

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	NWB.106
Historic Name:	Old South Church
Common Name:	
Address:	29 Federal St
City/Town:	Newburyport
Village/Neighborhood:	
Local No:	19-115
Year Constructed:	
Architect(s):	Sargent, Rufus
Architectural Style(s):	Georgian
Use(s):	Church
Significance:	Architecture; Religion
Area(s):	NWB.D: South End District NWB.L: Newburyport Historic District
Designation(s):	Nat'l Register District (8/2/1984); Preservation Restriction (10/15/1986)

Digital Photo
Not Yet
Available

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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FORM B - BUILDING

NW.B. 106

Area	Form no.
D + L	106

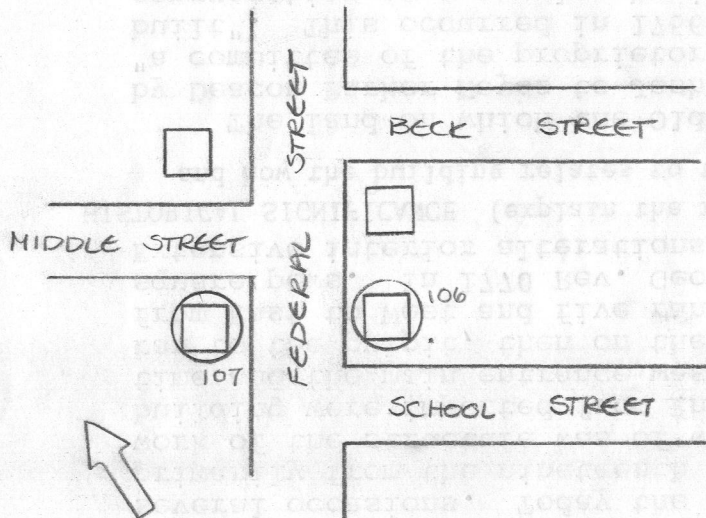
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

PHOTO (3x3" or 3x5", black & white)
Staple to left side of form
Photo number K-32

Town Newburyport
Address 29 Federal Street
Historic Name Old South Church
Use: Original Church
Present Church
Ownership: ☐ Private individual
Private organization First
Presbyterian Society
Public _____
Original owner First Presbyterian
Society

SKETCH MAP

Draw map showing property's
location in relation to nearest
cross streets and other buildings
or geographical features.
Indicate north.



DESCRIPTION:

Date 1756
Source Hovey "The Old South"
Style Georgian with later alterations
Architect Unknown
Exterior wall fabric Clapboards
Outbuildings Vestry
Major alterations (with dates) interior
alterations (1829) extensive exterior
alterations (1856)
Moved _____ Date _____
Approx. acreage 15,000 sq. ft.
Setting in densely built up
area in which the predominant building
type is that of eighteenth century
single family dwellings.

Recorded by Mary Jane Stirgwalt
Organization Office of Community
Development
Date 10-12-80

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within community)

The Old South Church, originally built in 1756 has been altered on several occasions. Today the character and detail of the church dates primarily from the nineteenth century. As originally built, the frame work of the structure was of white oak. Wrought iron rails used in the building were imported from England. The main hall was larger at one time and the main entrance was on School Street, from which a broad aisle ran to the pulpit, then on the east side. Two other narrow aisles ran from East to West and five ran the opposite direction separating the 140 square pews. In 1770 Rev. George Whitefield was buried in the church. Extensive interior alterations were made to the church in 1829. (cont.)

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

The land on which the Old South Church stands was originally sold by Deacon Parker Noyes to Joshua Beck. Beck then conveyed the land to "a committee of the proprietors of the meetinghouse that is to be built". This occurred in 1756 and the church was first opened to the congregation on a regular basis in August of that year. The church was incorporated in 1815.

Jonathan Parsons was the first minister of the church and he presided over the congregation until his death in 1776. In 1770 the famous evangelist Rev. George Whitefield died in the house of Rev. Parsons and was buried in crypt under the church pulpit. Whitefield had preached in the church and is considered by some the founder of the church.

One of the later pastors of the church was Rev. Daniel Dana. He was installed as pastor in 1794. His views were the cause of some parishioners breaking away to form the Second Presbyterian Society. Dr. Dana later served as president of Dartmouth College and the parish founded one of the earliest Sunday Schools during his pastorate. Some of the first missionaries sent out by the American Board of Missions were ordained here. Oddly enough Dr. Dana later served as pastor of the church he had caused to form, the Second Presbyterian or Harris Street Meeting House. Dana published many sermons and discourses.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- H. Hovey, Origin and Annals of "The Old South" First Presbyterian Church and Parish in Newburyport, Mass. 1746-1896, Boston, 1896.
1851 Plan of Newburyport, Mass. H. McIntire
1872 Map of the City of Newburyport, Mass. D. G. Beers and Co.
Assessor's Records 1890-1980

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

NWB.106

Community: Newburyport	Form No: 106
Property Name: Old South Church 29 Federal St.	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (CONT.)

At that time the old galleries and pews were replaced. A new pulpit with brick crypt enclosing the remains of George Whitefield was also built on the South side of the church. A cenotaph was erected in the Eastern gallery at the time in memory of Rev. George Whitefield. It was designed by William Strickland and cut in marble by Strothers of Philadelphia. The spire of the Church was replaced in 1848, according to the designs of local architect, Rufus Sargent.

In 1856 the meeting house was altered extensively. The character of the building's exterior results from this remodeling at which time the pedimented facade of Greek Revival elements was constructed. The Italianate window lintels also date from this period. Interior alterations made at this time included a new pulpit, and the refrescoeing of the walls and ceiling.

In 1810 a chapel was erected adjacent to the church. This building was later moved to Charles Street. In 1843 a new chapel was erected and connected to the church. A classroom was added in 1885.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom