

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Saint Thomas Episcopal Church and Rectory

and or common

2. Location

street & number Putnam Pike N.A. not for publication

city, town Smithfield N.A. vicinity of congressional district #1,  
Hon. Fernand J. St Germain

state Rhode Island code 44 county Providence code 007

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N.A. in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<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:

4. Owner of Property

name Saint Thomas Episcopal Church (Rev. Donald Belt)

street & number Putnam Pike

P.O.

~~city, town~~ Greenville N.A. vicinity of state Rhode Island 02828

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Smithfield Town Hall

street & number 64 Farnum Pike

city, town Smithfield state Rhode Island

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See Continuation Sheet #1 has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local \_\_\_\_\_

depository for survey records

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
X good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved    date _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Saint Thomas Episcopal Church, built in 1851 and altered in 1891, is a handsome Gothic Revival building of coursed rubblestone. It stands in the village of Greenville on a corner lot which also contains a mid-20th-century parish hall and a modest, wood-frame, Queen Anne-style rectory.

The church comprises a tall end-gable-roof nave block, a four-story central foretower, and a rectangular gable-roof chancel. Its masonry has a banded effect created by alternating wide and narrow courses of stone. The foretower has a Gothic-arch entrance at the base, single lancet windows at the second-story level, circular windows at the third-story level, a belfry with louver-filled Gothic arches, and a battlemented parapet with short corner pinnacles. The walls of the nave block are articulated by buttresses, set diagonally at the corners, and contain stained-glass lancet windows.

As originally constructed, the building consisted of the nave and chancel, with a bell gable on the facade. Some stained-glass memorial windows were installed in 1866 and other unspecified improvements were made in 1879 and 1889 (probably including the installation of some new stained glass, judging from the varying artistic styles of the existing windows). In 1891 the bell gable was replaced by the present foretower.

The interior of the church is a simple, unbroken space, finished plainly with the exposed framing of its hammer beam roof its principal decoration. The nave is entered through a plain double-leaf door set in a blind Gothic arch which fills the west end. Above the door is a small shallow gallery (a later addition) and a lancet window opening into the tower. A series of five arches support the roof. Each is composed of an arched brace supported by a hammer beam and a hammer brace which rests on a plain corbel. The wall plate, ridge piece, purlins, rafters and collar beams, all of unfinished wood, are left exposed. The walls and ceiling are finished in plain painted plaster and the floor is made of narrow boards.

Light fixtures are suspended from the hammer braces. Each is composed of five simple globes hung from a metal collar. The church's pews appear to be mid-twentieth-century replacements of earlier furniture.

To the left of the chancel arch is an octagonal wood pulpit and a large Gothic Revival chair; to the right is a hexagonal stone font and the diagonal-boarded door to the sacristy. The sanctuary is separated from the nave by a low altar rail carved into a series of Gothic arches, set two steps above the main floor. The chancel is lit by three lancet windows, the center one the tallest, and is panelled to a height of about 7 feet.

In 1951, a one-story, flat-roofed parish hall was constructed on the west side of Saint Thomas; it is connected to the church by a passageway. The parish house is constructed of concrete blocks of two different sizes,

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 1

Item number 6

Page 2

A Report on Historical and Cultural Resources Within the Proposed  
Highway Study Corridor for the Reconstruction of U.S. Route 44...from  
Route I-295 to Chepachet.

March 1978

State

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission  
Providence, Rhode Island

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 2

Item number 7

Page 2

laid in alternating courses to simulate the texture of the church's masonry. Its main entrance is set in a Gothic-arch recess in a projecting pavilion at the center of the facade. As a structure less than fifty years old, the parish house is not considered architecturally or historically significant, and though it stands within the area encompassed by the nomination, it is included as a non-contributing structure.

A rectory, built in 1889, stands southwest of the church on the same lot. Set on a granite-slab foundation, it is a one-and-one-half-story, gable-roof, clapboard Queen Anne-style dwelling with a shallow, off-center front projection and a rear ell. The front wing has truncated corners at first-floor level, forming a polygonal bay window, and there is a rectangular bay window on the northeast side. Front and rear entrance porches are set into the corners formed by the intersections of the main block with the front and rear wings. The porches' square posts each have deeply cut chamfers that create edges running along what should be the faces of each post (see rectory photo, # ). In addition to their stick balustrades (the one on the front porch also ornamented with a band of miniature semicircular and ogee cut-outs) the porches have rows of spindles below the eaves. The house's double-hung, two-over-two windows are flanked by louvered blinds and topped by small shed hoods. The gable ends are trimmed with bargeboards containing incised Eastlake-style decoration and lattice screens at the peaks.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
... prehistoric	... archeology-prehistoric	... community planning	... landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
... 1400-1499	... archeology-historic	... conservation	... law	... science
... 1500-1599	... agriculture	... economics	... literature	... sculpture
... 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	... education	... military	... social/
... 1700-1799	... art	... engineering	... music	... humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	... commerce	... exploration/settlement	... philosophy	... theater
... 1900-	... communications	... industry	... politics/government	... transportation
		... invention		... other (specify)

Specific dates 1851 Builder/Architect Thomas A. Tefft

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

St. Thomas Church is architecturally significant as one of the best small-scale Gothic Revival ecclesiastical buildings in Rhode Island, notable for its unusual stone construction. The building is part of a design for small country churches in the United States that includes, and was greatly influenced by, the works of Richard Upjohn. The original portion of St. Thomas is important as a surviving example of the work of Thomas A. Tefft (1826-59), one of the most talented architects practicing in Rhode Island in the mid-nineteenth century, and is especially notable as the only Gothic church design by him known to have been constructed. From its inception St. Thomas has been associated with individuals and families prominent in the socio-economic and ecclesiastical history of Rhode Island. The story of the parish's origin and development contribute to a greater understanding of nineteenth-century culture and religious life and the evolution and growth of the Episcopal denomination in the state. With further study, more could probably be learned about patterns of philanthropy and architectural patronage at that time.

The movement that culminated in the founding of St. Thomas parish began in the 1840s, when visiting Episcopal clergymen held occasional services at Greenville. The Reverend James H. Eames (1814-77), then rector of St. Stephens Church, Providence, conducted services here twice in 1849. In October 1850, Eames resigned the rectorate of St. Stephens, reportedly for financial reasons, and became a diocesan missionary. A month later he began to hold regular services in Greenville, first in the Baptist Church and later in a hall. St. Thomas Church received a charter from the Rhode Island General Assembly in January 1851 and the first parish meeting was held 5 February of that year. The construction of a church building was apparently the chief priority. A lot was donated to the congregation by Resolved Waterman (1787-1886) of Providence, a Greenville native descended from the family that had initiated settlement of the village in the 1680s. A well-to-do businessman, Waterman was a communicant and vestryman of St. Stephens, where Eames had been pastor, and was a liberal benefactor of the Episcopal Church. Funds were raised by local subscription and solicitation of friends of the church in Rhode Island and Boston. The Bishop of Rhode Island, the Rt. Rev. John P.K. Henshaw, gave St. Thomas a grant from the legacy of the late Samuel J. Larned, who had left the diocese three bequests with the stipulation that each was to be used to help underwrite the construction of a church in a needy parish. The simple Gothic-style structure of local rubblestone with a rectangular nave, a rectangular chancel, buttressed walls, and a bell gable topping the facade was designed by Providence architect Thomas A. Tefft and completed in 1851 at a cost of \$4200. The structure was consecrated by Bishop Henshaw on 9 March 1852.

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 3

Item number 8

Page 2

St. Thomas, Greenville, bears a strong similarity to a few of the rural Episcopal churches executed by Richard Upjohn between 1847 and 1851. It is nearly identical to Upjohn's Calvary Church (1847-49) in Stonington, Connecticut, which is also a stone structure with a rectangular plan, diagonal corner buttresses, and a bell gable at the front roof peak. The relative proximity of Providence and Stonington (50 miles) makes it very possible that Tefft was aware of Calvary Church when he designed St. Thomas. Tefft was well acquainted with another Upjohn work, Grace Church, Providence (1845-46), a building which he singled out for discussion in an 1851 lecture entitled "The Cultivation of True Taste."

The real significance of St. Thomas, however, lies not in its reflection of Upjohn's work but in its authorship by Tefft, an innovator in his own right, and in its place in Tefft's brief but brilliant career. Thomas A. Tefft (1826-59) is one of the most significant, if less well-known, figures in the history of American architecture. Born in Richmond, Rhode Island, he became a protege of the famous educator Henry Barnard, who encouraged him to enroll at Brown University in Providence. While still an undergraduate, Tefft entered the office of builder/architects James C. Bucklin and William Tallman as a draftsman. Tefft's design for the first Providence Union Station (1847-48, demolished 1897-98), executed when he was only twenty-one, was voted one of the twenty best buildings in the United States in a poll conducted by the American Institute of Architects in 1885, and has been cited by Henry-Russell Hitchcock as "...the finest early [railroad] station in the New World." Tefft was instrumental in the introduction of the Italianate and Romanesque styles to Rhode Island. Carroll Meeks lists him together with Upjohn and James Renwick as one of the pioneers of the Romanesque in America. Though not unique in his position among the architectural avant-garde of the mid-nineteenth century, Tefft is notable for his highly personal interpretation of the styles he helped to popularize.

Tefft's authorship of St. Thomas was unknown until it was discovered during the process of preparing this nomination. This discovery and other new information raises to thirty the number of documented church designs by Tefft, twenty-five of which are represented by drawings in the Brown University archives. Of these only eleven are known to have been constructed, of which seven, including St. Thomas, still exist (one additional existing church is attributed to Tefft but differs considerably from the project drawing in the Brown archives, though it still exhibits stylistic features characteristic of Tefft's work). Prior to this all of the Tefft churches known to have been constructed were in the Romanesque style. A small Gothic Revival church formerly standing at Georgiaville, Rhode Island (built 1851? 1856?, now demolished; illustrated in Hitchcock, Rhode Island Architecture) was once attributed to Tefft, but never documented. One of the heretofore unidentified Gothic Revival church designs among the Tefft drawings now appears to be a study, if not a final design, for St. Thomas, Greenville. As the only known extant Gothic Revival church by Tefft, St. Thomas puts a new perspective on his ecclesiastical work.

(See Continuation Sheet #4)

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 4

Item number 8

Page 3

The choice of Gothic for St. Thomas may have been influenced by the new parish's connection to St. Stephens Church, Providence, though the Reverend Eames and the Waterman family--Resolved Waterman and his son, the Reverend Henry Waterman. The link between the two parishes is illustrated by the fact that St. Stephens gave its old communion service to St. Thomas in April 1852. St. Stephens was one of the earliest Episcopal churches in New England, if not the first, to come under the influence of the Oxford movement. It seems likely that Eames, as a one-time rector of St. Stephens, was attuned to the principles of the Tractarian movement. This may account for the choice of a Gothic Revival design for St. Thomas. Henry Waterman (1813-76) was rector of St. Stephens both before and after Eames's tenure there, and is well known for his High Church attitudes and beliefs. During Waterman's second term at St. Stephens, the parish commissioned Upjohn to build a new Gothic Revival church in 1860-62. Henry Waterman was apparently knowledgeable about and interested in Ecclesiological theories about church architecture, and perhaps he exerted some influence over the planning and construction of St. Thomas. Although Tefft was himself a Baptist, and the majority of his church designs were for evangelical or non-ritualistic denominations (only one other Episcopal church--in the Romanesque style--besides St. Thomas), he was acquainted with the Tractarian movement. Tefft owned copies of New York Ecclesiologist and pattern books by A.W.N. Pugin. Though at variance with his own religious beliefs, the philosophical and aesthetic dictates of the High Church movement were familiar to Tefft.

St. Thomas is historically notable as a product of missionary activity implemented by J.P.K. Henshaw (1792-1852), Bishop of Rhode Island from 1843- to 1852. In the annals of the Episcopal Church, Henshaw is famous for his evangelical zeal. Born in Middletown, Connecticut, Henshaw spent his youth in Middlebury, Vermont, and graduated from the college there at the age of sixteen. Before his nineteenth birthday he underwent a dramatic conversion to the Episcopal faith while visiting his birthplace. Thereafter Henshaw devoted himself to church affairs. He helped start several churches in Vermont before moving to Bristol, Rhode Island, to study for the ministry under the Rt. Rev. Alexander V. Griswold, Bishop of the Eastern Diocese and rector of St. Michael's Church. Henshaw was called to serve churches in Marblehead, Massachusetts; Brooklyn, New York; and Baltimore, Maryland-- the first two before taking his final orders in 1816. Henshaw was greatly admired for his industry and efficacy, reviving or expanding his own parishes and helping to found new churches wherever he went.

In 1843 Henshaw returned to Rhode Island as bishop of the diocese and rector of Grace Church, Providence. His missionary labors extended denominational activity into many new areas, especially among the growing mill villages of the state. He was instrumental in establishing at least six permanent parishes in the state during his nine-year episcopate in addition to mission stations. Henshaw's assignment of James Eames to St. Thomas and his allocation of diocesan funds for the construction of the church make him a key figure in the parish's early development.

(See Continuation Sheet #5)

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 5

Item number 8

Page 4

There is little readily available information on the later history of St. Thomas. One secondary source notes that "repairs" to the building were made in 1866, 1879, and 1889, but the specifics of these alterations are unknown. The rectory, built in 1889, is a modest but good example of a vernacular Queen Anne residence. In 1891 the original bell gable of the church was replaced with the present foretower, added as a memorial to the third rector, the Rev. Benjamin H. Chase. No information has been found that identifies the architect or builder of this tower. As it stands, the church's distinctive monumental design and structural character and prominent siting along U.S. Route 44 make it an important landmark in north-western Rhode Island.

A combination of superior architectural quality with numerous and varied historical associations make St. Thomas Church a significant cultural resource.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 6

Item number 9

Page 2

Biographical Cyclopedia of Representative Men of Rhode Island (Providence: 1881), pp. 221-22, 385-86, 395.

Catir, Norman Joseph, Jr., St. Stephens Church in Providence (Providence: 1964), pp. 18-23, 26-27.

History of the State of Rhode Island (Philadelphia: 1878), p. 311.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Baltimore:

Rhode Island Architecture (Providence: 1939).

Little, Margaret Ruth, "The Architecture of a Late Lamented Genius, Thomas A. Tefft," (unpublished masters' thesis, Brown University, 1971).

Meeks, Carroll, "Romanesque Before Richardson," Art Bulletin, (March 1953).

"St. Thomas' Church, Greenville," Providence Journal, 26 March 1852.

Upjohn, Everard M., Richard Upjohn: Architect and Churchman (New York: 1939).

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

<b>For NPS use only</b>
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date entered

Continuation sheet 7

Item number 10

Page 2

Verbal Boundary Description

curb line of Smith Avenue (RI Route 116), and southwesterly and northwesterly by the southwesterly and northwesterly lot lines of lot 171 in Assessor's Plat 6, as defined by the Town of Smithfield. It is intended to include within this nomination a granite-post and wrought-iron gateway at the head of the path leading to the main entrance of the church building.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes all of the elements that constitute the historical and architectural significance of this cultural resource.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bayles, Richard M., History of Providence County, Rhode Island (New York: 1891), II, pp. 213-14.

(See Continuation Sheet #6)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name North Scituate, R.I.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

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

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

## Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is bounded northeasterly by the southerly curb line of Putnam Pike (U.S. Route 44), southeasterly by the northwesterly (See Continuation Sheet #7)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert O. Jones, Senior Historic Preservation Planner

organization R.I. Historical Preservation Comm. date April 1986

street & number 150 Benefit Street telephone 401-277-2678

city or town Providence state Rhode Island 02903

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

For NPS use only

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

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bayles, Richard M., History of Providence County, Rhode Island (New York: 1891), II, pp. 213-14.

(See Continuation Sheet #6)

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A 

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

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is bounded northeasterly by the southerly curb line of Putnam Pike (U.S. Route 44), southeasterly by the northwesterly (See Continuation Sheet #7)

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State Historic Preservation Officer signature Theresa C. Williams

title \_\_\_\_\_ date 15 April 1987

For NPS use only

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

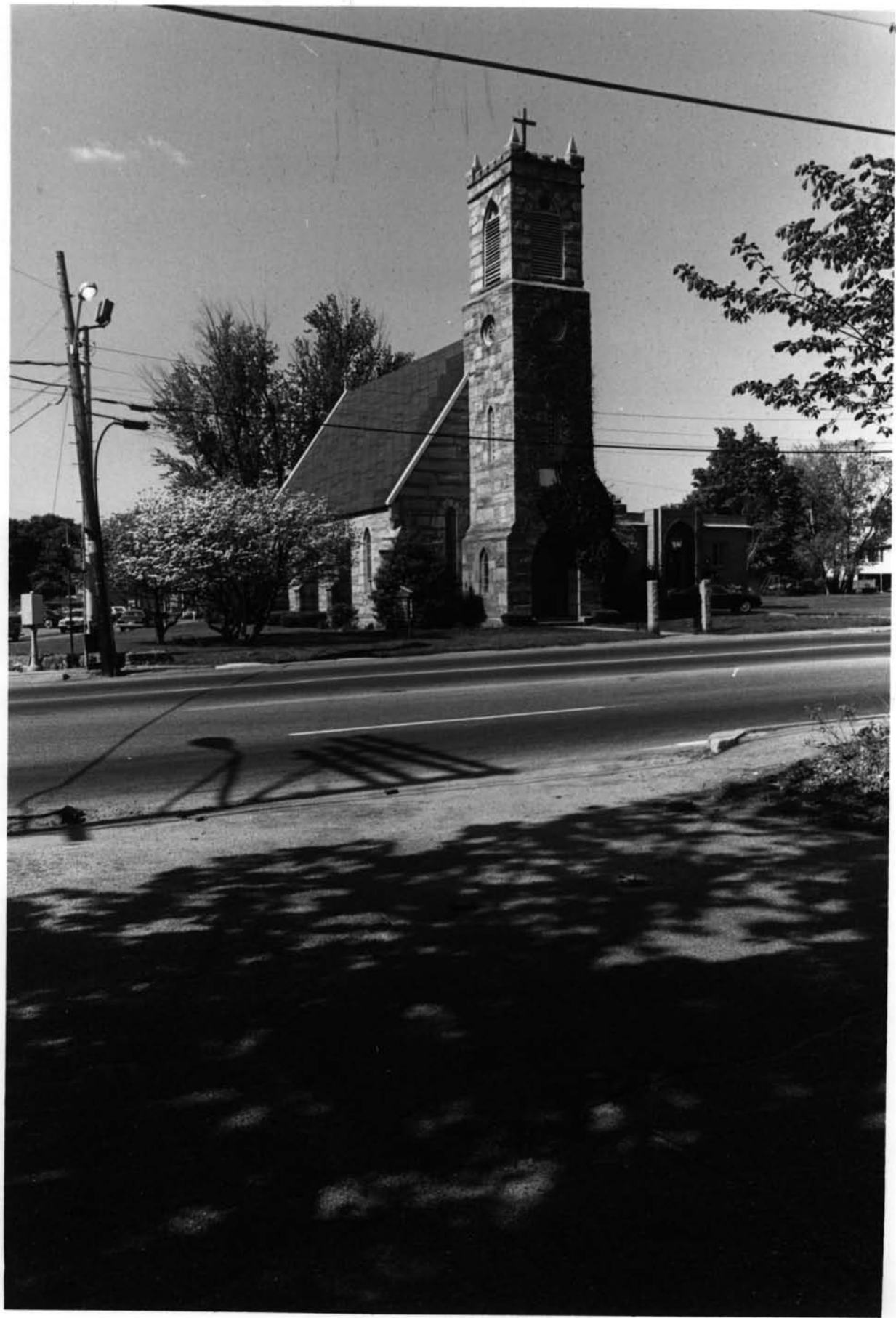
date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration



ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND RECTORY

Smithfield, Rhode Island

Photographer: Robert O. Jones

Date: May 1985

Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Exterior view of the church facing southwesterly.

Photo #1



ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND RECTORY

Smithfield, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger

Date: August 1985

Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Interior view of the church facing northerly.

Photo #3





ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND RECTORY

Smithfield, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger

Date: August 1985

Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Detail view of church interior facing northeasterly.

Photo #4



ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND RECTORY

Smithfield, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger

Date: August 1985

Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Interior view of the church facing southerly.

Photo #2



ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND RECTORY

Smithfield, Rhode Island

Photographer: Robert O. Jones

Date: May 1985

Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence, RI 02903

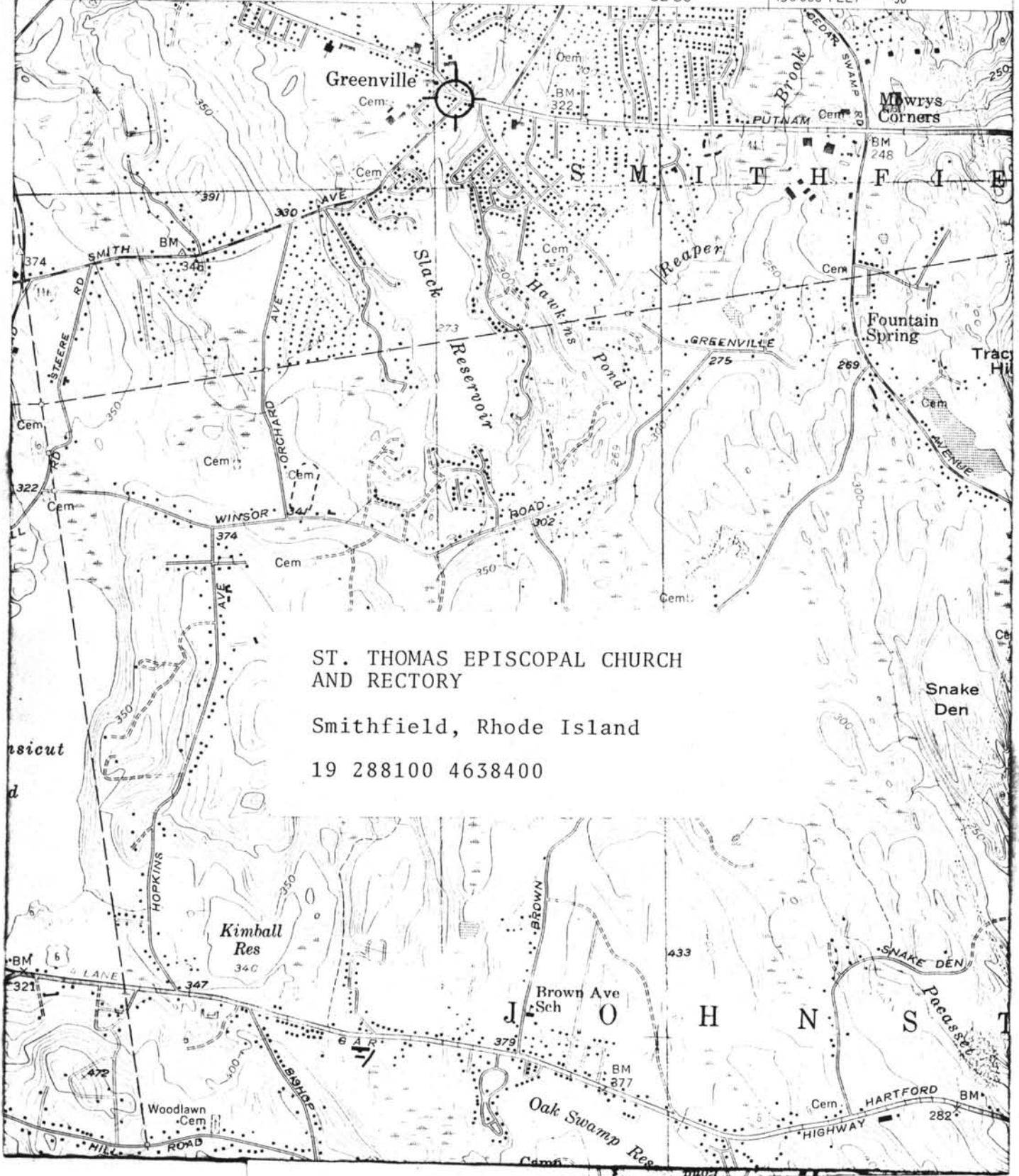
Exterior view of the rectory facing southwesterly.

Photo #5

6667 1 NE  
(GEORGIAVILLE)

32°30'

490 000 FEET 790



ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
AND RECTORY

Smithfield, Rhode Island

19 288100 4638400

nsicut  
d

Snake  
Den

Kimball  
Res  
340

Brown Ave  
Sch

Woodlawn  
Cem

HARTFORD  
HIGHWAY

Oak Swamp Res