

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.

Form no.

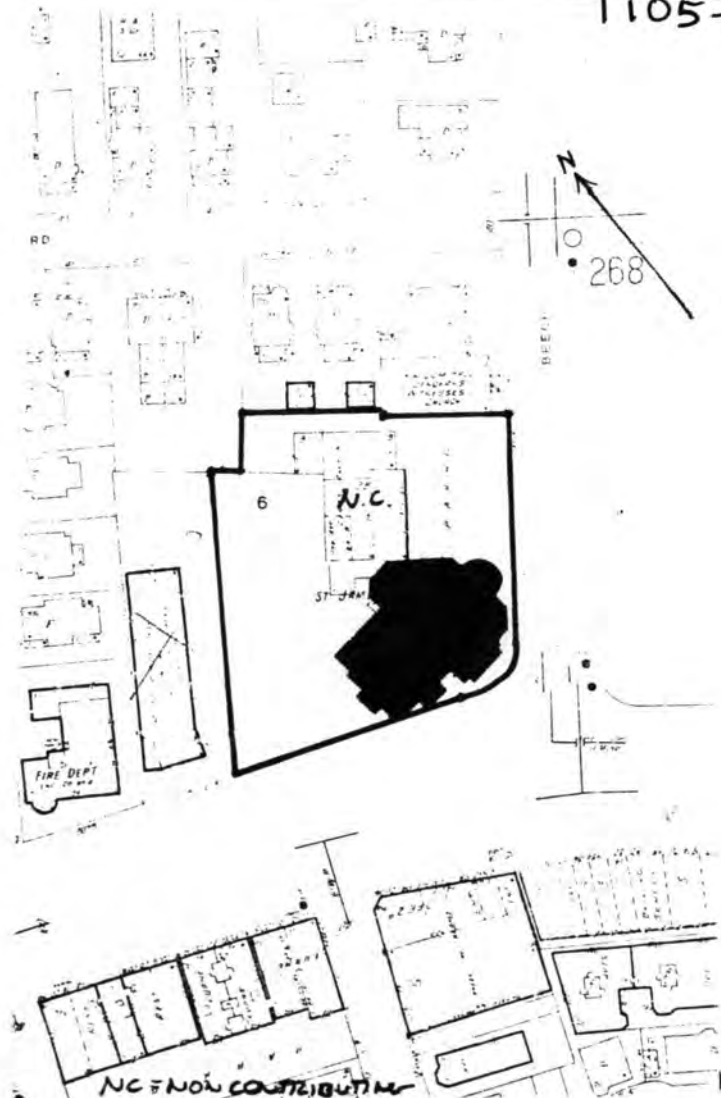
NW CAMB.

NWC

IID2



1105-19



ASSESSOR # 181-50

Cambridge

ss 1991 Massachusetts Avenue

St. James Episcopal Church

nt use church

nt owner St. James Episcopal Church

ription:

1888

urce deed records

Richardsonian Romanesque

Architect Henry M. Congdon

Exterior wall fabric stone, brick

Outbuildings (describe) -----

Other features crossing tower with

peaked roof and finial, apse has  
sandstone Romanesque columns separ-  
ating its windows with scalloped  
capitals and molded band.

Altered No Date -----

Moved No Date -----

5. Lot size:

One acre or less ☒ Over one acre

Approximate frontage 200 feet

Approximate distance of building from street  
5 feet

6. Recorded by Bainbridge Bunting

Organization Cambridge Historical Comm.

Date 1965

UTM-BOSTON NORTH  
19/325400/4695130

7. Original owner (if known) St. James Parish

Original use church

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates same

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

|                       |                                     |                            |                          |                         |                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Aboriginal            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Conservation               | <input type="checkbox"/> | Recreation              | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Agricultural          | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Education                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Religion                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Architectural         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Exploration/<br>settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> | Science/<br>invention   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| The Arts              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Industry                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Social/<br>humanitarian | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Commerce              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Military                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Transportation          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Communication         | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Political                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                         |                                     |
| Community development | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                            |                          |                         |                                     |

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

St James Church was built in 1888-89 on the site of an earlier Cambridge landmark, the eighteenth century Davenport Tavern. The parish of St. James had begun in 1864 as a mission from Christ Church, and built its first chapel in 1871. Within ten years, the congregation was able to plan the erection of the present building.

The commanding presence of St. James results from the richness of its masonry and from its unusual siting on an angle at the corner of Beech Street and Massachusetts Avenue. The compact, centralized plan, broad for its length, is characteristic of Episcopalian churches. A square tower dominates the complex composition of buttresses, gables, dormers and porches. The use of four materials, puddingstone, brownstone, brick and slate, creates vivid contrasts. The spacious beamed interior contains handsome woodwork and a rose window.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

NOV 14 1987

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## EVALUATION / RETURN SHEET

Property: St. James Episcopal Church (Cambridge Multiple Resource Area)  
State, County: MA - Middlesex  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Working No. 11-14-80-2862

Fed. Reg. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Due: 4-17-82

Action: ☐ ACCEPT

☒ RETURN 4/13/82

☐ REJECT

photos 1

maps \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ resubmission
- ☐ nomination by person or local government
- ☐ owner objection
- ☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☒ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

*No context, no statement of architectural significance beyond "commanding presence."*

Recom./Criteria Return

Reviewer Brigham

Discipline arch / hs

Date 4.5.82

☐ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☐ technical corrections cited below  
☐ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location \_\_\_\_\_

3. Classification

|          |                    |            |             |
|----------|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Category | Ownership          | Status     | Present Use |
|          | Public Acquisition | Accessible |             |

4. Owner of Property \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description \_\_\_\_\_

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

|                                    |                                       |                                    |                                           |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Condition                          |                                       | Check one                          | Check one                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input type="checkbox"/> original site    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good      | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> altered   | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair      | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |                                    |                                           |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ alterations/integrity
- ☐ dates
- ☐ boundary selection

## 8. Significance

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates \_\_\_\_\_ Builder/Architect \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

## 10. Geographical Data

Address of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UNIT References

Verbal boundary description and justification

## 11. Form Prepared By

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

## 13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to Andrew

Signed Braunam

Date 4.13.82

Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| In Area no. | Form no.    |
| NW CAMB.    | NWC<br>IID2 |

1. Town Cambridge

Address 1991 Massachusetts Avenue

Name St. James Episcopal Church

Present use church

Present owner St. James Episcopal Church

3. Description:

Date 1888

Source deed records

Style Richardsonian Romanesque

Architect Henry M. Congdon

Exterior wall fabric stone, brick

Outbuildings (describe) -----

Other features crossing tower with  
peaked roof and finial, apse has  
sandstone Romanesque columns separ-  
ating its windows with scalloped  
capitals and molded band.

Altered No Date -----

Moved No Date -----

5. Lot size:

One acre or less ☒ Over one acre ☐

Approximate frontage 200 feet

Approximate distance of building from street

5 feet

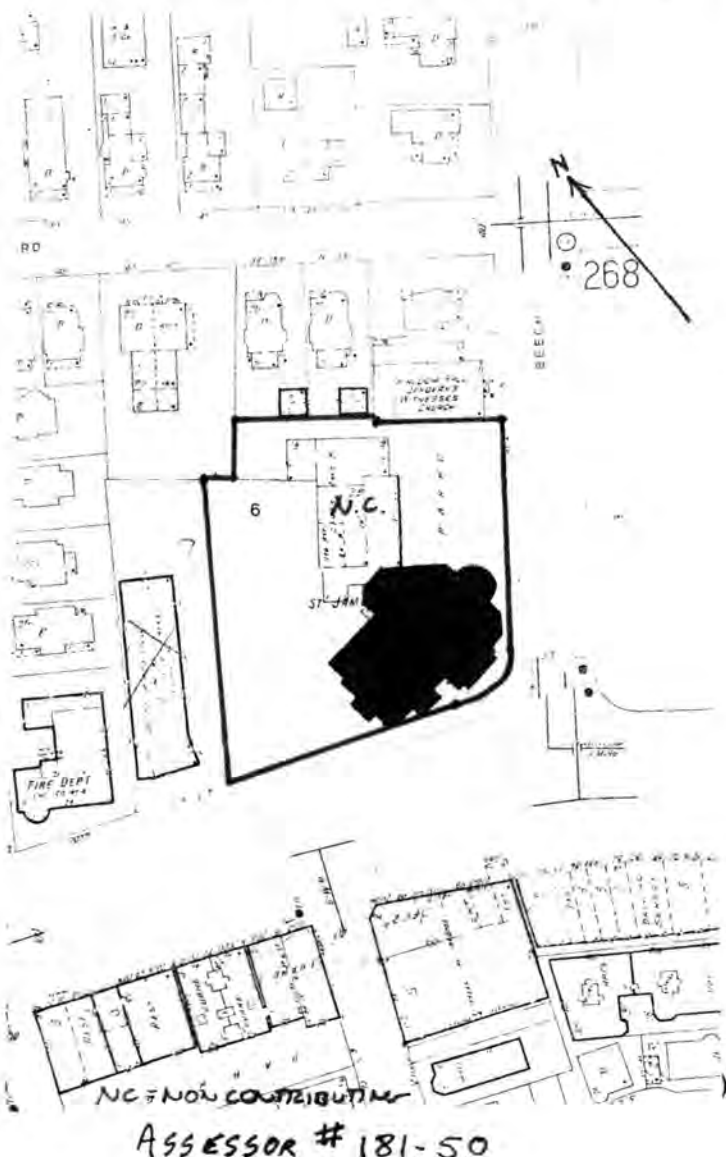
6. Recorded by Bainbridge Bunting

Organization Cambridge Historical Comm.

Date 1965

UTM-BOSTON NORTH  
1A/325400/4695130

2. Photo (3x3" or 3x5")  
Staple to left side of form  
Photo number 1105-19





7. Original owner (if known) St. James Parish

Original use church

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates same

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

|                       |               |                            |               |                         |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Aboriginal            | <u>      </u> | Conservation               | <u>      </u> | Recreation              | <u>      </u> |
| Agricultural          | <u>      </u> | Education                  | <u>      </u> | Religion                | <u>XX</u>     |
| Architectural         | <u>XX</u>     | Exploration/<br>settlement | <u>      </u> | Science/<br>invention   | <u>      </u> |
| The Arts              | <u>      </u> | Industry                   | <u>      </u> | Social/<br>humanitarian | <u>      </u> |
| Commerce              | <u>      </u> | Military                   | <u>      </u> | Transportation          | <u>      </u> |
| Communication         | <u>      </u> | Political                  | <u>      </u> |                         |               |
| Community development | <u>      </u> |                            |               |                         |               |

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

St James Church was built in 1888-89 on the site of an earlier Cambridge landmark, the eighteenth century Davenport Tavern. The parish of St. James had begun in 1864 as a mission from Christ Church, and built its first chapel in 1871. Within ten years, the congregation was able to plan the erection of the present building.

The commanding presence of St. James results from the richness of its masonry and from its unusual siting on an angle at the corner of Beech Street and Massachusetts Avenue. The compact, centralized plan, broad for its length, is characteristic of Episcopalian churches. A square tower dominates the complex composition of buttresses, gables, dormers and porches. The use of four materials, puddingstone, brownstone, brick and slate, creates vivid contrasts. The spacious beamed interior contains handsome woodwork and a rose window.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

NOV 14 1987

## INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

|                                                |                |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Community:                                     | Form No:       |
| Northwest Cambridge                            | NWC II.<br>D.2 |
| Property Name: Saint James<br>Episcopal Church |                |

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Until the middle of the 19th century, Porter Square and Massachusetts Avenue developed as a strip community along the highways to Lexington on the west and Charlestown and Harvard Square on the east and south. The Square itself was an important stage stop, with a hotel, tavern, blacksmith shops and cattle market. The opening of the Fitchburg Railroad in 1843 established direct communication to Boston, and North Cambridge quickly became a bedroom community. While North (Massachusetts) Avenue from Porter Square to Harvard Square quickly became a prestigious suburban address, Porter Square itself and the streets north of it developed in a more modest fashion. The streets north of the railroad immediately adjoining Porter Square were developed in the 1850-1880 period with comfortable single family homes on small lots, while the streets further out Massachusetts Avenue developed in the 1890-1930 period in two family houses and three deckers. Those who built close in were Yankee and Protestant Yankee craftsmen and managers, while those who built further out were Irish Catholics, the children of immigrants.

St. James Episcopal Church was built to serve the established Yankee community in Porter Square. It is described in Report Five: Northwest Cambridge of the Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge:

The St. James Episcopal Congregation was brought together in 1864 by a retired clergyman, and first met in rented quarters in an old drill hall over a grocery store on Russell Street. By 1871, the group was large enough to erect a modest wooden chapel on Beech Street, just north of the present church, but it was soon discovered that the building had been built partially on adjacent property. The owner of this land refused to sell the strip of land on which the church sat, but was willing to part with the entire parcel. Thus, in 1885, the congregation acquired its present site at 1991 Massachusetts Avenue, including the Davenport Tavern which had stood there since 1757. By 1888, the group was ready to undertake the construction of the present building, although this necessitated moving one section of the tavern to 81 Eustis Street, Somerville, and demolishing the remainder. Much of the funds for the new building came from parishioners who lived in Old Cambridge, and included a very large gift from Mary Longfellow Greenleaf, sister of the poet and resident of 76 Brattle Street.

The design of St. James is a good late example of Richardson Romanesque and is the work of Henry M. Congdon, an architect from New York City. It has a commanding presence because of its unusual site and fine materials. The principal view is a side elevation seen from the south as one proceeds north on Massachusetts Avenue from Porter Square. The composition is deliberately picturesque, and suffers from an overabundance of architectural elements: a crossing tower, a belfry, slate roofing, dormer windows of different sizes, a transept, two side entrances with separate and different-

Staple to Inventory form at bottom (see continuation sheet)

sized porches, a complicated arrangement of shapes fitting around the apse, and numerous finials, gable stones, and buttresses. The compact, centralized plan - broad for its length - is characteristic of Episcopal parishes with the low church ritual which emphasized sermon rather than ceremony. St. James is somewhat similar to Trinity Church in Boston in the way the composition is crowned by a dominant crossing tower, but it lacks the calm monumentality of Richardson's masterpiece. Moreover, the use of four materials provides too strong a contrast. The random puddingstone masonry is beautiful in itself, but its tawny colors do not harmonize with the reddish brownstone nor with the unusually ruddy brick. It is clear from contemporary newspaper accounts, however, that the builders would have preferred stone to the existing brick trim, which was necessitated by economy.

St. James Episcopal Church meets criterion A of the National Register, due to its associations with the development of Massachusetts Avenue and North Cambridge, most notably the Yankee community between Harvard and Porter Squares. It also meets criterion C as a good local example of Richardsonian Romanesque ecclesiastical design.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 16 of 17

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

Name Cambridge Multiple Resource Area  
State MA

| Nomination/Type of Review                                               | Date/Signature                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 151. Day, Anna, House <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓                       | Keeper <u>William H. Bracham 4.13.82</u><br>Attest _____ |
| 152. Kingsley, Chester, House <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓               | Keeper <u>William H. Bracham 4.13.82</u><br>Attest _____ |
| 153. Watson, Abraham, House <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓                 | Keeper <u>William H. Bracham 4.13.82</u><br>Attest _____ |
| 154. Wyeth Brickyard Superintendent's House <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓ | Keeper <u>William H. Bracham 4.13.82</u><br>Attest _____ |
| 155. Greek Revival Cottage <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓                  | Keeper <u>William H. Bracham 4.13.82</u><br>Attest _____ |
| 156. ✓ St. James Episcopal Church <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓           | Keeper <u>Donna Lee Dangel 6.30.83</u><br>Attest _____   |
| 157. Kidder-Sargent-McCrehan House <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓          | Keeper <u>William H. Bracham 4.13.82</u><br>Attest _____ |
| 158. Henderson Carriage Repository <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓          | Keeper <u>William H. Bracham 4.13.82</u><br>Attest _____ |
| 159. Soule, Lawrence, House <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓                 | Keeper <u>William H. Bracham 4.13.82</u><br>Attest _____ |
| 160. Wyeth-Smith House <i>Substantive Review</i> ✓                      | Keeper <u>William H. Bracham 4.13.82</u><br>Attest _____ |

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

EVALUATION / RETURN SHEET

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

*Substantive Review*

St. James Episcopal Church (Cambridge MRA)  
Middlesex County  
MA

Working No. 11.14.80-2862  
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-84  
Date Due: 7/4/83  
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 6/30/83  
☐ RETURN  
☐ REJECT

- ☒ resubmission  
☐ nomination by person or local government  
☐ owner objection  
☐ appeal

Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☒ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

*SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT ADEQUATELY  
EXPANDED*

Recom./Criteria ATC/Sec 106  
Reviewer Mike DOWD  
Discipline A-4  
Date 6-30-87  
see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☐ technical corrections cited below  
☐ substantive reasons discussed below

## 1. Name

## 2. Location

## 3. Classification

|          |                    |            |             |
|----------|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Category | Ownership          | Status     | Present Use |
|          | Public Acquisition | Accessible |             |

## 4. Owner of Property

## 5. Location of Legal Description

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

## 7. Description

|                                    |                                       |                                    |                                           |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Condition                          |                                       | Check one                          | Check one                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input type="checkbox"/> original site    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good      | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> altered   | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair      | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |                                    |                                           |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph  
☐ completeness  
☐ clarity  
☐ alterations/integrity

## **8. Significance**

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates \_\_\_\_\_ Builder Architect \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- ☒ summary paragraph  
☐ completeness  
☐ clarity  
☐ applicable criteria  
☐ justification of areas checked  
☐ relating significance to the resource  
☐ context  
☐ relationship of integrity to significance  
☐ justification of exception  
☐ other

## **9. Major Bibliographical References**

## **10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UMT References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

## **11. Form Prepared By**

## **12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national \_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_ local

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

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

## **13. Other**

- \_\_\_\_ Maps  
\_\_\_\_ Photographs  
\_\_\_\_ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: 202 272 - 3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



1105-19

NOV 14 1980

st. James Episcopal Church  
Cambridge MA, Ma

1991 Massachusetts Ave.

1105-19



Please refer to the map in the  
Multiple Property Cover Sheet  
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000275