

**FORM A - AREA**

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02116

Photos (3"x3" or 3"x5" black  
& white). Indicate on back  
of each photo street addresses  
for buildings shown. Staple to  
left side of form.

Sketch Map. Draw a general map of the  
area indicating properties within it.  
Number each property for which individual  
inventory forms have been completed.  
Label streets including route numbers, if  
any. Indicate north. (Attach a separate  
sheet if space here is not sufficient).

(SEE ATTACHED MAP)

UTM REFERENCE    A 19/315910/4690640  
                  B 19/315860/4690840  
                  C 19/316180/4690940  
                  D 19/317240/4690730  
USGS QUADRANGLE    NEWTON, MA  
SCALE                1:25,000

**Area Letter    Form numbers in this Area**

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| E | (see Data Sheet) |
|---|------------------|

Newton, Mass. MRA  
Town    NEWTON    (West Newton)

Name of Area (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Webster Park Historic District

Present Use    Residential

General Date or Period \_\_\_\_\_

1845-1870

General Condition    Fair-Good

Acreage    11.51 acres

Recorded by    Peter Stott

Organization    Newton Historical Comm.

Date    April 1986

## NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

The Webster Park Historic District is one of the most intact examples of an early residential subdivision built after the opening of the Boston & Worcester Railroad in 1834. The original park laid out by Alexander Wadsworth remains, and the collection of eight Gothic Revival cottages, by a known Boston architect, is a significant component of the district, which thus meets criteria A, B, and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

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

The Webster Park Historic District covers a 12-acre area containing 26 properties along Webster Street and Webster Park. The district is the southwest corner of the original 54-acre subdivision known as "Webster Place" laid out in 1844 by the Boston surveyor and landscape architect, Alexander Wadsworth and was the earliest portion to be developed. This level sandy land abutting the railroad tracks of the former Boston & Worcester Railroad is one of the least altered of the early suburban railroad subdivisions built in Newton.

The district takes its name from the small oval park which divides the street known as Webster Park. The park was characteristic of many of the early subdivisions laid out by Alexander Wadsworth and his associates who frequently ornamented their real estate developments with a picturesque oval or other landscape feature. Wadsworth's own Walnut, Waban, and Kenrick parks in Newton Corner were contemporary examples.

### HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain historical importance of area and how the area relates to the development of other areas of the community.

Although West Newton had an 18th-century existence as the location of the West Parish meeting house and the intersection of several major thoroughfares, like its neighbors to the east and west, the village saw its real development with the opening of the Boston & Worcester Railroad in 1834. The railroad allowed easy access to and from the city, a fact quickly recognized by real-estate developers, who began buying up land near the tracks and dividing it into house lots. After the railroad introduced a regular passenger service in 1844, the village grew rapidly. Between 1831 and 1848, West Newton's population more than doubled. Cherry, Webster, and Elm streets were extended from the village center; and on West Newton Hill ("Sylvan Heights" as it was then known), Otis, Chestnut, and Highland streets were laid out (see Area F). By 1848, more than 70 new houses had been built.

The 60-acre subdivision known as Webster Place was among the first of these speculative developments. Its initiator was William J. Porter, a native of Wenham, Massachusetts, who had been investing in Newton real estate as early as 1839. In April 1844 he purchased 65 acres of land in West Newton and within a few months had commissioned the surveyor and landscape architect Alexander Wadsworth (1806-1898) to lay out 83 lots between Webster and Pine streets.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Susan Abele, Thelma Fleishman, "Webster Park Laid out for William Porter by Alexander Wadsworth September 14, 1844." Research notes prepared for the Jackson Homestead. Courtesy of the Authors.
- Friends of the Jackson Homestead, Newton's Older Houses: West Newton. Publication #12 (1978).

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

|                                  |                    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Community:<br>Newton, Mass. MRA  | Form No:<br>Area E |
| Property Name: Webster Park H.D. |                    |

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

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

Architecturally, the district is dominated by eight (originally ten) nearly identical Gothic Revival cottages built along Webster Park and Webster Street. Twin Gothic gables on the facade are a common feature of the unusual designs for these houses, along with a central entrance pavilion, several of which are still capped with an arcaded frieze band. One of the best preserved is 120 Webster Street (c.1848), which retains its Gothic-style labels over the windows. All eight were designed by the Boston architect, Edward Shaw (b. 1784), the author of a popular pattern book, Civic Architecture (1831), widely used by contemporary builders. According to a deed in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds [Book 479:374], John Rollins, a housewright of Boston, was the builder; and Gilbert Patter, also of Boston, agreed to execute all the carpenter's work. Although several of the original Gothic cottages have been altered with modern siding materials, and several have seen changes in their fenestration, the collection is an unusual and significant representation of the Gothic Revival style by a known architect.

Although Shaw's Gothic Revival cottages were the earliest residences built in the district, several earlier structures were subsequently moved into the area. Of these the oldest is the Nathaniel Fuller House at 126-128 Webster Street, a traditional five-bay, center-entry homestead. Nineteenth-century photographs of this house show a wide, double-pile central-hall plan building type with large end chimneys, suggesting an early 19th-century date. The house was moved from Washington Street to this location in the 1890s. Another migrant building is 152 Webster Street, believed to have been Seth Davis's original school, built on the site of the present Davis School on Waltham Street. As a one-room school, the building was said to have provided students with private booths around the room. By an ingenious arrangement of mirrors, the instructor could watch each student individually. The present bellcast Mansard roof was probably added soon after the building was moved to its present location as a residence in the late 1850s. Two pairs of Ionic pilasters mark the original gable-end entrances to the school room.

The remaining thirteen buildings in the district are about equally divided between Italianate, Mansard, and Queen Anne style residences. No. 144 Webster Street (c.1855) is an Italianate structure, three bays wide with a center entrance and twin interior stove chimneys. The three-bay facade and narrow gable end was a popular vernacular house form seen in other parts of Newton as well. Both 125 Webster Street and 69 Webster Park are 2-1/2-story sidehall-plan Italianate houses with characteristic Italianate round-arched windows in the gable end.

The Mansard style is represented by both a small cottage at 80 Webster Park and one of the most elaborate residences in the district, the Harvey Brown House at 153 Webster Street. The 2-1/2-story Brown House, built about 1865, displays a projecting Mansard entrance tower offset on the street facade, and round-arched dormers. The most distinctive feature of this house, which has been sided with asphalt shingles, is the retention of its wrought-iron cresting, which appears on the tower, dormers, and main roof.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Community:                       | Form No: |
| Newton, Mass. MRA                | Area E   |
| Property Name: Webster Park H.D. |          |

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

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

The Thomas Bradley House (115 Webster Street), built in 1900, combines decorative detail and forms associated with the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles. The 2-1/2-story structure balances a polygonal corner tower with a projecting porch beneath an overshot gable roof. Shingled wall surfaces and pedimented end gables add to the well-detailed quality of this substantial residence. The cottage at 92 Webster Park, also displays Queen Anne details, added to an earlier structure from the 1860s. A corner tower, shingled wall surfaces, and a profusion of projecting gable dormers, bays, and balconies give this modest residence a picturesque quality.

The district contains two non-contributing structures built in the first decades of the 20th century. Compatible with their neighbors, the two are defined as non-contributing only by virtue of their post-1907 construction dates.

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

Wadsworth's name frequently appears as a surveyor of mid-century subdivisions in the Boston area. Examples of his work can be found in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville, in addition to Newton. In Newton Corner, Wadsworth was responsible for laying out subdivisions around Waban, Walnut, and Kenrick parks. But probably his most significant contribution to landscape design was as the surveyor of Mount Auburn Cemetery in 1831, although Boston's Jacob Bigelow is credited with the concept of this, the first rural cemetery in the United States. Its distinctive feature, rapidly adopted by other large urban cemeteries and later by the parks movement as a whole, was the achievement of continuously varied, picturesque vistas by allowing roadways and footpaths to follow the natural contours of the ground, winding around hills and ponds as the terrain dictated. However, despite Wadsworth's familiarity with this advanced theory of landscape design, his later residential subdivisions were modest. Like his contemporaries, though he occasionally experimented with a small park as a landscape focus, his plans utilized a right-angle grid of intersecting streets and rectangular lots.

Wadsworth's design for William Porter was no exception. Back-to-back rectangular lots were laid out on either side of a series of parallel side streets. The smallest lots, twelve parcels of 15,000 square feet, were at the eastern end, closest to the commercial center of the village, and the largest at the western end, where Webster Park itself was laid out. Almost all lots had a uniform street frontage of 100 feet, and their area varied according to the distance between streets. The plan ignored the presence of Cheesecake Brook and its substantial wetlands, although lots laid out in this area tended to be larger in size.

It was neither Porter nor Wadsworth, however, who was responsible for the subsequent development of Webster Park. In October 1845, Porter sold an interest in 58 of the lots to Boston housewright John Rollins. Rollins appears to have been responsible for engaging architect Edward Shaw to design the first houses for the property, although it is also possible that

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
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|                                  |                    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
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Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

the designs were taken from Shaw's book, Civic Architecture. Several of these houses were built and traded for services, including lumber, carpentry, and paint. Ashael Wheeler (1817-1901), a paint dealer, was the owner of 120 Webster Street. From the start, a number were owned by non-residents and rented out to tenants. No. 104 Webster Street was owned by Edmund T. Wiswall (1832-1918), a milk dealer on Cross Street, for whom Wiswall Street was named. Wiswall would later make substantial investments in West Newton real estate in the eastern part of the village.

After the construction of Rollins' ten Gothic houses in the late 1840s, construction slowed. West Newton Hill became the more fashionable place to reside, particularly as more and more Boston businessmen began to see the advantage of commuting to homes in West Newton. In the 1860s, the West Newton Land Company laid out a large parcel of hillside land above Lincoln Park (see Area D, Putnam Street Historic District). Opposite the new parsonage for the Second Congregational Church, two Boston bankers constructed houses. With the increased popularity of West Newton, Webster Park received some of the spillover. In the 1860s, Franklin Metcalf (1834-1923), a Boston photographer with an office on Washington Street, moved to 80 Webster Park in the 1860s; and Charles Sweetland, a Boston supplier of shoe trim, built a house next door at 92 Webster Park. Rienzi M. Lindley at 144 Webster Street (1855-65), was a patternmaker at the Boston & Albany Railroad shops in Brighton (now that part of Boston bordering Newton Corner).

Nevertheless, men who worked in West Newton still predominated in the Webster Park area. Harvey Brown, who built 153 Webster Street (c.1865) for himself, was a local grocer. In the 1870s, he constructed the house at 69 Webster Park as a rental property. Lydia Dodge, the local grammar school teacher, was part owner of 125 Webster Street (1860s). George H. Haynes (1835-1923), a local builder, built and lived in successively both the adjoining houses at 102 Webster Park (1885) and 155-157 Webster Street (1888). Haynes was also responsible for earlier houses on Cherry Street and Cherry Place. Thomas Bradley (1844-1926), a mason, was another member of the local building trades. In 1900, he constructed the Queen Anne-style house at 115 Webster Street.

Webster Park's development was primarily a 19th-century phenomenon. Despite the fact that between 1900 and 1940, West Newton's population nearly doubled, little change occurred in the district. Webster Park itself was never extended over Cheesecake Brook to Auburndale Avenue as Wadsworth had intended; today the wetlands are protected as part of the Dolan Pond Conservation Area, and Webster Park has remained a relatively undisturbed, if neglected, cul-de-sac. The village's largest growth occurred in the 1920s, and one residence, 76 Webster Park, was constructed facing the park at that time. By contrast, Webster Street has seen a significant increase in traffic, with the creation of turn-of-the-century subdivisions immediately to the west of Webster Park. Most of the lots on the south side of Webster Street have been subdivided for commercial purposes along Border Street.

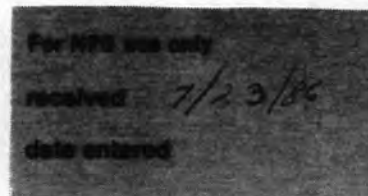
Staple to Inventory form at bottom

Newton, Mass. Multiple Resource Area  
WEBSTER PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

| Address           | S-B-L    | Historic Name          | Date             | Style               | C/NC | Inven. # | Area   |
|-------------------|----------|------------------------|------------------|---------------------|------|----------|--------|
| Webster Park      | 33-21-1  | W E B S T E R P A R K  | 1848             |                     | C    |          | 15,200 |
| 69 Webster Park   | 33-17-16 |                        | 1870s            | Italianate          | C    | 3456     | 24,400 |
| 76 Webster Park   | 33-22-36 |                        | 1925             | Craftsman/Col. Rev. | NC   |          | 49,974 |
| 79 Webster Park   | 33-17-17 |                        | c.1848           | Gothic Revival      | C    | 3455     | 20,550 |
| 80 Webster Park   | 33-22-37 | Franklin Metcalf House | c.1865           | Mansard             | C    | 3457     | 35,521 |
| Webster Park      | 33-22-38 | V A C A N T L O T      |                  |                     | NC   |          | 21,105 |
| 87 Webster Park   | 33-17-18 |                        | 1848             | Gothic Revival      | C    | 3454     | 20,975 |
| 92 Webster Park   | 33-22-39 |                        | 1860s            | Queen Anne cottage  | C    | 3458     | 17,003 |
| 95 Webster Park   | 33-17-19 |                        | 1909             | Arts & Crafts       | NC   |          | 25,546 |
| 102 Webster Park  | 33-22-40 | George Haynes House    | 1885             | Queen Anne          | C    | 3459     | 12,000 |
| 103 Webster Park  | 33-17-20 |                        | 1847             | Gothic Revival      | C    | 3453     | 27,104 |
| 111 Webster Park  | 33-17-21 |                        | 1847             | Gothic Revival      | C    | 3452     | 9,730  |
| 102-4 Webster St. | 33-13-5  |                        | c.1848           | Gothic Revival      | C    | 3530     | 15,675 |
| 110-2 Webster St. | 33-13-4  |                        | c.1847           | Gothic Revival      | C    | 3529     | 15,673 |
| 115 Webster St.   | 33-22-10 | Thomas Bradley House   | 1900             | Queen Anne          | C    | 3468     | 12,100 |
| 120 Webster St.   | 33-13-3  |                        | c.1847           | Gothic Revival      | C    | 3528     | 15,722 |
| 125 Webster St.   | 33-22-9  |                        | 1860s            | Italianate          | C    | 3467     | 14,300 |
| 126-8 Webster St. | 33-13-2  | Nathaniel Fuller House | early 1800s      | vernacular          | C    | 3527     | 10,700 |
| Webster St.       | 33-13-1  | V A C A N T L O T      |                  |                     | NC   |          | 18,150 |
| 133 Webster St.   | 33-22-4  | John Bellamy House     | 1884             | Queen Anne          | C    | 3463     | 11,000 |
| 141 Webster St.   | 33-22-3  |                        | c.1852           | Italianate          | C    | 3462     | 33,000 |
| 144 Webster St.   | 33-14-2  |                        | 1855-65          | Italianate          | C    | 3526     | 10,005 |
| 152 Webster St.   | 33-14-1  | Seth Davis School      | early 19th cent. | Gk. Rev./Mansard    | C    | 3525     | 10,173 |
| 153 Webster St.   | 33-22-2  | Harvey Brown House     | c.1865           | Mansard             | C    | 3461     | 29,768 |
| 155-7 Webster St. | 33-22-1  |                        | 1888             | Queen Anne          | C    | 3460     | 11,913 |
| 166 Webster St.   | 33-15-14 |                        | c.1848           | Gothic Revival      | C    | 3524     | 14,369 |

-----  
26 properties with an area of 501,656 square feet (11.51 acres).

23 buildings (2 non-contributing)  
2 vacant lots  
1 Webster Park

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

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic GroupName Newton MRA  
State Middlesex County, MA

## Nomination/Type of Review

## Date/Signature

11. Newton Lower Falls  
Historic DistrictEntered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

12. Newton Theological Institution  
Historic DistrictEntered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

13. Newton Upper Falls  
Historic DistrictEntered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

14. Newtonville Historic District

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

15. Old Chestnut Hill  
Historic DistrictEntered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

16. Our Lady Help of Christians  
Historic DistrictEntered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

17. Putnam Street Historic  
DistrictEntered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

18. Sumner and Gibbs Streets  
Historic DistrictEntered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

19. Union Street Historic  
DistrictEntered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

20. Webster Park Historic  
DistrictEntered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melores Byers 9/4/86

Attest

86001764

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Webster Park Historic District (Newton MRA)  
Middlesex County  
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. JUL 23 1986  
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/3/87  
Date Due: 8/21/86 - 9/6/86  
Action: ACCEPT 9-4-86  
RETURN  
REJECT  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Entered  
National Register

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

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

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership          | Status     | Present Use |
|----------|--------------------|------------|-------------|
|          | Public Acquisition | Accessible |             |

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- |                                    |                                       |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good      | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair      | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |

Check one

- ☐ unaltered  
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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

## 8. Significance

Period      Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

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

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Form Prepared By

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

## 13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



Newton, Mass. MRA

Webster Park H.D.

Three Gothic cottages along Webster St.  
(L-R) 102, 110, 120 Webster St.



Newton, Mass. MRA

Webster Park H.D.

Webster Park looking North

front to back: <sup>92</sup>  
~~80~~ Webster Park  
80 Webster Park  
76 Webster Park



Newton, Mass. MKA

Webster Park H.D.

Webster St. (foreground) at intersection with Webster Park

155-157 ~~St.~~ Webster St., foreground.

111 Webster Park (rear)



76 Webster Park  
West Newton, Mass 02165

Webster Park MA  
file MRA 52V

May 12, 1986.

RECEIVED

MAY 15 1986

MASS. HIST. COMM.

Dear Mrs. Talmadge:

This letter is in response to your letter of April 18, 1986 concerning the listing of property on Webster Park. Please note: for historic preservation.

The property at 76 Webster Park is <sup>the</sup> property of Irene W. Forté. As sole owner, I object to any listing of my property.

If this information should be in other than your hands, will you please notify me at the above address. Otherwise, I shall consider the matter closed as stated in this letter.  
Sincerely, Irene W. Forté  
Irene W. Forté

May 13, 1986. I witnessed Irene Forte signing

WENDI B. BRIEFER  
NOTARY PUBLIC

Notary Public My Commission Expires  
Sept. 18, 1992

Wendi Briefer