

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service1609  
AUG 31 1989National Register of Historic Places  
Registration FormNATIONAL  
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 Fox, Warren Buildingother names/site number N/A

## 2. Location

street & number 190-196 Middlesex StreetN/A not for publicationcity, town LowellN/A vicinitystate Massachusetts

code

025county Middlesex

code

017zip code 01852

## 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

1

## Noncontributing

       buildings       sites       structures       objects1 0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber 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.

Valerie A. Talmage

Signature of certifying official

8/23/89

Date

Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission;State or Federal agency and bureau State Historic Preservation OfficerIn my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

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:) \_\_\_\_\_for

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action 10-12-89

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

commerce: specialty storedomestic: multiple dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

work in progress**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Late Victorian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation granitewalls brickroof asphalt shingleother cast iron (storefronts)granite

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See Continuation Sheet

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Located between Pearl and South Streets on the outskirts of Lowell's central business district, the Warren Fox Building (190-196 Middlesex Street) is a mixed-use block constructed in 1884. The building occupies its entire 3,290-square foot lot, bounded by Middlesex Street to the north, an attached one-story brick structure to the east, a parking lot to the south, and the Howe Building (208 Middlesex) to the west.

The four-story brick block has a flat roof and an eight-bay facade with the fifth bay (right of center) treated as the architectural focus. Two trabeated cast iron storefronts flank the recessed main entry, above which is a granite lintel carved with the building's date. Grooved cast iron piers define the storefronts, each consisting of a recessed center entry, two-light transoms, and a metal signband. Projecting brick pilasters framing the main entry arise the full height of the building, culminating above the roofline in a narrow parapet wall with a granite cornice supported by two granite consoles. Brick pilasters at the end walls are similarly treated, each finished above the roofline with a cornice and single console. Evenly spaced windows on each of the three upper stories have 2/2 wood sash, granite lintels, and share a granite sillcourse. Ornamental brickwork includes checkerboard panels beneath the third-story windows, recessed panels beneath the fourth-story windows, a beaded stringcourse above the fourth story, and a stepped corbel cornice. Fire escapes span the fourth and fifth bays on the three upper stories.

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Exposed secondary elevations lack the decorative brickwork of the facade (north elevation). The east elevation, exposed above the first story, is a plain wall of common brick with no openings. The south (rear) elevation is also of common brick with a stepped corbel cornice. On the first floor, three entries have been infilled as have all five windows. Eight brick segmental-arch windows on each of the three upper floors have 6/6 wood sash and granite sills. Fire escapes span two bays on each upper level. The Fox Building shares a brick party wall with the Howe Building to the west.

Built as a 16-unit apartment house with ground floor retail space, the Fox Building retains its original plan. Of the two retail spaces, the northernmost is wider, spanning four bays as compared to three for the other storefront. In general, the retail spaces are not partitioned. A single stair rising through the core of the building leads to the upper (residential) floors. The stair features an original wood railing with turned newel posts and balusters. A skylight above the stair creates a lightwell onto which open interior windows from adjacent residential rooms. Units and hallways retain original wood trim, including heavily molded window and door surrounds with corner blocks, matchboard wainscoting, and paneled wood doors.

The Warren Fox Building will be undergoing certified rehabilitation.

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Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric sites are currently recorded on the property, it is possible that sites are present. Seven known prehistoric sites are recorded in the general area (within one mile). This factor and the proximity of the property to the Merrimack River, Concord River, and River Meadow Brook indicate a reasonable potential for locating prehistoric sites. In general, however, the potential for locating significant archaeological survivals, either prehistoric or historic, is low because of 19th century building construction (4 story building) which nearly covers the parcel.

**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)

architecturecommerce

Period of Significance

1884-ca. 1930

Significant Dates

1884

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

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

See Continuation Sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Atlas of the City of Lowell, Massachusetts. Springfield, MA: L.J. Richards & Co., 1896.

City Atlas of Lowell, Massachusetts. Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1879.

City Directories, Lowell, MA.

Coburn, Frederick W. History of Lowell and Its People. NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1920.

Hill, Frank P., comp. and ed. Lowell Illustrated: A Chronological Record of the Events and Historical Sketches of the Large Manufacturing Corporations. Lowell, 1884.

Illustrated History of Lowell and Vicinity. Courier-Citizen Co. (Lowell), 1897.

☒ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)  
has been requested HPCA #11154MA

☐ 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: \_\_\_\_\_

MHC

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 19 310410 4723280  
Zone Easting Northing

C                              

B                                
Zone Easting Northing

D                              

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the accompanying detail of the City of Lowell assessor's map. The lot measures 53.5' x 61.5'.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lot that has historically been associated with the property.

☐ See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kathleen Kelly Broomer, Consultant, with Marcia M. Cini and Betsy Friedberg,  
organization NR Director, Mass. Historical Commission date February 1989  
street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone 617 727 8470  
city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02116

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The Warren Fox Building, Lowell, is a representative example of the development that occurred along Middlesex Street and throughout much of Lowell's business district in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Serving as retail and residential rental space, this commercial block addressed both the city's economic expansion and the need for new types of housing for mill operatives following the post-Civil War dismantling of the corporation-run boardinghouse system. Reflecting typical late 19th-century commercial design in Lowell, the Warren Fox Building retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association and meets Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places on the local level.

Lowell is a major urban industrial center located on the Merrimack River approximately thirty miles northwest of Boston. Bordered to the north and northeast by Dracut, the east by Tewksbury, the south and west by Chelmsford, and the northwest by Tyngsborough, Lowell reached its current size through annexations from Tewksbury (1834, 1888), Dracut (1851, 1874, 1879), and Chelmsford (1874). The confluence of the Merrimack and Concord Rivers and associated canal systems at the heart of the city shape and define Lowell's historic industrial, commercial, and institutional core.

A mid-17th century settlement on the western outskirts of Chelmsford, the area that is now Lowell was originally characterized by Indian settlements and numerous family-owned farms. By the late 18th century

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small manufacturing concerns such as saw and grist mills appeared. Construction of a series of canals, particularly the Pawtucket (1797) and the Middlesex (1801), improved navigation of the Merrimack River and spurred economic development, thereby setting the stage for rapid industrial and commercial growth in the early 19th century.

A major shift in Lowell's economic base occurred with the establishment of cotton manufacturing companies by Boston merchant investors. The shift began in 1822 with the incorporation of the Merrimack Manufacturing Company, the first of ten major companies that were to dominate Lowell manufacturing through the turn of the 20th century. The nine other mills were Hamilton (1825), Appleton (1828), Lowell (1828), Middlesex (1830), Suffolk (1830), Tremont (1830), Lawrence (1831), Boott (1835), and Massachusetts (1835). The revolutionary character of these mills was based on Waltham precedent, in which the manufacture of cotton cloth was carried out from start to finish. The Lowell companies' directors brought together for the first time some of the period's most advanced ideas in the areas of power generation, industrial and transportation technology, production control, capital formulation, scientific research, and social organization. Rapid industrial expansion prompted a sharp increase in population, and in just under a decade Lowell grew from a town (incorporated March 1826) into a city (incorporated April 1, 1836).

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The city continued its expansion until ca. 1857, when a financial panic resulted in a general slowdown in business. Population declined through the Civil War years, during which time the Lowell mills were idle due to the belief of their combined directors that the mills could not be run at a profit. The cessation of mill operations during the war was the turning point for a marked change in the socio-economic character of mill operatives and, by extension, the general Lowell population. Trained mill girls and the corporation-run boardinghouse system were replaced after the war by unskilled immigrant labor and the need for family tenements.

By the end of the 1870s industrial complexes lined the Pawtucket Canal, creating a concentrated manufacturing zone at the heart of the city. Much of the area along the canal in the vicinity of Fletcher, Dutton, and Middlesex Streets as well as scattered locations along the Concord River were built up with two to four-story mills, many constructed of stone and powered by steam. While mill complexes continued to expand with additions or new buildings through the 1880s, few if any corporation boardinghouses were constructed.

The growth of Lowell's business district paralleled the city's industrial development with major expansion in the 1850s and again in the 1880s. During the first half of the 19th century Merrimack Street was the spine of the downtown commercial area, which also took in Middle and Central Streets (Merrimack-Middle Streets Historic District, NR 1979).

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The area contains a significant group of two to five-story commercial blocks, largely brick, built primarily in the 1880s and 1890s. Many of these and later buildings are late Victorian commercial hybrids, exhibiting elements of the Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, or Renaissance Revival styles.

The commercial district remains in the grid of the original mill company area, having expanded gradually along major thoroughfares. One such thoroughfare, Middlesex Street, was established as a suburban radial to western sections of the city by the mid-19th century. A major transportation artery into downtown, Middlesex Street was the location of a railroad depot at Fletcher Street for lines to Boston (beginning 1835) and Nashua, New Hampshire (beginning 1838), as well as a route for the street railroad in the 1860s and the electric streetcar in the 1890s.

Prominently positioned immediately north of Middlesex Street between Gorham and Fletcher Streets were the juxtaposed mill complexes of the aforementioned Hamilton Manufacturing Co. and Appleton Co. The complexes occupied the area between the Pawtucket Canal and Hamilton Canal (ca. 1822-1824) extending south to Jackson Street with Appleton Co. boardinghouses (ca. 1832-1860) ranged along Middlesex Street below Jackson. Although both corporations built major structures on Jackson Street after the Civil War--Hamilton a long storehouse and attached counting house (ca. 1868) and Appleton a new mill (1873)--construction of new corporate boardinghouses had ceased. Instead, beginning ca. 1889 the

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Appleton Co. either sold its boardinghouse holdings on the north side of Middlesex Street to outside owners, or redeveloped the properties by constructing new mixed-use buildings. The corporation retained ownership of some of the resulting commercial blocks as late as the 1920s.

New development along Middlesex Street in the 1880s and 1890s was typical of the physical transformation of the city's center. Brick mill housing on the north side of Middlesex Street and modest wood-frame commercial buildings on the south side of the street were replaced by three and four-story brick mixed-use blocks. These blocks contained retail space on the ground floor and apartments for rent on the upper floors. Older downtown neighborhoods such as Middlesex Street had become densely developed working-class areas, and the construction of new blocks addressed the need for a new type of housing for mill operatives.

Extant brick blocks constructed on the sites of earlier Appleton boardinghouses on the north side of Middlesex Street include the Marston Building at 155-159 Middlesex (1889), the Spaulding Building at 189 Middlesex (ca. 1890), the Elliot Building at 193 Middlesex (1890), and Appleton Chambers at 207 Middlesex (ca. 1910). On the south side of the street, the only building with known mill associations is a school for children of Hamilton and Appleton mill employees at 150 Middlesex Street (1829). This building was sold by the corporations in 1862 and converted into a commercial block in 1882. Other buildings on this side of the street did not have a history of mill ownership. The Warren Fox Building

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at 190-196 Middlesex and the Howe Building at 208 Middlesex are two of the best preserved examples of the new commercial construction on the street in the last decades of the 19th century.

The Fox Building was built on the south side of Middlesex Street in 1884 by Warren Fox. City directories for the period show a Warren Fox boarding on Summer Street in Lowell but yield no other information.

Original commercial tenants of the Fox Building include the business of D. L. Bryant, a dealer in watches, clocks and jewelry. The identities of the building's early apartment-dwellers are unknown, but they presumably held textile-related jobs, giving the building's proximity to the Hamilton and Appleton mills and the majority (nearly fifty percent) of the city's working population then involved in textile manufacturing. The 1917 city directory shows 12 of the occupants in textile- or other industrial-related occupations, and a shoe store and a variety store occupying the ground floor retail space. The building remained in the Fox Family until at least 1924.

Architecturally, the Fox Building is representative of Lowell's late 19th-century commercial architecture. Few attributions to specific architects and builders can be made during this period as the city's building records generally begin ca. 1906. The Fox Building is typical in its combination of uses, namely ground floor retail and residential above, and its load-bearing construction. Metal frame construction first appeared in other commercial buildings on Middlesex Street ca. 1890.

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These brick blocks commonly included cast-iron storefronts and decorative detailing achieved either by the use of granite or brownstone or by the manipulation of the brick wall surface. Stylistically, the Fox Building is not high-style but rather a vernacular Late Victorian commercial design common to Lowell. The building incorporates a feature seen particularly on commercial buildings in the Merrimack Street-Middle Street area: the central pavilion extending above the roofline.

Mill closings in the 1920s and 1930s adversely affected Lowell's economic vitality. On Middlesex Street, Hamilton sold its property between 1924 and 1936, and the Appleton Co., which suspended operations in the 1920s, owned its complex until 1936. Some of the factory buildings are extant. A population decline in Lowell beginning in the early 1920s accelerated with the Depression. City directories indicate high vacancy rates in commercial and residential space, and the Fox Building was no exception. Fully occupied in 1925, the Fox Building had one-third of its residential units vacant by 1930. The building's retail space was occupied from ca. 1924 through 1930 by shoe stores, in 1935 by Morris Lever Salt & Hops, and from 1940 through 1955 by Middlesex Equipment Co. Inc. heating supplies. Occupancy of the residential units revived somewhat in the 1940s and 1950s, but declined again in the 1960s.

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Complete and partial demolition of commercial blocks has occurred on Middlesex Street since the city's earliest mill closings. A few buildings in the vicinity of the Fox Building were demolished or irreversibly altered, including 163-167 Middlesex (demolished ca. 1920-1936), 169 Middlesex (demolished ca. 1924-1936), 218-220 Middlesex (upper story removed 1935), 230-240 Middlesex (upper story removed 1945), and 182-186 Middlesex (demolished ca. 1976). Vacant lots and unsympathetic 20th-century construction detract from the late 19th-century/early 20th-century streetscape. Certified rehabilitation of the Fox Building will contribute to the revitalization of the area.

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Lowell National Historical Park and Preservation District Cultural  
Resources Inventory Report. National Park Service, 1979.

Lowell: Past, Present, and Prospective. Lowell: Citizen Newspaper Co.,  
1891.

Massachusetts Historical Commission. Lowell Reconnaissance Survey  
Report, 1980.

WARREN FOX BLDG. SCALE

Surveyed 1888.  
Revised

PEARL ST.

NORTH

MIDDLESEX ST.

SOUTH ST.

WARREN FOX BUILDING  
190-196 MIDDLESEX ST.  
LOWELL, MASS.  
1980 CITY OF LOWELL ASSESSORS

MAP  
SCALE: 1" = 50'

1870

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Fox, Warren, Building

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Middlesex

DATE RECEIVED: 8/31/89 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/12/89  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/28/89 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/15/89  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 89001609

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 10/12/89 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Locally significant commercial  
building representing late 19th-century  
mixed-up retail/rental residential  
type.*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A+C  
REVIEWER Savage  
DISCIPLINE Architectural History  
DATE 10/12/89

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

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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

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

☐ acreage      ☐ verbal boundary description  
☐ UTM's      ☐ boundary justification

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ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

☐ sketch maps    ☐ USGS maps    ☐ photographs    ☐ presentation

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OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



190-196 Middlesex Street (Warren Fox Building)  
Lowell, Massachusetts

Photographer: Kim Withers Bringle

Taken November 1987

Negative on file at Northfields Preservation Associates  
10 Barr Street  
Salem, Massachusetts 01970

View from Middlesex Street facing southwest

Photograph → 1 of 3



Warren Fox Building (190-196 Middlesex Street)

Lowell, Massachusetts

Photographer: Kim Withers Brengle

Taken November 1987

Negative on file at Northfields Preservation Associates

33 Walter St.

Salem, Massachusetts 01970

View from Middlesex St. facing southwest - showing Fox Bldg (center left) in context

Photograph # 2 of 3



155-193 Middlesex St., north of Warren Fox Building (190-196 Middlesex)  
Lowell, Massachusetts

Photographer: Kim Withers Bringle

Taken November 1987

Negative in file at Northfields Preservation Associates  
33 Walter St.

Salem, Massachusetts 01970

View of North side of Middlesex St. facing northeast - fire escape of Fox Bldg to extreme right

Photograph # 3 of 3



CONVERSION  
SCALES

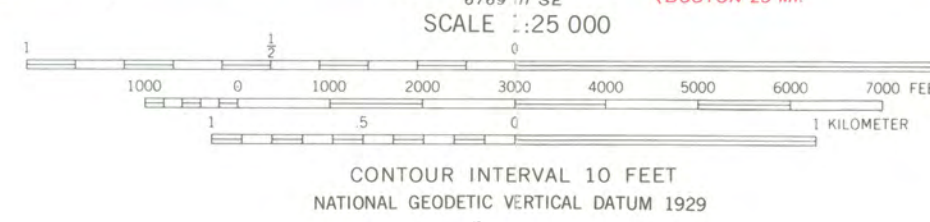


| Feet | Meters |
|------|--------|
| 1    | 3048   |
| 2    | 6096   |
| 3    | 9144   |
| 4    | 12192  |
| 5    | 15240  |
| 6    | 18288  |
| 7    | 21336  |
| 8    | 24384  |
| 9    | 27432  |
| 10   | 30480  |

To convert feet to meters  
multiply by 3.048  
To convert meters to feet  
multiply by 3.2808

WARREN FOX BUILDING  
140-146 MIDDLESEX STREET  
LOWELL, MASS.  
LOWELL QUAD  
1:25000  
A 19310410 4723280

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey  
Topography by planetable surveys 1939 and 1944. Revised 1966  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grids based on Massachusetts coordinate system,  
mainland zone, and New Hampshire coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid  
zone 19  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
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



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



LOWELL, MASS. - N. H.  
N4237.5 - W7115.7.5  
1966  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
AMS 6769 III NE - SERIES V814



August 23, 1989

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

AUG 31 1989

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

Howe Building, 208 Middlesex Street, Lowell, (Middlesex County), Massachusetts;

Warren Fox Building, 190-196 Middlesex Street, Lowell, (Middlesex County),  
Massachusetts.

There have been no owner objections for the above mentioned properties.

The nominations have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination form.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Tait  
Acting National Register Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure: