

LOWELL CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

IDENTIFICATION 200 WORTHEN STREET MAP SHEET # 7  
 1) CURRENT OWNER Lowell Girls Club OWNER OCCUPIED yes  
 2) HISTORIC NAME Worthen Street Methodist - Episcopal Church  
 3) CURRENT NAME Lowell Girls Club  
 4) PROPERTY TYPE church 5) ZONING CLASSIFICATION B 3  
 6) TAXES: PAYMENTS exempt STATUS clear  
 7) WITHIN BOUNDARIES OF City Hall HD

HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

1) CONSTRUCTION DATE 1841-1843  
 SOURCE documented: 1855 directory and 1841 and 1850 maps  
 2) ARCHITECT OR BUILDER unknown  
 3) HISTORIC OWNER Worthen Street Methodist - Episcopal Church  
 4) ORIGINAL USE: GF church UF church  
 5) PREVIOUS BLDGS ON PROPERTY no DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 SOURCE \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1) ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Greek Revival  
 2) PRESENT USE:  
 GF institutional  
 UF institutional  
 3) NO OF STORIES 2  
 4) PROP SQ FT (partial) 10,340  
 5) PLAN rectangular  
 6) ROOF facade gable  
 7) STRUCTURAL SYSTEM  
wood frame  
 8) OUTBUILDINGS  
none  
 9) MATERIALS:  
 FOUNDATION  
granite, rubble stone  
 FACADE sides and rear: wood clapboard; front: matched boarding  
 TRIM wood  
 10) NOTABLE SURFACE & LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS none



ADDRESS 200 WORTHEN STREET

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- 1) CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC. good
- 2) IF DETERIORATED, CAUSES n/a
- 3) INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BLDG FABRIC: GF intact with evolutionary alterations  
UF intact with evolutionary alterations
- 4) SURROUNDING LAND USES commercial, industrial, residential, institutional
- 5) INTEGRITY OF PROP'S HIST SETTING moderately disrupted historic setting
- 6) IMPORTANCE OF PROP TO HIST SETTING focal point in area

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

See Research report.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

See Research Report.

ARCHEOLOGICAL COMMENT

This building totally covers its site and is the first and only structure known to have stood there. Potential for the recovery of archeological remains from the property is low.

Research Report  
200 Worthen Street  
Worthen Street Methodist Episcopal Church (now Lowell Girls  
Club)  
1841-42

200 Worthen Street, built in 1842 as the Worthen Street Methodist Episcopal Church, symbolizes Methodism's introduction, growth, and struggles in Lowell during the 1830's and 1840's.

This is a frame structure two stories high on a tall rubble stone basement. It is of rectangular plan. This building's emphasis on horizontal massing and low-pitched roof convey a sense of bulk and stability.

Despite late nineteenth century alterations (discussed below in this report), the former Worthen Methodist Episcopal Church still reflects its Greek Revival stylistic origins. The Worthen Street facade is sheathed in matched flush boarding to create a smooth surface, the other sides are clapboarded.

On the facade, pairs of Ionic pilasters flank a wide, recessed central area. In the center of this wide area is a projecting entrance, capped by a gable roof providing a pediment. The double doorway of the central entrance is topped by a fan light and flanked by pairs of Ionic pilasters supporting a full entablature. These Ionic pilasters are more attenuated counterparts to the monumental pilasters that frame the facade. There are four shuttered windows on the facade, arranged on two levels, and a second entrance, located between the two left pilasters.

The pairs of monumental pilasters framing the facade culminate in an entablature band, which does not span the width of the facade. Above the entablatures are return eaves. The facade is topped by a wide, low-pitched facade gable, devoid of fenestration.

The side and rear walls of the Worthen Methodist Episcopal Church feature a high rubble stone basement story, pierced with three windows on each side wall. These tall rectangular windows are symmetrically placed in the side walls above the rubble stone basement. At the center of the rear wall, just above the rubble stone foundation, is a wide, windowless, box-like projection that probably added to the sacristy space of the church.

The present structure dates from 1841-1842. Apparently the church was first occupied in 1842 (1855 Directory), but its outline appears on the 1841 map, suggesting construction had begun by that date. The Worthen Street Methodist Episcopal Church cost \$9,000 to build [1]. In 1838 the Methodist community in Lowell split into two congregations, following a dispute over a new minister who took too mild an abolitionist stand to suit part of his congregation. The congregation known as the Chapel Hill Church eventually erected the present St. Paul's Methodist Church at Warner and Hurd Streets. The Worthen Street Methodist Episcopal Church is descended from the other Wesley Chapel congregation. This congregation held services initially in Mechanics' Hall on Dutton Street while the Worthen Street Church was under construction.

An 1860 photograph of the Worthen Street Methodist Episcopal Church attests to the extensive alterations this structure has undergone (Fig. 1 & 2). The Worthen Street entrances originally stood at first-floor level, and were reached by a wide stairway which nearly spanned the facade. At the top of the stairs were three long rectangular doors. Three long narrow windows with shutters and projecting sills and lintels were symmetrically placed above the three entrances. The pilasters at the corners of the main facade originally read as wide single pilasters, each with a recessed central panel. The Ionic capitals, which make twin pilasters out of the original singles, were part of the 1890 remodelling. Above the pilasters no pediment was defined, but rather a wide blind arch, decorated with a lunette with a louvered fan screen. The arch, lunette, and fan screen are all rather retarditaire Federal style features.

The original rectangular configuration remained unchanged until 1890. In that year, "under the pastorate of Rev. W.T. Perrin, extensive alterations and repairs were made upon the church edifice at a cost of nearly 14,000 dollars" [2]. A steeple was added, projecting from the center of the Worthen Street facade (Figures 3 and 4). Other 1890 additions include the rear projection, the Ionic capitals of the pilasters and the side entrance of the Worthen Street facade.

The Worthen Street Methodist Episcopal Church became the African Methodist Episcopal Church, or Church of all Nations, in 1921. The Lowell Girls Club has occupied this structure since 1947 (City directories). The 1890 steeple was razed in 1950 [3]. The present projecting central entrance is

apparently all that remains of the steeple shaft.

Although altered, the former Worthen Street Methodist Episcopal Church is a major one of the several fine Greek Revival structures which represent the earliest phase of Worthen Street's development in the 1830's to 1850's. This structure is a key element in the religious history of the city, symbolizing the abolition issue and the ethical and political conflicts that surrounded it. This structure also has associations with Lowell's black community, as the structure housed a black congregation in the 1920's and 1930's.

#### Footnotes

- 1) Hurd. History of Middlesex County, v. II, p.143.
- 2) Illustrated History of Lowell, 1897, p. 736.
- 3) Lowell Buildings Dept. records.

#### Other Sources

1841, 1850 Lowell maps; 1879, 1896, 1906, 1924 Lowell atlases.  
University of Lowell Library, Special Collections, photo files.  
Lowell city directories.

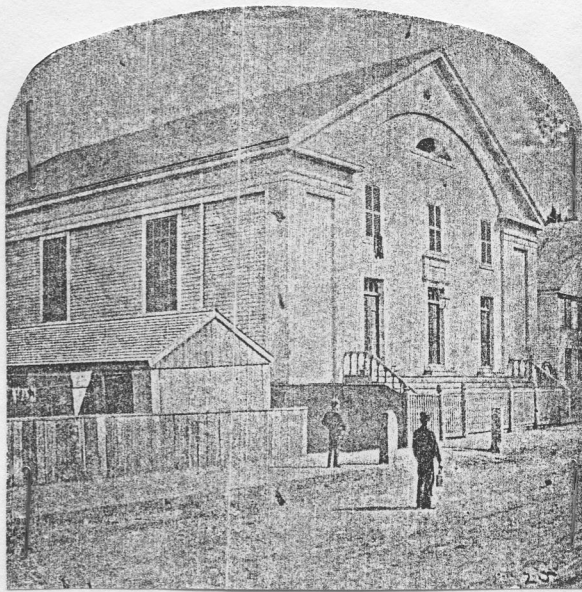


Figure 1

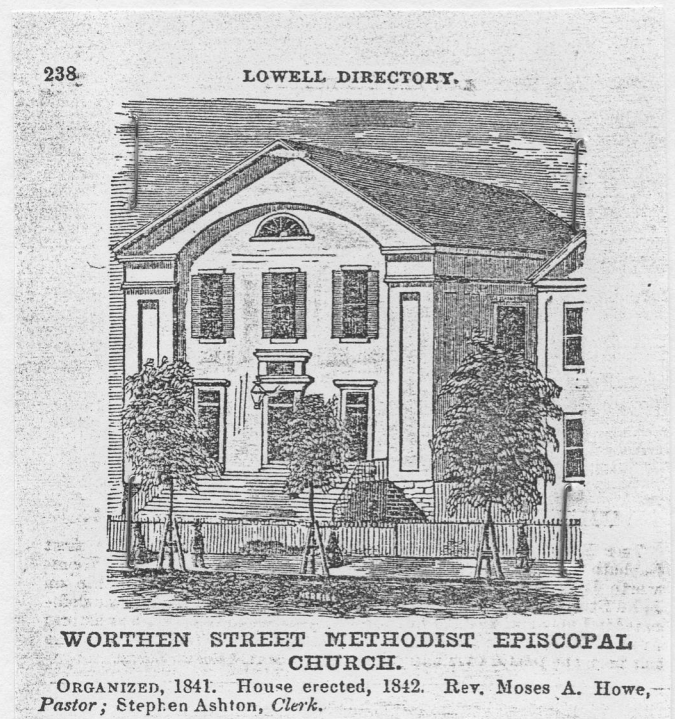
1860 view of Worthen Street  
Methodist Episcopal Church.

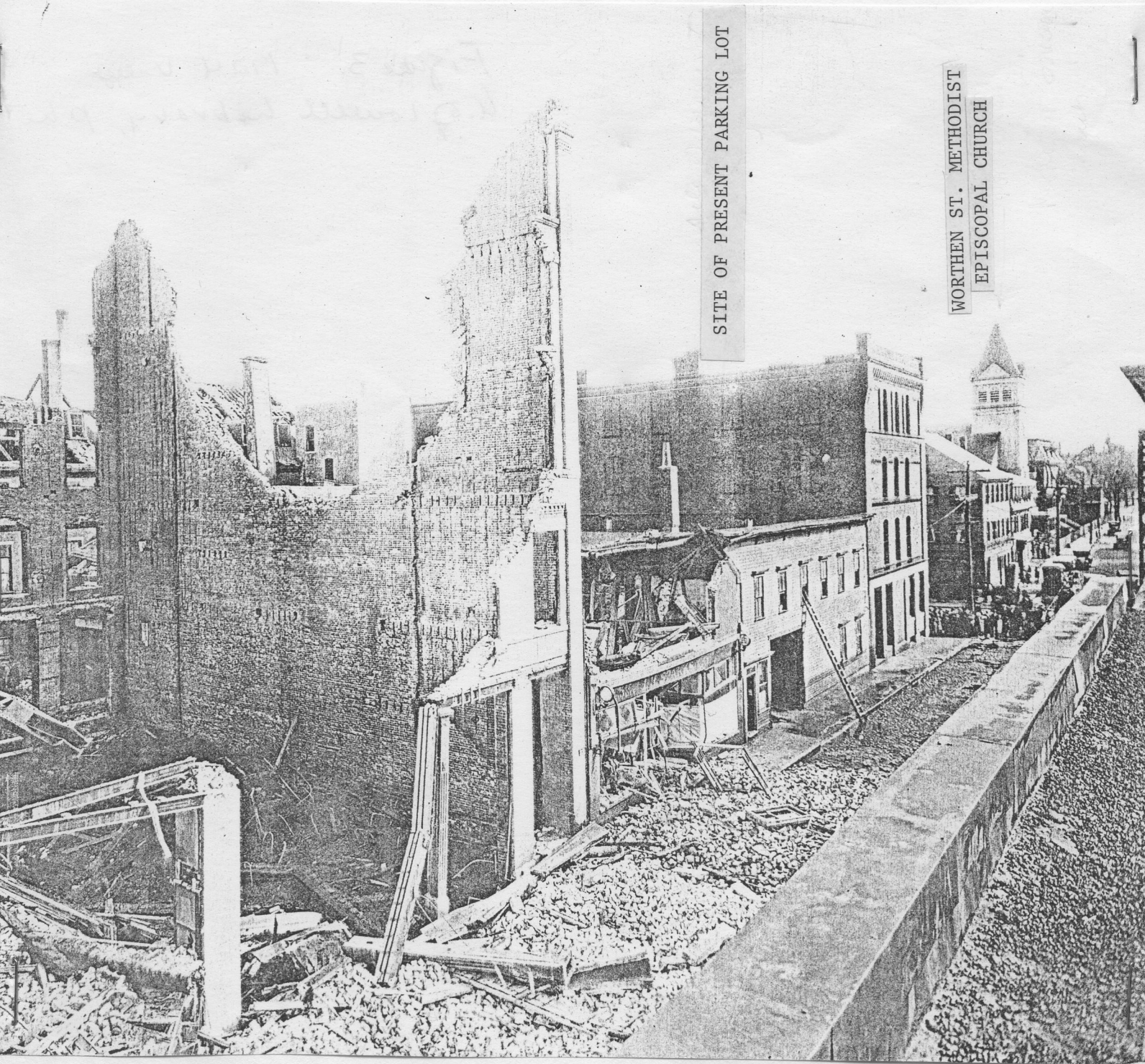
U. of Lowell, Special  
Collections, photo file.

Figure 2

1855 Lowell Directory, p. 238.

U. of Lowell Library, Special  
Collections, photo file.





SITE OF PRESENT PARKING LOT

WORTHEN ST. METHODIST  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Figure 3

1924 view of Worthen Street after the Associate Building fire.  
U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections, photo file.

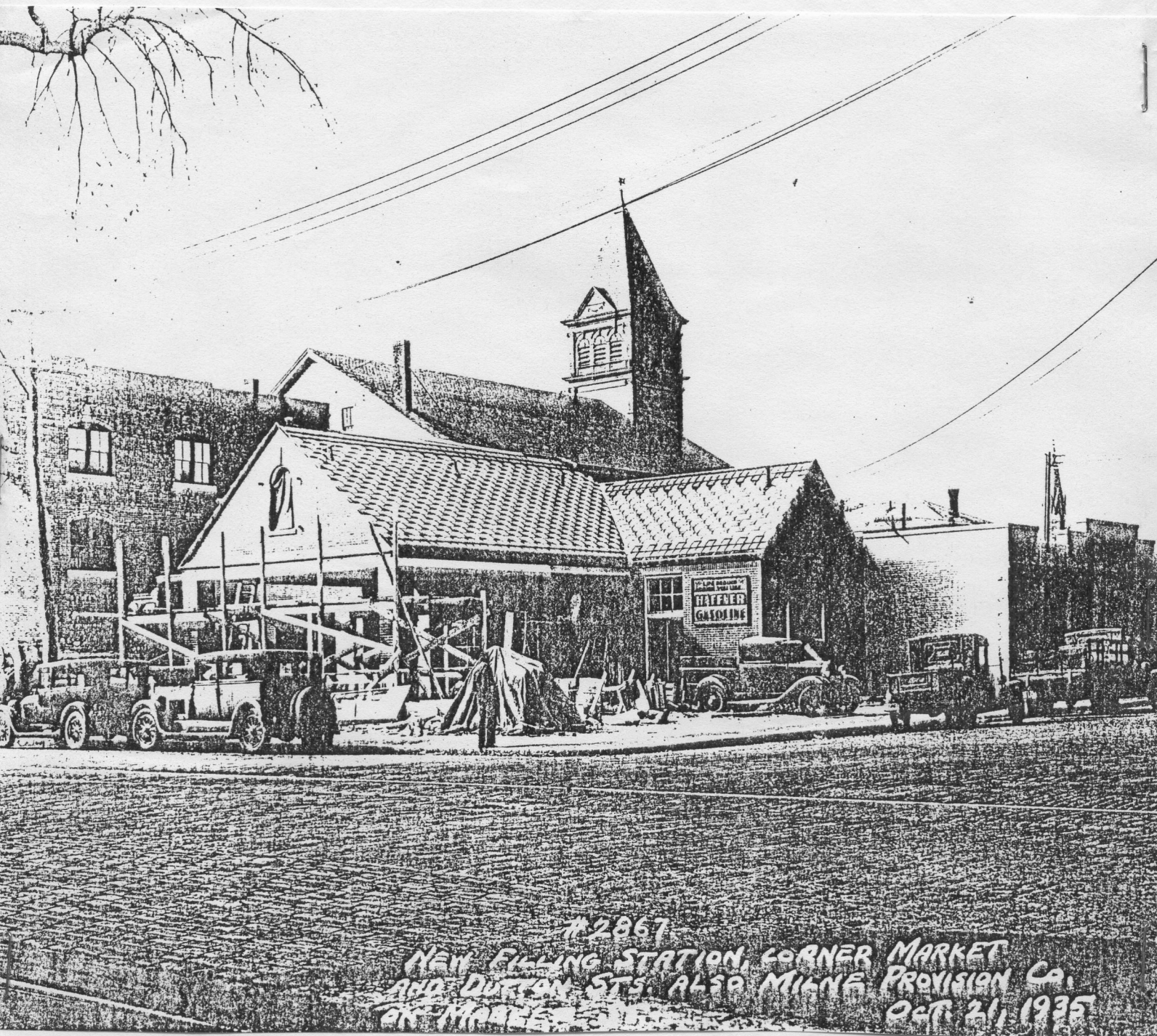


Figure 4

October 21, 1935 view of Worthen Street Church showing steeple removed in 1950.

U. of Lowell, Special Collections, Locks and Canals photo file #2861.



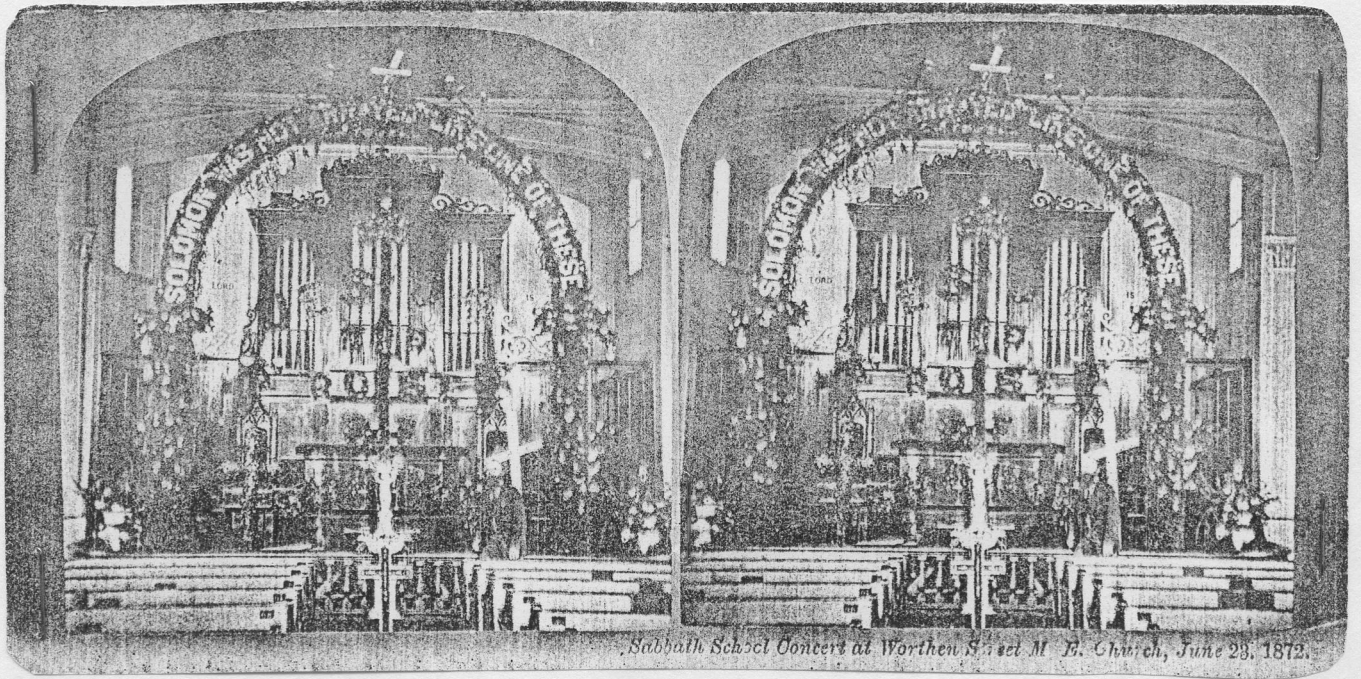


Figure 5

Interior of Worthen Methodist Episcopal Church, June 23, 1872.

Stereograph from U. of Lowell Library, Special Collections.