

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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

For HCRS use only

received SEP 10 1980

date entered NOV 10 1980

## 1. Name

historic Oak Square School (use for publication)

and/or common Same

## 2. Location

street & number 35 Nonantum Street \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Boston (Brighton) \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district Eighth

state Massachusetts code 025 county Suffolk code 025

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name City of Boston School Department

street & number 26 Court Street

city, town Boston \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Massachusetts

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Suffolk County Registry of Deeds

street & number Pemberton Square

city, town Boston \_\_\_\_\_ state Massachusetts

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of the Historic Assets \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible?  yes \_\_\_\_\_ no  
of the Commonwealth of Mass.

date July 1978 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston, 02108 \_\_\_\_\_ state Mass.

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" 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 Oak Square School is situated between Nonantum and Tremont Street at the foot of Nonantum Hill in the Oak Square section of the Brighton Neighborhood of Boston. The primary facade faces Nonantum (east), a residential street of modest 20th century Colonial Revival one-and two-family houses and three-deckers typical of much of the surrounding western Brighton area.

The Oak Square School was built in 1894 as a two-room schoolhouse in the popular Colonial Revival style and was enlarged in 1923 with a two-room rear addition to form the present T-shape. The school is located on a sparsely landscaped irregularly shaped lot which slopes gradually towards Oak Square. The property is surrounded by a simple cast iron fence and is largely asphalted for use as a playground. The building is set back forty feet from Nonantum Street, with rear addition and playground facing Tremont Street.

The original rectangular block, a one-story frame, clapboarded structure, painted yellow, is set on a stone foundation which varies in height from two to six feet to accommodate the building to its sloping site. The 9 to 3 bay main block measures 90 feet by 23 feet and is 35 feet high from base to slate ridge-hipped roof.

Windows in the main block are fitted with nine-over-nine sash and accented by paneled, capped lintels; small square basement windows correspond in placement to the windows in the main elevation. On the short sides, two windows have been converted to emergency exits with metal stairways leading to the ground. The block is further defined by corner boards, a water table between clapboards and stone foundation, and a modillion cornice.

The 1923 addition is connected to the main block by a narrow, one-bay pavillion. The five by eight bay addition measures 30 feet by 37 feet and rests on a gray-painted concrete foundation which varies in height from six to twelve feet. A pair of rear doors is reached by high metal stairways. The flat roofed addition is finished at the top with a simple cornice and paneled parapet. Use of clapboards, along with the same water table and corner board treatment, make the addition compatible with the main block despite a difference in height between the main block, where classroom ceiling height is 17½ feet, and the addition, where classroom ceiling height is 12 feet.

The balanced, classical design has as its focus a central portico supported by four sturdy Tuscan columns and reached by a broad flight of steps. Detailing on the triangular pediment is correct but restrained: an unadorned three-part entablature, row of dentils, modillion block cornice and oculus window accented by four wooden keystones.

The architect of the Oak Square School, Edmund March Wheelwright, referred to the building as "Old Colonial" in style, and references to the Georgian period are clearly evident in the doorway, with its semi-circular leaded glass fanlight and sidelights, as well as the oval leaded glass windows with keystone architraves which flank the entrance. The original two-leaved wooden door is presently covered with metal sheathing, and leaded glass in the sidelights has been replaced with plywood, but otherwise detailing is intact. A central emphasis is further enhanced by four Tuscan pilasters positioned behind the four portico columns.

The crowning feature of the schoolhouse -- an octagonal cupola fitted with buvers and topped with a copper polygonal cap -- gives the building its distinctive silhouette and increases the central focus and 18th century feeling of the structure. Behind the cupola, a large chimney connects to the building's incinerator system.

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input 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 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** 1894; 1923

**Builder/Architect** Edmund March Wheelwright

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Oak Square School retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials and workmanship. It is significant as one of the last and most elaborate examples of a now obsolete building type -- the small, 19th century wood frame suburban schoolhouse -- and as a representative example of the work of Edmund March Wheelwright, prominent Boston architect who is said to have set a new standard of excellence in American municipal architecture.

The two-room schoolhouse, completed in 1894, was the smallest of only three wooden primary schools built by Wheelwright during his four-year term as Boston City Architect, from 1891 to 1895. The trend toward larger masonry school buildings made the Oak Square School one of the last examples of a building type that was becoming obsolete in city school systems by the turn of the century. By the first decade of the 20th century, it was city policy to build all schools of common brick.

Edmund March Wheelwright (1854-1912) studied architecture at M.I.T. and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and worked for the firms of Peabody & Stearns and McKim, Mead & White before beginning practice in Boston in 1885. As City Architect from 1891 to 1895, Wheelwright designed numerous public schools, hospitals, fire houses and police stations, all maintaining a high standard of design and construction. Remaining works from this period include two other Brighton buildings, the Police Station (1893) and the Brighton High School, now Taft Junior High (1894), as well as the Park Street subway entrance (NHL), Bowdoin School (recently rehabilitated for housing), and Fire Department Headquarters (currently being remodeled for use by the Pine Street Inn). After resuming practice under the firm name of Wheelwright & Haven, he prepared plans for noted Boston public buildings including Horticultural Hall (1900) (NR), the New England Conservatory of Music (1903) (NR), Jordan Hall, the Massachusetts Historical Society (NR), and the Longfellow Bridge, as well as serving as consulting architect for the new Museum of Fine Arts on Huntington Avenue. Because of his nationwide reputation as a designer of municipal buildings, he was often consulted by officials of other states on the design of public buildings.

The 1894 schoolhouse is the third to occupy a site in the Oak Square area. The first two buildings stood in the center of the Square under the massive white oaks for which the Square is named. A sketch of what may have been the first schoolhouse shows a wooden Federal structure; the second schoolhouse, in the Italianate style, was built in 1855 and remained in use for the next 39 years. In 1892, the Boston School Committee requested a \$12,000 appropriation for the removal of the school to a new and presumably less restricted and congested site. A new lot was purchased for \$6,000, but at the recommendation of the City Architect, it was decided to obtain a small additional appropriation and erect a new, "suitable and modern" building. The Italianate schoolhouse was eventually moved nearby to 16 Bigelow Street, where it was converted to a multi-family dwelling and remains today.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Annual Reports of the School Committee of the City of Boston (Boston), for the years 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1897, 1898.
- Hamlin, A.D.F., Modern School Houses: Being a Series of Authoritative Articles on Planning, Sanitation, Heating and Ventilation. New York, 1910.

## 10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Newton

Quadrangle scale 1:25000

UMT References

A 

1	0	3	2	1	3	2	0	4	6	9	0	6	1	8	0
Zone				Easting				Northing							

C 

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E 

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G 

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B 

Zone				Easting				Northing							

D 

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F 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Please refer to the attached map.

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

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Candace Jenkins, National Register Coordinator Jonathan Malone, Boston Landmarks Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date December 1979

street & number 294 Washington 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  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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Patricia L. Wealowski 8/19/80

title Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission date

For HCERS use only

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

Patricia L. Wealowski  
Keeper of the National Register

date 11/10/80

Attest: Patricia L. Wealowski  
Chief of Registration

date 11/6/80

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

SEP 10 1980

DATE ENTERED

NOV. 10 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8, 9 PAGE 2

Although the Oak Square School is one of the smallest remaining Wheelwright buildings, it embodies all the principles of school design and construction practiced by Wheelwright and advocated in his book School Architecture, published in 1901. The design, described by Wheelwright as "Old Colonial," exemplifies his preference for a classical, balanced arrangement of rooms as more economical in planning than "a picturesque and irregular disposition." Wheelwright held that the key to good design was in mass, proportion, placement of windows, and judicious use of architectural details. In an era when school systems were rapidly expanding and money for new facilities was a constant problem, Wheelwright insisted on quality construction methods and the budgeting of a small percentage of costs for ornament to lift the building above the level of the purely functional. His design for the Oak Square school can thus be viewed as a continuation of the 19th century tradition which held that a beautiful school was a factor in the education of the young, a tradition which was forced to give way to considerations of economy.

In his book on Modern School Houses, written in 1910, A.D.F. Hamlin mentions the influence of Wheelwright on the design of school buildings, noting that "the last fifteen years have witnessed a great advance in the average quality of American school buildings, and that in the larger cities, and notably in Boston, New York, Chicago and St. Louis, a very high standard of design and construction has been set and maintained by such men as E.M. Wheelwright...." Architectural historian Charles Eliot Norton also praised Wheelwright because he "made the beauty of his buildings reside in their proportions, and in the lines and arrangements of their doors and windows; he has the sense to discard superfluous ornament... which another man might have been tempted to add."

9) Bibliography continued

3. Wheelwright, Edmund March. School Architecture, a General Treatise for the Use of Architects and Others, Boston, 1901.
4. Withey, Henry. F. & Elsie R. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased); Los Angeles, 1956.



OAK SQUARE  
16,607

OAK SQUARE  
EL. SCHOOL

WASHINGTON  
STREET

CHAMPNEY  
STREET

BIGELOW  
STREET

WASHINGTON  
STREET

WALL  
STREET

TOP  
STREET

REMONT  
STREET

NONANTUM  
STREET

WASHINGTON  
STREET

AVENUE

LANGLEY  
ROAD

BRECK  
AVENUE

NONANTUM  
STREET

NORTH  
CRESCENT  
STREET

Oak Square School  
35 Nonantum St., Boston, MA  
Scale: 1" = 100'  
UTM References:  
19/321320/4690680



SEP 10 1980

SEP 1 0 1980

NOV 10 1980

Property

*Oak Square School*

*DOE 11/10/80*

State

*MA, Suffolk*

Working Number

*9/10/80/2267*

**TECHNICAL**

**CONTROL**

Photos

2

Maps

1

*This building is significant for the quality of its architecture, as a rare surviving example of a once common building type, and for its association with the prominent architect E. M. Wheelwright. Built in 1897 this one story frame building is a good example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture. It is the last and most elaborate example of the small 19th cent. wood frame public school buildings in Boston - by turn of the century public schools were constructed in brick*

**HISTORIAN**

*accept Patrick Andrus 11/4/80*

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

**ARCHEOLOGIST**

**OTHER**

**HAER**

Inventory \_\_\_\_\_

Review \_\_\_\_\_

**REVIEW UNIT CHIEF**

**BRANCH CHIEF**

**KEEPER**

National Register Write-up \_\_\_\_\_

Send-back \_\_\_\_\_

Entered *NOV 16 1980*

Federal Register Entry 2-2-82

Re-submit \_\_\_\_\_



OAK SQUARE SCHOOL  
Boston, Suffolk <sup>County</sup> Ct., MASS.  
Richard Shaklik, photographer  
Boston Landmarks Commission  
7/77; view of facade from  
south SEP 10 1980 1/2

Photo #1 of 2 NOV 10 1980



OAK SQUARE SCHOOL  
Boston, Suffolk <sup>County</sup> SEP 10 1980  
Richard Shaklik, photographer  
Boston Landmarks Commission  
July, '77. view of rear from  
northwest 2/2

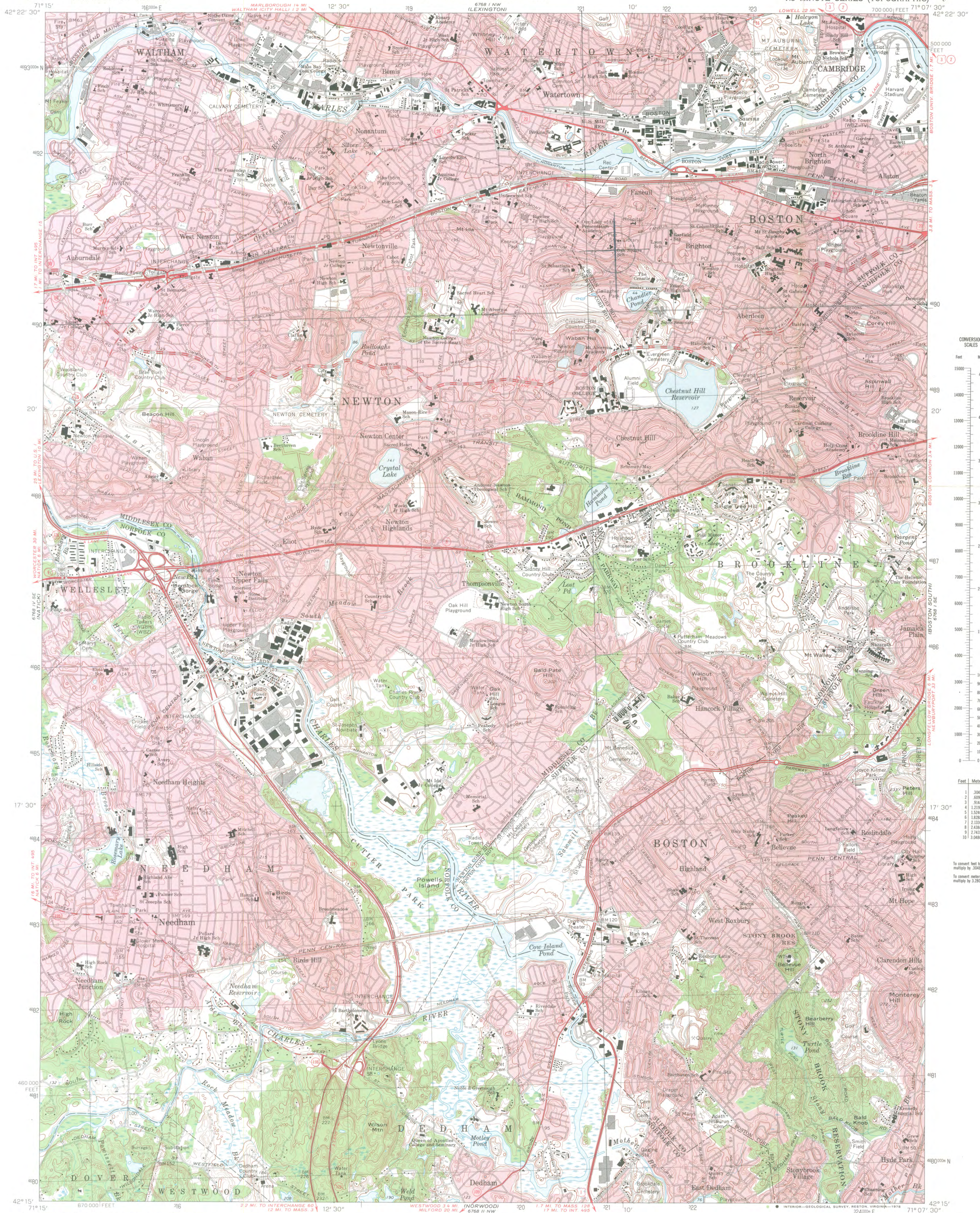
PHOTO #2 OF 2 NOV 10 1980

OAK SQUARE SCHOOL  
 35 Nonantum St., Boston, MA  
 Scale: 1"=25,000'  
 UTM References:  
 19/321320/4690680

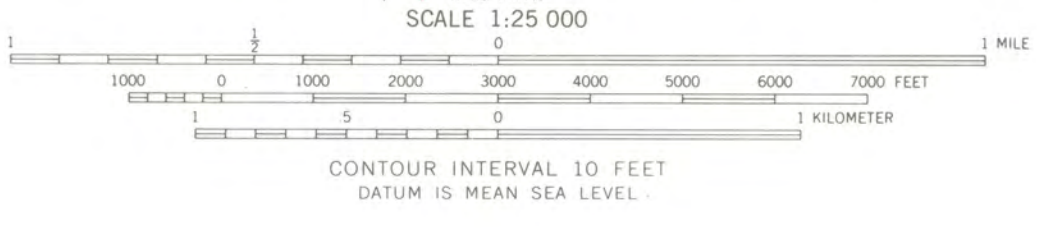
UNITED STATES  
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

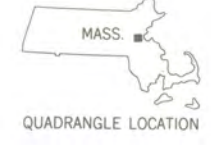
NEWTON QUADRANGLE  
 MASSACHUSETTS  
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
 Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey  
 Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
 taken 1939. Topography by planetable surveys 1943.  
 Revised from aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970  
 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  
 Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



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



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
 DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

NEWTON, MASS.  
 N4215-W7107.5/7.5  
 1970  
 AMS 6768 1 SW-SERIES V81





**MASSACHUSETTS  
HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION**

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
Office of the Secretary of State**

294 Washington Street  
Boston, Massachusetts  
02108  
617-727-8470

MICHAEL JOSEPH CONNOLLY  
Secretary of State

Aug 20, 1980

Ms. Carol Shull, Acting Keeper  
Registration Branch  
Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service  
DOI, W434  
Washington, D.C. 20243

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

- Boston: Oak Square School (Local)
- Boston: Russia Wharf (Local)
- Chicopee: Polish National Home (Local)
- Lynn: Broad Street Historical District (State)
- Northfield: Main Street Historical District (Local)

All have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Sincerely,

*Candace Jenkins*

Candace Jenkins  
Evaluation Director

CJ/lk





ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

Date Entered NOV 10 1980

Name

Location

Oak Square School

Boston  
Suffolk County

Also Notified

Honorable Paul Tsongas

Honorable Edward M. Kennedy  
Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mrs. Patricia L. Weslowski  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
294 Washington Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

NR Byers/bjr/11/17/80

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.