

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received DEC 23 1985

date entered JAN 23 1986

1. Name

historic Pleasant Street School

and or common same

2. Location

street & number Pleasant Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Ayer

N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts

code 025

county Middlesex

code 017

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
	N/A being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☐ museum
			☐ park
			☐ private residence
			☐ religious
			☐ scientific
			☐ transportation
			☒ other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Ayer

street & number Town Hall, Main Street

city, town Ayer

N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Middlesex South District Registry of Deeds

street & number 208 Cambridge Street

city, town Cambridge

state Massachusetts 02141

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of the Historic Assets of
the Commonwealth of Massachusetts #2 has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1985

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission, 80 Boylston Street

city, town Boston

state Massachusetts

7. Description Pleasant Street School, Ayer, Massachusetts

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

The Pleasant Street School is a large, two-story frame Colonial Revival building. Rectangular in form with stairhall projections at each end, the building rises to a broad hipped roof with large gabled dormers. The school faces east and occupies a generous lot which is bordered by a low chain link fence, large deciduous trees, and shrubbery. The area immediately surrounding the school is paved while the northern half of the lot is an open, grassy field. The school is located in the midst of a neighborhood of late 19th century residences that constitute Ayer's town center. Less than a half mile to the south is the main shopping and commercial district of Ayer, a small working class community some 35 miles northeast of Boston. Ayer is also the location of Massachusetts's largest military installation, Fort Devens.

The Pleasant Street School exhibits a symmetrical four bay by three bay rectangular plan that is the result of two major builds. The design was pragmatically conceived in two sections, the first section constructed in 1893 and the second to be constructed when needed. The southern half was built first with the northern half added in 1906. The building, which is sheathed with narrow clapboards, rises two stories from an exposed fieldstone foundation to a broad hipped roof with a central deck. A narrow central chimney and seven gable roofed dormers pierce the roof, which is sheathed with asphalt shingles. Originally, the deck was encircled by an open balustrade. Projecting from the north and south walls are two flat-roofed stairtowers supported on piers. At the rear, a one story enclosed staircase leads from the first floor to the basement level. On the facade, a flat-roofed open porch (1953-1954) shelters the offset entrance to the school.

Detailing throughout the school is Colonial Revival in style. Narrow cornerboards define the corners of the building and support a wide fascia encircling the building. A deep boxed cornice with dentils surmounts the fascia. Similar dentilated cornices frame the large dormers and their pediments. Contained within the pediments of the facade dormers are wooden torches in relief. On the facade, remnants of Ionic capitals top the cornerboards. In the main block and stairtowers, the windows contain wooden double hung 6/2 sash, while the dormers are set with smaller 8/2 double hung sash. A distinctive feature of the building is the pattern created by combinations of banded windows in sets of three, four, and five. Small square fixed sash with radiating starburst mullions further enliven the front and rear facades.

The main (east) elevation is six bays wide. The central two bays contain, on the second floor, a pair of tripartite windows. These consist of a central rectangular window flanked by smaller windows set over fielded panels. On the first floor, a flat-roofed porch with clustered columns shelters the school's

Continued

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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received 12/23/81

date entered 1/23/86

Pleasant Street School

Continuation sheet Ayer, Massachusetts

Item number 7

Page 1

entrance. Balustrades once circled the roof and base of the porch. Large pedimented dormers with four banded windows surmount the next two bays while the outermost bays contain banded sets of four windows on the first and second floors.

The north elevation, of three bays width, is dominated by the projecting stairtower in the central bay. Centered above the stairtower on the roof is a pedimented dormer containing a band of three small 6/2 windows. A shed-roofed extension gives access from the dormer to the stairtower. The stairtower is gained by a flight of steps leading to a door in the base of the tower. The stairtowers were added at both ends when the north half of the school was built in 1906. Classroom bays, marked by long bands of five windows each, flank the stairtower on both floors.

The rear (west) elevation has seen the greatest alteration. A protecting metal ventilator stack (for the cafeteria kitchen) and an enclosed stair leading from the first floor to the basement detract from the appearance of this elevation. Though also six bays in width, the rear wall lacks the symmetry of the facade. The outer two bays contain five-part window bands lighting corner classrooms. However, the interior bays are unevenly filled with tripartite window bands on the second floor and a four-part window and the projecting stair enclosure on the first. Because the site slopes down to the west, the basement story on the west is exposed and finished with clapboards. The basement level contains two windows and three doors.

The three-bay-wide south elevation, part of the original build, differs slightly from its northern counterpart. Two classroom bays with four, rather than five, windows flank the central stairtower. Another difference is the placement of two smaller dormers to either side of the stairtower rather than a single large dormer above the stairtower, as on the north wall.

Once completed in 1906, the only major alterations to the school occurred in 1953-1954. At the time, the interior of the school was renovated with new wiring and lighting and with the addition of cafeteria and classroom facilities in the basement. Exterior alterations done at that time include the addition of the present entrance porch and the closing of one of the two entrances to leave a single offset entrance in the fourth (from the left) facade bay. The need to upgrade means of egress from the school seems to account for changes made to the north stairtower and dormer and to west wall with its enclosed stair.

The school has been vacant since 1981 and suffers from lack of maintenance.

8. Significance Pleasant Street School, Ayer, 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 1893, 1906 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Pleasant Street School is a large well detailed example of Colonial Revival school architecture. Though modest in design, the school is, within the local context, one of Ayer's three outstanding municipal buildings, the others being the town's 1876 Panel Brick Town Hall and ca. 1900 Renaissance Revival Library. Historically, the school is notable as the town's last remaining intact 19th century school building. (While an earlier, mid-19th century frame school also stands in the town, it has been converted to residential use and no longer retains integrity as a school.) The Pleasant Street School reflects the late 19th century prosperity of Ayer, an important railroad transportation center in Middlesex County throughout the last half of the 19th century. The school retains integrity of location, design, materials, setting, workmanship and association. It meets National Register Criterion C on the local level.

The Pleasant Street School was built in two stages, with the south section completed in 1893 and the north section in 1906. The school was built on a site donated to the town by John A. Park, a local doctor whose family was prominent in the early history of the area. Park donated the site as an expression of his support for free public education.

The school was constructed to house both grade and high school classes. It continued in its dual function until 1931, when a separate high school building was constructed. Elementary-level classes were held in the school until its closing in 1981. The school has been vacant since that time.

The Town of Ayer experienced its most prolific development in the period between 1845 and 1930. Originally part of Groton, Massachusetts, Ayer was first known as South Groton. Extremely sparsely settled throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries, South Groton supported a very small population of farmers in dispersed farmsteads. As late as 1854, the area had a population of only 100.

This began to change after 1845 when the Fitchburg Railroad was laid through South Groton. By 1855, four railroads had been laid through the area: the Fitchburg, running east and west, and three lesser lines running north and south, mainly between Worcester and Nashua, New Hampshire. Fortuitously for South Groton, the lines intersected at the tiny village center thereafter known as Groton Junction.

Population grew rapidly as railroad-related support services and a tannery congregated at the junction. In 1869, a census showed that Groton Junction held 1,890 of the surrounding area's 2,011 residents. Residents successfully petitioned for separation from Groton and, in 1871, incorporated as the Town of Ayer.

Continued

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ayer Town Reports
Ralph H. Richardson, Public Spirit.
Ayer School Department Records

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3

Quadrangle name Ayer

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UTM References

A 19 287600 4715440
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached assessor's map.

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

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

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sarah J. Zimmerman, Director of Preservation Planning, Massachusetts Historical Comm.
with Frank F. Maxant, Chairman, Ayer Historical Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date November, 1985

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 ☒ 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. Calmagne

Executive Director
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12-13-85

For NPS use only

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

John A. Brown
Keeper of the National Register

Delivered to the
National Register

date 1-23-86

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only

received 12/23/85

date entered 1/23/86

Pleasant Street School
Continuation sheet Ayer, Massachusetts

Item number 8

Page 1

The town continued to grow thorough the early 20th century, though not at the rate experienced between 1854 and 1869. While the local economy supported some diversity of manufacturing interest (a short-lived plow factory, furniture factories, ice-cutting operations, and the aforementioned tannery), by far the most important employer in the town was the railroads. Extensive railroad facilities just south of the town center were said to provide the largest classification yard in New England.

As a result of the railroads' introduction, settlement around the Junction grew rapidly to encompass a small commercial district on Main Street with a residential neighborhood to the north, between Park and Washington Streets. This neighborhood of simple side-hall Italianate and Queen Anne cottages and houses occupies approximately 20 blocks, in the midst of which is located the Pleasant Street School.

Architecturally, the school far surpasses its neighbors in scale and architectural distinction. Conceived of as a two-part design, the school was pragmatically planned to be expanded as an increasing population of school children demanded.

At the time of its construction, the Pleasant Street School was the fourth school standing in the town. The other three were simpler district schools of brick (1859; 1867) or frame (1852; raised to two stories, 1865) construction. The Pleasant Street School was by far the most sophisticated of these and incorporated an up-to-date plan with large, well-lighted classrooms and a modern ventilation and heating system. The architect of this building is unknown, but early photographs of the building show it to be a handsome and carefully executed structure with Georgian Revival roof balustrades and porch detail.

As Ayer's most distinguished educational building and one of its finest municipal buildings and as a reflection of Ayer's late 19th century growth and prosperity, the Pleasant Street School merits listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Pleasant Street School
Middlesex County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. DEC 23 1985
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/3/86
Date Due: 1/23/86 - 2/6/86
Action: ACCEPT 1-23-86
RETURN
REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

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

Entered in the
National Register

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

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
_____ 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	Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ moved date _____
☐ fair	☐ unexposed	
	☐ unaltered	
	☐ altered	

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: _____



Property Name: Pleasant St. School
Street Address: Pleasant Street
Community: Ayer, Massachusetts

Photographer: T. Kent Hikida 7/85
location of neg.- Ayer Historical
Commission

Photo number 1 of 8

Description of view: North Facade
partial view of Pleasant St
(East) entrance facade.



Property name: Pleasant Street School

Street Address: Pleasant Street

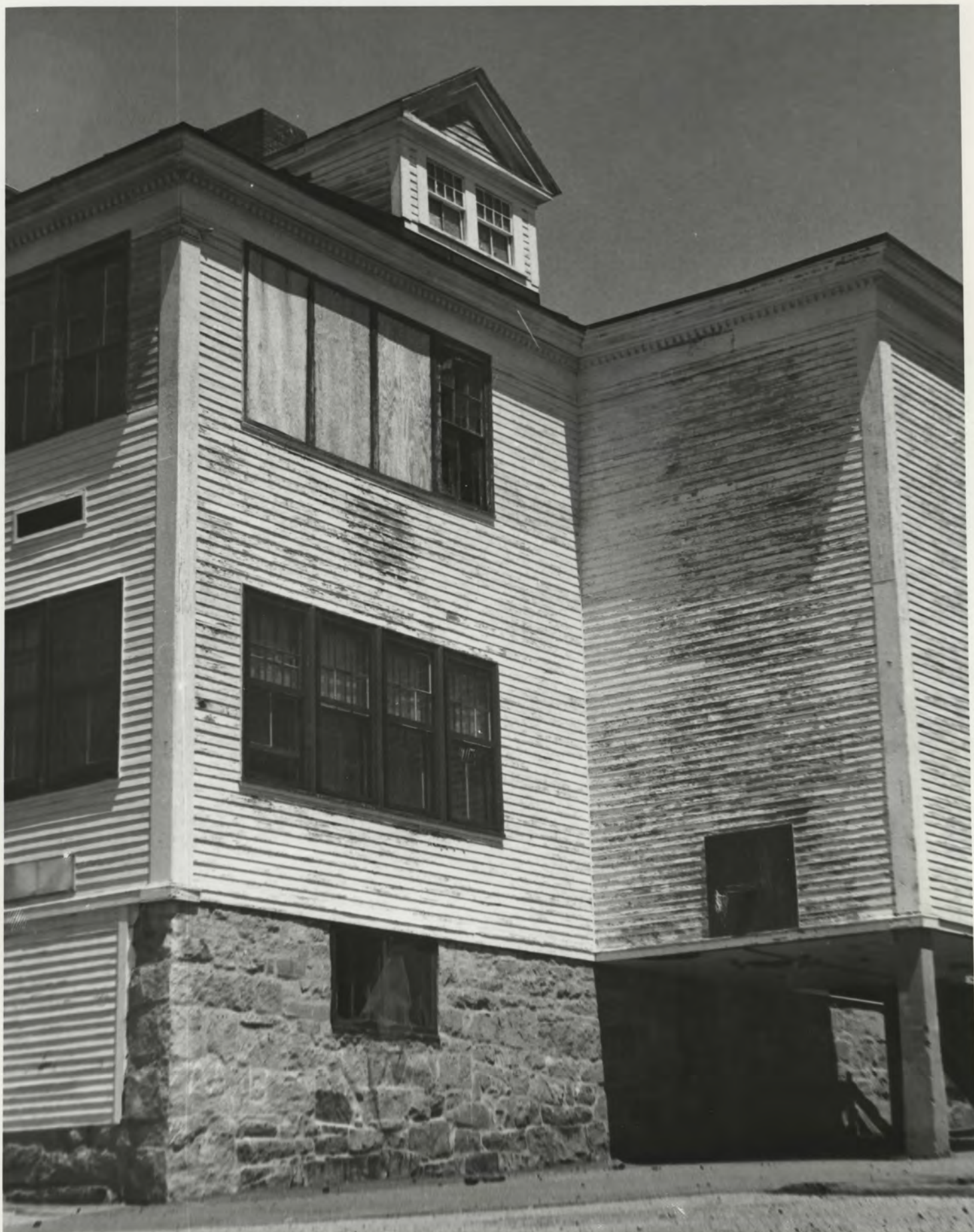
Community: Ayer, Massachusetts

Photographer: T. Kent Hikida 7/85

Location of neg.- Ayer Historical
Commission

Photo number 2 of 8

Description of view: Rear facade
(West elevation).



Property name: Pleasant Street School

Street Address: Pleasant Street

Community: Ayer, Massachusetts

Photographer: T. Kent Hikida 7/85

Location of Neg.- Ayer Historical
Commission

Photo number 3 of 8

Description of view: Southwest corner
Old foundation; South stair tower
small dormer.



Property name: Pleasant St. School
Street Address: Pleasant Street
Community: Ayer, Massachusetts
PL

Photographer: T. Kent Hikiida 7/85
Location of neg.- Ayer Historical
Commission

Photo number 4 of 8

Description of view: Southeast corner
Large and small dormers; chimney;
Pleasant St. street edge.



Property name: Pleasant St. School

Street Address: Pleasant Street

Community; Ayer, Massachusetts

Photographer: T. Kent Hikida 7/85

Location of Neg.- Ayer Historical
Commission

Photo number 5 of 8

Description of view: Southeast corner
detail; dormer & window details;
cornice detail; corner pilaster
detail.



Property name: Pleasant St. School

Street Address: Pleasant Street

Community: Ayer, Massachusetts

Photographer: T. Kent Hikida 7/85

Location of Neg.- Ayer Historical
Commission

Photo number 6 of 8

Description of view: Entrance from
Pleasant Street; Northeastern
large dormer.



Property name: Pleasant St. School
Street Address: Pleasant Street
Community: Ayer, Massachusetts
Photographer: T. Kent Hikida 7/85
Location of Negative: Ayer Historical
Commission

Photo number 7 of 8

Description of view: Portico entrance
Pleasant Street.



Property name: Pleasant St. School

Street address: Pleasant Street

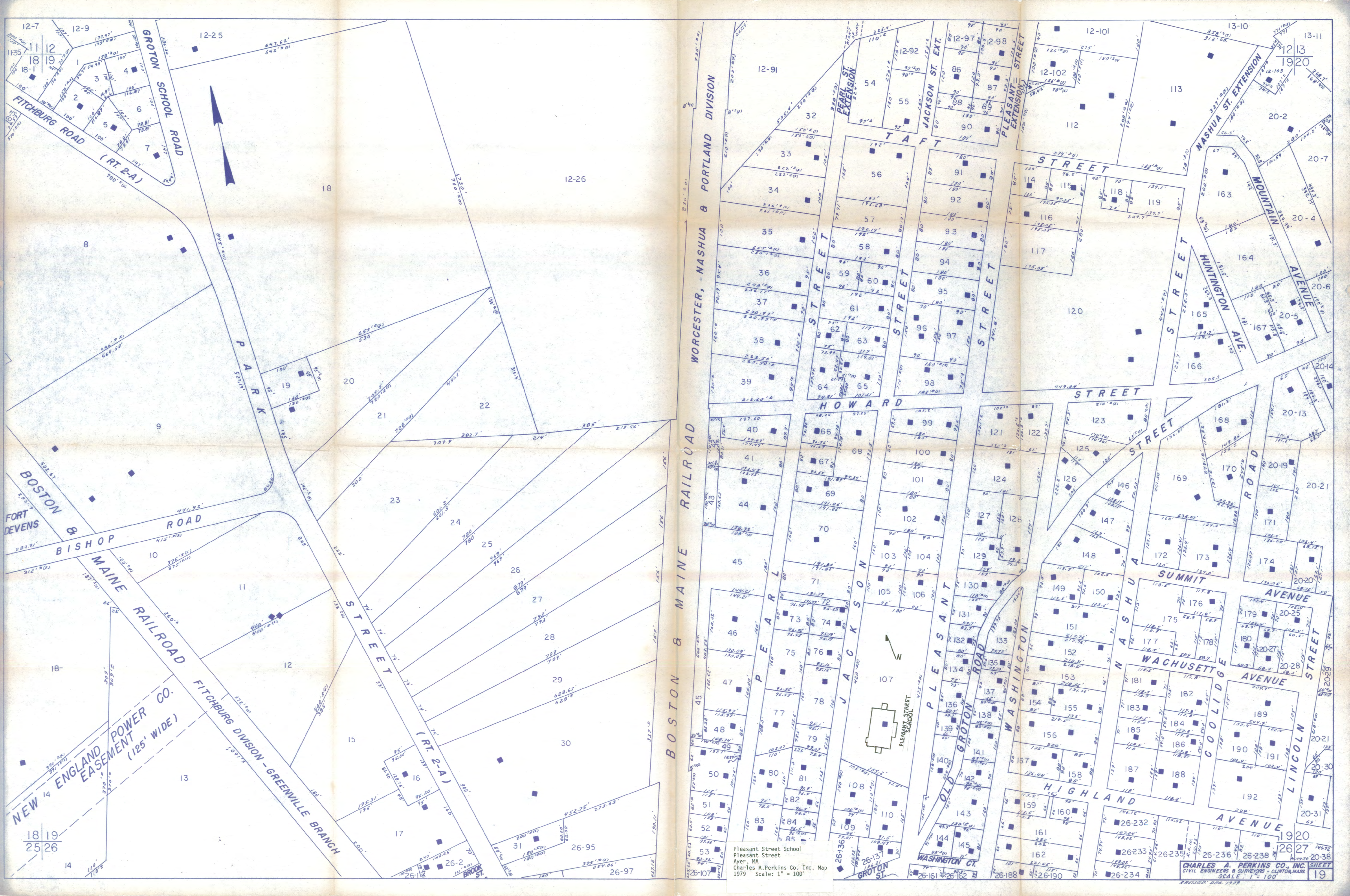
Community: Ayer, Massachusetts

Photographer: T. Kent Hikida 7/85

Location of negative: Ayer Historical
Commission

Photo number 8 of 8

Description of view: detailed view
of Large northeastern dormer;
cornice detail.



WORCESTER, NASHUA & PORTLAND DIVISION

BOSTON & MAINE RAILROAD

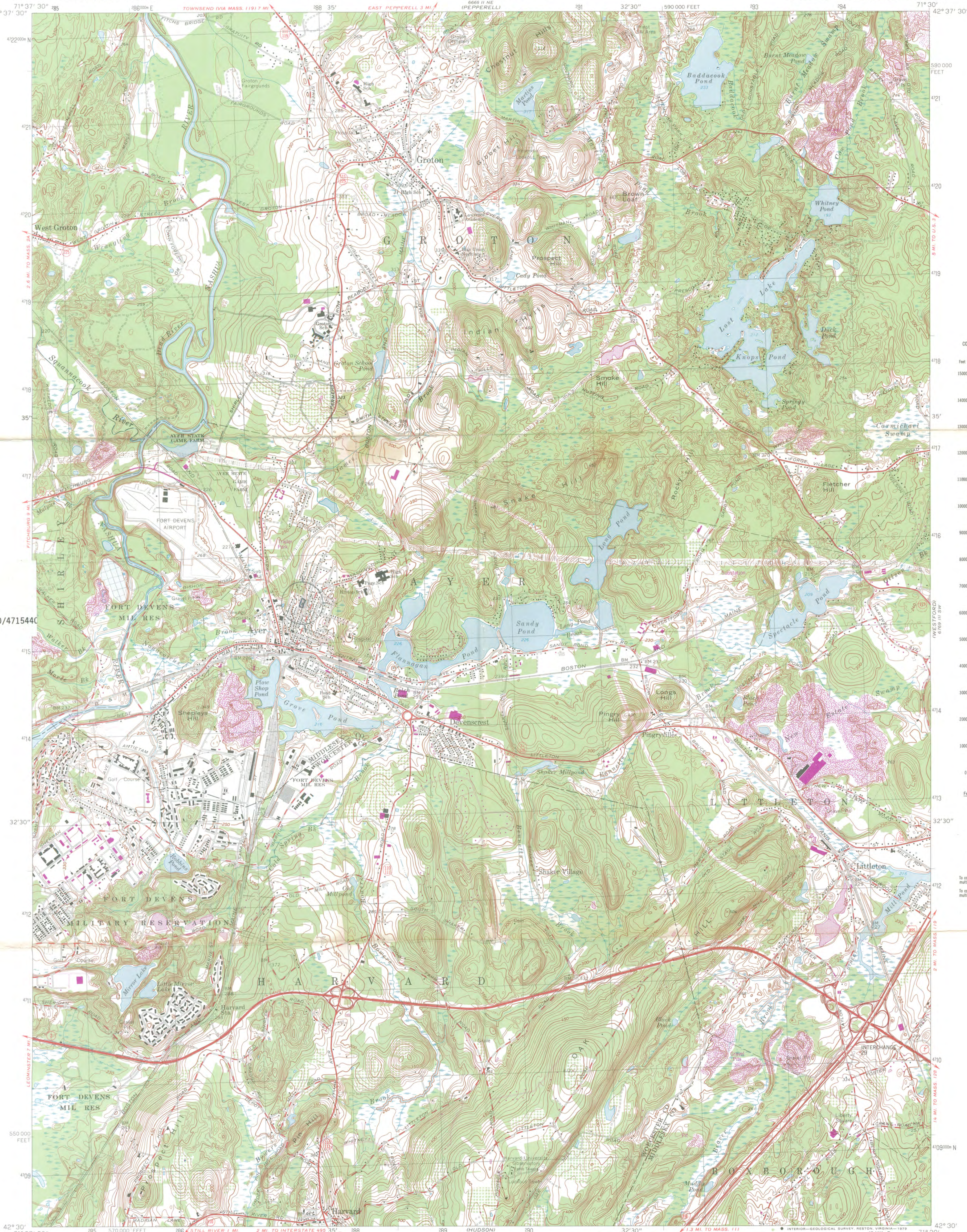
Pleasant Street School
Pleasant Street
Ayer, MA
Charles A. Perkins Co., Inc. Map
1979 Scale: 1" = 100'

CHARLES A. PERKINS CO., INC. SHEET
CIVIL ENGINEERS & SURVEYORS - CLINTON, MASS.
SCALE: 1" = 100'
REVISED: DEC. 1979

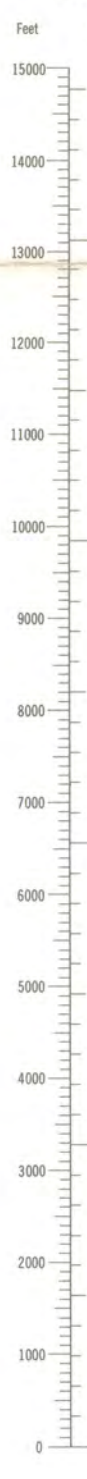


6869 II NW
(TOWNSEND)
6869 II SW
(MASSA SOUTH)

Pleasant Street School
Pleasant Street
Ayer, MA
Ayer Quadrangle
1:25,000
UTM Reference: 19/287600/4715440



CONVERSION
SCALES

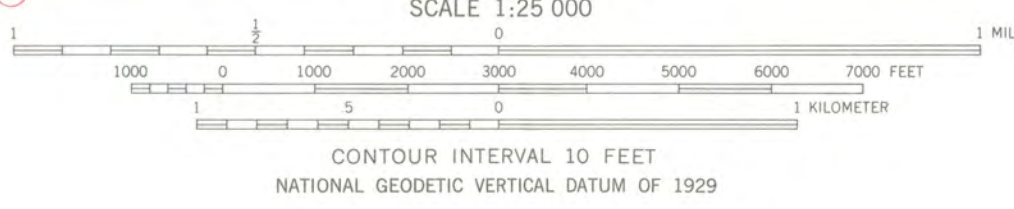
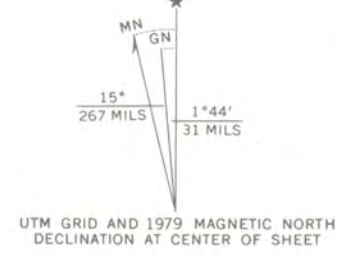


Feet	Meters
1	.3048
2	.6096
3	.9144
4	1.2192
5	1.5240
6	1.8288
7	2.1336
8	2.4384
9	2.7432
10	3.0480

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

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1923 and 1935. Revised 1966
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
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 State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1977 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979



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



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route ——— State Route ———

AYER, MASS.
N4230—W7130/7.5
1966
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6669 II SE—SERIES V814