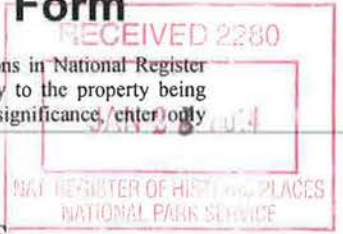


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: BENSON'S NEW BLOCK and the MOHAWK CHAMBERS

Other names/site number: Patterson Apartments, Aaron Rooms, Newman Rooms (136-138 Main St.); Winslow Hotel, Stearns Room, Harco Rooms (130-134 Main St.), Winslow Apartments

Name of related multiple property listing:

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

2. Location

Street & number: 136-138 Main Street; 130-134 Main Street; & 11 Wells Street

City or town: Greenfield State: Massachusetts County: Franklin

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<u>Brona Simon</u>	<u>December 30, 2013</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title: Brona Simon, SHPO	
Date	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain:)

Patricia Andrews
Signature of the Keeper

3/11/2014
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
Public - Local
Public - State
Public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)

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District	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Object	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE / TRADE: Business
DOMESTIC: Hotel / Multiple Dwelling

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Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

Materials: *(enter categories from instructions.)*

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, CONCRETE

Narrative Description

*(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)*

Summary Paragraph

Benson's New Block (136-138 Main Street) and the Mohawk Chambers (130-134 Main Street) are adjacent masonry commercial blocks at the northeast corner of Main and Wells streets in downtown Greenfield, Massachusetts. The buildings are located on small, level lots in an urban downtown setting, and were built to conform to the lot lines with no front or side setbacks. The National Register nomination includes the two historic buildings (1916 and 1917) as contributing resources, and the 2011 addition to the Mohawk Chambers, with the adjacent surface parking lot as a noncontributing resource.

The two Classical Revival-style buildings are separately owned, but are distinctive in that they have retained much of their historic appearance while other early and mid 20th-century buildings in the immediate area have been substantially altered and remodeled. The three-story Benson's New Block was privately restored in 2010. The four-story Mohawk Chambers was rehabilitated to historic standards in 2011. A two-story brick addition was built on the parking lot north of the Mohawk Chambers in 2011, and is connected to the rear of the older section by a recessed entrance and an elevator lobby.

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Narrative Description

Benson's New Block

Benson's New Block (1916, GRE.96, Photographs 1 and 2) is a three-story masonry and steel building erected one block east of the original Benson's Block (94 Main St., GRE.399, erected 1914), still extant at the northwest corner of Main and Conway Street in Greenfield. The New Block is more ambitious and more ornate than Benson's earlier, functional development.

Benson's New Block has a rectangular footprint that conforms to the lot lines with no setback. On the south elevation (Main Street), a pressed-metal cornice defines the large commercial storefront. The modern storefront (138 Main Street) has a recessed entry, flanked by display windows and capped by a broad sign band.

At the southwest corner of the building, fluted concrete pilasters support a dentillated pediment, inscribed "BENSON'S NEW BLOCK," that marks the entrance to the upper floors of the building (136 Main Street). Mosaic tile flooring, dark red glazed tile wainscoting, and a pressed-metal ceiling provide a shallow vestibule leading to the entry door and main staircase.

Above the street level, four concrete pilasters on the south elevation support a pressed-metal cornice and a brick parapet. The pilasters divide the façade into a large center bay and two flanking bays. At the second-floor level, the center bay is fitted with a shallow projecting window assembly, consisting of a wide center light and transom, flanked by individual double-hung windows and capped with a shallow metal roof. At the third floor, a central pair of double-hung windows is flanked by single windows under a band of corbelled brick. The center bay of the façade is flanked by double-hung 1/1 windows at each floor level, with a corbelled brick detail above the third floor and rectangular attic vents inserted below the cornice. All of the windows have concrete sills and lintels, except for the projecting bay at the second floor.

On the east elevation, Benson's New Block overlooks the roof of the adjacent one-story commercial building. Concrete pilasters divide the east elevation into rhythmic bays and support a metal cornice and brick parapet. Each bay is fitted with a shallow, three-part, window bay at the second floor, and an array of three double-hung windows with concrete sills and lintels at the third floor.

The west wall of the New Block is built directly against the adjacent Mohawk Chambers building, but the floor levels do not correspond.

The north (rear) elevation consists of a plain brick wall with stepped windows that conform to the levels of the rear staircase. The windows are double-hung 1/1 sash with concrete sills and lintels.

At the interior, the street-level commercial space is an open floor plan fitted with modern finishes to suit the needs of the current retail tenant. A separate entrance west of the storefront leads to a wooden staircase on the west side of the building that provides access to the two upper floors.

On the upper floors, Benson's New Block is arranged as commercial office suites with hardwood strip flooring, plaster walls, original wood trim, and pressed-tin ceilings. Offices at the front of the building

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tend to be more highly detailed than those along the single corridor to the rear. An enclosed metal fire stair at the north end of the building provides secondary egress from all floors.

Mohawk Chambers

The Mohawk Chambers (1917, GRE.94, Photographs 1-4) is a four-story masonry and steel building, with a rectangular footprint built out to the limits of the corner lot. It is bordered on the east by a party wall with the adjacent Benson's New Block (1916), on the south (across Main Street) by a mix of 20th-century commercial buildings (Pella Window Factory, service station, church), on the west by Wells Street and a furniture store on the opposite corner and on the north by a new two-story addition (2011) and series of paved parking lots in an area that was formerly a row of residential buildings (demolished ca. 1965).

On the south elevation (Main Street, Photographs 1 and 2), the Mohawk Chambers presents a double-leaf center entrance at street level, flanked by two commercial storefronts. The recessed center entrance is fitted with a pair of half-glass doors with rectangular transom above. The ceramic apron in front of the doors spells out "THE WINSLOW" in mosaic tile. The retail spaces on either side of the entrance are fitted with traditional storefronts within the original masonry openings, under a continuous pressed metal-cornice. The larger commercial space on the west side currently accommodates a nail studio, while the smaller one on the east side holds a children's toy store and bookstore.

Above the street level, the red-brick façade rises to a simple pressed-metal cornice and a rectangular brick parapet above the fourth floor. The fenestration pattern is slightly irregular, with the two west bays on each floor fitted with a pair of double-hung, 1/1, wood replacement windows with concrete sills and lintels. The fenestration above the center entrance consists of a set of three small, double-hung, 1/1, wood replacement windows under a concrete lintel at the first landing level, a pair of full-size windows at the second landing, an embedded concrete cross panel at the third level, and a pair of full-size windows aligned with the fourth floor under a concrete lintel. The fenestration on the eastern bay of the south elevation consists of sets of three double-hung, 1/1, wood replacement windows, with concrete sills and lintels at each level. A line of four shallow attic vent windows is evenly spaced between the fourth floor windows and the metal cornice.

On the west elevation (Wells Street, Photographs 2 and 3), the street level features a partial continuation of the pressed metal storefront cornice along the west side of the building, with storefront windows below. A secondary commercial space near the northwest corner features a slightly recessed entry and a close array of windows under a section of pressed-metal cornice.

Fenestration on the upper stories along the west elevation consists of regularly spaced pairs of double-hung, 1/1, wood replacement windows with concrete lintels and sills. The rectangular attic vents continue along the west side of the building between the fourth floor and the corbelled roofline. A single interior brick chimney is visible above the roofline at the rear of the building.

The north (rear) elevation is partially concealed by the elevator addition and the new residential addition, but the red-brick walls, paired, double-hung, 1/1 windows, concrete sills and lintels, and corbelled roofline are visible adjacent to the elevator tower and above the two-story addition.

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On the interior, the two street-level commercial spaces on Main Street (south elevation) both have open floor plans. In the east storefront, the original ceiling height has been preserved at the front of the commercial space, and the original tin ceiling has been restored along the west side. In the west storefront, the large display windows have been restored along the south and west sides and the original ceiling height has been preserved at the front of the space. The interior portions of both retail spaces have been fitted out with drop ceilings, sheetrock walls, and wall-to-wall carpeting to suit the needs of the commercial tenants.

At the residential entrance from Main Street (south elevation), the double doors lead to a shallow vestibule with a tile floor and a front staircase that serves all three upper floors. The staircase retains its square newel posts, wooden handrail, and turned wooden balusters.

The floor plan is similar on each of the upper floors, with a central corridor connecting all thirty-five residential units to the main staircase in front, and a simpler enclosed stair at the rear (Photographs 4-5). The pressed-metal ceilings are preserved in the second-floor corridor and in a portion of the third-floor corridor. An acoustical drop ceiling is installed in the fourth-floor corridor to accommodate mechanical systems.

Each unit entry consists of a single five-panel door with a molded wood surround. Some of the units on the second and third floors retain framed transom lights (now backed by solid panels) above their entries. The studio-style residential units are small, but each includes a galley kitchen and a private bath (photo 6). Plaster walls, wood trim, and historic window and door surrounds are preserved in most units.

The second floor is equipped with a common laundry room and with a housekeeping room for the storage of supplies. The third floor features a large community room with a fully equipped kitchen and space for meetings and events.

A four-story elevator addition and a two-story residential addition (2011, photo 3) are located immediately north of the original building. On the west elevation, the elevator addition features a recessed entrance under a wide canopy between the north (rear) wall of the old building and the south wall of the addition. The walls of the elevator addition are clad in metal panels and stepped back in order to expose the fenestration on the north wall of the older building. The residential addition is a two-story, flat-roofed building with red-brick walls, and paired, double-hung, 1/1 windows that relate the new construction to the earlier building.

The elevator addition at the north end provides barrier-free access to all four floors of the main building and the two floors of the north addition. The floor plan of the new addition is similar to that of the main building, with twenty single-room occupancy (SRO) units arrayed along both sides of a central corridor.

Visual Context

Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers are part of the central business district along Main Street in downtown Greenfield. The surrounding buildings at the west end of downtown are primarily one-story, 20th-century commercial development on the north side of Main Street, and scattered late 20th-century development on the south side of Main Street.

One block east of Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers is the Greenfield Main Street Historic

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District (Fig. C: Greenfield Historic Districts) consisting of 53 properties primarily dating from the mid to late 19th century. Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers represent a second phase of development, as the downtown business district extended west in conjunction with the development of the Mohawk Trail (Massachusetts Route 2) as an automobile touring route in the early 20th century.

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are known on the Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers properties, sites may be present. Seven sites are known in the general area (within one mile), most located in uplands bordering the Green River and other wetlands. The buildings are located on level to moderately sloping topography. Soil types in the area are sandy, and formed in stratified glaciofluvial deposits. The property is located in close proximity to wetlands. In general, however, the potential for locating significant archaeological resources, both ancient Native American and historic, is low. Any potential pre-1916 cultural resources that may have been present were destroyed by construction of the Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers. The buildings are located on small, level lots in an urban downtown setting, and were built to conform to the lot lines.

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.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location

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- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1914-1963

Significant Dates

1916 (construction of Benson's New Block)

1918 (construction of Mohawk Chambers)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

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Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Benson, W. Edward (1879-1956), Developer
Gass, Thomas J. (b. 1876), Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph *(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)*

Benson's New Block (136-138 Main Street, GRE.96, built 1916) and the Mohawk Chambers (130-134 Main Street, GRE.94, built 1917) are two adjacent masonry commercial buildings that were erected by W. Edward Benson, a local real estate developer, as part of the western expansion of Greenfield's central business district. Both buildings are well-preserved examples of early 20th-century commercial architecture with modest Classical Revival-style detailing, and have a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The two buildings meet National Register Criterion A at the local level in the areas of commerce, community planning, and social history. The expansion of the central business district in Greenfield was driven by technological advancement (movie theatres, automobiles) and by tourism, particularly the development of the Mohawk Trail (Massachusetts Route 2) as a popular automobile touring route in the early 20th century.

Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers also meet National Register Criterion C at the local level in the area of architecture. The two adjacent buildings are both multistory, rectangular masonry buildings conforming to the lot lines with no front or side setback. Both buildings have street-level storefronts with rhythmic fenestration above, and a flat roof partially concealed by a front parapet. The street elevations of both buildings are faced in brick and concrete, but the use of Classical Revival-style design and detailing is distinctly different on each building. Together the two buildings represent a particular style of development advocated by a local developer and intended to promote economic development in Greenfield by making the downtown business corridor appear both attractive and modern.

Both buildings have been in continuous commercial use since their construction. The period of significance runs from the date of first construction (1916) to the objective 50-year threshold (1963).

Narrative Statement of Significance *(Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)*

Historical Background

Greenfield (2010 pop. 17,400) is located in the center of Franklin County in the Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts, and is the largest community in the county. The area was opened for English settlement as part of the 800-acre Deerfield grant in 1673. Greenfield became a separate district in 1753, and was incorporated as a town in 1775. Greenfield was named as the county seat of the new Franklin County in 1811, and developed throughout the 19th century as a market town and manufacturing center.

Major railroad lines, running north and south along the Connecticut River Valley, linked Greenfield to suppliers and markets in Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut in the mid 19th century. With the completion of the Hoosac Tunnel in North Adams (1875), Greenfield also has direct east and west connections by rail to Boston and Albany.

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The Late Industrial period (1870-1915) was a time of rapid growth and prosperity for Greenfield, and the dense rows of commercial buildings that form the central business district along Main Street date primarily from that period. A wide range of local industries (particularly fine knives, farm tools, and tool and die production) provided employment for local residents and for immigrants from Europe and Canada. Greenfield's population increased rapidly from 3,500 in 1870 to 7,900 in 1900, and more than 15,500 by 1915.

The Mohawk Trail (Massachusetts Route 2) through Greenfield and the Berkshire Hills of Western Massachusetts was one of the first and most popular automobile touring routes in New England. From Millers Falls on the Connecticut River west to the New York State line, the 63-mile road follows the Deerfield River up into the Berkshires, descends into the Housatonic Valley, then rises again toward the New York border. The trail had been in use for centuries as a major east-west route, but the road was widened and paved to accommodate automobiles in the early 20th century. In 1914, the Mohawk Trail was officially designated as a scenic tourist route by the Massachusetts legislature.

Greenfield's prosperity continued through the 1920s, but slowed substantially with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. Many local manufacturers closed up shop or moved to less expensive labor markets in the 1930s and early 1940s. As a result, the town had very little new development throughout the period.

After World War II, Greenfield's idyllic setting and convenient location attracted a new wave of suburban residents. The Mohawk Trail touring route, already being decried as tacky and overdone, still attracted visitors throughout the summer and fall. Public and private efforts to modernize the downtown area and make it more attractive resulted in the demolition or significant alteration of several historic buildings, but the downtown core remained essentially intact.

In the 1970s, Greenfield developed a reputation as a center for alternative lifestyles. The resurgence of interest in agriculture, natural foods, artisanal crafts, and the arts proved to be a lasting benefit for Greenfield. The town today is a regional center for education, community activism, locally based retail, and community agriculture.

Criterion A: Commerce, Community Planning & Social History

Benson's New Block (1916) and the adjacent Mohawk Chambers (1917) were part of the early 20th-century expansion of the central business district westward along Main St. Both buildings were built for W. Edward Benson (1879-1956), a local real estate developer and entrepreneur who actively promoted the expansion of the downtown business district and the construction of new residential neighborhoods in Greenfield. Benson was particularly interested in developing commercial and residential areas that could take advantage of the growing popularity of the automobile.

Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers were conceived as mixed-use developments. Benson's New Block (named to distinguish it from Benson's earlier development at 94 Main Street, erected 1914) was designed with a large commercial storefront at street level and a separate entrance for the well-appointed office suites on the two upper floors. The Mohawk Chambers (referring to the 1914 scenic road designation of Route 2 in Greenfield as the Mohawk Trail) originally had three commercial spaces at street level, offices and meeting rooms on the second floor, and hotel rooms and apartments on the top two floors.

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Over the years, Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers accommodated the developer's various business ventures in real estate, insurance, and automobile retailing. The large corner storefront at Main and Wells Street was occupied by the popular Mohawk Chocolate Shop, while the smaller storefronts in both buildings held a succession of retail specialty shops to meet the needs of local residents and visitors.

The two buildings were formerly connected on the upper floors by doors in the adjoining walls (despite the unequal floor levels.) The openings were closed up when the two buildings went into separate ownership after Benson's death.

The west end of Main Street evolved to serve automobile traffic in the mid 20th century. Most of the subsequent development consists of single-story commercial buildings and freestanding service establishments, along with car dealers and a few late 20th-century commercial buildings. The Mohawk Chambers and Benson's New Block are vestiges of the earlier downtown development pattern of multistory masonry buildings with shared party walls and no setback (Fig. A: Sanborn map, 1922).

Benson's New Block

The narrow vacant lot that was developed as Benson's New Block (1916) was purchased by W. Edward Benson in combination with the former First Baptist Church at Main and Wells Street (later the site of the Mohawk Chambers, 1917). While the old church was converted to retail stores and a movie theater, Benson's New Block was a completely new venture.

Benson's business interests were wide ranging. He had started as a dealer in wood, coal, and fuel oil, and became a tireless promoter of Greenfield's commercial and residential potential. As a real estate broker, he helped market the community, but also had a direct hand in developing new commercial and residential properties.

When it opened in 1916, Benson's New Block provided a prominent modern location for Benson's real estate brokerage and development company. By 1918, two of the second-floor offices were rented to doctors, and the third floor was configured as 25 hotel rooms. The street-level storefront was occupied by the Dembar-Lyon Motor Company, a retail dealer in automobiles and auto supplies.

In 1920, the New York Cash Market took over the main storefront space. The business went through various name changes as Walter Griesbach Grocer (1921-22), the Co-op Grocery (1923-24), Landau's Grocery (1923-47), and Thrifty's (1948). By 1950, the grocery store had closed and the space was converted to the Peggy Parker women's clothing store, which operated into the 1980s.

The upper floors of Benson's New Block served as office space (second floor) and hotel rooms (third floor) until 1926. Both floors were then converted to small apartments and were advertised as the Patterson Apartments (1927-1953), Aaron Rooms (1954-67), and Newman Rooms (1968-1970s). The rooms were converted back to offices about 1985, and the historic trim and finishes were restored in 2010.

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Mohawk Chambers

The site of the Mohawk Chambers was formerly occupied by the First Baptist Church (1853), located on a narrow corner parcel on the north side of Main Street, with Wells Street to the west and School Place (later Elm Place) located directly to the east. When the church closed in 1911, the building was converted to a fish market with retail stores on the first floor and the Bijou movie theatre on the second floor (in the old church sanctuary). In 1916, just before the former church was demolished, the street-level commercial spaces were occupied by the Bijou Cigar Store, Cummings & Company millinery, and the Bijou Candy Kitchen. The Bijou Theater operated upstairs.

Fresh on the heels of completing Benson's New Block (1916) on the former vacant parcel east of the Bijou, W. Edward Benson decided to tear down the old wood-frame building and erect a new modern building in its place. Noting that new movie theaters were opening in Greenfield and that touring traffic on the Mohawk Trail was picking up, Benson decided to create a mixed-use development that would complement the adjacent New Block.

When it opened in 1917, the Mohawk Chambers served three distinct functions. At street level, the new four-story masonry and steel building originally accommodated the Mohawk Chocolate Shop in the large corner storefront, with two smaller retail stores on either side. The second floor was originally configured as offices and meeting space for W. Edward Benson and his various business ventures. The third and fourth floors were set up as hotel accommodations for tourists with 92 rooms. The original designation of the building as the Mohawk Chambers highlighted the availability of comfortable sleeping accommodations for automobile tourists exploring the Mohawk Trail (MA Route 2).

The Mohawk Chocolate Shop kept the large corner storefront at 130 Main Street until 1924. The space was converted to Peter J. Sullivan's Drug Store (1926-33), the remodeled as a restaurant known as the Sandwich Shop (1934-37), then Sullivan's Restaurant (1938), and later the Waffle Shop (1939-1950). Rudolph Jewelers occupied the space from 1952-65. Braff Tailors and Formal Wear bought the entire building in 1965 and took over the corner storefront as a retail business location.

The smaller commercial space at 134 Main Street was initially occupied by Streeter Electric (1918-1922). It briefly held Victor Salustri Shoe Repair and Frank S. Mauri confectioner (1925-26), and then was converted to the Olympic Fruit Company (grocers 1927-36). It served as LeCroix's Electric Shop in 1937-38, then stood vacant for a couple of years. It reopened in 1940 as Colodny Clothing, which operated through 1956. Braff & Rich men's clothing (1965-1984) occupied the space after Braff bought the building in 1965. Later tenants were the Bagel Deli (1985) and Bar Harbor Clothing (1990).

A secondary storefront at 7 Wells Street operated as O'Keefe's Grocery (1926) and First National Stores (grocers, 1928). It was occupied by the Mohawk Barber Shop from 1959 to 1963, and the space was later incorporated as an adjunct to the main corner storefront.

The upper floors of the Mohawk Chambers initially included office space on the second floor and hotel rooms above, but the need for more lodging quickly pushed out the office use. The Mohawk Chambers operated as tourist accommodations from 1918 to 1926. It was renamed the Winslow Hotel in 1927, and operated under that name until 1938. With the onset of the Great Depression, the building shifted from the tourist market to single-room-occupancy units and was known as the Stearns Rooms (1939-50) and then Harco Rooms (1951-1980s).

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The three small lots north of the Mohawk Chambers on Wells Street were when the Braff family purchased the Mohawk Chambers building in 1965. The three wood-frame, multi-family, houses on the lots were demolished that year to create additional parking for the commercial building (Fig. A: Sanborn map, 1922; Fig. B: 2010 Greenfield Assessor's Map).

The building was completely rehabilitated in 2011 as the Winslow Apartments, with two commercial spaces at street level and living units on the upper floors. As part of the rehabilitation project, a two-story residential addition with a full elevator connection to the four-story main building was erected on a portion of the north parking lot (where one of the multifamily houses had been demolished in 1965).

W. Edward Benson

W. Edward Benson (1879-1956) was a local real estate broker actively involved in residential and commercial development in Greenfield and the surrounding communities. He made substantial investments in commercial real estate in Greenfield (MA) and nearby Brattleboro (VT). He also bought and sold farmland, developing some of the farmland for new housing.

Benson was born in Grafton, Vermont, but moved to Greenfield as a child and graduated from Greenfield High School in 1898. He was only 24 when he started buying and selling real estate in Greenfield in 1903. By 1910, he was employed as the secretary and treasurer of the W. E. Benson Coal Company. In addition to selling coal and wood, Benson ran an insurance agency and invested in real estate.

W. Edward Benson was a Greenfield booster throughout his life. Benson's advertisement in the Springfield Republican newspaper in 1913 read in part:

Greenfield, Mass. / "Things Are Booming Here."

The ad touted the town's three theaters, six hotels, three fireproof garages, eight churches ("Good Ones"), and twelve schools. Benson noted that "Real Estate has doubled in value in less than 10 years. If you had bought Greenfield Real Estate 10 years ago for \$5,000 you could sell it for \$10,000 today."¹

Benson's first major real estate development in downtown Greenfield was the Benson Block at Main and Conway Streets (94-100 Main Street, erected 1914). The three-story brick building was located a few blocks west of the traditional central business district, and was designed to take advantage of lower land prices and better automobile access. The building originally housed a grocery and a bakery, as well as Benson's real estate office.

Benson next eyed the former First Baptist Church of Greenfield at the corner of Main and Wells streets. The church had been built in 1853, but had closed in 1911, and the building was being used for occasional motion picture showings under the name "The Bijou." Benson purchased the wood-frame building on the edge of downtown in 1914, along with the vacant lot to the east of it:

Important Real Estate Sale

¹ *Springfield Republican*, Dec. 22, 1913

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The Bijou building so-called on the corner of Main and Wells Street and the land to the east of it adjoining the Main Street school yard has been sold by William A. Davenport to W. Edward Benson, the real estate operator. Mr. Benson does not plan any changes in the present building, but he expects to erect a building on the vacant land east of it. He expects to start work on the new building in the spring and will devote it to office purposes.²

After removing the organ and stained-glass windows from the old church, Benson remodeled the Bijou as a motion picture theatre at a cost of \$20,000.³

The narrow vacant lot to the east of the Bijou was selected as the location for Benson's New Block (136-138 Main St.), erected in 1915-16.⁴ The three-story brick building, erected at a cost of \$45,000, had a commercial storefront at street level, with a separate entrance to the office suites on the upper floors.⁵

Immediately after the completion of Benson's New Block, the developer focused again on the adjacent Bijou Theater. With several new movie theaters being constructed in Greenfield, Benson chose to close the Bijou in 1916 and clear the lot for new construction.

The Mohawk Chambers (later the Winslow Hotel) opened in November 1917 to great local acclaim:

"Mohawk Chambers" Opening

A large number of the townspeople attended the formal opening of "Mohawk Chambers," W. Edward Benson's new building at the corner of Main and Wells Street on Tuesday evening. There was an entertainment with dancing on the second floor, music being furnished by a two-piece orchestra. In addition the visitors were shown around the building. There are three stores on the ground floor, including the finely appointed "Mohawk Chocolate Shop." On the second floor are the Benson real estate offices with rooms for Mr. Benson and Manager Joseph Chamberland, also a large drafting room in the rear. The two upper floors are suites of rooms and well help the congestion when the town is overrun with transients [seasonal tourists] as is often the case.⁶

In its original configuration, the Mohawk Chambers, located at the east end of the Mohawk Trail scenic automobile route, had three commercial storefronts on the ground floor—two on Main Street, facing south, and one on Wells Street, facing west. The largest storefront at the southwest corner of the building was occupied by the Mohawk Chocolate Shop, "a modernly equipped confectionery store with a handsome soda fountain and carrying cigars and tobacco as a sideline."⁷ The second floor was devoted to the real estate sales and development offices of W. Edward Benson, with additional space available for other business tenants. The third and fourth floors provided suites of hotel rooms for tourists and visitors:

The third floor is given up to two-room suites with private baths. These are designed for transients, particularly the automobile trade, which Greenfield has had difficulty in housing for

² *Greenfield Recorder*, Dec. 2, 1914

³ Franklin County Registry of Deeds, Book 564, p. 78: First Baptist Church to William A. Davenport (May 3, 1911)

⁴ Franklin County Registry of Deeds, Book 597, p. 358: William A. Davenport to W. Edward Benson (Nov. 27, 1914)

⁵ *Springfield Republican*, Jan. 1, 1917

⁶ *Greenfield Gazette & Courier*, Nov. 10, 1917

⁷ *Greenfield Recorder*, Nov. 7, 1917

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the past two seasons. The rooms are so arranged that they may be used singly if desired. The baths are of the most modern type, with tessellated floors and white enamel fixtures.

On the top floor are more two-room suites, each with private toilet and shower-bath. The building is connected with the new Benson block which stands next to it by several doors, all of which are of the fireproof type. The building throughout is finished in hard pine with floors of maple. The furnishings are very attractive. The general tone is brown, the woodwork, furniture, and decorations being in harmony.⁸

Benson's real estate ventures involved both financial and occasional physical risk. An article in the *Springfield Republican* in 1921 noted Benson's direct involvement:

W. Edward Benson, real estate man, while looking over some property on Chapman Street [in Greenfield], fell from a platform breaking both bones in his left arm. He was able to go to the office of a physician.⁹

By 1922, Benson had expanded his business ventures and was a retailer of the King Eight, "the Most Powerful Car on the Market." His sales office was in the Mohawk Chambers on Main Street.¹⁰ The eight-cylinder luxury car was advertised as "the car of no regrets."

W. Edward Benson died in Greenfield on May 18, 1956. He left his wife, Florence R. Benson (married in 1901), and three daughters, Ruth L. Diggins, Mildred L. Lyman, and Evelyn F. Houghton. The local newspaper gave front-page coverage to Benson's death:

W.E. Benson, 77, Prominent Real Estate Man Dies

Benson was one of the foremost real estate dealers during the great building era of the town from 1900 to 1920. He built many of the business blocks in the West Main Street area and developed a number of residential areas in the north part of town.¹¹

The obituary noted that Benson was a member of the First Baptist Church, the Masonic Lodge, and Kiwanis. He served on the building committee for the new Greenfield High School and also on the town's finance committee. He was the first president of the Franklin County Real Estate Board and was a member of the Board of Trade.

Criterion C: Architecture

Benson's New Block (1916) marked a departure from the load-bearing masonry buildings and embellished Victorian facades that characterized the commercial center of Greenfield. The steel and masonry building represents a modern interpretation of classical precedents.

The three-story brick façade with colossal pilasters and a central bay window references the Classical Revival style in its symmetry and detailing. The exposed upper stories of the east wall are faced with

⁸ *Greenfield Recorder*, Nov. 7, 1917

⁹ *Springfield Republican*, Aug. 26, 1921

¹⁰ *Springfield Republican*, Aug. 27, 1922

¹¹ *Greenfield Recorder*, May 19, 1956

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common red brick, but the rhythmic bays dividing the wall, the projecting windows at the second floor, and the triple arrays of windows at the third floor continue the Classical Revival vocabulary. The use of cast-concrete details and simplified profiles makes Benson's New Block a modern expression inspired by classical architecture.

The four-story Mohawk Chambers (1917) is somewhat blockish in design, but incorporates a mix of Classical Revival and modern elements. The textured brick façade on Main Street is divided into four uneven bays to conform to the design of the storefronts at street level.

The windows are aligned vertically in each bay, but the window configurations are arranged to fit the varying widths of each bay and the landing levels of the staircase. Cast-concrete sills and lintels and a prominent pressed-metal cornice echo the design of the adjacent New Block. The relevance of the large cross-shaped concrete panel between the third and fourth floors of the staircase bay is unclear, but it may be a subtle reference to the First Baptist Church that formerly occupied the site.

Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers were both constructed by Thomas J. Gass (b. 1876), a local contractor who worked closely with Benson on many of his commercial and residential developments in and around Greenfield. Gass came to Greenfield from Vermont about 1900 and worked first as a farmer and laborer, then as a carpenter. He established a large contracting firm with his sons, and was responsible for building or renovating many buildings in downtown Greenfield in the early and mid 20th century.

Recent History

Both Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers were updated periodically to suit new commercial standards and new tenants. The completion of Interstate 91 on the west side of Greenfield in the late 1960s encouraged new commercial development along Main Street (redesignated as Route 2A) from the downtown center to the highway interchange.

Benson's New Block was remodeled in 1948, when the upstairs was Aaron's Inn. Metal ceilings were added to the first-floor commercial space occupied by Peggy Parker women's clothing at the same time. According to town records, the building was renovated again in November 1985, and awnings were added to the storefront in May 1990. Benson's New Block was restored by a new owner in 2010. The building now accommodates a furniture consignment shop on the ground floor and professional offices above.

The commercial space on the ground floor of the Mohawk Chambers was remodeled and updated as Braff Tailors in October 1965. The smaller commercial unit on the east side was remodeled for Bagel Deli in February 1985. The three upper floors were converted to residential use as single-room-occupancy (SRO) efficiency units (some with shared baths) on each floor, under the name Harco Rooms.

In 2009, the Mohawk Chambers had two commercial spaces on the ground floor and 38 efficiency apartments on the three upper floors. As part of the tax-advantaged rehabilitation of the building in 2011, the two commercial spaces were completely rehabilitated, and the upper floors were reconfigured to create 35 studio apartments with private baths and kitchens, as well as a community space. An elevator addition and residential addition at the rear of the building was constructed on a portion of the north parking lot to provide twenty additional studio apartment units and barrier-free access to all floors of both buildings.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (*Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.*)

Annual Reports of the Town of Greenfield. Greenfield, MA: Town of Greenfield, various dates (1854-2009).

Barber, John Warner. Historical Collections Relating to the History and Antiquities of Every Town in Massachusetts. Worcester, MA: Door, Howland & Co., 1839.

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Town of Greenfield, Building Department records (1940s-present).

Warner, Charles Forbes, ed. Picturesque Franklin. Northampton MA: Wade, Warner & Co., 1891.

MAPS AND PLANS

1867-1950 Sanborn Map Co. Insurance Maps of Greenfield, Massachusetts.

1871 Beers, F.W. Atlas of Franklin County, Massachusetts.

1904 Walker, G.H. Atlas of Massachusetts.

1918 Richards, H.H. Atlas of the Town of Greenfield, Massachusetts

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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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): GRE.94 (130-134 Main St.) & GRE.96 (136-138 Main St.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates.

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.587939 | Longitude: -72.604390 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 18 | Easting: 696567 | Northing: 4717840 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (*Describe the boundaries of the property.*)

The boundaries of the nominated district are shown as a penciled line on the accompanying 2010 Assessor's Map of the town of Greenfield, Sheet 058, Parcels 34 & 35. Starting at the northeast corner of Main and Wells streets, the boundary runs north 298 feet along the east side of Wells Street to the rear parcel line, then east 112 feet along the rear parcel line, then south 299 feet along the east parcel lines of 136-138 Main Street, then west 85 feet along the north side of Main Street to the point of beginning, and encompasses an area of less than one acre.

Boundary Justification (*Explain why the boundaries were selected.*)

The boundaries of the National Register nomination delineate the parcel lines of the developed parcels known as 130-134 Main Street and 11 Wells Street (Parcel 058-34) and 136-138 Main Street (Parcel 058-35), Greenfield, Massachusetts. The south and west boundaries align with Main Street and Wells Street, respectively. The north boundary follows the rear parcel line. The east boundary follows the east parcel line and the east wall of 136-138 Main Street.

The areas directly north and east of the defined boundaries consist of paved surface parking lots maintained by the Town of Greenfield. The development pattern beyond the delineated boundary consists of a dense commercial corridor along Main Street with retail stores, gas stations, and institutional buildings. Most of the buildings in the immediate vicinity date from the mid- to late 20th century. Many of the buildings have been substantially altered and no longer retain a high degree of historical or architectural integrity.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Gregory Farmer (consultant) with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director
organization: Massachusetts Historical Commission
street & number: 220 Morrissey Blvd.
city or town: Boston state: MA zip code: 02125-3314
e-mail: betsy.friedberg@state.ma.us
telephone: 617-727-8470
date: December, 2013

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Maps and Views

Figure A: Sanborn Insurance Map of Greenfield, Mass. (1922), Plate 4

Figure B: Town of Greenfield, Tax Assessor's Map #058 (2010)

Figure C: Town of Greenfield – Main Street Historic Districts

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: BENSON'S NEW BLOCK and the MOHAWK CHAMBERS

City or Vicinity: GREENFIELD

County: FRANKLIN

State: MASSACHUSETTS

Photographer: Gregory Farmer

Date: November 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 6: Exterior view of Mohawk Chambers and Benson's New Block, south and east elevations (camera facing northwest).

2 of 6: Exterior view of Mohawk Chambers & Benson's New Block, west and south elevations (camera facing northeast)

3 of 6: Exterior view of the north addition (2011) and west elevation at 11 Wells Street, Greenfield (camera facing southeast)

4 of 6: Interior view of the second-floor residential corridor at Mohawk Chambers / Winslow Apartments, showing portions of the tin ceiling.

5 of 6: Interior view of Mohawk Chambers/Winslow Apts., showing south staircase at the third floor.

6 of 6: Interior view of Mohawk Chambers/Winslow Apts., typical unit configuration.

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. 460 et seq.).

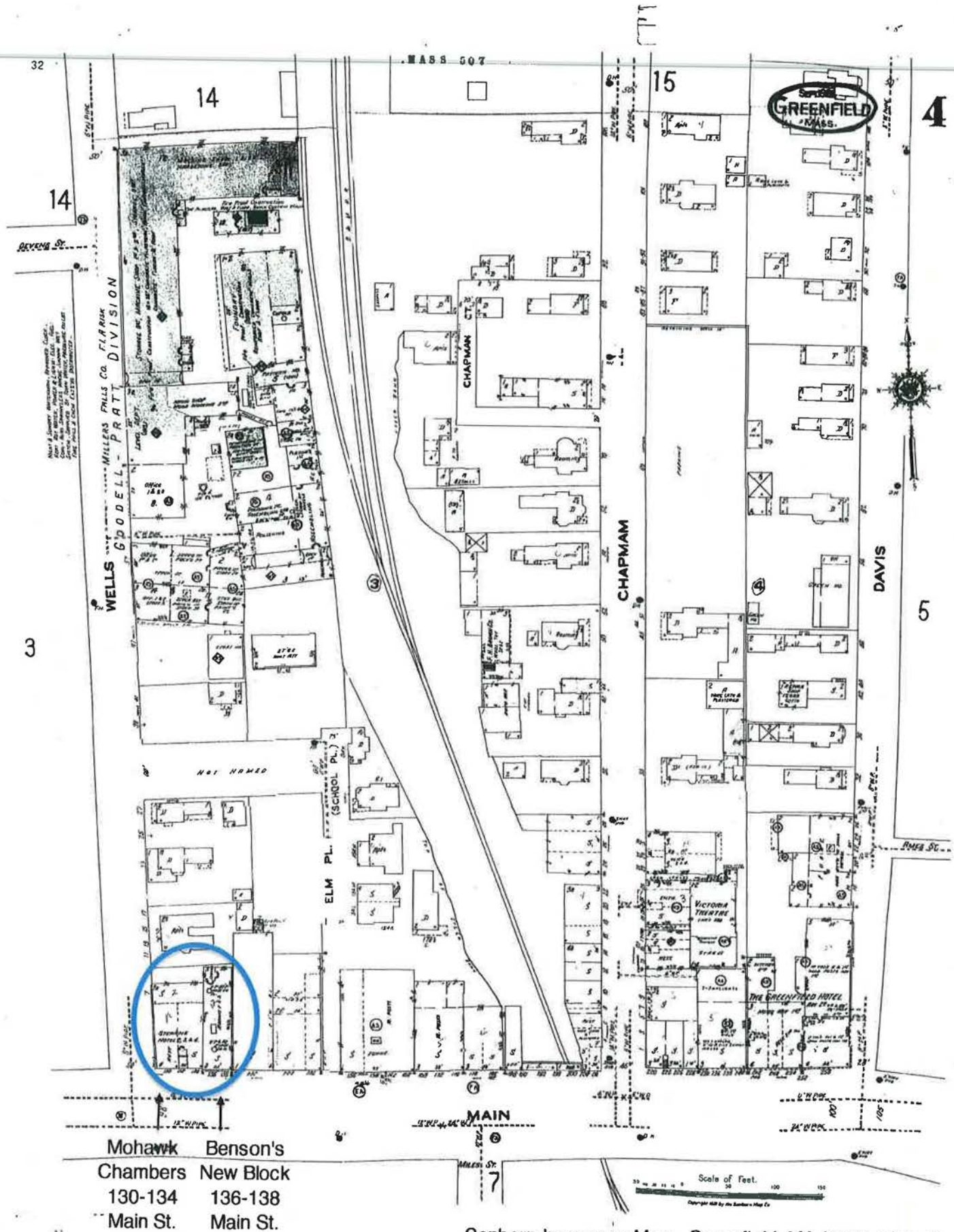
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

PHOTOGRAPH LOCATIONS

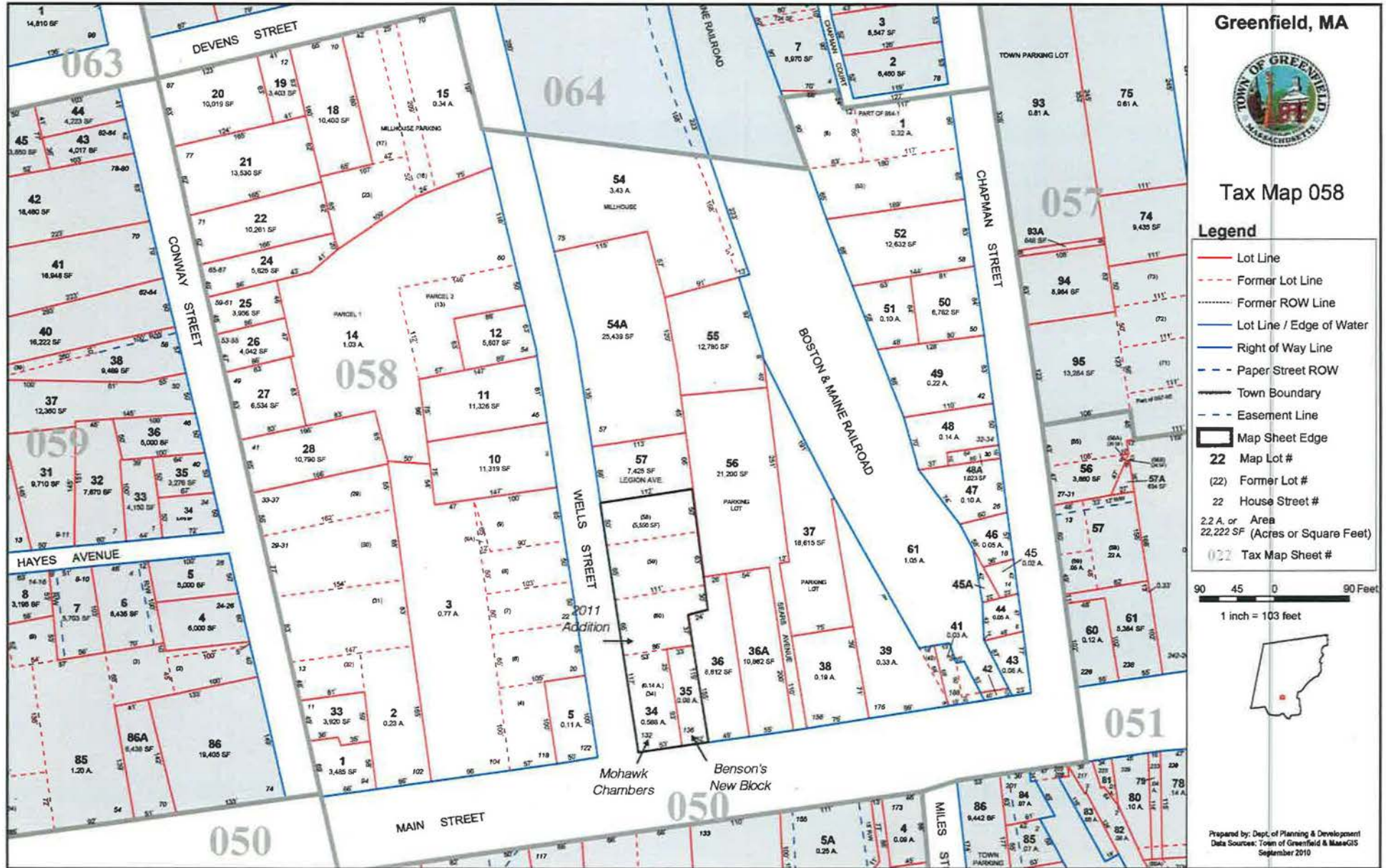


BENSON'S NEW BLOCK and the MOHAWK CHAMBERS
GREENFIELD (FRANKLIN)
MA

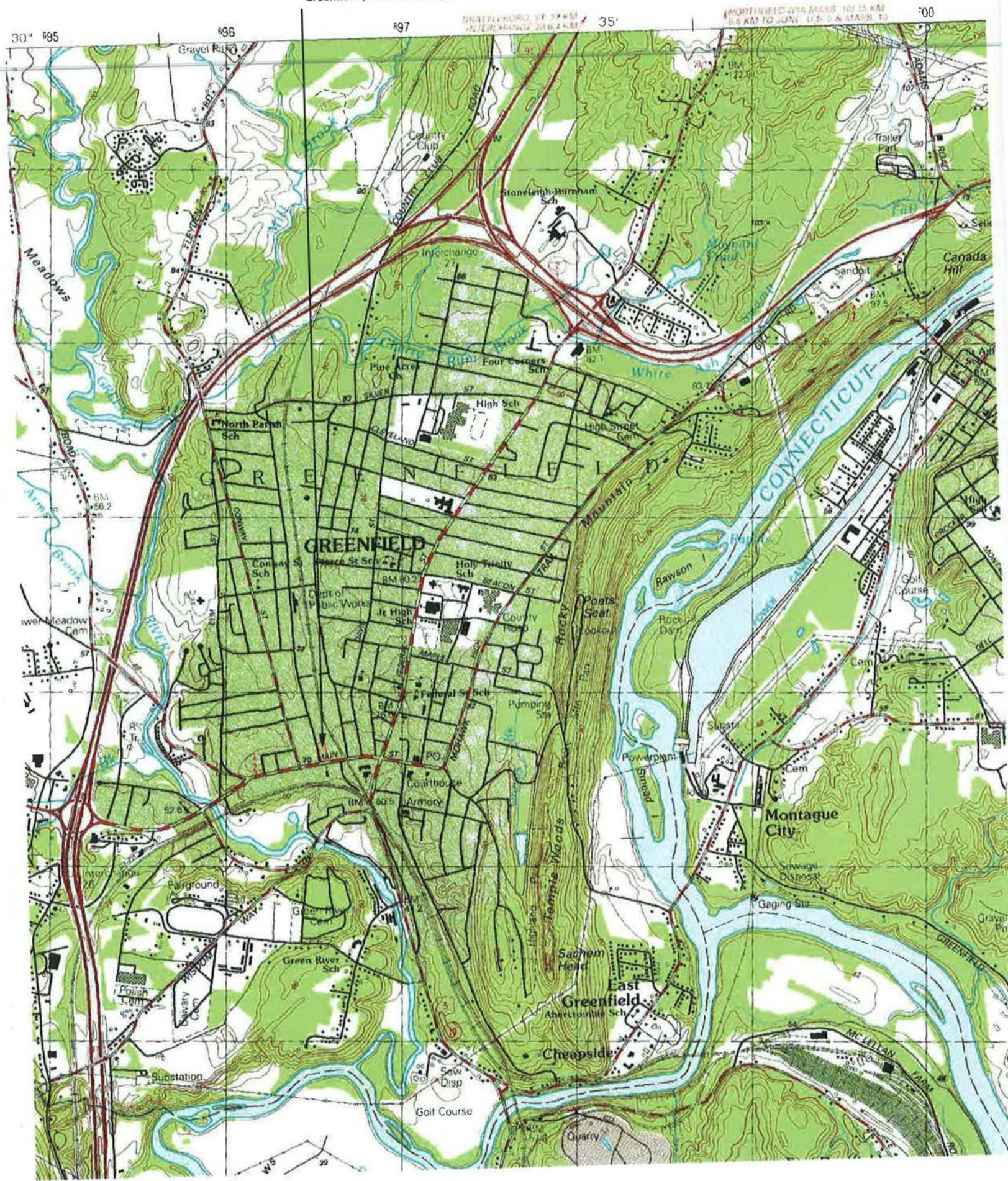
National Register nomination: Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers, Greenfield (Franklin Co.), MA



Sanborn Insurance Map - Greenfield, MA (1922, plate 4)



Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers
Greenfield (Franklin County), MA





RE

Consignment

MASTERS



LUCKY NAILS SALON

LUCKY NAILS SALON PROFESSIONAL NAIL CARE

FOOT SPA • FOOT
PEDICURE

NAILS

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GEL

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Benson's New Block and the Mohawk Chambers
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Franklin

DATE RECEIVED: 1/23/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/24/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/11/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/11/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000046

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: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 3/11/2014 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept AIC
REVIEWER Patricia Andrus DISCIPLINE Historian
TELEPHONE _____ DATE 3/11/2014

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

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

December 30, 2013

Mr. J. Paul Loether
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Benson's New Block and Mohawk Chambers, Greenfield (Franklin), MA

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 blue ink that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Gregory Farmer, consultant
John Passiglia, Greenfield Historical Commission
John Carridi, Winslow Building Mgmt. LP
Mark A. and Barbara N. Zaccheo
William F. Martin, Mayor, City of Greenfield
Roxanne Wedegartner, Greenfield Planning Board Chair