

**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 MAR 3 1982

date entered APR 1 1982

1. Name

historic Townsend House

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 980 Central Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Needham

N/A vicinity of

congressional district Ninth

state Massachusetts

code 025

county Norfolk

code 021

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
☐ commercial
☐ educational
☐ entertainment
☐ government
☐ industrial
☐ military

☐ museum
☐ park
☒ private residence
☐ religious
☐ scientific
☐ transportation
☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Robert D. and Nancy Peck

street & number 980 Central Avenue

city, town Needham

N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number 650 High Street

city, town Dedham

state Massachusetts

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of the Historic Assets
of the Commonwealth

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1977

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston

state Massachusetts 02108

7. Description

NEEDHAM: Townsend House, 980 Central Avenue

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

The Townsend House stands on its original site at the junction of Central Avenue and Nehoiden Street adjacent to Needham's early town center. Its site, which borders North Hill and occupies a slight rise surrounded by lawns, gardens, and shade trees, is part of the twenty acre parcel purchased by the first owner, Reverend Jonathan Townsend. The property is now surrounded by other private homes, primarily of a later date.

Extensively remodeled during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Townsend House is presently square in plan and two rooms deep with a five bay center entry facade facing north. The two story wood frame structure is sheathed with clapboards and is enclosed by a mansard roof with paired interior chimneys. Trim consists of paneled corner pilasters supporting a wide frieze and boxed cornice as well as molded window frames with corner blocks. Sash is 6/6 in the main floors and 2/2 in the dormers.

Entries are located on the north and west elevations. The north entry consists of a paneled door enframed by sidelights and a transom and is protected by a Doric portico. The west entry is flanked by sidelights and has a more severe Doric portico which carries a balustrade. A one story shed roof porch extends from the east elevation, while a gable roof ell and hip roof garage partially obscure the south elevation.

As originally constructed c. 1720, the house was a one room deep, two story structure with a central chimney and a center entry on the west elevation. On the first floor the south served as a kitchen while the north room served as a parlor and the upper rooms as chambers. This original structure measured 50 feet by 23 feet and had a fieldstone foundation only under the parlor. Alterations were made following 1769 when the Reverend Samuel West, Needham's second minister, purchased the home. Mr. West added the northeast rooms on the first and second floors, giving the house an L-shaped plan. In 1837, the house changed hands again and significant changes were made including a shift from the central chimney house with a westerly orientation to a central hall house with a northerly orientation. This was achieved by adding a spacious stairhall reached by a porticoed Greek Revival entry on the north elevation. The other major exterior change was the addition of a similar Greek Revival enframement to the original west entry. Interior renovations of this period included the neoclassical trim of the central hall and the northeast room which had been added in the previous building phase.

The last major change occurred c. 1870 when the missing southwest quarter of the now four-square house was added, and the composition was unified beneath a mansard roof. The third floor thus created was lit by three dormer windows on the east and west elevations and two on the north and south elevations. The kitchen/garage ell was added to the south elevation during the twentieth century.

8. Significance

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)

Specific dates 1720, 1769, 1837, 1870 **Builder/Architect** Rev. Jonathan Townsend (1720)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Reverend Jonathan Townsend House possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship as well as significant historical associations with Needham's early ministers. Additionally, it is a good example of eighteenth century construction modified during the nineteenth century to meet changing needs. The Townsend House thus meets criteria B and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

Rev. Townsend, who was born in Lynn on January 1, 1697, moved to Needham in 1720 to become ordained as the first minister of the town's First Church on March 23. Two months later he married Mary Sugars of Boston and bought twenty acres of outlands as well as a separate eight acre house lot at the junction of Central Avenue and Nehoiden Street from the heirs of Thomas Aldrich of Dedham (Needham was set off from the original Dedham grant in 1711). Here he erected a two story wood frame house of one room depth, five bay facade, and central chimney plan. This house stood at the southern corner of the Central-Nehoiden juncture facing Central Avenue, and a footpath ran from the rear of the house to Nehoiden Street where the meetinghouse stood. Rev. Townsend served as the town's minister and occupied this house until his death on September 30, 1762.

For the next two years Needham remained without a permanent pastor, making do with guest preachers who boarded with Townsend's widow Mary. It was not until the Rev. Samuel West was ordained on April 25, 1754, that the post was finally filled. At first he boarded with various families in the town but shortly after his marriage to Priscilla Plymton of Medfield in February of 1769, he purchased the Townsend House with its eight acre house lot and thirteen acres of outland. It is believed that shortly thereafter, he added a two story ell to the house. Mr. West served as minister throughout the American Revolution, during which time the town's stock of ball, powder, and flint were kept in Townsend House. Following the War, the town found it increasingly difficult to pay Rev. West's ministerial wages, so he finally resigned his post in December of 1788 and was installed as pastor of the Hollis Street Church in Boston in early 1789. Upon his departure, the house was purchased by Mr. Thomas Hubbard Townsend who boarded visiting pastors of the First Church. One of these guest preachers was the Rev. Stephen Palmer who accepted a call from the Needham Church in August 1789 and was ordained on November 7, 1792. He married Catherine Haven of Dedham, and following tradition, purchased the Townsend House in August 1793. Rev. Palmer was important to the town not only as minister, but also as a major proponent of a local public school system and as the author of the "Century Sermon" delivered on the occasion of Needham's Centennial Celebration in 1811. This historical sketch of Needham was the only printed history of the town available until George Kuhn Clarke, a much later occupant of the Townsend House, published his valuable "History of Needham, Massachusetts" in 1912.

Following Palmer's death in 1821, and the death of his widow in 1827, tradition was broken and the house lost its close associations with the ministers of the First Church. At that time it was sold to Rufus Mills, Palmer's son-in-law and the town's first postmaster, and it served briefly as the post office before that function was moved to Daniel Kingsbury's Store and the McIntosh Tavern. Mills was very active in town affairs and in addition to serving as postmaster until 1839, he was also Representative to the General Court, Town Treasurer, Assessor, School Committeeman, Coroner, and Justice of the Peace.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Clarke, George Kuhn, History of Needham. Cambridge, 1912
Jones, Frederic A., Old Houses in Needham, Needham, 1953

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 46,600 sq. ft.

Quadrangle name Natick

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UMT References

A

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3	1	4	5	4	0
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4	6	8	4	3	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification Northwesterly, by Central Avenue, 80 13/100 ft.; North-easterly, by Lot 7 on said plan, 100 ft.; Northerly by lots 7, 6, and 5 on said plan and by land now or formerly of Priscilla Trust Co., as shown on said plan by four lines together measuring 268.9 ft.; Southeasterly, by land of Gerry Schnelle, as shown on said plan, 294.08 ft.; (cont. sh. 2)

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 Candace Jenkins, Registration Director with Needham Historical Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date 1981

street & number 294 Washington Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts 02108

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. Weslawski

title Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission date 2/17/82

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 4/1/82

for
Attesting
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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For HCERS use only	
received	MAR 8 1982
date entered	APR 1 1982

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

Mills and his family occupied the house until 1837 when it was sold to Royal McIntosh who in turn sold it to George Brigham Revere three years later. Revere, who was a Boston merchant, is important to Needham history for his refusal to donate land to the Charles River Railroad Co., when they proposed to run a right of way along Central Street in the 1830's. His refusal caused the company to shift their route eastward from the existing town center to Needham Plain, which became known as Needham Square. The preeminence of this area which continues today was firmly established by 1886 when the site of the meetinghouse was moved there.

Revere died in 1870 and the house was sold by his heir to George H. Kuhn of Boston. During Kuhn's occupancy from 1870-1878, the house assumed most of its present characteristics including four-square plan and mansard roof. The house was occupied by Kuhn's heirs until 1945, and has passed hands several times since.

**United States Department of the Interior
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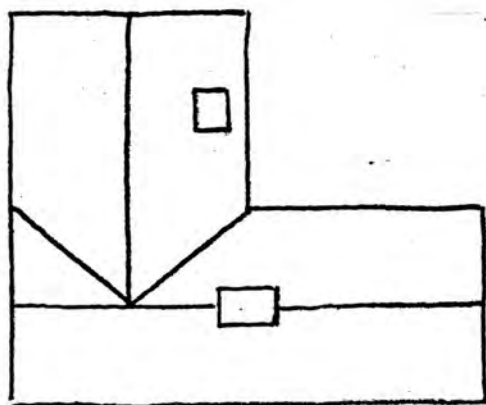
Continuation sheet

Item number 10

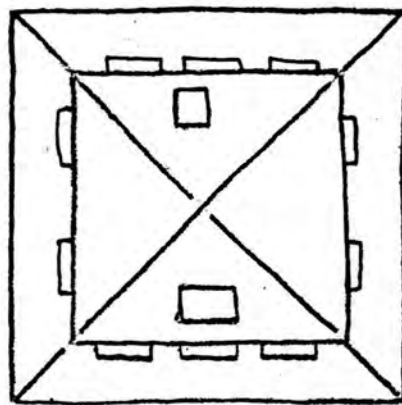
Page 2

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

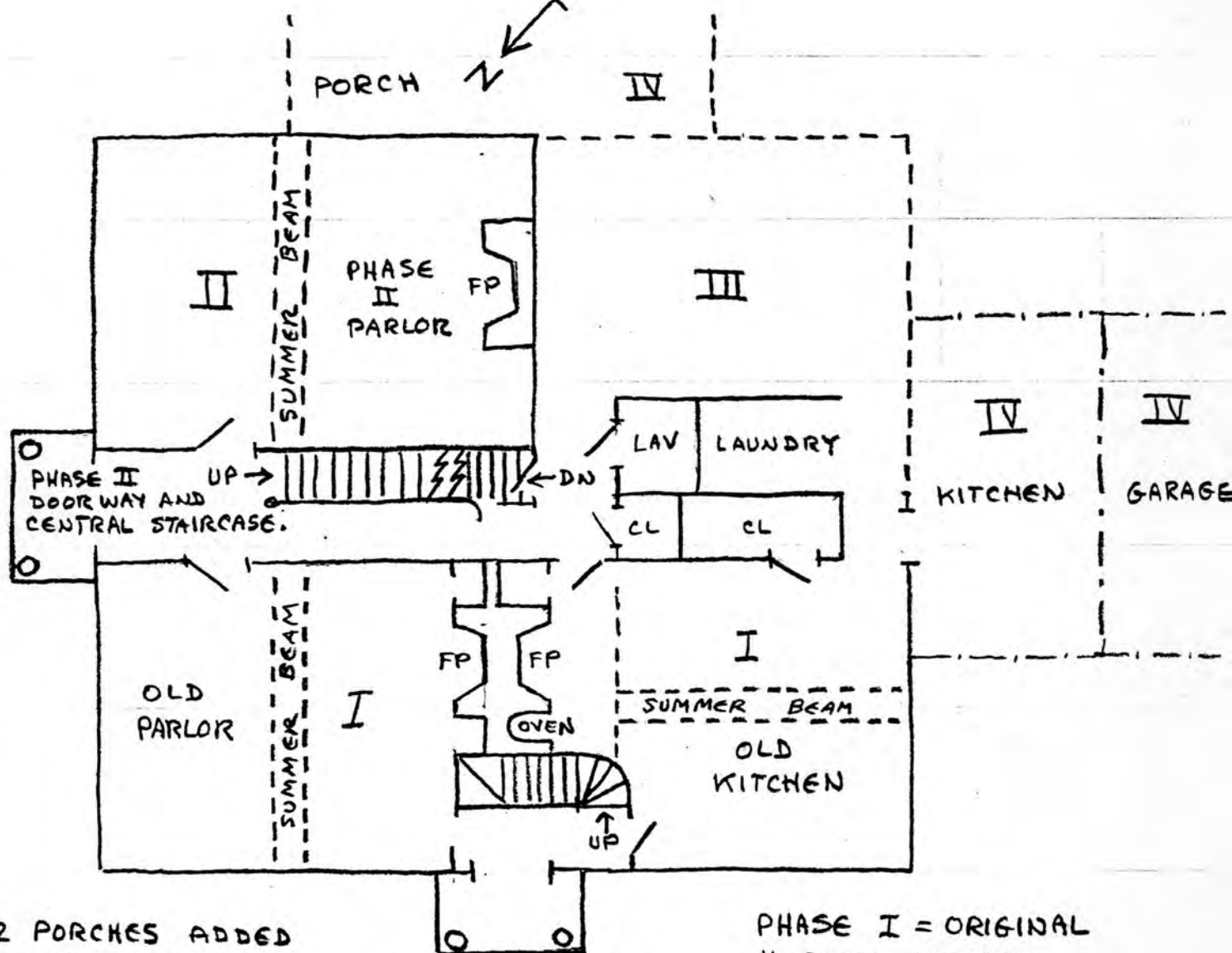
Northeasterly by Lot 9, 136.13 ft. Plan No. 762 of land in Needham, Massachusetts, recorded with Norfolk Deeds, June 10, 1953.



PHASE II



PHASE III



2 PORCHES ADDED
1837-1840.

ORIGINAL FOUNDATION
UNDER OLD PARLOR:

30' X 23'

ORIGINAL FRONT
ENTRY

TOWNSEND HOUSE

- 1720 -

PHASE I = ORIGINAL
4-ROOM HOUSE;
2½ STOREYS, WITH
PITCHED ROOF

MAR 3 1982

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

EVALUATION / RETURN SHEET

Property: Townsend House
State, County: MA, Norfolk
Federal Agency: _____

Working No. 3/3/82-589
Fed. Reg. Date: 2.1.83
Date Due: 4-1-82 4-17-82
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 4/1/82

Entered in the _____ RETURN _____
National Register _____ REJECT _____
photos 2
maps 1

☐ 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

X 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

Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

USGS 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: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



NEEDHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Town Hall
Needham, MA 02192

Townsend House
980 Central Avenue
Needham, MA

Kenneth Watson 1980
142 Hillcrest Road
Needham

Photo #1 Of 2
West elevation

MAR 3 1982

KENNETH E. WATSON
142 HILLCREST RD.
NEEDHAM, MA 02192

980 Central Ave



NEEDHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Town Hall

Needham, MA 02192

Townsend House
980 Central Avenue
Needham, MA

Kenneth Watson 1980
142 Hillcrest Road
Needham

Photo # 2 of 2
North elevation MAR 3 1982

KENNETH E. WATSON
142 HILLCREST RD.
NEEDHAM, MA 02192

980 CENTRAL AVE

1982-V-80

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

NATICK QUADRANGLE
MASSACHUSETTS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



CONVERSION
SCALES

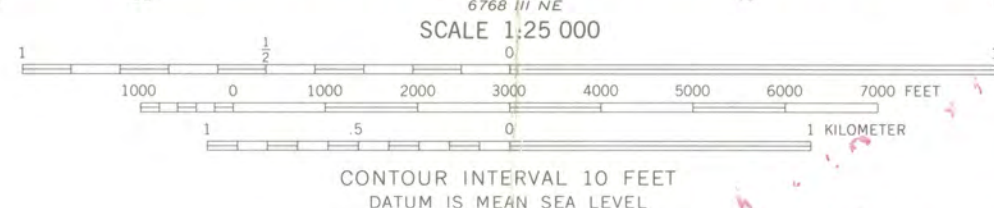


Feet	Meters
1	0.3048
2	0.6096
3	0.9144
4	1.2192
5	1.5240
6	1.8288
7	2.1336
8	2.4384
9	2.7432
10	3.0480

To convert feet to meters
multiply by 0.3048
To convert meters to feet
multiply by 3.2808

TOWNSEND HOUSE
NEEDHAM, MA
UTM REFERENCE
19J14540/4684350

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, US&GS and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1940-1941
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



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

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface
Secondary highway, hard surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U. S. Route
State Route



NATICK, MASS.
N4215-W7115/7.5
1970

AMS 6768 IV SE-SERIES V814



ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

Date Entered APRIL 1, 1982

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Melrose Town Center Historic District	Melrose Middlesex County
American Net and Twine Company Factory (Cambridge Multiple Resource Area)	Cambridge Middlesex County
<u>Townsend House</u>	Needham Norfolk County
Lewis, Joshua, House	Needham Norfolk County

Notified

Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Honorable Paul E. Tsongas
Honorable Edward J. Markey
Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.
Honorable John Joseph Moakley

Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, NPS
North Atlantic Regional Office, NPS

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