

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	CON.303
Historic Name:	Saint Bernard's Roman Catholic Church
Common Name:	Concord First Universalist Church
Address:	12 Monument Sq
City/Town:	Concord
Village/Neighborhood:	Concord Center
Local No:	H9-843
Year Constructed:	c 1840
Architect(s):	Chapman, John H.; Chickering and O'Connell; Cuneo, Laurence J.; Keefe Associates
Architectural Style(s):	Greek Revival; Italianate
Use(s):	Abandoned or Vacant; Church
Significance:	Architecture; Ethnic Heritage; Religion
Area(s):	CON.A: Concord Monument Sq-Lexington Road Historic Dist. CON.DV: North Bridge - Monument Square Historic District CON.EG: Saint Bernard Roman Catholic Church Complex
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (03/05/1973); Nat'l Register District (09/13/1977)
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Wood Shingle Wall: Glass; Wood; Wood Clapboard Foundation: Concrete Unspecified; Stone, Uncut



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

FORM B - BUILDING

Assessor's number

USGS Quad

Area(s)

Form Number

CON. 303

Massachusetts Historical Commission
 Massachusetts Archives Building
 220 Morrissey Boulevard
 Boston, Massachusetts 02125

H9-843

Concord

A DV

303

NR: DIS; LHD 3/5/73

Town Concord

Place (neighborhood or village) _____

Concord centerAddress 12 Monument SquareHistoric Name St. Bernard's ChurchUses: Present Catholic ChurchOriginal Universalist ChurchDate of Construction 1840-42Source Meetinghouse on the GreenStyle/Form Italianate

Architect/Builder John Chapman (1889 renovations); Laurence Cuneo (1959 renovations)

Exterior Material:

Foundation concrete and flat stoneWall/Trim wood clapboardRoof asphalt shingle; wood-shingle steeple roof

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures _____

none

Major Alterations (with dates) enlarged and updated to Italianate style, 1888-89; rear ex-

tended, doors added and front stair built--1959-1960. 1996: stairs and lower entry being rebuilt
 Condition fair/good

Moved [] no [X] yes Date ca. 1873Acreage 1 1/3 acres

Setting At corner of Bedford St, facing south-east end of Monument Square; Hill Burying

Ground just east, parking lot to rear.

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photo.
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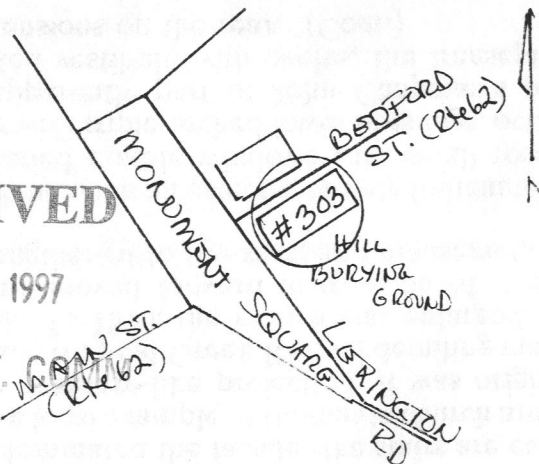
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FEB 03 1997

MASS. HIST. COM. (Rte 62)

Recorded by Anne Forbes, consultant
 research by Susie Birnner
 Organization Concord Hist. Commission

Date 11/96

BUILDING FORM

CON-303

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION [X] *see continuation sheet*

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

The appearance of St. Bernard's Church today, originally built in 1840-1842, is the product of several renovations and a relocation. Although a massive three-part stair and entry of 1959-60 has until recently dominated the facade (the stairs are currently being replaced), the building is otherwise an impressive local example of Italianate church architecture. A pedimented, gable-roofed building with a shallow transept-like projection, it was originally much smaller and simpler in ornamentation. Some of the original Greek Revival detailing may remain in the wide, flat corner pilasters, frieze and sill board. In 1870, the church was enlarged, turned 90 degrees to face southwest toward Main Street, and moved forward to front on Monument Square. At the same time, the building was raised, lengthened to the rear, and a basement inserted underneath.

Embellishments in an eclectic, largely Italianate style, including the large arched main entry, the tall round-headed double windows with small rose window and hood molds, and a tall three-stage belltower with triple-arched lower openings, octagonal mid-section, and decorative-shingled steeple, are all apparently part of John Chapman's renovations of 1889. He also added the shallow, pedimented vestibule with oculus, the transept-like side projections with Palladian windows, and more extensions on the rear. (Cont.)

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE [X] *see continuation sheet*

Explain 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.

This church has the distinction of having been the sanctuary of two of Concord's religious congregations, and of representing the work of Concord's premier architect of the 1880's, John H. Chapman. Most of all, it is significant as Concord's earliest Catholic Church, and, as such, served as both the spiritual and social anchor of the town's large Irish-American population of the second half of the nineteenth century.

The building began as a Universalist church. A small Universalist society was first formed in Concord in 1838, and erected this church just off the common behind the old "green store" in 1840 (some sources say 1842). The guest preacher at the dedication was the eminent Rev. Hosea Ballou. The small congregation, the First Universalist Society in Concord, struggled along until 1860, but it had in fact reduced greatly in numbers and had to give up its church well before that. The society had only one settled minister during its existence, the Rev. Addison G. Fay (1818-1873), a Southborough native who had studied and assisted under Dr. Ballou, and was called to the Concord church in 1842, at the age of 24. Finding he was more "cut out for business", and unable to live on the small salary of \$450 a year that the society could afford to pay, he left the ministry in 1846 and began a small pencil-making business behind his house at 93 Monument Street (see Form #209). He later founded the powder mills of what became the American Powder Co. in West Concord, where he was ultimately killed in an explosion in 1873. Other ministers who preached at the church, all for very brief periods, were Dr. Joseph O. Skinner, and the Rev. Daniel Foster, later chaplain for one of the "negro regiments" in the Civil War. (Cont.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES [X] *see continuation sheet*

Maps and Atlases: Maps and Atlases: 1852, 1856, 1875. 1889, 1893, 1906. Sanborns from 1887. Concord directories.

Concord Free Library, Special Collections: photo and pamphlet files.

Drake, History of Middlesex County. 1880.

Bailey, Beyer, and Manion. "A History of St. Bernard's Parish." 1986. (Cont.)

[X] Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places*. If checked, a completed National Register Criteria Statement form is attached. *NR-listed 1977.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Concord

St. Bernard's Church

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ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

John H. Chapman (see Form #64--350 Main Street) was well-respected in town for the other buildings he designed in the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles, including the 1886 West Concord School (demolished), the 1887 armory at 51 Walden Street, the Concord High School of 1888 (demolished), and a very different stone church, Trinity Church on Elm Street, in 1884.

Other changes Chapman made to the exterior are not specified in the church history or other local accounts. Although the wide 8-panel double-leaf door of the center entry is apparently part of his design, the two double-leaf, 4-panel doors on either side of the facade postdate 1906. The beautifully-executed anchor in the stained-glass window over the west door, and the bunch of grapes in the east window also probably date to the early twentieth century. In 1959 the church was enlarged again, with a long addition at the northeast end. At that time the front sections of the foundation were faced with the flat, uncoursed stone popular in the 1950's, and three-part stairs with a high slate center platform, and a ground-level glassed entry were added.

As at the other churches in Concord center, a line of open horse sheds stood behind the building until the automobile made them obsolete in the early part of this century; they were torn down between 1918 and 1927. In the mid-twentieth century the parish purchased the old Silas Holden House of ca. 1870, which had stood behind the horse sheds, and paved its site for a parking lot.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

Financial difficulties plagued the little church throughout its short existence. By 1851 even the women's church society, the "Concord Universalist Social Institute", which had begun by raising money for books for the "Sabbath School", was contributing to the "support of preaching" and the painting of the building. Although some sources say the church ended its services in 1852, the year the Rev. Foster came to Concord, the Social Institute was still active four years later, when the minutes from one of its meetings foretold the inevitable end of the church, stating that there "is no possibility of a resurrection of the Universalist Society."

For several years the church stood empty. According to Keyes, one winter "old Silas Wesson" camped out in the building, "having a cook stove in the entry way and sleeping in a corner of the stairway." Then, in December of 1863, the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston purchased the property (from Sam Staples, who had bought up several buildings in the vicinity). Instrumental in the purchase was Father Bernard Flood, of St. Mary's, Waltham, the parish of which Concord had been a mission since 1853-54.

By one account, the first Mass in Concord is believed to have been said at the home of one of the town's early Irish immigrants in 1844. Church tradition, however, places the first Mass in town at the home of Mrs. Bulger in the old "yellow block" on Lexington Road in 1852. From the time Concord was made a mission of St. Mary's until the purchase of this property, the most faithful of the town's Catholics walked eleven miles to Mass in Waltham on Sundays when no priest could come to town to preach in the Town House or a private home.

In its early years St. Bernard's, which became an independent parish in 1867, also struggled financially. Its parishioners, virtually all Irish immigrant families, were overwhelmingly poor, and suffered as well from the widespread discrimination against both Catholics and the Irish that was common in New England's old yankee communities. (Cont.)

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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

Gradually, however, due partly to the heroism of Concord's Catholic soldiers during the Civil War, some degree of respect was afforded to both the members of the town's Irish Catholic population and to their clapboarded church on the common. In 1865, the Selectmen, who had withdrawn permission to celebrate Mass in the Town House, granted permission to found St. Bernard's Cemetery on Bedford Street in time to bury some of the Catholic Civil War dead (see Form #803). The cemetery itself drained the financial resources of the parish for a number of years, however, as did the 1868 purchase of the old County House across the square for a rectory (see Form #330). Then, in 1870, to accommodate its ever-growing number of parishioners, the parish purchased the old "green store" (again from Sam Staples) that had stood between it and the common, moved the church building forward, turned it to face the foot of Main Street, and enlarged it with additional seating, a new vestibule, a basement, and a new sanctuary. Later renovations in 1889, designed by local architect John Chapman, doubled the size of the auditorium and added a steeple. (See above.)

Gradually, as more of Concord's influential protestants, such as Bronson Alcott, Judge George Brooks, Ebenezer R. Hoar, and Town Clerk George Heywood gave their open support to the church and its ministry, and as more local Catholics espoused the cause of temperance, local prejudice against Catholics diminished. After years of concerted efforts, a Catholic, Father John A. Crowe, was finally elected to the School Committee in 1887, and Catholic representation in the running of Concord's schools, where over a third of the pupils came from Irish-American families, was accepted from then on. In 1895, Father Edward J. Moriarity was appointed to the Concord Free Public Library Committee.

Through the turn of the century, the Catholic population of Concord continued to swell, especially in the industrial community of West Concord, where Mass was being celebrated in private homes as early as 1873. In 1904, Our Lady Help of Christians, which had operated as a mission church of St. Bernards, was built at 53 Church Street; it became an independent parish in 1908. By that time the parishioners of St. Bernards had gained more status, were better educated, and the majority were no longer laborers or domestic servants. They founded several organizations, including the Knights of Columbus in 1897, and shortly afterward the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which led a well-organized program of helping newly-arrived Irish immigrants to find housing and employment. In 1906-1907, on land adjacent to the Rectory, the parish built Monument Hall to serve as a meeting place and community center (see Form #331), and in 1953 opened Concord's first parochial school, the Rose Hawthorne School on Main Street.

Although the flock of St. Bernard's Parish remained overwhelmingly Irish in origin through the turn of the century, by the First World War many Italian immigrants had come to Concord, swelling the numbers at Sunday masses. At the same time, although many Catholics from Quebec were finding jobs in the factories of West Concord, where they attended Our Lady Help of Christians, a small number joined St. Bernard's, as well.

BIBLIOGRAPHY, cont.

Garrelick, Renee, with William Bailey. Concord in the Days of Strawberries and Streetcars. 1985.
Hurd, History of Middlesex County. 1890.
Jarvis.
Keyes.
Scudder.
Richardson. Concord Chronicle. 1967.
Social Circle Memoirs: Addison Grant Fay.
Teele, ed. The Meetinghouse on the Green. 1985.
Wheeler House Files.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Additional information by Sara W. Wilbur, March, 2001:**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, cont.**

Major renovations to the building were undertaken in 1996-97, at a cost of \$1.5 million. The main exterior facade was returned as much as possible to its 19th-century appearance, removing the 1959-'60 front entry vestibule, closing the two side doors, and returning the front stairs to their earlier configuration. A single wide stairway now leads to one center entrance to the sanctuary.

On the interior, the altar was moved from its former north placement to the wide west side, as were the altar rail, pulpit, font, and choir. Seating now faces this central altar and font area on both the south and north sides, bringing the congregation closer to the "action" of the services, according to the pastor. The church now has two organs. One is a pipe organ, making possible dramatic musical performances.

BIBLIOGRAPHY, cont.

Interview with Father John Murray, 3/2001.



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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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

Town

Concord

Property Address

12 Monument Sq

Area(s)

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BUILDING INSPECTION DEPARTMENT—DISTRICT POLICE
 PLAN RECORD

CASE B RACK 1 APART. 32 NO. 3095

BUILDING St. Bernard's R. C. Church. STORIES 1B

CITY OR TOWN Concord. STREET

TO BE USED FOR Religious Purposes. CLASS Church

OWNER R. C. Bishop of Boston. Wood.

ARCHITECT Chickering & O'Connell.

CERTIFICATE APPROVAL—SPECIFICATION REQUIREMENTS—REFERRED

DATE Aug. 27, 1903

INSPECTOR WHITE.

FORM 41. 10,000. 2-2-18.