

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Mary's Church Complex

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 14 William Street

not for publication

city or town Newport

vicinity

state Rhode Island

code RI

county Newport

code 005

zip code 02840

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination
 request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____

Date _____

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
 - See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- other (explain)

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

St. Mary's Church Complex
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
3	1	total

Name of related multiple property listings
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

3

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility
RELIGION: church school
RELIGION: church-related residence

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility
RELIGION: church-related residence

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19TH CENTURY: Gothic Revival
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
Colonial Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation STONE
walls STONE: sandstone, granite
BRICK
roof STONE: slate
other CONCRETE: cast stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

St. Mary's Church Complex
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1848-1852

1865

1925

Significant Dates

1848-1852

1865

1925

Significant Person

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Keeley, Patrick C., architect

Murphy, Ambrose J., architect

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository

St. Mary's Parish

St. Mary's Church Complex
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.77 acres

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	9	3	0	6	9	3	7	4	5	9	4	8	4	9
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
4															

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Leslie Donovan and Katherine Matison

organization Tremont Preservation Services, LLC date April 2007

street & number 374 Congress Street, Suite301B telephone 617-482-0910

city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02210

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name St. Mary's Church

street & number 14 William Street telephone 401-847-0475

city or town Newport state Rhode Island zip code 02840

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

Page

1

DESCRIPTION

St. Mary's Church Complex

St. Mary's Parish complex is located at 14 William Street and includes three contributing buildings, St. Mary's Church (1848-52), the Parish Center, formerly St. Mary's School (1865), and St. Mary's Rectory (1925). One non-contributing building, the Garage (ca. 1965) is also included in the complex. The land parcel measures 0.77 acres and is tightly bounded by Spring Street, William Street and Memorial Boulevard West (formerly Levin Street). Spring Street serves as a major north-south artery and is an extension of the original street pattern in Newport.¹ At the east section of the property, an area paved with asphalt is reserved for parking cars. The parish buildings are grouped closely together, separated by small landscaped areas with stone benches and concrete paths for access. A raised garden terrace occupies the southwest corner of the property, surrounded by the Church on one side, and the Rectory at the east end. This area contains mature trees, small bushes and stone benches. In one corner, the original, gilded cast iron cross taken from the spire is mounted and preserved, making the space a small verdant retreat.

The landscape surrounding the complex slopes westward toward the Newport Harbor waterfront, which begins one block away, on the west side of Thames Street. The Parish complex occupies the northeast edge of the densely developed residential district known as the Southern Thames Street Neighborhood, which historically was populated with Irish who were predominantly working class. Many of the urban streets around St. Mary's are lined with mostly small-scale, detached wooden houses built during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are a small number of commercial enterprises nearby, including two small retail stores on the west side of Spring Street, opposite the southwest corner of the Parish complex. There is a parking lot that occupies a large parcel opposite the Rectory, on the south side of William Street.

On the parcel of land on west side of Spring Street, also opposite St. Mary's Church, there is a plaque that memorializes the old convent, which historically formed part of the parish complex. The building housed the Sisters of Mercy, who had been associated with the Parish since 1854, when they arrived to teach at the newly established parochial school, one of the earliest in Rhode Island. In 1984, St. Mary's Convent (1880), which stood on the lot, was sold and moved to another location. The lots on the west side of Spring Street, opposite the Church, are now used for parking.

¹ Spring Street began at the site of the Town Spring, located in the 17th century behind the site of the Colony House. Levin Street became Memorial Boulevard (West) around 1967-1968.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number _____	Page 2	

St. Mary's Church

St. Mary's is a well-preserved and important example of an early parish church in Gothic Revival style, designed in keeping with national trends in architecture.² The Irish-born architect of St. Mary's Church, Patrick C. Keeley (1816–1896), and the Irish clergy who collaborated with him were fully conversant with the Gothic Revival as a fitting style for Roman Catholic ecclesiastical architecture. The asymmetrical Church is the central focus of the parish complex, and faces west onto Spring Street. The front of the Church is raised about five feet above street level to compensate for the slope of the land, which is supported in part by a low, dry-laid wall of coursed rubble. The main entry consists of a projecting porch, centered on the nave façade, which leads from the sidewalk into the main body of the Church. At either side of the main entrance, a landscaped section is separated from the sidewalk by heavy granite curbing. The area is covered with small paving stones. Several ornamental trees are growing in front of the church, as well as well-groomed low shrubbery. The presence of a low stone bench in front invites the passersby to sit and observe the church. A roughly cut granite wall running east along William Street forms the southwest boundary of church's property and extends to the southwest corner of the Rectory building.

The majestic presence of St. Mary's Church conveys the impression of both strength and soaring height, reflecting its gothic spirit. The Church is a rectangular structure 129 feet long and 72 feet wide that is heavily buttressed. The Church is built with coursed brownstone from the Middlesex Quarry in Portland, Connecticut.³ The color of the brownstone is reddish brown and imparts a warm tone and richness to the building. The roughly cut stone on the wall surfaces gives the church a rugged, earthy look. The massing of the structure is enlivened by the profusion of decorative elements that cover the whole building. The massing of the main body of the church consists of a tall, one-story, rectangular nave with a clerestory sheltered by a steeply pitched gable roof. A stone cross rises from the ridge at the top of each gable. One-story, shed-roofed side aisles flank the nave. The roof over the nave and side aisles is covered with slate. Bands of slate over the main structure are cut in an ornamental fish-scale pattern and the roof ridge is decorated with foliated iron cresting. The eaves of each roof are ornamented with stone brackets. The asymmetrical west façade displays an impressive, tall stained-glass window consisting of three slender lancets and flamboyant wooden tracery above. The window is capped with hood molding. A smaller quatrefoil stained-glass window occupies the peak of gable. On the west elevation, both aisles contain stained glass lancet windows.

The prominent west porch entry with its tall, front-gabled stone arch is surmounted by an elegant brownstone statue of the Virgin Mary. The porch gable is covered with stone coping. The cornice has stone

² Existing Conditions Report (2000) by McGinely Hart and Associates LLP of Boston MA. This report has been the basis of recent preservation work carried out at St. Mary's Church.

³ In many places, irreparably damaged stones around the windows and doors have been expertly repaired with dutchmen.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number _____	Page 3	

brackets, and is incised with a series of small quatrefoils. The double wooden battened door with its decorative iron strap hinges and latches is set into a shallow pointed arch, resting on slender engaged columns with foliated capitals. Above the door, a heavily carved roundel is set into a pointed arch panel. Another recessed gothic arch framing the door is studded with crockets. Inside the covered porch, a short flight of steps, flanked by a pair of brass handrails, lead directly into the nave. The porch roof is covered with slate cut in a fish-scale pattern and the ridge is finished with metal cresting. Each side of the brownstone porch is pierced with three small lancet windows filled with stained glass. The battened door described above, itself a gothic motif, replaced an earlier entrance, which is illustrated in an undated photograph possibly taken ca. 1900.⁴ The original entrance was divided into two brownstone lancet arches, supported by three slender engaged columns with foliated capitals and surmounted by the heavily carved roundel that survives today.

A tall, one-story apse with a gabled-roof is located at the east end of the Church. The narrow, steeply pitched roof of the apse is covered with slate, cresting adorns the ridge and the end gable is crowned with a stone cross. Two small lancet windows with flamboyant tracery on top pierce both the north and south elevations of the apse. The east elevation of the apse contains a large stained-glass window. This striking window is composed of five long and narrow lancets with flamboyant-style tracery designs on top. The east end of the Church is separated from the west side of the Parish Center by about 20 feet.

A corner-buttressed bell tower, surmounted by a tall slender octagonal spire is located on the northwestern corner, and has long been a local landmark. On the first and second stages of the bell tower there are double lancet windows with trefoils above, capped by hood molding. On the third stage there are double louvered arches with window tracery in small gothic-arched openings. The top of the bell tower is crenellated with incised diamond ornaments in panels. The spire base has gabled dormer windows. Four empty niches in the section above the transition area used to contain carved statues of the four apostles. The statues had become unstable and were removed from the niches for safety reasons. The octagonal edges of the upper ribbed stone spire are decorated with foliated crockets. The spire's finial has a ball surmounted by an ornamental gilded cast iron cross. With a \$35,000 gift, this cross was installed in 2001 and replaced the original gilded cross that had become unstable. At the base of the bell tower, on the north elevation there is a small entrance. The battened double door, with brass strap hinges and latch is set into a recessed pointed arch with hood molding. A short flight of granite stairs, flanked by brass handrails, leads from the sidewalk on Memorial Boulevard West directly into the Church.

The north and south elevations display many similarities. All the eaves are decorated with stone brackets. Both clerestories comprise a sequence of seven double lancet stained-glass windows with wooden flamboyant tracery above. All the clerestory windows are furnished with hood moldings. Many of the Church's brownstone window and door moldings were heavily degraded, and have recently been fabricated in cast stone. There are six pilasters centered in between each clerestory window. The side aisles on both elevations consist

⁴ Illustrated on the last page of the booklet *A History - St. Mary's Parish Newport, 1828-1878*.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number	Page	4

of a sequence of six double lancet stained-glass windows with rondels on top. Each bay is defined by stepped stone buttresses.

The north and south elevations exhibit some differences. A single, circular window of stained glass is centered on the east elevation of the north aisle. On the south aisle, at the west end, there is another small projecting porch entry that opens onto the raised terrace. The porch has a steeply pitched gable, capped by a cross. Vermiculated work decorates the front surface of the porch. A stone medallion incised with the date 'MDCCCXLVIII' and a small, bracketed lantern have been placed in the peak of the gable. The porch roof is covered with slate laid in a fish-scale pattern and iron cresting on the ridge.

East Longmeadow Brownstone was used for the one-story, flat-roofed addition to the sanctuary constructed in 1937 that wraps around the apse on the southeastern corner of the Church. As a consequence, space in the sacristy was enlarged considerably. Three bands of stone stringcourses emphasize the horizontal aspect of this small addition. The subtle addition seems to have been designed to minimize the disruption of Keeley's original design for the apse. The three-bay south elevation contains of two small leaded glass windows and a doorway with a lantern attached on the left hand side. The one-bay west side is pierced with narrow leaded glass window. The two-bay east side comprises two windows as well as a stairway to the basement. The north side has a door with an ornamental lantern attached to the wall.

St. Mary's is ornamented with forty-two stained glass windows, an outstanding collection of glass art. Some early windows are set into small pointed arch windows on the side walls of the south and west entry porches. These windows have clear etched glass surrounded by a narrow border of yellow glass with plain geometric designs created by the comes. In 1989, "The Census of Stained Glass Windows In America" took an inventory of the antique stained-glass windows in St. Mary's Church, documented the iconographic subject matter, and reported that they were in excellent condition. Many donors were involved in financing the windows. Some are identified at the bottom of the glass windows. The Census dated the majority of the windows ca. 1892-95, and attributed them to Tyroler Glasmalerei Anstalt (TGA), Innsbruck, Austria. Protective glazing has been applied to all stained-glass windows, after the removal of Lexan.

The interior scheme of St. Mary's is richly decorated and especially well preserved. It exhibits elements of both its construction from 1848-52, and periodic remodeling, especially one carried out in 1937. With its vertical emphasis, the interior fully conveys the gothic aesthetic. One of the great achievements is the profusion of ornamental woodwork. The wooden hammer beam ceiling is carved with such delicacy that it almost appears weightless. The slender wooden beams are incised with paint including gold leaf. Metal tie rods help support the wooden ceiling. Inside, St. Mary's is illuminated by the profusion of stained-glass windows, and a series of delicately incised metal and glass lanterns, which hang overhead. On either side of the longitudinal nave, there are six compound piers made up of slender clustered columns of cast stone with foliated capitals, creating a six-bay arcade. The pendent shafts on the nave arcade are ornamented with foliated capitals. The ornamental heads of the apostles and saints of the church are situated at the base of the shafts. There are twenty-

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number _____	Page 5	

eight rows of wooden pews, with a central double aisle and two single side aisles, which allow the Church to seat seven hundred people. The pews are heavily incised with gothic forms including quatrefoils and pointed arches. At the east end of the Church the marble altar rests near the front of the raised sanctuary. On each side of the sanctuary there are small chapels. The choir loft at the west end contains the organ built by Canadian firm Casavant Frères Ltée of Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec. The impressive organ was installed in 1958 under the guidance of Father Walter Leo Flynn, at a cost of about \$40,000.

On April 1, 1937, the "Providence Visitor" reported that Pastor John F. O'Rourke had recently directed extensive repairs, alterations and redecoration to St. Mary's Church. John F. Hogan, a Providence architect was quoted as saying that he was determined to respect the original spirit of the building. Aspects of this major remodeling of 1937 are visible today. The marble floor was laid in the sanctuary, floor tiles placed in the aisles, a new cement floor was set under the pews, and a new wooden floor was added to the gallery at the west end. The old altars were replaced with new marble altars of white carrara marble from the studio of Angelo Lualdi in Florence. The Stations of the Cross made of caen stone were placed on the walls of the nave arcade. Behind the main altar, there is an elaborate reredos. At this time the new enlarged sacristy was added at the southeast corner of the apse. At the same time two confessionals were removed, while two others were remodeled, and one more was added. A new roof was built over one of the side aisles, all the roofing was repaired, and new doors were placed at side entrances. Sofus L. Mortenson of Boston was in charge of the decorative work. The general contractor was Hope Building Company of Providence. The "Providence Visitor" wrote in conclusion that the repairs should be completed by the time Newport's "summer visitors arrive."

In 1967, responding to reforms outlined in Vatican II, the altar was brought forward. Providence architect, Milton Kenyon drew the plans, which are stored in the archives at St. Mary's. The most recent preservation and conservation efforts have been carried out on the exterior in phases, after the year 2000. An *Existing Conditions Report* was commissioned and produced under the direction of McGinley Hart & Associates, a firm of architects and preservation planners. It has led to the award-winning preservation of this highly significant building, whose structure has remained intact since its mid-nineteenth century construction. After the rehabilitation was completed, Father George B. McCarthy, current pastor of St. Mary's rededicated the Church on July 6, 2002.

St. Mary's School (1865)

Patrick C. Keeley submitted plans for St. Mary's School in 1861, but construction was delayed by the onset of the Civil War, and therefore the building was not completed until 1865. The former St. Mary's School, now the Parish Center on William Street, is located to the east (rear) of the church. Only a small courtyard with a patch of lawn, shrubs and a mature tree separate the two buildings. The original interior configuration has been altered. Today, a meeting hall occupies the first floor, while the second floor layout includes offices as

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number _____	Page 6	

well as classrooms used for religious education, and on the third floor there is a library and gym (originally the assembly hall).

The solid massing of the former school makes a bold architectural statement, ornamented with some Gothic Revival motifs. Keeley constructed a building that exhibits strength and a sense of permanence, while adding a variety of decorative features to enliven the structure. The original granite main block measures 51 feet wide and 79 feet deep, and rests on a granite foundation. The building is five bays long by three bays deep. Two granite stair towers project from the east and west elevations of the central main block. Built in 1937, each square tower measures 19 feet wide by 19 feet deep.

Keeley's original three-story rectangular building is built of coursed, roughly cut granite. The variegated rust-colored granite blocks are interspersed with pale blue blocks of stone placed in a random pattern. The corners of the building are decorated with heavy granite quoins in the contrasting pale blue color, which visually ties the structure together, and adds to the building's muscular look. The hipped roof is truncated to form a flat surface. The blue slate roof is articulated with contrasting red slate that adds visual interest. The school's original main façade, faces north on Memorial Boulevard, formerly Levin Street, set at an angle to the street, with a minimal setback from the sidewalk.

Before the stair towers were added, each elevation was fairly consistent, although there were also some differences. The original design included symmetrical façades, dominated by slightly projecting, gabled central pavilions, which interrupt the cornice. The gothic spirit is echoed in the pavilions, which taper upwards, emphasizing the vertical aspect of the structure, adding an impression of lightness. The fenestration is a striking decorative feature of the building. The stone window surrounds emphasize the gothic-arched shape of the windows. Windows are inset with wood tracery, shaped to look like double lancet windows with quatrefoils above. They are awning windows, whereby the lower half can be unlatched and pushed outward, at the base of the windows. On the first and second stories, the windows exhibit shallow pointed arches. By contrast, on the third story, the windows on all four elevations become taller and narrower, once again stressing verticality. Horizontality is expressed by two stringcourses that appear on all four sides. One stringcourse wraps around the building below the sills of the third story windows. With some breaks, the second stringcourse extends around the building, above the third story windows, just below the prominent stone modillion cornice that crowns the central, rectangular block.

The north and south elevations give the clearest view of Keeley's original intention, because they have not been disrupted by the addition of the stair towers. Each story consists of three bays including the central pavilion. The north elevation fronts onto Memorial Boulevard West (formerly Levin Street). Here the central pavilion terminates with a gothic-styled gable, with a lancet-shaped niche, set into a carved wooden panel. On the first story, the central bay contains a gothic-style entry that once served as the main front access into the school. This entrance (now closed) is inset with a heavily recessed wooden double-door, shaped to form a lancet arch. The door has four panels, which are heavily incised. Above the door, three small decorative lights are set into a pointed-arched panel of wooden tracery. Framing the door there is a lancet arch constructed with

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number	Page	7

smoothly cut voussoirs. A second lancet arch surrounds the inner arch, further highlighting the entry. A rectangular stone panel is carved in raised letters with the words "St. Mary's School" centered on the pavilion just below the third story window. The south elevation looks similar, though it has some differences. For example, the former school has no entrance on the south side. Instead there are three windows on the first story. The central pavilion on the south side of the building has less ornamentation than the north façade. Near the peak of the gable there is a small quatrefoil window.

Stair-towers capped by hip roofs are centered on both the east and west elevations. The towers are utilitarian structures, which John F. Hogan, an architect from Providence, constructed in 1937 for fire egress. The east and west elevations of each tower have a small basement window with two double hung sash stacked vertically above. These windows are not synchronized with the fenestration of the main block. The towers are constructed using coursed but roughly cut granite in hues of blue and rust, and edged with heavy quoins. The color of the granite towers is well matched with the original main block, except it lacks the faded patina of age. The roof of each tower extends to the third story, just underneath the cornice of the central block. The entrance to the Parish Center is situated at the base of the east tower, on the south elevation. Access is provided through a set of double wooden doors with glass panels inserted in the upper sections. The doors open onto the parking lot that extends to the east boundary of the parcel.

Above each tower the original central pavilion is still visible. On both the east and west elevations of the main structure where the gable terminates, corbelled chimneys extend upward. Just below the east chimney there is a stone plaque set into granite wall and incised with the words "Erected by Catholics of Newport, A.D. 1865, The Very Rev. W. O'Reilly, Pastor." Reverend O'Reilly organized the building of the school, and engaged Patrick Keeley to design the building.⁵ Fenestration on the east elevation of the central main block has been rearranged to accommodate the east stair tower. The west elevation is similar to the east elevation but lacks any form of access to the Parish Center (former school). A small ornamented shed, with a copper roof and some gothic details is attached on the north side of the west elevation.

St. Mary's Rectory

A handsome building in the Colonial Revival style, St. Mary's Rectory (1925) is the most recent addition to the Parish complex. It is significant that the new design was a complete departure from the Gothic Revival style that characterized the earlier parish buildings. Instead, it responds to the earlier classical styles reflected in the surrounding buildings. In 1923, Providence architect Ambrose J. Murphy (1869-1949) submitted plans for a new rectory. The plans show that the new rectory was partially built over the footprint of the previous masonry Gothic Revival-style rectory, constructed in 1866 by Newport architect Dudley Newton, and demolished by a fire in 1921. The new rectory runs parallel to William Street, with a minimal setback from the sidewalk. A low, well-groomed hedge marking the property line grows in front of the building. Behind the

⁵ Reverend O'Reilly initiated the building of the school, and engaged Patrick Keeley to design the building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number _____	Page 8	

rectory, a narrow landscaped area separates the Rectory from the Church and the Parish Office (formerly the school).

The three-story brick building with a low basement has a flat roof covered with asphalt tiles. There is a single brick chimney protruding from the northeast section of the roof. The building is seven bays long and three bays deep on the west elevation, but only two bays in depth on the east elevation. L-shaped in plan, the footprint of the Rectory measures 94 feet long x 34 feet wide. The fine-grained, smooth brick is laid in patterns of five rows of stretchers followed by one row of alternate headers and stretchers creating added visual interest. A broad, cast stone watertable creates a strong visual base for the building. The well-defined stone cornice just below the line of the roof gives the building an additional air of stability.

The building is subtly divided into two parts, the five-bay main block, with a sun porch attached at the west end, and a slightly recessed two-bay wing at the east end. The front elevation of the main block is symmetrical. A short flight of granite steps with elegantly curved iron hand rails leads from the sidewalk to the central main entrance. This imposing, fashionable Colonial Revival frontispiece is composed of classical forms, and remains a focal point of the building. Flanking the doorway, two wooden Tuscan columns rest on buttresses (plinths) of cast stone. The white columns support the decorative wooden entablature that includes a scroll located in the center, and triglyphs placed directly above each column. A black wrought iron railing rests on top of the architrave in front of the second-story window, giving the impression of a balcony. The wooden paneled door, painted red with a brass knocker and base plate is flanked by slender leaded glass sidelights and surmounted by transom lights of opalescent stained glass. The vertical accent of the leaded glass light subtly recalls the Gothic-style that characterized the earlier rectory, the Church and the St. Mary's School, now the Parish Center. The single and double windows are arranged in a rhythmic pattern across the façade. The windows are double-hung sash with vinyl muntins applied on the inside of the upper sash. All windows on the façade have small cast stone sills and are flanked with black vinyl shutters.

The slightly recessed east wing closely matches the main block. Originally it was the service block for the Rectory, where the housekeeper and servants lived and worked. At the first story, at the east end, there is a small wooden door and a single window. A short, narrow flight of steps leads from the sidewalk to the paneled wooden door, which has three slender opalescent leadlight panels in the top section. Though smaller and simpler in design, they match the leadlight surrounding the main door. This service entrance is capped with a doorhood supported by two scrolled brackets. At the east end of the Rectory a small passage leads to a narrow landscaped area separating the three parish buildings. Attached to the passageway, there is a one-story, four-bay, flat-roofed brick Garage (non-contributing) with black metal doors. The garage was built ca. 1965 and fronts onto William Street, adjacent to the Parish parking lot.

One of the most novel features of the building is the enclosed sun porch, which combines a classicized wooden frame, painted white and inset with large glass panels. This light-filled room was part of Murphy's original plan, where it was described as a "sun parlor." Centered on the Rectory's west elevation, the flat-roofed, projecting porch measures 26 feet wide and 8 feet deep. The one-story porch is three bays in length and

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
_____ Name of Property	_____ City/Town	_____ County and State
Section Number _____	Page 9	

one bay in width. The windows are set on paneled skirt panels. The Tuscan wooden columns define each bay and support the broad flat architrave above that is ornamented with triglyphs and projecting eaves.

In 1925, when the Rectory was built, it was designed to house the pastor and several assistants, as well as guests. It had ample public spaces, spaces for private study and a service wing.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number _____	Page	10

PHOTOGRAPHS

St. Mary's Parish Complex
14 Williams Street
Newport, Newport County, Rhode Island

Photographer: Katherine Matison

Date: April-June 2005

Negatives at: Tremont Preservation Services, 374 Congress St, Boston, MA 02210

Church

- #1 View NE of west and south elevations
- #2 View SE of north elevation
- #3 View E of west elevation, and steeple
- #4 Detail, steeple, north and west sides
- #5 Main entrance on Spring Street, west side
- #6 Detail atop entrance porch, west side
- #7 View N of south elevation, stone wall in foreground, rectory at right
- #8 View N of west entrance
- #9 View NE of west elevation
- #10 View W of east elevation
- #11 View W of east elevation

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

Page

11

School

#12 View NW of south and east elevations

#13 View SW of east and north elevations

Rectory

#14 View SW of east and north elevations

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex		Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property		City/Town	County and State
Section Number	8	Page	1

SIGNIFICANCE

St. Mary's Parish is eligible for the National Register under criterion A, as a group of three buildings significant to the Irish heritage of Newport and Rhode Island, and as an important early work of architect Patrick C. Keeley. The parish complex, which includes the church, school, and rectory, is the earliest Roman Catholic parish in the state. The church and related facilities provided for social as well as spiritual needs of the Irish immigrants, who for economic reasons were forced to leave Ireland in the nineteenth century.

From 1824 onward, significant numbers of Irish settled and found employment in the Newport area. The parish itself dates back to 1828, when services were held on Barney Street in a small converted schoolhouse bought by the parish. Within ten years, the diocese of Boston provided funds to build St. Joseph's Church (1837), a simple gothic-styled wooden building on the corner of Barney and Vernon streets. As Irish immigration burgeoned, the congregation's needs increased. In 1847, the parish was able to purchase land on Spring Street, and built a towering edifice, the brownstone St. Mary's Church (1848-1852). This was achieved firstly through the generosity and labor of ordinary parishioners. Secondly, well-to-do Catholic families from Baltimore and New York also contributed generously as patrons of St. Mary's Church. These wealthy parishioners spent their summers in Newport, which was developing into a fashionable resort town.

St. Mary's Church is an important early work of Irish-born architect Patrick C. Keeley (1816-1896), who is acknowledged as a pioneering and eminent designer of Roman Catholic ecclesiastical buildings with great architectural significance. St. Mary's was Keeley's second church, but it shows his early ability to handle, with enormous skill and confidence, the elements of the Gothic Revival style that was favored by the Irish clergy, both locally and nationally. With its elegant tall spire and imposing presence, St. Mary's Church became a landmark in the Thames Street neighborhood that was becoming mostly Irish and working class. The church survives as a well-preserved example of mature Gothic style. St. Mary's Parish therefore meets National Register criterion C due to the elegant, Gothic Revival church built by a renowned architect giving it significance at the local level.

In 1846, St. Mary's parish began to organize Catholic education in Newport. After the Civil War ended, architect Keeley built St. Mary's Parish School (1865) to satisfy the increased need for a parochial school. The granite school exemplifies the movement in Rhode Island to extend private education based on Catholic values, at a time when Catholics still encountered bias in the broader community.

From its inception, the Spring Street site included a rectory for the clergy. The first was a two-story house that sufficed until 1886, when it was replaced with a gothic-style building. The present Colonial Revival-style rectory built in 1925 is the third building of this type to occupy the Spring Street site. St. Mary's Rectory (1925) is a building type historically essential to the functioning of Catholic parishes as a whole. Ambrose Murphy, a Providence architect with many ecclesiastical buildings to his name, designed the Rectory. The building dates from a period in which the Catholic Church had grown and gained considerable influence, which is reflected in the 'commodious' and expansive interior layout. This rectory was equipped to house the pastor

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

8

Page

2

and four assistant priests, a housekeeper, and servants. St. Mary's Parish complex retains integrity of setting, location, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

In 1975, St. Mary's Church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource within the Newport Historic District, which is also a National Historic Landmark district. St. Mary's, with its tall belltower, continues to be a prominent landmark in the South Thames Street neighborhood. In 1980, a report by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission described St. Mary's Church as an "integral part" of the historic fabric of the Southern Thames Street neighborhood in Newport. The influx of Irish immigrants effected a change in the ethnic composition of Newport, which consisted of a small Jewish population with a predominantly Protestant majority. St. Mary's was part of an early push to increase the number of Catholic church buildings in the second half of the nineteenth century. The configuration of the church and the buildings associated with it form a typical parish complex built to serve the spiritual, educational, and social needs of the local Roman Catholic congregation.

Irish immigration led to the formation of numerous Catholic missions and parishes, which provided the necessary institutional and social support needed to improve conditions. Although there had been an Irish presence in Rhode Island by the mid-seventeenth century, from 1815 to 1845 about one million Irish (most Catholics) flocked to America, and of these approximately 5,000 settled in Rhode Island. They came from rural backgrounds, but when they settled in Rhode Island, the majority became urban dwellers. The potato famine of 1845-46 caused a mass exodus of Irish who had to flee from the dire circumstances. At this time, Rhode Island had seven Catholic churches. Further statistics give some idea of the impact of this outpouring of Irish immigration. The 1850 census in Rhode Island shows that 15,944, or 69 percent, of the foreign-born population were from Ireland. Twenty years later, the 1870 federal census counted 31,534 Irish-born immigrants in Rhode Island. These Irish immigrants were dependent on local employment that initially paid very low wages. Public charity and works programs were insufficient, which meant that Catholic church-related efforts were essential to the welfare of the immigrant population.

Providence had a small but active colony of Irish in the early nineteenth century. In 1813 Irish Catholics rented an old schoolhouse on Sheldon Street, near Benefit Street, and then moved to another lot on Fox Point. Bishop Cheverus, the first bishop of Boston, sometimes officiated at Providence Chapel (1813-15), which is recognized as the first Catholic house of worship in the State of Rhode Island. Unfortunately, it was swept away in the Great Gale and tidal wave of 1815. Catholics dispersed widely over Rhode Island including Newport, Woonsocket, and Providence, which became a diocese in 1872.

Like Providence, Newport was one of Rhode Island's early mission stations founded during the years when Irish migration began to accelerate. In 1827, 150 Roman Catholics received communion in Newport, and 50 in Portsmouth, nine miles north of Newport. Most male members of the early parish were Irish laborers involved in construction at nearby Fort Adams, which had resumed in 1824. Others worked in the coal mines of Portsmouth. At this time, Newport's prosperity was heavily dependent on work being available at Fort Adams and the Portsmouth mines. Between 1825 and 1845, several textile mills were established in the Thames Street

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex		Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property		City/Town	County and State
Section Number	8	Page	3

district including the Newport Steam Mill (1831), and the Perry Mill (1835), and breweries also thrived. With more employment opportunities, many Irish laborers and their families found accommodation in the Southern Thames Street district. Irish women often took on domestic jobs in hotels or with wealthy families.

The foundation of St. Mary's as an early parish in Rhode Island dates back to services held on June 6, 1828 in a converted private schoolhouse on Barney Street, several blocks north of the present church. In response to the influx of Irish immigrants in the mid-1820s, Benedict Fenwick, the second Bishop of Boston, sent a young priest, Father Robert D. Woodley, a native of Virginia, to Newport, Rhode Island, with orders to find a suitable building for the purpose of celebrating mass. On behalf of Bishop Fenwick, Father Woodley purchased Eleazer Trevett's schoolhouse for \$1,100 in April 1828. This wooden schoolhouse, built in 1809 for schoolmaster Trevett, is believed to be earliest property purchased by the Roman Catholic Church in Rhode Island. Woodley equipped the building with an altar so that services could begin. Father Woodley only conducted services about every eight weeks, on days when he visited Newport.

Maryland-born, Bishop Fenwick was determined to make Newport a formal mission of the diocese of Boston. Since 1808, Rhode Island had been part of the Diocese of Boston.⁶ Six months after Father Woodley's purchase, Bishop Fenwick inspected the Barney Street premises and was very dissatisfied with the converted schoolhouse situated on its small lot. In 1830, Irish-born Father John Corry was sent to Newport to assist Father Woodley in serving the mission stations that included Pawtucket, Taunton, Providence, Newport, and Fall River. Father Corry became responsible for Newport, and asked Bishop Fenwick, who had some skills in architecture, to send plans for a Gothic-style wooden church. St. James Parish (renamed St. Mary's in 1849) purchased an adjoining parcel of land, making the whole property 100 feet by 150 feet. In 1833 construction began on St. Joseph's Church, located at the intersection of Barney and Vernon streets. St. Joseph's was finally dedicated and opened in 1837. The wood-frame structure measured approximately 63 feet by 40 feet, and with its gallery could accommodate approximately 700 people. Some time later (date unknown) the former schoolhouse was removed from the site. The construction of St. Joseph's strengthened the position of the Catholic Church in Newport. According to Catholic historian Patrick Conley, these events "signify the beginning of a continuous structural and organizational presence of the Catholic Church in Rhode Island."⁷

Economic prosperity in Newport declined in the early 1840s, but within a few years conditions improved and the parish was reinvigorated. In November 1846, Newport became a distinct parish under the supervision of the Reverend James Fitton, an energetic priest responsible for getting a number of churches built in the diocese, as well as the first New England Catholic college, Holy Cross (1843) in Worcester, Massachusetts. According to Father Fitton's records, by 1848, the Newport congregation had reached about 586. By this time, St. Joseph's was in poor condition and Father Fitton wanted a new, more elaborate structure. On February 2, 1847 Father Fitton arranged the purchase of land on Spring Street, where St. Mary's now stands.

⁶ Rhode Island was joined with Connecticut as a new diocese in 1843. Providence became a diocese in 1875.

⁷ Conley, Patrick T. & Matthew J. Smith, *Catholicism in Rhode Island: The Formative Era*, Diocese of Providence, 1976, 22.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

8

Page

4

The land already had a small cottage on it, and Father Fitton adapted it for religious services, to be held while the church was being built. Mrs. Catherine Goodloe Harper of Baltimore, Maryland is listed as the main donor, who gave the \$4,000 needed to buy the land, and she continued to be a generous patron of the building of St. Mary's Church. Her father, Charles Carroll of Carrollton was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and her husband was a successful politician and businessman. It is significant that one of St. Mary's early patrons was from Baltimore. Historically Baltimore was a city that welcomed Catholics. Baltimore Cathedral (1804-1821) was the first truly monumental Catholic cathedral built in America by eminent English-born architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820).

The Harpers spent their summers in Newport, in a house on Bellevue Avenue only half a mile from the church. Since the 1830s and 1840s Newport had begun to attract visitors during the summer. The early summer houses were built east of the central core, near Eastons Beach and Bellevue Avenue. Gradually Newport's popularity increased becoming a summer resort for affluent families, many of them from New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore. In the second half of the nineteenth century, St. Mary's congregation included Irish servants employed by wealthy summer residents.

On Spring Street construction began on August 7, 1848 when men from the parish dug the first trenches. It has been recorded that members of the parish were asked to devote one days labor for the excavation of the foundation. A few days later on August 15, the first stone was laid and the new church was dedicated to the Holy Name of Mary, Our Lady of the Isle and called St. Mary's Church. The "Newport Daily News," August 8, 1848 took the view that the new church would be a "decided improvement for the neighborhood." A year later, in 1849 St. Joseph's was renamed St. Mary's Parish.

St. Mary's Church was fortunate to have Irish born Patrick Charles Keeley (1816-1896) as its architect, because Keeley was just beginning his illustrious career as a designer of Catholic-church architecture. Lieutenant William S. Rosencrans (1819-1898) supervised the construction. A graduate of West Point, Rosencrans was assigned to Fort Adams as an engineer. Later, during the Civil War, he became a leading general in the Union Army. Rosencrans organized soldiers from Fort Adams to build the new church. The Reverend Bishop John Fitzpatrick of Boston laid the cornerstone for St. Mary's Church on June 14, 1849, and it was dedicated on July 25, 1852. In 1855 when Father Fitton left, Father William O'Reilly was appointed the pastor at Saint Mary's. He raised enough money to install pews, an organ gallery and bell tower or porch. By 1857 Father O'Reilly had raised enough funds to finish the church tower and install a bell, cast by James & Co. of Troy, New York. In 1863 Father O'Reilly sold the old St. Joseph's Church at the intersection of Barney and Vernon streets. Bishop McFarland's diary in 1868 noted that Rev. O'Reilly was able to have the spire built and added "exquisite porches." (*A History, St. Mary's Parish Newport, 1828-1978*).

The 1860s meant new responsibilities for St. Mary's. During the Civil War (1861-65), the United States Naval Academy relocated from Annapolis Maryland to Bellevue Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island for four years. During that period, St. Mary's Church was used as the Chapel for the Naval Academy. After the war, the church building was conveyed to St. Mary's Parish by Patrick P. McFarland, Bishop of the Diocese of Hartford

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex		Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property		City/Town	County and State
Section Number	8	Page	5

by a deed dated June 29, 1869, recorded in Land Evidence of the City of Newport on July 3, 1869 in Volume 41, Pages 11 and 12.

A few months after the death of Father William O'Reilly, the Reverend Philip Grace, a Doctor of Divinity was appointed pastor of St. Mary's in 1869. Born in Ireland in 1838, Dr. Grace led St. Mary's for the next 29 years. During that period he was able to make numerous improvements to the parish buildings and enlarge the church's property. Dr. Grace organized funding for the impressive decorative program of Austrian stained glass, installed in St. Mary's Church from about 1892-1895. The stained glass enhances the church's artistic significance, as it was imported from Tyroler Glasmalerei Anstalt (TGA), Innsbruck, Austria and placed throughout the church. TGA began to send representatives to sell their new decorative patterns for churches. German and Austrian studios also opened up American business offices. TGA set up an office in Park Place, New York as Tyrolese Art Glass Co. American Catholic churches favored German and Austrian glass painters because of their knowledge of Catholic iconography. Rev. Grace managed to reduce the Parish's mortgage debt, largely incurred by the construction of the school building in 1865. In 1869 when Dr. Grace offered Mass the congregation was largely made up of artisans and laborers. Some were carpenters, painters and craftsmen who worked on the 'cottages' of wealthy summer residents. In 1898 when Dr. Grace died the merchants along Thames Street closed their stores.

Social mobility became evident in the 1870s, when Catholics in Newport increased in numbers and became more prosperous. Societies were formed to 'improve' and educate the Irish population. For example, St. Mary's Parish sponsored the Young Men's Literary Society in the 1870s, and in 1873, St. Mary's Benevolent Society began promoting temperance. Support for St. Mary's came from year-round parishioners as well as the summer colony. One of the most successful Irish-born residents from the Southern Thames Street neighborhood was landscape gardener Thomas Galvin, who had settled in Newport, and built a house in 1846. Galvin opened his large nursery on Spring Street, and worked as a landscaper for many of the wealthy summer residents. St. Mary's hosted a number of society weddings. In 1871, Colonel Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte, grandnephew of the Emperor married Caroline LeRoy Edgar, a granddaughter of Daniel Webster. These wealthy patrons played an important role in maintaining the church. By 1881, records show that Colonel Bonaparte was one of St. Mary's most generous patrons. Mrs. Theodore Havenmeyer, wife of the Austrian consul had generously paid for the renovation of the vestry in 1878. Newport's peak as a summer resort led to a surge of building from 1883 to 1907. The congregation continued to grow, and so St. Mary's parish was divided three times --- in 1885, 1909 and 1911.

Over the next few decades, Newport continued to attract wealthy summer residents. The Bouvier family spent the summers in Newport for many years, and attended St. Mary's as their local church. On December 9, 1953 Jacqueline Lee Bouvier was married to Senator John Fitzgerald Kennedy (later the 35th President) at St. Mary's Church in Newport. Archbishop Richard Cushing (later Cardinal Cushing) of Boston conducted the wedding ceremony. During the 1960s, in the three years when John Kennedy was President, he spent several

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

8

Page

6

weekends in Newport and attended Sunday Mass at St. Mary's Church.⁸ The well-publicized wedding contributed to the local significance of St. Mary's Church.

Patrick C. Keeley:

Patrick Charles Keeley (1816–1896) was born at Kilkenny, Ireland, and migrated to the United States with his father in 1842. Keeley's father was an established architect and builder who evidently trained his son in the art of construction. Aged twenty-six, Keeley settled in Brooklyn, New York where he first worked as a carpenter. In 1846, Patrick Keeley received his first commission. Father Sylvester Malone, a young priest and an acquaintance of Keeley's, engaged him to design the Gothic Revival Church of Sts. Peter and Paul in the Williamsburgh section of Brooklyn, New York. Keeley's own Irish background and connections helped him throughout his productive career. St. Mary's Church (1848–1852), begun barely two years after his first commission was therefore the second church designed by Keeley. This early and significant work set the architect on course for a career that earned him national recognition. Keeley collaborated closely with his clients, and adapted his designs to their needs. Together architects, parishioners, and clergy, the so-called 'bricks and mortar priests,' fulfilled the urgent need for Catholic churches.

In 1849, just three years after completing his first church in Brooklyn, New York, Keeley was invited to design the Cathedral in Albany for Bishop McClusky, who later became the first American cardinal. This was the first of 20 cathedrals designed by Keeley, including those in Chicago, Cleveland, Buffalo, Hartford, Newark, Boston and Providence. He specialized in Roman Catholic churches and institutional buildings and is credited with over five hundred in North America. The geographical distribution of Keeley's work ranged from Charleston, South Carolina to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and as far west as Iowa. The largest concentration of his work survives in New York, New England and eastern Canada.

Keeley developed a large architectural studio. His firm became a training ground for many young Catholic architects, and this helped him to create such a large body of work. Several architects worked in Keeley's office, including his wife's brother-in-law James J. Murphy (1834–1907). In the 1860s the partnership Keeley and Murphy operated offices in Brooklyn, New York and Providence, Rhode Island. James Murphy opened his own office in Providence in 1867 and later opened an office in Boston, Massachusetts. Later Keeley's sons-in-law Patrick Ford and Thomas Houghton joined Keeley's firm. In 1884, Patrick Keeley received the Laetare Medal, the highest award given by the American Roman Catholic Church.

⁸ Murray, Beth. This is Newport (Plantation Press, n. d.).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

8

Page

7

Patrick C. Keeley's Churches in Rhode Island:

Another early example of Keeley's religious buildings, St. Joseph's Church (1851-53) at 86 Hope Street, Providence, is located in the College Hill Historic District. St. Joseph's like St. Mary's, Newport, was inspired by the parish churches of England and Ireland, being revived under the influence of English architect and Catholic convert A. W. Pugin (1812-52). Keeley designed the Church of the Immaculate Conception (1857-58) on West River Street in Providence. This church was another eclectic gothic-inspired parish church. Unfortunately Immaculate Conception was demolished ca. 1957 to make way for the West River Industrial Park. St. Mary's Church (1864), Broadway, Providence is credited to the firm of Keeley and Murphy, but according to the Rhode Island Historical and Preservation Commission (RIHPC) may be the work of James T. Murphy alone, since he was working out of the Providence office at the time.⁹ The firm of Keeley and Murphy broke up around 1867. St. Mary's, Broadway was built to serve the needs of Catholic workers employed in the Olneyville Mills in Providence.

Keeley also designed St. Charles Borromeo Church (1867-71) in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Located at North Main, Daniel and Earle streets, the church is part of a complex that includes a school, parish house and convent. The parish dates back to the 1840s, making it the original parish in Woonsocket. Keeley's design for St. Charles Borromeo replaced the first church built in 1844, one of the early Roman Catholic churches in northern Rhode Island. Keeley's church was a simple rendering of Gothic Revival style. Like St. Mary's, the early congregation at St. Charles Borromeo was predominantly Irish immigrants who worked in the local mills and lived nearby with their families.

It was a great era for cathedral building and Patrick Keeley was responsible for seven in New England. The Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul (1878-1889) on Cathedral Square, Providence, Rhode Island is one of the architect's later works. Built in the center of Providence, the property is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and also in the Downtown Providence Historic District. The landmark cathedral, with its cruciform plan, is covered with cross gable roofs and two tall square towers flank the main portals. The lavish interior is Gothic Revival on a grand scale, richly ornamented with marble and exotic hardwoods. The scale of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul shows the growth and influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Rhode Island.

Keeley's ecclesiastical work in Boston corresponds with many of his buildings in Rhode Island. It also further indication of the scope of his work. Early in his career Patrick Keeley designed churches, and later a cathedral in Boston. His early churches, including St. Mary's, Newport, are notable because the plans of these sizable buildings were often similar. For example, the asymmetrical Church of the Most Holy Redeemer (1854-

⁹ Communication from Jeffrey D. Emidy, National Register Assistant, Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission. February 25, 2005.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number <u>8</u>	Page <u>8</u>	

57) in East Boston with its stone spire of 200 feet resembles St. Mary's Church in Newport. Like St. Mary's it was based on the English-gothic parish churches. On a completely different scale, Patrick Keeley's most ambitious work in Boston was the Cathedral of the Holy Cross (1865-76) on Washington Street, in the newly landscaped South End. Keeley submitted plans in 1861, but again, the onset of the Civil War delayed construction. The location was significant because at this early stage, the South End was planned as an important residential district. Holy Cross is still the largest Catholic church in New England and seats 3,500 congregants. The Cathedral looked back to Pugin and the English medieval influence, but it was also progressive because it adopted contemporary engineering techniques. For example, iron pillars supported the roof, enabling the church to be built on an unprecedented, monumental scale. While working on Holy Cross, Keeley designed the Gothic Revival style Holy Trinity Church (1872-77) on Shawmut Avenue, also in the South End. For list of Keeley's principal buildings in Boston see Douglass Shand-Tucci's, *Built in Boston, City and Suburb*.

Catholic Education

Catholic education had already begun at St. Mary's parish in 1846 when the parish (then St. Joseph's) under Father Fitton established a parochial school on the Barney Street site, under the supervision of a lay teacher. It was the second parochial school in Rhode Island. The Sisters of Mercy arrived in Newport May 3, 1854, after they were asked to conduct the elementary school. The Sisters lived in a small cottage, which had been used on weekdays for services, while the St. Mary's school was being built. The cottage was moved to land purchased by Mrs. Goodloe Harper on the west side of Spring Street, opposite the church.¹⁰ A wing was added to each side of the cottage, combining the convent with the new school facilities. St. Mary's Boys and Girls School opened in 1854 and had 50 to 60 scholars. The primary classroom occupied the left wing, and the intermediate and grammar grades were taught in the right wing. The Sisters taught the girls and younger children. Initially, a lay teacher, William K. Delany, was hired to teach the older boys in an old wooden building on the north side of Levin Street. By 1857 there were about three hundred forty students, 220 female and about 120 males, being taught in various buildings. In 1867, the Academy of St. Mary's of the Isle opened in the Mercy convent on Spring Street, with 28 girls enrolled, mostly from the higher classes.¹¹ They used the old schoolrooms in the wings of the convent. According to Conley and Smith, this school was the third Catholic high school, which had operated on an informal basis since 1854, eventually closing in 1924.¹²

After a few years, the school became overcrowded. The Very Reverend William O'Reilly proposed a new schoolhouse. Plans were discussed for a new parochial school for male and female students with the aim

¹⁰ *A History, St. Mary's Parish Newport, 1828-1978*. Also Hayman, Robert W., "A History of St. Mary's Parish, Newport." (1995), 24. It is not clear where this cottage stood before it was moved.

¹¹ Conley, Patrick T. & Matthew J. Smith, *Catholicism in Rhode Island*. 106.

¹² In 1851, St. Xavier's Academy for girls, run by the mostly Irish Sisters of Mercy in Providence became the first Catholic secondary school in Rhode Island.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

8

Page

9

that it be one of the finest school buildings in New England. Parishioners including the wealthy summer residents contributed to fund the school. Father O'Reilly, pastor of St. Mary's since 1855, acquired an extra 21,080 square feet of land, east of the church between Levin and William streets.

Early Catholic education in Rhode Island was still a controversial undertaking. According to historian Patrick Conley, parochial schools were still in their "infancy" in the 1860s.¹³ Historically, Catholics in New England had been subjected to religious prejudice, making it difficult to obtain land for institutional buildings, including schools. The immigrant Irish Catholics were often not naturalized citizens and therefore had little control over public schools. Public schools were generally perceived as biased and anti-Catholic, and as places where history was taught from a Protestant perspective. For all these reasons, Catholic clergy and laity wanted schools that wholly reflected their religious and societal values. Nevertheless, Newport in particular, and Rhode Island in general, were seen as comparatively tolerant environments where Catholics could settle and thrive.

Father William O'Reilly asked Patrick Keeley to draw plans for the school in 1861, because the increasing number of scholars needed better facilities. In 1863 Father O'Reilly sold the old St. Joseph's Church to help pay for the new school. The Civil War delayed its construction and meant building costs were grossly inflated. In the end \$80,000 was needed to complete the school building, an enormous sum in those days. The building of the school had its critics who complained that it was badly located on a backstreet (Levin Street), cost too much, and saddled the parish with too much debt. Still St. Mary's Parish School was an impressive, solid granite building that clearly conveyed the importance of Catholic education in Newport. Bishop McFarland laid the cornerstone for the school on July 23, 1865, and the school opened in the same year. St. Mary's School by Patrick Keeley was one of a number of parochial schools built in Rhode Island in the 1860s.

"The Newport Mercury" on March 26, 1864 described Keeley's design. The first floor was to accommodate classrooms, a corridor and a vestibule. The second floor repeated the same layout. The boys were to occupy the first floor and the girls would use the second floor. The third floor was a multi-purpose assembly hall for the school, but also for meetings of the various benevolent societies of St. Mary's Parish. An attic was available for storage. In all there were eighteen windows and four doors to allow for a quick exit in an emergency. Initially however there were only two rooms on each floor. On the first floor the boy's higher intermediate, grammar and high school grades were taught under Mr. Delaney. On the second floor, the girls primary, lower and upper intermediate, grammar and high school grades were taught by the Sisters of Mercy.

In 1937, Father F. O. O'Rourke had two stair halls added to the east and west elevations by Providence architect John F. Hogan. With fire being a constant threat, the stair towers were designed to facilitate a quick evacuation of the building. On a daily basis boys used the east staircase, and girls used the west staircase. In 1969-70 St. Mary's Parish School became Newport County Catholic Regional School joining with other neighboring parishes. In 1981 Newport County Catholic Regional School moved to St. Lucy's School in

¹³ Conley, Patrick T. & Matthew J. Smith, Catholicism in Rhode Island, 106.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number 8	Page 10	

Middletown. Two years later, under the Reverend George McCarthy, appointed pastor of St. Mary's in 1976, the former school was adapted for use as the Parish Center.

St. Mary's Rectory (1866-1921)

On June 21, 1886 the Reverend Dr. Grace, Chairman of the Trustees of St. Mary's agreed to accept plans from Newport architect Dudley Newton (1845-1907) to build a new "parsonage" for the clergy.¹⁴ Dudley Newton designed 'summer cottages' in Newport, but was only known locally. His works include two Stick Style houses, the Cram-Sturtevant House (1871-1872), Middletown, Rhode Island, and the King Birkhead House (1872) in Newport. Newton's reputation was later revived by the publications of architectural historians Henry Russell Hitchcock and Vincent Scully.

The rectory built by Dudley Newton replaced the now decrepit 18th-century, two-story Dr. King House, which had stood on the Spring Street property since St. Mary's first purchased the lot in 1847. At that time the wood-frame house was moved further towards the rear of the lot where it served as the earliest residence on this site for the clergy, including Father William O'Reilly, St. Mary's Church's second pastor. The Dripps' 1850 map of Newport shows a building adjacent to the newly built church.

Dr. Grace moved with his assistants into the Rectory designed by Newton in 1887. On December 11, 1887, the "Providence Sunday Journal" described St. Mary's new parsonage as "the handsomest" rectory in Newport. It was a gothic-inspired masonry building as shown in the line drawing that illustrated the article. The journal described the building as having four projecting gable ends, one on each side. The two-and-one-half-story building stood adjacent to the church structure on the south side. A photo appeared in the "Providence Journal" on August 18, 1902 showing the south elevation of the church with the rectory in the background. The Rectory (1886) by Dudley Newton shows on L. J. Richards Map (1893) where the footprint was reminiscent of a Greek cross, as outlined in the "Providence Sunday Journal." The north elevation was roughly parallel with the Church, and the east elevation was parallel with the School. The Rectory was placed only twelve to fifteen feet from the surrounding Church and School. It was constructed in Maine brick with "rich, dark" brownstone trimmings, and displayed pointed Gothic-like window treatments and square bay windows. The broad single-story porch that covered the facade was carried by five columns and inset with decorative, flattened Gothic or Tudor arches between the main supports. Other ornamental treatments were applied to the cornice and eaves. Clearly the building was meant to continue the Gothic theme initiated by Keeley's design for St. Mary's Church and St. Mary's Parish School. The old rectory included a hall, stairway, reception room, dining room, parlor, kitchen, and large open fireplaces. The rear portion of the top floor had two rooms for servants. The building stood until 1921 when a fire destroyed the building, and Ellen Rush one of the servants died in the blaze. At the

¹⁴ Trustees Book, Archives, St. Mary's Church, Newport RI.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex	Newport	Newport County, Rhode Island
Name of Property	City/Town	County and State
Section Number <u>8</u>	Page <u>11</u>	

time pastor Father James Ward and two assistants who lived in the rectory lost all their possessions. After the fire, the convent on Spring Street (opposite the church) was used temporarily as a rectory.

Rectory (1925)

The present Rectory (1925) was built over the ruins of the earlier rectory, destroyed by fire in 1921. Reverend Jeremiah W. Baggott was appointed pastor on July 28, 1921, and oversaw the building of the impressive new Rectory. A larger and more 'modern' rectory was built from the plans of Providence architect Ambrose Jerome Murphy (1869-1949). Michael J. McCormick, a parishioner and contractor, supervised the construction. According to the "Providence Visitor," St. Mary's new rectory was finished by August 14, 1924.

Ambrose Murphy's plans survive in St. Mary's own archives. The entrance to the main block opened onto a spacious vestibule with a stair hall behind. There were two offices either side of the vestibule and another office and the dining room in the rear section. At the west end, a large common room with wooden beams and plaster panels opened onto the sun porch. The second floor had an adjoining chamber and study for the pastor, and the same for his first assistant. The third floor had a chamber and a study for the second assistant, and a chamber for the third assistant, as well as three guest rooms. The recessed section of the rectory was the service wing, which contained a kitchen, a servant's hall, pantry and water closet on the first floor, and rooms for a housekeeper and servant on the second and third floors.

Born in Worcester, Massachusetts, Ambrose Jerome Murphy (1869-1949) designed ecclesiastical buildings including Catholic churches, schools and other institutional buildings in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. His Rhode Island works include St. Joseph's Hospital Nurses Home (1912) Providence, St. Anthony's Church (1927) Woonsocket, Jesus Savior Church (1928) Newport, Providence College Science Building (1933) Providence. The Rhode Island Historical Society has a full list of Ambrose Murphy's buildings.

Ambrose Murphy began his architectural career by working for his uncle, Irish-born architect James T. Murphy (1834-1907). Apprenticed to and later a partner of Patrick Keeley in the 1860s, James Murphy left Keeley's firm and established offices in Boston and Providence. Ambrose Murphy formed a partnership with Franklin R. Hindle in 1900, and Benjamin W. Wright joined them on 1907. The partnership lasted until 1917. At that time Ambrose Murphy took over the firm and continued to practice independently until 1942. Murphy was a member emeritus of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.) and the Rhode Island Chapter:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

9

Page

1

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

9

Page

2

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

9

Page

3

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

St. Mary's Church Complex

Newport

Newport County, Rhode Island

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number 10

Page 1

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is that of Newport Tax Assessor's Plat 27 Lot 119.

Boundary Justification

The area of the nominated resource is that which has been historically occupied by St. Mary's Church, School, and Rectory since the construction of the parish's first building in the mid-nineteenth century.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Property Name St. Mary's Parish, Newport, Newport County, Rhode Island

Section number Photographs

Page 1

PHOTOGRAPH INDEX

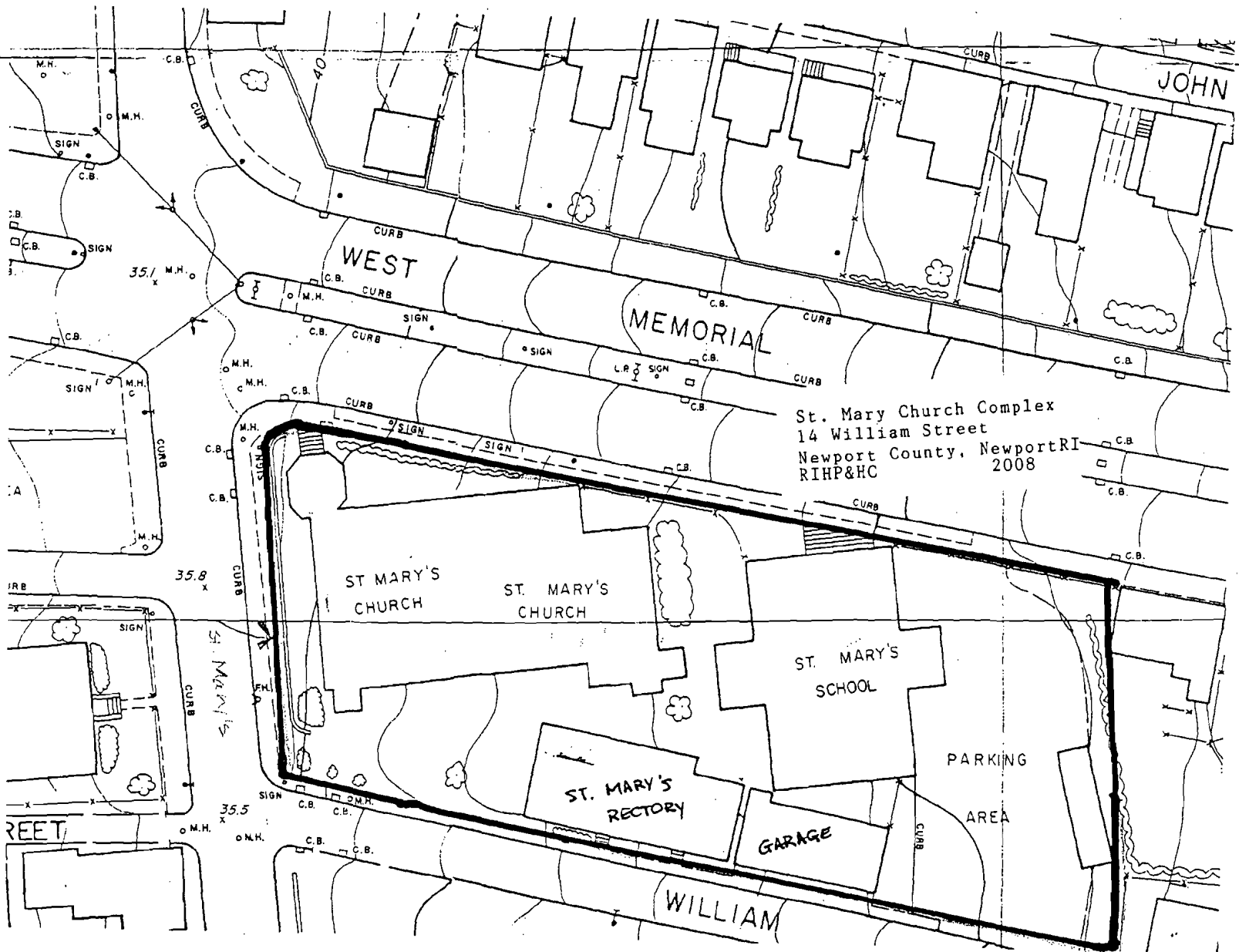
St. Mary's Parish Complex
14 Williams Street
Newport, Newport County Rhode Island

Photographer: Katherine Matison

Date: April – June 2005

Negatives: Tremont Preservation Services LLC, 374 Congress Street, Suite 301, Boston, MA 02210

- 1 St. Mary's Parish Church, view NE of West and South elevations
- 2 St. Mary's Parish Church, view SE of North elevation
- 3 St. Mary's Parish Church, view E of W elevation, and steeple
- 4 St. Mary's Parish Church, detail, steeple
- 5 St. Mary's Parish Church, Main entrance on Spring Street
- 6 St. Mary's Parish Church, detail, statue atop entrance porch
- 7 St. Mary's Parish Church, view N of South elevation, view of stone wall in foreground and view of W porch on Rectory at right
- 8 St. Mary's Parish Church, view N of W entrance
- 9 St. Mary's Parish Church, view NE of west elevation
- 10 St. Mary's Parish Church, view W of East elevation
- 11 St. Mary's Parish Church, view E of
- 12 St. Mary's Parish School, View NW of South and East elevations
- 13 St. Mary' Parish School, View SW of East and North elevations
- 14 St. Mary's Parish Rectory, View SW of East and North elevations



St. Mary Church Complex
14 William Street
Newport County, Newport RI
RIHP&HC 2008

WEST

MEMORIAL

JOHN

ST. MARY'S
CHURCH

ST. MARY'S
CHURCH

ST. MARY'S
SCHOOL

ST. MARY'S
RECTORY

GARAGE

PARKING
AREA

WILLIAM

REET







St. Mary's Church
1854-1855
Designed by
Richard Upjohn
Architect
New York, N.Y.









