

**First Congregational Church
Nantucket, MA
Exterior Tower Repairs, Restoration and Conservation**

Study photos

August 22, 2007

**DMH Enterprises, Architects
104 Federal Street
Salem, MA 01970
617-745-2172**

**Additional research by
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New England Landmarks
302 Central Street Georgetown, MA 01833
978 352-2819**

South



West



East

June 2007



Drawn by J. W. Estlin—Engraved by S. R. Brown, Boston.

SOUTH-EASTERN VIEW OF NANTUCKET, MASS.

The above view shows the appearance of Nantucket, as it is seen from the shore of the inner harbor, south-east from the town. The Light-House, on Brant Point, is seen in the distance on the right; beyond, in the extreme distance, are seen vessels near the sand bar, south from the outer harbor, and nearly two miles from the northern shore.

"Historical Collections Relating to the History and Antiquities of Every Town in Massachusetts: With Geographical Descriptions Illustrated by 200 Engravings," 1839, (Detwiller)

Library of Congress, HABS, unknown artist, unsigned, collection of FCC. The date of this drawing is unknown. Could be contemporary with the first rendition, or it could be 20th century, in which case it is probably conjectural.

Church reportedly erected in 1834 and lengthened and a fourth window added in 1841-1842

If this is the church, then the following observations apply:

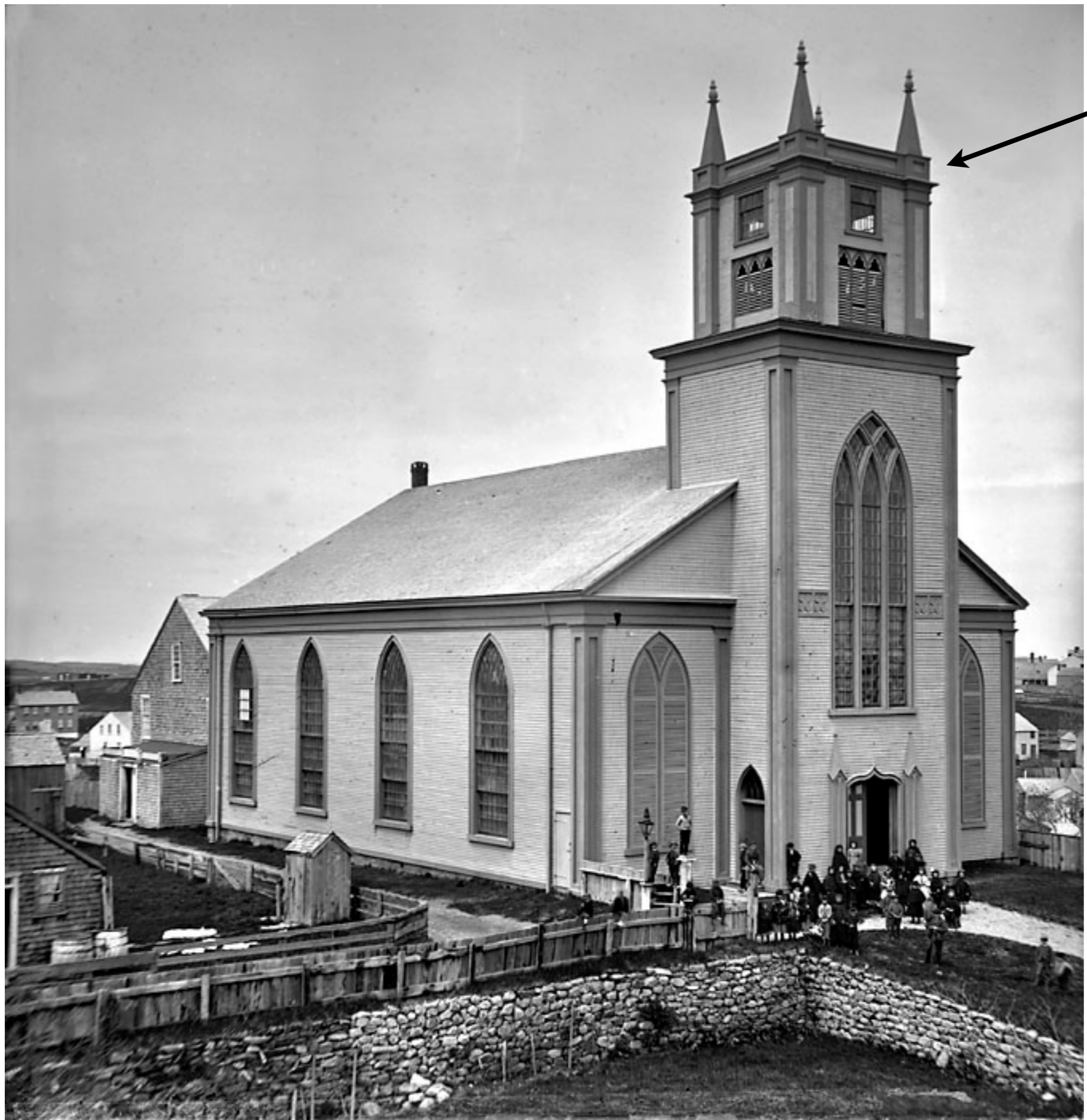
The entire design is pretty close to the existing conditions of most photographs (without the second stage and spire and the crenellations).

Note the finials at the second and third stages.

Crenellations at first and second stages

The second stage and the spire appear to have been restored fairly accurately by Ames & Graves in 1968.





Note Balustrade



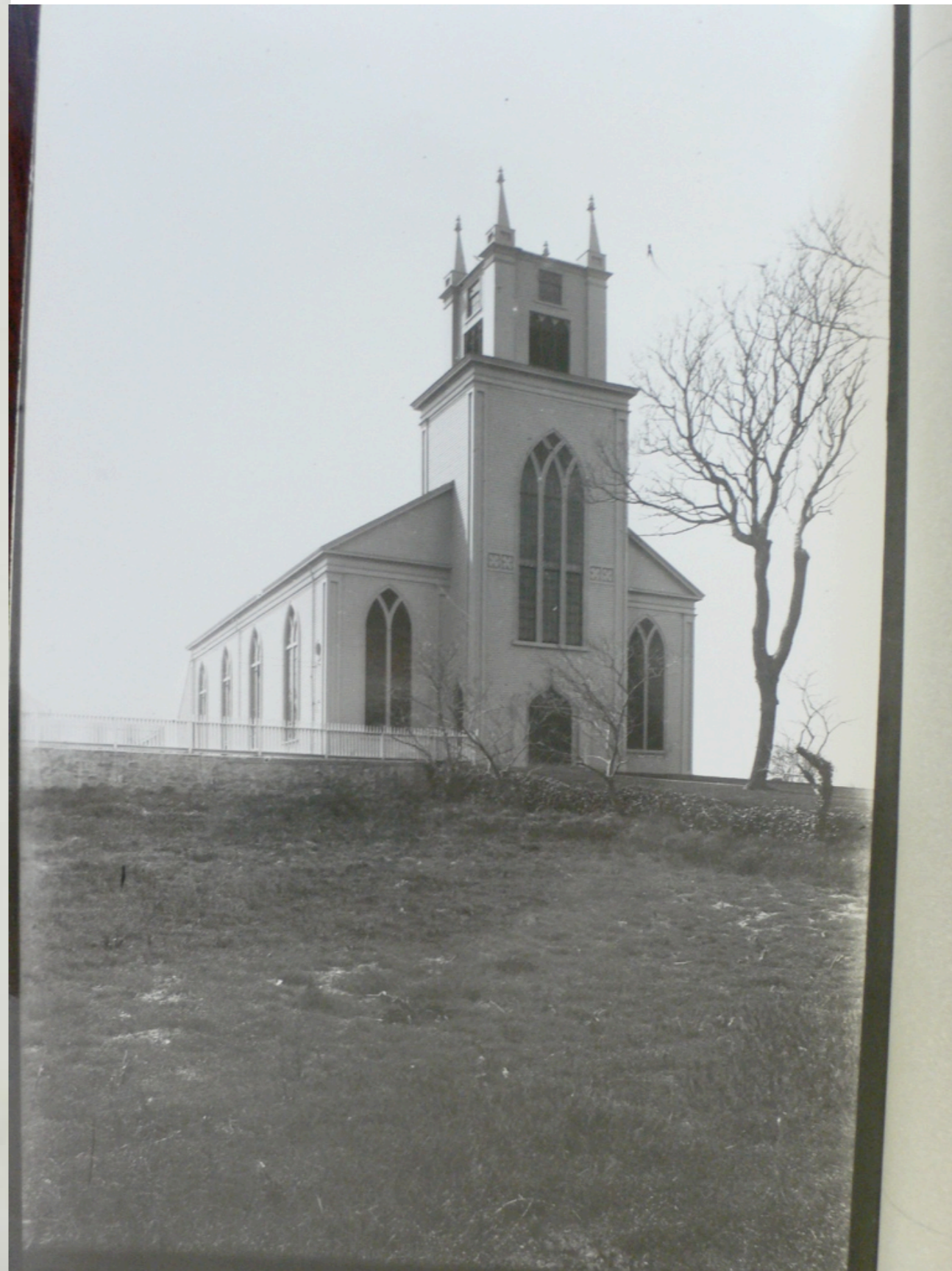
The spire was apparently removed in 1849 (“Big Church steeple (spire) removed due to instability and danger in the wind. Minarets placed at corners of tower”). The record is silent on the removal of the second stage (if there was one).

Note door surround compared to c-1900 and 1966 version

Charles N. Shute collection, N11, negative 298, c-1860, Old Time Photographs, Nantucket



c1895?



Later - note door surround has changed



Note Balustrade of c1860's missing

c1895?

Photo in FCC collection

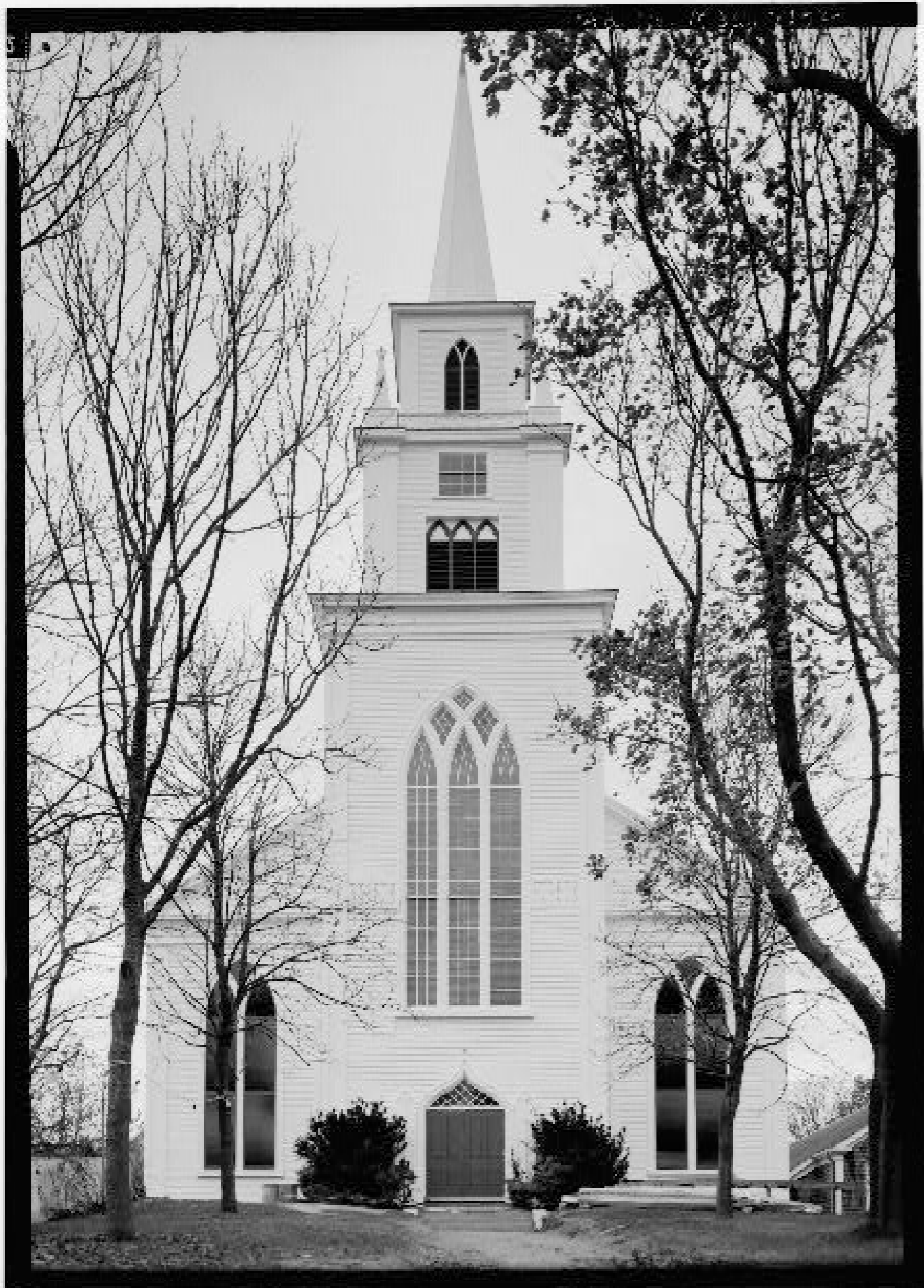
MASS-4024



Note Balustrade of 1866 removed

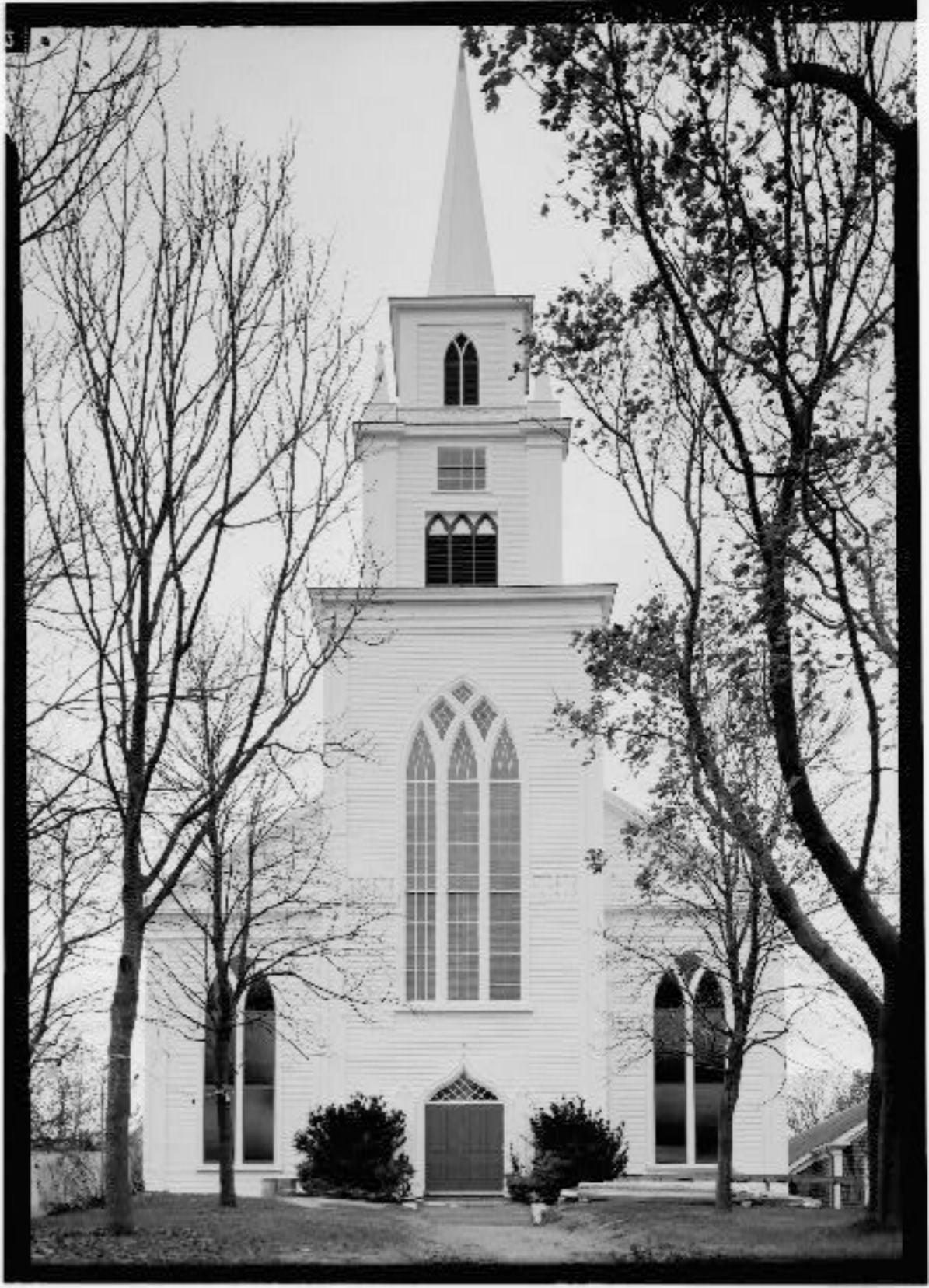
**Note Door surround
compared to 1860's**

**Library of Congress.
HABS 1966, Courtland
Hubbard**

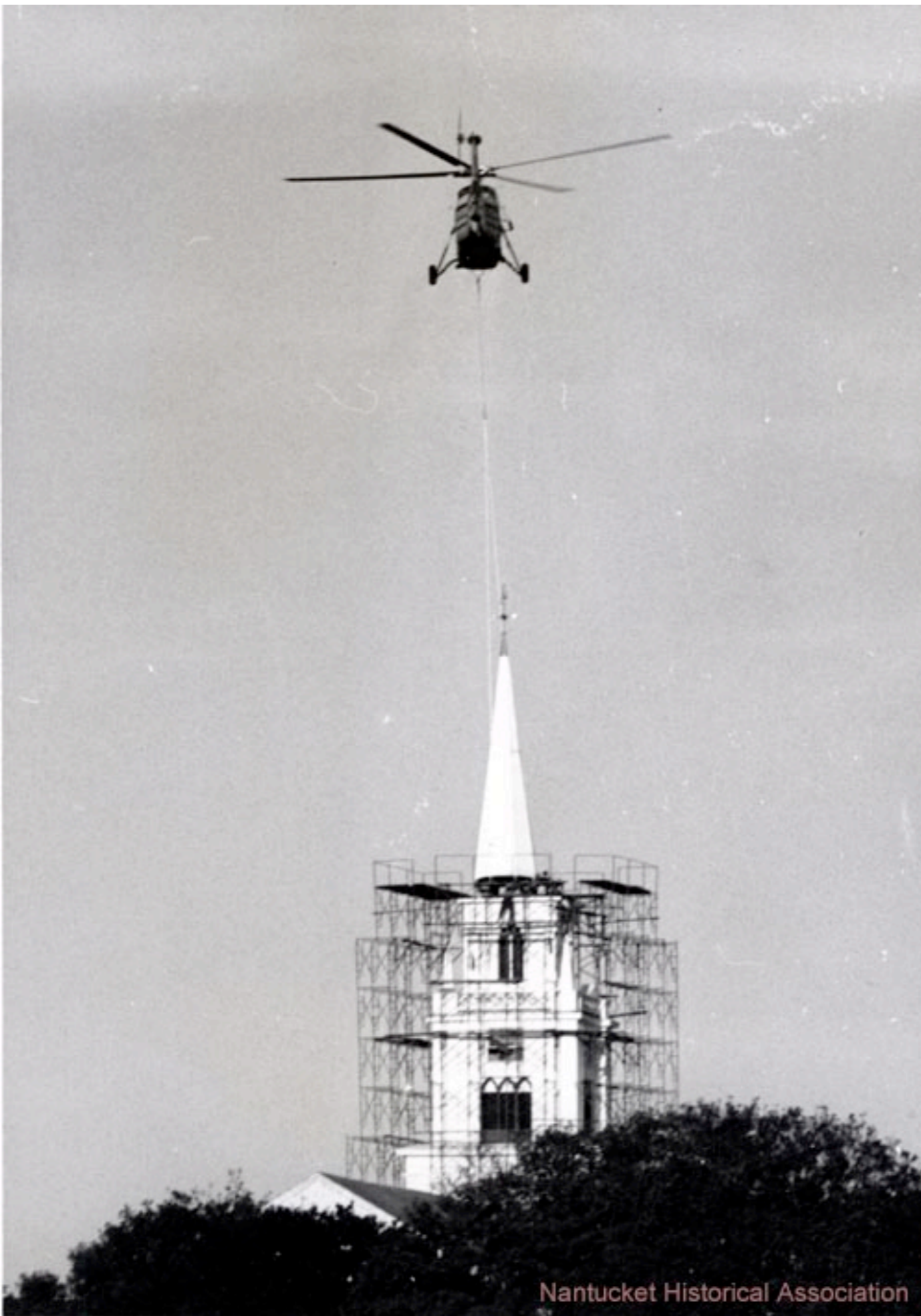


**Library of Congress, HABS
1970, Jack Boucher**

**Church just after 1968
restoration**



Comparison of 1966 and 1970 (after restoration), HABS photographs



Spire being placed on restored second stage

The finials and balustrade depicted in Ames & Graves 1968 design appear to have been installed when this photo was taken.

Nantucket Historical Association, 9/5/68, photographer unknown.

MEMORANDUM

To: Nantucket Historical Trust
Att: John N. Welch

From: George Wrenn, III

Subject: Drawings for
Restoration of
Congregational Church

Following are some comments on the drawings and specifications prepared by Mr. Graves for the restoration of the Congregational Church. These comments pertain only to those portions of the drawings and specifications which apply to the historical architectural aspects of the building.

- I. Effect of new structural members on the appearance of the interior of the auditorium: The new 8" diameter columns are of such size that they necessitate breaking through the back wall of the auditorium at each corner and constructing a new section of wall. Careful investigation should be made by the structural engineer to determine whether it might not be possible to use a column of rectangular outline which might fit within the 6 1/2" wall and avoid the necessity of breaking through the old walls.
- II. Wall treatment: I feel that the removal of the existing plaster and the installation of sheetrock is going to create a wall which is too perfect and which will never have the slight imperfections of surface and age which plaster on wood lath has by nature and acquires with the years. One of the real problems raised in the course of every restoration is that our techniques allow the work to be done better than it had been done. Use of these techniques means that we cannot achieve the effect which was achieved in the past and it seems to me unfortunate to use them where early plaster still exists, albeit with some cracks in it.
- III. Ceiling treatment: I like the idea of preserving the old plaster ceiling under the new and don't object to the use of sheetrock here. Unless there is good reason to remove the plaster rosette in the center of the ceiling, I think that it should be preserved intact.
- IV. Lighting of the auditorium: Wall sconces were never used in the auditorium and their use should not be considered. I have yet to see any evidence that a chandelier was ever used in the auditorium either and until such evidence is found I don't think that the use of a chandelier should be considered either. The church and auditorium are fine enough architecturally themselves to stand without being dressed up in a way which never existed. If extra light is thought necessary it is preferable to get that light through unobstrusive modern spot lighting perhaps located in the choir loft and reflecting off the ceiling. I am uncertain as to what

First page of George Wrenn memo of 1968 - assumed to be this data as he refers to Graves design.

lighting arrangement is proposed at the pulpit so will withhold comments at the present time.

- V. Tower and steeple: I think that the steeple should be made as tall as possible within the scope of the present drawings in order to counteract the foreshortening effect of looking up at it from the ground. Also, the point should be made as pointed as practicable considering the installation of a weather vane on top of it. The general design is good and the rail along the roof of one level of the tower is a good idea. Its exact design will need careful study. I'm inclined to be against moving the present finials to a higher level. Perhaps it would be better to put another set of finials at the higher levels of similar design to those below. This design, of course, will be determined by what is found under the present covering of the finials. Finally, the new sash should match the sash shown in the old photographs.
- VI. Exterior surface treatment: The shingles now in place over the old clapboards should be removed and the clapboards should be preserved in place where their condition warrants. Paint colors remain to be determined.

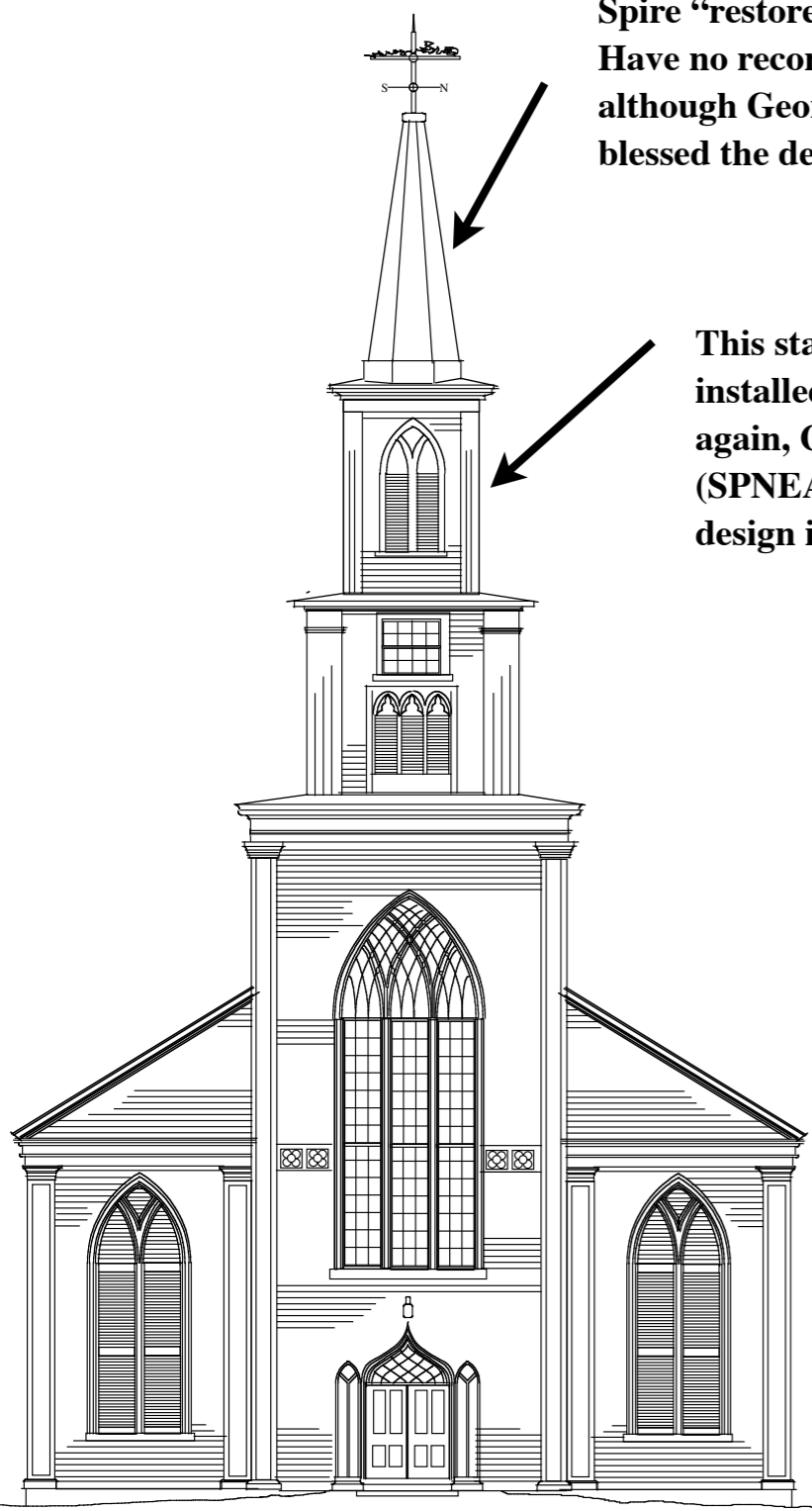
Second page of George Wrenn memo of 1968 - assumed to be this data as he refers to Graves design. Discusses design of spire and steeple.

Note Balustrade



**Balustrade apparently
“restored” in the 1968 work.
Removed sometime after 1970
and prior to 2007.**

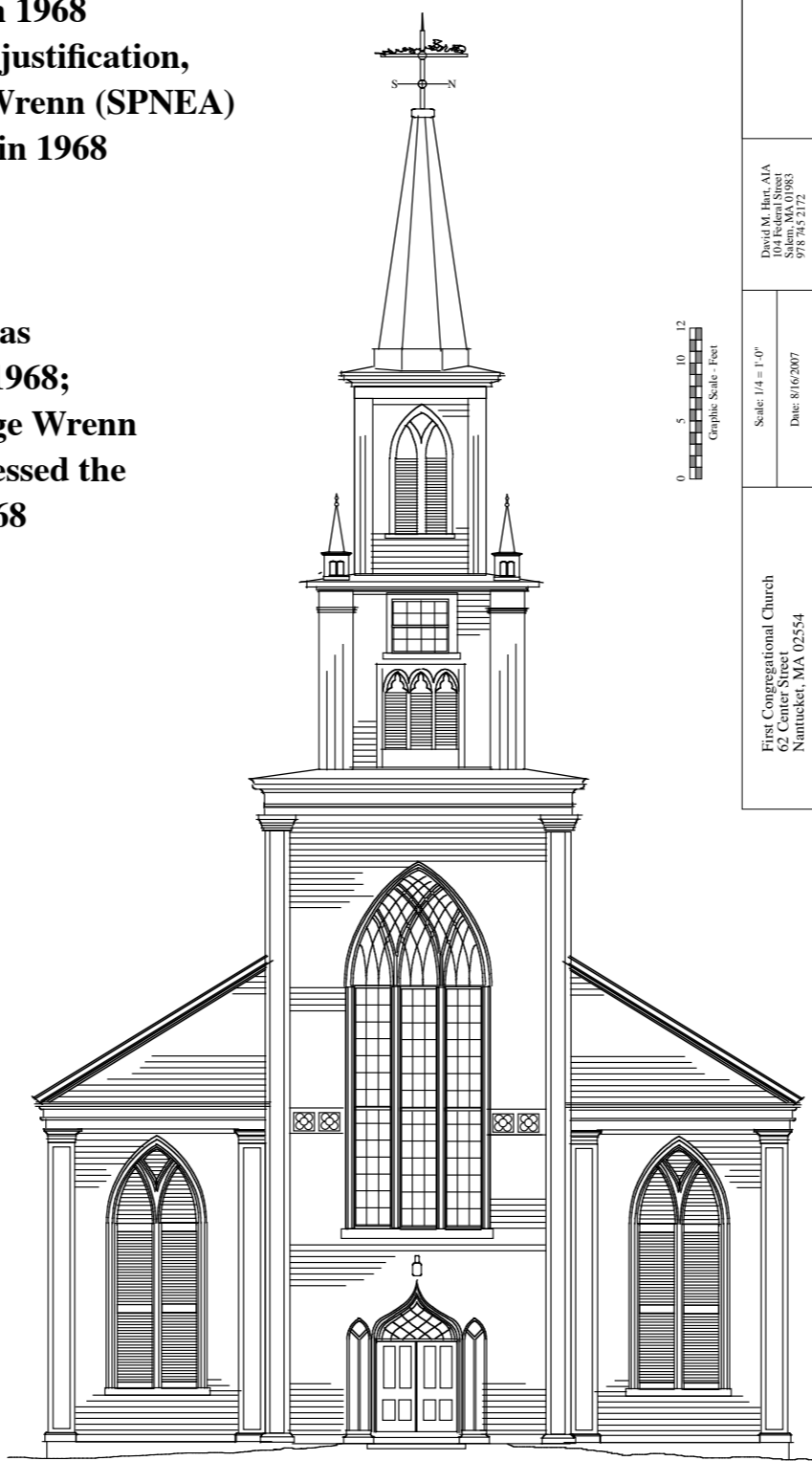
c-1970's?



East Existing

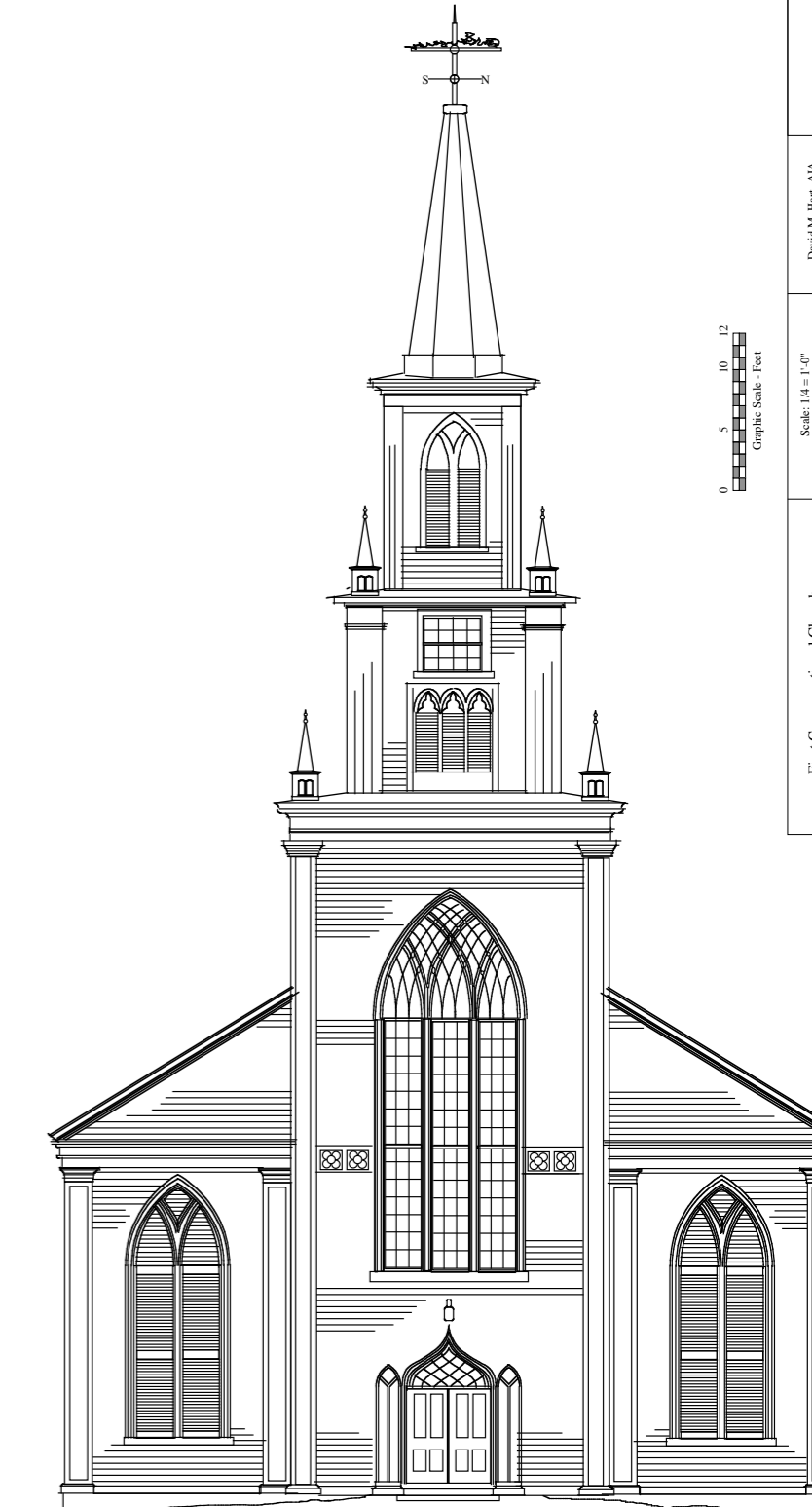
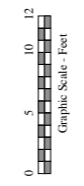
**Spire "restored" in 1968
Have no record of justification,
although George Wrenn (SPNEA)
blessed the design in 1968**

**This stage was
installed in 1968;
again, George Wrenn
(SPNEA) blessed the
design in 1968**

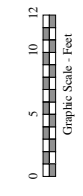


East - can justify this set

David M. Hart, AIA 104 Federal Street Salem, MA 01983 978-453-2172		Revision:	
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"	Date: 8/16/2007	Drawn: DMH	
First Congregational Church 62 Center Street Nantucket, MA 02554			



**East - have no
documentation for the
second set**



Questions:

- 1. Can the lower set of finials be justified based upon historic precedent?**
- 2. Does the upper stage (below the spire) have any historic precedent?**
- 3. Does the spire have any historic precedent?**