

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received MAY 4 1987

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Abbotsford (preferred)

and or common The Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists

2. Location

street & number 300 Walnut Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Boston (Roxbury) N/A vicinity of

state MA code 025 county Suffolk code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☒ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☒ museum
			☐ park
			☐ private residence
			☐ religious
			☐ scientific
			☐ transportation
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name National Center of Afro-American Artists

street & number 300 Walnut Avenue

city, town Roxbury N/A vicinity of state MA

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Suffolk County Courthouse

street & number Pemberton Square

city, town Boston state MA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts #79
has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1984 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston state Massachusetts

7. Description

Abbotsford, Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered
(see text)

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Abbotsford, a large stone Victorian Gothic mansion which now houses the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, stands on a grassy knoll, dotted with large deciduous trees. Abbotsford was built in 1872, by prominent Boston architect Alden Frikk. It visually shares a large lot, 162,123 square feet or just under four acres, with an elementary school (which is considered noncontributing). The museum faces north on the lot which occupies the corner of Walnut Avenue and Crawford Street. Historically, this neighborhood was considered to be within the Roxbury Highlands, a picturesque area of rolling hills and rich farmland, but it is currently considered a part of the Washington Park section.

The museum is set back approximately 200 feet from the corner of Walnut Avenue and Crawford Street. To the north and east of the structure are expansive lawns which run to the edge of the property. To the west is the David A. Ellis Elementary School, and to the south is an asphalt parking lot which is reached by a driveway at the southwest corner of the lot.

The surrounding neighborhood is characterized by large late-19th and early 20th century detached suburban single and multi-family houses, with some brick apartment buildings also present.

The plan of this structure is essentially rectangular, but bays, cross gables and porches make it somewhat irregular. It is 2 1/2 stories high with a full basement. The front (north elevation) of the building is 80' long, and 62' deep. The mansard roof is covered with asphalt shingles, which replaced the original slate shingles in 1980. Like the plan, the roof lines are quite irregular: a projecting entrance bay on the north elevation is topped by a gable roof and flanked by two gabled dormers; on the south (rear) elevation there are two bays which are capped by gable roofs and a four story tower capped by a conical roof with four small triangular dormers; on the east elevation there is also a projecting bay capped by a gable roof, and a jog in the rear corner of this elevation is accentuated by a hipped dormer; the roof of the west elevation is accentuated with four gable dormers with stone pediments and exaggerated finials.

The building is constructed of rough hewn coursed Roxbury Puddingstone, executed in the High Victorian Gothic style. The corners are highlighted by rusticated stone quoins; the door and window surrounds are smooth finished stone. The foundation is constructed of smooth finished granite.

The north (front) elevation features a central entrance bay which is composed of a large pointed arch flanked by two small arches. They are supported on two massive columns and two massive piers with corinthian capitals. Above the arcuated entrance porch a band of smooth stone separates the first floor from the second. A large rectangular window rests above a blind balustrade, and dominates the center portion of the entrance bay. In the pediment of the gabled bay are two pointed arch windows enframed with dark stone. A copper finial stands at the peak of the gable.

continued

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Continuation sheet Abbotsford, Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts

Item number

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Page 1

The front elevation is essentially symmetrical on either side of the entrance bay. On the western half of the facade, a polygonal bay window projects from the wall surface; on the east side, the bay window is rectangular. One tall rectangular window flanks each of these bays. On the second floor, the same rectangular window shape is used, and the placement corresponds to the first floor. A cornice with prominent brackets distinguishes the wall plane from the roof.

The east elevation contains five window bays; the center three project from the plane of the wall. The first (northernmost) group contains a polygonal bay window on the first floor, and a long rectangular double windows on the second. The second, third and fifth bays each contain single rectangular windows on the both stories. The fourth bay contains a double window on each story. Concrete block has been added to the basement walls, and is visible on the south side of this elevation where the lot slopes downward. A small covered service garage placed at the basement level, directly under the third and fourth bays extends approximately fifteen feet.

The rear elevation is composed of a four story tower flanked by two pedimented gables; each component is on a different plane. The tower is divided into four distinct sections, each section distinguished by a thin band of dark stone. The first story has two rectangular windows, while the second story has a single window. The third story has a double window with stone triangular ornament above each window. The tower is square until the top of the third story where, the corners are clipped and form a polygonal shape. The fourth section of the tower is polygonal, with dark stone accents at the corners and a window which is identical to the window on the third story.

The western gable has a strip of four windows on both the first and second floors. The two windows in the pediment of the gable echo the windows on the third story of the tower. Originally this portion of the wall was recessed behind the tower and had a steep hipped roof with a single gable. The alteration was done with such care and attention to detail that the change is not apparent without reference to an old photograph. The eastern gable has a polygonal bay on the first floor, and a double window on the second. The windows in the pediment are identical to those in the western bay. There are copper finials at the peak of both gables, and a copper weather vane stands at the peak of the tower.

The west elevation has undergone the most extensive alterations yet maintains the original grand character. When constructed, an ornate gothic porch wrapped around the corner of this elevation and the rear elevation. A portion of this porch, intact though missing a balustrade, remains on the western facade. Two windows were added above the porch on the second floor, and on the roof, a chimney was removed and two dormer windows were connected to create one large window. An early photograph suggests that the center bay was enlarged and brought forward to meet the wall plan of the existing projecting gable. Roxbury puddingstone and original detailing was used and a hip roof put on top of the bay, making the alteration barely discernable. A three story gable on the north half of the west elevation remains essentially unaltered.

continued

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The interior of Abbotsford was altered a great deal when the property was converted from a private home to a public school. It was altered again to accommodate the museum. The entry and stair hall, and some detailing throughout the house, are all that remain from the original interior.

In addition to the alterations previously discussed, (replacement of roof shingles, addition of concrete block and garage at the basement level on the east elevation, alteration of fenestration and removal of porch on west and south elevation), the most noticeable alteration involves the windows. To make the structure functional as a museum, it was necessary to brick in the windows with concrete block. Every window has been bricked in, though many have been covered with louvered shutters. In addition, some of the copper finials and all of the roof cresting has been removed; it was most likely taken off during the structure's tenure as a school building, when maintenance was too expensive. Despite these alterations, Abbotsford retains much of its original grandeur and is exceptional as a monumental reminder of Roxbury's 19th century prosperity.

No archaeological research has been conducted at the Abbotsford property, however expected categories of archaeological resources may contribute to the site significance for the agricultural, residential, and institutional phases of historic period use. Prehistoric remains are not expected at the site because of the absence of natural resources attractive to prehistoric groups including fresh water and lithic sources.

The Abbotsford property may contain archaeological resources that may elucidate agricultural land use for the period 1700-1873 when the property was a component of the first Aaron Davis Williams Farmstead. The first Aaron Davis Williams house was apparently constructed a few hundred yards from the later Abbotsford Mansion and was standing until the twentieth century. Specific categories of archaeological resources may include outbuilding foundations and activity areas associated with the Williams Farmstead.

Archaeological data expected to exist at the Abbotsford site for the period 1873-1923 may elucidate the architecture, landscape architecture and other forms of land use. Cartographic evidence indicates that at least three structures, no longer extant, stood south of the mansion in 1873 (Hopkins 1873). Archeological remains of building foundations and associated artifacts may reveal the form and function of these structures. Archeological evidence may also reveal the site's landscape treatment by the Williams, Smith and Morrison families. The location of walkways and gardens may be determined through archaeological research at the site. In addition, informal activities at the site including refuse disposal, interior and exterior renovations to the house, and the consumer behavior of the Williams, Smith and Morrison families may be represented by archaeological deposits.

The transformation of the Abbotsford property from residential to institutional use as a school for delinquent boys is probably documented in a striking fashion by the archaeological deposits immediately surrounding Abbotsford. These data may be comparable to 'schoolyard' artifact patterns investigated by Graffam (1982) and by Smardz (1987).

8. Significance

Abbotsford, Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below							
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion				
☐ 1400-1499	☒ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science				
☐ 1500-1599	☐ agriculture	☒ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture				
☐ 1600-1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/				
☐ 1700-1799	☒ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian				
☒ 1800-1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater				
☐ 1900-	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation				
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)				

Specific dates 1872

Builder/Architect

Alden Frink

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

300 Walnut Avenue, commonly known as Abbotsford, is highly significant as an excellent example of a stone mansion house in the High Victorian Gothic Style, the only building of this type in Roxbury section of Boston, and one of a few in the City. It is also significant as the home of a prominent industrialist, Aaron Davis Williams Jr., and it embodies a sense of the Roxbury's prosperity in the late 19th century. Finally, it is significant as the most ambitious work of Boston architect, Alden Frink, who designed numerous residences and commercial buildings in the city and surrounding towns. 300 Walnut Avenue possesses integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship, thus it meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places on the local level.

In the 18th century, the area surrounding Abbotsford consisted mainly of fertile farmland, and supplied the city of Boston with cattle and produce. Lower Roxbury was a market town and the site of some early industrial development including several tanneries, ropewalks and breweries. Starting in the 1840s, the highlands saw increased residential uses. The hilly terrain kept industries out and was attractive for summer houses and stately mansions. By the late 19th century, affluent suburban development was widespread throughout Roxbury Highlands and surrounding areas, with substantial house constructed in Victorian Gothic, Stick and Shingle Styles. This area, and Walnut Avenue in particular, became further isolated by the creation of Franklin Park in 1886-1889. Franklin Park created a distinct southern barrier for the highlands, and Walnut Avenue which might have become heavily trafficked, became a dead end street.

Best evidence indicates that the structure at 300 Walnut Street was constructed for Aaron Davis Williams Jr. in 1872. The property on which the mansion was built was a portion of a huge estate which had been in the Williams family for over 150 years. An anonymous article, written c. 1900, describes a 100 acre farm, whose boundaries now coincide with Franklin Park, Seaver, Townsend and Washington Streets. The Williams farm was known for its great orchards which produced "the famous Williams apples" and other fruit. The original farmhouse, constructed in 1704, was believed to be the first house constructed between Elm Hill and the present Roxbury Crossing, and was still standing at the end of the 19th century.

continued

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National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet Abbotsford, Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts Item number

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Aaron Davis Williams, Sr. inherited a considerable estate upon his father's death, and continued to manage the prosperous farm. Williams, Sr. marketed his choice fruits and vegetables at the Faneuil Hall Markets, and was remembered for his contribution to "the advancement of the horticulture of our vicinity." Williams also established the Roxbury Institute for Savings, and was a highly regarded businessman. When Williams died in 1863, he left to his son, Aaron Davis Williams, Jr., the original farmhouse plus approximately 50 acres of land at Roxbury Point. The property was partitioned in 1872, and the large stone mansion is not cited in the transfer. The mansion does however appear in the 1873 Hopkins Atlas of Suffolk County. Therefore, it is likely that Williams Jr. built the mansion upon receipt of the estate. The anonymous article confirms this assumption by stating that "this son built a fine residence of stone, several hundred yards from the old homestead, and the new place was the marvel of the region. It was called Oak Bend..."

Before the death of his father, Aaron Davis Williams Jr. had several occupations including farming, working as a partner in the J.T. Ellis & Co. (a supplier of fuel, lumber, lime and paint), and as a land agent. Eventually, Davis Jr. evolved into a prominent industrialist and established the Boston Leadworks in the 1860s. He lost his fortune in the 1870s; some sources say through speculation and some say as a delayed reaction to the Panic of 1872.

The house had two subsequent private owners. James M. Smith, the treasurer of the Suffolk Brewery, purchased the house in 1886. Smith was reportedly a devotee of the then popular Sir Walter Scott. Smith renamed the mansion Abbotsford, after the poet's own home. In 1894, James M. Morrison, a prosperous wool merchant, acquired Abbotsford. He lived there with his family until 1923 when the property was sold to the City of Boston for use as a disciplinary school for boys. It remained in the hands of the Boston School system, and used as an annex to the David A. Ellis School until it closed in 1975. In 1976, the National Center of Afro-American Artists acquired the mansion, and renovated the interior to make it suitable for museum use that continues to the present. It is surprising that a structure of this size, often considered impractical and unmanageable, has been recycled for new uses and survives intact today.

continued

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Item number

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Architect Alden Frink is best known as the designer of Boston and Maine Railroad Stations, including station in Woburn, Prospect Hill, Marblehead, Lynn and Wakefield. Frink was born in Woodstock, Vermont on April 18, 1833. From age 9 to 15 he worked on a farm and then moved to Windsor, Vt. to learn carpentry. By age 21 he was studying architecture in the Worcester office of Elbridge Boyden, architect of Mechanic's Hall there. Frink came to Boston in 1857 to work as a draftsman on the Minot Ledge Lighthouse. In 1860, after a tour of Europe, he opened offices at 20 State Street, Boston. Frink designed a number of Boston buildings including a leather factory in Jamaica Plain, a group of Queen Anne Commercial buildings in Boston's Leather District, and numerous residences, row houses and apartment buildings in Roxbury.

On the original lot is a masonry elementary school constructed in 1934 and designed by Fay, Spofford and Thorndike engineers, which does not contribute to the significance of the nomination, as it does not appear to meet National Register Criteria. Its presence on the site does not detract from the significance of Abbotsford, rather it confirms the practice of large lots being more intensely utilized for various public purposes.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 46,640' (just over 1 acre)

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1' = 25,000

UTM References

A 19 327510 4686790
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

It is the same parcel as described in Suffolk 9500/53, containing 46,650 sq. feet, bounded northerly by Walnut Street, 178.72', easterly by Crawford Street 288.81', southerly by a City of Boston passageway of 243', and westerly by land of the City of Boston 204'

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county code N/A

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol Huggins, Assistant Director of Survey and Planning, Boston Landmarks Commission, with Betsy Friedberg, Director National Register, Mass. Historical Commission

organization Mass. Historical Commission date March 1987

street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone 617-727-3470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Valerie Talmage

Executive Director

title State Historic Preservation Officer date April 28, 1987

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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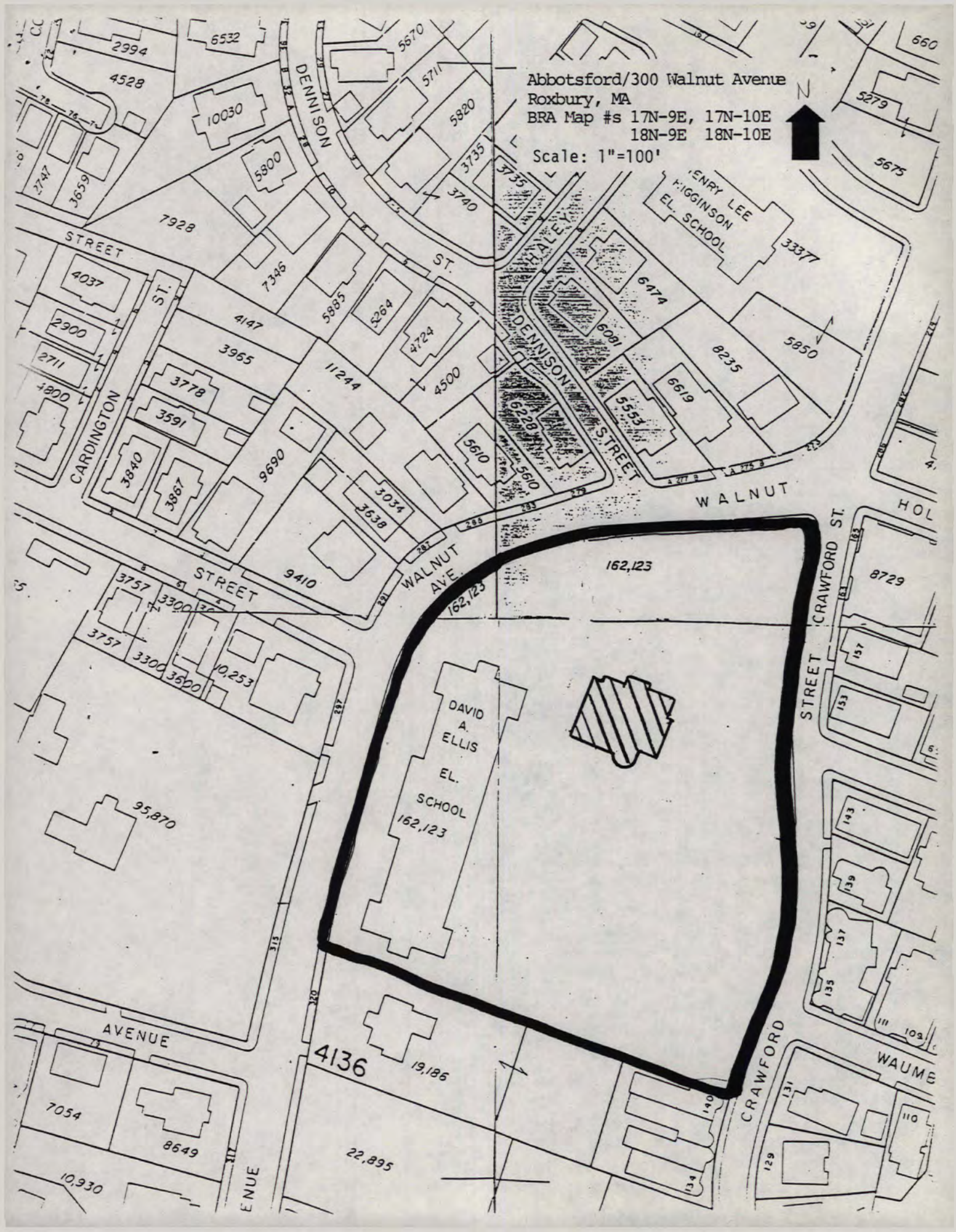
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Abbotsford/300 Walnut Avenue
Roxbury, MA
BRA Map #s 17N-9E, 17N-10E
18N-9E 18N-10E

Scale: 1"=100'



87000885

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Abbotsford
Suffolk County
MASSACHUSETTS

Substantive Review

- ☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal

Reviewer's comments:

*Property is clearly
architecturally significant.
See corrections necessary
to enable listing.*

Working No. MAY - 4 1987

Fed. Reg. Date: _____

Date Due: 6/4/87 - 6/18/87

Action: ☐ ACCEPT

☒ RETURN 6-16-87

☐ REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

☒ NR decision

Recom./Criteria Return

Reviewer George

Discipline Architectural History

Date 6/16/87

____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☒ technical corrections cited below
☒ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- ☐ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

- ☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. 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

Please provide further justification for historic archeology, art & economics as areas of significance if they are to be included in the resubmission. Art & economics seen particularly inapplicable to the historic importance of the property. For historic archeology provide context for the significance of potential info. to be yielded, specifically reference the historic documentation to be supplemented by it, address integrity of the site particularly in light of the

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property

Quadrangle name

UTM References

Verbal boundary description and justification

according to the scale on the sketch map this parcel computes to approximately 4.5 acres as delineated. Please review and revise as appropriate.

Due to the imposing size of the school (noncontributing) it may be recommended to exclude it from the boundary of the nomination.

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state ___ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☒ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Please label photos.

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

Signed Patrick Andrews

Peter Savage (202) 343-9550
Date 6/16/87

Phone: _____

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See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

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SEP 16 1987

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			☐ other:

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title Commonwealth of Massachusetts #79

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1984 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

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Abbotsford, Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts

Condition		Check one	Check one	
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site	
☒ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved	date <u>N/A</u>
☐ fair	☐ unexposed	(see text)		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Abbotsford, a large stone Victorian Gothic mansion which now houses the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, stands on a grassy knoll, dotted with large deciduous trees. Abbotsford was built in 1872, by prominent Boston architect Alden Frink. Historically, this neighborhood was considered to be within the Roxbury Highlands, a picturesque area of rolling hills and rich farmland, but it is currently considered a part of the Washington Park section.

The museum is set back approximately 200 feet from the corner of Walnut Avenue and Crawford Street. To the west, the building shares its large lot, 162,123 square feet or just under four acres, with an elementary school, David A. Ellis Elementary School (which is not included in the nomination). To the south is an asphalt parking lot which is reached by a driveway at the southwest corner of the lot. To the north and east of the structure are expansive lawns which run to the edge of the property.

The surrounding neighborhood is characterized by large late-19th and early 20th century detached suburban single and multi-family houses, with some brick apartment buildings also present.

The plan of this structure is essentially rectangular, but bays, cross gables and porches make it somewhat irregular. It is 2 1/2 stories high with a full basement. The front (north) elevation of the building is 80 feet long and 62 feet deep. The mansard roof is covered with asphalt shingles, which replaced the original slate shingles in 1980. Like the plan, the rooflines are quite irregular: a projecting entrance bay on the north elevation is topped by a gable roof and flanked by two gabled dormers; on the south (rear) elevation, there are two bays that are capped by gable roofs and a four-story tower capped by a conical roof with four small triangular dormers; on the east elevation, there is also a projecting bay capped by a gable roof, and a jog in the rear corner of this elevation is accentuated by a hipped dormer; the roof of the west elevation is accentuated with four gable dormers with stone pediments and exaggerated finials.

The building is constructed of rough-hewn coursed Roxbury puddingstone, executed in the High Victorian Gothic style. The corners are highlighted by rusticated stone quoins; the door and window surrounds are smooth finished stone.

C →

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The north (front) elevation features a central entrance bay which is composed of a large pointed arch flanked by two small arches. They are supported on two massive columns and two massive piers with corinthian capitals. Above the arcuated entrance porch a band of smooth stone separates the first floor from the second. A large rectangular window rests above a blind balustrade, and dominates the center portion of the entrance bay. In the pediment of the gabled bay are two pointed-arch windows enframed with dark stone. A copper finial stands at the peak of the gable.

The front elevation is essentially symmetrical on either side of the entrance bay. On the western half of the facade, a polygonal bay window projects from the wall surface; on the east side, the bay window is rectangular. One tall rectangular window flanks each of these bays. On the second floor, the same rectangular window shape is used, and the placement corresponds to the first floor. A cornice with prominent brackets distinguishes the wall plane from the roof.

The east elevation contains five window bays; the center three project from the plane of the wall. The first (northernmost) group contains a polygonal bay window on the first floor, and along rectangular double window on each story. Concrete block has been added to the basement walls, and is visible on the south side of this elevation where the lot slopes downward. A small covered service garage placed at the basement level, directly under the third and fourth bays, extends approximately fifteen feet.

The rear elevation is composed of a four-story tower flanked by two pedimented gables; each component is on a different plane. The tower is divided into four distinct sections, each section distinguished by a thin band of dark stone. The first story has two rectangular windows, while the second story has a single window. The third story has a double window with stone triangular ornament above each window. The tower is square until the top of the third story, where the corners are clipped and form a polygonal shape. The fourth section of the tower is polygonal, with dark stone accents at the corners, and a window which is identical to the window on the third story.

The western gable has a strip of four windows on both the first and second floors. The two windows in the pediment of the gable echo the windows on the third story of the tower. Originally, this portion of the wall was recessed behind the tower and had a steep hipped roof with a single gable. The alteration was done with such care and attention to detail that the change is not apparent without reference to an old photograph. The eastern gable has a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Abbotsford,

Continuation sheet Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts

Item number

7

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6 1987

polygonal bay on the first floor, and a double window on the second. The windows in the pediment are identical to those in the western bay. There are copper finials at the peak of both gables, and a copper weather vane stands at the peak of the tower.

The west elevation has undergone the most extensive alterations, yet maintains its original grand character. When constructed, an ornate gothic porch wrapped around the corner of this elevation and the rear elevation. A portion of this porch, intact though missing a balustrade, remains on the western facade. Two windows were added above the porch on the second floor, and on the roof, a chimney was removed and two dormer windows were connected to create one large window. An early photograph suggests that the center bay was enlarged and brought forward to meet the wall plane of the existing projecting gable. Roxbury puddingstone and original detailing were used and a hip roof put on top of the bay, making the alteration barely discernible. A three-story gable on the north half of the west elevation remains essentially unaltered.

The interior of Abbotsford was altered a great deal when the property was converted from a private home to a public school. It was altered again to accommodate the museum. The entry and stair hall, and some detailing throughout the house, are all that remain from the original interior.

In addition to the alterations previously discussed (replacement of roof shingles, addition of concrete block and garage at the basement level on the east elevation, alteration of fenestration and removal of porch on west and south elevations), the most noticeable alteration involves the windows. To make the structure functional as a museum, it was necessary to brick in the windows with concrete block. Every window has been bricked in, though many have been covered with louvered shutters. In addition, some of the copper finials and all of the roof cresting have been removed; it was most likely taken off during the structure's tenure as a schoolbuilding, when maintenance was too expensive. Despite these alterations, Abbotsford retains much of its original grandeur and is exceptional as a monumental reminder of Roxbury's 19th century prosperity.

Archaeology

No archaeological research has been conducted at the Abbotsford property; however, expected categories of archaeological resources may contribute to the site significance for the agricultural, residential, and institutional phases of historic period use. Prehistoric remains are not expected at the site because of the absence of natural resources attractive to prehistoric groups, including fresh water and lithic sources.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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7

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The Abbotsford property may contain archeological resources that may elucidate agricultural land use for the period 1700-1873 when the property was a component of the first Aaron Davis Williams Farmstead. The first Aaron Davis Williams house was apparently constructed a few hundred yards from the later Abbotsford Mansion and was standing until the twentieth century. Specific categories of archaeological resources may include outbuilding foundations and activity areas associated with the Williams Farmstead.

Archaeological data expected to exist at the Abbotsford site for the period 1873-1923 may elucidate the architecture, landscape architecture, and other forms of land use. Cartographic evidence indicates that at least three structures, no longer extend, stood south of the mansion in 1873 (Hopkins 1873). Archaeological remains of building foundations and associated artifacts may reveal the form and function of these structures.

Archaeological evidence may also reveal the site's landscape treatment by the Williams, Smith, and Morrison families. The location of walkways and gardens may be determined through archaeological research at the site. In addition, informal activities at the site including refuse disposal, interior and exterior renovations to the house, and the consumer behavior of the Williams, Smith, and Morrison families may be represented by archaeological deposits.

The transformation of the Abbotsford property from residential to institutional use as a school for delinquent boys is probably documented in a striking fashion by the archaeological deposits immediately surrounding Abbotsford. These data may be comparable to "schoolyard" artifact patterns investigated by Graffam (1982) and by Smardz (1987).

8. Significance

Abbotsford, Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400-1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500-1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600-1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800-1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☐ 1900-	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1872

Builder/Architect

Alden Frink

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

300 Walnut Avenue, commonly known as Abbotsford, is highly significant as an excellent example of a stone mansion house in the High Victorian Gothic Style, the only building of this type in the Roxbury section of Boston, and one of a few in the City. It is also significant as the home of a prominent industrialist, Aaron Davis Williams Jr., and it embodies a sense of the Roxbury's prosperity in the late 19th century. Finally, it is significant as the most ambitious work of Boston architect Alden Frink, who designed numerous residences and commercial buildings in the city and surrounding towns. 300 Walnut Avenue possesses integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship, thus it meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places on the local level.

In the 18th century, the area surrounding Abbotsford consisted mainly of fertile farmland, and supplied the city of Boston with cattle and produce. Lower Roxbury was a market town and the site of some early industrial development including several tanneries, ropewalks and breweries. Starting in the 1840s, the highlands saw increased residential uses. The hilly terrain kept industries out and was attractive for summer houses and stately mansions. By the late 19th century, affluent suburban development was widespread throughout Roxbury Highlands and surrounding areas, with substantial houses constructed in Victorian Gothic, Stick, and Shingle Styles. This area, and Walnut Avenue in particular, became further isolated by the creation of Franklin Park in 1886-1889. Franklin Park created a distinct southern barrier for the highlands, and Walnut Avenue, which might have become heavily trafficked, became a dead-end street.

Best evidence indicates that the structure at 300 Walnut Street was constructed for Aaron Davis Williams Jr. in 1872. The property on which the mansion was built was a portion of a huge estate which had been in the Williams family for over 150 years. An anonymous article, written ca. 1900, describes a 100-acre farm, whose boundaries now coincide with Franklin Park, Seaver, Townsend, and Washington Streets. The Williams farm was known for its great orchards, which produced "the famous Williams apples" and other fruit. The original farmhouse, constructed in 1704, was believed to be the first house constructed between Elm Hill and the present Roxbury Crossing, and was still standing at the end of the 19th century.

C-7

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.9 Acres

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1' = 25,000

UTM References

A

1	9	3	2	7	5	1	0	4	6	8	6	7	9	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol Huggins, Assistant Director of Survey and Planning, Boston Landmarks Commission with, Betsy Friedberg, Director National Register, Massachusetts Historical Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date March 1987

street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Valerie A. Talmage

Executive Director

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 30, 1987

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date 9/16/87

Keeper of the National Register

date 9/16/87

Attest: Beth L. Sarge
Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Abbotsford
Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts Item number

8

Page 1

Aaron Davis Williams Sr. inherited a considerable estate upon his father's death, and continued to manage the prosperous farm. Williams Sr. marketed his choice fruits and vegetables at the Faneuil Hall Markets, and was remembered for his contribution to "the advancement of the horticulture of our vicinity." Williams also established the Roxbury Institute for Savings, and was a highly regarded businessman. When Williams died in 1863, he left to his son, Aaron Davis Williams Jr., the original farmhouse plus approximately 50 acres of land at Roxbury Point. The property was partitioned in 1872 and the large stone mansion is not cited in the transfer. The mansion does, however, appear in the 1873 Hopkins Atlas of Suffolk County. Therefore, it is likely that Williams Jr. built the mansion upon receipt of the estate. The anonymous article confirms this assumption by stating that "this son built a fine residence of stone, several hundred yards from the old homestead, and the new place was the marvel of the region. It was called Oak Bend . . ."

Before the death of his father, Aaron Davis Williams Jr. had several occupations, including farming, working as a partner in the J. T. Ellis & Co. (a supplier of fuel, lumber, lime, and paint), and as a land agent. Eventually, Davis Jr. evolved into a prominent industrialist and established the Boston Leadworks in the 1860s. He lost his fortune in the 1870s; some sources say through speculation and some say as a delayed reaction to the Panic of 1872.

The house had two subsequent private owners. James M. Smith, the treasurer of the Suffolk Brewery, purchased the house in 1886. Smith was reportedly a devotee of the then popular Sir Walter Scott. Smith renamed the mansion Abbotsford, after the poet's own home. In 1894, James M. Morrison, a prosperous wool merchant, acquired Abbotsford. He lived there with his family until 1923 when the property was sold to the City of Boston for use as a disciplinary school for boys. It remained in the hands of the Boston School system, and was used as an annex to the adjacent David A. Ellis School until it closed in 1975. In 1976, the National Center of Afro-American Artists acquired the mansion, and renovated the interior to make it suitable for museum use that continues to the present. It is surprising that a structure of this size, often considered impractical and unmanageable, has been recycled for new uses and survives intact today.

Architect Alden Frink is best known as the designer of Boston and Maine Railroad stations, including stations in Woburn, Prospect Hill, Marblehead, Lynn, and Wakefield. Frink was born in Woodstock, Vermont, on April 18, 1833. From age nine to age fifteen, he worked on a farm and then moved to Windsor, Vermont, to learn carpentry. By age 21 he was studying architecture in the Worcester office of Elbridge Boyden, architect of Mechanic's Hall there. Frink came to Boston in 1857 to work as a draftsman on the Minot Ledge

0-7

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Abbotsford

Continuation sheet Boston (Roxbury), Massachusetts Item number 8

Page 2

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date entered

Lighthouse. In 1860, after a tour of Europe, he opened offices at 20 State Street, Boston. Frink designed a number of Boston buildings including a leather factory in Jamaica Plain, a group of Queen Anne commercial buildings in Boston's Leather District, and numerous residences, row houses and apartment buildings in Roxbury.

On the original lot is a masonry elementary school constructed in 1934 and designed by Fay, Spofford and Thorndike engineers, which is not included within the boundaries of the present nomination. Its presence on the site does not detract from the significance of Abbotsford; rather, it confirms the practice of large lots being more intensely utilized for various public purposes.

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Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Abbotsford, Boston
Continuation sheet (Roxbury), Massachusetts Item number 9 Page 1

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"A Mansion A Cartoon - Or is it a School," Unidentified Newspaper Article, ,
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Boston Public Library Architects File.

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Drake, Francis Samuel, The Town of Roxbury: Its Memorable Persons and Places
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet

Item number

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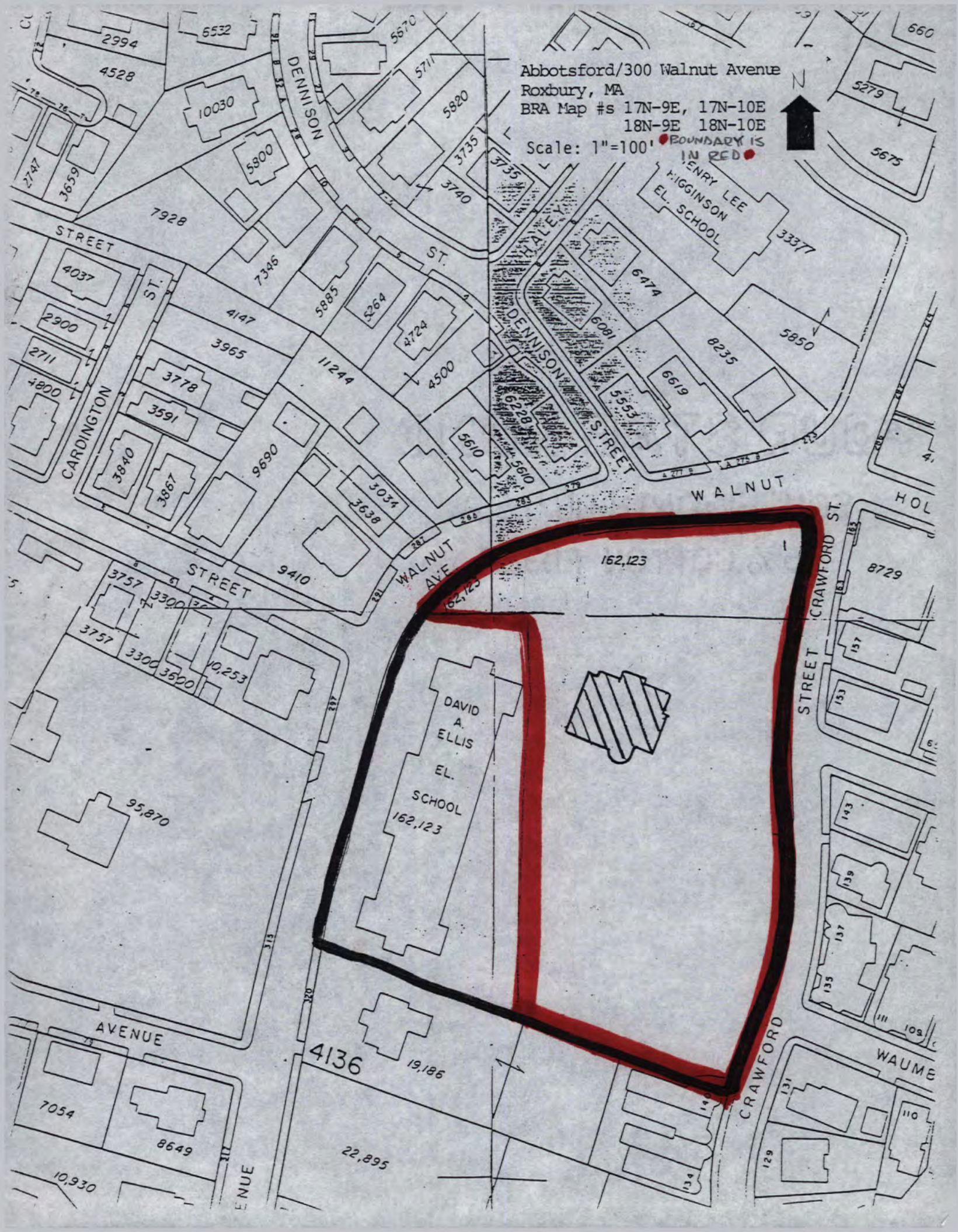
Page

1

10. Geographical Data

The bounds of the nominated property were drawn to include all of the Abbotsford building and its immediate surroundings while excluding the David A. Ellis Elementary School (constructed 1934) that stands on the same parcel, described in Suffolk 9500/53. See attached assessors map.

Scale: 1"=100' ● BOUNDARY IS IN RED ●



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Abbotsford
Suffolk County
MASSACHUSETTS

~~Substantive Review~~

Working No. 5-4-87
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/2/88
Date Due: 9/20/87
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 9-16-87
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

- ☒ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☒ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

*Relatively rare High Victorian Gothic
mansion house, the home of industrialist
Aaron Davis Williams, Jr. and the design
of local architect Alden Frink.
Initial return comments have been satisfactorily rectified.*

Recom./Criteria Accept C
Reviewer Seaver
Discipline Architectural History
Date 9/14/87
see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☐ technical corrections cited below
☐ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ excellent | ☐ deteriorated |
| ☐ good | ☐ ruins |
| ☐ fair | ☐ unexposed |

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. 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

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____



ABBOTSFORD

300 WALNUT AVENUE

BOSTON (ROXBURY)

NORTH (FRONT) FACADE

LOCATION OF NEGATIVES:

1 OF 3 pictures

BOSTON LANDMARKS
COMMISSION

BOSTON CITY HALL
ROOM 710.

RECEIVED

MAY 4 1987

NATIONAL
REGISTER



ABBOTSFORD
300 WALNUT AVENUE
BOSTON (ROXBURY), MASS

NORTH FACADE (CLOSE-UP)

LOCATION OF NEGATIVE: BOSTON LANDMARKS
COMMISSION
BOSTON CITY HALL

2 OF 3 PICTURES

RECEIVED

MAY 4 1987

NATIONAL
REGISTER



ABBOTSFORD
300 WALNUT AVENUE
BOSTON (CROXBURY), MASS

S.W. CORNER
LOCATION OF NEGATIVE: BOSTON LANDMARKS
COMMISSION
BOSTON CITY HALL

3 OF 3 pictures

RECEIVED

MAY 4 1987

NATIONAL
REGISTER

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Abbotts/Museum of the Mat'l
Center of Afro-American
Artists
Boston, Massachusetts
UTM Reference 19/327510/4696790

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

BOSTON SOUTH QUADRANGLE
MASSACHUSETTS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



CONVERSION SCALES	
Feet	Meters
15000	4500
14000	4000
13000	3500
12000	3000
11000	2500
10000	2000
9000	1500
8000	1000
7000	500
6000	0
5000	0
4000	0
3000	0
2000	0
1000	0
0	0

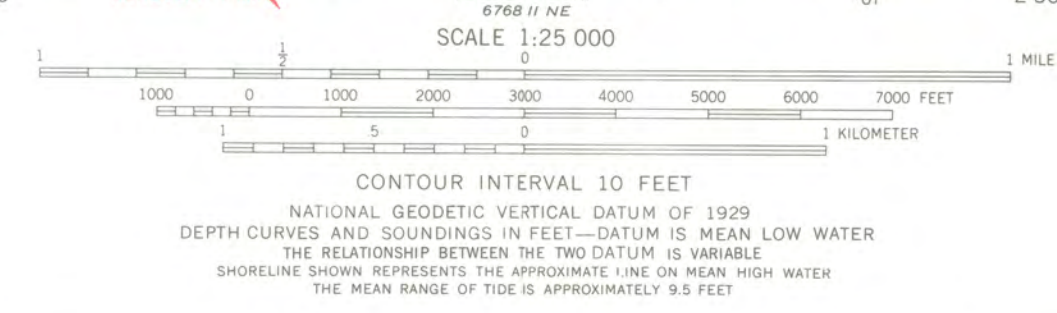
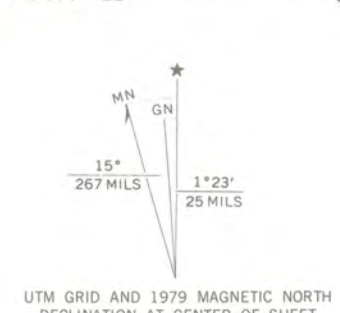
Feet	Meters
1	3048
2	6096
3	9144
4	12192
5	15240
6	18288
7	21336
8	24384
9	27432
10	30480

To convert feet to meters
multiply by .3048
To convert meters to feet
multiply by 3.2808

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MAY 4 1987
NATIONAL
REGISTER

APPROVED
00 - BOSTON AVENUE
BOSTON (ROXBURY), MASS
QUAD: BOSTON SOUTH
SCALE: 1:25,000
REFERENCE: 19/327510/4696790

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970.
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 246
and 248 (1971). This information is not intended for navigational
purposes.
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1 000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
Boundaries in tidalwater areas from information supplied
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



ROAD CLASSIFICATION	
Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

QUADRANGLE LOCATION
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map.
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.
N4215—W7100/7.5
1970
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6768 1 SE—SERIES V814



P 685 548 121

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of the Secretary of State
Michael Joseph Connolly, Secretary

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Valerie A. Talmage
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

April 27, 1987

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

Dear Ms. Shull,

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

Athol, Athol Historical Society Museum, 1307 Main Street.

Boston(Roxbury), Abbotsford, 300 Walnut Avenue.

Brockton, Brockton Edison Electric Illuminating Power Station, 70 School Street.

Cambridge(Cambridge MRA Amendment), Harvard Graduate Center, 10-26 Everett Street. This is a resubmission. Corrections have been made.

Westborough, West Main Street Historic District, Blake, Church, Fay, Grove, Heath, West Main, Milk Parkman, Phillips, South, West and Whitney Streets (233). Park Building, 32 Main Street, HPCA #10305MA and Henry Block Building, 9-17 South Street, HPCA #10409MA.

Winchendon, Old Center Historic District, roughly bounded by Old County, Baldwinsville, Hale and Teel Roads.

All 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. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination forms.

RECEIVED

MAY 4 1987

NATIONAL
REGISTER

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

BF/aet

80 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116 (617) 727-8470



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of the Secretary of State
Michael Joseph Connolly, Secretary

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Valerie A. Talmage

Executive Director

State Historic Preservation Officer

July 29, 1987

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

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find six nominations that were returned to the MHC for technical and substantive corrections. The following nominations are enclosed:

✓ Boston (Roxbury), Abbotsford, 300 Walnut Avenue
Brockton, Brockton Edison Electric Illuminating Company Power Station
Richmond, Nichols-Sterner House
Westminster, Ahijah Wood House, 174 Worcester Road
Westminster, Nathan Wood House, 164 Worcester Road
Winchendon, Old Centre Historic District

All corrections have been made.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosures

AUG 6 1987