Point Neighborhood
Historic Resource Survey/Preservation
Salem, Massachusetts

Figure
Proposed Boundaries for Point
Neighborhood National Register
Historic District
Salem, Massachusetts

FORM A - AREA

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

Photograph

(3" x 3" or 3- 1/2" x 5", black and white only)

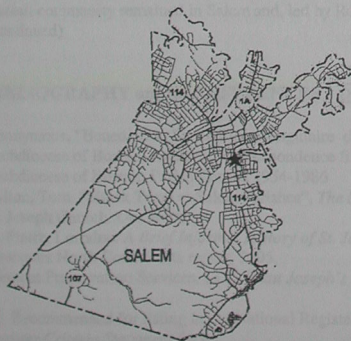
Label photos on back with town and addresses for all buildings shown. Record film roll and negative numbers here on the form. Staple 1-2 photos to left side of form over this space. Attach additional photos to continuation sheets.

roll negative(s)

2	9A-24A
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Sketch Map

Draw a map of the area indicating properties within it. Circle and number properties for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets including route numbers, if any. Attach a continuation sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate north.



Assessor's Sheets	USGS Quad	Area Letter	Form Numbers in Area
34: 307	Salem	IX	SAL.3952, 3953, 3954, 3955

Town: Salem

Place (neighborhood or village): The Point (La Pointe)

Name of Area: St. Joseph's R. C. Parish Complex

Present Use: Vacant

Construction Dates or Period: ca. 1917 (rectory), 1921 (school), 1949 (church), 1962 (convent)

Overall Condition: Fair

Major Intrusions and Alterations:

Parking lot expansion

Acreage: 2.4 acres

Recorded by: Rita Walsh, Dawn Frost

Organization: Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Date (month/year): June, 2005

AREA FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION ☒ see continuation sheet

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

St. Joseph Roman Catholic Parish Complex encompasses four buildings situated in the Point neighborhood of Salem, Massachusetts. The 2.4-acre complex includes the ca. 1949 St. Joseph Church building, ca. 1917 Second Renaissance Revival style rectory, ca. 1921 Second Renaissance Revival school building, and a 1962 brick convent. These buildings occupy most of the block bounded by Lafayette, Dow, Salem, and Harbor Streets close to the commercial area of this neighborhood. While each building maintains a façade and entrance on the street, each also has doors opening toward the interior of the block facilitating circulation between the buildings. The surrounding neighborhood primarily contains wood frame multiple family dwellings from the early to mid-20th century. The small, triangular shaped Lafayette Park across Lafayette Street lies to the west, while a small commercial area is to the north. Lafayette Street is the major corridor into Salem from the south and is a busy thoroughfare.

As part of a reuse assessment study commissioned by the City of Salem, Structures North Consulting Engineers, Inc. and Tremont Preservation Services, LLC both compiled information on the St. Joseph Church complex in 2004 including a brief history and structural information. Much of their information is included here. The following summaries provide descriptions of each building in the complex as well as an assessment of current conditions. (continued)

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ☒ see continuation sheet

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

St. Joseph Roman Catholic parish was one of two Catholic parishes in Salem that were specifically established to serve the French Catholics. Before its suppression in 2004, it was one of six parishes in the city. St. Joseph was established in 1873 to serve the French-Canadian immigrants who arrived in Salem beginning in the 1860s. The four buildings in the parish complex today represent the early to mid-20th century building campaigns after a devastating and widespread fire in the neighborhood destroyed all of the buildings in the parish complex. Salem's history with regard to French Catholic activity began in 1651, when the first French Catholic Jesuit priest visited Salem, Massachusetts as a guest of Governor John Endicott. Although further contacts occurred between 1755 and 1766 and a group of French Catholics moved from Nova Scotia to Salem, political and social conditions for Roman Catholics in Massachusetts were still difficult and many of them returned to Canada. However, a small community remained in Salem and, led by Reverend John Thayer, celebrated their first mass on May 6, 1790. (continued)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES ☒ see continuation sheet

- Anonymous, "Benediction De La Pierre Angulaire de L'Eglise de Saint-Joseph", *Le Courrier de Salem*, May 13, 1949
Archdiocese of Boston, Archives. Correspondence files.
Archdiocese of Boston, Parish Census 1954-1986
Dalton, Tom, "Shock Tears at Salem Parishes", *The Salem News*, Wednesday May 26, 2004.
St. Joseph Church. *Our History*
St. Pierre, Lorraine. *A Brief Informal History of St. Joseph Parish*.
Structures North Consultants report, 2005.
Tremont Preservation Services, LLC. *Saint Joseph's Parish*, 2005.

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

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
SALEM

Property Address
ST. JOSEPH R.C. PARISH
COMPLEX
135 LAFAYETTE ST.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

St. Joseph Church, 135 Lafayette Street (MHC #SAL.3952), was the fourth church building for the parish and the third on the Lafayette St. site. Designed in 1948 by Boston architect John James O'Shaughnessy, it was constructed in 1949-1950. The building is a rare example of International style in Salem, Massachusetts and its distinctive tower is a physical landmark in the community. The building bears some similarities to the 1962 Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, CT, especially its tower, white coloring (although this building is sheathed in limestone), and interior arrangement. The Connecticut building was designed in 1957 by the architectural firm of Eggers and Higgins of NY, postdating the Salem church by nearly 10 years.

Constructed on the remaining stone cruciform plan foundation of the 1911 church that preceded it, the building's monolithic appearance is accentuated by simple cube-shaped forms that are covered with a veneer of monochromatic glazed white brick with minimal exterior adornment. The building form consists of four major blocks that rise from the cross-shaped plan, with lower, one-story sections flanking the transepts on the north and south sides. The flat-roofed structure is crowned with a three-tiered stepped tower centered above the transept crossing. The red brick or terra cotta-trimmed tower has voids infilled with a pierced square patterned screen. The front facade features a monumental cast stone statue of Christ, with a large stained glass window behind it, which is centered on the facade. Two small stone shields flank the statue's base. The slightly projecting wall in the center of the front facade is trimmed with cast stone molding with a central capstone containing the words "Christus Regnat" (Christ Reigns or Rules). A large, but simple, cross is centered on the rear (east) elevation. A wide, flat-roofed canopy at the entrance shelters a deeply recessed entry with three pairs of original wood doors. Wide piers sheathed in the same white brick as the rest of the building separate the entrances. A full-width set of concrete steps lead to the front entrance.

The fenestration on the building consists of paired and single narrow vertical openings with brick sills. The steel sash contains stained and leaded glass with scenes that depict the history of the Roman Catholic Church. Below these windows, in the lower one-story sections, are paired and single smaller window openings. In the sections flanking the front block, these windows contain stained glass depictions of saints.

The church interior consists of a full basement and a high-bay main level. The basement contains a large room with two rows of massive columns, a remnant of the 1911 church built on the site. The sanctuary includes a balcony located over the entry hall, considered the former narthex, at the west end of the building. The primary focus of the interior is the voluminous main sanctuary with side chapels.

Condition Assessment: The church building is in fair condition. A structural investigation of the structure in 2004 revealed that there are long deep vertical cracks are occurring at almost every corner of the building due to incompatible expansion of materials and water infiltration. Corrosion of steel lintels over the windows has also resulting in some visible horizontal cracks. The steel structure within the tower is rusting, but only requires cleaning and repainting, as opposed to more ambitious structural remedies. Although there is evidence of some interior water infiltration, seen in some staining on interior wall surfaces, the interior is otherwise in good condition.

St. Joseph's Rectory, 131 Lafayette Street (MHC #SAL.3953), is a three-story Second Renaissance Revival residence built ca. 1917. The flat-roofed rectangular plan building has a two-story, L-plan rear section to the west and an enclosed side entrance porch on the south elevation. The pressed red brick and stone trim of the building stands in contrast to the white glazed brick of the church. Small one-story bays project from the north elevation on both the front and rear sections. The entire building is

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encircled by a stone stringcourse near the top of the wall and wider beltcourse above the raised rusticated brick foundation. The main and secondary block, porches, and bay windows all have prominent cornices with modillions and brackets.

The symmetrical three-bay front façade has a central entrance with leaded glass sidelights and transom, flanked by shallow bays on the first story. Wide windows openings on the second and third stories alternate with shallow brick piers that divide the façade into three main sections. Original 1/1 window sash remain although exterior aluminum storms have been installed over them. Fenestration on the other elevations is primarily individual windows with stone lugsills, but no visible lintel. A full-width brick porch supported by brick piers and stone columns with Corinthian capitals features a stone section above the porch entrance that identifies the building as "Presbytere S. Joseph" (parish house or rectory of St. Joseph Parish). The rear and side porches are similar to the front porch, with stone or concrete steps and rusticated brick foundation. A brick chimney on the south elevation of the rear section has been truncated and capped. Although the interior was not visited for this documentation effort, recent photographs during the reuse study show a relatively intact interior featuring highly varnished wood (probably fir) trim and built-in elements with a classical design.

Condition Assessment: The rectory building is in good condition, but the integrity of the masonry is somewhat threatened due to the original use of concealed headers. Water infiltration was also noted in the basement and attic areas as part of the structural assessment of the structure. The concrete steps at several entrances display some cracks and spalling. Repointing is needed in the area between the upper string course and cornice and in other locations, due to mortar erosion.

St. Joseph's School, 20 Harbor Street (MHC #SAL.3954) is a simple, three-story Second Renaissance Revival building with a flat roof and rectangular plan. The brick building has three main bays on the Harbor Street side, and five primary bays on the east and west elevations. The south elevation only contains a single central entrance with 1950s detailing and a large single window above it on the second story. The Second Renaissance Revival style is seen in the building's form, beltcourses and interior cornice, and classical entrance on the Harbor Street elevation. Mission style parapets with cast stone coping surmount the central sections of the north, east and west elevations. A brick chimney, now stuccoed, is near the center of the roof.

The front façade, considered to be the Harbor Street side, contains a central cast stone portico with engaged Doric columns. The deeply recessed entrance has a set of double doors with aluminum frames infilled with glass. A large window above in the second story is infilled with multi-paned replacement sash. A cast stone plaque between the window and the front entrance is badly eroded, but is presumed to have indicated that the building was St. Joseph School, probably in French. A niche in the brick parapet contains a statue that appears to be St. Joseph holding the infant Christ. A cornerstone with the date "1921" is placed at the northeast corner of the Harbor Street elevation.

Windows and door openings throughout the building have simple cast stone or brick solidier lintels and narrow cast stone lugsills. The windows have predominantly replacement sash. Fenestration is primarily composed of banks of four and five individual windows with brick piers between.

The interior of the school features a wide central corridor with a wide stair at either end. Smaller offices and corridors on the second floor separate classrooms in the building. An auditorium with a stage on the south wall is located on the third floor with partitions added to create two rooms in the northeast and northwest corners of the hall.

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Condition Assessment: According to the 2004 structural conditions assessment, the school building is in fair condition, but sections of the cast stone trim on all elevations are eroding. Repointing is needed on certain sections of the building, especially around the pediments. Miscellaneous cracks are visible on all elevations, but are not extensive.

St. Joseph's Convent, 18 Harbor Street (MHC #SAL.3955), is a simple two-story, flat-roofed concrete block structure sheathed with brick veneer in a Flemish bond pattern with no other decoration. Due to its cube-shaped forms and lack of ornamentation, the building exhibits a modified version of the International Style. The L-plan building is nine bays wide on the Harbor Street and east side elevation. Fenestration consists of individual windows with cast stone lugsills and no visible lintels. A large garage door opening is on the west elevation behind the rectory. A door on the east elevation with a flat-roofed canopy provided convenient access to the school building.

Condition Assessment: The convent is in good condition, with no structural issues noted in the 2004 structural conditions assessment. Mortar displacement around the masonry near the top of the windows is the result of rusting of the embedded steel lintels.

Historical Narrative (continued)

Beginning in the 1860s, a new wave of French Canadians left their native country and moved to Salem for employment at the Naumkeag Steam and Cotton Mill. Located on Naumkeag Street adjoining Prince and Harbor Streets to the east of the parish complex, the mill employed hundreds of factory workers many of them immigrants. Large, brick tenement buildings quickly sprang up around the mill and were occupied by French families primarily employed there. Known as "La Pointe", the area became what was essentially a French village within a growing metropolis. St. Joseph Parish was founded on May 17, 1873 to serve the expanding community of French speaking Catholic immigrants arriving from Canada in the La Pointe neighborhood. Led by Reverend Matthew Harkins, the parishioners met in the basement of Immaculate Conception Church, an English-speaking parish, as they could not afford to build their own church. Having studied French in Paris, Reverend Harkins was able to celebrate mass in French for the Canadian immigrants of St. Joseph.

Reverend George Talbot was appointed pastor of the French community consisting of approximately 90 families shortly after the parish's establishment in 1873. The community was eager to build its own church building, but resisted a South Salem location desired by Reverend Talbot. In the same year, Reverend Talbot was called away and Reverend Harkins returned to the parish. He oversaw purchase of the old Seamen's Bethel (place of worship for seamen), a small wood frame front gable structure, on Herbert Street near Derby Wharf, a short distance northeast of the current location. However, the parish continued to look for land to construct a new church.

A series of pastors served short-term appointments in the mid-1870s, succeeded in 1879 by Reverend F.S.L. Vezina, who oversaw the parish for seven years. During his tenure, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston (RCAB) purchased the Luscomb estate on Lafayette Street in 1881, the current site of the parish complex, for the Parish of St. Joseph to erect a church. Construction began almost immediately and the first mass was held in March 1884. The wood frame church was Romanesque Revival in design and included a square tower fifty feet in height on the north end of the façade. A few years later, the Elwell Estate was purchased and the house converted for use as the rectory. This second purchase of land marked the

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beginning of a process to acquire most of the property bounded by Lafayette, Harbor, Salem, and Dow Streets into the early 20th century.

In 1887, Father Joseph Gadoury was appointed pastor and remained for seventeen years. Father Gadoury also pursued purchasing the entire square of 15,000 feet with the exception of a short interior byway named Harbor Court still owned by the city. In time, the city donated that street to the church for use as a playground. Two years later, in 1889, after Father Gadoury joined the parish the congregation numbered 5,000, which maintained a strong emphasis on preserving the French Canadian culture.

Always interested in a parochial education for their children, the parish finally built their first school in 1892. The building on the corner of Harbor and Salem Streets was designed by architect W.D. Dennis, a native of Salem. The four-story brick building had separate entrances for boys and girls and, eventually, a connection to the convent built in 1906 to the west on Harbor Street. The small, wood frame convent housed both the Grey nuns, also known as the Sisters of Charity of Montreal, would be the first of three religious orders to teach at St. Joseph, and several girls who boarded there. The Sisters of Ste. Chretienne would replace the Sister of Charity in 1903 and would teach for the next 22 years.

Father Gadoury passed away in April 1904 and left substantial funds to the parish for building purposes. In May of that year, Reverend George A. Rainville was named the new pastor of St. Joseph. A brick rectory was built with the funds left by Father Gadoury at the corner of Dow and Lafayette Streets in 1911. A new church building with a cruciform plan on the site of the older wood frame church building was also completed in this year. The old church building was moved to the west towards Salem Street almost directly behind, or east of, the newly planned church. The succeeding use and subsequent disposition of the old church building are unknown.

The new brick St. Joseph's Church was completed in 1911 and featured large stone twin towers 185 feet tall between which stood a large statue of St. Joseph. Only three years later, the Great Salem Fire in June 1914 destroyed this church, all of the other buildings in the parish complex, and a large section of the southern part of the city. The basement, towers, and a few walls were all that remained when the fire was finally extinguished. Residents of the area were housed in tent villages for a long period while nearby homes and tenements destroyed by the fire were rebuilt, while many others moved to other nearby communities, including Beverly. An exodus of nearly 1,000 French Catholics to Beverly as a result of the fire caused the creation of a new French Catholic parish there that was named St. Alphonsus.

Those parishioners of St. Joseph who remained in Salem reused the basement of the church for their religious services, while classrooms for the school were built above the basement level. This arrangement would be used for several years while members pursued fundraising for new construction. In 1917, the first new parish building to rise on the block was a rectory, built at the corner of Lafayette and Harbor Streets. Father Rainville oversaw the construction of the rectory and began plans for a new school building. His tenure ended in 1920, just before the school was completed. Father Pierre H. Grenier served the parish from 1920 until 1931, during which time, two new school buildings, a small garage, and a new convent were built. In 1921, a new high school building was erected on the corner of Harbor and Salem Streets on the site of the old 1892 school building. That same year, a two-car brick garage with concrete floor was built behind the rectory on Harbor Street. In 1921, land was purchased south of the church from Paul Chaput in an exchange of property owned by the Archdiocese on Wisteria Street to the south. A second school building for elementary grades followed in 1925, which fronted on Dow Street at the intersection with Lafayette Street. A new convent was built on Harbor Street in 1925 as well, toward the middle of the block