

FORM A - AREA SURVEY

ref no 80000577

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

Form numbers in this area	Area no. 116-CBD- 23
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1. Town Worcester
 Name of area (if any) Mechanics' Hall
Historic District

3. General date or period 1854-1925

4. Is area uniform (explain):
no (mixed Victorian and
 in style? 20th century)
 in condition? no (fair to excellent)
 in type of ownership? yes (private)
 in use? yes (commercial)

2. Photo (3x3" or 3x5")
 Staple to left side of form
 Photo number _____

Rolls 26, 27 & 28

5. Map. Use space below to draw a general map of the area involved. Indicate any historic properties for which individual reports are completed on Forms B thru F, using corresponding numbers. Show street names (including route numbers, if any) and indicate north. Indicate with an "x" existing houses not inventoried on Form B.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE USGS Quadrant _____ MHC Photo no. _____
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6. Recorded by _____
 Organization Worc. Heritage Pres. Soc.
 Date _____

(over)

UTH
19/268890/4682870

7. Historical data. Explain the historical/architectural importance of this area.

Physical District: Containing eight commercial buildings, the Mechanics' Hall District contains one of Worcester's few remaining clusters of densely built commercial row buildings. Boundaries for the district were chosen to include row buildings on both sides of Main Street (north and south of Mechanics' Hall) which preserve a sense of Main Street's development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and which provide Mechanics' Hall with the densely built setting for which it was designed. Rear boundaries of the district follow the rear lot lines of included buildings, which are:

1. Central Exchange Building, 301-315 Main Street: built 1895-1896 (W.G. Preston of Boston, architect), addition at building's north end 1902 (Fuller & Delano, architects)

Built in 1895-1896, the Central Exchange Building occupies the site of the Old Central Exchange Building of 1830, a Federalist style building which was burned in 1843, rebuilt in 1844 and demolished in the 1890s. A five-storey structure, faced with limestone, the present building was illustrated in the American Architect and Building News in 1896, at which time it consisted of the southern three-quarters of the present facade. Of eclectic Classical design, the facade was originally symmetrical, terminating in end pavilions which rise to broken scroll pediments of pressed copper. At the first storey center is a richly carved limestone entry (now being uncovered). Upper floors contain a wealth of carved stone panels, arched window heads set on carved capitals, and other decorated window surrounds. In 1902 the building was extended northward from its original end pavilion. Built in the style of the original structure, this addition has frontages on Main and Exchange Streets, and contains elaborately carved limestone as well as original stone and metal store fronts. At the rear of the building, concealed from Main Street, is a later four-storey brick building which is connected to the Central Building by bridges. Of utilitarian design and later construction, this rear building is unimportant to the area's significance.

The Central Exchange Building was first owned by Mrs. Lizzie Davis Dewey, daughter of real estate developer Harrison Bliss and wife of Francis H. Dewey. It is probable that Mrs. Dewey held title to the property but did not take an active part in its development. Francis H. Dewey, the son and grandson of prominent local judges, was born in Worcester in 1856, studied law in a local law office and at Harvard University

8. Bibliography and/or references such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, (cont.)
early maps, etc.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Worcester	Form No: 116-CBD- 23
Property Name: Mechanics' Hall Historic District	

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

- 7) 1. and in 1879 began his own law office in Worcester. In 1880 he was made a trustee of the Mechanics' National Bank and of the Worcester Savings Bank (both early tenants of the Central Exchange Building). By 1888 Dewey had been elected president of the National Bank in addition to his other extensive business interests, among which were the Worcester Consolidated Street Railway Company (director after 1893, president after 1898), New England Investment and Security Company (of which he was president) and the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company (of which he was a director). Dewey's interest in commercial development is characteristic of many of the city's prominent lawyers, who took an active role in the commercial development of Main Street in the nineteenth century.

2. Mechanics' Hall, 321 Main Street: built 1855-1857 (Elbridge Boyden, architect). A unique example of Italianate style architecture and containing an early concert hall, Mechanics' Hall serves both as a major local landmark and as a focal point of the Mechanics' Hall District. Mechanics' Hall was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 9, 1972; for further information see nomination papers.

Empty lot, 327-333 Main Street; site of a Victorian Gothic style commercial block, demolished.

3. Burnside Building, 335-343 Main Street: built 1886-1887 (Bradlee, Winslow and Wetherell of Boston, architects).

The Burnside Building is a four-storey brick block with ornate sandstone trim. Designed as a row building, the structure's facade (west) originally contained store fronts (first storey) and plate-glass display windows (second storey) set in a cast-iron surround. This original arrangement of the first two stories is now covered by modern materials. The building's upper three stories are symmetrically arranged about a narrow center bay. All windows are set in stone architraves with decorative panels between third and fourth storey windows; fifth storey windows are arranged in groups of two and three windows, divided internally by stone columns. At the roof line is a wide sandstone entablature, above which is a shallow cornice of egg-and-dart moulding and modillions. Although employing elements of Romanesque Revival design, the Burnside Building does not fit purely into a single style.

Among the larger commercial blocks of the 1880s, the Burnside Building was built by the heirs of Samuel Burnside (a local lawyer) on the site of an earlier two-storey commercial building. Acting as a corporate body, the Burnside heirs received plans for the building from the Boston firm of Bradlee, Winslow and Wetherell, designers of the Hemenway Building (corner Tremont and Court Streets, Boston) to which the Burnside Building bears a resemblance.

(cont.)

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Community: Worcester	Form No: 116-CBD- 23
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Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

7) 4. Flagg's Building, 282-294 Main Street; built 1854 (architect unknown)

An important local example of Italianate architecture, Flagg's Building is Worcester's best-preserved commercial block of the 1850s, a major period of building in downtown Worcester. Four stories high, of brick construction, Flagg's Building is of rectangular plan and has a nearly flat roof which slopes to the building's rear. The building's facade (east) is symmetrical, consisting of a slightly projecting pavilion of two panels' width, flanked on each side by an additional two panels. Each wall panel contains two windows at each storey, is framed by brick piers and rises to a corbelled head above which the roof line is trimmed with a modillioned wooden cornice. Window lintels are made of cast iron, being pediments on consoles (2nd storey), flat hoods on consoles (3rd storey) and simple moulded hoods (4th storey). Alterations to the facade include modern store fronts occupying the position of original store fronts and second storey display windows added to the first, fifth and sixth wall panels counting from south to north. Despite these alterations, Flagg's Building is the city's best example of its type and period, one which retains unique features in its wood, brick and cast-iron trim and especially in its fine cast-iron name plaque. The building stands at the southeast corner of a large lot assembled by the property's present owner as much of this larger lot has been cleared and bears no relation to the significance of the Mechanics' Hall District, only the land on which the block stands (Lot #46, Assessors' Book 2, p.27) is included in this nomination.

Built at a cost of \$50,000, Flagg's Building was owned by Augustus and Elisha Flagg, whose family had been associated with Worcester from the time of its first settlement in the 1670s. Flagg's Building was built "on the site of an extensive bakery establishment which was owned and operated by Enoch and Elisha Flagg" around 1800. On February 18, 1815 the bakery buildings were destroyed by fire, after which the use of the site is unknown until 1854. Upon completion, Flagg's Building contained six store fronts at street level, offices at the second storey and lodgings at the third and fourth stories.

5. Day Building, 300-310 Main Street: built 1897-1898 (Barker & Nourse, architects), 1898-1899 (Barker & Nourse, architects), 1906 (George T. Tribe, architect)

One of Worcester's largest nineteenth-century office blocks, the Day Building's major facade fronts on Main Street and contains elements of Romanesque Revival style architecture with finely carved trim of limestone. The Day Building was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places on September 13, 1978; for further information see nomination papers.

(cont.)

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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

7) 6. Former Worcester Five Cent Savings Bank, 316 Main Street; built 1891 (Stephen C. Earle, architect) A unique local example of Romanesque Revival style architecture, the former Worcester Five Cent Savings Bank is a five-storey block built of yellow brick with limestone and fine yellow terracotta trim; this building was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places September 13, 1978. For further information see nomination papers.

7. Central Building, 322-332 Main Street; built 1925 (architect unknown) Of classically derived design, the Central Building is a seven-storey steel-frame structure faced with dressed limestone. The building has a symmetrical facade arranged about a central court, facing Walnut Street, although the building's most prominent elevation faces Main Street (east). The first two stories of the Main Street elevation contain metal store fronts, embossed with a variety of classical motifs, all in original condition. Upper floors are largely undecorated, except for a decorated stone course (top of second storey), a cast-iron frieze and copper cornice with cresting at the roof line. Among the last major office blocks built downtown before the Great Depression, the Central Building is a well-preserved example of its period.

8. (Second) State Mutual Building (now the Commerce Building), 340 Main Street; built 1894-1897 (Peabody & Stearns of Boston, architects)

Built as Worcester's first "skyscraper", the (Second) State Mutual Building is a nine-storey steel-frame structure, faced with dressed white marble. The building is of extremely ornate, Renaissance Revival design, rising from a one-storey base of rusticated piers to an intermediate two-storey stage of deeply draughted stonework. Upper floors are faced with dressed marble ashlar. The building's facade (east) is symmetrical with two store fronts on each side of the main entry. Above the entry is a Palladian window framed by pilasters and Corinthian columns, with a deep, coffered frame. Flanking this window are four arched windows set in similarly elaborate surrounds. The fourth to eighth stories are dominated at their centers by three five-storey high arches. The ninth floor has paired arched windows. At the roof line is a cornice with modillions. The building's south elevation (facing Maple Street) bears similar decoration to that of the facade. Along the western (Maple Street) edge of this property is an eight-storey addition, built in the early twentieth century. Built of buff brick with limestone trim, this addition is largely undecorated and is connected to the 1897 building by bridges.

Regarded as "the first modern office building in the city" at the time of its construction, the State Mutual Building was the second office building constructed for the State Mutual Life Assurance Company (the first building was at 240 Main Street - see Form #116-CBD-13). The company was founded in Worcester in 1844-1845 as the nation's fifth life insurance company. Between 1872 and the late 1880s, the State Mutual

(cont.)

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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

7) 8.

Company shared 240 Main Street with the Merchants' and Farmers' Fire Insurance Company. Beginning in the late 1880s, the growth of State Mutual's business led first to the sole acquisition of 240 Main Street and later to the construction of 340 Main Street. Planned as a lavish corporate symbol, the (Second) State Mutual Building contained a large interior court with a grand staircase and an arcaded loggia at the second storey. The building's top floor was occupied in 1897 by the Commonwealth Club and Brigham's Restaurant, while the store fronts were occupied by various tenants until 1907, after which all were occupied by banks and investment counsellors. Excepting the alteration of the main entry and some of the store fronts, the building is intact.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Mechanics' Hall District contains a group of Victorian Gothic and early twentieth century commercial buildings of exceptionally high architectural quality. Most notable are Mechanics' Hall, a rare Italianate performance hall and commercial block of 1855-1857; Flagg's Building, one of Worcester's last and best Italianate commercial blocks; the Worcester Five Cent Savings Bank, an unusual example of Romanesque Revival architecture, and the (Second) State Mutual Building, Worcester's first skyscraper and an ornate example of Renaissance Revival architecture. Other buildings in the district, such as the Day Building, the Central Exchange Building and the Burnside Building are good examples of late Victorian commercial architecture, retaining most of the original carved stonework and store fronts. Finally, the Central Building provides a good, unaltered example of late Classical Revival taste, one which dates from the last period in which downtown Worcester prospered. The district's only intrusion is a vacant lot on the south side of Mechanics' Hall where a Victorian Gothic style block once stood.

In addition to the high architectural quality of the individual buildings, the Mechanics' Hall District is one of the last sections of Main Street to retain the appearance of the dense row construction which once lined Main Street from Lincoln Square to Franklin Square, but which has been fragmented by demolitions in the last twenty years. Finally, the area's densely built character provides an appropriate setting for Mechanics' Hall, a building of regional importance which was designed to fit into a commercial district.

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

<u>Property</u>	<u>Property List Assessor's Data</u>	<u>Present Owner</u>
Central Exchange Building	Book 2, p. 26 Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5A, 7 & 22 23,868 sq. ft.	Exchange Associates c/o Bowditch, Gowetz & Lane 340 Main St. Worcester, Mass. 01608
Mechanics' Hall	Book 2, p. 26 Lots 1 & 10A 16,830 sq. ft.	Worcester County Mechanics' Association 321 Main St. Worcester, Mass. 01608
Burnside Building	Book 2, p. 26 Lot 17--14,673 sq. ft.	Burnside Realty Trust 339 Main St. Worcester, Mass. 01608
Flagg's Building	Book 2, p. 27 Lot 46--approx. 12,000 sq. ft.	Beverly R. Gold Barry L. Krock 6 Meadowbrook Rd. Worcester, Mass. 01609
Day Building	Book 2, p. 27 Lots 34, 35 & 36-- 32,659 sq. ft.	Consumers Savings Bank 316 Main St. Worcester, Mass. 01608
Worcester Five Cent Savings Bank	Book 2, p. 27 Lot 39--3,599 sq. ft.	same
Central Building	Book 3, p. 32 Lot 22--13,562 sq. ft.	Walnut Realty Trust 101 Pleasant St. Worcester, Mass. 01609
(Second) State Mutual Building	Book 3, p. 32 Lot 21--51,022 sq. ft.	340 and 390 Main Street Associates 340 Main Street Worcester, Mass. 01608

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

Property Worcester Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)

State MA (Worcester) Working Number 8.30.79.2060

TECHNICAL

CONTROL

Photos 383 + 13
Maps 2, 63

Excellent multiple resource nomination for the entire city of Worcester. Both the general description & statement of significance & the individual inventory sheets are well done. Each type of property included is well justified, & reasons are listed for not including others at this time (e.g. 3-deckers). **HISTORIAN**
Call/Accept
Lightner
10.30.79
Opposition is high. Minor problems w/ some properties are listed on attached sheets. **ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

Concur with Bruce's comments on 102-L-3, 116-CBD-11, 117-E, and 130-CBD-50 and 44. Integrity and/or boundaries need to be addressed specifically on individual forms. **ARCHEOLOGIST**

116-CBD-11 - Destroyed, cannot be listed.
130-CBD-44 - I am not convinced this has lost integrity. See attached.
102-L-3 - Period of significance and categorization of bldgs need to be discussed with State.

With 3 exceptions all properties appear to me to meet the criteria and the forms are adequate. ~~Both~~ **BOTH** TECHNICALLY AND TO DETERMINE SIGNIFICANCE. ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE FORMS DID NOT CONTAIN STRONG STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE THE RESOURCE CATEGORIES WERE THOROUGHLY DISCUSSED IN THE BODY OF THE NOMINATION; THEREFORE SIGNIFICANCE WAS ESTABLISHED. PDOS WERE NOT NECESSARY BECAUSE

OTHER

ACEPT
MURPHY
2/28/80

OF THE SCALE MAPS AND CLEARLY DELINEATED BOUNDARIES. ALTHOUGH WAS MISSING IN SOME PROPERTIES BUT IS NOW INCLUDED AFTER THE 2/11/CORRECTIONS.

HAER

THE ONLY PROPERTIES THAT I DO NOT RECOMMEND LISTING ARE

Inventory _____

- ✓ 116-CBD-13 - DESTROYED BY FIRE MD - 116 CBD - 11
- 130-CBD-44 - DOES NOT RETAIN INTEGRITY FOR INDIVIDUAL ELIGIBILITY

Review _____

- ✓ 102-L-3 I ~~DO NOT~~ ^{AM} NOT CONVINCED ABOUT BOUNDARIES BUT BELIEVE THEY COULD BE OK. BASED ON ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION SUBMITTED - I DEFER JUDGEMENT.

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Recommend Listing all properties ^{now} ~~except~~ ^{except} these 3. Return 116-CBD-11 to State (not eligible); ~~to discuss further~~ ^{to discuss further} w/NR staff + State. **BRANCH CHIEF** 3/3/80

Return 102-L-3 to state for correction;
HOLD 130-CBD-44 for info from state

3/5/80
DOBIE

Staff conference 3/5/80 - agreed to action as noted below:

KEEPER

Accept with exception of 116-CBD-11 (official notification of fire & demo from State), 102-L-3 (returning to state for revision - also returning 116-CBD-11) and 130-CBD-44 (holding from state)

Soldner
3/5/80

National Register Write-up _____ Send-back _____ Entered MAR 5 1980
Federal Register Entry 2.3.81 Re-submit _____ ^{SEE 3/13/80 REPORT}



87 AUG 1979

116-CBD-23

Machimus yelli

322-332

main St.

Worcester MA

East + north elev.

80 AUG 1979



116-CBD-23
282-294 main
Mechanics Hall St.
Worcester, MA
East Union

30 AUG 1979



30 AUG 1979

116-CBD-23

301-315 Main

St - Mechanics Hall
near to MAR/14

North + west elev.



80 AUG 1979

116-CBD-23

Meckling Hall
340 Main St.
Worcester, MA, Ma

South + east
elevations



116-CBD-23
321 Main St.
Mechanics Hall.
West elevation
Worcester MA, Ma

30 AUG 1979



NO LEFT
TURN

ONE
WAY

BARNARDS

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TECHNICAL

FOR
REPAIRS
AND PARTS
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FALLMAN
PORTRAITS
& CAMERAS

Archer Kent
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slow
optician

JUN 1979



by Berkey

116-CAD-23
Mechanics Hall
335-343 Main St
Worcester, MA
West elevation

30 AUG 1979



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By Barclay

JAN 1978

116- CBD-23
Mechanics Hall
300-310 Main St
West of MRA, Ma
East elevations



by Berkeley



Prestige Prints

JAN 1978

JAN 1978

29 AUG 1979

Mechanics Hall
116-CBD-23
Worcester, MA
316 Main St.
South + east
elevations



1978

THIS PAPER
MANUFACTURED
BY KODAK

JAN 1978



Prestige Prints

by Berkey

80 AUG 1979

116-CBD-23
322-332 Main St
Mechanics Hall
North elev.
Worcester, MA, Ma

JAN 1978



Prestige Prints

by Berkey

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000304