

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SWN.10
Historic Name:	Church of Christ
Common Name:	First Christian Congregational Church
Address:	G.A.R. Hwy
	U.S. Route 6
City/Town:	Swansea
Village/Neighborhood:	
Local No:	49;
Year Constructed:	1833
Architectural Style(s):	Greek Revival;
Use(s):	Church; Other Religious;
Significance:	Architecture; Religion;
Area(s):	
Designation(s):	Nat'l Register Individual Property (02/16/1990); Nat'l Register MRA (02/16/1990);
Building Materials:	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Wall: Wood Clapboard; Foundation: Stone, Uncut;
Demolished	No



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

This file was accessed on: Monday, June 27, 2022 at 7:37 PM

NR IND 2/16/90
NR MRA 2/16/90

USGS-SOMER

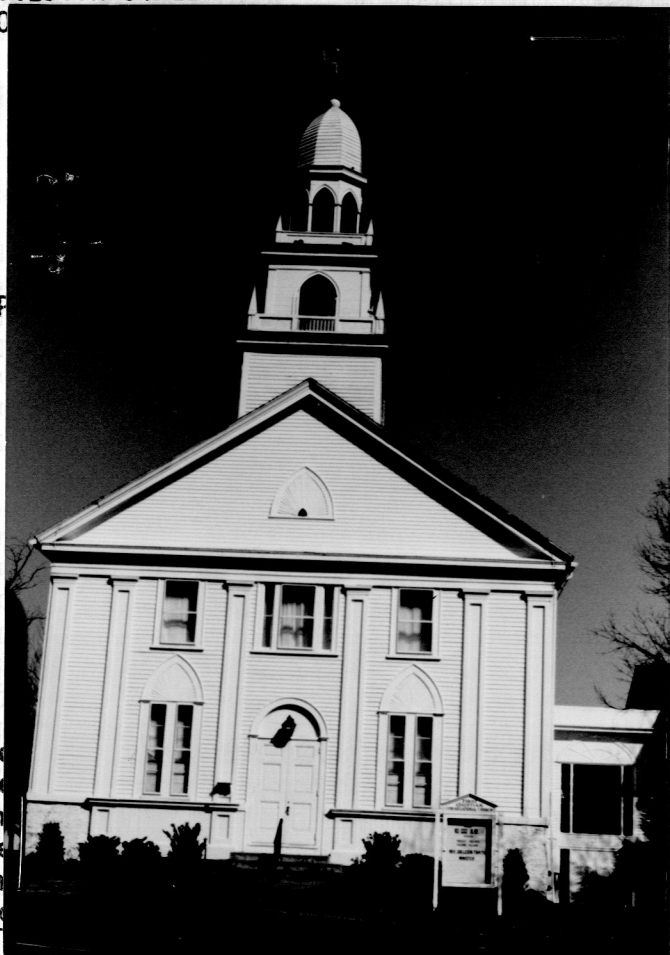
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTONOFFICE COPY
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AREA

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FORM NO.

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(see attached map)

Town Swansea, Mass. MRA
SWANSEA

Address G. A. R. Highway (U. S. Rte. 6)

Historic Name Church of Christ, Swansea
[also: First Christian Congregational Church]

Use: Present Religious services

Original Religious services

DESCRIPTION

Date 1833

Source Church records/D. H. Hurd

Style Greek Revival

Architect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric clapboard

Outbuildings none

Major Alterations (with dates) enlargement/int. renovations (1873);
1-story education wing, E side (1966)

Condition good

Moved no Date ---Acreage less than one acreSetting heavily developed commercialarea with major traffic along G. A. R.highwayUTM REFERENCE 19 314980 4624300USGS QUADRANGLE Somerset, MA 1985SCALE 1:25000Recorded by H. Pierce/K. Valente/K. BroomerOrganization Swansea Historical CommissionDate 1978/March 1986/October 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

Church of Christ, Swansea (now the First Christian Congregational Church) retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association and is significant on the local level. The church meets Criterion A for its associations with the non-sectarian Christian church organized in the town in the late 17th century, and Criterion C as an important local example of Greek Revival architecture. The church also meets Criterion Consideration A as a religious property deriving its primary significance from architectural distinction and historical importance.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

The present church is the second on the site. The first meetinghouse, built in 1720 of oak and chestnut timbers, was unique in that it was heated. [Hurd and Hutt] In 1815, the roof of this square meetinghouse was blown off, and replaced so that the former ends of the structure became the sides. Dedicated in 1833, the present 1½-story structure is of rectangular massing with a pedimented gable-front facade. Six paneled pilasters partition the facade into bays, the center bay containing a double-door entrance in a round-arched surround. Long double windows flanking the entrance are topped with ogee-arched heads; another blind ogee fan ornaments the pediment. Rising from the two-stage square tower is an octagonal cupola with louvered pointed-arch openings. Gabled one-story extensions to the rear (north side) of the building are likely the result of the 1873 remodeling which focused on the interior. An organ built in the church in 1868 by E. & G. Hook was restored in 1963 and repaired in 1978. The empire pulpit was a gift from the Central Congregational Church, Fall River, in 1875.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

The Church of Christ, Swansea was formally organized in 1693. Services held as early as 1680, however, may qualify the congregation as one of the oldest in New England. [Swansea Tercen.] The church is historically significant for its ecclesiastical independence, never having had a legal connection with the town and therefore never supported by taxation. The church imposed no doctrinal tests as conditions of admission, and was open to all Christians regardless of the specific tenets of their faith. In 1725 the members decided to receive additional members only by the "laying on of hands." The church was briefly associated with the Six-Principle Baptist Church of Swansea from 1803 to 1820 and thereafter operated independently.

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, the pastors of the church were all members of the Mason family, descendants of Samson Mason, who came to America in the late 17th century. The Greek Revival building was constructed during the pastorate of Richard Davis (Nov. 1830-May 1833), although the structure was not ready for occupancy until the beginning of the ministry of his successor, James J. Thatcher. Rev. Thatcher, a well-known Swansea minister, went on to serve as pastor to the First Baptist Church in North Swansea in the 1840s.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Hurd, Duane H. History of Bristol County, Mass. Philadelphia, 1883.
 Hutt, Frank Walcott. A History of Bristol County, Mass. NY: Lewis Hist. Publ. Co., 1924.
 Pierce, Helen, ed. Swansea Tercentenary 1667-1967. Swansea, MA, 1967.
 Wright, Otis Olney. History of Swansea 1667-1917. Swansea, MA, 1917.

SWN-10

PROPERTY MAP
TOWN OF SWANSEA
BRISTOL COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS

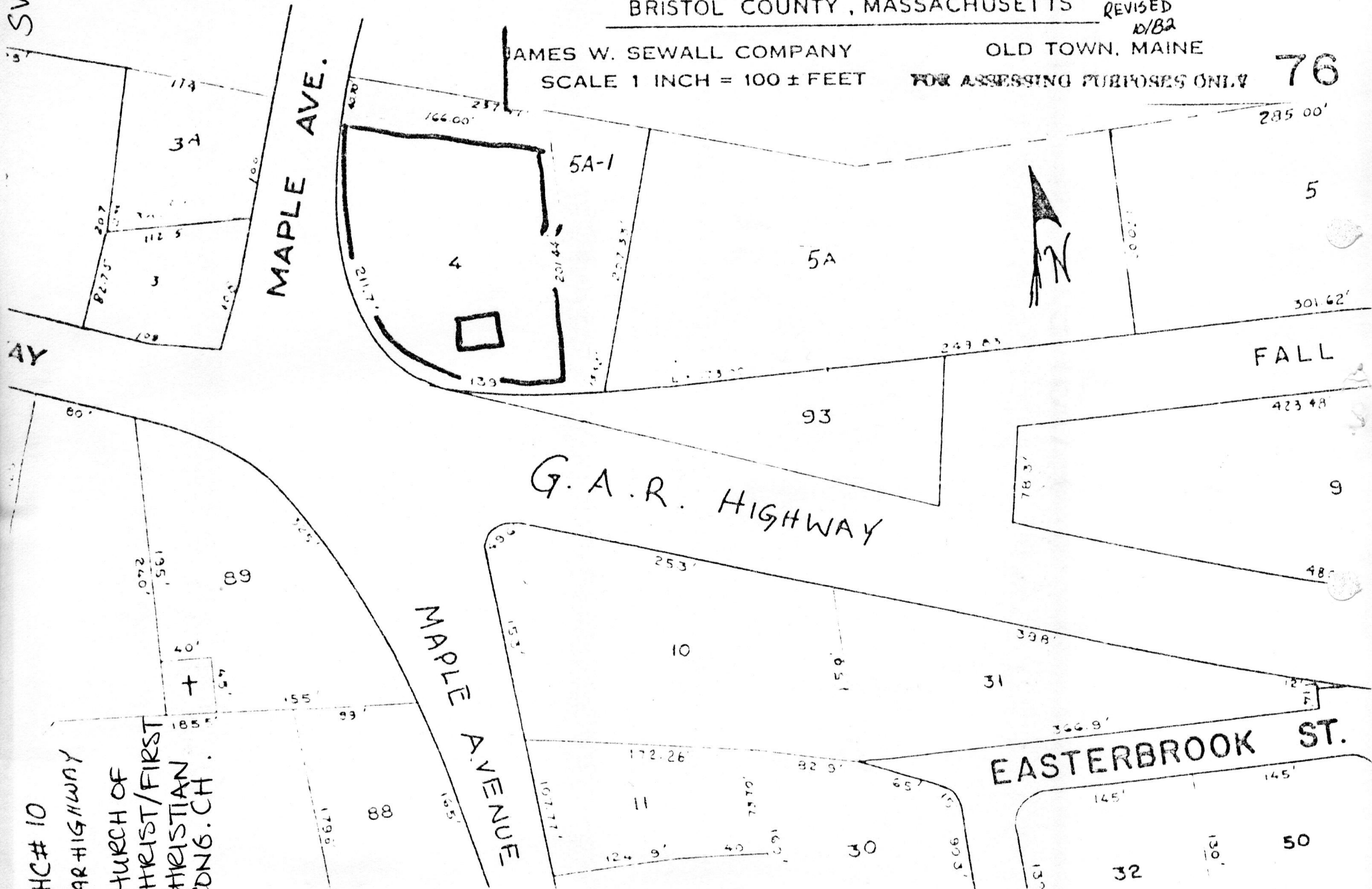
1961
REVISED
10/82

JAMES W. SEWALL COMPANY
SCALE 1 INCH = 100 ± FEET

OLD TOWN, MAINE

FOR ASSESSING PURPOSES ONLY

76



YHC# 10
GAR HIGHWAY
CHURCH OF
CHRIST/FIRST
CHRISTIAN
CONG. CH.

NRIND
NRmRA 7 2/16/40

NR

AREA

FORM NO.

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AL-
USGS - SOMER

1c

Town SWANSEA

Address G.A.R. Highway

Historic Name First Christian

Congregational Church

Use: Present Religious Service

Original Religious Service

DESCRIPTION

Date Dedicated April 10, 1833

Source Church Records

Style Greek Revival

Architect Unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric Clapboard

Outbuildings None

Major Alterations (with dates) Addition

1958 - Addition 1966

Condition _____

Moved No Date _____

Acreage Over one acre

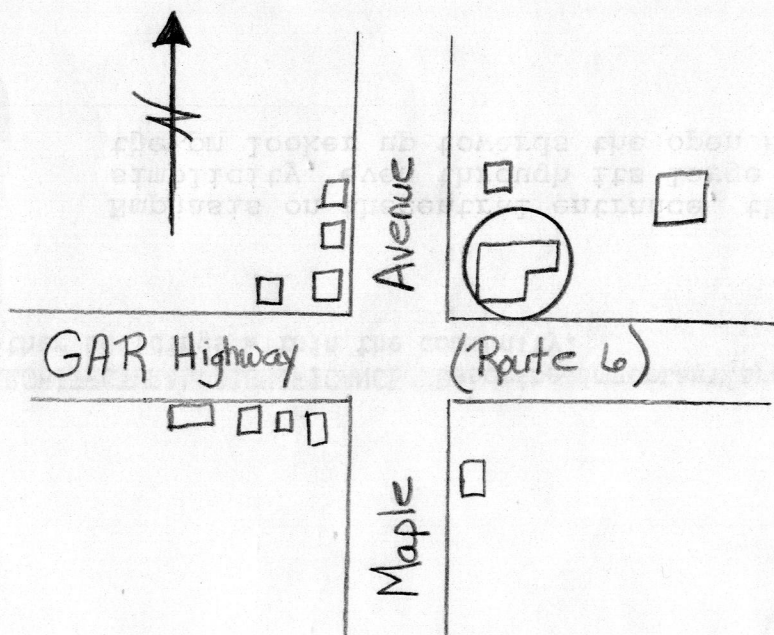
Setting Now at the cross roads of
a very busy heavy commercially develop-
ed area, this church was once,
beautifully set at the apex in front
of the town.

Recorded by K. Valente / H. Pierce '78

Organization Swansea Historical
Commission

Date March, 1986

intersection(s).
Indicate north



UTM REFERENCE _____

USGS QUADRANGLE Fall River, MA-RI 1967-79

SCALE _____

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

Emphasis on the central entrance, this Greek Revival Church, shows simplicity, even through its large mass. Simple full - pediment carries the on looker up towards the open belfry tower and cupola.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

Although the present building was erected in 1833, this congregation was organized in 1693. It was unique in three ways. In the "Church of Christ in Swansea, " all Christians had equal rights in the "Household of Faith" without demands of creed. Support was from voluntary gifts as opposed to taxation. The building of 1720 was heated.

An organ built in the church in 1868 by E. & G.G. Hook, was restored in 1963 and repaired in 1978. The empire pulpit was a gift from the Central Congregational Church, Fall River, in 1875.

The original chandelier was converted from kerosene to electricity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

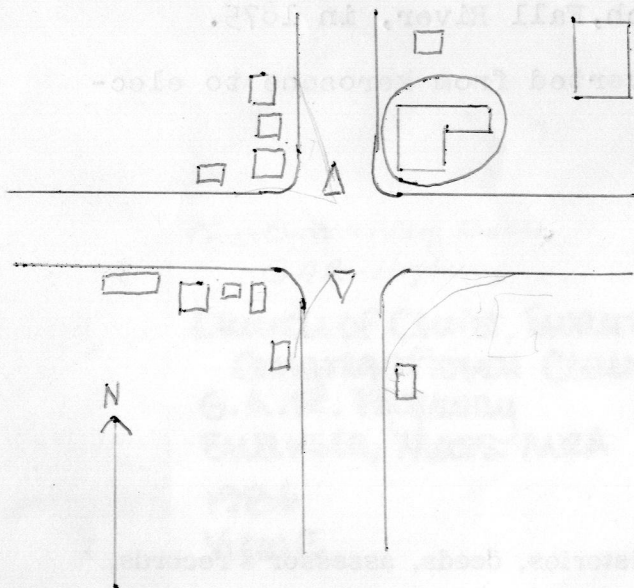
In Area no.

Form no.

10 49



2. Map. Draw sketch of building location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings. Indicate north.



RECEIVED

MAR 28 1979

MASS. HIST. COMM.

(over)

1. Town Swansea, Massachusetts

Address G.A.R. Highway

Name First Christian Congregational Church

Present use Church Services

Present owner Same as name above

3. Description:

Date Dedicated April 10, 1833.

Source Church Records

Style Early 19th century N.E. with Cupola Bell Tower.

Architect Unknown

Exterior wall fabric Clapboard

Outbuildings (describe) None

Other features Beautiful weathervane

Altered Addition Date 1958

Moved Addition Date 1966

5. Lot size:

One acre or less _____ Over one acre X

Approximate frontage 139 feet

Approximate distance of building from street

20 feet

6. Recorded by Helen Pierce

Organization Swansea Historical Soc.

Date August 3, 1978

7. Original owner (if known) First Swansea Christian Church

Original use Religious Services

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates _____

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	<u>X</u>	Education	<u>X</u>	Religion	<u>X</u>
Architectural	_____	Exploration/ settlement	_____	Science/ invention	_____
The Arts	_____	Industry	_____	Social/ humanitarian	<u>X</u>
Commerce	_____	Military	_____	Transportation	_____
Communication	_____	Political	_____		
Community development	_____				

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

Although the present building was erected in 1833, this congregation was organized in 1693. It was unique in three ways. In the "Church of Christ in Swansea", all Christians had equal rights in the "Household of Faith" without demands of creed. Support was from voluntary gifts as opposed to taxation. The building of 1720 was heated.

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The original chandelier was converted from kerosene to electricity.

10. Bibliography and
early maps, etc.



1986. View east.