

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Bell Street Chapel

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
5 Bell Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE  
Rhode Island, 02909

CODE  
44

COUNTY:  
Providence

CODE  
007

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Trust under the will of James Eddy and The Religious Society of Bell Street Chapel

STREET AND NUMBER:  
5 Bell Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE:  
Rhode Island, 02909

CODE  
44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Dorrance Street at Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE:  
Rhode Island, 02903

CODE  
44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Not so represented

DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal  
 State  
 County  
 Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

## 7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Bell Street Chapel, located on a short street branching off Broadway in the western section of Providence, was designed in 1875 by William R. Walker, a prominent local architect. It stands on land--donated by James Eddy, a prosperous art dealer--which in 1875 was far from the city center; but the surrounding area was rapidly becoming a fashionable residential section.

Set dramatically on the sidewalk's edge, the chapel rises high above the pavement, forcing the viewer to look sharply upwards to see its temple front. A timber-framed, hip-roofed structure, it is composed of a piano nobile faced in brick and trimmed with wood and brownstone, which is set upon a full-storey basement of rusticated brownstone that serves as a podium. The general scheme was adapted to the current Victorian taste of this country from a long-standing French academic mode (cf. the buildings of the Place de la Concorde); and for the important portico feature of the building the architect has referred to the Maison Carrée as a model. Today in all major respects the building stands unchanged. The correctly Corinthian tetrastyle portico prefacing the upper part of the building is backed by two Corinthian pilasters at its extremities, and the ornament of its entablature and pediment is heavy and complex. Piercing the stone "platform" at street level are two arched doorways flanking a blank central bay; above, within the portico, the façade displays one tall central round-headed window emphasized by enframing wooden moldings and flanked by two blind arches lesser in height. These blind arches originally were given some visual importance by iron latticework, now lost. Originally surmounting the building were a balustrade just above eaves-level and another balustrade railing the flat deck of the hip roof; these no longer exist. The "parade" façade of the chapel is described above; the sides and rear are of finely-mortared brickwork, running back to a depth of five bays on each side, where there are flat-headed windows on the ground floor and round-headed ones for the church auditorium on the second floor; the rear elevation has two contiguous round-headed windows at auditorium level, flanked by two blind arches.

Entrance to the building is gained through the two doorways of the enclosed "loggia" at sidewalk level which lead to two small vestibules and then into a low-ceilinged ante-room with wainscoting and cornice of dark-stained wood. (Immediately behind is a large room with a stage at its further end. The doors to this room are covered with imitation leather and have maxims and proverbs lettered upon this surface by small tacks.) From the ante-room lateral stairs--carved posts punctuating the plain railings--lead up to another ante-space on the main floor, where the large central window gives on the portico.

From this upstairs area doors lead into the chapel proper, which can be described as a large Protestant preaching hall. It is lighted by four of the five large windows filling the side bays; these retain

(See Continuation Sheet.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

7. Description.

frosted panes with narrow colored borders; each window is equipped with folding, louvred interior shutters. Dark wainscoting along the walls carries a heavy upper terminating molding. The closely-set rows of pews are of heavy wood construction, panelled at the ends, where an S-scroll motif forms both an ornament and an arm-rest. The preaching and "altar" or offertory area forms a high segmentally-arched niche (not a chancel) which is emphasized by very heavy moldings, supported on side brackets and having a heavy sculptural keystone, enframing the upper arched portion. The pulpit is given elegant carving and panelling, with curved corners. Within the preaching niche there are two side openings which are bordered by wooden moldings enriched with gilt. One opening is a doorway to a vestry, and the other contains a large organ console with carved "Gothic" adornment. The platform upon which the organ now rests is curved and balustraded but is of more recent date than the organ itself. There are many paintings hanging in the church, supplied or donated by James Eddy. They are mostly of romantic scenes and ancient ruins, in keeping with the inspiration of the exterior architecture.

8. Significance.

is, as a result, filled with many fine buildings that exemplify seventy or more years of American public and private architectural style and tastes. Plans to protect as much of the area as possible are presently being made. Important in itself, the Bell Street Chapel is also significant as part of Broadway's architectural development.

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the Bell Street Chapel lies in its role as an example of the taste of its time, and as a well-preserved and important landmark in a community which developed mostly in the second half of the 19th century. This is a community which--up to the moment of writing--has remained largely intact and is deserving of careful attention and appraisal today in order that it may remain intact in the future.

The building typifies the French academic style of architecture which had, in the 1860's, taken firm root in this country and of which better-known examples were the former (but extant) New England Museum of Natural History and the (demolished) Rogers Building of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, both in Boston and both designed by William G. Preston. Both Boston structures were, however, fairly elaborate in their adornment--and the Rogers Building was even "fussy" by present standards. These qualities are not to be found in the Bell Street Chapel, which keeps to the strict essentials of the style, emphasizing its forced verticality, sparing and calculated use of decoration, and historical allusions. Sited above a landscape declivity at the end of Broadway, and itself upon a high base, the chapel originally rose over surrounding trees and greenery (as can be seen in old photographs); it no doubt was intended to beckon the viewer, like a temple far away on a hill.

Its architect, William Russell Walker (1830-1905), was born and trained in Rhode Island. He was talented and prolific, and left a son and a grandson to carry on his practice. Not many of his major works now survive in the state, but the two which can be considered outstanding, the classical chapel and the old Brown University Library in the north-Italian style advocated by Ruskin, still stand.

The Bell Street Chapel remains generally well-preserved and is in use for a congregation of the Unitarian Church. It is an important landmark in a section of the city (Broadway) which developed in the latter half of the 19th century as a fashionable residential area and

(See Continuation Sheet.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Cady, John Hutchins: The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island, 1957), p. 153.  
 Withey, Henry F., and Withey, Elsie Rathburn: Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles, California, 1970), p. 626.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		41° 49 ' 7.02 " N	71° 26 ' 11.78 " W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**B. Christopher Bene, Consultant**

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission      DATE: October 5, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
State House, 90 Smith Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence      STATE: Rhode Island, 02903      CODE: 44

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National       State       Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

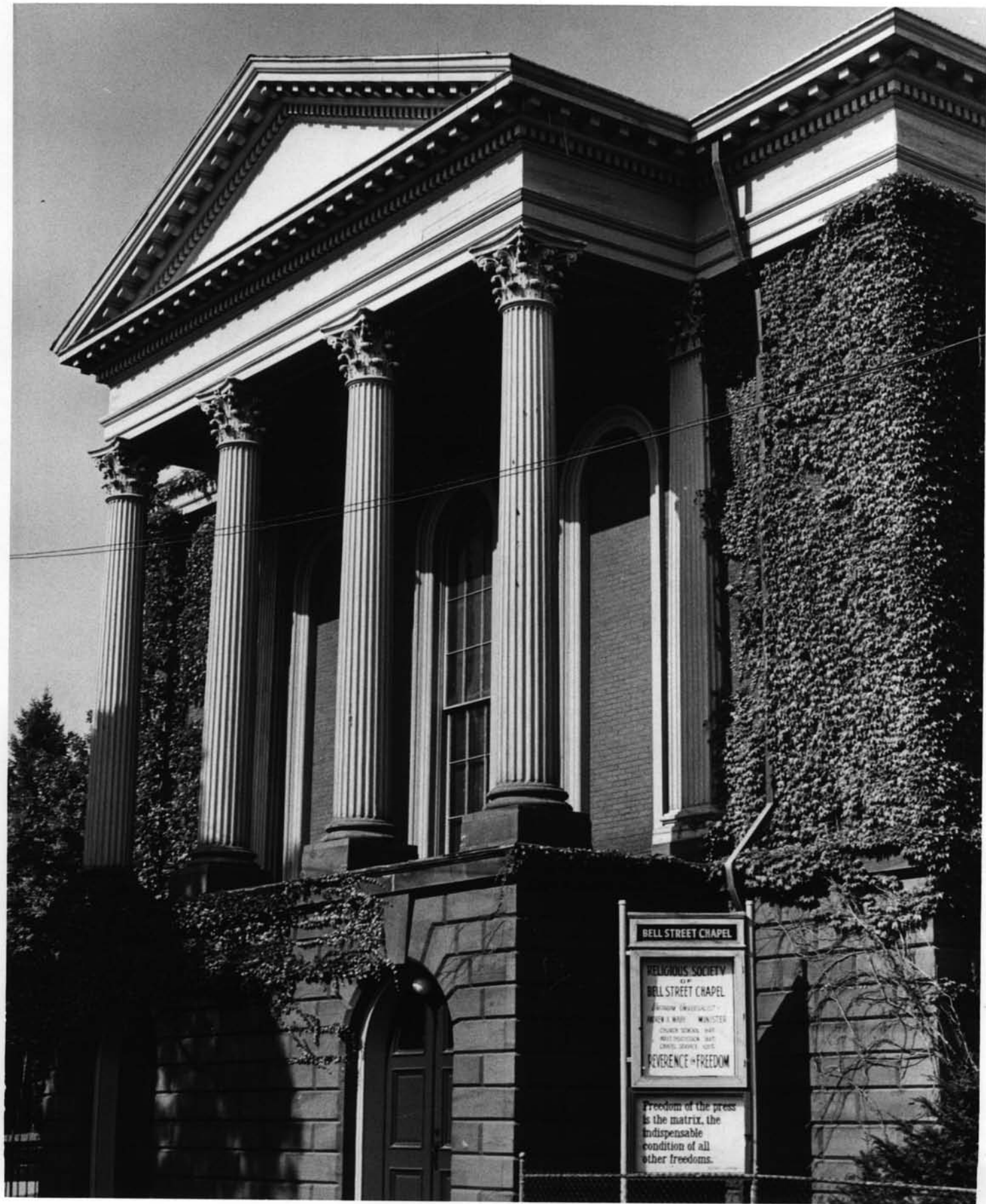
Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**BELL STREET CHAPEL**

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY  
OF  
BELL STREET CHAPEL

MINISTER: W. H. WATSON  
CHURCH SERVICES: 10:30 AM  
SUNDAY SCHOOL: 10:45 AM  
WEDNESDAY: 7:30 PM

REVERENCE - FREEDOM

Freedom of the press  
is the matrix, the  
indispensable  
condition of all  
other freedoms.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Bell Street Chapel

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

5 Bell Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Providence

STATE:

Rhode Island

CODE

44

COUNTY:

Providence

CODE

007

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: B. Christopher Bene

DATE OF PHOTO: 1971

NEGATIVE FILED AT: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House,  
90 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Entrance front seen from the south.





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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DATE OF PHOTO: 1971

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90 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Church auditorium, looking north-east towards pulpit area.



**GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES**

Latitude: 41° 49' 7.02" N

Longitude: 71° 26' 11.78" W

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM

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

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

<b>1. NAME</b>			
COMMON: Bell Street Chapel			
AND/OR HISTORIC:			
<b>2. LOCATION</b>			
STREET AND NUMBER: 7 Bell Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence			
STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Providence	CODE 007
<b>3. MAP REFERENCE</b>			
SOURCE: U. S. Geological Survey			
SCALE: 1: 24,000			
DATE: 1957			
<b>4. REQUIREMENTS</b>			
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS			
1. Property boundaries where required.			
2. North arrow.			
3. Latitude and longitude reference.			