

FORM B - BUILDING

Area

Form no.

3000

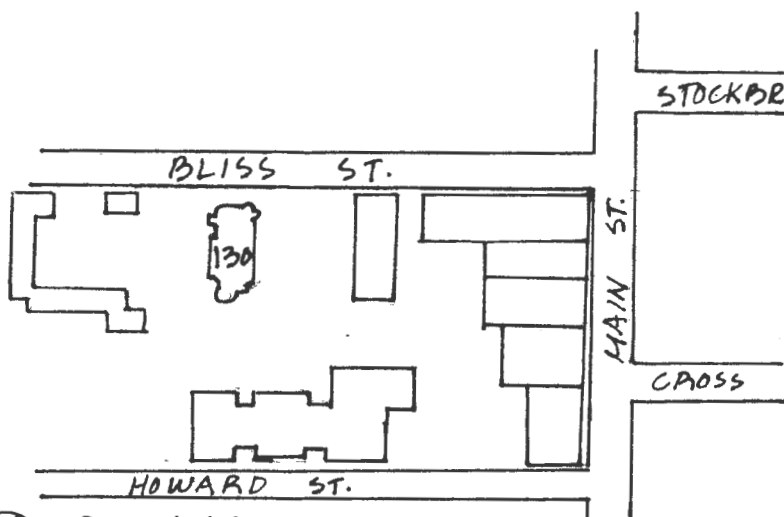
130

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

PHOTO (3x3" or 3x5", black & white)
Staple to left side of form
Photo number _____

SKETCH MAP

Draw map showing property's
location in relation to nearest
cross streets and other buildings
or geographical features.
Indicate north.



Recorded by Margo Webber

Organization Anderson Notter Finegold Inc.

Date June, 1981

Research and Descriptions: Antoinette
E. Tomasik, LPVRPC

Assessor's Map #308

UTM Ref: 18/699480/4663410 (Staple additional sheets here)

Springfield South Quadrangle

Town Springfield

Address 33-37 Bliss Street

Historic Name French Congregational Church

Use: Original church

Present church

Ownership: ☐ Private individual

Private organization First

Spiritualist Church

Public _____

Original owner French Congregational
Society

DESCRIPTION:

Date 1887

Source cornerstone

Style Victorian Gothic

Architect Sam Provost, builder

Exterior wall fabric brick

Outbuildings none

Major alterations (with dates) none

Moved no Date _____

Approx. acreage less than one acre

Setting Set back 30' from street in an
area of mixed use ranging from a boarding
house and commercial buildings to vacant
lots and a garage.

Criteria Statement

The French Congregational Church possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials and workmanship. It is significant for its strong associations with Springfield's ethnic working class; it is also a fine local example of the Victorian Gothic Style. It meets criteria A & C of the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within community)

The First Spiritualist Church is a fine example of the style known as high Victorian Gothic. Various building components are massed together, presenting a compact, yet highly diversified appearance from all facades. The church is 68 feet long by 42 feet wide and is constructed of pressed brick, with trim of East Longmeadow brownstone.

Three distinct elements are combined to create the front facade. The central portion is a narrow gable-end building, which projects forward between two towers. Its brick facade is interrupted only by five large, Gothic stained-glass windows...

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community)

The decades between 1865 and 1915 were a time of great change, growth and progress in Springfield, and is referred to as Springfield's "Golden Era". The city's vitality was reflected in its changing physical appearance, its burgeoning ethnic population and its diversifying economic base. The building which now houses the First Spiritualist Church was born into and reflects the prosperity and attitudes of this time period.

The church was built in 1887. It was designed by a local architect and constructed by Sam Provost, a local builder. The architecture of the church demonstrated Springfield's embrace of the new and modern, elaborate, ornamental Victorian Gothic designs.

Sponsored in large part by Daniel B. Wesson, a Springfield industrialist, the church was constructed for the benefit of a crew of French Canadian Huguenots who were employed by the Smith and Wesson Company. The prevailing paternalistic attitude which encouraged such largesse from the industrial sector was plainly revealed in statements made during the church's dedication. One pastor commented, "The French Canadians need something else than Romanism. It is our work to evangelize them. Their ignorance and superstition are almost incredible and they need looking after almost as much as so-called heathen in China, Japan or India." (Springfield Daily Republican, June 4, 1888)

In 1909 the French Protestants were forced to give up the church due to declining membership and lack of a pastor. Mr. Wesson, acting for the church, sold the building to the Congregational Union, a group organized to aid all Congregational churches in Springfield. The Union sublet the church to various ethnic religious denominations including a Negro Protestant congregation and an Italian Baptist...

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Research and Text by Antoinette Tomasik, Tower Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission

Sources:

Springfield Republican, June 4, 1888, p. 6

King, Moses, King's Handbook of Springfield, 1884, p. 196.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:	Form No:
Springfield	130
Property Name: French Congregational Church	

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

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

. . . Three smaller windows are in the gable. A cornice of angled, vertically-aligned bricks further distinguishes the front. Two towers flank this main section.

The east tower, the smaller of the two, is capped by an octagonal spire roof. At the tower's base is a narrow entrance porch with shingled pediment and carved wooden trim. The 68-foot west tower is perhaps the most striking feature of the building, both in terms of its height and its design. This tower has a pyramidal roof and much decorative, relieved brickwork along the cornice and around the louvered bell windows. The church's main entrance is at the base of this tower. The entrance is larger, but otherwise identical to the east entrance.

The true bulk of the church only becomes evident as the side elevations become visible--an unexpected development in view of the front facade's illusion of compactness. The narrow central portion of the front facade blossoms out behind the towers to the front's full width. Both the east and west facades are dominated by the fenestration--large, evenly spaced, pointed arch windows--and by the multi-planed, multi-colored slate roof.

The large Gothic windows are important as a unifying design element. Most of the windows which grace the facade and the towers are glazed with central panes of translucent glass, bordered by small squares of colored glass. In contrast, the windows on the side elevations are stained glass memorial windows. Each of these windows is dedicated to a former Spiritualist Church member and incorporates a sunflower motif. The sunflower symbolizes the Spiritualist creed, "Spiritualism lights the way".

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

. . . group. In 1919, the church was purchased by members of the First Spiritualist Society. This group dates back to 1850, when it was known as the Spiritualist Union and was housed at Gill's Hall on Main Street at Bridge Street. The Society had no written creed, but believed that "it is better to love humanity than God." They believe in the revelation of science rather than 'so-called' revelations of the Christian bible." (King, p. 196) The Church has remained in continuous use by the First Spiritualist Church since 1919.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

French Congregational Church (Downtown Springfield
MRA)
Hampden County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. 11/18/82-3025

Fed. Reg. Date: _____

Date Due: 12/4/82 - 12/25/82

Action: ☐ ACCEPT

☒ RETURN 12/22/82

☐ REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

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

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

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____

Reviewer _____

Discipline _____

Date _____

☐ see continuation sheet

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

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☐ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ altered	☐ moved date _____
☐ fair	☐ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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

8. Significance

Period _____ Area of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Address of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

USGS References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification

Please provide

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

Title _____ date _____

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed *W. Byers* Date *12/22/82* Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 5245

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Downtown Springfield Multiple Resource Area
State MA

Nomination/Type of Review

41. Colonial Block

Entered in the
National Register *for* Keeper

Date/Signature

Melvin Byers 2/24/83

Attest

42. McKinney Building

Entered in the
National Register *for* Keeper

Melvin Byers 2/24/83

Attest

43. Bangs Block

Entered in the
National Register *for* Keeper

Melvin Byers 2/24/83

Attest

44. Burbach Block

Entered in the
National Register *for* Keeper

Melvin Byers 2/24/83

Attest

45. Apremont Triangle Historic
District

Substantive Review

Keeper

Melvin Byers 5/27/83

Attest

46. WCA Boarding House

Entered in the
National Register *for* Keeper

Melvin Byers 2/24/83

Attest

47. French Congregational
Church

Entered in the
National Register *for* Keeper

Melvin Byers 2/24/83

Attest

48. St. Joseph's Church

Entered in the
National Register *for* Keeper

Melvin Byers 2/24/83

Attest

49. Milton-Bradley Company

Entered in the
National Register *for* Keeper

Melvin Byers 2/24/83

Attest

50.

Keeper

Attest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

French Congregational Church
(Downtown Springfield MRA)

Hampden County

MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. 11/10/82 - 3025

Fed. Reg. Date: 2.7.89

Date Due: 4/1/83

Action: ☒ ACCEPT 2/24/83

Entered in the ☐ RETURN

National Register ☐ REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

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

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

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____

Reviewer _____

Discipline _____

Date _____

see continuation sheet

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

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☐ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ altered	☐ moved date _____
☐ fair	☐ unexposed		

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

8. Significance

Period _____ Area of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____

Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Address of nominated property _____

Geographic name _____

USIT Reference _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

Site _____

Date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-3500



Downtown Springfield MRA, Ma

French Congregational Church

307

STREET

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STREET

French Congregational
Church #130
33-37 Bliss St.
1st-50th Springfield MA

