

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

417-02914-008 Southbridge STU.A STU.10
NRDIS 11/9/1977

Town/City: Sturbridge

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Sturbridge Center

Photograph



Address: 8 Maple Street

Historic Name: Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale

Uses: Present: Church

Original: Church

Date of Construction: 1910, 1954, 1960s

Source: Haynes 1910; L'Heureux 1954; Burns 1988

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder: 1910: George H. Clemence, architect; Orrin J. Aldrich, builder. 1960s additions: John S. Bilzerian, architect

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete

Wall/Trim: Vinyl/Vinyl

Roof: Slate and Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: None

Major Alterations (*with dates*): single-story basement addition, 1954; two-story west addition with portico and new steeple, 1960s; portions of roof clad with asphalt shingles, 2016; vinyl siding, early 21st century

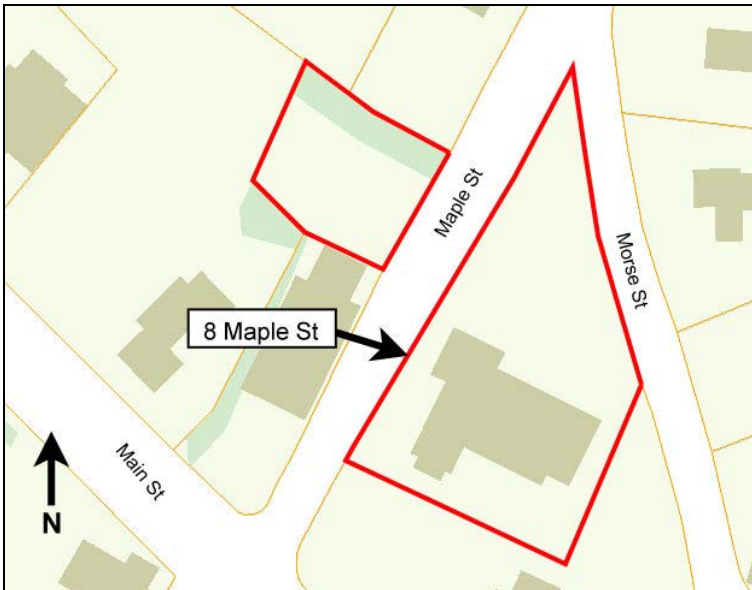
Condition: Fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 2 acres

Setting: The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale is on an irregularly shaped parcel at the south corner of the intersection of Maple and Morse streets, on a grassy lot. Sturbridge Town Hall is immediately west, and the Joshua Hyde Public Library is southeast. The property also encompasses a vacant lot on the west side of Maple Street.

Locus Map



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

Organization: Sturbridge Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): May 2018

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8 MAPLE 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 Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale (1910, 1954, 1960s, STU.10) is a southwest-facing, Colonial Revival-style, two-story, L-shaped, wood-frame building with a concrete foundation and a cross-gable roof. The walls are covered with vinyl siding, and the roof is clad with asphalt and slate shingles. A steeple projects from the roof ridge at the south end of the west ell. The main entrance in the ell's south elevation is sheltered by a two-story, gable-roof portico supported by pillars topped with acanthus leaves. The entrance consists of paired, six-panel wood doors surrounded by a wide entablature with a broken pediment. Secondary entrances in the west elevation are filled with modern doors. Fenestration consists of regularly spaced, eight-over-eight and twelve-over-twelve, double-hung vinyl replacement sash.

The building was extended to the east at an unknown date prior to 1954, when a one-story, basement-level addition along the north elevation was built to accommodate Sunday School classrooms. Extensive renovations to the west end of the building in the early 1960s included the replacement of the original steepled entrance vestibule and one-story ladies' parlor facing Maple Street with the current large, two-story, cross-gable ell that has a full-height portico and new steeple (see Figures 1 and 2). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the building was clad with vinyl siding, the windows were replaced, and portions of the roof slates were replaced with asphalt shingles. The core of the original building remains extant within the additions and alterations.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale (1910, 1954, 1960s, STU.10) was built in 1910 as a Congregational Church to replace one that was destroyed by fire following a lightning strike in 1908 (Burns 1988:98).

The Congregational Church in Sturbridge began in 1736, when the town was settled and a minister was engaged (Haynes 1910:5). Services were first held in the meetinghouse, which was likely immediately adjacent to the Old Cemetery on Main Street. About 1750, a small number of residents split off from the Congregational Church, forming the nucleus of the Baptist Church in Sturbridge (Haynes 1910:14). A recounting of church history given at the dedication of the new Congregational Church in 1910 indicates that a Baptist preacher from nearby Brimfield was believed to have been responsible for the split (Haynes 1910:14).

By 1773, the town's population was outgrowing the original meetinghouse, and residents voted to build a new one. With the onset of the Revolutionary War, however, the construction was delayed, and the matter was taken up again in 1783 (Haynes 1910:17–18). Construction of a new meetinghouse in the center of town began in June 1784 and lasted two-and-one-half years (Haynes 1910:20). The building was shared by the Baptist Society (Haynes 1910:21). In 1786, the town voted to use the upper portion of the meetinghouse as a powder house and installed lightning rods on the roof. This arrangement ended in 1799, when the munitions were moved to a powder magazine (Haynes 1910:22–23). In 1801, several members of the Congregational Church in Sturbridge split off to form the Congregational Church in nearby Southbridge (Haynes 1910:28).

During the Second Great Awakening (1790–1840), a Protestant religious revival, membership in the Congregational Church grew significantly, with 55 people joining the church in 1826 and 44 more in 1830 (Haynes 1910:30). In 1867, however, another split occurred in the church, with a group splitting off to form the Unitarian Society (Haynes 1910:35). Between 1870 and 1898, a vestry on the west side of Maple Street, likely associated with the Congregational Church, was demolished. The Church retains ownership of the now vacant lot, according to Sturbridge Assessor's records (Beers 1870; Richards 1898; Sturbridge Assessor 2018).

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In 1908, the meetinghouse was struck by lightning and subsequently destroyed by fire. The Congregational Church formed a committee to undertake the construction of a new church. The committee hired Worcester architect George H. Clemence to design the building and Orrin J. Aldrich of Southbridge to build it. The Unitarians offered the Congregationalists the use of their building while the new church was under construction (Haynes 1910:61–62). The one-story, Shingle-style building with a three-story vestibule tower and one-story ladies' parlor at the west end was dedicated on May 11, 1910 (Figures 1 and 2).

In 1922, the Baptist, Unitarian, and Congregationalist churches decided to find a pastor who could serve all three congregations, forming a Federated Church circuit. The federation chose the Congregational Church at 8 Maple Street as their home (Burns 1988:95, 99–101, 192). The building was expanded several times after its construction, including an extension to the east at an unknown date. In 1954, the congregation engaged the services of an architect identified simply as L'Heureux to design a north basement addition housing four Sunday School classrooms (L'Heureux 1954). In the early 1960s, the church was renovated extensively in the Colonial Revival style and expanded to the north and west with the construction of the extant two-story west ell, entrance portico, and steeple. Previous documentation attributed the 1960s renovations to the architect John S. Bildarian, probably a misspelling of the Armenian architect John S. Bilzerian of Worcester (Holley and Wilkin 1970). Further research in the church records might provide more information on the renovations.

George Henry Clemence (1865–1924)

Architect George H. Clemence was born in Worcester in 1865 to Richard and Eva Clemence. In 1882, he went to work for Worcester architect Stephen C. Earle and subsequently enrolled in the architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). After graduating from MIT in 1891, Clemence returned to Earle's office and worked as head draftsman. In 1892, he went into business for himself. Clemence designed numerous residences, public buildings, and commercial buildings (Nutt 1919:314). There are 25 properties attributed to Clemence in MACRIS, including Brookfield Town Hall (BKF.1) and the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church (BKF.109) in Brookfield and the Overlook Hotel – Masonic Home (CRT.55) in Charlton.

John S. Bilzerian (1890–1986)

Architect John S. Bilzerian was born in Elazig, Turkey, to Armenian parents. About 1900, Bilzerian's family emigrated to the United States. Bilzerian is responsible for several buildings in Massachusetts, including the Cambridge Armenian Church (ca. 1959, CAM.50), the Metropolitan Theater in Leominster (ca. 1928, no longer extant), and the Devens branch of the Worcester County National Bank (Find A Grave 2011, *Fitchburg Sentinel* 1928, 1971).

The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 9, 1977, as part of the Sturbridge Common Historic District.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 2. Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale, 8 Maple Street, looking northeast.

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Photo 3. Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale, 8 Maple Street, looking southwest.

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HISTORIC IMAGES



Figure 1. Postcard showing Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale (left) and Joshua Hyde Public Library (right), prior to later alterations to the church (Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge, MA).

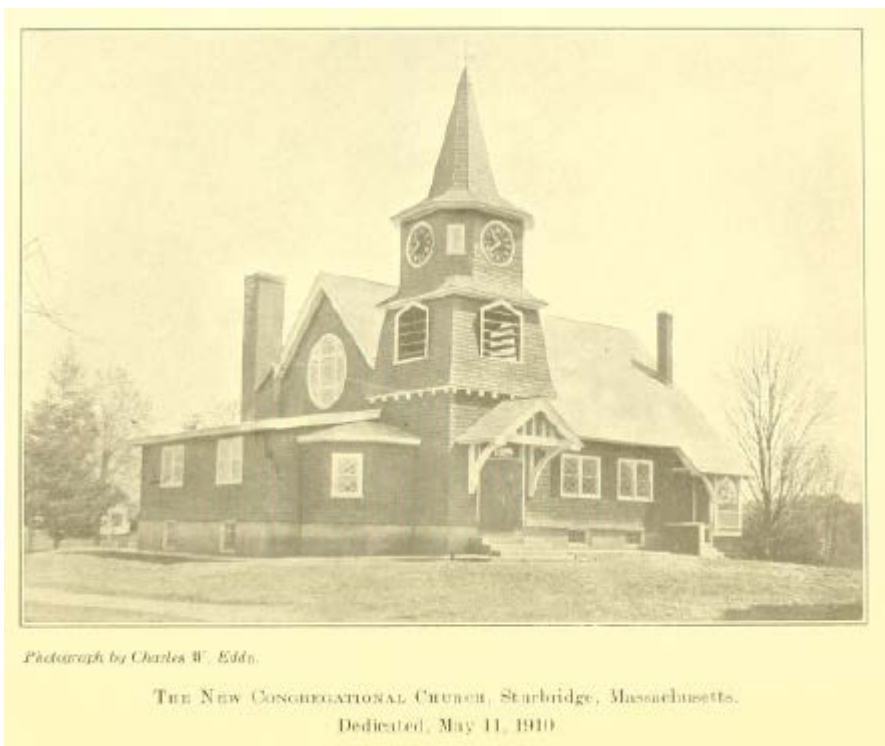


Figure 2. Congregational Church of Sturbridge in 1910 (Haynes 1910).