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OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name District Five Schoolhouse (preferred)

other names/site number Fenner Hill Schoolhouse

Little Red Schoolhouse

2. Location

street & number School Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Webster

N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts

code 025

county Worcester

code 027

zip code 01570

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical State Historic Preservation Officer

Date Commission:

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Judith B. McDonough

Date April 24, 1991

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

Entered in the
National Register

Melanie Byers

6/5/91

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education/Schoolhouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation/Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19th Century/Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Granitewalls Brickroof Asphaltother Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The District Five or Fenner Hill Schoolhouse is located on the east side of School Street, in the town of Webster, Massachusetts, on a small parcel of land sold to the town for this purpose, nearly opposite the intersection of Hill Street. As the name for the school suggests it sits at the top of one of the hills rising to the east of the French River. The small building is oriented with its ridge parallel to the roadway and with its primary entry in the south gable end. School Street began as a long north-south artery in the area, connecting Webster to Thompson, Connecticut to the south. With the construction of this schoolhouse in 1835, and of the larger school at the lower, north end of the street in 1869, the road gradually took on its current name. The surrounding neighborhood is one of single and multi-family residences constructed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The neighborhood's present appearance and building stock reflects the growth of the town of Webster from a string of mill villages along the French River and Mill Brook to an industrial and commercial center with a brick and wood frame commercial Main Street forming its spine and large residential neighborhoods filling the interstices.

The school is a single-story brick gabled block at its core, constructed in a common American bond of seven stretcher courses to one header course. The building is nearly square, measuring 32 feet in length and 25 1/2 feet in width. Although it has no basement, its footings are capped with granite blocks, and granite was also employed to trim the openings, still visible as sills and lintels. A single entry opening is located in the south gable end, with a window and a door in the opposite north gable end. Both the east and west elevations are pierced by three windows, located closer to the front than to one another or to the rear. Photographs of the school dating to the late nineteenth century show the two-over-two sash that remain in place. Louvered shutters that were in place at that time were replaced by the 1920s with single board and batten shutters, which are still in place on the street, or west, facade. The school's wood shingle roof was replaced sometime after 1935. All photographs show the school painted as it remains today. The entire brick block was used as a single classroom, and remains an open room in its current use as the museum and meeting place for the Webster-Dudley Historical Society. In 1973 the interior was remodeled to add storage space for collections, as a series of closed cupboards between the windows. At that

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Webster, MassachusettsSection number 7 Page 1

time the wall finish, with molded chair rail and cornice, was removed on the long walls, but remains at each end.

The brick block has a small frame addition at each end, a gabled vestibule measuring 6 by 12 feet on the south front over the door, and a former shed and necessary on the rear measuring 8 by 22 feet. The vestibule is covered in clapboards, and formerly had a plain surrounded door and window to the left. The openings have been replaced, probably in 1966, with a single door opening and Colonial Revival surround; the door itself was recently replaced and an aluminum screen/storm door added to protect it. The rear ell was rebuilt in its original configuration after a fire in the early 1970s. Formerly the site of the school's heating stove and fuel storage, and later, indoor plumbing, the ell now holds a small kitchen and a bathroom, retaining the existing door and window surrounds. The alterations and the enclosed frame make exact dating of these appendages difficult, but the differing trim of the ell surrounds, and the matchboard wall and ceiling cover in the vestibule, suggest that these were later nineteenth century additions. The school's privy was formerly located to the northeast from the school. Four granite posts are located in the yard before the door, and a fieldstone wall marks the parcel along the street side.

The District Five Schoolhouse is located within a primarily working class neighborhood of Webster that expanded during the nineteenth and twentieth century up the hills to the east of the French River. This area was settled in the dispersed agricultural phase of regional development, and an early nineteenth century house, the Moore Homestead, is located to the south. More dense development took place in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, but no hamlet or village emerged here. To the west clusters grew around Chase's Mill and to the north and west around the merino, and later, linen mill, both of these in the neighboring town of Dudley, while another cluster grew at the depot to the north. Resources from this period, the construction period for the school, are not located together, both because of their original siting, and because of late construction which brought infill and replacement. Those closest to the school include a small house constructed in the 1860s, the Andrew Snow House, and another from the 1850s. The majority of the construction in the vicinity of the school dates to the late nineteenth century overlay that extended dense settlement further from the river and the main routes. School Street was widened and straightened in 1860 as part of this pattern. During the third quarter of the century a number of large gable-front houses were located along School Street and its adjacent neighborhood, and the area to the east was platted for small lots in a grid illustrated in the Beers Atlas of 1870. But the development was not completed as outlined, indeed today some of the streets do not connect across the hill. The Richards Atlas of 1898 shows a dense grid pattern of development oriented to the commercial development of Main Street, and extending south from there.

(continued)

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District Five Schoolhouse,
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The extent of that development can be marked along School Street to Fifth Street. At the turn of the century large triple deckers, two-family houses in a related gable-front form, as well as a number of large and small single-family dwellings were added as infill. Opposite the school are three triple deckers and to the north and the south, more modern buildings.

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Archaeological Description

No prehistoric sites are recorded on the property or in the general area (within one mile). In general, the potential for significant prehistoric archaeological remains is low because of small lot size, historic development on the lot and because locational criterion (slope, drainage, distance to water) of the property are not particularly favorable for prehistoric settlement.

A moderate potential exists for significant historic archaeological remains on the property. Archaeological survivals of the school's privy may exist northeast of the school building; school-related sheet refuse may also be present on the grounds surrounding the school building.

(end)

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locallyApplicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ArchitectureEducationCommunity Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1835-1935

Significant Dates

1835

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wood, Harvey

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The District Five or Fenner Hill Schoolhouse is a well-preserved example of a Greek Revival district school, constructed at the height in popularity of decentralized schools and during the first period of municipal construction in the newly formed town of Webster. Small one-room schoolhouses, like this one, are the embodiment of the independent school districts that characterized this period and that provided local institutions below the level of the town meeting. The building possesses integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location and association. The District Five Schoolhouse meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places at the local level.

The Fenner Hill School is located in Webster, Massachusetts, a town formed to contain the industrial villages established by Samuel Slater in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The Town of Webster is located along the French River and encloses within it Lake Webster or Chargoggagogmanchaugagogchaubunagungamaug, the area of one of a few regional foci for Native American Nipmuck settlement. The area is further distinguished as the location of multiple grants of land to individuals for service to the colony, dating to the earliest rewards to investors in the stock company that settled Massachusetts Bay. Unlike the majority of the Commonwealth, where town formation began with the granting of land tracts to proprietors obliged to meet requirements toward orderly and godly communities, tracts in this area were designated exclusively to financially benefit the grantee. Dudley to the west takes its name from the extensive grants designated to that influential family, and numerous smaller grants were located in the area that became Webster. When adjacent areas were carved out into plantations and towns in the late seventeenth century, this area remained unorganized as a Gore (a Gore is a small triangular piece of land). The exchange of grants in this area and the eventual settlement of the lands in the eighteenth century brought the designation as the Kingsbury neighborhood to the settled area near the lake. It was assigned as a discontinuous part of the town of Oxford in 1731 and was joined to the town in 1807 with the annexation of land north and west of the gore to Dudley's line. Like most of

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Books

- Daniels, George F., The History of the Town of Oxfore..., 1892.
 Gulliford, Andrew, America's Country Schools, 1984.
 Kaestle, Carl, Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860, 1983.
 Katz, Michael B., The Irony of Early School Reform: Education Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts, 1968.
 Prude, Jonanthan, The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860, 1983.
 Tucker, Barbara, Samuel Slater and the Origins of the American Textile Industry, 1790-1860, 1984.

☐ See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Webster-Dudley Historical Society

10. Geographical DataAcreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 19 261400 4658340
 Zone Easting Northing
 C

B
 Zone Easting Northing
 D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property bounds are indicated on the attached assessors map, a lot measuring 74' on the north side, 87' on the east, 66.51' on the south, and 80' on the west.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The parcel was purchased when the school was constructed, remains the same dimensions, and contains all the land associated with the school.

☐ See continuation sheet**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Claire W. Dempsey, Consultant with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director
 organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date July 1990
 street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone (617) 727-8470
 city or town Boston state MA zip code 02116

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central Massachusetts this area was characterized by dispersed agricultural settlement throughout the eighteenth century.

The decision of Samuel Slater to invest here, at the falls of the French River and the outlet of the lake, brought an early and dramatic transformation from a life of farming, cashless exchange and patriarchal town government to the world of independent wage laborers, factory discipline and party politics. Slater is renowned for bringing mechanized production to textile manufacturing and for establishing the family labor and village setting for industrial communities that became widespread in New England. After making his reputation in Pawtucket, Slater moved out to form industrial communities on his own, most notably Slatersville in Smithfield, Rhode Island, and here in what would become Webster, Massachusetts. Slater repeatedly tried to gain power in his new community through attempts to control the local bank and education in his villages as a separate school district, and to win subsidized road construction to serve his mills. Finally over the objections of both Dudley and Oxford, the new town of Webster was incorporated in 1832.

The district school system was developed during the Colonial Period in Massachusetts where universal education was an early important goal of government. By the third quarter of the eighteenth century, towns in this part of the colony had established multiple schools and schoolhouses, and the new state government continued the system into the early national period. Districts were allowed a remarkable degree of autonomy, raising their own funds, building their own buildings, hiring and firing school teachers and determining the length and timing of school terms. When Slater and other mill owners attempted to control schooling of their factory operatives by having their villages "drawn off" into newly formed districts, the existing districts initially objected because of concern over diminishing their tax base. The towns were additionally concerned that the mill owners would then add governmental power to their economic strength. Oxford's first accession to Slater was the establishment of a school district in the east village in 1829. The first new school established after incorporation was this one, to serve the southern and western portion of the town, and to complement the schools that had existed to serve the Kingsbury neighborhood since 1809 and the East Village School. The town included five districts. The land for the school was purchased from Collins Moore for \$7.00, the contract to build the school was awarded to Harvey Wood for \$439.00, and the door stone was purchased from Alvin Childs for \$1.50. The district choose a traditional form for their school, entry in the gable end of a single story one room block. Early in the twentieth century, the teacher stood at the south end near the entry with the student desks arranged before her. The choice of brick contributed to the school's long life as well as demonstrating the initial importance felt by the town and district for education.

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By the time of the growth of the mill villages, educational reformers were already influencing townspeople to vote alterations to the district system. They took back from the district committees the right to choose textbooks and later the right to approve the dissolution of the districts and the right to approve school teachers. Finally in 1867 they convinced the town to approve the dissolution of the district system altogether. However, there remained two mixed schools in the town, that is ungraded, geographically defined schools, including this one, until 1883. At that time Fenner Hill became a primary school, where the town's youngest students attended. The teachers, where known, were overwhelmingly female and single. The school committee preferred normal school educated teachers from the 1860s on, and by the twentieth century the reports listed the educational credentials of all faculty, and illustrates a preference for local colleges. No information was available on changing curriculum. The town and the school committee were concerned that the family system of industrial employment was preventing children from regularly attending school and in spite of frequent discussions were apparently unable to improve attendance. As late as the 1880s they complained that a quarter to a third of the school age children were not attending school. Indeed the comparison of the number of all children that attended the Fenner Hill School, 50, with the average number that attended, 35 confirms this.

The persistence of mixed schools suggests the area remained dispersed in settlement until this time. Webster, like other Worcester County "town" pattern communities, was formerly a number of small villages that have merged. At the end of the century construction took place all along the streets that rise to the east of Main Street, an extensive rather than localized development, to form a large neighborhood. The development of neighborhoods such as these is characteristic of industrial communities emerging as regional commercial centers late in the nineteenth century. In form, much of the layout of these areas and the house-types chosen within them are better known from the speculative development around cities that we know as street-car suburbs. Without a unifying transportation line or developer, these smaller-scaled developments have a haphazard quality. Construction took place over a number of years, in a range of sizes, and for a broad economic spectrum, as strict class-based neighborhoods failed to develop in the smaller centers. This large undifferentiated area is not recognized as a town neighborhood, and names for sub-areas are related to earlier periods. The Fenner Hill School's life as a local primary school coincides with this phase in the neighborhood's development.

The Fenner Hill School remained in use into the late 1930s. At least once the school committee recommended that it be sold, in 1869, but this idea did not take hold. While other of the town schools were rebuilt and replaced with new multiple classroom forms this school remained in use. The severe financial

(continued)

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constraints put on the town during the depression years forced the temporary closing of this school and the Rock Castle School during 1933. Two years later the town recognized the centennial of the school with a celebration and newspaper photograph of the students and the school. By 1939 the school had been removed from the list of active schools and the building was used for storage. In 1962 the school was leased to the Webster-Dudley Historical Society for \$1.00, to be returned to the town if no longer used as a museum.

(continued)

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District Five Schoolhouse,
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Archaeological Significance

Historic archaeological remains described above have the potential for providing detailed information on the social, cultural and economic patterns that characterized the nineteenth and twentieth century working class community which supported the school. Careful analysis of privy remains can contribute information on students who attended the school as well as data on the development or lack of neighborhoods in the area. This data may explain why this schoolhouse remained in use without change through the twentieth century while other schools in the area were rebuilt and reorganized.

(end)

District Five Schoolhouse
Webster Assessors Map, Lot K-13
Scale 1"=100' ↑N



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY District Five Schoolhouse
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Worcester

DATE RECEIVED: 5/03/91 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/20/91
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/05/91 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/17/91
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 91000697

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: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT

6/5/91

DATE

Entered in the
National Register

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA
REVIEWER
DISCIPLINE
DATE

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 _____



District Five Schoolhouse
Webster MA *Worcester*
Claire W. Dempsey
July 1990



District Five
School house
UTM Reference
19 261400 4658 340
Worcester

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1942-1943. Revised from aerial
photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1969
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grids based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone, and Connecticut coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Areas covered by dashed light-blue pattern
are subject to controlled inundation

UTM GRID AND 1979 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:25 000
1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 KILOMETER
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface
Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Unimproved road, fair or dry weather
State Route

WEBSTER, MASS.-CONN.
N4200-W7152.5/7.5
1969
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6668 III SW-SERIES V814

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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

QUADRANGLE LOCATION



April 18, 1991

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 please find the following nomination:

District Five Schoolhouse, School Street, Webster (Worcester County),
Massachusetts 01570.

There has been no owner objection for the property listed above.

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has 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. No comments have been received to date.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure:

cc: Chairperson, Webster Historical Commission
Claire Dempsey, P. O. Box 138, Wakefield, MA 01880