FORM B – BUILDING

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

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
35/126	Reading		377

Town: Reading

Place: *(neighborhood or village)*

Address: 312 Haverhill Street

Historic Name: St. Athanasius Church

Uses: Present: religious

Original: religious

Date of Construction: 1960

Source: *At Wood End,* p. 115

Style/Form: Contemporary

Architect/Builder: Scibelli and Tully

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: brick, concrete

Roof: concrete

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Parish house (1976), school (c.1995)

Major Alterations *(with dates):*

Condition: good

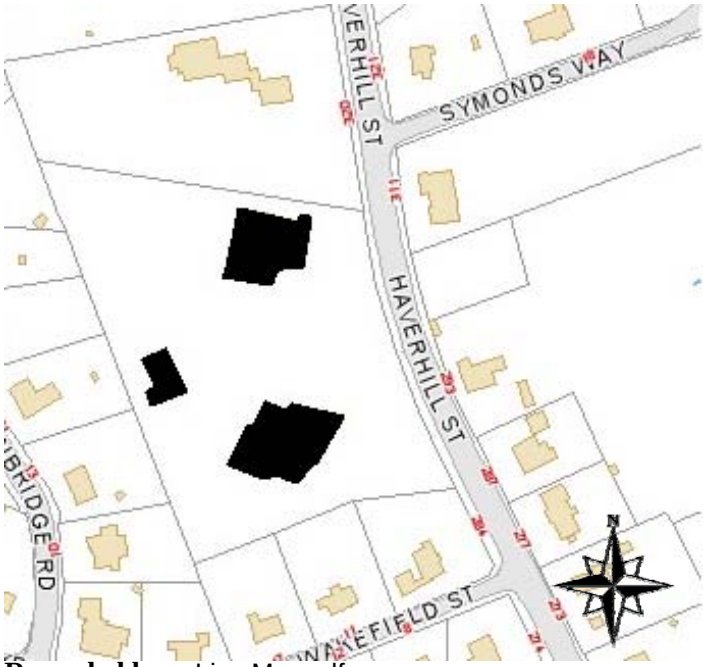
Moved: **no** | x | **yes** | | **Date** _____

Acreage: 4.3 acres

Setting: mixed residential

Photograph

Topographic or Assessor's Map



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Reading Historical Commission

Date (*month / year)*: December 2009

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

_X_ 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.

A rhombus in plan, St. Athanasius Church is a contemporary style church measuring approximately 120 feet by 155 feet, topped by a hyperbolic paraboloid or “saddle” roof. A saddle roof is one which follows a convex curve about one axis and a concave curve about the other. When completed, this was the largest concrete thin shell (3”) hyperbolic paraboloid structure in the western hemisphere. The walls are constructed of brick and large windows fill the sharp angled projection at the east end of the structure, facing the street. The main entrance is recessed in the single-story flat-roofed section which fronts the east end of the church, echoing the angle of the roof above.

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.

The parish of Saint Athanasius, named after a third century Bishop, was founded in 1960 to serve the spiritual needs of the growing east side of the Town of Reading.

St. Athanasius Church was designed by the Melrose firm of Louis A. Scibelli and Daniel F. Tully in 1959. Excavation began in 1960, the construction continued for about sixteen months, culminating in the dedication by Richard Cardinal Cushing in 1962.

The church, when designed, was the largest "Hyperbolic Paraboloid" roof shell in the Western Hemisphere and perhaps the world at that time. Its stained glass windows were fabricated by Tolleri of Florence, Italy from the designs of Scibelli and Tully. The original altar was designed to be in the abstract form of an Alpha and Omega symbolic of the quote in the gospel "I am the beginning and the end." The "screen" [the lattice wall, no longer there] between the seats and the inner lobby was specifically designed to provide insight to the constant change once felt by the churchgoer on entering through the front doors into the compressed space of the Narthex.

Among the other buildings designed by Scibelli and Tully are St. Malachy’s Roman Catholic Church at 99 Bedford Street in Burlington (1963) and St. Timothy’s in Norwood (1963). Louis A. Scibellli (1923-1997) passed away in Melrose in 1997.

Daniel F. Tully was educated at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London and in 1951 attended MIT, studying Building Construction Engineering. He later studied at Auburn and returned to MIT in 1965. He was first licensed to practice as a structural engineer in 1959 and in 1963 received his license to practice architecture. From 1970 to present he has owned Tully International Master Builders. Specializing in the design and construction of complex structures, his designs have included a concrete hangar for the U.S. Coast Guard, a large concrete service building for the Caterpillar Tractor Company, the newspaper plant of the Holyoke Transcript Telegram, full or partial underground concrete buildings with rooftop football fields for Georgetown, Brown and the University of Rochester and more than thirty churches. Specializing in sports and recreation facility planning, he designed and built over one hundred university and secondary school buildings in the US including many competition ice rinks and Olympic swimming pools as well as the National Basketball Arena in Dublin, Ireland. In 1984 Tully was selected by *Engineering News Record* as one of the ten best engineers in the world for his landmark work on the Brown University Olney Margolies Athletic Building. He also specializes in construction dispute resolution services and currently lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

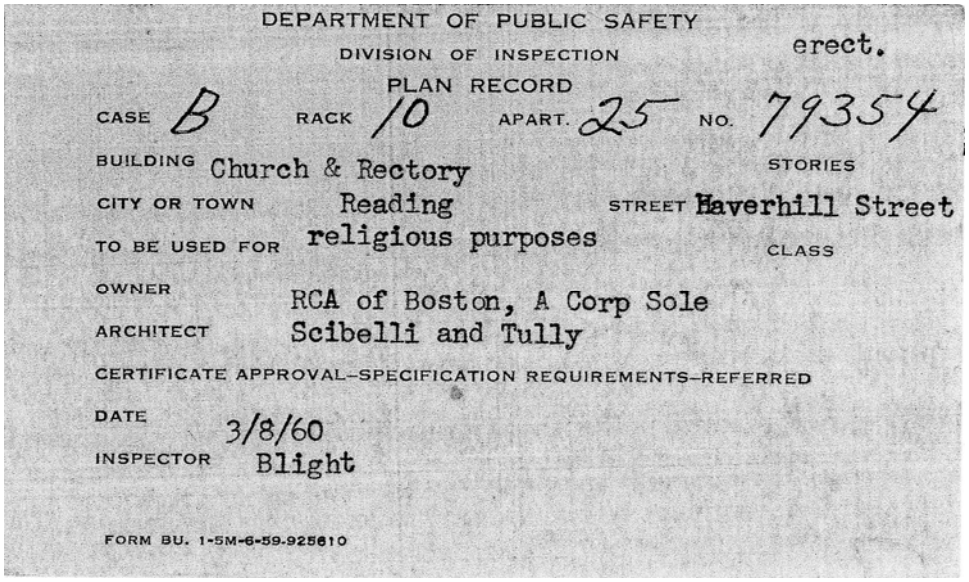
BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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

http://www.rc.net/boston/stathanasius/history.htm

http://www.tullyinternational.com/html/religious.html

http://www.constructiondisputes-cdrs.com



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
DIVISION OF INSPECTION
PLAN RECORD

CASE B RACK 10 APART. 25 NO. 79354

BUILDING Church & Rectory erect. STORIES

CITY OR TOWN Reading STREET Haverhill Street

TO BE USED FOR religious purposes CLASS

OWNER RCA of Boston, A Corp Sole

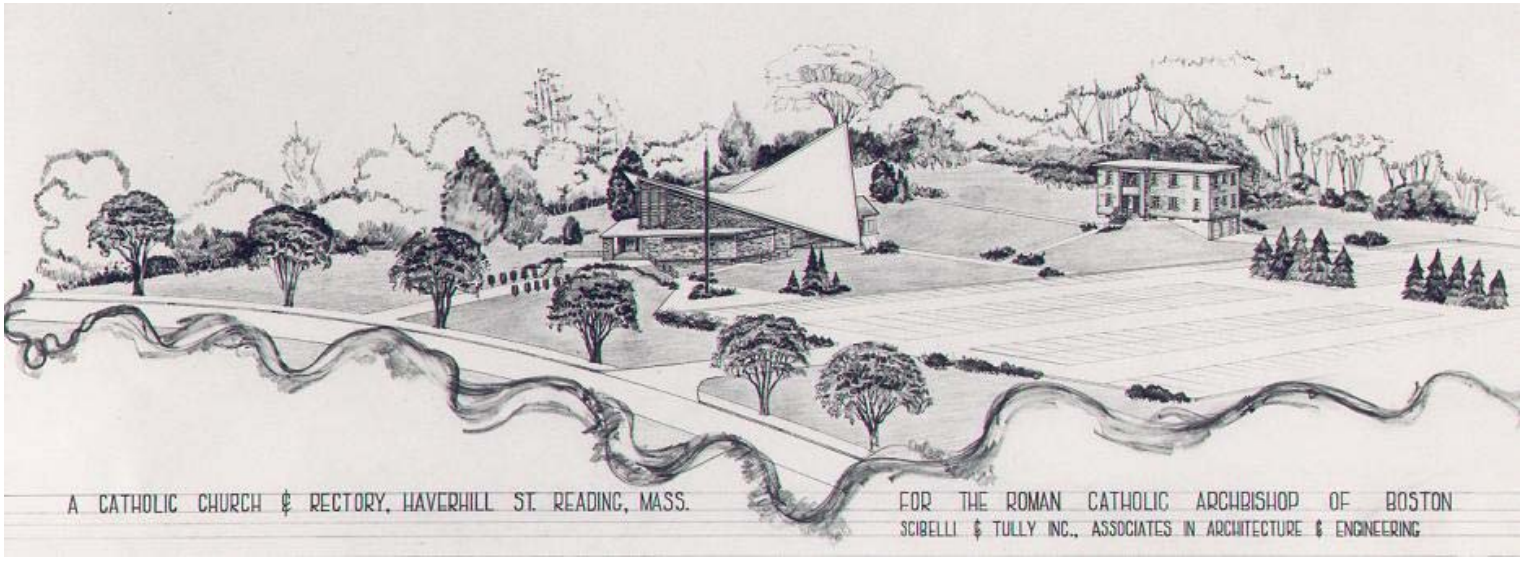
ARCHITECT Scibelli and Tully

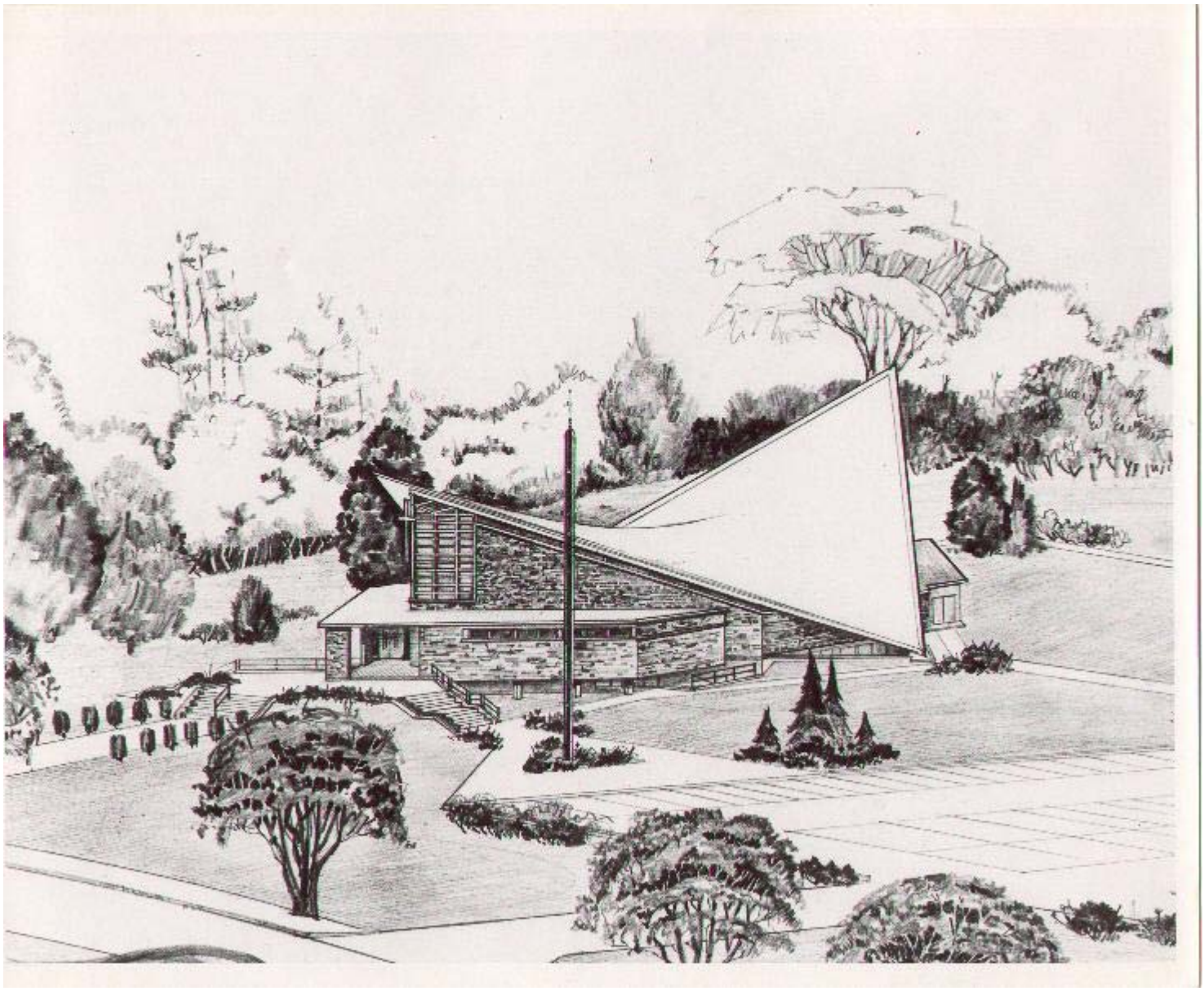
CERTIFICATE APPROVAL–SPECIFICATION REQUIREMENTS–REFERRED

DATE 3/8/60

INSPECTOR Blight

FORM BU. 1-5M-6-59-925610


A CATHOLIC CHURCH & RECTORY, HAVERHILL ST. READING, MASS.
FOR THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF BOSTON
SCIBELLI & TULLY INC., ASSOCIATES IN ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING



Source: St. Athanasius website

St. Malachy's Church, Burlington

St. Timothy's Church, Norwood

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

Community	Property Address
READING	312 HAVERHILL STREET

Area(s)	Form No.
	377

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible **only** in a historic district

☐ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☐ **A** ☐ **B** ☒ **C** ☐ **D**

Criteria Considerations: ☒ **A** ☐ **B** ☐ **C** ☐ **D** ☐ **E** ☐ **F** ☐ **G**

Statement of Significance by Lisa Mausolf
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

When completed in 1960, St. Athanasius Church was the largest concrete thin shell (3") hyperbolic paraboloid structure in the western hemisphere. Although it is a religious property, it is potentially eligible under Criterion C as a noteworthy example of contemporary architecture and more specifically as a landmark example of this construction technique.