



**Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission
HISTORIC PROPERTY DATA FORM**

DATABASE ID# _____

TOWN Providence VILLAGE _____

ADDRESS 100 Olney Street PLAT/LOT 9/525

NAME(s) Olney Street Baptist Church

PROPERTY TYPE Bld OWNERSHIP Priv

STATUS NHL NR Dist C

NR DISTRICT College Hill Historic District

USES: Select terms from National Register table

CURRENT Religious Facility HISTORIC Religious Facility

SITING: SETBACK 30 ft LOT SIZE 53,143 sq ft

STORIES 1 ROOF(s) Flat

MATERIALS: Select terms from National Register table

ROOF Tar & Gravel WALL Brick

FOUNDATION Concrete OTHER _____

WINDOWS Wood and vinyl; fixed, awning, and sliding sash



Photo ID PROV_OlneySt100_NW

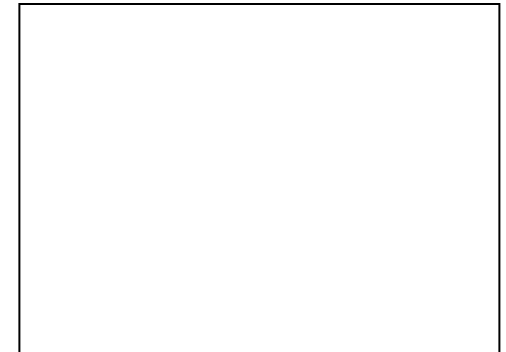


Photo ID _____

ALTERATIONS:	PORCH	WINDOWS	TRIM	OVERALL
Material	None	Min	None	None
Configuration	None	None	None	None

INTEGRITY X Excellent Good Fair Poor Destroyed

PROPERTY COMPONENTS: List & number in order of importance. Include the primary component of the resource as number 1.

Component Type	Code	Count	Component Type	Code	Count
(1) Church	B-C	1	(4)		
(2)			(5)		
(3)			(6)		

EVENT	DATE	SOURCE	NAME (person/firm/organization)	ROLE
Original construction	1962-1963	NR	Johnson & Haynes	Architect

ARCHITECTURE: If more than one, list & number in order of importance

TYPE _____ STYLE(s) Mid-Twentieth Century Modern

SURVEYOR PAL DATE Nov. 2018 REVIEWER _____ DATE _____

Use reverse for comments, history, and bibliography

This form was produced as part of a survey of resources associated with the twentieth-century African American Civil Rights Movement in Rhode Island and provides a summary of information relevant to that historical context. The surveyed property may have associations with additional historical contexts that are not discussed.

History:

The current Olney Street Baptist Church was constructed in 1962–1963 as the second church building for the congregation, which incorporated in 1901. The early congregation consisted primarily of more than 100 African American members who withdrew from the Congdon Street Baptist Church. They initially met in the homes of members and in Gaspee Hall on South Main Street. The congregation purchased the former Olney Street Congregational Church on lower Olney Street in late 1901 and met there until 1961, when the building was demolished as part of the Lippitt Hill Redevelopment Project. Not wanting to leave the neighborhood, the congregation purchased a large lot at the corner of Olney and Camp streets from the Providence Redevelopment Authority for the construction of the current building (Gross 1971; Grover and Larson 2018). In addition to its associations with urban renewal in Providence and the related relocation of many members of its congregation, the Olney Street Baptist Church was an active participant in other aspects of the struggle for African American civil rights in Rhode Island.

In August 1962, the church's African American pastor Reverend Percy A. Carter Jr. (1929–1996) wrote an article in the *Providence Journal* calling attention to race relations in Providence in light of the recent non-violent protests led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Albany, Georgia. Carter countered the assumption that things must, by definition, be better “Up North” in Rhode Island than in the South. He noted that the slums were not as far removed from the state capital as some might have believed. Carter discussed in particular an event that occurred in Providence on August 2, 1962, in which 57 blacks were “rounded up in a raid-like fashion” in the Blackstone Cafe at 228 Plain Street (no longer extant). According to an article he read in the weekly black newspaper the *New England Sun*:

Police using their trained dogs, surrounded the café, and herded the occupants into waiting patrol wagons. After allegedly spending two hours in the city jail, during which time they were subjected to questioning establishing their identity, these citizens were reportedly released with no explanation as to the reasons for their detention. Many of them, including some pregnant women, were said to have been forced to walk to their South Providence homes because of lack of transportation (quoted in Carter 1962).

Carter noted that this incident was not covered in local news media. He ended his article with a call for more significant actions than protest, such as better use of all forms of media; a refusal to accept “patronage” appointments of little significance; a concerted effort to examine the voting records of political candidates; deliberate and vocal support of politicians whose positions align with civil rights goals; and a coordinated effort between agencies, groups, and organizations that are pursuing the same ideals (Carter 1962).

In 1964, the Olney Street church hosted non-violent resistance classes, sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and taught by Rev. Arthur L. Hardge of the A.M.E. Zion Church; Hardge was also chairman of the Providence CORE (Porter 1964).

In 1969, Reverend Paul F. Thompson (1933–2008), pastor of the Olney Street Baptist Church and a member of the Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC), protested the treatment of blacks by police while attempting to quell a riot outside the Rhode Island Auditorium on North Main Street (not extant) after a Sly and the Family Stone concert. The PHRC reported that out of 150 people involved in the riot, 13 police and 25 black teenagers were injured. Thompson stated that while some white teens were also beaten, they were not arrested, and that the police acted with excessive force (Antonucci 2012:133).

The Olney Street Baptist Church is a contributing resource in the College Hill National Register Historic District (listed in 1970, updated in 2018).

Bibliography:

Antonucci, Carl

2012 *Machine Politics and Urban Renewal in Providence, Rhode Island: The Era of Mayor Joseph A. Doorley Jr., 1965–1974*. Ph.D. dissertation, Providence College, Providence, RI.

Carter, Percy A. Jr.

1962 “How Far Away is Albany, Ga?” *Providence Journal*, 19 August, p. 102.

Gross, Dr. Carl R.

1971 “Manuscript E.” Electronic document,

https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=crgross_papers, accessed May 2019.

Grover, Kathryn and Neil Larson

2018 *College Hill Historic District (Additional Documentation)*. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. On file, Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, Providence, RI.

Porter, G. Bruce

1964 “C.O.R.E. to Begin Classes.” *Providence Journal*, 20 January, p.9.

Providence Journal

1962 “200 Witness Baptist Church Ground-Breaking Ceremony.” 25 June, p. 25.