

UP TO DATE 7/77

Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)  
(Type in entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
First Baptist Meeting House

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
First Baptist Meeting House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
75 North Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence 1st Congressional District

STATE: Rhode Island      CODE: 44      COUNTY: Providence      CODE: 007

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Baptist Church

STREET AND NUMBER:  
75 North Main Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence      STATE: Rhode Island      CODE: 44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Providence City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Dorrance and Washington Streets

CITY OR TOWN: Providence      STATE: Rhode Island      CODE: 44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Building Survey (28 photos, 1774 and 1789 drawings) 4 data pages

DATE OF SURVEY: 1900, 1937, 1939, 1962     Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Division of Prints and Photographs

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Library of Congress/Annex

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D.C.      CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Rhode Island  
COUNTY: Providence  
ENTRY NUMBER  
GATE  
FOR NPS USE ONLY

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

(NATIONAL HISTORIC INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description second page

These pilasters are carried around the east wall where they frame the pulpit and sounding board by supporting a keystone elliptical arch molding. This monumental central feature is flanked by large double doors with eared frames topped by broken pediments. Between the pulpit and the sounding board is a Palladian window.

Several other structural changes occurred throughout the nineteenth century. In 1832 the high pulpit and original square pews were removed and the woodwork was painted white. In 1834 the organ, given by Nicholas Brown II, was installed. This was enlarged and rebuilt in 1884 and 1929, but the original case and many of the original pipes have survived. Also in 1884 an addition was made to the east end of the building. Here a new baptistry was installed and a stained glass window inserted in the east wall of the addition. The Waterford glass chandelier is original, given by Hope Brown in 1792.

In 1957, through the interest of John D. Rockefeller Jr., the entire building was renovated and strengthened, the white paint on the interior woodwork was changed to the original sage green, and the high pulpit and sounding board were restored along the lines of the first design. The baptistry added in 1884 was closed off from the main auditorium by means of a reconstructed Palladian window, rebuilt in the position of the original.

BOUNDARY

The First Baptist Meeting House property occupies a full block bounded on the north by the south curb of Thomas Street, on the east by the west curb of Benefit Street, on the south by the north curb of Waterman Street and on the west by the east curb of North Main Street, an area of approximately 1.1 acres.

## DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated     Ruins     Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered     Unaltered     Moved     Original Site

(Check One)

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The First Baptist Meeting House was originally eighty feet square, with doors on all four sides, the main entrance being at the west end under the tower. The main body of the church is a two story frame structure with a low pitched roof and gable ends. Wooden quoins visually support the corners adding a vertical emphasis to the horizontal clapboarding and wooden beltcourse at the second story. Two rows of round-headed keystone windows surround the entire building over a high basement with rectangular windows. The graceful spire rises from a projecting pedimented two-story porch or tower with wooden quoins and a modillioned cornice on the gable, like those of the main structure. In the center of the upper story of the pavilion is a Palladian window. The entrance itself is framed by a freestanding pedimented Doric portico. Although the beautifully proportioned and ornamented spire is the major focal point of the building, it lacks unity with the rest of the building in both scale and quality.

This lack of coherence reveals Brown's amateur methods of design. Instead of planning the building as a whole, he gathered parts from various plates in Gibbs' book and adjusted them to accommodate the building. The tower was taken almost line for line from one of the rejected designs for St. Martin's which Gibbs illustrated in his book. A Boston master carpenter, James Summer, was brought to Providence to execute the design in wood, eliminating only the non-architectural ornament.

Originally painted to imitate grained stone, it would have had an even stronger resemblance to the prototype. Gibbs' steeple however, was designed to mount a full Corinthian portico; Brown used instead a small one story portico from another plate, Gibbs' design for Marybone Chapel. The first stage of the spire is square, with quoined corners, relating it to the porch on which it rests. Above this an almost temple like pavilion sits, pedimented on all four sides, with arched openings below, framed by Ionic pilasters. The third and fourth stages are octagonal, diminishing in size, with arched windows and Corinthian pilasters. Ornamental vases or urns at the angles of each stage, decrease proportionately in size, maintaining the upward movement of forms.

On the interior, the Square auditorium is divided into nave and side aisles by a row of four fluted Doric columns on each side which carry an elliptical ceiling and groin-vaulted gallery. A balcony cuts through the columns on both sides. This arrangement is a somewhat simplified version of Gibbs' design for Marybone Chapel, also illustrated in his book. The broad shallow plaster vault over the nave and the groin vaulted side bays are unornamented and create a lofty expansive space, accented by their light, graceful springing from the slender Doric columns. Fluted doric pilasters along the wall correspond to the columns and provide support for the vaults of the side bays.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1774-75

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |   |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Political      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | losophy                                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science        | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian                                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The First Baptist Meeting House, erected in Providence Rhode Island in 1774-75, is an important example of late Georgian church design in the American colonies. Joseph Brown, a wealthy merchant and professor at Brown University, was in part responsible for the design, based upon an unexecuted variant for St. Martins-in-the-Fields by James Gibbs. The building reflects its New England heritage in its frame and clapboard construction and in its originally square, meeting house plan. Although perhaps not as elegant as Christ Church in Philadelphia (1727-57), with its wealth of Baroque detail executed in brick, or as refined as Kings Chapel in Boston (1761) with its well proportioned portico and fine granite masonry, The First Baptist Meeting House with its well proportioned, elaborate spire retains a strength and dignity which makes it one of the most beautiful eighteenth century churches in America.

HISTORY

In 1638 Roger Williams founded the first Baptist Church in America. For sixty years, services were held in houses of members until the sixth pastor, Pardon Tillinghast, built the first church. In 1774 when it was decided that a new church was needed, a site was chosen and Joseph Brown, amateur architect, and Jonathan Hammond, master carpenter, were sent to Boston to view churches and meetinghouses there. A committee was formed called The Charitable Baptist Society and was granted a Charter of Incorporation giving it the power to receive and hold property. The meeting house was completed in 1775 as an 80 foot square building seating about twelve hundred persons. The design, selected by Joseph Brown, was based upon several plates from James Gibbs' Book of Architecture, 1728, which was owned by Brown. The plan was adapted to conform to the square, non axial building of the traditional meeting house to disassociate it from Anglican worship. Originally an aisle ran through the middle at right angles to the side aisles with doors opening on all sides. In 1832 the box pews were removed and the present longitudinal ones installed which changed the original orientation of the church. This was further disrupted in 1884 when an addition was made to the east end of the building.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance second page

With two exceptions (1804 and 1832) Brown University's commencement has been held in the Meetinghouse since 1776. One of these graduates, John D. Rockefeller Jr. funded a complete rehabilitation in 1957-58 and the building remains today both a useful house for an active religious community and a fine example of late Georgian church architecture.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Downing, Antoinette F., Early Homes of Rhode Island, Richmond, Va., 1937.  
 Isham, Norman M., The Meeting House of the First Baptist Church in Providence, Providence R.I., 1925.  
 King, Henry M., "The First Baptist Church, Providence, Rhode Island," Old Time New England, XXXIV, No 3, January, 1944.  
 Marlowe, George F., Churches of Old New England, New York, 1947.  
 Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture, New York, 1952.  
 Pierson, William H. Jr., American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial -Classical Styles, Garden City, N.Y., 1970.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		UTM	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

19.299930.4633190

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1.1 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Patricia Heintzelman, architectural historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1967.

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey DATE: 1/20/75

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L. Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: 11

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register of Historic Places as a Landmark.

Designated: 10/9/60

**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
Charles Snell  
**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST: Arthur Jensen 7/24/75  
 Boundary Affirmed:  
 Director, OAHPS  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**  
**(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)**  
(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
First Baptist Meeting House

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
First Baptist Meeting House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
75 North Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

1st Congressional District

STATE Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Providence	CODE 007
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Baptist Church

STREET AND NUMBER:  
75 North Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 44
------------------------	------------

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Providence City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Dorrance and Washington Streets

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE Rhode Island	CODE 44
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Division of Prints and Photographs

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CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE: D.C.	CODE 11
----------------	------------

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
Rhode Island

COUNTY:  
Providence

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The First Baptist Meeting House was originally eighty feet square, with doors on all four sides, the main entrance being at the west end under the tower. The main body of the church is a two story frame structure with a low pitched roof and gable ends. Wooden quoins visually support the corners adding a vertical emphasis to the horizontal clapboarding and wooden beltcourse at the second story. Two rows of round-headed keystone windows surround the entire building over a high basement with rectangular windows. The graceful spire rises from a projecting pedimented two-story porch or tower with wooden quoins and a modillioned cornice on the gable, like those of the main structure. In the center of the upper story of the pavilion is a Palladian window. The entrance itself is framed by a freestanding pedimented Doric portico. Although the beautifully proportioned and ornamented spire is the major focal point of the building, it lacks unity with the rest of the building in both scale and quality.

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Rhode Island	
COUNTY	
Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description second page

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BOUNDARY

The First Baptist Meeting House property occupies a full block bounded on the north by the south curb of Thomas Street, on the east by the west curb of Benefit Street, on the south by the north curb of Waterman Street and on the west by the east curb of North Main Street, an area of approximately 1.1 acres.

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1774-75

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The First Baptist Meeting House, erected in Providence Rhode Island in 1774-75, is an important example of late Georgian church design in the American colonies. Joseph Brown, a wealthy merchant and professor at Brown University, was in part responsible for the design, based upon an unexecuted variant for St. Martins-in-the-Fields by James Gibbs. The building reflects its New England heritage in its frame and clapboard construction and in its originally square, meeting house plan. Although perhaps not as elegant as Christ Church in Philadelphia (1727-57), with its wealth of Baroque detail executed in brick, or as refined as Kings Chapel in Boston (1761) with its well proportioned portico and fine granite masonry, The First Baptist Meeting House with its well proportioned, elaborate spire retains a strength and dignity which makes it one of the most beautiful eighteenth century churches in America.

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Rhode Island	
COUNTY	
Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance second page

With two exceptions (1804 and 1832) Brown University's commencement has been held in the Meetinghouse since 1776. One of these graduates, John D. Rockefeller Jr. funded a complete rehabilitation in 1957-58 and the building remains today both a useful house for an active religious community and a fine example of late Georgian church architecture.

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 Pierson, William H. Jr., American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial -Classical Styles, Garden City, N.Y., 1970.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		UTM	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		°	'	"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		°	'	"
SE	° ' "	° ' "		°	'	"
SW	° ' "	° ' "		°	'	"
				19.299930.4633190		

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1.1 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Patricia Heintzeman, architectural historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1967.

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey DATE: 1/20/75

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L. Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: 11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

**(NATIONAL HISTORIC**

Name LAN...

Title \_\_\_\_\_

**(NATIONAL HISTORIC**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register of Historic Landmarks

Designated: 10/19/1960  
**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Charles Snell  
**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST Boundary Affirmed:

Charles Snell 7/24/75

Director, OHP

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Form 10-317  
(Sept. 1967)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Rhode Island	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. Theme XX, Architecture (Colonial)
3. NAME(S) OF SITE First Baptist Meeting House	4. APPROX. ACREAGE .5 acre
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) 75 North Main Street, between Waterman and Thomas Streets, Providence, Providence County.	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Baptist Church	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)	

The First Baptist Meeting House, designed by Joseph Brown and erected in 1774-75, is an outstanding example of the elaborate type of Late Georgian church structure that was utilized in New England cities during the last half of the 18th century. It is also the oldest Baptist church edifice in the United States.

Joseph Brown, well-to-do merchant and amateur architect, is credited with the design of this church, which he based largely on the plans of English churches reproduced in his personal copy of James Gibbs' Book of Architecture (1728).

The church was originally 80 feet square, with doors on all four sides, the main entrance being at the west end under the tower. The main body of the church is a wood two-story frame structure with low-pitched roof and two tiers of round-headed windows. The imposing spire rests on a projecting square tower with a modillioned cornice and wooden quoins at the corners like those on the main structure; the tower and spire rise to a height of 185 feet. Modeled after an unexecuted design (plate 30) by Gibbs for Martin's-in-the-Field, London, the features of the spire were detailed by James Sumner, a master carpenter, of Boston; tower and spire were originally "painted with different colors," probably marbleizing. The first stage of the spire is square and open, adorned with coupled Ionic pilasters with arched opening, entablature, and pediment on each side while the octagonal second and third stages have arched windows and are adorned with Corinthian pilasters. Vase ornaments at the angles, proportionately smaller at each stage, minimize the effect of the setbacks. The proportionate

(Continued)

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)

See page 3.

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

Historic American Building Survey: (28 photos, 1774 and 1789 drawings, c. 1900, 1937, 1939).

10. PHOTOGRAPHS* 44288-92 ATTACHED Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Excellent	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Active Church	13. DATE OF VISIT Sept. 17, 1967
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) Charles W. Snell	15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE Nov. 14, 1967	

\* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS  
SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

Page 2.

STATE	NAME(S) OF SITE
Rhode Island	First Baptist Meeting House

7. Continued:

height of the stages and their transition from square to octagon is very ably treated. Stairs in the tower lead to the galleries.

The interior, which was lengthened during the 19th century, bears a strong resemblance to two of James Gibbs' churches, Marylebone Chapel and St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. The square auditorium is divided into a nave with single aisles by rows of four giant, fluted Doric columns on each side. These columns are broken by a gallery around the rear and both sides. A shallow plaster vault over the nave meets groined vaults over the gallery bays. The east end was originally flat. The fine Palladian window set with clear glass was moved backward in 1884 by the addition of a small channel. Despite the loss of original pews and pulpit and an interesting second gallery at the west end, where Negro slaves used to sit, the interior preserved most of the original fine detail of windows, doors, and cornice. Over the nave still hangs a beautiful cut-glass chandelier, which was brought from England in 1792.

In 1956 committees were appointed by the church to study ways and means to restore the building. A gift from John D. Rockefeller, Sr., a Brown University alumnus, made possible a complete rehabilitation and restoration. This work, done under the supervision of Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, architects, and Antoinette F. Downing, was completed in 1957-58 and was largely concentrated on the east end, where the baptistry, added in 1884, was closed off from the main auditorium by means of a reconstructed Palladian window, which was rebuilt in the position of the original window. The high pulpit was also reconstructed along the lines of the original design and the white paint was replaced by sage, the original interior color.

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6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . . Page 3.

STATE Rhode Island	NAME(S) OF SITE First Baptist Meeting House
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8. References:

-Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952), 461-462, figs. 385-86; Aymar Embury, II, Early American Churches (New York, 1914), 66-67; Elise Lathrop, Old New England Churches (Rutland, Vermont, 1938), 136, 140-41; George F. Marlowe, Churches of Old New England (New York, 1947), 117-123; Edward F. Rines, Old Historic Churches of America (New York, 1936), 82-84; James G. Vanderpool, "Historical Development of Architecture in the U.S.A., 1632-1912," (N.P.S. Ms., 1966), 82; ; Rhode Island, A Guide to the Smallest State (American Guide Series) (Boston, 1937), 264-265; Antoinette F. Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Va., 1937), 271-276; Brown Alumni Monthly Vol.58 (May, 1958). Henry M. King, "The First Baptist Church, Providence, Rhode Island, Old Time New England, XXXIV, No. 3, (Jan. 1944), 39-43; Norman M. Isham, The Meeting House of the First Baptist Church in Providence (Providence, 1925).

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE <b>Rhode Island</b>	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. <b>IX, Development of the English Colonies, 1700-1775</b>
3. NAME(S) OF SITE <b>First Baptist Meetinghouse</b>	4. APPROX. ACREAGE
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) <b>North Main Street between Waterman and Thomas Streets, Providence</b>	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) <b>Church property</b>	

## 7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)

Both architecturally and historically, the First Baptist meetinghouse is one of New England's most notable public buildings. Its origins date from the establishment of the first Baptist organization in America, founded in Providence in 1639, although the present structure was not built until 1774-75. The church was dedicated in May, 1775, a few weeks after the outbreak of the Revolution, but in design and feeling the structure belongs to the Colonial period.

When the congregation decided to build a new church, a committee of its members was sent to Boston to study churches and meetinghouses and record their forms and dimensions. Joseph Brown of the famous Providence family, and well-to-do merchant and amateur architect in his own right, is credited with the design of the church. This he based on an unexecuted design for St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, London, and on the plans of other English churches reproduced in his personal copy of Gibbs' Book of Architecture. The church as originally built was 80 feet square, with a door on each side and the main entrance under the spire on the west end. A gabled extension with a pedimented portico on the west end housed the stairs to the tower and spire, which rose to a height of 185 feet. The elaborate spire was the work of James Sumner, a master carpenter of Boston. An unusual feature of the body of the church are the two tiers of round-headed windows. The low-pitched roof and the squareness of the structure combine to give the church an aspect of spaciousness and dignity. The interior, all white, is trimmed in wood. Galleries run along each side, supported by giant Doric columns. Over the five bays on each side are groined vaults which join the shallow vault over the nave.

The interior was extended in the 19th century, and the original pews, pulpit and slave gallery are gone, but otherwise the meetinghouse has suffered little alteration. Happily it has survived to illustrate the maturity of native architecture in the last years of Colonial America when the country stood on the threshold of independence. (cont'd)

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)

Aymar Embury, Early American Churches (New York, 1914); George F. Marlowe, Churches of Old New England (New York, 1947); Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York 1952); Edward F. Rines, Old Historic Churches of America (New York, 1936).

## 9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

Historic American Buildings Survey (28 photos c. 1900, 1937, 1939, and including copies of drawings of 1774 and 1789).

10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION <b>Good</b>	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) <b>Church</b>	13. DATE OF VISIT <b>8/8/58</b>
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <b>Charles E. Shedd, Jr.</b>		15. TITLE <b>Historic Sites Historian</b>	16. DATE <b>5/6/60</b>

\* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/4 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS  
SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

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STATE Rhode Island	NAME(S) OF SITE First Baptist Meetinghouse
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7. Importance and Description (cont'd)

In 1956 committees were appointed by the church to study ways and means to restore the building. A gift of \$500,000 from Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., made possible complete rehabilitation and restoration which, it is estimated, will add at least another hundred years to the life and use of the Meetinghouse. The major change has been the reconstruction of the high pulpit with sounding board on the basis of the original design.

Form 10-317  
(Sept. 1957)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Rhode Island		2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. IX, Development of the English Colonies, 1700-1775	
3. NAME(S) OF SITE First Baptist Meetinghouse			4. APPROX. ACREAGE
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) <del>North Main Street between Waterman and Thomas Streets, Providence</del>			
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9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HAIS, etc.)

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10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		11. CONDITION Good	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Church	13. DATE OF VISIT 8/8/58
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) Charles E. Shedd, Jr.		15. TITLE Historic Sites Historian		16. DATE 5/6/60

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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

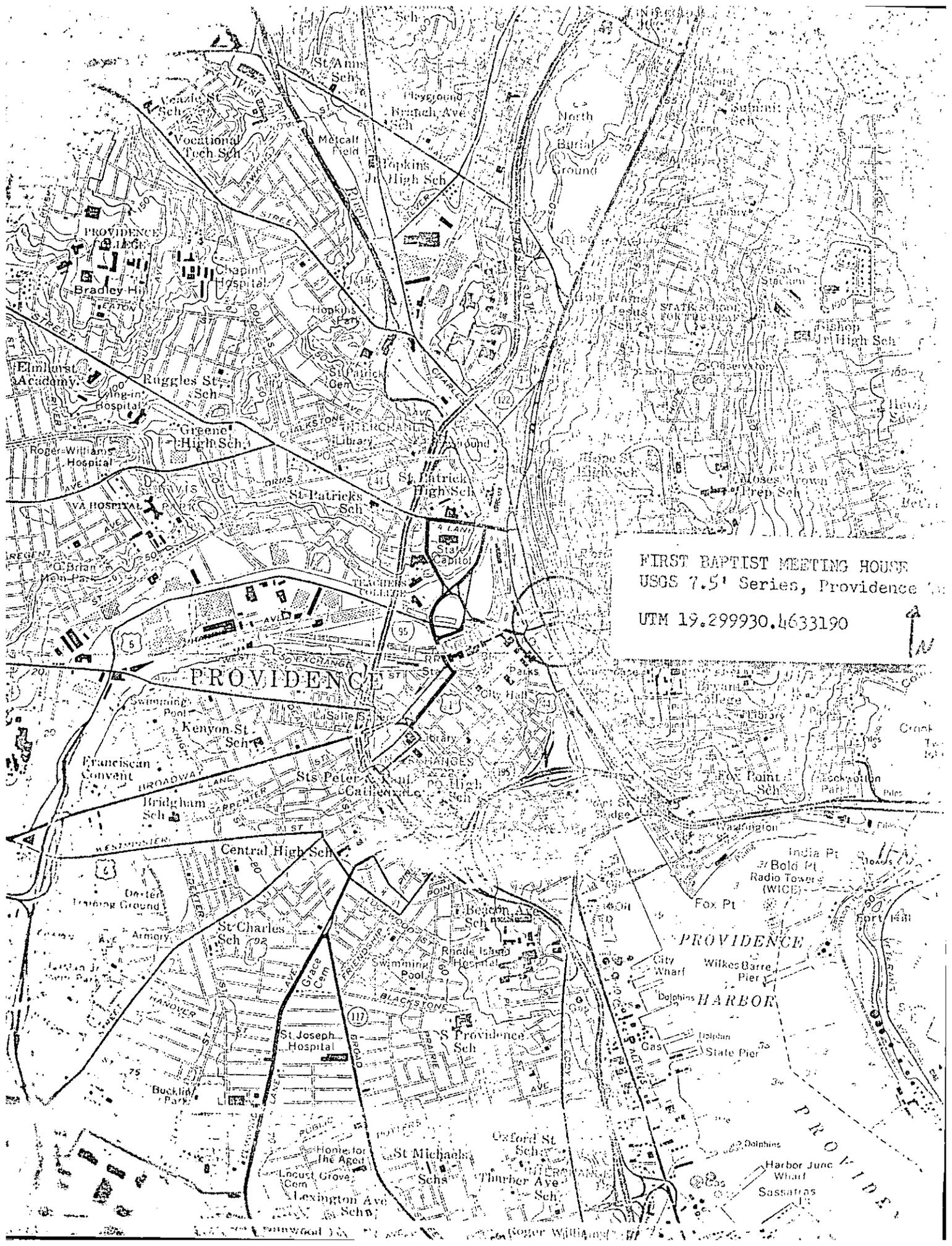
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STATE	NAME(S) OF SITE
Rhode Island	First Baptist Meetinghouse

7. Importance and Description (cont'd)

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FIRST BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE  
USOS 7.5' Series, Providence  
UTM 19.299930.4633190



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 First Baptist Meeting House		AND/OR HISTORIC First Baptist Meeting House	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS) Rhode Island (44) Providence (007)
2. LOCATION STATE Rhode Island		COUNTY Providence	TOWN Providence
STREET AND NUMBER 75 North Main Street			
3. PHOTO REFERENCE PHOTO CREDIT Norman S. Watson		DATE undated, verified 1974	NEGATIVE FILED AT First Baptist Meeting House, Providence, Rhode Island
4. IDENTIFICATION DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.			

Interior, view of east end

FORM 10-301 A  
(6/72)

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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COMMON First Baptist Church	AND/OR HISTORIC First Baptist Church	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS) Rhode Island (44) Providence (007)
2. LOCATION		
STATE Rhode Island	COUNTY Providence	TOWN Providence
STREET AND NUMBER 75 North Main Street		
3. PHOTO REFERENCE		
PHOTO CREDIT Norman S. Watson	DATE undated, verified 1974	NEGATIVE FILED AT First Baptist Church, Providence, Rhode Island
4. IDENTIFICATION		
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

View of church from the west.

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		AND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE <i>(Assigned by NPS)</i>
First Baptist Meeting House		First Baptist Meeting House	Rhode Island (44) Providence (007)
2. LOCATION STATE		COUNTY	TOWN
Rhode Island		Providence	Providence
STREET AND NUMBER			
75 North Main Street			
3. PHOTO REFERENCE PHOTO CREDIT		DATE	NEGATIVE FILED AT
Patricia Heintzelman		October, 1974	Historic Sites Survey, NPS
4. IDENTIFICATION DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.			

View of organ and west end of church.

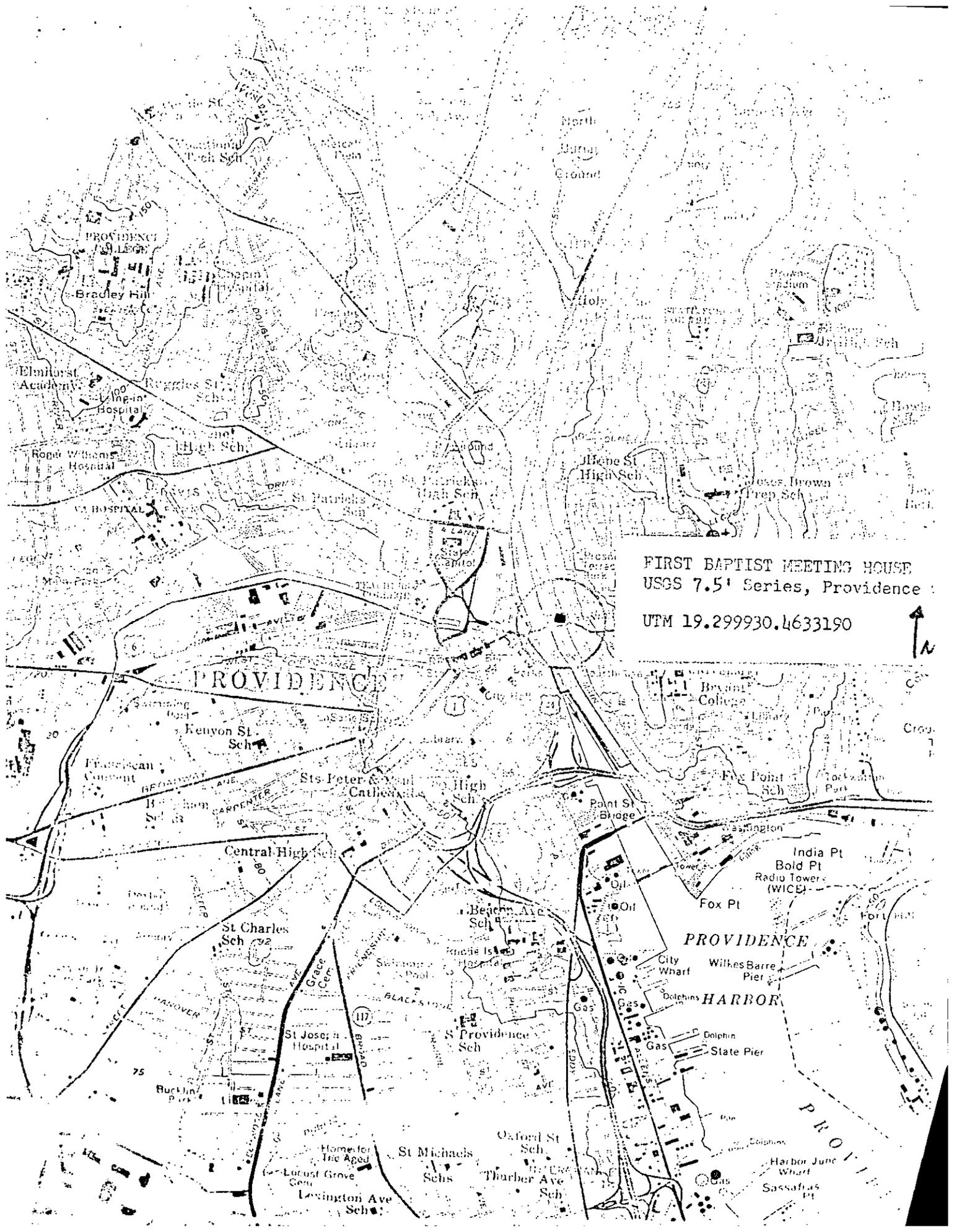
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

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

STATE	
Rhode Island	
COUNTY	
Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

<b>1. NAME</b>			
COMMON: First Baptist Meeting House			
AND/OR HISTORIC: First Baptist Meeting House			
<b>2. LOCATION</b>			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
75 North Main Street			
CITY OR TOWN:			
Providence			
STATE:		CODE	COUNTY:
Rhode Island		44	Providence
			CODE
			007
<b>3. MAP REFERENCE</b>			
SOURCE:			
U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Providence Quadrangle			
SCALE: 1:24000			
DATE: 1957, photorevised 1970			
<b>4. REQUIREMENTS</b>			
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS			
1. Property boundaries where required.			
2. North arrow.			
3. Latitude and longitude reference.			



FIRST BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE  
USGS 7.5' Series, Providence  
UTM 19.299930.4633190



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

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

STATE	
Rhode Island	
COUNTY	
Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

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AND/OR HISTORIC: First Baptist Meeting House			
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Providence			
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**  
*(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)*

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First Baptist Meeting House		First Baptist Meeting House	Rhode Island (44) Providence (007)
2. LOCATION STATE		COUNTY	TOWN
Rhode Island		Providence	Providence
STREET AND NUMBER			
75 North Main Street			
3. PHOTO REFERENCE PHOTO CREDIT		DATE	NEGATIVE FILED AT
Patricia Heintzelman		October, 1974	Historic Sites Survey, NPS
4. IDENTIFICATION DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.			

View of organ and west end of church.

FORM 10-301 A  
(6/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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STATE Rhode Island	COUNTY Providence	TOWN Providence
STREET AND NUMBER 75 North Main Street		
3. PHOTO REFERENCE		
PHOTO CREDIT Norman S. Watson	DATE undated, verified 1974	NEGATIVE FILED AT First Baptist Church, Providence, Rhode Island
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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

View of church from the west.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
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Interior, view of east end