

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NOV 29 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Boston N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Suffolk code 025 zip code 02116

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical State Historic Preservation Officer

Date Commission; _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Department Store;

Specialty Store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

walls Brick; Limestone; Concrete Block

roof Asphalt

other Steel; Aluminum; Glass

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Occupying a prominent location in the Fenway section of Boston at the intersection of Park Drive, Brookline Avenue and the Olmsted Park System, the Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store ("Sears") dominates its surroundings by its size, positioning and architectural design. While the original Sears Building occupies only about 29% of its 385,142 square foot trapezium site, its additions and acquisition increase this coverage to 55%, with most of the remaining land being asphalt or concrete covered parking and loading areas. Traces of the original landscaping plan (although not the plantings themselves) exist near the south corner of the building. The MBTA Riverside Line's Fenway "T" Station is located at the west corner of the site.

Since the completion of the original building in 1928-1930, the Sears Roebuck and Company complex has expanded to suit its needs, spawning two additions and incorporating a previously independent building. All four elements are now interconnected, but may be evaluated as four distinct components:

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store, George C. Nimmons, and Nimmons Carr and Wright, architects, 1928-1939, Sections "A-D" on the attached plan, "Sears Roebuck and Company Building Sections".

Miller Building, architect unknown, 1929, Section M.

Addition, Carr and Wright, architects, 1948-1949, Section E.

Addition, Ballinger and Company, architects and engineers, 1966, Section F.

1928-1930 Building, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue

The original Sears Building (Sections A-D) was constructed in two consecutive phases: Sections A and B plus basement and floor 1 of Section C and basement to floor 4 of Section D in 1928; floors 2-8 of Section C and 5-8 of Section D in 1930.

Facing Park Drive, the primary 21-bay, 442 foot-long southwest facade is the most detailed, featuring a three-bay-wide projecting central tower element flanked by 9-bay-wide wings. The tower, 84 feet 6 inches wide at its base and

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50 feet 6 inches square at the top, rises 200 feet (12 stories) with 3 setbacks above floors 2, 9 and 11. It represents the building's most impressive use of Art Deco style and limestone detail at its top, and above its 2-story central entrance. The tower's three-window-wide central bay projects 5 feet from its 2-window-wide flanking bays. The first setback occurs only on the front, above the second floor. At the ninth floor the tower is set back on the southeast and northwest sides, continuing with four identically finished facades. The third setback, on all four sides, is above floor 11. Floors 11 and 12, along with floors 3 and 4, represent the most elaborate detailing on the building. Floors 10 and 12 have double-height, round-arched windows with limestone keystones supporting carved limestone attached columns which terminate in free-standing urns in the shape of stylized Corinthian-like capitals above the 11th floor, and carved hexagonal posts at the top of the tower. At the 11th floor setback, ornately carved buttresses flank the central bay on all four elevations, with all detail being rendered in limestone. A second area of limestone articulation occurs above the two-story recessed main entrance on the tower, within and around the central bay. The limestone carving is in the form of stylized foliation set in a variety of geometric contexts and interspersed with smaller geometric forms. Most is relatively low relief except for the urns and other points of termination. Architectural setbacks and chamfers of limestone blocks tend to monumentalize the decorative limestone elements.

The central tower is flanked by nine-bay wings, each of which has a slightly projecting three-bay portion with piers rising above the roof parapet. Two-window bays again flank a three-window central bay in each case with the round-arched windows at floor 8 and the limestone detail similar to that at the top of the tower. Other bays on the wings have single large window openings set between wide brick piers which rise only to the parapet, with more modest limestone detail above the eighth floor windows.

Southeast and northwest elevations repeat the pattern of the southwest facade's wings. The thirteen-bay southeast Brookline Avenue elevation is 262.92 feet long and incorporates two projecting 3-bay portions, complete with limestone detail similar to those on the southwest facade. The balance of the windows are similarly treated as well, except for an additional set at the second floor mezzanine of Section D. There is also a one-story entrance centered in the projecting portion nearest to Park Drive.

The northwest elevation, being only 208.85 feet with eleven bays, features only one projecting three-bay element with detail and window treatment similar to the others. Other aspects of the elevation have similar treatments as those on the southwest and southeast except on floor 1, which has been altered by the introduction of loading docks. Also, an entrance similar to that on the southeast has been removed and the three-story 1966 addition abuts the northeastern three bays of this elevation. There are limestone belt courses

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above floors 2 and 8 on all three elevations, with the latter interrupted by the projecting three-bay portions.

Much of the northeast elevation is obscured from view by the 1949 and 1966 additions to the building. The visible portion reveals an industrial-like arrangement of large, regularly organized window openings, most of which are of similar size and shape. The limestone belt course seen above the eighth floor windows on the other elevation is continued on the northeast. The elevation is broken at the junction of Sections C and D, angling toward the west on Section C. There are twenty-one bays in the two sections.

There are brick spandrels between window levels, with limestone sills and concrete lintels, on all elevations. All windows have fixed steel-framed units surrounding top-hinged projecting steel casements (in most cases) with the steel painted green.

A 20 inch-high limestone water table serves as the base for the brick walls of southwest, southeast and northwest elevations. Brick is laid in common bond with alternating header/stretcher bonding courses occurring every sixth course.

There has been considerable replacement of brick and infill of window openings (the latter mostly on floor 1) with a brick that is similar in texture but slightly warmer in color. An earlier design for the building which appeared in The American Architect (see attachment) included store fronts or "Show Windows" in all bays on floor 1 (except the entrances) of the southwest and southeast elevations. The building as built featured only two of these large windows on the southwest plus five on the southeast. The other bays on the southeast, exclusive of the tower, had clerestory windows. All of these, as well as a number of basement lights, have been bricked up.

The roof is flat with a built-up tar and gravel surface. The brick parapet with limestone coping sits atop a "pipe tunnel" which follows the perimeter of Sections A and B of the building. Between Sections A and B and C and D are a series of unadorned brick elevator and mechanical penthouses. A steel smoke stack rises from one of these.

The building structural system consists of a reinforced concrete foundation and frame, with 12 inch-thick brick exterior walls. Round mushroom columns 20 feet on center in both directions support reinforced concrete slabs at all levels. The columns range in diameter from 3 feet in the basement to 1 foot on floor 8. Columns in the tower are square. Ceiling heights in the main part of the building range from 9 feet 6 inches on most floors to 16 feet in the first floor retail area. Structural elements are exposed except in the lobby, on floors 2 to 8 of the tower and part of floor 2, with a cafeteria and offices.

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Exclusive of the tower, which includes the main lobby with round arches, original staircase with alternating square and twisted balusters and wood handrail, more recent elevators, plus halls and offices on the upper floors (modest detail), the building is divided into four sections (A,B,C and D), separated by brick partitions with elevators, staircases and washrooms strung along the partition separating Sections A and B from C and D. This holds for all 9 levels (basement to 8). The partition between Sections A and B is missing on floor 1 to provide uninterrupted retail space. There are a number of non-structural partitions in the basement and on floors 1 and 2, some original but most of more recent vintage. Floors 3 through 8 have relatively uninterrupted spaces. Floor 2 of Section D and its mezzanine are packed with distribution equipment. Exposed concrete, brick and later concrete block surfaces are painted on all levels.

The building contains about 1,000,000 square feet of floor space. The bulk of the interior was built as, and remains, open warehouse space featuring only concrete mushroom columns 20 feet on center in both directions. There are few later concrete block partitions and some fairly recent stud and sheetrock/plywood partitions with hung ceilings. The tower section is divided into smaller rooms but essentially without detail. The arches in the lobby and staircase to the second floor are of some interest as is the distribution equipment (of an uncertain date) on floor 2. The original plans for the building exist and include some details of the lobby.

The "spiral conveyor", a brick cylinder enclosing spiral chutes and located near the west corner of Section A on floors 3 to 8, is of particular interest as an original part of the distribution system. The building's original main switchboard is still in use in the basement.

The tower has offices on floors 2 to 8, mechanical space on floors 9 to 11, and a 50,000 gallon water tank on floor 12, which services the gravity-fed sprinkler system.

The Miller Building, 155-163 Brookline Avenue (Section M)

Originally constructed in 1929, it was leased to the Miller Rubber Company of New England, a wholesale tire store, from 1929 to 1936. From 1938 through 1954 it housed the Sears Service Station, and was substantially altered by Sears in 1937 and 1948. An application filed at Inspectional Services requests permission to change the use from a service station to a "super service station" which required storing much larger amounts of gasoline, lubrication oil and kerosene. Partitions were removed and "greasing pits" were added. A building permit dated January 26, 1948 gives a further scope of work as follows: "Make necessary alterations in present building to change occupancy from service station and retail store to mail order store. Cut openings in wall to provide access to new addition to existing mail order

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store." This work coincided with the 1949 addition and was also completed by Carr and Wright with Turner Construction as the contractor.

The three-story brick and concrete building, painted yellow, has a flat roof and windows of the same style and muntins the same color as found in the main Sears building. Original cast concrete detail, featuring a stylized tire motif, has been almost entirely removed, openings have been blocked up and poor painting has caused the brick to retain water and crack. The interior has more recently been reconfigured into office space with drop ceilings and vinyl floor covering.

1949 Addition, Section E

Also by Carr and Wright, Section E serves as a connector between the Miller Building and the original Section D. The addition features a canopied loading dock and is strictly utilitarian, built of brick and concrete. It houses much of the mail order house distribution equipment.

1966 Addition, Section F

Abutting Sections C, E, and M, this final addition to the Sears plant is again strictly utilitarian, a three-story brick building with loading docks, roll up metal doors, flat roof and aluminum windows. The plans drawn up by Ballinger Company envisioned future additions of 8 floors, which were not built.

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Archaeological Description

The Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store site may contain intact remains of prehistoric Native American fishweirs from the Late Archaic Period (ca. 3000 - 1000 B.C.). These remains may consist of wooden stakes set vertically into underlying deposits in configurations to facilitate catching fish in the various tidal channels that formerly covered the Back Bay at low tide. Portions of fishweirs have been documented underlying Boylston Street in Boston's Back Bay since 1913, in 1939 at the construction site of the New England Mutual Life Company Building, at the 1946 and 1954 construction of the Old John Hancock building, the IBM building (corner of Boylston and Claredon Streets), and at the 1986 construction at 500 Boylston Street. Fishweir remains in the Back Bay tend to be directly associated with the interface of clay, peat and silt deposits as are found at the Sears and Roebuck building site, varying in depth between 10 and 30 feet below surface. Preservation at these sites is generally excellent because of the high water table in the Back Bay and the extreme depth of archaeological deposits.

(end)

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

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 nationally statewide locallyApplicable National Register Criteria A B C DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture1928 - 19401928 - 1930CommerceCommunity Planning & Development

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

See Continuation Sheet

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

The Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store (1928-1930) ("Sears building"), located at 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and meets National Register Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the Sears building is significant for the valuable role it played in the local economy and by extension as a catalog mail order house, the building represents and reflects the changing tastes, styles and material wants and needs of late 19th through late 20th century American consumers. Additionally under Criterion A, the Sears building and its site are associated with the growth and development of the Fenway district. Under Criterion C, the Sears building represents an architectural style, Art Deco, that is scarce in Boston; it is an example of the work of George C. Nimmons (1865-1947), FAIA, a prolific designer of industrial and mercantile structures; and shows several advancements in building technology. Like most massive industrial and mercantile buildings, the Sears building has seen alterations and additions over the years, yet the original structure is easily envisioned without its later (1940's and 1960's) appendages and bricked up openings. The building's integrity remains and its alterations are reversible.

Not long after the first settlers arrived on the Shawmut Peninsula in the summer of 1630, the need for additional grazing and foraging land for their cattle and swine became apparent. With nearby Roxbury and Charlestown already established as separate towns, inhabitants of Boston were forced to look toward more distant shores for suitable pastures. Less than two miles westward, across a marshy bay, an area of hills, woods and pasture land appeared to be an ideal spot. Called Muddy River, after the meandering stream which formed its boundary with Roxbury, it was eventually set off from Boston as Brookline in 1705.

The first reference to Muddy River as a grazing ground in the Town Records of Boston occurred in 1634 when Edmund Quinsey, Samuel Wilbore and others were called upon to make rates for "the young cattle and cowskeeper at Muddy

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River". Between 1635 and 1641 the land at Muddy River was divided up among certain inhabitants of Boston through a series of grants, offered initially to the more prominent citizens (the first being "a sufficient allotment for a farm for our Teacher, Mr. John Cotton") and subsequently to "the poorer sort of the Inhabitants...(who) have no Cattell, shall have their proportion of allotments for planting ground..." Individual grants to the "poorer sort" were limited to four or five acres. In 1675 John Josselyn wrote: "Two miles from the town at a place called Muddy-River, the Inhabitants have Farms, to which belong rich arable grounds and meadows where they keep their Cattle in the Summer, and bring them to Boston in the Winter..."

The northeastern portion of Muddy River, including the Sears site, and bounded by the river of the same name on the southwest, the bay on the east and the Charles River on the north, was salt water marsh and therefore of limited use for farming and grazing. Nevertheless, between 1636 and 1641, twenty-four grants and sales of marsh were recorded in the Town Records, the first of which was a grant to Thomas Savage, who "shall have seven acres layed him out, for keeping of his Cattle (being in number five)." In 1637 Thomas Flint "hath allotted unto him twenty-four acres of marsh ground at the mouth of Muddy River..." The largest grant was for sixty acres to Peter Oliver in 1640.

In the beginning Bostonians kept their cattle at Muddy River during the summer while corn was growing on their plots of land at home, returning the animals to the Shawmut Peninsula for the winter. Gradually farms were established and by 1650 there were about twenty-five families living in Muddy River. In the 17th century it was the most convenient grazing land, during the 18th century Brookline was the nearest farming community, and by the 1830s and 1840s, it had become the favorite resort for wealthy Boston merchants.

Brookline's population, which stood at 518 in 1790, had risen only to 1,265 by 1840, but spurted to 5,164 in 1860, following the opening of the Brookline Branch of the Boston and Worcester Railroad in April of 1848. Chartered on June 23, 1831, the railroad began operations as far as Newton on April 16, 1834. Colonel Amos Binney (1778-1833), who had been U.S. Navy Agent for the Port of Boston from 1812 until 1826, was appointed the first superintendent, but died of "liver complaint" on January 11, 1833. The railroad nevertheless opened with passages made chiefly by the Meteor Engine, built in England by Robert Stephenson. Applications from the inhabitants of Brookline in 1847 led to the establishment of a Brookline branch, running diagonally across the marshes to Brookline Village, in April of the following year. By 1849 the railroad had twenty-nine engines, fifty-seven passenger cars and hundreds of freight cars. In 1868 the Boston and Worcester line merged with the Western Railroad to form the Boston and Albany Railroad. In 1928 a two-track spur was laid down leading into a one-story train shed at the rear of the newly constructed Sears Roebuck building, accounting for the angle of the northeast elevation of Section C of the structure. The Boston and Albany right of way

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became the MBTA Riverside subway line in 1959.

As early as 1633 a cart bridge was ordered constructed "at some convenient place over the Muddy River", the location of which was where Boston's Huntington Avenue becomes Brookline's Boylston Street today. Until the Mill Dam was completed in 1821, this bridge (and its successors at this location) provided the only overland connection from Roxbury (Boston) to Brookline, Watertown, Newton and Cambridge. In 1717 Benjamin White sold a small lot to James Goddard for a tavern, a short distance west of the bridge. Known as the Punch Bowl Tavern, it became an important stagecoach stop and was the nucleus around which the village of Brookline gathered. The construction of the Mill Dam and of other bridges over Muddy River, plus the opening of the Brookline Branch Railroad, drained business away from the Punch Bowl, which was bought in 1833 by Isaac Thayer and demolished.

The northeastern tip of the Brookline marshes, where the Charles River expanded into a bay fed by the Muddy River, was called Sewall's Point, after a notable Massachusetts family. Samuel Sewall (1652-1730), known for his Diary, was appointed a commissioner in 1692 to try the Salem witchcraft cases, for which he later "repented." He was also chief justice of the Superior Court from 1718 to 1728 and an overseer of Harvard College. Judge Sewall's wife, Hannah, was the daughter of John Hull, Mint Master for New England, who minted the famous Pine Tree Shilling. In fourteen separate transactions between 1670 and 1684, John Hull had acquired 300 acres of land in Muddy River "known by the name of Brookline Swamp Line and Hogs Coat" (Suffolk Deed 26:183), abutting the Charles River on the north and the marshes to the east. This substantial tract of "woodland pasture meadow and Salt Marsh" was willed to John Hull's daughter, Hannah. In 1712 Samuel and Hannah Sewall conveyed the 300 acres to their eldest son, Samuel and his wife Rebecca, as "one handsome Seat or living with Suitable Accommodations, the Partition or Division whereof would prejudice and Spoil the same" (Suffolk Deed 26:183). Samuel and Rebecca, in turn, granted the estate to their "only Son and Heir apparent Henry Sewall" in 1739 (Suffolk Deed 61:133).

During the Revolutionary War, a fort stood on Sewall's Point, which can be seen on Lt. Page's 1775 map of "Boston Its Environs and Harbour with the Rebels Works." The fort was for a time commanded by Col. Thomas Aspinwall (1734-1799), brother of Dr. William Aspinwall who owned part of what is now the Sears site from 1791 until his death in 1823.

In 1781 the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed an "Act to provide for the Payment of Debts due from the Conspirators and Absentees and for the recovery of Debts due to them." This resulted in the confiscation of property of certain of the culprits, including one Samuel Sewall, Esquire, late of Brookline, who was an absentee. Two-hundred and sixty-three acres of the 300-acre Sewall farm were sold to Edward Kitchen Wolcott to Brookline,

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yeoman, in 1782 (Suffolk Deed 135:113). Wolcott sold the Hull/Sewall estate to Uriah Cotting for \$50,000 in 1815 (Norfolk Deed 50:33), who bought it on speculation, anticipating construction of the Mill Dam of which he was guiding force and engineer until his death in 1821. Cotting had played a similar role a few years earlier as an energetic partner in the Broad Street Association, developers of warehouses along Broad and India Streets as well as India and Central Wharves. He also designed the U.S. Custom House in 1810, located on the Broad Street Association's land.

On June 14, 1814 a charter was granted to the Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation to construct a dam separating the Charles River proper from the marshy bay to the south. According to a plan published by Benjamin Dearborn in February of that year, the dam would run from the foot of Beacon Street at water's edge to Sewall's Point in Brookline. The dam with Western Avenue (later Beacon Street) on top opened July 2, 1821. Following Cotting's death that same year, Loammi Baldwin (1780-1838) took over as engineer and completed the project, which included the diagonal Cross Dam at Gravelly Point. Loammi Baldwin, whose father Colonel Loammi Baldwin (1740-1807) developed the Baldwin apple and planned the Middlesex Canal, began a law career but soon turned to engineering. He is considered the father of civil engineering in America. He designed Holworthy Hall at Harvard in 1811, the Union Canal (Pennsylvania) in 1821, determined the proportions of the Bunker Hill Monument in 1825 and became chief engineer of the Charlestown Navy Yard in 1827.

The "great dam", a 50-foot-wide, 1 1/2-mile-long earthen dike faced with stone on the river side, enclosed about 600 acres of the Back Bay with the Cross Dam separating the westerly full basin from the easterly receiving basin. At high tide water entered the full basin through filling sluices and flowed on the the receiving basin by way of mill sluices, powering mills adjacent to the Cross Dam in the process. The water eventually returned to the Charles at low tide through emptying sluices in the main dam. Construction of the Mill Dam, plus the introduction of causeways for the Boston & Worcester and Boston & Providence Railroads in 1834, converted the tidal marshes into foul smelling mud flats at low tide, causing an offended citizenry to agitate for filling in the bay. The way for systematic filling of the Back Bay was opened in 1856 with a tripartite indenture among the Commonwealth, the City of Boston and various private proprietors. A plan with streets laid out in a formal grid and generally credited to Arthur Gilman was developed in 1856, with the contract being let the following year. Beginning at the east end, filling to a depth of over 20 feet had reached Clarendon Street by 1860, beyond Exeter by 1870 and was completed by 1900, with building construction in pursuit.

Brookline Avenue was laid out at some point between 1814, when it was shown on Benjamin Dearborn's plan as a "contemplated road," and 1818, when it appeared as "Punch Bowl Road" on Mather Withington's "Plan of Brookline Marshes Belonging to Sundry Persons." It was so-named because it connected the Mill

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Dam road with Washington Street in Brookline in the vicinity of the Punch Bowl Tavern. It became Brookline Avenue officially in 1868. Audubon Road was opened for travel to Brookline Avenue in 1892 and renamed Park Drive prior to 1938, when it so appeared in the Bromley Atlas for that year. Fullerton Street, the northeastern boundary of the Sears site, which appeared as Miner Street in the 1873 Hopkins Atlas, acquired its present name about 1900.

Despite completion of the Mill Dam/Western Avenue in 1821 and the laying out of Punch Bowl Road and Brighton Road (now Commonwealth Avenue) as extensions of it, planning for development of the Brookline marshes did not begin in earnest until the early 1870's. Although much of the marsh area was owned by individuals as early as the 1630's, it is difficult to trace specific ownerships from then until the present day. Fortunately Mather Withington's aforementioned "Plan of Brookline Marshes" presents a reasonably accurate picture of the shape, size, location and ownership of all of the parcels as of 1818. The Sears site is easy to locate since it is at the junction of Punch Bowl Road and Muddy River, the latter being the boundary line between Brookline and Roxbury. What is now the site was then composed of two complete parcels owned by Samuel Craft and John Warren respectively, plus parts of three other parcels with their owners being Ebenezer Heath, General Isaac Gardner and Dr. William Aspinwall. The boundaries of the five lots continued until 1917, when all but the Aspinwall parcel came under the ownership of Eugene N. Foss. With the exception of John Warren (1779-1848), a farmer and stone mason who arrived in Brookline shortly before 1809, all of the owners were descendents of early Brookline landholds. In 1786 the four-acre lot was owned by Nehemiah Davis. Warren purchased it in 1814 from Samuel Hammond (Norfolk Deed 52:126) and sold it to David R. Griggs in 1846 (Norfolk Deed 170:138). Griggs' family in turn conveyed it to Edward R. Secomb in 1871 (Suffolk Deed 1056:282). By 1922 it had been acquired by the Park Square Real Estate Trust following a series of short-term ownerships.

Although members of the Craft family were not among the first landowners in Muddy River, Griffin Craft (ca. 1600-1689) arrived from England in 1630 and settled in Roxbury, near the east bank of Muddy River. Samuel Craft (1787-1850) who owned a parcel on the Sears site in 1818, was a 6th generation descendent of Griffin, and a man of considerable property who was active in establishing the Congregational Society in Brookline. Samuel's grandfather Ebenezer Craft (1705-1791, a cordwainer who owned large tracts of land in Brookline and elsewhere, was in possession of the lot in 1786. Samuel sold the property to Charles B. Dana, a Brookline merchant, in 1853 (Norfolk Deed 218:80). A mortgage default in 1881 placed the property in the hands of Rufus Estabrook of Newton (Suffolk Deed 1538:469), whose heirs conveyed it to Eugene N. Foss sometime after 1895. Foss held it until after 1917 when it was acquired by the Park Square Real Estate Trust.

John Heath of Roxbury (1732-1804) owned ten parcels in Brookline by 1786, one

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of which was partly on the Sears site. He married Susannah Craft in 1858 and fought in the Revolutionary War. His son Ebenezer (1765-1845), town treasurer, constructed a new meeting house in Brookline, and inherited the property. Following Ebenezer's death in 1845 it was purchased by Hon. David Sears (1787-1871) (Norfolk Deed 162:83), distinguished descendent of Richard Sares who settled in Yarmouth in the 17th century. A wealthy Boston merchant and real estate developer, David Sears built and occupied the bow-fronted granite mansion house at 42 Beacon Street, contributed substantially to the construction of St. Paul's Church on Tremont Street (both designed by Alexander Parris), and built "Sears Tower" at the observatory in Cambridge. "About 1850 Mr. Sears purchased some 200 acres of land in the suburbs of Boston, which has since become the beautiful village of Longwood, which he proceeded to lay out and beautify at great expense, giving to many of the streets and squares names which he believed to be identified with the family in this country and in England". (May: The Descendents of Richard Sares) He also built Sears Chapel or Christ's Church in Longwood in 1860-1862, designed by Arthur Gilman. David Sears served several terms as a state representative and state senator. Following his death in 1871 the Heath parcel was transferred to the West Boston Land Associates (Suffolk Deed 1119:261). By 1884 it was back in the Sears family, having been acquired by David's grandsons David and Henry Sears who held it until 1912 when they sold it to Eugene N. Foss (Suffolk Deed 3651:135).

The Gardner parcel was in the possession of General Isaac Sparhawk Gardner (1756-1818) at the time of his death. This marsh land was conveyed to his grandfather Isaac Gardner (1686-1767), who had married Susanna Heath in 1715 and was the first deacon of the First Church, as two parcels from Dudley Boylston (1688-1748), yeoman, town constable and husband of Elizabeth Gardner, in 1729 (Suffolk Deed 45:145) and from Edward Devotion (d. 1744) in 1739 (Suffolk Deed 69:95). Dudley Boylston was the brother of Dr. Zabdiel Boylston (1680-1766), the first physician in the U.S. to inoculate for smallpox. Edward Devotion was constable, perambulator and surveyor of highways for Brookline. At his death he left his estate to the town "towards Building or Maintaining a School". His grandfather Edward, probably a French Huguenot from the La Rochelle family of Pierre de la Barre de Vaution, had acquired substantial acreage in Muddy River before 1667. In 1821 General Gardner's son Samuel, a yeoman, sold the 7 1/2 acres to Caleb Clark (1789-1849), also a yeoman (Norfolk Deed 65:125). By 1873 that portion of the parcel which is part of the Sears site had been subdivided into row house lots.

Dr. William Aspinwall (1743-1823) acquired his 5-acre parcel of saltmarsh from Henry Dana, innholder, in 1791 (Suffolk Deed 169:195). In 1760 Caleb Dana, esquire, conveyed the lot to his son Caleb, a tanner (Suffolk Deed 118:156). The Danas were residents of Cambridge. Dr. Aspinwall was the great grandson of Peter Aspinwall (ca. 1612-1687) who purchased a 150-acre farm in Muddy River in 1650. The doctor married Susanna Gardner, sister of General Gardner,

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and became the first physician to practice in Brookline. His friend General (Dr.) Joseph Warren convinced him to serve in the medical division during the Revolutionary War to "save Yankees instead of killing British." He was State Senator four times, Justice of the Peace and founded and maintained two hospitals for smallpox inoculations. His portrait was painted by Gilbert Stuart. Dr. Aspinwall's son Augustus (1787-1865) sold the parcel to Amos A. Lawrence (1814-1886) in 1858 (Norfolk Deed 263:150). Amos Lawrence, a commission merchant for textiles in Boston, was a director of numerous corporations, trustee of Massachusetts General Hospital, treasurer of Harvard and president of the trustees of the Groton School. In 1850 he bought ninety acres in Brookline from Ebenezer Francis and built a stone house in which he lived until his death. From 1851 on Amos and his brother William developed Cottage Farm with stone and brick cottages behind trees and hedges. The brothers also built the Church of Our Saviour in Brookline (Alexander Esty, 1868) in memory of their father. During the 1850s Amos A. Lawrence became involved with the Emigrant Aid Company, promoting emigration to Kansas as an anti-slavery device. He contributed \$10,000 for education which resulted in the founding of the state university in Lawrence in 1863. Lawrence Hall at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge was built with his money in 1873 and 1880. By 1873 the Aspinwall portion of the Sears site had been subdivided into row house lots.

From the early 1870s on when the northeastern edge of the Sears site was subdivided into row house lots, the parcels were held by a variety of land speculators, real estate trusts and an insurance company until January 5, 1928, when Sears Roebuck and Company purchased the 287,612-square-foot main portion of the site from the Park Square Real Estate Trust (Suffolk Deed 4967:322). On August 16, 1929, after the first phase of the Sears building was constructed, the company acquired the northeastern strip along Fullerton Street (Suffolk Deed 5123:218), except for the lot at the corner of Brookline Avenue and Fullerton Street which was sold by Nelson Pierce James of Newton to "155 Brookline Avenue Inc." in 1928 (Suffolk Deed 5043:381). The building presently occupying the corner site was constructed in 1929 and leased to the Miller Rubber Company of New England (wholesale tires) from that year through 1936. From 1938 through 1954 it housed the Sears Service Station (gasoline), after which it was integrated into the Sears mail order operation.

There is no evidence of any construction on the main Sears parcel prior to the erection of the mail order and retail building in 1928. It is not surprising that the marshes lagged well behind higher ground as choice development sites. Land speculation in Brookline began even before construction of the Mill Dam, with Uriah Cotting's purchase of the entire Sewall estate from E.K. Wolcott for \$50,000 in 1815 (Norfolk Deed 50:33). Three years later Israel Thorndike, David Sears and Ebenzer Francis bought up Cotting's purchase and began to partition the large holding on the assumption that land values would escalate with completion of the dam (Norfolk Deed 64:61). While Longwood was

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developed by David Sears following his 200-acre purchase in about 1820, and Cottage Farm was built up by Amos A. Lawrence during the 1850s, the marshes had to wait until after they were annexed to Boston in 1870. Hopkins' 1873 Atlas records extensive subdivision of blocks for row houses between the Boston and Albany Railroad to the north and Brookline Avenue to the southeast. Amos A. and William R. Lawrence laid out 221 lots on six blocks between Beacon Street and the railroad, R.A. Ballou and C.H. Burditt owned five smaller blocks with ninety-seven lots on the southeast side of Beacon Street and W.E. and D.N. Skilling had laid out 160 lots on four blocks northeast of the Sears site with twenty brick bowfront row houses already completed. By 1890 only thirteen of the Lawrence lots on Beacon Street were occupied and the rest of the area was unchanged. Three row houses and a stable were added to the northeast edge of the Sears site by 1895, and the number of houses on Beacon Street had increased to sixty-one. By 1917 the triangle between the Boston and Albany main line and the Brookline Branch was filled with bowfronted brick row houses and small apartment buildings, while two Willys-Overland warehouses had been constructed along Brookline Avenue and nine of the row houses demolished. This signaled the end of residential uses in the blocks abutting Brookline Avenue. By 1922 the remaining eleven row houses were gone from the Willys-Overland block and several commercial buildings were added on both sides of Brookline Avenue. The three houses and stable disappeared from the Sears site sometime after 1928, and by 1938 the neighborhood was completely commercial.

The area immediately southwest of the Sears site across Muddy River in Roxbury, was developed earlier in a significantly different manner. Much of Roxbury maintained a semi-rural or suburban residential character through most of the 19th century. Consistent with this situation was a "Plan of land of L. Pope and N.H. Emmons on Appleton Place in Roxbury" of January 16, 1845, drawn by Alexander Wadsworth, showing twenty-seven large lots laid out between Brookline Avenue and "Longwood Stream" (Muddy River). In 1861 twelve of the twenty-seven lots were occupied by detached frame houses. By 1871 there were thirteen houses, by 1890 the fourteenth residence had been added and by 1895 the maximum of eighteen was reached. With the appearance of the Simmons Female College Building in the 1906 Bromley Atlas, the area began to change. In 1931, after completion of the Sears building, the change in character of the neighborhood had become much more pronounced with the fifteen remaining houses interspersed with brick apartment buildings as well as an expanded Simmons College.

Although also partially filled land, the Fenway (Back Bay Fens) never developed on the grand and elegant scale of the neighboring Back Bay, in spite of the fact that many noted institutions such as the Museum of Fine Arts and several important individuals such as Isabella Steward Gardner, made their homes in the area. By the turn-of-the-century educational institutions - Northeastern University, Wentworth Institute, the Museum School, Simmons

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College, Emmanuel College and Boston University - were encroaching in or near the Fenway area. Along Brookline Avenue close to the railroad, automobile related businesses sprang up: tire sales such as the Miller Tire Building, Dunlop Tires, automobile sales and service stations. New roads were planned with the increasing use of the automobile and this was one of the major points Sears' management considered when buying the empty parcel bounded by Brookline Avenue, Park Drive and Fullerton Street. Additionally, the adjacent railroad made it possible to distribute all over Massachusetts.

Of the many factors that mark the Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store as an important contributor to all of New England and part of New York as well as Boston's architectural, economic and social heritage, (a particularly interesting one) is its visual role as a by-product of the burgeoning early 20th century motor age. As America's love of speed and efficiency grew throughout the century with the advent of the motor car, one can see a connection between the Sears building and growth of the American "mall". For example, as one looks through the articles published in the major Boston newspapers for the opening of the Sears building, the importance of easy access to the city via automobile by the many fast roads and spacious, convenient parking lots is repeatedly stressed. The newspapers create an "all roads lead to Sears" feeling as a map is shown with all roads ending up at the mail order and retail store. At Sears one could shop for clothing and household items, service the car, bury tires, meet friends at the soda fountain and shop some more. The era of the commercial strip and the drive-thru restaurant was just around the corner.

Sears Roebuck and Company, established in Chicago in 1894, has always been conscious of the important role it has played in developing, encouraging and shaping American taste. The pages of early 20th century Sears catalogs reveal a modernity we today often fail to associate with Sears Roebuck and Company. For instance, Sears began to sell automobiles as early as 1908. By 1910, five models were offered, but by 1915 Sears had dropped its line of automobiles. It is interesting to note, however, that Sears stores traditionally (as in the Park Drive store) have a service or automotive center, perhaps stemming from these early days. Sears published how-to manuals for painting, carpentry and dressmaking, attempting to keep up with Paris fashions, and sold childrens' wear. Sears offered just about everything for the home and the household, but one very interesting, little known sales line (noted by author David L. Cohn) was birth control. Although it was technically still against the law in most states to distribute information about birth control and contraceptive devices, the 1935 catalogs offered a variety of contraceptives under the guise of "feminine hygiene needs" and so bypassed the law and provided a popular sales order to their public.

The speed with which the Sears building was erected was testimony to changing times in old Boston. After investigating hundreds of plans and blueprints for

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the project, it is clear that a substantial portion of the construction was carried out only a few months prior to the opening of the building on August 30, 1928. For example, on one plan from the Indiana Limestone Company of Bedford, Indiana, a handwritten notation indicates that the limestone needed above the line drawn across the plan was not even sent "to the mill for production" until July 17th. The sheer number of contractors and craftsmen involved in this project is overwhelming (see Appendix A) and managing all of their specifications would have been a job itself. Blueprints exist for electrical work, ductwork, iron work, plumbing, fire doors, stairways, windows, equipment such as belt conveyors and moving baskets, carved limestone and, of course, the architects' architectural blueprints themselves. The Sears plant was very much an industrial building: as times changed and machinery advanced, Sears updated its equipment, its lighting, its use of space. Like the large buildings of its type that survive, it is generally because the buildings have become almost living organisms, growing, shrinking and changing with the current generation's needs.

George C. Nimmons (1865-1947) was a prolific architect and author, and an enthusiastic booster of the profession for over forty years. Nimmons discussed subjects from industrial design to the importance of teaching the fine arts in college. His long period of contact with Sears management could in itself make an interesting avenue of study; just as Cohn chose to examine American morals and changing tastes through the Sears catalogs from 1905 to 1940, so too may one examine the architecture of a century of Sears buildings from the earliest 1880's masonry structure to Chicago's soaring Sears Tower.

Born in Ohio, Nimmons attended a local school before traveling to Europe for study. After his return he began his career as a draughtsman in the offices of Burnham and Root at the age of eighteen. In 1897 Nimmons formed a partnership with William K. Fellows. Nimmons and Fellows practiced together until 1910. Together they produced one of Sears Roebuck and Company's earliest and most successful buildings, as well as other Sears projects in the Mid-West, and industrial buildings in Chicago. Nimmons may not have been the most creative or inspiring designer, but he was enthusiastic about his subject, industrial design, and sought to make it pleasing, functional and attractive at the same time.

Nimmons said of the Boston building, "The Boston store in design does not follow any historic style of architecture." Although he claims no historical precedent guided his work, one can clearly see antecedents in his design. His work may not have had a cornice line, but it had columns, sills, lintels, belt courses and a Gothic flavor, all skillfully integrated and executed. Nimmons remained always abreast of the latest technology and made every attempt to integrate it into his work. His sense of ornamental detail was highly refined and sophisticated as demonstrated in the exquisite limestone carving on the Boston Sears Building.

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Nimmons served, at age twenty-eight, as a Superintendent of Buildings for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition under the direction of D.H. Burnham (who had been his employer) as the Director of Works, with Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot as the landscape architects and a host of other contemporary notables. Another important role for Nimmons was as author. As mentioned above, he wrote extensively about the state of current industrial architecture, but he was also asked by the AIA Committee on Architectural Education to write about the importance of a fine arts background. The resulting 1923 article was entitled, "The Significance of the Fine Arts."

Little is currently known about Carr, but Clark C. Wright (1880-1948), the third member of the firm, was born in Illinois. He trained in architecture as well as engineering, studying at Chicago's Art Institute and Armour's Institute of Technology. In 1915 Wright joined Nimmon's firm as a draughtsman. By the time the Sears Building was planned, Wright was certainly an important member of the firm.

Establishing the actual dates that Nimmons practiced simply as George C. Nimmons and Company, and as Nimmons, Carr and Wright, is difficult to determine. It seems fairly clear that the design for the Boston Sears may be attributed primarily to Nimmons and his stamp is on several of the plans. However, the stamp "Nimmons Carr & Wright" is also on plans of 1928. The stamp also reads "Boston, Massachusetts," suggesting a field office for the firm, although such an office is not listed in the Boston Directories for 1928 and 1929. That they had a field office is not surprising and was necessary in order to complete the project as rapidly as they did. Even this supervision failed to prevent several fatal accidents from occurring in the months before the building opened. According to testimony gathered after the accidents, many of the workers attributed the fatalities to the rapid building schedule demanded by Sears. Carr and Wright must have also gained the confidence of Sears headquarters, for they went on to design the 1940's addition of the Boston Sears plant after Nimmons had retired.

The newspaper articles commemorating the opening of Sears Roebuck and Company at the Fenway reveal several items of interest concerning the building's up-to-the-minute technology and ideas of improved shopper comfort and convenience, associated specifically with this store and its architects. Major selling points of the project to its contemporary users included: the generous parking facilities; an eight-car train shed that facilitated handling of goods, cut costs to customers, and protected merchandise from bad weather; and its potential as a "neighborhood center" where "friends may wait for each other upon appointment," which included a restaurant and soda fountain, a beauty parlor ("for grown-up ladies"), and well-appointed restrooms.

One development originated by the architects, according to the Boston Herald, called for a special "comfort floor." Fine sand was laid atop the concrete,

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which was then covered with a matched maple top. This was said to be the first time such a notion had been considered and carried out. Users agreed that it gave a springy step and aided tired and aching feet. The other feature used for the first time in a Sears building - and certainly new to industrial structures - was the ventilating system, described by the Boston Herald as "one of the newest ventilating systems in the United States.... Sears Roebuck and Company has purchased for other stores the same kind of ventilating system that is to be used in Boston."

There were similarities in many of the mail order stores, with the central tower and vertical emphasis appearing most often, such as in Memphis, Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Los Angeles. The first three of these have similar materials to the Boston store, with Los Angeles adapting to regional conditions with stucco and tile. The Boston store was the 10th of 12 mail order stores: the last of the first burst of construction. The final two stores were constructed in 1946 and 1972. Boston's is the third largest, following Chicago and Philadelphia. There were additional stores as well, including Sears in Cambridge.

Several years later a March 1935 article in Architectural Forum entitled "Without Windows" contains an interesting discussion of eliminating windows from the new Sears stores, as a method of controlling climate and saving energy. The author notes that "Nimmons, Carr and Wright may well have started a train of development that will eventually lead to the complete elimination of the window in certain types of commercial buildings." It appears that with Sears as a client, Nimmons and his associates were very involved in state-of-the-art technology.

Although never fully executed in the Boston Sears building, earlier plans of the building as well as photographs of contemporary buildings from The Architectural Record (June 1931), showing stores in Cambridge, Buffalo, California and Washington, D.C., demonstrated that ground floor storefronts were an integral part of Nimmons' designs at this time. These storefronts, with awnings and canopies, play a major role in his work into the 1940s, as may be seen in the later articles from Architectural Forum (March 1935) and The Architectural Record (September 1940).

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Archaeological Significance

Portions of the so-called Boylston Street fishweir are considered to be among Boston's most important archaeological resources. Portions of the fishweir are included in the Back Bay Historic District National Register nomination, which also recognizes that the horizontal extent of the site is not known. Geologically, the Sears Roebuck and Company Site is included within the same Charles River estuary as the Boylston Street fishweir site, and fishweir remains could be uniformly distributed throughout this area.

Prehistoric fishweir remains that might be preserved at the Sear Roebuck building site may be significant for data on 1) location of such remains relative to the Back Bay, and 2) information on construction and use of the fishweir structure(s). Both the location and orientation of fishweir remains in the Back Bay, relative to the configuration of the bay and its channels in the period 3000 - 1000 B.C., may elucidate prehistoric patterns of resource exploitation in the Boston area. Dating of fishweir remains from the Sears Roebuck building site could be used to test Dena Dincauze's theory that the focus of prehistoric activity along the Charles River moved upriver with the shifting estuary head.

(end)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested HPCA #11186MA
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:
Massachusetts Historical Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property 8.8 acres

UTM References

A 19 326750 4689990
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Leslie Larson & Kim Shilland with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date 1990

street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02116

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**Appendix A
A Partial List of Architects, Engineers and Contractors**

Company	Title of Plan	Date
1928 and 1930 Building and Machinery		
George C. Nimmons & Co., Architect, Chicago, Ill.		1928
Nimmons, Carr & Wright, Architects, Chicago & Boston		1928
Indiana Limestone Co., Bedford, IN.		1928
Martin C. Schwab Construction Engineers Chicago, Ill		
Hegeman-Harris Co., General Contractor, Bos.		
The Merrill Co., Heating & Piping, Bos.		
Martin C. Schwab Construction Engineers	"Main Switchboard"	1928
Griffin Keiver Co.	Store Front design	1928
Lancaster Iron Works, Lancaster, PA.	Steel Stack	1928
A.L. Smith Iron Works, Chelsea, MA.	Plans for metal work	1928
Variety Fire Door Co.		1928
The Compound Pyrono Door Co., Boston branch		1928
Structural Gypsum Corp., Linden, N.J.	"Pipe Tunnel"	1928
New England Structural Co., Everett, MA.	Plans for Trainshed	1928
V.J. Gallini	Revision to 2nd fl. framing	1928
Turner Construction Co.	Alterations to door details	1930
1930's Machinery and Building Alterations		
Hess Engineering Co.	"Boston Shipping Room," Layout of Conveyors	1936
1948 Building Addition and 1940's & 1950's Machinery & Alterations		
Blackall Clapp & Clark Arthur Olive Eng.	Plans for Plumbing Service Bldg.	1941
Sam. Olson Co., Chicago, Ill.	"To Be Removed"	1945
?	conveying equipment	1949
Conveyor Specialty Co.	conversion to oil firing	1950
Link Belt Co., 136 Brookline Ave. Bos.	install. conveyor equip.	1951
	Installing conveyors, trolley truck tow, etc.	1953
	Air Conditioning install.	1958
Dunlap & Esgar, Arch/Eng., Chicago, Ill.	"Support Framing for New Tower on Existing Roof"	1958

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1965 Building Addition and 1960's Machinery

Unibelt Conveyors	conveyors	1962
Ballinger Company, Architects and Engineers		1965
Lookwood Greene Engineers, 316 Stuart St. Bos.		1964
Norfolk Conveyor, Cohasset, MA.		1965
	cafeteria alterations	1964

The above list is intended as partial not definitive list. Undoubtedly many other individuals and companies were involved in the original building, later alterations and updating of equipment.

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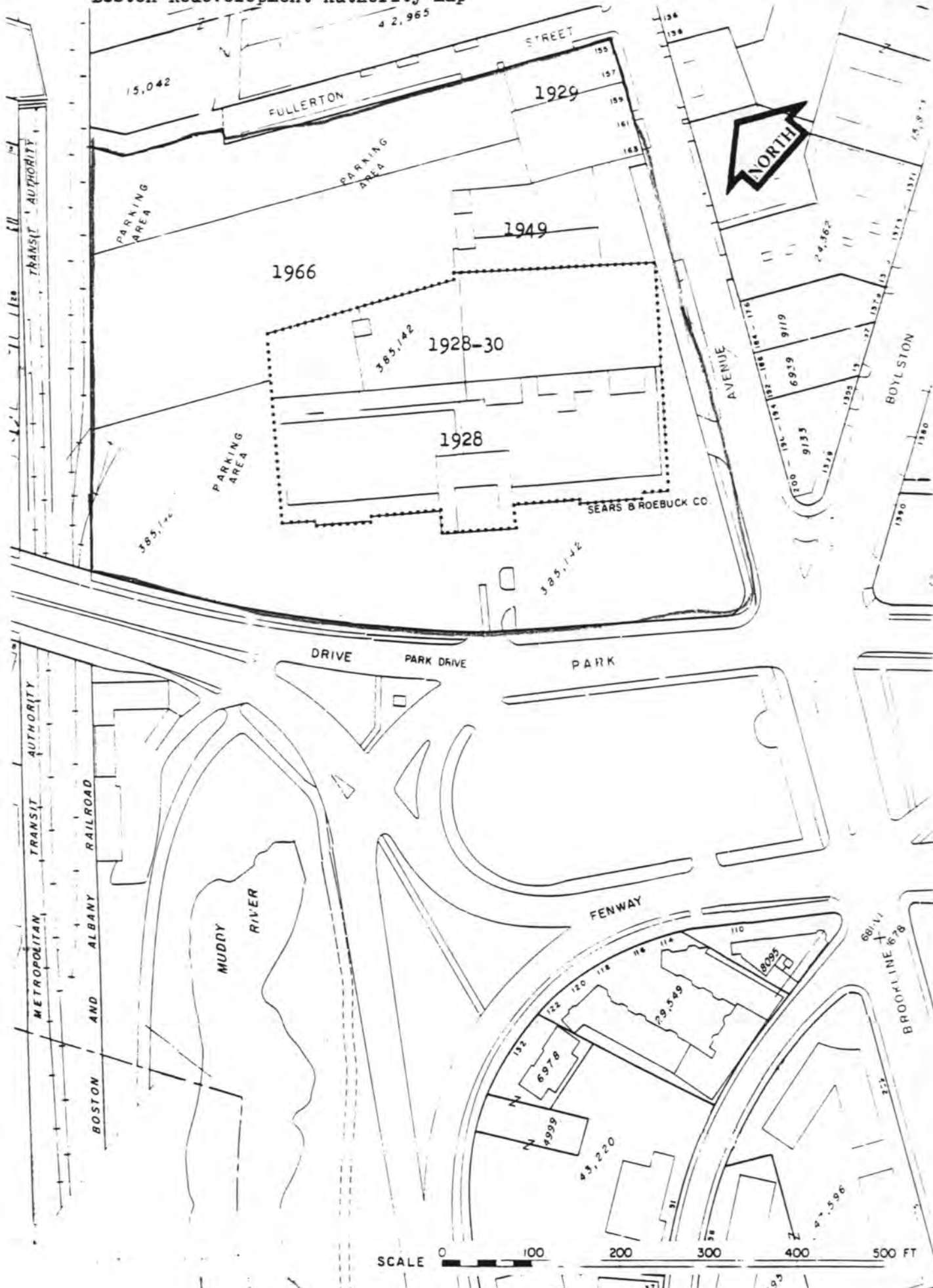
Verbal Boundary Description

The Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store lot is roughly a trapezium in shape, with the Park Drive edge gently curved leading into a rounded corner at Brookline Avenue, and small jogs on Brookline Avenue and Fullerton Street. It is bounded on the southwest on a curved line (radius = 1719.12 feet) by Park Drive, 725 feet; on the south by a corner (radius = 20 feet), 34.53 feet; on the southeast by Brookline Avenue, 490 feet to a jog; southwest on the jog, 20 feet; southeast again on Brookline Avenue, 150 feet; northeast on Fullerton Street, 469.62 feet to a jog; southeast on the jog, 20.31 feet; northeast again on Fullerton Street, 118.29; east on Fullerton Street, 37.55 feet; northwest on the MBTA Riverside Line, 480.73 feet.

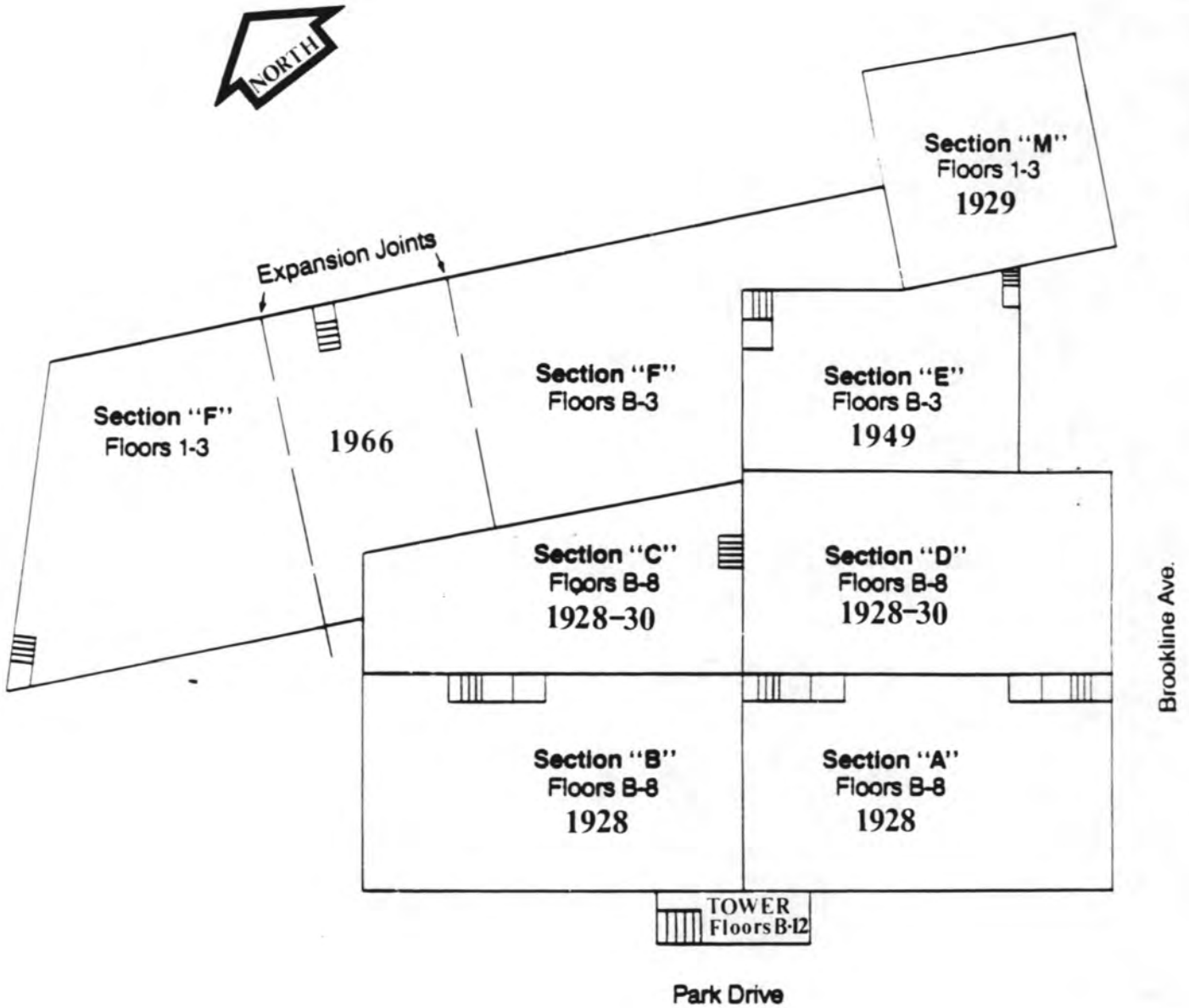
Boundary Justification

The boundary defining the Sears Roebuck lot is shown on the attached Boston Redevelopment Authority map. The legal boundary was also established in Suffolk County Deeds 4544:245; 4967:321, 322; 5123:218 and a "Plan of Land in Boston - Mass." by Aspinwall and Lincoln, dated July 21, 1928.

Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
Boston Redevelopment Authority map



Sears Roebuck & Co. Building Sections



CHARLES RIVER

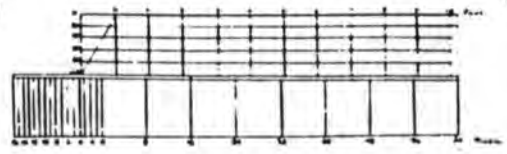


A Plan of
BROOKLINE MARSHES
 Belonging to Sundry Persons
 July 1818. Mather Withington, Surveyor.

Original in file



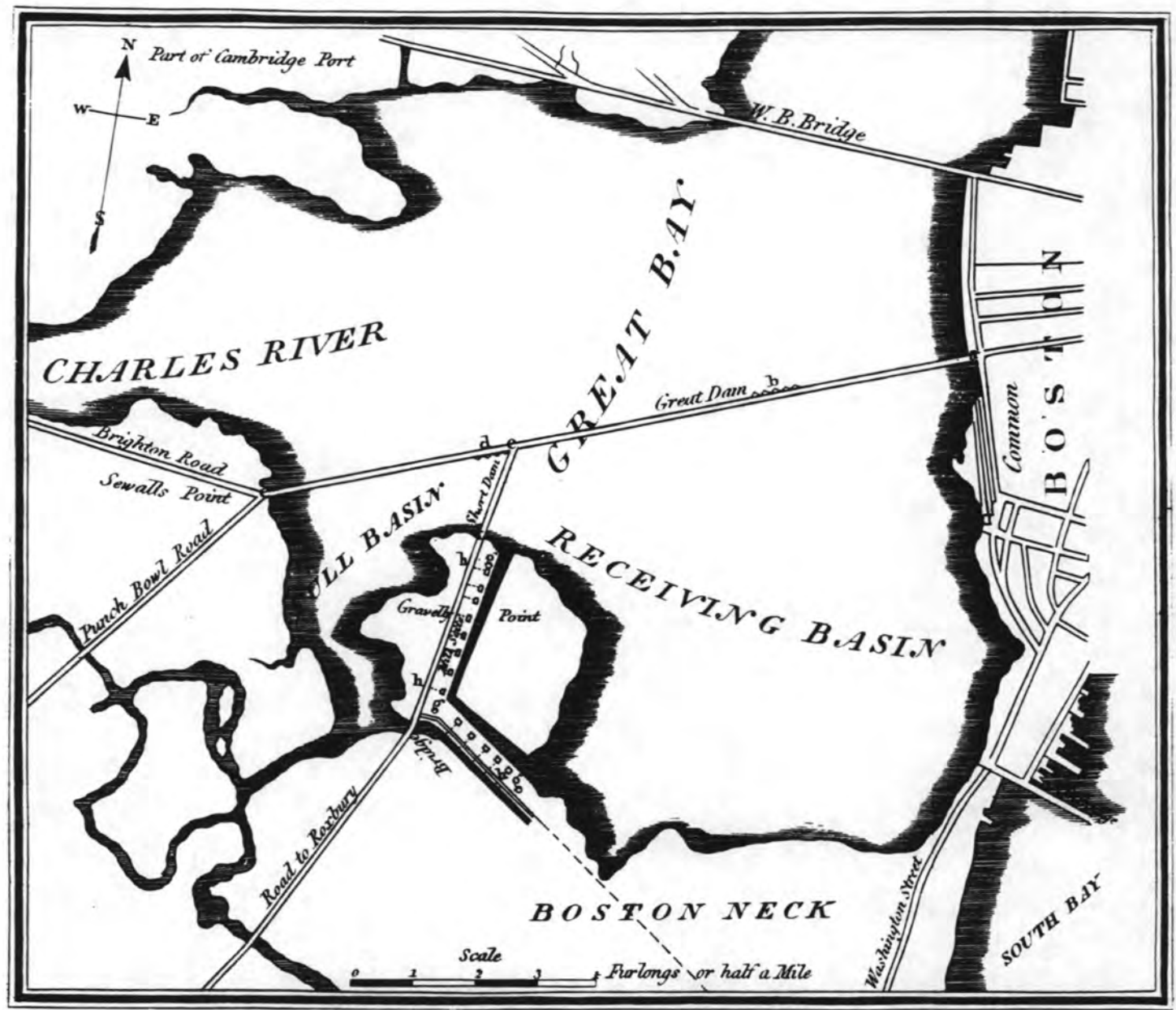
Read for record Mar 4, 1880.
 J. M. Burdick, Regt.



Sears Roebuck & Company
 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA

NOV 29 1990

Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
ca. 1821 map of Mill Dam, Cross Dam, Punch Bowl Road

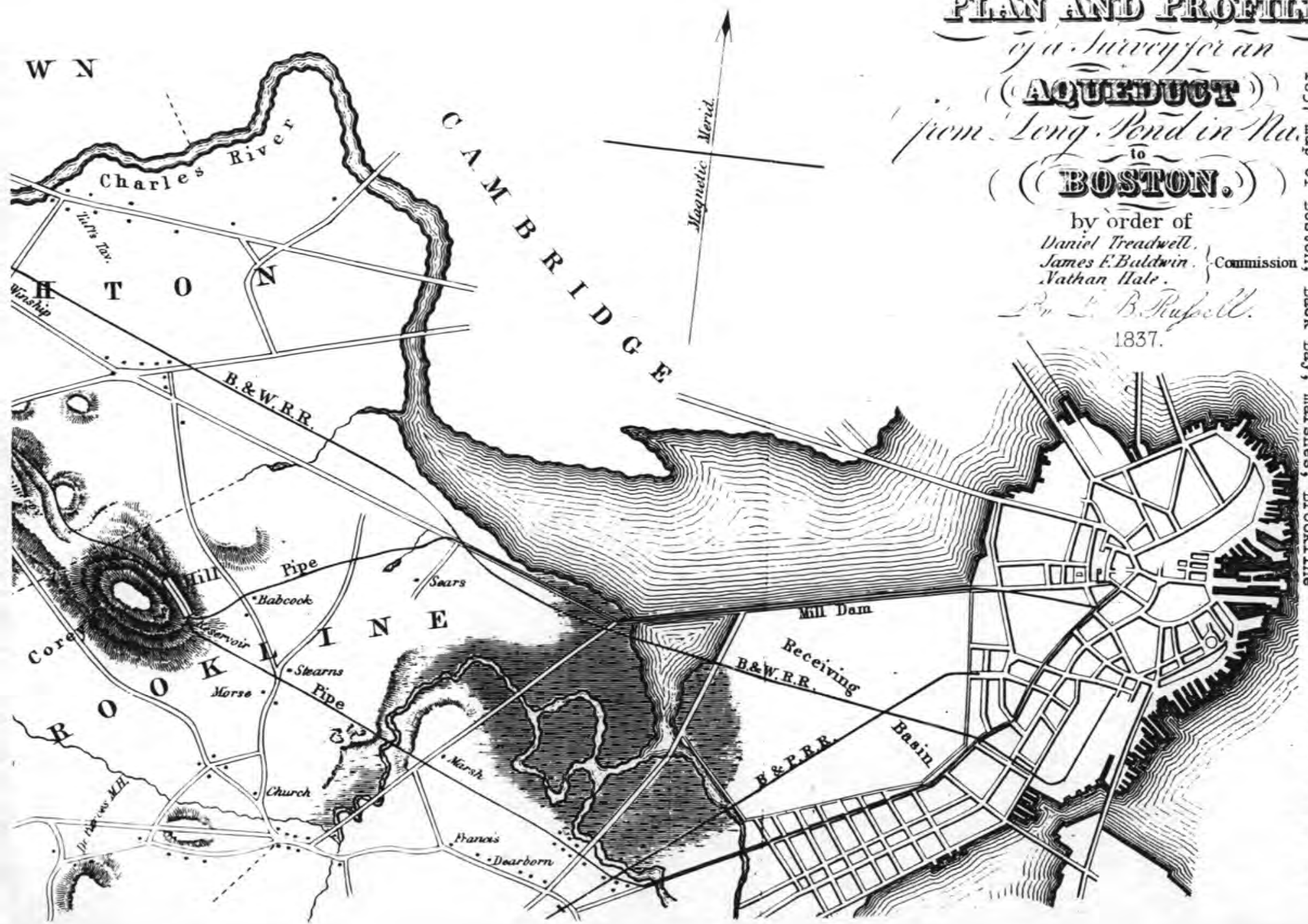


PLAN AND PROFILE
of a Survey for an
(AQUEDUCT)
from Long Pond in Mass.
to
(BOSTON.)

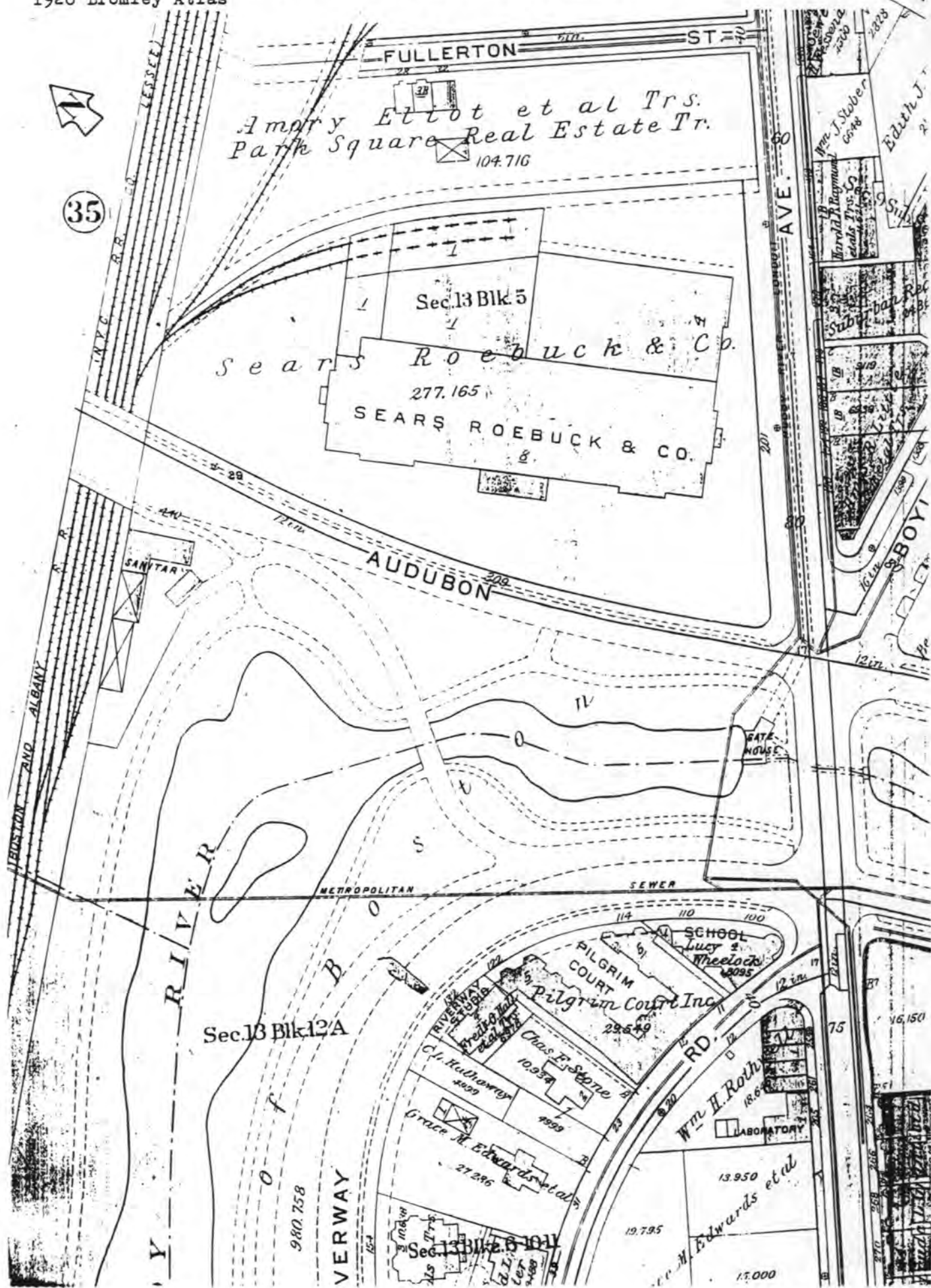
by order of
Daniel Treadwell,
James F. Baldwin, } Commission
Nathan Hale.
By L. B. Russell.
 1837.

Sears Roeback & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Brookline

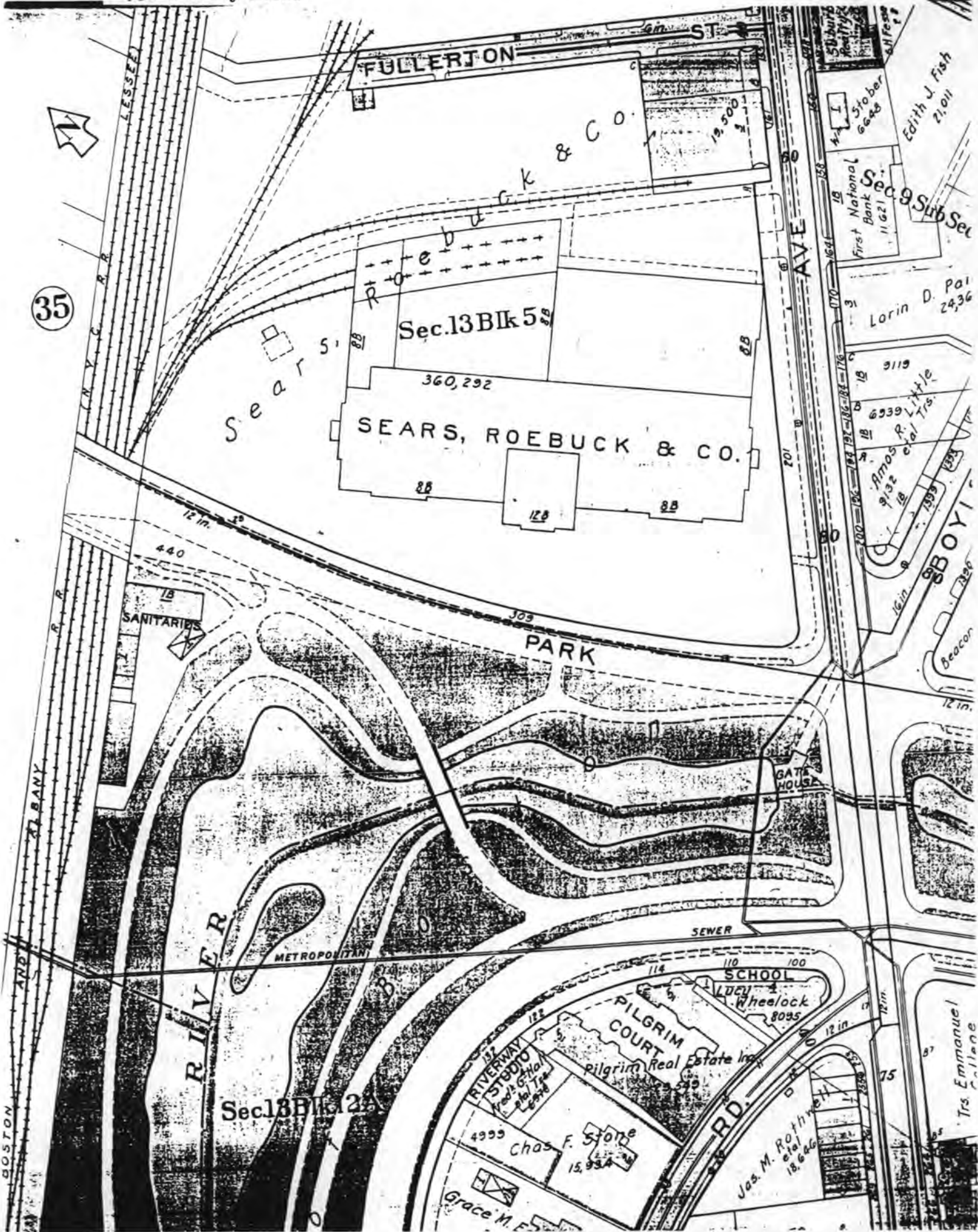
NOV 29 1898
 MA



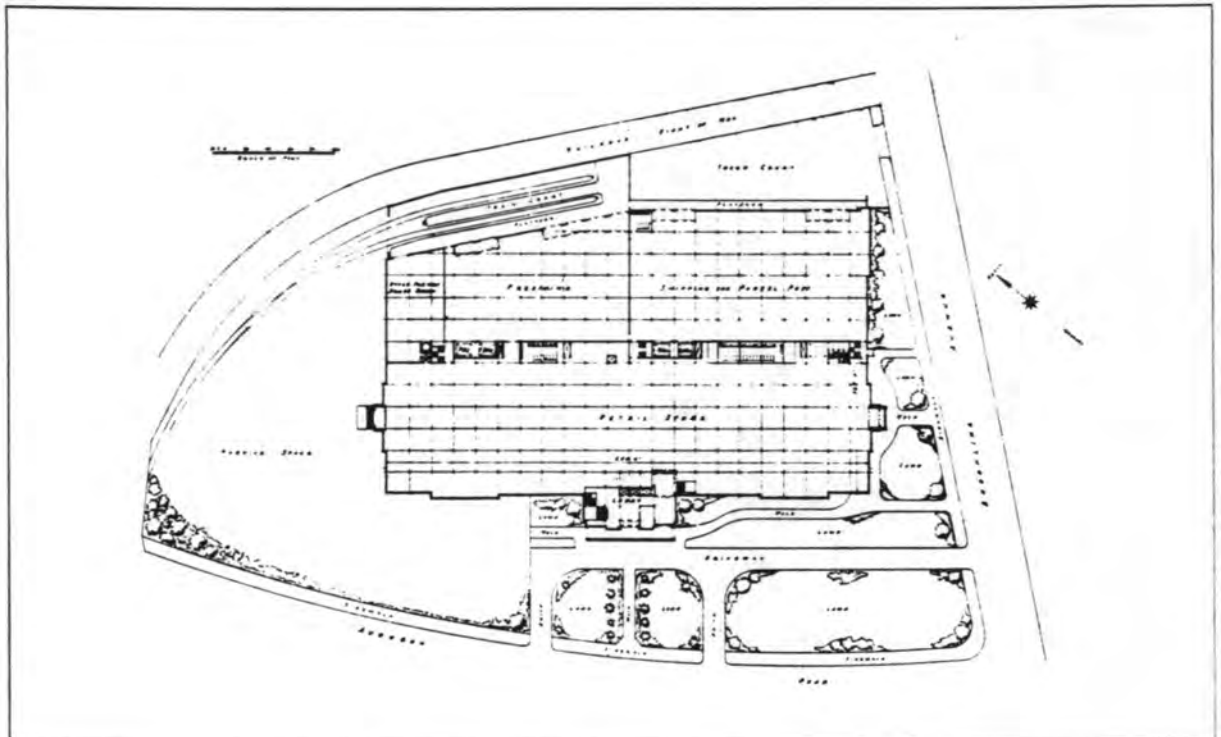
Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
1928 Bromley Atlas



Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
1938 Bromley Atlas



Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
rendering of first scheme showing storefronts in all floor 1 window bays;
site plan with landscaping



SEARS, ROEBUCK & COMPANY MAIL ORDER STORE, BOSTON, MASS.

NIMMONS, CARR & WRIGHT, ARCHITECTS



BUILDING FOR SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., BOSTON
NIMMONS, CARR & WRIGHT, ARCHITECTS

Sears Roebuck & Company,
1929 photo

NOV 2 1990

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Suffolk

DATE RECEIVED: 11/29/90 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/12/90
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/28/90 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/13/91
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 90001992

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 1/2/91 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Please have SHPO sign and
date nomination form*

RECOM./CRITERIA _____
REVIEWER _____
DISCIPLINE _____
DATE _____

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

CLASSIFICATION

___count ___resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

*Please have SHPO sign
and date nomination.*

FUNCTION

___historic ___current

DESCRIPTION

___architectural classification
___materials
___descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- ___summary paragraph
- ___completeness
- ___clarity
- ___applicable criteria
- ___justification of areas checked
- ___relating significance to the resource
- ___context
- ___relationship of integrity to significance
- ___justification of exception
- ___other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

___acreage ___verbal boundary description
___UTMs ___boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

___sketch maps ___USGS maps ___photographs ___presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

_____ Phone _____

Signed *AB*

Date 1/2/90

1992

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

RECEIVED NOV 29 1990

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue city, town Boston state Massachusetts code MA county Suffolk code 025 zip code 02116

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical State Historic Preservation Officer Date Commission; 1/7/91

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official Date State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

Entered in the National Register Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 1/15/91

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Department Store;

Specialty Store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

walls Brick; Limestone; Concrete Block

roof Asphalt

other Steel; Aluminum; Glass

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Occupying a prominent location in the Fenway section of Boston at the intersection of Park Drive, Brookline Avenue and the Olmsted Park System, the Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store ("Sears") dominates its surroundings by its size, positioning and architectural design. While the original Sears Building occupies only about 29% of its 385,142 square foot trapezium site, its additions and acquisition increase this coverage to 55%, with most of the remaining land being asphalt or concrete covered parking and loading areas. Traces of the original landscaping plan (although not the plantings themselves) exist near the south corner of the building. The MBTA Riverside Line's Fenway "T" Station is located at the west corner of the site.

Since the completion of the original building in 1928-1930, the Sears Roebuck and Company complex has expanded to suit its needs, spawning two additions and incorporating a previously independent building. All four elements are now interconnected, but may be evaluated as four distinct components:

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store, George C. Nimmons, and Nimmons Carr and Wright, architects, 1928-1939, Sections "A-D" on the attached plan, "Sears Roebuck and Company Building Sections".

Miller Building, architect unknown, 1929, Section M.

Addition, Carr and Wright, architects, 1948-1949, Section E.

Addition, Ballinger and Company, architects and engineers, 1966, Section F.

1928-1930 Building, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue

The original Sears Building (Sections A-D) was constructed in two consecutive phases: Sections A and B plus basement and floor 1 of Section C and basement to floor 4 of Section D in 1928; floors 2-8 of Section C and 5-8 of Section D in 1930.

Facing Park Drive, the primary 21-bay, 442 foot-long southwest facade is the most detailed, featuring a three-bay-wide projecting central tower element flanked by 9-bay-wide wings. The tower, 84 feet 6 inches wide at its base and

See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

50 feet 6 inches square at the top, rises 200 feet (12 stories) with 3 setbacks above floors 2, 9 and 11. It represents the building's most impressive use of Art Deco style and limestone detail at its top, and above its 2-story central entrance. The tower's three-window-wide central bay projects 5 feet from its 2-window-wide flanking bays. The first setback occurs only on the front, above the second floor. At the ninth floor the tower is set back on the southeast and northwest sides, continuing with four identically finished facades. The third setback, on all four sides, is above floor 11. Floors 11 and 12, along with floors 3 and 4, represent the most elaborate detailing on the building. Floors 10 and 12 have double-height, round-arched windows with limestone keystones supporting carved limestone attached columns which terminate in free-standing urns in the shape of stylized Corinthian-like capitals above the 11th floor, and carved hexagonal posts at the top of the tower. At the 11th floor setback, ornately carved buttresses flank the central bay on all four elevations, with all detail being rendered in limestone. A second area of limestone articulation occurs above the two-story recessed main entrance on the tower, within and around the central bay. The limestone carving is in the form of stylized foliation set in a variety of geometric contexts and interspersed with smaller geometric forms. Most is relatively low relief except for the urns and other points of termination. Architectural setbacks and chamfers of limestone blocks tend to monumentalize the decorative limestone elements.

The central tower is flanked by nine-bay wings, each of which has a slightly projecting three-bay portion with piers rising above the roof parapet. Two-window bays again flank a three-window central bay in each case with the round-arched windows at floor 8 and the limestone detail similar to that at the top of the tower. Other bays on the wings have single large window openings set between wide brick piers which rise only to the parapet, with more modest limestone detail above the eighth floor windows.

Southeast and northwest elevations repeat the pattern of the southwest facade's wings. The thirteen-bay southeast Brookline Avenue elevation is 262.92 feet long and incorporates two projecting 3-bay portions, complete with limestone detail similar to those on the southwest facade. The balance of the windows are similarly treated as well, except for an additional set at the second floor mezzanine of Section D. There is also a one-story entrance centered in the projecting portion nearest to Park Drive.

The northwest elevation, being only 208.85 feet with eleven bays, features only one projecting three-bay element with detail and window treatment similar to the others. Other aspects of the elevation have similar treatments as those on the southwest and southeast except on floor 1, which has been altered by the introduction of loading docks. Also, an entrance similar to that on the southeast has been removed and the three-story 1966 addition abuts the northeastern three bays of this elevation. There are limestone belt courses

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

Section number 7 Page 2

above floors 2 and 8 on all three elevations, with the latter interrupted by the projecting three-bay portions.

Much of the northeast elevation is obscured from view by the 1949 and 1966 additions to the building. The visible portion reveals an industrial-like arrangement of large, regularly organized window openings, most of which are of similar size and shape. The limestone belt course seen above the eighth floor windows on the other elevation is continued on the northeast. The elevation is broken at the junction of Sections C and D, angling toward the west on Section C. There are twenty-one bays in the two sections.

There are brick spandrels between window levels, with limestone sills and concrete lintels, on all elevations. All windows have fixed steel-framed units surrounding top-hinged projecting steel casements (in most cases) with the steel painted green.

A 20 inch-high limestone water table serves as the base for the brick walls of southwest, southeast and northwest elevations. Brick is laid in common bond with alternating header/stretcher bonding courses occurring every sixth course.

There has been considerable replacement of brick and infill of window openings (the latter mostly on floor 1) with a brick that is similar in texture but slightly warmer in color. An earlier design for the building which appeared in The American Architect (see attachment) included store fronts or "Show Windows" in all bays on floor 1 (except the entrances) of the southwest and southeast elevations. The building as built featured only two of these large windows on the southwest plus five on the southeast. The other bays on the southeast, exclusive of the tower, had clerestory windows. All of these, as well as a number of basement lights, have been bricked up.

The roof is flat with a built-up tar and gravel surface. The brick parapet with limestone coping sits atop a "pipe tunnel" which follows the perimeter of Sections A and B of the building. Between Sections A and B and C and D are a series of unadorned brick elevator and mechanical penthouses. A steel smoke stack rises from one of these.

The building structural system consists of a reinforced concrete foundation and frame, with 12 inch-thick brick exterior walls. Round mushroom columns 20 feet on center in both directions support reinforced concrete slabs at all levels. The columns range in diameter from 3 feet in the basement to 1 foot on floor 8. Columns in the tower are square. Ceiling heights in the main part of the building range from 9 feet 6 inches on most floors to 16 feet in the first floor retail area. Structural elements are exposed except in the lobby, on floors 2 to 8 of the tower and part of floor 2, with a cafeteria and offices.

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

Section number 7 Page 3

Exclusive of the tower, which includes the main lobby with round arches, original staircase with alternating square and twisted balusters and wood handrail, more recent elevators, plus halls and offices on the upper floors (modest detail), the building is divided into four sections (A,B,C and D), separated by brick partitions with elevators, staircases and washrooms strung along the partition separating Sections A and B from C and D. This holds for all 9 levels (basement to 8). The partition between Sections A and B is missing on floor 1 to provide uninterrupted retail space. There are a number of non-structural partitions in the basement and on floors 1 and 2, some original but most of more recent vintage. Floors 3 through 8 have relatively uninterrupted spaces. Floor 2 of Section D and its mezzanine are packed with distribution equipment. Exposed concrete, brick and later concrete block surfaces are painted on all levels.

The building contains about 1,000,000 square feet of floor space. The bulk of the interior was built as, and remains, open warehouse space featuring only concrete mushroom columns 20 feet on center in both directions. There are few later concrete block partitions and some fairly recent stud and sheetrock/plywood partitions with hung ceilings. The tower section is divided into smaller rooms but essentially without detail. The arches in the lobby and staircase to the second floor are of some interest as is the distribution equipment (of an uncertain date) on floor 2. The original plans for the building exist and include some details of the lobby.

The "spiral conveyor", a brick cylinder enclosing spiral chutes and located near the west corner of Section A on floors 3 to 8, is of particular interest as an original part of the distribution system. The building's original main switchboard is still in use in the basement.

The tower has offices on floors 2 to 8, mechanical space on floors 9 to 11, and a 50,000 gallon water tank on floor 12, which services the gravity-fed sprinkler system.

The Miller Building, 155-163 Brookline Avenue (Section M)

Originally constructed in 1929, it was leased to the Miller Rubber Company of New England, a wholesale tire store, from 1929 to 1936. From 1938 through 1954 it housed the Sears Service Station, and was substantially altered by Sears in 1937 and 1948. An application filed at Inspectional Services requests permission to change the use from a service station to a "super service station" which required storing much larger amounts of gasoline, lubrication oil and kerosene. Partitions were removed and "greasing pits" were added. A building permit dated January 26, 1948 gives a further scope of work as follows: "Make necessary alterations in present building to change occupancy from service station and retail store to mail order store. Cut openings in wall to provide access to new addition to existing mail order

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

store." This work coincided with the 1949 addition and was also completed by Carr and Wright with Turner Construction as the contractor.

The three-story brick and concrete building, painted yellow, has a flat roof and windows of the same style and muntins the same color as found in the main Sears building. Original cast concrete detail, featuring a stylized tire motif, has been almost entirely removed, openings have been blocked up and poor painting has caused the brick to retain water and crack. The interior has more recently been reconfigured into office space with drop ceilings and vinyl floor covering.

1949 Addition, Section E

Also by Carr and Wright, Section E serves as a connector between the Miller Building and the original Section D. The addition features a canopied loading dock and is strictly utilitarian, built of brick and concrete. It houses much of the mail order house distribution equipment.

1966 Addition, Section F

Abutting Sections C, E, and M, this final addition to the Sears plant is again strictly utilitarian, a three-story brick building with loading docks, roll up metal doors, flat roof and aluminum windows. The plans drawn up by Ballinger Company envisioned future additions of 8 floors, which were not built.

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

Section number 7 Page 4

Archaeological Description

The Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store site may contain intact remains of prehistoric Native American fishweirs from the Late Archaic Period (ca. 3000 - 1000 B.C.). These remains may consist of wooden stakes set vertically into underlying deposits in configurations to facilitate catching fish in the various tidal channels that formerly covered the Back Bay at low tide. Portions of fishweirs have been documented underlying Boylston Street in Boston's Back Bay since 1913, in 1939 at the construction site of the New England Mutual Life Company Building, at the 1946 and 1954 construction of the Old John Hancock building, the IBM building (corner of Boylston and Claredon Streets), and at the 1986 construction at 500 Boylston Street. Fishweir remains in the Back Bay tend to be directly associated with the interface of clay, peat and silt deposits as are found at the Sears and Roebuck building site, varying in depth between 10 and 30 feet below surface. Preservation at these sites is generally excellent because of the high water table in the Back Bay and the extreme depth of archaeological deposits.

(end)

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

NOV 29 1990

 nationally statewide locallyApplicable National Register Criteria A B C DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture1928 - 19401928 - 1930CommerceCommunity Planning & Development

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

See Continuation Sheet

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

The Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store (1928-1930) ("Sears building"), located at 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and meets National Register Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the Sears building is significant for the valuable role it played in the local economy and by extension as a catalog mail order house, the building represents and reflects the changing tastes, styles and material wants and needs of late 19th through late 20th century American consumers. Additionally under Criterion A, the Sears building and its site are associated with the growth and development of the Fenway district. Under Criterion C, the Sears building represents an architectural style, Art Deco, that is scarce in Boston; it is an example of the work of George C. Nimmons (1865-1947), FAIA, a prolific designer of industrial and mercantile structures; and shows several advancements in building technology. Like most massive industrial and mercantile buildings, the Sears building has seen alterations and additions over the years, yet the original structure is easily envisioned without its later (1940's and 1960's) appendages and bricked up openings. The building's integrity remains and its alterations are reversible.

Not long after the first settlers arrived on the Shawmut Peninsula in the summer of 1630, the need for additional grazing and foraging land for their cattle and swine became apparent. With nearby Roxbury and Charlestown already established as separate towns, inhabitants of Boston were forced to look toward more distant shores for suitable pastures. Less than two miles westward, across a marshy bay, an area of hills, woods and pasture land appeared to be an ideal spot. Called Muddy River, after the meandering stream which formed its boundary with Roxbury, it was eventually set off from Boston as Brookline in 1705.

The first reference to Muddy River as a grazing ground in the Town Records of Boston occurred in 1634 when Edmund Quinsey, Samuel Wilbore and others were called upon to make rates for "the young cattle and cowskeeper at Muddy

 See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested HPCA #11186MA
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

 See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of property 8.8 acres

UTM References

A 19 326750 4689990
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____ _____ _____
 Zone Easting Northing

B _____ _____ _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____ _____ _____
 Zone Easting Northing

 See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

 See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

 See continuation sheet**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Leslie Larson & Kim Shilland with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date 1990

street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02116

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

Section number 8 Page 1

River". Between 1635 and 1641 the land at Muddy River was divided up among certain inhabitants of Boston through a series of grants, offered initially to the more prominent citizens (the first being "a sufficient allotment for a farm for our Teacher, Mr. John Cotton") and subsequently to "the poorer sort of the Inhabitants...(who) have no Cattell, shall have their proportion of allotments for planting ground..." Individual grants to the "poorer sort" were limited to four or five acres. In 1675 John Josselyn wrote: "Two miles from the town at a place called Muddy-River, the Inhabitants have Farms, to which belong rich arable grounds and meadows where they keep their Cattle in the Summer, and bring them to Boston in the Winter..."

The northeastern portion of Muddy River, including the Sears site, and bounded by the river of the same name on the southwest, the bay on the east and the Charles River on the north, was salt water marsh and therefore of limited use for farming and grazing. Nevertheless, between 1636 and 1641, twenty-four grants and sales of marsh were recorded in the Town Records, the first of which was a grant to Thomas Savage, who "shall have seven acres layed him out, for keeping of his Cattle (being in number five)." In 1637 Thomas Flint "hath allotted unto him twenty-four acres of marsh ground at the mouth of Muddy River..." The largest grant was for sixty acres to Peter Oliver in 1640.

In the beginning Bostonians kept their cattle at Muddy River during the summer while corn was growing on their plots of land at home, returning the animals to the Shawmut Peninsula for the winter. Gradually farms were established and by 1650 there were about twenty-five families living in Muddy River. In the 17th century it was the most convenient grazing land, during the 18th century Brookline was the nearest farming community, and by the 1830s and 1840s, it had become the favorite resort for wealthy Boston merchants.

Brookline's population, which stood at 518 in 1790, had risen only to 1,265 by 1840, but spurted to 5,164 in 1860, following the opening of the Brookline Branch of the Boston and Worcester Railroad in April of 1848. Chartered on June 23, 1831, the railroad began operations as far as Newton on April 16, 1834. Colonel Amos Binney (1778-1833), who had been U.S. Navy Agent for the Port of Boston from 1812 until 1826, was appointed the first superintendent, but died of "liver complaint" on January 11, 1833. The railroad nevertheless opened with passages made chiefly by the Meteor Engine, built in England by Robert Stephenson. Applications from the inhabitants of Brookline in 1847 led to the establishment of a Brookline branch, running diagonally across the marshes to Brookline Village, in April of the following year. By 1849 the railroad had twenty-nine engines, fifty-seven passenger cars and hundreds of freight cars. In 1868 the Boston and Worcester line merged with the Western Railroad to form the Boston and Albany Railroad. In 1928 a two-track spur was laid down leading into a one-story train shed at the rear of the newly constructed Sears Roebuck building, accounting for the angle of the northeast elevation of Section C of the structure. The Boston and Albany right of way

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

became the MBTA Riverside subway line in 1959.

As early as 1633 a cart bridge was ordered constructed "at some convenient place over the Muddy River", the location of which was where Boston's Huntington Avenue becomes Brookline's Boylston Street today. Until the Mill Dam was completed in 1821, this bridge (and its successors at this location) provided the only overland connection from Roxbury (Boston) to Brookline, Watertown, Newton and Cambridge. In 1717 Benjamin White sold a small lot to James Goddard for a tavern, a short distance west of the bridge. Known as the Punch Bowl Tavern, it became an important stagecoach stop and was the nucleus around which the village of Brookline gathered. The construction of the Mill Dam and of other bridges over Muddy River, plus the opening of the Brookline Branch Railroad, drained business away from the Punch Bowl, which was bought in 1833 by Isaac Thayer and demolished.

The northeastern tip of the Brookline marshes, where the Charles River expanded into a bay fed by the Muddy River, was called Sewall's Point, after a notable Massachusetts family. Samuel Sewall (1652-1730), known for his Diary, was appointed a commissioner in 1692 to try the Salem witchcraft cases, for which he later "repented." He was also chief justice of the Superior Court from 1718 to 1728 and an overseer of Harvard College. Judge Sewall's wife, Hannah, was the daughter of John Hull, Mint Master for New England, who minted the famous Pine Tree Shilling. In fourteen separate transactions between 1670 and 1684, John Hull had acquired 300 acres of land in Muddy River "known by the name of Brookline Swamp Line and Hogs Coat" (Suffolk Deed 26:183), abutting the Charles River on the north and the marshes to the east. This substantial tract of "woodland pasture meadow and Salt Marsh" was willed to John Hull's daughter, Hannah. In 1712 Samuel and Hannah Sewall conveyed the 300 acres to their eldest son, Samuel and his wife Rebecca, as "one handsome Seat or living with Suitable Accommodations, the Partition or Division whereof would prejudice and Spoil the same" (Suffolk Deed 26:183). Samuel and Rebecca, in turn, granted the estate to their "only Son and Heir apparent Henry Sewall" in 1739 (Suffolk Deed 61:133).

During the Revolutionary War, a fort stood on Sewall's Point, which can be seen on Lt. Page's 1775 map of "Boston Its Environs and Harbour with the Rebels Works." The fort was for a time commanded by Col. Thomas Aspinwall (1734-1799), brother of Dr. William Aspinwall who owned part of what is now the Sears site from 1791 until his death in 1823.

In 1781 the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed an "Act to provide for the Payment of Debts due from the Conspirators and Absentees and for the recovery of Debts due to them." This resulted in the confiscation of property of certain of the culprits, including one Samuel Sewall, Esquire, late of Brookline, who was an absentee. Two-hundred and sixty-three acres of the 300-acre Sewall farm were sold to Edward Kitchen Wolcott to Brookline,

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

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yeoman, in 1782 (Suffolk Deed 135:113). Wolcott sold the Hull/Sewall estate to Uriah Cotting for \$50,000 in 1815 (Norfolk Deed 50:33), who bought it on speculation, anticipating construction of the Mill Dam of which he was guiding force and engineer until his death in 1821. Cotting had played a similar role a few years earlier as an energetic partner in the Broad Street Association, developers of warehouses along Broad and India Streets as well as India and Central Wharves. He also designed the U.S. Custom House in 1810, located on the Broad Street Association's land.

On June 14, 1814 a charter was granted to the Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation to construct a dam separating the Charles River proper from the marshy bay to the south. According to a plan published by Benjamin Dearborn in February of that year, the dam would run from the foot of Beacon Street at water's edge to Sewall's Point in Brookline. The dam with Western Avenue (later Beacon Street) on top opened July 2, 1821. Following Cotting's death that same year, Loammi Baldwin (1780-1838) took over as engineer and completed the project, which included the diagonal Cross Dam at Gravelly Point. Loammi Baldwin, whose father Colonel Loammi Baldwin (1740-1807) developed the Baldwin apple and planned the Middlesex Canal, began a law career but soon turned to engineering. He is considered the father of civil engineering in America. He designed Holworthy Hall at Harvard in 1811, the Union Canal (Pennsylvania) in 1821, determined the proportions of the Bunker Hill Monument in 1825 and became chief engineer of the Charlestown Navy Yard in 1827.

The "great dam", a 50-foot-wide, 1 1/2-mile-long earthen dike faced with stone on the river side, enclosed about 600 acres of the Back Bay with the Cross Dam separating the westerly full basin from the easterly receiving basin. At high tide water entered the full basin through filling sluices and flowed on the the receiving basin by way of mill sluices, powering mills adjacent to the Cross Dam in the process. The water eventually returned to the Charles at low tide through emptying sluices in the main dam. Construction of the Mill Dam, plus the introduction of causeways for the Boston & Worcester and Boston & Providence Railroads in 1834, converted the tidal marshes into foul smelling mud flats at low tide, causing an offended citizenry to agitate for filling in the bay. The way for systematic filling of the Back Bay was opened in 1856 with a tripartite indenture among the Commonwealth, the City of Boston and various private proprietors. A plan with streets laid out in a formal grid and generally credited to Arthur Gilman was developed in 1856, with the contract being let the following year. Beginning at the east end, filling to a depth of over 20 feet had reached Clarendon Street by 1860, beyond Exeter by 1870 and was completed by 1900, with building construction in pursuit.

Brookline Avenue was laid out at some point between 1814, when it was shown on Benjamin Dearborn's plan as a "contemplated road," and 1818, when it appeared as "Punch Bowl Road" on Mather Withington's "Plan of Brookline Marshes Belonging to Sundry Persons." It was so-named because it connected the Mill

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Dam road with Washington Street in Brookline in the vicinity of the Punch Bowl Tavern. It became Brookline Avenue officially in 1868. Audubon Road was opened for travel to Brookline Avenue in 1892 and renamed Park Drive prior to 1938, when it so appeared in the Bromley Atlas for that year. Fullerton Street, the northeastern boundary of the Sears site, which appeared as Miner Street in the 1873 Hopkins Atlas, acquired its present name about 1900.

Despite completion of the Mill Dam/Western Avenue in 1821 and the laying out of Punch Bowl Road and Brighton Road (now Commonwealth Avenue) as extensions of it, planning for development of the Brookline marshes did not begin in earnest until the early 1870's. Although much of the marsh area was owned by individuals as early as the 1630's, it is difficult to trace specific ownerships from then until the present day. Fortunately Mather Withington's aforementioned "Plan of Brookline Marshes" presents a reasonably accurate picture of the shape, size, location and ownership of all of the parcels as of 1818. The Sears site is easy to locate since it is at the junction of Punch Bowl Road and Muddy River, the latter being the boundary line between Brookline and Roxbury. What is now the site was then composed of two complete parcels owned by Samuel Craft and John Warren respectively, plus parts of three other parcels with their owners being Ebenezer Heath, General Isaac Gardner and Dr. William Aspinwall. The boundaries of the five lots continued until 1917, when all but the Aspinwall parcel came under the ownership of Eugene N. Foss. With the exception of John Warren (1779-1848), a farmer and stone mason who arrived in Brookline shortly before 1809, all of the owners were descendents of early Brookline landholders. In 1786 the four-acre lot was owned by Nehemiah Davis. Warren purchased it in 1814 from Samuel Hammond (Norfolk Deed 52:126) and sold it to David R. Griggs in 1846 (Norfolk Deed 170:138). Griggs' family in turn conveyed it to Edward R. Secomb in 1871 (Suffolk Deed 1056:282). By 1922 it had been acquired by the Park Square Real Estate Trust following a series of short-term ownerships.

Although members of the Craft family were not among the first landowners in Muddy River, Griffin Craft (ca. 1600-1689) arrived from England in 1630 and settled in Roxbury, near the east bank of Muddy River. Samuel Craft (1787-1850) who owned a parcel on the Sears site in 1818, was a 6th generation descendent of Griffin, and a man of considerable property who was active in establishing the Congregational Society in Brookline. Samuel's grandfather Ebenezer Craft (1705-1791, a cordwainer who owned large tracts of land in Brookline and elsewhere, was in possession of the lot in 1786. Samuel sold the property to Charles B. Dana, a Brookline merchant, in 1853 (Norfolk Deed 218:80). A mortgage default in 1881 placed the property in the hands of Rufus Estabrook of Newton (Suffolk Deed 1538:469), whose heirs conveyed it to Eugene N. Foss sometime after 1895. Foss held it until after 1917 when it was acquired by the Park Square Real Estate Trust.

John Heath of Roxbury (1732-1804) owned ten parcels in Brookline by 1786, one

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of which was partly on the Sears site. He married Susannah Craft in 1858 and fought in the Revolutionary War. His son Ebenezer (1765-1845), town treasurer, constructed a new meeting house in Brookline, and inherited the property. Following Ebenezer's death in 1845 it was purchased by Hon. David Sears (1787-1871) (Norfolk Deed 162:83), distinguished descendent of Richard Sares who settled in Yarmouth in the 17th century. A wealthy Boston merchant and real estate developer, David Sears built and occupied the bow-fronted granite mansion house at 42 Beacon Street, contributed substantially to the construction of St. Paul's Church on Tremont Street (both designed by Alexander Parris), and built "Sears Tower" at the observatory in Cambridge. "About 1850 Mr. Sears purchased some 200 acres of land in the suburbs of Boston, which has since become the beautiful village of Longwood, which he proceeded to lay out and beautify at great expense, giving to many of the streets and squares names which he believed to be identified with the family in this country and in England". (May: The Descendents of Richard Sares) He also built Sears Chapel or Christ's Church in Longwood in 1860-1862, designed by Arthur Gilman. David Sears served several terms as a state representative and state senator. Following his death in 1871 the Heath parcel was transferred to the West Boston Land Associates (Suffolk Deed 1119:261). By 1884 it was back in the Sears family, having been acquired by David's grandsons David and Henry Sears who held it until 1912 when they sold it to Eugene N. Foss (Suffolk Deed 3651:135).

The Gardner parcel was in the possession of General Isaac Sparhawk Gardner (1756-1818) at the time of his death. This marsh land was conveyed to his grandfather Isaac Gardner (1686-1767), who had married Susanna Heath in 1715 and was the first deacon of the First Church, as two parcels from Dudley Boylston (1688-1748), yeoman, town constable and husband of Elizabeth Gardner, in 1729 (Suffolk Deed 45:145) and from Edward Devotion (d. 1744) in 1739 (Suffolk Deed 69:95). Dudley Boylston was the brother of Dr. Zabdiel Boylston (1680-1766), the first physician in the U.S. to inoculate for smallpox. Edward Devotion was constable, perambulator and surveyor of highways for Brookline. At his death he left his estate to the town "towards Building or Maintaining a School". His grandfather Edward, probably a French Huguenot from the La Rochelle family of Pierre de la Barre de Vaution, had acquired substantial acreage in Muddy River before 1667. In 1821 General Gardner's son Samuel, a yeoman, sold the 7 1/2 acres to Caleb Clark (1789-1849), also a yeoman (Norfolk Deed 65:125). By 1873 that portion of the parcel which is part of the Sears site had been subdivided into row house lots.

Dr. William Aspinwall (1743-1823) acquired his 5-acre parcel of saltmarsh from Henry Dana, innholder, in 1791 (Suffolk Deed 169:195). In 1760 Caleb Dana, esquire, conveyed the lot to his son Caleb, a tanner (Suffolk Deed 118:156). The Danas were residents of Cambridge. Dr. Aspinwall was the great grandson of Peter Aspinwall (ca. 1612-1687) who purchased a 150-acre farm in Muddy River in 1650. The doctor married Susanna Gardner, sister of General Gardner,

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and became the first physician to practice in Brookline. His friend General (Dr.) Joseph Warren convinced him to serve in the medical division during the Revolutionary War to "save Yankees instead of killing British." He was State Senator four times, Justice of the Peace and founded and maintained two hospitals for smallpox inoculations. His portrait was painted by Gilbert Stuart. Dr. Aspinwall's son Augustus (1787-1865) sold the parcel to Amos A. Lawrence (1814-1886) in 1858 (Norfolk Deed 263:150). Amos Lawrence, a commission merchant for textiles in Boston, was a director of numerous corporations, trustee of Massachusetts General Hospital, treasurer of Harvard and president of the trustees of the Groton School. In 1850 he bought ninety acres in Brookline from Ebenezer Francis and built a stone house in which he lived until his death. From 1851 on Amos and his brother William developed Cottage Farm with stone and brick cottages behind trees and hedges. The brothers also built the Church of Our Saviour in Brookline (Alexander Esty, 1868) in memory of their father. During the 1850s Amos A. Lawrence became involved with the Emigrant Aid Company, promoting emigration to Kansas as an anti-slavery device. He contributed \$10,000 for education which resulted in the founding of the state university in Lawrence in 1863. Lawrence Hall at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge was built with his money in 1873 and 1880. By 1873 the Aspinwall portion of the Sears site had been subdivided into row house lots.

From the early 1870s on when the northeastern edge of the Sears site was subdivided into row house lots, the parcels were held by a variety of land speculators, real estate trusts and an insurance company until January 5, 1928, when Sears Roebuck and Company purchased the 287,612-square-foot main portion of the site from the Park Square Real Estate Trust (Suffolk Deed 4967:322). On August 16, 1929, after the first phase of the Sears building was constructed, the company acquired the northeastern strip along Fullerton Street (Suffolk Deed 5123:218), except for the lot at the corner of Brookline Avenue and Fullerton Street which was sold by Nelson Pierce James of Newton to "155 Brookline Avenue Inc." in 1928 (Suffolk Deed 5043:381). The building presently occupying the corner site was constructed in 1929 and leased to the Miller Rubber Company of New England (wholesale tires) from that year through 1936. From 1938 through 1954 it housed the Sears Service Station (gasoline), after which it was integrated into the Sears mail order operation.

There is no evidence of any construction on the main Sears parcel prior to the erection of the mail order and retail building in 1928. It is not surprising that the marshes lagged well behind higher ground as choice development sites. Land speculation in Brookline began even before construction of the Mill Dam, with Uriah Cotting's purchase of the entire Sewall estate from E.K. Wolcott for \$50,000 in 1815 (Norfolk Deed 50:33). Three years later Israel Thorndike, David Sears and Ebenzer Francis bought up Cotting's purchase and began to partition the large holding on the assumption that land values would escalate with completion of the dam (Norfolk Deed 64:61). While Longwood was

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developed by David Sears following his 200-acre purchase in about 1820, and Cottage Farm was built up by Amos A. Lawrence during the 1850s, the marshes had to wait until after they were annexed to Boston in 1870. Hopkins' 1873 Atlas records extensive subdivision of blocks for row houses between the Boston and Albany Railroad to the north and Brookline Avenue to the southeast. Amos A. and William R. Lawrence laid out 221 lots on six blocks between Beacon Street and the railroad, R.A. Ballou and C.H. Burditt owned five smaller blocks with ninety-seven lots on the southeast side of Beacon Street and W.E. and D.N. Skilling had laid out 160 lots on four blocks northeast of the Sears site with twenty brick bowfront row houses already completed. By 1890 only thirteen of the Lawrence lots on Beacon Street were occupied and the rest of the area was unchanged. Three row houses and a stable were added to the northeast edge of the Sears site by 1895, and the number of houses on Beacon Street had increased to sixty-one. By 1917 the triangle between the Boston and Albany main line and the Brookline Branch was filled with bowfronted brick row houses and small apartment buildings, while two Willys-Overland warehouses had been constructed along Brookline Avenue and nine of the row houses demolished. This signaled the end of residential uses in the blocks abutting Brookline Avenue. By 1922 the remaining eleven row houses were gone from the Willys-Overland block and several commercial buildings were added on both sides of Brookline Avenue. The three houses and stable disappeared from the Sears site sometime after 1928, and by 1938 the neighborhood was completely commercial.

The area immediately southwest of the Sears site across Muddy River in Roxbury, was developed earlier in a significantly different manner. Much of Roxbury maintained a semi-rural or suburban residential character through most of the 19th century. Consistent with this situation was a "Plan of land of L. Pope and N.H. Emmons on Appleton Place in Roxbury" of January 16, 1845, drawn by Alexander Wadsworth, showing twenty-seven large lots laid out between Brookline Avenue and "Longwood Stream" (Muddy River). In 1861 twelve of the twenty-seven lots were occupied by detached frame houses. By 1871 there were thirteen houses, by 1890 the fourteenth residence had been added and by 1895 the maximum of eighteen was reached. With the appearance of the Simmons Female College Building in the 1906 Bromley Atlas, the area began to change. In 1931, after completion of the Sears building, the change in character of the neighborhood had become much more pronounced with the fifteen remaining houses interspersed with brick apartment buildings as well as an expanded Simmons College.

Although also partially filled land, the Fenway (Back Bay Fens) never developed on the grand and elegant scale of the neighboring Back Bay, in spite of the fact that many noted institutions such as the Museum of Fine Arts and several important individuals such as Isabella Steward Gardner, made their homes in the area. By the turn-of-the-century educational institutions - Northeastern University, Wentworth Institute, the Museum School, Simmons

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College, Emmanuel College and Boston University - were encroaching in or near the Fenway area. Along Brookline Avenue close to the railroad, automobile related businesses sprang up: tire sales such as the Miller Tire Building, Dunlop Tires, automobile sales and service stations. New roads were planned with the increasing use of the automobile and this was one of the major points Sears' management considered when buying the empty parcel bounded by Brookline Avenue, Park Drive and Fullerton Street. Additionally, the adjacent railroad made it possible to distribute all over Massachusetts.

Of the many factors that mark the Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store as an important contributor to all of New England and part of New York as well as Boston's architectural, economic and social heritage, (a particularly interesting one) is its visual role as a by-product of the burgeoning early 20th century motor age. As America's love of speed and efficiency grew throughout the century with the advent of the motor car, one can see a connection between the Sears building and growth of the American "mall". For example, as one looks through the articles published in the major Boston newspapers for the opening of the Sears building, the importance of easy access to the city via automobile by the many fast roads and spacious, convenient parking lots is repeatedly stressed. The newspapers create an "all roads lead to Sears" feeling as a map is shown with all roads ending up at the mail order and retail store. At Sears one could shop for clothing and household items, service the car, bury tires, meet friends at the soda fountain and shop some more. The era of the commercial strip and the drive-thru restaurant was just around the corner.

Sears Roebuck and Company, established in Chicago in 1894, has always been conscious of the important role it has played in developing, encouraging and shaping American taste. The pages of early 20th century Sears catalogs reveal a modernity we today often fail to associate with Sears Roebuck and Company. For instance, Sears began to sell automobiles as early as 1908. By 1910, five models were offered, but by 1915 Sears had dropped its line of automobiles. It is interesting to note, however, that Sears stores traditionally (as in the Park Drive store) have a service or automotive center, perhaps stemming from these early days. Sears published how-to manuals for painting, carpentry and dressmaking, attempting to keep up with Paris fashions, and sold childrens' wear. Sears offered just about everything for the home and the household, but one very interesting, little known sales line (noted by author David L. Cohn) was birth control. Although it was technically still against the law in most states to distribute information about birth control and contraceptive devices, the 1935 catalogs offered a variety of contraceptives under the guise of "feminine hygiene needs" and so bypassed the law and provided a popular sales order to their public.

The speed with which the Sears building was erected was testimony to changing times in old Boston. After investigating hundreds of plans and blueprints for

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the project, it is clear that a substantial portion of the construction was carried out only a few months prior to the opening of the building on August 30, 1928. For example, on one plan from the Indiana Limestone Company of Bedford, Indiana, a handwritten notation indicates that the limestone needed above the line drawn across the plan was not even sent "to the mill for production" until July 17th. The sheer number of contractors and craftsmen involved in this project is overwhelming (see Appendix A) and managing all of their specifications would have been a job itself. Blueprints exist for electrical work, ductwork, iron work, plumbing, fire doors, stairways, windows, equipment such as belt conveyors and moving baskets, carved limestone and, of course, the architects' architectural blueprints themselves. The Sears plant was very much an industrial building: as times changed and machinery advanced, Sears updated its equipment, its lighting, its use of space. Like the large buildings of its type that survive, it is generally because the buildings have become almost living organisms, growing, shrinking and changing with the current generation's needs.

George C. Nimmons (1865-1947) was a prolific architect and author, and an enthusiastic booster of the profession for over forty years. Nimmons discussed subjects from industrial design to the importance of teaching the fine arts in college. His long period of contact with Sears management could in itself make an interesting avenue of study; just as Cohn chose to examine American morals and changing tastes through the Sears catalogs from 1905 to 1940, so too may one examine the architecture of a century of Sears buildings from the earliest 1880's masonry structure to Chicago's soaring Sears Tower.

Born in Ohio, Nimmons attended a local school before traveling to Europe for study. After his return he began his career as a draughtsman in the offices of Burnham and Root at the age of eighteen. In 1897 Nimmons formed a partnership with William K. Fellows. Nimmons and Fellows practiced together until 1910. Together they produced one of Sears Roebuck and Company's earliest and most successful buildings, as well as other Sears projects in the Mid-West, and industrial buildings in Chicago. Nimmons may not have been the most creative or inspiring designer, but he was enthusiastic about his subject, industrial design, and sought to make it pleasing, functional and attractive at the same time.

Nimmons said of the Boston building, "The Boston store in design does not follow any historic style of architecture." Although he claims no historical precedent guided his work, one can clearly see antecedents in his design. His work may not have had a cornice line, but it had columns, sills, lintels, belt courses and a Gothic flavor, all skillfully integrated and executed. Nimmons remained always abreast of the latest technology and made every attempt to integrate it into his work. His sense of ornamental detail was highly refined and sophisticated as demonstrated in the exquisite limestone carving on the Boston Sears Building.

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Nimmons served, at age twenty-eight, as a Superintendent of Buildings for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition under the direction of D.H. Burnham (who had been his employer) as the Director of Works, with Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot as the landscape architects and a host of other contemporary notables. Another important role for Nimmons was as author. As mentioned above, he wrote extensively about the state of current industrial architecture, but he was also asked by the AIA Committee on Architectural Education to write about the importance of a fine arts background. The resulting 1923 article was entitled, "The Significance of the Fine Arts."

Little is currently known about Carr, but Clark C. Wright (1880-1948), the third member of the firm, was born in Illinois. He trained in architecture as well as engineering, studying at Chicago's Art Institute and Armour's Institute of Technology. In 1915 Wright joined Nimmon's firm as a draughtsman. By the time the Sears Building was planned, Wright was certainly an important member of the firm.

Establishing the actual dates that Nimmons practiced simply as George C. Nimmons and Company, and as Nimmons, Carr and Wright, is difficult to determine. It seems fairly clear that the design for the Boston Sears may be attributed primarily to Nimmons and his stamp is on several of the plans. However, the stamp "Nimmons Carr & Wright" is also on plans of 1928. The stamp also reads "Boston, Massachusetts," suggesting a field office for the firm, although such an office is not listed in the Boston Directories for 1928 and 1929. That they had a field office is not surprising and was necessary in order to complete the project as rapidly as they did. Even this supervision failed to prevent several fatal accidents from occurring in the months before the building opened. According to testimony gathered after the accidents, many of the workers attributed the fatalities to the rapid building schedule demanded by Sears. Carr and Wright must have also gained the confidence of Sears headquarters, for they went on to design the 1940's addition of the Boston Sears plant after Nimmons had retired.

The newspaper articles commemorating the opening of Sears Roebuck and Company at the Fenway reveal several items of interest concerning the building's up-to-the-minute technology and ideas of improved shopper comfort and convenience, associated specifically with this store and its architects. Major selling points of the project to its contemporary users included: the generous parking facilities; an eight-car train shed that facilitated handling of goods, cut costs to customers, and protected merchandise from bad weather; and its potential as a "neighborhood center" where "friends may wait for each other upon appointment," which included a restaurant and soda fountain, a beauty parlor ("for grown-up ladies"), and well-appointed restrooms.

One development originated by the architects, according to the Boston Herald, called for a special "comfort floor." Fine sand was laid atop the concrete,

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which was then covered with a matched maple top. This was said to be the first time such a notion had been considered and carried out. Users agreed that it gave a springy step and aided tired and aching feet. The other feature used for the first time in a Sears building - and certainly new to industrial structures - was the ventilating system, described by the Boston Herald as "one of the newest ventilating systems in the United States.... Sears Roebuck and Company has purchased for other stores the same kind of ventilating system that is to be used in Boston."

There were similarities in many of the mail order stores, with the central tower and vertical emphasis appearing most often, such as in Memphis, Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Los Angeles. The first three of these have similar materials to the Boston store, with Los Angeles adapting to regional conditions with stucco and tile. The Boston store was the 10th of 12 mail order stores: the last of the first burst of construction. The final two stores were constructed in 1946 and 1972. Boston's is the third largest, following Chicago and Philadelphia. There were additional stores as well, including Sears in Cambridge.

Several years later a March 1935 article in Architectural Forum entitled "Without Windows" contains an interesting discussion of eliminating windows from the new Sears stores, as a method of controlling climate and saving energy. The author notes that "Nimmons, Carr and Wright may well have started a train of development that will eventually lead to the complete elimination of the window in certain types of commercial buildings." It appears that with Sears as a client, Nimmons and his associates were very involved in state-of-the-art technology.

Although never fully executed in the Boston Sears building, earlier plans of the building as well as photographs of contemporary buildings from The Architectural Record (June 1931), showing stores in Cambridge, Buffalo, California and Washington, D.C., demonstrated that ground floor storefronts were an integral part of Nimmons' designs at this time. These storefronts, with awnings and canopies, play a major role in his work into the 1940s, as may be seen in the later articles from Architectural Forum (March 1935) and The Architectural Record (September 1940).

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Archaeological Significance

Portions of the so-called Boylston Street fishweir are considered to be among Boston's most important archaeological resources. Portions of the fishweir are included in the Back Bay Historic District National Register nomination, which also recognizes that the horizontal extent of the site is not known. Geologically, the Sears Roebuck and Company Site is included within the same Charles River estuary as the Boylston Street fishweir site, and fishweir remains could be uniformly distributed throughout this area.

Prehistoric fishweir remains that might be preserved at the Sear Roebuck building site may be significant for data on 1) location of such remains relative to the Back Bay, and 2) information on construction and use of the fishweir structure(s). Both the location and orientation of fishweir remains in the Back Bay, relative to the configuration of the bay and its channels in the period 3000 - 1000 B.C., may elucidate prehistoric patterns of resource exploitation in the Boston area. Dating of fishweir remains from the Sears Roebuck building site could be used to test Dena Dincauze's theory that the focus of prehistoric activity along the Charles River moved upriver with the shifting estuary head.

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Boston, Massachusetts

Section number 9 Page 3

- Boston Redevelopment Authority map
Dearborn, Benjamin, "A Plan of those Parts of Boston", 1814.
Fuller & Whitney, "Back Bay in 1814"; also 1836, 1861, 1871, 1888
Map of Boston Boundary Line Changes, 1926.
Lt. Page, "Boston Its Environs and Harbour with the Rebels Works", 1775.
"Plan of Lands Belonging to the Commonwealth", 1857.
Wadsworth, Alexander, "Plan of land of L. Pope & N.H. Emmons on Appleton Place
in Roxbury", 1845
Withington, Mather, "A Plan of Brookline Marshes Belonging to Sundry Persons",
1818.
Wrightman, H.M., "Plan of Lands on the Back Bay", 1864.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 3

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

Appendix A A Partial List of Architects, Engineers and Contractors

Company	Title of Plan	Date
1928 and 1930 Building and Machinery		
George C. Nimmons & Co., Architect, Chicago, Ill.		1928
Nimmons, Carr & Wright, Architects, Chicago & Boston		1928
Indiana Limestone Co., Bedford, IN.		1928
Martin C. Schwab Construction Engineers Chicago, Ill		
Hegeman-Harris Co., General Contractor, Bos.		
The Merrill Co., Heating & Piping, Bos.		
Martin C. Schwab Construction Engineers	"Main Switchboard"	1928
Griffin Keiver Co.	Store Front design	1928
Lancaster Iron Works, Lancaster, PA.	Steel Stack	1928
A.L. Smith Iron Works, Chelsea, MA.	Plans for metal work	1928
Variety Fire Door Co.		1928
The Compound Pyrono Door Co., Boston branch		1928
Structural Gypsum Corp., Linden, N.J.	"Pipe Tunnel"	1928
New England Structural Co., Everett, MA.	Plans for Trainshed	1928
V.J. Gallini	Revision to 2nd fl. framing	1928
Turner Construction Co.	Alterations to door details	1930
1930's Machinery and Building Alterations		
Hess Engineering Co.	"Boston Shipping Room," Layout of Conveyors	1936
1948 Building Addition and 1940's & 1950's Machinery & Alterations		
Blackall Clapp & Clark Arthur Olive Eng.	Plans for Plumbing Service Bldg.	1941
Sam. Olson Co., Chicago, Ill.	"To Be Removed"	1945
?	conveying equipment	1949
Conveyor Specialty Co.	conversion to oil firing	1950
Link Belt Co., 136 Brookline Ave. Bos.	install. conveyor equip.	1951
	Installing conveyors, trolley truck tow, etc.	1953
	Air Conditioning install.	1958
Dunlap & Esgar, Arch/Eng., Chicago, Ill.	"Support Framing for New Tower on Existing Roof"	1958

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 4

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

1965 Building Addition and 1960's Machinery

Unibelt Conveyors	conveyors	1962
Ballinger Company, Architects and Engineers		1965
Lookwood Greene Engineers, 316 Stuart St. Bos.		1964
Norfolk Conveyor, Cohasset, MA.		1965
	cafeteria alterations	1964

The above list is intended as partial not definitive list. Undoubtedly many other individuals and companies were involved in the original building, later alterations and updating of equipment.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store,
Boston, Massachusetts

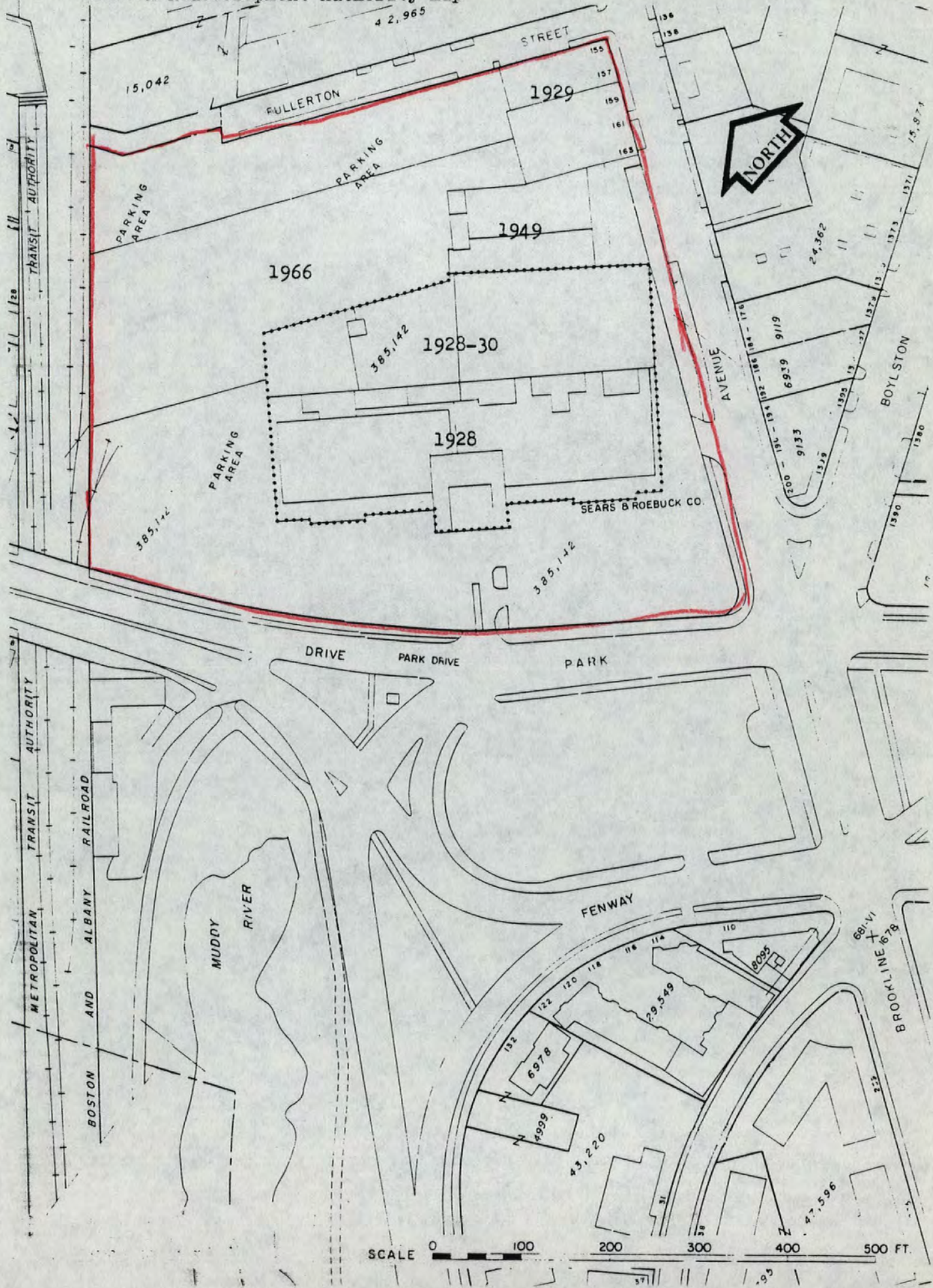
Verbal Boundary Description

The Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store lot is roughly a trapezium in shape, with the Park Drive edge gently curved leading into a rounded corner at Brookline Avenue, and small jogs on Brookline Avenue and Fullerton Street. It is bounded on the southwest on a curved line (radius = 1719.12 feet) by Park Drive, 725 feet; on the south by a corner (radius = 20 feet), 34.53 feet; on the southeast by Brookline Avenue, 490 feet to a jog; southwest on the jog, 20 feet; southeast again on Brookline Avenue, 150 feet; northeast on Fullerton Street, 469.62 feet to a jog; southeast on the jog, 20.31 feet; northeast again on Fullerton Street, 118.29; east on Fullerton Street, 37.55 feet; northwest on the MBTA Riverside Line, 480.73 feet.

Boundary Justification

The boundary defining the Sears Roebuck lot is shown on the attached Boston Redevelopment Authority map. The legal boundary was also established in Suffolk County Deeds 4544:245; 4967:321, 322; 5123:218 and a "Plan of Land in Boston - Mass." by Aspinwall and Lincoln, dated July 21, 1928.

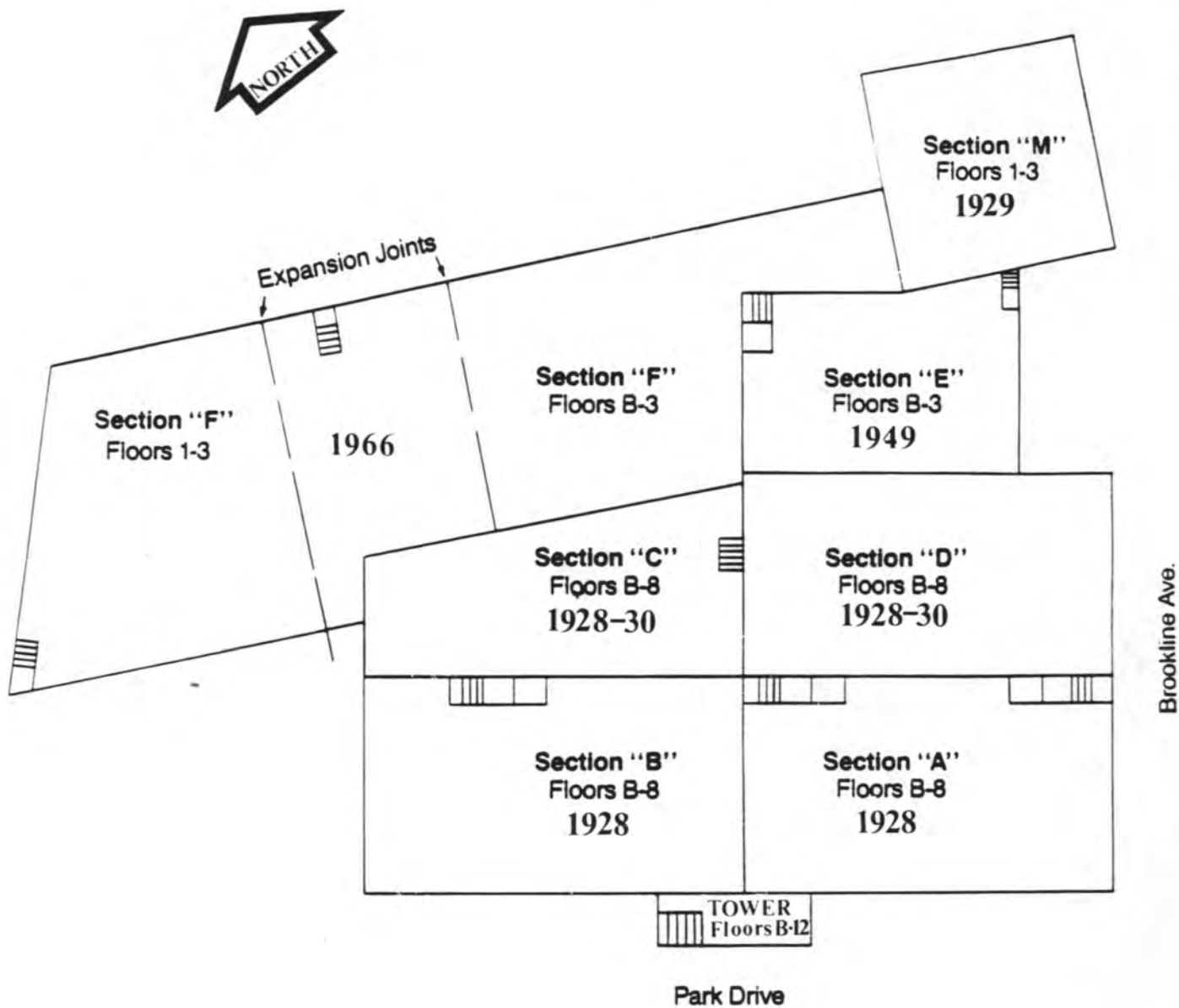
Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
Boston Redevelopment Authority map



SCALE 0 100 200 300 400 500 FT.

NOV 29 1990

Sears Roebuck & Co. Building Sections



CHARLES RIVER

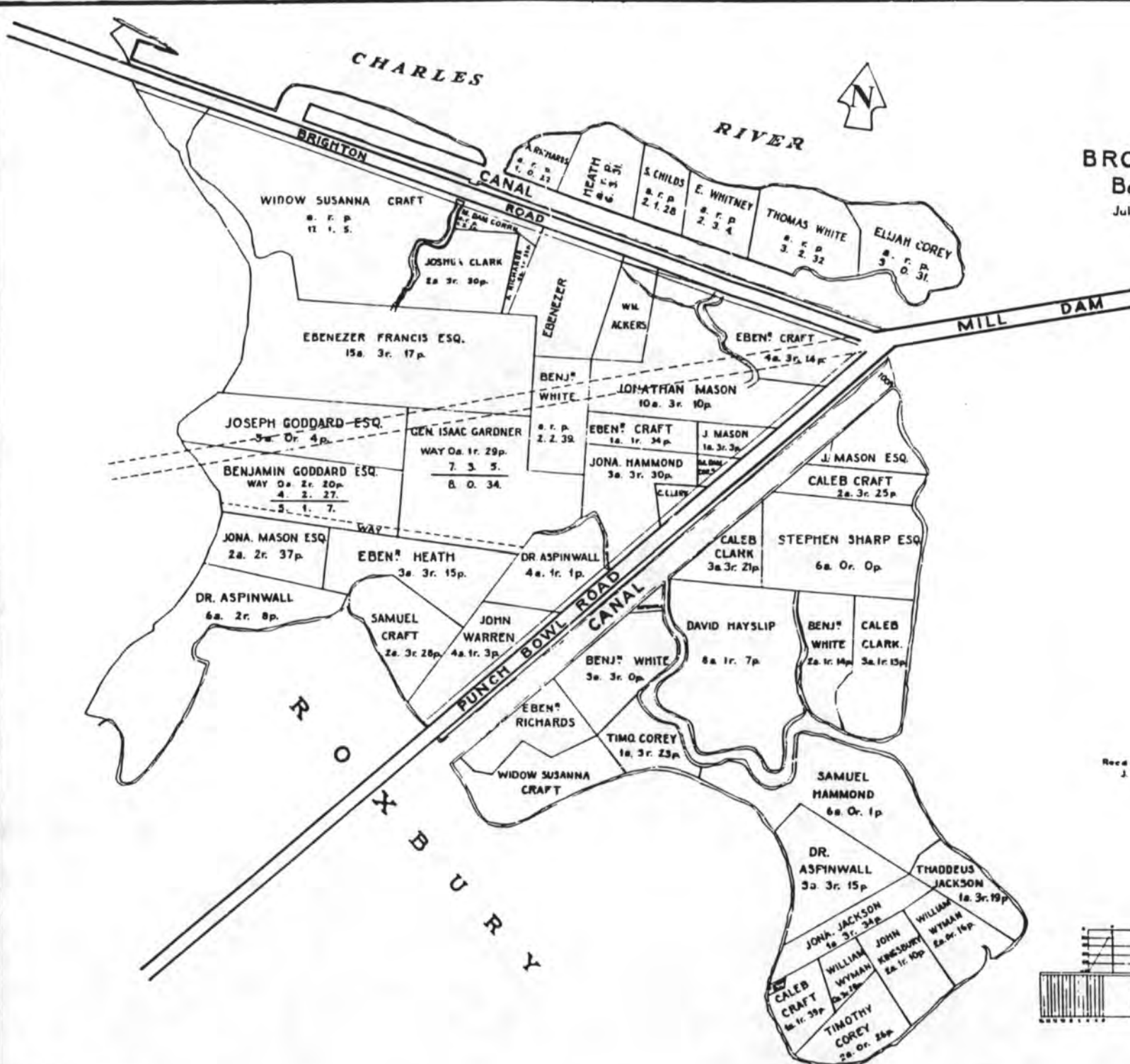


A Plan of BROOKLINE MARSHES

Belonging to Sundry Persons

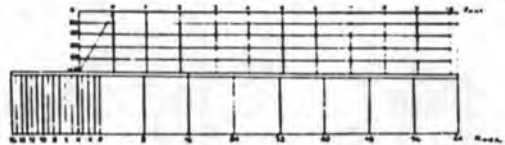
July 1818. Mather Withington, Surveyor.

Original in file

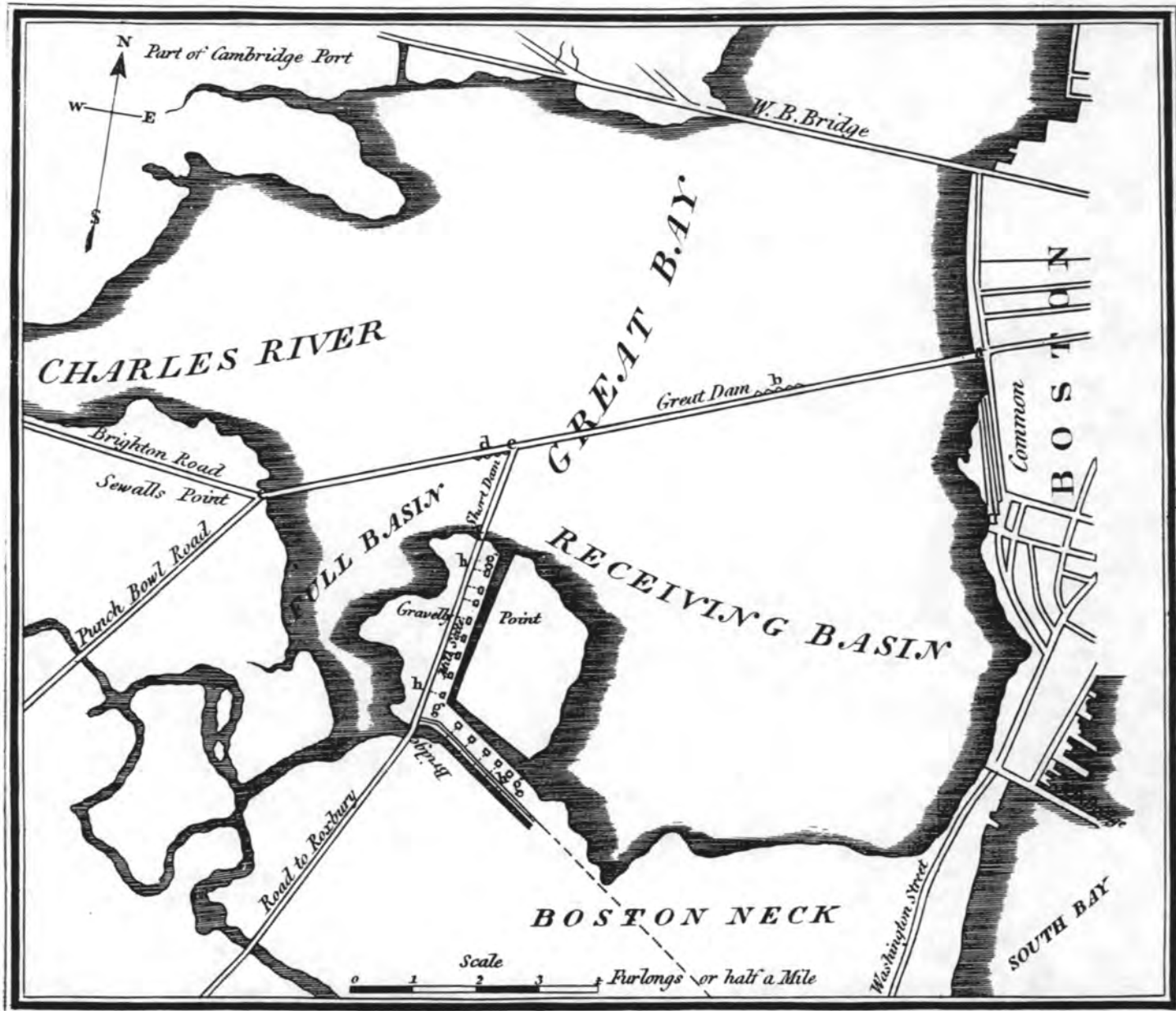


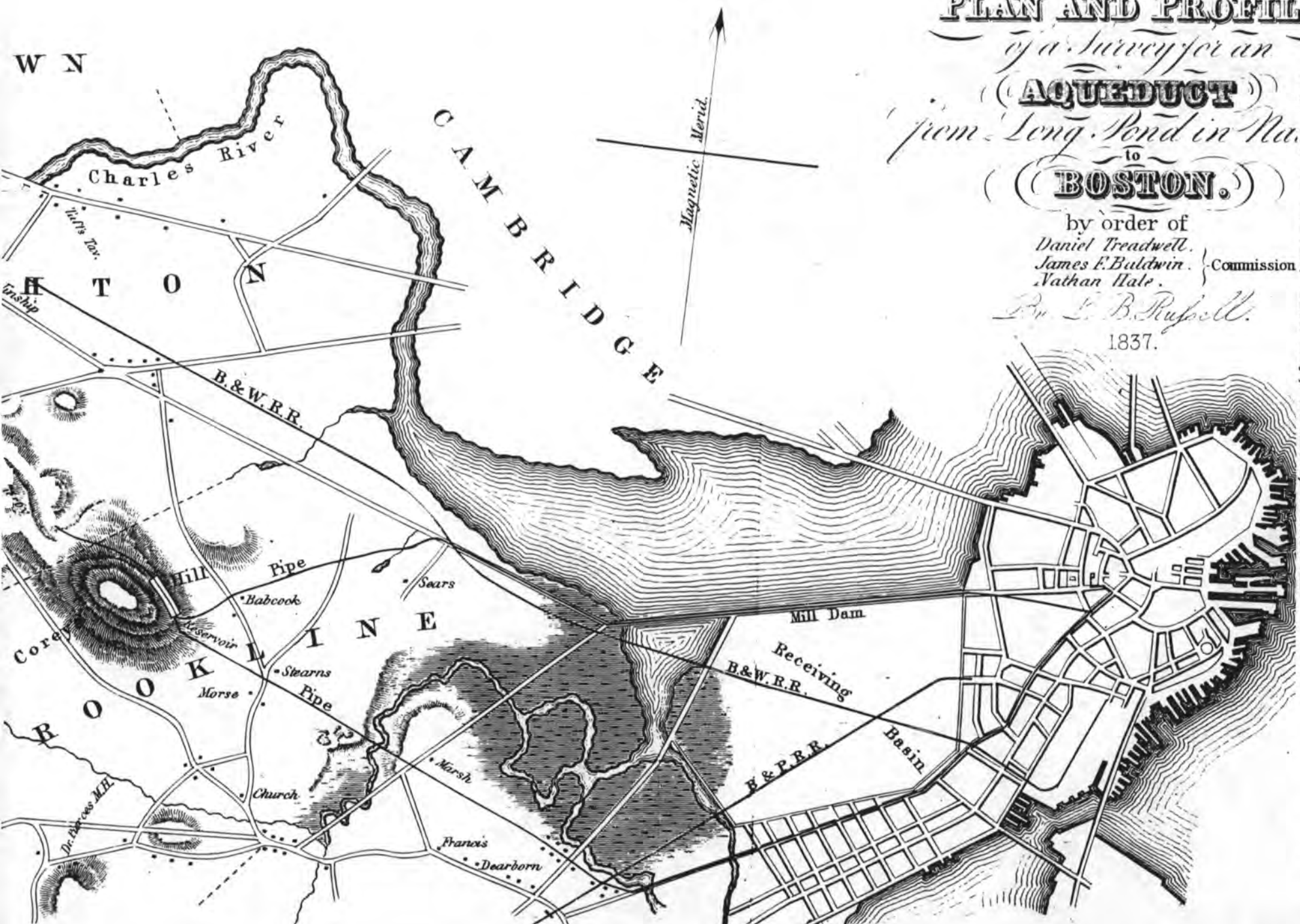
Sears Roebuck & Company
309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA

Recd for record Mar 4, 1880.
J. H. Burdakin, Reg^r



Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
ca. 1821 map of Mill Dam, Cross Dam, Punch Bowl Road





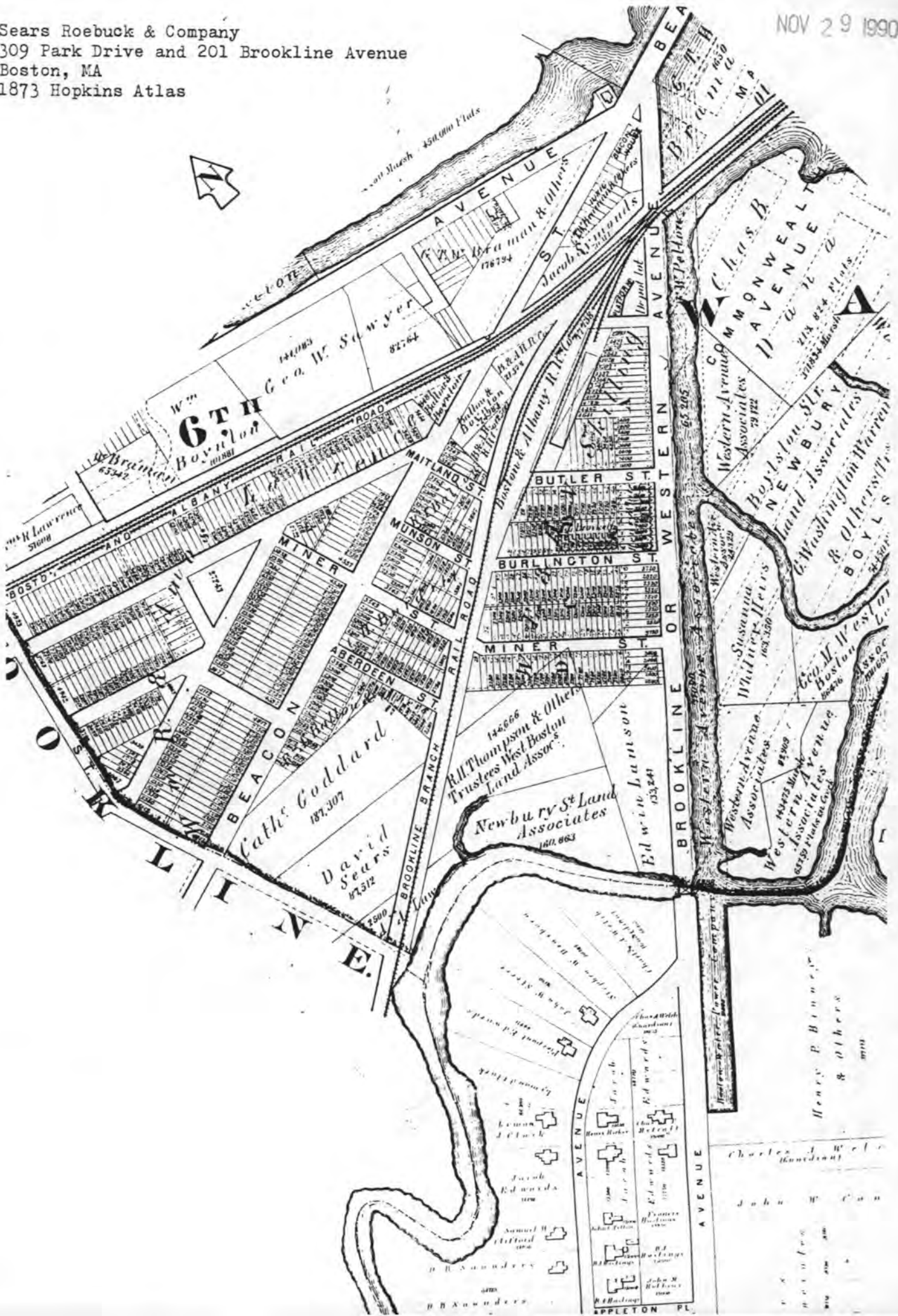
PLAN AND PROFILE
of a Survey for an
AQUEDUCT
from Long Pond in Na.
 to
BOSTON.

by order of
Daniel Treadwell,
James F. Baldwin, } Commission
Nathan Hale,
By L. B. Russell.
 1837.

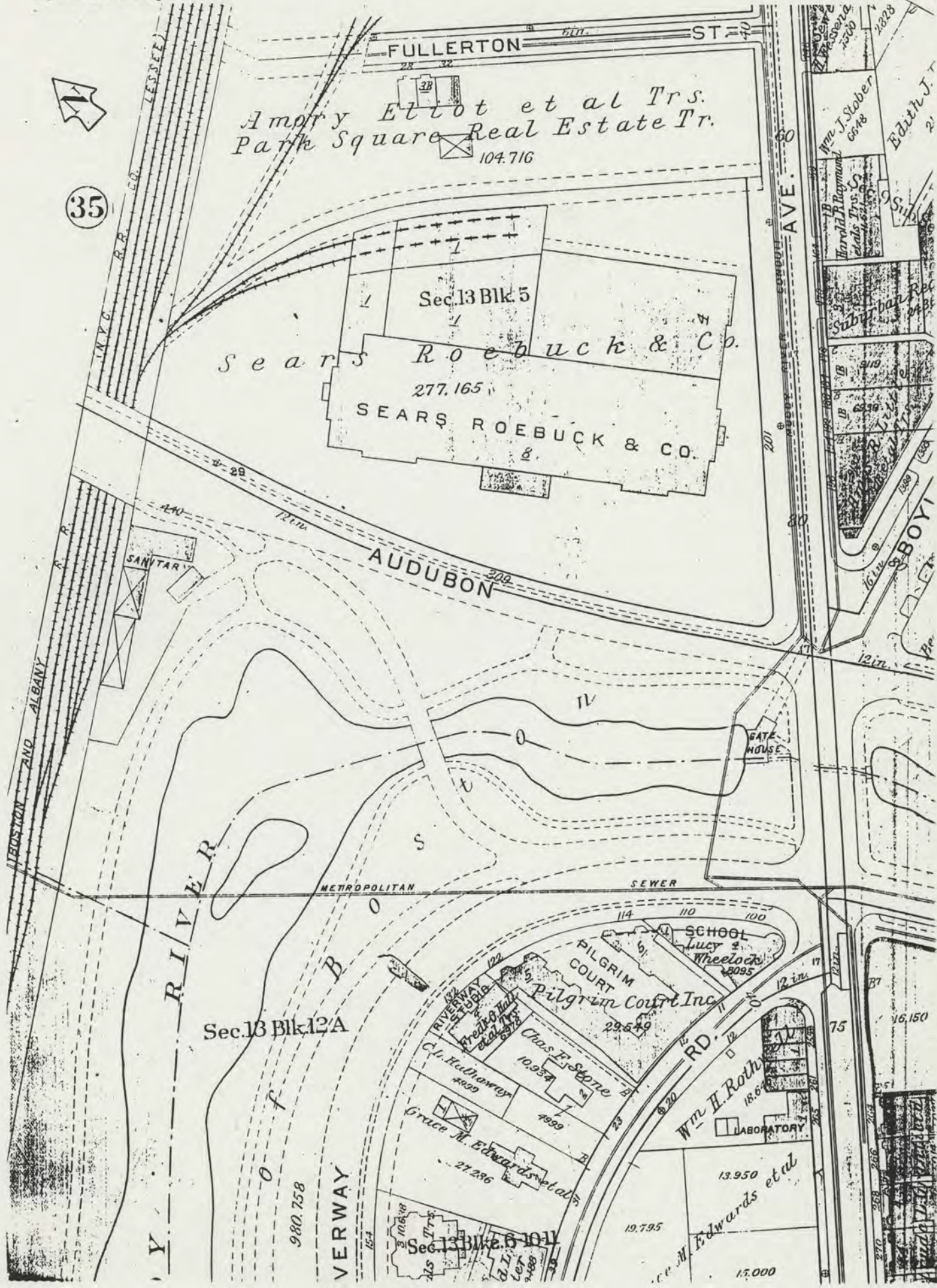
Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
 1837 map of Boston, Back Bay, marshes, Brookline
 NOV 29 1897

Sears Roebuck & Company
309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue
Boston, MA
1873 Hopkins Atlas

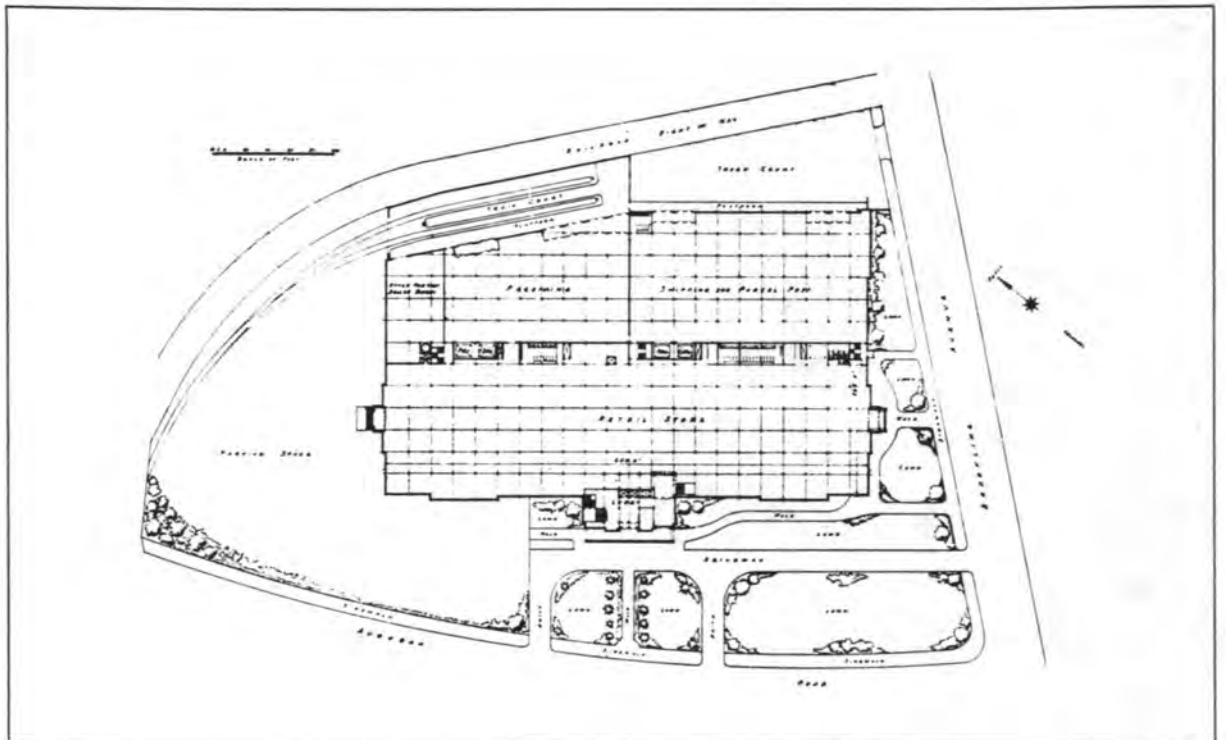
NOV 29 1990



Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
1928 Bromley Atlas



Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
rendering of first scheme showing storefronts in all floor 1 window bays;
site plan with landscaping



SEARS, ROEBUCK & COMPANY MAIL ORDER STORE, BOSTON, MASS.

NIMMONS, CARR & WRIGHT, ARCHITECTS





BUILDING FOR SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., BOSTON
NIMMONS, CARR & WRIGHT, ARCHITECTS

Sears Roebuck & Company, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston, MA
1929 photo

NOV 29 1990

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Suffolk

DATE RECEIVED: 1/10/91 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/24/91
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 90001992

NOMINATOR: STATE

DETAILED EVALUATION: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 1/15/91 DATE

**Entered in the
National Register**

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____
REVIEWER _____
DISCIPLINE _____
DATE _____

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

CLASSIFICATION

count resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

historic current

DESCRIPTION

architectural classification
 materials
 descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

acreage verbal boundary description
 UTM's boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

sketch maps USGS maps photographs presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

_____ Phone _____

Signed _____ Date _____



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON
DATE: 8-24-89
NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108
PHOTO NO: ①
VIEW: SOUTHWEST (PRIMARY) FACADE; FROM SOUTH



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE + 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON
DATE: 8-24-89
NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108
PHOTO NO: ②
VIEW: SOUTHWEST FACADE + SOUTHEAST ELEVATION; FROM SOUTH



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE; BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON
DATE: 8-24-89
NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108
PHOTO NO: (3)
VIEW: NORTHWEST ELEVATION; FROM WEST



NOV 29 1990

SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE; 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON
DATE: 8-24-89
NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108
PHOTO NO: (4)
VIEW: NORTHEAST ELEVATION; PART OF SOUTHWEST
ELEVATION OF 1949 ADDITION; FROM EAST



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE; 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON
DATE: 8-24-89
NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108
PHOTO NO: (5)
VIEW: UPPER FLOORS OF NORTHEAST ELEVATION; 1965-66 ADDITION
IN FOREGROUND; FROM NORTH



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY

309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA

PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON

DATE: 8-24-89

NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108

PHOTO NO: (6)

VIEW: TOWER, SOUTHWEST FACADE; FROM SOUTHWEST



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY

309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVENUE, BOSTON, MA

PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON

DATE: 8-24-89

NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108

PHOTO NO: ⑦

VIEW: UPPER FLOORS OF TOWER, NORTHWEST ELEVATION;
FROM WEST

NOV 29 1990



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON

DATE: 8-24-89

NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108

PHOTO NO: ⑧

VIEW: CARVED LIMESTONE & BRICK DETAIL, STEEL WINDOWS,
FLOORS 2-5 OF CENTRAL BAY OF TOWER, SOUTHWEST
FACADE; FROM SOUTHWEST

NOV 29 1990



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE; 201 BROOKLINE AVE; BOSTON, MA

PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON

DATE: 8-24-89

NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108

PHOTO NO: ⑨

VIEW: CARVED LIMESTONE PANEL, FLOOR 2, SOUTHWEST FACADE
OF TOWER; FROM SOUTHWEST



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON

DATE: 8-24-89

NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108

PHOTO NO: (10)

VIEW: CARVED LIMESTONE & BRICK DETAIL, FLOOR 8, NORTHWEST
ELEVATION; FROM NORTHWEST



NO SMOKING

CURRENT STOCK
FUND
46 1/2
33240 55 789

NO SMOKING

SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON
DATE: 8-24-89
NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108
PHOTO NO: ⑪
VIEW: LOBBY & STAIRCASE; FLOOR 1, TOWER

NOV 29 1990



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON
DATE: 8-24-89
NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108
PHOTO NO: (12)
VIEW: LOBBY FROM STAIRCASE; FLOOR 1, TOWER

NOV 29 1990



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE; 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON
DATE: 8-24-89
NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108
PHOTO NO: (13)
VIEW: TYPICAL WAREHOUSE SPACE; FLOOR 3, SECTION D



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON

DATE: 8-24-89

NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108

PHOTO NO: (14)

VIEW: COLUMNS, PIERS, STEEL WINDOWS; FLOOR 3, SECTION D



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY

309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA

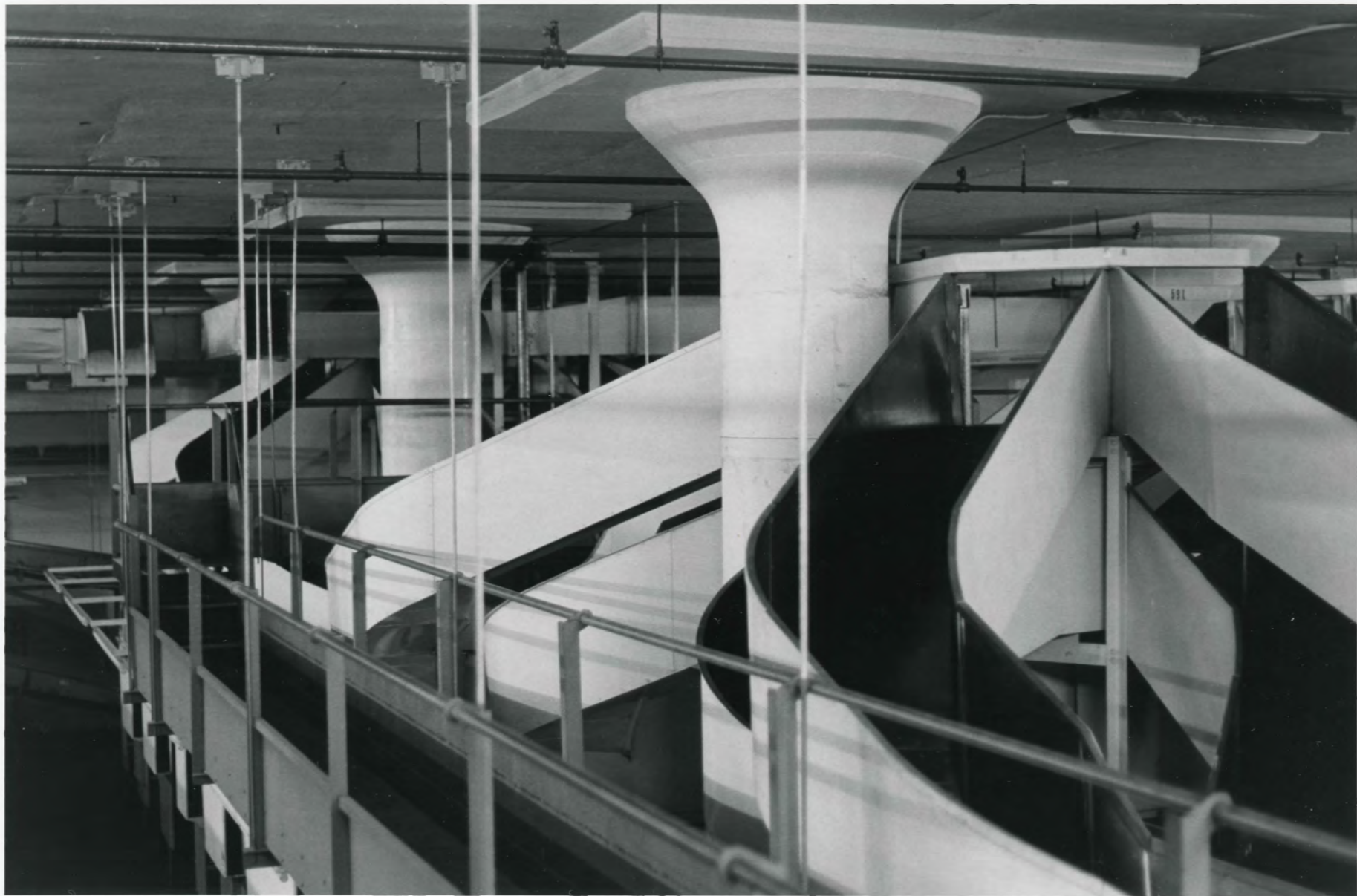
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON

DATE: 8-24-89

NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108

PHOTO NO: (15)

VIEW: SPIRAL CONVEYOR; FLOOR 4, SECTION A



SEARS ROEBUCK & COMPANY
309 PARK DRIVE & 201 BROOKLINE AVE., BOSTON, MA
PHOTOGRAPHER: LESLIE LARSON
DATE: 8-24-89
NEGATIVE: LESLIE LARSON, 6 JOY ST., BOSTON, MA 02108
PHOTO NO: (16)
VIEW: CONVEYORS; FLOOR 2 MEZZANINE, SECTION D

Boston South MASSACHUSETTS

1:25 000-scale metric topographic map



7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names



Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Massachusetts Department of Public Works
 Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies
 Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1978. Field checked 1979. Map revised 1987. Supersedes Newton and Boston South 1:25,000-scale maps dated 1970.
 Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS charts 13270 (1982) and 13272 (1982). This information is not intended for navigational purposes. Projection and 100-meter grid. Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 19. 18,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, meanland zone 1927 North American Datum. To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 6 meters south and 42 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks. There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map.
 CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
 OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.3 METER
 DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN METERS
 DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
 SOUNDING SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
 THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2.9 METERS
 THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

Meters	Feet
1	3.2808
2	6.5617
3	9.8425
4	13.1234
5	16.4043
6	19.6852
7	22.9660
8	26.2469
9	29.5278
10	32.8084

UTM Grid Convergence (CM) at center of map	UTM Grid Declination (MK) at center of map
1	0.0000
2	0.0000
3	0.0000
4	0.0000
5	0.0000
6	0.0000
7	0.0000
8	0.0000
9	0.0000
10	0.0000

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

Topographic Map Symbols

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road, trail
- Route marker: Interstate; U.S.; State
- Revised: standard gage; narrow gage
- Bridge; drawbridge
- Faithbridge; covered; underpass
- Subup area; only selected landmark buildings shown
- House; barn; church; school; large structure
- Boundary:
 - National, with monument
 - State
 - County, parish
 - Civil township, precinct, district
 - Incorporated city, village, town
 - National or State reservation, small park
 - Land grant with monument; found section corner
 - U.S. public lands survey; range, township; section
 - Range, township; section line; location approximate
- Fence or field line
- Power transmission line, located tower
- Dam; dam with lock
- Cemetery; grave
- Complement; picnic area; U.S. location monument
- Windmill; water well; spring
- Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cave
- Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation
- Contours; index; intermediate; supplementary; depression
- Distorted surface; strip mine; levee; sand
- Sounding; depth curve
- Parameal lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream
- Reef; large and small; tide, large and small
- Submerged marsh; marsh, swamp
- Land subject to controlled inundation; woodland
- Scrub; mangrove
- Ditch; vineyard

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request



Sears Roebuck and Company Mail order store
19 326750 4629970



November 13, 1990

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 please find the following nomination:

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store, HPCA #11186MA, 309 Park Drive and 201 Brookline Avenue, Boston (Suffolk County), Massachusetts 02116.

There has been no owner objection for the property listed above.

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 60-90 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination form.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure:

Massachusetts Historical Commission, Valerie A. Talmage, *Executive Director, State Historic Preservation Officer*
80 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116 (617) 727-8470

Office of the Secretary of State, Michael J. Connolly, *Secretary*



January 8, 1991

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 please find the following nomination:

Sears Roebuck and Company Mail Order Store, Boston, Massachusetts 02116 (HPCA #11186-MA).

The nomination, originally submitted to the National Park Service on November 13, 1990, was returned to the Massachusetts Historical Commission on January 7, 1991, because it had not been signed and dated by the State Historic Preservation Officer. That has now been done, and we are resubmitting the nomination (enclosed).

Because of this unanticipated delay in listing, we now request expedited review of the nomination.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure