

MEETING MINUTES
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

April 12, 2023

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Commission meeting was held remotely in a Zoom meeting.

Chairman Rosenberry called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. On behalf of Secretary Galvin, he welcomed the Commissioners. Chairman Rosenberry next addressed the audience, thanking them for attending. For those individuals who may not have attended commission meetings in the past, Chairman Rosenberry explained the structure of the meeting and when in the process the public could address the commission. Chairman Rosenberry then took attendance to determine that a quorum was met.

The Chairman turned to the first item on the agenda, the **approval of the March 8, 2023 meeting minutes**. He called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the minutes. A MOTION was made by Commissioner McDowell and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. Hearing no questions or comments, the chair moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, the Local Historic District Preliminary Study Reports, first calling for any recusals. Hearing none, he turned the meeting over to Jennifer Doherty, Local Government Programs Coordinator. Ms. Doherty presented the study reports with a PowerPoint presentation. A copy of the presentation is on file with these minutes.

Sacred Heart Local Historic District, Holyoke

Ms. Doherty first presented the **Sacred Heart Local Historic District in Holyoke**. The City of Holyoke is proposing to establish the Sacred Heart Local Historic District. This would be the City's second local historic district, after the Fairfield Avenue Local Historic District.

The district would protect a single property at 435 Maple Street, south of the city's downtown core. Encompassing an entire city block, the property includes four buildings: a church, rectory, recreation hall, and small garage.

The Sacred Heart complex is in an urban residential area. Surrounding streets include a number of multi-story, early 20th century brick apartment buildings. To the west is a large early 2000s development of single-family and duplex houses, some privately owned, and some owned by the Holyoke Housing Authority. Scattered throughout the neighborhood are small businesses, some in mixed-use buildings.

The LaFrance Block to the southwest of the Sacred Heart complex across Franklin Street is currently undergoing a rehabilitation using historic rehabilitation tax credits. The Sacred Heart complex would be contributing buildings to a proposed Central Churchill National Register District, required for the LaFrance project to receive the tax credits.

Covering a full city block, the Sacred Heart campus today includes four buildings: the church itself, constructed between 1876 and 1881; the rectory, also constructed in 1876; the recreation hall, added to the property in 1929; and a small one-story garage from the second quarter of the 20th century. The complex also historically included a convent, demolished in 1976, and a school, demolished in 1980.

Sacred Heart Church was executed in brick in a simplified Gothic Revival style. The long main body of the church features a gable roof, with cross-gable wings at the far end of the building. Buttresses trimmed with sandstone accent the verticality of the church's tower, while the Gothic Revival style is expressed through the pointed-arch windows on the façade and side elevations. Construction began in 1876, but like many churches, the congregation took several years to finish the building, worshipping in the basement until the upper church was finally finished in 1881 and dedicated in 1883. The tower initially terminated at the square brick top; the steeple was added in 1897.

The church was designed by architect Patrick W. Ford. He was a native of Ireland, immigrating to the United States in 1866. Eventually settling in Boston, many of his commissions were for the Catholic Church. He has almost 40 entries in MACRIS, most of which are ecclesiastical buildings scattered across the state, from Pittsfield to Lowell to Dedham.

Sited directly to the left, or south, of the church is the rectory. Although constructed around the same time, in the late 1870s, the rectory is more ornate than the church building. Brick with red sandstone trim, the rectory features a mansard roof. The centered entry is highlighted by a two-story projecting gabled pavilion. A round tower on the right corner of the façade and full-height polygonal bays on the

side elevations break up the massing of the building. Ornate details such as brick corbelling at the cornice, heavy sandstone lintels and sills on the windows, and several sandstone belt courses accent the building.

The architect of the rectory was Thomas Mann, an architect with more of a local focus and only three entries in MACRIS, all for commercial blocks in Holyoke. Mann also designed the now-demolished school and convent that had been part of the complex.

Finally, to the west of the church and rectory is a recreation hall, constructed in 1929 to designs by architect John W. Donohue. The brick building has a six-bay façade with projecting bays at either end featuring an entry door. The four middle bays were historically large arched windows divided by brick piers topped by sandstone capitals, with rows of smaller windows lining the side elevations. The building features a simple Classical Revival style, with a rusticated sandstone basement, sandstone lintels, and sandstone belt courses encircling the building below a low, plain parapet.

John William Donohue was a native of Springfield and was appointed the architect for the Diocese of Springfield in the early 20th century. He has over 70 entries in MACRIS, including 30 churches and an assortment of other related buildings such as convents and schools.

The Sacred Heart complex is representative of the waves of immigrants who have settled in Holyoke since the mid-19th century. The church was originally constructed after St. Jerome's parish, located in the downtown core, was split. Sacred Heart was constructed to serve the numerous Irish immigrants moving into the Churchill neighborhood of the city in the late 19th century. By 1905, additional parishes had been spun off of St. Jerome's, leaving the city with eight separate parishes in a city of 50,000 residents. However, as the city's Irish population declined and was replaced by Hispanic and Latin American residents in the late 20th century, the parish transitioned to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Our Lady of Guadalupe was closed in March of 2017 after plaster fell from the ceiling inside the church. The church has been vacant since then. In 2021, the Diocese of Springfield announced that Our Lady of Guadalupe would be merged back into St. Jerome's parish, along with the parish of Immaculate Conception. The City has heard that the diocese is planning to pursue demolition after marketing the buildings for sale resulted in no offers.

The city has lost several of its late 19th and early 20th century churches to demolition or fire in recent years, one of the most prominent being the demolition of Mater Dolorosa in 2018 at the far other end of Maple Street in downtown Holyoke.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Preliminary Study Report for the Sacred Heart Local Historic District and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the City of Holyoke to establish the Sacred Heart Local Historic District.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the protection of additional significant historic resources through a larger district or additional local historic districts.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Landmark Study Report for the **Sacred Heart Local Historic District in Holyoke**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner McDowell and SECONDED by Commissioner Ceccacci. The Chair called for questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The Chair then called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

This concluded the voting. Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, **Preview of the June 14, 2023 National Register Nominations**, and recognized Liz King, National Register Assistant, who informed the commission that there would be seven nominations on the agenda for the June 14 meeting. Copies of the nominations will be sent to the Commissioners about two weeks prior to the meeting.

The Seven Nominations Are:

Boston, (Roxbury) Elm Hill Avenue – Georgia Street – Cheney Street Historic District

Boston, (Roxbury) Homestead Street Apartments Historic District

Boston, Repertory Theatre of Boston

Cambridge, John Winthrop Chambers

Fall River, Ashworth Brothers Inc.

Lynn, Lynn Item Building

Worcester, Worcester Young Women's Christian Association

The Chairman thanked Ms. King for the preview of the National Register agenda for June, and he then turned to the next item on the agenda, the **Executive Director's Report**. He then recognized Brona Simon, Executive Director.

Ms. Simon began by reporting that selection of MPPF Round 29 grant awards will be voted on at the Commission's June 14th meeting. She indicated that Commissioner volunteers will be needed to serve on the MPPF subcommittee for a subcommittee meeting in the morning of June 14th before the full commission meeting. The June 14th subcommittee and full Commission meetings will be virtual meetings. Commissioners DeWitt, McDowell and Kleespies volunteered to serve on the MPPF subcommittee. The subcommittee will report its recommendations to the full commission meeting in the afternoon for votes on the recommended awards.

That concluded the Executive Director's report.

The Chair then called for any new business. The Chairman then informed the Commissioners on the resolution of the remote meeting provisions. Those were passed as part of the supplemental budget described in the previous Commission meeting in March. They were passed essentially as an extension of the existing provision until March 31, 2025. He stated we have another two years on the remote meeting option and we will continue in the same format for some time.

The Chairman then asked if any Commissioners had any other new business. Hearing none, he called for a MOTION to adjourn. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Friary and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The MOTION CARRIED, and the meeting adjourned at 1:26pm.

Commissioners Present

John Rosenberry

Dennis DeWitt

Michael McDowell

Susan Ceccacci

Donald Friary

Simone Early

Mark Wilson

Ashley Stolba

Gavin Kleespies

Anne Pride

Staff Present

Brona Simon

Jennifer Doherty

Michael Steinitz

Ben Haley

Elizabeth Sherva

Peter Stott

Paul Holtz

Nancy Alexson

Shari Perry-Wallace

Liz King

A TRUE COPY ATTEST

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Brown