

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Narragansett Baptist Church

AND/OR COMMON

South Ferry Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

South Ferry Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Narragansett

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#2 - Hon. Edward Beard

STATE

Rhode Island

VICINITY OF

CODE

44

COUNTY

Washington

CODE

009

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER unused

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography

STREET & NUMBER

South Ferry Road

CITY, TOWN

Narragansett

STATE

Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Narragansett Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER

15 Fifth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Narragansett

STATE

Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Not so represented

DATE

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

South Ferry Church, one of the finest Early Victorian churches still standing in Rhode Island, is set on a hilltop about 1000 feet from Narragansett Bay, across the road and slightly west of the Narragansett Bay Campus of the University of Rhode Island. It is a one-story, gable-roofed frame structure with a whitewashed fieldstone foundation, built on the standard rectangular church plan with a projecting central steeple at the front (south) end. The church measures approximately 24 feet by 44 feet, and the steeple is about 70 feet tall. Wall surfaces are covered with hexagonal-patterned wood shingles now painted white, while window and door openings are covered by flush-board panels painted a dark green, added about 1938 to protect the building from storms. There are four tall arched windows on each side of the church and two shorter, narrower arched windows on the front, flanking the steeple. The first level of the steeple has one small arched window on each side and an arched single-leaf door on the front (the original door, located inside the protective outer door, is composed of flush boards assembled in a chevron pattern), while the second level has paired arched windows on the sides and the front of the tower. The belfry, slightly smaller in plan than the base of the steeple, rises from a short, sloping roof which acts as a transitional element. It has paired arched openings on each of its four sides. The belfry is topped by a broach spire with four arched dormer windows set in the faces which are parallel to the walls of the steeple.

The church's decorative trim is very simple and is derived from the Romanesque architecture of medieval Europe. All of the window openings have plain trim and corbelled sills except the spire dormers, which lack sills but have drip moulds surmounted by acroteria. The door has a drip-mould supported by corbels. On each side of the church the rafters extend beyond the walls to form eaves brackets, while the cornices of the gable ends are ornamented with boards cut to resemble corbel tables. Rows of corbels are set under the pent roof between the steeple base and the belfry, and also along the belfry cornice. Finally, the front corners of the steeple base have been chamfered to make them look like the corner buttresses on the towers of Romanesque and Gothic churches.

The interior of the church is very simple. The base of the steeple forms a vestibule which leads into the auditorium, a rectangular room with a low dais at the front (north) end. The walls are plastered, with the upper portions now painted white and the lower sections sheathed with beaded matchboard wainscoting painted gray. The plain trim of the four windows on each side of the room is painted to match the wainscoting. The auditorium is furnished with rows of pews running from a central aisle to the walls. The two antique Gothic-style side chairs and the pulpit on the dais were installed when the church was restored in 1926 (the original furnishings were removed when the congregation moved to a chapel in

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE 2

Saunderstown, R. I. in 1908). There are a number of commemorative plaques, dedicated to the memories of former church members, attached to the rear (south) wall. The cast iron Victorian lamp holders along the side walls have been converted into electric lights, and a modern electric chandelier, modeled after a 19th-century oil lamp has been installed over the dais.

Currently owned by the University of Rhode Island, South Ferry Church is used occasionally for special events, such as weddings of university students and graduates. The building is kept closed and shuttered the rest of the time. The church is structurally sound but is in need of minor repairs, which the owner would like to undertake with assistance from the National Park Service grant-in-aid program.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

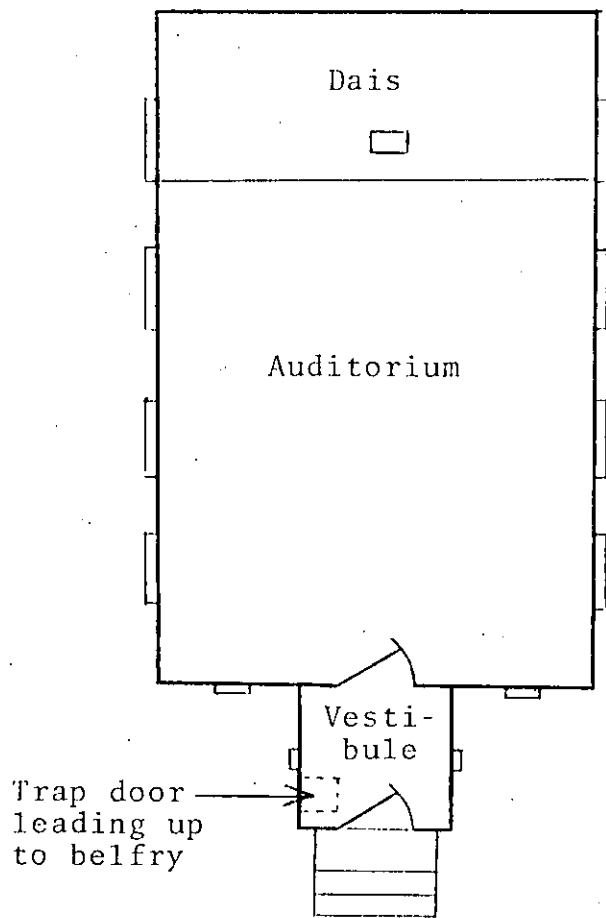
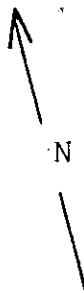
2

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

3



Narragansett Baptist Church
(South Ferry Church)
Narragansett, R.I.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1850-1851 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Thomas A. Tefft

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

South Ferry Church, designed by Thomas A. Tefft, a prominent 19th-century Rhode Island architect, is a cultural resource of statewide significance. In addition to its intrinsic architectural value, the church, visible from much of the surrounding countryside and from Narragansett Bay, is an important landmark which served as a navigation aid to 19th-century mariners bound for the thriving seaport which once stood nearby.

The church originally housed a Baptist congregation, organized 28 July 1850 and chartered in October of that year as the Narragansett Baptist Church. The congregation selected Thomas A. Tefft of Providence to be architect of their meetinghouse. He was a quickly rising young genius, one of the earliest and most original practitioners of the Lombard Romanesque and Renaissance Revival styles in this country. Two years earlier, while still a student at Brown University, he had designed Providence's red-brick Lombard-Romanesque Union Station (now destroyed), which one critic has called "the finest early (railroad) station in the New World."¹ Though by no means as grand as Union Station, South Ferry Church exhibits the same skill in adapting simplified historic architectural forms to new uses. In addition, the church is one of the earliest Victorian structures to use patterned wood shingling to achieve a picturesque effect. Tefft created a very personal, widely admired Romantic Rationalist architectural idiom. He was only 33 when he died in 1859, and the destruction of many of the buildings comprising his rather small oeuvre makes it even more imperative that those structures which have survived be protected. South Ferry Church, therefore, is significant as an example of the work of one of America's lesser-known mid-19th-century master architects.

At the time of its construction, the church overlooked one of the state's most vital rural communities. Ferry service from the foot of what is now South Ferry Road to Conanicut Island was established about 1695. This ferry became the primary means of shipping goods from Washington County plantations to Newport, a major colonial mercantile center. Its importance is attested to by the fact that in 1705 the Post Road from

¹Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, (Baltimore: 1958), p. 89.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

3

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

Westerly, R.I. to Newport was laid out through South Ferry. A village grew up near the ferry landing. It had its heyday in the mid-19th century, when Captain Joseph Eaton operated sixteen schooners from South Ferry, sending local products to New York, Philadelphia, and the West Indies. During this period the village was the pre-eminent settlement in the Narragansett district of the Town of South Kingstown, and the Narragansett post office was located here. There were also a mill, nine tenements, a store and school, ferry offices and a warehouse, a livery stable, a carriagehouse, a powerhouse, and an inn. South Ferry Church was set prominently on high ground to the west of these structures, which were all clustered on lower ground along the shore. Changes in transportation technology led to a decline in the village's shipping industry in the 1870s, and ferry service was finally discontinued in 1899. South Ferry became a rural backwater. World War I drew most of the people away to industrial centers in northern Rhode Island, and the physical fabric of the village was gradually destroyed, leaving the Baptist Church as the chief indication of this location's former status as one of the state's most important 18th- and 19th-century coastal settlements.

South Ferry Church was dedicated 23 January 1851. Within a few years the congregation it housed became extinct, but the Baptists of Narragansett reorganized in 1857 and used the church until 1908. In that year most of the congregation moved to a chapel in Saunderstown, about one mile away, taking the church furnishings with them. The church edifice at South Ferry was sold to the Catholic congregation at Saunders-town, which planned to move the structure to that village, but a faction of the Baptist congregation banded together with former church members from out of town and raised such an outcry that the Narragansett Town Council (the Narragansett District was separated from South Kingstown in 1888 and incorporated in 1901) refused to permit the church to be moved. A society was founded which acquired title to South Ferry Church with the intention of maintaining it as a memorial. By 1926 the church had deteriorated to such an extent that it was nearly condemned, but concerned citizens joined with the church memorial society to repair and restore the structure. The church was used for an annual summer religious service until 1975, when title to the property passed to the University of Rhode Island. In spite of its slightly deteriorated condition, South Ferry Church is still an important visual element within the local landscape, and a priceless and irreplaceable part of the architectural heritage of Rhode Island. The continuous effort to protect South Ferry Church from alteration or destruction serves to indicate the local residents' appreciation of the building's outstanding historical and architectural value.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chapin, Anna A. and Charles V., A History of Rhode Island Ferries, 1640-1923, (Providence: 1925), pp. 263-75.
 Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, (Baltimore: 1958), p. 89.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>19</u>	<u>297480</u>	<u>451961080</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property occupies lot 3, Town of Narragansett Assessors Plat N-C, which has an area of 17,139 square feet.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: Robert O. Jones, Survey Specialist

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Pres. Comm. DATE: April 1977

STREET & NUMBER: 150 Benefit Street TELEPHONE: 277-2678

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE: *Frank R. Williams*

TITLE: State Historic Preservation Officer DATE: June 17, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE
ATTEST	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

4

ITEM NUMBER

9

PAGE 2

Hoag, Wade and Company, History of the State of Rhode Island,
(Philadelphia: 1878), pp. 296-98.
Perspective drawing of South Ferry Church, File Ch (Na) 1.1, Tefft
Drawings, Brown University Archives, John Hay Library, Providence, R.I.
Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, Ships, Sailors and Seaports,
(Kingston, R.I.: 1963), p. 5.
Providence Journal, 27 January 1851, p. 2.
Providence Journal, 7 November 1926, Section F, p. 5.
Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society, The Hinterlander,
Volume XVI, number 4 (October 1972), p. 2.

MAP OF THE STATE OF
RHODE ISLAND

MASS.

SHOWING

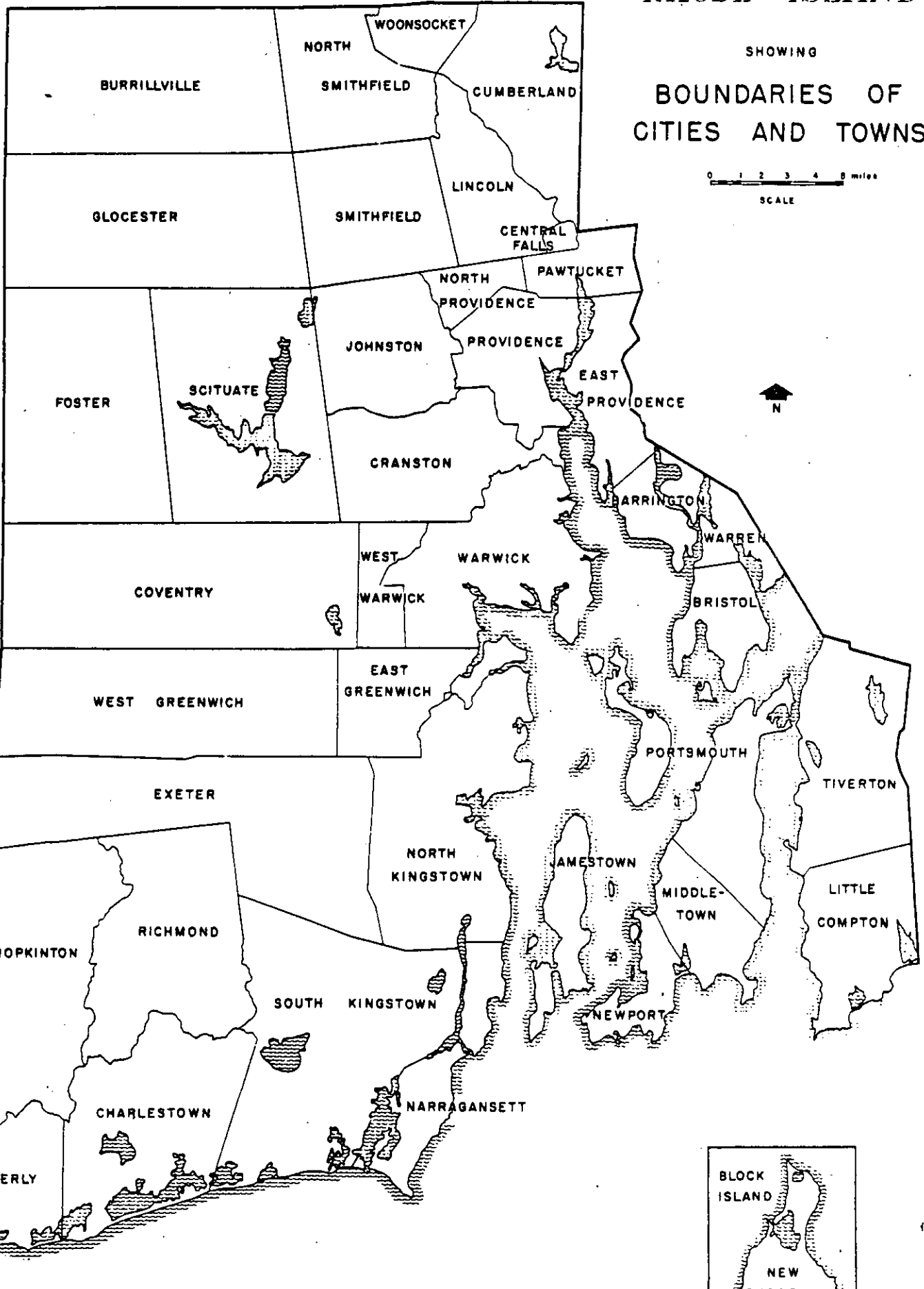
BOUNDARIES OF
CITIES AND TOWNS

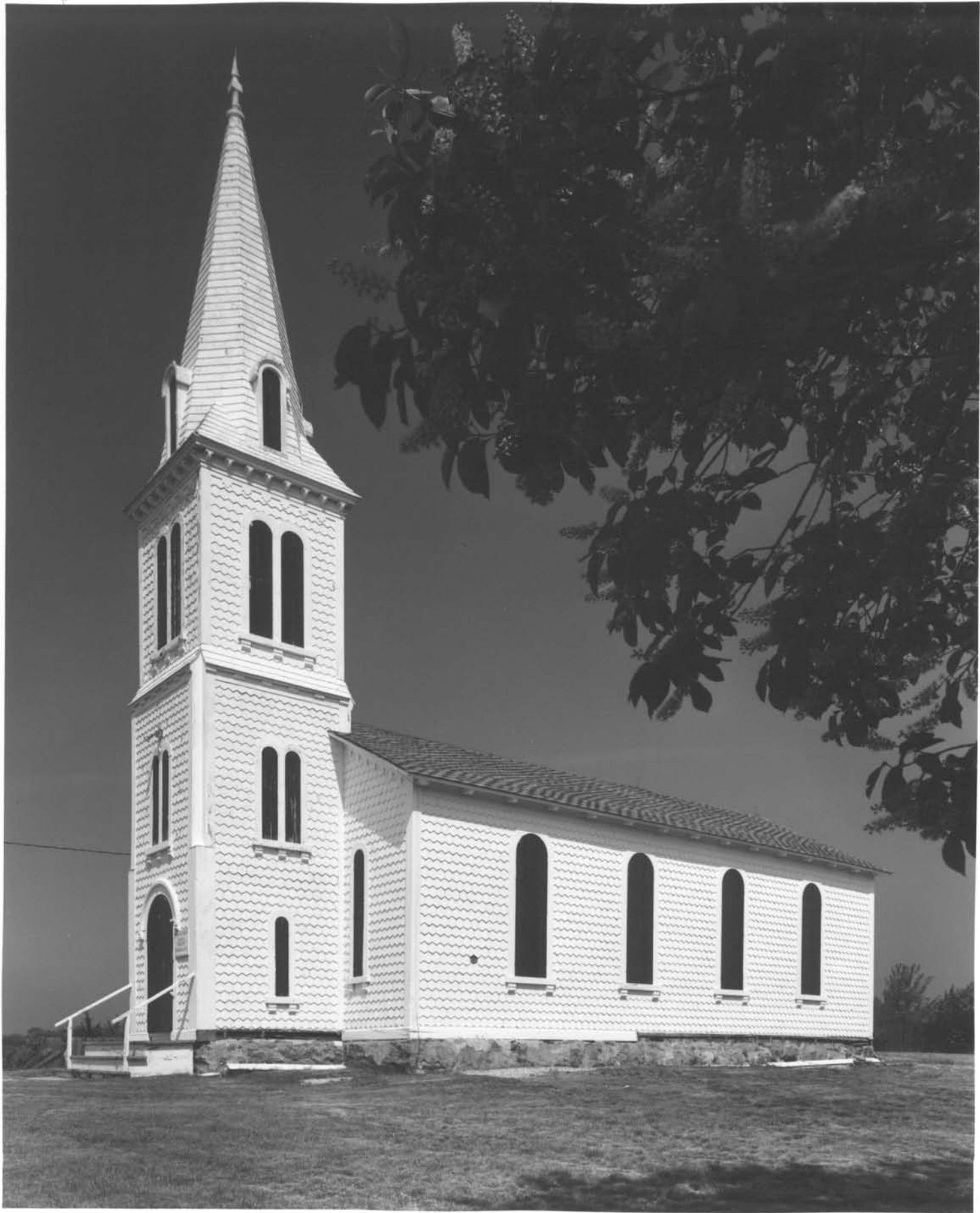
0 1 2 3 4 5 miles

SCALE



CONN.







South Ferry Church

Narragansett. R.I.

Warren Jagger

May 1977

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Detail of east wall showing hexagonal shingling.

Photo #2



South Ferry Church

Narragansett, R.I.

Warren Jagger

May 1977

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Interior view facing south, showing entrance.

Photo #3



South Ferry Church

Narragansett, R.I.

Warren Jagger

May 1977

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Interior view facing north, showing pulpit.

Photo #4



T. A. TERRY ARCHT.

St. Margaret's Church

South Ferry Church

Narragansett, R.I.

Copy negative by John Carter Brown Library

April 1977

Brown University Archives, John Hay Library

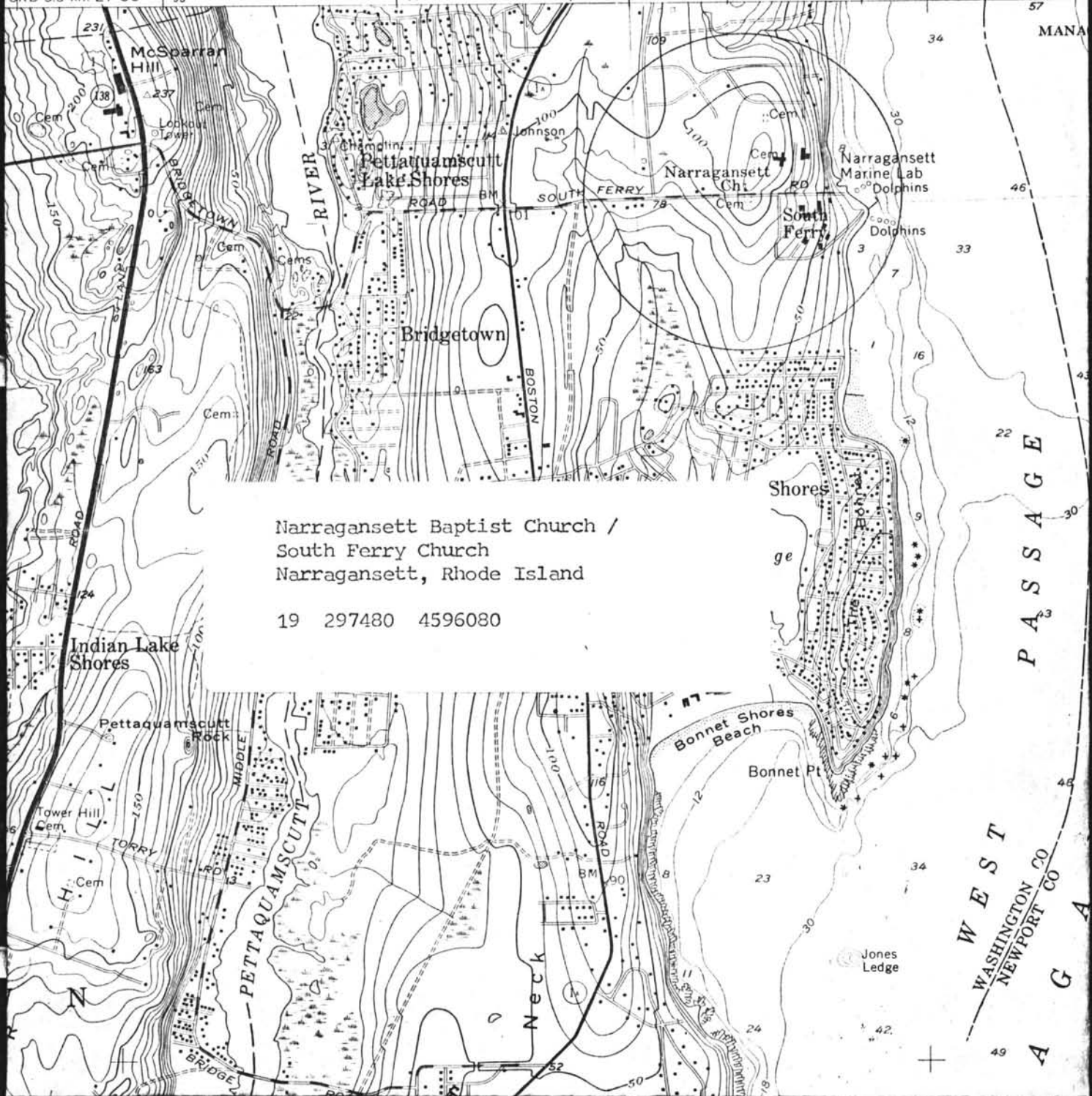
Rendering of South Ferry Church drawn by
C.P. Hartshorn, assistant to architect
T.A. Tefft, with sketches in margin showing
architect's experimentation with different
shingle patterns. Copied from the original
in the collection of Tefft papers in the
Brown University Archives, Providence, R.I.

Photo #5

HOUSE 24 MI
FORD 5.3 MI. 27'30" 295

6767 III SW WICKFORD 6.3 MI.
(WICKFORD) PLUM POINT 2.3 MI

298 25'



Narragansett Baptist Church /
South Ferry Church
Narragansett, Rhode Island

19 297480 4596080

WEST
WASHINGTON CO
NEWPORT CO
PASSAGE
A
G
A