Form 70-300

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory — Nomination Form

(Type all entries — complete applicable sections)

1. Name
   Common:
   St. Paul's Church
   And/or Historic:

2. Location
   Street and Number:
   76 Main Street, Wickford
   City or Town:
   North Kingstown
   State:
   Rhode Island, 02852
   Code: 44
   County: Washington
   Code: 009

3. Classification
   Category (Check One)
   District: Building X
   Site: Structure
   Object
   Ownership
   Public: ☐
   Private: ☑
   Both: ☐
   Public Acquisition:
   In Process: ☐
   Being Considered: ☑
   Status
   Occupied: ☑
   Unoccupied: ☐
   Preservation work in progress: ☐
   Accessible to the public
   Yes: ☑
   Restricted: ☑
   Unrestricted: ☐

Present Use (Check One or More as Appropriate)
   Agricultural: ☐
   Government: ☐
   Park: ☐
   Transportation: ☐
   Commercial: ☐
   Industrial: ☐
   Private Residence: ☑
   Other (Specify): ☐
   Educational: ☐
   Military: ☐
   Religious: ☑
   Comments: ☐
   Entertain: ☐
   Museum: ☐
   Scientific: ☐

4. Owner of Property
   Owners Name:
   St. Paul's Church
   Street and Number:
   76 Main Street, Wickford
   City or Town:
   North Kingstown
   State: Rhode Island, 02852
   Code: 44

5. Location of Legal Description
   Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc:
   Town Clerk
   Street and Number:
   80 Boston Neck Road
   City or Town:
   North Kingstown
   State: Rhode Island, 02852
   Code: 44

Approximate acreage of nominated property:
Less than one acre

6. Representation in existing surveys
   Title of Survey:
   Date of Survey:
   Federal: ☐
   State: ☑
   County: ☐
   Local: ☐
   Depository for survey records:
   Street and Number:
   City or Town:
   State: Rhode Island, 02852
   Code: 44
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, built in 1847, was designed in the prevailing "carpenters'" Romanesque style by Thomas A. Tefft, who was instrumental in the local development of that style, many prominent features of which are displayed in this building. As a translation of the Georgian meeting-house type, the church in its original conception was reduced to the barest compositional elements. The architect's drawings indicate a six-bayed nave beneath a gable roof with a cupola near the front, at the gable peak. The existing structure, however, is more complex and picturesque: a tower with bell turret and clock-faces rises to the left of the projecting central entrance-part of the tripartite façade, and a narthex addition with rather crude detailing, further to the left (or east) completes the asymmetry. Horizontal clapboarding (recently replaced) tends to decrease the vertical effect of the front and of the tall, narrow arched openings and the corbel strips along the sides of the building. Wooden pilasters define the side bays; a rosette window in the front gable is a later insertion. (The contradictory and sometimes overly-assertive detailing found on the main church is absent on the small side chapel to the left; here, the door of the projecting entranceway is of proportionately small size.) Large arched corbel tables are the only decoration on the entry and on the nave, except for a small rosette window (now painted over).

The arch motif of the exterior is carried on inside the church: the side walls have pilasters and corbel tables; the altar railing, altar wainscoting, balcony railing and pews continue the blind-arch theme. The nave doors have heavy strap-hinges, as do the doors of the main exterior entrance. The balcony is supported frontally on thin cast-iron colonnettes and still contains some of the original pews—the pews now used by the congregation on the main floor below are approximate replicas. The walls, which were probably originally beige, are now painted green, and most of the original translucent glass of the windows has been replaced by modern stained glass. The pulpit, altar and Bible-stand are of woodwork dating from about 1890. Large wall plaques commemorate former parishioners but unfortunately disturb the rhythm of the bays. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the interior is the plain timber trussing of the ceiling, a reminder of the austerity of the original conception of the church. Recently refinished, this timbering may originally have been flat-painted, and the balcony-front—also refinished—grained. The church structure has been given minor alterations or occasional refurbishment in the ways mentioned, but the basic integrity of its architecture remains.
St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Wickford is a well-preserved, if no longer pure, example of the re-use of Romanesque ecclesiogical architecture in the XIX Century by an architect who was not only in the mainstream of architectural development of the time, but who—a native Rhode Islander—gave his state many fine works during his short life (1826-1859). It is in this sense that St. Paul's Church is a monument worthy of care: although the Romanesque style was gaining popularity in the late forties, Tefft was unique in his devotion to this style. Simplifying the style without quite denaturing it, he adapted it for varied domestic, commercial and ecclesiogical purposes.

Tefft's talent has been described by Margaret Ruth Little in her thesis; The Architecture of a Lamented Genius, Thomas Alexander Tefft, submitted in 1971 to Brown University towards a master's degree:

[He was] not interested in ecclesiogical correctness, for his major concern was functionality. He advocated the creative interpretation of mediaeval styles, and felt that "...the adaptation of buildings to our present modes of worship with uninterrupted spaciousness and good acoustic qualities, has hardly been seriously attempted."

His contribution can be seen as one of functional adaptation of a mediaeval style to current needs and means. St. Paul's Church exhibits its spaciousness in its honest structural timbering and unhindered openness. With these, and its generous window areas, its simplified mode of decoration, it achieves what Miss Little terms a "looseness of massing' which here and in other Tefft buildings contributes to a flexible plan. St. Paul's Church deserves attention as a minor landmark of 19th-century architectural forms and freedom and as a major one in the small-scale townscape of Wickford.
# Major Bibliographical References


Tefft, Thomas Alexander: Collection of original drawings of plans, elevations, perspective renderings in Brown University Archives, Providence, Rhode Island.

## Geographical Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corner</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>SE</td>
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<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>0° 00' 00&quot;</td>
<td>0° 00' 00&quot;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Defining a Rectangle Locating the Property

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41° 31' 09&quot; N</td>
<td>71° 26' 59.21&quot; W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Defining the Center Point of a Property of Less Than One Acre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71° 26' 59.21&quot; W</td>
<td>71° 26' 59.21&quot; W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### List All States and Counties for Properties Overlapping State or County Boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State:</th>
<th>Code:</th>
<th>County:</th>
<th>Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Form Prepared By:**

E. Christopher Bene, Consultant

**Organization:**

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

**Street and Number:**

State House, 90 Smith Street

**City or Town:**

Providence

**State:**

Rhode Island, 02903

**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 [x]
- Local [ ]

**Name:**

[Name]

**Title:**

[Title]

**Date:**

[Date]

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

Chief, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

**ATTEST:**

[ATTEST]

Keeper of The National Register

**Date:**

[Date]
**1. NAME**

COMMON: St. Paul's Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: 76 Main Street, Wickford

CITY OR TOWN: North Kingston

STATE: Rhode Island

**3. PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT: Eric Hertfelder

DATE OF PHOTO: January, 1972

NEGATIVE FILED AT: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Room 201, 265 Melrose Street, Providence, R.I. 02907

**4. IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIPTIVE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.:

exterior from the north-west
1. NAME:
   COMMON: St. Paul's Church
   AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER: 76 Main Street, Wickford
   CITY OR TOWN: North Kingstown
   STATE: Rhode Island

3. PHOTO REFERENCE
   PHOTO CREDIT: Ross S. McElwee
   DATE OF PHOTO: 1971
   NEGATIVE FILED AT: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House, 90 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

4. IDENTIFICATION
   DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
   Exterior from east, showing side-chapel and its entrance.
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: St. Paul's Church
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION
STREET AND NUMBER: 76 Main Street, Wickford
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4. IDENTIFICATION
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

interior of nave, looking north toward the choir loft
GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES

Latitude: 41° 34' 17.09" N
Longitude: 71° 26' 59.21" W
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<th><strong>STATE</strong></th>
<th>Rhode Island</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COUNTY</strong></td>
<td>Washington</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROPERTY MAP FORM**

(To be included on all maps)

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.