

# FORM A - AREA

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

15-193-A, B, D, Y, Z	Boston North	CP	638-640, 684
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## Photograph



**Town/City:** Belmont

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

**Name of Area:** St. Luke's Church Complex

**Present Use:** religious/educational

**Construction Dates or Period:** 1923-1951

**Overall Condition:** good

**Major Intrusions and Alterations:**

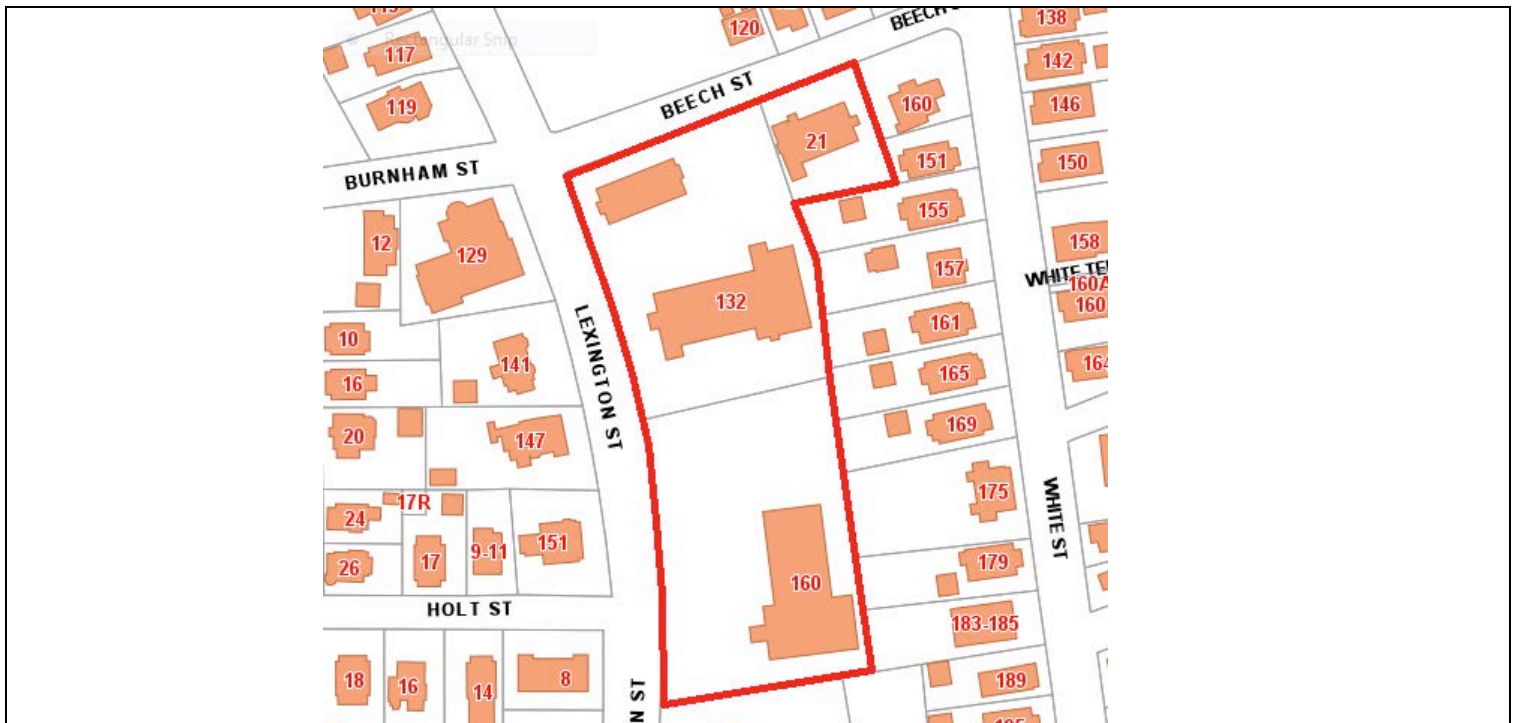
**Acreage:** 50,426 SF (1.15 acre)

**Recorded by:** Lisa Mausolf

**Organization:** Belmont Historic District Comm.

**Date** (*month/year*): November 2015

## Locus Map (north at top)



see continuation sheet

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT ST. LUKE'S CHURCH COMPLEX

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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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, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.*

The St. Luke's Roman Catholic Church Parish complex consists of four buildings: the church, rectory, convent, and school located on a level parcel of land near the corner of Lexington Street and Beech Street in the Waverley section of Belmont.

St. Luke's Church (1926-1934, BLM.638) is located on the east side of Lexington Street. Constructed in 1926, the Gothic Revival church has buff brick walls with stone trim and a slate roof with hip-roofed dormers and brick chimneys. A gabled vestibule is centered on the gable facing the street. The double wooden doors have large iron hinges and are set in a pointed arch surround above which is a bas relief of St. Luke. The front parapet is capped by a stylized cross. Gothic-inspired elements include buttresses at the corners of the building, on the vestibule, tower and between the bays. Windows include sets of three pointed arch openings containing diamond panes, a round window centered in the front gable containing ornate stone tracery in a trefoil design and rectangular openings filled with multi-light windows. An attenuated three-level gabled belfry rises from near the rear of the north elevation; it is capped by a thin spire. The two gabled brick entrances projecting from the two front corners of the building were added in 2014 as was the plaza in front of the church.

To the north of the church, St. Luke's Rectory (132 Lexington Street, 1923 & 1954, BLM.640) is a two-story, red brick veneered building capped by a hip roof. The western half of the building, facing Lexington Street is the original building which measured 32' x 41'. The flat-roofed front porch and the pedimented porch on the north side are both supported by Doric columns. Hip dormers project from the roof and the window openings are rectangular with 1/1 replacement sash. The eastern half of the building including a single-car garage in the northeast corner was added in 1954 and displays subtle differences including no hip dormers on the long elevations and simpler porch posts.

To the south of the church, St. Luke's School (160 Lexington Street, 1939, BLM.639), is a three-story buff brick, flat-roofed building that displays minimal decorative detail other than stone beltcourses above the lower level and second story windows. The long, rectangular window openings contain 1/1 aluminum sash topped by aluminum transoms. Attached to the south side of the class room building is a two-story assembly structure with pointed arch windows and a gabled entrance vestibule fronted by a flight of stone stairs.

The final building in the complex, the Convent (21 Beech Street, 1951, BLM.684) is an 80' x 43', flat-roofed building constructed of buff brick with concrete trim. The 1/1 windows have splayed lintels on the first floor and brick lintels above. The main entrance is contained in a pedimented vestibule and there is an enclosed sunporch on the south elevation.

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## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how this relates to the historical development of the community.*

St. Luke's Church was established to serve the Waverley members of St. Joseph's parish on Common Street. Due to the growth of the Catholic population in the area, the Church was set apart as an independent parish in April 1919. Early services were held in a small wood-frame chapel which was constructed in 1915 as a mission of St. Joseph's. The original chapel (demolished in 1929) was located on Beech Street.

The first rectory was a rented house at 31 Beech Street. The present day rectory at the southeast corner of Beech and Lexington Streets was built in 1923 by the Melanson Brothers, local contractors. The cornerstone for a new church was laid on August 1, 1926 by Cardinal O'Connell in the presence of about 1,500 parishioners. The bell in St. Luke's steeple was rung for the first time on October 24, 1926. On Christmas Day, 1926, the first Mass was celebrated in the lower church. The architect of the 1926 church was Edward J. Shields; the contractor was the J.J. Powers Co. of Cambridge. Upon completion of the new church, the original wooden chapel was used for social purposes. The building was torn down in March 1929. The inside of the upper section of the church was completed in 1934. Allen and Butler of Cambridge were the architects.

In 1937 the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston purchased 54,000 feet of land on Lexington Street adjacent to and south of the church from the estate of Charles J. McGinnis. In 1939 ground was broken for the erection of St. Luke's School, the first parochial school in Belmont. The architect of the two-story, eight-room school was Frank Irving Cooper Corporation of Boston. It was built by D'Amore Construction Company at a cost of \$110,000. The school opened in 1940. In 1952 a convent was constructed at 21 Beech Street, just east of the site of the original wood chapel. It was designed by Boston architect Maurice P. Meade and constructed by Walsh Brothers of Cambridge. In 1954 the adjacent rectory was doubled in size. The architect for the project was Chester Wright from Waltham.

In 1969 the Dominican Sisters who had supplied teachers for St. Luke's Parochial School announced their decision to withdraw due to the small numbers of sisters available for service and decreasing enrollments. The school officially closed in September 1970. Since that time the building has been used for parish activities and religious classes. It is currently used by the Waldorf High School. Adventures Daycare and Preschool is in the basement of St. Luke's School, at the north and south ends of the building. It was here before the Waldorf School moved in.

The architect of the church, Edward James Shields was born in Somerville in 1895 and received training at the Boston Architectural Club and MIT (1915-1920). He worked for various architectural firms including Cram Ferguson, Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch & Abbott (1921-1924) and Maginnis and Walsh (1924-1928?). By 1926 Shields had opened his own office at 80 Boylston Street in Boston. St. Luke's Church is Shields' earliest known commission. The MACRIS database includes ten religious buildings that Shields designed for the Catholic Church in the 1950s and 1960s including structures in Braintree, Holbrook, Marlborough, Marshfield, Quincy, Townsend, and Winchester.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

American Institute of Architects. American Architects Directory, 1956. R.R. Bowker, 1956.

Massachusetts Department of Public Safety, Division of Inspection, Record of Plans Filed. [Mass. Archives, Boston, Mass.]

Massachusetts Historical Commission. MACRIS database.

"St. Luke's Parish to Mark 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with Ball", *Belmont Citizen*, October 9, 1969.

"St. Luke's Parish", *Belmont Historical Society Newsletter*, September 1994.

Town of Belmont, Building Department files.

Williams, Judy. Area form for St. Luke's Church and School (BLM.CP), November 1982.



St. Luke's Church (BLM.638)

**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

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View down Lexington Street, looking south



BLM.639 – St. Luke's School

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BLM.640 – Rectory



BLM.684 - Convent

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

TOWN

NAME OF AREA

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## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible       Eligible **only** in a historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district       Potential historic district

Criteria:     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations:     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Statement of Significance by Lisa Mausolf

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The St. Luke's Roman Catholic Church Parish Complex appears to meet Criteria A and C of the National Register as a potential historic district. The establishment of the parish from St. Joseph's Parish reflects the continued expansion of the Catholic population in the town through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as the ever increasing role the church played in the lives of parishioners. What began as a humble wood-frame church grew to include the first parochial school in town as well as housing for the clergy and nuns.

The Church is a good example of contemporary ecclesiastical design in the Gothic Revival style and is of interest as an early work of architect Edward J. Shields. The other buildings in the complex, while more utilitarian, complement the church and all of the buildings retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, setting, feeling and association. The period of significance for the parish complex is 1923 to 1951, coinciding with the initial construction of the rectory and concluding with the construction of the convent in 1951.