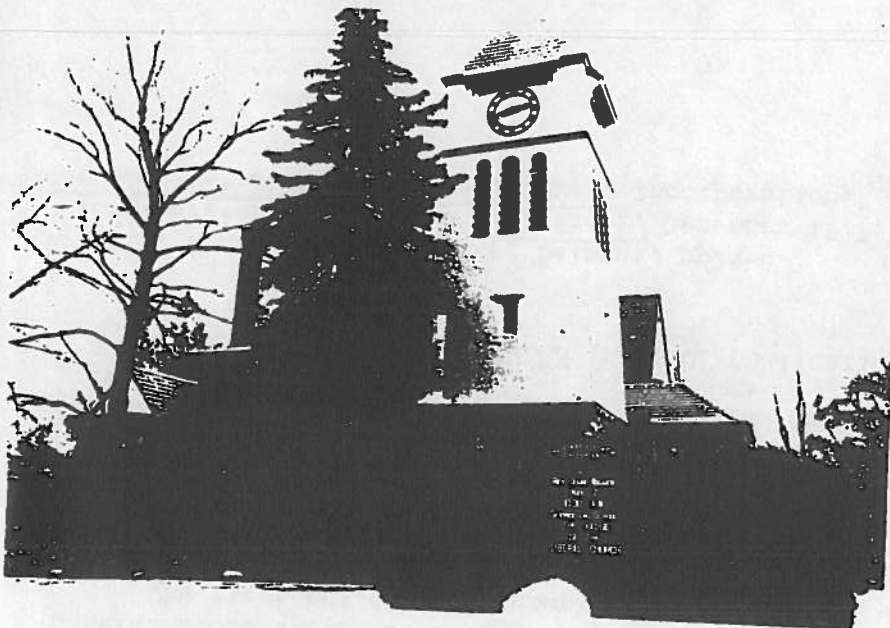


FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
294 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02108

AREA —	FORM NO. 24-2
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**SKETCH MAP**

Show property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection. Indicate north.

*See attached*

Recorded by Nora Lucas  
Organization Boston University  
Date November 1982

Address 404 Concord Avenue

Historic Name First Church Belmont

(Unitarian)

Present church

Original same

**DESCRIPTION:**

1890

• Source building records/church records

Style Romanesque Revival

Architect Hartwell & Richardson

Exterior wall fabric field stone & cement

Outbuildings parish house

Major alterations (with dates) NA

Moved NA Date

Approx. acreage 38043 sf, under 2 1/2 acres

Setting located on edge of Underwood estate, close to road, at busy intersection

(Staple additional sheets here)

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.)**

The First Church in Belmont, Unitarian, is significant as an example of the Romanesque building style, rare for Belmont, and as the work of two well known architects, Hartwell and Richardson. (BEL-82-15-25A, 26A)

It is a rambling fieldstone building, with wood framed spire and gables finished in cement plaster.

The First Church in Belmont is architecturally significant as the work of the firm of Hartwell and Richardson, and prominent example of the Romanesque Style in Belmont, meeting Criterion C of the National Register.

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

The First Church Belmont, formed in 1856, is significant as the first religious congregation in Belmont and for its important role in Belmont's battle for incorporation as a town, meeting Criterion A of the National Register.

Although an 1833 amendment to the State Constitution legally brought about the separation of church and state in Massachusetts, in actuality, a town desirous of incorporation needed an established church to validate its claim as a community. Mrs. Baldwin in her Story of Belmont writes: "One of the gentlemen for the opposition rebuked the proponents of secession for seeking separation before they even had "a church, a public hall, or even a blacksmith shop."

Thus, several town leaders elected to form a church, and in 1856 Samuel O. Mead, David Mack, and Samuel P. Hammat organized the parish committee of the Belmont Congregational Society, which met for a year above Adams General Store where services were led by visiting ministers.

The first building was completed in 1857, and was located on the site of the present Post Office. It was a typical wood framed meeting house, with a tall white spire. They secured the services of Rev. Amos Smith, and within two years of Belmont's hosting a proper congregation, the town succeeded in its fight for incorporation.

The first town meeting was held in the vestry, as were the others until the Town Hall-High School was built in 1867. The Belmont Town Seal is still graced with the old church spire.

CONTINUED

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (name of publication, author, date and publisher)**

Baldwin, Frances, The Story of Belmont, pp25-6.

Belmont Historical Society Newsletter, December 1977, pp 1-4

Guthrie, Peter, "Church aided Town's Incorporation," Belmont Citizen, September 4, 1980.

## FIRST CHURCH BELMONT

### Historical Significance Continued

The meeting house proved structurally unsound, however, and was in frequent need of repairs, and its location next to the increasingly busy Rail Road disturbed the congregation. It was decided in 1888 to build a new church, just across the road.

Land was purchased from J. Varnum Fletcher, and the architectural firm of Hartwell and Richardson was hired. It was fortunate that the congregation made this decision, for in 1890 the old church was destroyed by fire, giving the Town a chance to return an earlier favor, and provide a meeting place for the congregation until the new church was finished later that year.

A Sunday School program begun in the church's early stages, grew so that by 1909 they had to rent space in Belmont Center, and in 1924 a parish house was built.

In 1889, the Selectmen voted to place a clock in the new church, and an E. Howard Watch and Clock Company clock was placed in the spire in 1890. It still sounds the hours twenty four times a day.

It should be noted that in 1857 this Unitarian Church was known as "Belmont Congregational Society," but after the establishment of several other congregational churches in Belmont, the name was legally changed in 1928 to "The First Church in Belmont."