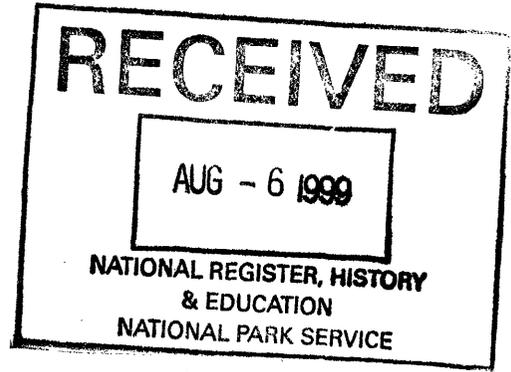


NPS Form 10-900-b  
(March 1992)

OMB No. 1024-0018

*cover*



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

  x   New Submission        Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

**THE DINERS OF MASSACHUSETTS**

=====  
B. Associated Historic Contexts

=====  
(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

- From Night Lunch Wagon to Diner (c. 1884 to the early 1920s)**
- Diners Take Hold in Massachusetts (mid-1920s to c. 1945)**
- Diners Go Deluxe (c.1945 to c. 1955)**
- The Diner Turned Restaurant (c. 1955 to c. 1970)**

=====  
C. Form Prepared by

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

street & number: 220 Morrissey Boulevard      telephone: 617-727-8470

city or town: Boston                      state: MA              zip code: 02125

=====  
D. Certification

=====  
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby

certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith B. McDonough  
Signature and title of certifying official

7/29/99  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*for* Patrick Andrews  
Signature of the Keeper

9/22/99  
Date

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURE:  
THE DINERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

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**E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXT**

This multiple property documentation form covers diners in Massachusetts with periods of significance between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the mid-1960s. For the purpose of this documentation, a diner is defined as a factory-built eatery hauled to its location or a built-on-site eatery designed to create the appearance of a diner. Massachusetts-based diner owners and builders played an important role in popularizing this uniquely American building form. The historic context traces the development of the diner from its earliest form as the night lunch wagon to the diner-restaurant of the post-World War II years.

Over the last fifteen years, several surveys have identified approximately one hundred-fifty diners in Massachusetts dating from the 1920s to 1960s. In most cases, the manufacturer's name and construction year are readily available. Massachusetts companies, most notably Worcester Lunch Car Company, manufactured about two-thirds of the diners currently in the state. A diner need not, however, have been manufactured in Massachusetts to be eligible for National Register listing under this multiple property documentation form. This documentation is not intended to cover diners manufactured by Massachusetts companies but located out of state.

The three principal sources for historical information on diners in Massachusetts are Richard J. S. Gutman's *American Diner Then and Now* [New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993], *Diner Finder Deluxe – Massachusetts* [Watertown, MA: Coffee Cup Publications, 1991], and the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth, maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The historic context presented here relies heavily upon the groundbreaking work of diner historian Richard J. S. Gutman, whose published studies constitute the most comprehensive social and architectural history of diners available to date.

**From Night Lunch Wagon to Diner (ca. 1884 to early 1920s)**

Massachusetts occupies a significant place in the early history of diners. In 1884 Samuel Messer Jones (1854-1926), a former mechanical engineer from Providence, Rhode Island, introduced the concept of the night lunch wagon to the central Massachusetts city of Worcester. Night lunch wagons, also known as night lunch carts, were horse-drawn wagons carrying sandwiches, soup, coffee, and the like for sale to walk-up customers. These customers included late-night factory workers and others desiring an inexpensive meal during hours when the standard eating establishments, such as boarding houses and hotel restaurants, were closed. Parked at the curb for an evening, the night lunch wagon had wall openings facing both the sidewalk and the street, allowing the operator to pass food directly to customers waiting outside. In 1872 Walter Scott of Providence created the first night lunch wagon out of a converted freight car. Eleven years later, Ruel B. Jones, also of Providence, had a local wagon builder construct the first wagon specifically designed as a lunch cart. It was Samuel Messer Jones, a cousin of Ruel B. Jones,

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who reportedly built the first mobile building constructed as a lunch cart, when in 1887 he turned out a lunch cart that not only had a complete kitchen but was large enough to allow customers to stand or even sit inside while they ate. Samuel Messer Jones moved on to Springfield, Massachusetts, introducing the night lunch business to that city in 1889. The night lunch trade for both cart operators and manufacturers developed on parallel tracks in Worcester and Springfield for the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As the lunch wagon business expanded from the late 1880s to the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more lunch wagon builders started up than in any other period of the state's diner history. Worcester quickly emerged as the lunch wagon capital of Massachusetts, and was home to builders Charles H. Palmer (who started business in 1889), New England Night Lunch Wagon Company (Thomas H. Buckley, 1891), Wilfred Barriere, (1905), Worcester Lunch Car and Carriage Manufacturing Company (1906), and John J. E. Hennigan (1907). In 1895 Charles Palmer moved his manufacturing plant north of Worcester to Fairbanks Street in Sterling (factory burned 1901) and retained his office in Worcester. Besides Jones in Springfield were Wilson Goodrich (1892) and Camille R. Remillard (1897). In addition, the city of Lynn north of Boston was the headquarters of Ephraim L. Hamel who, beginning in 1891, produced White House Café lunch wagons in association with Thomas H. Buckley of Worcester.

Each model of lunch wagon seemingly improved upon earlier models. As a result of Samuel Jones's innovation, the lunch wagon in Massachusetts was one in which the customer could dine indoors, shielded from the weather. Charles Palmer, who received the first patent for a lunch wagon in 1890, developed a prototype that remained the standard form for the next twenty-five years: an enclosed body with small front wheels and a narrower tail end between high back wheels; a counter separating the rear kitchen from the dining area, which featured stools or chairs; and windows for passing food to more customers standing at the curb or waiting alongside in carriages. Beginning in the 1890s, Thomas H. Buckley, described as the most prolific of the early lunch wagon manufacturers, and Ephraim Hamel perfected the art of decorating the lunch wagon in the White House Café models they produced in Worcester and Lynn. These elaborately detailed lunch wagons featured windows of frosted glass, etched glass, or flash glass (colored glass fused to clear glass), plus landscapes and historical scenes painted on the outside panels of the wagon.

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the lunch wagon evolved from horse-drawn wagon to stationary portable lunch car. Within two years of Buckley's death in 1903, his company introduced a new model built entirely on low wheels, which was intended to be hauled only the distance from the factory to the car's destination, an off-the-road, or roadside, site. This contrasted with the earlier wagons or carts, which rested in the street at curbside and had to be removed from the street early each the morning so as not to contribute to traffic congestion. Other important features of the Buckley company's new model that resurfaced in later lunch cars include a center kitchen surrounded by a U-shaped serving counter, and an eating shelf with stools along the inside perimeter of the car. Changing to a more permanent roadside location also

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enabled many operators to keep their businesses open twenty-four hours per day. In addition, the permanent site allowed for easy installation of electric lights, gas stoves, and running water, which improved the type of service provided. Installation of mechanical ventilation and inside toilet facilities was not far behind.

Industry improvements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century prompted a related development: as horse-drawn cars of the urban trolley lines were abandoned in favor of electric trolleys, the surplus cars could be converted to lunch wagons, usually at little expense. Some converted "trolley lunches" were inferior imitations of the gleaming new lunch cars, but these few nevertheless had the effect of stigmatizing the entire industry for their associations with standards and individuals of ill repute. In part to counter this increasingly negative image, the term *dining car* began to be used by the industry, an allusion to the fine dining cars of the railroad lines. The new term also reflected more accurately the developing twenty-four-hour nature of the operation. From *dining car* came the abbreviated term *diner*. By comparing terms used in a manufacturer's catalogs, Richard Gutman has pinpointed the earliest use of the term *diner* as occurring in the year between March 1923 and March 1924. [Gutman, p. 58]

**Diners Take Hold in Massachusetts (mid-1920s to ca. 1945)**

New England, the birthplace of diners, perhaps harbored the longest-running fondness for the horse-drawn lunch cart or wagon, despite the fact that by the 1920s the form had become essentially obsolete. According to Gutman, the horse-drawn cart could still be seen in Massachusetts into the 1930s. Massachusetts city and town directories show listings for lunch carts through the late 1920s, though it is not clear whether such listings refer to actual horse-drawn wagons or simply use the old term to describe the new stationary portable lunch cars. John F. Hickey kept an admittedly modern interpretation of the lunch wagon concept alive from 1944 until 1986 in Taunton, where he operated a ten-stool diner mounted atop a truck in the downtown business district. [Gutman, p. 107]

In Massachusetts, the earliest form of diner extant has a barrel roof, sliding doors, and ten stools at the counter. At least seven examples of this diner form, which were constructed from the 1920s through the 1940s, have been identified in the state, some considerably altered, and all manufactured by the Worcester Lunch Car Company from its plant on Franklin Street in Worcester. Casey's, located at 32 South Avenue, Natick (1922, MHC #NAT.116), is the best preserved of the ten-stoolers and believed to be the oldest operating diner in the Commonwealth, and possibly the nation. Its comparatively diminutive size, approximately 10 feet by 20-1/2 feet, plus its oak counter, eating shelf, and interior finishes, readily distinguish Casey's from later diners with interiors of predominantly tile and porcelain enamel. The original owner of Casey's, who had owned a horse-drawn lunch cart prior to purchasing the current diner, reportedly always referred to the current diner as a lunch cart. [Gutman, p. 76] Judy's Diner at 906 Eastern Avenue, Malden (1930s, Worcester Lunch Car Co.), while not a ten-stooler, is significant for its

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interior layout reminiscent of the old lunch wagons, consisting of a kitchen at one end of the diner and the seating area at the other. This layout is an unusual survivor in Massachusetts.

By the 1920s, the stationary portable lunch cars, or diners, had surpassed the horse-drawn lunch wagon as the dominant diner form in Massachusetts and elsewhere. These factory-built diners were transported to their more or less permanent destinations by horse teams, special dining car truckers, flatcars by railroad (although this method of transport was waning), or barges by sea. Wheels were still present on some diners, and were employed in the hauling of a diner to its new home. A 1930 account in Orra Stone's *History of Massachusetts Industries* identifies typical destinations:

“Production [of diners] is now going to industrial establishments where their use enables food to be cooked outside factory buildings, thus reducing the fire hazard; to oil and gas purveyors, who are locating the diners adjacent to filling stations; to schools, restaurateurs, and to the general trade.” [Vol. I, p. 490]

Diners were no longer confined to downtown business districts and manufacturing centers, as farsighted operators began to locate their diners on highways to capture the attention of the motoring public. With the dawning of the age of the roadside diner began a long tradition of diners on state and federal automobile routes. Routes in Massachusetts with the greatest number of diners over time include U. S. Route 1 north from Boston to the New Hampshire state line, U. S. Route 20 west from Boston to the Worcester suburbs, U. S. Route 6 from Cape Cod to Fall River in the southeastern part of the state, U. S. Route 5 through the Connecticut Valley, and State Route 12 through Worcester County. Capitalizing on this new connection between the diner industry and the automobile traveler was the goal of the Hi-Way Diners Club of New England, Inc., formed in Springfield in 1928. In conjunction with Brill Steel Diners, which had a subsidiary plant at Wason Manufacturing Company in Springfield, the club sought to establish a chain of better diners in the United States that were located on national highways. At least two diners are known to have been installed, in downtown Springfield and in the Stuart Street section of Boston's business district. [Gutman, pp. 71-72] Neither is extant.

An increase in the appeal of diners to a broader range of customers was evident by the 1920s and can be attributed in part to an “eating-out boom” that seized the country after World War I. In *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* [Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1985], Chester H. Liebs chronicles the evolution of this dining-out trend from leisurely dining in restaurants to quick informal dining at roadside foodstands, diners, and “recreational eating” establishments such as soda fountains and ice cream parlors. The trend had its roots in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when cafeterias, delicatessens, and lunch counters served the working-day lunch needs of industrial and subsequently white-collar workers. The increasing number of men and women working away from home and a decline in the use and availability of domestic help to

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prepare meals were cited as factors contributing to the eating-out trend. Tearooms and the new family restaurants met the need for highway eateries that were more convenient than downtown restaurants or a roadside picnic, and offered "a respectable ambience." [Liebs, pp. 193-197] The desire on the part of diner operators to draw women, and children, into the diner was a recurring theme in the industry from the 1920s onward. In an effort to encourage female customers, who presumably would not sit on stools at the counter, tables and booths were introduced in the dining area.

The practice of hauling of diners long distance allowed Massachusetts operators to acquire and install diners manufactured in other states. The two earliest diners in Massachusetts produced by out-of-state manufacturers were constructed in the 1920s. The **Breakfast Club**, at 478 West Housatonic Street, Pittsfield (1920s) was built by Ward & Dickinson, of Silver Creek, New York. The firm, established in 1923 and in business until ca. 1940, built narrow trolley-inspired diners. [Gutman, p. 243] Jerry O'Mahony, Inc. of Elizabeth, New Jersey built **Ted's Diner**, 67 Main Street, Milford (1920s). At least fourteen extant diners in Massachusetts were produced by O'Mahony, almost all of them constructed after World War II.

In the mid-1920s, Worcester Lunch Car Company, the state's premier diner builder, offered at least seven standard models of its barrel-roofed diner, the traditional diner prototype most closely associated with the company for the next thirty years. A company promotional brochure published ca. 1926 illustrates the steel-covered Worcester dining cars in sizes ranging from 10 feet by 20-1/2 feet, and seating ten at the counter, to 12 feet by 40 feet, and seating a total of thirty-nine at both the counter and an eating shelf running along the inside front wall. The Worcester cars were generally from eleven to seventeen bays across, including a center entry, and two to four bays on the side elevations, including one side entry. The cars were built on wheels for hauling to their destination. Interior finishes, including the counter, which the company also described as a "bar," were mostly of quartered oak or tile, while floors were tile and stools were white porcelain enamel. Each car came fully equipped with dishes, silverware, and cooking utensils, as well as a German Silver hood with at least two exhaust fans, a refrigerator ranging in capacity from 300 to 600 pounds, depending upon the model, a steam table, a pie warmer, a cake cabinet, a dessert display case, and in the larger models a stove custom built for Worcester by the Glenwood Stove Company. Worcester dining cars were wired for electrical service, and had piping for water hookup and gasoline heating and cooking. Prices for cars ranged from \$3,350 to \$11,000, and a car could be purchased with a down payment and the balance due in monthly installments. The company also built custom cars that differed from the standard models with regard to size, seating, and cooking facilities, among other features.

A number of Worcester diners survive in excellent or good condition in Massachusetts, and chronicle the evolution of the company's diner designs, particularly from the 1920s through the 1950s. The company built 651 lunch cars and diners between 1907 and 1957 [Gutman, pp. 161 and 243], and updated, reconditioned, or remodeled an unknown number of their diners. **Casey's**

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in Natick (see above) is a fine example of the early 1920s Worcester car with a primarily wood interior. **Central Diner** at 90 Elm Street, Millbury (1933, MHC #MIL.174) is a well preserved diner retaining tile finishes in checkerboard-like patterns on the counter apron, backbar, walls, and floors, and is also notable for its row of two-seater tables along the inside front wall. Other fine examples of Worcester diners from the late 1920s and 1930s include **Chadwick Square Diner**, 41 Prescott Street, Worcester (1928, Worcester #660, MHC #WOR.2137), **Judy's Diner** in Malden (see above), **Kenwood Diner**, 100 Main Street, Spencer (ca. 1933, MHC #SPE.220, NRDIS, Spencer Town Center Historic District), **Timmy's Diner**, Worcester Road, Framingham (1933, Worcester #711) and **Boulevard Diner**, 155 Shrewsbury Street, Worcester (1936, MHC #WOR.2059).

Both **Central Diner** and **Chadwick Square Diner** exhibit a distinctive roofline characteristic of several Massachusetts diners built in the late 1920s and early 1930s: the closed barrel (rounded hipped) roof with a full-length clerestory. This monitor roof design could be seen on certain parlor, sleeping, and dining cars of the railroad built between ca. 1865 and ca. 1920, as well as certain models of streetcars built between ca. 1900 and ca. 1935. [See Phillips and Carlson and Harding in bibliography.] Production of this type of diner was a logical extension of the business of railroad car and streetcar manufacturers. The dining car division of J. G. Brill Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania began building monitor roof diners in 1927 at its subsidiary plants in Springfield, Massachusetts and Cleveland, Ohio. [Gutman, p. 225] Its Springfield division was Wason Manufacturing Company, located in the Brightwood section of the city. Wason built railway and electric streetcars in addition to automobile bodies, motor boats, and airplanes. [Stone, pp. 490-491] Wason turned out the first all-steel-frame dining car in the country; previously, any steel supports were employed in conjunction with wood framing. In addition to the monitor roof, the Brill/Wason diners featured doors at either end of the diner, another detail borrowed from railroad cars and streetcars. **Capitol Diner**, at 431 Union Street, Lynn (1928, MHC #LYN.28), is the only identified Brill/Wason diner in Massachusetts. Brill operations in Springfield ceased in 1932.

Worcester Lunch Car Company built most of the monitor-roof diners surviving in the state. **Central Diner**, **Chadwick Square Diner** (see above), and **Kathy's Diner**, formerly Miss Northampton, 8 Strong Avenue, Northampton (ca. 1930, MHC #NTH.2063, NRDIS) are among the better preserved examples. More altered examples, including those in which the original clerestory has been covered over, include **Green Island Diner**, formerly Luke's Diner, 162 Millbury Street, Worcester (1929, MHC #WOR.2086) and **Airport Diner**, Lancaster Road, Shirley (ca. 1930, MHC #SRL.208).

With regard to Massachusetts survivals, far more unusual than the diner that resembled a rail car was the diner that actually had been a rail car. **Sisson's Diner**, 561 Wareham Street, (South) Middleborough (ca. 1926-1928, Wason Manufacturing, MHC #MID.163), is the only Massachusetts diner identified to date that originally operated as a streetcar. The car reportedly belonged to the fleet operated by the Middleborough, Wareham & Buzzards Bay Street Railway,

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chartered in 1901. The MW&BB was in receivership by 1905, when it was acquired by the newly formed Taunton & Buzzards Bay Street Railway, itself absorbed in 1906 by the New Bedford & Onset Street Railway Company. In 1926 the New Bedford & Onset abandoned its Wareham to Middleborough branch, and the following year buses replaced streetcars on the remainder of the line. Elmer Sisson converted one of the retired streetcars to the diner that bears his name. [Carlson and Harding, pp. 93-98; Gutman, p. 142] Further investigation is needed to determine whether Sisson's was originally an open streetcar (*i.e.*, without walls enclosing the car), as well as the extent to which the streetcar was remodeled. The original streetcar Sisson converted apparently had an open barrel roof rather than the closed barrel roof with clerestory that distinguishes the rail car-inspired diners in Massachusetts. Sisson's Diner retains a headlight at its southern end.

For the most part, diners were the typical entrepreneurial business venture, and the industry attracted a number of owners and operators who did not necessarily have experience in the restaurant business. A sales brochure for the Worcester Lunch Car Company touted the benefits of the dining car, or diner, to prospective purchasers:

"The Dining Car is a money maker. Unlike restaurants, it is busy all day and night. There are no dull times. People drop into a dining car anytime to get a bite to eat. Once you become established, you will have a constant profitable business. People must eat. Repeat orders are certain if the food is good. There are no dull seasons, and your profits are big – big and constant. Offer food to people in a spotlessly clean dining car where they can see it cooked, and you will find a ready market for your food. People like to know that the food they eat is fresh, and cooked in clean, sanitary surroundings." [Worcester Lunch Car Company, p. 1]

The diner also proved to be a popular business venture to undertake during the Depression, when potential operators saw the demand for inexpensive meals and the opportunity for conducting a small-scale independent business with low overhead.

Diner operations tended to stay within families, and several diners in Massachusetts have had long-term historical associations with the families of their original owners. In some cases, the owners of diners in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were the descendants of lunch cart operators, in the same town, during the 1910s and 1920s. **Casey's** in Natick, **Central Diner** in Millbury, and **Al Mac's Diner - Restaurant** in Fall River (see below) are typical examples. Further research is needed to determine whether diner owners and operators in Massachusetts historically engaged in businesses in addition to running the diner, or invested all their time and financial resources in the diner alone.

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During its brief existence from 1936 to 1942, Sterling Diners, operated by J. B. Judkins Company of Merrimac, made important contributions to the history of diner design in Massachusetts. The Judkins company had manufactured carriages and later custom automobile bodies before moving into the business of building its wood-frame Sterling diners. Sterling produced traditional barrel-roofed diners, dinettes (small-scale, one-man-operation diners introduced during the Depression years), and streamliners. The owner, J. B. Judkins III, acquired Berton G. Harley's patent for a sectional or modular diner design, upon which the early Sterling diners were based, and in 1939 acquired the patent of Roland L. Stickney of New York City, upon which the distinctive Sterling Streamliner model was based. [Gutman, pp. 114, 239-240] The earliest Sterling diner extant, **Finely Fran's of Worcester** (1936, Sterling #363, MHC #WOR.2126), was the third Sterling diner built. This barrel-roofed diner with monitor has had much of its interior fixtures removed and, threatened with demolition in 1997, is now in storage at the Worcester Airport in Worcester. A barrel-roofed Sterling diner is the former **White Way Grille**, 43 Boston Street, Lynn (1941, MHC #LYN.192), the interior of which was gutted in the conversion to its current retail use. The only identified example of a dinette in Massachusetts also was manufactured by Sterling: **Jim's Old Colony Diner**, Old Colony Road, Mansfield (built between 1936 and 1942, substantial exterior alterations).

Sterling Diners introduced the streamliner to the Massachusetts diner industry. From the mid-1930s to World War II, diner designs in Massachusetts and elsewhere took a distinctly modern turn, reflecting the impact of machine-age industrial design on American culture. The inevitable connection between diner building and the manufacturing of trains and automobiles in particular brought the aesthetics of streamlining to diner design. Streamlining emphasized a smooth, rounded, "aerodynamically contoured" form, inspired first and foremost by airplane designs and other transportation vehicles of the 1920s and 1930s such as dirigibles, ships, and ocean liners. This streamlined aesthetic began to become apparent in train and automobile design by the early 1930s. [Wilson et al., p. 55]. The new emphasis on streamlining in diners conveyed a sense of movement at the same time diners were unquestionably stationary, an irony Gutman describes as "the immobilization of mobility." [p. 113] In Massachusetts diners, two strains of streamlining are evident: the application of streamlining principles to create the streamliner diner type, exhibiting the aerodynamic features closely associated with mobility; and the later, usually stainless steel, diners that reflect the influence of streamlining and machine aesthetics in their horizontal emphasis, massing, and materials but demonstrate less obvious associations with mobility in their design.

The streamliner type of diner is very rare in Massachusetts today. Sterling Diners built the only surviving examples in the state of the "pure" streamliner form: **My Tin Man Diner** at 808 MacArthur Boulevard, Bourne at Pocasset (1940, Sterling production number unknown), and **The Salem Diner** at 70-1/2 Loring Avenue, Salem (1941, Sterling #4106). Both diners display the distinctive closed barrel (rounded hipped) roof plus curved, "shovel-nosed" ends. In the 1940s, Worcester Lunch Car Company built two diners similar in form to the Sterling Streamliner, and which the Worcester company's carpenters called "circular" diners; neither diner is extant. As an

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alternative, Worcester Lunch Car Company introduced the "semi-streamliner," which had the standard barrel or monitor roof and featured slightly canted end walls rather than the curving walls of the streamliner. These semi-streamliners reportedly were more popular among prospective diner purchasers than the more distinctive streamliners. [Gutman, p. 115] The recently restored **Rosebud Diner**, Summer Street, Somerville at Davis Square (1941, MHC #SMV.209, LHD), a monitor-roofed example, is one of very few semi-streamliners remaining in the state. In recent years two Worcester semi-streamliners have been moved out of state: the Peerless Diner, formerly in Lowell, and Hudson Diner (also known as Lamy's), formerly in Hudson.

By World War II, the venerable horse-drawn lunch wagons were a memory in Massachusetts. The Victorian-era origins of the monitor-roofed diners seemed more pronounced after the aerodynamic-looking streamliners appeared on the scene. The barrel-roofed diner so closely associated with the Worcester Lunch Car Company, and which embodied the image of the traditional diner in New England, continued to be in demand. Yet, some in the Massachusetts diner industry were ready for a new, more modern, look, which came in the form of stainless steel exteriors. The earliest steel-clad diner in the state is believed to be **Kenmore Diner**, 250 Franklin Street, Worcester (ca. 1940, Jerry O'Mahony, MHC #WOR.2224, interior altered). The Kenmore adds rounded corners and horizontal bands of stainless steel and porcelain enamel to what is essentially the old monitor-roof dining car form.

**Diners Go Deluxe (ca. 1945 to ca. 1960)**

Large, usually stainless steel, diners characterized the diner industry in Massachusetts in the post-World War II era. Over fifty diners in Massachusetts today date to this period, most manufactured by companies headquartered in either New Jersey -- Fodero Dining Car Company of Bloomfield, Mountain View Diners of Singac, Jerry O'Mahony, Inc. of Elizabeth, and Silk City Diners of Paterson -- or New York (DeRaffele Manufacturing Company of New Rochelle). Representing the later part of the period are diners manufactured by two more New Jersey companies -- Kullman Industries, Inc. of Avenel and Master Diners of Pequannock.

Worcester Lunch Car Company manufactured at least one-third of the diners in Massachusetts that date from the postwar years, principally in the late 1940s. The traditional barrel-roofed diner form for which the Worcester company was known encountered stiff competition from the stainless steel diner manufacturers, who offered newer forms and finishes. Worcester Lunch Car Company did not even add stainless steel to its diner exteriors until 1952.

The diner continued to evolve functionally and stylistically during the post-World War II years. A greater desire to attract families led to larger size diners with an emphasis on table and booth service. Cooking was removed from the area behind the counter to a separate kitchen.

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Interiors commonly featured fluorescent lights, mirrors, terrazzo floors, and pastel color schemes. Improvements in mechanical ventilating systems eliminated any need for a monitor roof with clerestory windows or even operable windows in the dining area, as fixed plate glass windows became the rule in most diners except the Worcester models. Stainless steel was widely used on exteriors, often in combination with colored accents in porcelain enamel, and the lingering influence of prewar streamlining was seen in rounded corners and horizontal detailing. Many stainless steel diners in Massachusetts actually have a common form: typically rectangular massing, low-pitched or flat roof, a projecting center entry vestibule, and rear kitchen wing. Good examples of the stainless steel form and finishes include the Mattapoisett Diner, 81 Fairhaven Road, Mattapoisett (1950, Mountain View #309), the Shawmut Diner, 943 Shawmut Avenue, New Bedford (1953, O'Mahony), Al Mac's Diner-Restaurant, 135 President Avenue, Fall River (1953, DeRaffele), and the Agawam Diner, 166 Newburyport Turnpike, Rowley (ca. 1954, Fodero, MHC #ROW.139). Jake's Diner, 114 Alden Road, Fairhaven (ca. 1952, O'Mahony) is unusual in Massachusetts for its exterior walls of tile and stainless steel.

Continued advances in diner building resulted in construction of sectional diners, or diners that were manufactured and shipped in sections and assembled on site. This type of construction made possible the large diners of the postwar period. The best preserved example is the stainless steel Corner Lunch at 133 Lamartine Street, Worcester (1950s DeRaffele, with alterations in 1968 by Musi Dining Car Company, MHC #WOR.2061). About one-third of the original main block was moved in 1968 to the rear of the diner to serve as the kitchen wing. Musi's remodeling of the Corner Lunch is believed to be the only example in New England of diner work by the company, which is still based in Carteret, New Jersey.

Worcester Lunch Car Company continued to produce primarily porcelain enamel-clad diners during this period. Notable examples include Bob's White City Diner at Rawlins Avenue, Marlborough (1947, Worcester #802), the Miss Worcester at 300 Southbridge Street, Worcester (1948, Worcester #812), and Wilson's Diner at 507 Main Street, Waltham (1949, Worcester #819). Main Street Diner at 901 Main Street, Woburn (1952, Worcester, production number undetermined) was a custom diner and one of the first Worcester models to include stainless steel on the exterior walls. The traditional barrel-roofed diner popularized by Worcester did not survive the 1950s; during this period the form came to be considered out of date and less desirable than the modern diner.

On occasion Worcester Lunch Car Company was contracted to update or expand some of its older diners. Available records provide only sketchy information as to which diners the company updated. After World War II, Worcester is known to have made changes ranging from installing a sandwich board (Casey's, Natick, see above), to changing the backbar area to accommodate a deep freezer (Central Diner, Millbury, see above), to enlarging and reconfiguring the size of the dining area (Miss Florence Diner, 99 Main Street, Northampton at Florence, 1930s, MHC #NTH.111).

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Constant pressure to update diners, plus an increased demand for new diners, created a market for secondhand and reconditioned diners beginning in the 1930s. The purchaser of a secondhand diner received, in an "as is" condition, a diner that had been traded in by another owner. The reconditioned diner, on the other hand, was completely overhauled in the factory before reselling [Gutman, p. 98]. Information on which diners in Massachusetts may have been secondhand or reconditioned diners is not readily available. One example for which only limited history is known is **Charlie's Diner** at 344 Plantation Street, Worcester (1948, Worcester #816, MHC #WOR.2031). About 1951 Charles D. Turner purchased the diner "used" from Worcester Lunch Car Company. Previously the diner had been located in Wareham.

The desire to update and expand a diner's operations also resulted in two of the state's earliest built-on-site diners, **Town Diner** and **Blue Diner**, both built in 1947. **Town Diner** at 627 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown (N. D. C. Construction, MHC #WAT.298) combines the barrel roof and porcelain enamel cladding of the traditional diner in Massachusetts with the curved ends, glass block, and center entry of the streamlined models from the early 1940s. Town Diner was constructed to replace an original ca. 1920s Worcester lunch car, which is now the kitchen to the rear and obscured by a series of later rear additions. **Blue Diner** at 178 Kneeland Street, Boston (B. L. Gallo, architect, MHC #BOS.1836, NRDIS, Leather District) replaced a barrel-roofed diner on the same site.

**The Diner-Turned-Restaurant (ca. 1960 to the present)**

The Town Diner in Watertown and Al Mac's Diner-Restaurant in Fall River mark the beginnings of a trend in the Massachusetts diner industry toward creating a restaurant ambience. After World War II, diners began to promote themselves as places for a leisurely family meal. In the 1960s this trend crystallized as the industry also sought to distinguish itself from the new fast food chains, which offered standardized quick meals at low prices. According to Richard Gutman, the diner's new image became conservative, not flashy, and the diner itself was "striving to be more than a roadside restaurant." [p. 181]. Some diner operators described their businesses as diner-restaurants while other operators, and some of the diner manufacturers, dropped the diner name altogether.

In connection with the effort to attract families, the form and appearance of the diner were modified, with such changes as an increase in tables rather than booths, a decrease in the number of counter stools, and an emphasis on traditional architectural detailing. Short-lived attempts at futuristic designs in the 1960s were quickly replaced by more traditional colonial styling, both exterior and interior, which blended better with suburbia, where new diners continued to be installed on routes with easy automobile access. The only colonial diner in Boston, **Victoria Diner-Restaurant**, now known as Victoria Dining, 1024 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston (1965, Swingle Diners Inc., Middlesex, New Jersey) is the best example identified to date of the diner-to-restaurant trend in Massachusetts. [Gutman, p. 184] Replacing a stainless steel O'Mahony diner, the Victoria was still prefabricated and assembled on site, but conveyed the appearance of a permanent, restaurant building rather than a rail car or stationary portable building.

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The Fillin' Station, 372 State Road, Whately (early 1960s, Kullman Industries, MHC #WHA.159) is perhaps the earliest example of contemporary diner design in Massachusetts. The diner is the better preserved of two Kullmans in the state, the other being encased in a later building in Pittsfield. More research is needed to establish a context for the Fillin' Station, which reportedly was erected in Whately about 1970 in conjunction with a gas station and truck stop complex off Interstate 91.

Not many diners installed or constructed from the 1960s onward have been identified in Massachusetts. In the 1970s, Mediterranean-inspired designs were introduced. The traditional designs like colonial and Mediterranean made use of standard building finishes rather than the porcelain enamel and stainless steel of earlier eras. From ca. 1980 to the present, typical diner designs included the "greenhouse" look and old style or "classic" diners; these diners were not investigated for this nomination. Systematic identification of diner-restaurants in the state is needed.

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THE DINERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

## F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

## I. Description

## A. First Property Type: Lunch Wagon/Lunch Cart – Physical and Associative Characteristics

Physical Characteristics The lunch wagon (or lunch cart) is an enclosed prefabricated wagon on wheels, intended to be horse-drawn. The cart has a wood frame, a barrel roof, either transom windows at the ends of the cart or a monitor roof with a clerestory for ventilation, and painted wood paneling or galvanized steel panels for exterior sheathing. Any example will be set upon a foundation that is later than the cart. The length of the lunch wagon or cart is generally two to three times the width, with a length of between about sixteen to twenty-six feet on average. Generally examples will incorporate a sliding door or pocket door at the center of the façade; secondary entrances, if any, on the end walls; operable windows of stained, frosted, flash, or etched glass; varnished natural wood on the interior; a kitchen or food preparation area separated from the dining area by a counter; and a dining area with standing room or seating on stools at the counter and/or an eating shelf, if present. The “ten-stooler,” consisting of ten stools at the counter, is typical. Signage is on the exterior panels of the cart. Of all the diner property types, the lunch wagon or cart is the most rare in Massachusetts today and the most likely to have been altered.

Associative Characteristics Lunch wagons were the precursor to the modern diner in Massachusetts and were the sole form of diner in the state from the 1880s to the early 1920s. Mounted on wheels, lunch wagons were horse-drawn in the streets at night and removed from the streets by morning. Their operators catered to the so-called “night-lunch” or “night-owl” trade, which served factory workers and others who needed a quick meal in the late night or early morning hours. Lunch wagons typically operated in urban areas--particularly manufacturing and retail districts--and in town centers. The lunch wagon or cart evolved from a horse-drawn wagon operated during late evening and early morning hours to a stationary portable lunch car located off the road and open around the clock. Beginning ca. 1905 wheels started to be used only to haul the lunch cart to its destination.

Samuel Messer Jones (1854-1926) introduced the lunch wagon idea to Worcester in 1884 and Springfield in 1889. Jones, Thomas H. Buckley, and Charles H. Palmer were the principal builders of the early lunch wagons or carts in Massachusetts. From the 1910s through the early 1920s the Worcester Lunch Car Company led the state in large-scale production of the new stationary portable lunch cars. Horse-drawn lunch wagons and stationary portable lunch cars are particularly significant for their associations with the early decades of the diner industry, not just in Massachusetts but nationally.

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Physical Characteristics The barrel roof diner is the traditional diner form in Massachusetts. Factory-built and hauled to its site, these diners generally have a boxy appearance, a symmetrical façade, and entries generally on the short (end) walls, though a center entry on the long elevation is sometimes seen. Typical features include a wood or steel frame, exterior panels of either painted steel or porcelain enamel, a brick or concrete foundation, and a continuous band of double-hung windows with transoms on the facade. The major distinguishing feature of this property type is the barrel roof, either with open eaves at the end walls or, less commonly, a closed barrel (rounded hipped) roof. On early examples the barrel roof extends over the entries on the two short walls; later examples tend not to continue the roofline over the entries but instead have flat projecting canopies at the ends. The interior typically features booths in the dining area, though also seen are the older layouts more commonly associated with lunch carts: a ten-stooler arrangement at the counter, an eating shelf along the inside façade wall, or even a dining area at one short end of the car with the kitchen at the other. More interior features and finishes include tile walls and floor; counters of white marble, white opalite, or Formica; white counter stools of white porcelain enamel; built-in refrigerators and other fixtures; and more equipment in the backbar area. Signage is painted on the exterior apron panels below the windows on the long elevation, or mounted above the windows. Examples of this property type are most susceptible to alterations in cladding and roof materials.

Associative Characteristics The barrel roof diner dominated the diner landscape in Massachusetts from about the mid-1920s to ca. 1950. Most closely associated with the dawning of the roadside diner era, during which an automobile was necessary to reach many diners, examples of this property type were installed on state and federal roadways and near important crossroads, in addition to the more established downtown business district and manufacturing district locations. The barrel roof diner also may be considered the first true “diner,” as the term is popularly known, in Massachusetts. Diner historian Richard J. S. Gutman identifies ca. 1923-1924 as the point at which the night lunch wagon or cart began to become known as the dining car or diner. An allusion to the fine dining then offered in dining cars on the railroads, the diner name also reflected a change in fare from night-only meals to meals served around the clock. The introduction of booths in the dining area, which also occurred in the mid-1920s, was intended to encourage female customers, who presumably would not sit at the counter on stools. As the earliest and most pervasive form of diner in Massachusetts for a generation, the barrel roof diner reflects changes to the image and desired clientele of the diner over time. Worcester Lunch Car Company manufactured almost all examples of this property type in Massachusetts, though a handful of diners were produced by other manufacturers, particularly Jerry O’Mahony Inc. of Elizabeth, New Jersey.

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Physical Characteristics This property type includes factory-built diners bearing a resemblance to railroad cars or streetcars or, rarely, a former railroad car or streetcar converted to a diner. Hauled to

its site, the rail car diner has a wood or steel frame, a foundation of brick or concrete, and exterior panels of either painted galvanized steel or porcelain enamel. On most examples, the rail car inspiration is evident in the closed barrel (rounded hipped) roof with full-length clerestory windows, and the long façade -- typically 10 to 14 bays -- with integral entries in the short end walls. Variations that are much less common include a barrel roof with open ends and clerestory, or a center entry on the long wall rather than entries on the short end walls. There are no distinguishing interior features specific to the rail car diner other than the effect of having two end-wall entries, when present. Examples of this property type are most susceptible to alterations in cladding and roof materials, and particularly the covering of the clerestory windows, as well as the construction of incompatible additions.

Associative Characteristics Both inspired by and an outgrowth of railroad car and streetcar design, the rail car diner is a discrete phenomenon in the diner industry. Known examples of this property type in Massachusetts were constructed in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the product of the decline and subsequent abandonment of streetcar lines in the Commonwealth, the influence of "fine dining" cars on railroad lines, and the suitability of the rail car form for diner use. Original rail cars converted to diners are rare survivals in Massachusetts. More common is the factory-built diner showing the rail car influence in its design. Production of rail car diners was a logical extension of the business of streetcar and railroad dining car manufacturers. In Massachusetts, J. G. Brill Company of Philadelphia began building monitor-roof diners in 1927 at its subsidiary plant, Wason Manufacturing Company of Springfield, a builder of railway and electric streetcars. Worcester Lunch Car Company also manufactured diners of this type. Like examples of the barrel roof diner, examples of this property type were installed on major roadways and near important crossroads, in addition to the more established downtown business district and manufacturing district locations.

**D. Fourth Property Type: Streamliner – Physical and Associative Characteristics**

Physical Characteristics A factory-built diner hauled to its site, the streamliner has a distinctive form, with a closed barrel (rounded hipped) roof and either one or both short end walls having a curved, "shovel-nosed" profile. The streamliner form has been likened to the form of a bullet. Known examples of the property type in Massachusetts are wood or steel frame and clad with porcelain enamel panels. Ornamental detailing in a contrasting color, if any, typically runs horizontally on the building and accentuates the appearance of mobility conveyed by the streamlined form. Another element contributing to the streamlined appearance of the diner is a rooftop fin for ornamental and often signage purposes; on examples without the fin, roof-mounted signage is usually present. The entry is most often located on a

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long wall, and fenestration can include bands of thin rectangular windows in the curved ends. Though interior finishes generally are typical of other diners of the 1930s and early 1940s, the interior space is distinctive, with freestanding tables and chairs or curved booth seating occupying the curved “nose-end” of the diner. As a property type, a streamliner in its architectural features is distinct from other, generally later, diner forms that reflect the influence of streamlining and machine aesthetics but demonstrate less obvious associations with mobility in their design. A modified version of the streamliner is the “semi-streamliner,” with either a barrel or monitor roof and featuring slightly canted end walls. Streamliners and semi-streamliners are rare in Massachusetts today.

Associative Characteristics Perhaps more than any other diner property type, the streamliner in its design evokes the diner’s early history as a mobile building. Constructed from 1939 to 1942, the streamliner reflects the influence of industrial design of the 1920s and 1930s. The form mimicked the look of streamlined locomotives and automobiles. J. B. Judkins Company of Merrimac and the Worcester Lunch Car Company constructed all known examples in Massachusetts. A former builder of custom automobile bodies, J. B. Judkins Company entered the diner-building industry after the Depression and produced the Sterling Streamliner. Later in the 1930s, Worcester Lunch Car Company introduced two streamlined models: the model with curved nose at the short ends (also known as the double-ended bullet or “circular diner”) and a more popular model with canted ends (known as the “semi-streamliner”). While streamlining was introduced to diner design through the distinctive shape of diners of this property type, the influence of streamlining persisted in diner design for over twenty-five years. The typical location of the streamliner reflected a shift from downtown business district and manufacturing areas to roadside sites with parking lots, especially on heavily traveled highway routes. The streamliner’s relationship with the road and the automobile is a key factor in its eligibility.

**E. Fifth Property Type: Stainless Steel Diner – Physical and Associative Characteristics**

Physical Characteristics The stainless steel diner was the quintessential modern diner in Massachusetts after World War II. Factory-built and hauled to its site, the stainless steel diner was also the first type of diner present in Massachusetts that could be constructed and hauled in sections. An example of this property type typically has a steel frame, flat or low-pitched roof, high foundation of concrete or brick, and rectangular massing with a projecting entry vestibule centered on the façade. Monitor roofs are uncommon but may be seen in early (1940s) examples of this type. The major character-defining feature is the stainless steel exterior, generally with porcelain enamel metal accents that run horizontally, though sometimes vertically, above and below the windows. Many examples of this property type also display rounded corners, large windows of fixed plate glass, steel fin-like dividers between windows, a pair of steel and glass entries in the projecting vestibule, a clock centered at the top of the vestibule, and steel ornament in quilted, sawtooth, or other patterns. Signage is most commonly located on the roof, and consists of either individual channel letters in neon or one roof-mounted sign. On the interior, the stainless steel diner displays a cove ceiling, steel on the walls and back bar, tile or

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terrazzo floors, and a Formica counter. Counter stools are steel, and booths are steel or wood generally covered in vinyl. The entry vestibule, exterior and interior, is the most common location of alterations on the stainless steel diner, usually with replacement finishes, handrails at the stairs, or entries. Rear kitchen wings, usually wood-frame or concrete block, are common on examples of this property type; some appear to be original.

Associative Characteristics Presenting an image of efficiency, cleanliness, and machine-inspired modernity, the stainless steel diner was the most popular diner form in Massachusetts from ca. 1945 to ca. 1960. Mountain View Diners, Jerry O'Mahony Inc., DeRaffele Diners, Silk City Diners, and Fodero Dining Car Company, all diner manufacturers based in New Jersey or New York, produced almost all examples of the property type in Massachusetts. As the modern alternative to the traditional barrel-roofed diner in Massachusetts, the stainless steel diners were immensely popular and posed a challenge to Worcester Lunch Car Company, whose traditional porcelain enamel-clad, barrel-roofed diners with wood-trimmed interiors failed to compete successfully with the newer stainless steel designs. The Worcester company did come out with its own model of stainless steel diner in 1952 but by that time could not recapture its share of the diner-building market. Advances in diner design and construction enabled diner manufacturers to offer sectional, or split, diners, which could be transported in pieces and assembled on site. The typical location of stainless steel diners, like that of the earlier streamliner form, reflected a shift from downtown business district and manufacturing areas to roadside sites with parking lots, especially on heavily traveled highway routes. The stainless steel diner's relationship with the road and the automobile is a key factor in its eligibility.

## II. Significance

Examples of all five property types—lunch cart/lunch wagon, barrel roof diner, rail car diner, streamliner, and stainless steel diner—are an important physical manifestation of the diner industry in Massachusetts from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to ca. 1970 as described in the historic context above. An example of any of the five property types will meet the National Register criteria and criteria considerations, at the state and local levels, as discussed in this section.

### A. National Register Criteria

Criterion A All examples will meet this criterion for associations with the development of the diner industry in the Commonwealth and with the development of the community or region in which they are located. Refer to **Section E, Statement of Historic Context** for more detailed information.

Criterion B Some examples may meet this criterion for integral associations with the productive lives and work of noted people in the diner industry. Refer to **Section E, Statement of Historic Context** for more detailed information.

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Criterion C All examples will meet criterion as examples of diner form and style in the Commonwealth. Some will be examples of the work of master designers (in this case, diner manufacturers) and/or will possess high artistic value. Refer to **Section E, Statement of Historic Context** for more detailed information.

Criterion D A few examples may meet criterion due to their potential to yield important information about the evolution of the diner industry or diner building either through the study of extant diners or through historic archaeological remains. Refer to **Section E, Statement of Historic Context** for more detailed information.

## B. National Register Criteria Considerations

With the occasional exception of Criteria Considerations B and G, the criteria considerations do not apply to the five property types as a whole.

Criteria Consideration B Removal from one location and placement in another is inherent in the portable nature of diners of all property types. Most diners have an orientation, setting, and general roadside environment that are comparable to those of their historic location and compatible with their significance. An example of any of the five property types need not meet Criteria Consideration B unless it has been relocated to a site that is incompatible with the diner's original function. Examples of all five property types are significant primarily for architectural value in a state and local context. Their historic association with the community in which they are placed, while important, is a secondary factor in their significance.

Criteria Consideration G Both scholarly research and the evaluation of the history of diners over the last ten to fifteen years has provided the necessary historical perspective to determine that a diner is exceptionally important. In addition, with very few exceptions, cities and towns in Massachusetts have a single diner, if any at all. From the perspective of a community's architectural history, the diner form is sufficiently unique to be considered of exceptional significance, provided the diner was located in Massachusetts during the period of significance.

## C. Level of Evaluation

Diners of all five property types are judged in a state as well as local context.

## III. Registration Requirements

An example from any of the five property types must possess the physical and associative characteristics discussed above and in Section E to be considered eligible for National Register listing.

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The primary associated characteristic, and the key registration requirement, is integral connections with the development of the diner industry in the Commonwealth, namely the operation of diners in Massachusetts during the period from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to ca. 1970. To be eligible for nomination to the National Register, an example from any of the five property types must have been operated in connection with the diner industry in Massachusetts and maintain sufficient physical integrity to convey that association. The factory-built diner need not have been manufactured in Massachusetts to be eligible but should have been located in Massachusetts during the period of significance.

An example from any of the five property types also must retain integrity to the period of significance. The physical condition and integrity of a diner is affected by changes in ownership and management, which potentially can compromise these buildings over time. Retrofitting of interior spaces and equipment, and construction of kitchen, service, or storage additions to meet business demands is a common occurrence. Abandonment of these buildings or conversion to non-restaurant uses also may compromise integrity.

Location and Setting An example of any of the five property types would not be expected to retain integrity of location but always will possess integrity of setting. Given the portable nature of most diners, a diner need not be in its historic location to be eligible, although a majority of the diners identified to date in Massachusetts are believed to be on their original sites. Lunch wagons/lunch carts in particular may not retain integrity of location, as they were mobile buildings placed onto permanent foundations when it was no longer feasible or desirable to continue the original horse-drawn operation. Extant examples of the lunch wagon/lunch cart property type, however, are extremely rare in Massachusetts. With regard to setting, to be eligible a diner must be located in a historically appropriate setting, with clear orientation to the street a critical factor, and such setting must be compatible with the diner's historic function.

Factors that affect this type of integrity include changes in ownership and management, and removal of the diner to a storage or museum location. These factors may be sufficiently detrimental to integrity to preclude registration.

Design, Materials, and Workmanship An example of any of the five property types will always possess a high degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. These are important integrity factors for each of the five property types. Refer to **Section E, Statement of Historic Context**, for more detailed information.

Factors that typically affect this type of integrity include modification of the original roof line or eave line, or addition of historically inappropriate exterior cladding such as synthetic siding or roof shingles. In examples of the rail car type, irreversible alteration to or elimination of the rooftop clerestory windows, a key character-defining feature, would compromise integrity. In examples of the

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streamliner type, alteration of the profile of the curved end(s) would compromise integrity. Collectively these factors may be sufficiently detrimental to integrity to preclude registration of the diner. Alteration or removal of historic signage generally will not be considered sufficiently detrimental to compromise the diner's integrity as a whole, nor will replacement of historic materials on the interior if the interior as a whole maintains integrity to a large degree. Construction of wood-clad or concrete block additions for kitchens and storage is consistent with the historic use of the diner over time and will not be considered to compromise the diner's architectural integrity if such additions are located on the rear of the main diner block and are clearly secondary to the main block in scale and massing.

Feeling and Association An example from any of the five property types must possess historic associations with the diner industry in Massachusetts. This is a key integrity factor. Examples must retain sufficient physical integrity as described above to be able to convey their relationships to and associations with the historic context described in Section E.

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**G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Diners must be sited within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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**H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS**

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The multiple property listing, *Twentieth-Century Commercial Architecture: The Diners of Massachusetts*, draws from over fifteen years of survey and research conducted by diner and other cultural historians throughout the Commonwealth. Three principal sources for identifying diners in Massachusetts are the directory of diners in Richard J. S. Gutman's *American Diner Then and Now* [New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993], the *Diner Finder Deluxe – Massachusetts* road map [Watertown, MA: Coffee Cup Publications, 1991], and the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth, the statewide historic properties inventory maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). In general, these sources provide the name of the diner, previous names and locations, if known, the name of the manufacturer with model number, if known, and the date of construction. Two additional sources have provided periodic updates on the ownership, management, and location of diners in Massachusetts: Larry Cultrera's "Diner Hotline," published in each issue of the *Society for Commercial Archeology Journal*, and *Roadside Magazine* (both online and hard-copy formats), published by Randolph Garbin and Coffee Cup Publications.

Using the considerable amount of research already available for diners in Massachusetts, a database was compiled during the first phase of the multiple property listing project, drawing from the three principal sources cited above. This database, which includes over 150 diners dating from the 1920s to the 1960s, allows the diners to be grouped by manufacturer, date of construction, or geographic region of the Commonwealth. Condition, including restoration work or alterations, also is noted. Existence of this database precluded the need for a systematic reconnaissance field survey of the Commonwealth's 351 cities and towns. The database list served as the primary means of identifying potential candidates for intensive survey and evaluation under the multiple property listing.

Existing research also allowed for the development, during the first phase (year one) of the project, of a draft statement of historic contexts, a draft description of associated property types, and a bibliography. The narratives drew heavily from the groundbreaking work of diner historian Richard J. S. Gutman, whose published studies constitute the most comprehensive social and architectural history of diners available to date. The drafts were continually revised during the second phase of the project as more information was gathered. Through analysis of the database list and preparation of the draft narrative overviews, the following parameters emerged, which ultimately influenced the selection of specific diners for intensive survey, evaluation, and registration.

The large number of diners that are in excellent or good condition, or have been restored, were targeted over more altered examples. Since most diners in the Commonwealth were designed to be portable, removal of a diner from its original roadside location, either during or after the period of significance, did not preclude the diner from consideration, provided the

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current location has a roadside orientation. In this context, diners that were stick-built on permanent foundations on site, to look like prefabricated portable diners, were of great interest.

The routine moving of diners from one location to another made a geographic representation of diners across the different regions of the Commonwealth of less value than a study that focused on manufacturer, the evolution of diner forms, and date of construction. The Worcester Lunch Car Company of Worcester manufactured about half of the diners currently in Massachusetts. There was a desire to trace evolutions in the form of the company's diner models, as represented by extant examples from the 1920s through the early 1950s. At the same time, diners produced by other Massachusetts manufacturers or out-of-state manufacturers are far less common, and therefore well preserved examples of the work of those manufacturers were of great interest. Roughly one-third of the Massachusetts diners for which construction dates are known were built between 1949 (fifty years from the present) and ca. 1970 (the end-date for the historic context in this multiple property listing). In the interest of having the registration documentation reflect the full range of historic diners in Massachusetts, diners of fewer than fifty years in age were considered. To be eligible for listing under this multiple property format, however, a diner had to have been located in Massachusetts during its period of significance.

Each diner considered for registration under this multiple property listing was evaluated for National Register eligibility by MHC staff. Some diners were not already represented in the statewide inventory, and these diners were intensively surveyed and recorded on MHC inventory forms for the first time. In certain other cases, existing MHC inventory forms were redrafted to include current photographs, detailed descriptions of form and condition, and expanded discussion of the diner's history, especially in the context of diners statewide. Each of the diners selected for intensive survey had something about its architectural form or history that allowed MHC staff and the project consultant to test different aspects of the National Register criteria. This ensured that the eligibility requirements under this multiple property listing were not defined too narrowly. Each completed inventory form included a National Register Criteria Statement for formal evaluation by MHC staff. During the first phase (year one) of the project, budgetary and time constraints limited the number of diners that were intensively surveyed to five. MHC staff evaluated about twice that number for National Register eligibility. A working list of about forty-five diners also was compiled during this phase of the project. This list identified diners eligible for the National Register, diners that are significant but require additional investigation of their integrity, and diners that retain their integrity but require additional historical research to confirm their significance. This list is revised as more information is gathered.

The nine nominations included with this multiple property listing were prepared during the second phase (year two) of the project. They were chosen because they represent, as a group, a cross-section of the state's diners in terms of period of significance, architectural form, and manufacturer. In addition, nomination of some of these diners allowed for further exploration of certain issues surrounding integrity and the application of the National Register criteria to this

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very significant and very vulnerable resource type. In addition to preparing the nine nominations and finalizing the statement of historic contexts and associated property types section, the project consultant conducted intensive surveys of another five diners, which were submitted to the MHC for evaluation.

Project consultant Kathleen Kelly Broomer, an architectural historian and preservation planner, completed the first and second phases of work under the multiple listing project. A third phase, now underway, will produce nominations for another five diners, as well as detailed inventory forms for ten more diners. Given the value of National Register listing in raising public awareness and encouraging preservation of significant resources, the third phase is expected to include certain diners that are vacant or otherwise endangered.

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20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURE:  
THE DINERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

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