

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

1. NAME

COMMON:
Former reservation of the Narragansett Tribe of Indians

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Historic Village of the Narragansetts in Charlestown

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Contained within the area bounded by Routes 2 and 112 on the east, Route 1 on the south, Kings Factory Road on the west, and Route 91 on the north.

CITY OR TOWN: Charlestown

STATE Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Washington	CODE 009
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input checked="" 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: Multiple

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Town Hall, Town of Charlestown

STREET AND NUMBER: Route 2

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

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Various surveys, historic and recent

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Charlestown Town Hall

STREET AND NUMBER: Route 2

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

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DATE:

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input checked="" 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 Historic Village of the Narragansetts includes an area of approximately 8.75 square miles in the town of Charlestown, Rhode Island bounded by Routes 2 and 112 on the east, Route 1 on the south, Kings Factory Road on the west and Route 91 on the north. It encompasses School House and Deep Ponds as well as the Indian Cedar Swamp. The area contains a spring, some large rock outcroppings and hillocks, is now sparsely inhabited and largely overgrown with 20 to 30 year old trees.

From 1709 to 1880 this district was the nucleus of the reservation of the Narragansett Indians. It became a partly self-sustaining community of Indians whose economic life depended on sheep raising, cedar tree cutting and marginal farming within the area. The integrity of the area has been little impaired by recent development. Some residential and commercial development has occurred on the periphery, but this in no way detracts from the interior of the district, where the setting of the village, church, and other physical remnants in their relation to the land remains largely intact. Because this area was an Indian enclave during the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, it is very important as an archaeological site. Some work has been carried out; there is great potential for new work and further discovery. The boundaries of the present nomination have been drawn with the purpose of protecting the archaeological potential of the district.

Presently the area contains the following historic features:

I. Those still in use:

CHAR 00200 1. The Indian Church, facing south on the meeting grounds, was constructed by the Indians of granite blocks in 1859 on the site of the earlier wooden church building built in 1750. The church is a small (40 feet by 28 feet) rectangular building of simple Greek Revival style, built of hand-hewn regularly-coursed granite blocks quarried locally by the families of the congregation. The "new" church incorporated in its northern wall part of the old sheathing and plastering, and marks of the old chimney are still discernible within.

The exterior displays such characteristics of Greek Revival style as the use of the pediment or gable end of the building as the front, an overhanging eave above a wooden entablature, and heavy stone sills underlining the windows of the eastern and western walls.

The very plain interior reveals a mixture of Greek Revival and late-Colonial elements. The plastered ceiling and walls and horizontal wooden-wall sheathing to window level are typical late-colonial treatments. The deeply-recessed windows (three in each side wall and one in the front or southern wall), with their narrow wooden

(See Continuation sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet) 1.

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7. Description

frames capped by flaring keystone-like lintels, indicate the Greek Revival influence. The church hall is furnished with the original (1859) wooden pews, a small wood-burning stove (which vents in a chimney at the northeast), a piano and an organ. The reading desk, with a single pew behind it, is located at the southern end of a raised dais between the two entrance doorways. The room was originally illuminated by a brass chandelier and wall sconces, all of which have been stolen recently.

2. Some roads and trails, especially those that lead from main roads to the church and site of the school house.

3. The August meeting grounds, immediately in front of the church.

II. Ruins and traces of features of communal use.

1. The site of the Indian School House and its carriage house, demolished in 1968. The school house was a wooden structure erected in the 1740's about a half a mile from the church. It was attended until 1880 and was one of the oldest public schools in the United States. It was used by the tribe as a Meeting house for elections and discussions.

2. Faint traces of a saw mill near the church and school.

3. Traces of roads connecting house sites with the main roads, the church and school.

4. A pound for stray cows.

III. Ruins of over 25 houses and their outbuildings:

1. These are discernible in the form of dry masonry stone lined cellars, stone building foundations, stone lined wells, bricks from chimneys and refuse dumps. Six or more houses are very close to the church; others are distributed over the area. The more outlying and isolated sites are complexes of house, barn, smoke house, well and animal pens. Stone fences abound, separating properties and fields of various uses, and bordering the roads and trails in the area. Stone work has long been a special skill of the tribe, and oral tradition has it that many of the ubiquitous stone fences in the area were built as "busy work" projects when there was nothing better to do. Cement work is present in the more recently abandoned structures.

IV. Graveyards:

1. There are at least 14 of these of various sizes and dates of use. Some are small family plots and near house sites. Some are large and communal such as the two near the church. Two are enclosed in stone walls. Some grave stones are smoothed and professionally engraved, some

8. 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) from 1709 to about 1930

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" 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 rapid expansion of cities and industrial sites have destroyed much of the physical remnants of Indian culture, both prehistoric and historic. Thus the site of this abandoned village is a rare and possibly unique example in the northeastern United States of an area of concentrated Indian occupancy from the 18th, throughout the 19th and into the early 20th centuries, the Indians being almost totally acculturated to European culture, yet filling a particular social and economic niche and displaying a unique form of adaptation to European lifeways. Living under a reservation and later a non-reservation status, the Indian community remained an enclave in the midst of increasing numbers of residents of other ethnic origins. Some of the area's land has never been owned by non-Indians. Their community included a protestant church, first built in the 1740's by the Indians themselves and from the first ministered by Indian preachers. It also included a school, also built in the 1740's but no longer attended after 1880.

The year 1880 is very important in the history of the Indian community as the year in which the tribe sold its commonly owned property to the state and the Indians were thus detribalized. By then, however, many families owned their homes and farms as private property.

By the 1930's the area was almost totally abandoned by the Indians for economic reasons. Mainly the lack of nearby means of livelihood, thus leaving the stonework remains of houses, barns, wells and animal pens undisturbed. There are over 25 house sites or farm complexes and 14 graveyards. Through the mapping, now in progress, of the distribution of these house sites with reference to the church, school, the network of roads and the ponds, a reconstruction of the social, economic, religious and recreational life of the inhabitants is emerging. This study is greatly aided by interviews with Indians who remember some of the houses and their inhabitants when occupied. These interviews aid in the interpretation of architectural features as well as reveal particular farming and social habits.

(See continuation sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. Description (continued)

are roughly dressed with names and dates rudely chiseled, some are simple unmarked head and foot stones. All three of these types may appear side by side. The most important grave historically is that of Samuel Niles, the first Indian Minister of the Indian church, who died in 1785. His is a finely smoothed, engraved and carved head stone accompanied by an engraved foot stone. The oldest dated grave is similar in quality and is dated 1753. The most recent grave is by the church and dates in the 1950's. As in the case of the old roads and trails, the communal graveyards are partly purely historic and partly still in use, linking the past with the present.

8. Significance

This village site is unique or rare in the northeastern United States because of the extensive use of stone by the Indian builders and because of the high quality of their workmanship in the masonry used in the construction of buildings and wells. The acquisition of the skill of stone masonry took place while the Indians were indentured servants to the colonists as a retribution for their having taken part in King Philip's War in 1675. Most of the masonry work is dry but the church, built in its present form in 1859, is an example of the high level of wet masonry work achieved by the Indians by then. (The Indians are still stone masonry experts in central Rhode Island)

Although the separate elements of the life of the inhabitants of this village were much more European than aboriginal Indian, the particular combination of these formed a distinct pattern of social and economic life. The main sources of cash income were: cutting and sawing trees from the Indian Cedar Swamp, sheepraising and the sale of wool, employment as stone masons in the outer community. The income from these occupations was supplemented by hunting, fishing and farming. The social life revolved around the church, school, the tribal organization and closely knit family and marriage ties. The August meeting of two days' length now, formerly was a two week long series of family reunions.

Protestant Christianity was accepted by the Indians by the 1740's to the extent that they erected a church and have heard Indian ministers ever since. Burial practices were by then Christian in character. By the same date schooling was considered important enough for the Indians to erect and maintain a school in the midst of their community.

Although this is an abandoned village, the church and annual August meeting continue to attract its living descendants into it, keeping alive the memory of this area as an ancestral home.

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(Continuation Sheet)

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Historic Village of the Narragansetts in Charlestown

Features of interest on the district map:

1. Narragansett Indian Church, August meeting grounds, ruins of six houses, the spring, and two cemeteries.
2. Site and ruins of the Indian School House and its carriage house.
3. Stone pound for stray cows.
4. Stone walled cemetery (R.I. Historical Cemetery #44--Charlestown)

NOTE: The mapping of the house sites and other features mentioned in the nomination is not yet complete. The majority of the sites are as yet unexcavated, and for this reason it is unwise to publish their precise location.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arnold, Samuel Greene. 1878. History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Appleton and Co., New York, N. Y.
 Boissevain, Ethel. 1956. The Detribalization of the Narragansett Indians: a Case Study. Ethnohistory, Vol. 3; No. 3.
 Chapin, Howard M. 1931. Sachems of the Narragansetts. Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R. I.
 Potter, Elisha R., Jr. 1835. The Early History of Narragansett. Rhode Island Historical Society. Vol. 3, Providence, R. I.
 Report of the Committee of Investigation; a Historical sketch, and Evidence Taken. Made to the House of Representatives at its January Session, 1880, Providence, 1880.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	41° 27' 15.82"	71° 41' 43.86"		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	41° 27' 15.82"	71° 38' 14.61"		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	41° 23' 4.95"	71° 38' 14.61"		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	41° 23' 4.95"	71° 41' 43.86"		° ' "	° ' "	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 5600 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Ethel Boissevain Lesser, Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, Herbert H. Lehman College of the City University of New York
 ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission DATE: February, 1973
 STREET AND NUMBER: 52 Power Street
 CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island CODE: 44

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
 Name _____
 Title _____
 Date _____

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

 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
 Date _____
 ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register
 Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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	LAND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)
Former reservation of the Narragansett Tribe of Indians	Historic Village of the Narragansetts in Charlestown	
2. LOCATION		
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3. PHOTO REFERENCE		
PHOTO CREDIT	DATE	NEGATIVE FILED AT
Eric Hertfel der	February, 1973	R.I. Historical Preservation Commission, 52 Power Street, Providence, R.I.
4. IDENTIFICATION		
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

View north across the meeting grounds, showing the Narragansett Indian Church.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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COMMON NAME Former reservation of the Narragansett Tribe of In- dians	AND/OR HISTORIC NAME Historic Village of the Narragansetts in Charlestown	NUMERIC CODE <i>(Assigned by NPS)</i>
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STATE Rhode Island	COUNTY Washington	TOWN Charlestown
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3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Chris Bene	DATE June, 1972	NEGATIVE FILED AT R.I. Historical Preservation Commission, 52 Power St., Providence, R.I.
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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

View of graveyard north of the Narragansett Indian Church, with the north wall
of the church in the background.



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Eric Hertfelder

DATE
February, 1973

NEGATIVE FILED AT R.I. Historical
Preservation Commission, 52
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View of unexcavated house site near the Narragansett Indian Church.



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Eric Hertfelder	February, 1973	R.I. Historical Preservation Commission, 52 Power St., Providence, R. I.
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View east across Indian Cedar Swamp, from Kings Factory Road



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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Stone wall surrounding R.I. Historical Cemetery #44 -- Charlestown
(#4 on district map).

MEMO

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

SARAH ZURIER

To _____

PAUL has photo
of church

9/25/01

FORM 10-301 A
(6/72)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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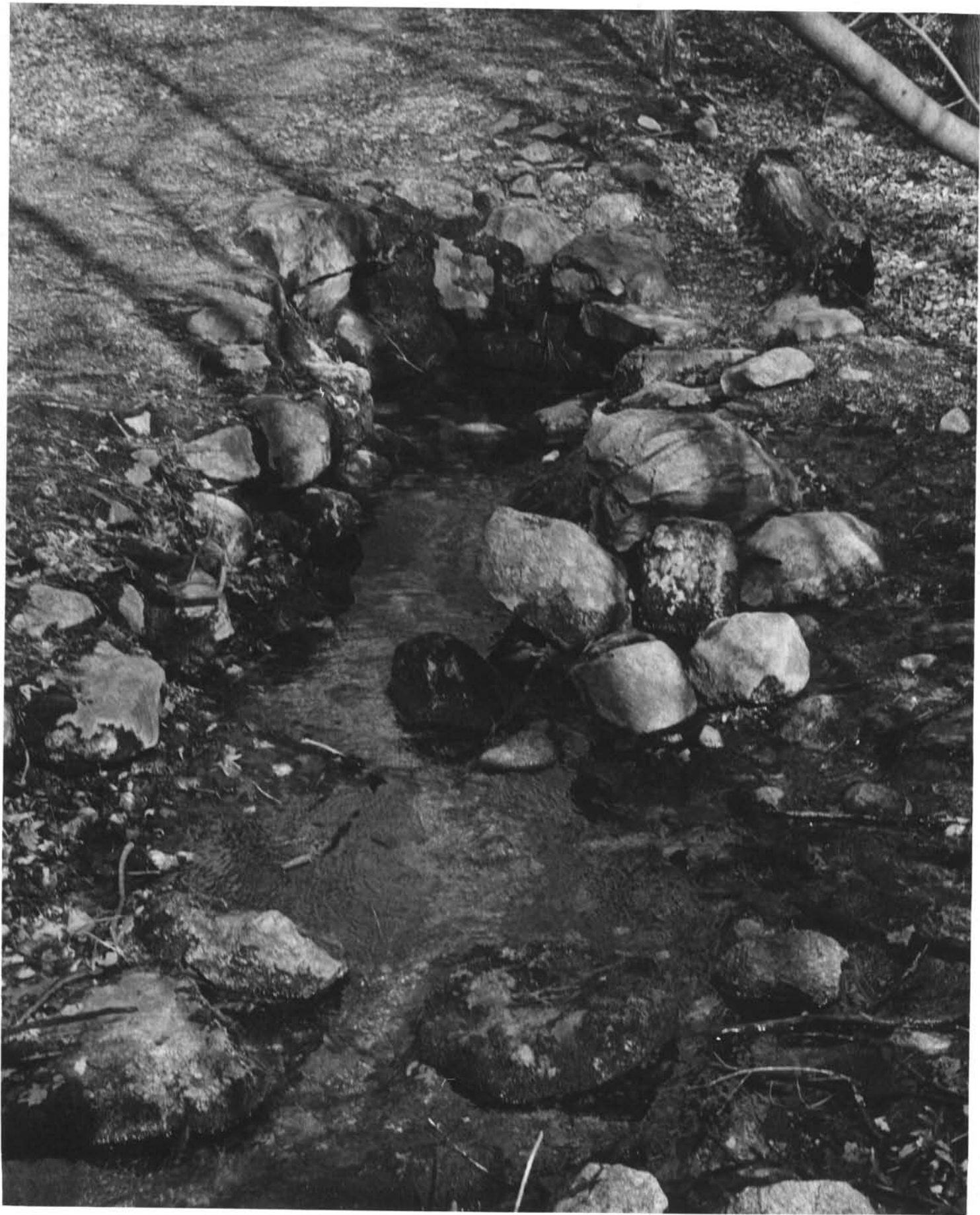
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View of the Narragansett Indian Church from the south-east.



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Spring site near the Narragansett Indian Church.



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Stone pound on Old Mill Road, #3 on district map.



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Detail of stone pound on Old Mill Road (#3 on district map).

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM

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

STATE Rhode Island	
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CITY OR TOWN: Charlestown the north.

STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Washington	CODE 009
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3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE: U.S. Geological Survey

SCALE: 1:24,000

DATE: 1953 (photorevised 1970)

4. REQUIREMENTS

- TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS
1. Property boundaries where required.
 2. North arrow.
 3. Latitude and longitude reference.