

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

24-1	Boston North		BLM.228 BLM.749 BLM.750
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**Town/City:** Belmont

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

**Address:** 160 Common Street

**Historic Name:** St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church

**Uses:** Present: religious

Original: religious

**Date of Construction:** 1912

**Source:** building permit

**Style/Form:** Gothic Revival

**Architect/Builder:** T. Edward Sheehan, architect;  
McGahey & O'Connor, builders

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: brick, stone, stucco

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**

Convent (1951 – Whelan and Westman) BLM.749  
School (1950 – Whelan and Westman) BLM.750

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*):

1988 – demolition of part of school and construction of new parish house

**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

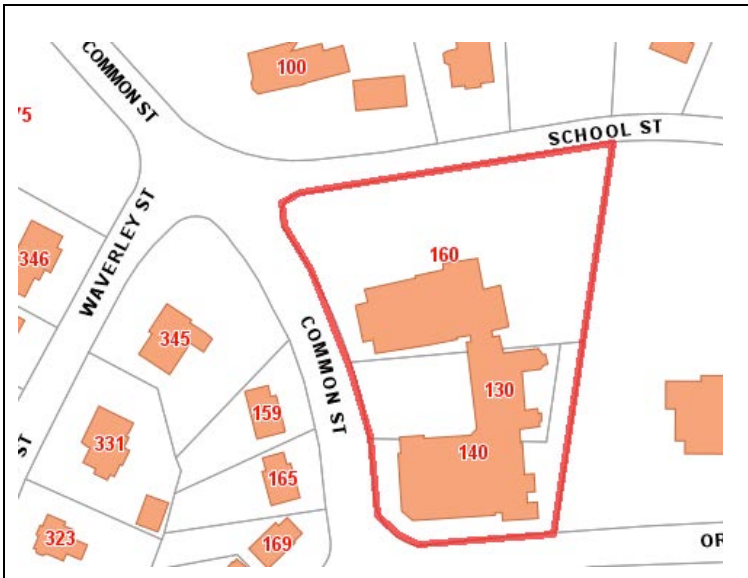
**Acreage:** 15,500 SF

**Setting:** corner lot on well-traveled route, adjacent to Wellington School

## Photograph



## Locus Map (north at top)



**Recorded by:** Lisa Mausolf

**Organization:** Belmont Historic District Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): July 2014

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

160 COMMON 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:

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

Constructed in 1912 St. Joseph's Church is a Gothic Revival structure constructed of a combination of Weymouth broken ashlar, and buff brick with lighter stone trim. The church is oriented with its partial gable to the street flanked by taller square battlements on either side. The church is fronted by a single-story entrance portico containing three segmental arched entrances with quined edges. A statue of St. Joseph is located above the center entrance while the other two portals are topped by gables with crosses. There are buttresses at the corners of the building and between the bays. The side elevations which are brick, consist of single story aisles with gabled transepts. Window openings on the building take the form of segmental rather than pointed arches and rectangular openings. The tracery incorporates simple trefoil tracery and leaded glass. Some of the windows on the side elevations are capped by label molds. Entrances on the lesser elevations are capped by simple door hoods set on braces with half-timbered gables. The rear elevation of the church is red brick.

Extending to the south from the church is a three-story, utilitarian Convent building (130 Common Street, BLM.749) constructed in 1951. The flat-roofed buff brick building has simple rectangular window openings. A single-story enclosed porch spans the west elevation and faces the courtyard between the Church, convent and school (now parish house).

To the south of the former convent is a single-story Parish Hall (140 Common Street, BLM.750) constructed in 1988 and which incorporates the first floor of the former 1950 school. A contemporary metal gridded vestibule marks the entrance from Common Street. The remainder of the building is buff brick with large rectangular gridded windows and concrete beltcourses. A second floor projections with a wall of windows on the north side brings in additional light.

A large paved parking lot is located to the north of the church. A grassy courtyard fills the space between the three buildings and is landscaped with concrete paths, benches and granite posts interspersed with bushes along the street.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Discuss the 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.*

St. Joseph's parish began in 1888 as a mission church of St. Malachy's (later St. Agnes) Parish in Arlington. Originally meetings were held in the Belmont Town Hall. Construction of a small wooden church was started in September 1887. This Stick Style church was built on the site of the present church. The cellar was dug by men of the Parish in the evenings after their regular day's work. The church was completed in June 1888 at a cost of \$9,000. The first Mass was celebrated at that time although the church was not formally dedicated until March 1889. In 1900 St. Joseph's Parish was formally established; the first pastor was Rev. Nicholas Murphy. Within a few years the wooden church became too small for the congregation. It was moved around the corner to School Street and used as a Parish Center for some time before being demolished in July 1935.

The present brick church was constructed in 1912. It was designed by architect T. Edward Sheehan (1866-1933) of Dorchester. Sheehan was active from about the late 1890s until about 1930. The MACRIS database includes 44 properties that are linked to him including churches, convents, three-deckers and two-family houses. These include structures for Roman Catholic churches in Boston, Everett, Lawrence, Lowell, Newton, Somerville and Westford. The church was constructed by McGahey & O'Connor.

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In the years that followed the parish continued to grow and was divided three times – St. Luke’s in Waverley, Our Lady of Mercy in Payson Park, and St. Jerome’s on the Arlington line. The parish also owned other buildings in addition to the church including a rectory at 116 Common (demolished 1940), a house and barn at 136 Common (demolished in 1933), the old church on School Street (demolished 1935) and a house at 7 School Street (demolished 1947). In 1939 the residence across the street at 345 Waverley Street was acquired and renovated for use as a rectory according to designs by Edward T.P. Graham (see individual inventory form for 345 Waverley). (This building was subsequently sold by the Church in 2016.)

St. Joseph’s School was constructed at the corner of Common and Orchard Streets in 1950. The steel and concrete building with brick exterior was designed by architects Whelan and Westman; the cost of the building was \$350,000. Leo Whelan (b. 1899) and Frederick W. Westman (b.1903) were partners from 1945 to 1967. Whelan was educated at MIT, the Boston Architectural Center and the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He worked as chief architect for the FHA from 1936 to 1945. He served as chairman of the Belmont School Building Committee from 1960 to 1965 and lived at 33 Fletcher Road. Westman was born in Dorchester and received his B.S. and M.A. degrees from MIT in 1925. He worked for Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott from 1928 to 1932 and in the office of Edward T.P. Graham from 1932 to 1936.

Whelan and Westman were also the architects for St. Joseph’s Convent, constructed between the church and school in 1951. The steel and brick structure included ten rooms on the first floor, 15 on the second and 15 on the third. In 1983 the building was renovated for use by the Protestant Guild for the Blind.

In 1988 extensive modifications were made to the existing school, reducing it from three stories to one for use as a parish hall. The architects for the new parish hall were Peirce Pierce & Kramer of Cambridge.

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Sanctuary of St. Joseph's Church

Source: *Images of America: Belmont*, p. 69

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Left to right: Convent (BLM.749) and Former School now Parish Hall (BLM.750)



Church with Parish Hall to right

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North elevation of Church



Rear of Convent and Church