



## CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Date: January 22, 2013

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: Charles M. Sullivan, Executive Director *CHS*

Re: Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi Church (315-325 Cambridge Street; 40-42 Sciarappa Street; 74-76 Gore Street) landmark designation report and recommendation

Attached please find the Final Landmark Designation Study Report for the Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi Church at 325 Cambridge Street. On January 3, 2013, the Cambridge Historical Commission voted unanimously to forward this study to the City Council with a recommendation to approve landmark designation.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

**Second Baptist / St. Francis of Assisi Church  
315-325 Cambridge Street, 40-42 Sciarappa Street, and 74-76 Gore Street  
Final Landmark Designation Study Report**

Prepared by Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner  
Cambridge Historical Commission  
January 22, 2013

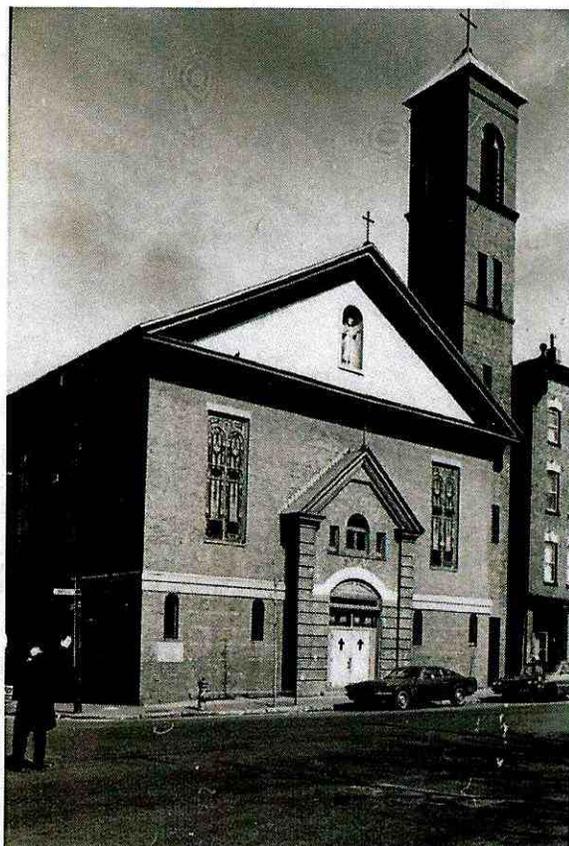


Fig. 1, St. Francis of Assisi Church. CHC survey photo. March 1970.

### Executive Summary

The St. Francis of Assisi Church building at 325 Cambridge Street was constructed in the Greek Revival style in 1837 by the Second Baptist Church. It is the fifth oldest church building existing in the city and the oldest church building in Cambridge in use by a Roman Catholic parish. Its 175-year ownership and history reflect the changing demographics and religious make up of East Cambridge as successive groups entered the community and worshipped in the church, beginning with the Baptists (1827-1908) and continuing, after a brief secular use as a theater, with the St. Francis of Assisi Italian Roman Catholic parish from 1917 to the present day. The church is also important for its associations with Judge Joseph A. DeGuglielmo who served on the City Council and as Mayor and in the city's administration as both city solicitor and manager, Mayor Alred Vellucci, Monsignor Anthony Spinosa, Gerard Scarpone, and other prominent Cantabrigians.

The St. Francis of Assisi Church meets criterion (1) of Article III of the city code for its important associations with the broad architectural, cultural and social history of the city and criterion (2) for its historical and architectural significance in terms of its period and style.

## 1. Location and Economic Status

### A. Address, Parcel Number and Zoning

The St. Francis of Assisi Church complex, with the commonly-used addresses of 325 Cambridge and 42 Sciarappa streets, is located at the corner of Cambridge and Sciarappa streets in East Cambridge. It comprises two parcels identified as Lots 1 and 2 on the Cambridge assessor's Map 21 identified as 315 Cambridge and 40 Sciarappa streets. The lots measure 6,000 and 4,220 square feet, respectively. As a religious structure, the property is not taxed.

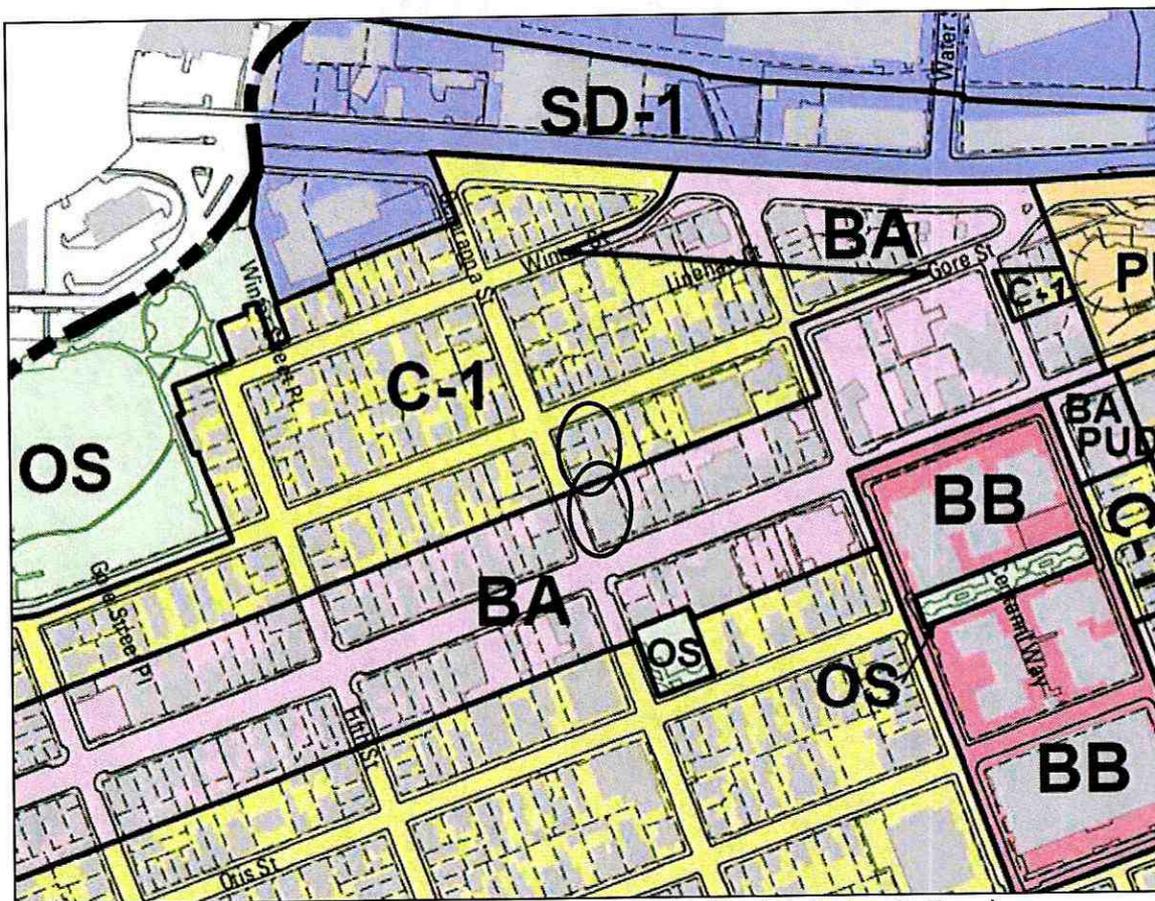


Fig. 2 Cambridge Zoning Map, December 2012. Showing the two St. Francis parcels at the juncture of the Residence C-1 district and the Business A district.

The church and attached rectory on Lot 1 (315 Cambridge street) have an assessed value of \$1.798 million for the building and \$1.02 million for the land. The total assessed value is \$2.818 million. The zoning district for this parcel is Business BA, which allows neighborhood retail and office uses with an FAR of 1.0 and a 35' height limit, or multifamily residences as in C-2B districts, with a 1.75 FAR and a 45' height limit.

An adjoining building, a former fire and police station on Lot 2 (40 Sciarappa Street) has an assessed value of \$989,000 for the building and \$341,800, for the land, for a total

assessed value of \$1,330,800. This parcel is located in a Residence C-1 district, which allows multifamily residences with an FAR of .75 and a height limit of 35.'

The combined value of the St. Francis properties is \$4,148,800. The existing buildings are substantially larger than would be allowed under current zoning. Their highest and best use, if not for religious purposes, is probably residential conversion.

#### B. Ownership and Occupancy

Both properties are owned by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. The church has not listed the property for sale on the MLS, though a group of parishioners were informed at a meeting on November 16, 2011 of its anticipated closure. The Cambridge City Council passed an order on November 21, 2011 requesting the City Manager to instruct the Historical Commission to commence a landmark study of the St. Francis properties.

The longtime parish priest at St. Francis, Father Norbert DeAmato, of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate Conception (O.F.M.), became ill and retired in 2011 at age 89. According to the Archdiocese's website, Mass is held at St. Francis Church five days a week (twice on Sundays). However, the administration of the parish was consolidated in 2011 with that of St. Anthony of Padua Church, a Portuguese parish on Cardinal Medeiros Avenue. The O.F.M. did not provide a full time permanent replacement for Father DeAmato, and the Archdiocese assigned Father Walter Carreiro of St. Anthony's to be responsible for the St. Francis of Assisi parish. Archbishop Sean O'Malley determined that St. Anthony's would be the welcoming parish, rather than Sacred Heart Church (also in East Cambridge), for the parishioners of St. Francis. (Letter of Fr. Carreiro in the November 27, 2011 St. Anthony's church bulletin).

In November 2012, the Archbishop accepted the Disciples in Mission – A Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese of Boston, and further information about the phased implementation of this plan is expected to be issued, beginning in January 2013. This plan includes the grouping of multiple parishes into larger collaboratives, while maintaining "parish identity...buildings, canonical rights, financial assets and obligations." (Carreiro letter, St. Francis parish church bulletin, December 23, 2012)

According to attorney Marie Elena Saccoccio, who is also St. Francis of Assisi parishioner, a non-profit group, the Friends of Saint Francis of Assisi, has been formed to raise funds for legal fees and for certain continuing activities of the parish. This group has retained the services of two lawyers, Carlo and Alessia Gullo, who specialize in Canon law. The friends group plans to file an appeal in the event that the Archdiocese proceeds with official measures to close the church, though no official date for closure has been announced.

#### C. Area Description

The St. Francis of Assisi church building fronts on Cambridge Street, the busy commercial artery of East Cambridge. The rectory addition at the rear of the church

fronts on the cross street, Sciarappa Street, which is primarily residential in character. The adjacent parish house building at 42 Sciarappa Street was originally the city's Engine 3/Station 3 fire and police station house. This building is in an L configuration with a former stable facing Gore Street. Gore Street is also primarily residential, though it used to host a school and convent associated with St. Francis of Assisi Church.

#### D. Planning Issues

The immediate issue confronting the property is whether the Archdiocese will move to close and sell the church. Landmark study and/or designation has no bearing on this decision, which lies with the church as owner and Canon law proceedings. Redevelopment in an urban location such as this would no doubt raise abutter interest and potential concerns about construction and parking impacts, change of use or intensity of use. The Cambridge residential real estate market appears to be recovering with the number of small redevelopment applications increasing, with several larger institutional to residential adaptive re-use projects and new construction of offices and laboratory space underway or entering the market at this time. If offered for sale, it seems likely that the Archdiocese would find a buyer who would propose residential re-use of the buildings.

While re-use by a new church congregation would likely mean fewer physical changes proposed for the buildings, other Roman Catholic churches in Cambridge have been sold by the Archdiocese with deed restrictions allowing only non-religious use after de-sanctification by the Roman Catholic Church. The Immaculate Conception Lithuanian church on Windsor Street was sold to Just-A-Start Corp. in 2007 with the restriction that the premises were to be used "only for residential housing" and that they were not to be used for a "church, chapel, or other house of religious worship," an abortion clinic or counseling service, or an embryonic stem cell research facility.

E. Map



Fig. 3. St. Francis Church and Rectory (Map 21-Lot 1 in orange) and the former Engine 3 and Station 3 (Map 21-Lot 2 in yellow). Cambridge GIS, 2011

## II. Description

### A. Type and Use

The St. Francis of Assisi Church was constructed as a church in 1838 by the Second Baptist Church and has been used in that capacity since that time, except for a brief period in the 1910s when it was leased and used as a motion picture theater.

The church consists of several parts, built at different times and adapted gradually for church use. The main building houses a large sanctuary space on the first floor and a raised basement which originally housed the Sunday School rooms for the Baptist congregation and now houses a small chapel, large auditorium, and other support spaces for St. Francis of Assisi Church. An addition constructed by the Second Baptist Church extended the building by 28 feet on the north side in 1890-1891 for such spaces as robing rooms, the pastor's study, and the baptistery. This addition was altered by St. Francis of Assisi Church for use as the rectory. The former municipal building next door at 40 Sciarappa Street was constructed in 1871 and used for many years as a combined fire and police station with a ward room above, which was later adapted as a branch library for East Cambridge. A stable was added at right angles to the back of the station house with its entrance on Gore Street. Both these buildings were acquired by the Archdiocese and adaptively used by the parish as offices, meeting rooms, and recreation space. In late 2011, the rectory and parish office were closed, and the office administration was consolidated with that of St. Anthony's Church at 400 Cardinal Medeiros Avenue. Recent parish bulletins indicate that the St. Francis rectory is again being used as a residence, for visiting missionaries.

### B. Physical Description

#### **Church and Rectory**

St. Francis of Assisi Church is a brick, two-story building constructed in the Greek Revival style in 1838.<sup>1</sup> It measured 54' wide by 70' long with a steeple, the top of which was 86' above the ground. The church was organized into three bays across the front and four bays deep on the Fourth Street elevation. The original window sashes were double hung with multiple small lights. Two symmetrically-placed doors were centered on the facade. The sanctuary could accommodate 500 people. The basement contained a vestry at the back and two Sunday school rooms at the front (later leased as commercial space). The original ornamentation was kept to a minimum and featured classical elements such as a full pediment with raking cornice and paired modillions, a heavy water table above the basement story, and a round louvered vent in the gable end (see Fig. 4).

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<sup>1</sup> The original frame church building had been built by the Second Baptist Church in 1827 on the same site, but burned in the spring of 1837. The former building was 46' x 66' with a 100' spire. The church was soon rebuilt in brick, a more fireproof material.

In 1852, the congregation made repairs to the building and added a baptistery, due to the fact that it had become difficult to find access to an outdoor location suitable for baptizing new members. (Donallan, p. 57) The church's first organ was also added at this time.

In 1868, the church embellished both the interior and exterior of the church, indicating that the congregation was flourishing. A brick entrance vestibule was constructed at the center front, and stained glass windows replaced the clear lights. New curved pews and frescoed walls decorated the inside, and a new choir gallery was constructed. The wood steeple was made 75' taller, for a total height of 125' above grade.



Fig. 4. Second Baptist Church, 325 Cambridge Street in 1864 with the 16<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry returning home.

The Baptist church celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in 1887, and soon embarked on further physical alterations. In 1890, Boston architect Walter T. Paine raised the building three to four feet to increase the capacity of the basement Sunday school from 200 to 500 students. The organ and choir gallery were moved from the street side of the church to the rear behind the pulpit. A rectory addition at 42 Sciarappa Street extended the church to the north and accommodated a large parlor, study, robing rooms,

and a larger baptistery. In the second half of the nineteenth century, two retail spaces fronting on Cambridge Street were inserted into the ground floor level. The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company market occupied the corner spot for several years and a fruit stand occupied the storefront on the right side. See historic photographs. The stores were removed during later alterations of St. Francis of Assisi Church.

Further modifications were made to the church after the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston purchased the property in January 1917. The Franciscans were assigned responsibility for the parish, and they remodeled the church in 1917, 1932, and again in 1967 for St. Francis of Assisi Church's golden anniversary. Further alterations were made in 1973. Initial alterations were largely on the interior and the church was dedicated and blessed on April 1, 1917 (Palm Sunday).

Additional stained glass windows were installed in 1922 and then in 1931 the church suffered a fire that prompted significant repairs and alterations in 1932 including removal of the wood steeple and construction of a brick campanile with round arches in the belfry on the right side of the building, construction of the small chapel on the ground floor, and installation of a statue of St. Francis in a round arched niche in the gable end. Interior renovations were completed in 1973.

### **Fire/Police Station House and Stable**

The East Cambridge fire and police station at 40 Sciarappa Street was built in 1871. It served both departments until a new engine house was built at Third and Otis streets in 1892.<sup>2</sup> The three-story brick, Bracketed-Italianate style station house features a round window in a central gable that projects through the heavy wood cornice. The cornice detail includes tightly spaced brackets and wood dentils. The windows are ornamented with heavy limestone hoods and sills.

In 1892, the building was remodeled as a police station and branch library. A brick two-story stable for the police wagon was built in 1893 on Gore Street and connected to the original building by a new cell block; police officers slept upstairs and used the fire pole to reach the ground floor. The stable was designed by architect C. Herbert McClare with a large brick arched opening for the wagon entrance and two smaller arched doorways on either side. The stable has a high parapet wall above the second floor and unusual corner pinnacles. (See Fig. 9).

The library occupied the second floor of the station house, where the Ward Room had been. (See Figures 5 and 6) These police and library uses continued until the city opened the Valente branch library on Cambridge Street in 1938 and closed neighborhood police stations in 1941, after which the building was sold to the Archdiocese and used for recreational purposes and as a residence. The upper floors of the building remain intact, while the ground floor has been altered several times. The jail cells are reportedly still

<sup>2</sup> The engine house at Third and Otis streets was razed to allow construction of the Registry of Deeds and a new fire station was constructed at Third and Gore streets in 1895.

evident in the basement of building. (Marie Elena Saccoccio e-mail of 1 January 2013, describing her conversation with Father Norbert about the building).

The brick stable on Gore Street remains in substantially original condition, except that the large stable door was bricked closed in 1951. Its original form, however, is still clearly visible. (Fig. 9).



Fig. 5. Engine 3/ Police Station 3, 40 Sciarappa Street in 1883 with personnel and equipment.

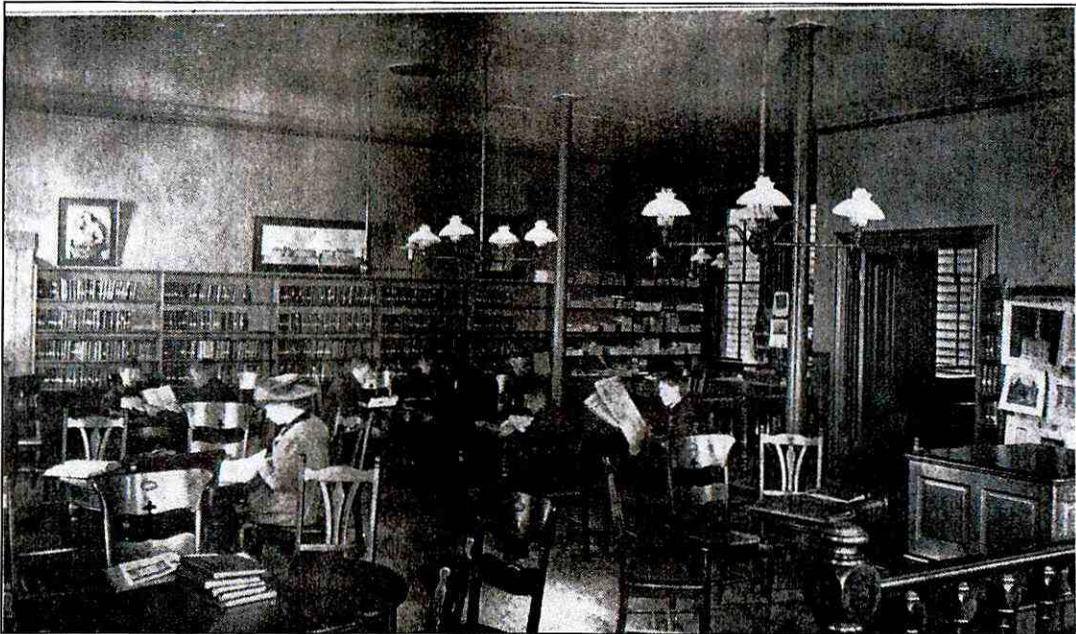


Fig. 6. East Cambridge Branch Library, second floor of 40 Sciarappa Street, ca. 1892.

## C. Contemporary Photographs

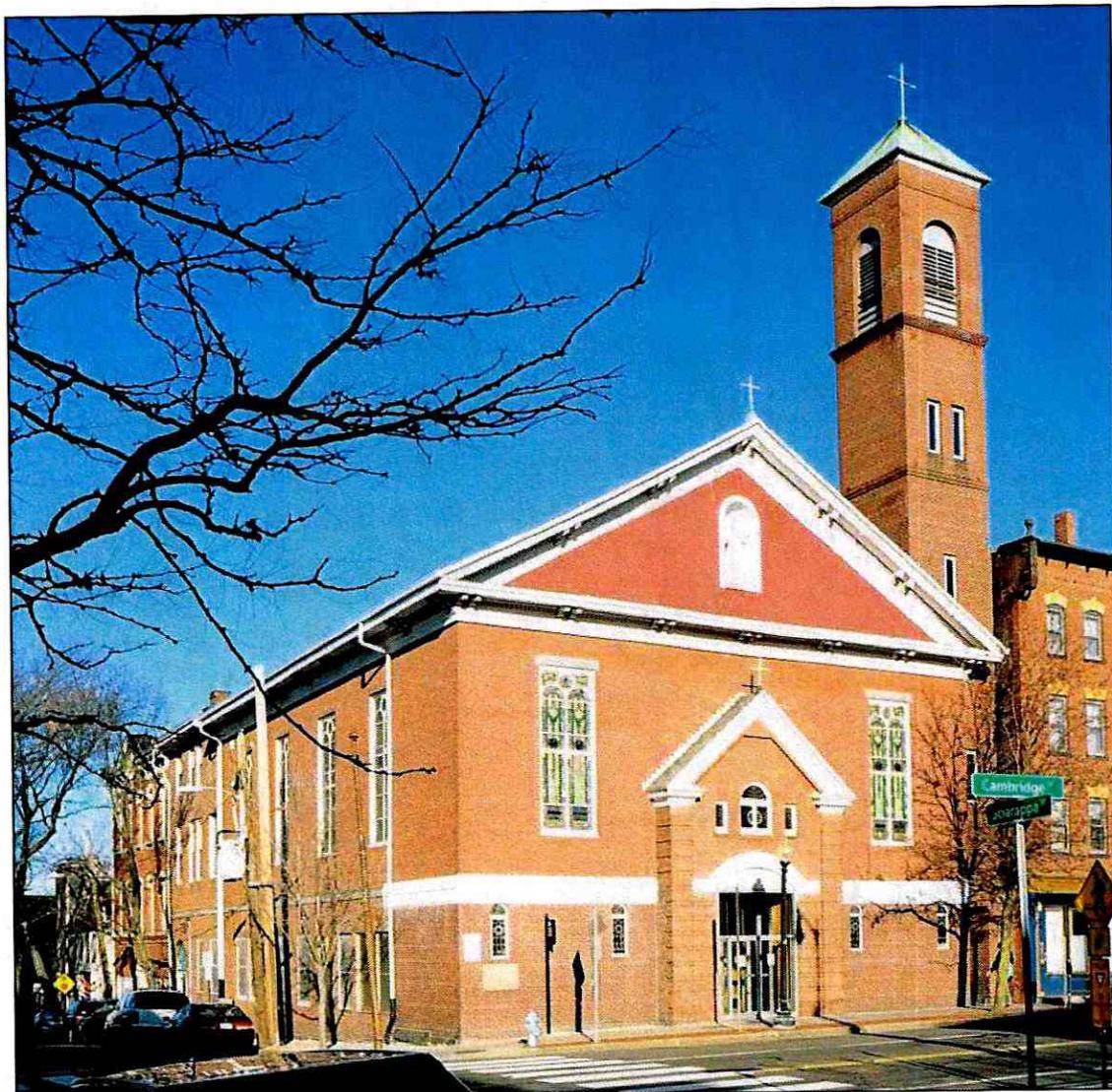


Fig. 7. St. Francis of Assisi Church, 325 Cambridge Street (1837-38 construction; 1868 and 1890 alterations; 1931 campanile). CHC photo, Dec. 2011.

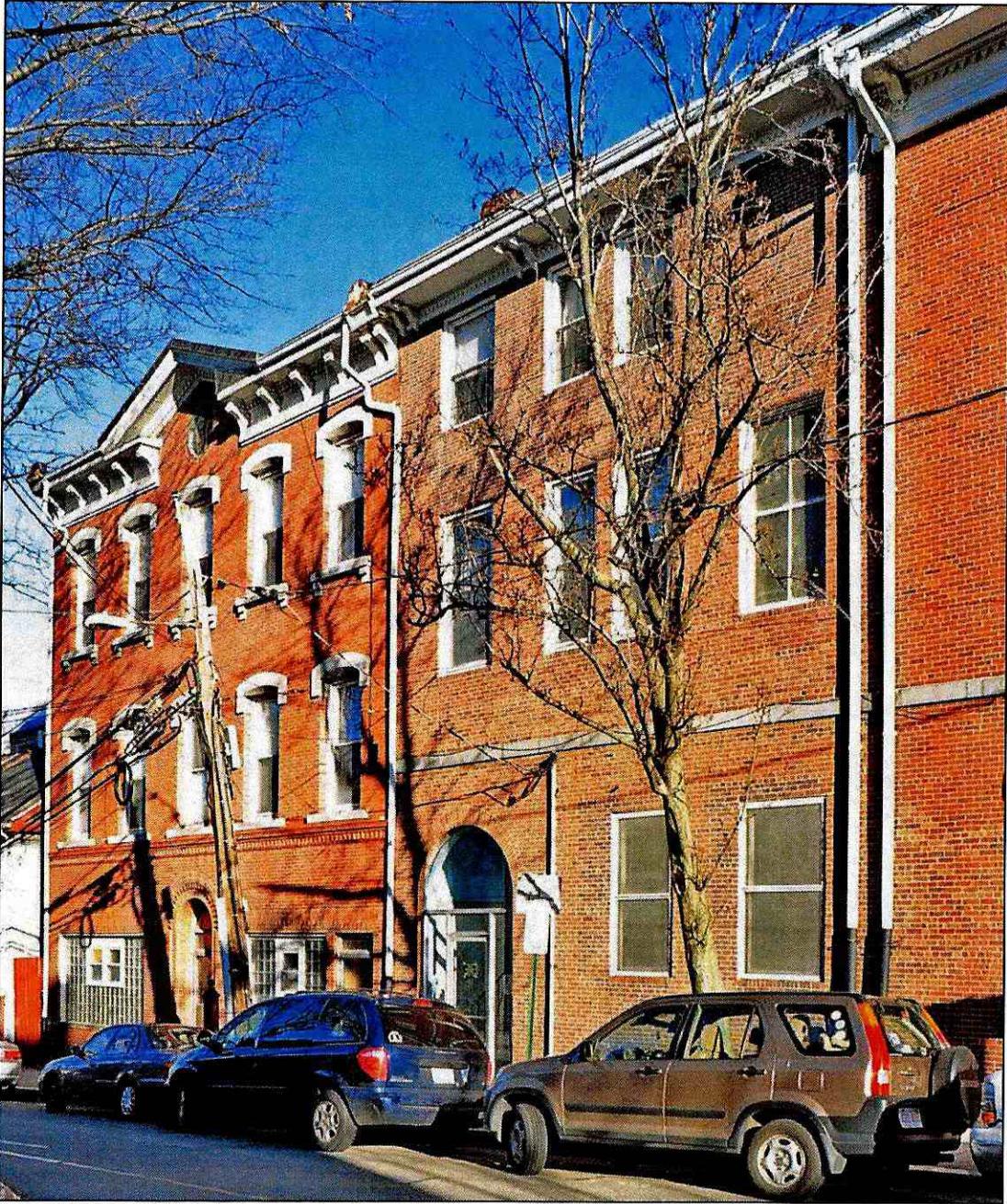


Fig. 8. Former Engine 3/Station 3, 40 Sciarappa St. (1871), left, and the St. Francis rectory (1890), center. CHC photo, Dec. 2011.



Fig. 9. Former Station 3 stable, 74-76 Gore Street (1893, C. Herbert McClare, architect).  
CHC photo, Dec. 2011.

### III. History of the Property

#### A. Historic Development Patterns

##### 1. Deed History

The lot at the northeast corner of Cambridge and Sciarappa streets (Assessor's Map 21/Lot 1) was acquired by William W. Blake and Nathaniel R. Cobb on behalf of the Cambridge Baptist Society in 1827 from Edmund Munroe (Book 283/Page 95). It was on this site that a wood church and Sunday school building was constructed. When the church burned down ten years later, it was replaced by the present brick structure.

The rear portion of the Cambridge Street lot was leased to Sylvia Boutelle in 1856 (Book 730/Page 421), and a wood dwelling was erected on the site. The house was demolished or moved and the land was taken back by 1890 when the church built the brick addition at 42 Sciarappa Street.

Due to dwindling numbers in the congregation attributable to older members dying off and younger members moving out of East Cambridge, the Second Baptist Church defaulted on a mortgage deed given to Andrew Robertson in 1890 (Book 2010/Page 149) and later assigned to the North Avenue Savings Bank (Book 3020/Page 258). The property was sold at public auction in 1908 and conveyed to Dudley P. Bailey, the highest bidder at a price of \$8,204.00 (Book 3383/ Page 197). Bailey was a director of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society and a prominent citizen of Everett.

With funds raised from the new parishioners, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston purchased the church property on January 8, 1917 from Josephine M. Hicks, Trustee (South Middlesex Registry of Deeds, Book 4109, Page 397).

The second property purchased by the Archbishop of Boston for the St. Francis of Assisi Church (Map 21/Lot 2) was acquired from the City of Cambridge on July 16, 1943. (Book 6693/Page 147). This L-shaped lot accommodated the Fire Engine 3/Police Station 3 house at 40 Sciarappa Street and the attached brick stable facing Gore Street. Both buildings were remodeled by the church for meeting space and recreation facilities.

##### 2. Development History of Parcel and Surroundings

The history of ownership of the church is a reflection of the development history of the East Cambridge neighborhood itself. Historically in New England, church formation indicated the maturity of a settled community. Construction of the Second Baptist Church in 1827 can be seen as a valid measure of the community's growth and strength.

East Cambridge in 1827 was a comparatively young community. Prior to the opening of the Canal (or Craigie's) Bridge in 1809, on the site of present-day Charles River Dam and

Monsignor O'Brien Highway, East Cambridge was a virtually unpopulated area of low-lying, tidal flats and marsh, chiefly valued for its salt hay and isolated from the main settlement at Old Cambridge. Its development was the result of the speculative efforts of Andrew Craigie, who began acquiring land for buildings, roads, and a bridgehead to Boston after the opening of the West Boston (now Longfellow) Bridge in 1793 proved the benefits of enhanced access between Boston's markets and the farmland to the west.

Craigie began purchasing large tracts of land in East Cambridge in 1795 and in 1805 petitioned the General Court for permission to build the Canal Bridge. In 1810, after the bridge had opened, Craigie and his investors incorporated as the Lechmere Point Corporation. Craigie and the proprietors of the Lechmere Point Corporation owned most of the land east of Portland Street, which they subdivided on a grid plan in 1811 and offered for sale. In 1813, the Lechmere Point proprietors offered Middlesex County land and funds to build a new courthouse and in 1816, the Middlesex County Courthouse relocated from Harvard Square to East Cambridge.

The presence of the new courthouse, the growth of a major local industry (the New England Glass Company, 1818), and the area's proximity to Boston underpinned sales of the proprietors' residential holdings and the village's population grew. In 1823, East Cambridge's population was estimated to be 1,000. The village's first school was built in 1818 and its first church, the Ebenezer Chapel (Methodist), was built in 1823 at the corner of Third and Cambridge streets.

That the Methodists were the first church organized in the neighborhood is indicative of the area's "newcomer" status. The orthodox Congregational church of early New England was, by the 1820s, losing ground to alternative religions; Methodism, which had strong historical links to the artisan and working classes and an "outsider" status as a "dissenting" religion, would have been appealing to the newly-settled, laboring population of East Cambridge.

The Baptists soon followed the Methodists into East Cambridge. Baptists were also considered an outsider faith in the early nineteenth century. Full immersion baptism of adults was not in favor with other protestant denominations that preferred to baptize infants, and Christian evangelism, then as now, did not come naturally to staid Yankees. In 1824, a group of Baptists started a Sunday school in an upper room of the Putnam School.<sup>3</sup> This Sunday school was aimed at reaching the children of the immigrant laborers of the neighborhood (primarily Irish working at the nearby glass factory). Soon after, they also started an evening worship service with visiting preachers once a week, in an attempt to reach some of the adults of the community. The vote deciding to form a permanent congregation in East Cambridge was taken in 1827, when several East Cambridge Baptists decided to establish the Second Baptist Church in Cambridge. Almost immediately they erected a wooden meetinghouse (66 by 46 feet) with a 100-foot spire and a bell on the northeast corner of Cambridge and Fourth (now Sciarappa) streets, the third church to be constructed in East Cambridge.

<sup>3</sup> The first Putnam School was a two-story frame schoolhouse located at the southwest corner of Otis and Fourth streets at the site of the Revolutionary Fort Putnam.

Only ten years later, the original church structure burned in a fire, which is described in the church records:

About midnight the meetinghouse of this church and society was discovered to be on fire in the basement, occupied by the New England Glass Company as a storehouse, and when first observed the fire had made such progress as to render it impossible to save anything from destruction in any part of the building.

Thus, in less than two hours, our beautiful house was reduced to a heap of smoldering ruins, together with all the furniture and bell, the Sabbath School library, and all the furniture of the vestry. (Donallan, 34)

In January 1838, a new brick church was dedicated on the same site. Put up quickly with no architect and a very small budget, the new building was plain but substantial and contained 82 pews seating 500 people. The sanctuary was above a raised basement, where the vestry and classrooms were located. At some point, the two rooms closest to Cambridge Street on the ground floor were adapted from Sunday school rooms to leased commercial space, providing some income to the church. (See Fig. 4).

In 1868, the more prosperous congregation undertook substantial alterations that included a new entrance vestibule, a taller steeple, stained glass windows, and circular pews in the sanctuary. In 1890, another renovation was designed by the Boston architect Walter T. Paine. Paine's plan raised the building three feet to increase the capacity of the basement Sunday school from 200 to 500; he also designed an addition at 42 Sciarappa Street with a parlor, study, robing rooms, and baptistery.

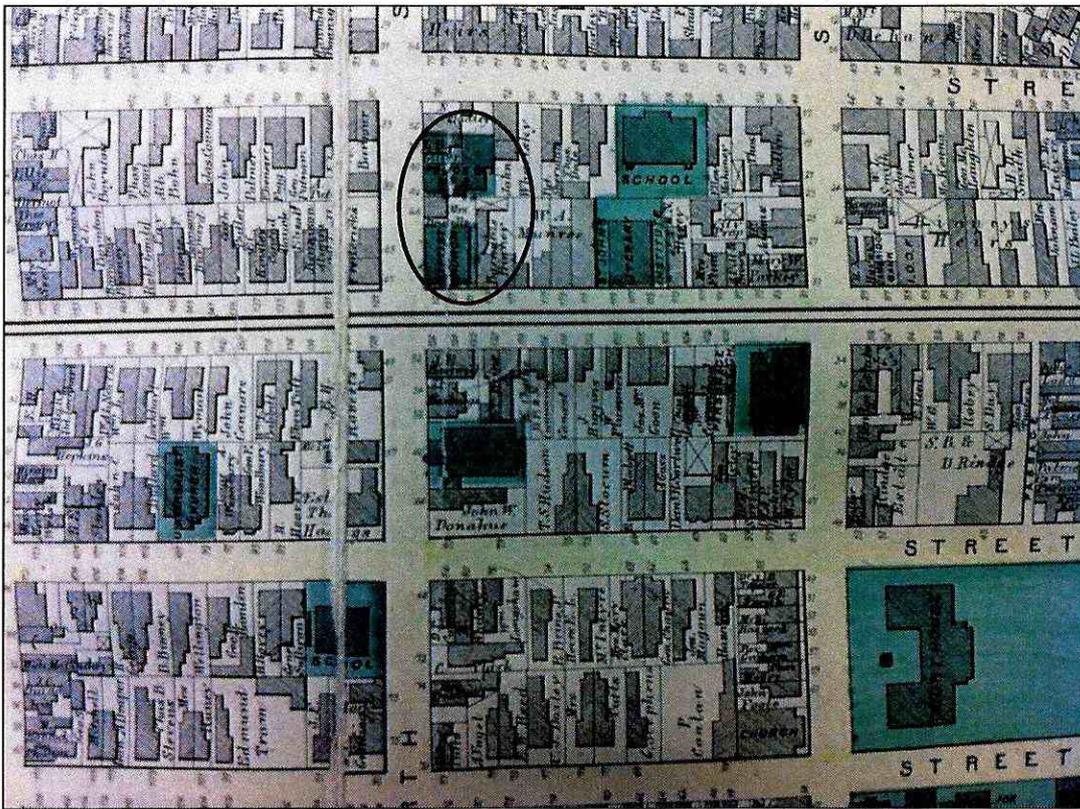
During the second half of the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth century, the demographics of East Cambridge were changing quickly. The neighborhood's American-born founders started to die off or move away from East Cambridge, and a more diverse immigrant population moved into the neighborhood. Early church buildings, which were mostly Protestant, were adapted by new immigrant groups to suit their own traditions and spiritual needs. The Second Baptist Church found itself without a pastor for the second time in two years and was struggling to pay the bills. The Second Baptist Church's early history, written in 1866, relates several such periods of debt, lack of full-time pastoral leadership, and subsequent revivals in the church coffers and membership. But this time proved fatal, and the church dissolved in 1906.

East Cambridge's Italian community was booming by this time. Most Italian immigrants worshipped in the North End of Boston, where mass was offered in the Italian language. With the help of the Franciscan fathers at St. Leonard's Church in Boston, a group of Italian Catholics from East Cambridge appealed to the Archdiocese of Boston to start a new parish in East Cambridge to serve the approximately 4,000 Italian residents there ("Brief History of St. Francis of Assisi Church"). The appeals met with success and the Archbishop purchased the former Second Baptist Church in 1917 for the new Italian parish of St. Francis of Assisi. A large portion of the funds for the purchase came from

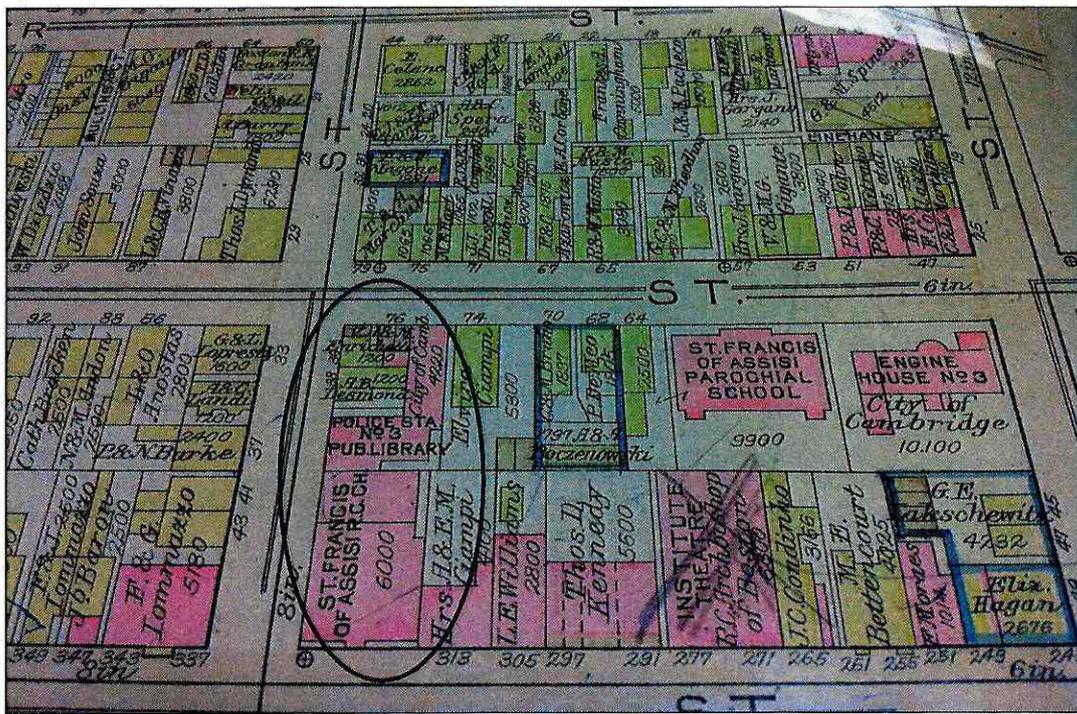
the local East Cambridge families who had petitioned for the parish to be started there. (All in the Same Boat, p. 22).

Manufacturing sustained the neighborhood as an area of working class housing through the mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century, but weakened as factories began to leave the area in the 1950s and '60s. More recently, vacant industrial complexes east of the courthouse and south toward Kendall Square have been adaptively reused for offices as the area re-established itself as a center of technology-based commerce. The award-winning 1981 adaptive reuse of the Superior Courthouse (1848, Ammi Young) by Graham Gund signaled the area's rebirth.

B. Historic Maps



1873 Hopkins Atlas of Cambridge showing churches, schools, and civic buildings in green. The corner of Cambridge, Fourth, and Gore streets circled.



1930 Bromley Atlas of Cambridge, showing the St. Francis church and rectory and adjacent police station/library. The parochial school is visible on the south side of Gore Street.

## IV. Significance of the Property

### A. Historical Significance

The churches of East Cambridge have changed along with its population, but the sites and some of the buildings have remained the same since the 19th century. The earliest congregation was organized in 1818, and three others followed in the 1820s. As elsewhere in Cambridge, new congregations first met for worship in private houses, schools, or public halls until they prospered enough to erect their own buildings. The first church in East Cambridge was built in the 1820s, and by 1827 the neighborhood had four Protestant congregations and three churches. These sufficed until the 1840s, when two more churches were established including the first Catholic church in the city, St. John's on Fourth Street, south of Cambridge Street. Several large brick and stone churches were erected after the Civil War. When the cornerstone for Sacred Heart Church was laid in 1874, East Cambridge had six other churches, four of them still used by their original congregations. Only three 19th-century church buildings remain in the neighborhood.

The first church in East Cambridge was built by a Methodist congregation at the southwest corner of Cambridge and Third streets in 1823; it was replaced in 1869 by a new brick church that survived until 1952, and the site is now a parking lot. In 1827, the Third Congregational Society (Unitarian) acquired the northwest corner of Third and Thorndike streets and built the second church in East Cambridge. This is now the third oldest in the city, after Christ Church (1760) and the former Universalist Church at 8 Inman Street (1822). The Third Congregational Church was converted to condominiums in 2001.

The 175-year history of the Second Baptist and St. Francis churches encompasses most of East Cambridge's settled history, and its record of ownership reflects the changing pattern of the neighborhood's social development, as successive groups made their marks on the religious history of the neighborhood. As a site, the church location also provides evidence of the early settlement pattern of East Cambridge in a grid pattern with most of the substantial early buildings being located within a few blocks of the courthouse. One of St. Francis Church's members, Judge Joseph A. DeGuglielmo, served in Cambridge's city government on the City Council and as Mayor and in the city's administration as both the city solicitor and manager.

The Second Baptist Church was established at a time of great change in the traditional settlement patterns of Cambridge. The upstart villages at Cambridgeport and East Cambridge were beginning to challenge the primacy of the traditional town center at Old Cambridge just as the formation of new religious groups (Methodists, Baptists, and others) was weakening the orthodox stronghold of the Congregational church. At the time of its formation in 1827, the Second Baptist Church was one of nine religious societies worshipping in Cambridge, five of which had been founded in the preceding decade. It was a time of increasing diversity and great growth in the religious life of the city.

In its location, the church reflects the earliest development patterns of East Cambridge. Laid out on a grid in 1811, East Cambridge lacked an “organic” center, such as a common. The important village structures were built near and along Cambridge Street, close to the bridge and the courthouse. The village’s first school (1818) was on Third Street between Winter and Gore streets.

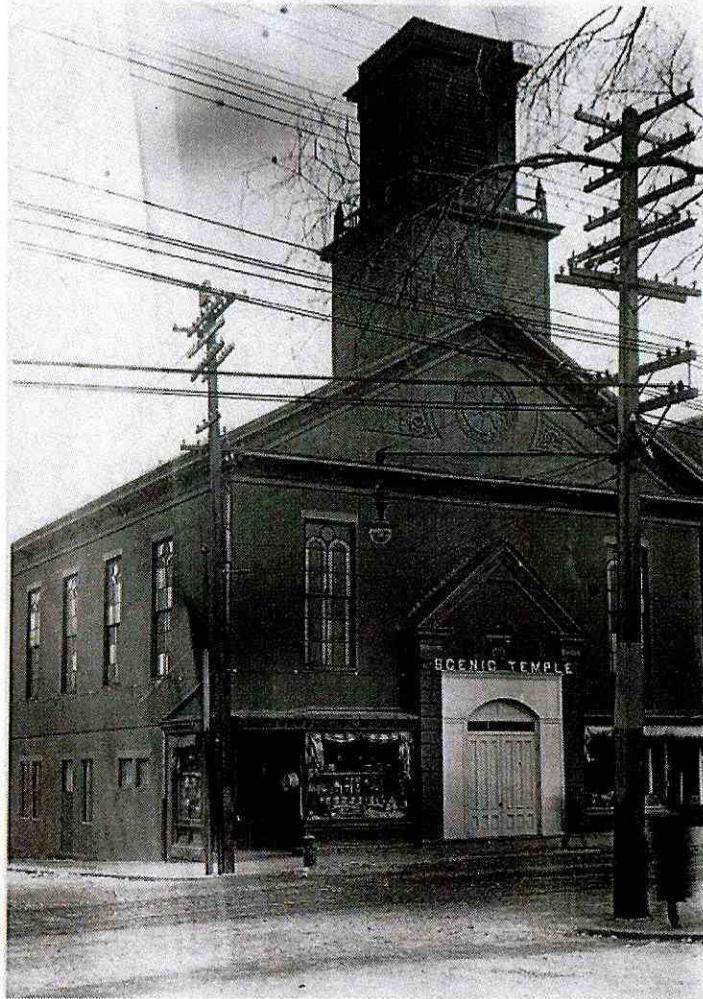


Fig. 10, 315-325 Cambridge Street ca. 1908, with signs for the Scenic Temple movie house and Cohen’s dry goods at corner.

After the Second Baptist Church defaulted on its mortgage in 1906, the property was sold at public auction in 1908 and acquired by the directors of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society. But this arrangement did not provide a safety net for the struggling congregation. The church’s pews and bells were sold and its silver communion service was stolen from the building (*Cambridge Chronicle*, 25 April 1908 and 8 August 1908). The Missionary Society had no particular use for the building and leased it in 1908 to the proprietor of a motion picture theater company, Frank C. Cauley, of Boston. He unwisely spent a good deal of money preparing the church for use as a theater called the Scenic Temple (See Fig. 10), before he secured the necessary permits from the city. The former members of the Second Baptist Church were joined by other Baptist pastors and Father John O’Brien of Sacred Heart Parish in opposing the theater use. Mayor Walter C.

Wardwell was swayed by the public's concern and did not grant the necessary license to Frank Cauley.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, the Comique Theater subsequently moved to the church. This turn of events apparently met with less community objection, perhaps because it was a familiar business, having relocated from 1050 Cambridge Street. In any case, the building's secular use as a theater was short lived and a new congregation would soon return it to sacred use.

The St. Francis of Assisi parish was established by several prominent Italian families in East Cambridge, including Austin and Mary DeGugliemo, Vito Antonio Errichetti, and Pasquale Cantore, with the help of the Franciscan Fathers of St. Leonard's Church in Boston's North End. The Archbishop entrusted the administration of the new parish to the Franciscan Order (O.F.M.), led by the church's first pastor, Rev. Anselmo Lenzi. The church was dedicated in 1917 by the Very Rev. Joseph Meright, O.F.M. Most of the original parishioners were from the province of Avellino, near Naples, while others came from Potenza and Rome. Other original parishioners included Jennie and Modestino DeVito, David and Joseph Ciampa, and Carmine Iantosca. (*All in the Same Boat*, p. 22). The Franciscans led the parish until Father DeAmato's 2011 retirement.

The parish started a parochial grammar school in 1926, purchasing the Gore Street School building from the City. The teachers were Franciscan nuns, mostly of Irish descent, under the leadership of Mother Scholastica. The St. Francis of Assisi School on Gore Street graduated its first class of children in 1933 and operated until 1980.

St. Francis is one of several Catholic congregations in East Cambridge. The city's first Catholic church, St. John's, was built on Fourth (now Sciarappa) street near Otis in 1842. Until that time, Cambridge Catholics had to go to either the cathedral in Boston or St. Mary's Church in Charlestown to attend mass. St. John's was used for church-related activities after Sacred Heart opened in 1876. It was demolished in 1934, and the site is now a playground. A granite marker indicates its location and significance.

In 1873, Father John O'Brien, the pastor of St. John's, began a campaign for a new church. The cornerstone for Sacred Heart Church was laid in 1874, and the church was formally consecrated in 1883. Sacred Heart was the largest and most expensive church in East Cambridge. Sacred Heart's congregation remained primarily Irish until the 1890s, but the growing numbers of Polish, Portuguese, and Italian immigrants created new demands on the parish. At this time, new churches and fraternal clubs and societies were encouraged that could provide worship space and leadership to the various immigrant groups that wished to preserve their national traditions. St. Francis of Assisi, for example, was founded and staffed by the Franciscan order; the Franciscans reported only to the Archdiocese, not to the pastor of Sacred Heart.

Many of the founding families in the parish hailed from Muro Lucano, Italy in the Apennine Mountains and home town of St. Gerard. Several of the oral history interviews

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<sup>4</sup> Cauley may have moved his business venture to Central Square, where the popular Scenic Temple opened in 1910 on Temple Street at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue. There was also a Scenic Temple in Boston.

with the founding families of the parish reveal that the Italian immigrants felt unwelcome at Sacred Heart and other parish churches and were expected to travel to St. Leonard's in Boston's North End for attend Mass. Soon after the new St. Francis of Assisi parish church opened, the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti got underway in Boston. This was a time of particular distress, discrimination, and fear for the Italian American community. Money was raised at St. Francis for Sacco and Vanzetti's legal defense fund and a procession from St. Francis to St. Leonard's was held at the time of their funerals.

There are many prominent persons associated with St. Francis of Assisi Church. Among them are Judge Joseph A. DeGuglielmo who served on the City Council and as Mayor and in the city's administration as both city solicitor and manager. Alfred Vellucci was a member of the school committee, the city council and Mayor of Cambridge. Many future priests were raised in the parish and several priests associated with the parish reached prominent positions in the Roman Catholic church including Monsignor Anthony Spinosa, Bishop Gerard Scarpone, and Bishop Peter Uglietto. Among the founding families of St. Francis parish was the talented mosaic artisan Luigi Totino, whose commissions included the floors of the Hall of Flags at the statehouse and mosaics at the Gardner Museum.

Another significant event related to St. Francis of Assisi parish is the annual Mass, parade, and feast of the Saint Cosmas and Damian Society. The two-day celebration includes a street festival and procession through East Cambridge with statues of the saints. The Society and its annual festival started in 1926 and continues to the present.

#### B. Architectural Significance

The Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi church building conveys the history of the two congregations in its physical characteristics. In form and mass, the church still exhibits the Greek Revival style of its 1838 construction such as the full pediment, water table, and symmetrical fenestration. The addition of the rectory at 42 Sciarappa Street was completed in materials and form consistent with the architecture of the main church building. The rhythm of the windows along Sciarappa Street as well as the height and mass of the addition are in keeping with the original building.

With the arrival of new Italian parishioners in the early twentieth century, the building changed and now evokes certain elements of traditional Italian architecture such as the tall, offset masonry campanile and the prominent placement of a figurative sculpture for the patron saint, St. Francis of Assisi, on the front of the church.

The acquisition and adaptation of the municipal police station house and stable in the 1940s was both fiscally conservative—as they were solidly constructed masonry buildings--and creative in giving them a new purpose and connecting them to the existing church spaces. These former civic buildings add an additional layer of architectural and historical significance to the St. Francis Church complex.

The interior, while not eligible for protection by landmark designation, contains some early features from its days as a Baptist church, such as the bipartite, stained glass windows on the side of the sanctuary to the choir gallery at the street end of the space. Other significant interior features added by the Catholic parish include additional stained glass windows, the painted columns and brackets, polychromed sculptures of the Saints, and the bas relief Stations of the Cross.

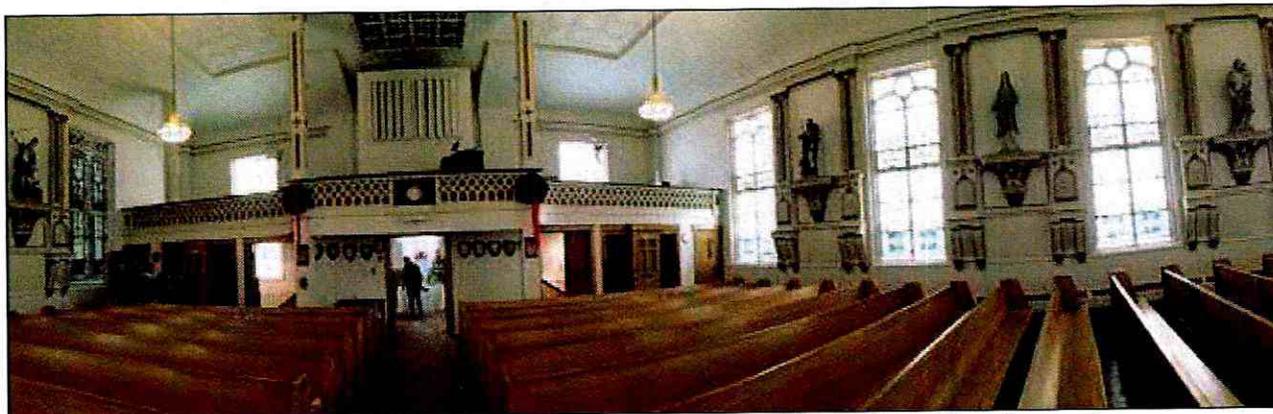


Fig. 11, Interior of St. Francis of Assisi Church, ca. 2012. Photo provided by Marie Elena Saccoccio.

## V. Relationship to Criteria

### A. Article III, Chapter 2.78.180 a.

The enabling ordinance for landmarks states:

The Historical Commission by majority vote may recommend for designation as a landmark any property within the City being or containing a place, structure, feature or object which it determines to be either (1) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth or (2) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of its period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures . . .

### B. Relationship of Property to Criteria

The Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi Church meets criterion (1) of the enabling ordinance for its important associations with the broad architectural, cultural and social history of the City as an early surviving church building from the settlement period of East Cambridge and, through its ownership history, as a reflection of the changing social and demographic character of East Cambridge as successive immigrant groups entered the community. It is also significant for its associations with the broad political history of the city through Judge Joseph A. DeGuglielmo who served on the City Council and as Mayor and in the city's administration as both city solicitor and manager, and with other prominent Cambridge citizens.

The Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi Church meets criterion (2) for its historical and architectural significance in terms of its period as the fifth oldest church building in the city and the oldest church building in use by the Roman Catholic Church and in terms of its style as a Greek Revival style building with significant later alterations in the Italian religious architectural tradition.

## VI. Recommendations

### A. Article III, Chapter 2.78.140

The purpose of landmark designation is contained in the enabling ordinance, which is to:

preserve, conserve and protect the beauty and heritage of the City and to improve the quality of its environment through identification, conservation and maintenance of . . . site and structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose; [and] to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such . . . structures . . .

### B. Preservation Options

There are two options available to accomplish the long-term preservation of the Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi Church. The first is through a City Council vote to designate the property a landmark, the second through the owner's voluntary donation of a preservation restriction or easement to the Historical Commission or some other qualified body. According to Article III, Chapter 2.78.190, designation of the Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi Church as a landmark would establish a process wherein "the Historical Commission . . . shall review all construction, demolition or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features, other than color," of the landmark. Chapter 2.78.210 states, "No building permit for alteration of an exterior architectural feature of a landmark . . . and no demolition permit for demolition or removal of a landmark . . . shall be issued by the City or any department thereof until the certificate required by this article has been issued by the Historical Commission . . ."

A certificate of appropriateness, hardship or non-applicability is issued by the Historical Commission depending on the nature of the alteration or construction proposed for the landmark. Applications for certificates of appropriateness or hardship are reviewed by the Commission at a public hearing, with 14 days notice provided to affected parties by legal notice and first class mail. The staff issues certificates of non-applicability administratively. The intent of the review process is to prevent "developments incongruous to the historic aspects, architectural significance or the distinctive character of the landmark" (2.78.220) The designation report may be drafted to allow specific development opportunities to take place.

Preservation easements may be donated to the Historical Commission or another qualified historic preservation organization under Chapter 184 of the Massachusetts General Laws. An easement is a “non-possessory right to control what happens to buildings or land owned by others.” It is voluntarily conveyed by the property owner to an entity, such as the Historical Commission, which holds the right and enforces the terms. To be effective, the easement must protect the publicly visible features of the property from alteration without the Commission’s prior approval. It may also be drafted to allow specific development opportunities to take place or to protect significant interior features.

Donation of an easement encourages private investment in significant buildings with no corresponding expenditure of public funds. Under Internal Revenue Service regulations, the value of an easement on a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places may be taken as a charitable deduction on personal income taxes. The value of an easement is calculated by taking the difference between “before” and “after” appraisals of the property. However, the rules for charitable contribution deductions for preservation easements are very technical. Any property owner considering the donation of an easement should consult a qualified tax consultant relative to the specific circumstances.

Preservation easements protect significant property in a similar manner to landmarking, that is, through review and approval of the Historical Commission and issuance of a certificate of appropriateness or hardship for any proposed repairs or alterations that affect protected portions of the property. Unlike landmarking, a preservation easement may have certain financial benefits for a commercial property owner and can address the protection of significant interior features. The donation of an easement would have no such benefit to the Archbishop of Boston, as the property is already tax exempt. So, this option seems unlikely unless the property were sold into private ownership.

### C. Staff Recommendation

It is the staff recommendation that the Historical Commission recommend the Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi Church to the City Council for designation as a landmark.

## VII. Standards and Criteria

### A. Introduction

Under Article III, the Historical Commission is charged with reviewing any construction, demolition or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features (other than paint color) of a landmark. This report describes exterior architectural features that are among the characteristics that led to consideration of the property as a landmark. Except as the order designating or amending the landmark may otherwise provide, the exterior architectural features described in this report should be preserved and/or enhanced in any proposed alteration or construction that affects those features of the landmark. The

standards following in paragraphs B and C of this section provide specific guidelines for the treatment of the landmark described in this report.

#### B. General Standards and Criteria

Subject to review and approval of exterior architectural features under the terms of this report, the following standards shall apply:

1. Significant historic and architectural features of the landmark shall be preserved.
2. Changes and additions to the landmark, which have taken place over time, are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have acquired significance in their own right and, if so, that significance should be recognized and respected.
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture, and appearance. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.
6. The surface cleaning of a landmark shall be done by the gentlest possible means. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that damage exterior architectural features shall not be used.
7. New additions shall not destroy significant exterior architectural features and shall not be incongruous to the historic aspects, architectural significance, or distinct character of the landmark, neighborhood, and environment.
8. New additions should be done in a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landmark should be unimpaired.

#### C. Suggested Review Guidelines

##### 1. Site Development.

There appears to be no further as-of-right potential for development on the site. Partial demolition seems unlikely because the space lost could not be replaced. Full demolition is also unlikely because the building appears to exceed the present allowable FAR and that volume would be difficult to recapture through the special permit process.

##### 2. Alterations

###### a. Exterior surfaces

Exterior materials should be preserved insofar as practicable. Special care should be taken to protect and maintain the existing ornamentation, door surround, cornice, windows, and window trim. Re-pointing the mortar

joints should be done with special care to maintain the color and texture of the mortar and the profile of the joints.

b. Fenestration

Introduction of new window openings should be discouraged. Wood sash should be repaired. The owner should be encouraged to restore the original sash material and configuration in the station house, rectory, and stable. Storm windows may be installed or upgraded without review in conformance with current Commission guidelines. Re-introduction of original windows openings where they have been closed is not discouraged, subject to construction details of impacted masonry and replacement sash.

Introduction of new door openings should be discouraged. Re-introduction of original openings where they have been closed is not discouraged, subject to construction details of impacted masonry and replacement doors. There are sufficient original door openings to meet anticipated needs of either religious or secular uses of the buildings in the future. The existing entry doors are not original and could be replaced in like kind or with new wood doors, subject to the review of door details by the Commission.

c. Interior features

Although interior features are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Cambridge Historical Commission, the owner should be encouraged to preserve original spaces and their materials and detailing such as the columns, cornices, wainscoting, staircases and window trim.

## VIII. Proposed Order

### ORDERED:

That the Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi Church at 315-325 Cambridge Street, 40-42 Sciarappa Street, and 74-76 Gore Street, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on January 3, 2013. The premises so designated are defined as parcels 1 and 2 of assessor's map 21 and recorded in Book 4109, Page 397 and Book 6693, Page 147 of the South Middlesex Registry of Deeds.

This designation is justified by the significant associations with the broad architectural, cultural and social history of the City as an early surviving church building from the settlement period of East Cambridge and, through its ownership history, as a reflection of the changing social and demographic character of East Cambridge as successive immigrant groups entered the community. It is also significant for its associations with the broad political history of the city through Judge Joseph A. DeGuglielmo who served on the City Council and as Mayor and in the city's administration as both city solicitor and manager, and with other prominent Cambridge citizens.

This designation is further justified by the significance of the Second Baptist/St. Francis of Assisi Church in terms of its period as the fifth oldest church building in the city and the oldest church building in use by the Roman Catholic Church, and in terms of its style as a Greek Revival style building with significant later alterations in the Italian religious architectural tradition.

The effect of this designation shall be that no construction activity can take place within the designated area, and no action can be taken affecting the appearance of 315-325 Cambridge Street, 40-42 Sciarappa Street, and 74-76 Gore Street, that would in either case be visible from a public way, without prior review and approval by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability, as the case may be. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the landmark designation report, dated January 22, 2013, and by Section VII, Standards and Criteria, of the landmark designation report, and by the applicable sections of Article 2.78.

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### C. Other Records

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Cambridge and Boston newspaper articles 1863-2012

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Letter of Fr. Walter Carreiro in the November 27, 2011 St. Anthony's church bulletin, [http://parishbulletin.com/Bulletins/935/935\\_Anthony\\_Cam\\_1127.pdf](http://parishbulletin.com/Bulletins/935/935_Anthony_Cam_1127.pdf).

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Letter of Fr. Walter Carreiro in the December 23, 2012 St. Francis church bulletin.