

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Powers Institute Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Church Street N/A not for publication

city or town Bernardston N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Franklin code 011 zip code 01337

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith B. McDonough 1/28/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Judith B. McDonough, Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

for Signature of the Keeper
[Signature]

Date of Action
2/18/93

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
4	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: institutional housing

EDUCATION: school; library

RECREATION & CULTURE: park

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

EDUCATION: library

GOVERNMENT: fire station

RECREATION & CULTURE: park; museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK, STONE

walls WOOD: weatherboard, BRICK

roof STONE: slate, ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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7. DESCRIPTION

The Powers Institute Historic District is located in the center village of Bernardston, Massachusetts. The town of Bernardston is located along the northern border of Massachusetts with Vermont. Settled first during the 1730s, and permanently by the 1760s, the town maintained an agricultural economy well into the 20th century, with a rural settlement pattern remaining today. The center village is located at the south-central portion of the town, in the valley of the Fall River, at an elevation averaging 110 meters above sea level. This village developed here in the later 18th and early 19th centuries, particularly after the arrival of the Connecticut Valley Railroad in 1846. The Powers Institute Historic District was developed during this period, adding an important educational component to the village and bringing students and staff to the town from surrounding communities. Sited on two large lots opposite one another at the western end of Church Street, the district includes the large Italianate school building and the brick Italianate Cushman Library on the north side of the street, and Cushman Park and the Cushman Hall boarding house on the south side of the street. The park adds additional open space within the already generously spaced pattern of development, while the Institute, Library, and Hall add significantly to the village ensemble and Bernardston's historic landscape.

Bernardston is located on the western side of the Connecticut River Valley, one of the Commonwealth's northern tier of upland towns. The town is roughly four miles from north to south and five from east to west, and is bisected by the Fall River, one of the tributaries of the Connecticut River. The center village of Bernardston is comparatively large, with nearly one hundred buildings, generously spread across an area extending over a mile from north to south and more than half a mile from east to west. Two primary roads intersect in the center of the village: South Street (Route 5 and 10), runs from north to south along the west side of the village, intersecting at right angle with Church Street (Route 10). Very small roadways form a network of streets off these larger ones, including three that run to the north, merging at the northern edge of the district, and secondary north-south routes including Depot Street, which runs to the railroad line from the center of the village, and River Road, which continues south out of the village.

The majority of the town's public buildings are located in the center village, most constructed in the three decades of the mid-19th century. The Town Hall on the north side of Church Street is a Stick Style building of 1877, a gable-front form with a semi-detached clock tower. Three churches are located

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here as well, the Congregational Unitarian, the Goodale United, and the Baptist, the first on Church Street, the other two on Depot Street, all similar nave-plan with tower structures whose appearance dates to the mid-19th century. Two small stores date to 1869 and the early 20th century, and the large Bernardston Inn is located at the corner of Church and South streets, built to replace an earlier building after it burned in 1904. The earlier town hall, an earlier academy building, a former Universalist Church, a former blacksmith's shop, and the former district school are also located within the village. Saw and grist mill sites were developed to the south of the village, near the junction of the river and the railroad, the site of the exceptional stone four-arch bridge of 1846.

These buildings are surrounded by as many as sixty residences, their form and ornament reflecting construction dates during three periods of growth in the village. A handful of houses are said to date to the colonial period, and while some have been altered since that time, many retain period fabric. The first clustering of buildings dates to the early national period, when about ten of the so-called L-houses, 2 1/2-story houses of single-pile configuration under gable roofs with rear ells, were built in the village. The next wave of construction dates to the second quarter of the 19th century, when about twenty-five more residences were added. Most are Greek Revival in ornament, and fall into two basic form categories, the 1 1/2-story gable block house and the 1 1/2-story gable front house, the former outnumbering the later. Two related houses, 2 1/2 stories in height with a gable-front main block and a wing, are also found in the village. A small number of these houses are found to have Gothic or Italianate rather than Greek ornament. Finally, in the late 19th century, a wave of construction of just under twenty new houses occurred; most were in the Queen Anne version of the gable-front form, where projecting windows and bays add to the picturesque qualities desired at that time. Both 2 1/2- and 1 1/2-story examples are found in the village. In 1958 the construction of Route 91 along the eastern border of the village led to the demolition of some buildings in that area. As a whole, however, Bernardston Village appears eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Staff members of the Massachusetts Historical Commission have conducted an initial evaluation of the area and have encouraged the Bernardston Historical Commission to proceed with a National Register nomination for the center village.

The Powers Institute Historic District is located on two large lots of land, one on each side of Church Street near its intersection with South Street. The Institute building itself, Cushman Library, and the new Fire Station are located on the two-acre lot on the north side of the street. The Institute sits near the center of the lot, set back from the street about 150 feet, on a

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small knoll that slopes away on each side. To the east is a small pond, and further to the east is Cushman Library, sited at the corner of Church and Library streets. On the west side of the lot is the 1975 town Fire Station, sited close to Church Street. To the west of this lot is the Bernardston Inn of 1904 at the corner of South and Church streets. The lot on the south side of the street includes about six acres at the corner of Church and South streets. The western majority of the parcel is taken up by **Cushman Park**, donated to the town by Henry W. Cushman at his death in 1863. The park is now a large open space in the town center, crossed by a diagonal walk from Church Street to South Street and by Fox Brook running across the north portion of the park before entering a culvert under the eastern part of the park. Most of the park is covered with grass and shade trees including sycamores, acacia, flowering crabtrees, black willows, weeping willows, and maples. In the eastern part of the park, a baseball diamond has been constructed. Along the northern edge near Church Street is a large flower bed maintained by the Kiwanis Club, a small earthen mound with stones set in concrete spelling "1864 CUSHMAN PARK 1864," and a modern war monument and flagpole. The western end of the lot includes Cushman Hall, constructed as housing for the principal and a dormitory for students of the Institute.

The Powers Institute (MHC #38) was constructed in a form comparatively rare in rural Massachusetts, departing from the more common meetinghouse and domestic models for public buildings to employ more complex massing related to the large spaces within. Built in 1857, its massing and ornament reflect popular Italianate design tenets and the increasingly popular and well-known forms of ambitious public buildings. The form of the building consists of a large main block of 2 1/2 stories, with its three-bay gable end oriented to the street, and small gabled wings of 1 1/2 stories projecting at right angles from each side. The main block is six bays in depth, and the wings are positioned in the central four bays, themselves four bays in depth and a single bay across the facade elevation. The dimensions of the main block of the building are 34 feet in width and 65 in depth, while the wings each measure 16 feet in width and 33 feet in depth. The building sits on a foundation of granite, with clapboarded walls and a slate roof topped by a central belvedere. It is painted a medium blue-grey with its trim accented in white.

Both the south and the north elevations have similar treatments, with prominent central entries, treated with transom and sidelights, and a surround of pilasters and cornice. On the main block large 6/6 double-hung sash windows with broad pedimented heads flank the entry, and three are aligned in the second story. The gable end receives the traditional treatment as a

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classical pediment, with pilasters rising along the corners to support the cornice and the pediment treatment of the gable. The narrow single bays of the eaves have a similar window, pilaster, and cornice treatment on these elevations. In keeping with Italianate design, the pilasters are paneled, the cornices are bracketed, and the tympanum is molded and lit with a fan-shaped window. On the south elevation, the name of the school is inscribed in gold in the tympanum, and the second-floor east window was removed ca. 1930. On the north elevation, the door is no longer recessed, the surround and door having been moved forward to the primary plane of the main block. The side elevations match one another as well. The main block shows corner pilasters and cornice, with a single bay of 6/6 double-hung sash at each end on two floors; a second interior bay of a one 6/6 double-hung sash and a small sash of 6/6 arranged horizontally under the cornice are sited above the wing. The elevations of the wings are most developed on this side, divided into four bays of 6/6 sash, with pilasters and cornice matching the remainder of the building and the tympanum treated with molding and fanlight like the facades; a gabled bulkhead is centered on the east side. The building is topped by a square belvedere under a hip roof, with three-part roundheaded openings on each side.

The plan of the interior of the Institute can partially be predicted by the arrangement of the exterior. On the first floor the plan is clearly the largest: on the south side, the projecting portion of the main block includes the entry vestibule, cloakrooms and stairways down for boys and girls, and a single stair on the east side to reach the second story. Two large recitation rooms, each measuring 32 by 33 feet, are located behind these, divided in the center by large pocket doors and extending beyond the confines of the main block into the wings for added space. Behind these, the gabled portion of the north side of the building is divided into two small rooms, serving perhaps as offices for staff or small recitation rooms. The rooms all have high ceilings measuring 13 feet. In the second story the main rooms are all located in the main block of the buildings, with garret storage in the wings. Above the vestibule area is the stair on the east and a small room, probably a storage area, on the west. A single large room, 32 by 40 feet, is located in the center of the building, with a single room at the north end that served for some time as a laboratory. The walls of the interior are covered with matchboard wainscoting, with lathe and plaster above, often fitted with large blackboards. The ceilings were once lathe and plastered but were later covered with a pressed tin cover. In the basement the vestibule area was fitted with girls' and boys' lavatories, the large central section remains open, with the north-central section housing the building's heating system.

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In 1862 the small brick Cushman Library (MHC #37) was built, the result of a gift by Henry W. Cushman to honor his town's centennial. The 2 1/2-story building presents its gable end to the street, and extends in the rear three bays. It measures 25 feet in width and 36 feet 8 inches in depth. The south front elevation is treated with a large central recessed entry under a Tuscan Roman relieving arch, with a pair of roman-arched windows in the center of the second story under another relieving arch, each of these ornamented with thick labels. At the corners, Tuscan pilasters rise to support the bracketed cornice that rises along the eaves of the gable end. To the left of the entry is a marble plaque was installed in 1919 to commemorate Bernardston's service in the Great War. The side elevations are similar, each of the three bays marked by Tuscan pilasters, each window treated with a thick curved label. All of the building's window caps and sills, as well as its capitals, are made of contrasting brown sandstone. The interior space is divided into a small vestibule in the front, with the reading room behind it. On the second floor the stair and the historic room are located above the vestibule, and Sanderson Hall is the room now used as stacks for the library collection.

Cushman Hall (MHC #21) stands on the opposite (south side), of Church Street, and was constructed for the use of the Institute by Henry W. Cushman in 1860. The large 2 1/2-story building is oriented with its wide five-bay gable end to the street and extends three bays in depth in the main block. In each slope of the gable roof, a gable-roofed dormer provides additional light to the attic story. Both the primary front entry and the secondary entry in the center of the east side elevation are treated with a simple surround, transom, and three-quarter sidelights; the front door has a familiar Italianate porch with a flat roof. On the facade, the second story's fenestration in the secondary story varies from that in the first floor, with windows only in bays two, three, and four; three openings are aligned with them in the gable. Behind this, the house includes two rear ells, first a lower service ell, of narrower dimensions than the main block, with a porch on each side, and extending five irregular bays to the rear, and culminating in a still lower former carriagehouse. The building sits on a brick foundation in the front; a fieldstone foundation under the carriagehouse is covered in clapboards. The building is treated with Italianate ornament like its neighbors, with paneled pilasters at the corners and a cornice encircling the main structure. Its blue-gray and white color scheme matches the Powers Institute. The lower floor of the building was originally the housing provided for the school's director, with dormitory rooms in the floors above. Since the school stopped taking boarders at the end of the 19th century, the building has been divided into a number of apartments obscuring the original plan. It appears, however,

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that the first floor was arranged in the familiar central-hall, double-pile plan, and the primary stair remains intact there, while in the upper story three tiers of rooms opened off of the hall that ran from front to rear.

Alterations to the district after the period of significance have been few. The Powers Institute ceased serving as the town high school in 1958, and this reduced use has led to some deterioration of the building's fabric. Recent repairs to the roof and the removal of an added rear chimney have eliminated the most serious structural threats. The building now houses the collections of the Bernardston Historical Society. A 1983 addition to the rear of the Cushman Library building, designed by Margo Jones for Pierre Belhumeur, is also of brick, a gable-roofed structure set at right angles to the main block and offset to the east allowing for handicapped access. The new addition houses a children's room on the first floor, and in the basement below, additional storage and a vault for historic town documents have been constructed. A single new structure was added to the district after the period of significance, a brick Fire Station of three bays in a gable-front orientation, constructed on the Powers Institute lot in 1975.

Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric sites are currently recorded within the district or in the general area (within one mile), it is possible that sites are present. The physical characteristics of the district, a well drained terrace containing knoll, pond and Fox Brook, all in close proximity to the Fall River indicate favorable locational criteria for prehistoric settlement and subsistence activities. Although site densities in this area of Massachusetts are generally low, clustering often occurs around wetlands. In general, the information presented above combined with the size of the district (6 1/2 acres) indicates a moderate to high potential for significant prehistoric survivals.

There is a high potential for significant historic archaeological remains in the district. Structural remains may survive on both parcels of land in the district. North of Church Street, in the vicinity of the Institute, archaeological survivals may exist from the log cabin of the African American "Nat the Fiddler" (ca. 1755-1818). The Theodore B. Hoyt House is also reported on the western portion of this lot from 1821-1832. The Obed Dickenson blacksmith shop is reported on this lot in 1850. The southern side of Church Street was reported to be part of the 18th century Samuel Hastings farm prior to the construction of Cushman Hall. A tannery was also reported in this area. Occupational related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may survive in association with structures which pre-date the extent contributing

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
removed from its original location.
a birthplace or grave.
a cemetery.
a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
a commemorative property.
less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
EDUCATION
SOCIAL HISTORY
COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1857-1942

Significant Dates

1860, 1862

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Woodcock, Virgil

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Bernardston Historical Commission

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property approximately 6 1/2 acres**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	8	7	0	0	3	8	0	4	7	2	7	0	2	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

2

1	8	7	0	0	5	0	0	4	7	2	7	0	0	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

3

1	8	7	0	0	5	0	0	4	7	2	7	1	2	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

4

1	8	7	0	0	6	1	0	4	7	2	7	1	0	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

 See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Geoffrey A. Rogers and Members of the Bernardston Historical Commission and
Claire Dempsey, NR Edit Consultant with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director MHCorganization Massachusetts Historical Commission date January 1993street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone 617-727-8470city or town Boston state MA zip code 02116**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Bernardstonstreet & number Town Hall, Church Street telephone (413) 648-5400city or town Bernardston state MA zip code 01337**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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resources of the district. A well associated with the Hoyt House reportedly survived into the 20th century. Privies may also survive around the Institute building and Cushman Hall. Toilets were added late in the school's life. Sheet refuse may also be present around the school buildings and in the park area.

(end)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Powers Institute Historic District includes four buildings and a park on approximately 6 1/2 acres of land, located along Church Street in the center village of Bernardston, Franklin County, Massachusetts. The centerpiece of the district is the Powers Institute, an Italianate school building of 1857, located on a small rise in a prominent location within the district and the village. Next door to the east is the small but well-detailed brick Cushman Library of 1862, and on the west side a modern fire station. Opposite these are located the Cushman Hall boarding house, built for school faculty and students in 1860, and Cushman Park, established in 1863. Constructed as the result of a series of bequeaths to the town by two of its most prominent citizens, this cluster of buildings sets the distinctive character of the village in the 19th century that remains today. The Powers Institute Historic District is an important cluster of education-related buildings and open land within the town of Bernardston, within the small grouping of municipal and religious buildings that forms the focus of the village. The Powers Institute Historic District is eligible to the National Register of Historic Places meeting criteria A and C at the local level. The district retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

The town of Bernardston, like many along the northern border of the Commonwealth, was established by the General Court to compensate soldiers serving in the Province's wars with Native Americans. This grant was designated for the descendants of those who fought in the Falls Fight of 1676, one of the battles of King Philip's War, fought in Deerfield. Fifty-eight years later, Samuel Hunt of Billerica and others petitioned the General Court for a tract of land north of Deerfield for a new township. Their petition was granted, with a familiar list of requirements made upon them for the establishment of the new community: "provided the grantees do within four years settle sixty families in said township, and have each of them a house eighteen feet square and five acres of land brought to English grass, or broken up by plowing, and also to build a convenient Meeting House, and settle a learned orthodox minister among them..." The six-mile square included what

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is now the town of Bernardston as well as portions of the towns of Leyden and Colrain, and a strip of land now within the state of Vermont. The initial division of land into lots included fifty-acre home lots and an additional meadow lot for each proprietor. While they had no trouble attracting claimants to the land (97 had come forward by 1736), they had more difficulty attracting the required settlers.

The proprietors of Fallstown met in Deerfield to plan the settlement of their land grant. Among their first decisions was to build a meetinghouse, and as the site of this first community building, they choose the top of Huckle Hill, in the eastern part of the town. By 1743 there were a reported fourteen families in the town, but the outbreak of King George's War in 1744 began a fifteen-year period when the area was occupied by forts and soldiers rather than farmers and their families. Twenty-five families had returned or newly settled in the town by 1760 and they petitioned the General Court the next year for the incorporation of the Fall Town grant as a new town named Bernardston. For a brief period in the third quarter of the 18th century, the town stretched across the Green River, but soon its large size, coupled with the rough terrain, led to the division of the area. Though the easternmost part remained Bernardston, that portion west of the river was annexed to Colrain in 1771; that to the east of the Green River but west of the Green River, but west of the present Bernardston, became Leyden in 1784.

Discussion of schooling for the town dates to the re-settlement period, and in 1780 the town established and funded schools in four districts. These schools met in private homes until 1784 when the town voted to build schoolhouses for the first time. The town added a fifth district two years later and by the middle of the 19th century the number had risen to six. The town had only these elementary or common schools until 1833 when the Honorable Job Goodale planned an academy. While Massachusetts common schools of the colonial and early national periods are legendary, support for secondary schools was largely the product of the middle of the 19th century. Secondary schools had been required by law for larger communities since the 17th century, but it was not uncommon for towns to avoid this obligation. By the Federal period, both towns and small groups of private citizens were establishing these schools in increasing numbers, to train teachers and to prepare students for college. It was popular even in rural areas to establish private secondary schools to serve the comparatively small number of students interested in additional education. In the Connecticut Valley, schools like this had been established in a dozen communities including Deerfield, Ashfield, Buckland, New Salem, and Northfield in Franklin County by 1830. Goodale had contracted with Orra Sheldon, the carpenter associated with the

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move of the Congregational Unitarian Church in 1824, to build an academy. In his will of 1833, he bequeathed this contract in trust to the town, together with five acres of land on Church Street. The Goodale Academy operated until the establishment of the Powers Institute, and the building remains as a residence.

The founding of the Powers Institute dates to a bequest by Edward Eppes Powers (1793-1855) to his hometown. Powers was the son of John Powers, a baker who had lived briefly in several communities before settling with his family in Bernardston. He apprenticed his son Edward to a Northampton harnessmaker and saddler. Powers did not last long in this trade, however, setting off instead with his friend Lewis C. Allen to establish a dry goods business in Clinton, Georgia. Powers eventually relocated to the expanding community of Columbia, where he flourished. He spent his winters in Georgia, returning each summer to his hometown of Bernardston. Powers never married. His will provided for a number of charitable efforts and a number of his nieces and nephews. For the town of Bernardston, his chief concern was its schools. He bequeathed to the town 100 shares in the Franklin County Bank, the income of which was to be used "for the purposes of education in said town." Half of the income was to support the common or public elementary schools, with the additional requirement that the town raise at least 300 per year for that purpose. The other half was to support a grammar or secondary school in the town. By the middle years of the 19th century, secondary schools were increasing in popularity whether privately or municipally funded. They have been credited as instrumental in the period's transformation of the "middling sort" of artisans into the largely white-collar middle class. During the middle of the 19th century, sixteen more academies and a number of town and city high schools were added in the Connecticut Valley, including (besides Bernardston), Charlemont, Greenfield, New Salem, and Shelburne in Franklin County. Powers clearly valued this trend and hoped to bring it to his hometown.

The next year, the town accepted the bequest and contributed to the construction of the Powers Institute building. Three parcels of land were donated to the town to assist in establishing the school, and comprise the lot today: 1/2 acre from Henry W. Cushman, and 1 1/4 acre from Aretas Ferry, both in 1856; and six years later, an additional piece of land from Cushman, Ferry, John Sanderson, and Joel W. Dewey. There was apparently little development of this parcel prior to the construction of the Institute. The bulk of the lot was reputedly the property of Polycanthus L. Cushman, father of Henry Cushman, who eventually sold it to Obed Dickenson, who had a blacksmith's shop there. The shop had been part of the tannery across the road, and was moved here in

(continued)

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Bernardston (Franklin County)
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about 1850. During Cushman's ownership the lot was said to have been occupied by the log cabin of the African American "Nat the Fiddler" (ca. 1755-1818). On the western part of the lot was the house of Theodore B. Hoyt from 1821 until 1832, with a well that survived into the 20th century.

The design of the Powers Institute marked a departure from the common pattern of school building in rural Massachusetts. Traditional schools were commonly small single-story single-room buildings under gable roofs, resembling small meetinghouses and other meeting halls. More complex buildings for larger educational institutions were of course known, with multiple classrooms and the provision of dormitory space for students and occasionally for staff. But an institution of this kind was not established in the region until the establishment of Amherst College and the construction of its important Isaac Damon buildings in 1821-1827. Probably the first elaborate building constructed in the region for a secondary school was Mount Pleasant in Amherst in 1826, a domed Greek Revival structure with arcades leading to pavilions. More commonly these buildings, if separate buildings were constructed at all, were domestic or town hall-like buildings, rectangular in shape, two or three stories in height, with small rooms on the lower stories and often a larger meeting hall above. The complex massing of the Powers Institute reflects a knowledge of the new planning modes employed in public buildings, in which the design of a building's exterior indicated more clearly the plan and activities of the building's interior. Its two wings indicate to the observer that the interior is more complex than other schools of the region and period, employing more and larger recitation rooms and specialized spaces than the more common school. The carpenter associated with this building is Virgil Woodcock (ca. 1806-1875), of Swanzey, New Hampshire, who combined mining in Vermont and California with his trade, and built the City Hotel in Keene and churches in Swanzey and Troy, all in New Hampshire.

One of the executors of the Powers will, Henry W. Cushman (1805-1863), was influential in the early years of the school, and added substantially to the original bequest with associated gifts of his own. Cushman was the only child and heir of Polycarpus and Maria Louisa Dickman Cushman. After younger years as farmer and teacher, he served on boards of a number of banks and insurance companies. He also served extensively in town government, as clerk, treasurer, member of the school committee, representative and then senator in the state legislature, and served a term as lieutenant governor in 1851-1852. Cushman was as well a vocational historian and genealogist. Opposite the school building, on a large parcel of land he owned there, Cushman built Cushman Hall, the second school building, in 1860. This parcel had in the

(continued)

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MassachusettsSection number 8 Page 5

18th century been the farm of Samuel Hastings and his son Rufus, who also operated a tannery here. A portion of the land was sold by Rufus to Thomas Snow and Gamaliel Kingsley, who sold the land to Cushman. Another tannery in this area was operated by Izatus Sheldon and Elizur Chamberlain during the 1830s. This is the building that was taken down in about 1850 and a portion moved across the street and converted into a blacksmith's shop. The building that Cushman built in its place cost \$5,000, and on its first floor provided housing for the school principal, while students boarded upstairs. At his death, he left to the town Cushman Hall and the land adjacent to it, with the income from the hall to go to support the maintenance of the park. He further stipulated that no buildings were to be erected on the land or the gift would be null and void and the land turned over to Amherst College for the Agriculture Department. During the 1870s a number of trees were planted in the park, and for a time a bandstand and a wellhouse stood within the parcel.

The early construction of this associated building suggests that the trustees of the Powers Fund had early on decided that the school would serve an audience larger than the town of Bernardston. The post-Revolutionary years had been a period of growth for the town, bringing change to the composition of the community. The town's agricultural economy prospered, focusing on the common mixed grain and husbandry culture with period specialties in hops and merino sheep. Saw and grist mills sprang up in multiple locations and were soon joined by a scythe snathe manufactory, several tanneries, and boot and shoe shops. Although the early 19th century was a period of growth, the community remained a country town, and this fact may have been influential in the decision to admit students from outside the town and establish Powers Institute as a tuition school. The location of the school in a rural and agricultural community was a key factor in attracting students. As George H. Hovey said during the dedication services: "Its location is pleasant and healthful, enjoying meadow and mountain scenery, and quietude." Three years later, the catalogue was more explicit: "Bernardston is essentially an agricultural town, and therefore has no place for lounging idlers or dissipation... a residence where young men will be entirely free from temptation to evil conduct." As late as 1900, the school catalogue claimed the village to be "entirely free from the disturbing elements usually found in manufacturing towns." The school thus established by the Powers bequest took a not-uncommon period form combining elements of financing that were charitable, public, and private. The Powers bequest laid the groundwork for a high-quality school, with a large and up-to-date building, and subsequent bequests added to the school's fittings and physical plant. Perhaps the town or the trustees recognized that the school's ambitious plant and equipment would outstrip the local needs for such a facility. However the decision was

(continued)

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made, the school eventually took in students from outside the town. Most of the school's students came from towns in the northern Connecticut Valley, but some came from as far away as Ohio and Georgia. Students from the town of Bernardston could be admitted to the school on the "free list," assuring a component of free public education within this mix.

Just two years after constructing Cushman Hall, Cushman made an even more important gift to the town. In 1862 the town celebrated its centennial, with lectures, parades, and collations, bringing together town dignitaries and former residents, as well as the general citizenry. Cushman took the opportunity of his speech to this assembled group to announce his intention to donate to the town a public library. He believed, as many of his time believed, that "education and religion are the great and fundamental principals on which the prosperity and happiness of all communities must depend." He noted the fortunate presence of five churches and six common school districts besides the Powers Institute in the town, but went on to note that "in order to render your means of education and social progress complete, you need a public library." His gift was for \$1,000 to establish the library, \$500 for the construction of a fireproof building, and for the next ten years an annual gift of \$100 to expand the library holdings. His gift was conditioned on several premises. The library must be free to residents of Bernardston, Powers Institute students and staff, and any nonresidents who were members of Bernardston churches. It would be overseen by a board of trustees, run by a trained librarian, insured against loss by fire. Finally, Cushman specified that "no religious sect, political party, or any combination of the kind shall ever pervert the library to its own particular uses."

Cushman's gift made Bernardston one of the first towns in the region to have the benefits of a public library. Subscription libraries and small collections associated with the district schools were known in the colonial and early national periods, but it was not until late in the 19th century that most communities made a formal provision for this amenity in their community, and seldom was this accomplished without acts of philanthropy such as this one. Public libraries rose in popularity during the 19th century, in part because of financial support supplied to them from the state legislature. In the Connecticut Valley, only Shelburne, whose library dates to 1859, predates Bernardston in the establishment of a public library. The building was constructed on the same lot as the Powers Institute, in the southeast corner near Church Street. To the gift by Cushman was added one by John Sanderson (1814-1898), a successful town resident who was the sole heir of his father's tannery. Sanderson added to the funds for constructing the building so that a second floor could be added to the building, a public meeting area known as

(continued)

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Bernardston (Franklin County)
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Sanderson Hall. In 1900 his heirs presented it formally to the town. When Cushman died in 1863, he established a library fund of \$2,500, with its income available for the purchase of additional books.

The Powers Institute became quickly, if briefly, an exceptionally popular school. This was in part due to the influence of L. F. Ward (1824-1882), the school's principal from 1858-1863 and again from 1868-1871. Educated at Dartmouth, Ward had worked at several other academies and was said to have brought a number of students with him to Powers Institute. In the 1860 catalogue of the school, we see the school at the peak of its size and offering its most diverse and extensive curriculum. The school at that time had nine in staff: the principal, two preceptresses, a teacher of German and librarian, a teacher of music, a teacher of French, a teacher of penmanship, of penmanship and mathematics, and of elocution, oratory, and mathematics. Students in the program were divided among a number of departments, including the majority in the English department (142 boys and 134 girls), a significant number in the Classical department (71 boys and 36 girls), and an additional 57 students each in the music and ornamental (art) branches. In addition to preparing students for college, the English and normal courses were available to provide "a thorough and practical knowledge of all branches of an English education," as well as preparing them for a career in teaching. Students were admitted from twelve years up, and were required to take an examination prior to admission. Otherwise tuition ranged from \$12.60 to \$16.10 per term with extra fees for certain special courses and \$2.25 for board. The school offered four terms of study, with the largest number of students enrolling during the fall term, followed by the spring, the winter, and finally the summer term. In addition to Cushman Hall, other boarding houses in the village included Alonzo R. Cushman's Boarding Hall, Stratton Hall, and P. C. Alexander's Boarding Hall. Students might also find accommodations singly or in pairs within the families of the village.

The large number of students attending Powers Institute during its early years was not sustained at the school for a long period. The enrollments declined during the 1870s, when the school included 47 students from Bernardston and 43 from other towns. By 1891 the number of students had dropped to 61, divided between the academic and English departments, and most out-of-town students were in residence at Cushman Hall. Shortly thereafter, by a vote of the State Board of Education, the school was "approved as a school for the purposes of state reimbursement of high school tuition," making the school free to students from communities with valuations of less than \$500,000 that did not maintain a high school. During the first half of the 20th century, the school operated more conventionally as the town's secondary or high school, as well

(continued)

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as its middle school, serving a still smaller number of students and offering courses of study including college preparatory, scientific, and agricultural. Cushman Hall ceased to be a boarding hall for the school, and was subsequently divided into a number of apartments for rent. The school closed in 1958 when the town joined its neighbors in a regional school. Since that time, it has housed the collection of the Bernardston Historical Society. Cushman Library remains the town's public library, and was expanded in 1983 with a rear ell. Cushman Park remains an important open space within the village, particularly popular during Little League season. The Powers Institute Historic District includes several of the town's most important municipal buildings, continuing to serve important roles within the community today, and in their ambitious and attractive forms, adding significantly to the village ensemble.

Archaeological Significance

Since patterns of prehistoric occupations in Bernardston are poorly understood, any surviving sites would be significant. Surviving sites in this area can provide important examples of prehistoric settlement in upland/interior locales and along tributary streams of the Connecticut River. These sites may include smaller low density special purpose type sites which may contrast larger sites along the Connecticut River.

Historic archaeological remains described above have the potential to provide detailed information on the social, cultural and economic patterns that characterized growth and development in a rural center village with an agricultural economy which remained unchanged well into the 20th century. Structural and occupational related survivals from the residence of "Nat the Fiddler" can provide insights into the role of African American in the settlement of rural Massachusetts communities. Survivals from the Hastings farm may contribute information on agricultural practices within the community and the role rural agricultural economic played within the larger regional network. Survivals from tanneries and possibly the Dickenson blacksmith shop can provide information in the role these industries or trades played within a predominantly agricultural community. Careful analysis of sheet refuse patterns may provide data on activities which occurred around institute buildings and in the park by the general community. Finally, privy remains possible associated with the Institute can provide important information on groups of individuals who attended the Institute including boarders and local students.

(end)

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Powers Institute Historic District
Bernardston (Franklin County)
Massachusetts

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM References: (continued)

	zone	easting	northing
5)	18	700600	4727000
6)	18	700560	4727000
7)	18	700560	4726900
8)	18	700360	4726920

Verbal Boundary Description:

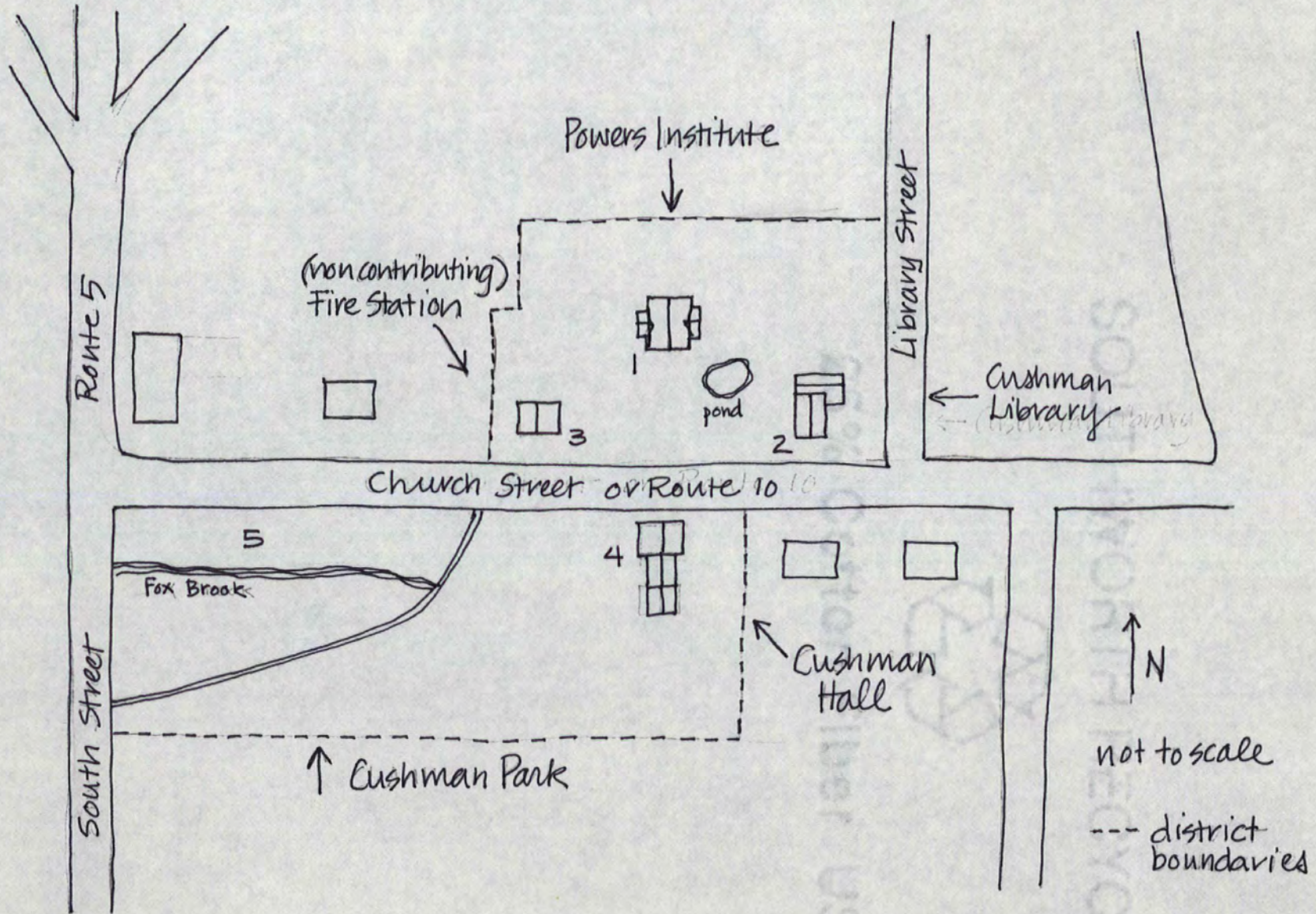
See attached Bernardston Assessors Map #14, Block C, lot #3; and Map #9A, Block A, lot #1.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries are those historically associated with the Powers Institute and its associated buildings, and consist of two parcels given to the town for the Institute, the Cushman Library, and Cushman Hall and Park.

(end)

Sketch map of the Powers Institute Historic District



Powers Institute Historic District
Bernardston, Massachusetts
DISTRICT DATA SHEET

<u>MAP #</u>	<u>MHC #</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>STYLE</u>	<u>STATUS</u>	<u>RESOURCE</u>
1	MHC #38	Powers Institute pond	Church Street	1857	Italianate	C	B
2	MHC #37	Cushman Library	Church Street	1862	Italianate	C	B
3		Fire Station	Church Street	1975		NC	B
4	MHC #21	Cushman Hall	Church Street	1860	Italianate	C	B
5	MHC #900	Cushman Park fox brook baseball diamond flower beds	Church & South Strs.	1870s		C	Si

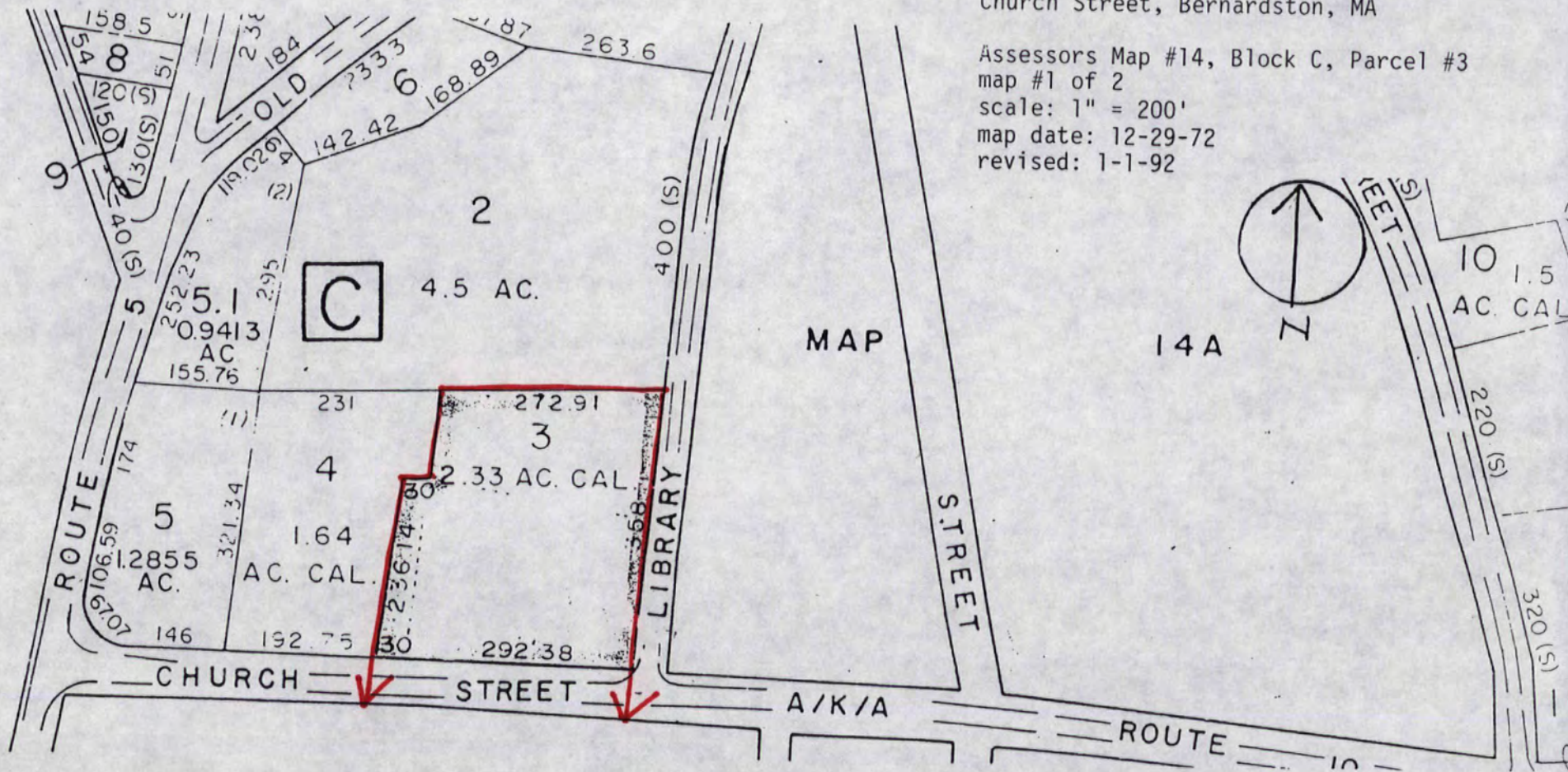
TOTAL: 4 Contributing; 1 Noncontributing

3 Contributing Buildings 1 Noncontributing Building
1 Contributing Site

Powers Institute Historic District
Church Street, Bernardston, MA

Assessors Map #14, Block C, Parcel #3
map #1 of 2
scale: 1" = 200'
map date: 12-29-72
revised: 1-1-92

3



TOWN OF BERNARDSTON

BOARD OF ASSESSORS
BERNARDSTON, MASS.



MAP NO. 14

DATE, AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY: 5-11-71

PHOTO NO: 39

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 93000127 Date Listed: 03/18/93

Powers Institute Historic District Franklin MA
Property Name County State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Beth Savage
Signature of the Keeper

3/18/93
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

6. Function or Use: Historic & Current Functions

"RECREATION & CULTURE: park" is not a recognized function. One of the three applicable historic functions is "RECREATION & CULTURE/outdoor recreation" and one of the four applicable current functions is "RECREATION & CULTURE/outdoor recreation/sports facility."

This information has been conveyed to the MASHPO by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without attachment)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Powers Institute Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Franklin

DATE RECEIVED: 2/01/93 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/16/93
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/04/93 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/18/93
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 93000127

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept at C
REVIEWER Swasey
DISCIPLINE Architectural History
DATE 3/10/03

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

CLASSIFICATION

count resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

historic current

DESCRIPTION

architectural classification
 materials
 descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

summary paragraph
 completeness
 clarity
 applicable criteria
 justification of areas checked
 relating significance to the resource
 context
 relationship of integrity to significance
 justification of exception
 other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

acreage verbal boundary description
 UTMs boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

sketch maps USGS maps photographs presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

_____ Phone _____

Signed _____

Date _____



POWERS INSTITUTE
20 CHURCH STREET
BERNARDSTON, MA 01337

PHOTO: GEOFF ROGERS
NEGATIVE LOC.: SELECTMEN'S OFFICE, TOWN HALL

~~#1 OF 2, COPY B~~



N



N



VIEW FROM SOUTHEAST (CHURCH STREET)

PHOTO #1 OF 5



POWERS INSTITUTE
20 CHURCH STREET
BERNARDSTON, MA 01337

PHOTO: GEOFF ROGERS

N
NEGATIVE LOC.: ^N SELECTMEN'S OFFICE, ^N TOWN HALL

~~# 2 OF 2, COPY 'A'~~

VIEW FROM NORTHEAST

PHOTO # 2 OF 5



Cushman Library
Church Street
Powers Institute Historic District
Bernardston MA
Claire Dempsey
September 1992

PHOTO # 3 OF 5



Cushman Hall
Church Street
Powers Institute Historic District
Bernardston MA
Claire Dempsey
September 1992

PHOTO # 4 OF 5



Cushman Park
Church Street
Powers Institute Historic District
Bernardston MA
Claire W. Dempsey
September 1992

PHOTO # 5 OF 5



RECEIVED

FEB 01 1993

NATIONAL
REGISTER

January 27, 1993

Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following two nomination forms:

Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church, Church Street, Bernardston
(Franklin County), Massachusetts, 01337

Powers Institute Historic District, Church Street, Bernardston (Franklin
County), Massachusetts, 01337

Both nominations have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have
been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified
of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and
were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Carol Dyer, Bernardston Congregational Unitarian Church
Esther Carlin, Chairperson, Bernardston Historical Commission
Geoffery A. Rogers, Shared Town Administrator
Claire Dempsey, Preservation Consultant
Daniel J. O'Keefe, Chairman, Bernardston Board of Selectmen
Cushman Library

PROPERTY NAME: Powers Institute Historic District

OTHER NAME/ NOT APPLICABLE
SITE No. :

MULTIPLE NAME: NOT APPLICABLE

ADDRESS/ Church St. between South and Library Sts.
BOUNDARY :

CITY: Bernardston

COUNTY: Franklin STATE: MASSACHUSETTS

Restricted Location Information: Owner: PRIVATE Resource Type: DISTRICT

Contributing Noncontributing

Buildings	3	1
Sites	1	0
Structures	0	0
Objects	0	0

Nomination/Determination Type: SINGLE RESOURCE

Nominator: STATE GOVERNMENT

Nominator Name:
NOT APPLICABLE

Federal NOT APPLICABLE
Agency:

NPS Park Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Certification: DATE RECEIVED/PENDING NOMINATION Date: 02/01/93

Other NOT APPLICABLE
Certification:

Historic DOMESTIC
Functions: EDUCATION
RECREATION AND CULTURE

Historic INSTITUTIONAL HOUSING
Subfunctions: SCHOOL
LIBRARY
OUTDOOR RECREATION

Current DOMESTIC
Functions: EDUCATION
RECREATION AND CULTURE

Current MULTIPLE DWELLING
Subfunctions: LIBRARY
MUSEUM
SPORT FACILITY
OUTDOOR RECREATION

Level of LOCAL Applicable Criteria: EVENT
Significance: ARCHITECTURE/ENGINEERING

Significant Person's Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Criteria Considerations: NOT APPLICABLE

Area of Significance: ARCHITECTURE
EDUCATION
SOCIAL HISTORY
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Periods of: 1825-1849 1850-1874 Circa: Specific Sig. Years:
Significance: 1875-1899 1900-1924
1925-1949 1860
1862

Architect/Builder/Engineer/ Cultural Affiliation:
Designer: NOT APPLICABLE

Woodcock, Virgil

Other Documentation:

NOT APPLICABLE

HABS No. N/A

HAER No. N/A

Architectural ~~LATE VICTORIAN~~
Styles: ITALIANATE

Describe Other Style: NOT APPLICABLE

Foundation Materials: BRICK
Wall Materials: WEATHERBOARD BRICK
Roof Materials: SLATE
Other Materials: STONE ASPHALT

Acreage: 6.5

UTM	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
Coordinates:	18/	7 00 380/	47 27 020	18/	7 00 500/	47 27 000
	18/	7 00 500/	47 27 120	18/	7 00 610/	47 27 100
	18/	7 00 600/	47 27 000	18/	7 00 560/	47 27 000
	18/	7 00 560/	47 26 900	18/	7 00 360/	47 26 920

deleted 2/18 ER