

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SBR.31
Historic Name:	Southborough Second Meeting House
Common Name:	Pilgrim Evangelical Church
Address:	15 Common St
City/Town:	Southborough
Village/Neighborhood:	Southborough
Local No:	54-5
Year Constructed:	
Architect(s):	Hooper, Henry N. Company; Messier, Roland A.; Stebbins, William Company
Architectural Style(s):	Italianate
Use(s):	Church; Meeting House; Parochial School
Significance:	Architecture; Community Planning; Education; Politics Government; Religion
Area(s):	SBR.AG: Southborough Town Center SBR.A: Main Street Area
Designation(s):	
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Wood Clapboard; Wood; Wood Flushboard Foundation: Granite; Stone, Cut



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

This file was accessed on:

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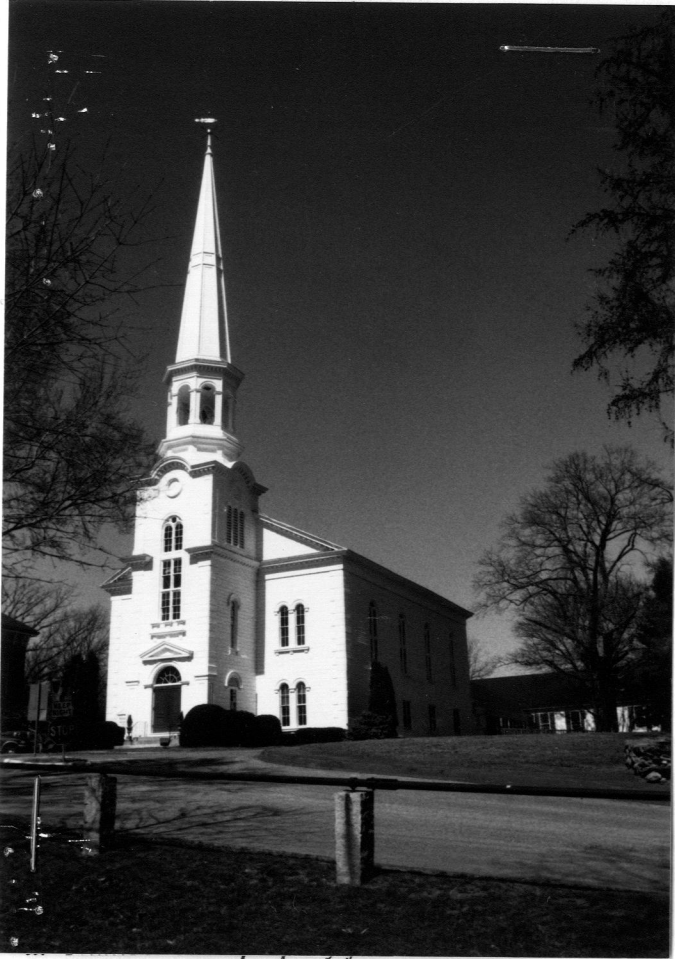
Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building

54-5

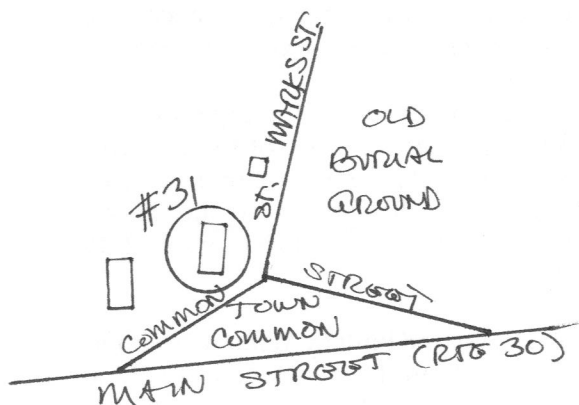
Marlborough

A

31



inventory forms have been completed. Label streets, including route numbers, if any. Attach a separate sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate north.



Town Southborough

Place (neighborhood or village) _____

Southborough Center

Address Common Street

Historic Name Second Meetinghouse/ Pilgrim
Evangelical Church

Uses: Present church

Original meetinghouse/church

Date of Construction 1806/1857-58

Source church histories

Style/Form Italianate

Architect/Builder unknown; 1963 addn.: Roland
Messier

Exterior Material:

Foundation granite block

Wall/Trim wood clapboard; flushboard

Roof asphalt

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures _____

none

Major Alterations (with dates) remodelled and en-
larged 1857-58; 1-story parish hall added, 1963.

Condition good

Moved [x]no [] yes Date N/A

Acreage less than one acre

Setting Opposite Old Burial Ground at foot of

St. Mark's St. Landscaped common to S. Town

House to W. Parking area N. and NW.

Recorded by Forbes/Schuler, consultants

RECEIVED

Organization Southborough Historical Commission

Date 03 2000 March, 2000

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION [] *see continuation sheet*

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

In spite of the presence of a long one-story wing that was added to the rear in 1963, the Pilgrim Church is an extremely well-preserved example of a wood-frame Italianate rural church of the 1850s. Essentially a radical renovation and enlargement of Southborough's 1806 Second Meetinghouse, the building as remodelled in 1857-1858 is a two-story, gable-front three- by four-bay clapboard church with a flushboard facade and a massive square tower on the front, topped by an open belfry and octagonal spire. The building rests on a high, exposed foundation of two courses of granite blocks. The sides of the building have four window bays at each story, all fitted with paired 4-over-4-sash windows divided by a heavy mullion. The first-story (vestry level) windows are rectangular. Aligned above them, the windows of the sanctuary are two-sashes high, with the upper sash round-headed, contained within round-arched, heavily-molded openings. An exterior brick chimney toward the rear of the west side is the only significant later alteration.

The facade of the church is pedimented, and the entire wall is clad in short, staggered pieces of flushboard in imitation of stone ashlar. On the main wall to either side of the tower at both stories is a double round-headed window, with the same type of sash and heavy moldings as those on the sides. Typical of the Italianate, most of the building's architectural trim consists of heavy, large-scale elements that lend a sculptural quality to the building. The corners of the building are quoined, and it is ringed at the broad, molded, boxed cornice with a wide, plain frieze and a dentil course. A water table trims the wall above the foundation.

The four-stage tower, which is centered on the facade, is also clad in flushboard, and has pilastered corners at the first story, and quoined corners at the second. The tower base is square; its sides each have a single window--the upper window is 6-over-6-sash, the lower, under a semi-circular fanlight, is a 4/4-sash. The main, front entry has double-leaf two-paneled doors with applied moldings, surmounted by a large semi-circular divided fanlight under a heavy molding descending to flat pilasters. Above the fanlight is a triangular pediment. The focal point of the tower facade, filling the second story and extending through the cornice into the second stage, is a tall, three-part window with three tiers of paired 4/4-sash in a round-arched opening; (the lower sashes of the center tier have been replaced with single panes). The paired upper sash is round-headed. The second stage of the tower is a squat square section, as wide as the lower part of the tower, and rising a little higher than the main gable peak. On three sides its upper, modillioned cornice rises in a segmental-arched curve over an oculus. Below each side oculus is a triple, round-topped, louvered opening. The corners of this stage embellished with recessed-paneled pilasters with a small circular center panel. The tower's third stage is an open octagonal belfry on a low, pilastered base. The side openings are surmounted by round arches, supported by wide posts with molded tops. Topping the tower is a tall octagonal spire, each face embellished with three-part recessed panels. A gilded weathervane rises from the top of the spire.

While its predecessor was a simple, square building, it is likely that the Second Meetinghouse was always longitudinally oriented, with a pulpit at the north end, and a belfry at the front of the building. While prominent changes in the 1850s remodelling included the addition of the present steeple, chancel, and vestibule, as well as the profusion of Italianate details, it is also likely that the entire church was raised at that time to accommodate a full, finished basement story for a vestry--an important feature of New England churches in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The 1963 one-story parish hall wing, designed by architect Roland Messier and built by William Stebbins Co., is a long, L-plan, gable-roofed structure, with a recessed entry porch on the west side just behind the church, and a main entry opposite it on the east side under an extension of the roof. The west side of the wing is eleven bays long, with 6-over-6-sash windows with louvered shutters. The east side is eight bays, and has 8-over-12-sash windows. The rear section of the wing is cross-gabled, and extends east of the main wing by four bays of 12/12 sash.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Southborough

Second Meetinghouse/
Pilgrim ChurchArea(s)
AForm No.
31HISTORICAL NARRATIVE [x] *see continuation sheet*

Explain history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

The Southborough United Church of Christ, Congregational, still known locally by its mid-nineteenth-century name, the Pilgrim Church, is significant for its nearly 275 years of association with Southborough's religious life. Built in 1806 as the Second Southborough Meetinghouse, the building stands nearly on the site of the first meetinghouse, which was erected after much planning, discussion, and contention among the early proprietors in 1727-28.

The first settled minister of Southborough was Nathan Stone, who preached for half a century, from 1730 to 1781. Such a long pastorate was difficult to follow, and for ten years afterward the town had no minister. The Rev. Samuel Sumner took over the pulpit from 1791 to 1797. Two years later, a locally-born pastor, and the town's first college graduate, the Rev. Jereboam Parker, was installed. It was during his pastorate that the old meetinghouse was replaced with the present building. Over two decades, the Rev. Parker, perhaps calling upon his Harvard training, gradually shifted the theology of the town church from its Calvinist roots to Unitarianism. Inevitably, there was a rift among the congregation, and in 1823 a powerful minority, including such church and community leaders as Josiah and Webster Johnson, John Chamberlain, and Peter Fay, began meeting in homes to study the bible and continue to follow the more conservative, orthodox teachings of the old Calvinist church. At the same time, another small but substantial portion of the congregation withdrew to form the First Baptist Society.

The orthodox Congregationalists formed their own religious organization, the Pilgrim Evangelical Society, in February, 1831 with thirteen initial members. Their early meetings, including one the previous October, when the Rev. George Trask of Framingham preached to 150 "newly awakened people," were held in the Peter Fay House at 2 Chestnut Hill Road (see Form #M-16). Three years later, one hundred members strong, they built their own church northeast of the intersection of Main Street and Cordaville Road, where Peters Park is located today. In the early 1830s, the official connection between town and church that had existed since the founding of the colonies was ended in Massachusetts, and in 1833 the 11th amendment to the Constitution resulted in official disestablishment. Religious societies henceforth operated as bodies independent of the government, and taxation was no longer available for their support. All three Southborough congregations struggled with supporting their ministers and maintaining their buildings in those early years. With both town tax support removed and their numbers severely diminished, however, it was the older Unitarian society, reorganized as the First Church of Southborough, which suffered the most during the transition.

Disheartened by the withdrawal of so many of his flock, the aging Rev. Jereboam Parker resigned from the First Church in 1832. He retired to the home of his son, Deacon Gabriel Parker, at 33 Main Street, where for the next fifteen years a succession of Unitarian pastors, most of whom stayed for only a few years, often boarded. By 1850, the year the Rev. Parker died, the Unitarian congregation had gradually dwindled away, and the Second Meetinghouse, unused except for some summer services, continued to deteriorate over the next few years.

In 1857, the last few members of the First Church offered the deed of the meetinghouse to the Pilgrim Society, if they would agree to repair it and "put it in good order for worship," expending not less than \$4,000 for its repair. Welcoming the opportunity to move back to their place of origin, the Pilgrim members agreed, and within a year raised thirteen thousand dollars for a major remodelling and expansion of the 1806 structure. (Cont.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Southborough Second Meetinghouse/
Pilgrim Church

Area(s)
A

Form No.
31

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

They removed the old box pews, the high pulpit and galleries, lengthened the building by twenty feet, and updated it to the Italianate style, adding a chancel and a spire. They also installed both a pipe organ and a new bell. The bell, made in 1857 by Henry Hooper & Co. of Boston, was a necessary addition, as the Unitarians asked to keep the old Paul Revere bell. The two congregations were subsequently reunited into one parish as the Pilgrim Church of Christ in Southborough, and in February of 1858, the rebuilt church was dedicated under the Pilgrim minister, the Rev. William J. Breed.

The consolidation of the two congregations under one roof led to at least two other major mid-nineteenth-century changes in Southborough, both of them associated with wealthy Southborough resident Henry H. Peters. In 1859 he purchased the former Pilgrim Church building, which he had refitted and donated to the town for its first public high school. He also led the effort to beautify the grounds around the new home of the Pilgrim Society, contributing maple saplings to the town for street trees on Main Street and on the common, which was now officially regarded as a "green" in front of the building.

The Pilgrim Society thrived through the rest of the nineteenth century. In 1901 the church and the society were incorporated into one organization. After 1906, when the Rev. Martin F. Mevis, whose twelve-year pastorate had been longer than any other since the founding of the Pilgrim Society in 1831, resigned, an unsettled period ensued. During the next eight years the church had three successive ministers--all of whom, as the Rev. Mevis had done, also served as ministers of the Second Congregational Church in Southville.

In 1910, under the Rev. Arden Rockwood, the church founded the Pilgrim Youth Fellowship in an effort to bring more of Southborough's youth under the civilizing influence of Christian teachings. Other early-twentieth-century changes included the founding of the Pilgrim Church Men's Club in 1936, which was formed with the purpose of both promoting Christian fellowship and raising funds during the difficult years of the Depression.

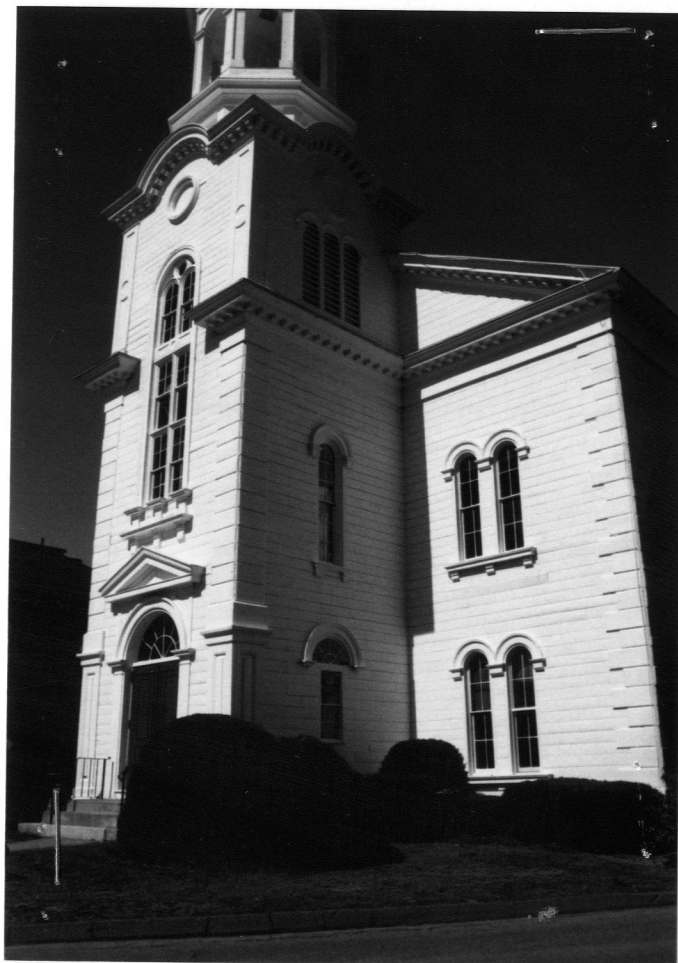
BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES [] *see continuation sheet*

Maps and Atlases: 1795; 1831; 1856; 1857; 1870; 1898.

Newton, Cora, et al. United Church of Christ, Pilgrim Church, Southborough, MA, Sesquicentennial. 1981.

Noble. Fences of Stone. 1993.

Taylor, Mrs. David E. A History of the Pilgrim Congregational Church in Southborough. n.d.



Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community Property Address
Southborough Second Meetinghouse/
Pilgrim Church

Area(s) Form No(s).
A 31

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible only in a historic district
☒ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Statement of Significance by Forbes/Schuler, Consultants

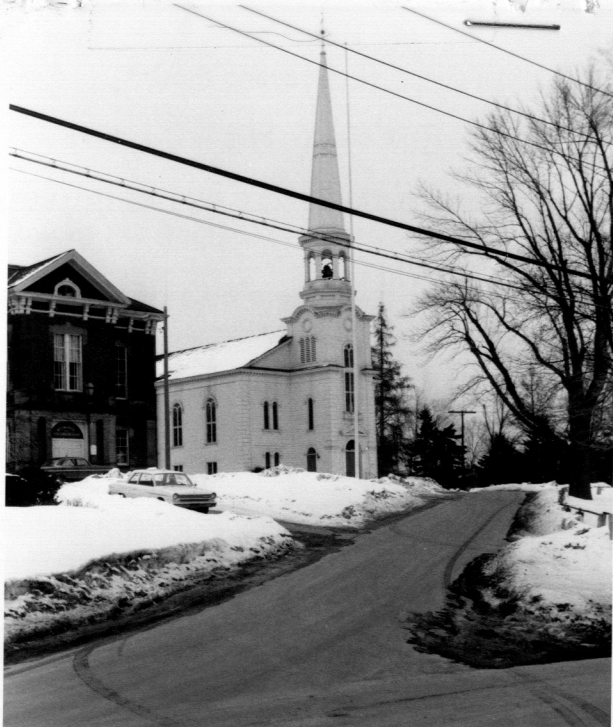
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Southborough United Church of Christ, Congregational, still known locally by its mid-nineteenth-century name, the Pilgrim Church, is eligible for the National Register at the local level under Criterion A for its nearly 275 years of association with Southborough's religious and community life. Built in 1806 as the second Southborough Meetinghouse, the building stands nearly on the site of the first meetinghouse, which was erected after much planning, discussion, and contention among the early proprietors in 1727-28.

It also fulfills Criterion C for its well preserved 1850s Italianate architecture, and as an outstanding example of a wood-frame rural New England church illustrative of regional architectural trends in the years just before the Civil War.

For all the above reasons it is also eligible as a contributing property in a National Register district encompassing the historic residential and institutional meetinghouse center of the town.

The property retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting and association.



Music

Development of town/city

Architect

Robert A. Messier

3. CONDITION: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Moved Altered Added classrooms, auditorium

4. DESCRIPTION

FOUNDATION/BASEMENT: High Regular Low Material: _____

WALL COVER: Wood _____ Brick Stone Other _____

ROOF: Ridge Gambrel Flat Hip Mansard Spire
Tower Cupola Dormer windows Balustrade Grillwork _____

CHIMNEYS: 1 2 3 4 Center End Interior Irregular Cluster Elaborate

STORIES: 1 2 3 4 ATTACHMENTS: Wings Ell Shed _____

PORCHES: 1 2 3 4 _____ PORTICO _____ Balcony

FACADE: Gable end: Front/Side Ornament: _____

Entrance: Side Front: Center/Side Details: In tower

Windows: Spacing: Regular Irregular Identical Varied

Corners: Plain Pilasters Quoins Cornerboards _____

5. Indicate location of structure in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings

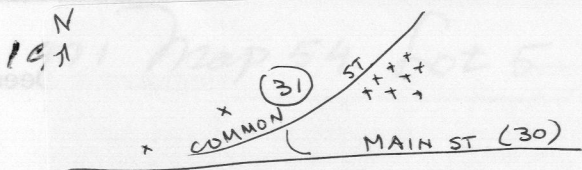
6. Footage of structure from street
 Property has _____ feet frontage on street

Recorder _____

For _____

Photo 1-24A Date 1971

SEE REVERSE



RELATION OF SURROUNDING TO STRUCTURE

SBR.31

1. Outbuildings _____

2. Landscape Features: Agriculture Open Wooded Garden: Formal/Informal
 Predominant features _____
 Landscape architect _____

3. Neighboring Structures

Style: Colonial Federal Greek Revival Gothic Revival Italian Villa Lombard Rom.
 Venetian Gothic Mansard Richardsonian Modern

Use: Residential Commercial Religious Conditions: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF SITE (Refer and elaborate on theme circled on front of form)

The Traditional New England white-spired church on the common. Built by the town as its second Meeting House in 1806, on the site of the original Meeting House, it was remodelled in the 1850's and new classrooms, kitchen and auditorium were added in 1963. ①

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND/OR REFERENCE

① H D S C Report 1972

RESTRICTIONS _____

Original Owner: _____

Deed Information: Book Number _____ Page _____, Registry of Deeds

5BR.31

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY			
DIVISION OF INSPECTION			
PLAN RECORD			
CASE	B	RACK	10
BUILDING	Pilgrim Cong. Church		APART. 162
CITY OR TOWN	Southboro	STREET	NO. 80581
TO BE USED FOR		CLASS	Common
OWNER	Pilgrim Cong. Church		
ARCHITECT	Roland A. Messier, Cross St.		
CERTIFICATE APPROVAL-SPECIFICATION REQUIREMENTS-REFERRED			
DATE	July 17, 1962		
INSPECTOR	William V. DeFlavio		

FORM BU 1-5M-6-55-925610

431