

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

MAY 12 1986
JUN 13 1986

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Exchange Hall

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number Quimby Square (School Street at Main Street)

N/A not for publication

city, town Acton N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts

code 025

county Middlesex

code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture	☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial	☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational	☐ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☒ entertainment	☐ religious
☐ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government	☐ scientific
	☐ N/A being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial	☐ transportation
		☐ no	☐ military	☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Wilbur Jones Tolman

street & number 77 Willow Street

city, town Acton

N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Middlesex South District Courthouse

street & number Cambridge Street

city, town Cambridge

state Massachusetts

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Inventory of the Historic Assets
title of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts #18 has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1973 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission, 80 Boylston Street,

city, town Boston

state Massachusetts

7. Description Exchange Hall, Acton, MA

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Exchange Hall, Acton, dominates Quimby Square in the southern part of this small industrial town 25 miles northwest of Boston. Built in 1860, it is a richly embellished Italianate-style building. The building faces south on a gently sloping site and is surrounded by a mixture of modest residential and commercial buildings whose construction dates vary from the mid 18th century into the 20th century. Most of the older buildings have been substantially altered or are quite neglected. Exchange Hall is set back about 15 feet from School Street to the south and 50 feet from Main Street to the west. Several hundred feet to the south, crossing Fort Pond Brook, run the tracks of the Boston & Maine Railroad.

The overall plan of the building is rectangular, measuring 38 by 70 feet, with porches on its southern and western sides. The building is 3 1/2 stories in height and, due to the slope of the land, the basement is expressed as an additional full story on the south. Its slate-covered pitched roof, with south and north gable ends, is surmounted by a two-stage, hipped-roofed cupola at the south end. The chimney is at the north end of the west slope, and the east slope has a roof hatch leading from the attic. The building is sheathed with clapboards, except for the recessed portion of the south front and the cupola, which are flushboarded. The foundation is original, brick on the exposed south side and elsewhere dressed stone above grade and rubble stone.

The exterior of Exchange Hall displays a thoroughly realized interpretation of the bracketed Italianate style. The cornices at portico, piazza, and roof are composed of scrolled and panelled brackets, each with a turned drop. Corner pilasters, square piers, and columns have recessed, arched-top Italianate panels let into their sides. Window surrounds are plain architraves with crown moldings, except beneath the front portico and west piazza, and in the gables and cupola, where, as around the doors, a simple molded architrave is used.

The front (southern) elevation is a three-bay composition. A balconied portico effect across the full width of the facade is formed by the recessed plane of the basement, first, and second stories crowned by a cornice at the third-story level; its four square piers are linked at first- and second-story levels by turned balustrades. The wall and gable above are defined by panelled pilasters and bracketed cornice returns and barges. The wide central basement door is flanked by a large window at each side. At first-story level, the main entrance, topped by a flat lintel, is set slightly off center. It is flanked by large display bay windows at either side and, at the east corner, the entrance to the hall stairs. The glass-paned central door at the second story is flanked by large, simply enframed 6/6 sash windows. At the center of the third story, a segmental-arched blind window with eared hood is likewise flanked by 6/6 windows, taller than those below, and above it is a

Continued

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Continuation sheet Exchange Hall, Acton, MA

Item number 7

Page 1

round-headed 6/6 window centered in the gable. The two-stage flat-roofed cupola surmounting the gable peak has a louvered round-headed opening on each side of the second stage, which has corner pilasters and bracketed cornice. A segmental cartouche above the third-story windows formerly contained the words "EXCHANGE HALL" in gilded wooden letters, now virtually obliterated. The otherwise blank frieze between the piers at the second-story level at one time had gilded letters naming the goods sold within.

Originally, access to the main entrance was by flights of steps projecting forward from either end of the portico: a straight flight stood at the eastern end, while at the western end, a flight turned to the northwest to follow the line of the piazza. These have been removed, with access now provided by staircases at either end of the portico extending at right angles to the building.

The east and west (side) elevations are both six bays deep and of similar disposition, and framed within panelled pilasters and bracketed roof cornice. The third-story windows are taller than those below, all with 6/6 lights and flat lintels. Extending the length of the west side is a one-story piazza whose southern end curves in a quarter circle to join the portico. This elevation also includes a minor entry at its northwest end (added ca. 1960 and originally a window) and a flight of stairs leading to a two-bay hipped-roof porch and entry (both ca. 1940 additions) on the second story. On the eastern elevation, two bays, on the first and second story, are blind.

The rear, northern elevation is three bays wide, framed by panelled pilasters, bracketed cornice returns, and gable barges. Loading doors are in the center of first and second stories, and a round-headed window is centered in the gable. All windows are 6/6, and identical to those on the side elevations.

The building's interior plan originally consisted of open retail store space on the first and second stories, with adjoining small rooms at the north end (those on the first floor for offices and on the second for sleeping space for the night guards). The third story holds an open hall, also with small adjoining rooms, and includes stairs to the attic at the north. The principal stairway to the hall is at the east side, commencing at the south front of the first story and terminating toward the north end of the third story. The bulk of the interior finish is evidently original. The most notable features occur in the third-story hall: the molded plaster ceiling rosettes (now obscured by a building code-ordered suspended ceiling) and the spring dance floor (the latter installed ca. 1900).

With the exception of the loss of the entrance steps, and the removal of the window blinds, the exterior retains virtually all of its original material.

Continued

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Continuation sheet Exchange Hall, Acton, MA Item number 7

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The most significant external alteration was the addition of the fire escape on the west side, which was consciously planned to be as little disruptive as possible.

Archaeology

While no prehistoric sites are currently recorded on the property, it is possible that sites may be present. One site (19-MD-147) has been reported directly across Fort Pond Brook from the property. In general, however, the potential for significant archaeological remains, either prehistoric or historic, seems low, a result of small lot size, extensive disturbance of the ground surface around the building, and the presence of a full basement.

8. Significance Exchange Hall, Acton, MA

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☒ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800–1899	☒ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☒ other (specify) community development
Specific dates	1860–1904	Builder/Architect	unknown	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Exchange Hall, Acton, retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The building is distinguished for its well-executed Italianate design and is the most elaborate example of this style in Acton. It was constructed in the mid 19th century at the core of Acton's increasingly prosperous commercial district by a group of successful local entrepreneurs. Prominently sited above the railroad line, Exchange Hall served Acton well into the 20th century, playing both a mercantile and social role, and holds direct associations with the town's development. Exchange Hall thus fulfills Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places on the local level.

Exchange Hall was built in South Acton in 1860 to serve a variety of functions, primarily commercial. South Acton, with small milling operations and an ironworks established along Fort Pond Brook, had been a locus of settlement since the earliest years of the 18th century. While the town's village center evolved to the north (the location of the first meetinghouse, demolished, and other institutional buildings), South Acton remained the site for industrial and economic development into the 19th century, spurred by the arrival of the Fitchburg Railroad from Boston in 1844. With a direct link to Boston markets, South Acton's industrial enterprises flourished, and businesses prospered accordingly.

On the eve of the Civil War, South Acton supported a number of thriving businesses, most under the aegis of three men: James Tuttle (1818–1898), his brother Varnum Tuttle (1823–1904), and Elnathan Jones Jr. (1829–1904). The latter was the great-grandson of Samuel Jones, who established a successful tavern and store across the road from the site of the nominated property in 1750 (extant and nominated to the National Register). James Tuttle was Elnathan Jones' brother-in-law, and both men worked in the family store, with Elnathan specializing in fancy goods. James Tuttle had opened a small store in South Acton in 1839; he inherited the tavern and store in 1845, just as South Acton was beginning to enjoy the prosperity accompanying the presence of a rail link to Boston.

As James Tuttle and Company, the trio vastly expanded the existing business, erecting store buildings near the tavern to accommodate the business' various departments. In 1860, at the cost of \$10,000, they financed the construction of Exchange Hall, designed to serve as the focus for the group of shops. They chose as their site a prominent spot at the intersection of Main and School Streets, directly opposite the railroad tracks and only a few feet from the Tavern. The site had previously held the Jones Cooperage, erected ca. 1760. The cooperage was moved to the rear of 34 School Street to the east, just before construction of the hall began. It was subsequently demolished, in

Continued

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Maynard

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UTM References

A 19 298150 4703260
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached assessor's map

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betsy Friedberg, Preservation Planner, Massachusetts Historical Commission, with Robert H. Nylander, Acton Historical Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date February, 1986

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

city or town Boston state Massachusetts

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Valerie A. Talmage

Executive Director
title State Historic Preservation Officer date May 5, 1986

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Allene B. Byrum Entered in the date 6-7-86
National Register
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet Exchange Hall, Acton, MA Item number 8

Page 1

1954. Although the architect for Exchange Hall is unknown, local belief has it that Elnathan Jones Jr., who was interested in architecture, may have been involved in the building's design.

While serving as the visual focal point for the group of business, Exchange Hall was also designed to provide retail and storage space for dry goods and clothing as well as display areas for the furniture and home furnishings departments for which Elnathan Jones had responsibility. Together, the buildings of the James Tuttle and Company enterprise, with Exchange Hall as the fulcrum, served as a forerunner of the modern department store. From ca. 1860 to ca. 1900, the company was one of the most extensive of its kind to serve Massachusetts' smaller industrial towns.

In addition to its commercial space, Exchange Hall also provided room for community functions. The hall on the third floor served as the meeting place for the South Acton Universalist Church--South Acton's first religious society--from ca. 1860 to 1878 (at which time they built their own Stick Style building nearby) and was later used for a wide range of public functions, including dances, concerts, lectures, political caucuses, conventions, and theatrical and vaudeville productions. The third-floor spring dance floor is one of only a few remaining in New England. It is still used occasionally for dances. Among those who spoke in Exchange Hall during its heyday were Henry David Thoreau (ca. 1865) and Henry Ward Beecher (ca. 1875).

In 1867, the Tuttle Company admitted a new partner, Jonathan K. Wetherbee. A well-known Acton citizen, Wetherbee served as town treasurer for 31 years and postmaster for 15. As Tuttle, Jones and Wetherbee Co., the partnership endured until James Tuttle's death in 1898. The entire property was then divided, with Elnathan Jones taking title to Exchange Hall. Mr. Jones continued the dry goods and furniture business until his death in 1904, after which, until 1933, it was operated by the firm of Finney and Hoit. From 1933 to 1950, when the business was finally closed, it was carried on under the name of South Acton Department Store by Jones' grandson-in-law, Otis J. Reed. The South Acton branch of the Acton Memorial Library was located in the upper floors of the building for a part of the latter period. It is currently occupied by a number of small businesses.

Exchange Hall is the most richly delineated interpretation of the bracketed Italianate style in Acton; other local buildings of its type and period are more restrained in their use of the decorative vocabulary of the style (for example, Acton Town Hall, 1863 [NR 1983]), use few of its elements, or are utilitarian in detail (such as the now-altered Tuttle, Jones and Wetherbee

Continued

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Continuation sheet Exchange Hall, Acton, MA Item number 8

Page 2

Grocery Store, 5-7 School Street, 1866). In its exuberant architectural detail, the building illustrates the use of a popular and significant style in American architecture of the mid-19th century. In its siting overlooking Quimby Square (originally South Acton Square) and the tracks of the Fitchburg railroad, the building reflects an emerging awareness, in a rural community, of the use of architecture as an element in community planning, as well as the prosperity and optimism of an age directly related to the success of the railroad.

The primary period of significance of Exchange Hall runs from 1860, when the building was first constructed, to 1904, when the last of its original proprietors died. The building continued to be significant to South Acton's commercial livelihood through 1950, when the business closed.

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Continuation sheet Exchange Hall, Acton, MA Item number 9

Page 1

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Fletcher, James, Acton in History (Philadelphia and Boston: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1890).

Phalen, Harold R., History of Acton (n.p.: 1954)

"South Acton in 1840" (n.p;n.d. [c. 1880]).

"The Past and Present of a Notable Firm in South Acton" (n.p.: 1885)

Iron Work Farm in Acton, Inc. Files: Title and reference notebooks, Vol. 1

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Exchange Hall
Middlesex County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. MAY 12 1986
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/3/87
Date Due: 6/13/86 - 6/26/86
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 6-13-86
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

Entered in ~~NPS~~
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		Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☐ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☐ altered	☐ moved date _____
☐ fair	☐ unexposed		

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: _____



EXCHANGE HALL
Quimby Square
School St. at Main St.
S. Acton, Mass. 01720

Wm. A. Klauer, photog.
March 1984

Neg. filed with Acton
Historical Commission,
Acton Town Hall, 01720

Photo #1 of 4
Front (south) facade and
west side.



EXCHANGE HALL
Quimby Square
School St. at Main St.
S. Acton, 01720

Wm. A. Klauer, photog.
March 1984
Neg. filed with Acton
Historical Commission,
Acton Town Hall, 01720

Photo #2 of 4
West side.



EXCHANGE HALL
Quimby Square
School St. at Main St.
S. Acton, Mass. 01720

Wm. A. Klauer, Photog.
May 1984
Neg. filed with Acton
Historical Commission,
Acton Town Hall, 01720

Photo #3 of 4
Rear (north) of building.



EXCHANGE HALL
Quimby Square
School St. at Main St.
S. Acton, Mass. 01720

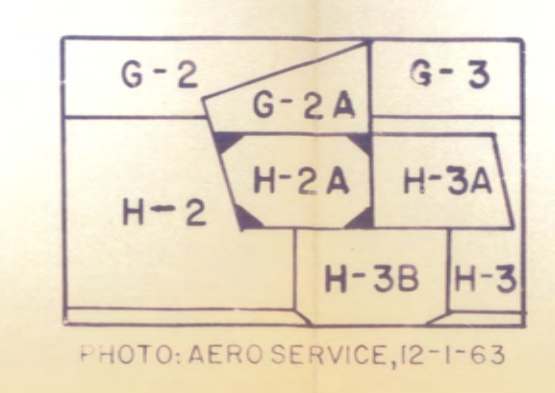
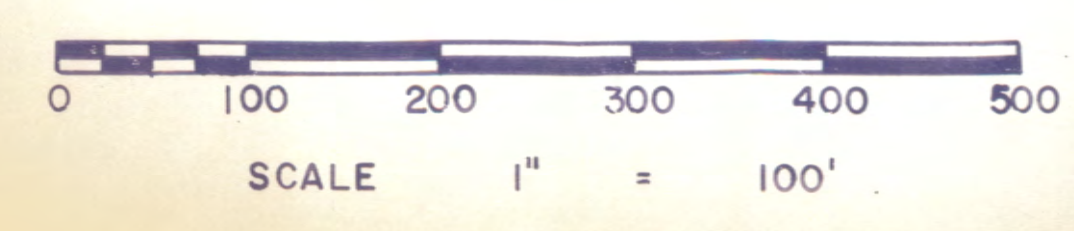
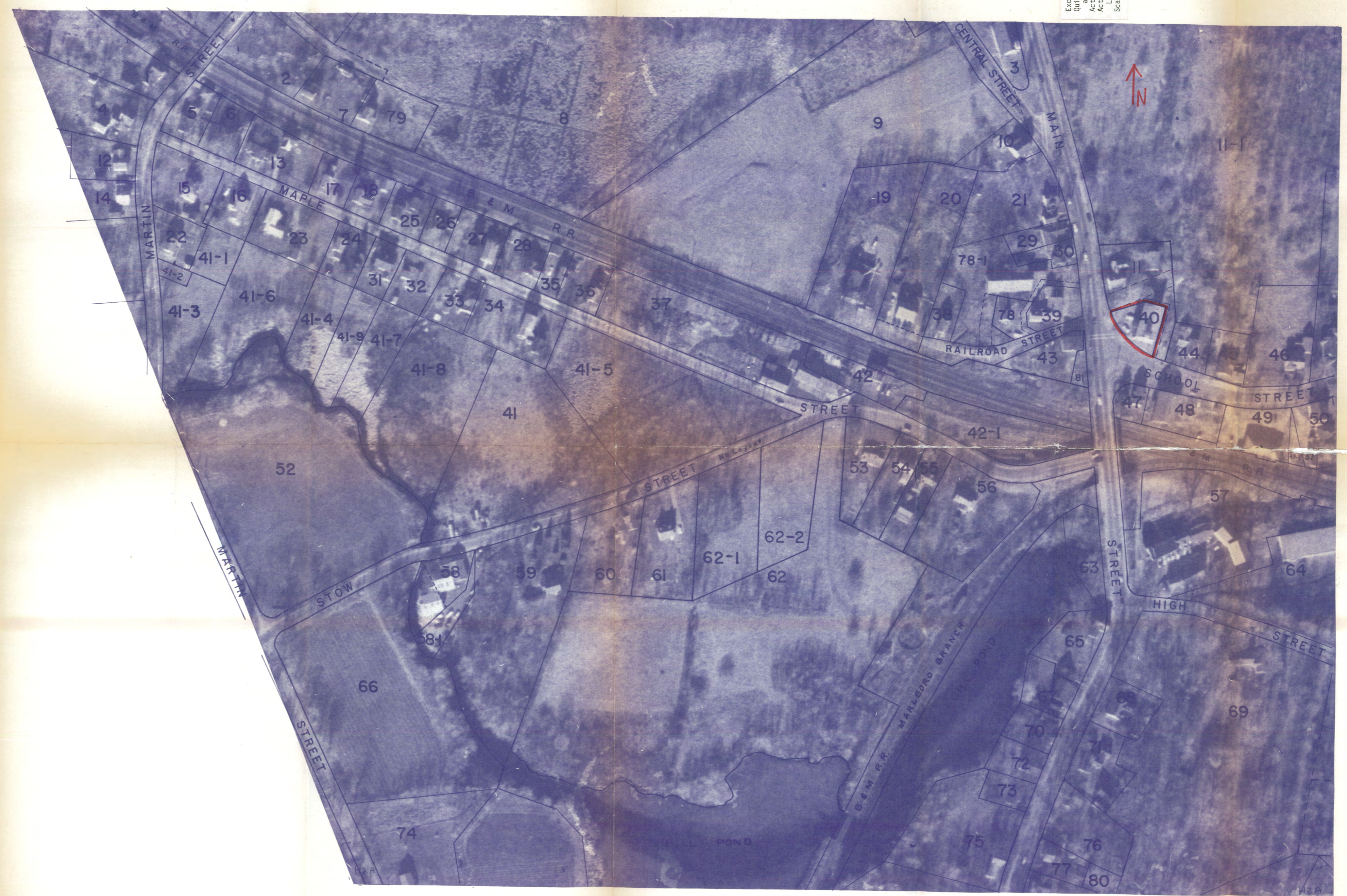
Wm. A. Klauer, Photog.
May 1984

Neg. filed with Acton
Historical Commission,
Acton Town Hall, 01720

Photo #4 of 4
East side.

Exchange Hall
Quimby Square (School Street
at Main Street)
Acton, MA
Acton Assessors Map, Map H-2A
Scale: 1" = 100'

H-2A

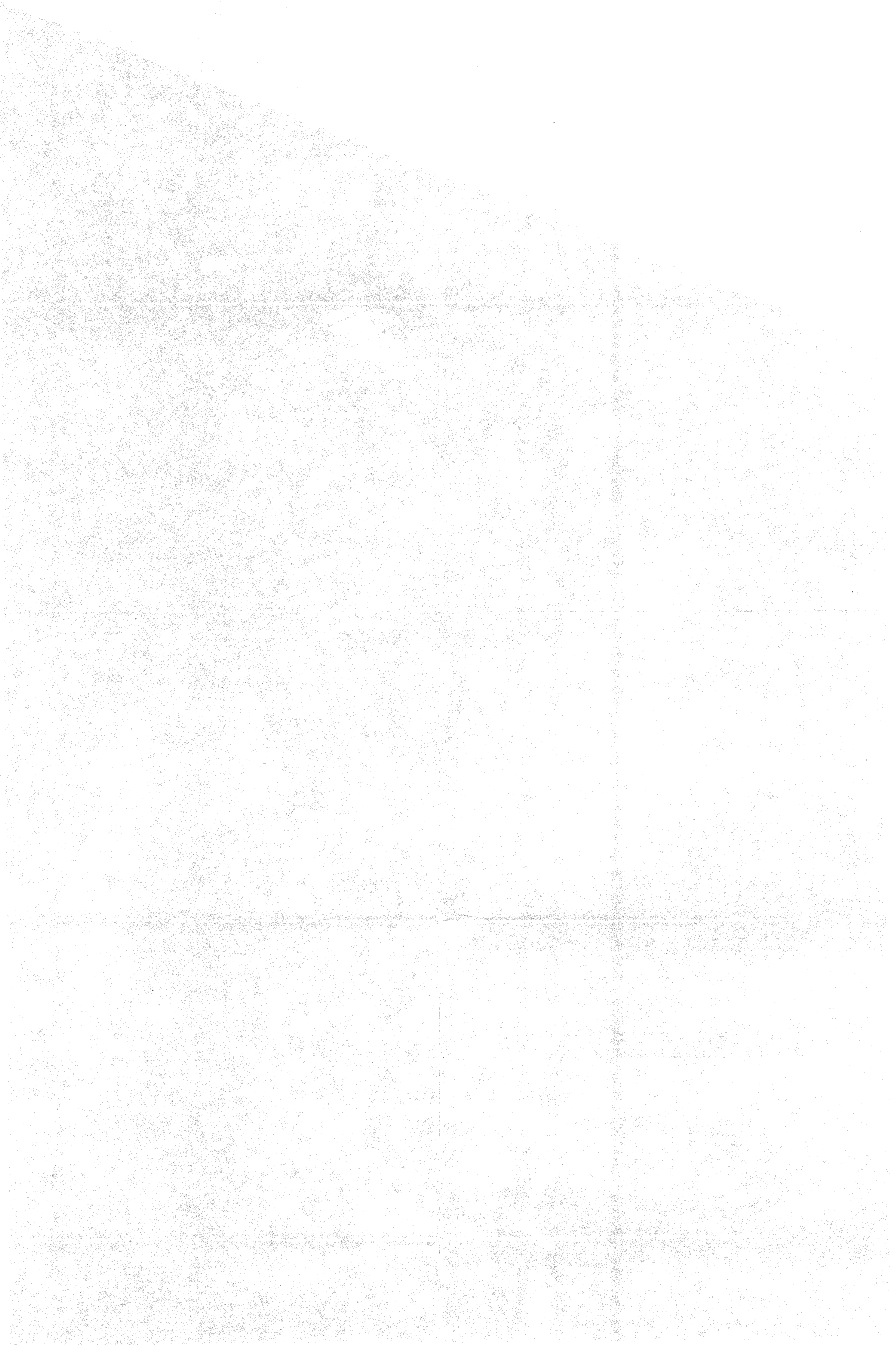


TOWN of ACTON

H-2A

Exchange Hall, School st at Main st., South Acton:
lot 40

RECEIVED
MAY 20 1964
WAGE RATE COM. DIV.



RECEIVED

MAY 30 1984

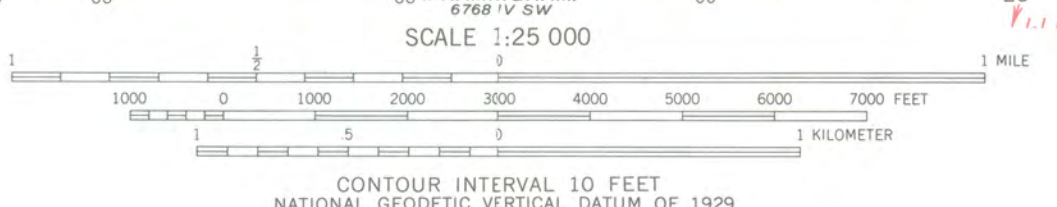
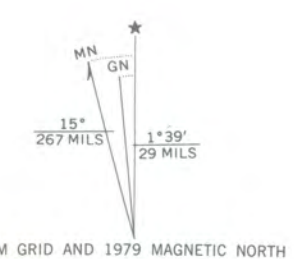
MASS. HIST. COMM.

Exchange Hall

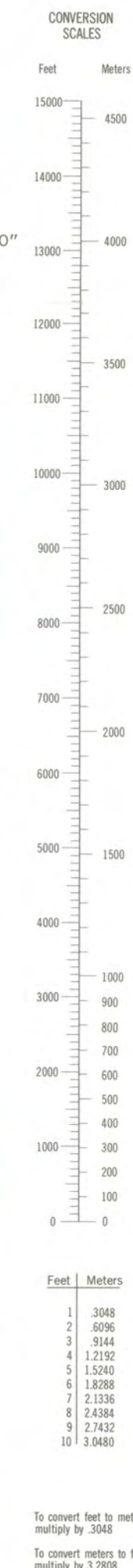


Exchange Hall
Quimby Square (School Street
at Main Street)
Acton, MA
USGS Quad: Maynard, MA
Scale: 1:25,000
UTM: 19/298150/4703260

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1941. Revised 1965
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map
Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with
State of Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1977 and
other source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
State Route



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

MAYNARD, MASS.
N4222.5-W7122.5/7.5
1965
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6768 IV NW-SERIES V814



P093545988

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of the Secretary of State
Michael Joseph Connolly, Secretary

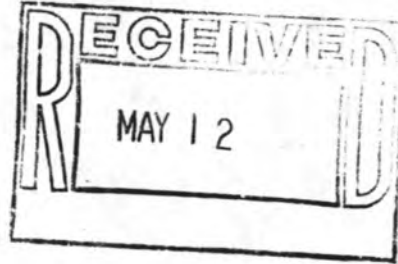
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Valerie A. Talmage

Executive Director

State Historic Preservation Officer

May 5, 1986



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

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

✓ Acton, EXCHANGE HALL,
Quimby Hall (School Street at Main Street).

Acton, JONES TAVERN
128 South Main Street.

All have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination forms.

Sincerely,

Sarah J. Zimmerman
Director, Preservation Planning
Massachusetts Historical Commission

SJZ/lis