

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

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

17/31	Reading		349
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Town: Reading

Place: (*neighborhood or village*) Downtown

Photograph



Address: 37 Ash Street

Historic Name: Methodist Church/American Legion

Uses: Present: meeting hall

Original: church

Date of Construction: 1869

Source: *At Wood End*, p. 110

Style/Form: Italianate/Stick Style/Col. Revival (alt.)

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

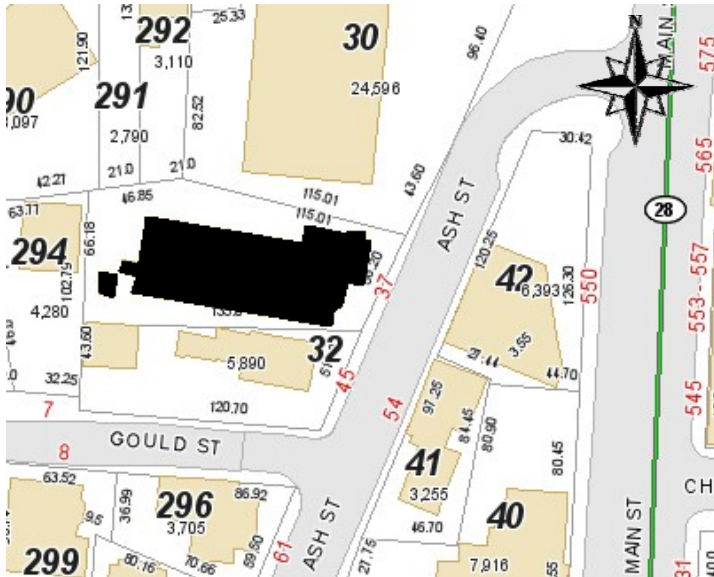
Wall/Trim: vinyl siding

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

none

Topographic or Assessor's Map



Major Alterations (*with dates*):

c.1886 – addition of front bay window, rear additions
1919 – renovations including front porch
late 20th c. – siding, new windows, porch rebuilt, fire damage

Condition: fair (due to siding)

Moved: no | x | yes | | **Date** _____

Acreage: 0.22 acre

Setting: mixed downtown area

Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Reading Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2010

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AUG 20 2010
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INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

READING

37 Ash Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

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

Originally constructed as a church, 37 Ash Street was originally a simple 2½-story gablefront structure which has seen various additions and alterations over the years. In the 1880s various alterations were made including the addition of stickwork and the two-story, three-sided bay window at the center of the gablefront (see historic photo on next page). A single-story porch supported by square posts with a roof balustrade was added later (probably about 1919). The current porch is a modern rebuild. The original double-hung windows have been replaced with modern picture windows and casement units. The front doors are modern glass units in metal frames.

In the front yard are several monuments and artifacts including a stone marker commemorating “departed comrades” from World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam; a bronze plaque mounted on a flat stone reading “In memory of our comrades of World War II and Korea action” and a machine gun.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

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.

This building was originally constructed in 1869 as a church for the Methodist Society. The building was dedicated on July 1, 1869. In 1886 the congregation had grown to such a point that the original building was no longer adequate. The Methodist Society purchased the Old South building from the Congregationalists and took possession of the property on January 16, 1887 (*At Wood End*: 110).

During the late 19th and early 20th century the building housed the Reading Athletic Club which was formed in 1886. The club's facilities included a gymnasium, dance hall, parlor, whist room, bowling alley, shooting gallery, reading rooms, bath rooms and dressing rooms (Palmer:48).

In 1919 Wesley Davis, chairman of the local Red Cross, purchased the building as a “Victory House” for soldiers returning from World War I. Renovations were made to the building according to plans by local architects, Adden & Parker (Adams). On November 11, 1919 Davis turned the building over to the local American Legion (Post 62) which still owns and utilizes the building today. A two-alarm fire in 1975 nearly destroyed the building.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Adams, Virginia. Information on Adden & Parker, Dec. 2009.

Palmer, Ed. *Reading, Massachusetts: Then and now*. Turner Publishing Co., 1999.

Reading Public Library, NOBLE Digital Library Archive.

Reading 350th Book Committee. *At Wood End – Reading, Massachusetts 1644-1994, A Pictorial History*, 1994, p. 110.

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hdl:10262/5219

Earliest known (c.1894) photo of 37 Ash Street during use by Reading Athletic Club.
Note original church windows still extant at that time at rear of side elevation.

Source: Reading Public Library,
NOBLE Digital Library Archive

BUILDING INSPECTION DEPARTMENT—DISTRICT POLICE
PLAN RECORD

CASE D RACK 4 APART. 6 NO. 14950 ✓

BUILDING Victory House STORIES 2B

CITY OR TOWN Reading STREET Ash

TO BE USED FOR Social purposes CLASS Misc

OWNER Board of Trustees Hall

ARCHITECT Adden & Parker Wood

~~CERTIFICATE APPROVAL—SPECIFICATION REQUIREMENTS~~ REFERRED

DATE April 4th, 1919

INSPECTOR Lewis

FORM 41. 10,000. 2-2-18.