

FORM A - AREA

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA. 02108

Form numbers in this area	Area letter
51x, 173, 174, 186, 197, 198, 199, 200, 30, 229x, 230x, 240x, 242x, 248x, 800-1	B,C,D

Photo (3x3" or 3x5")
Staple to left side of form

Photo number _____

Town _____ Reading _____

Name of area (if any) _____

Common Historic District
roughly bounded by Harnden,
Sanborn, Woburn & Main Streets
General date or period 1800-1920

Sketch map. Draw a general map of the area indicating properties within it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets (including route numbers, if any) and indicate north. (Attach a separate sheet if space here is not sufficient)

Common Historic District

UTM:

A 19/327250/4709910
B 19/327100/4709960
C 19/327060/4710160
D 19/326950/4710350
E 19/327240/4710520
F 19/327380/4710100

Acreage: approximately 30.

Please see continuation sheet
for verbal boundary description.

Recorded by Architectural Preservation
Associates
Organization Reading Historical Commission
Date February, 1982

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Describe physical setting, general character, and architecturally significant structures). This proposed district consists of the inverted triangle formed by Harnden Street on the east, Laurel Hill Cemetery on the north, Sanborn Street on the west and Woburn Street on the south; it is bisected by Main Street, or Route 28. The Common forms the very heart of Reading. A number of the town's most important roads come together here, yet the area has escaped the commercial development that often occurs at such intersections. Instead, a green-sward planted with large, old trees slopes upward to a replica of an 1817, Federal-style church (form no. D-199). On either side of this greensward is a series of buildings that leads the eye toward the church. On the west side, along Lowell Street, are the granite Gothic Revival First Church of Christ, Scientist (form no. D-240x) of 1913, the solid, red-brick, Georgian-Revival Public Library and Town Hall (forms no. D-197 and D-198) and on Sanborn Street, the 1906 High School (form no. C-186), also in the Georgian Revival style.

Anchoring the northern most corner of this boundary is Thomas Pratt's house and store of 1817 (form no. B-242x), now greatly altered but still retaining some of its Federal

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Explain development of area, what caused it, and how it affected community; be specific). (Continued)

The earliest extent of the Reading Common is not known, but we do know that the present Common was owned communally by 1737, and that a burial ground lay to its north. The public land was skirted by a road that would later become a major coach road, Ash Street. In 1745, the official boundaries of the Common and burial ground were established. We know that there was in 1765 a house on the western edge of the Common, about where the library sits today.

In 1769, a site nearly opposite the house was chosen for the erection of the first meetinghouse in the area of present-day Reading. It was this meetinghouse that gave definition to the Third - or West - Parish, later present-day Reading, and which set off "Wood-End," as it was then called, from the parishes that would become today's Wakefield and North Reading. Situated near the junction of early roads, it was conveniently located for congregation members from all parts of the new parish. The nearby houses and 25 acres were purchased for a parsonage and sold to the first minister, the Rev. Thomas Haven. Much later, this house was moved to 25 School Street, to make way for the erection of the present library in 1917 (forms no. C-243 and D-197, respectively).

The meetinghouse served the parish well until 1817, when a new church was built just to its north (form no. D-199). The old meetinghouse was moved away and reused as a hall and a school, and moved again and used commercially before it burned. A bronze tablet now marks the meetinghouse's original site. The new church was used until 1911, when it burned. It was rebuilt in 1913 according to measured drawings that had been made of the exterior by architect, Winthrop Parker. Apparently, the symbolic

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

1765 map
1795 map
1830 map
1854 map
1875 map
1889 map

Bishop, Rooftrees, Chapter 6
Pitkin, Vignettes, pp. 55-56

Eaton, Genealogical History, p. 236
Eaton, Memorial Volume, pp. 223, 224.
Waldlin, Concerning the Past, Ch. XVII

(Continued)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

Reading

Form No:

Property Name: Common Historic District

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

Architectural Significance Continuation

grandeur. The Craftsman-style Edgerley and Bessom funeral home (form no. B-24x) sits a little farther to the west. Still farther west, Main Street leaves the Common, but the crest of the hill and the trees beyond it maintain the sense of enclosure. To the left of Main Street is the church and its cemetery.

The church edifice is significant both as a remembrance of the original Asher Benjamin-style building once here, and as a Federal Revival structure exhibiting great faithfulness to its design sources. On the district's southern boundary of Woburn Street stands the Greek Revival Boyce House (form no. C-173), notable for its attached barn. On the east side along Harnden Street and down Salem, is an intact row of four 19th-century houses (forms no. B-51, B-229x, B-230x, and B-30). The northern boundary of the district is formed by the rear property line of the Laurel Hill Cemetery (form no. 800-1), the town's original burying ground (1737), in use until 1980 and featuring picturesque 19th-century landscaping.

The buildings and open spaces of the Common area convey a sense of the qualities that characterize Reading; a feeling of community, a respect for the past, and a decided preference for conservative stability. There are no intrusions in the district.

Historical Significance continuation

importance of this building was so strong that only a copy of the original seemed appropriate.

This continuing concentration of religious buildings and residences has buttressed the role of the Common as the town's center. Educational facilities located here, too. The first was an academy, which - along with a church - was built in 1827 on the site of the present Town Hall parking lot. Another was the town's first building constructed especially for a high school, in 1867. This sat where the Old Soth Methodist Church's Educational Building is today. After serving as a high school, a lower school, an municipal offices, it was pulled down in 1957 to make room for the Educational Building.

Commercial activity naturally followed public usage particularly after the opening of the Boston and Andover Turnpike in 1806. William Johnson opened a store of sorts in 1801, at about the present-day address of 28 Salem Street. Other stores opened, either in the owner's house, or in a separate building close to it. The first approach was adopted by Thomas Pratt in 1817, at the northeast corner of the turnpike and Salem Street. The second approach was followed by Thomas Parker in 1810, at the corner of the turnpike and Pleasant Street. The block beyond Union and Salem Streets continued to remain mostly residential (forms no. B-229x and B-230x), but business flourished around it: The Edgerley and Bessom funeral home (form no. B-248x) was built in 1915, on the site of Thomas Pratt's store, which was moved a short distance away and remodeled (form no. B-242x).

The Common continued to serve as a center of institutional focus in the 20th-century with the construction of five new major institutional buildings, all designed in historical styles by Boston architects who resided in Reading and whose work appears throughout the town. Secular government facilities were added to the Common area, when the high

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Reading	Form No: --
Property Name: Common Historic District	

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

Historical Significance Continuation

school (1906, form no. C-186), Town Hall (1917-18, form no. D-198) and Public Library (1917-18, form no. D-197) were built. Two houses had to be moved to accommodate these structures, but Reading's sense of public identity was by that time so closely tied to the Common, that it was inevitable that the new buildings would be located here. The two other major institutional buildings built in the Common area were the First Congregational Church (form no. C-174) of 1911 and the First Church of Christ, Scientist (form no. D-240x) of 1913-14, both stone buildings in the Gothic Revival style. Even today, the Common remains the ceremonial center of town.

In sum, the Common area is locally significant in terms of religion, education, commerce, architecture, government, and recreation.

The Common Historic District is significant (1) In its role as the civic, institutional, and commercial center of Reading since the Colonial Period; (2) for the intact design of its 18th-century Common; and (3) for the high quality of architectural design seen in the district's residential and institutional buildings. It retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship and meets Criteria A & C of the National Register.

Verbal Boundary Description: The Common Historic District boundaries include all municipal, institutional and residential buildings which retain integrity and which define the historic center of the community. The boundaries are as shown by the heavy line on the accompanying map, entitled, "Common Historic District" and drawn to a scale of 1"= 333'.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Common Historic District (Reading MRA)
Middlesex County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. JUN 4 1984

Fed. Reg. Date: _____

Date Due: 7-5-84 / 7-19-84

Action: ☐ EPT

☒ RETURN 7-19-84

☐ REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

- ☐ 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

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ excellent | ☐ deteriorated |
| ☐ good | ☐ ruins |
| ☐ fair | ☐ unexposed |

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

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:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received 6/14/84

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 1 of 9

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Reading Multiple Resource Area
State MASSACHUSETTS

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Ace Art Company

Substantive Review for Keeper
Attest

Conn. [Signature] 2/1/84

2. Common Historic District

Substantive Review for Keeper
Attest

Conn. [Signature] 2/1/85

3. Harnden-Browne House

Substantive Review for Keeper
Attest

Conn. [Signature] 2/1/85

4. Haverhill Street Milestone

Substantive Review for Keeper
Attest

Conn. [Signature] 2/1/85

5. Kemp Place

Entered in the National Register for Keeper
Attest

[Signature] 7/19/84

6. Kemp Barn

Entered in the National Register for Keeper
Attest

[Signature] 7/19/84

7. Nichols, Jerry, Tavern

Entered in the National Register for Keeper
Attest

[Signature] 7/19/84

8. Reading Standpipe

Substantive Review for Keeper
Attest

Conn. [Signature] 2/1/85

9. Smith Shoe Shop

Substantive Review for Keeper
Attest

Conn. [Signature] 2/1/85

10. Woburn Street Historic District

Substantive Review for Keeper
Attest

Conn. [Signature] 2/1/85

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Common Historic District (Reading MRA)
Middlesex County
MASSACHUSETTS

- ☒ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal

Reviewer's comments:

Working No. 6-4-84
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-4-86
Date Due: 2-2-85
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 2-1-85
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

☒ NR decision

Recom./Criteria Accept Atc
Reviewer Mr. Conforti
Discipline A.H.
Date 2-1-85
_____ 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

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ excellent | ☐ deteriorated |
| ☐ good | ☐ ruins |
| ☐ fair | ☐ unexposed |

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

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: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Common View of
Reading Mass, Ma

Common View with Harnden St. XXXV-16



Common H. D.

Reading MRA, Ma



Common View with library XXXV-15

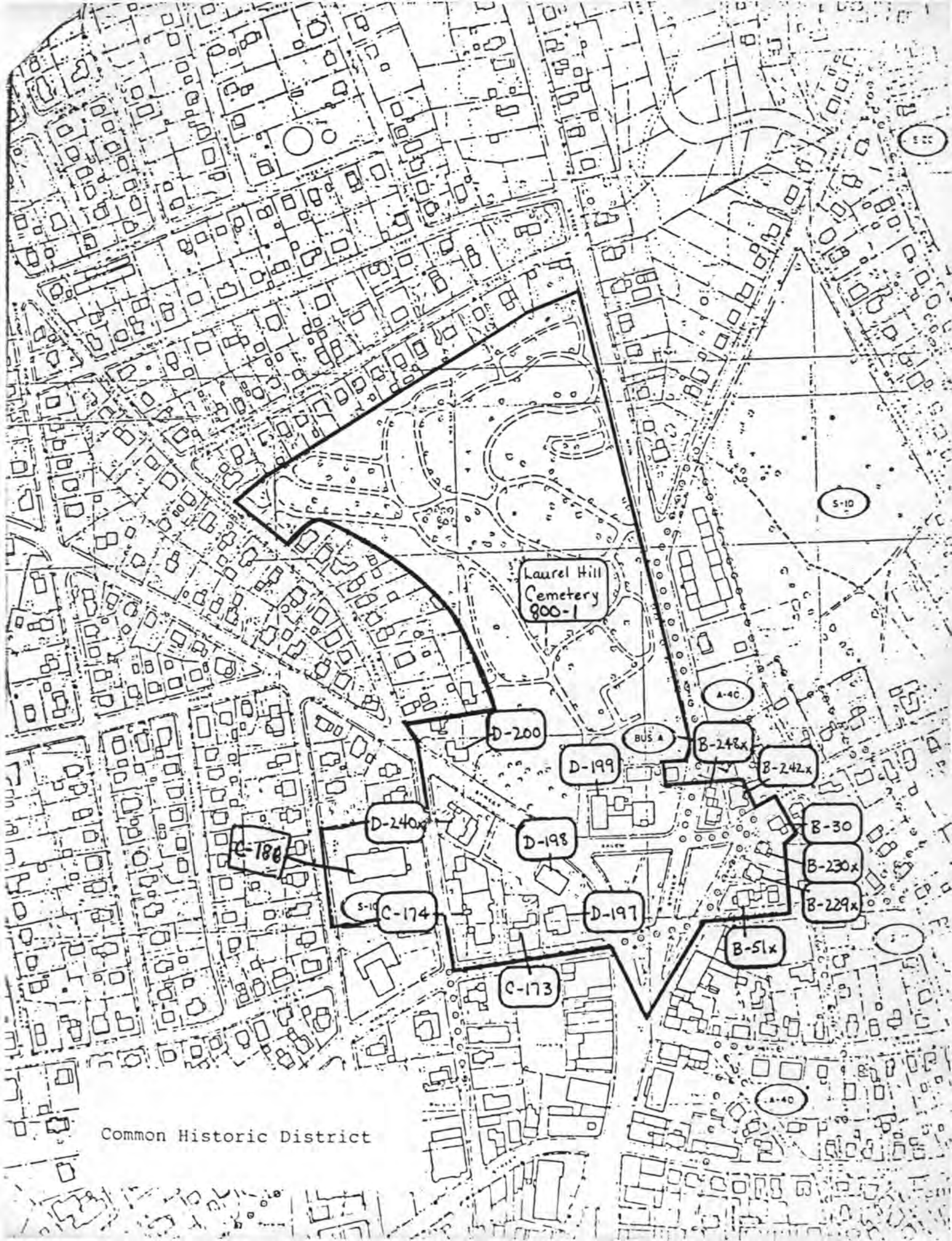


Common ^{View} H. P.

Rauldy MRA, Ma

Common. View

XXXV - 18



Common Historic District

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

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000290

D-240

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST
CORNER OF LOWELL AND SANBORN STREETS
READING, MASSACHUSETTS

March 7, 1984

Massachusetts Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Sirs:

First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Reading finds it necessary to object to its being included in The National Register of Historic Places. Our property is part of the proposed "Reading Multiple Resource Area" at 32 Lowell Street.

Sincerely,
The Executive Board

Barbara J. Sprague

Barbara J. Sprague, Clerk

Notorized by *John S. Norton*

Date: *3-12-84*

*My Commission Expires
Sept 10, 1987*