

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: First Baptist Church of Tiverton

Other names/site number: Old Stone Church

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 7 Old Stone Church Road

City or town: Tiverton State: RI County: Newport

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A ___ B x C ___ D

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p><u>Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission</u></p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p> | <p>Date</p> |
|--|--------------------|

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> | |
| <p>Signature of commenting official:</p> | <p>Date</p> |
| <p>Title :</p> | <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p> |

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
 Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
 County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <u>3</u> | <u> </u> | buildings |
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> | sites |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | structures |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | objects |
| <u>4</u> | <u> </u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility

RELIGION: church-related residence

FUNERARY: cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility

RELIGION: church-related residence

FUNERARY: cemetery

VACANT/NOT IN USE

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STUCCO; WOOD: weatherboard; STONE;
ASPHALT; BRICK

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The First Baptist Church property in Tiverton, Rhode Island, also known as the Old Stone Church, encompasses approximately 38 acres of gently sloping land at the intersection of Old Stone Church Road and Stone Church Road (Plat 912, Lots 101 and 106 and Plat 908, Lot 104). The property is located in a rural residential part of Tiverton, immediately to the north of the Little Compton, Rhode Island town line and with the town of Westport, Massachusetts to the east. It is on the outskirts of the village of Adamsville, which encompasses parts of Tiverton, Little Compton and Westport. Stone Church Road is a quiet, two-lane road that follows the gently-rolling terrain. It is lined with stone walls – dry-laid fieldstone in the vicinity of the church, cut-stone further north – for much of its length. Single-family residences are sited on lots immediately to the north, east and west of the First Baptist Church property, and Pleasant View Cemetery, a private, non-denominational burial ground not affiliated with the Church, is located to the south.

The First Baptist Church property includes a church, parsonage, parish house and cemetery, all clustered by the road. The remainder of the property, some of which was historically used as

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

farmland for the church's minister, is mostly wooded. The east-facing, Greek Revival-style Church is set back approximately 100 feet from Old Stone Church Road. Built in 1841, the Church includes a 1958 addition to its rear. About 50 feet to the west of the Church is the 1884-1885 Parsonage, a side-gable residence with a measure of Italianate trim, and a late-19th-century, wood-frame carriage shed. The Old Stone Church Cemetery, with grave markers dating primarily from the mid-19th century, is located immediately to the north of the Church. A semi-circular asphalt driveway provides access to the front of the Church, with parking to the north and west. The area immediately around the Parsonage is open and grassy, and there is a small open field to the northwest of the buildings. The ca. 1879 Parish House – a simple, wood-frame, one-and-a-half-story, front-gable building – is located across the street and a short distance to the south, on a triangular lot on the east side of Old Stone Church Road. Dry-laid stone walls are located along three sides of the cemetery, as well as within the interior of the property.

The First Baptist Church property as a whole, and its individual resources, retain a high level of integrity in terms of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Narrative Description

The First Baptist Church property occupies approximately 38 acres of land and includes a church, parsonage, parish house and cemetery, described below.

First Baptist Church (1841, 1958)

The First Baptist Church consists of an east-facing, front-gable, one-story building constructed in 1841 and executed in a restrained, Greek Revival style, as well as a one-story, rear addition built in 1958. The rectangular-plan Church measures approximately 45 feet by 55 feet, and is two bays wide by three bays deep. Of timber-frame construction, the Church's exterior walls are rubblestone covered with stucco. (The exterior walls were originally scored to imitate ashlar, a treatment that was obscured by a mid-20th-century application of stucco.¹) The building has an asphalt-shingled roof with a plain box cornice with partial returns. There are two brick chimneys with lancet-arched chimney caps near the east end of the building, one on the north slope and one on the south slope of the roof. The Church's most prominent feature is its hipped-roof belfry, set back several feet from the façade. The walls of the belfry are sheathed with horizontal wood siding. Each elevation of the belfry features a rectangular opening filled with a louvered panel, as well as paneled corner pilasters, surmounted by a plain but broad frieze and molded cornice. The structure is topped by a copper weathervane in the form of a Rhode Island Red rooster. The belfry houses a bell cast by Revere and Sons in 1822, which pre-dates the building; it was presumably created for use at a different location or, possibly, for the previous church on this site.

¹ Nancy Jensen Devin and Richard V. Simpson, *Images of America: Tiverton and Little Compton, Rhode Island, Volume II* (Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 1998): 51.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

The east-facing façade includes two pairs of symmetrically-placed, recessed, two-paneled wood doors. Above each pair of doors is a blind transom that features a pair of recessed panels like those in the doors. A set of wood steps, stretching nearly the width of the façade, leads to the entrances. (A modern ramp enclosed by a spindle railing runs along a portion of the building's north and east elevations to provide handicapped access at the northern doorway.) An engraved marble tablet placed between the two entries and centered beneath the gable peak reads "FREE-WILL / BAPTIST CHURCH / 1841." Two copper lanterns adorn the façade, one at the northeast corner and one at the southeast corner. Each is affixed to the church by four wrought iron brackets. These lanterns were electrified in the mid-20th century.

The north and south elevations of the Church feature three evenly-spaced, tall window openings with sixteen-over-sixteen, double-hung, wood sash flanked by louvered wood shutters. The west (rear) elevation features one window opening with sixteen-over-twelve, wood, double-hung sash in its northern bay. The original window opening in the southern bay was altered to accommodate an interior doorway leading to a small hyphen that connects the 1841 Church with the 1958 addition (described below).

Like the exterior, the interior of the Church is of a simple design with minimal architectural detailing. The sanctuary – which contains the pulpit, communion table, lectern and baptistery, all added in the mid-1960s – is located at the east end of the building, raised one step up from the nave. It occupies a niche created between the interior vestibules behind the front doors, and is framed by wood pilasters. A pair of paneled, wood doors occupies each of the openings leading to the vestibules. The openings are trimmed with wood ogee molding. In the nave, three banks of wood slip pews are arranged to create two side aisles. The pews face east, toward the sanctuary. Behind the congregation, at the west end of the building, is the choir area, raised four steps up from the nave. The interior walls of the Church feature horizontal wood sheathing to the bottom of the windows, terminated with simple wood molding, and plaster above. The deeply-recessed windows have no wood trim, but are framed by paired beads in the plaster walls. Wood crown molding sets off the vaulted ceiling, which features pressed-metal ceiling tiles likely installed in the late 19th or early 20th century. The railings that divide the choir from the nave are of paneled wood.

The interior of the Church has abundant natural light, but also features several historic lighting fixtures. Most notable are the four, early-20th-century, electric, wrought-iron chandeliers that hang in the four corners of the nave. Of simple design, each chandelier has a metal hoop fitted with five light sockets and a single ring of crystal drops. In addition, there are four cast-iron sconces, dating from the 1920s, located at the sanctuary.

A one-story, gable-roofed, rectangular-plan addition, known as the Fellowship Hall, was constructed off the northwest corner of the Church in 1958 and houses a large meeting space, a kitchen, bathrooms and storage. It is connected to the Church by a small hyphen, which has a door in its north and south elevations. The addition measures approximately 30 feet by 60 feet, rests on a concrete-block foundation, has walls sheathed in wood shingles, features simple wood trim, and is topped by a gable roof with asphalt shingles. A brick chimney is located on the east

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

slope of the roof, near the southern end of the building. Since the addition is not immediately visible from Stone Church Road and its construction involved only minor alterations to the Church, it does not detract significantly from the historic building's integrity.

The principal entrance to the Fellowship Hall is located on the north elevation, and consists of a pair of doors centered beneath the gable peak, topped by a triangular pediment and flanked by fluted pilasters. Additional entrances, both of which lead to the kitchen, are located in the southernmost bay of the west elevation and in the south elevation, just east of center. Windows in the addition are all double-hung, wood sash. On the west elevation, they include a series of five, evenly-spaced, eight-over-eight sash in the northernmost bays and a single, six-over-six window to the south. On the south elevation, there is a pair of six-over-six windows to the west of the entry and two, three-over-three windows to the east. The east elevation includes five, evenly-spaced, eight-over-eight sash. There are no windows on the north elevation. The interior of the Fellowship Hall is finished with linoleum tile floors, plasterboard walls and, in the large meeting space, a dropped tile ceiling.

Parsonage (1884-1885)

Located about 50 feet to the west of the Church, the Parsonage is an east-facing, side-gable, two-story residence that was built in 1884-1885 and exhibits elements of the Italianate style. The building consists of an approximately 25-foot-by-35-foot main block with a one-story, approximately 15-foot-by-15-foot ell extending to the south. Depicted on an 1895 map, the ell was built concurrent with or soon after the main block.² A small, one-story, wood-frame carriage shed is located immediately to the west of the ell.

The Parsonage rests on a parged fieldstone foundation and has exterior walls sheathed in wood clapboards, with plain corner boards and simple, molded fascia boards. Its gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and is pierced by a single, brick chimney in the center of the east slope of the main block. The principal entrance to the Parsonage is located in the northernmost bay of the five-bay façade and consists of a single, modern door with plain wood trim and a flat-roof hood. The scrollwork brackets at the hood, characteristic of Italianate-style buildings, represent some of the only architectural elaboration at this otherwise plain structure.

The historic fenestration pattern of the Parsonage's main block is largely intact, and the simple wood window trim – which includes molded drip caps, except where the second-story windows meet the cornice line – remains. All of the historic two-over-two wood sash have been replaced with vinyl. On the east façade, there are four window openings to the south of the entrance at the first story and five at the second story. The two-bay north elevation features a single window opening at the first story, in the western bay; two windows at the second story; and one in the attic, centered beneath the gable peak. The three-bay west elevation has a window opening in each bay at both the first and second stories. A large picture window was recently installed immediately to the south of the middle window at the first floor, the only alteration to the

² Everts and Richards, *New Topographical Atlas of Surveys – Southern Rhode Island* (Philadelphia: Everts and Richards, 1895).

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

fenestration. The south elevation of the main block, largely obscured by the ell, has an attic window in the gable peak, a small window opening below that, and a window in the easternmost bay of both the first and second stories.

Like the main block, the ell rests on a parged fieldstone foundation, is sheathed in wood clapboards, has simple wood corner boards, and is topped by an asphalt-shingled, gable roof. The historic fenestration pattern at the ell has been altered somewhat, and all window openings are filled with vinyl sash. A pair of windows is located in the center of the east elevation, while the south elevation includes a pair of windows as well as a group of three, small windows near the level of the eaves. The west elevation contains no windows, but has an entry in the northernmost bay. The ell contains the kitchen for the Parsonage.

The Parsonage largely retains its historic floor plan, with the only notable exception being the removal of an interior wall in order to join the two front rooms on the first floor. On the second floor, the plan is entirely intact. Much of the historic architectural detailing remains, including four-paneled wood doors and, on the first floor, molded wood window and door trim. The entrance foyer features a curved stairway with a turned, mahogany newel post, mahogany handrail and turned balusters. The foyer also includes an early-20th-century, brass pendant light fixture.

A small, wood-frame, one-story carriage shed, resting on a fieldstone foundation and probably dating to the late 19th century, is located immediately to the west of the Parsonage. It was at one time attached to the kitchen ell by a small hyphen (demolished). The former doorway between the kitchen and the hyphen, filled in with wood, is still visible on the west elevation of the ell. The shed is in poor condition; although some wood-shingle siding remains, in many locations vertical wood sheathing is visible, and its gable roof is covered in roofing paper. It is currently used for storage.

Old Stone Church Cemetery (early- to mid-19th century)

The Old Stone Church Cemetery³ is located immediately to the north of the Church, and occupies a trapezoidal area bounded on three sides by historic dry-laid fieldstone walls. The wall on the east is approximately 280 feet long, the wall on the north is approximately 25 feet long and the wall on the west is approximately 250 feet long. The south perimeter of the Cemetery, which measures approximately 90 feet, is not walled. (A set of carriage sheds, built in 1844 and demolished in 1958, used to run along this side of the Cemetery, with berths facing south, toward the Church.) The Cemetery is wooded, with scattered deciduous and evergreen trees amidst the grave markers, and exhibits no formal design elements, such as paths for circulation.

Most of the extant, visible grave markers at the Old Stone Church Cemetery are concentrated at the south end of the Cemetery, near the Church. (It is likely that some grave markers have fallen and are buried, or that there are unmarked graves.) Approximately 25 headstones are extant,

³ The Cemetery has been surveyed by the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission, which identifies it as Tiverton Cemetery #8.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

mostly dating to the mid-1800s, though the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries database indicates that the earliest burial dates to at least 1828. Many of the headstones, with inscriptions facing west, are paired with footstones to their east. Almost all of the grave markers are granite slabs, though at least one slate marker is present. Few exhibit any imagery, though there is one example of a headstone with the image of a chain with a broken link.

Parish House (ca. 1879)

The Parish House⁴ is a north-facing, front-gable, wood-frame building located across the street from and a short distance to the south of the First Baptist Church building, at the fork between Old Stone Church and Stone Church Roads. Built around 1879, the rectangular-plan main block measures approximately 20 feet by 30 feet and is one-and-a-half stories tall. An approximately 18-foot-by-12-foot, hip-roof, one-story ell extends off the south side.

The main block of the building, which rests on a fieldstone foundation, is clad in wood clapboards and topped by an asphalt-shingled, gable roof. A single exterior brick chimney is centered on the south elevation. The building features plain wood corner boards and boxed eaves. Window and door trim is also simple, but includes handsome, molded drip caps. The main entry is centered in the north façade, and consists of a pair of two-paneled, wood doors. There are two windows at the first story of the north façade – one on either side of the entry – and two at the second story. A secondary entrance is located in the southernmost bay of the three-bay west elevation, and consists of a single, wood door featuring two-over-two paneling and four lights above. There are two windows to its north and a series of three, smaller window openings at the second-story level, just under the eave. The east elevation has window openings in each of its three bays to match those on the west side. The south elevation, the first story of which is obscured by the ell, features two windows at the second story. Although the historic fenestration pattern remains, the sashes have been replaced with vinyl.

The one-story ell, which post-dates the main block, is supported by concrete piers, sheathed in wood clapboard and has an asphalt-shingled, hip roof. As at the main block, there are plain wood corner boards and simple door and window trim with molded drip caps. The east and west elevations each has a single window opening, while the south elevation includes a window in its eastern bay and a vertical wood-plank door in its western bay.

The interior plan of the Parish House remains essentially as it was built, the only change being the installation of a temporary wall to create a small vestibule behind the front entry. A large room occupies the first floor, which retains its historic wood flooring and wood window and door trim. Walls are finished with plaster and feature a simple wood chair rail. The southern end of the first floor, which is set off from the main space by a wall with a wide opening, houses the building's heating equipment, venting to the chimney behind; historically, a stove was likely located here. A high rail with coat hooks suggests this space was also used as a cloak room. A door to the west of the furnace leads to the small addition, which has wall-mounted shelves and

⁴ The Parish House was dedicated as the Reverend Frank Snell Christian Education Center in 1970.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

cabinets. Although this space was once used as a kitchen, the building has never had running water.

The second floor is accessed by a narrow, enclosed staircase in the northwest corner of the building. It includes a simple, oak balustrade with a square-post newel terminating in a gentle peak. The second story consists of a single room and features historic wood flooring, wood window trim and plaster walls with bead-board wainscoting.

Stone Walls (18th to 19th centuries)

The First Baptist Church property features numerous stone walls, mostly dry-laid fieldstone. These include walls along parts of the south and north property boundaries, as well as walls that delineate the cemetery (as described above). Stretches of fieldstone walls are also located within the property, in the now-wooded area to the rear of the Parsonage, which was historically farmed by the church's minister; presumably the walls indicate the location of former farm fields. In addition, two cut-granite walls, approximately 3 feet tall, form an L to the southwest of the church building. The north-south leg is approximately 125 ft long, and the east-west leg stretches about 75 feet. The stone walls at the First Baptist Church property were likely erected over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, as the area began to be farmed and the church property was developed.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

architecture

religion

community planning and development

Period of Significance

mid-18th century to 1963

Significant Dates

mid-18th century, land donated to church

early 19th century, cemetery established

1841, First Baptist Church built

ca. 1879, Parish House built

1884-1885, Parsonage built

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The First Baptist Church in Tiverton is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of religion, for its capacity to illustrate the history and evolution of the Baptist denomination in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Home to one of the oldest Baptist congregations in the country, the church was built during a period of rapid expansion for the denomination and also illustrates the growth of Baptist subsets in the region in the mid-19th century. The First Baptist Church also reflects the historical development of the town of Tiverton and the village of Adamsville, and is therefore significant in the area of community planning and development. In the 1680s, when the congregation was established, present-day Tiverton's location on the outskirts of the Plymouth Colony made it a relatively tolerant place for Baptists. By the mid-19th century, when the current church was built, the village of Adamsville – which includes parts of Tiverton, Little Compton and Westport, Massachusetts – was well-established, and the church was an important community institution. In addition, the First Baptist Church property, with its collection of simple buildings that exhibit a vernacular interpretation of architectural styles, is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture. The church building itself, with its simple form and restrained Greek-Revival styling, is a little-altered example of a particular class of structures in mid-19th century Rhode Island – the rural church, nearly all of which follow the same form and design.

Period of Significance Justification

The period of significance begins in the mid-18th century, when approximately 34 acres of land was donated to the First Baptist Society for the purpose of erecting a church and parsonage and to provide farmland for the minister. The donated land is included within the nominated property, and its early history is evident in the now wooded “church farm,” where stone walls indicate the location of former fields. The period of significance ends in 1963 (50 years ago), thereby encompassing the construction of the Church (1841), Parsonage (1884-1885), Parish House (ca. 1879) and Cemetery (early to mid-19th century), as well as capturing the property's enduring importance to the town of Tiverton and the village of Adamsville.

Criteria Considerations

Criteria Consideration A applies to the First Baptist Church property, which is owned by a religious organization and used for religious purposes. However, the property derives its primary significance from its architectural qualities; from its ability to illustrate the evolution of the Baptist denomination, an important historical force in the region; and from its association with the historical development of the Tiverton community. Criteria Consideration D also applies, since the property includes a cemetery. Dating to at least 1828, the cemetery is notable as a typical early 19th-century burial ground and contributes considerably to the property's architectural and historical significance.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historical Background

Present-day Tiverton was among the lands granted to Plymouth Colony by royal charter in 1606. Permanent European settlement did not take hold in the area until after King Philip's War (1675-1676), which decimated the native Wampanoag population and opened the area for white settlers. Although there had been some small land purchases prior to the war, the majority of present-day Tiverton was granted to eight men in 1679-1680 through the Pocasset Purchase, and the division of land into house lots began. In 1692 Plymouth Colony was united with the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and two years later the town of Tiverton was incorporated, carved out of the town of Dartmouth. Tiverton remained a part of Massachusetts until 1746, at which time it was transferred to the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, and became part of Newport County. The town's current boundaries were not established until 1862, when a portion of the town's north end was transferred to the city of Fall River, Massachusetts.⁵

Early settlers in the western part of Plymouth Colony, which included present-day Tiverton, were mostly Baptists and Quakers – and thus more akin to Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, religious dissenters who settled nearby Rhode Island, than to the Pilgrims of Plymouth. By settling on the outskirts of the colony, they hoped to have greater religious freedom; indeed, the Plymouth magistrates tried only half-heartedly to promote Congregationalism in the area. (After the merger of the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies in 1692, Puritans in Boston made a greater effort in this regard, but to little effect.) The founding of the First Baptist Church in Tiverton reflects the relative tolerance for Baptists in this part of Plymouth Colony. The church was organized by John Cooke, who had come to Plymouth Colony as a child on the *Mayflower* and was expelled from the Pilgrim church in Plymouth in 1654 for “the error of Anabaptistry.” Cooke relocated to Dartmouth, joined the Baptist Church in Newport and then, sometime between 1680 and 1685, gathered fellow members from Little Compton, Dartmouth and present-day Tiverton to form a new religious society, with Hugh Mosier (or Mosher) as minister.⁶ This society, which eventually became known as the First Baptist Society in Tiverton, was therefore among the earliest to be established in America; the

⁵ Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Tiverton, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report* (Providence, RI: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1983):1, 6-7, 10.

⁶ Sources vary as to the exact date of the formation of the First Baptist Church in Tiverton. When the church was incorporated in 1859, the petition to incorporate stated that the church was formed around 1680, as does Richard Bayles' *History of Newport County*. Historian William G. McLoughlin wrote that the church was formed in 1684, while David Benedict provides a date of 1685. Richard M. Bayles, *History of Newport County, Rhode Island, from the Year 1638 to the Year 1887, Including the Settlement of its Towns and their Subsequent Progress* (New York: L.E. Preston & Co., 1888): 924; David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World* (New York: Lewis Colby and Company, 1850):461; William G. McLoughlin, “Tiverton's Fight for Religious Liberty, 1692-1724,” *Rhode Island History* 38, no. 2 (May 1979), 35.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

19th-century Baptist historian David Benedict states that it is the ninth-oldest Baptist congregation in the country.⁷

The congregation built its first church – a simple wood structure – in 1752 and its first parsonage in 1755, on land donated by member Job Almy. Almy’s donation included about 34 acres to the rear of the buildings, to be used as farmland for the minister.⁸ A burial ground was established immediately to the north of the church at least by 1828, but possibly earlier.⁹ At the time that the church building was erected, development in Tiverton was concentrated in the northern part of town, near the Sakonnet River, though there was also settlement along the old Dartmouth Road – comprised of present-day Neck, East and Stone Church roads – which had been laid out in 1683.¹⁰ The church’s location in the southwest corner of town, bordering Little Compton on the south and with Dartmouth just to the east, reflects the congregation’s origins among residents of all three communities. (Currently, the town of Westport, Massachusetts, which was incorporated from Dartmouth in 1787, is immediately to the east.)

According to a history of the church prepared in 1955, “the need for a new meeting-house was ... becoming urgent” by 1840. Presumably the 1752 structure was in poor condition or possibly the congregation had outgrown the building. In any case, a committee was appointed to “ascertain the kind of house wanted, its probable cost, the most suitable time to erect it, and how best to raise the money.” The committee recommended the construction of a stone building, 45 feet by 55 feet, to be funded through the sale of pews. It was also recommended that a committee be established to oversee the removal of the original church and the construction of the new building. The stone church, which cost \$2,300 to build, was dedicated in the fall of 1841. Three years later, the congregation spent \$200 to construct a set of carriage sheds (demolished), 90 feet long and 19 feet deep, along the southern perimeter of the cemetery, with berths facing the Church.¹¹

By the time the Church was constructed, the congregation had joined a subset of the Baptist denomination, known as Free-Will Baptists. This affiliation is reflected in the marble tablet on the Church’s façade, which reads “FREE-WILL / BAPTIST CHURCH / 1841.” The decision to join the Free-Will Baptists, in a vote taken on September 5, 1835, appears to have caused a rift in the congregation; shortly before the vote, 28 members withdrew from the church and the reverend declined to continue his post. (In 1912, the Free-Will Baptists of Rhode Island merged with the Rhode Island Baptist State Convention, and the First Baptist Church of Tiverton thus returned to the mainstream Baptist fold.)¹²

The second quarter of the 19th century was a period of rapid growth for the Baptists in Rhode Island, due in part to a series of revivals in 1829 and 1840-1843. As of 1825, there were 44

⁷ Benedict, 461.

⁸ Rev. Wilbur Nelson, “A History of the Old Stone Church,” 12.

⁹ The earliest burial listed in the Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries database is from 1828.

¹⁰ Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1983, 8-9.

¹¹ Nelson, 6, 14.

¹² Nelson, 5-7; C. Allyn Russell, “Rhode Island Baptists, 1825-1931,” *Rhode Island History* 28, no. 2 (April 1969), 38.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton

Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island

County and State

Baptist churches in the state with 3,887 members. In 1844, there were slightly fewer churches, but total membership had grown to 7,331.¹³ At the same time, a subset of the denomination, the Free-Will Baptists – so called because of a belief in the importance of human free will in cooperation with God’s grace – was gaining a foothold. In New England, the first Free-Will Baptist Church was established in New Durham, New Hampshire in 1780 by Benjamin Randall. One of his disciples, John Colby, came to Rhode Island to preach in 1812 and the first Free-Will Baptist church in Rhode Island was established that same year, in the town of Burrillville.¹⁴ By 1850, there were about thirteen Free-Will Baptist churches in Rhode Island with congregations of 100 or more members; according to Baptist historian David Benedict, the Tiverton church had a membership of 136.¹⁵ In June of 1859, the congregation incorporated itself as the First Baptist Church and Society in the Town of Tiverton.¹⁶

In the mid-1800s, when the First Baptist Church was built, the congregation included members of the Cook, Grinnell, Hart, Lake, Manchester, Sanford, Simmons and Tripp families. All of these names appear on maps of Tiverton from the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, many along Crandall Road, a north/south-running street located a short distance to the east of the church. Crandall Road formed the spine of Crandallville, a linear village named after descendants of John Crandall, a Baptist minister who came to Boston in 1634 or 1635 and ultimately settled in Newport. Stephen Crandall, presumably a descendant of John, owned property on Crandall Road in the mid-19th century and is listed among the church’s members in 1843. Many of these Tiverton family names remained associated with the church into at least the mid-20th century, when a history of the church identified Mrs. Irving Crandall, Bertha Grinnell and Mrs. David Simmons as longstanding members. Also noted was William Mosher, presumably a descendant of the church’s first minister.¹⁷ These strong family affiliations are reflected in the cemetery, which includes the graves of members of the Cook, Lake, Manchester, Mosher, Sanford and Tripp families, among others.

Many of these family names also appear on mid- to late-19th century maps of nearby Little Compton, Rhode Island and Westport, Massachusetts – a reflection of the congregation’s geographic origins and of the close relationship among these three communities, as exemplified in the village of Adamsville. Home to a few settlers by the mid-1700s, by the mid-19th century Adamsville was a small, but well-established village, with twenty residences, two stores, a post office, a grist mill, a carding mill and a sawmill.¹⁸ While mostly in Little Compton, Adamsville also encompasses parts of Tiverton and Westport. In his 1888 *History of Newport County, Rhode*

¹³ Henry S. Burrage, *A History of the Baptists in New England* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1894):228-229.

¹⁴ Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005):110-111; Charles Allyn Russell, “A History of the Regular Baptists in Rhode Island, 1825-1931” (PhD diss., Boston University, 1959):154.

¹⁵ Benedict, 907.

¹⁶ First Baptist Church and Society in the Town of Tiverton, incorporation papers.

¹⁷ First Baptist Church in Tiverton, Rhode Island, Church Records, Books 6 and 10; Nelson, 17-18; Tiverton Tercentenary Committee, *Rhode Island Tercentenary, 1636-1936, Historical Edition of Tiverton, Rhode Island* (Tiverton, RI: Tiverton Historical Society, 1936):57.

¹⁸ Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Little Compton, Rhode Island* (Providence, RI: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1990):17.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

Island, Richard Bayles explains that "...the social and commercial interests of [Adamsville] ... are more closely allied to those of the region to the eastward in Massachusetts, and to the northward in Tiverton, than to the town of which it is geographically and politically a part."¹⁹ It is clear that the First Baptist Church was considered an institution of Adamsville: a map of Little Compton from 1895 shows the Church and the Parsonage, despite being just over the town line in Tiverton, and research shows that the church was at times referred to as the Stone Church in Adamsville.²⁰

Research also shows that the First Baptist Church in Tiverton had become enmeshed in the community by the mid- to late-19th century. Annual clambakes were held in a grove behind the Parsonage beginning in the 1860s and quickly became popular, attracting church members and non-members alike. According to one source, "No less than a thousand tickets were sold on one occasion, while one hundred would-be patrons were turned away."²¹ In 1876, the First Baptist Society requested control of Stone Church Road for one-half mile in either direction from the church during the clambake, so that others could not sell "goods of any kind" in the immediate vicinity. The annual clambakes continued until World War II, were reinstated in 1976 and remain an important community event to this day.²²

The late 19th century brought some significant changes to the First Baptist Church property. At a meeting on September 29, 1879, members voted to appropriate the "balance of last year's clam bake proceeds to expend on the new building now in process of erection"²³ – most likely the Parish House. The original purpose of the building is not entirely clear; the minutes from the September 29 meeting include reference to settling bills for the new "storehouse," though the building seems too large and well-crafted to have been intended just for that purpose. Whatever its original function, the building ultimately provided space for Sunday School and church suppers, uses that continued until the late-1950s, when the addition to the church was built.²⁴

At a meeting in June of 1884, the Society discussed the need for a new residence for the minister. The Parsonage was complete by the following spring, and the original 1755 building, which historic maps indicate had been sited to the north of the church, was reportedly sold and moved to a location on nearby Crandall Road.²⁵ The small, wood-frame carriage shed behind the Parsonage was likely built at the same time as the residence, or soon after. The construction of the Parish House and Parsonage within just a few years of each other suggests that, in the late 19th century, the First Baptist Church congregation was flourishing.

¹⁹ Bayles, 1018.

²⁰ An announcement in the *Providence Evening Press* in 1876 stated that the Rev. H.W. Conant, a temperance leader, would be speaking at the "Stone Church, Adamsville."

²¹ Nelson, 15.

²² Revered Patrick Crough, personal communication, 27 March 2013; "The First Baptist Church People of Tiverton Ask to Control the Highways," *Providence Evening Press*, 26 January 1876.

²³ First Baptist Church in Tiverton, Rhode Island, Church Records, Book 8.

²⁴ Thomas Deschene, personal communication, 18 April 2013.

²⁵ Nelson, 9-10.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

At the church itself, the only significant change during this period was the installation of the pressed-metal ceiling in the sanctuary. A less expensive alternative to plaster, pressed-metal ceilings reached the height of their popularity at the turn of the 20th century. Church records indicate that the building was “being repaired” in the summer of 1899, so possibly the new ceiling was being installed at that time.²⁶ The four wrought-iron chandeliers, which stylistically appear to date to the early 20th century, were probably installed at the same time or soon after the ceiling.

In the mid-20th century, several changes were made to the First Baptist Church property. Minor projects included the installation of a new electronic organ in the church choir area in 1955 and the addition of new sanctuary furnishings, including an open baptistery, in the mid-1960s. In 1959, a copper weathervane in the form of a Rhode Island Red rooster, a breed developed near Adamsville, was added to the belfry. In the 1960s, a church youth group cleared a small area to the west of the Parsonage to create a “chapel in the woods,” which remains to this day.²⁷ None of these projects significantly affected the architectural features of the church or the overall integrity of the property.

The greatest change to the property came in 1958, with the construction of the large Fellowship Hall off the west (rear) elevation of the 1841 church. The project also involved the demolition of the 1844 carriage sheds, in order to create space for additional surface parking and improve traffic circulation – a reflection of the growing impact of the automobile. Recent changes to the First Baptist Church property have been minimal. Historic wood window sash at the Parsonage and the Parish House have been replaced with vinyl sash; a new, plate-glass window has been installed in the west (rear) elevation of the Parsonage; the Parsonage’s front door has been replaced with a modern unit; and the hyphen that once connected the Parsonage to the carriage shed has been removed. Sunday School and church suppers now take place at the Fellowship Hall, and the Parish House is used for storage. The Society recently put the latter building on the market.

Despite these few changes, the First Baptist Church property retains a high level of integrity. Alterations to the buildings have been relatively minor, with the exception of the 1958 addition to the Church. The location of the addition at the rear of the building, however, minimizes the impact on the overall setting, and its construction did not greatly affect the building’s historic fabric. The property’s key elements – the Church, Parsonage, Parish House and Cemetery – and its setting, which includes the former church farm, remain. Together they illustrate the evolution of the First Baptist Society in Tiverton, from the mid-18th century, when the land was donated, through the 19th century, when the church complex was developed, and speak to the history of the Baptist denomination in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In addition, the First Baptist Church is representative of the historical development of the town of Tiverton and the village of Adamsville, a well-established settlement by the time the church complex was constructed in the mid- to late 19th century.

²⁶ First Baptist Church in Tiverton, Rhode Island, Church Records, Book 7, p. 45.

²⁷ Crough; Nelson, 18; Ronald J. Onorato, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for The Rhode Island Red, Little Compton, RI*, 2000.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

Architectural Significance

The First Baptist Church property contains excellent examples of vernacular resources that reflect the period of the property's development. Together, they present a cohesive picture of a 19th-century rural church complex. The 1841 church was executed in the Greek Revival style that was prevalent throughout the country in the mid-19th century. This is evident in its front-gable form, gable-end cornice returns and, at the belfry, corner pilasters. It is a decidedly simple interpretation of the style, however, lacking the pediment or columned portico that would be found on more high-style examples.

The 1884-1885 Parsonage is an excellent example of a late-19th century, rural, vernacular residence. Exterior architectural details are limited; there are drip caps at the windows and the front door hood is supported by scrollwork brackets, characteristic of Italianate-style buildings. While the Italianate style was waning in urban areas by this time, rural builders continued to employ its design elements. Interior details like the curved staircase and turned mahogany newel post likewise reflect the Victorian period.

The ca. 1879 Parish House, with its front-gable form and minimal styling, is also characteristic of late-19th-century, vernacular construction. The paneled, wood doors and plain but handsome window and door trim provide the only exterior elaboration. Interior finishes, which include a simple wood staircase and bead-board wainscoting, are practical, reflecting the building's ancillary function.

The Old Stone Church Cemetery, established at least by 1828, is typical of early-19th century burial grounds: it exhibits no formal design in terms of the organization of grave markers, nor does it have circulation paths, fencing or deliberate plantings that might be found in a later cemetery. Based on the extant grave markers, many of the burials face east toward the rising sun, a common early-19th-century convention.

The property's architectural significance is further enhanced by its place in the larger context of mid-19th-century, rural Rhode Island churches, of which the First Baptist Church in Tiverton is an excellent example. Built mostly from the 1840s through the 1860s, these simple, Greek Revival-style structures are generally one-story tall, three bays deep and have two entrances placed symmetrically on the front-gable façade. The roof may or may not be topped with a squat, square belfry. In most cases, architectural detailing is limited to gable-end cornice returns, simple corner pilasters, and/or wide frieze bands. A few include fully-articulated pediments, but none has a portico.²⁸

²⁸ Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Rhode Island Statewide Survey Historic Building Data Sheets; William H. Jordy, *Buildings of Rhode Island* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Margery I. Matthews, Virginia I. Benson and Arthur E. Wilson, *Churches of Foster: A History of Religious Life in Rural Rhode Island* (Foster, RI: North Foster Baptist Church, 1978).

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

The First Baptist Church in Tiverton is, in terms of form and style, a typical example of a mid-19th-century, rural Rhode Island church. It is, however, unusual in a few respects. Almost all of these small, Greek Revival-style churches are located in small towns and villages in the western part of the state, while Tiverton is in the east. In addition, almost all known examples are of wood-frame construction with wood exterior wall sheathing, while the timber-frame Tiverton church has exterior walls of stuccoed rubblestone. Finally, the First Baptist Church in Tiverton's floor plan, with entrances located on either side of the sanctuary, is unusual. A few other small, rural churches have the same plan – including the Narragansett Indian Church in Charlestown (1859), the Hopkins Hollow Church in Coventry (1862) and the Foster Center Baptist Church in Foster (1882) – but most are designed with the sanctuary on the wall opposite the entrances.

The First Baptist Church in Tiverton is architecturally significant for its collection of vernacular resources that reflect the property's development over the course of the 19th century. The church itself is significant as a distinctive example of a mid-19th-century, rural Rhode Island church, unusual for its masonry construction and relatively rare floor plan.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

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Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

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First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

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First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) 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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: Rhode Island Historical Society Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 38.25 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
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| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

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|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 19 | Easting: 320399 | Northing: 4603245 |
| 2. Zone: 19 | Easting: 321239 | Northing: 4603430 |
| 3. Zone: 19 | Easting: 321538 | Northing: 4603184 |
| 4. Zone: 19 | Easting : 321442 | Northing: 4603163 |
| 5. Zone: 19 | Easting: 321353 | Northing: 4603297 |
| 6. Zone: 19 | Easting: 320446 | Northing: 4603080 |

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the First Baptist Church property are shown on the attached sketch map. The property encompasses just over 38 acres and includes Plat 912, Lots 101 and 106 and Plat 908, Lot 104.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the nominated property encompass the lots containing all of the historic resources associated with the First Baptist Church in Tiverton – namely, the Church, Parsonage, Cemetery and Parish House, as well as the now-wooded lot that was historically farmed by the church's minister. Plat 912, Lot 106 and Plat 908, Lot 104, which were donated to the church in the 1750s, contain the Church, Parsonage, Cemetery and former farmland. Plat 912, Lot 101 contains the Parish House, which has been a part of the church complex since it was constructed around 1879.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Joanna M. Doherty, Senior Architectural Historian
organization: Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission
street & number: 150 Benefit Street
city or town: Providence state: RI zip code: 02903
e-mail: joanna.doherty@preservation.ri.gov
telephone: 401-222-4136
date: May 22, 2013

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: First Baptist Church of Tiverton

City or Vicinity: Tiverton, RI

County: Newport

State: Rhode Island

Photographer: Joanna M. Doherty

Date Photographed: March and April 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 16. View of First Baptist Church and Parsonage, looking west.
- 2 of 16. View showing east and south elevations of Church.
- 3 of 16. View showing east and north elevations of Church.
- 4 of 16. View showing south and west elevations of Church belfry.
- 5 of 16. View of nave and sanctuary of Church.
- 6 of 16. View of chandeliers at Church.
- 7 of 16. View showing east elevation of Parsonage.
- 8 of 16. View showing north and west elevations of Parsonage.
- 9 of 16. Detail of brackets at door hood at Parsonage's main entry, on east elevation.
- 10 of 16. Detail of Parsonage staircase.
- 11 of 16. View looking southwest from rear of Church, toward Parish House.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

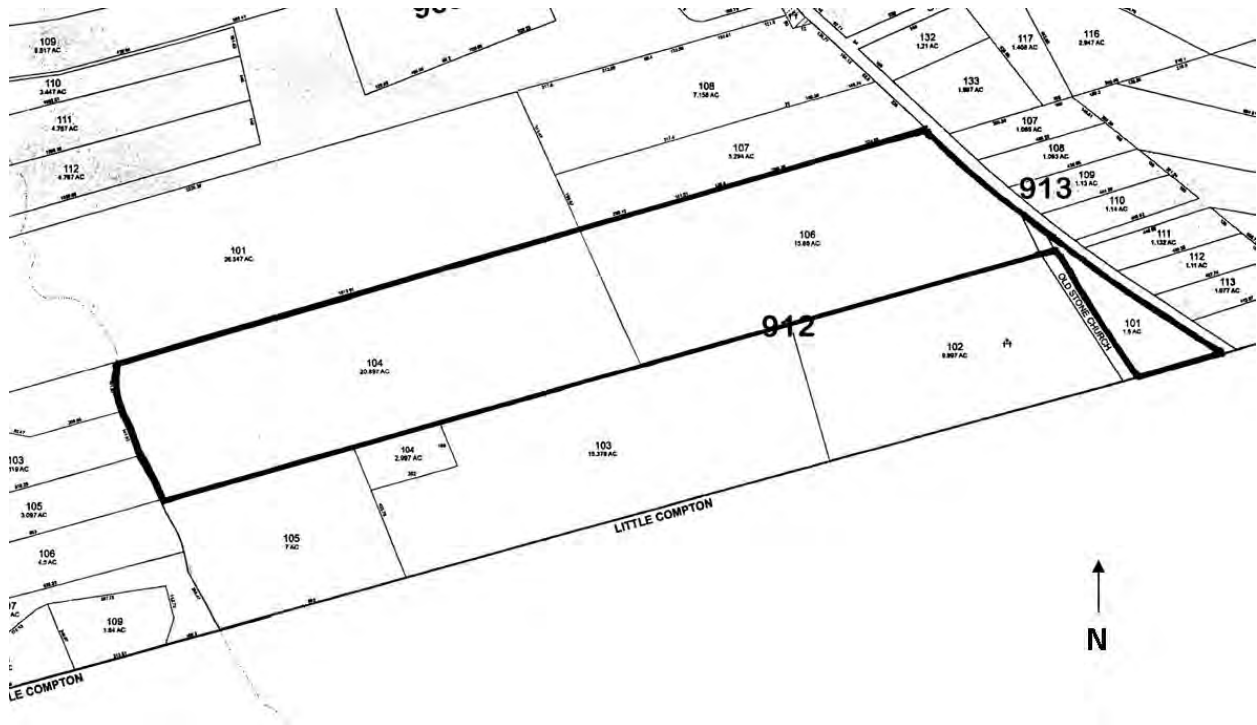
Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

- 12 of 16. View showing north and west elevations of Parish House.
- 13 of 16. View showing south and west elevations of Parish House.
- 14 of 16. Detail of main entry to Parish House, on north elevation.
- 15 of 16. View looking south from Cemetery, toward Church.
- 16 of 16. View of Cemetery, looking west toward Stone Church Road.

First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

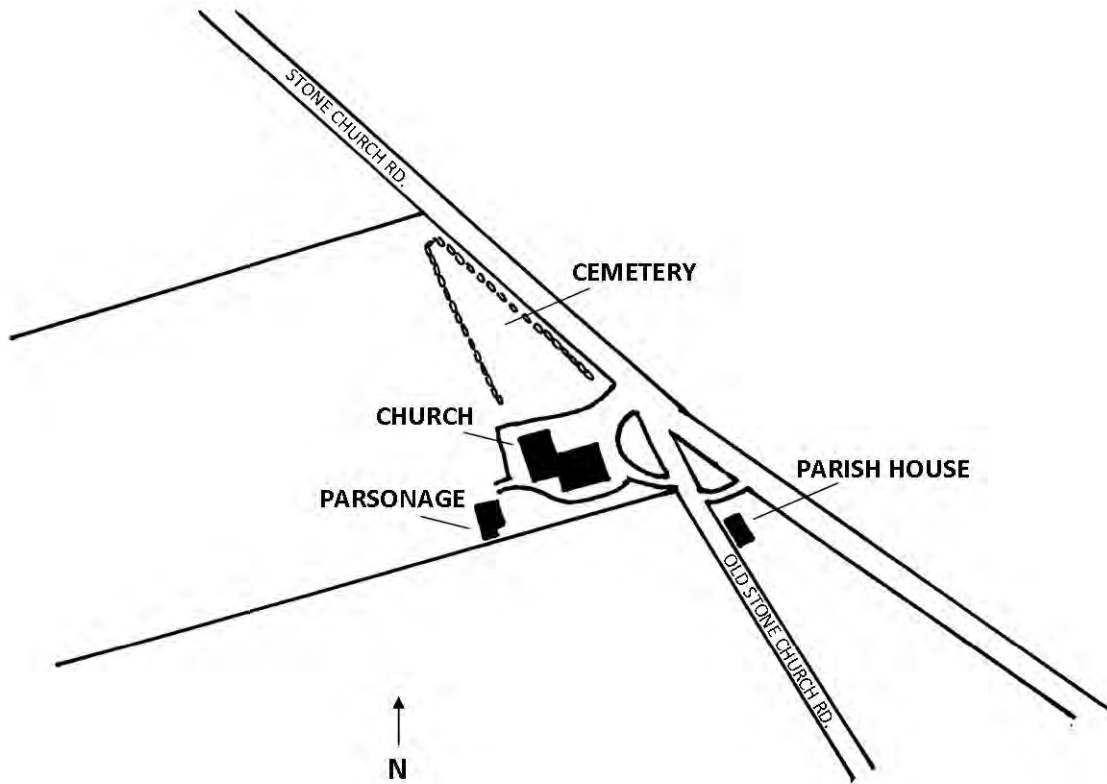
Composite of Tiverton assessor's maps 908 and 912, showing boundaries of First Baptist Church property.



First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

First Baptist Church Site Plan



First Baptist Church of Tiverton
Name of Property

Newport County, Rhode Island
County and State

First Baptist Church and Parsonage as depicted in Everts and Richards, *New Topographical Atlas of Surveys – Southern Rhode Island, Comprising the Counties of Newport, Bristol, Kent and Washington*, 1895.



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 to amend existing 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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.











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Holy Bible



EXIT



















MARY ANN
daughter of
ELDER
JOSEPH WHITMORE
& MARY ANN
his wife.
died Sept. 1908 10
aged 1 year & 17
days.

In memory of
HEA LOREN
wife of Thomas Berg
who died Dec. 3, 1863
in the 3rd year
of her age

In memory of
Mr.
THOMAS BERG
who died
June 18, 1866
in the 56th year
of his age





In the memory of
DEBORAH
wife of
Weston Tepp.
who died
March 11, 1822
aged 61 years 11 months
and 22 days.

In memory of
PELEG COOK,
who died March 31,
1818.
in the 68th year
of his age.

WHEELER
20 1861
18 1807

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF TIVERTON
TIVERTON, NEWPORT CO., RHODE ISLAND

319 10' 320 321 FALL RIVER 9 KM 322 7' 30"

Westport Quadrangle, Massachusetts and
Rhode Island. 7.5 x 15 Minute Series. 1985.

UTM References

- 1: 19/320399/4603245
- 2: 19/321239/4603430
- 3: 19/321538/4603184
- 4: 19/321442/4603163
- 5: 19/321353/4603297
- 6: 19/320446/4603080

