

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	CON.1839
Historic Name:	Concord School of Philosophy
Common Name:	Hillside Chapel
Address:	391 Lexington Rd
City/Town:	Concord
Village/Neighborhood:	Merriam's Corner
Local No:	9-4122
Year Constructed:	1880
Architect(s):	Alcott, Amos Bronson
Architectural Style(s):	Gothic Revival
Use(s):	Other Educational
Significance:	Architecture; Community Planning; Literature; Performing Arts; Philosophy; Recreation
Area(s):	CON.DS: American Mile Historic District
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (03/06/1961); Nat'l Historic Landmark (12/29/1962); Nat'l Register Individual Property (10/15/1966); Preservation Restriction (02/05/1988)
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Cedar Shingle; Copper Wall: Board and Batten; Copper; Wood Foundation: Cast Concrete



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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

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

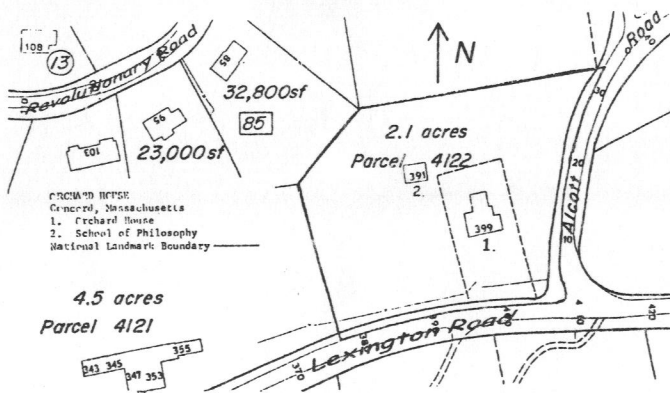
Photograph (Digital)

(3" x 3" or 3-1/2" x 5" black and white only) Label photo on back with town and property address. Record film roll and negative numbers here on the form. Staple photo to left side of form over this space. Attach additional photos to continuation sheets.



Sketch Map

Draw a map showing the building's location in relation to the nearest cross streets and/or major natural features. Show all buildings between inventoried building and nearest intersection or natural feature. Label streets including route numbers, if any. Circle and number the inventoried building. Indicate north.



CON. 1839
[DS] 1839

BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

☒ see continuation sheet

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

The CSOP is a one-story board and batten structure measuring approximately 28' x 35' with a gabled roof and 6/6 double-hung sash windows that is unlike many other structures in the Town of Concord. At the eastern end of the south elevation is an enclosed gable-roofed entry porch containing 12 steps. The interior of the CSOP consists of a single room, open to the rafters, with a seating capacity of 75 to 80. There is a low stage along the north wall and a stone fireplace at the western end of the room. In accordance with Mr. Alcott's theories on architecture and home design, the building was never painted, but allowed to weather and become a natural part of its environment.

A c. 1882 illustration in Orchard House's archives shows the original interior as described with plaster busts flanking the stage. This stage originally had a narrower opening flanked by quarter braces. Oil lamps also flanked the opening, and a table and chairs were provided for speakers. The audience sat on simple wooden chairs, many of which are still extant (reproductions made in 2002). The brick chimney masonry was also

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

☒ see continuation sheet

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.

A. Bronson Alcott and his family lived at Orchard House for 19 years, from 1858 to 1877. During that time, Mr. Alcott had carpenters and workmen move a tenant's house, located a hundred or so feet to the east of the main house, up to the north side of the main house, and joined them together. He then spent the next 18 years periodically remodeling and adding to the home. Home improvement was not restricted to the main house, however. Alcott also had other structures built on the property: a garden pavilion constructed of various intact parts of trees, and trellises, garden pyramids, and a "rustic seats" [benches].

By 1880, Mr. Alcott designed and had built a structure for the "new" enterprise that he and several other notable Concordians had dreamed of for over 40 years -- a center of education and philosophy. The CSOP attracted nearly 400 persons annually, only approximately 100 of whom were from Concord, with the rest

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

☒ see continuation sheet

Alcott, A. Bronson. *The Journals of Bronson Alcott*, Odell Shepard, ed. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1938.

Albright, Gary E. "Survey Report: Photograph Collections - Orchard House." Andover, MA: Northeast Document Conservation Center, January 1989.

Bartlett, George B. "Concord: Historic, Literary, and Picturesque." Concord, MA, 1985.

Callard, Judith. "The Alcotts in Germantown." Philadelphia, PA: *The Germantown Crier*, Vol. 47, 1996.

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEETTown
CONCORDProperty Address
399 LEXINGTON ROADMASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

DS	1839
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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION *continued*

visible on the interior. Vertical board sheathing of the chimney enclosure and close to the south, as well as the mantel, were apparently added c. 1882-85. At the same time, or perhaps under the ownership of the W. T. Harris, the stage opening was widened, and the increased span reinforced by a railroad car truss. Interestingly, this suspension rod truss has been used in railroad cars for years.

A c. 1885 photo shows the School of Philosophy (or "Hillside Chapel" as it was more popularly known at the time) with crosses at each of the gable ends. Another shows two steps and a pathway leading up to the northeast where there was a small privy. A later photo shows the small vertical board sheathed building in the same style as the School. In photos from the 1910-26 era, when the CSOP was located at neighboring Wayside, the gable-end crosses seem to have been removed.

Records for the next 50 years of maintenance and repair to the CSOP are incomplete. Aside from replacement of the roof in 1988, emergency repairs to the roof and internal truss necessitated after damaging heavy snows in the winter of 2004, the CSOP has had only minor repairs in 1976 to make it fit to re-open to the public for summer adult education.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE *continued*

coming from 22 states! The CSOP continued successfully (i.e., tickets paying all expenses, without leaving a surplus) for the next eight years. In 1888, Mr. Alcott died; the CSOP conducted its last sessions and closed in his honor that summer.

After the turn of the 20th Century, the structure was moved about the Orchard House property and that of neighbor Miss Margaret M. Lothrop (daughter of former Wayside owner Mrs. Harriet Lothrop, aka "Margaret Sidney"). In 1925, Miss Lothrop deeded the CSOP to the Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association, and the structure was moved to or near its original foundation site in 1926.

In 1976, the CSOP was repaired enough to open once more to the public for summer adult education (known since as "The Summer Conversational Series"). Since then, the CSOP has also hosted children's educational programs, author events, concerts, wedding receptions, and was even a private reception for First Lady Laura Bush (2002).

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Detwiller, Frederic C. "Orchard House Architectural-Historical Analysis and Preservation Plan." Boston, MA: Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association, 1980.

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McCluskey, Dorothy. *Bronson Alcott, Teacher*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1940.

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