

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

15-203-A

Boston  
North

AF

BLM.72

**Town/City:** Belmont

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

**Address:** 129 Lexington Street

**Historic Name:** First Baptist Church

**Uses:** Present: church

Original: church

**Date of Construction:** 1904

**Source:** Massachusetts Dept. of Public Safety records

**Style/Form:** Shingle Style/English Revival

**Architect/Builder:** G.Wilton Lewis, arch; Melanson Brothers, builders (1904); Arland Dirlam, arch. (1935); John Danielson, arch.; Donald Tait, bldr. (1955)

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: stone, concrete

Wall/Trim: wood shingle, stucco, wood, concrete

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
none

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

1935 – addition of sanctuary to south  
1955 – addition in northeast corner

**Condition:** good

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

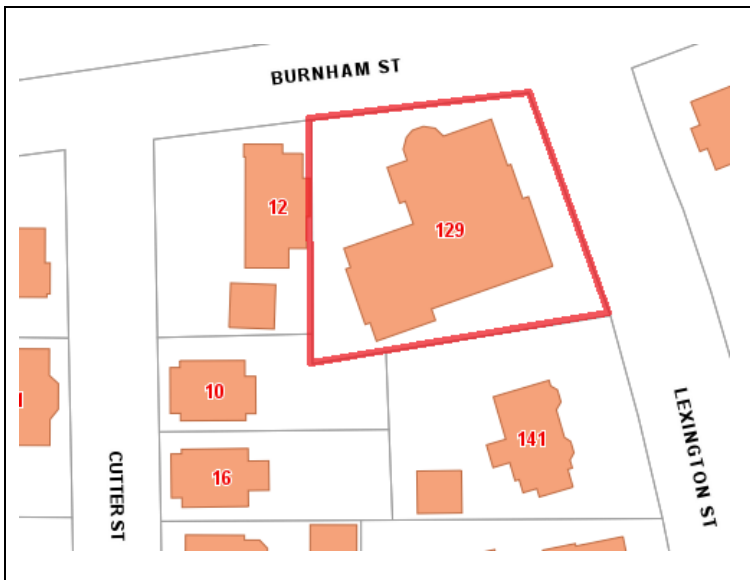
**Acreage:** 15,500 SF

**Setting:** major thoroughfare near Waverley commercial center

## 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

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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.*

Located at the southwest corner of Lexington and Burnham Streets, the First Baptist Church documents the growth of the congregation as illustrated by three different building campaigns. The original Shingle Style chapel was constructed in 1904 and is still visible from Burnham Street. It consists of a single-story, gable-roofed building sheathed in wood shingles and set on a fieldstone foundation. Attached to the north end is a rounded apse. The narrow rectangular window openings are filled with leaded glass in geometric patterns. Double-hung 4/4 windows fill the basement openings which have fieldstone lintels.

In 1935 a new sanctuary was constructed to the south in an English Revival style. That section presents a stuccoed gablefront with half timbering to Lexington Street. It is set above an ashlar veneered foundation and there are ashlar quoins and stone window surrounds including around the large leaded window in the gable. The entrance vestibule to the north of the gablefront is flat roofed and has a stone door surround with two small faces under the label mold and the inscription "Praise the Lord" over the double board and batten doors which display large iron hinges. In 1955 another addition was constructed north of the entrance vestibule and east of the original chapel. The flat-roofed building includes a first floor and basement and has windows on the façade like the 1935 section (possibly reused from the adjacent elevation) and utilitarian steel windows on the north elevation. The church occupies a level corner lot with miscellaneous shaped hedges. There is a sidewalk and handicap ramp extending to the south of the church.

## 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 First Baptist Church of Belmont was organized in 1897. Ground was broken for the first church building at the corner of Lexington and Burnham Streets on July 25, 1904. The Shingle Style chapel was dedicated on December 29, 1904. The architect of the building was G. Wilton Lewis (1847- after 1923). Lewis was born in New York State and graduated from MIT in 1875. He worked initially in the office of Charles K. Kirby and practiced on his own until about 1890 when Walter Paine joined his office. That partnership lasted until about 1894. Lewis continued to practice in Boston until about 1916 and lived in Malden. MACRIS lists a number of residential structures that he designed in the Back Bay. He is also known to have designed several religious structures including the Blue Hill Community Church in Hyde Park (BOS.11023, 1888-9) and the Hancock Congregational Church in Lexington – Lewis and Paine (LEX.66, 1893).

In 1935 construction began on a new sanctuary to the south of the original chapel. Initially services were held in the basement fellowship hall until the upstairs could be completed. This addition was dedicated on November 27, 1938. The architect was Arland A. Dirlam of Malden. The 1935 design included a tower to the south that was never constructed. The cost of the 36' x 56' addition was \$18,000. In February 1936 building department records indicate that a permit was granted to repair fire damage to the roof of the main church.

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. Dirlam was the architect for a number of buildings at Tufts University and earned an honorary doctorate from the institution in 1953. In Belmont, he also designed the First Armenian Church at 380 Concord Avenue in 1958. He retired from practice in 1967.

A smaller 25' x 25' addition was constructed in 1955 at the northeast corner of the church, in front of the original chapel. The architect for the single-story, flat-roofed addition was John Danielson of Medford; the builder was Donald Tait of Belmont.

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<https://backbayhouses.org/george-wilton-lewis/>

[www.churchbelmont.org](http://www.churchbelmont.org)



View from Burnham Street showing original Shingle Style chapel at center, 1955 to left and 1935 at right.

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1935 Addition, Lexington Street façade



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Interiors of Church

Source: [www.churchbelmont.org](http://www.churchbelmont.org)