

FORM B - BUILDING

Area	Form no. 352
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
201 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108



City Newburyport

Address 25 Pleasant Street

Historic Name Church of the First

Religious Society

Type: Original Church

Present Church

Ownership:  Private individual

Private organization First

Religious Society

Public

Original owner First Religious  
Society

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

DESCRIPTION:

Date Church (1801), parish hall (1873)

Source National Register Nomination  
Form

Style Federal

Architect Unknown

Exterior wall fabric Clapboards

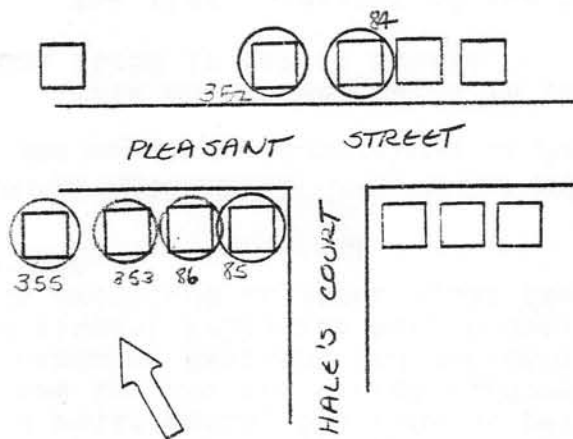
Outbuildings Parish Hall

Major alterations (with dates) \_\_\_\_\_

Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approx. acreage 23,604 sq. ft.

Setting adjacent to Newburyport's  
central business district and the  
Market Square Historic district.



Recorded by Mary Jane Stirgwolt

Organization Office of Community  
Development

Date 9-20-80

(Staple additional sheets here)

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

The Church of the First Religious Society is magnificent in its proportion and detail. The architect is unknown but speculation on this point has suggested Timothy Palmer or Samuel McIntire. The church was built during the Federal period and has many features of that style. These include the arched windows. The central entrance is surmounted by a handsome fanlight and pediment. There are doorways at either side and an elegant Palladian window above. The steeple is magnificent and finds its prototype in James Gibbs design for St. Martin's-in-the-Fields in London.

(cont)

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

This church was built in 1801 to replace an earlier structure that stood in Market Square.

The first minister of the church was Reverend John Lowell. His descendents are among the country's most illustrious educators. The elder Lowell was born in Boston in 1704, graduated from Harvard in 1721, and was then ordained minister of the Third Parish of Newbury. This church would become the First Religious Society of Newburyport after Newburyport's incorporation in 1764.

Among the many distinguished men that belonged to the First Religious Society were the eminent lawyer Theophilus Parsons and merchant Nathaniel Tracy.

The church organ was built by Joseph Alley of Newburyport in 1834. The communion silver contains eighteenth century pieces and the baptismal bowl was made from silver dollars donated by parishioners in 1804.

The Church of the First Religious Society has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- J. J. Currier, History of Newburyport 1764-1905, Vols. I and II., reprint, Newburyport, 1977.  
J. Dobbs, National Register Nomination Form, Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1976.  
Assessor's Records 1890-1980

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Newburyport	Form No: 352
Property Name: Church of the First Religious Society	

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

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (CONTINUED)

The interior of the church has been altered, though not extensively. The exterior of the church remains relatively unchanged.

The parish hall was built in 1873 and its design is compatible with the adjacent church.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom