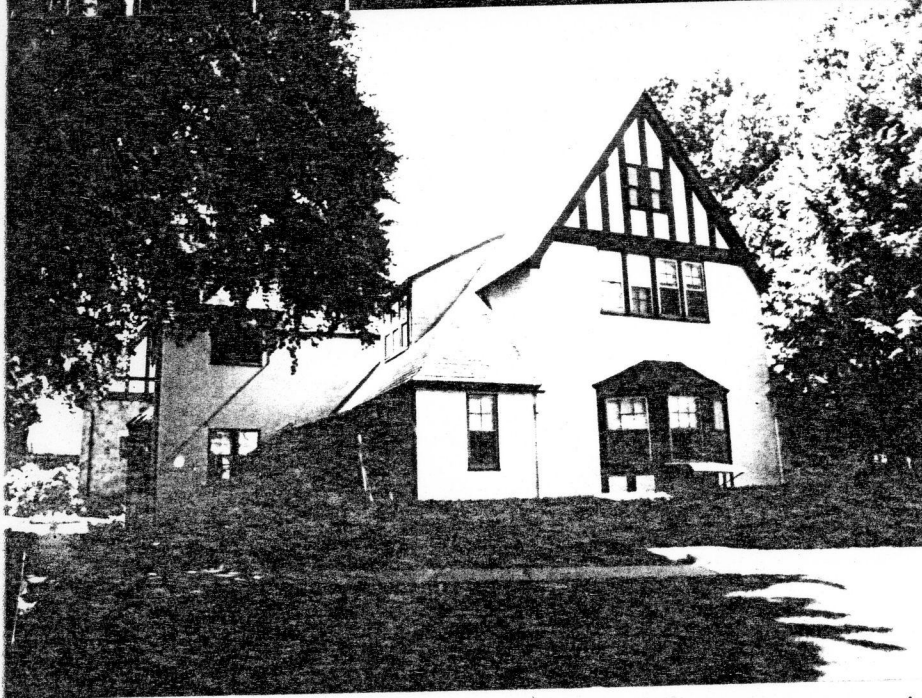
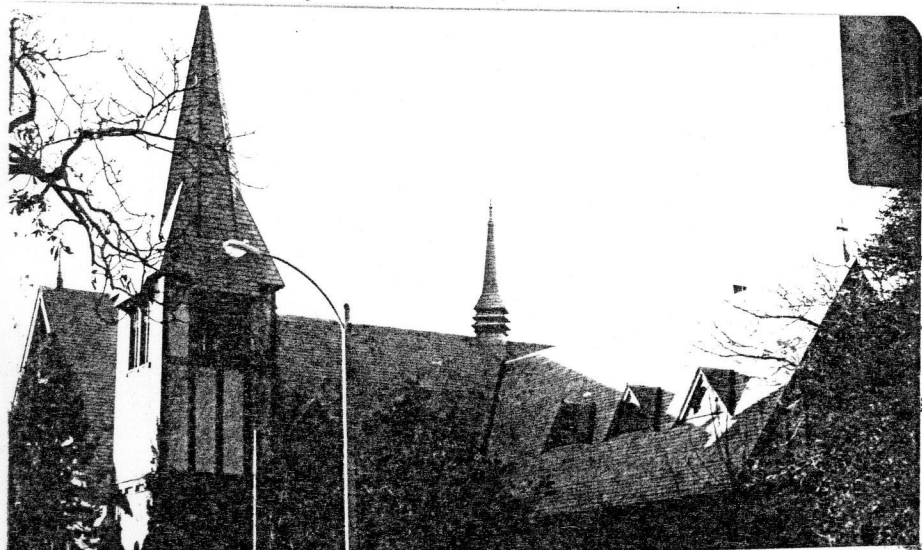


NRIND NRMRA 10/17/1985

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02116

| AREA | FORM NO. |
|------|----------|
| W2 | 6/27-1-3 |



own Brookline MRA
Address 207 Freeman Street; 158 Pleasant Street
Historic Name St Aidan's Church and Rectory

Use: Present Religious

Original Religious

DESCRIPTION:

Church: 1911, Rectory: 1850-1855

Source Building permit; maps; Church records

Style Medieval Revival

Architect Church, Maginnis and Walsh

Exterior wall fabric stone, stucco, wood

Buildings no

Alterations (with dates) Rectory:

built, roof altered, 15x21', 2½ story

condition, stuccoed; all 1920

Interior no Date na

Approx. acreage 1½ acres

Setting On a well-landscaped lot at the corner of Freeman and Pleasant Streets in a residential neighborhood of late nineteenth and early twentieth century homes.

See attached map.

Recorded by Carla Benka, Flora Greenan

Organization Brookline Historical Comm.

Date Fall 1978, Spring 1985

Boston South Quadrangle

UTM Reference: 19/325410/4690330

Map #: 17

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.)

See attached sheets.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.)

See attached sheets.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (name of publication, author, date and publisher)

- Brookline Maps--184, 1855; Brookline Atlases--1874, 1884, 1900, 1907; Brookline tax lists 1850-55; directory--1868, 1878; Boston Directory 1859.
- Archdiocese of Boston--Chancery Archives, Parish Correspondance--St. Aidan's 1913-1951.
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- Byrne, Barry, Maginnis and Walsh, Architects: An Appreciation, Liturgical Arts Vol 5., #3, 1936, pp. 90-104.
- Lord, Robert H.; Sexton, John & Harrington, Edward, History of the Archdioces of Boston, Vol. III, 1866-1943, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1944.
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- Tucci, Douglass Shand, Built in Boston, N. Y. Graphic Society, Boston: 1978.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Community: Brookline MRA | Form No: 6/27-1-3 |
| Property Name: St. Aidan's Church | |

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Architectural Significance

The style of St. Aidan's Church is Medieval Revival. Its prototype was the village church found so often in England and usually associated with Protestantism, but not rightly so, for its architects, Charles D. Maginnis, said that there were "thousands of such Catholic Village churches in France and Ireland". It is two-storied, cross-gabled, built of local, dressed random ashlar, which is stuccoed and painted white on its western elevation (left-side), but left natural elsewhere with an addition of stuccoed half-timbering at the gabled nave and transept ends (again, with the exception of the western end) and at the upper section of the church tower.

To the right of the main entrance is a two-story, square, broach-spired belfry tower. Attached to the eastern transept arm is an L-shaped addition which leads to the church rectory. The church rectory is stuccoed and half-timbered in keeping with the Medieval Revival elements of the church; it has 2 1/2 stories and a complex gabled roof. This building formed part of the Chadbourne estate which was bought by the Archdiocese in 1910, and remodelled in 1920 to fit into the architecture of the main building. In an architectural drawing of the proposed church (see xerox copy), the original 1850-55 structure appears very different from its present appearance, having a segmentally-arched window and a slight gambrel roof.

Both the church, its tower and the church rectory have decorative slate roofs. In choosing building materials, especially for the smaller village churches, Maginnis was explicit in his preferences. He favored using local materials, i.e. fieldstone, if available, and if not, then "even wood may serve...Shingled walls with gables or half-timber and cement may be made an attractive combination of materials."

As to the style of the village church, again he was explicit. Its structure should be "primitively simple. There should be no aping of the forms of ambitious architecture...If good art is to be had, the lessons architects must from the modest means at their disposal is to make their churches modest too."

The exterior of St. Aidan's expresses perfectly this ideal of design simplicity. Within the gabled nave pediment of the front facade (southern elevation) there is a gothic-arched stained glass window and this pediment is defined precisely by the vertical banding of half-timbering. At every other banding, i.e. at bands 1, 3, 5, and 7, there is a heavy wooden bracket which supports the gable bargeboard. The 7th band defines the center of the pediment, at the apex of which is a gilded cross. At the

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| Property Name: St. Aidan's Church | |

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

base of each banding, there is a modillion set in a wooden string course which divides the nave (front) facade; then it is carried to the church tower where it serves the same function, separating the spire and ashlar base from the stuccoed middle belfry section. The roof of the is also bracketed and extends slightly beyond the belfry forming, as it were, mock dormers over its banded arched openings. At the spire's peak, there is another cross. There is a single lancet with leaded glass in the tower's base section.

Below the gabled pediment, the ashlar base of the nave is buttressed by side piers, and set with miniature square stained glass windows on either side of the gabled entrance. At the base of the right-side buttress is the church's cornerstone, sculpted with the Coat of Arms of His Eminence, Cardinal O'Connell. Behind it is placed a sanctified bronze box containing the history of the parish.

The single-storied gabled entrance, positioned at the center of the nave, repeats the form of the pediment and, starting with the finely-designed door opening, one can easily trace a vertical pull of energy through the "Light of the World" lamp, up past the figure of King David in the stained glass window, through the peak of the window and that of the nave and ending majestically in the gilded cross. There is a smaller recessed end gabled side entrance to the left.

The interior plan of the church is like a traditional basilica, with a shallow western transept (5') and an eastern transept which is deeper (15') and which leads into and becomes integrated with a side chapel 30' long, which has its own entrance (on the exterior.) The width of the western transept transept arm is 45' and that of the eastern arm, 50'. The peaked nave roof is supported by five exposed beams (4 to the transept/nave and one beyond) which lead directly to the nave's exterior wall. What has been achieved is the centralization of this interior space, a sine qua non of Catholic architecture, where the altar is theologically the church, by virtue of the Catholic Principle of Divine Presence, and its visibility is of central importance to the congregation. Thus, from any point within this interior, the altar is visible and within hearing of the seated congregation. Furthermore, the exposed beams express Maginnis's ideal of structural integrity. "In the design of the village church, nothing could be in worse taste than the introduction of the meaningless pointed vaultings of lath and gaudily tinted plaster. How much finer is the sentiment of the roof, whose honest beams reveal their sturdy purpose."

The interior decorative detailing is also restrained and simple. Color and light come principally from the full-story, gothic-arched, panelled

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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| Community: Brookline MRA | Form No: 6/27-1-3 |
| Property Name: St. Aidan's Church | |

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

windows of stained glass set at both ends of the nave and of the transept, and from the smaller series of stained glass windows which are set in banded, thin, round-arched eared frames and placed along the nave and transept sides, in a 2-4-2 and 4-4 rhythm respectively. The beams are of mahogany, stopped with decorative bosses; the nave and transept wainscoting is of mahogany; and the fixed pews are of blond oak. The walls are pale pink with gilded fretwork along the wainscoting. Between the eastern transept arm and side chapel, there is a delicate leaded-glass partition. The side chapel has two exposed mahogany beams and repeats the decorative detailing of the main nave. The nave chancel is recessed and framed by a pointed arch at the transept/nave intersection. Originally, there were four life-size figures of the Apostles painted on the chancel end, on either side of the stained-glass window behind the altar, but they have since been painted over. The stained glass windows were designed and executed by the firm of Murphy & Millson, formerly located at 451-457 Tremont Street, Boston, Massachusetts

The firm of Maginnis & Walsh had achieved national prominence as leading Catholic Church architects before their work at St. Aidan's, with such buildings as the Cathedral of St. Vibiana, Los Angeles, California (1906), St. Joseph's, Dayton, Ohio (1908), St. Catherine of Genoa, Somerville, Massachusetts (1909) and Boston College (1909). Charles D. Maginnis (1867-1955), its senior partner, received many honors during a lifetime of distinguished work, including the A.I.A. Gold Medal in 1948.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

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Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Historical Significance

St. Aidan's was Brookline's third Catholic Parish (St. Mary's (1852) being the first and St. Lawrence's (1897) the second.) The establishment of the parish was announced as follows:

On Christmas day which this year occurs one week from next Sunday, a new parish will be established for the Catholic people living in the vicinity of Coolidge Corner, Brookline, and Rev. Fr. Joseph F. Coppinger, for a dozen years or more attached to St. Joseph's parish in the West End, will be pastor... This information will be pleasing news to a great many in Brookline and Allston, who will be officially notified of the same next Sunday morning at the several masses in St. Mary's Church, Brookline, from which parish a goodly part of the territory for the new parish has been taken"...

(The Boston Globe, December 16, 1910)

The first Mass for this new parish was held at Whitney Hall in Coolidge Corner on Christmas morning. The cornerstone for the new church, St. Aidan's (named after the 7th century Irish Bishop and Missionary, who established a monastery on the Island of Lindisfarne and whose missionary journeys to the mainland strengthened and extended the church in northern England) was laid on May 27, 1911. Archbishop O'Connell officiated at this solemn ceremony and the words of his address at the time reflect the significance of the new parish within the Archdiocese of Boston: "I am very much pleased at the establishment of this new parish because I feel it is a tribute to myself. Although the parishioners were few in number, you have done wonderfully to found the church. All of these new parishes springing up around this Archdiocese represent my ideal and I like this parish most of all and hope to fill the pulpit often."...(Brookline Press, May 27, 1911)

The church was dedicated on November 17, 1912, with His Eminence, Cardinal O'Connell, again officiating: "The occasion brought out about 1000 parishioners and many friends in Brookline and surrounding parishes, and the audience included many of the town officials."...(Brookline Press, November 23, 1912)

Intimately connected with St. Aidan's early history was its second pastor, Monsignor John T. Creagh, who succeeded Fr. Coppinger in 1913 and who remained at St. Aidan's until 1951. Monsignor Creagh came to Brookline after having distinguished himself as a leading scholar on Canon Law. He graduated from Boston College in 1891, and was ordained in 1895 (St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Massachusetts) at a special ceremony accorded

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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him by Archbishop Williams of Boston, because of his outstanding scholastic record. He then studied at the American College in Rome, earning the degrees of S.T.L. and D.C.D. He later earned LL.B and J.U.D. degrees at Catholic University in Washington and was Doctor of Canon Law on their faculty until becoming pastor at St. Aidan's. His 15,000-volume library, which is now part of the Creagh Research Library, was considered second only to the Vatican Library Collection. Indeed, as late as 1946, he was still adding to his library and traveling to Switzerland for the purchase of rare books. (Archdiocese of Boston, Chancery Archives, Parish Correspondence, St. Aidan's, July 14, 1946)

Monsignor Creagh guided the young parish through its formative years, enlarged the rectory in 1920, purchased land which abutted the church property on Freeman Street in 1924, and further expanded the services of the church by buying land and property the same year for a school and convent. Regarding the advisability of this latter acquisition, he noted that "the purchase would be a wise investment. It would meet the needs of the parish, not in any passing, incomplete way, but permanently, making complete provision for school and convent for all time."...(Archdiocese of Boston, Chancery Archives, Parish Correspondence, St. Aidan's June 28, 1924)

During these early years, the young Joseph P. Kennedy family was also a part of St. Aidan's history. Between 1915-1927, they lived nearby at 83 Beals Street, and later, on Abbotsford Road. It was in this period that their children John, Rosemary, Kathleen, Eunice, Patricia and Robert were born and each was baptized at St. Aidan's. John was baptized on June 19, 1917 and Robert on December 13, 1925. Mrs. Kennedy attended daily Mass and the children attended a special Mass on Sundays. Both Joseph Jr. and John were Altar boys. The children then received their first religious instruction under the scholarly aegis of Monsignor Creagh.

Another figure closely connected with St. Aidan's was His Eminence Cardinal O'Connell. Cardinal O'Connell had a great love for St. Aidan's and the parish's pride in him was mutually great. The church's pulpit was presented to him at the Dedication of St. Aidan's and its inscription reads, "A Tribute to His eminence Cardinal O'Connell, From His Loving Children at St. Aidan's." He had many personal friends among the parishioners, including the Kennedy family. When he chose Brookline as his official residence in 1915, it was described as "quite in the order of natural events. That is why it is only natural to expect that a rapidly increasing number of important people in the affairs of Boston and Massachusetts will come to choose Brookline to live in"...(Brookline Chronicle, December 1915) It is safe to assume that his presence in Brookline accorded all the Catholic parishes, but especially St. Aidan's,

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Sample to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Office of the Secretary, Boston

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| Community: Brookline MRS | Form No: 6/27-1-3 |
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prestige.

St. Aidan's was from the beginning the focal point of an important and vigorous Catholic community. With leaders such as Cardinal O'Connell and Monsignor Creagh and with families such as the Kennedy family so intimately associated with its early history, it represents the young ideals of this community and the nurturing of these ideals in its younger members within an environment that encouraged scholarship and attainment. It was, as well, the first house of worship for the first Catholic president of the United States of America.

Today, St. Aidan's remains unchanged. Its scale is still the most domestic of all of Brookline's churches, intimate and modest, mimicing the cross-gabled gothic revival of its older neighbor, "Emmett Cottage" next door. Its Medieval half-timbering links it with Coolidge Corner's most celebrated building, Whitney Hall (now the S. S. Peirce Building) and reminds us that the parish's first Mass was held there, 69 years ago. Its half-timbering also links it with St. Lawrence's church, Brookline's second Catholic church. It is the center of a neighborhood which is very much as it was during the early years of the parish, intact and harmoniously complete, with 19th century vernacular homes, turn-of-the-century apartment buildings and 1913-1919 three-deckers which reflect the needs and typify the development of the neighborhood before St. Aidan's appeared and after it was built.

St. Aidan's Church and rectory derive their primary significance from architectural distinction and historical importance, being a fine example of a type of American Roman Catholic Church architecture: the village church, and associated with such prominent Roman Catholic theologians as John T. Creagh and Archbishop William O'Connell. It also was part of the growth of an upwardly mobile Catholic community in North Brookline, as represented by Joseph P. Kennedy and his family. St. Aidan's Church and Rectory meet National Register Criteria A and C and Criteria Exception G.



DESIGN FOR STAINED GLASS WINDOW IN WEST SIDE OF SANCTUARY.

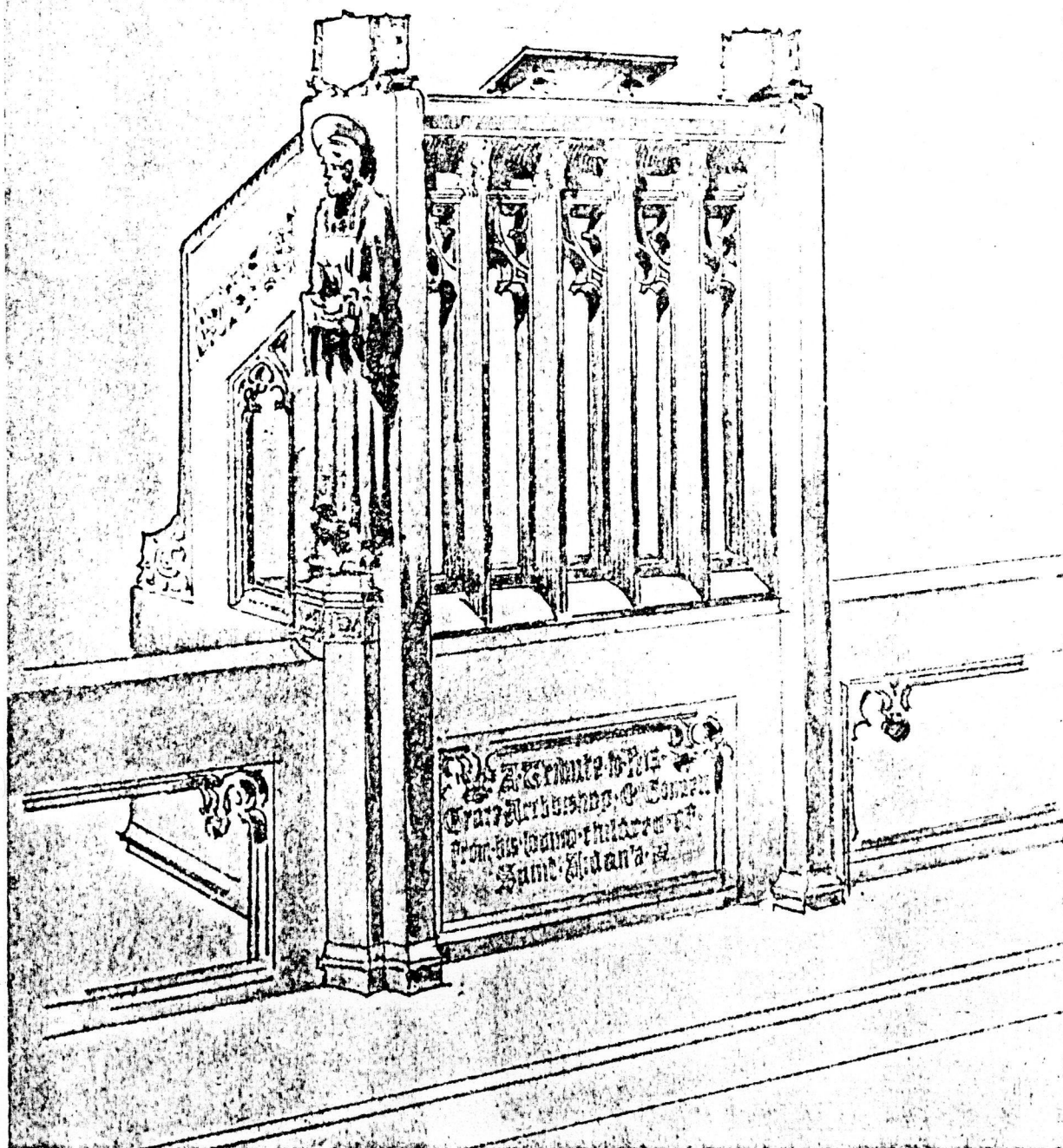
The Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Holland



DESIGN FOR STAINED GLASS WINDOW IN CHAPEL SANCTUARY.

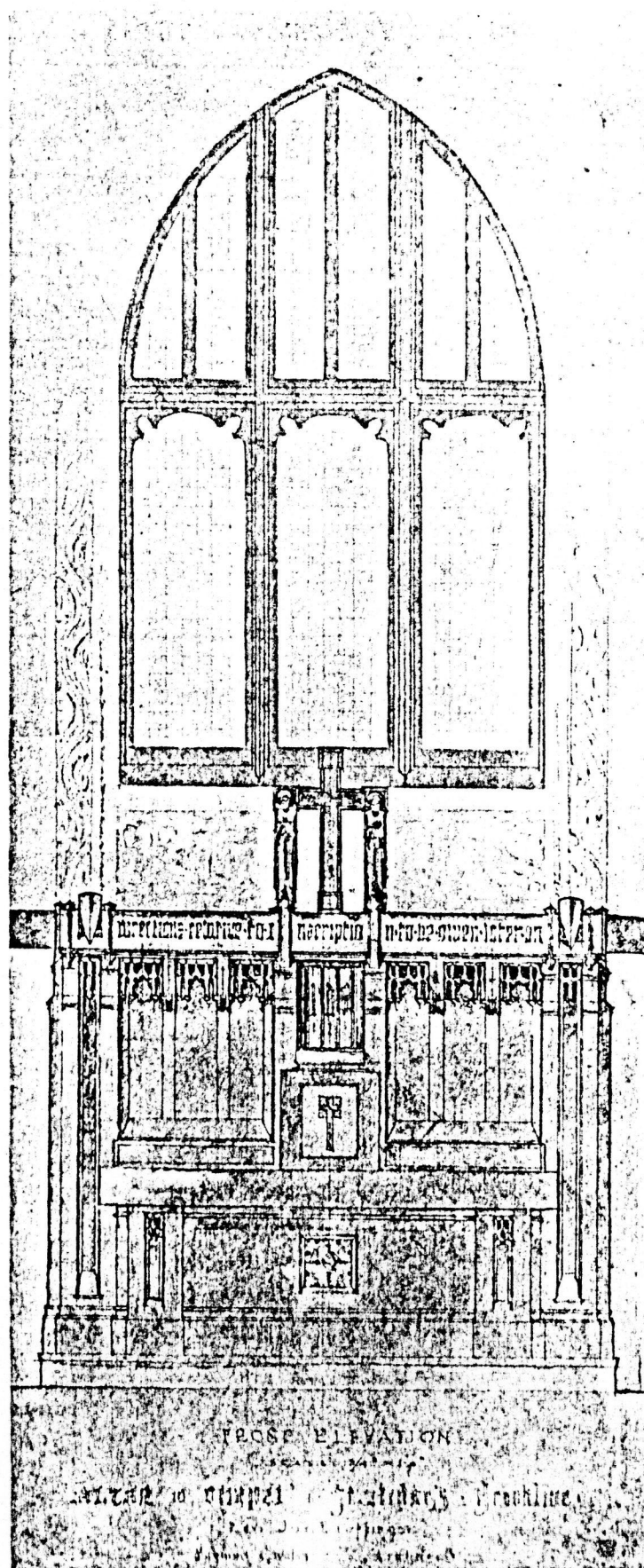
The Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Erskine Smith, of Brookline and New York, in Memory of the
Parents of Mrs. Smith

Sketch of Pulpit for St. Aidan's Church. REV. JOS. F. COLLIER, B.R.OOKLINE.



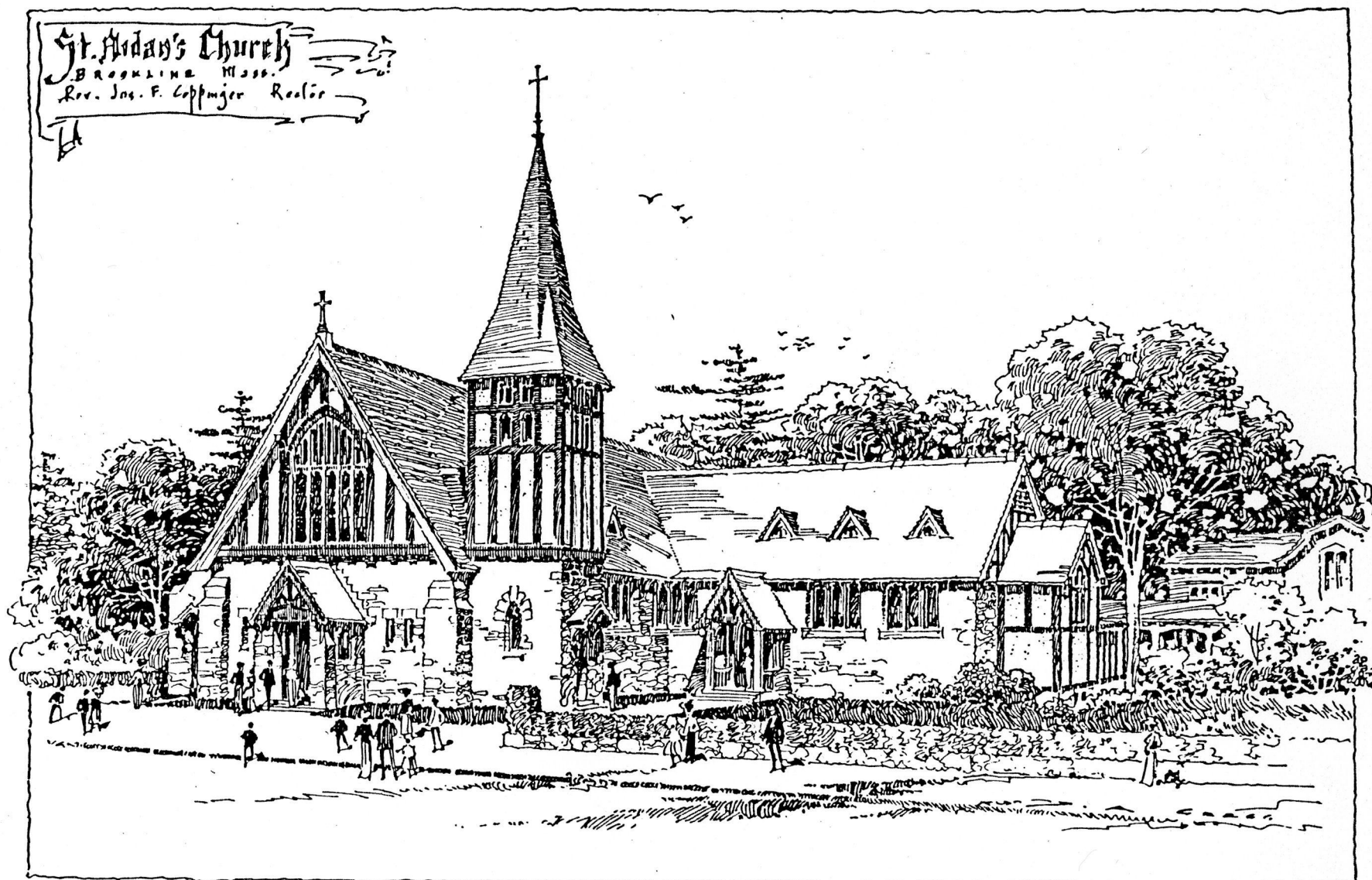
SKETCH OF ST. AIDAN'S PULPIT.

A tribute to His Eminence Cardinal O'Connell, from his loving children of St. Aidan's.



ARCHITECTS' DRAWING OF ALTAR IN CHAPEL

The Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William W. Taff, in Memory of their Parents



1911-1920

St. Aidan's with old chabouire house, still not altered.

207 Freeman & 158 Pleasant St.
 St. Aidan's Church & Rectory
 BROOKLINE (MA) MRA (6/27-1-3)
 Town of Brookline Map Jan 1931
 $\frac{1}{2"} = 200'$

