

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

~~(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)~~

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC American Antiquarian Society

AND/OR COMMON

American Antiquarian Society

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 185 Salisbury Street

CITY, TOWN

Worcester

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE

025

COUNTY

Worcester

CODE

027

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME American Antiquarian Society

STREET & NUMBER

185 Salisbury Street

CITY, TOWN

Worcester 01609

VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Worcester Registry of Deeds, Worcester District

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Worcester 01608

STATE

Massachusetts

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

NONE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The American Antiquarian Society occupies a 1.80 acre site on the south side of Salisbury Street (number 185, between Park Avenue and Regent Street) in a section of Worcester, Massachusetts, devoted primarily to residential buildings and other educational institutions.

Construction of the Society's present building, its third home, was made possible by a bequest of \$200,000 from Stephen Salisbury, a prominent Worcester businessman and landowner. The building site was acquired from the Worcester Art Museum (to whom it had been bequeathed by Salisbury). The Antiquarian Society retained two Boston architectural firms--R. Clipton Sturgis and Winslow, Bigelow & Wadsworth--to prepare competing plans for its new building. The Winslow firm's plans were selected, but Sturgis was engaged to supervise construction. The building was begun in October 1909, and completed late in 1910.

The Antiquarian Society building is a 2-story Georgian Revival structure, brick with marble trim, on a low, granite block foundation. Its octagonal mass, which projects one bay on the northeast (front), southeast, and northwest elevations, culminates in a low dome on an octagonal base; a stack wing, roughly square in shape, is attached to the southwest elevation. The marble cornice and frieze which surrounds the building at roof level is repeated on the base of the dome. The tetrastyle Doric portico which covers the main entrance carries a full entablature with triglyphs and a triangular pediment. The doorway itself is flanked by Doric pilasters and repeats the entablature and pediment of the portico on a smaller scale. Windows are 12/12 double-hung sash with keystone marble lintels. Marble panels with carved garlands are set into the brick between the first and second floor windows on the southeast and northwest elevations.

At the center of the octagonal mass is a 2-story octagonal reading room open to the dome; it is surrounded by alternating hexagonal office or exhibit spaces and open passageways on the first floor, by hexagonal exhibit spaces and galleries at the second. The southeast and northwest bays contain smaller reading rooms on the first floor, a meeting room and work area on the second. The northeast (front) bay contains the entrance hall, coat rooms, and a half-turn marble staircase.

Alterations to the original portion of the building have been few and minor. The most noticeable of them was made in 1924 when the marble dome was covered with copper to prevent leakage. Additions made at the rear of the building in 1924 and 1950 have tripled its original stack capacity; both repeat the material and detailing of the 1910 structure. A basement-level addition, containing administrative offices and engineering facilities, was erected in 1972 at the rear of the northwest side of the building. Though constructed of concrete, it does not detract from the older portions of the building; only its roof projects above ground-level and that has been treated as a lawn terrace.

(Note: National Landmark Boundaries appear on the rear of the form)

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES      1812; 1910      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Winslow, Bigelow & Wadsworth

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The American Antiquarian Society, founded in 1812, is the third oldest historical society in the United States (only the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1790, and the New York Historical Society, 1804, have a longer history), and the first to be national rather than regional in its purpose and in the scope of its collections. It is the age and the extent of those collections which constitute the basis of the national significance of the Society. With holdings numbering close to three million books, pamphlets, broadsides, manuscripts, prints, maps and newspapers, this library preserves the largest single collection of printed source material relating to the history, literature and culture of the first 250 years of what is now the United States. The Society specializes in the American period to 1877 and holds two-thirds of the total pieces known to have been printed in this country between 1640 and 1821, as well as the most useful source materials and reference works printed since that period. Its files of 18th and 19th century newspapers, numbering two million issues, are the finest in the world.

The Society's third and present home in Worcester, Massachusetts, is a Georgian Revival building erected in 1909-1910 (the earlier buildings, also in Worcester, are no longer extant). A research institution rather than a reading library, the Society restricts the use of its facilities to the adult public; its operating hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday (closed on legal holidays).

### Historical Background

Isaiah Thomas, the founder of the American Antiquarian Society, was born in 1749 to a family so poor that at the age of six he was taken from his mother by the Overseers of the Poor of Boston and apprenticed to a printer. During the genesis of the American Revolution, Thomas's sympathies were with the popular faction. He made his newspaper, The Massachusetts Spy, the voice of the Whig party. The paper was distributed from Quebec to Savannah by the couriers of the Committees of Correspondence and, as much as any other one factor, it served to unify the resistance movement in the thirteen colonies. Three nights prior to the Battle of Lexington and Concord, Thomas smuggled his printing press out of Boston and set it up in Worcester. Thomas became the leading printer, editor, publisher and bookseller in the United States after the war. The editions which he published were the best in every field, and were marketed through interlocking partnerships which covered the new nation.

In 1802, Thomas retired and turned his attention to the preservation of the recorded origins and growth of the nation which he had helped to make. Believing that the answers to the problems of history lie in the lives and thoughts of common men, one

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"American Antiquarian Society," pamphlet, n.p., n.d.

Brigham, Clarence S. Fifty Years of Collecting Americana for the American Antiquarian Society, 1908-1958 (Barre, Massachusetts, 1958).

Shipton, Clifford K. "The American Antiquarian Society," William and Mary Quarterly (second issue, 1945).

Isaiah Thomas, Printer, Patriot and Philanthropist (New York, 1948).

Whitehill, Walter M. Independent Historical Societies (Boston, 1962).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY C. 1.80

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 268220 4684180

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B         

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D         

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark (shown in red on the attached topographical plan): beginning at the intersection of the southern curbline of Salisbury Street and the western curbline of Park Avenue; thence, along said western curbline to its intersection with the northern line of property now or formerly owned by Edward J. Croce; thence, along said northern line to its intersection with the eastern curbline of Regent Street; thence, along the curving line formed by the eastern curbline of Regent Street and the southern curbline of Salisbury Street to

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

the point of beginning.

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by John D. McDermott, Historian, 7/31/68

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, NPS

DATE

1/11/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, 20240

STATE

District of Columbia

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

N/A National Historic Landmark

Designated: 11/24/02 date

TITLE

DATE

Cornelius Heine 9-17-75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Checked by:    date

Arch. Survey

DATE

Boundary Identified:

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

   9/25/75

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Director, OHP date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

American Antiquarian Society

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

of his first steps was to make the rounds of newspapers of Revolutionary days to buy up their office files. In his search for material he one day went into the largest music store in Boston and bought one copy of every ballad on its shelves (the cornerstone of the American Antiquarian Society's present extensive collection of early American music).

The task of preserving these sources of history for the American people was far more than one man could accomplish. With a group of like-minded men, Thomas founded the American Antiquarian Society, incorporated by the Massachusetts Legislature on October 24, 1812. At the Society's first meeting, held on November 19 at the Exchange Coffee House in Boston, Thomas was elected its president, a position he held until his death in 1831. Worcester was chosen as the Society's permanent home because it was an inland town, safe from attack by the British fleet (then raiding the American coast in the War of 1812).

Thomas presented the newly formed Society with his library of 8,000 volumes and an endowment of \$20,000, a substantial sum for the period. At first Thomas kept the holdings of the Society in his own home, but in 1817 he offered to contribute the site, 150,000 bricks, and \$2,000 toward the construction of a suitable building to house them. This first building was completed in 1820 and was replaced by the Society's second headquarters in 1853.

During its early years, the Antiquarian Society played an important role in furthering the study of American anthropology. It maintained an anthropological museum and made a concerted effort to collect American Indian material. In 1830, the Society published a volume on prehistoric remains in the western United States, followed six years later by Albert Gallatin's classic account of the Indian tribes of North America. Later, the Society was active in such fields as Central American archaeology, but the growth of anthropology and related sciences at the Smithsonian Institution and like organizations made it obvious that more could be accomplished by specialization than by duplication of effort. The Society, therefore, abandoned active anthropological work and broke up its museum; between 1886 and 1895, the archaeological and ethnological collections were transferred to Harvard's Peabody Museum.

A new era in the history of the Antiquarian Society began with the appointment of Clarence S. Brigham as Librarian in 1908 and the construction of its present building, specifically designed as a research library, in 1909-1910. In the years that immediately followed, existing collections of genealogy, local history, psalmody, early school books, United States documents, and almanacs were notably increased. Under Brigham's leadership, the Society established or built to major dimensions collections of American literature, maps, book catalogues, song books, sheet music, lithography, bookplates, colonial currency, cookbooks, railroad material, and western narratives. In such minor and ephemeral fields as valentines, stereoscopic views, miniature books, watch papers, and watermarked papers, the Society assembled collections that have, in some cases, proved to be unequalled.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

American Antiquarian Society  
CONTINUATION SHEET

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)  
ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

3

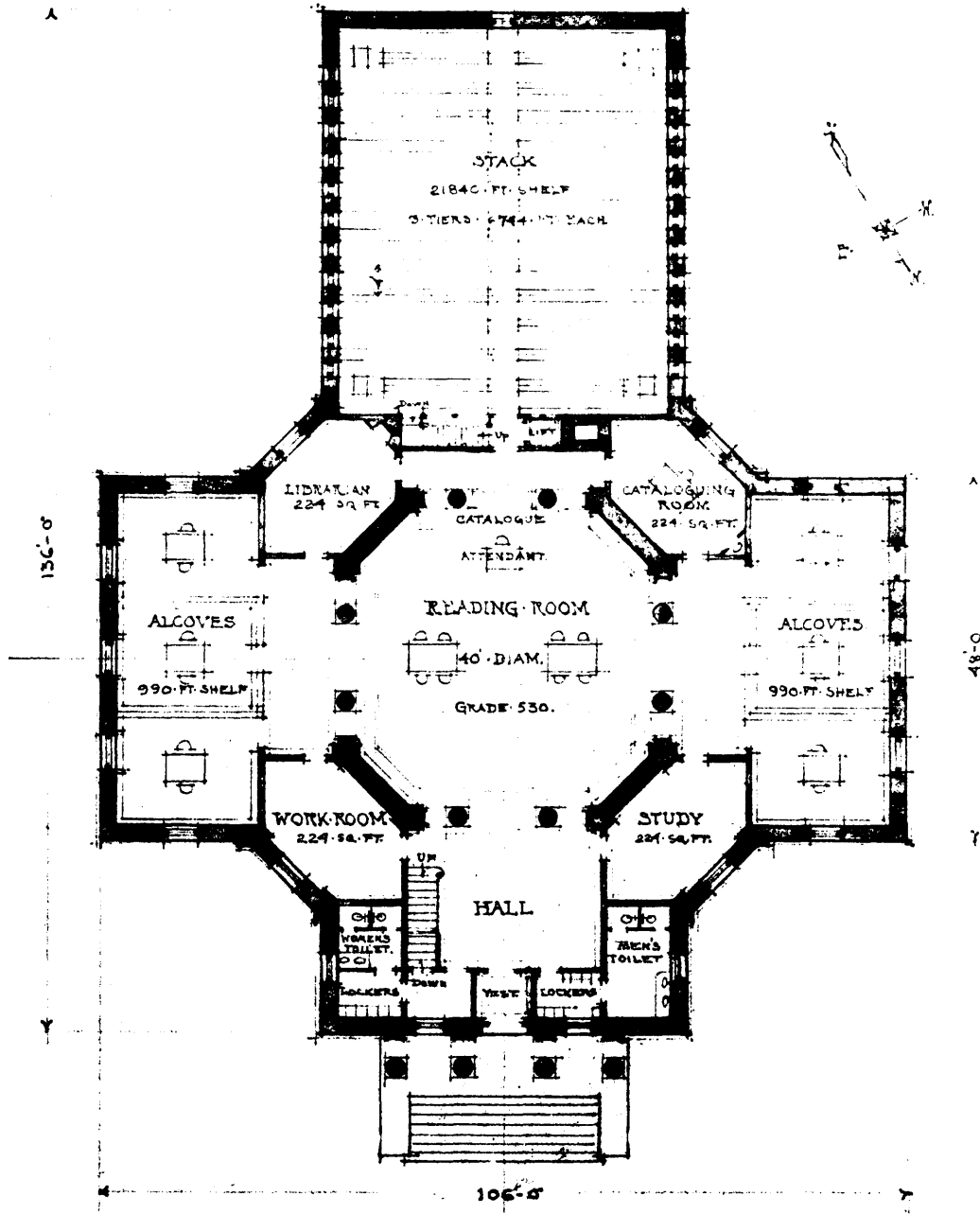
With current holdings of nearly three million items, dealing primarily with the American period to 1877, the Antiquarian Society ranks as the preeminent institution of its kind. In addition, the Society has made significant contributions to the advancement of bibliographical knowledge. For example, in 1927 it sponsored and published the History and Bibliography of American Newspapers 1690-1820 by Clarence Brigham, which has become the standard work on that subject. More recently, under Librarian Clifford K. Shipton, the Society initiated its Early American Imprints project, a microfilm edition which will eventually include every book, pamphlet, and broadside printed in what is now the United States between 1640 and 1820; to date, full texts of over 75,000 titles have been copied.

The American Antiquarian Society has numbered among its members twelve presidents of the United States and hundreds of other distinguished men, including Thomas Hart Benton, Lewis Cass, Henry Clay, DeWitt Clinton, Robert Fulton, Albert Gallatin, John Jay and Daniel Webster. Calvin Coolidge was president of the Society at the time of his death in 1933. Membership is by election and is open to 300 persons who come from all parts of the nation; members are chosen for their interest in the advancement of historical research and it is they who support the work of the Society.

· BUILDING · FOR · THE · AMERICAN · ANTIQUARIAN · SOCIETY ·  
 · WORCESTER · MASSACHUSETTS ·

R CLIPSTON · STURGIS  
 WINSLOW & BIGELOW

ARCHITECTS  
 BOSTON · MASS.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

· 977 · SQ. FT. NOT INCLUDING PORCHES ·