**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

*(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)*

1. **NAME:**
   - **COMMON:** Clarke Street Meeting House
   - **AND/OR HISTORIC:** Second Congregational Church

2. **LOCATION**
   - **STREET AND NUMBER:** Clarke Street
   - **CITY OR TOWN:** Newport
   - **STATE:** Rhode Island
   - **CODE:** 02810
   - **COUNTY:** Newport

3. **CLASSIFICATION**
   - **CATEGORY (Check One):**
     - District [X] Building
     - Site [ ] Structure
     - Object [ ]
   - **OWNERSHIP:**
     - Public [X] Private [ ] Both [ ]
   - **PUBLIC ACQUISITION:**
     - In Process [ ] Being Considered [ ]
   - **STATUS:**
     - Occupied [ ]
     - Unoccupied [ ]
   - **ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC:**
     - Yes [ ]
     - Restricted [ ]
     - Unrestricted [ ]

4. **PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate):**
   - Agricultural [ ] Government [ ] Park [ ]
   - Commercial [ ] Industrial [ ] Private Residence [ ]
   - Educational [ ] Military [ ] Religious [ ]
   - Entertainment [ ] Museum [ ] Scientific [ ]
   - Construction [ ] Storage [ ]
   - Transportation [ ] Comments [ ]

5. **OWNER OF PROPERTY**
   - **OWNERS NAME:** Corporation of St. Joseph's Church of Newport, Rhode Island
   - **STREET AND NUMBER:** 5, Mann Avenue
   - **CITY OR TOWN:** Newport
   - **STATE:** Rhode Island
   - **CODE:** 02810

6. **LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**
   - **COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:**
     - City Hall
   - **STREET AND NUMBER:** Broadway
   - **CITY OR TOWN:** Newport
   - **STATE:** Rhode Island
   - **CODE:** 02810

7. **APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:** Less than one acre

8. **REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**
   - **TITLE OF SURVEY:** Rhode Island Statewide Survey
   - **DATE OF SURVEY:** 1970
   - **DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:**
     - Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
     - State House, 90, Smith Street
   - **CITY OR TOWN:** Providence
   - **STATE:** Rhode Island
   - **CODE:** 02903
6. Representation in Existing Surveys.

Historic American Buildings Survey
1st Street and Independence Avenue, S. E.
Washington, District of Columbia 11
In 1735 the Second Congregational Society of Newport required a meeting-house and called upon Cotton Palmer, a builder or housewright of the Providence-Taunton area, to provide them with one. (He had already experience in building another Newport meeting-house a few years earlier.) Specifications given Palmer were for a building to be located on the west side of Clarke Street and "to be 62 feet long by 26 between joints with a proper and proportionate spire." One need not add that a timber-framed structure clothed and trimmed in wood was had in mind, this to be upon stone foundations.

Such was provided by Palmer: a simple, gabled, clapboarded rectangle with a tower and spire partially indented in the east gable end. The tower is shown in a 1740 view to have risen one square storey above the gable, with a flat-headed sash-window on each side; this was surrounded at its top by a rail or parapet with short pinnacles on each corner-post; it was surmounted by an octagonal stage of one storey with four windows. On top of this last was set the octagonal shingled spire, its roof pent out like a flounce at the bottom, a weather-vane at its top.

This same 1740 view shows the church to have had seven bays along its sixty-two-foot sides and four in its forty-two-foot ends. Entrance was west through the base of the tower in the east end and through a doorway in the middle of the south side, opposite the pulpit. Though tower and spire are in what had become their conventional position, pulpit and pews still remained in the old New England "preaching-hall" arrangement (this corroborated by an 1816 pew plan).

The building suffered severely during British and French military use during the Revolutionary War, but by 1785 "the whole inside was entirely and elegantly rebuilt."

Antoinette F. Downing tells us (see Section 9, Bibliographical References) that "when the Central Baptist Society bought the building in 1817, they made extensive changes ... lengthening the house to ninety-three feet and enclosing the tower in the body of the church ... added Greek Revival exterior and interior detail, but Cotton Palmer's spire above the tower remained untouched ... In 1874-1875 wings were added and Victorian detail encrusted on the façade and spire, although the basic lines of the spire were kept until it was taken down in 1916 ..."

The church building has for some time been owned by a local Roman Catholic parish and lately used for storage purposes. Its present condition cannot be praised, but the building is well within the possibility and desirability of rescue, restoration (not to a prohibitively expensive Williamsburg retrospective perfection, however) and re-use for new purposes.
This building has played a part in Newport and Rhode Island history not only as a prominent landmark in early Newport, but also by way of outstanding personalities and new thoughts associated with its pastors and congregation.

Ezra Stiles was one of its earliest pastors (1755–1776) and one of Newport’s most active intellects until his departure—because of the local disruption by war—for Connecticut, where he became president of Yale College but still thought of his Newport flock and valued his Newport connections. James Franklin (brother of Benjamin) was a Newporter and a friend of Stiles, who obtained from the former some newly-invented lightning-rods which are still in place on the church.

William Ellery, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, was a member of the Second Congregational Society, as was William Vernon, a Newport nabob prominent in naval affairs of the Revolutionary War. Henry Marchant likewise belonged; he assisted in writing the Constitution of the United States and was insistent upon injecting therein the provisions separating church and state. In the XIX Century the church was a vocal centre for anti-slavery thought. The names of many long- (and still-) prominent Newport families can be found associated with this church.

The building played its part in the military activities of the Revolutionary War, though passively. To-day, although altered and long without a congregation, it plays a most active and visible part in maintaining the integrity of the Clarke Street area, as do the old and adjacent armory of the Newport Artillery Company, the handsome Vernon house (a National Historic Place) across the street and a number of other fine old dwellings. There are plans for a "Clarke Street Restoration," where not already accomplished (see Downing and Scully, pp. 191–197). The Clarke Street Meeting House is naturally included for both historical and visual reasons, in spite of its alterations—some of these could be cosmetically removed and its landmark spire perhaps restored. One cannot think of a substitute for this structure and certainly cannot envision a gaping, empty tooth-hole where it now stands.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEORGICAL DATA

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LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES

- Defining a rectangle locating the property
- Defining the center point of a property of less than one acre

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

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FORM PREPARED BY

Richard B. Harrington, Consultant
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
State House, 90, Smith Street
Providence, 02903

STATE LIAISON OFFICER: CERTIFICATION

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

- National ☑
- State ☐
- Local ☑

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register
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)

1. NAME:
   COMMON: Clarke Street Meeting House
   AND/OR HISTORIC: Second Congregational Church

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER: Clarke Street
   CITY OR TOWN: Newport
   STATE: Rhode Island

3. PHOTO REFERENCE
   PHOTO CREDIT: Historic American Buildings Survey
   DATE OF PHOTO: 1970
   NEGATIVE FILED AT: Library of Congress, 1st Street and Independence Avenue, S. E., Washington, D. C.

4. IDENTIFICATION
   DESCRIPTIVE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
   Exterior from north-east, showing XIX-Century changes and absence of spire.
1. NAME
   COMMON: Clarke Street Meeting House
   AND/OR HISTORIC: Second Congregational Church

2. LOCATION
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   DATE OF PHOTO: 1970
   NEGATIVE FILED AT: Library of Congress, 1st Street and Independence Avenue, S. E., Washington, D. C.

4. IDENTIFICATION
   DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
   Exterior from south-east, showing XIX-Century changes and absence of spire.
**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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<td>DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Exterior from north-west, showing XIX-Century lateral additions, trim.</td>
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<tr>
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# Clarke Street Meeting House

## Location

- **Street and Number:** Clarke Street
- **City or Town:** Newport
- **State:** Rhode Island

## Photo Reference

- **Photo Credit:** Historic American Buildings Survey
- **Date of Photo:** 1970
- **Negative Filed At:** Library of Congress, 1st Street and Independence Avenue, S. E., Washington, D. C.

## Identification

South-east portion of church auditorium, showing XIX-Century lateral enlargement and Victorian ornamentation.
GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES

Latitude: 41° 29' 20" N
Longitude: 71° 18' 49" W
## National Register of Historic Places
### Property Map Form

**Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map**

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### 1. Name

**Common:** Clarke Street Meeting House  
**And/or Historic:** Second Congregational Church

### 2. Location

**Street and Number:** Clarke Street  
**City or Town:** Newport  
**State:** Rhode Island  
**County Code:** Newport  
**State Code:** RI

### 3. Map Reference

**Source:** U. S. Geological Survey  
**Scale:** 1:24,000  
**Date:** 1957

### 4. Requirements

**To be included on all maps:**
1. Property boundaries where required.  
2. North arrow.  
3. Latitude and longitude reference.