation of stone laid in random ashlar, the walls, also of stone, are faced with brick laid with narrow mortar joints and are slightly recessed above the basement story. While most of the brick is English, the brick at the rear of the west façade is of local manufacture and was laid where it originally would be least conspicuous. The straight, vertical division is still visible.

According to an old drawing of the structure, before Bucklin's remodelling, the wall surfaces above the basement level were pierced by two tiers of twelve-over-twelve-sash windows of uniform size, with five bays across the front and the same along each side. Triple, central front entrances were protected by a projecting flat portice of colossal order, supported by four tall, slender columns. The structure was crowned by a balustrade of turned posts. A central dome, set on a high, clapboarded, decorated and fenestrated ocatgonal base, capped the hipped roof and carried a cupola of tall proportions. It has been suggested that Pastor Wilson was inspired by Dublin architecture for the design of this dome, but the design is actually much more similar in style and proportion to that of Bulfinch's State House which had only recently been erected in Boston.

Though the basic 1809 structure remains, James Bucklin's design for the 1836 renovation is responsible for the present exterior appearance. On the front, Bucklin removed the earlier attenuated porch and added a heavy tetrastyle Doric portico of colossal order, with fluted wooden columns supporting a fully-developed Doric entablature and pediment. The triple entrances were retained, but the central doorway was made slightly taller than the others and capped by a rectangular lintel. This doorway has since been remodelled. The high base of the portico, with broad steps flowing down on three sides, has recently been restored.

To reduce the visual verticality of the original church and to reinforce the effect of the simple volumes, Bucklin enlarged the drum of the dome into a solid, austere, stuccoed octagon (the original clapboarded drum is still intact beneath the present one). A wooden replica of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens replaced the old cupola of

(See Continuation Sheet)

Ferm 10-300u (Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTABLE OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SLRVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES - INVENTORY - NOMEDATION FORM

(Continuation Shoot) - 1

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Providence					
FOR MPS USE ONLY					
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7. Description.

similar dimensions. The new wooden dome was adorned with gold leaf in 1857, and it and its drum have since been protected by metal sheathing. A closed, panelled balustrade replaces the original opened one, thus emphasizing the building!arcubical form. A large-scale Greek-key motif decorates the balustrade where it rises above the portico and is also used in the slightly peaked, central panels above each side façade.

Bucklin's ingenious remodelling of the original windows adds significantly to the monumentality of the church. The twelve-lightesashes were replaced by new ones of six lights, and to the top of each of the first-story windows a third, blind sash was added. Thus, while the windows netain their original dimensions on the interior, the lower windows of the exterior have been made visually taller. As an alternative to Greek Revival motifs, Bucklin applied battered and crossetted architraves of Egyptian inspiration over the original simple stone window trim. To emphasize further the box-like mass of the building, the walls were whitewashed. In recent years this has been removed, exposing the original brickwork.

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(See Continuation Sheet 2)

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Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES OF PARTMENT OF THE HITEROOF - NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - MOMBRATION FORM

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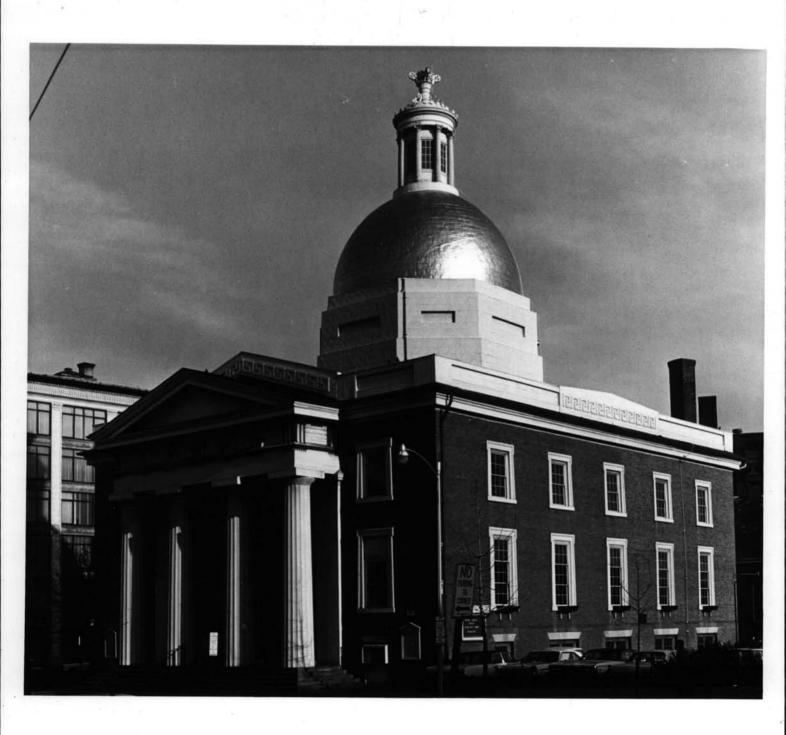
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			ted State L						 Lhereby	certify t	that this p	roperty	is included	l in the
	tional Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law			.	National Register.									
	89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been			Į			*	7						
	evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set									·				
	forth	by the Nat	tional Parl	h Ser	vice.	The recor			Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation					
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

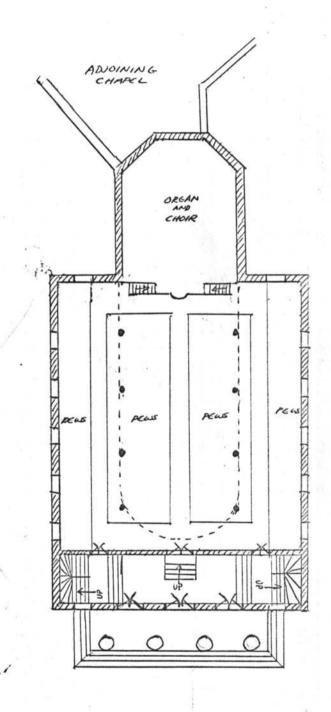
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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

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	FOR	NPS USE ON	ILY
	ENTRY	NUMBER	DATE

AND/OR HISTORIC: 2. LOCATION STREET AND NUMBER: 300 Weybosset Street CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island PHOTO REFERENCE PHOTO CREDIT: Clifford M. Renshaw, III	AND/OR HISTORIC:			
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State House, 90 Smith Street, Providence, R. I., 02903				
4. IDENTIFICATION				





PLAN - BENEFICENT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
"OLD ROUND TOP"

300 WEY BOSSET STREET, PROVIDENCE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

Rhode Island	
Providence	
FOR NPS USE ON	LY
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

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1	AND/OR HISTORIC: OCATION			
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INITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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COMMON: Beneficent Congre	gational Church	2	
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рното скерит: Beneficent Co	ongregational Church	*	
DATE OF PHOTO: 1971			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Benifice:	nt Congregational Churcosset Street, Providence		3
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ET	С.		
Church auditorium	, central portion, look	king south.	
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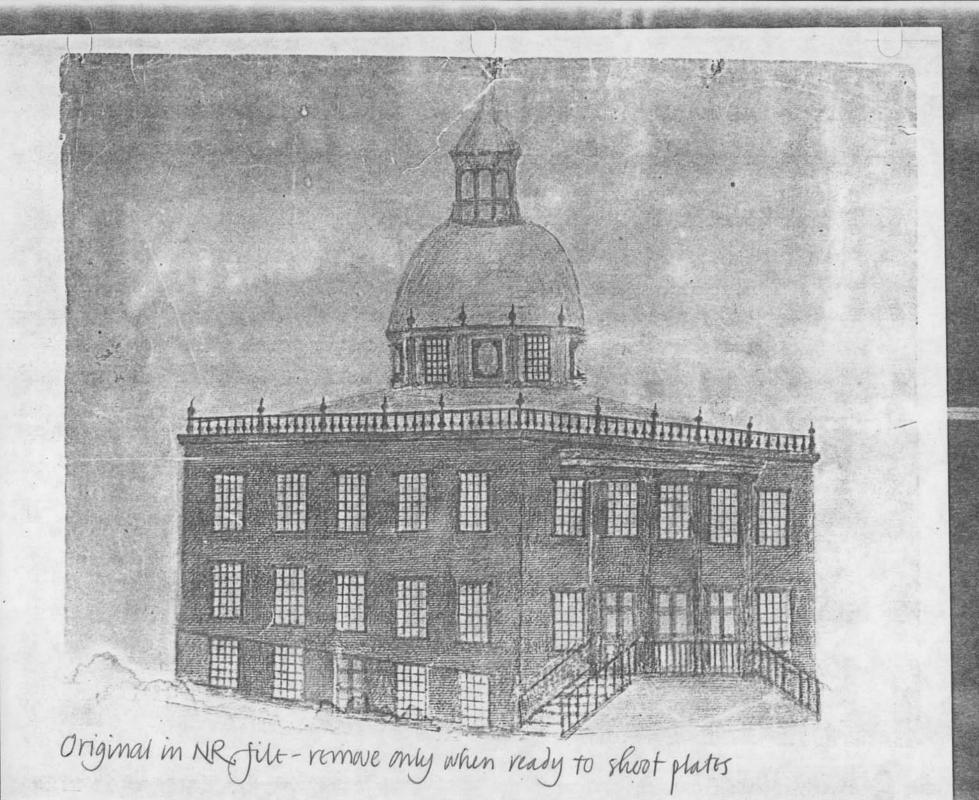


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

STATE	
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	PHOTO CREDIT: Clifford M. Renshaw, II	I						
	DATE OF PHOTO: 1971		(a					
	NEGATIVE FILED AT: Rhode Island Histor	ical Pres	ervation Commission,					
,	State House, 90 Smith Street, Providence, R. I., 02903							
4	IDENTIFICATION							
	DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.							



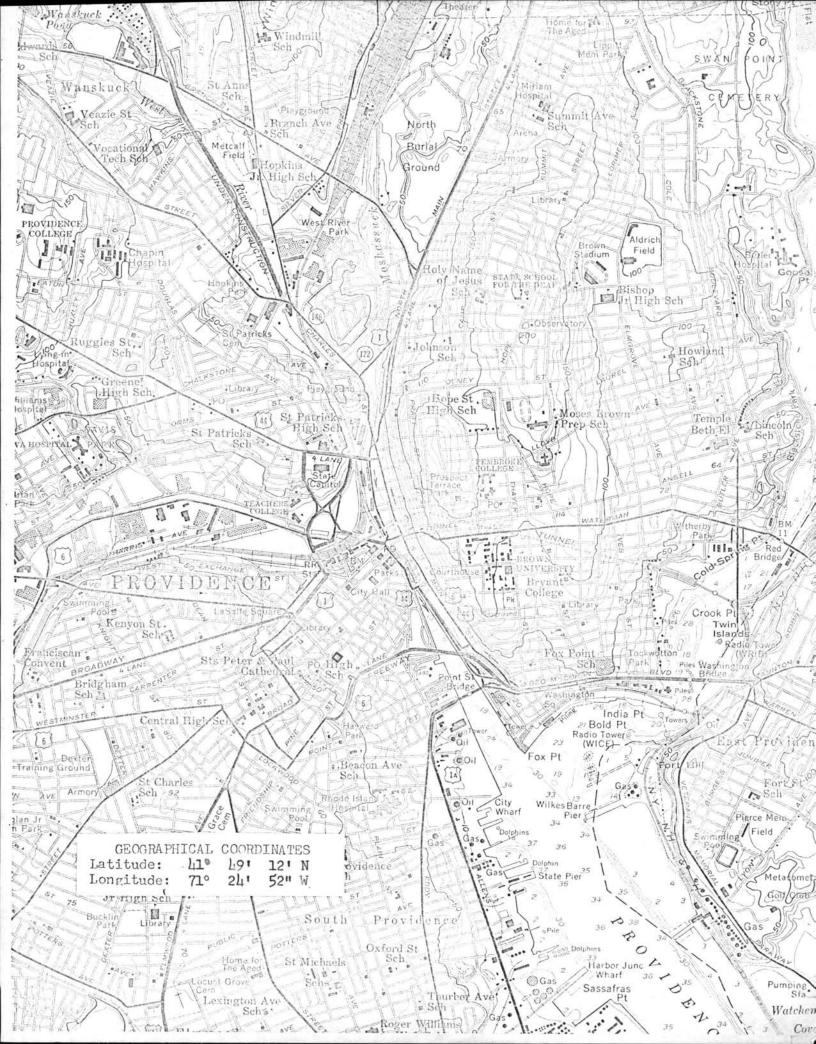
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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COMMON: Beneficent Congregations	al Church		
AND/OR HISTORIC:	- Constitution		
2. LOCATION			
300 Weybosset Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence			
Rhode Island	CODE COUNTY:	idence	007
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рното сверит: Rhode Island Histor	rical Society		
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NEGATIVE FILED AT: Rhode Island H: 52 Power Stree	istorical Society, t, Providence, Rhode	Island, 02906	
4. IDENTIFICATION		-	
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.			
Exterior of the original memory by Francis Read			



Form 10-301 (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY MAP FORM

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

Rhode Island	
COUNTY	
Providence	
FOR NPS USE O	NLY
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

COMMON: Beneficent Congregat	ional Church		
AND/OR HISTORIC:			
2. LOCATION			
street and number: 300 Weybosset Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence			
Rhode Island	CODE	Providence	- 687
3. MAP REFERENCE	1		
Source: U. S. Geological Sur	vey		
SCALE: 1: 24,000			
DATE: 1957			
4. REQUIREMENTS			
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS	•		
1. Property broundaries where require	ed.		
2. North arrow.			