

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

M-03 /87 & 88

Boston  
North

EST.776

**Town/City:** Medford

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*):  
West Medford

## Photograph



View from NE

**Address:** 0 Holton Ave. (cor. Bower St.)

**Historic Name:** Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church  
Shiloh Baptist Church (since 1966)

**Uses:** Present: church

Original: church

**Date of Construction:** 1897

**Source:** published church history

**Style/Form:** Shingle Style

**Architect/Builder:** Richard C. Loss, Phila., arch't.  
Ham & Hopkins, Medford, bldr.

## Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood shingle

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
none

## Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Belfry removed, ca. 1965

Slate roof replaced w/ asphalt shingles, late 20<sup>th</sup> C.

Concrete steps added, late 20<sup>th</sup> century

**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 8320 + 4700 = 13,020 sq. ft.

**Setting:** The church is situated in a historic residential neighborhood characterized by single family dwellings, most of which were built between 1870 and 1930.

## Locus Map (north at top)



**Recorded by:** Neil Larson

**Organization:** Medford Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): June 2012

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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:

The wood frame church building is located on the southwest corner of Holton and Bower streets. The property is comprised of two lots, one containing the church and the other vacant and paved for a parking lot. The building is square in plan with a cross gable roof with a square tower inserted between the two gables in the northeast corner. The main section containing the sanctuary is sited with one end of its gable roof facing Bower Street. A tall square tower engaged to the northeast corner and contains entrances on both street elevations. A large Palladian stained-glass window surmounted by a stained-glass fanlight is centered in the wide north gable end. It is flanked by smaller sash units, also with stained glass and arched pediments. A similar window group occupies a cross gable in the center of the east wall. The entrances at the base of the tower have double doors with arched stained-glass transoms. Both are set within shallow pedimented porches supported by pairs of Tuscan columns on tall bases. The church is elevated on a tall cut stone basement with steps leading up to the doorways. Original steps, probably constructed of wood, have been replaced by concrete. The three-story tower was built with openings at the top for a belfry, but these have been walled over more recently. Small octagonal windows, which appear to be original, are centered in the second story. A cross-gable pavilion also extends from the west side, which appears to contain service areas as evidenced by a large brick chimney visible above the roof and a basement entrance on the west wall.

Auxiliary spaces are contained in a one-story hipped-roof wing engaged to the south end of the church. An octagonal tower with pointed roof distinguishes the junction of the two sections on the east wall of the building. It contains three tall stained glass windows that are stepped in alignment indicating stairs within. The east end of the rear section contains an entrance in a vestibule at the head of a run of concrete stairs and a projecting bay faceted on three planes, each containing one window on the first floor and another in a broken eave dormer above. Two more similar window groups are located at the ends of the south wall. Two pairs of large windows are centered between them representing the location of the social hall within this section. As in the front part of the building, service areas are concentrated at the west end of the annex. All the abovementioned windows contain patterned stained glass.

Based on one written description, the interior of the building contained the "audience room," or sanctuary, chapel, school room and parlor on the main floor, all of which had moveably partitions so that some or all could be combined if required. Kindergarten and class rooms were located in the upper story of the rear wing, and a spacious dining hall and kitchen occupied the basement.<sup>1</sup> The original wood shingle siding and wood trim, as well as windows and doors, are intact. The most conspicuous alterations are the concrete replacement steps leading up to exterior entrances, the walling in of the top of the tower, and the replacement of the slate roof with asphalt shingles. When built the existing tower was surmounted by a large belfry with wide arched openings on each side framed by corner turrets and topped by a pyramidal roof. This feature was lost sometime in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and replaced with the existing low balustrade.

The Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church is a distinctive example of Shingle Style church architecture popular at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although it has lost a major design feature, the belfry atop the square tower containing the main entrances to the church, it retains sufficient design integrity to be individually eligible for the National Register for its architectural and historic significance.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The history of Methodism in Medford began at least by 1865 when a group of ladies organized a Sunday School in Mystic Hall in West Medford. By 1867 a young Methodist minister, Rev. M.B. Chapman, had begun preaching at services under the auspices of the West Medford Christian Union. In 1871 Rev. N.T. Whittaker was leading a weekly class, which resulted in the organization of a church the following year at meeting at the Sharon Street home of Mr. and Mrs. Moses W. Mann. Two lots were purchased from Samuel S. Holton, proprietor of the Smith Estate subdivision in which the land was located and Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> Mann, Moses W. "Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church." *Medford Historical Register* 14:2 (April 1911): 25-50.

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Mann's father, in 1873 and plans were initiated for the building of a chapel. The small society adopted the name of Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>2</sup>

According to Moses W. Mann, building the chapel, the first religious building in West Medford, was an important step for the new community.

The [quarterly M.E.] conference adjourned and went to view several sites that had been informally considered, and selected one on Bower street as the most eligible. It was at once secured by the trustees, twenty cents per foot being the purchase price. The building committee procured a plan and contracted for a chapel, to be completed by October 15 [1873], and on the morning of July 4, with the contractor, staked out its location, reserving spaces for a future church edifice on one side and for a parsonage on the other. Work was at once begun, and the little village of West Medford awoke to the fact that there was something being done., Meantime Holton street had been opened to Boston avenue, then just built, and from this street entrance was had to West Medford's first house of worship.<sup>3</sup>

The project cost \$9,000, which the church borrowed. Samuel S. Holton held a note for half that amount and Laura L. Rudolphson held a note for the other half. Moses W. Mann, a West Medford builder as well as a church trustee, and is credited with both the design and construction of the chapel.<sup>4</sup>

While the chapel was in construction came the great tidal wave of financial depression that followed the Wall street panic known as Black Friday. The Boston City Missionary Society, that had given encouragement to the enterprise and promise of financial help, in the stringency was unable to redeem its promise and we were left to our own resources. Nevertheless, the work went on and the chapel was completed on time... During this year [1875] we thought it advisable to sell a portion of our land, thereby reducing our indebtedness about one thousand three hundred dollars.<sup>5</sup>

These debts were finally paid off in 1896. With their mortgage paid and their congregation growing, plans developed for a new and more commodious building. This time, however, the church leaders waited to initiate construction until sufficient funds were raised by subscription. On April 20, 1896 the chapel building was sold to Samuel S. Holton, Jr. for \$500. Holton had it moved west across lots and attached it to the rear of a commercial block on 22 Harvard Avenue where it functioned as a banquet and recreation facility until recently, when it was torn down. Mann recalled that, "The former house had been sold, moved to another spot, and was still in use though perched high on the movers' timbers. Within the walls, in October [1896], the newly formed Baptist church held its recognition service. On the last Sunday in November five services, all of special import, gave our first house, which had been our church home for twenty-three years, around which so many hallowed memories cluster, an appropriate farewell."<sup>6</sup>

The design for the new church is attributed to Richard C. Loss, Architect, 1324 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, about whom no further information has been found. On August 20, 1896 the Building Committee of Trinity M.E. Church entered into a contract with West Medford builders Ham and Hopkins for the erection of a church, for which the Building Committee agreed to pay \$9,700.<sup>7</sup>

Charles L. Oxnard provided a detailed account of the construction of the church in a 1962 reminiscence presented on the occasion of the 90 anniversary of the founding of the church.

The original contract with Messrs. Ham and Hopkins was simply for the building of "a church," and although the specifications are in great detail, it becomes evident that all the contractor had to do was erect the "shell of the church" as it were. The roofing became a separate job, as did the placing of the windows. There is nothing to

<sup>2</sup> Charles L. Oxnard, "Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church: Record of Certain Facts Regarding the Society and the Building of its First and second Houses of Worship" (1962). Taken from attachment to MHC Area Form MDF.J; no publication name provided by source.

<sup>3</sup> Mann, 34-45.

<sup>4</sup> Oxnard.

<sup>5</sup> Mann, 36-37.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>7</sup> Oxnard.

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indicate who installed the heating and plumbing, and as for the furnishings and fixtures, those all had to be provided separately.

Receipted bills indicate that one Wm. W. James of Granville, New York, furnished and laid 88 squares of slate at \$6.00 per square for \$528. A man named George Hughes helped him and his board for 3 weeks cost Mr. James \$40.50. Express on the slate cost the church \$3.50. 748 1/2 sq. ft. of tin roofing, laid on a section of the main roof at the rear of the building and also around the tower, by Brown and Gilbert of Boston, cost \$74.03. 604 lbs. of zinc and a keg of nails were bought of the Albee stove Co. of Boston and used to cover the flat deck of the open space just below the roof of the tower at a cost of 438.88. If then my addition was correct, the total cost of the roofing was \$654.21. Remarkable as it may seem, the zinc roof deck has never had to be repaired and the other roofing, with proper care, is still giving good service now, after 65 years.

The leaded stained glass windows, 30 in number, were furnished by Spence, Moakler and Bell of 90 Canal street, Boston and cost \$543.02. According to their estimate this price included "setting the two large windows at the church, and the others were to be glazed at their works." If one examines these windows it is seen that most of them are memorials to different individuals, and presumably were privately paid for. Up near the top of the large window on the Holton Street side are to be seen the letters U.O.G.C., the initials of a fraternal benefit organization which had a lodge in West Medford at the turn of the century, called the United Order of the Golden Cross. Set in the window over the vestibule door on the Holton Street side under the tower is the inscription Trinity M.E. Church. The designation Episcopal, then, had not been dropped from the name of the church.

The pews for the church auditorium (nowadays usually called the sanctuary) were supplied by the Excelsior Church and School Furnishings Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio. They were shipped here by freight and set up for the company by a Mr. Cochrane, for the sum of \$466. Quite a hassle arose because of the "color of the finish," resulting in considerable correspondence back and forth. Eventually the company exchanged the ends and divisions of the pews, for which it was paid an additional \$50 making in all \$516. It is worthy to note that now, 66 years later, these same pews are rendering valiant service. A few years ago, thinking that the company that furnished them would appreciate a word of commendation, I wrote to it. My letter came back, unclaimed and the postmaster in Cincinnati wrote me that no such company now exists. The pews have outlasted their makers.

The original organ was given to the church by Mr. Elisha Pierce who lived in the northwest corner of Harvard Avenue and Monument Street and conducted a market in Boston. I have always understood that it cost \$1,000. It was installed at the back of the choir loft, which was entirely inclosed [sic] in those days, and was entered through a doorway at the left from a small room which served as the Sunday School library. Today's organ is installed *in* that room.

The altar rail was made by Mr. Moses W. Mann, undoubtedly in his woodworking mill on Boston Avenue, next to the Mystic River. The pulpit was hand-carved by a cabinet maker named David Richert who lived next to the river at the end of Jerome Street. I have always understood that it was his gift to the Church. I never saw him in the church but his family attended there. The settee on the platform does not date back to those days, but was originally used in the College Avenue Methodist Church in Somerville, and I believe it was given to Trinity years later by that church.

One of the unique features of the building is the six rolling wooden doors which separate the "Chapel Room" from the other parts of the edifice. I have no knowledge as to their origin.

The building was heated originally by hot air furnaces which burned hard coal. Two of them were set up in the large open cellar under the auditorium, and I seem to remember a third furnace there, which was used as an auxiliary in extremely cold weather. When the present steam system was installed the open cellar was converted into "Mann Hall." All the work on that project was done with volunteer labor by the men of the church.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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One curious detail in the specifications was that the tower "be constructed according to a plan furnished by Mr. Mann." In the church history it states that Moses W. Mann, who built many of the houses in the neighborhood, "erected a tower on every house he built."<sup>9</sup> The foundation of the new building contains two date stones, one carved with the date 1873, which was preserved from the old chapel, and one dated 1896. The building was dedicated on 11 March 1897. The program included a list of subscribers included West Medford's most important citizens, including local businessmen as well as commuters, many of them not Methodists. The Board of Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia contributed \$500 to defray construction costs, which were billed at nearly \$10,000. A \$5,000 mortgage was obtained from the Boston Five Cent Savings Bank. This note was discharged in 1904 with the proceeds of a \$6,550 loan from the Wildey Savings Bank. The debt was finally satisfied ten years later.<sup>10</sup>

In 1966 Trinity M.E. Church merged with two other Medford churches, Hillside Methodist Church and St. John's Methodist Church, to form Wesley United Methodist Church. A new church was built on the site of the Hillside Methodist Church to accommodate the combined congregations. In that year the old Trinity church was sold to Shiloh Baptist Church, which had outgrown the small church built for it in 1899 at the corner of Lincoln and Fairfield streets in West Medford. Formed in 1898, Shiloh is the first and continues to be the only African American church in the city of Medford. It has a large congregation with membership extending well beyond West Medford's borders. Shiloh has maintained the historic Trinity M.E. Church building in an excellent manner over the 46 years they have owned the building.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



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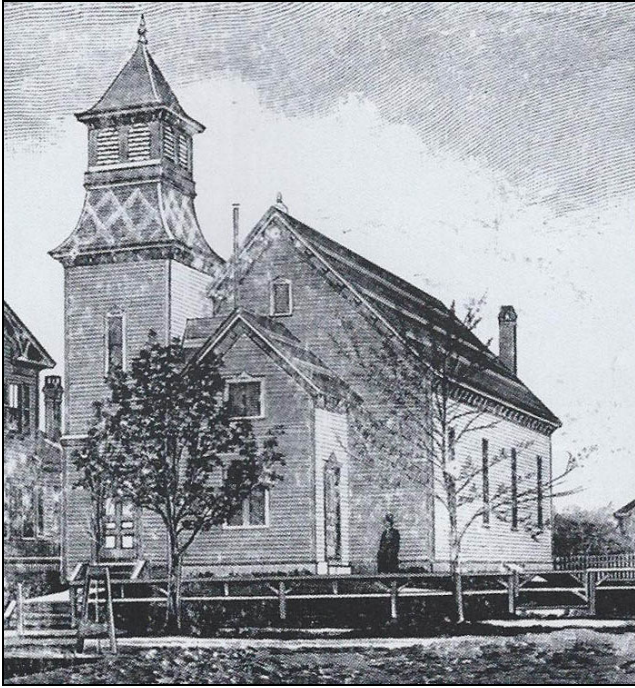
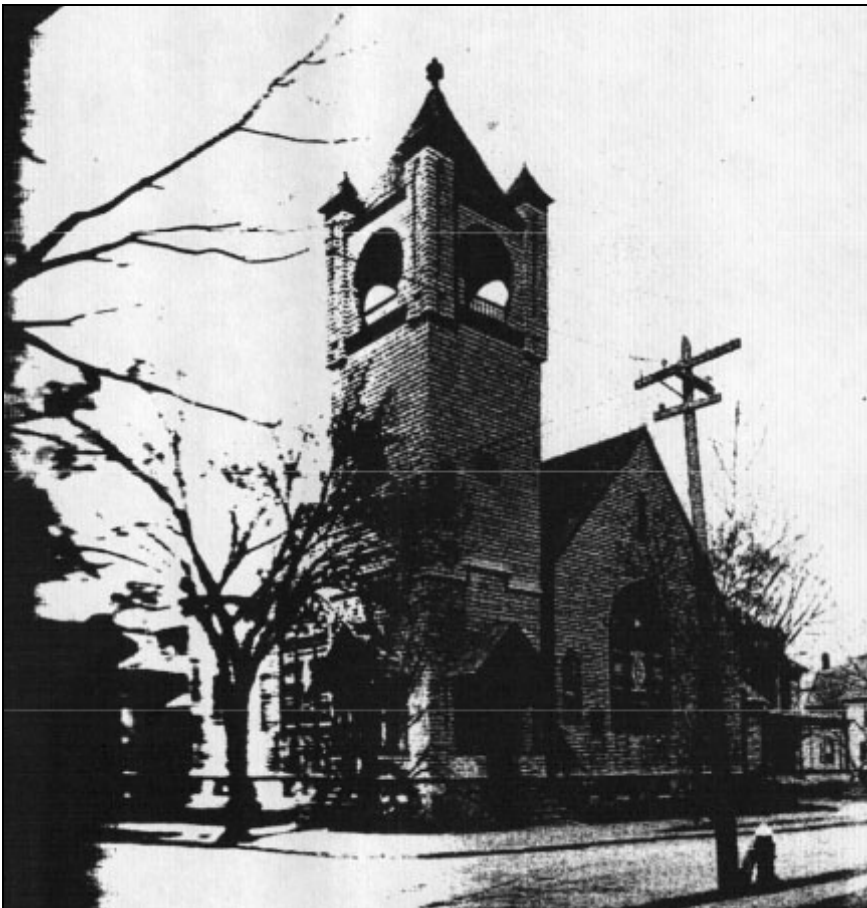


Image of first church on site, 1873. From Kerr, Barbara. *Images of America: Medford in the Victorian Era*. Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004.



Historic view of church from NE. From Mann, Moses W. "Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church." *Medford Historical Register* 14:2 (April 1911).



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PHOTOGRAPHS (all photos by Neil Larson, 2012)



View on Bower St. from NW.



View of Holton Street from SE.



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View of Holton Street façade from NE.



Detail of window on Bower St. facade



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*[Delete this page if no Criteria Statement is prepared]*

## 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 Neil Larson

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church is a distinctive example of Shingle Style church architecture popular at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although it has lost a major design feature, the belfry atop the square tower containing the main entrances to the church, it retains sufficient design integrity to be individually eligible for the National Register for its architectural and historic significance.