

**NEWTON PUBLIC BUILDINGS SURVEY
PHASE II – ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Building Analysis

Jeannette Curtis West Recreation Center



Address: 69 Tyler Terrace
Year of Construction: 1892

Level of Significance: High

Recommended Treatment Level: Preservation/Rehabilitation

PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance

Building History

The late 19th century witnessed a movement across New England to preserve forests, meadows, mountains and fens. The Appalachian Mountain Club, the Massachusetts Audubon Society and the Trustee of Reservations were all organized during this time period. Locally, there were a number of village improvement associations that formed throughout Newton. Through the efforts of these organizations and the gifts of property of private citizens, many playgrounds and small parks were created throughout Newton by the beginning of the 20th century.

During this time period the Newton Centre Improvement Association, founded in 1878, and the Newton Centre Women's Club jointly secured a large tract of land for recreational use; in 1890, the Frederick Law Olmstead designed Newton Centre Playground opened for use.

Trinity Parish of Newton Center built a their first church on Pelham Street in 1892. In 1898 the shingle-style wooden church was moved to a site on the corner of Centre and Homer Streets. By 1915 with general population growth in Newton, the congregation had outgrown their chapel. A new church, designed by Boston architect George W. Chickering, was built in its place. The first worship service was held on Palm Sunday, April 16, 1916. To make room for the new building, the original church was relocated a second time and donated to the Newton Centre Playground. It was modified to hold showers, lockers and other sanitary facilities for park users.

The building was renovated in the 1940s and again in 1992. Today the Jeannette Curtis West Recreation Center, or "The Hut" as the former Episcopal Church building is currently known, is the home of the Mason Rice After School Program, the Centre Acres Summer Program and a variety of adult and youth specialty groups.

Level of Significance

The building has a very interesting history and is a unique building among those owned by the City. It still retains many of its character-defining features and materials.

References

<http://newton.patch.com/articles/one-little-building-many-different-uses-the-hut> (visited 12/15/11)

Carter, Allison. "One Little Building, Many Different Uses: The Hut." *Newton Patch*. November 24, 2010.

http://www.trinitynewton.org/our_history.html (visited 12/14/11)

"Our History." Trinity Episcopal Church. Website.

<http://www.newtonma.gov/Parks/Recinfo.htm>

(visited 11/17/11)

<http://www.newtonconservators.org/husher.htm> (visited 11/28/11)

Husher, Jean M. "20th Century Brings Success Preserving Public Open Spaces". *Newton Tab*. February 10, 2000.

PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance: Historic Images
Additional Information Sources for Future Research

Historic Images



THE FIRST CHURCH BUILDING (1893-1916)

Figure 1: Image from 1916. Old Trinity Episcopal Church, prior to being relocated. (Credit: Historic Newton)



Figure 2: Image from 1925. Note the shingles, which appear to have been unpainted, and the no longer extant dormers. (Credit: Historic Newton)

Phase II: Analysis of Historically Significant City Buildings, Newton, Massachusetts
Jeannette Curtis West Recreation Center
DRAFT 2/17/2012

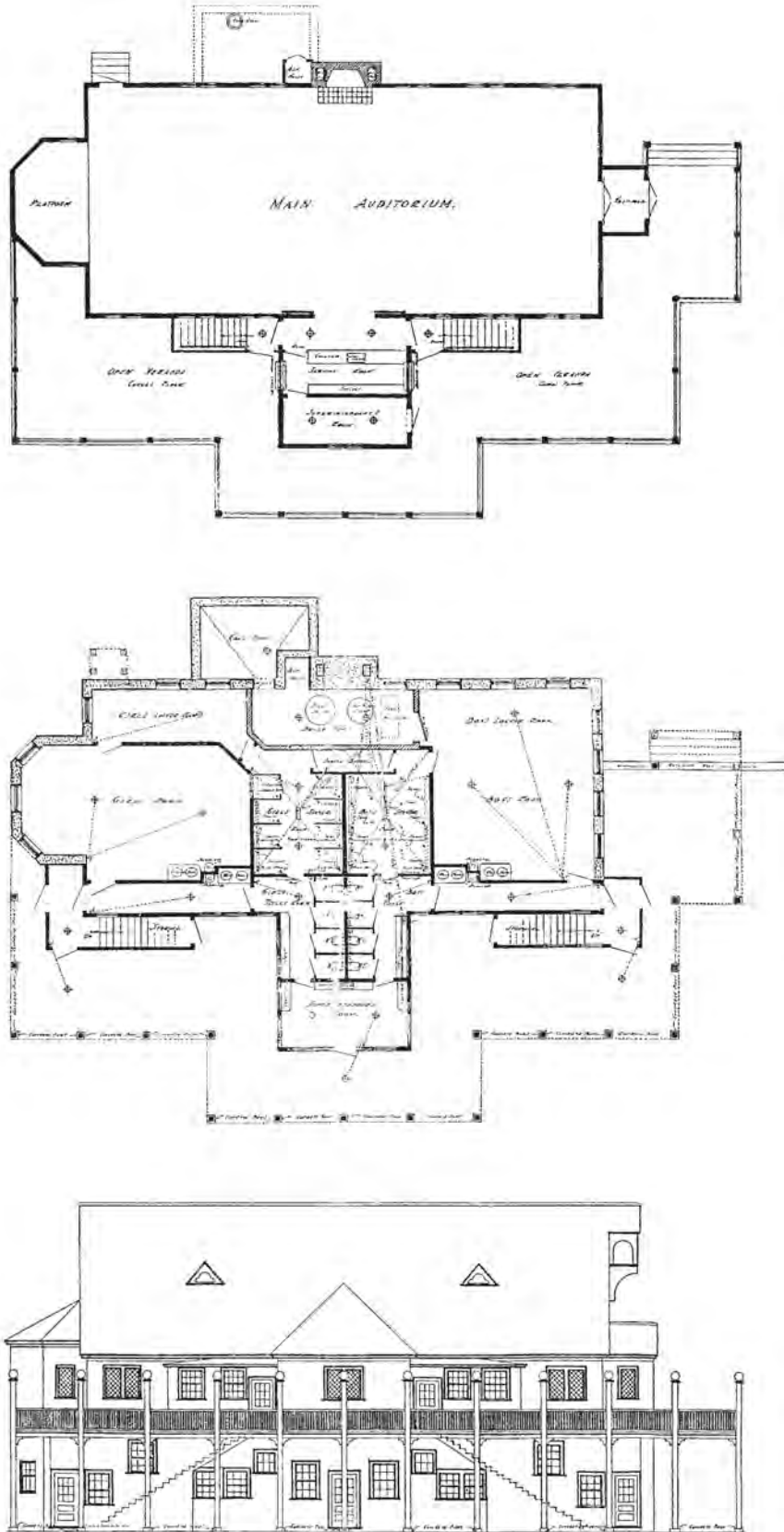


Figure 3: 1915 drawings for the proposed design of recreation center. Top: Floor Plan for upper level. Center: Floor Plan for lower level. Bottom: Playground-side elevation. It is unclear whether the shown alterations were ever constructed. (Credit: Newton Historical Society)

Part 2 – Description of Historically Significant Features

Exterior Visual Character

Setting

- The Recreation Center is set on a grassy north-facing slope of Newton Centre Playground

Shape

- Rectangular structure with apse, one story at street level, two stories facing the park due to the grade change.

Roof and Related Features

- The building has a gable roof with multiple small cross gables and a half-hipped apse roof. Grey asphalt shingles replaced what were likely wood shingles. Roof membrane is exposed above the wood gutters at the eaves.
- There is a prominent brick and stone chimney at the south elevation and a metal clad, possibly false, chimney to the east.

Openings

- Small individual windows with transoms and 4-over-4 wood sashes are on three sides. Larger double-hung windows with pointed arches and metal grates are seen on the north side. Most of the windows have wood shutters. Shutter dogs are extant at the west and north elevations. Metal grates cover the original windows at the lower level.
- Basement windows at the south elevation have been infilled with concrete.
- The original wood paneled doors have been replaced with aluminum doors.
- A small shingled portico with decorative wood brackets covers the north doorway with transom, which may date to the building move in 1915. The door is not original.

Projections:

- The west entry vestibule features an overhanging hip roof, two pairs of ornamental modillions, and a wood beadboard ceiling. Wood steps and a wood deck on brick piers with plywood facings lead to the vestibule.
- The stairs to basement are contained in a bulkhead at the southwest corner.
- The north side has been significantly altered some time after 1915. The triangular dormers and large north projection have been removed. Three dormers and a large shed roof at the lower level have been added.

Trim and Secondary Features:

- The decorative wood band below the windows marks a change in the spacing and pattern of the wood shingle cladding.

Materials

- Wood shingles and a rubble stone foundation. The lower level is shingled at the north side.

Craft Details

- The shingle cladding is triple-stacked below the band, and more typical, single-stacked shingle courses above. The eaves at the gable ends are shingled.
- The brick chimney has a rubble stone foundation with a niche in its center. Stones are also set into the brick as decorative accents at the base of the ornamental brick vertical lines.
- In the west gable end there are two pointed openings with louvers within.
- The west gable end is stepped forward at the top to project over the lower portion, with a row of brackets at the overhang, and a decorative zigzag cut on the bottom shingle course.

Interior Visual Character

Individually Important Spaces

Nave (current gymnasium)

- 6 open trusses, plus two embedded within wall, constructed of heavy timber, fire-chamfered, with bolted metal plates
- 6 pairs of windows on north side; 2 visible on south side
 - 4/4, with metal grate, plastic wrap with duct tape on trim
- One pair of wood paneled doors at west entry
- Beadboard ceiling, horizontally laid above small vertical purlins
- Wood gym floor
- Gypsum wallboard walls

Related Spaces

Apse

- Flat plaster finish at sloped ceiling surfaces.
- Painted wood beadboard wainscot below wood chair rail.
- The skylight openings are extant, but covered by exterior sheathing above.
- Gothic arch opening to nave covered in chain link mesh and gypsum wallboard infill

Other Significant Interior Features

Basement:

- Walls clad in painted vertical beadboard
- Window trim, possibly original
- Wood stair treads and risers

Part 2 – Images



Figure 4: the shingle detailing was well-considered to create different effects at different parts of the building.



Figure 5: ornamental wood brackets at the west entry vestibule



Figure 6: original windows with ornamental muntins still extant at lower level



Figure 7: although now used as a gymnasium, vestiges of the original chapel can still be seen, including the open trusses, high ceiling, and the pointed arched opening at the apse.

Part 3 – Treatment Recommendations

Preservation Treatment Level

The Jeannette Curtis West Recreation Center has a unique history, and is significant to both the civic and religious histories of Newton, and a good example of building reuse in an earlier time period. While the building has been in use for much longer as a recreation center than as a church, vestiges of both remain and are important to the understanding of the significance of the building. It is recommended that the most important spaces and the historically significant features (listed in Part 2 of this report) be treated at the “Preservation” Level outlined in the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The Preservation treatment level places a premium on the retention of historic fabric through conservation, maintenance and repair.

In related spaces and ancillary spaces not directly contributing to the historic character, the “Rehabilitation” level of treatment from the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* may be more appropriate. At this level, the emphasis is placed on protecting and maintaining historic building material and significant features while providing an efficient contemporary use of the building.

The following bulleted list contains an analysis of existing conditions and recommended treatments for the significant features catalogued in Part 2 of this report.

Exterior Recommendations

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

- Exterior lower wall of apse has settled and detached from building, allowing water in. Reattach to building frame, repair.
- Replace missing leaders, including at north side of west projection. Repair in kind damage below to ensure weather-tight enclosure.

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- Conduct survey of window condition. Windows were behind closed shutters on the exterior and behind building plastic on the interior at time of survey. Repair as necessary.
- Restore original wood windows with ornamental muntin patterns. Reglaze, repaint.
- window directly to east of north door missing a muntin. Repair.
- Check all wood shutters for operability. Repair wood shutters at main level, including missing elements at the north side. Replace missing shutter dogs.
- Replace all missing, severely deteriorated, and poorly matched replacement wood elements. Repair components as necessary. Includes eaves, gutters, shingle siding and belt course between shingle coursing types. Retain historic size, spacing and detailing. Paint all wood elements.
- Replace rotting shingles directly above wood window hoods (west elevation). Provide minimal slope for drainage at top of hoods; provide slight gap between bottom of shingles and top of hood.
- Replace metal guards at shingle corners, next to south entry.
- Remove rust and repaint all ferrous elements, including pipe rails. Repair water-damaged door at apse. Review drainage strategy to prevent water from collecting at building exterior.
- Replace wood porch at west entry with more historically appropriate, code-compliant porch. Refer to stairs in 1916 image, or coordinate with wrap-around porch in 1915 plan.
- Remove ivy growth, including at east elevation.

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Remove extraneous ferrous elements from building exterior, including leader straps. Patch as required.
- Repoint cracks in mortar at stone rubble foundation.
- Remove inappropriate cementitious patch between chimney stone and shingles.
- Repair non-original concrete steps at south entry broken where damaged at rusting pipe rail insertion. Reattach pipe rail with more appropriate anchor detail.
- Replace PVC leaders with metal, following contour of building. Relocate leaders to original locations.
- Review locations of exposed conduit and electrical fixtures, particularly at masonry chimney and north door. Reroute in more appropriate locations.
- Clean building exterior, including:
 - Biological: stone rubble foundation
 - General atmospheric: stone rubble foundation
 - Graffiti: at north windows, west doors
- When asphalt shingles reach end of usable life, replace with wood shingles to match original. Investigate nailing patterns and historic photos to confirm material and spacing.
- Reconstruct missing triangular dormers and projection at the top of the west gable, to match original. Coordinate with HVAC strategy, not in the scope of this survey.
- Replace coping at main chimney with tapered coping to match original.
- Determine original paint colors, repaint. May be coordinated with first priority painting, above, or planned for next repainting.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Continue regular maintenance of character-defining features.
- Maintain all gutters, leaders and drains to keep clog-free.

Interior Recommendations

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Large air ducts at east side of main space are very prominent; compromises use of stage/apse. Reevaluate HVAC strategy to improve appearance and use of main space. Coordinate with window repair and dormer replacement.
- Locations of missing dormers are visible in the roof framing. Their replication could assist in daylighting or ventilation. Coordinate with daylighting and ventilation strategies.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Repaint ceiling, trusses, walls.
- Repair and repaint peeling plaster at apse and at stairs to lower level. Investigate roof for possible leaks.
- Refinish the partially painted handrail at stairs.