

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	MRN.195
Historic Name:	Saint Rita's Roman Catholic Church
Common Name:	
Address:	121 Front St
City/Town:	Marion
Village/Neighborhood:	Marion;
Local No:	
Year Constructed:	1916
Architectural Style(s):	Craftsman;
Architect(s):	Martino Stained Glass Studio; Martino, Michael; Sullivan, Matthew;
Use(s):	Church;
Significance:	Architecture; Religion;
Area(s):	MRN.N
Designation(s):	
Building Materials:	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Wall: Brick; Glass; Wood; Wood Shingle; Foundation: Poured Concrete;
Demolished	No



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

16-139	Marion	MRN.N	MRN.195
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Town/City: Marion

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Wharf Village

Photograph



Address: 121 Front Street (formerly 115 Front Street)

Historic Name: St. Rita's Roman Catholic Church

Uses: Present: Church

Original: Church

Date of Construction: 1916

Source: Department of Public Safety files, church histories

Style/Form: Craftsman

Architect/Builder: Matthew Sullivan, architect

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Poured concrete

Wall/Trim: Brick / Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Wood picket fence at property line

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Windows altered (1999-2000)

Condition: Excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.27 acres

Setting: On well-traveled Front Street at the heart of Sippican Village. Surrounding buildings are primarily 19th and early 20th century in date, a mix of residential and institutional uses.

Locus Map (*North is Up*)



Recorded by: Jennifer B. Doherty

Organization: Sippican Historical Society

Date (*month / year*): June, 2019

RECEIVED

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MASS. HIST. COMM.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

121 FRONT STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

MRN.N

MRN.195

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

St. Rita's Roman Catholic Church is a well-preserved example of an early 20th century chapel in the Craftsman style. The low, long, one-story brick building sits on a poured concrete foundation, is constructed of brick, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The end-gabled building faces onto Front Street, with entry doors recessed slightly behind two smooth Tuscan columns. The three entrances – the middle with a pair of doors, rather than the single doors found on either side – are reached by a set of concrete steps with metal handrails. A stained-glass oculus is above, and a small wood cross highlights the peak of the gable.

The side elevations feature evenly spaced square, fixed stained-glass windows set directly above rectangular, sliding operable windows. The stained-glass windows were installed in 1999-2000 and depict the life of Jesus. They were designed by Michael Martino of the Martino Stained Glass Studio in Uxbridge.¹ Brick piers separate the windows, although they do not run the full height of the building so may represent buttresses. A secondary entrance is located towards the east end of each elevation. That on the south elevation is reached by a set of concrete stairs, while the entrance on the north elevation is reached by a modern wood accessibility ramp. The roof extends out about a foot to cover these side entrances. An additional entrance is located in the east gable end. The eaves are marked by long projecting rafter tails, and the wood doors feature glazing in their upper half with thick muntins creating a triangular pattern, all hallmarks of the Colonial Revival and Craftsman styles. A low wood shingled cupola is sited towards the east end of the roof, above the side elevation entrances, likely marking the location of a cross-aisle before the altar.

Sited on the east side of Front Street, St. Rita's faces west across the street. The building fills most of the north half of the lot, with a small lawn area to the south demarcated at the property line by a low, wood picket fence. A rectory and parish hall are located to the south, across Vine Street (Old Marion Congregational Church Parsonage, 113 Front Street, MRN.194).

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

A Roman Catholic parish was established in the South Coast/Cape Cod area by 1830, served by St. Peter's in Sandwich, where the glass company employed a number of Irish immigrants.² Over the course of the 19th century, as the Catholic population in the area waxed and waned, several mission churches were established, and eventually a second parish, St. Patrick's, was established in Wareham in 1911. Soon after, a mission was established at Marion to serve the summer Catholic community there. They initially met at the Sippican Hotel Casino, before St. Rita's was constructed. During the late 19th and early 20th century, the property was part of a larger estate that stretched from South Street to Vine Street. the present lot was acquired by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Fall River from George P. Hamlin in 1915.³

The church was designed by Matthew Sullivan. Plans show that several alterations were made to the initial design, either before it was built or at some point thereafter.⁴ The cupola has been moved forward more, over the secondary entrance on either side elevation. As noted above, the windows were replaced with stained glass panels in 1999-2000. The 1916 plans show a design with multi-pane windows capped by a similar triangular-light pane to that found on the doors. However historic photographs show a third set of windows, large multi-light panels without the triangular lights.

A history of the church notes that the building was weatherized in 1940, establishing a year-round meeting place for the congregation. In 1972 the bishop of the Fall River Diocese, Most Rev. Daniel Anthony Cronin, S.T.D., established the church as an independent parish. Today the parish shares a pastor with St. Anthony's of Mattapoisett.

¹ "St. Rita – Marion, MA," Martino Stained Glass Studio, martinostainedglass.com/st-rita-stained-glass.

² "History," St. Patrick's Church, stpatrickswareham.org/about-us/history.

³ "Welcome to St. Rita's," St. Anthony's Parish and St. Rita's Parish, anthonyandrita.com/st-ritas-information/.

⁴ PCRD Book 1220, Page 235, August 12, 1915

⁴ "13410 – Mission," Department of Public Safety Files, Massachusetts State Archives.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

121 FRONT STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

MRN.N

MRN.195

Matthew Sullivan, Architect

St. Rita's was designed by noted ecclesiastical architect Matthew Sullivan (1868-1938).⁵ A native of Boston, Sullivan trained in the firms of Edmund M. Wheelwright and Eames & Young. He served as assistant city architect for the City of Boston under Nathan Matthews until 1899, when he founded the firm of Maginnis, Walsh & Sullivan. The three architects worked together until 1908, when Sullivan established his own practice. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects. Sullivan lived in Canton for nearly 40 years, where he served on the School Committee and Planning Board. He was also active in various other societies such as the Bostonian Society, the Knights of Columbus, and St. Vincent de Paul.

There are numerous entries in MACRIS for Catholic churches, rectories, and other public buildings designed by Sullivan. Many of these were larger, more ornate churches compared to the small, mission chapel format of St. Rita's. These larger designs include Boston's St. Lazarus Roman Catholic Church (61 Ashley Street, BOS.1) and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Church (120 Grove Street, BOS.26); St. Therese Roman Catholic Church (801 Broadway, EVR.70) and Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church (Nichols Street, EVR.140), both in Everett; and St. Agnes Catholic Church in Reading (186 Woburn Street, REA.245).

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps and atlases:

1855 H.F. Walling, *Map of the Town of Marion, Plymouth County, Massachusetts*

1879 Geo H Walker & Co, *Atlas of Plymouth County Massachusetts*.

1903 L. J. Richards & Co, *New Topographic Atlas of Surveys of Plymouth County ... Massachusetts*

1908, 1921, 1933 Sanborn Insurance Atlases.

Ancestry.com: see footnotes.

Gordon, Edward W, MRN.N, 1998.

Ryder, Alice Austin, *Lands of Sippican on Buzzards Bay* (Sippican Historical Society, 1975).

Plymouth County Registry of Deeds, in notes as PCRD book:page.

Somers, Olive Hiller, *Three Centuries of Marion Houses* (1972).

⁵ "Matthew Sullivan, 70, Boston Architect, Dead," *Boston Globe*, August 12, 1938.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

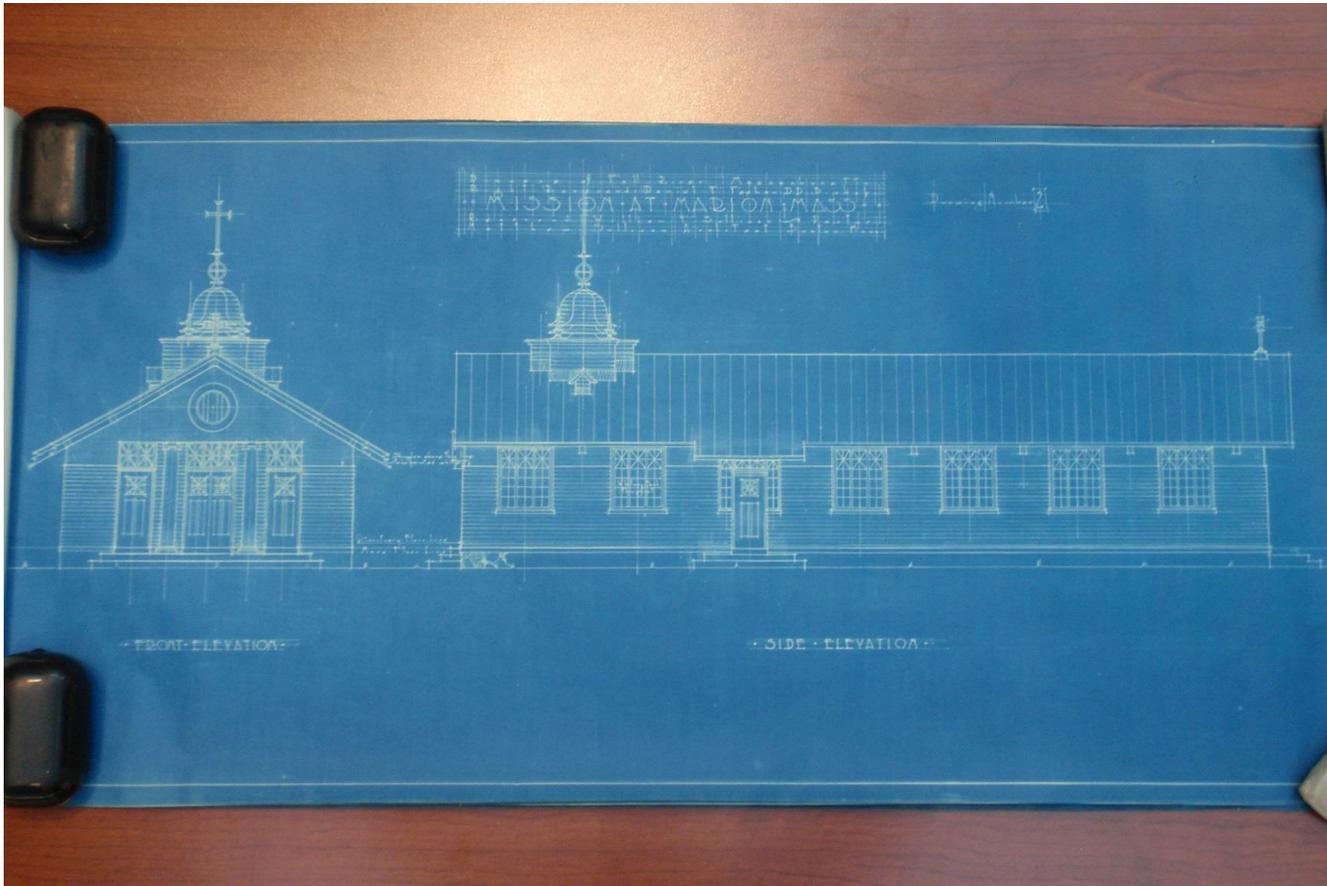
121 FRONT STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

MRN.N

MRN.195



Matthew Sullivan's 1916 plans for St. Rita's Roman Catholic Church show that the building retains a high degree of integrity, aside from the windows, which have been replaced with stained-glass panels. Department of Public Safety Files, Massachusetts State Archives, number 13410.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

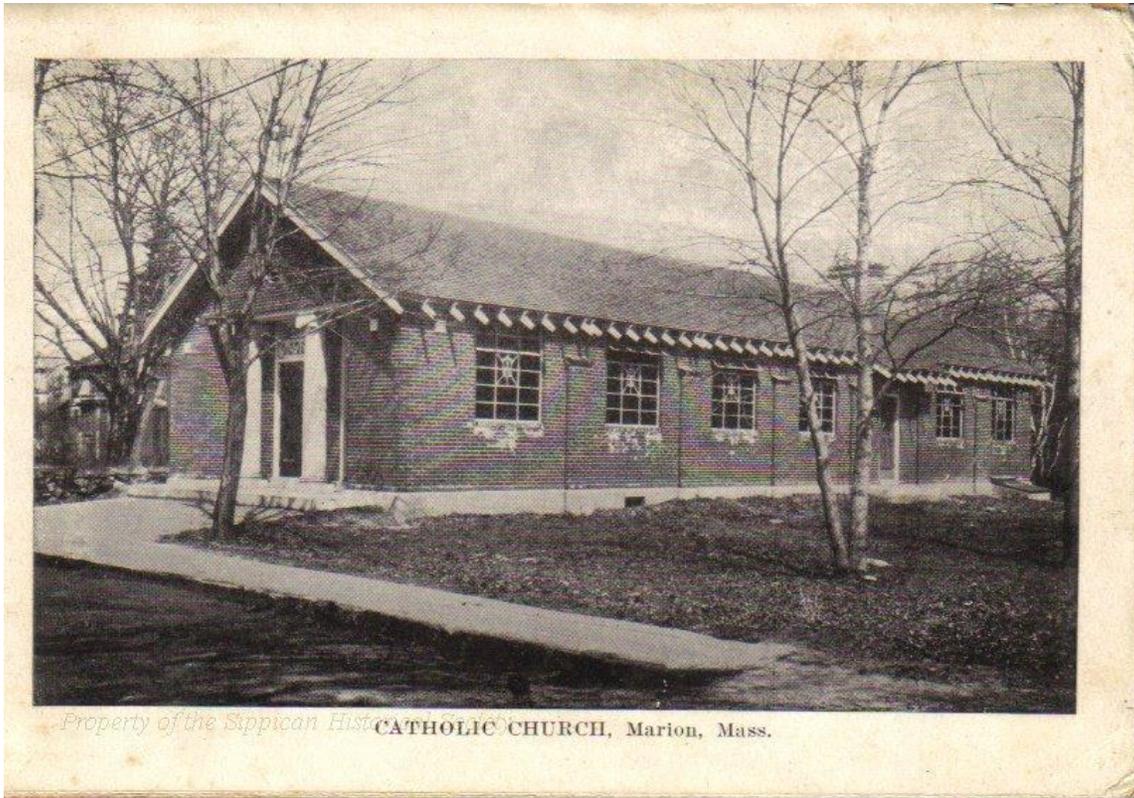
121 FRONT STREET

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Area(s) Form No.

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MRN.195



This undated postcard view shows St. Rita's with a third set of windows, neither those shown on the 1916 plans of the building or the current stained-glass windows. From the collection of the Sippican Historical Society.

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 Claire W Dempsey
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

St Rita's Roman Catholic Church is an important component of Marion Center's historic landscape. Known variously as Wharf, Sippican, and Lower Village, Marion's center is an exceptionally well-preserved harbor village including an important array of public buildings, stores and workplaces, and dwellings dating from the 18th through the 20th century. The village constitutes a small, dense grid along two early and principal streets, Main Street running east-west and Front Street running north-south. Other east-west (Cottage, Hiller, and South) and north-south (Spring, Pleasant, School, and Water) streets were added as the village grew. The potential district includes typical public buildings, including churches and schools, as well as a group of exceptional gifts to the town from Elizabeth Taber, including the present Town Hall, Library and Natural History Museum, Congregational Chapel, Music Hall, among others. Front Street is one of the Marion's commercial zones, with shops and other businesses serving the community; some resources from the village's maritime history survive as well. Dwellings here present fine examples of regionally popular forms including Capes, ell houses, end houses, and picturesque cottages, with a handful of later dwellings interspersed. The comparatively small scale of the buildings and lots, and the uniform treatment of wood shingles and clapboards, combine to create an extraordinary historic landscape deserving of greater recognition and continued preservation. Additional research is necessary on the area, which will also provide better guidance on district boundaries. Most of the resources here retain substantial integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, design, feeling, and association. The district would likely meet criteria A and C at the local level, with areas of significance in architecture, community planning and development, maritime history, and social history.