

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name The White Diner

other names/site number Al's Diner (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 14 Yelle Street not for publication

city or town Chicopee vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Hampden code 013 zip code 01013

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith B. McDonough
Signature of certifying official/Title Judith B. McDonough, Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

10/25/2000
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register
☐ removed from the
National Register
☐ other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Ratunk Andrus

Date of Action

12/14/00

Al's Diner (preferred)
Name of Property

Hampden County, Massachusetts
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

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

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing

Noncontributing

<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	building
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Twentieth-Century Commercial Architecture:

The Diners of Massachusetts

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Stainless Steel Diner

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete, brick

walls stainless steel

porcelain enamel

roof rubber membrane

other _____

Narrative Description

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

Al's Diner (preferred)

Name of Property

Hampden County, Massachusetts

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1958

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Master Diners

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: _____

Al's Diner (preferred)
Name of Property

Hampden County, Massachusetts
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 18	698220	4673640
Zone	Easting	Northing
2.		
Zone	Easting	Northing

3.		
Zone	Easting	Northing
4.		
Zone	Easting	Northing
— See continuation sheet		

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

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

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date October, 2000

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

city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mathews Family (building) Michael S. Pawlishen (land)

Al's Diner Mar. Auto Repair

street & number 14 Yelle Street 31 Prospect Street telephone _____

city or town Chicopee state MA zip code 01013

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503. NPS Form 10-900 OMB No.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

The Diners of Massachusetts MPS
Al's Diner
Chicopee (Hampden Co.), MA

Section number 7 Page 1

7. Description

Al's Diner, 14 Yelle Street, Chicopee (1958, MHC # 798), is architecturally significant as one of only two diners in Massachusetts built by Master Diners of Pequannock, New Jersey. Al's Diner is the better preserved of the two. The other example of Master's work is the Windsor Diner (1958, not inventoried), located at the airport in Southbridge, which has a deck addition built onto the front.

Al's Diner is situated in the Willimansett area of Chicopee, about three blocks southeast of the Willimansett Bridge, which crosses the Connecticut River between the cities of Chicopee and Holyoke. The site is a corner lot at a crossroads that is dominated by industrial and commercial buildings. The diner occupies the southern end of the lot and faces north, with its east (side) elevation fronting Yelle Street. Northwest of the diner is a parking lot, and farther north, on the same lot, is a ca. 1920s brick commercial garage building. For the purpose of this nomination, the brick garage is a noncontributing building.

Rectangular in massing, the prefabricated section of Al's Diner is eight bays wide and three bays deep. The steel-frame diner has stainless steel cladding that incorporates horizontal bands in red and blue porcelain enamel. The concrete block foundation has a brick veneer at the façade. A stainless steel parapet surrounds the monitor roof, which is clad with rubber membrane. There is a one-story, shed-roofed, concrete block kitchen wing, one bay deep, at the rear (south elevation). This wing is unobtrusive and does not compromise the integrity of the prefabricated section of the diner.

The diner has entries in the first and eighth bays, each displaying a steel and glass door and a steel hood. The entry hoods have steel panels with quilted motifs on the underside. Compared with other stainless steel diners of the same era, which have a pair of entries located in a projecting center vestibule, the end-bay entries on the Master diners were considered a distinctive feature, but one that also cut valuable floor space from the interior [Gutman, 154]. Windows in the diner are steel-rimmed and contain fixed plate glass.

Given its small size, Al's Diner retains a wealth of roof-mounted signage. At the center is *AL'S RESTAURANT*, a sign that dates to the 1960s, with the second word executed in neon. Mounted above this sign are two internally lit box signs that advertise *Whole Cooked Hams to Take Home* and *French Meat Pie to Take Home*. To the left (east) is a later, internally lit box sign that reads *AL'S DINER*.

On the interior, the two entrances are now enclosed with wood and glass. There are six booths seating twenty-four along the north (façade) wall, and fourteen counter stools. The counter extends most of the length of the interior and has a center staff entrance. The back bar behind the counter retains the grill and is finished with steel wall panels in a sunburst motif. The remainder of the cooking is done in the rear kitchen. To the right (west) of the counter is the entrance to the restrooms.

The original interior color scheme was salmon pink, pale grey, dark grey, and white. One or more of these colors

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

The Diners of Massachusetts MPS
Al's Diner
Chicopee (Hampden Co.), MA

Section number 7/8 Page 2/1

appears in the monitor ceiling, which is clad in laminate trimmed with steel; on the walls below the windows, which also are executed in laminate trimmed with steel; on the tables, which are laminate with steel supports; and in the terrazzo tile of the counter apron and the floor. The counter is white plastic laminate. Both the counter stools and the booths are upholstered in green vinyl.

Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric sites are recorded on the nominated property, it is possible that sites are present. Six sites are recorded in the general area (within one mile). Environmental characteristics of the property also represent favorable locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, distance to wetlands) for many types of prehistoric sites. The property is situated on a well drained, level to moderately sloping terrace adjacent to a tributary stream of the Connecticut River. The property also lies within 1000 feet of the main channel of the Connecticut River. In general, however, the potential for locating significant prehistoric resources on the Al's Diner property is low. Installation of the diner, utilities, parking lot and non-contributing brick building on the less than one acre parcel have probably impacted any prehistoric resources present on the site. There is also a low potential for locating historic archaeological resources on the property. No historic period resources have been identified that are related to or predate construction of the diner, parking lot and 1920's brick commercial garage building on the property.

(end)

8. Statement of Significance

Al's Diner, 14 Yelle Street (1958, MHC #798) is the last diner in Chicopee, and unusual in Massachusetts as one of only two diners in the state manufactured by Master Diners of Pequannock, New Jersey. Its form, with entries located at the front corners rather than in a central projecting vestibule, distinguishes Al's Diner from other post-World War II stainless steel diners in Massachusetts. Members of the Mathews family have been associated with the operation of the diner since 1959, when the business was known by its original name of The White Diner. The diner was called Al's Restaurant in the 1960s and early 1970s, reflecting a trend in the diner industry toward creating a restaurant image. For these reasons, Al's Diner is of exceptional significance on both the local and state levels. Retaining integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, Al's Diner meets Criteria A and C and Criteria Consideration G of the National Register at the state and local levels.

In 1958, Al Thibault brought the present diner to Chicopee with the help of Charlie Dugre [history on menu for Al's Diner]. Originally, the diner was known as The White Diner. The origin of this name has not been

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

The Diners of Massachusetts MPS
Al's Diner
Chicopee (Hampden Co.), MA

Section number 8 Page 2

determined. In the spring of 1959, Anastasios "Toss" Mathews left his job with the Puritan Diner on Northampton Street in Holyoke, across the Connecticut River, to become the late-night short-order cook at The White Diner.

Al Rubin bought the diner in 1962, and changed the name to Al's Restaurant. This decision reflected a trend in the diner industry toward providing a more family-oriented dining experience. This trend first surfaced in the 1950s and completely transformed the industry in the 1960s. [Gutman] Much of the cooking was removed from the area behind the counter to a separate kitchen, usually at the rear of the prefabricated section of the building. By drawing families, diner-restaurants could provide an alternative to, and therefore could better compete with, the booming fast food chains.

On February 1, 1975, the Mathews family purchased the diner-restaurant. By that time, two other family members also were involved in the operation: Costas "Gus" Mathews as cook, and Becky Mathews, Toss's wife, who helped out in the beginning and later took over the operation of the kitchen. The diner operated twenty-fours a day, seven days a week until 1983, when the diner was closed Sunday nights. Starting in 1985, the diner was closed Monday nights, then late-night hours were eliminated. The diner remains in the Mathews family.

Al's Diner is located on Yelle Street, in an industrial area near the Willimansett Bridge in northwest Chicopee. Yelle Street was known after World War II as the Montgomery Street Cut-off. In 1939, Chicopee was selected as the home of the U. S. Army North Eastern Air Base, later known as the Air Transport Command, and known today as Westover Air Reserve Base. In addition to having a major military base in its eastern quarter, Chicopee was the home of numerous manufacturing concerns after World War II. These businesses produced automobile tires, drop forgings, firearms, fabricated steel, sporting goods, toilet accessories, paper boxes, box containers, chemicals for paper-making, cotton products (surgical bandages), knit goods, boys' and youth's clothing, millinery, ladies underwear, meat products, bobbins, store furniture, office fixtures, and radio parts.

A city directory for Chicopee from 1949 listed fifty-five restaurants, twelve of which were located in Willimansett. Two diners in the city at that time were the Falls Diner at 120 Main Street, Chicopee Falls, and the Market Square Diner at 253 Front Street, in the southern part of the city. The current location of these two diners has not been determined. Al's Diner is the last diner in Chicopee. [DeForge]

Massachusetts is home to numerous diners built by out-of-state manufacturers. Most of the Massachusetts diners that were manufactured in other states were built and brought to Massachusetts after World War II. Al's Diner is unusual as the better preserved of only two diners in Massachusetts produced by Master Diners of Pequannock, New Jersey. Arthur Schelling started the company in Pequannock in about 1940. Previously, Schelling had worked for two other New Jersey-based diner builders, Jerry O'Mahony Inc. and Paramount Diners. George Schelling and William Schelling, sons of Arthur Schelling, also worked for the company, and took over the company operations after their father's death in the 1960s. The standard Master diner was a forty-footer, such as Al's Diner, though the company also made fifty-footers, sixty-footers, and "doubles." Most of the approximately sixty diners produced by Master Diners were shipped to states located east of the Mississippi River, and predominantly in the northeast United States. Master Diners went out of business in the 1970s. According to

(continued)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**The Diners of Massachusetts MPS
Al's Diner
Chicopee (Hampden Co.), MA**

Section number 8/9/10 **Page** 2/1

George Schelling, this was due to a lack of demand for diners in the face of increased competition from fast food companies. [Schelling interview] Diner historian Richard Gutman notes that Master was "a small company that built diners with an old-fashioned feel." [p. 234] Master diners reportedly were distinguished by stained glass transoms over the windows, though transoms are not present at Al's Diner.

(end)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Menu for Al's Diner, Chicopee, Massachusetts (includes history of diner).
Interview with George Schelling, Pompton Plains, New Jersey. September 24, 1999.
Information provided by Aldona Pintsch, Reference Librarian, Pequannock Township Public Library, Pompton Plains, New Jersey. September 1999.
DeForge, Jeanette. "Al's diner serves flavor of the 50s." *Springfield Union-News*. May 11, 1999.
Gutman, Richard J. S. *American Diner Then and Now*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993.
Diner Finder Deluxe: Massachusetts. Watertown, MA: Coffee Cup Publications, 1991.
Springfield, West Springfield, Longmeadow, and Chicopee Directory. Springfield: Polk & Lee, 1949.

(end)

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the accompanying detail of the City of Chicopee assessors' map.

Boundary Justification

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

(end)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY
NAME:

~~White Diner, The~~ *Al's Diner*

MULTIPLE
NAME: Diners of Massachusetts MPS

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Hampden

DATE RECEIVED: 11/02/00

DATE OF PENDING LIST:

DATE OF 16TH DAY:

DATE OF 45TH DAY:

12/17/00

DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 00001482

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

 ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA *accept A & C*

REVIEWER *Patrick Andrus*

DISCIPLINE *Historian*

TELEPHONE

DATE *12/14/00*

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



Al's Diner

14 Yelle Street

Chicopee

Diners of Massachusetts MPS

Photo: 1998

Neg: MHC

View SW



Al's Diner
14 Yelle Street
Chicopee

Diners of Massachusetts MPS

Photo: 1998

Neg: MHC

View W

509

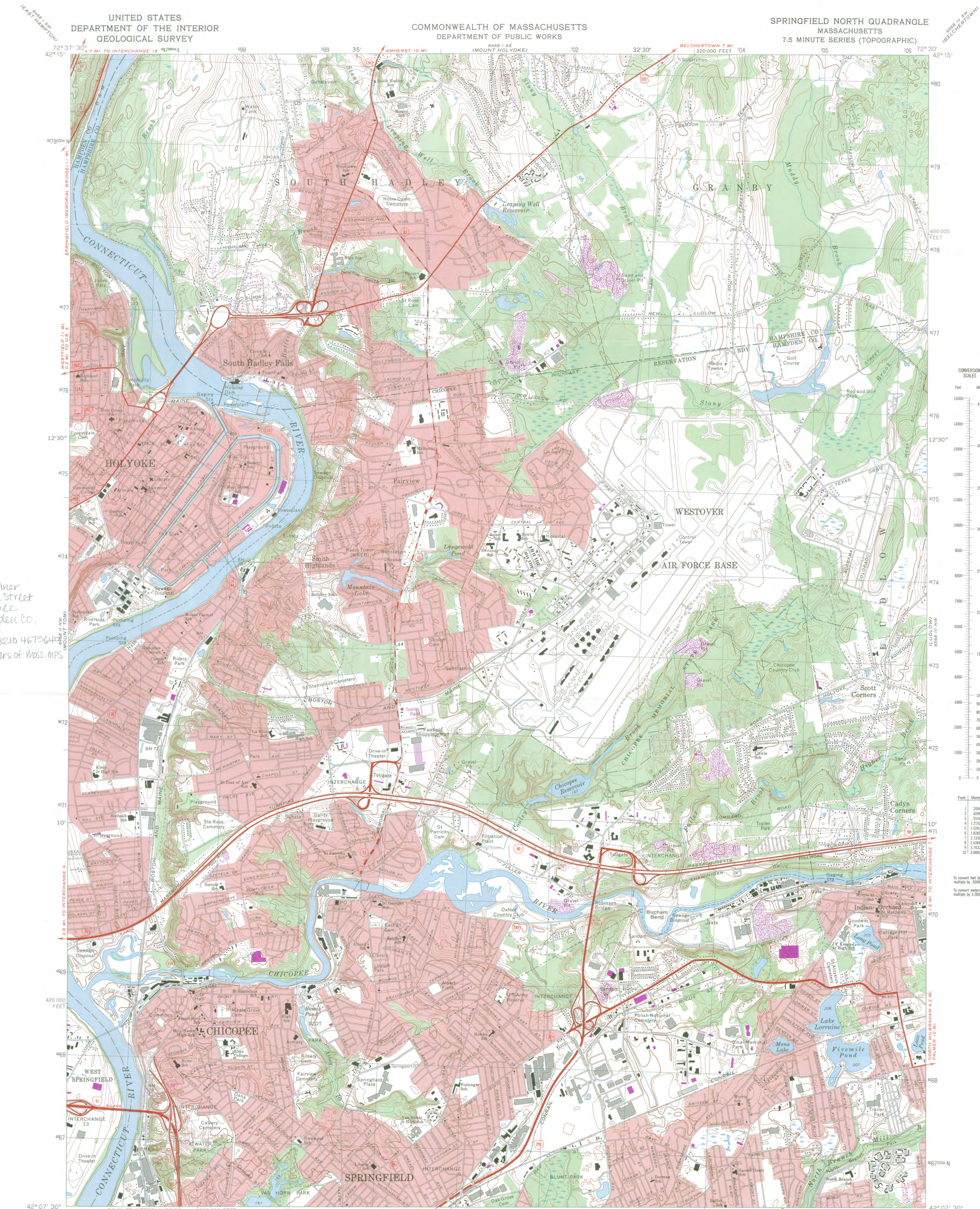


SCALE: 1 IN = 40 FT.

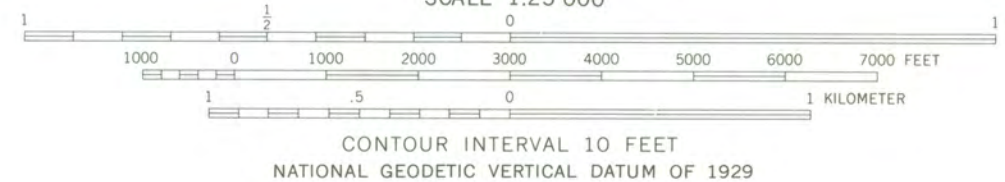
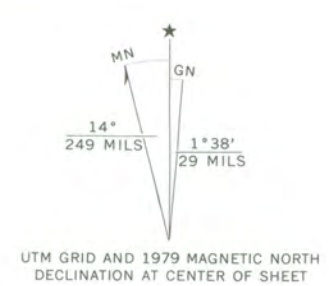
AREA 1.96 ACRES

605

141's Diner
141 Yale Street
Chicopee
Hampden Co.
Mass.
18 698210 467364
The Diners of Mass. MAPS



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1933. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1971. Field checked 1972
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 18
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 the State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979



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

SPRINGFIELD NORTH, MASS.
N4207.5—W7230.7.5
1972
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6468 II NE—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



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

October 25, 2000

Ms. Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Mail Stop 2280, Suite 400
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Al's Diner, 14 Yelle Street, Chicopee (Hampden), MA
THE DINERS OF MASSACHUSETTS MPS

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Mathews Family, Al's Diner
Michael S. Pawlishen
Stephen Jendrysik, Chicopee Historical Commission
Mayor Richard Kos, City of Chicopee
Kathleen Kelly Broomer, Preservation Consultant
Kate Brown, Department of Planning & Development

Author: "Bergen; Phil @ SEC" <Phil.Bergen@sec.state.ma.us> at np--internet
Date: 1/31/01 4:47 PM
Normal

TO: Patrick Andrus at NP-WASO-NRHESubject: FW: Historic vs. preferred name
ent of recent----- Message Contents

Replacem

-----Original Message-----

From: Bergen, Phil @ SEC
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2001 4:09 PM
To: patrick.andrus@nps.gov
Subject: Historic vs. preferred name Replacement of recently submit ted
nomination

Patrick, hi.

We recently had the White Diner in Chicopee, MA listed [12/14/00 NPS#
00001482]. Although the White Diner is the historic name, is is popularly
known as Al's Diner, and we listed that as the preferred name to use.

Why would the preferred name be not used? In the future, should we list
both names on the "other names" line and indicate which one is preferred?
The business is currently named Al's and the owner is perplexed as his
business' name will not be the one indicated in the NR. In this case the
1958 diner has been known as Al's since the 1960s.

Secondly, we are submitting an amended version of the Rowley Village Forge
Site nomination (Boxford, MA) that was ssent to Washington about two weeks
ago. We have found a number of typos in it, much to the consultant's
consternation, and would like the revised copy to be used. All photos, maps
etc. can be kept; it is just the text itself that is being changed.

Thanks

Phil Bergen

e-mail: phil.bergen@sec.state.ma.us
617-727-8470