

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

415-02432-518

Southbridge

STU.E

STU.137

Town/City: Sturbridge

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Fiskdale

Photograph



Address: 518 Main Street

Historic Name: Fiskdale Baptist Church Vestry

Uses: Present: Other Educational

Original: Other Religious, Church Hall

Date of Construction: 1857–1870

Source: Walling 1857, Beers 1870

Style/Form: Greek Revival

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Stone

Wall/Trim: Wood Clapboard /Wood Trim

Roof: Slate Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: None

Major Alterations (*with dates*): ladies' parlor and kitchen added, 1903; vinyl windows, late 20th century

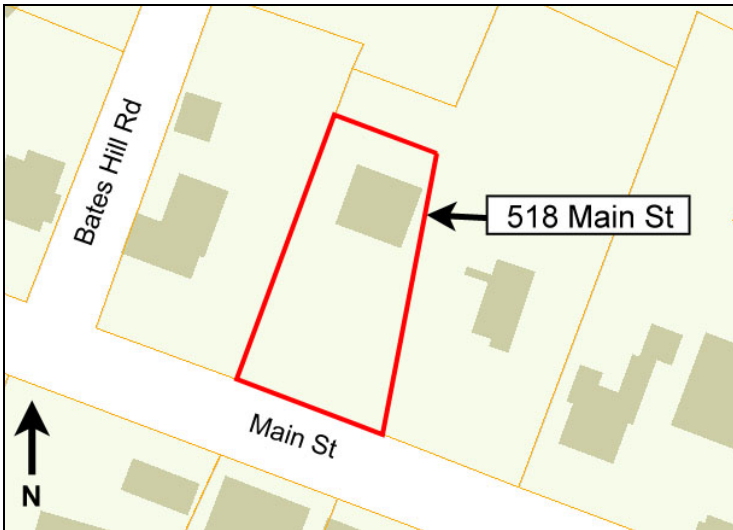
Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .42 acres

Setting: The building occupies a roughly rectangular lot on the north side of Main Street in the village of Fiskdale. It is a south-facing building set far from the street edge. The parcel slopes up toward the north and is accessed by a long driveway bounded by concrete retaining walls.

Locus Map



Recorded by: L. Kline, G. Pineo, E. Giacomarra; PAL

Organization: Sturbridge Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): May 2018

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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STURBRIDGE

518 MAIN STREET

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Fiskdale Baptist Church Vestry (1857–1870, STU.137) is a south-facing, Greek Revival-style, one-story, three-bay-by-four-bay, wood-frame building with a stone foundation and an end-gable roof. The roof is covered with slate shingles, and the walls are clad with wood clapboards. A brick chimney pierces the east slope of the roof, just off the ridgeline. The east and west elevations have a wide wood entablature and wood corner boards. A gable entry porch supported by wood columns shelters the main entrance in the south bay of the east elevation. The entrance is filled with a nine-light modern door. Secondary entrances in the west elevation provide access to a playground on the south side of the building. Fenestration consists of one-over-one, double-hung vinyl replacement sash with wide board surrounds. A carved signboard reading “Sturbridge Nursery School” is above the windows on the south elevation. In the late twentieth century, vinyl replacement windows were installed.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Fiskdale Baptist Church Vestry (1857–1870, STU.137) is near the center of the village of Fiskdale in the town of Sturbridge. Sturbridge was settled ca. 1725 by residents of Medfield and was incorporated as a town in 1738 (MHC 1984:3–4).

The subject property was constructed in the mid-to-late nineteenth century as a vestry for the Fiskdale Baptist Church, located on the same parcel (immediately south of the vestry) from 1838 to 1947. Previous documentation stated that the vestry building was constructed in 1849; however, only the church appears on the 1857 Walling map, indicating that the vestry might have been built between 1857 and 1870 (Holley 1973; Walling 1857; Beers 1870). Further research could confirm the exact date of construction. A ladies’ parlor and kitchen were added to the vestry building in 1903 (Holley 1973).

The Baptist Church was established in Sturbridge in 1748, after a small number of residents split off from the Congregational Church (Haynes 1910:14; SBA 1844:5). The Baptists initially met in a schoolhouse, which was subsequently enlarged and converted into a church. In 1784, the congregation shared a meetinghouse with the Congregational Church (SBA 1844:11; Haynes 1910:21). At some point, the Baptists built a second church on Fisk Hill in the western part of Sturbridge, and in 1832 they built a third church at an unknown location in the center of Sturbridge (SBA 1844:11). In 1837, Mr. Orrin O. Stearns of Brown University became the minister for the Baptist Church, and in 1838, the congregation voted to move the church building from the center of Sturbridge to Fiskdale (SBA 1844:11, 17). At a cost of nearly \$1000, the church was moved approximately 2 miles to the subject property given by Josiah J. Fiske, near the residence of Simeon Drake (SBA 1844:12). In 1842, the church was damaged by a lightning strike, causing \$300 worth of damage (SBA 1844:12). The Baptist congregation occupied the church and vestry until 1922, when the Baptist, Unitarian, and Congregationalist churches in Sturbridge formed a Federated Church circuit with a single pastor to serve all three congregations. The federation chose the Congregational Church at 8 Maple Street (1910, STU.10) as their home (Burns 1988:95, 99–101, 192). In 1947, the Baptist Church on Main Street in Fiskdale was moved to the grounds of Old Sturbridge Village, where it is now interpreted as the Center Meetinghouse (OSV 2018).

The Town of Sturbridge acquired the vestry building from the Baptist Society in 1953 and converted it to a community youth center. Today, the property continues to be owned by the Town and is occupied by a nursery school (Holley 1973; WCRD 3519/182).

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Burns, Brian, editor. *Sturbridge: A Pictorial History*. Norfolk, VA: The Donning Company, 1988.

Haynes, George H. *Historical Sketch of the First Congregational Church Sturbridge, Massachusetts*. Worcester: The Davis Press, 1910.

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Holley, Helen G. *Massachusetts Historical Commission Building Form B – Fiskdale Baptist Church Vestry, 518 Main Street (STU.137)*. On file, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, MA, 1973.

Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report – Sturbridge*. On file, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, MA, 1984.

Old Sturbridge Village (OSV). "Center Meetinghouse." <https://www.osv.org/building/center-meetinghouse/>, accessed August 2018.

Sturbridge Baptist Association (SBA). *History of the Baptist Churches composing the Sturbridge association, from their origin to 1843*. New York: J.R. Bigelow, 1844.

Walling, H.F. *Map of the Worcester County, Massachusetts*. New York: Wm. E. Baker & Co., 1857.

Worcester County Registry of Deeds (WCRD). Book/Page (Year). 3519/182 (1953).