



**The Church with The Golden Dome<sup>1</sup>**  
Original poem by Edmund Delaney Roche (1989)

Across from my shop stands a lovely old church,  
The church with the golden dome.  
Like a beacon it stands through the day in the sun,  
To welcome the wayward back home.

Charisma to me is a small country town  
With a white clapboard church on the Green.  
A bell in the steeple, and quiet within,  
As I open the doors and go in....

Proposal to

Rehabilitate Upper Level "Tin" Ceiling

**West Acton Baptist Church**

**RECEIVED**

November 12, 2013

NOV 12 2013

Town of Acton  
Planning Department



***West Acton Baptist Church***

592 Massachusetts Avenue  
Acton, Massachusetts 01720-2238  
Email: [wabcadmin@verizon.net](mailto:wabcadmin@verizon.net)  
*Reverend Robert Branch, Interim Pastor*  
*Nancy L. Hoover, Moderator*

Date: November 12, 2013

Community Preservation Committee  
Planning Department, Town of Acton  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee:

Enclosed please find 15 copies of an application with supporting documents from the West Acton Baptist Church for a 2014 Community Preservation Grant. It is a proposal titled Restoration of the "Tin" Upper Level Ceiling for \$42,961, 10% of which we will provide. It is one of the most beautiful features of this 1854 landmark building in West Acton Village.

The proposal describes a vital area identified in the Master Plan, for which we hired OMR Architects, Inc. under the terms of a 2013 grant by the vote of the Town of Acton.

We are seeking assistance from the Community Preservation Committee to help us preserve this historical building by asking the Town of Acton's Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting to vote their approval for this project. We thank you for your consideration of our application.

If you require additional information, please contact either Nancy L. Hoover, Moderator, listed below or through Nancy Dodge, Administrative Assistant of the West Acton Baptist Church, 592 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA, Tel. 978-263-5902.

Most sincerely,

Nancy L. Hoover, Moderator & Property Team Chair  
West Acton Baptist Church  
978-46-7685 (Home)  
[nhoover7@gmail.com](mailto:nhoover7@gmail.com)

enc.

## PROJECT APPLICATION FORM – 2014

**Applicant:** West Acton Baptist Church      **Submission Date:** November 12, 2013

**Applicant's Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Purpose: (Please select all that apply)**

592 Massachusetts Avenue	<input type="radio"/>	Open Space
Acton, MA 01720	<input type="radio"/>	Community Housing
<b>Phone Number:</b> 978-263-5902	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Historic Preservation
<b>E-mail:</b> <u>wabcadmin@verizon.net</u>	<input type="radio"/>	Recreation

**Town Committee (if applicable):** Community Preservation Committee

**Project Name:** Rehabilitation of "Tin" Upper Level Ceiling

**Project Location/Address:** 592 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA 01720

**Amount Requested:** \$42,961

**Project Summary:** In the space below, provide a brief summary of the project.

One of the key character defining elements in West Acton Baptist's historic sanctuary is the pressed metal ceiling. It is unique in West Acton Village and unique among all the churches in the Town of Acton. It is also one of the key factors in the incredible acoustics of this space, which is 1900 square feet in area and seats 200.

The bas-relief metal ceiling is currently rusting, resulting in peeling paint and a loss of the historic fabric. We feel it is critical to halt this process, remove all rust, and then clean and repaint the ceiling to ensure the longevity of this beautiful feature of the building.

Repairing and restoring the ceiling in this 1900 square foot space will require the specialized work of a contractor qualified and experienced in historical restoration work in general, and of a bas-relief metal surface in particular. In addition, the contractor will need to knowledgeable about materials that enhance rather than deaden sound resonance, in order to preserve this room's excellent acoustics. Fortunately, our Music Director and soprano soloist, Kathi Geller, has considerable knowledge of these matters, and access to more, that will be very helpful for this project.

**Estimated Date for Commencement of Project:** May 2014

**Estimated Date for Completion of Project:** August 2015

## Narrative

### Background

The West Acton Baptist Church (WABC), built in 1854, is a landmark in the community, with a long history of availability and service to the Town of Acton (see Attachment 5). The exterior of the building features beautiful period detail and stained glass windows, topped by a belfry and a dome which replaced the original steeple in 1934. This gold dome stands as a beacon marking the western end of the Village of West Acton. The bell itself, cast in Boston in 1854 by a former apprentice of Paul Revere, is of significant historical value.

WABC is a blend of a historical 19<sup>th</sup> Century community meetinghouse with a vision of serving as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century community activities center for Acton. There are some spaces in the building that are used at capacity, while others are empty much of the time, especially the upper level.

We seek to rehabilitate the interior beauty and preserve the historic character and unique acoustics of the upper level space. We hope this will allow us to expand the community uses of this concert-hall-like level of our handicapped-accessible church building, making it available and desirable for such functions as musical rehearsals and performances; meetings, lectures and discussion forums; art, photography, and multi-media exhibits; talent shows, and dramatic presentations.

One of the significant historic elements of the interior is this space's unusually decorative and unique metal ceiling. We had believed this was a tin ceiling, and that's what we've called it, but our historical records revealed something else. An internal booklet summarizing our history states,

In 1898 the church underwent extensive repairs, renovation and redecoration totaling \$4801 (\$21 more than the cost of the original building). This included the addition of 18 feet to the original building, moving of the organ from the rear to the front of the church, installation of a baptistery, renewal of stained glass windows, pews, pulpit chairs, lamps, carpet and "the whole redecorated and frescoed."

Further research into our records of that year revealed that the ceiling is not tin at all, nor is it plaster. What was installed in 1898 is, instead, a pressed steel ceiling with a variety of bas-relief patterns. The color scheme of the paint highlights the details of the bas-relief designs.

Today, not only is the paint on that beautiful ceiling peeling; there are areas of rust where water damage has corroded the metal. Restoration has to be done with an expertise in historical restoration that will repair and repaint the metal, while preserving both the beauty and the excellent acoustics of this 200-seat upper assembly area, so that it can continue to serve equally well for worship services and for secular performances.

### Project Description, and Benefits to the Town of Acton and its Citizens

The surface of the ceiling will have to be freed of all peeling and loose paint and cleaned, and the rusted areas repaired, before it can be repainted. An early estimate (before we knew the ceiling is pressed steel, not tin) describes the work as follows:

#### Scrape & Paint Water Damaged Tin Ceiling:

- Protect all surfaces not scheduled for new paint of any paint drops or spatters such as pews, light fixtures, floors, windows, etc.
- Scrape all loose/peeling paint on entire ceiling.
- Prepare & clean all surfaces such as tin ceiling, hanging light fixtures, ceiling speakers, sprinkler pipes, fans etc.

- Apply spot prime to all bare tin/ rusty ceiling surfaces.
- Apply full primer coat to entire tin ceiling and sprinkler pipes.
- Apply full finish coat to entire tin ceiling and sprinkler pipes to match existing.

#### Benefits to the Town of Acton and its Citizens

We would like to increase the community uses of the building, especially the upper level, which will be available as a 200-seat concert hall with excellent acoustics. Restoring the ceiling will make this room far more attractive and inviting to community members, which in turn will make it possible for us share this beauty with our West Acton neighbors and beyond by opening our building to more activities and performances of interest and service to the entire Acton community.

#### Timeline and Scope of Project

The work would begin as soon as the chosen contractor's schedule can fit us in after a grant award letter for this project has been issued (probably after late April 2014). It will be completed, hopefully, before the school and church programs resume in September 2014, but at least by the end of the 2015 summer.

#### WABC Plans for Funding Restoration Work

As a non-profit, all lay volunteer organization, West Acton Baptist Church operates on a limited budget which does not allow for significant restoration and rehabilitation work. Nevertheless, the West Acton Baptist Church is prepared to cover 10% of the estimated cost of this ceiling project. In fact WABC already has about \$3,800 from congregational contributions set aside and specifically designated for ceiling rehabilitation.

#### Urgency and Priority

The metal fabric of the ceiling is currently rusting. At present it is still possible to halt this deterioration and rehabilitate the ceiling by cleaning and treating the affected areas. However, if the problem is not addressed it could result in loss of the historic material which would be very difficult and expensive to replace or repair

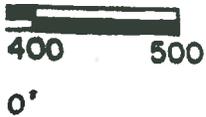
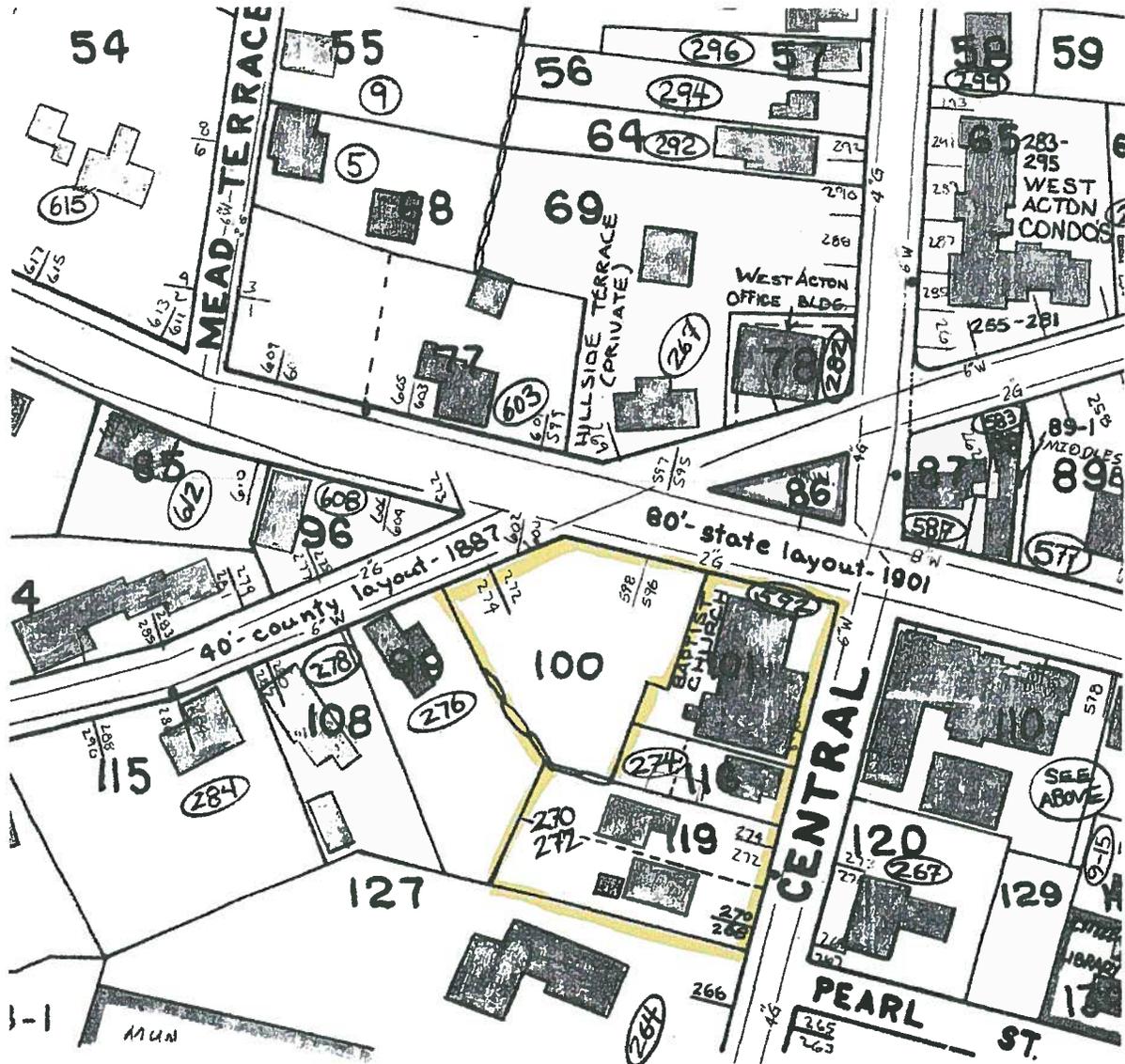
Its current appearance is an unattractive deterrent to the much-desired expansion in community uses of the building's upper level. For the church membership, restoring the ceiling is a top priority among all those recommended in the WABC 2013 Master Plan prepared by OMR Architects, Inc. of West Acton, which they developed after extensive interviews, research, and analysis of the building's needs.

The fact that the ceiling is actually not tin, but pressed steel, explains why it seems to be rusting due to water damage. Now that the source of the water has been eliminated by the restoration of the belfry, thanks to a CPC grant this year (2013), the sooner that corrosion is stopped and repaired, the less the damage there will be.

#### Attachments

1. Map: Part of Tax Assessor's Map of West Acton, centered on the WABC (1 page)
2. Map: West Acton Baptist Church in the center of the West Acton Historic District (1 page)
3. Deed: Properties owned by West Acton Baptist Church, Inc. (3 pages)
4. Blueprint Showing Side View of West Acton Baptist Church (1 page)
5. Table: History of WABC Availability and Service to the Town of Acton, with proposed community uses for the future (2 pages)
6. Photos & information (5 pages)
7. Contractors' Estimates: Because the one estimate we have received to date is from a firm not listed with the Preservation Massachusetts' 2013 Directory, it is not included here. We have cited OMR's estimated costs, and are currently contacting qualified professionals to invite proposals.

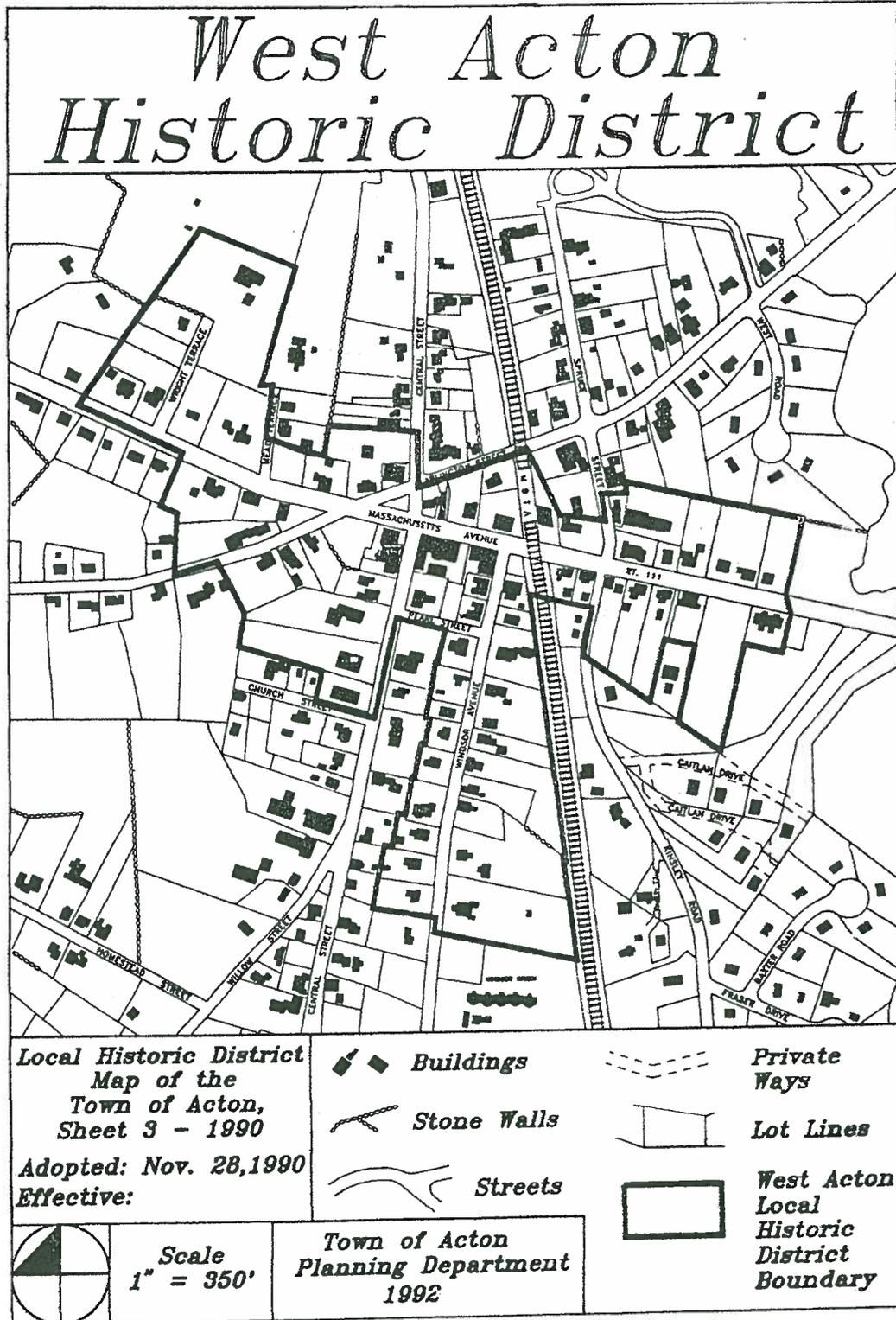
Attachment 1: from Acton Tax Assessor's Map



E-1	E
F-1	F-2A
	F-2B

PHOTO: AERO SERVICE

Attachment 2: West Acton Historic District



Attachment 3: West Acton Baptist Church  
1955 Deed Citing, Deeds from 1846 and 1881 (page 1 of 3 pages)

Hx 8636 Ps 492

W. Donald Feltus, Myron Hall, Harry Holt, H. Benjamin Smith,  
and Edward Bailey, as Deacons of the West Acton Baptist Church,

DEC 20 11 AM 08:03 COGRE \*\*\*0.01

of Acton, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

for consideration paid, grant to The West Acton Baptist Church, a corporation established under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and having a principal place of business in said Acton,

XXXX

with warranty

the land in that part of said Acton known as West Acton, with the buildings

thereon, bounded as follows: <sup>(Description and encumbrances, if any)</sup> Easterly by Central Street; Northerly by Massachusetts Avenue; Westerly by land of one Stevenson; and Southerly by land formerly of Tasker and now of Flora Beach.

For our title see deed from Asa Wilbur to James M. Brown et al., Deacons of the Baptist Church in Acton dated September 5, 1846, recorded with Middlesex South District Deeds, Book 493, Page 123.

Also the land in the westerly part of said Acton, with the buildings thereon, bounded and described as follows: Beginning at a stake and stones at the Southwesterly corner of the premises on the old road leading from West Acton to Stow, and at land now or formerly of George Hager; thence running Northerly by said Hager land about forty-six (46) feet to a stone bound; thence Northerly by said Hager land about seventy-four (74) feet to the County road; thence S. 71° 17' E. one hundred forty-six and 3/4 (146 3/4) feet on said County road to the junction of said County and Stow Roads; thence S. 65° 46' W. on said Stow road one hundred and forty-nine and 1/4 (149 1/4) feet to the point of beginning. Containing about eighty-five hundred (8500) feet of land, more or less.

Being the same premises conveyed by Deletta H. Hall to Brock Hall et al., Deacons of the Baptist Church in West Acton, dated November 13, 1881, recorded with said Deeds, Book 1590, Page 396.

Hk# 636 Pg 494

At a meeting of the parish of the West Acton Baptist Church, duly called, it was

Voiced:

That the Deacons, <sup>O.</sup> Donald <sup>F.</sup> Felton (list names) <sup>E.</sup> Eugene Hall <sup>H.</sup> Harry Holt  
~~H. Benjamin Smith~~ <sup>R.</sup> ~~Edward Bailey~~ be authorized to sign, execute, and deliver a deed to all real estate now standing in their names to the West Acton Baptist Church, a Corporation.

The above motion was carried.

Minetta D. Lee

Clerk of the Parish.

Then personally appeared the above named Minetta D. Lee and made oath that the above is a true copy taken from the records of a meeting of the Parish held Dec 14, 1955.

Harlow E. Tuttle

Notary Public.

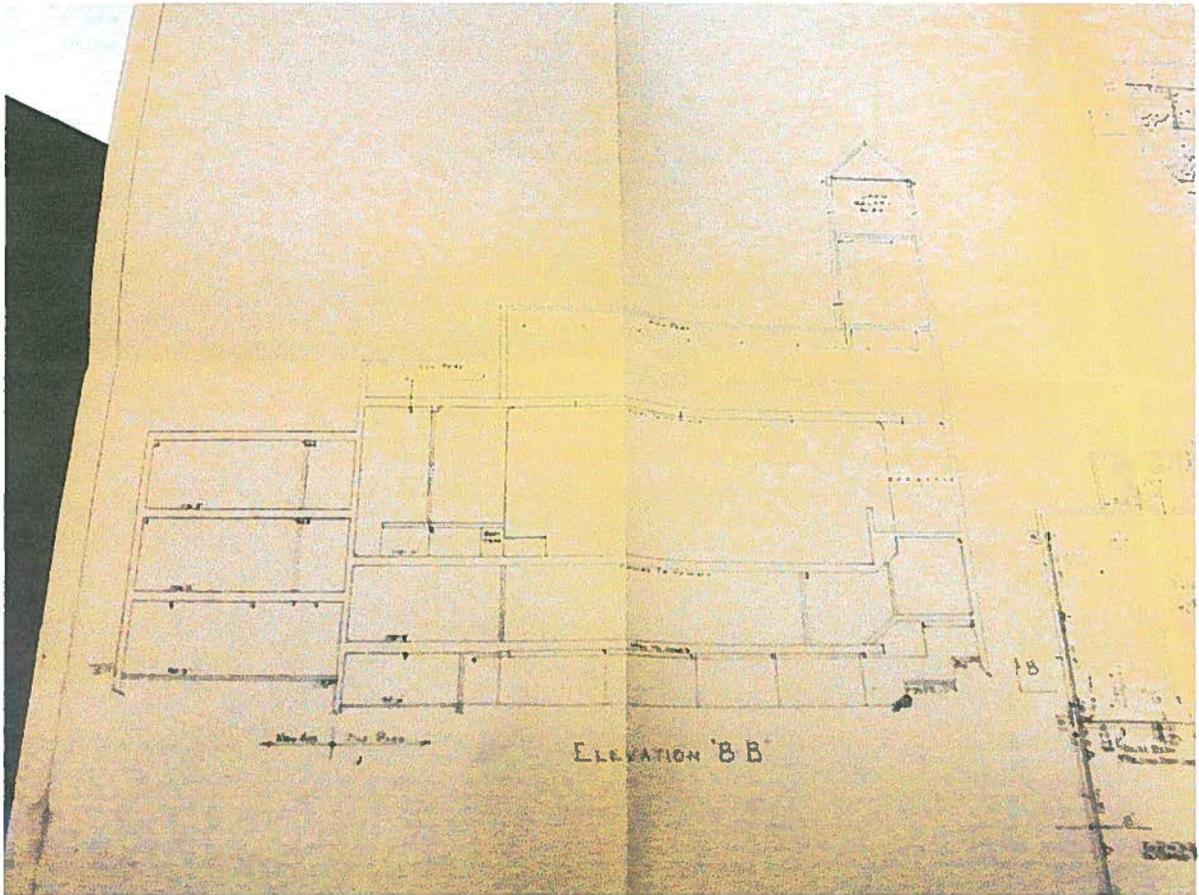


My Comm. Expires March 2, 1956.



Attachment 4 WABC

Blueprint Showing Side View of West Acton Baptist Church (1 page)



Belfry at right  
Original building at right center  
1898 addition at left center  
1956 education wing addition at the left end

**Attachment 5 (2 pages)**

**History of WABC Availability and Service to Acton with Possible Future Community Uses**

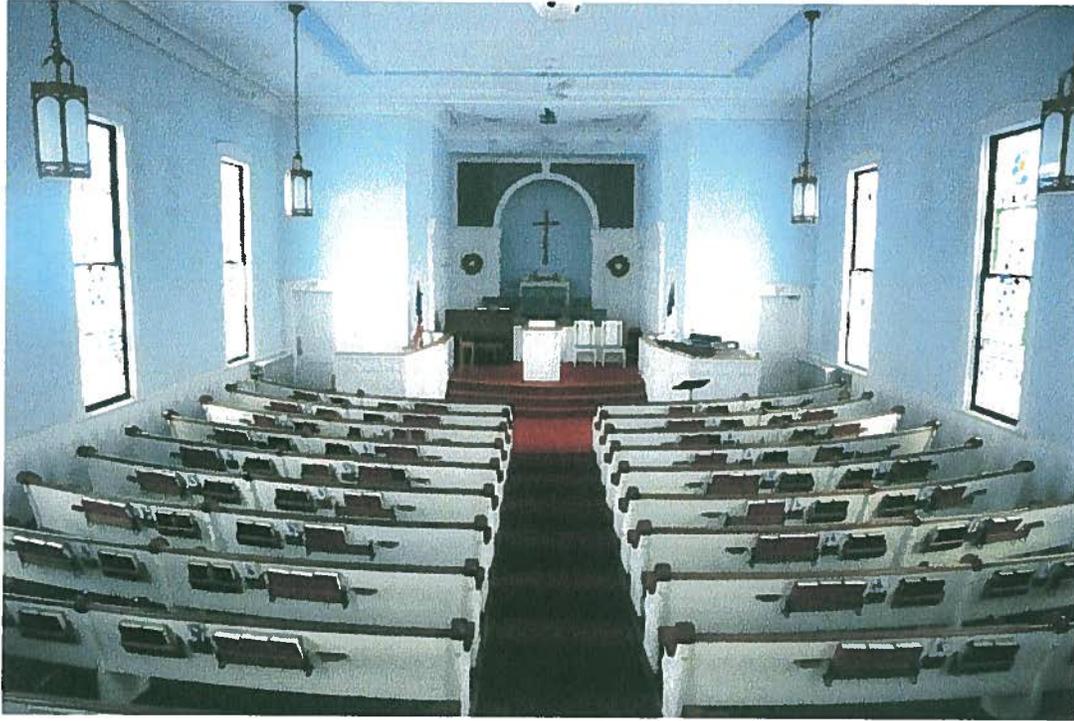
*The West Acton Baptist Church is a historic landmark in the community, with a long history of availability and service to the Town of Acton. After restoration, we seek to expand the community uses of our handicapped-accessible church building.*

(key: S = Sanctuary, F = Fellowship Hall, E = Education Wing, L = Library)

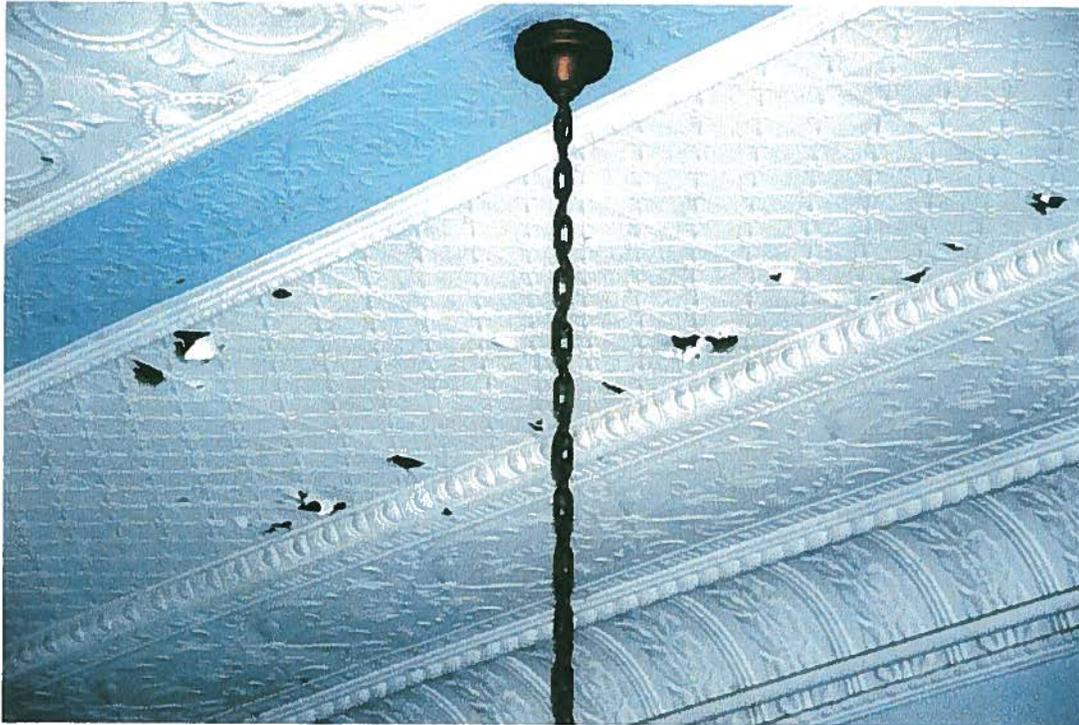
<b>Locations &amp; Dates</b>	<b>Historical Community Uses</b>	<b>Possible Future Community Uses</b>
<b>S</b> October 2011	<b>Photography slide show</b> on the theme of "Darkness to Light," by amateur photographer Rev. Jeffrey Long Middleton.	Painting and photography shows, hanging or in other visual media.
<b>S</b> March 2010	<b>Community-wide talent show</b> with 14 acts by people aged 5-86. (The choir and pulpit areas, with moveable furniture, are designed to be adapted for different uses.)	Talent shows, gymnastic and dance exhibits...
<b>S</b> March 2004 March 11, 2005 & Sept 23, 2004 Feb 21, 2004 Mar 9, 2002 October 1991	<b>Musical performances (recent years only):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Billy &amp; Guy – vocal &amp; instrumental</li> <li>· Phil Argiris &amp; Wendy Nottenham (instrumental group)</li> <li>· Firehouse Band</li> <li>· Covenant Players</li> <li>· Organ Recital – Charles King</li> <li>· Katherine Geller, soloist</li> </ul>	Dances, auditions and rehearsals for musical concerts, paid performances open to the public.
<b>S</b> On-going	<b>Ecumenical Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Interfaith Thanksgiving service</li> <li>· Community Holiday Sing</li> <li>· Christmas Eve Candles and Carols</li> <li>· Maundy Thursday (The Last Supper)</li> <li>· Good Friday community services &amp; walk</li> <li>· Annual State-Wide Ecumenical Choir rehearsal (3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in October)</li> </ul>	All are annual events that will continue.  Cherished by many West Acton area residents.  Led by many local pastors
<b>S, F</b> 1990's-Present	<b>Community interest group meetings</b> and open forum regarding overrides, and other such meetings, have continued here through the years. The Acton Forum met here several times in the past few years.	Community meetings as needed; political and educational lectures, debates, and forums ( <i>a la</i> Ralph Waldo Emerson) are possible expanded uses for both the sanctuary and the fellowship hall, depending on audience size.
<b>S, F</b> 2005 - present	A <b>Brazilian congregation</b> shares our worship space on Wednesdays and Sundays and uses our fellowship hall for dinners and special events.	Igreja Batista Renovada de Acton expects to remain and continue both its own worship and shared services and functions with WABC.
<b>E</b> 1957 (a historical note; no restoration proposed)	A significant population increase occurred in Acton. The existing school system was unable to house all students. The church opened its newly-built education wing to provide <b>class-room space</b> for the growing Acton elementary school population and a Community Cooperative Pre-School.	Fifty-five years later, the educational wing is still home to the <b>Acton Cooperative School</b> – the building is alive on weekday mornings with the sound and songs of preschoolers. The school has significantly invested in its space and expects to remain for the foreseeable future.
<b>F</b> 1970's – 1990's	WABC hosted a <b>Boy Scout</b> troop with leadership provided by church members.	Scouts would again be welcome, should they need the space.

<b>F</b> 1980 - 1994	Fellowship hall was the site for <b>Senior Citizens'</b> lunches and programs for several years before construction of the senior center.	A senior day care program might be possible, adjacent to the preschool, to their mutual benefit in stimulation and story-telling.
<b>F</b> 1964 – 1970	During the pastorate of the Rev. David Hirano, a <b>coffee house for teenagers</b> was opened at the church during evening hours. It proved so popular a place to go for young people that it led to the establishment of a youth center which later became incorporated and relocated at a facility of its own. With seminarians from Andover Newton leading the senior and junior high youth, and under the guidance of Rev. Hirano, the social and spiritual needs of teenagers were nurtured. The Acton Jaycees honored Rev. Hirano in January 1968, with the presentation of the Distinguished Service Award. Rev. Hirano was the chairman of B.A.C.K Inc., a group that sponsored the newly established teen center.	With perhaps a more flexible and adjustable lighting and sound system, another coffee house might even attract the grown-up generation of those same youth—along with their children and grandchildren. Not to compete with the fine musical offerings of the Acton Jazz Café, this coffee house might host poetry and author readings, murder mystery meals, comedy shows, and similar entertainments.
<b>L</b> 1988-2003	A <b>Single Parents</b> group formed and met for 15 years – until their children grew up.	We will continue to identify a community need and provide a service or function to meet it.
<b>F</b> Several decades	<b>Six AA groups</b> (veterans, women, & open) currently meet on Saturdays and evenings, not only in the Fellowship Hall but also in the Library (off the Fellowship Hall) and in a non-Coop School space in the Educational Wing. A women's group provides child care in that same space, so mothers of young children can focus for that time on their own recovery. Overaters Anonymous, Al-Anon, and Alateen have also met in here in the past.	The AA groups have always been welcome and will continue to be; other self-help support groups would also be welcome if they should need space to meet.
<b>F</b> March 14 <sup>th</sup> & 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2011 Oct 18, 2011 Nov 16, 2010 Dec 13, 2010 April 14, 2009 March 2, 2008 June 14, 2007 AM & PM	<b>Specialist Presentations</b> Slowing Down in a Hurried World Rev. Cheryl Harris Healthy Relations: Tools for Resolving Conflict Michael Landers Five Ways We Grieve – Susan Burger Male Grieving – Support follow-up Whole Health Fair – Many Local Businesses Bullying – w/ Network for Women's Lives Healthy Eating & Living for a Healthy Brain - Dr. Nancy Emerson Lombardo	Several of these presenters are still available and their offerings could be repeated or followed up with sequels. More are possible, in response to perceived, identified or requested community needs.
<b>F, L</b> 11/9/06 & 8/30/07 9/2010- 5/2011 Nov 18, 2006 2007 - 2010 Mid-1980's Feb-June 2009	<b>Other Occasional Uses:</b> Lifeline Screening Violin Lessons – Suzuki Music School Community Craft Fair – Annette Lockery ESL every Monday Emerson Hospital Auxiliary – Made puppets for pediatric unit every 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday Fox Moms Exercise Group	Flexibility is characteristic of the building's uses.
<b>Various Rooms</b> (recent years only) Fall 1998 Feb-Mar 2008 Oct-Nov 2008 March 2009 Oct-Nov 2009	<b>6-week Workshops</b> (Nancy Hoover, Rev. Jeffrey Long Middleton, Bob Williams, Nancy Emerson Lombardo, Ira Smith) Forgiveness Reconciliation The Non-Financial Aspects of Retirement Parenting, Transitions & Stress Living with Afflictions	Participants were consistently about 50% community members and 50% church members. The workshop leaders are currently shepherding the church through a transition period, but later, as we identify more community needs, we would like to resume offering similar workshops.
<b>L</b> Nov 2009 - present	<b>The Sharing and Caring</b> community group, an outgrowth of the 'Living with Afflictions' workshop series, has sponsored guest speakers which several community members have attended.	Sharing and Caring, part of WABC's mission to church and community members alike, will continue meeting monthly and inviting occasional guest speakers.

**Attachment 6: WABC Sanctuary Ceiling Photos**



1. West Acton Baptist Church Sanctuary



2. WABC Sanctuary Ceiling showing multiple bas-relief patterns and peeling paint

Attachment 6 (cont.)

3. WABC Sanctuary ceiling (looking south) [Brown lines along the sides are sprinkler pipes.]



4. WABC Sanctuary ceiling toward front & choir loft (looking south)



5. WABC sanctuary ceiling over choir loft (south)

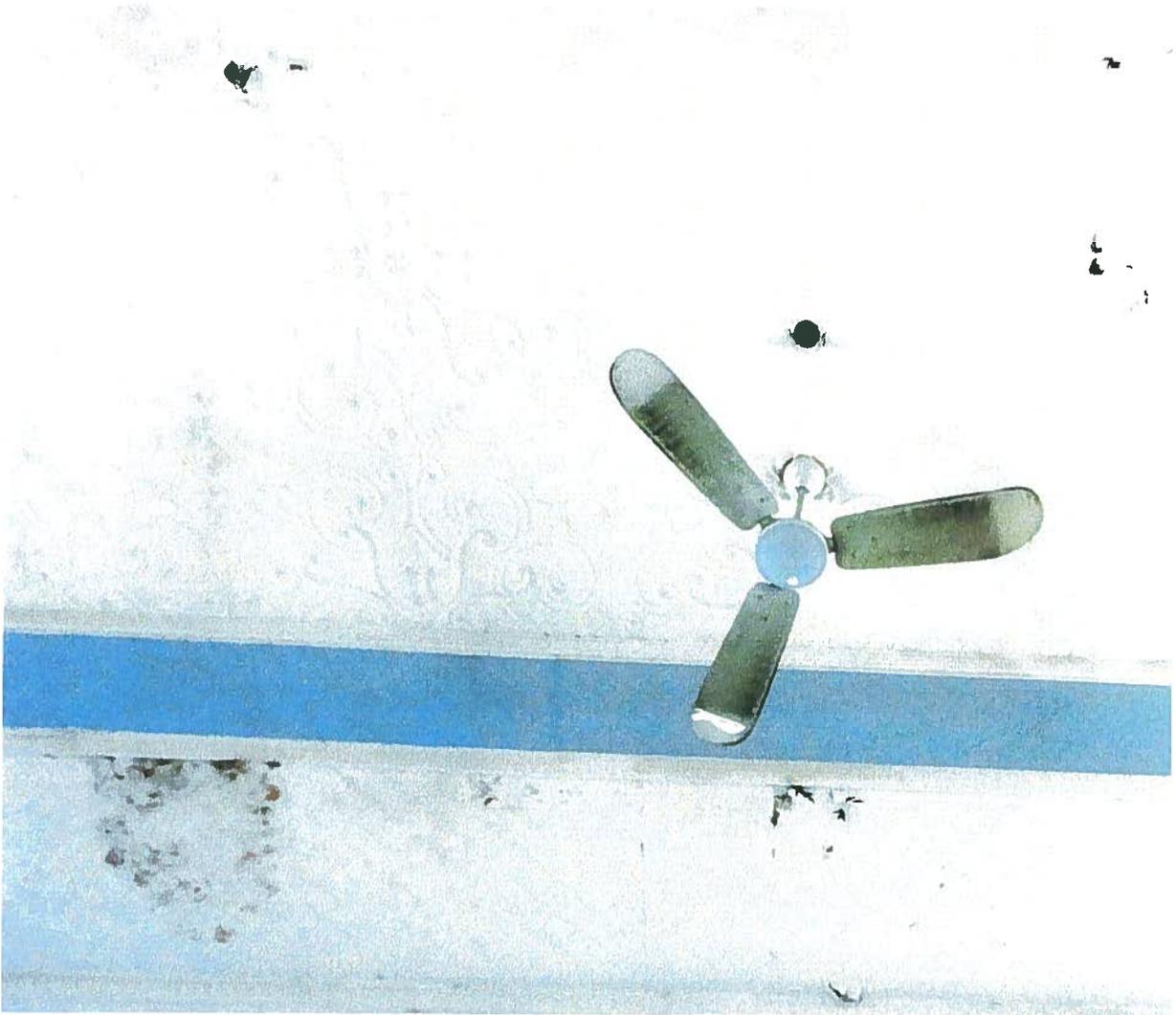


6. WABC sanctuary ceiling under belfry (north)



Attachment 6 (cont.)

7. WABC sanctuary ceiling @ back (northwest)



8. WABC sanctuary ceiling rust patch detail (northwest)



9. WABC sanctuary ceiling peeling paint detail (southwest, above stained glass window)



10. Photo of the old organ with its pipes, showing portions of the pressed steel ceiling, before the organ was replaced in the spring of 1953.

