

FORM B – BUILDING

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

24-58-A	Boston North		BLM.758 BLM.939
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: Belmont

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

Address: 380 Concord Avenue

Historic Name: First Armenian Church

Uses: Present: church
Original: church

Date of Construction: 1958

Source: Church History

Style/Form: Georgian Revival

Architect/Builder: Arland Dirlam

Exterior Material:

Foundation: not visible

Wall/Trim: brick, wood

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Armenian Genocide Monument (BLM.939)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):
1963- addition of social hall to east

Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

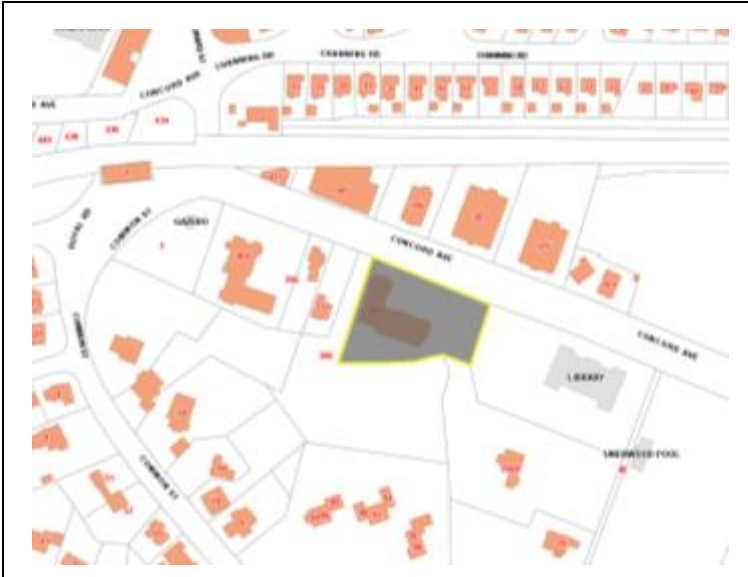
Acreage: 55,597 SF

Setting: mixed use, institutional neighborhood

Photograph



Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date (*month / year*): October 2014

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

380 CONCORD AVENUE

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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.

Facing the south side of Concord Avenue just west of the Belmont Public Library, the First Armenian Church is a brick Georgian Revival structure dating to 1958. The church is rectangular in plan with an extended pedimented pavilion projecting from the front gable of the church toward the street. The pavilion displays corner pilasters supporting a full entablature with frieze with an additional pair of pilasters framing a central rectangular stained glass window with a border of small rectangular panes of glass and a row of raised panels below the window. The pediment has a blue background with raised foliate ornament and a central medallion with chalice and a cross above. On either side of the central pavilion are lower hip-roofed entrance vestibules with six-panel doors and round windows. The main body of the church has elongated, multi-light windows with flat arch brick lintels and stone sills. Rising from the front of the church roof is an octagonal cupola with arched louvered openings set on a square, brick base and capped by a gilded dome with cross. Four small urns marking the corners of the base have been removed.

A single-story, flat-roofed connector links the church to the social hall which is set at right angles to the east, forming a L-shaped plan. The connector is accessed through double doors flanked by sidelights and sheltered by a porch supported by two pairs of Doric columns. The hall is a single story with basement below and presents a five-bay side elevation to the street with rectangular 9/6 windows with stone sills. A simple stone belt course separates the two levels.

In front of the church there is a Monument to the victims of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. The rectangular slab of tufa stone (a type of limestone) was imported from Armenia. Varoujan Artzrounian carved the Khachkar, a traditional Armenian cross surmounting a rosette or solar disk. The monument includes extensive and intricate interlace designs.

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.

The history of this church begins outside the bounds of the town of Belmont in 1891-2 when a small group of Armenian immigrants began holding worship services in Boston. At the time there were about 500 Armenians in Boston who had sought freedom from Turkish persecution. Services were initially held at Pilgrim Hall on Park Street until 1929 when the Armenian congregation purchased its own church building at Porter Square in Cambridge. Services continued to be held here until 1954 when Hurricane Carol toppled the church steeple and partially destroyed the church. A little more than a week later, on September 8, 1954, Hurricane Edna completed the destruction of the church interior. For the next four years services were held in the neighboring Masonic Temple and Cilician Armenian Memorial Church until a new church was completed in Belmont.

The Trustees of the First Armenian Evangelical Church of Boston purchased land on Concord Avenue in Belmont from the Henry O. Underwood Estate in October 1955. The deed specified that the style and design of the church was to be approved by the grantors prior to construction. In 1957 it was decided to build a Colonial style church and Arland A. Dirlam (1905-1979) was chosen as architect. The Martin W. Manzelli Company was awarded the construction contract. On January 5, 1958 ground breaking ceremonies were held and eight months later, on September 14, 1958, the first worship services were held in the new church. The church was formally dedicated on December 7, 1958.

In 1962 the church began fundraising to construct the Fellowship and Education Hall which had been part of the original plan but not constructed. Ground was broken on August 1, 1962. Among the major donors was Dr. Stephen Mugar, president of the Star Market Company and a friend and benefactor of the church. The hall was completed in 1964.

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Architect Arland Augustus Dirlam was born in Somerville in 1905. He received a civil engineering degree from Tufts in 1926 and a Masters degree from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design in 1929. He opened an architectural office in Malden in 1932 and specialized in the design of ecclesiastical buildings and designed dozens of churches throughout New England as well as lesser numbers of public buildings and residences. In Belmont, he designed the First Baptist Church in Waverley in 1935. Dirlam was the architect for a number of buildings at Tufts University and earned an honorary doctorate from the institution in 1953. He retired from practice in 1967.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Betts, Richard B. *The Streets of Belmont and How they Were Named (2nd edition)*. Belmont: Belmont Historical Society, 2012.
- First Armenian Church, Seventieth Anniversary, 1892-1962*. Belmont: 1962.
- Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA
- Robbins, Samuel Dowse, ed. *Who's Who in Belmont*. Belmont: Belmont Historical Society, 1972.
- Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1915, 1922, 1931, 1949.

http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Memorial.123/current_category.75/memorials_detail.html

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Monument to Victims of Armenian Genocide (BLM.939)