Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System
Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	FRM.AH
Historic Name:	Edwards Congregational Church Complex
City/Town:	Framingham
Village/Neighborhood:	Saxonville;
Local No:	
Year Constructed:	
Use(s):	Other Religious;
Significance:	Architecture; Community Planning; Education; Religion;
Designation(s):	
Building Materials:	
Demolished	No



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

This file was accessed on: Thursday, November 5, 2026 at 9:17 AM

FORM A - AREA

Assessor's Sheets	USGS Quad	Area Letter	Form Numbers in Area
40/ 34/ 1608, 2627, 3610, 3448	Framing-ham	AH	FRM.665, 1176-1179

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

Photograph



Town/City: Framingham

Place *(neighborhood or village):* Saxonville

Name of Area: Edwards Congregational Church

Present Use: religious, residential, educational, offices

Construction Dates or Period: 1827-1960

Overall Condition: good

Major Intrusions and Alterations:
education building added to church

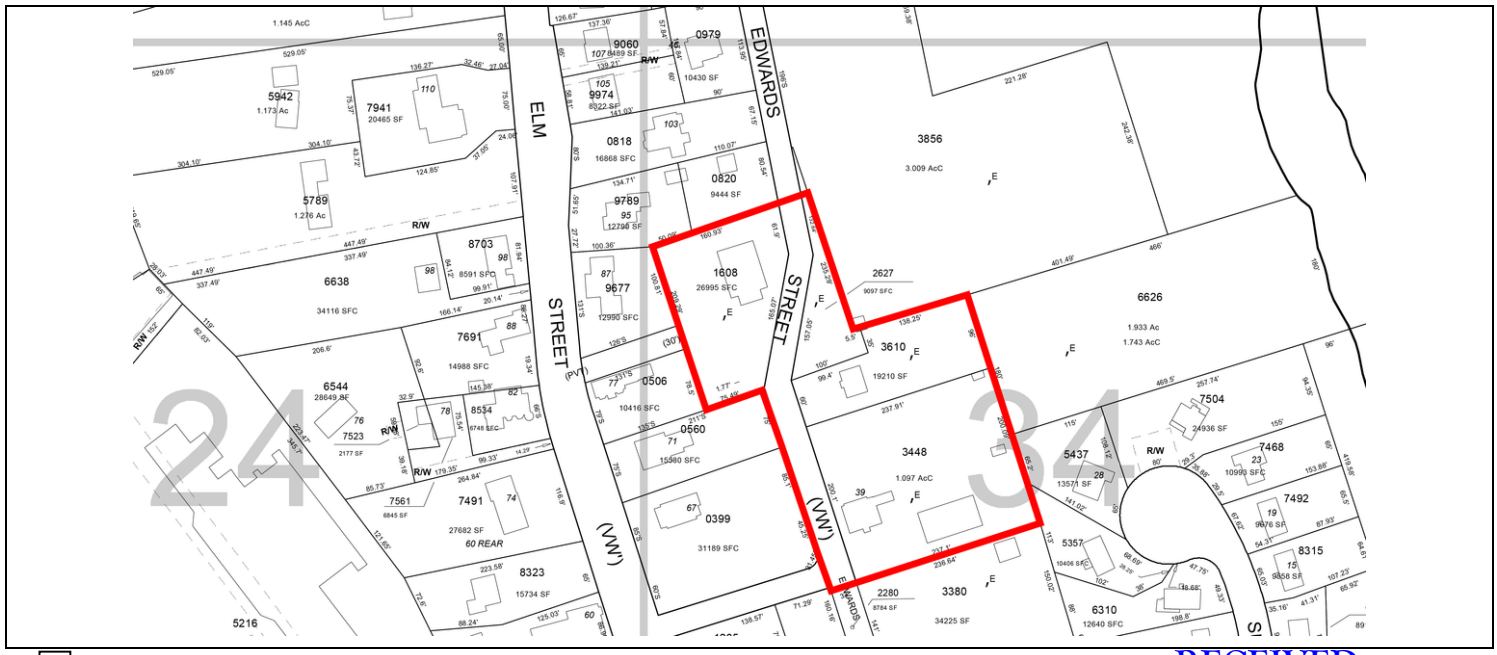
Acreage: about two acres

Recorded by: Claire W. Dempsey with Zachary Violette

Organization: Framingham Historic District Commission

Date *(month/year):* June 2016

Locus Map (north is up)



☐ *see continuation sheet*

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220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area Letter	Form Nos.
AH	665, 1176-1179

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.

The Edwards Congregational Church Area is located at the north end of the village of Saxonville, east of the main north-south artery of Elm Street and adjacent to the Edwards Cemetery, a Town-owned burying ground that takes its name from the Church. The area includes the land and the five buildings that make up the Church campus; see data sheet and Bing bird's eye view attached. The core of the area is the 1827 Church (A on bird's eye view), facing south onto the head of what is now known as Edwards Street, formerly known as Temple Street, which originally began at the Church and extended south from the Church to Chestnut Street, with perpendicular sections dividing off in front of the Church to connect to Elm Street to the west and the Edwards Cemetery to the east. Today Edwards Street continues north around the east side of the Church and beyond, but to the south terminates at the Saxonville (now Mary E. Stapleton) School (FRM.1030). Attached to the Church on the left or west side by a glazed hyphen is the Susan B. Dickerman Education Building (B on bird's eye view), an end gabled volume on a raised basement with a gabled vestibule built in 2002. In the mid-20th century, the property of the Church was significantly expanded through the purchase of land extending south from the original parcel along the east side of Edwards Street. This land includes a residence that has been a neighbor of the Church throughout its history and which today is known as Jonathan House (D on bird's eye view). That purchase provided enough space for the construction of two new buildings, the Parsonage of 1956 (C on bird's eye view) and Edwards Hall of 1960 (E on bird's eye view). The Parsonage is located next to the Church and facing onto Edwards Street, perpendicular to the Church. Next to the south is Jonathan House, set perpendicular to Edwards Street and facing south down the hill onto what is now the Saxonville School. Behind Jonathan House is Edwards Hall. These buildings are surrounded by a grassy lawn with shade trees, and there are parking areas in front of the Education Building and to the north of Jonathan House and Edwards Hall. In the descriptions below, the buildings are described in order from north to south.

Built as the Saxonville Meeting House in 1827, the **Edwards Congregational Church (FRM.665, 40 Edwards Street, A)** this is one of the oldest houses of worship surviving in Framingham. Today, the building is Gothic in style in spite of its aluminum siding, and that appearance may date to its initial construction. The main Church building is composed of three primary masses, the large gabled block of the nave, a vestibule and tower projecting from the south or front side, and a chancel projecting from the north or rear side. The vestibule and tower dominate the facade, giving it the churchly appearance that was becoming increasingly popular in New England in the early 19th century. The vestibule covers about three-fifths of the gable end of the main block, with a partial gable roof whose pitch mimics that of the main block. The tower is flush with the vestibule and rises in two stages, each trimmed with a simple balustrade and culminating in corner pinnacles. Its lower section is pierced by a large lancet window of stained glass, echoed in the upper tower's openings, though there the arched segments are blind. The center, double-leafed entry is sheltered by a flat hood and ornamented by large strap hinges. The gable end of the main block is treated as a closed pediment, and the outlines of the tower and the window are marked with narrow boards. The side elevations of the main block of the Church are pierced by four large gothic windows with stained glass, while the vestibule has smaller lancet windows at the ground level and a 1/1 opening above, both also with stained glass. The rear chancel has no openings on its north elevation but narrow lancet windows on each side, also with stained glass. The Church itself is edged by a low stone retaining wall, and there are large bushes along the path to the Church, flanking the tower, and continuing across the Church and Education Building.

The interior is also divided into three spaces. The vestibule is sheathed in high board wainscot and in the southeast corner includes the narrow turning stair to the choir loft in the front or south end of the Church; with the door casings,

these seem to be early surviving fabric. Three doors provide access to the nave, a single open space with a full floor of slip pews divided by a center aisle. The stained pews have scrolled arms and are angled to improve the view of the pulpit, chancel, and organ at the north end of the room. The chancel includes a raised platform within the nave and an arched opening before the large and ornamental organ, treated with six Corinthian pilasters on pedestals. The choir loft projects slightly into the nave and is treated with gothic arcade paneling. The walls have low stained wainscot and plaster above, emphasizing the colorful geometric patterns of the stained glass in the lancet windows.

The **Susan P. Dickerman Education Building (FRM.1178, 40 Edwards Street, 2002, B)** is composed of two elements, the end-gabled two-story main block and the lower end-gabled vestibule. The land slopes down to the west, so that this building is entered from the ground level lower than the church. Entry is into a glazed double-leafed, paneled door, and the building is regularly fenestrated with paired 6/1 sash along all its elevations, with a lancet window above the entry echoing the treatment of the Church. Its eaves are boxed and it is covered in vinyl siding. The hyphen linking the space to the main sanctuary includes three larger 9/1 sash on each elevation. Designed to be fully accessible, the building provides a grade level entry and a circulation core that includes an elevator and a stair leading several steps up to the main floor and meeting room and several steps down to the classroom level.

The **Parsonage (FRM.1179, 45 Edwards Street, 1956, C**) takes the familiar form colloquially known as the "center-entry Colonial," a simple rectangular volume measuring about 32 feet across and 26 feet deep, of two stories under a low-gabled roof. Facing west onto Edwards Street, the building's walls are covered in shingles, and its main entry is at the center of the three bay façade, sheltered by a simple gabled porch with square posts. A pair of small windows is positioned above the entry, and most of the modern 1/1 sash windows are flanked by plank shutters. A secondary entry is located on the north side and an exterior brick chimney on the south. The plan includes a full depth living room on the south side and dining room and kitchen on the north, with four bedrooms and bath on the second floor.

The building known today as **Jonathan House (FRM.1177, 39 Edwards Street, ca. 1830, D)** appears on historic maps of this area as early as 1832, and the property with buildings has been traced back at least that far. The alterations to the house over its long history and the limited fieldwork associated with standard survey preclude a definitive history of the house. But today, the house demonstrates at least four phases of development, construction as an end house in the mid-19th century; a later 19th century iteration with porches, longer wing, and attached outbuildings; remodeling probably in the early 20th century; and more recent accommodation to its use as church offices. Its current form is a two-story end house facing to the south with a lower wing extending to the east. Its fenestration pattern and chimney location are typical of an end house, with windows regularly deployed front and rear and along the west side elevation indicating the location of fireplaces. Changes are visible to the early core. The primary facade includes a pedimented porch with Tuscan columns on the side entry, and the windows are 1/1 sash and the building has been covered in vinyl siding, both recent changes. A flat-roofed addition has been added in the front reentrant angle between the main block and the wing. A related Tuscan porch runs along the north or rear elevation, now treated as the building's main entrance point; an exterior stair and balustrade has been added to the porch roof to provide an additional means of egress. An open gable-roofed porch extends east beyond the wing, and this may be a surviving section of the ells and outbuildings that are illustrated on period maps. The side-hall plan seems to parallel the room-by-room inventory recorded in 1851 (see Historical Narrative) and includes two parlors flanking the hall in the main block, and it seems likely that the wing may originally have enclosed the dining room. The house had a long rear ell for much of its history, and the early the kitchen, stove room, china closets and the man's and girl's rooms may have been located there. The new room sits before the wing and we might speculate that it served as a dining room when the longer wing was removed and the dining room converted to a kitchen. There are three bedrooms in the second story, with two small rooms divided off from the hall in the front and rear; two finished rooms are located in the attic. A range of 19th century finishes survive, including a mid-19th century stair, bead board wainscot in the kitchen, window and door casings, and a Colonial Revival mantel in one of the second-story rooms.

Behind Jonathan House, **Edwards Hall (FRM.1176, 29 Edwards Street, 1960, E)** is a modern structure, set with its gable end to the house and the street and extending into the lot. The land slopes down here, and the façade faces north to the parking area and presents two levels on the south side facing the school. Covered in clapboards, the building has a deeply overhanging roof that extends to shelter the projecting entry offset to the east of the center of the building; a

second double-door entry is located to the west. On the interior, the vestibule leads to a kitchen on the east and a large meeting space on the west, with classrooms on the ground floor. The meeting space is framed with curved posts that create the 'cathedral' ceiling, covered in planks, a common feature of period buildings. The building includes a variety of window types, including banks of narrow windows lighting the meeting hall, sliders for the classrooms on the ground floor along the rear, and each end includes a geometrical pattern of fixed sash extending into the gable.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how this relates to the historical development of the community.

The Edwards Congregational Church area, today the campus of the church of that name, includes the original church building of 1827, a neighboring house which probably dates to ca. 1830 and was later purchased by the church, and a parsonage and meeting hall built by the church in 1955 and 1960 respectively. In the narrative below, the history of the Church is followed by the history of the mid-19th century house.

The building now known as the Edwards Congregational Church was built in 1827 as the Saxonville Meeting House, to serve the growing population of Saxonville, an early mill village in the northeast part of Framingham. With much of the land owned by the Saxonville Factory Company (later the New England Worsted Company and Roxbury Carpet Company), the village included the mill buildings, a commercial core nearby, and company- and privately-owned residences surrounding these. At the north end, a cluster of public buildings emerged over the mid-nineteenth century, including this Church, the nearby schools on Elm and Edwards streets, and the Methodist Church on Elm Street. The Saxonville Company apparently played a role in the Church's founding, as early meetings of the religious society were held in its offices and when the land on which the building stands was finally given to the society, in 1916, it came from Frank E. Simpson, then its president.

Church histories note that the church was built by Frances (sic) Batcheldor of Boston from plans drawn by Thomas W. Summers of Brooklyn, NY. Little is known about Thomas W. Summers of Brooklyn. He has not been located in census, directory, or vital records for that area in this period. A Thomas W. Summers (1808-1886) of Philadelphia worked as a clerk; there is no evidence that this Summers was an architect. A George Summers, also of Philadelphia, is listed as an architect in the 1840s through the 1860s, although his relationship either to Thomas Summers or the Edwards Church is unclear.[1] It is possible the reference to Summers is a misspelling of Thomas Waldron Sumner (1768-1849), a well-known Boston architect and associate of Charles Bulfinch, who is credited with a number of churches and other important public buildings in the early nineteenth century. Sumner was architect of Divinity Hall at Harvard (1825, CAM.119), and of the East India Marine Hall (SAL.2473, 1825) and Independent Congregational Church in Salem (demolished).[2]

Initially, the building was to serve as a union meeting place, and Unitarians and Methodists preached here in the early years, including Harvard professor Henry Ware (1764-1845), who officiated at the dedication. Ware, formerly minister in Hingham, was a prominent liberal, whose selection as Hollis Professor of Divinity in 1805 was one of the key appointments indicating the shift of that institution into the Unitarian camp. Of particular interest in Framingham is the fact that three years later, when the first parish became Unitarian, the newly formed Trinitarian church took the name Hollis Evangelical Church; today it is known as the Plymouth Church (FRM. 9, 89 Edgell Road). In 1833, 25 members of that church sought dismissal to form a Congregational Church in Saxonville and took over this building. The Church was known as the Congregational Church of Saxonville during most of the 19th century, and in addition to this building they built a chapel, surviving at the corner of Elm and Chestnut streets (FRM.1027, 9-11 Elm Street). The Church officially took the name Edwards Congregational Church in 1917. In 1957, when the Congregationalists merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, this became a member of the United Church of Christ.

[1] No information on Summers could be uncovered in basic vital record, directory, and census searches on Ancestry.com and elsewhere.
[2] For more on Sumner see Appleton, William S. *Record of the Descendants of William Sumner, of Dorchester, Mass., 1636*, (Boston: D. Clapp & Son, 1879) 21, 49-50.

The original appearance of the church is not certainly known, but it may be that it was always "Gothick" in style. So designated to distinguish it from the post-1840 Gothic Revival, this use of motifs from medieval European buildings was employed in New England church architecture in the early decades of the 19th century. Early examples included Benjamin Latrobe's Christ Church in Washington, DC (1808), Charles Bulfinch's Federal Street Church in Boston (1809), John Holden Green's St. John's Church in Providence (1810), and Ithiel Town's Trinity Episcopal Church in New Haven, (1816); the style enjoyed particular popularity with Episcopal congregations and became more common among rural congregations in the 1820s and 30s. The two earliest images of the building, of 1832 and 1882, both show the general form that survives today, as well as details like the tower's pinnacles. The more detailed view of about 1910 includes features that may be indicative of this early treatment, including the crenellation on the vestibule and both levels of the tower, the pinnacles, and the wood trim, tracing the base of the tower and its Gothic window in an ogee arch. Further research would be helpful in determining the earliest configuration and detailing of the building.

The Church seems to have prospered during the 19th century. Funds were initially raised by means of pew rentals, but the shift to the 'envelope system' in 1882 suggests a different method for fundraising, perhaps associated with increasingly popular free seating and weekly offerings. Church histories note moments of change to the building, though they do not always clarify whether the work was undertaken or characterize the work. In 1863/4, the building was enlarged, described recently: "an extension was built, the choir loft extended and new pews were made." This may be the chancel and the font projection of the choir loft and possibly the current pews. Most of the stained glass windows were installed in 1883, with one memorial window added in the tower in 1977. Electric lights were introduced and the organ was installed in 1905. Church publications report it had formerly been in use in Charlestown, MA, and that it was inscribed "George H. Butler, of George Stevens, builder of this organ." George Stevens (1803-1894) was a well-known producer of high-quality organs, based in East Cambridge; he also served as alderman and mayor of Cambridge. The interior includes the low pulpit, large organ, and auditorium seating that Evangelical churches frequently chose later in the nineteenth century.

There is little written in the Church history about the decision to name the church for Jonathan Edwards, a name it seems to have taken by the 1860s. Edwards (1703-1758) was an extraordinary figure in the intellectual history of New England Protestantism, inspiring revivals, writing important theological works, and leading two congregations, first succeeding his grandfather in Northampton, later moving to Stockbridge, then the frontier. This choice would certainly reiterate the congregation's commitment to the tenants of Congregationalism. His names were given to the other campus buildings in recent years.

The Church struggled early in the 20th century, but the Town's rapid expansion in the postwar years brought renewed growth, especially in terms of its real estate. The house next door on Edwards Street was at the time owned by Lemual A. "Al" Kirkpatrick, and in 1955 and 1960, a sale of land and then the house and land significantly increased the plant. See below for the history of that house. The Parsonage was built after the first purchase of land in 1955, and for about 25 years was used by the minister; since that time it has been rented. Jonathan House was used for classrooms and a nursery school for a time, and it is now used as the Church's main office space. The Church was covered in aluminum siding in 1957. In 1960/61, Edwards Hall was constructed from designs by Priestly Associates of Boston by Devlin Construction. Priestly Associates was a Boston architecture and engineering firm, later known as Priestly/Sterling, founded by John Priestly, Jr., (2/5/1925–3/11/2013), an architect and developer. Priestly was a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design and World War II veteran who worked on architecture and historic preservation projects in the Boston area for over 60 years, including work on the rehabilitation of Faneuil Hall.[3] In 1961 the Church sold the chapel at the corner of Elm and Chestnut streets. In 2002, the Education Building was constructed to provide fully accessible spaces for classes and meetings, from designs by John Pearson of Margulies and Associates by Vantage Builders of Natick. The large, Boston-based architecture and interiors firm was founded in 1988 by Marc Margulies and is now known as Margulies-Perruzzi Associates. They are responsible for numerous corporate, health care, and educational facilities in the Greater Boston Area, including work for Massachusetts General Hospital and Blue Cross Blue Shield of

[3] "John W. Priestly Jr." (Obituary) http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/bostonglobe/obituary.aspx?pid=163620262.

Massachusetts. John Pearson, AIA, was then senior associate at the firm and president of Andover Community Trust, who was responsible for the design of a number of affordable housing developments in that town.[4]

Next door to the Church, to the south, there is a house that may be of similar age as the Church itself. The series of names indicated on the historic maps of the area, and confirmed through a cursory title search, provide a possible outline of its history; more intense field and documentary research would be necessary to confirm its details. Members of the Fiske family owned in this area, where Micah (1764-1813) took over an established tannery in about 1790 and was succeeded by his son Charles (1792-1874). Charles, who served as the village postmaster after 1830, sold the land that became the Saxonville Cemetery, today known as the Edwards Cemetery, to the Town of Framingham in two one-acre parcels, in 1838 and 1865.[5] John Head also owned land in this area in the early 1830s, and a man of that name was one of the incorporators of the Saxon Cotton & Woolen Factory in 1829, a predecessor of the company that was responsible for the early development of the mill privileges and the village that came to be known as Saxonville. Some village properties nearby are labeled "J Head houses" on the map of 1832, and he seems to have been a developer and sub-divider of property here.[6] By that date, however, this property was probably owned by J. Morland, who was another manufacturer. Unlike Head, John Morland (b. ca. 1803) married and lived in Framingham, before removing to Andover by 1837, when he sold the property.[7]

A longer-term owner of the property was Samuel Woods (ca. 1783-1851), described as a gentleman at the time of his death. He owned property here and in Boston, and his probate records include a room-by-room inventory that seems to align with this house. The named rooms include, in the order of the document: parlors, front entry, dining room, room over front door, front chamber, back chamber, small room adjoining, chamber over dining room, front attic, back attic, man's room, girl's room, store room, kitchen, china closets, and outdoors. These spaces suggest the building we see today, with a longer wing or another space to accommodate the last five rooms; later maps and atlases indicate the building had a long wing extending east from the main block.[8] Woods' heirs sold the property to Russell E. Pullen in 1853, who then defaulted on his mortgage from the Shawmut Mutual Loan and Fund Association; this may be the same individual who later lived in Medford on Touro Avenue and died in 1890.[9] In 1860, the property was sold to Dexter Baldwin (5 July 1798-27 May 1870), a physician who later reported his occupation as farmer and lived in Saxonville with his wife Lavinia and their children.[10]

After two very short-term owners, George Wilson Webster bought the property and established his residence here until his death in 1910. Webster (25 November 1825- 15 July 1919) and his wife Sarah Searle Webster (b. ca. 1828- 16 March 1901) married in 1856 and were living in Framingham as early as 1860, he describing himself as a peddler, she a milliner. By 1870, they were living in the household of Lanie and Cassie Baldwin, perhaps a boardinghouse, with John R. Webster, their nephew, and the family of farmer Edward Howard; Webster reported his occupation as dry goods trader and his personal estate was valued at $41,000, likely his stock and apparently enough to fund the purchase of this house and land. In 1880 George described himself as a farmer, Sarah was keeping house, and John R. was at school. They shared their home with Jerymiah (sic) Fuller, a 68-year-old farmer, Mary Wheeler, 17, at school, and Nellie Taylor, 16, servant. Webster was a member of the Edwards Church parish committee that purchased land at the corner of Elm and Chestnut streets in 1887. George was still here just before his death in 1910, reporting no occupation and living with a servant and

[4] http://mp-architects.com/about-mpa .
[5] Temple, *History of Framingham*, pp. 24, 355, 357, 359, 372, 550.
[6] Temple, *History of Framingham*, p. 357. This may be the Boston merchant of longstanding, 1761-1837, whose death was reported in the *Columbian Centinal*; see Ancestry.com: Newspaper Abstracts Northeast, MA Wills & Probate; Boston directories, multiple years. Middlesex Registry of Deeds, 313:400.
[7] Middlesex Registry of Deeds 313:400, 315:108; 363:431.
[8] Middlesex County Probate Docket 45019, Registry of Deeds 372:357, 657:481. Ancestry.com: MA Vital Records.
[9] Middlesex Registry of Deeds, 657:481, 483, 485. Ancestry.com: MA Vital Records; US Directories Boston, Medford, Malden multiple years.
[10] Temple, *History of Framingham*, p. 462. Ancestry.com: US Federal Census mortality schedule; NH Births, MA Deaths, US Census 1860, MA Census 1855, 1865.

a hired man.[11] The ownership of the property in the early 20th century has not yet been researched. The removal of the outbuildings, the shortening of the wing, the addition of the new room, and the current configuration of the porches were all in place by 1930, and likely represent work done by the next owner after Webster. By the middle of the 20th century the house belonged to Lemuel A. "Al" Kirkpatrick, who sold it to the Church.

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1872: [Walling Map, unk pub. Inf., Framingham Public Library from History Center].
1875: F.W. Beers, Atlas of Middlesex County.
1882: G.H. Bailey, Saxonville, MA (bird's eye view).
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[11] Middlesex Country Register of Deeds 1166:141. Ancestry.com: MA Death records; MA Vital records, MA Marriage Records. US Census 1860, 1870, 1880, 1910.

Data Sheet

MHC #	assessors #	name	address	map	date	style/ form
1176	40/34/3448	Edwards Hall	29 Edwards St.	D	1960	Modernist/ gabled block
1177		Jonathan House	39 Edwards St.	E	ca. 1830	altered/ end house w/ wing
665	40/34/1608	Edwards Congrega-tional Church	40 Edwards St.	A	1827	"Gothick"/ nave and tower
1178		Susan P Dickerman Education Building	40 Edwards St.	B	2002	Gothic/ end gabled
1179	40/34/3610	Parsonage	45 Edwards St.	C	1955	Colonial Revival/ center entry
	40/34/2627	lot				



Bing bird's eye view of the area, with buildings labeled.



The Susan P. Dickerman Education Building



The Parsonage



Jonathan House: above, the south and east sides, below, the north and west sides.





Edwards Hall



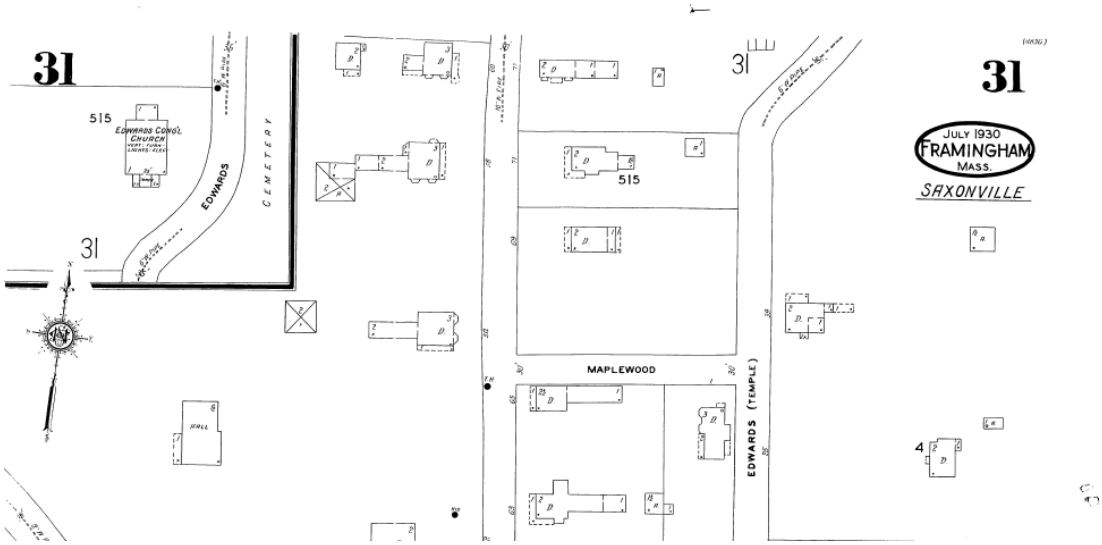
The Nixon Map of 1832 shows the earliest view of Edwards Church; the property marked J. Marland may be the building now known as Jonathan House.



Detail of O.H. Bailey bird's eye view of Saxonville (1882) showing the Church and Jonathan House.



Framingham Public Library.



Detail of Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas 1930. The inset shown the Church, and its correct location is indicated with the small 31 near the top of the image. To the south on the east side of Edwards is Jonathan House, showing its present footprint.