

FORM B - Building

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

Map and Lot # 116 11 USGS Quad Y Area(s) 22 Form Number
 Town Groton
 Place (neighborhood or village) Groton Center

Photograph

(3"x3" or 3-1/2x5" black and white only) Label photo on back with town and property address. Record film roll and negative numbers here on form. Staple photo to left side of form over this space. Attach additional photos to continuation sheets.

Roll Negative(s)

Address 1 Powder House Road
 Historic Name First Parish Church
 Uses: Present Church
 Original Church
 Date of Construction 1755, 1839
 Source Green, Butler
 Style/Form Colonial-Greek Revival

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite

Wall/Trim Wood clapboard

Roof Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/secondary structure

Parsonage

Major Alterations (with dates)

Turned to face west, remodeled interior, 1839; Addition to rear, 2002

Condition Excellent

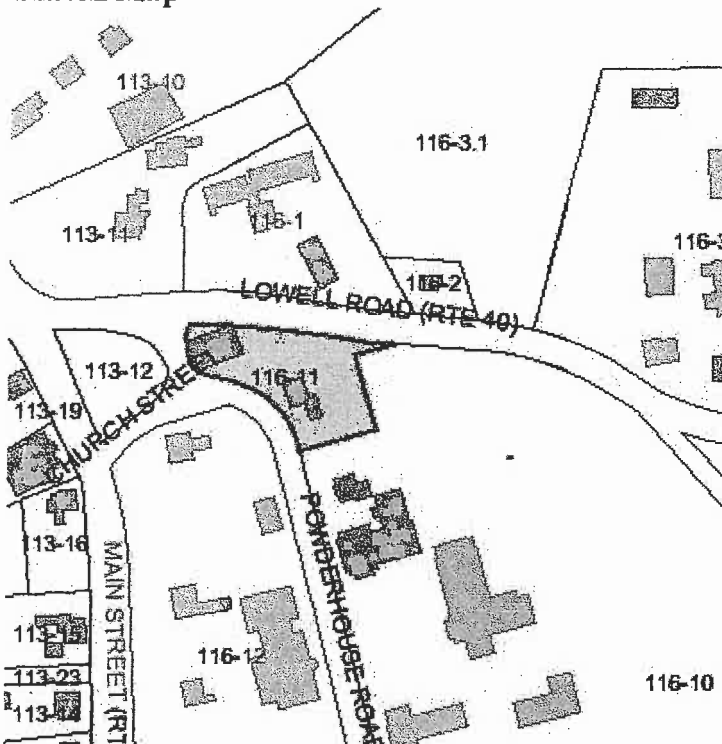
116-10 Moved no yes Date 1839

Acreage 1

Setting Town Center

Sketch Map

North Toward Top



Recorded by Sanford Johnson

Organization Groton Historical Commission

Date (month/year) 6/06

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.

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 First Parish Church is a 3x5-bay, 2-story, front-gabled, wood-framed building with a steeple above the façade; a three-bay entrance portico with two fluted Tuscan columns in antis is recessed into the pedimented front gable elevation;
- * The steeple rises from the roof on a 2-level, square wood clapboard base with cornice, corner pilasters and a clock on three sides; the second story of the tower is a octagonal block with bell roof and has louvered panels that may conceal a carillon; the spire is a hexagonal pyramid sheathed in wood clapboards capped by a round finial and weathervane in the form of a rooster
- * Decorative features include the flushboard tympanum with triangular ornament, paneled pilasters at the corners of the building and at the outer edges of the portico, wide frieze at the eaves and molded cornice
- * Windows in the portico and second story of the side elevations are 25/25 double-hung sash; those on the first story of the sides are 10/10 double-hung units; the three entries in the portico have wide trim with bosses at the upper corners; the center entry has a double leaf door
- * The building faces Main Street beyond the town common which is lined with split granite posts and wood rails; the Lawrence Academy campus is adjacent to the south; this is the most prominent of Groton's churches due to its size and central location
- * Alterations to the design include the addition of the steeple, portico, columns and Greek Revival trim in the façade in 1839 as well as the rear gable roofed wood clapboard block of two stories in 2004

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

see continuation sheets

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.

The current First Parish Church was the fourth to be constructed in the town and the second on this site. Previous churches were at the corners of Martins Pond Road and Hollis Street (Construction may have begun at this site and the building moved mid-project; it was finished October, 1666 with thatch roof, half timbering and clay walls, clapboard exterior, two stairways, two floors, glass windows; burned by Native Americans, 1676); School Street and Hollis Street (built 1679, reused as a school, c. 1715) and the predecessor at the current site (built 1714-1716; 35'x40'; enlarged 1727-8, again in 1730; 500lb bell added 1729; glass windows paid for by parishioners). The current building was begun in May of 1754 and was to be 65' x 50' with a belfry at one end and a porch opposite. During the Revolutionary War, lead window weights were removed and melted down for bullets according to Butler's history. Due to the proximity of the powder house (no longer extant) a short distance to the south, minutemen gathered on the common west of the church prior to marching to Concord on April 19th, 1775. The minister at the time, Samuel Dana, preached tolerance of the British policies and so was dismissed although he remained in Groton for some time, later moving to Amherst, NH to practice law. The building served as the meeting place of the Court of Common Pleas for Middlesex County in 1776-1787. A fire in 1795 resulted from a lightning strike and was extinguished partly with milk by some who thought it the only liquid to control that type of fire. News coverage of the event describes damage that consisted of burned timbers in the steeple, cladding torn off the base of the steeple (then on the north gable end) as a result of the strike, shattered timbers, a post shivered to atoms that broke windows as it exploded, timber thrown across the building and damage to the north wall. The amount of 400 pounds was required for repairs. Interior changes from the early 19th century resulted in the removal of box pews and installation of benches. The church bell, bearing the date 1819 and stamped Revere & Son, and the clock by Francis (or James) Ridgeway, dated 1809, were added around this time. Religious schism occurred here in 1826, after which a

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

continuation sheet

Previous GHS research; Tercentenary Booklet, pp. 18-19; 1875 Beers Atlas; Green, Vol. 2, pp. 60-61, Vol. 4, pp. 1-8, 300-301, 331; Sanborn fire insurance maps, 1896-1906; Butler, pp. 137-215, 182, 259, 417, 454; May, "Groton Plantation", pp. 19, 152, 160-161; Sanborn fire insurance maps, 1896-1906; First Parish Church. Article in the [Newburyport] Political Gazette concerning the 1795 fire at the church, July 16, 1795;

**** All properties mentioned in bold type are individually inventoried resources**

- 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 SHEET**Town**
Groton**Property Address**Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Massachusetts Archives Building
Boston, Massachusetts 02125**Area(s)** **Form No.****1 Powderhouse Road – First Parish Church Historical Narrative**

group of Congregationalists built a separate church in 1826 (218 Main Street, MHC #195), leaving the Unitarians to occupy the building. Trees were planted in a double row on the common in 1830 by John G. Park and Benjamin Prescott. This was the first attempt at systematic tree planting in Groton Center. At this time, horse sheds occupied a site south of the church in the future path of Powderhouse Road but were removed in 1839 as part of a major remodeling project which consisted, among other things, of turning the north elevation west and making it the façade. Also, the interior furnishings, including the high square pews, benches, pulpit and sounding board, were removed and rebuilt, the exterior stripped of sheathing which was later replaced, corners made by the projection of the old tower filled in to a plane even with the front of the old tower, the base of which was removed and the recessed porch and columns in antis put in place, a floor built inside to create a two story interior for use as town hall and vestry below and church above, and the pulpit rebuilt in walnut after the style of Gerard. The work was dedicated on May 20, 1840 and cost \$5,000. Town meetings occurred here until construction of the Town Hall in 1859 (MHC #3). Horse sheds were removed c. 1839 to make way for the construction of High Street, Later called Powderhouse Road, south of the church. The sheds were eventually rebuilt east of the church and later removed to the Groton fairgrounds in 1930. The Sanborn fire insurance maps of 1906 show the steeple height to be 110', the highest in town, and the horse shed in place at the east or rear of the church. Groton architect Lawrence Park, resident of 36 Main Street (MHC #19) again remodeled the interior in 1916 in unspecified ways. The wayside pulpit was placed on the Common in front of the church in 1918. The route to the east, now Lowell Road, formerly passed the south side of the church but was realigned to the north in 1835 and the southerly route filled in and made a parking lot by Michael Sheedy in 1938.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Town
Groton

Property Address

Area(s)

Form No.

1 Powderhouse Road – First Parish Church



Massachusetts Historical Commission

Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community Groton
Property Address
1 Powderhouse Road

Area(s) Y

Form No.

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

Individually eligible X

Eligible only in a historic district

Contributing to a potential historic district X

Potential historic district

Criteria: A B C D

Criteria considerations: A B C D E F G

The Greek Revival Style First Parish Church at 1 Powderhouse Road is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as an individual resource at the local level. The current First Parish Church was the fourth to be constructed in the town and the second on this site. The current building was begun in May of 1754 and was to be 65' x 50' with a belfry at one end and a porch opposite. Due to the proximity of the powder house (no longer extant) a short distance to the south, minutemen gathered on the common west of the church prior to marching to Concord on April 19th, 1775. The building served as the meeting place of the Court of Common Pleas for Middlesex County in 1776-1787. Religious schism occurred here in 1826, after which a group of Congregationalists built a separate church in 1827 (218 Main Street, MHC #XX), leaving the Unitarians to occupy the building. A major remodeling project occurred in 1839 which consisted, among other things, of turning the north elevation west and making it the façade. Town meetings occurred here until construction of the Town Hall in 1859 (MHC #3). Groton architect Lawrence Park, resident of 36 Main Street (MHC #19) again remodeled the interior in 1916 in unspecified ways. The route to the east, now Lowell Road, formerly passed the south side of the church but was realigned to the north in 1835 and the southerly route filled in and made a parking lot by Michael Sheedy in 1938. The building's association with historic political, military and religious activity establishes its significance under Criterion A. The refined design of the church with its 110' tall spire and the surviving historic exterior materials make the property eligible under Criterion C. The church retains integrity of design, materials and workmanship.