

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

<b>Inventory No:</b>	NWB.2923
<b>Historic Name:</b>	Fiske Memorial Chapel
<b>Common Name:</b>	Belleville Congregational Church Vestry
<b>Address:</b>	300 High St
<b>City/Town:</b>	Newburyport
<b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>	
<b>Local No:</b>	62-45
<b>Year Constructed:</b>	
<b>Architect(s):</b>	Cummings, Charles Kimball
<b>Architectural Style(s):</b>	Greek Revival
<b>Use(s):</b>	Administration Office; Auditorium; Chapel; Church Hall; Classroom; Library; Other Governmental or Civic; Other Religious
<b>Significance:</b>	Architecture; Community Planning; Education; Recreation; Religion
<b>Area(s):</b>	NWB.A: High Street District NWB.L: Newburyport Historic District
<b>Designation(s):</b>	Nat'l Register District (8/2/1984); Preservation Restriction (6/20/2011)



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

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Friday, April 18, 2014 at 12:50 PM

**FORM B – BUILDING**

Assessor's Number

USGS Quad

Area(s)

Form Number

62-45

A, L

2923

PR 6/20/2011

NWB-8/2/84

Town/City: Newburyport

Place: (neighborhood or village): Belleville

Address: 300 High Street

Historic Name: Fiske Memorial Chapel and Parish Hall

Uses: Present: Chapel, Offices, Sunday School, Meeting  
and Function Rooms, Thrift Shop  
Original: Chapel, church school, social events

Date of Construction: 1848 (Vestry) & 1914 (Fiske  
Memorial Chapel/Parish Hall.

Source: Currier, John J., *History of Newburyport,  
Mass., 1774-1905.* 1906

Style/Form: Greek Revival

Architect/Builder: C.K.Cummings, 8 Beacon St., Boston

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: vinyl siding

Roof: slate

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: none

Major Alterations (with dates):

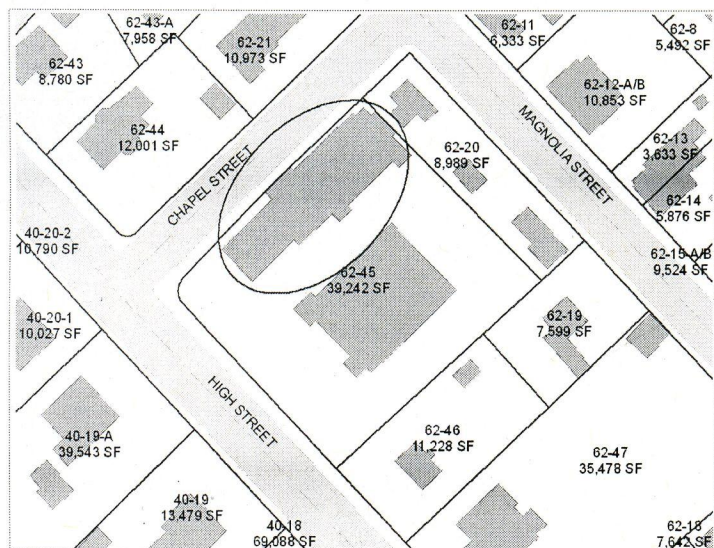
Sept. 1914- Dedication of Fiske Chapel/Parish Hall

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ Date:

Acreage: 39,500 sq. ft.- shares lot with Belleville Church

Setting: Building occupies a prominent site in the  
Belleville section of Newburyport on the main  
thoroughfare, High Street, noted for its excellent examples  
of eighteen and nineteenth century architecture

**Locus Map**

Recorded by: Dorothy Williamson/Robert Gould, Architect

Organization: Belleville Congregational Church, UCC

Date (month / year): March 2011

**RECEIVED**

MAY 04 2011

**MASS. HIST. COMM**



**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

TOWN Newburyport ADDRESS 300 High St.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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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.*

*Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.*

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:**

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

Parish Hall – architectural features.

The original structure, built in 1848, has been added to over the years. The structure is clad in vinyl siding over the original wooden clapboards. The 1913 blueprints, together with photographs predating the work, show that the addition was extensive. Extant design development blueprints are of interest in showing the evolution of the design before the final documents.

The parish hall features a Greek Revival temple front, with four large Doric columns. This was added in 1914 when the orientation of the chapel within was reversed, to be entered from High Street. The pediment extends the entire width of the chapel; the four columns sit on a wooden porch, approximately 5'-4" deep. In the center is a glassed-in vestibule, likewise capped with a pediment. Steps leading to the front entrance were once flanked, as photos show, with balusters and newels similar to those remaining elsewhere on the building, including those still surrounding the front porch; the handrails at the steps have been replaced with metal rails.

The building widens in two steps toward the northern end. At the western (Chapel Street) side, a jog occurs beyond the chapel, as it does at the opposite side. A small shed roof extends over a landing, which opens onto steps with elaborate balusters, leading to the ground. Old pictures show that the porch replaces a former enclosed vestibule (as on the other side, where a set of steps has been replaced by an accessible ramp). The other jog occurs only at the eastern side at the point where a stage room was added in the 1914 renovations. Here, too, are a porch and steps with ornamental balusters. A shed roof was added later over the porch. In the chapel, three double-hung windows were replaced by four windows, with fixed arched windows above.

The main part of the building was originally T-shaped, with gabled roofs at each section; a small one-story section to the rear was removed in 1914, to be replaced by an auditorium and church offices. The bar of the T holds two aboveground stories. Five arched windows, similar to those in the chapel, are on each side of the stage room. At each side of the bar of the T, there had been a bay of three large windows, with the central window higher than the rest and surmounted by a small pediment. (A similar bank of windows on the High Street side was replaced by the temple front and new entrance.) At the time of the renovation, the central window was made smaller to align with those flanking it, and a pediment created across the entire wing, in keeping with the Greek Revival renovations at the front. The central, double hung window, 8 over 8 lites, is approximately twice as wide as the two 4 over 4 double hung windows flanking it; the three are approximately 9'-0" in height.

Beyond the auditorium area, at each side of the stage, are small offices. The eastern one, used as the pastor's office, extends beyond the building to allow for access by a small set of steps, with similar balusters to the others. At the rear of the building is a stairwell to the lower floor; at some point since 1914, this was enclosed by a small bulkhead.

There is a full basement, in two levels, below nearly the entire building.

**Connector:**

Access for the disabled was achieved to both buildings in 2009 by a covered connector; beneath the gabled roof perpendicular to the main roofs of the meetinghouse and parish hall. A ramp and steps lead to the meetinghouse. A shed roof covers the ramp to the parish hall. A deteriorated door at the central part of the building was replaced in connection with the same project, which involved interior renovations to improve accessibility. Further accessible renovations are planned.

**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.*

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In 1848, a building (Vestry) was erected adjacent to the Meetinghouse for church school and social events. In 1914, that building was extensively renovated and remodeled and on the same site into the present Fiske Memorial Chapel/Parish Hall. (Blueprints show existing and new construction- on the same foundations as the old chapel). A stage/classroom was added to the structure and other changes were made to the chapel. The chapel can hold up to 200 people and the parish hall has two meeting rooms, stage room, offices, classrooms and a thrift shop. The number and layout of the rooms in the Fiske Parish Hall are conducive to fairs and meetings of which there have been many over the years.

It has provided space as a meeting hall for numerous local civic and lay groups. They included the following: a concert venue for religious and other musical programs, a Ward 5 voting location, a "North End" branch of the Newburyport Public Library for 45 years, a meeting place for Brownies, Girl Scouts and Boy Scout Troops, and a set of classrooms for the local school system. For several years, it was the site of graduation exercises for the local grammar school and for religious education classes conducted by the local school system. It has been the site of various fairs put on by the church and other community organizations. Currently, many local civil and private organizations and groups rent space (at a minimal cost) or are provided space free of charge. AA Meetings, Anna Jaques Hospital, Newburyport Mother's Club, Newburyport Choral Society, 3MB Fencing Group, Piano Concerts, Sacred Circle Dance, Birthday Celebrations, Weddings, Baby Showers, Funerals, Middle School Dance, Belly Dance Show & Dance Party, Adult Martial Arts, Spiritual Art Auction, New England Clinical Hypnosis, and non-paying renters- Gentle Chair Yoga, 2 Brownie Girl Scout Troops, CODA (12 step recovery program), Roots Music Concert Series, Speakers, and the Newburyport Preservation Trust meet regularly at the Fiske Parish Hall.

Over the past several years, various projects have been undertaken to stabilize the interior and exterior the building. The projects include extensive work on the roofs, construction of a connector between the two buildings (with a handicapped ramp), electrical wiring updates, both kitchen and bathroom facilities upgrades to meet current building codes, and extensive interior painting. Recently completed projects include the installation of a handicapped accessible bathroom, the conversion of a small storage space into a kitchenette on the main floor of the Parish Hall, and the conversion of a room on the first floor of the Parish Hall into a new church office.

Current planning for a proposed project involves extensive repairs to and painting of porches and decks at the sides and front of the Parish Hall. These particular areas are deteriorating and need attention before they require total replacement. Wooden trim around all of the steps, entranceways and associated railings will be repaired or replaced. They will also be scraped, primed and painted. Any of the balusters and railings rotted beyond repair will be replaced prior to painting.

The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 2, 1984 as a contributing resource to the Newburyport Historic District.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

Belleville Congregational Church.

*Fiske Memorial Parish House Program for Dedication Week, September 13-16, 1914.*

Photographs - Fiske Memorial Chapel/Parish Hall and 1867 Meetinghouse - North elevation - taken between 1922-1970.

The 1848 Chapel (Vestry) - South elevation- taken between 1867 and 1914.

Currier, John J. *History of Newburyport, Mass., 1774-1905.* 1906.

Cummings, C.K.. Blueprints of the proposed Fiske Memorial Chapel/Parish Hall. August 29, 1913.

Fiske, Daniel Taggart. *An Historical Discourse Commemorative of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Organization of the*

*Belleville Congregational Church, November 25, 1858.*

Historical Society of Old Newbury. Colored lithograph of the Belleville Congregational Church and Society. circa 1867.

Williamson, Dorothy L.. *Belleville Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Newburyport, Massachusetts, 1808-2008.*

Maps

Newburyport MIMAP



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Photo 1: Front Façade, Southwest Elevation



Photo 2: Fiske Chapel/Parish Hall with Connector to Meetinghouse, Southeast Elevation



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Photo 3: Fiske Chapel/Parish Hall with Connector to Meetinghouse, East Detail Elevation



Photo 4: East Elevation



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Photo 5: Rear, North Elevation



Photo: 6: West Elevation





2010 - FISKE CHAPEL + BELLEVILLE MEETING HOUSE



2010 - FISKE MEMORIAL CHAPEL + PARISH HALL - NORTH SIDE





2010 - FISKE MEMORIAL CHAPEL + PARISH HALL - SOUTH SIDE



2010 - FISKE MEMORIAL CHAPEL + PARISH HALL - REAR