

FORM B - BUILDING

Vallie A Talmage 3/7/88
MA supo

MAR 14 1988

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116

AREA

FORM NO.

--	--

Town Worcester (MRA ammendment)

Address 652-660 Main Street

Historic Name Aurora Hotel

Use: Present Vacant

Original Residential hotel and stores

DESCRIPTION

Date 1897-1898

Source Building notices

Style Classical Revival

Architect Barker and Nourse

Exterior Wall Fabric white marble and brick

Outbuildings none

Major Alterations (with dates) interior
and storefronts: 1929, 1947

Condition Exterior - fair to good
Interior - poor

Moved No Date

Acreage less than one acre

Setting Located on edge of central business
district in a run-down commercial
neighborhood.

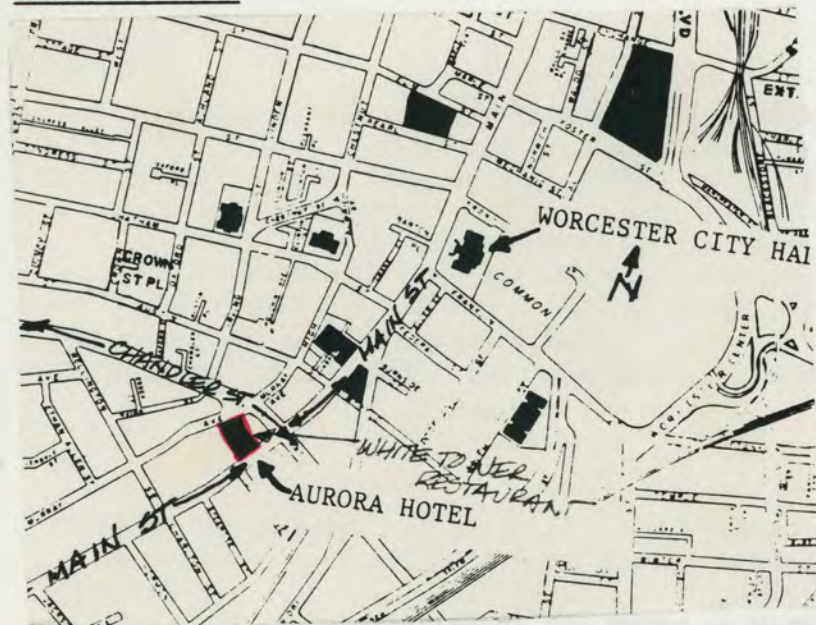
Recorded by Claire Dempsey

Organization Massachusetts Historical

Date November 1987 Commission

Photo (3"x3" or 3"x5", black and white) Indicate address of property on back of photo. Staple to left side of form.

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s). Indicate north



UTM REFERENCE 19/268600/4682170

USGS QUADRANGLE Worcester North

SCALE 1:25000

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

The Aurora Hotel is a well-preserved example of the Classical Revival style designed by the Worcester architectural firm Baker and Nourse. The Aurora Hotel is representative of the urban architecture in Worcester during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. It retains integrity of location, design, materials, association, and workmanship and meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places on the local level.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Aurora Hotel possesses the distinctive characteristics of high-quality late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century commercial architecture of the Classical Revival Style. Much of its detailing was clearly custom designed, and the high quality materials and finish of its facade are expressive of its function as a leading hotel in the community. Although the loss of some detailing is unfortunate, the exterior still retains its integrity due to the strength of the overall design and the many key details.

continued

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

The Aurora Hotel is located at 652-660 Main Street in the City of Worcester. In 1897-1898 when the hotel was originally constructed, the South Main Street area was predominantly an urban residential neighborhood on the edge of the downtown commercial core. Trinity Methodist Church (demolished in 1930) was located next door to the north, and several other substantial brick apartment buildings were being built in the neighborhood. In 1906, both the Worcester Boys Club and the Odd Fellows Building were constructed nearby. Most likely the Aurora was used largely as a high-quality apartment hotel. Its original owner and builder, Charles Stevens, was the son of Charles P. Stevens, an owner of the Stevens Building on Southbridge Street. The younger Stevens was born in Worcester in 1855, attended Harvard Law School, and shortly after his admission to the bar was appointed a Justice of the Peace (1878). Between 1878 and 1900, Stevens practiced law in Worcester, eventually retiring from practice to manage his extensive estate holdings.

continued

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Engineering and Building Record, Vol. XXXV, 2/20/1987 (building notice).
Builder's Weekly, Vol. I, 10/02/1987, p.3 (building notices)
Barker and Nourse, Illustrations. (1898) illustrated, pages unnumbered.
Nutt, C., History of Worcester.
Worcester's Best, Elliot B. Knowlton, editor, 1984.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Worcester

Form No:

Property Name: Aurora Hotel

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Architectural Significance (continued)

The Aurora Hotel is a major work of one of the primary architectural firms practicing in Worcester in the late-nineteenth century. The firm, Barker and Nourse (1880-1902), was responsible for many of Worcester's major buildings of this period, including the Worcester Historical Society, the Day Building, English High School, the Bliss Building, and the Boynton and Windsor apartment blocks. The Aurora is an especially significant Classical Revival design in contrast to the remainder of their work in the Romanesque Revival style.

The detailing of the facade is executed in an eclectic version of the Classical Revival Style typical of commercial buildings of this period. As the building was to be a high quality hotel of some pretension, the detailing was unusually varied and exuberant. The upper five floors of the primary facade of this six story building are faced with white marble in a symmetrical composition with two curved bays, originally clad in copper, rising to a projecting copper cornice. The spandrels at each level of the copper bays were executed in different designs rather than being uniform from top to bottom. The lowest three each had different panels deeply embossed with classical foliate and swag motifs. The central panel between the second and third floors was of the mythical figure Aurora in her chariot bringing in the dawn. The windows in these bays are composed of a central 1/1 double hung sash flanked by curved 1/1 sash windows

The central portion of the facade between the projecting copper bays is organized to rise as a series of free style orders complete with entablatures. Floors two through five have two sets of paired windows, with the windows set at a slight angle divided by a central mullion with a single colonette. The second floor is composed of two paired windows divided by a single heavy marble pilaster with a Romanesque capitol and a simple but massive entablature and cornice across the top. Floors three and four are united by three central colonettes rising between the paired windows to a denticular cornice and entablature above the fourth floor. The spandrels between the windows are slightly curved marble panels with carved classical swags. The fifth floor windows are framed by more simple pilasters without a cornice. The sixth floor is composed of four individual windows with brick arches separated by small marble pilasters, separated from the lower floors by a molded beltcourse at the base of its windows. In the central section, a panel with the building's name "Aurora" is defined by the addition of a second lower belt course.

The first floor was originally composed of four similar plate-glass storefronts with a central recessed entry to the hotel. The outer two stores were entirely contained in one-story wings that projected from the sides of the main block of the building. The storefronts and entry were united by a single cast-iron sign bank and denticular cornice just below the second floor.

continued

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Worcester

Form No:

Property Name: Aurora Hotel

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Architectural Significance (continued)

The storefronts have been through numerous changes, and today exhibit major elements dating from 1929 thru the 1950s. Remnants of the original storefronts include cast-iron piers at each end and the cast-iron sign band and cornice on the main block. In 1920, two storefronts in the main block were altered when the two central cast-iron piers were changed to larger, round cast-iron piers. In 1929, all four storefronts and main entry were changed to a Colonial Revival design executed in tapestry brick. The marquee was added under the main block to unify the facade, and a large design was painted on the west side of the building. These changes were part of an overall renovation of the interior. The main entry survives as the right central storefront; and tapestry brick of the left central and far right storefront survives. In 1937, the left central storefront (#656 and #658) was changed to the Art Deco Rora Bar. In 1947, the far left storefront (#660) was changed to the Moderne style with the figure of Aurora inlaid into the terrazzo cladding. The marquee and signage of the main block was altered to conform to the Moderne Style of #660. The far right storefront was altered with new aluminum and red panel glazing system at this time, or perhaps later in the 1950s. These changes reflect new ownership, and all these latest elements remain intact. The upper five floors survive intact with most of their detail, except the copper on the front facade bays which was sold as scrap metal in 1982, by the last private owner before the building was acquired by the City of Worcester for tax title.

The deeply projecting copper cornice and the white marble of the front facade both turn the corners and run back about thirteen feet along the side facades before merging into the plain brick of the side elevations. The side elevations are of more utilitarian design, but still utilize white marble for their sills and lintels with rounded bullnose brick to define the window jambs. The cornice loses most of its bold projection and is composed entirely of brick. The rear facade is purely utilitarian, having a plain wooden porch with wood egress stairs running across most of its length.

Originally the building was entered through a recessed entry at the center of the facade. A small vestibule led immediately into a central open staircase rising the full height of the building. The hotel rooms and suites were accessed from open corridors off the central stairwell. It is not clear whether there were any formal public rooms. It may be that originally the hotel was primarily an apartment hotel. Other than a very few trim elements, the overall floor plan of the upper stories, and the framework of the central stair, virtually nothing of the original interior survives.

In 1929, the entire interior was completely remodeled to become one of the premier hotels of downtown Worcester. The entry location was changed to the right central side of the main block, and led through a progression of large public lobby spaces to several restaurants and a bar on the main floor, a new

continued

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Worcester

Form No:

Property Name: Aurora Hotel

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Architectural Significance (continued)

Art Deco style function room in the basement, and a large sitting room on the second floor. The original main staircase continued to be used. The rooms were remodeled, and probably had the existing private baths installed at this time. Except for a Spanish style restaurant and bar entered off the street from the left central storefront, the public spaces were in a formal Colonial Revival style. The basic plan survives from this period, but the finishes in most spaces are in extremely poor condition or missing.

In 1947, the building was again remodeled, with the major interior changes being the conversion of the store at #660 to a new restaurant. The Spanish style restaurant was also redecorated to be consistent with the 1937 Art Deco bar adjoining it, which was also redecorated. These changes survive in plan, but most finishes are missing or are in very poor condition. Changes since 1947 have included the complete enclosing of the central stairwell with sheet rock to meet current codes. The floor plan of 1929, as modified in 1947, survives largely intact. However, the removal of most architectural trim for salvage material in 1982 by the last private owner destroyed the architectural integrity of most surviving interior finishes and spaces.

In 1982, the Hotel was closed, and the property taken by the City of Worcester for nonpayment of back taxes. Current plans call for the renovation of the Hotel by a private developer into 85 studios and one-bedroom low-income housing units with community rooms and commercial office space on the first floor.

Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric sites are currently recorded on the property, it is possible that sites are present. One known site is reported in close proximity (within one mile) to the property. In general, however, the potential for significant archaeological remains, either prehistoric or historic, seems low, as a result of small lot size and the impacts of building construction on the lot.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Worcester

Form No:

Property Name: Aurora Hotel

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Historical Significance (continued)

During the first third of the twentieth century, the area gradually developed a more commercial character as an extension of the downtown business district to the north, and the Aurora was made into a first-class hotel. Elaborate public spaces were installed in 1929, fully described in a December 28, 1929 article in the Worcester Gazette. The high cost of this remodeling--\$150,000--is indicative of the importance of the hotel to the community. The Aurora was frequently utilized for important social events and public gatherings.

Typical of many other New England industrial cities, by the late 1950s, Worcester had entered a period of economic decline as industries moved south in search of cheaper labor, and its population moved to nearby suburbs. Motels were replacing older urban hotels as the standard form of accommodation for travelers. During the 1950s and 1960s, Worcester's extended business district retreated back into the central core on the northern portion of Main Street. The neighborhood around the Aurora Hotel rapidly declined, and the Aurora became a transient roominghouse.

Number of Resources within Property

	Buildings	Sites	Structures	Objects	Total
Contributing:	1	0	0	0	1
Noncontributing:	0	0	0	0	0

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property includes the lot historically associated with the Aurora Hotel.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received 5-3-84

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 1 of 1

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Worcester Multiple Resource Area
State Worcester County, MASSACHUSETTS

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Worcester Corset Company
-
- Factory

Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

2. Malvern Road School

Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

3. Claremont Street Historic
-
- District

Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

4. Richmond, Willard, Apartment
-
- Block

Entered in the
National Register

Keeper

Attest

5. Russell (The)

Entered in the
National Register

Keeper

Attest

6. Aurora Hotel

Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

7. Holy Name of Jesus Complex

Keeper

Attest

8. Vendome and the St. Ives

Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

9. Shaarai Torah Synagogue

Entered in the
National Register

Keeper

Attest

- 10.

Keeper

Attest

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

88000429

Aurora Hotel (Worcester MRA)
Worcester County
MASSACHUSETTS

Substantive Review

Working No. MAR 14 1988
Fed. Reg. Date: 27/69
Date Due: 4/14/88 - 4/28/88
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 4-28-88
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

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

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

Reviewer's comments:

Architecturally and historically important as major work of Worcester architectural firm of Barker & Morse executed in the Classical Revival mode; also for its historical role as one of

Recom./Criteria Accept A+C
Reviewer Savage
Discipline Architectural History
Date 4/25/88
____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

downtown Worcester's Premier hotels in the late 1920's - 1930's. Unfortunate loss of majority of interior features and finishes.

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- ☐ excellent ☐ deteriorated
☐ good ☐ ruins
☐ fair ☐ unexposed

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

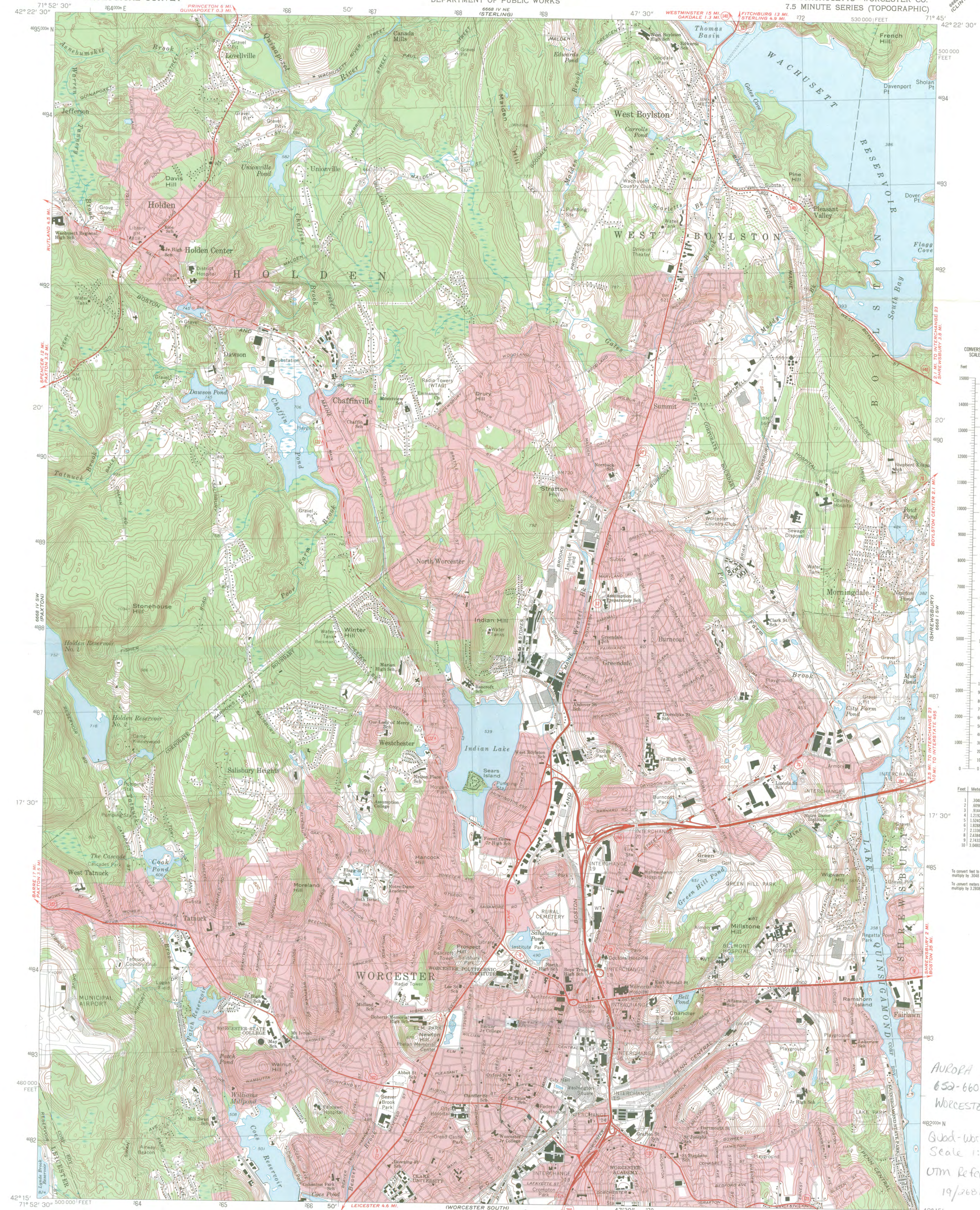


Aurora Hotel
652-660 Main Street
Worcester, MA, MRA

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

WORCESTER NORTH QUADRANGLE
MASSACHUSETTS—WORCESTER CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



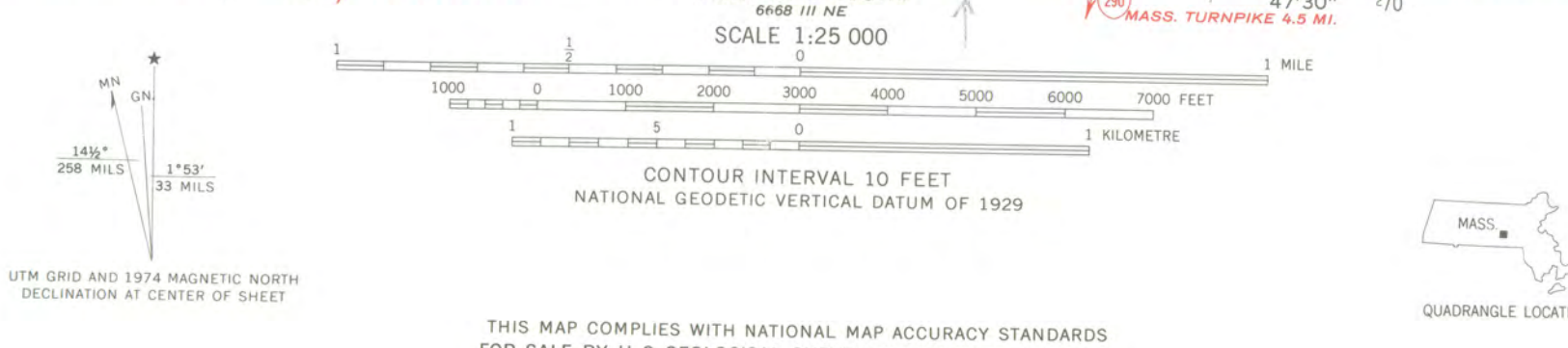
CONVERSION SCALES

Feet	Meters
1000	305
2000	610
3000	914
4000	1219
5000	1524
6000	1829
7000	2134
8000	2438
9000	2743
10000	3048

To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.305
To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.281

AUOPRA HOTEL
652-660 MAIN STREET
WORCESTER, MA
Quad-Worcester North
Scale 1:25,000
UTM References:
19J68600/4682170

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1941. Revised from aerial
photographs taken 1972. Field checked 1974
Polyconic projection, 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

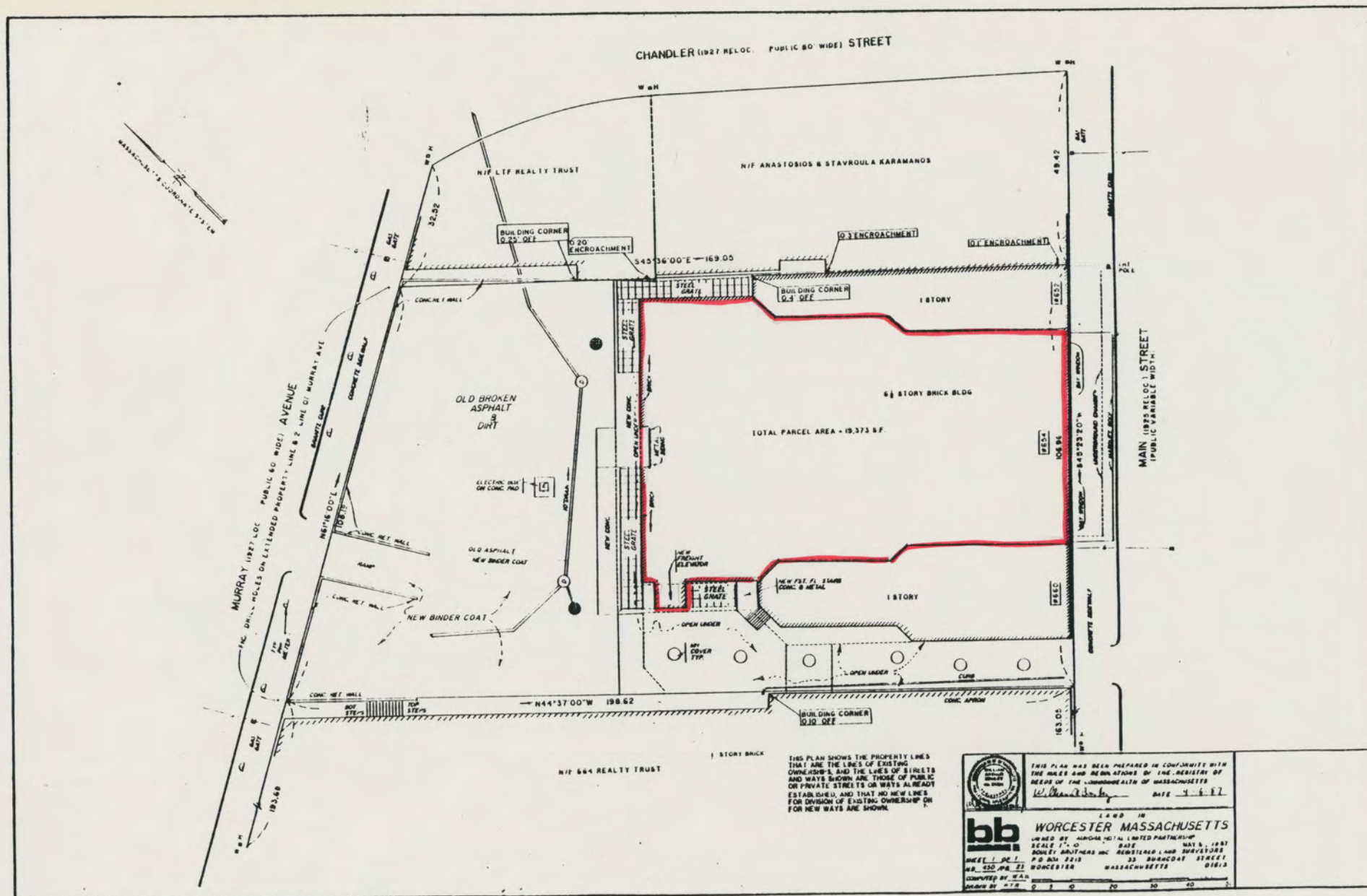
Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

WORCESTER NORTH, MASS.
N4215-W7145/7.5

1974

AMS 6668 IV SE—SERIES V814

AURORA HOTEL
652-660 Main Street
Worcester, MA





P 093545969

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of the Secretary of State
Michael Joseph Connolly, Secretary

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Valerie A. Talmage

Executive Director

State Historic Preservation Officer

March 7, 1988

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

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the nomination forms for the following properties:

Districts

Boston, Temple Place Historic District

Milton, Milton Centre Historic District

Sterling, Sterling Center Historic District

Wellesley, Hunnewell Estates Historic District

Weston, Wellington Farm Historic District

Individual properties

Boston, Dorchester Lower Mills Branch Library, 1110 Washington Street

Oxford, Huguenot Fort, Fort Hill Road

Worcester (Worcester MRA), Aurora Hotel, 652-660 Main Street

They have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. No comments have been received to date. We request the expedited review of the Hunnewell Estates Historic District, Wellesley.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

BF/es

Enclosure