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**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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Still River Baptist Church

other names/site number Harvard Historical Society

2. Location

street & number 213 Still River Road N/A not for publication

city or town Harvard N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Worcester code 027 zip code 01451

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith B. McDonough

10/31/96

Signature of certifying official/Title Judith B. McDonough, Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

12-13-96

Entered on the
National Register

Still River Baptist Church
Name of Property

Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts
County and State

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	building
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
3	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Church

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Church

CULTURE: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone and brick

walls clapboard

roof asphalt shingle

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 1**Still River Baptist Church
Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts****7. DESCRIPTION**

The Still River Baptist Church is a towered Gothic Revival nave-plan church, constructed in 1832 as the second meetinghouse of Harvard's Baptist Church. It is located on a small lot at 213 Still River Road, the primary north-south thoroughfare of the village of the same name in the Town of Harvard, Worcester County, Massachusetts. The church is sited on the east side of the road, just south of the Depot Road juncture, facing to the west and overlooking the Nashua River valley. Its primary mass is the original street-facing gable-block sanctuary, augmented by a shallow projecting entry tower rising to a pinnacled belfry above the ridge. At the rear of the building is an addition of 1902, consisting of two masses: a lower gabled ell extending from the rear of the church to the east, and a still lower hip-roofed wing projecting from the ell to the south. Ornamented with Gothic window and door treatments, the church's form and style are emblematic of the flourishing New England village of the early 19th century. In addition to the church, a single grave of a church founder, William Willard, Jr., is located at the southeast of the lot. After the demise of the Still River Baptist Society in 1970, the Still River Baptist Church was purchased by the Harvard Historical Society. Since that time the Harvard Historical Society has expanded its land holdings around the building and now owns two adjacent buildings, the Willard-Watt Cottage, a rental property, and a camp, recently converted for use as the Society's Archives Center. The property has been well maintained since that time, assuring that a significant element in the Still River landscape has remained in place. The Still River Baptist Church remains the primary public building within this village, serving today as the headquarters of the Harvard Historical Society.

Still River is a linear village, located along an elevated ridge with land sloping off sharply to the west toward the Nashua River. Its siting along this ridge is exceptionally attractive, providing beautiful and impressive views across the valley and north to Mount Wachusett. Today the village includes primarily residences and farms, as well as the nominated Still River Baptist Church, and once served as a small commercial center. Residences in the village date from the first years of settlement in the area but also include structures from the subsequent building booms within the village. Due to these later periods of building, particularly those of the late 19th and early 20th century, the village is a large example of this New England settlement form. Within the village, about fifty properties are clustered together quite closely and set close to the street, most on lots of under an acre, others on lots expanding behind a narrow road frontage.

Still River is exceptional for the high survival rate of its colonial-period dwellings, at least in part because of their ample size. The oldest of the center-chimney houses is the Willard-Haskell House, 259 Still River Road (MHC #155), with a broad facade and leanto that reflect the additive nature of late 17th century buildings. The Joseph and Elizabeth Willard Farm at 175 Still River Road (MHC #121) was constructed in 1730, originally in saltbox form but later altered to encompass a full two stories. Other outstanding center-chimney examples include the Haskell-Willard House at 259 Still River Road (MHC #154), with a Colonial Revival door and symmetrical Beverly jogs, and the Chaffin-Haskell House at 3 Depot Road (MHC #135). The Dudley House at 290 Still River Road

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(MHC #160) and the Atherton Farm at 24 Depot Road (MHC #134) demonstrate the popularity of this form through the end of the 18th century, while the Lewis House, 212 Still River Road (MHC #141), with later Italianate bays and porch, has a center-chimney house at its core. The Hutchins House at 291 Still River Road (MHC #161), is a rare surviving example of an early small house type, a single room with a chimney along its lateral wall. A probable example of the so-called half-house type, three rather than five bays in breadth, is the Harrod House at 10 Depot Road (MHC #130). Another small version of the center-chimney house, of single-story height, can be seen at the Gardner House at 210 Still River Road (MHC #140). Large houses became more common later in the 18th century as fashionable residents adopted the central-hall double-pile Georgian plan. Probably the largest and most ambitious of these is the Mycall House at 204 Still River Road (MHC #126), with a hip roof and quoins distinguishing it from its neighbors. Another hip-roofed double house is the Sampson House at 221 Still River Road (MHC #144), while gable-roofed examples include the Harwood House at 200 Still River Road (MHC #124), the Cleverly-Whitney House at 207 Still River Road (MHC #136), and the Haskell-Stone House at 248 Still River Road (MHC #153). The popular related ell-house form, with a center-hall front pile and a rear kitchen ell, survives here as well. A brick example can be seen at the Willard-Watt Farm at 12 Depot Road (MHC #131) and a frame example in the Haskell House/Baptist Parsonage at 216 Still River Road (MHC #142).

The second quarter of the 19th century brought a building boom to Still River, as it did across Massachusetts, and impressive numbers of Greek Revival buildings in its wake. A small gable-block house in this style can be seen at 262 Still River Road (MHC #157). More common were houses in the new gable-end-to-the-street form. A small Greek Revival end house is the Atherton-Harrod House at 272 Still River Road (MHC #158), while a larger contemporary example is the Harrod-Hutcherson House at 230 Still River Road (MHC #147); an Italianate example is the Willard-Haynes House at 16 Depot Road (MHC #132). As is common in many Worcester County towns, Still River has a number of Greek Revival end houses that employ a five-bay, center-entry facade. Examples can be seen at the Gerry House at 197 Still River Road (MHC #123), the Atherton-Dalton House at 277 Still River Road (MHC #159), the Conant House at 320 Still River Road (MHC #162), and the Chase House at 184 Still River Road (MHC #122). Still River's prominent public buildings, the nominated Still River Baptist Church and the Still River Academy at 222 Still River Road (MHC #145) also date to this period. The academy is the area's most ambitious Greek Revival building, featuring a Doric portico, but is now serving as a residence. The only other historic public building within this area, the local district school, has been demolished.

Unlike some Worcester County villages, Still River continued to expand late in the 19th century and early in the 20th. The gable block Queen Anne-style Hersey House at 18 Depot Road (MHC #133) and the more elaborate if small Whitney-Haskell House at 236 Still River Road (MHC #148) date to this period. The endhouse remained remarkably popular, and later examples include the Newell House at 6 Depot Road (MHC #129), the Queen Anne Willard House at 218 Still River Road (MHC #143), and the house at 263 Still River Road (MHC #156). Four-squares, cubical in massing under a high pyramidal roof and employing a four-room plan, can be seen at the Russell House at 228 Still River

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Road (MHC #146) and the house at 201 Still River Road (MHC# 125). A related house in a large hip-block Italian Renaissance form is located at 239 Still River Road (MHC #150). The house at 238 Still River Road (MHC #149) is a small hip-block house resembling the common bungalow. The Simmons House or Rosemary Cottage at 240 Still River Road (MHC #151) resembles a lakeside cottage in its small single-story gable-block form. The Maxey House at 246 Still River Road (MHC #152) takes the common Dutch Colonial form of shed dormer-lit gambrel block. Since World War Two, a small number of residences have been added to the region, most on small lots conforming to the village pattern, a small number along the lower portions of the ridge overlooking the Nashua River.

Unaided by established status, the Still River Baptist Church lacks the prominent siting found among meetinghouses and churches of the orthodoxy in the village centers. The meetinghouse is set back from the road, the only distinguishing feature of its location, positioned on its small lot to face the west and orient its pulpit at the east end. The deep front lawn contains a granite trough and a wrought-iron sign that reads "Harvard Historical Society, Founded 1897." A semi-circular drive fronts the church and two narrow drives lead to small structures on the lot to the rear of the church, the Willard-Watt Cottage to the left or the north and the present Archive Center to the right or the south. In spite of their proximity to the church, these buildings are not known to have been closely associated with the Baptist Society, but rather were originally situated on a separate village lot. Behind the church once stood a range of gable-roofed horse sheds, positioned with their ridge perpendicular to the church, parallel to the road. These were first constructed just after the completion of the meetinghouse, in 1834, and remained in place through the early 1930s.

The original gable-fronted meetinghouse composes the primary mass of the present structure, measuring 40' across its facade and 50' in length. The building is clapboard-sheathed on its walls, sitting on a cut-granite foundation, and topped by an asphalt shingle roof. A flat-roofed square tower is embedded in the center of the facade, projecting slightly. The facade measures three bays in width and is distinguished by lancet-shaped entries in the outer bays. Small and squat lancet windows with Gothic tracery light the space above these entries. The central bay contains an elongated glazed lancet window, which has been shuttered closed since 1870 when the installation of a new organ blocked the opening. A louvered circular window is centered in the tower at the level of the peak of the nave's gable. The tower supports a belfry with lancet-shaped openings along each exposure. The belfry contains an 1807 bell said to have been recast by George Holbrook of Brookfield after hanging in Harvard Hall, Cambridge, from 1807 to 1832. (Lawrence 1926: 8-9) The belfry is topped by pinnacles located at each corner; the tower and belfry are each trimmed with a turned balustrade. The church's lateral walls are symmetrically fenestrated with three large 20/20 sash windows, each surmounted by an arched louver to create the illusion of lancet windows. A two-part addition dating to 1902 extends to the rear of the original church, the second in this position. The gabled ell measures 46' in length and 32' in width; it is lit with 2/2 sash windows, four along the north wall, three across the rear, one on the exposed south wall. A hipped wing extends from the south elevation, measuring 31' in length and 13' in width; it has an entry on its west elevation, an entry flanked by a 2/2 sash

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and a small window on the south elevation, and two 2/2 windows on the east wall. The clapboarded addition sits on a brick foundation and is roofed with asphalt shingles.

The present interior of the church reflects changes to the building in the 1870s and again in 1902. (Records of the Baptist Church and Society, Collections of the Harvard Historical Society) The building was originally entered through its two primary doors into a narrow vestibule across the front of the church, which enclosed at each end winding staircases to the former gallery and the tower. The current configuration of the vestibule and gallery dates to 1870 when the large organ was added to the sanctuary, installed in a new large half-round niche projecting backward into the vestibule and gallery. The niche blocks the center facade window, which was plastered over at this time. It also divides the vestibule in two, and has left only small enclosed rooms at the head of each stair on either side of the tower. The Stevens Organ, manufactured in East Cambridge, is located at the west end of the sanctuary in the new niche, a single manual instrument with fifteen stops and a dark mahogany pipe case. In front of the organ is the choir, a raised platform furnished with long Windsor benches.

In the main section of the sanctuary, many elements of the church's original configuration survive. Most of the original slip pews remain in place, ornamented by unpainted reverse-curved scrolled ends. The pews are arranged on the floor in three groups divided by two side aisles; nine rows are located along each outside wall, while two sections of eight rows are positioned in the center of the sanctuary. Two groups of three rows have been removed from the church, those formerly located at the east corners of the sanctuary, which were positioned to face the pulpit and thus perpendicular to those that remain. In the two western corners of the sanctuary were formerly located small stoves to heat the church, and historic photographs show lengths of stove pipe running through the length of the sanctuary to warm it. The original elevated pulpit at the east end of the church was removed in the late 1850s and the surviving furniture suite of pulpit, communion table, and chairs, all in the Gothic Revival style, appears to date to this alteration. (Lawrence 1926: 10) The raised platform at the center of the east end of the church covers the heated baptismal tank installed in the church in 1902; it measures four feet in depth and width and eight feet in length. Although the walls and ceiling are now painted in simple cream, at the end of the 19th century they were richly decorated with stencils, on the ceiling, as a frieze at the cornice, and as an ornamental band around the perimeter wall.

The rear additions to the church are the second in this general location, with the first vestibule dating to 1867; this space was reconstructed to larger dimensions in 1902. The gabled ell encloses two large open spaces, divided by a wall pierced by both a standard door and a large opening with a counter-weighted pocket door which when raised opened these spaces to one another. The inner room includes a raised platform at its west end, between the two doors leading to the sanctuary; it is presently known as Sturdy Memorial Hall and is used as gallery space for the Harvard Historical Society. The outer section of this ell is divided into two spaces, a larger room to the north and a smaller one to the south, both serving as artifact storage for the Historical Society. The hip-roofed wing extending from this ell encloses the building's service spaces, including an entry to the ell in the west elevation, leading into a hall flanked by a church office to the south, to a storage area in the

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center, and to a kitchen at the east end.

Two other buildings unassociated with the church are now located on the same parcel, the result of land acquisitions by the Harvard Historical Society in 1992. The older of these, known as the Willard-Watt Cottage at 215 Still River Road (MHC #138), probably dates to the second quarter of the 19th century. While the original form of the Willard Cottage is unknown, it probably fell within the broad category of early 19th century 1 1/2-story gable block. The clapboarded house has an asymmetrical five-bay facade, with an off-center entry trimmed with molded boards. A shed-roofed wing extends from the rear of the southside elevation. The house has undergone several phases of remodeling that have obscured its early form and history. The second building on the current lot was formerly a combination camp and garage. The long, low, clapboarded building was originally a garage at the north end with a small living and service space at the south end. The garage doors have been closed to serve as storage space for the society, the central space is an office and bath, while the well-lit south portion is a reading and work area.

Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric sites are currently recorded on the church property, sites may be present. Three prehistoric sites are known for the general area (within one mile). Each of these sites is located on terraces bordering the eastern margin of the Still River flood plain, a tributary stream of the Nashua River located a short distance west of the nominated property. In general, however, the potential for significant prehistoric sites on the church property is low. Locational characteristics for the nominated area, particularly its distance of over 1000 feet (300 meters) from wetlands, combined with current knowledge of regional site distribution in the region indicates the area is not favorable for most types of prehistoric sites.

There is a high potential for historic archaeological resources on the church property. Structural remains may survive from the first meetinghouse constructed on the property in 1782. That structure was removed across the road and converted to residential use until it burned in 1910. The new church was built in 1832 in roughly the same location but closer to the road indicating a portion of the original meetinghouse site may exist behind the present structure. Structural remains may also survive from horse sheds constructed in 1834 behind the church. The horse sheds were apparently demolished in ca. 1930. Occupational related features should also survive associated with the 1782 and 1832 churches. Occupational related features may also survive around the Willard-Watts house and camp/garage now used as the Archive Center.

(end)

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Religion
- Social History
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Period of Significance

1832-1946

Significant Dates

1832, 1867, 1870, 1902

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Still River Baptist Church
Name of Property

Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.51 acres

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.19	284 860	4707 460		3.		
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
2.			4.			
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	

_ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Claire W. Dempsey with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date October, 1996

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Harvard Historical Society

street & number 213 Still River Road telephone _____

city or town Harvard state MA zip code 01451

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
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Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts****8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Still River Baptist Church is an important historical monument within the Town of Harvard, Worcester County, Massachusetts. Located within the village of Still River, the building demonstrates the rise of dissenting groups within the religious and social landscape of early New England, particularly significant within this community, which is exceptional for its continuing experience of alternative associations. A well-preserved example of a Gothic Revival nave-plan church, its presence and appearance bring an important symbolic component to this secondary village. The Still River Baptist Church meets National Register criteria A and C at the local level. It retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The church is presently owned by the Harvard Historical Society. The church derives its primary significance from its architectural and historical importance within the village of Still River and the Town of Harvard. Both the Church and the single grave on the land are contributing properties in this nomination, while two other small buildings on the lot are unassociated with the history of the Church and are therefore noncontributing. The Still River Baptist Church is located within a village that is likely to be eligible as a historic district, and the two other buildings on the lot are likely to contribute to such a district. Among the approximately 40 historic houses that survive in Still River, many of the region's most important types can be found, as well as a range of architectural styles. Its large colonial and Federal houses, its Gothic meetinghouse and Greek Revival academy, its end houses and four squares, all contribute to an assemblage which typifies a New England village. Due to its location overlooking the Nashua River valley, Still River is an unusually attractive example of this well-known regional form.

English settlement began in Harvard in the 17th century, as its neighbors Lancaster, Groton, and Stow were established by the General Court, and settlers made their way west to the rich lands of the Nashua River valley. Nashaway leader Sholan sold a large tract to fur traders in 1643, but settlement was disbursed by King Philip's War. Settlement in this area began with the granting of second division Lancaster lands in the western part of today's Harvard. By the early years of the 18th century, settlers were numerous enough to desire a town of their own and Harvard was established from portions of these towns in 1732. As is by now well-known for New England towns, settlers took up large agricultural parcels in the countryside. The town grew rapidly, reaching a population of 1,315 by 1774. An exceptional number of 18th century houses have survived here, many on farms dating to the earliest settlement period. The families that established these farms showed remarkable persistence, as Haskells, Whitneys, Athertons, and Willards held close to the valuable and attractive location. Reflecting the early importance of the river-bottom lands, Still River is the oldest clustered settlement in the town of Harvard and well-known for its location overlooking the Nashua River valley. (Nourse 1894 and Anderson 1976: *passim*)

Much of the growth and prosperity of Still River is related to its position on key transportation routes, particularly after the completion of Union Turnpike junction in 1805. More houses are known from the early national period, when many New England communities experienced a spurt of growth and rebuilding associated with the rise of home manufactures and artisan activities, increased retailing, and

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a growth in the professions. By 1831, there were about twenty-five houses in the area, only a handful fewer than the town's ecclesiastical and municipal center to the east. The middle of the 19th century saw additional growth, as a half-dozen more houses were constructed and the number and quality of the public buildings improved. Still River's prominent public buildings, the nominated Still River Baptist Church and the Still River Academy, as well as its former school, date to this period. Unusual for most villages, growth continued to be strong during the late 19th century and into the early years of the 20th, in part because of the stunning view to the west and because the town was gaining popularity as a country retreat. A dozen more houses, about a third of the total in the village, survive from this period. Today the Still River area remains an outstanding and attractive landscape within the town, privileged in its picturesque location and retaining much of its historic fabric. (Dempsey and FitzPatrick 1992-94: passim)

Although Still River was the earliest settled section of the town, Harvard followed the regional preference for siting its meetinghouse and common in the geographical center of the town, to the east of Still River at Harvard Center. There, in keeping with provincial requirements, the town located its meetinghouse and appointed the well-connected John Seccomb as first minister. Public support for the minister and the meetinghouse brought townspeople from across its disbursed landscape into the town center, its civic but not its settlement core. Within Harvard, however, the unity of an established church was a short-lived phenomenon, and through its subsequent history, the town was exceptional for the number of dissenting and alternative groups that flourished in its midst. During the years of the Great Awakening, Seccomb's generally New Light position eventually proved inadequate to some townspeople, whose experience of conversion and goal of a pure church led them to withdraw from the First Church in 1751 and worship together on their own. Two years later they were joined by the extraordinary Shadrach Ireland, an itinerant believer in perfectionism and his own immortality. Communal residence and property ownership characterized the community, which built the surviving Square House at 94 Shaker Road (MHC #104) in about 1770. Ireland died ten years later, and when he failed to rise again, his followers secretly buried him in one of their cornfields. Shortly thereafter this group was visited by Mother Ann Lee and her followers and became the core of the Shaker community that flourished in Harvard for nearly a hundred and twenty years. (McLoughlin 1971: Vol. I, pp. 358, 692; Vol. II, pp. 713, 736-39)

The next withdrawal from the First Church was a more orderly and predictable one. On June 27, 1776, fourteen members of Harvard's First Congregational Church organized a Baptist Society and selected Dr. Isaiah Parker as their instructor. This group of Baptists shares many characteristics of the earlier Worcester County Baptist groups described by John Brooke in *The Heart of the Commonwealth*. His examination of this 18th century trend emphasizes the new groups' creation of alternative forms of community, not just withdrawing from the orthodoxy of the Standing Order but from the broader corporate community as well. Baptists chose separate voluntary associations, establishing competing churches and a new set of landmarks in the landscape. Often associated with emergent milling and artisanal activities, their successful economic position made a strong contrast to the marginalized roles of earlier dissenters in Harvard. For Still River, the establishment of a new

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church gave a new independent identity to the prominent families of long standing, one to rival the establishment at the center. While there is no reason to question the genuineness of their belief, particularly since at least one of the families was historically associated with Massachusetts' earliest and most persecuted Baptists, the opportunity to construct their own arena for leadership was a significant motivation as well. (Brooke 1989: 66-96)

Like most 18th century Baptist Societies, Still River drew its members broadly from surrounding communities. Dissenting from the established church, but not embracing the radicalism in their midst, the members of the church described themselves to the Warren Association in 1781 as "surrounded on every side with almost all sorts of Persuasions." (McLoughlin 1971: Vol. I, p. 739) The church records that survive demonstrate the importance of maintaining a godly community, with frequent evaluation of member behavior and the meting out of punishment to those who wandered too far. (Records of the Baptist Church and Society, Collections of the Harvard Historical Society, hereafter Baptist Records, HHS)

In 1782 the society purchased at auction the First Meetinghouse of Leominster, which was dismantled and rebuilt as the Still River Baptist Church. A half-acre parcel on which the meetinghouse stood was sold by Josiah Willard to the deacons of the church for \$20 in a deed signed in 1803 and filed in 1822. (Worcester County Registry of Deeds 227:264, hereafter WCRD) Although little is known about the appearance of this building, it is likely to have been a small version of the familiar New England meetinghouse form, generally square in shape, oriented to position its entry and pulpit on opposite long walls, and with seventeen box pews arranged on its floor to promote the dissemination of the Word. From the meetinghouse on the ridge overlooking the Nashua, the new Baptists journeyed down to the Still River for their new birth. With the reorientation from the rituals of death to those of baptism, the Still River Baptist meetinghouse provided a powerful new space and metaphor within the community.

By September of 1832, the Society was considering the construction of a new building. Although they had hoped for a benefactor to underwrite the cost, they eventually decided to sell \$25 shares to raise the required funds. A committee of Calvin Haskell, William B. Willard, Waltin (? illeg.) Burbank, and Dr. Charles Chase was selected "to procure a plan and ascertain the probable expenses of a house suitable for the convenience of said society." (24 September 1832 Meeting, Baptist Records, HHS) On October 22, the committee reported that the cost of the building would likely amount to \$1,600 plus the value of the old house, recommending that the building be the same width as the old building and fifty feet in length. The congregation voted to erect a new meetinghouse to be located in the center of the same lot but sited two rods closer to the road. Haskell, Willard, and Scott gathered subscriptions and superintended the building of the new meetinghouse. In 1834 Jacob Haskell and others were given leave to build a horse shed behind the meetinghouse. (3 April 1834 Meeting, Baptist Records, HHS) The old meetinghouse was moved across the road and converted to residential use. In the mid-1830s, it served as a boardinghouse for the Still River Academy and later as a private residence; it burned in 1910.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4Still River Baptist Church
Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts

The form and ornament chosen for the new Still River Baptist Church follow patterns emerging for rural church buildings during the previous two decades. The nave-plan church, in which slip pews are arranged so that all members of the congregation face the preacher, was well established as the preferred choice during the early decades of the 19th century in rural New England. It was therefore not surprising that the congregation would choose this new "face forward" arrangement to replace their earlier arrangement of pews in a meetinghouse plan. For their exterior ornament, the church made a more unusual choice, selecting the particularly ecclesiastical Gothic rather than the extraordinarily popular Greek or generally classical mode of the period. Beginning early in the 19th century, the Gothic mode enjoyed increasing popularity for New England churches, not surprisingly first selected among the newly independent Protestant Episcopal Church.

By the second quarter of the 19th century, however, an austere Gothic, achieved with the selection of the semi-projecting tower and lancet windows, was the only real alternative to the Greek. While cities and port towns embraced this alternative style, the Gothic was far rarer among rural churches and farmhouses.

The Church thrived throughout the 19th century due to Still River's concentration of Baptists and the general growth of this and other dissenting denominations. Baptist groups in surrounding localities split off from the Still River Church to form their own churches, in Littleton in 1822, in West Townsend in 1827, in Bolton in 1833, and Lancaster in 1847, as well as in Leominster and Fitchburg. This church experienced its greatest growth between 1835 and 1842, and the society added Sabbath school to weekly preaching. In 1867 the society voted to repair and expand the meetinghouse, in part to accommodate these auxiliary meetings. The new vestry extended from the east or rear of the church and measured 22 by 32 feet and 12 feet in height. The committee of Willard, Chase, and Levi Howard was appointed to raise a subscription, borrow any additional funds needed, and superintend the construction. Three years later, William Bowles Willard, an active member and benefactor of the church, gave a large new organ to the congregation (Lawrence 1926: *passim*; Baptist Records, HHS: *passim*). The organ was manufactured by George Stevens (1803-92) of East Cambridge. At East Cambridge, Stevens and his primary competitors specialized in the manufacture of small and medium-sized conservative organs for small congregations. Stevens took over the factory of William Goodrich, founder of the industry in the Boston area, and his business expanded to become the region's largest. From his factories on Fifth Street and on Bridge Street, Stevens and his small shop constructed more than 800 organs (Maycock 1988: 199-200). The installation of this large organ brought a reconfiguration of the vestibule and sanctuary of the church, as its niche penetrated and divided the vestibule and the gallery.

By the turn of the century, another round of alterations was made to the building and lot. An adjacent lot to the south was purchased in 1898 from Luther Willard, measuring 50' in width and about 145' in length. (WCRD 1882:67) In 1902 the vestry was rebuilt, more than doubling the available space along the plans that survive today, at a cost of \$1,300. This new space provided room for Sunday school classes and various church-group meetings, an office for the minister, and a kitchen. Until this

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 5**Still River Baptist Church
Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts**

space was constructed, many of these activities had taken place in the Baptist parsonage, which from 1868 to 1939 was the Haskell House at 216 Still River Road (MHC #142). The 20th century witnessed the erosion of this religious community. In a town where once there was a Congregational, a Unitarian, a Universalist, a Methodist, as well as a Baptist church, the early 20th century saw mergers of old rivals. With no minister of its own since 1938, the Still River Baptists shared a pastor with the Bolton Baptist Church from 1939 to 1955. In that year the Baptists united with the Evangelical Congregational Church in Harvard Center. In 1966 the Still River Baptist Church officially disbanded and began to make the arrangements that eventually led to the sale of the property to the Harvard Historical Society in 1970.

Founded in 1897, the Harvard Historical Society had formerly been located in a room within the Harvard Public Library in Harvard Center. The wing and vestry were renovated and rededicated in 1987 as the Sturdy Memorial Hall to house the Historical Society's archives and collections. The Harvard Historical Society has recently acquired property behind the meetinghouse, including the Willard-Watt Cottage and a small combination garage and cottage that now serves as its Archives Center. The full ownership history of the land is not known, but the house may date to the second quarter of the 19th century. The house and land have been variously associated with Still River landowning families, including the Chaplins, Farwells, Athertons, Lawrences, and Willards.

In the 20th century the house was owned by the Scotts and their heir Priscilla Sibley, and at this time the small camp is believed to have been constructed. The land was subsequently purchased in five small lots by the Watt family in 1966; the Watts sold the land to the Harvard Historical Society in 1992. (WCRD Research by Richard Larkin) The active Historical Society assures an important role for the Still River Baptist Church within the village and the town.

Archaeological Significance

Historic archaeological resources described in Section 7 have the potential to document the social, cultural, and economic changes which occurred in the Still River Baptist Society from its 18th century inception through the 20th century and the land use changes which took place to the First and Second meetinghouses during that period. Archaeological survey and testing can document the types, locations and integrity of resources that survive with the first meetinghouse site and existing second meetinghouse. Excavation and mapping of structural remains related to the 1782 church can provide information relating to materials used in the building's construction and techniques used in the construction process. Detailed analysis of occupational related features (trash pits, privies, wells) can also provide us with examples of the activities which took place at and around the church and insights into the lives of the church parishioners and Harvard/Still River residents. Archaeological survivals from the horse shed can provide as with information pertaining to 19th century methods of transportation and its availability to different members of the church. The analysis of archaeological survivals related to the Willard-Watt House can help document the ownership history of that building and changes which have occurred to its form over time, both topics which are presently obscured by

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8, 9 Page 6, 1

Still River Baptist Church
Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts

its present condition and state of knowledge. Archaeological survivals related to the existing camp/garage can also document the land use history of that structure and the nature and local role of its function as a camp.

(end)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Worcester County Registry of Deeds. Research by Richard Larkin.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Still River Baptist Church
Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of this property are marked on the attached Town of Harvard Assessor's Map # 21 and include the parcel held by the current owner, the Harvard Historical Society.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of this property are those currently associated with the Still River Baptist Church.

(end)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Still River Baptist Church
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Worcester

DATE RECEIVED: 11/12/96 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/27/96
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/13/96 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/27/96
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 96001479

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 12-13-96 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS: **Entered in the
National Register**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



Still River Baptist Church
Harvard MA

(Worcester County)

photograph 1 of 2

Claire Dempsey 1993

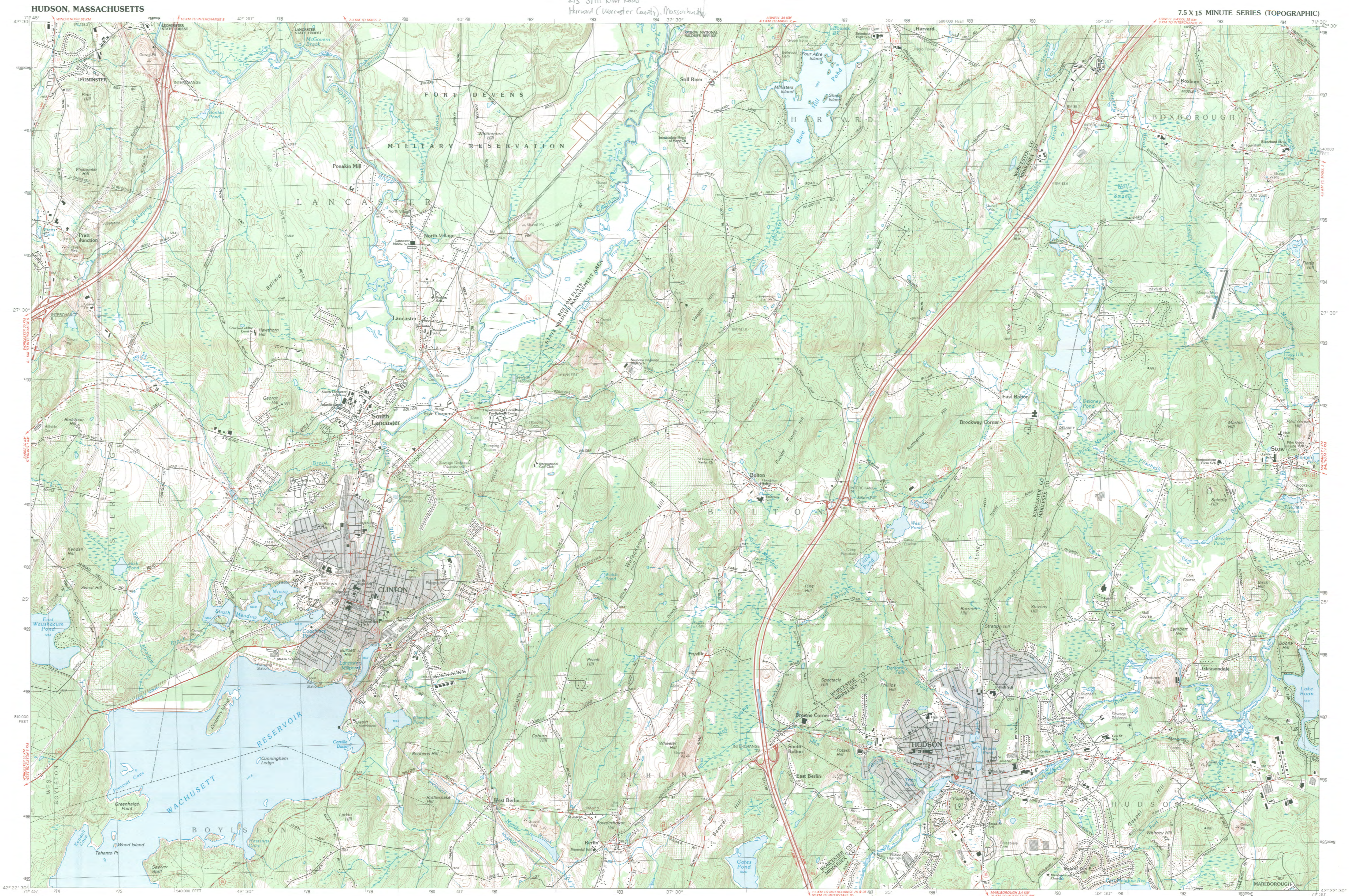


Archives Center behind
Still River Baptist Church
Harvard MA

(Worcester County)

photograph 2012

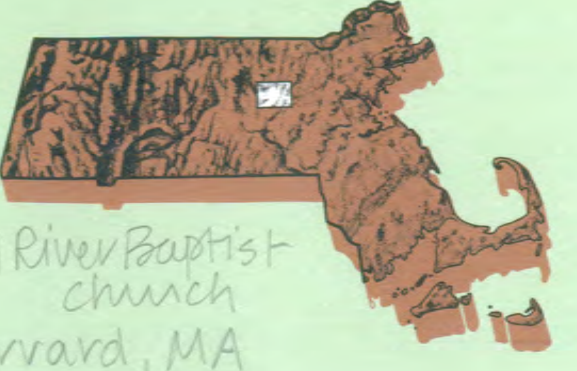
Claire Dempsey 1994



Still River Baptist Church
 213 Still River Road
 Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts
 utm - 19/288600/4707460

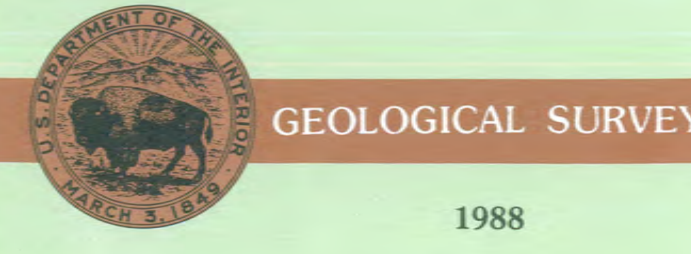
Hudson MASSACHUSETTS

1:25 000-scale metric topographic map



7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
 Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies
 Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1960. Field checked 1981. Map edited 1988
 Supersedes Clinton 1965 and Hudson 1966
 1:25,000-scale maps
 Projection and 1000-meter grid, zone 19
 Universal Transverse Mercator
 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone. 1927 North American Datum
 To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 6 meters south and 40 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks
 There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
 CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER
 OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.5 METER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

CONVERSION TABLE	DECLINATION DIAGRAM	ADJOINING MAPS																															
<table border="1"> <tr><th>Meters</th><th>Feet</th></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>3.2808</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>6.5617</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>9.8425</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>13.1234</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>16.4042</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>19.6850</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>22.9659</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>26.2467</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>29.5275</td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td>32.8084</td></tr> </table>	Meters	Feet	1	3.2808	2	6.5617	3	9.8425	4	13.1234	5	16.4042	6	19.6850	7	22.9659	8	26.2467	9	29.5275	10	32.8084	<p>UTM grid convergency (GV) and 1983 magnetic declination (MD) at center of map Diagram is approximate</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>8</td><td></td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
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FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
 DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

Topographic Map Symbols

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road, trail
- Route marker: Interstate U.S. State
- Railroad: standard gage; narrow gage
- Bridge: drawbridge
- Footbridge; overpass; underpass
- Railway area: only selected building shown
- House; barn; church; school; large structure
- Boundary:
 - National, with monument
 - State
 - County, parish
 - Civil township, precinct, district
 - Incorporated city, village, town
 - National or State reservation; small park
 - Land grant with monument; found section corner
 - U.S. public lands survey: range, township; section
 - Range, township; section line: location approximate
 - Fence or field line
 - Power transmission line, located tower
 - Dam; dam with lock
 - Cemetery; grave
 - Campground; picnic area; U.S. location monument
 - Windmill; water well; spring
 - Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cave
 - Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation
 - Contour: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression
 - Distorted surface: strip mine, lava, sand
 - Sounding; depth curve
 - Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream
 - Reef; large and small; barge, large and small
 - Swamp; marsh
 - Submerged marsh; land subject to controlled inundation
 - Woodland; scattered trees
 - Soak; mangrove
 - Orchard; vineyard

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request



Still River Baptist Church
 213 Still River Road
 Harvard (Worcester County),
 Massachusetts

<p>THIS MAP IS FOR ASSESSMENT PURPOSES. IT IS NOT VALID FOR LEGAL DESCRIPTION OR CONVEYANCE.</p>	<p>REVISED & REPRINTED BY JALBERT ENGINEERING, INC. STURBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 01566 347-5136 PRODUCED BY GORDON E. AINSWORTH & ASSOCIATES, INC.</p>	<p>LEGEND</p> <p>AREA CALCULATED AcC AREA SURVEYED Ac BLOCK LIMIT ——— BLOCK NUMBER 02 COMMON OWNERSHIP / OR Z EXEMPT PROPERTY E</p> <p>SYMBOLS</p> <p>SUBDIVISION LOT NO. ② MATCH LINE ← M.L. → RIGHT OF WAY R/W RECORD DIMENSION 100' SCALED DIMENSION 100'S WETLANDS</p>	<p>SCALE</p> <p>1 INCH = 200 FEET</p> <p>FEET</p> <p>METERS</p>	<p>INDEX DIAGRAM</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17A</td> <td>17B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20</td> <td></td> <td>17C</td> <td>17D</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25</td> <td>26</td> <td>22A</td> <td>22B</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>27</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	15	16	17A	17B	20		17C	17D	25	26	22A	22B			27		<p>ASSESSORS MAP</p> <p>HARVARD</p>
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20		17C	17D																		
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		27																			
<p>THE HORIZONTAL DATUM IS THE MASS. STATE PLANE COORDINATE SYSTEM.</p> <p>PHOTOGRAPHY DATE: APRIL 23, 1983</p> <p>COMPLETION DATE: FEBRUARY 15, 1985</p>					<p>REVISED THROUGH</p> <p>1-1-94</p> <p>MAP NO.</p> <p>21</p>																



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

31 October 1996

Carol Shull
Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
P. O. Box 37127
Washington, D. C. 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Still River Baptist Church, 213 Still River Road,
Harvard (Worcester County), Massachusetts, 01451

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: John Martin, Chairperson, Harvard Historical Commission
Harvard Historical Society
Claire Dempsey, Preservation Consultant
Virginia E. Thurston, Chairperson, Board of Selectmen
Nancy Reifenstein, CLG Coordinator, Town of Harvard
Linda Dagdigan, Librarian, Harvard Public Library

NAME OF PROPERTY STILL RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH

Harvard

NUMBER OF PROPERTIES _____

DATE OF ACCEPTANCE _____

<u>ADDRESSES</u>	<u>DATE OWNER UPDATE REQUESTED</u>	<u>DATE NOTIFICATION LETTER MAILED</u>	<u>DATE ELIGIBILITY LETTER MAILED</u>	<u>DATE ACCEPTANCE LETTER MAILED</u>
213 STILL RIVER ROAD HARVARD, MA 01451				
<u>OWNER</u> HARVARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY 213 STILL RIVER ROAD HARVARD, MA 01451 <i>PO Box 542 (mailing address)</i>		8/9/96	9/20/96	
<u>LOCAL HISTORICAL COMMISSION</u> JOHN MARTIN, CH. HARVARD HISTORICAL COMMISSION P.O. BOX 104 HARVARD, MA 01451-0377		8/9/96	9/20/96	
<u>CERTIFIED ELECTED OFFICIAL</u> VIRGINIA E. THURSTON, CHAIR BOARD OF SELECTMEN 13 AYER ROAD HARVARD, MA 01451-1411		8/9/96	9/20/96	
<u>APPLICANT</u> CLAIRE DEMPSEY 33 GROVE STREET WINCHESTER, MA 01890		8/9/96	9/20/96	
<u>REGIONAL PLANNER</u> <i>Library: Lisa Osgood, Librarian Harvard Public Library Fairbanks St. Harvard MA 01451</i>		8/9/96	9/20/96	
<u>OTHER SUPPORTERS: ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE</u> Nancy Reifstern CLG Coordinator Town of Harvard PO Box 154 Harvard MA 01451	6/5/96	8/9/96	9/20/96	