



1127

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 any 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 Town Diner (The Diners of Massachusetts MPS)

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 627 Mount Auburn Street not for publication

city or town Watertown vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Middlesex code 027 zip code 02472

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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  
Signature of certifying official/Title Judith B. McDonough, Executive Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

7/29/99  
Date

State or 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 this 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):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

9/22/99

Town Diner  
Name of Property

Watertown, Middlesex County, Massachusetts  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

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

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	building
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

Twentieth-Century Commercial Architecture:

The Diners of Massachusetts

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Diner

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls porcelain enamel

steel

roof metal

other glass block

**Narrative Description**

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

Town Diner  
Name of Property

Watertown, Middlesex County, Massachusetts  
County and State

**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.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** 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.
- D** 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:

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

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

**Period of Significance**

1947-1949

**Significant Dates**

1947

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

DeLoria

N. D. C. Construction Company

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

The Diners of Massachusetts MPS  
Town Diner  
Watertown (Middlesex Co.), MA

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7. Description

Town Diner, 627 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown (1947, MHC #298), is one of the earliest built-on-site diners in Massachusetts. The diner is located in the Coolidge Square commercial area in the east part of Watertown near the Cambridge city line. Mount Auburn Street is part of State Route 16, one of Watertown's primary east-west arteries and an important route through the region. Town Diner occupies a corner lot with no on-site parking. The façade is oriented northeast, fronting the corner, and provides a strong visual anchor in this commercial district. There is a landscaped island between the sidewalk and the façade of the diner.

Town Diner has a steel-frame main block, roughly rectangular in massing, and an irregularly massed, wood-frame wing on the southeast elevation fronting Bigelow Avenue. The two principal elevations of the main block were constructed in 1947, as an L-shaped addition wrapping around the northeast and northwest sides of a Worcester Lunch Car Company diner already on the site. The Worcester diner, of undetermined vintage, was heavily remodeled to serve as the kitchen for the enlarged diner. The profile of the original diner cannot be discerned on the exterior. Brick veneer on the rear wall of the diner was added in 1986. The wood-frame wing on the southeast elevation is believed to date to ca. 1951, according to building permits and Sanborn fire insurance maps. This wing is currently clad with corrugated metal panels. As a secondary feature that is not visible from most vantage points, the wing does not compromise the integrity of the 1947 main block.

The 1947 main block of the diner retains its historic architectural integrity. Building permits indicate the architect of this block was named DeLoria, and a 1982 survey attributes the construction to N. D. C. Construction Company. The diner has a high concrete foundation with glass block basement windows, a rounded hipped metal roof, and porcelain enamel exterior panels in a color scheme of cream and teal. Approximately ten bays wide and five to six bays deep, Town Diner has rounded front corners and two finished elevations: on the northeast, fronting the intersection of Mount Auburn Street and Bigelow Avenue, and on the northwest, fronting Mount Auburn Street. Each elevation has a steel and glass entry placed off center. The façade entry has paired doors, a double staircase in brick, and wrought iron railings. The side entry has a single door and is situated at street level. Windows contain 1/1 steel sash with transoms except at the rounded corners, where window openings are filled with glass block.

The diner exterior also is distinguished for its rooftop signage, though the neon tubes were recently removed. Centered over the façade is the *TOWN DINER* sign, which includes a steel-rimmed clock between the two words. Flanking the diner name are smaller illuminated signs that read *Homemade Pastry* and *Fresh Sea Foods*. On the Mount Auburn Street elevation is a projecting sign that is vertical in its orientation and reads *TOWN DINER*.

On the interior, Town Diner has an L-shaped footprint and displays a fusion of diner and restaurant details. Despite some cosmetic changes to certain interior finishes, the diner's historic spaces are maintained. The most intact finishes of the interior are found in the counter and back bar area. The counter extends the length of the diner's northeast arm, parallel to the northeast (front) wall. Staff entrances are located at the center of the counter—directly across from the diner's main entrance and in front of the kitchen doors—as well as at the right (north) end. Despite the replacement Formica counter top, the counter retains its tiled apron in a light blue and black color scheme. The counter apron also includes glass block framing the center staff entrance. The back bar features steel panels bearing a sunburst motif. There are sixteen steel counter stools with vinyl covers. Booth seating is located along the northeast (front), northwest (Mount

(continued)

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The Diners of Massachusetts MPS  
Town Diner  
Watertown (Middlesex Co.), MA

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Auburn Street side), and southeast (Bigelow Avenue) walls; the booths are finished in Formica and upholstered in replacement vinyl. Walls display wood paneling. The floor is tiled. Interior alterations include reproduction colonial hanging lamps and a recessed lighting and ventilation system (ca. 1970s) that is suspended from the barrel ceiling.

### Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric sites are located on the nominated property, it is possible that sites are present. Thirteen sites are recorded in the general area (within one mile) of the diner. In general, however, environmental characteristics of the property, especially its distance of over 1000 feet from the nearest wetlands, are not locationally favorable for most types of prehistoric sites. Most prehistoric sites in the region are located in close proximity to streams, ponds and wetlands within the Charles River drainage. Many of these sites are located along the shoreline of the main Charles River basin to the south and the shores of Fresh Pond located north of the diner. Given the above information, the small size of the nominated parcel (12,700 square feet), and construction impacts from the diner, which has a basement, a low potential exists for locating prehistoric resources on the property. A low potential also exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the Town Diner property. No information is present indicating specific historic period landuse on the property prior to installation of the Worcester Lunch Car Company Diner on the property in the mid-1930's and incorporation of that diner into the present diner in 1947.

(end)

### 8. Statement of Significance

Town Diner is an early and important example of the built-on-site diner in Massachusetts. Architecturally, the diner combines the barrel roof and porcelain enamel cladding of the traditional Worcester lunch car diner with the curved corners, center entry, L-shaped seating area, and glass block seen in later diner types introduced in the 1940s. Town Diner also is important historically for its long association with the Contos family of Watertown, who operated the business beginning in 1945 and transformed the diner in 1947 to its present appearance. The existing diner is one of the state's best illustrations of a diner operator's desire to update and upgrade his facilities. Retaining integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, Town Diner meets Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places at the local and state levels.

The history of the Town Diner begins in the mid-1930s, when Joseph E. Carroll was the proprietor of the small Worcester lunch car at this location. It is not clear whether Carroll purchased and installed a new Worcester diner on the site, a secondhand (in "as is" condition) diner, or a reconditioned diner. According to Watertown directories, Carroll did not live in the town at the time. He operated the Town Diner until about 1942, when Arthur C. Derosiers was the proprietor. Derosiers lived in Revere, north of Boston.

Louis Contos took over the Town Diner in 1945. Contos emigrated from Greece in 1912 and, according to town directories, lived in Watertown from the mid-1930s onward. In the early 1940s, before owning the diner, Contos was employed in South Boston; his occupation at that time has not been determined. Peter Contos, another Watertown resident and likely a relative, had a restaurant in Boston about the same time. In 1947, Louis Contos and his son, George,

(continued)

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Town Diner  
Watertown (Middlesex Co.), MA

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substantially enlarged the main block of the diner to its present appearance, retaining the Worcester lunch car already on the site for use as the kitchen in the rear.

The remodeled Town Diner is a combination "Worcester Lunch Car/Paramount Diner." [Gutman, p. 143] The design fuses the traditional Massachusetts diner form—the barrel-roofed diner with closed barrel (rounded hipped) roof—and contemporary diner forms of the 1940s, with their sleek profiles and exterior finishes, and their greater use of stainless steel on the interior. Watertown building permits attribute the design of the Town Diner to an individual named DeLoria. There is no listing for a DeLoria in the Watertown directories. The directories for the neighboring city of Cambridge, however, show a John A. DeLoria, who was the city's building inspector in 1946 and directed the city's remodeling and reconstruction department in 1954. This DeLoria may have been involved in the design of the Town Diner.

By the time the Contos family acquired the Town Diner, the Coolidge Square area was an important neighborhood shopping district in the east part of Watertown. A number of retail and service establishments operated on Mount Auburn Street and adjacent side streets, among them markets, banks, variety shops, a pharmacy, shoe repair shops, a tailor, a laundry, a barber shop, and a beauty salon. There were at least two service stations in the immediate vicinity, as well as a café, a bakery, and a "bowladrome." The Town Diner occupies an important site in this commercial area and provides a strong visual anchor in this neighborhood shopping district.

The Contos family ran the Town Diner until the early 1980s, at which point the current operator acquired the diner.

(end)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Gutman, Richard J. S. *American Diner Then and Now*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993.
- and Peter Ames Richards. "A guide to dining out . . . way out." *The New York Times*. Sunday, September 15, 1974, Travel and Resorts, Section 10, p.1.
- Diner Finder Deluxe: Massachusetts*. Watertown, MA: Coffee Cup Publications, 1991.
- MHC Inventory Form for Town Diner, Watertown (recorded by Architectural Preservation Associates), September 1982.
- Watertown Directory*. North Hampton, NH: Crosby Publishing Co., Inc. (1930, 1935, 1939, 1942).
- Manning's Cambridge Directory*. Boston: H. A. Manning Co. (1946, 1954).
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps*: 1923, 1928 (corrected to September 1949), 1971.
- Watertown building permits for Town Diner, 627 Mount Auburn Street.

(end)

Town Diner  
Name of Property

Watertown, Middlesex County, Massachusetts  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 12,700 square feet

### UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19	322270	4693010	3.		
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.			4.		
Zone	Easting	Northing	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 By

name/title Kathleen Kelly Broomer, consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date June, 1999

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02125

### 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Athas Arvanitis

street & number 627 Mt. Auburn Street telephone 617-924-9789

city or town Watertown state MA zip code 02472

**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503. NPS Form 10-900 OMB No.

1024-0018

(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

The Diners of Massachusetts MPS  
Town Diner  
Watertown (Middlesex Co.), MA

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the accompanying detail of the town of Watertown assessors' map.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the entire parcel that has been historically associated with the diner.

(end)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Town Diner  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Diners of Massachusetts MPS  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Middlesex

DATE RECEIVED: 8/09/99      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/24/99  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/09/99      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/23/99  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 99001127

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: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    9/23/99 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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



OWN DINNER

FRESH SEA FOODS

OPEN



Town Diner  
627 Mount Auburn Street  
Watertown, Middlesex County, Mass.

# 1998

View SW

Photo: KK Bremer

Neg: MHC



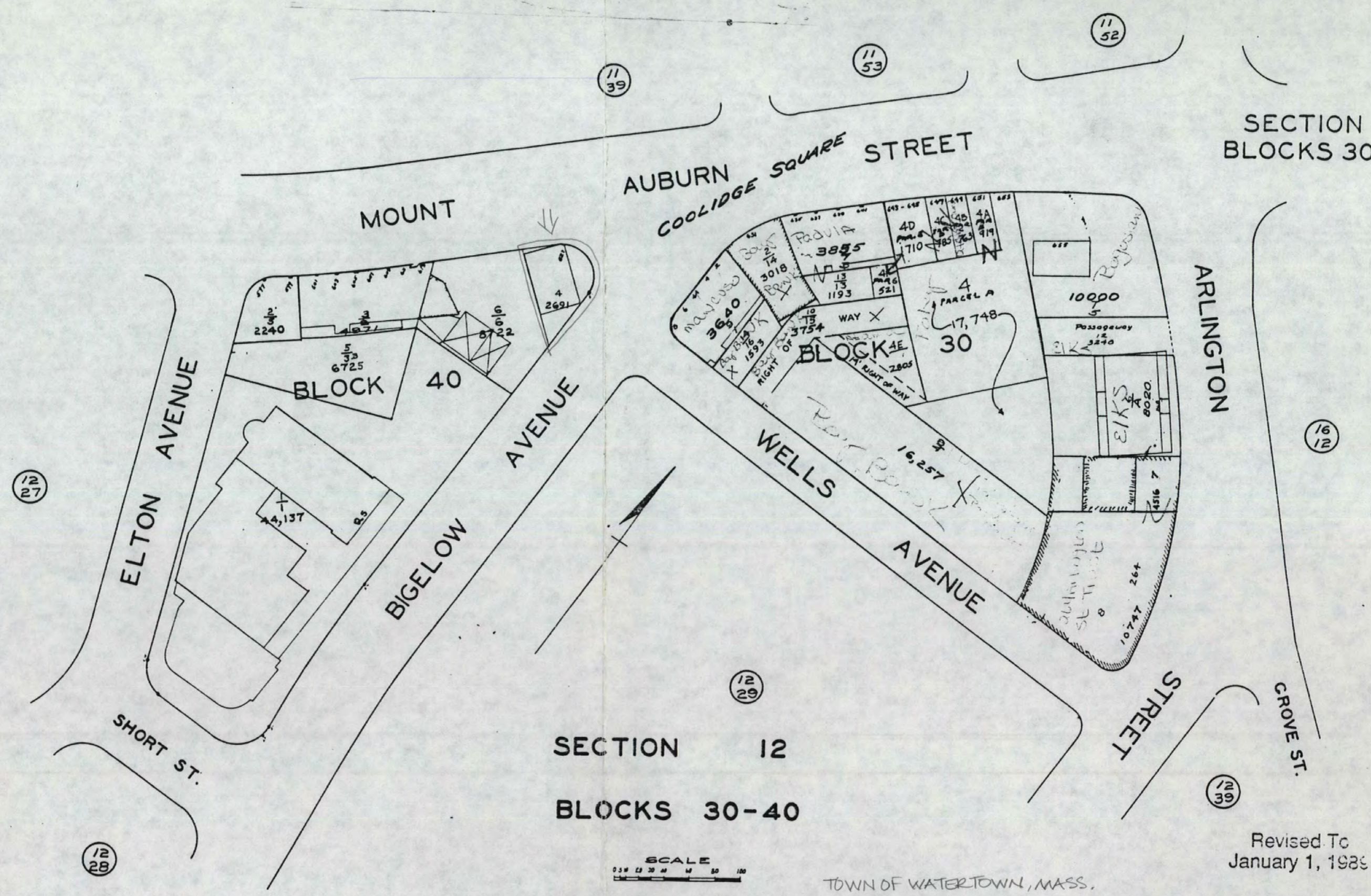
Town Diker  
627 Mount Auburn Street  
Watertown, Middlesex County, Mass.

Interior view SE

1998

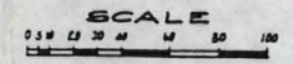
Photo: KK Broomer

Neg: MHC



SECTION 12  
BLOCKS 30+40

SECTION 12  
BLOCKS 30-40



TOWN OF WATERTOWN, MASS.  
ASSESSOR'S MAP  
TOWN DINER, 627 MOUNT AUBURN STREET, WATERTOWN  
MAP 1240 SECTION 4

Revised To  
January 1, 1983

THE DINERS OF MASSACHUSETTS MPS



The Claws of Massachusetts  
WFS  
19 3 2270 463010

1:25 000-scale metric  
topographic map



7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE  
SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names



GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

1987

Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Massachusetts Department of Public Works

Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies  
 Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1978. Field checked 1979. Map edited 1987  
 Superimposed Newton and Boston South 1:25,000-scale maps dated 1970  
 Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS charts 13270 (1982) and 13272 (1982). This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
 Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 19  
 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, unadjusted zone  
 1927 North American Datum  
 To show on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 6 meters south and 42 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks  
 There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS  
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
 CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER  
 OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.3 METER  
 DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
 DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN METERS  
 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE  
 THE SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
 THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2.9 METERS

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

CONVERSION TABLE		DECLINATION DIAGRAM	ADJOINING MAPS		
Meters	Feet		1	2	3
1	3.2808		1	2	3
2	6.5617		4	5	
3	9.8425		6	7	8
4	13.1234				
5	16.4043				
6	19.6852				
7	22.9661				
8	26.2470				
9	29.5279				
10	32.8088				

To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808  
 To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.3048  
 UTM grid convergence  
 41° center of map  
 declination (MAG)  
 41° center of map  
 Diagram is approximate



**Topographic Map Symbols**

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road, trail
- Route marker: Interstate, U. S., State
- Railroad: standard gage; narrow gage
- Bridge: drawbridge
- Footbridge; overpass; underpass; small bridge
- Build-up area: only selected landmark buildings shown
- House; barn; church; school; large structure
- Boundary:
  - National, with monument
  - State
  - County, parish
  - Civil township, precinct, district
  - Incorporated city, village, town
  - National or State reservation; small park
  - Land grant with monument; found section corner
  - U. S. public lands survey; range, township, section
  - Range, township; section line; location approximate
  - Fence or field line
  - Power transmission line; located tower
  - Dam; dam with lock
  - Cemetery; grave
  - Campground; picnic area; U. S. located monument
  - Windmill; water well; spring
  - Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cave
  - Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation
  - Contours: index; intermediate; spot; depression
  - Disturbed surface: strip mine; lava; sand
  - Soundings; depth curve
  - Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream
  - Rapids; ledge and small hole; large and small
  - Submerged marsh; marsh, swamp
  - Land subject to controlled inundation; woodland
  - Scrub; mangrove
  - Orchard; vineyard

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

