

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

FILED
MAR 22 1999

MAR 28 1990

**NATIONAL
REGISTER**

1. Name of Property

other names/site number	Oak Bluffs Christian Union Chapel
-------------------------	-----------------------------------

state	Massachusetts,	code	025	county	Dukes	code	007	zip code	02557
-------	----------------	------	-----	--------	-------	------	-----	----------	-------

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100. 101. 102. 103. 104. 105. 106. 107. 108. 109. 110. 111. 112. 113. 114. 115. 116. 117. 118. 119. 120. 121. 122. 123. 124. 125. 126. 127. 128. 129. 130. 131. 132. 133. 134. 135. 136. 137. 138. 139. 140. 141. 142. 143. 144. 145. 146. 147. 148. 149. 150. 151. 152. 153. 154. 155. 156. 157. 158. 159. 160. 161. 162. 163. 164. 165. 166. 167. 168. 169. 170. 171. 172. 173. 174. 175. 176. 177. 178. 179. 180. 181. 182. 183. 184. 185. 186. 187. 188. 189. 190. 191. 192. 193. 194. 195. 196. 197. 198. 199. 200. 201. 202. 203. 204. 205. 206. 207. 208. 209. 210. 211. 212. 213. 214. 215. 216. 217. 218. 219. 220. 221. 222. 223. 224. 225. 226. 227. 228. 229. 230. 231. 232. 233. 234. 235. 236. 237. 238. 239. 240. 241. 242. 243. 244. 245. 246. 247. 248. 249. 250. 251. 252. 253. 254. 255. 256. 257. 258. 259. 260. 261. 262. 263. 264. 265. 266. 267. 268. 269. 270. 271. 272. 273. 274. 275. 276. 277. 278. 279. 280. 281. 282. 283. 284. 285. 286. 287. 288. 289. 290. 291. 292. 293. 294. 295. 296. 297. 298. 299. 300. 301. 302. 303. 304. 305. 306. 307. 308. 309. 310. 311. 312. 313. 314. 315. 316. 317. 318. 319. 320. 321. 322. 323. 324. 325. 326. 327. 328. 329. 330. 331. 332. 333. 334. 335. 336. 337. 338. 339. 340. 341. 342. 343. 344. 345. 346. 347. 348. 349. 350. 351. 352. 353. 354. 355. 356. 357. 358. 359. 360. 361. 362. 363. 364. 365. 366. 367. 368. 369. 370. 371. 372. 373. 374. 375. 376. 377. 378. 379. 380. 381. 382. 383. 384. 385. 386. 387. 388. 389. 390. 391. 392. 393. 394. 395. 396. 397. 398. 399. 400. 401. 402. 403. 404. 405. 406. 407. 408. 409. 410. 411. 412. 413. 414. 415. 416. 417. 418. 419. 420. 421. 422. 423. 424. 425. 426. 427. 428. 429. 430. 431. 432. 433. 434. 435. 436. 437. 438. 439. 440. 441. 442. 443. 444. 445. 446. 447. 448. 449. 450. 451. 452. 453. 454. 455. 456. 457. 458. 459. 460. 461. 462. 463. 464. 465. 466. 467. 468. 469. 470. 471. 472. 473. 474. 475. 476. 477. 478. 479. 480. 481. 482. 483. 484. 485. 486. 487. 488. 489. 490. 491. 492. 493. 494. 495. 496. 497. 498. 499. 500. 501. 502. 503. 504. 505. 506. 507. 508. 509. 510. 511. 512. 513. 514. 515. 516. 517. 518. 519. 520. 521. 522. 523. 524. 525. 526. 527. 528. 529. 530. 531. 532. 533. 534. 535. 536. 537. 538. 539. 540. 541. 542. 543. 544. 545. 546. 547. 548. 549. 550. 551. 552. 553. 554. 555. 556. 557. 558. 559. 560. 561. 562. 563. 564. 565. 566. 567. 568. 569. 570. 571. 572. 573. 574. 575. 576. 577. 578. 579. 580. 581. 582. 583. 584. 585. 586. 587. 588. 589. 590. 591. 592. 593. 594. 595. 596. 597. 598. 599. 600. 601. 602. 603. 604. 605. 606. 607. 608. 609. 610. 611. 612. 613. 614. 615. 616. 617. 618. 619. 620. 621. 622. 623. 624. 625. 626. 627. 628. 629. 630. 631. 632. 633. 634. 635. 636. 637. 638. 639. 640. 641. 642. 643. 644. 645. 646. 647. 648. 649. 650. 651. 652. 653. 654. 655. 656. 657. 658. 659. 660. 661. 662. 663. 664. 665. 666. 667. 668. 669. 670. 671. 672. 673. 674. 675. 676. 677. 678. 679. 680. 681. 682. 683. 684. 685. 686. 687. 688. 689. 690. 691. 692. 693. 694. 695. 696. 697. 698. 699. 700. 701. 702. 703. 704. 705. 706. 707. 708. 709. 710. 711. 712. 713. 714. 715. 716. 717. 718. 719. 720. 721. 722. 723. 724. 725. 726. 727. 728. 729. 730. 731. 732. 733. 734. 735. 736. 737. 738. 739. 740. 741. 742. 743. 744. 745. 746. 747. 748. 749. 750. 751. 752. 753. 754. 755. 756. 757. 758. 759. 760. 761. 762. 763. 764. 765. 766. 767. 768. 769. 770. 771. 772. 773. 774. 775. 776. 777. 778. 779. 780. 781. 782. 783. 784. 785. 786. 787. 788. 789. 790. 791. 792. 793. 794. 795. 796. 797. 798. 799. 800. 801. 802. 803. 804. 805. 806. 807. 808. 809. 810. 811. 812. 813. 814. 815. 816. 817. 818. 819. 820. 821. 822. 823. 824. 825. 826. 827. 828. 829. 830. 831. 832. 833. 834. 835. 836. 837. 838. 839. 840. 84

☐ object

Total

listed in the National Register 0

State or Federal agency and bureau

State or Federal agency and bureau

☐ other, (explain:)

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religious: Religious Structure

Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religious: Religious Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian: Octagonal Mode
Stick

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: Granite

walls Wood: Shingle

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Oak Bluffs Christian Union Chapel, known historically simply as Union Chapel, is located in the Town of Oak Bluffs, Dukes County, Massachusetts, on the north side of Martha's Vineyard. The Vineyard is approximately four miles across Nantucket Sound off the southwest tip of Cape Cod. The Chapel, built in 1870 in the American Stick Style, embodies design elements which confirm its transitional aesthetic linking the preceding Gothic Revival with the subsequent Queen Anne. The building today stands in the middle of an irregular lot of a fractional acre approximately twenty-five feet from each of its boundary roads: Circuit Avenue, Kennebec Avenue, Narragansett Avenue, and Grove Street. The site is located in the Ocean Park neighborhood of Oak Bluffs, characterized by late nineteenth century residential development to the east and a commercial strip of late nineteenth century buildings to the west. The surrounding street pattern, primarily curvilinear in form, is dictated by the siting of Ocean Park, a seven acre semi-circular, slightly concave green space which faces Seaview Avenue and the Sound beyond. This results in an arrangement of narrow residential lanes forming ever-expanding crescents around the west side of the Park.

Union Chapel occupies a lot larger than those of its neighboring buildings which were confined in the early 1870s by local restrictions to parcels of fifty by seventy-five feet. The Chapel is sited on a slight rise, to the west of Ocean Park and close to the Methodist campground of Wesleyan Grove. Old oak trees were felled in 1870 to make way for the construction of the meetinghouse; these were subsequently replaced with young oaks and small coniferous trees. Today, the parcel is heavily treed, with the post 1871 vegetation having reached mature form and partially obscuring the Chapel from viewing from the contiguous streets. Gravel and dirt walkways intersect the immediate environs of the Chapel and lead to its four entrance porches. There are no additional buildings, other than the meetinghouse, on the lot.

Octagonal in plan, Union Chapel is a picturesque wood frame, weathered cedar shingle clad building that maintains its original siting and form, but has lost some of its 1870 detailing. The triangular massing of the structure is emphasized by the steeply pitched octagonal asphalt shingled upper roof superimposed over a more gently sloping octagonal lower roof set on a two story base. An eight-sided clerestory with horizontally oriented small,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

square paned rectangular windows separates the two roof systems. This clerestory was originally constructed with triangulated ogival windows of Gothic inspiration, divided by lights in a diamond pattern. These were replaced by the rectangular windows sometime after 1897, according to Ellen Weiss' seminal history of Oak Bluffs, City in the Woods. Elements modeled on triangular forms - dormers in the upper roof, double-gabled roofs placed cross-axially over each entrance, and inverted triangular Gothic detailing along the cornice of the main roof - reinforce the building's triangular qualities. Each of the eight elevations of the Chapel is twenty feet in width. On alternating sides, there are tall, broad, double-leaved wood doors set under braced, cross gables supported by square wooden columns set on short square plinths. Doorways are framed by simple wood surrounds. Three low poured concrete steps lead from the walkways to the wide, triangular porches at the four entrances to the sanctuary. Corner posts, painted white, define the junctions of the Chapel's eight exterior planar surfaces, and with the porch detailing, also white, complement the dark green of the exterior doors. At the south side of the building, there is a tall, one-story, gable-roofed ell, constructed in 1928 to provide space for toilet facilities, a music library, and a small vestibule. The original building and the addition are set on a low, dressed stone foundation. There is no basement, nor chimneys.

The Chapel's fenestration scheme is eclectic with several series of windows of different forms comprising the main surviving decorative detailing of the structure. In each leaf of the entrance doors and over the door enframements are rectangular windows with small square panes. Similar windows are located in the clerestory and along the front and sides of the 1928 vestibule addition. On the elevations between the four entrances are pairs of large paned, tall and narrow, triple-hung (four-over-four-over-four) windows with operable and probably original six panel inward rotating exterior wooden shutters. Original triangular elements atop the shutters are now missing. Perhaps the most striking series of windows is found on the eight sides of the upper roof. Tall, isocetes windows, forming an inverted V, face each of the steeply pitched dormers, which are now missing their original decorative finials. Window trim on the exterior of the Chapel is uniformly painted white.

A separate bell tower, constructed on the site in 1871 with steep hipped roof and flared eaves, has been demolished. Also no longer extant is a tall steeple with ornate finial originally at the apex of the eight-sided upper roof. The roof of the steeple, also octagonal and set over an open, railed platform, mirrored that of the 1871 bell tower in the use of decorative wood shingles arranged in colored bands. Both bell tower and steeple were removed in 1928.

The interior of Union Chapel is a dramatic exploration in the use of controlled volumetrics. The large, open, eight-sided sanctuary with its peaked

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

upper roof, is noted for its fine acoustics. Interior walls, creating sharply defined planes, are of painted (now dark green but originally yellow) vertical tongue and groove paneling. Stick style decorative detailing, forming repeating right angles, is painted white and segments the walls on the main floor and balcony above. The balcony surrounds the sanctuary on all eight sides of the room. On one side of the balcony, there is a gallery with choir loft and 1923 Austin organ with 1200 pipes. Beneath the choir on the main floor is a small rectangular dias with (nonpermanent and non-original) lectern. The sanctuary's seating capacity is 350 on the floor with another 150 in the balcony galleries. Seating has historically been provided on caned wooden chairs, a practice which continues today. The floors of the Chapel are wooden and apparently not original to 1870. The most striking aspect of the interior space is the pattern created under the roof where rafters radiate out in eight directions from central bracing, forming an eight-pointed star at the apex of the room. Rafter systems of parallel two by sixes are infilled with butt jointed planking at right angles, all of which are painted a muted green as is the interior of the lower roof. The sanctuary receives an ample amount of natural light from the building's numerous windows, creating a luminescent quality to the interior.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1991

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Archaeological Description

No prehistoric sites are recorded on the property or in the general area (within one mile). Little evidence is also present for historic archaeological resources on the property other than sheet refuse possibly related to church activities. Because of these factors, small lot size (fractional area) and the impacts of church construction on the lot, the potential for significant archaeological remains, either prehistoric or historic is low.

(end)

8. Statement of Significance

Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locallyApplicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Religion

Period of Significance

1870-1940

Significant Dates

1870

1871

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Pratt, Samuel Freeman

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Oak Bluffs Christian Union Chapel retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Built during 1870 and 1871 on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Union Chapel, in continued use since construction as an interdenominational house of worship, is significant as the first nonsectarian religious building to be erected on the Vineyard in a community that until 1870 was noted primarily for its strong association with the Methodist Church and its summer camp meeting assemblies. The Chapel offered islanders and seasonal visitors regardless of religious affiliation not only an opportunity to worship but a gathering place for cultural activities. The Chapel is also important as the single surviving major work of the locally significant architect, Samuel Freeman Pratt, who designed for Oak Bluffs numerous cottages and the sprawling Sea View Hotel (1870-1872), now demolished. And as an exemplar of the octagonal mode of design following in the tradition of the creative vision of Orson S. Fowler, Union Chapel is the only extant historic eight-sided building on Martha's Vineyard. The Christian Union Chapel thus fulfills Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places at the local level.

As an early example of a planned subdivision designed on romantic ideals, the community of Oak Bluffs was laid out originally in 1867 adjacent to the famed Methodist camp meeting at Wesleyan Grove, which was founded in 1835. Between 1859 and 1864, the campground cottage developed into a new American residential form at Wesleyan Grove, replacing the impermanent canvas tents which previously had sheltered those Methodists who regularly gathered for summer retreats of religious contemplation. In 1865, the newly incorporated Martha's Vineyard Camp-Meeting Association pondered the possibility of purchasing additional land on the bluffs to the south of its original location to protect the privacy of those who attended services. Delay in consummating any transaction allowed a partnership of six - four whaling captains and two off-islanders - to purchase in 1866 as part of their ambitious commercial land development scheme seventy-five acres including the bluffs for subdivision

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1991

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

into one thousand house lots. In a short time this new resort, originally called Cottage City and renamed Oak Bluffs in 1907, became a successful summer community for the middle class with a strong religious flavor, carrying forward many of the spiritual values espoused by the closely situated camp meeting, although not formally associated with Methodism. One of the first activities of the development partners was to erect a wharf into Nantucket Sound. The wharf became popular with the revivalists because it was located close to Wesleyan Grove. In a spirit of cooperation with the Methodists, the land company prevented steamers from docking on Sundays to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath, and joined with the religious sect to act in concert on other matters of mutual, and often spiritual, concern. "By 1870, it must have been evident that the developers were applying the style of the camp meeting, especially that of its physical planning, to their project at Oak Bluffs." ¹ The architecture and settlement pattern of the new Cottage City were soon seen as an extension of many aspects of Wesleyan Grove.

Robert Morris Copeland, a landscape gardener experienced in rural cemetery layout and a contemporary of Frederick Law Olmsted, was hired by the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company to plan the lots and streets of the new community. One of Copeland's early scenarios for the site (in 1867) called for a seven acre park in an area near the bluffs, opening the land considerably and providing relief from the intensity of tiny house lots that were the mainstay of the development scheme. Named Ocean Park, this green space is today the most distinctive landscape feature of Oak Bluffs. The 1867 Copeland plan was amended at least twice, in 1870 and 1871, to incorporate an additional forty-five acres purchased by the development company. What results is an imaginative and romantic land planning scheme that uses primarily curvilinear forms borrowed from the physical aesthetic of the camp meeting, but translated into the scale required of a traditional residential neighborhood. Lots in the early stages of Cottage City's development are thirty-five by sixty-five feet, and those of the 1870, 1871 sections are fifty by seventy-five feet. Campground lots at Wesleyan Grove were only fourteen to twenty feet wide. Deed restrictions in Cottage City further required set backs of ten feet at the front and five feet at the sides of the buildings, defining the normal relationship of house and privately owned land to the public streets. By 1870, success seemed guaranteed for the new community. The developers embarked on an extensive two year program of construction, which came to include a grand hotel, the Sea View, and the Christian Union Chapel, demonstrating an advanced level of architectural ambition as they moved beyond cottage construction exclusively.

Samuel Freeman Pratt (1824-1920), the Boston architect-inventor, was selected by the land company to design a new gateway to the wharf, the Chapel, the Sea View Hotel, and between twelve and twenty cottages for the 1871, 1872 building campaign. Pratt's early career as an inventor of metallic objects

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

7 28 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

has received negligible scholarly attention, as has his education and training. The son of a carpenter, he switched to architectural practice in midlife and had a limited output. In addition to his work at Oak Bluffs, he was responsible for designing his own house in Newport (1872) and two other hotels - Katama on the Vineyard (1872, never constructed) and Dering Harbor on Shelter Island, New York (1872, demolished 1910). Pratt was made wealthy by a sewing machine patent and lived to an elderly age, a gentleman of leisure involved in the activities of Newport's yachting elite. "Pratt's contribution to Oak Bluffs was that of a dynamic and festive architectural style" in which he seemed particularly influenced by the French revivalistic sentiment and the Stick Style work of Richard Morris Hunt in Newport as well as Swiss sources.² Although he explored octagonal forms in some of his projects, such as in the 1871 design for "Round Crown," a cottage for a New Bedford Quaker who summered on the vineyard, Union Chapel is his only building in a fully developed octagonal mode.

Copeland's designs for Oak Bluffs first identified a location for a chapel in February 1870, siting it behind the apex of Ocean Park, close to but not within the immediate environs of the Methodist campground. Apparently from its inception, the Chapel was intended to be entirely non-denominational in spiritual matters, and even "liberal" in its preaching and programs, according to Minutes of the Association. As an interdenominational meeting house, it represents a contrast to the devout Methodism of camp meeting, and assured prospective purchasers in Cottage City an opportunity to attend worship services without having to partake of the intensity of religious practices at nearby Wesleyan Grove. In August 1871, at the dedication ceremony attended by camp meeting dignitaries and local officials, Union Chapel was described as a "tabernacle of the Israelites, constructed by voluntary offerings of a wandering people as a temporary place of worship."³

Samuel F. Pratt's design for Union Chapel follows the octagonal aesthetic established in America by Orson S. Fowler in 1849, and incorporates elements of Gothic inspired detailing and Queen Anne use of materials in an essentially Stick Style building. Fowler, of Fishkill, New York, popularized the octagon style for residential construction with publication of The Octagon House, A Home for All. Among other attributes, he emphasized that eight-sided buildings eliminate dark corners and wasted space while increasing sunlight and ventilation, all of which are clearly demonstrated in Union Chapel. Local sources indicate that the Chapel is the only extant octagonal building on Martha's Vineyard and may be the only one ever constructed there. Structures demonstrating a completely realized octagonal plan are relatively rare in America, and appear mainly in New York, Massachusetts, and the Midwest. Several hundred survive, most of which were constructed in the 1850s and 1860s.⁴ Thus, the Chapel is a late exploration into the use of this architectural mode.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

As a Stick Style design, Union Chapel embodies distinctive characteristics of its type, period, and method of construction. Along with its predecessor, the Gothic Revival, and its successor, the Queen Anne, the Stick Style is an adaptation of medieval England building tradition which stressed the wall surface itself as a decorative element rather than merely as a plane. Additional decorative effects were achieved through applied ornament at doors, windows, and cornices. An emphasis on patterned wood surfaces characteristic of the Stick Style is seen at the Chapel in the tongue and groove paneling of the walls and elaborate interior braced rafter system of the sanctuary ceiling. Applied horizontal and vertical wood strips segmenting the large interior space of the Chapel are also derivative of medieval England, and further suggest Stick Style associations of the building. Gothic elements in windows, cornice detailing, and steeply pitched roof and dormers combine with a Queen Anne use of weathered cedar shingles on the exterior to confirm the transitional nature of this period of American architecture, well illustrated by Pratt's design for Union Chapel.

Samuel Pratt's other major contribution to Oak Bluffs' architecture, the Sea View Hotel, was erected at the head of the wharf in 1872, but burned down in 1892. In plan, the Sea View was a long rectangle of 225 feet. Rising to a height of five stories on the water side, the Hotel with "French roof" and "Flemish tower" was considered to be the most advanced hotel design of its time for seaside resorts. Its luxury was in sharp contrast with the simplicity of the modest tented camp meeting and local cottages. With the demise of the Sea View, Union Chapel takes on added significance as the chief surviving physical manifestation of Pratt's work at Oak Bluffs.

Today, Union Chapel has a congregation of approximately two hundred, and continues its non-denominational tradition of holding worship services every Sunday from late June to early September. Different speakers of varying faiths preach each week, some of whom have been doing so for over thirty years. For forty-two years, Harold Heereman, one of America's noted organists, has played the great Austin organ, installed in 1923. The choir has historically included distinguished soloists, at least one of whom has sung with the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York. In addition to Sunday services, Union Chapel is also a venue for occasional weddings, baptisms, and musical events open to the community.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

ENDNOTES

¹ Ellen Weiss, City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 78. For the purposes of this nomination, the description of the development of Oak Bluffs relies heavily on this source.

² Ibid., p. 94.

³ Ibid., p. 98.

⁴ Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), p. 235.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. Minutes of Union Chapel Meetings. No date, no pagination.

Oak Bluffs Historical Commission. A Centennial History of Cottage City. Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts: Oak Bluffs Historical Commission, 1987.Vineyard Gazette (Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts) 7 May 1971.Weiss, Ellen. City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.☐ See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission

10. Geographical DataAcreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 19 369810 4590180
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

D _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for Oak Bluffs Christian Union Chapel coincides with that of the Town of Oak Bluffs Tax Assessor's Lot #23, no Plat # given. This boundary represents the limit of land that encompasses the resource and its immediate setting, both at the time of construction and today. This parcel is bordered by Circuit Avenue, Kennebec Avenue, Narragansett Avenue, and Grove Street. See Assessor's map which accompanies this form.

☐ See continuation sheet

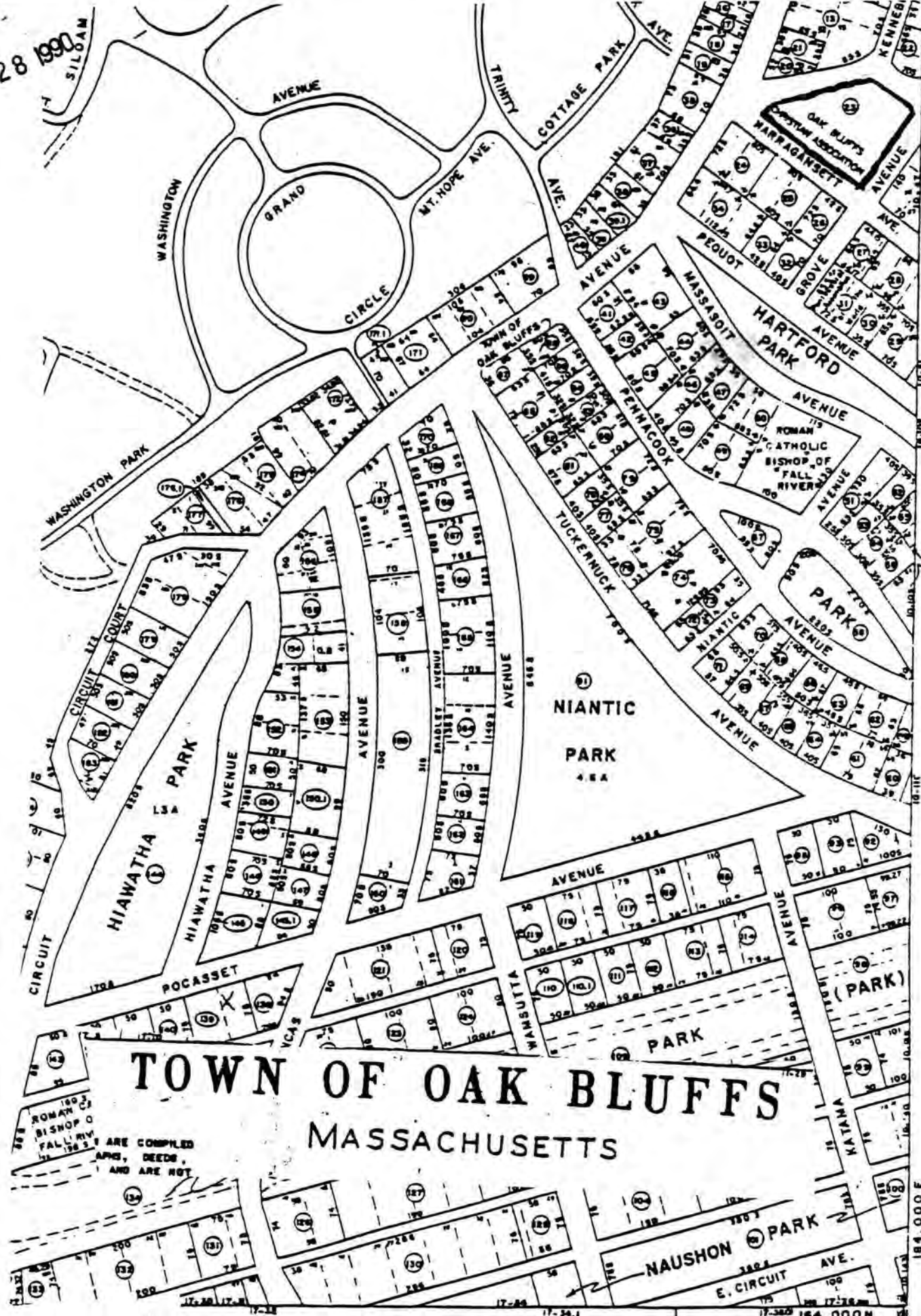
Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lot that has historically been associated with the Union Chapel.

☐ See continuation sheet**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title J. Alfred Guest and Karen L. Jessup, Consultant, with Bersy Friedberg, NR Director
organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date November 18, 1989
street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone 617-727-8470
city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02116

MAR 28 1990



← obtain from Oak Bluffs tax Assessor's office JAY

TOWN OF OAK BLUFFS

MASSACHUSETTS

Revised To 1988

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Union Chapel
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Dukes

DATE RECEIVED: 3/28/90 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/10/90
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/26/90 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/12/90
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 90000677

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 4/26/90 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Please have SHHC sign and date nomination form

RECOM./CRITERIA _____
REVIEWER _____
DISCIPLINE _____
DATE _____

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

CLASSIFICATION

___count ___resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

___historic ___current

DESCRIPTION

___architectural classification
___materials
___descriptive text

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

___acreage ___verbal boundary description
___UTMs ___boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

___sketch maps ___USGS maps ___photographs ___presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

Signed

N. G. Yen

Phone 202-343-9553

Date

4/26/90

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Propertyhistoric name Union Chapelother names/site number Oak Bluffs Christian Union Chapel**2. Location**

street & number Bordered by Circuit, Kennebec, and Narragansett ☒ not for publication
city, town Oak Bluffs Avenues and Grove Street ☒ vicinity
state Massachusetts code 025 county Dukes code 007 zip code 02557

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

| Contributing | Noncontributing |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> buildings |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> sites |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> structures |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> Total |

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Valerie A. Taormina
Signature of certifying official Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical
State Historic Preservation Officer

May 8, 1990
Date Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

Entered in the
National Register

Albion Byrnes

6/7/90

for
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religious: Religious Structure

Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religious: Religious Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian: Octagonal Mode

Stick

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: Granite

walls Wood: Shingle

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Oak Bluffs Christian Union Chapel, known historically simply as Union Chapel, is located in the Town of Oak Bluffs, Dukes County, Massachusetts, on the north side of Martha's Vineyard. The Vineyard is approximately four miles across Nantucket Sound off the southwest tip of Cape Cod. The Chapel, built in 1870 in the American Stick Style, embodies design elements which confirm its transitional aesthetic linking the preceding Gothic Revival with the subsequent Queen Anne. The building today stands in the middle of an irregular lot of a fractional acre approximately twenty-five feet from each of its boundary roads: Circuit Avenue, Kennebec Avenue, Narragansett Avenue, and Grove Street. The site is located in the Ocean Park neighborhood of Oak Bluffs, characterized by late nineteenth century residential development to the east and a commercial strip of late nineteenth century buildings to the west. The surrounding street pattern, primarily curvilinear in form, is dictated by the siting of Ocean Park, a seven acre semi-circular, slightly concave green space which faces Seaview Avenue and the Sound beyond. This results in an arrangement of narrow residential lanes forming ever-expanding crescents around the west side of the Park.

Union Chapel occupies a lot larger than those of its neighboring buildings which were confined in the early 1870s by local restrictions to parcels of fifty by seventy-five feet. The Chapel is sited on a slight rise, to the west of Ocean Park and close to the Methodist campground of Wesleyan Grove. Old oak trees were felled in 1870 to make way for the construction of the meetinghouse; these were subsequently replaced with young oaks and small coniferous trees. Today, the parcel is heavily treed, with the post 1871 vegetation having reached mature form and partially obscuring the Chapel from viewing from the contiguous streets. Gravel and dirt walkways intersect the immediate environs of the Chapel and lead to its four entrance porches. There are no additional buildings, other than the meetinghouse, on the lot.

Octagonal in plan, Union Chapel is a picturesque wood frame, weathered cedar shingle clad building that maintains its original siting and form, but has lost some of its 1870 detailing. The triangular massing of the structure is emphasized by the steeply pitched octagonal asphalt shingled upper roof superimposed over a more gently sloping octagonal lower roof set on a two story base. An eight-sided clerestory with horizontally oriented small,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

square paned rectangular windows separates the two roof systems. This clerestory was originally constructed with triangulated ogival windows of Gothic inspiration, divided by lights in a diamond pattern. These were replaced by the rectangular windows sometime after 1897, according to Ellen Weiss' seminal history of Oak Bluffs, City in the Woods. Elements modeled on triangular forms - dormers in the upper roof, double-gabled roofs placed cross-axially over each entrance, and inverted triangular Gothic detailing along the cornice of the main roof - reinforce the building's triangular qualities. Each of the eight elevations of the Chapel is twenty feet in width. On alternating sides, there are tall, broad, double-leaved wood doors set under braced, cross gables supported by square wooden columns set on short square plinths. Doorways are framed by simple wood surrounds. Three low poured concrete steps lead from the walkways to the wide, triangular porches at the four entrances to the sanctuary. Corner posts, painted white, define the junctions of the Chapel's eight exterior planar surfaces, and with the porch detailing, also white, complement the dark green of the exterior doors. At the south side of the building, there is a tall, one-story, gable-roofed ell, constructed in 1928 to provide space for toilet facilities, a music library, and a small vestibule. The original building and the addition are set on a low, dressed stone foundation. There is no basement, nor chimneys.

The Chapel's fenestration scheme is eclectic with several series of windows of different forms comprising the main surviving decorative detailing of the structure. In each leaf of the entrance doors and over the door enframements are rectangular windows with small square panes. Similar windows are located in the clerestory and along the front and sides of the 1928 vestibule addition. On the elevations between the four entrances are pairs of large paned, tall and narrow, triple-hung (four-over-four-over-four) windows with operable and probably original six panel inward rotating exterior wooden shutters. Original triangular elements atop the shutters are now missing. Perhaps the most striking series of windows is found on the eight sides of the upper roof. Tall, isocetes windows, forming an inverted V, face each of the steeply pitched dormers, which are now missing their original decorative finials. Window trim on the exterior of the Chapel is uniformly painted white.

A separate bell tower, constructed on the site in 1871 with steep hipped roof and flared eaves, has been demolished. Also no longer extant is a tall steeple with ornate finial originally at the apex of the eight-sided upper roof. The roof of the steeple, also octagonal and set over an open, railed platform, mirrored that of the 1871 bell tower in the use of decorative wood shingles arranged in colored bands. Both bell tower and steeple were removed in 1928.

The interior of Union Chapel is a dramatic exploration in the use of controlled volumetrics. The large, open, eight-sided sanctuary with its peaked

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

upper roof, is noted for its fine acoustics. Interior walls, creating sharply defined planes, are of painted (now dark green but originally yellow) vertical tongue and groove paneling. Stick style decorative detailing, forming repeating right angles, is painted white and segments the walls on the main floor and balcony above. The balcony surrounds the sanctuary on all eight sides of the room. On one side of the balcony, there is a gallery with choir loft and 1923 Austin organ with 1200 pipes. Beneath the choir on the main floor is a small rectangular dias with (nonpermanent and non-original) lectern. The sanctuary's seating capacity is 350 on the floor with another 150 in the balcony galleries. Seating has historically been provided on caned wooden chairs, a practice which continues today. The floors of the Chapel are wooden and apparently not original to 1870. The most striking aspect of the interior space is the pattern created under the roof where rafters radiate out in eight directions from central bracing, forming an eight-pointed star at the apex of the room. Rafter systems of parallel two by sixes are infilled with butt jointed planking at right angles, all of which are painted a muted green as is the interior of the lower roof. The sanctuary receives an ample amount of natural light from the building's numerous windows, creating a luminescent quality to the interior.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1997

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Archaeological Description

No prehistoric sites are recorded on the property or in the general area (within one mile). Little evidence is also present for historic archaeological resources on the property other than sheet refuse possibly related to church activities. Because of these factors, small lot size (fractional area) and the impacts of church construction on the lot, the potential for significant archaeological remains, either prehistoric or historic is low.

(end)

8. Statement of Significance

Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Religion

Period of Significance

1870-1940

Significant Dates

1870

1871

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Pratt, Samuel Freeman

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Oak Bluffs Christian Union Chapel retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Built during 1870 and 1871 on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Union Chapel, in continued use since construction as an interdenominational house of worship, is significant as the first nonsectarian religious building to be erected on the Vineyard in a community that until 1870 was noted primarily for its strong association with the Methodist Church and its summer camp meeting assemblies. The Chapel offered islanders and seasonal visitors regardless of religious affiliation not only an opportunity to worship but a gathering place for cultural activities. The Chapel is also important as the single surviving major work of the locally significant architect, Samuel Freeman Pratt, who designed for Oak Bluffs numerous cottages and the sprawling Sea View Hotel (1870-1872), now demolished. And as an exemplar of the octagonal mode of design following in the tradition of the creative vision of Orson S. Fowler, Union Chapel is the only extant historic eight-sided building on Martha's Vineyard. The Christian Union Chapel thus fulfills Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places at the local level.

As an early example of a planned subdivision designed on romantic ideals, the community of Oak Bluffs was laid out originally in 1867 adjacent to the famed Methodist camp meeting at Wesleyan Grove, which was founded in 1835. Between 1859 and 1864, the campground cottage developed into a new American residential form at Wesleyan Grove, replacing the impermanent canvas tents which previously had sheltered those Methodists who regularly gathered for summer retreats of religious contemplation. In 1865, the newly incorporated Martha's Vineyard Camp-Meeting Association pondered the possibility of purchasing additional land on the bluffs to the south of its original location to protect the privacy of those who attended services. Delay in consummating any transaction allowed a partnership of six - four whaling captains and two off-islanders - to purchase in 1866 as part of their ambitious commercial land development scheme seventy-five acres including the bluffs for subdivision

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. Minutes of Union Chapel Meetings. No date, no pagination.

Oak Bluffs Historical Commission. A Centennial History of Cottage City. Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts: Oak Bluffs Historical Commission, 1987.Vineyard Gazette (Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts) 7 May 1971.Weiss, Ellen. City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

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 # _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 0 |
| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

C

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

B

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | |

D

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for Oak Bluffs Christian Union Chapel coincides with that of the Town of Oak Bluffs Tax Assessor's Lot #23, no Plat # given. This boundary represents the limit of land that encompasses the resource and its immediate setting, both at the time of construction and today. This parcel is bordered by Circuit Avenue, Kennebec Avenue, Narragansett Avenue, and Grove Street. See Assessor's map which accompanies this form.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lot that has historically been associated with the Union Chapel.

☐ See continuation sheet**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title J. Alfred Guest and Karen L. Jessup, Consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director
organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date November 18, 1989
street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone 617-727-8470
city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02116

MAR 28 1990

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

into one thousand house lots. In a short time this new resort, originally called Cottage City and renamed Oak Bluffs in 1907, became a successful summer community for the middle class with a strong religious flavor, carrying forward many of the spiritual values espoused by the closely situated camp meeting, although not formally associated with Methodism. One of the first activities of the development partners was to erect a wharf into Nantucket Sound. The wharf became popular with the revivalists because it was located close to Wesleyan Grove. In a spirit of cooperation with the Methodists, the land company prevented steamers from docking on Sundays to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath, and joined with the religious sect to act in concert on other matters of mutual, and often spiritual, concern. "By 1870, it must have been evident that the developers were applying the style of the camp meeting, especially that of its physical planning, to their project at Oak Bluffs." ¹ The architecture and settlement pattern of the new Cottage City were soon seen as an extension of many aspects of Wesleyan Grove.

Robert Morris Copeland, a landscape gardener experienced in rural cemetery layout and a contemporary of Frederick Law Olmsted, was hired by the Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company to plan the lots and streets of the new community. One of Copeland's early scenarios for the site (in 1867) called for a seven acre park in an area near the bluffs, opening the land considerably and providing relief from the intensity of tiny house lots that were the mainstay of the development scheme. Named Ocean Park, this green space is today the most distinctive landscape feature of Oak Bluffs. The 1867 Copeland plan was amended at least twice, in 1870 and 1871, to incorporate an additional forty-five acres purchased by the development company. What results is an imaginative and romantic land planning scheme that uses primarily curvilinear forms borrowed from the physical aesthetic of the camp meeting, but translated into the scale required of a traditional residential neighborhood. Lots in the early stages of Cottage City's development are thirty-five by sixty-five feet, and those of the 1870, 1871 sections are fifty by seventy-five feet. Campground lots at Wesleyan Grove were only fourteen to twenty feet wide. Deed restrictions in Cottage City further required set backs of ten feet at the front and five feet at the sides of the buildings, defining the normal relationship of house and privately owned land to the public streets. By 1870, success seemed guaranteed for the new community. The developers embarked on an extensive two year program of construction, which came to include a grand hotel, the Sea View, and the Christian Union Chapel, demonstrating an advanced level of architectural ambition as they moved beyond cottage construction exclusively.

Samuel Freeman Pratt (1824-1920), the Boston architect-inventor, was selected by the land company to design a new gateway to the wharf, the Chapel, the Sea View Hotel, and between twelve and twenty cottages for the 1871, 1872 building campaign. Pratt's early career as an inventor of metallic objects

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

has received negligible scholarly attention, as has his education and training. The son of a carpenter, he switched to architectural practice in midlife and had a limited output. In addition to his work at Oak Bluffs, he was responsible for designing his own house in Newport (1872) and two other hotels - Katama on the Vineyard (1872, never constructed) and Dering Harbor on Shelter Island, New York (1872, demolished 1910). Pratt was made wealthy by a sewing machine patent and lived to an elderly age, a gentleman of leisure involved in the activities of Newport's yachting elite. "Pratt's contribution to Oak Bluffs was that of a dynamic and festive architectural style" in which he seemed particularly influenced by the French revivalistic sentiment and the Stick Style work of Richard Morris Hunt in Newport as well as Swiss sources.² Although he explored octagonal forms in some of his projects, such as in the 1871 design for "Round Crown," a cottage for a New Bedford Quaker who summered on the vineyard, Union Chapel is his only building in a fully developed octagonal mode.

Copeland's designs for Oak Bluffs first identified a location for a chapel in February 1870, siting it behind the apex of Ocean Park, close to but not within the immediate environs of the Methodist campground. Apparently from its inception, the Chapel was intended to be entirely non-denominational in spiritual matters, and even "liberal" in its preaching and programs, according to Minutes of the Association. As an interdenominational meeting house, it represents a contrast to the devout Methodism of camp meeting, and assured prospective purchasers in Cottage City an opportunity to attend worship services without having to partake of the intensity of religious practices at nearby Wesleyan Grove. In August 1871, at the dedication ceremony attended by camp meeting dignitaries and local officials, Union Chapel was described as a "tabernacle of the Israelites, constructed by voluntary offerings of a wandering people as a temporary place of worship."³

Samuel F. Pratt's design for Union Chapel follows the octagonal aesthetic established in America by Orson S. Fowler in 1849, and incorporates elements of Gothic inspired detailing and Queen Anne use of materials in an essentially Stick Style building. Fowler, of Fishkill, New York, popularized the octagon style for residential construction with publication of The Octagon House, A Home for All. Among other attributes, he emphasized that eight-sided buildings eliminate dark corners and wasted space while increasing sunlight and ventilation, all of which are clearly demonstrated in Union Chapel. Local sources indicate that the Chapel is the only extant octagonal building on Martha's Vineyard and may be the only one ever constructed there. Structures demonstrating a completely realized octagonal plan are relatively rare in America, and appear mainly in New York, Massachusetts, and the Midwest. Several hundred survive, most of which were constructed in the 1850s and 1860s.⁴ Thus, the Chapel is a late exploration into the use of this architectural mode.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

As a Stick Style design, Union Chapel embodies distinctive characteristics of its type, period, and method of construction. Along with its predecessor, the Gothic Revival, and its successor, the Queen Anne, the Stick Style is an adaptation of medieval England building tradition which stressed the wall surface itself as a decorative element rather than merely as a plane. Additional decorative effects were achieved through applied ornament at doors, windows, and cornices. An emphasis on patterned wood surfaces characteristic of the Stick Style is seen at the Chapel in the tongue and groove paneling of the walls and elaborate interior braced rafter system of the sanctuary ceiling. Applied horizontal and vertical wood strips segmenting the large interior space of the Chapel are also derivative of medieval England, and further suggest Stick Style associations of the building. Gothic elements in windows, cornice detailing, and steeply pitched roof and dormers combine with a Queen Anne use of weathered cedar shingles on the exterior to confirm the transitional nature of this period of American architecture, well illustrated by Pratt's design for Union Chapel.

Samuel Pratt's other major contribution to Oak Bluffs' architecture, the Sea View Hotel, was erected at the head of the wharf in 1872, but burned down in 1892. In plan, the Sea View was a long rectangle of 225 feet. Rising to a height of five stories on the water side, the Hotel with "French roof" and "Flemish tower" was considered to be the most advanced hotel design of its time for seaside resorts. Its luxury was in sharp contrast with the simplicity of the modest tented camp meeting and local cottages. With the demise of the Sea View, Union Chapel takes on added significance as the chief surviving physical manifestation of Pratt's work at Oak Bluffs.

Today, Union Chapel has a congregation of approximately two hundred, and continues its non-denominational tradition of holding worship services every Sunday from late June to early September. Different speakers of varying faiths preach each week, some of whom have been doing so for over thirty years. For forty-two years, Harold Heereman, one of America's noted organists, has played the great Austin organ, installed in 1923. The choir has historically included distinguished soloists, at least one of whom has sung with the Metropolitan Opera Company of New York. In addition to Sunday services, Union Chapel is also a venue for occasional weddings, baptisms, and musical events open to the community.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 28 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Union Chapel,
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

ENDNOTES

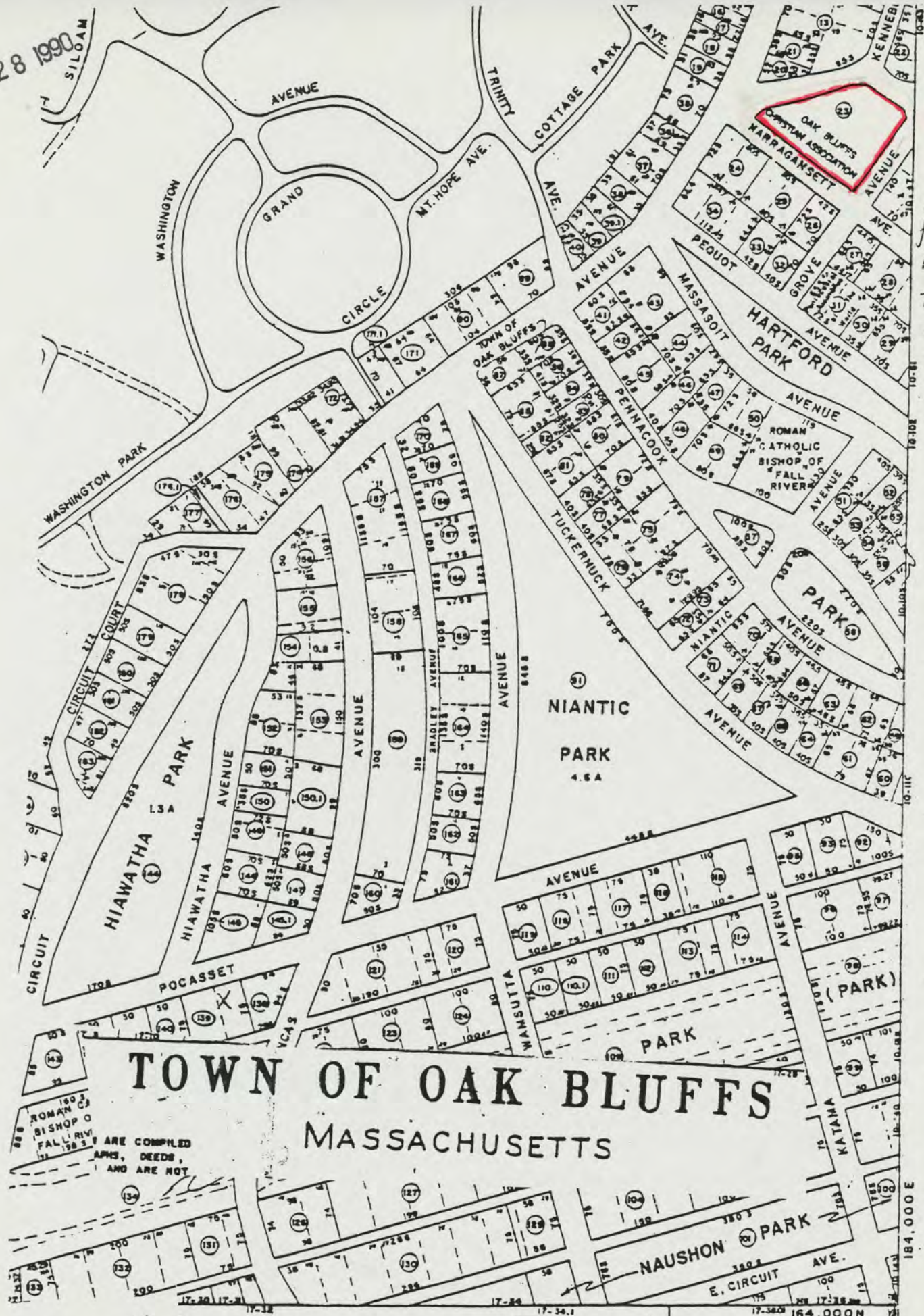
¹ Ellen Weiss, City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 78. For the purposes of this nomination, the description of the development of Oak Bluffs relies heavily on this source.

² Ibid., p. 94.

³ Ibid., p. 98.

⁴ Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), p. 235.

MAR 28 1990

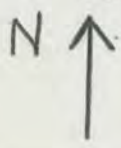


obtained
from Oak
Bluffs
tax
Assessors
office
JAY

TOWN OF OAK BLUFFS MASSACHUSETTS

ALL MAPS ARE COMPILED
FROM DEEDS
AND ARE NOT

1" = 175'



NORTH
UTM COORDINATE
ZONE

| | | |
|------|------|------|
| 5 | 4 | 3 |
| 9 | 7 | 6 |
| 12 | 11 | 10 |
| 15 | 14 | 13 |
| 18 | 17 | 16 |
| 21 | 20 | 19 |
| 24 | 23 | 22 |
| 27 | 26 | 25 |
| 30 | 29 | 28 |
| 33 | 32 | 31 |
| 36 | 35 | 34 |
| 39 | 38 | 37 |
| 42 | 41 | 40 |
| 45 | 44 | 43 |
| 48 | 47 | 46 |
| 51 | 50 | 49 |
| 54 | 53 | 52 |
| 57 | 56 | 55 |
| 60 | 59 | 58 |
| 63 | 62 | 61 |
| 66 | 65 | 64 |
| 69 | 68 | 67 |
| 72 | 71 | 70 |
| 75 | 74 | 73 |
| 78 | 77 | 76 |
| 81 | 80 | 79 |
| 84 | 83 | 82 |
| 87 | 86 | 85 |
| 90 | 89 | 88 |
| 93 | 92 | 91 |
| 96 | 95 | 94 |
| 99 | 98 | 97 |
| 102 | 101 | 100 |
| 105 | 104 | 103 |
| 108 | 107 | 106 |
| 111 | 110 | 109 |
| 114 | 113 | 112 |
| 117 | 116 | 115 |
| 120 | 119 | 118 |
| 123 | 122 | 121 |
| 126 | 125 | 124 |
| 129 | 128 | 127 |
| 132 | 131 | 130 |
| 135 | 134 | 133 |
| 138 | 137 | 136 |
| 141 | 140 | 139 |
| 144 | 143 | 142 |
| 147 | 146 | 145 |
| 150 | 149 | 148 |
| 153 | 152 | 151 |
| 156 | 155 | 154 |
| 159 | 158 | 157 |
| 162 | 161 | 160 |
| 165 | 164 | 163 |
| 168 | 167 | 166 |
| 171 | 170 | 169 |
| 174 | 173 | 172 |
| 177 | 176 | 175 |
| 180 | 179 | 178 |
| 183 | 182 | 181 |
| 186 | 185 | 184 |
| 189 | 188 | 187 |
| 192 | 191 | 190 |
| 195 | 194 | 193 |
| 198 | 197 | 196 |
| 201 | 200 | 199 |
| 204 | 203 | 202 |
| 207 | 206 | 205 |
| 210 | 209 | 208 |
| 213 | 212 | 211 |
| 216 | 215 | 214 |
| 219 | 218 | 217 |
| 222 | 221 | 220 |
| 225 | 224 | 223 |
| 228 | 227 | 226 |
| 231 | 230 | 229 |
| 234 | 233 | 232 |
| 237 | 236 | 235 |
| 240 | 239 | 238 |
| 243 | 242 | 241 |
| 246 | 245 | 244 |
| 249 | 248 | 247 |
| 252 | 251 | 250 |
| 255 | 254 | 253 |
| 258 | 257 | 256 |
| 261 | 260 | 259 |
| 264 | 263 | 262 |
| 267 | 266 | 265 |
| 270 | 269 | 268 |
| 273 | 272 | 271 |
| 276 | 275 | 274 |
| 279 | 278 | 277 |
| 282 | 281 | 280 |
| 285 | 284 | 283 |
| 288 | 287 | 286 |
| 291 | 290 | 289 |
| 294 | 293 | 292 |
| 297 | 296 | 295 |
| 300 | 299 | 298 |
| 303 | 302 | 301 |
| 306 | 305 | 304 |
| 309 | 308 | 307 |
| 312 | 311 | 310 |
| 315 | 314 | 313 |
| 318 | 317 | 316 |
| 321 | 320 | 319 |
| 324 | 323 | 322 |
| 327 | 326 | 325 |
| 330 | 329 | 328 |
| 333 | 332 | 331 |
| 336 | 335 | 334 |
| 339 | 338 | 337 |
| 342 | 341 | 340 |
| 345 | 344 | 343 |
| 348 | 347 | 346 |
| 351 | 350 | 349 |
| 354 | 353 | 352 |
| 357 | 356 | 355 |
| 360 | 359 | 358 |
| 363 | 362 | 361 |
| 366 | 365 | 364 |
| 369 | 368 | 367 |
| 372 | 371 | 370 |
| 375 | 374 | 373 |
| 378 | 377 | 376 |
| 381 | 380 | 379 |
| 384 | 383 | 382 |
| 387 | 386 | 385 |
| 390 | 389 | 388 |
| 393 | 392 | 391 |
| 396 | 395 | 394 |
| 399 | 398 | 397 |
| 402 | 401 | 400 |
| 405 | 404 | 403 |
| 408 | 407 | 406 |
| 411 | 410 | 409 |
| 414 | 413 | 412 |
| 417 | 416 | 415 |
| 420 | 419 | 418 |
| 423 | 422 | 421 |
| 426 | 425 | 424 |
| 429 | 428 | 427 |
| 432 | 431 | 430 |
| 435 | 434 | 433 |
| 438 | 437 | 436 |
| 441 | 440 | 439 |
| 444 | 443 | 442 |
| 447 | 446 | 445 |
| 450 | 449 | 448 |
| 453 | 452 | 451 |
| 456 | 455 | 454 |
| 459 | 458 | 457 |
| 462 | 461 | 460 |
| 465 | 464 | 463 |
| 468 | 467 | 466 |
| 471 | 470 | 469 |
| 474 | 473 | 472 |
| 477 | 476 | 475 |
| 480 | 479 | 478 |
| 483 | 482 | 481 |
| 486 | 485 | 484 |
| 489 | 488 | 487 |
| 492 | 491 | 490 |
| 495 | 494 | 493 |
| 498 | 497 | 496 |
| 501 | 500 | 499 |
| 504 | 503 | 502 |
| 507 | 506 | 505 |
| 510 | 509 | 508 |
| 513 | 512 | 511 |
| 516 | 515 | 514 |
| 519 | 518 | 517 |
| 522 | 521 | 520 |
| 525 | 524 | 523 |
| 528 | 527 | 526 |
| 531 | 530 | 529 |
| 534 | 533 | 532 |
| 537 | 536 | 535 |
| 540 | 539 | 538 |
| 543 | 542 | 541 |
| 546 | 545 | 544 |
| 549 | 548 | 547 |
| 552 | 551 | 550 |
| 555 | 554 | 553 |
| 558 | 557 | 556 |
| 561 | 560 | 559 |
| 564 | 563 | 562 |
| 567 | 566 | 565 |
| 570 | 569 | 568 |
| 573 | 572 | 571 |
| 576 | 575 | 574 |
| 579 | 578 | 577 |
| 582 | 581 | 580 |
| 585 | 584 | 583 |
| 588 | 587 | 586 |
| 591 | 590 | 589 |
| 594 | 593 | 592 |
| 597 | 596 | 595 |
| 600 | 599 | 598 |
| 603 | 602 | 601 |
| 606 | 605 | 604 |
| 609 | 608 | 607 |
| 612 | 611 | 610 |
| 615 | 614 | 613 |
| 618 | 617 | 616 |
| 621 | 620 | 619 |
| 624 | 623 | 622 |
| 627 | 626 | 625 |
| 630 | 629 | 628 |
| 633 | 632 | 631 |
| 636 | 635 | 634 |
| 639 | 638 | 637 |
| 642 | 641 | 640 |
| 645 | 644 | 643 |
| 648 | 647 | 646 |
| 651 | 650 | 649 |
| 654 | 653 | 652 |
| 657 | 656 | 655 |
| 660 | 659 | 658 |
| 663 | 662 | 661 |
| 666 | 665 | 664 |
| 669 | 668 | 667 |
| 672 | 671 | 670 |
| 675 | 674 | 673 |
| 678 | 677 | 676 |
| 681 | 680 | 679 |
| 684 | 683 | 682 |
| 687 | 686 | 685 |
| 690 | 689 | 688 |
| 693 | 692 | 691 |
| 696 | 695 | 694 |
| 699 | 698 | 697 |
| 702 | 701 | 700 |
| 705 | 704 | 703 |
| 708 | 707 | 706 |
| 711 | 710 | 709 |
| 714 | 713 | 712 |
| 717 | 716 | 715 |
| 720 | 719 | 718 |
| 723 | 722 | 721 |
| 726 | 725 | 724 |
| 729 | 728 | 727 |
| 732 | 731 | 730 |
| 735 | 734 | 733 |
| 738 | 737 | 736 |
| 741 | 740 | 739 |
| 744 | 743 | 742 |
| 747 | 746 | 745 |
| 750 | 749 | 748 |
| 753 | 752 | 751 |
| 756 | 755 | 754 |
| 759 | 758 | 757 |
| 762 | 761 | 760 |
| 765 | 764 | 763 |
| 768 | 767 | 766 |
| 771 | 770 | 769 |
| 774 | 773 | 772 |
| 777 | 776 | 775 |
| 780 | 779 | 778 |
| 783 | 782 | 781 |
| 786 | 785 | 784 |
| 789 | 788 | 787 |
| 792 | 791 | 790 |
| 795 | 794 | 793 |
| 798 | 797 | 796 |
| 801 | 800 | 799 |
| 804 | 803 | 802 |
| 807 | 806 | 805 |
| 810 | 809 | 808 |
| 813 | 812 | 811 |
| 816 | 815 | 814 |
| 819 | 818 | 817 |
| 822 | 821 | 820 |
| 825 | 824 | 823 |
| 828 | 827 | 826 |
| 831 | 830 | 829 |
| 834 | 833 | 832 |
| 837 | 836 | 835 |
| 840 | 839 | 838 |
| 843 | 842 | 841 |
| 846 | 845 | 844 |
| 849 | 848 | 847 |
| 852 | 851 | 850 |
| 855 | 854 | 853 |
| 858 | 857 | 856 |
| 861 | 860 | 859 |
| 864 | 863 | 862 |
| 867 | 866 | 865 |
| 870 | 869 | 868 |
| 873 | 872 | 871 |
| 876 | 875 | 874 |
| 879 | 878 | 877 |
| 882 | 881 | 880 |
| 885 | 884 | 883 |
| 888 | 887 | 886 |
| 891 | 890 | 889 |
| 894 | 893 | 892 |
| 897 | 896 | 895 |
| 900 | 899 | 898 |
| 903 | 902 | 901 |
| 906 | 905 | 904 |
| 909 | 908 | 907 |
| 912 | 911 | 910 |
| 915 | 914 | 913 |
| 918 | 917 | 916 |
| 921 | 920 | 919 |
| 924 | 923 | 922 |
| 927 | 926 | 925 |
| 930 | 929 | 928 |
| 933 | 932 | 931 |
| 936 | 935 | 934 |
| 939 | 938 | 937 |
| 942 | 941 | 940 |
| 945 | 944 | 943 |
| 948 | 947 | 946 |
| 951 | 950 | 949 |
| 954 | 953 | 952 |
| 957 | 956 | 955 |
| 960 | 959 | 958 |
| 963 | 962 | 961 |
| 966 | 965 | 964 |
| 969 | 968 | 967 |
| 972 | 971 | 970 |
| 975 | 974 | 973 |
| 978 | 977 | 976 |
| 981 | 980 | 979 |
| 984 | 983 | 982 |
| 987 | 986 | 985 |
| 990 | 989 | 988 |
| 993 | 992 | 991 |
| 996 | 995 | 994 |
| 999 | 998 | 997 |
| 1002 | 1001 | 1000 |

Revised To 1988
January

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY Union Chapel
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Dukes

DATE RECEIVED: 5/30/90 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/14/90
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 90000677

NOMINATOR: STATE

DETAILED EVALUATION: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 6/7/90 DATE

Entered in the
National Register

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____
REVIEWER _____
DISCIPLINE _____
DATE _____

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

CLASSIFICATION

☐ count ☐ resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

☐ historic ☐ current

DESCRIPTION

☐ architectural classification

☐ materials

☐ descriptive text

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

☐ acreage ☐ verbal boundary description

☐ UTM's ☐ boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

☐ sketch maps ☐ USGS maps ☐ photographs ☐ presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

Phone _____

Signed _____ Date _____



Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs, Mass - *Dukes Co*

The East showing one of the architraves

(eight in all)

Photographer: Alfred Guest

August 28, 1989

1 of 2

3/28/90



Union Chapel

Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts - *Dukes Co*

view from the southeast, showing architrave of one
entrance, and also the addition of the 1920s(vestry/library)

Photographer: Alfred Guest

August 28, 1989

3/88/90



March 12, 1990

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

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

-Harrison A. Tucker Cottage, 42 Ocean Avenue, Oak Bluffs, (Dukes County),
Massachusetts.

-Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs, (Dukes County), Massachusetts

Both have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have 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. Comments received to date are attached
to the nomination form.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure:

BF/cd



May 20, 1990

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

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination:

Union Chapel, bordered by Circuit, Kennebec and Narragansett Avenues and Grove Street, Oak Bluffs (Dukes County), Massachusetts, 02557.

There has been no owner objection for the property listed above.

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. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination form.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure: