

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

35/142/12	Westford		CLM.376
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Town/City: Chelmsford

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): West Chelmsford

Photograph



Address: 242 Main Street

Historic Name: West Chelmsford United Methodist Church

Uses: Present: church

Original: church

Date of Construction: 1922

Source: *Images of America: Chelmsford*

Style/Form: Colonial Revival/Eclectic

Architect/Builder: Alden Frink/Edwards and Monahan Co., Builders

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: vinyl siding/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):
1958 educational building addition
Ca. 1990 replacement siding

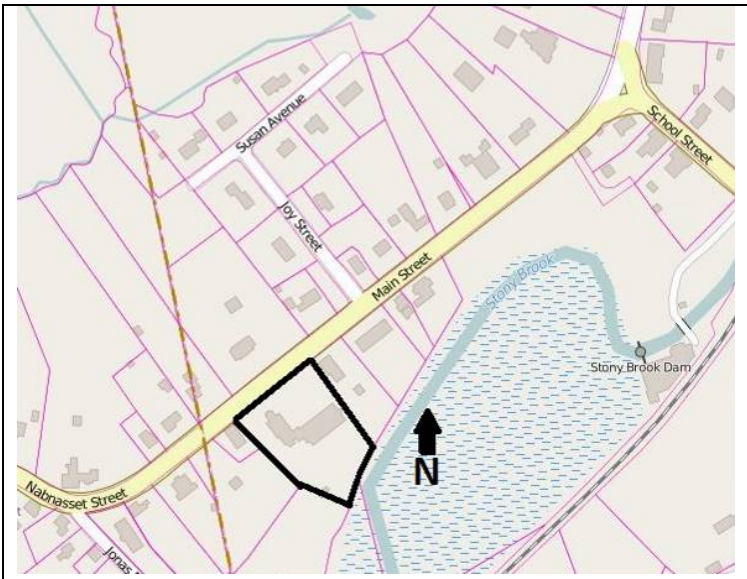
Condition: Fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 1.27 acres

Setting: The church is located approximately 50' southeast of Main St. The addition connects to the southeast corner of the church. A parking area is to the south and west of the church. A large, flat and grassy area with a few mature trees is within the ell of the two buildings. The area includes 19th and 20th c. residential development.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Jennifer Burden, Gray & Pape, Inc.

Organization: Chelmsford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): June 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

CHELMSFORD

242 MAIN STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The 2.5-story building has a stone foundation, walls clad in replacement siding with wood trim, and a multiple-plane asphalt-shingled roof. No chimneys are visible on the building. Windows on the main portion of the church are historic, wood, multiple-light, double-hung windows. The church is clad in replacement horizontal siding with a course of vertical siding between the first and second stories. The building has a cross pattern. The primary (northwest) façade is one bay wide with a double wood entry door centrally located on the wall. The entry has a broken pediment surround and a paired window is above the doorway on the second story. The half story features an unadorned pediment. This portion of the church building is topped with a spire, which includes a belfry. The northeast and southwest walls are each three bays deep with single windows in the north and south bays and paired windows in the center bay. These walls have large pediments with a semi-circular decorative element with a central vent. Historically, decorative elements were included within the course between the windows at the first and second stories and in the pediments. These features are currently covered with siding. The 1958 addition was constructed at the southeast corner of the church building. The two-story addition is clad in siding and has a side gable roof. Windows in the addition are a combination of fixed casement and awning windows.

The building is an altered example of a mid-twentieth century church that retains historic integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

The church's origins date to 1854 when the West Chelmsford Benevolent Society raised money for a chapel for the village, which to this date did not have its own house of worship. By selling shares at \$5 apiece, the group was able to raise enough money to buy the property that now houses the church. After buying the land, the society moved a barn on the lot that served as the first church building. Until 1871 the church was non-denominational with leaders from nearby churches providing services to the West Chelmsford citizens. In 1871 the society created a Methodist Episcopal parish and the next year the West Chelmsford Methodist Episcopal Church was inaugurated. The new congregation set out to raise \$5,500 for the construction of a church building. Before construction began, the barn that served as the church was moved again, this time to 43 Nabnasset Street in Westford. The new building was designed by noted architect Alden Frink (1833-1908), a sole practitioner working out of Boston from 1858 through 1904, and then from his Roxbury home until his death in 1908. Most of Frink's work was located in and around Boston with his best known building, Abbotsford, in Roxbury (BOS.11374). He designed that house in 1872 and it currently houses the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists. Frink's other well-known work is Thomas Edison's Fort Myers, Florida house, which he designed in 1886. The West Chelmsford United Methodist Church building was completed in 1887 (see below).

In July 1920 the church building caught fire, likely the result of arson, and was completely destroyed. Immediately after the fire, church members sought to rebuild the church building and hired Edwards and Monahan Company to construct the new building. The new church, built in 1921 and dedicated on January 18, 1922, used the original plans from architect Alden Frink and was constructed on the original foundation. The new church building cost approximately \$31,000 to construct. The new church building is similar to the original, but included new Colonial Revival style features including, a broken pediment over the main entry and arched window openings. Other alterations from the original design include the addition of four center window openings on the west wall and single rather than double openings on each side of the belfry.

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In 1939 due to a merger of branches of the Methodist faith, the church dropped Episcopal from its name. In 1944 the congregation purchased a building at 44 Nabnasset Street to serve as a parsonage for the church; until this date student ministers performed services as no parsonage was available to house a permanent minister. In 1953 the house to the east at 238 Main was acquired to serve as a second parsonage for the church. In 1958 the congregation constructed an educational wing addition on to the church building at a cost of \$103,000; the addition was completed in 1962. The congregation acquired a new parsonage at 10 Ridgewood Road; the congregation sold the parsonage at 238 Main in 1978. The congregation remains vibrant with approximately 600 members.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Back Bay Houses. "Alden Frink." <https://backbayhouses.org/alden-frink/>.

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Geo. H. Walker & Co. *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*. Geo. H. Walker & Co., Boston, MA. 1889.

Merriam, Fred. *Images of America: North and West Chelmsford*. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina. 2016.

Seymour, Christine. "Church Marks Anniversary." Available from the Chelmsford Historical Commission, Jane Drury's collection for 242 Main Street.

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242 Main Street showing educational addition, facing southeast. November 2015.



Undated photograph of the original church building constructed in 1887. (West Chelmsford United Methodist Church.)

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: **A** **B** **C** **D**

Criteria Considerations: **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G**

Statement of Significance

The area of West Chelmsford is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a locally significant historic district under Criterion A for the development of this area around the Roby Manufacturing Company and Chelmsford Woolen Mills as well as under Criterion C for its intact examples of mid-nineteenth through early twentieth century residential architecture. The boundary of the proposed district would include resources built during the period of significance along Main Street from approximately Loiselle Lane in the north to the Westford Town Line, as well as resources along School Street between Main Street and Graniteville Road. This building at 242 Main Street would be a contributing resource to that district as an example of ecclesiastical architecture constructed during its period of significance that retains some historic integrity. The building is also individually eligible for inclusion in the National Register at the local level for its association with the development of West Chelmsford since it was the first house of worship built in the village.