

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Old North Church;

AND/OR COMMON Christ Church in the City of Boston

Old North Church

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

191 Salem Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Boston

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Eighth

STATE

Massachusetts

VICINITY OF

CODE

025

COUNTY

Suffolk

COOE

025

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☒ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Corporation of Christ Church in the City of Boston

STREET &amp; NUMBER

193 Salem Street

CITY, TOWN

Boston

VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Suffolk Registry of Deeds

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Suffolk County Court House, Somerset Street

CITY, TOWN

Boston, Massachusetts

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1941

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington,

STATE

District of Columbia

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Old North Church (Christ Church in the City of Boston) and three related buildings--the vicarage, the Italian chapel, and the Clough House--are located on an irregularly-shaped parcel of 16,062 square feet of land, situated between Salem Street (northwest) and Unity Street (southeast) in the North End of Boston. Though the dates and styles of the buildings vary, intervening brick courtyards and walkways, small formal gardens, and some mature trees link them effectively in a single complex. For the most part, the Old North complex is surrounded by moderately-scaled buildings with combined commercial/residential use. Immediately to the rear of the church is an extension of the Paul Revere Mall, maintained by the City of Boston. The Mall itself, located on the opposite side of Unity Street, is a paved and landscaped promenade featuring an equestrian statue of Revere erected c. 1940.

Construction of Old North Church was begun in 1723. The building was designed by William Price, a Boston book and print dealer, who clearly was familiar with the style of Christopher Wren's London churches: the exterior of Old North is a simplified adaptation of Wren forms and the interior is very similar to that of his St. James, Piccadilly. Old North Church was the first such building in the English colonies to assume the fully developed character of the Wren or Georgian type church, with a front tower topped by a lofty spire, a main entrance at one end of an oblong auditorium, and longitudinal aisles separating box pews. During the 18th century this "new church" plan rapidly superceded the "four-square" meeting house with side-entrance plan and no tower, which had appeared throughout the New England colonies during the 1600's.

The body of Old North is a simple rectangular mass, 51 feet wide and 70 feet long. Its brick walls, over two feet thick and 42 feet high, are laid in English bond and are broken by two tiers of round-arched windows. A projecting square brick tower, nearly 100 feet high and with walls 3 feet thick, was added to the front (west) end of the main structure in 1724-37. The tower was topped by a wooden spire 191 feet high. Completed in 1740, the three setback stages, classical decorative detail, and fragile lines of the wooden spire were also strongly reminiscent of Wren's churches. The bells, the first peal of eight to be brought to America, were cast by Abel Rudhall of Gloucester, England in 1745. The original spire was blown down in 1804 and replaced in 1807 by one 175 feet high and generally attributed to Charles Bulfinch. This second tower was toppled by a hurricane on August 31, 1954, and the next year was replaced by a 191-foot spire that is a copy of the original. Each of the three spires has carried the original weathervane--a waving banner surmounted by a five-pointed star, designed by Deacon Shem Drowne.

The interior of the church, entered from a vestibule in the base of the tower, is a simple rectangular space, which is oriented longitudinally by the three aisles which separate the high box pews and by the range of square, panelled piers which support the side galleries. This orientation terminates in a fine apse set with a tall round-arched window. At the left (north) side of the apse is a paneled wine-glass pulpit with hexagonal sounding board. The plain plaster ceiling above the galleries is a series of cross vaults supported on entablatures which abut the outer wall at one end and are carried by square fluted piers at the other. Between these cross vaults, running the length of the auditorium is sprung the elliptical vault of the main ceiling, the weight of which is carried primarily by suspension from the main trusses of the roof.

Unlike Boston's Puritan meeting houses, Old North was fitted with an organ. The first was a second-hand instrument purchased in Newport, Rhode Island. In 1759 Thomas Johnston of Boston completed a new organ, located at the center of the rear gallery; although it has twice been rebuilt, most of the original casing and some of the pipes remain in place.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

\*War for Independence

SPECIFIC DATES      1723-1740; 1775      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      William Price; restoration, Sturgis

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE      and Ross.

Historically and architecturally, the Old North Church (Christ Church) on Salem Street in Boston's North End is one of America's most cherished landmarks. Despite the almost legendary quality of the story today, two lanterns did hang in the spire on the night of April 18, 1775, to notify patriots on the opposite side of the Charles River that British troops were moving out of Boston by water in route to Concord and Lexington. In addition to its role as a signal station on the eve of the American Revolution, Old North possesses further distinction as Boston's oldest surviving church and the first such building in the English colonies to assume the fully developed character of Christopher Wren's London churches.

Old North Church was designed by William Price, a Boston book and print dealer, and erected in 1723-37. The wooden spire added to the tower of the brick building in 1740 was seriously damaged by storms in 1804 and 1954, and was replaced on both occasions; the design of the earlier (1807) replacement is generally attributed to Charles Bulfinch. The church was restored in 1912-14 and has been well maintained since that time. Old North is now open to the public from 9 to 5 daily with regular services at 9:30 and 11 a.m. on Sunday.

### Historical Background

Old North Church (Christ Church in the City of Boston) served the second Church of England parish in the city, established after King's Chapel, then a small wooden structure near Boston Common, proved inadequate for the growing number of Anglicans in the former Puritan stronghold. Subscriptions for the new church were invited in 1722. The sea captains, merchants, and artisans who had settled in Boston's North End contributed generously to the building fund, and construction began in April, 1723. The site selected was a piece of pasture land near the crown of Copp's Hill, the highest elevation in the North End.

The building was designed by William Price, a Boston book and print dealer, who clearly was familiar with the work of Christopher Wren, since the style of Old North is unmistakably related to that of Wren's London churches. Born in England, Price settled in Boston as a young man but visited London occasionally on business. A devout Anglican, he served as vestryman and warden of Old North and was also the church's first organist.

The first peal of eight bells to be brought to America was installed at Old North as the result of a subscription fund. They were cast by Abel Rudhall of Gloucester, England in 1745. Five years later, Paul Revere, then a youth of 15, was given permission with six friends to form a guild of bell ringers and to meet once a week at Old North to practice. While Revere was a Congregationalist, his eldest son became an Anglican and owned a family pew at Old North, which is still occasionally occupied by his descendants.

During the tense days before the American Revolution, both Patriots and Tories were members of the Old North parish. Robert Newman, sexton of the church and a patriot, sat in a pew at the eastern end of the left aisle, while General Thomas Gage, commander of the

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alden, J.R. The American Revolution, 1775-1783 (New York, 1954).  
Fenton, John H. The Old North Church: A Historical Portrait (Boston, 1975).  
Forbes, Esther Paul Revere and the World He Lived In (Boston, 1942).  
Marlowe, George F. Churches of Old New England (New York, 1947).  
Morrison, Hugh. Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 330780 4692270  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C         

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the national historic landmark designation for the Old North Church (Christ Church in the City of Boston) are those of the property as now owned by the Church Corporation: an irregularly-shaped parcel lying between Salem and Unity Street in Boston's North End, containing Old North itself, the vicarage, the Italian Chapel (now the museum and gift shop), and the Clough House, on a total of 16,062 square feet of land. Specific lines (shown in red on the accompanying sketch map A-boundaries) are defined as follows:

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 Polly M. Rettig, Landmark Review Project; Original forms prepared by  
C.E. Shedd, Jr. (8/1/60) and Charles W. Snell (12/19/67)

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1100 L Street NW

(202) 523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington

District of Columbia

## 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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

N/A National Historic Landmark

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

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Christ Church in the City of Boston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

The instrument had been altered to electric action but in 1959 it was restored to mechanical key action. Mounted on the gallery railing in front of the organ is the Avery-Bennett clock, built by two Old North parishioners in 1726 and still in operation. Above the clock and positioned around the organ on the railing are four polychromed wooden statues of Cherubim, installed in 1746, Carved in Belgium for a church in Quebec, they were part of the cargo seized from a French ship by a privateer belonging to another Old North parishioner.

A full scale restoration of Old North was carried out in 1912-14 under the direction of architects R. Clipson Sturgis and Henry C. Ross. A number of 19th century alterations were then eliminated. In this work floor timbers and gallery stairs were replaced, the original arched window in the apse at the east end was replaced, and the old square box pews and raised pulpit were reconstructed. The interior woodwork, however, was incorrectly repainted white rather than the rich variety of original colors described in the early documents of the church. On the exterior wooden sheathing was removed from the north side of the building and all of the brickwork, which had been painted gray, was sandblasted and returned to its original red. Finally a one-story brick addition, intended as a museum area but now containing parish offices, was constructed at the rear of the church.

Immediately north of the church on Salem Street stands the vicarage, a brick building which appears to date from the early to mid 19th century. It consists of a 3 1/2-story, gable-roofed main block with entrance and windows capped by stone lintels and a 2-story, gable-roofed rear ell. The Italian chapel, located just south of the church on Salem Street, is a one-story, gable-roofed building of brick with stone detailing in a simplified Romanesque style; it was constructed in 1918 for use by the North End's Italian Protestant community and became a museum and gift shop about 1960.

At the southeast corner of the church complex facing Unity Street is the 3-story brick Clough House, one of a row of six houses constructed c. 1715 by Ebenezer Clough, an early speculative builder and one of the two master masons who laid the brick for Old North. By 1962 five of the houses had been razed and the one which Clough had occupied was badly deteriorated, divided into six flats with a butcher shop on the ground floor. The Corporation of Christ Church in the City of Boston (the corporate body of Old North) acquired the Clough House shortly thereafter and has since put the building in excellent, though partly reconstructed, condition. The original brick has been cleaned, the fireplaces and the English oak staircase with pendant acorn drop decorations restored; new ceilings, walls, and flooring were necessary on the upper stories. The building now serves as a parish hall and a meeting place for local organizations.

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Old North Church: Christ Church in the City of  
CONTINUATION SHEET Boston ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

British occupation forces during the siege of Boston, had a pew at the western end of the same aisle. The most famous event in Old North's history came on the night of April 18, 1775, when Newman climbed to the spire and hung two lanterns as a signal that a British expeditionary force was moving up the Charles River to Cambridge on its way to seize a cache of Colonial military supplies at Concord. The signal had been arranged for by Paul Revere, who at that moment was being rowed virtually under the guns of the British frigate Somerset to Charlestown. Revere had reasoned that if he were captured, other patriots would carry warning of the British advance to Concord and the intervening towns of Middlesex County.

Following the incident of the lanterns, Old North was closed for a period of three years because of the open conflict between Patriot and Tory parishioners. The Rector, the Rev. Mather Byles, Jr., was exiled to Canada as a Tory. When the church reopened after the Revolution there was an attempt by French Huguenots to take over the parish, but enough Patriot Anglicans returned to continue traditions of worship under the newly organized Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. In 1810, the current Rector, Rev. Asa Eaton, helped to organize the Salem Street Academy, which led to the construction of a school building on the north side of the church property. Five years later, the Old North parish established the first Sunday School in the eastern United States.

During the early 1800's affluent Bostonians began moving westward from the North End. By mid century they had been replaced first by an influx of Russian Jews, then by Irish fleeing the potato famine, and finally by Italians, who dominate the North End today. In 1918, the parish erected an Italian Protestant chapel at the south side of the church property on Salem Street. Although it flourished briefly, the majority of the newcomers to the area were Roman Catholic and Old North became an Episcopal island.

With the decline of a formalized parish, Old North became the responsibility of the diocesan bishop, as rector ex-officio. Since 1939, vicars have administered the day-to-day affairs of the church. Instead of a vestry, a corporate body, the Corporation of Christ Church in the City of Boston, supervises Old North's fabric and financial resources. Members of the corporation make up the nucleus of a congregation regularly augmented by visitors from throughout the world. While services are conducted in the Episcopal Church tradition, visitors are made to feel at home. The church is open to the public from 9 to 5 daily with regular services at 9:30 and 11 a.m. each Sunday and additional services during the Christmas and Easter holidays. At a special service on April 18 each year, a descendant of Robert Newman or Paul Revere re-enacts the hanging of the famous lanterns.

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Old North Church: Christ church in the City of  
CONTINUATION SHEET Boston ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Pierson, William H., Jr., American Buildings and Their Architects: the Colonial and  
Neo-Classical Styles (New York, 1970).

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Old North Church

Christ Church in the City of

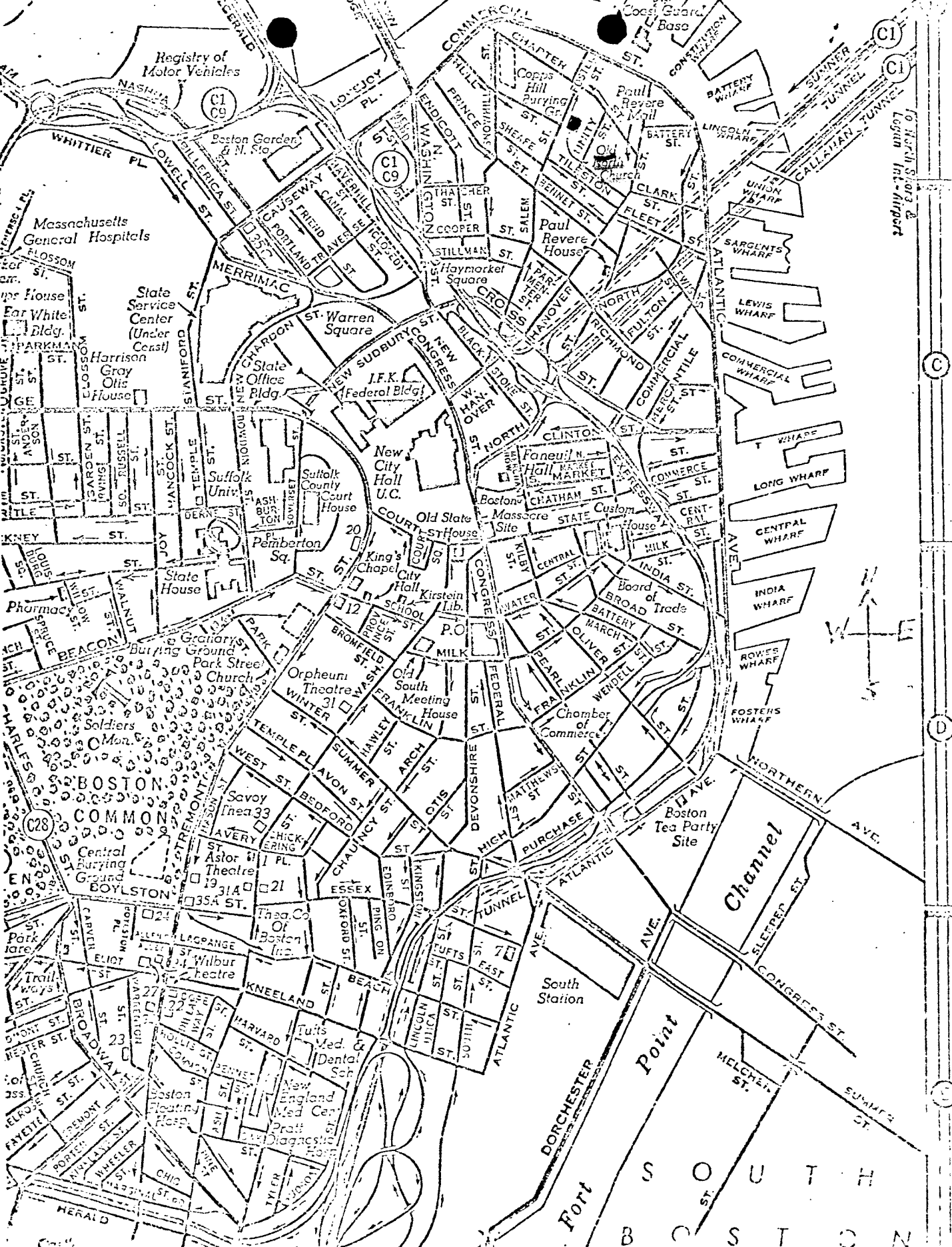
CONTINUATION SHEET Boston

ITEM NUMBER 10

PAGE 1

Bounded northwesterly by Salem Street 115 feet more or less; northeasterly by land now or formerly of A. Foppiano 51 feet more or less; northwesterly by said land now or formerly of A. Foppiano and an open court 50 feet more or less; northeasterly by land now or formerly of J. Perfietti 47 feet more or less; southeasterly by Unity Court 38 feet more less; northeasterly by Unity Court 52 feet more or less; southeasterly by land now or formerly of A. Repetto 35 feet more or less; southwesterly by land now or formerly of L. Privitera 23 feet more or less; southeasterly by land now or formerly of L. Privitera 20 feet more or less; northeasterly by land now or formerly of L. Privitera 30 feet more or less; southeasterly by land now or formerly of L. Privitera 5 feet more or less; northeasterly by land now or formerly of L. Privitera 23 feet more or less; southeasterly by Unity Street 92 feet more or less; southwesterly by land now or formerly of T. Pernassani and land now or formerly of G. and C. Colarruso 55 feet more or less; northwesterly by said land now or formerly of G. and C. Colarruso 5 feet more or less; southwesterly by land now or formerly of G. and C. Colarruso and land now or formerly of N. and M. DiMasi 45 feet more or less; northwesterly by Salem Court 11 feet more or less; and southwesterly by Salem Court 67 feet more or less.



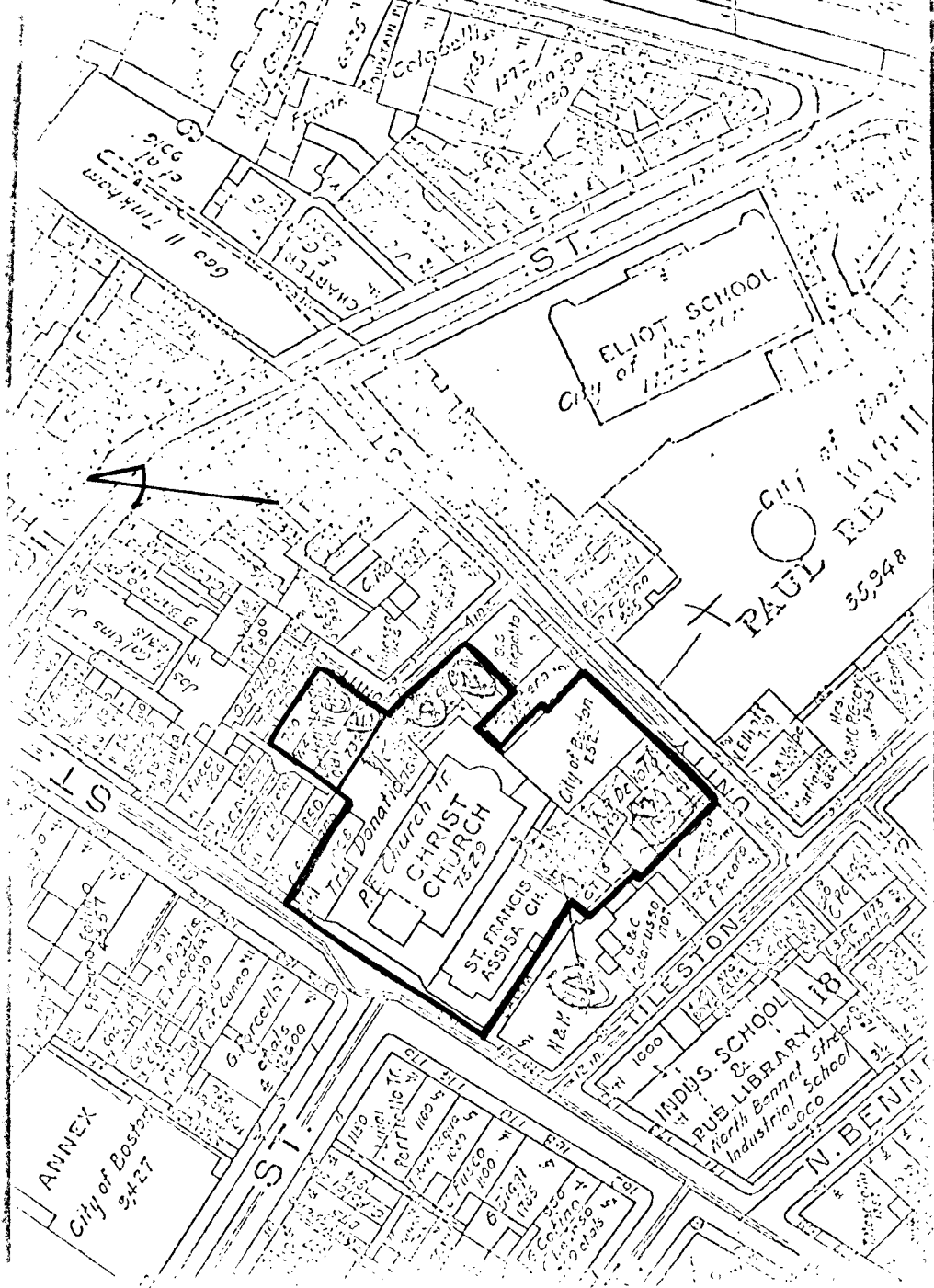


OLD NORTH CHURCH  
(CHRIST CHURCH IN THE CITY OF BOSTON)  
Boston, Massachusetts

Sketch Map A - Boundaries

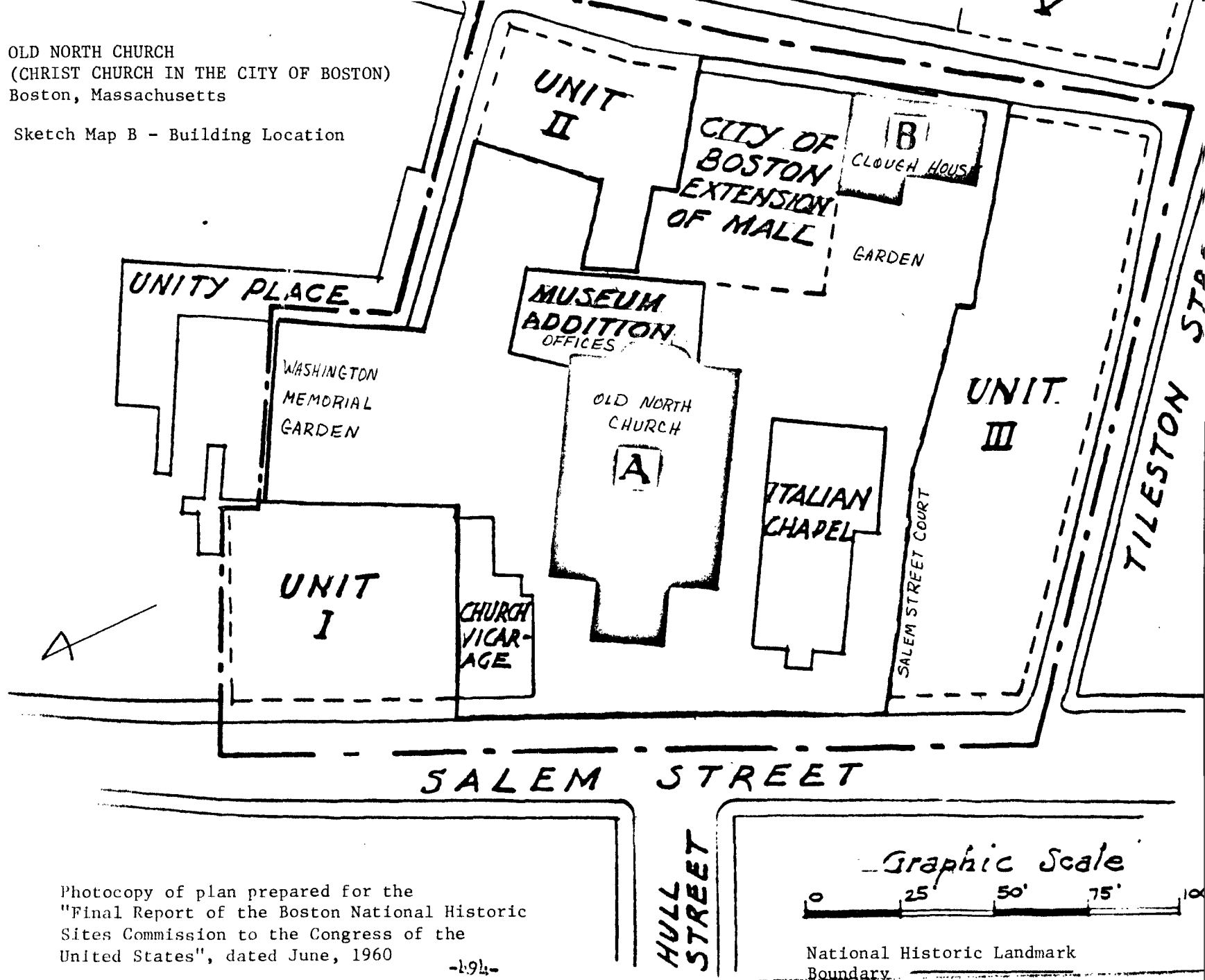
photocopy of City of Boston  
property map,  
date and scale not indicated

National Historic Landmark  
Boundary



OLD NORTH CHURCH  
(CHRIST CHURCH IN THE CITY OF BOSTON)  
Boston, Massachusetts

Sketch Map B - Building Location



Photocopy of plan prepared for the  
"Final Report of the Boston National Historic  
Sites Commission to the Congress of the  
United States", dated June, 1960

Negative No. 4603

Subject Old North Church, 1723 South (front) elevation with tower

Date 9/22/67 Locality Boston, Mass. By Charles W. Snell



Subject Old North Church, 1723 South (front) elevation (left), and east side (right)

Date 9/22/67 Locality Boston, Mass. By Charles W. Snell



Subject

Old North Church, 1723 North (rear) elevation and east side (left)

Negative No. 4604

Date 9/22/67 Locality Boston, Mass.

By Charles W. Snell





Subject Old North Church, 1723 South (front) elevation

Date 9/22/67 Locality Boston, Mass. By Charles W. Snell



Negative No. 4606

Subject Old North Church, 1723 West (side) elevation

Date 9/22/67 Locality Boston, Mass.

By Charles W. Snell





Negative No. 4607

Subject Old North Church, 1723 North (rear) elevation and part of east side (left)

Date 9/22/67 Locality Boston, Mass.

By Charles W. Snell





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**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN Boston

\_\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY Suffolk

STATE Massachusetts

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Polly M. Rettig, Landmark Review Project

DATE OF PHOTO July 1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service, 1100 L Street, NW. Wash.D.C.

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO. 4

Southeast (front) and northeast elevations of Clough House and entrance to adjacent Courtyard.





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PHOTO NO. 1

Northwest (front) elevations of Old North (center), Vicarage (3 bays -left)  
and Italian Chapel (right).



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PHOTO NO.

2

Interior of Church - view toward altar (southeast)





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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

3

Interior of Church - view toward entrance (northwest)