

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED AUG 16 1979

DATE ENTERED OCT 10 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Commonwealth Pier Five

AND/OR COMMON

Commonwealth Pier

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

165 Northern Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

VICINITY OF

CODE
025

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

9th

COUNTY

Suffolk

CODE

025

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

Massachusetts Port Authority

STREET & NUMBER

99 High Street

CITY, TOWN

Boston

VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Suffolk County Courthouse, Pemberton Square

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Inventory of the Historic Assets of the Commonwealth

DATE

1979

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Massachusetts Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

7 DESCRIPTION

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

Commonwealth Pier Five is located in South Boston on Northern Avenue, an area of industrial and commercial use and the location of many of Boston's maritime facilities. The Pier is one of several lying between Fort Point Channel and the former site of the South Boston Naval Annex, now the Boston Marine Industrial Park.

Completed in 1914, the Pier buildings cover the entire pier (400' x 1500') and consist of a head house, three sheds and later additions which now connect the three sheds. The head house is a steel and concrete structure consisting of a two story base (9 bay facade by 5 bays' depth) and a two story upper section (9 bay facade by 3 bays' depth) which contains the main public access to the pier.

The head house's lower level is faced with cast stone ashlar, rising to a cornice at the first story and stuccoed second story. Above the second story is a cast-stone cornice and parapet which serves as a railing for the plaza in front of the pier's main entry. Sash is uniform by story, consisting of 1/1 and transoms at the first story and 1/1 at the second. Built to provide rail access to the pier sheds and to house offices of the port administration, railroad and steamship lines, the lower level has a facade which contains four one-and-one-half story, low-arched openings some of which retain wooden paving blocks, (second, fourth, sixth and eighth bays) and enclosed offices (first, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth bays). Symmetrical about the center (fifth) bay which contains groups of tri-partite windows, the third and fifth bays each contain a center entry, with pedimented cap, flanked by paired windows and surmounted, at the second story, by a blind arch. End bays (first and ninth) each contain a battery of five windows at the first story and two windows at the second. The lower section's center bay is partially blocked by a viaduct which provides access to the pier's main entry at the third story. End walls of the lower section contain one set of tri-partite windows in each bay at each story; the front two bays (south) are faced with the same materials as the facade of the lower section, while the rear two bays are faced with stucco and trimmed with cast-stone quoins.

The upper level of the head house (third and fourth stories) contains a monumental facade, arranged symmetrically about a triumphal arch motif and faced with cast-stone ashlar. The facade's central two-story arch is flanked by four (paired) engaged Tuscan columns. Set between each pair of columns is a one-story doorway with a moulded cap set on consoles and crested with acroteria and dolphins. Above each doorway is a decorative panel bearing the projecting bow of a ship surmounted by an urn which originally served as the base of a flagpole. The bow of each ship is decorated with an eagle figurehead, oars and garland. Above the engaged columns is an entablature, cornice with dentils and parapet. At its ends and above each column, the parapet is braced by stylized volutes. Flanking this triumphal arch are six two story arches (three on each side). Each arch has a moulded architrave and console keystone. Each end bay (first and ninth) contains a group of three windows with transoms at each story. Extending the length of the facade is an entablature, cornice with dentils and low parapet. Endwalls are identical: each is covered with stucco and trimmed with quoins and a cornice. Set in each bay at each story is a tripartite window with transoms (1/1 sash).



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED AUG 18 1979

DATE ENTERED OCT 10 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Set behind the head house's seven arches (third and fourth stories) is a concourse, the major elevation of which (north) is seven bays long and mimes the arrangement of the facade with seven blind arches. Flanking the central arch are two one-story entries with caps of acroteria and marine animals. End walls of the concourse each contain a central blind arch flanked by single windows. Trim of the arches, windows and doorways is of cast-stone. Other surfaces are of buff brick with bandings of lighter and darker bricks forming panels. The ceiling of the concourse is of exposed metal truss.

Set behind the head house are three steel-truss and concrete sheds, which were originally separated by light wells and linked by covered walkways. The inner walls of these sheds have been removed and the original light wells have been built over to crease one large interior space. Original skylights have also been removed.

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	X ARCHITECTURE	— EDUCATION	X MILITARY	— SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
— 1700-1799	— ART	— ENGINEERING	— MUSIC	— THEATER	
— 1800-1899	X COMMERCE	— EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	— PHILOSOPHY	X TRANSPORTATION	
X 1900-	— COMMUNICATIONS	— INDUSTRY	— POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	X OTHER (SPECIFY)	maritime history
		— INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

1914

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

H.P. Converse and Company

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Commonwealth Pier possesses integrity of location, design, setting and materials. Historically, the pier building is significant as the world's largest pier at the time of its construction and as the first construction project carried out in commercial development of the South Boston Flats. In addition, the pier's head house is one of Boston's major examples of Beaux Arts architecture.

Planned as part of a vigorous campaign for the enlargement of Boston's port, Commonwealth Pier was built for the Directors of the Port of Boston, the first city appointed authority of its type in the United States, established in 1911. Together with the neighboring Fish Pier, built in 1914 to house the Boston Fish Market, the Commonwealth Pier brought about a re-juvenation of Boston's maritime interests and signalled the re-emergence of Boston as an important industrial and commercial port in the twentieth century.

Following its completion, the Commonwealth Pier became the center of the American wool trade, handling the unloading of imported wool for New England's textile industry. The pier also served as a Port of Entry for immigrants to the United States; the first passenger liners operating from the Commonwealth Pier were owned by the Hamburg-American Line, which brought immigrants to Boston from Germany and intermediate European ports.

During World War I, the Pier served many of the major shipping lines displaced by New York's use as a naval station. It was a Naval Supply Station during World Wars I and II, and was used by the U.S. Army to land displaced persons from 1947-1949. During the early 1950's, the Pier was used to service passenger and cargo ships, but Pier business declined as air travel grew and rail service diminished. Commonwealth Pier today is owned and operated by the Massachusetts Port Authority and is used for large expositions, offices and short-term warehousing, and serves as Boston's only passenger ship terminal for limited steamship activity.

As one of the two major examples of public Beaux-Arts architecture in Boston (the other being the Low Service Pumping Station in Chestnut Hill), the Pier head house at the upper level presents a monumental facade for foot, carriage, and motor traffic to the Pier. Its strong classical elements are representative of the turn-of-the-century styles of Boston's public architecture. The arcade is reminiscent of other transportation centers in the city, most notably Union Station (1894, demolished 1927) and to some extent the similarly monumental but more stylistically restrained South Station (1899, partially demolished). Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, the prominent



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

AUG 16 1979

DATE ENTERED

OCT 10 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

Boston firm which designed these two stations, may also have been responsible for the design of the Pier head house, although no architect is named in contemporary Port Authority documents.

The pier sheds and head house were constructed by H.P. Converse and Company under the supervision of Frank W. Hodgdon, City Engineer. The pier complex was planned to contain three transportation systems: rail, marine, and vehicle, in one facility, a unique and efficient arrangement which resulted in the Pier's pre-eminence as a passenger and freight terminal. Freight traffic was restricted to the outer sheds, which, at ground level, were served by railroad tracks. A direct line for freight delivery was established linking Commonwealth Pier with other terminals throughout the South Boston area. A viaduct spans the tracks and trucking approaches to the Pier, connecting at the third story of the head house, where baggage and waiting rooms for passengers were located. From the Pier, passengers could be transported across the viaduct to nearby South Station, or could board trains directly from the lower level. The Pier's plan may have been influenced by the more elaborate system of levels and connecting ramps at Grand Central Station in New York City.



9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Port of Boston, Directors Reports, 1913, 1915.
Port of Boston, The Port Book of Boston, October 1913.
Tucci, Douglas Shand, Built in Boston, Boston, New York Graphic Society, 1978.
"Port Directors Hustle", Boston Evening Transcript, November 11, 1912, p. 1.
Boston Evening Transcript, November 9, 14, 21, 1912: related articles.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA *79,500 = 1.8 A*

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 900,000 sq. ft.

QUADRANGLE NAME Boston South

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 10 331 8910 4690 6000

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please refer to the attached Boston Redevelopment Authority map on which the boundaries are delineated. The nomination includes the entire pier and buildings thereon.

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

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

Judith McDonough, Boston Landmarks Comm.

NAME / TITLE

Brian R. Pfeiffer, Consultant with

Ann Beha Associates, Consultants

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Massachusetts Historical Commission

July 1979

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

294 Washington Street

(617) 727-8470

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Boston

Massachusetts

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *William Webster*

8/9/79

TITLE

Executive Director, Mass. Historical Commission

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

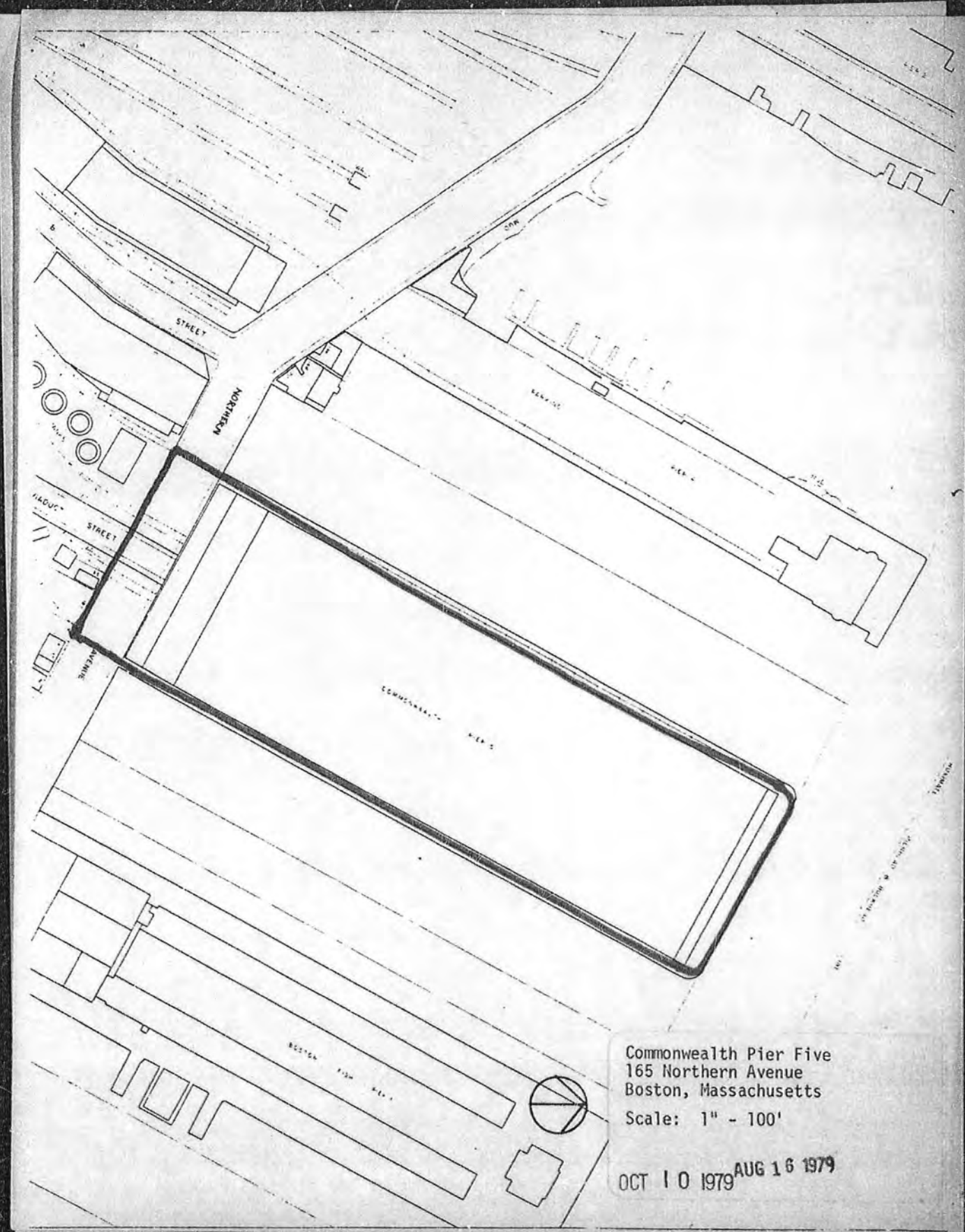
John A. Stuel

DATE 10-10-79

ATTEST: *Margaret Walling*

DATE 10/9/79

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION



Commonwealth Pier Five
165 Northern Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts
Scale: 1" = 100'

OCT 10 1979 AUG 16 1979

Property Commonwealth Pier Five

State MA (Suffolk) Working Number 8.16.79.1972

TECHNICAL

Photos 1
Maps 41

CONTROL

OK 8.16.79

The Commonwealth Pier 5 was constructed as part of a vigorous campaign to enlarge Boston's port. It is credited (in conjunction with the neighboring Fish pier) with rejuvenating Boston's maritime interests. It is also one of Boston's major examples of Beaux Arts style architecture.

HISTORIAN

Accept
Outline
10-17-79

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory

Review

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

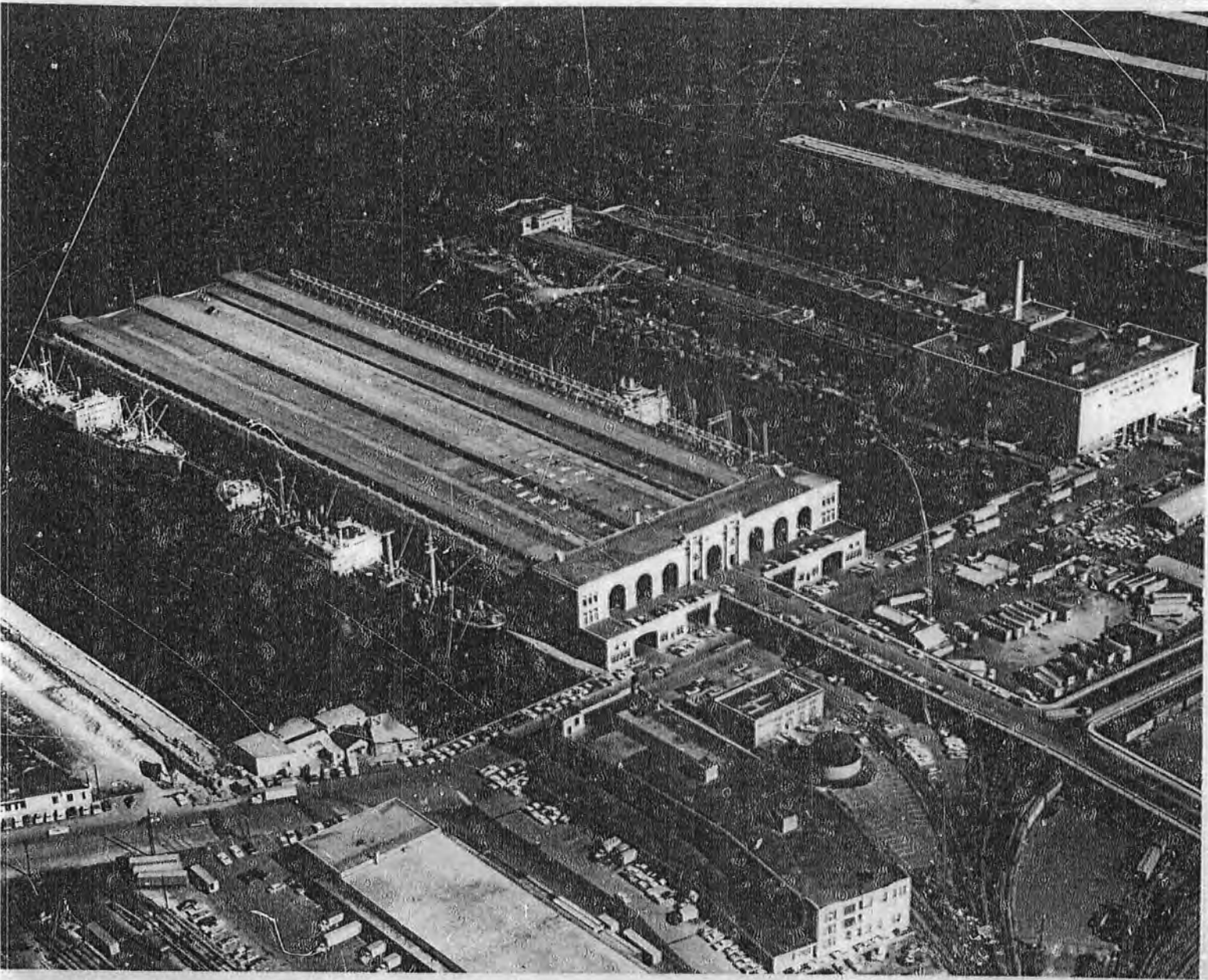
National Register Write-up

Federal Register Entry

Send-back

Re-submit

Entered OCT 10 1979



DOE
OCT 10 1979

Commonwealth Pier Five
Boston, Mass., *Suffolk County*, MASSACHUSETTS
Laurence Lowry 1950
234 Cabot Street
Beverly, Mass.

Photo #1 *1/1*
Ariel view

AUG 18 1974

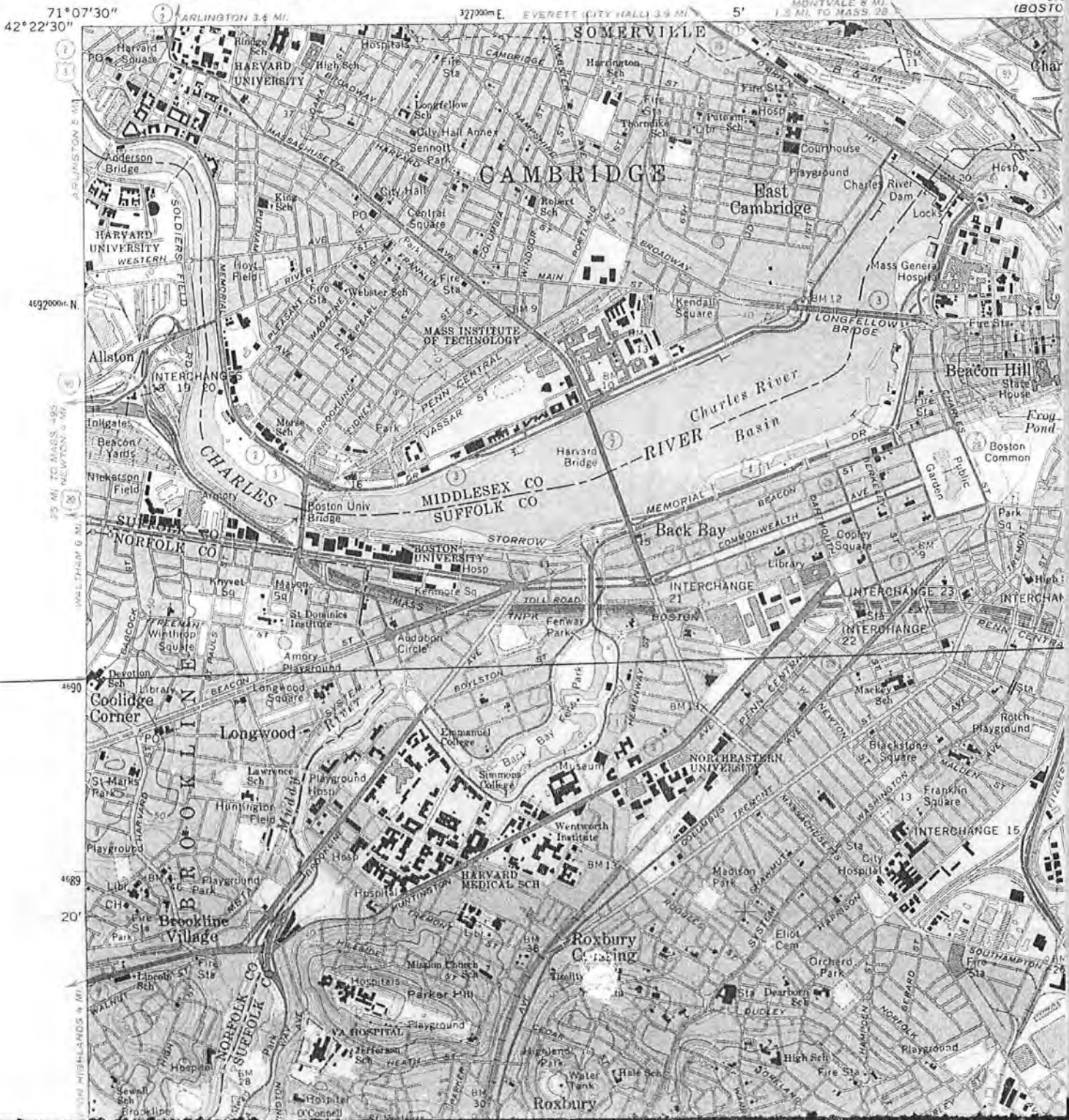
LAURENCE LOWRY

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

234 CABOT STREET
BEVERLY, MASS.

#20383

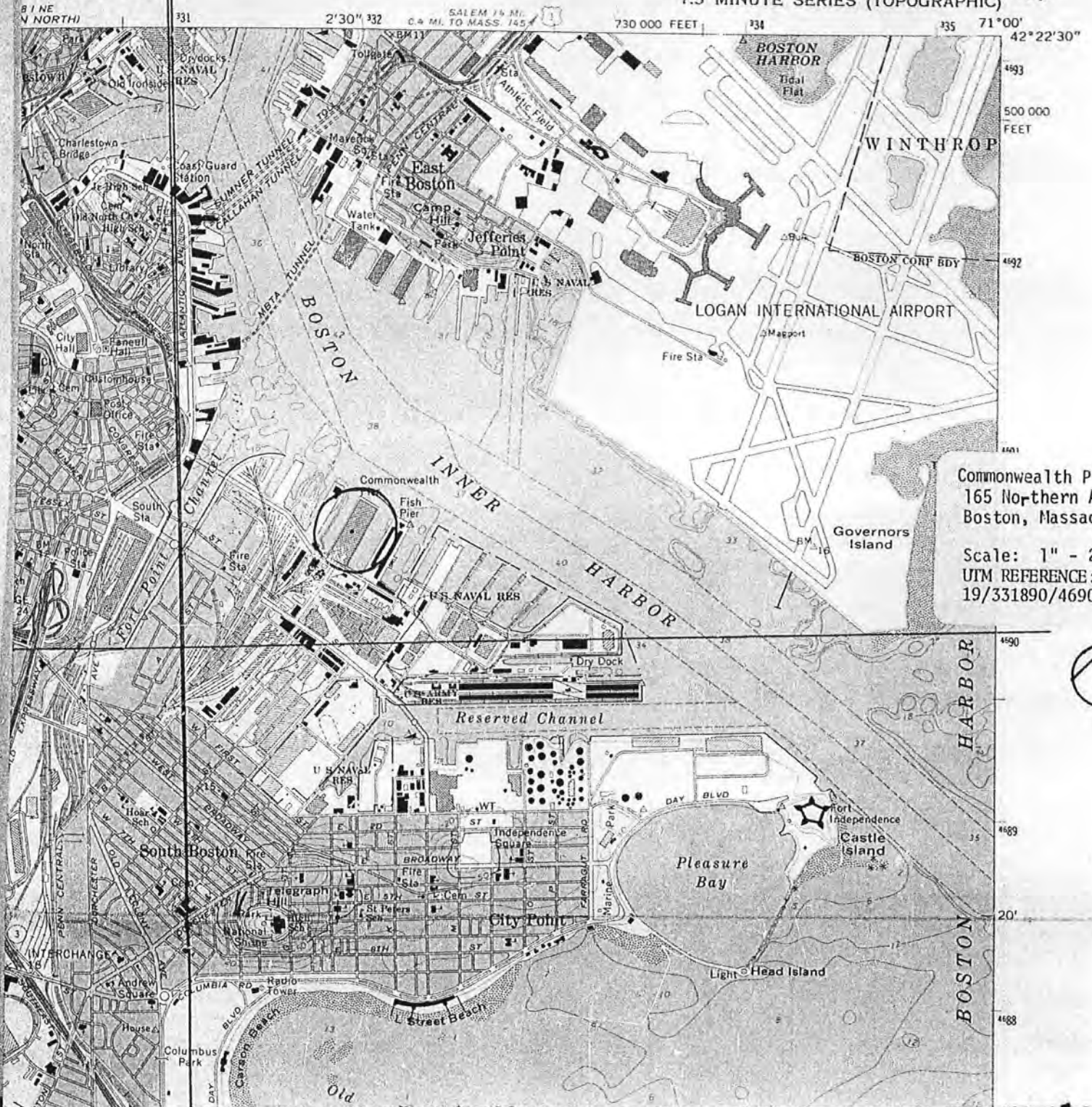
6768 1 NW
EXINGTON)

676
(BOSTO

OF MASSACHUSETTS
F PUBLIC WORKS

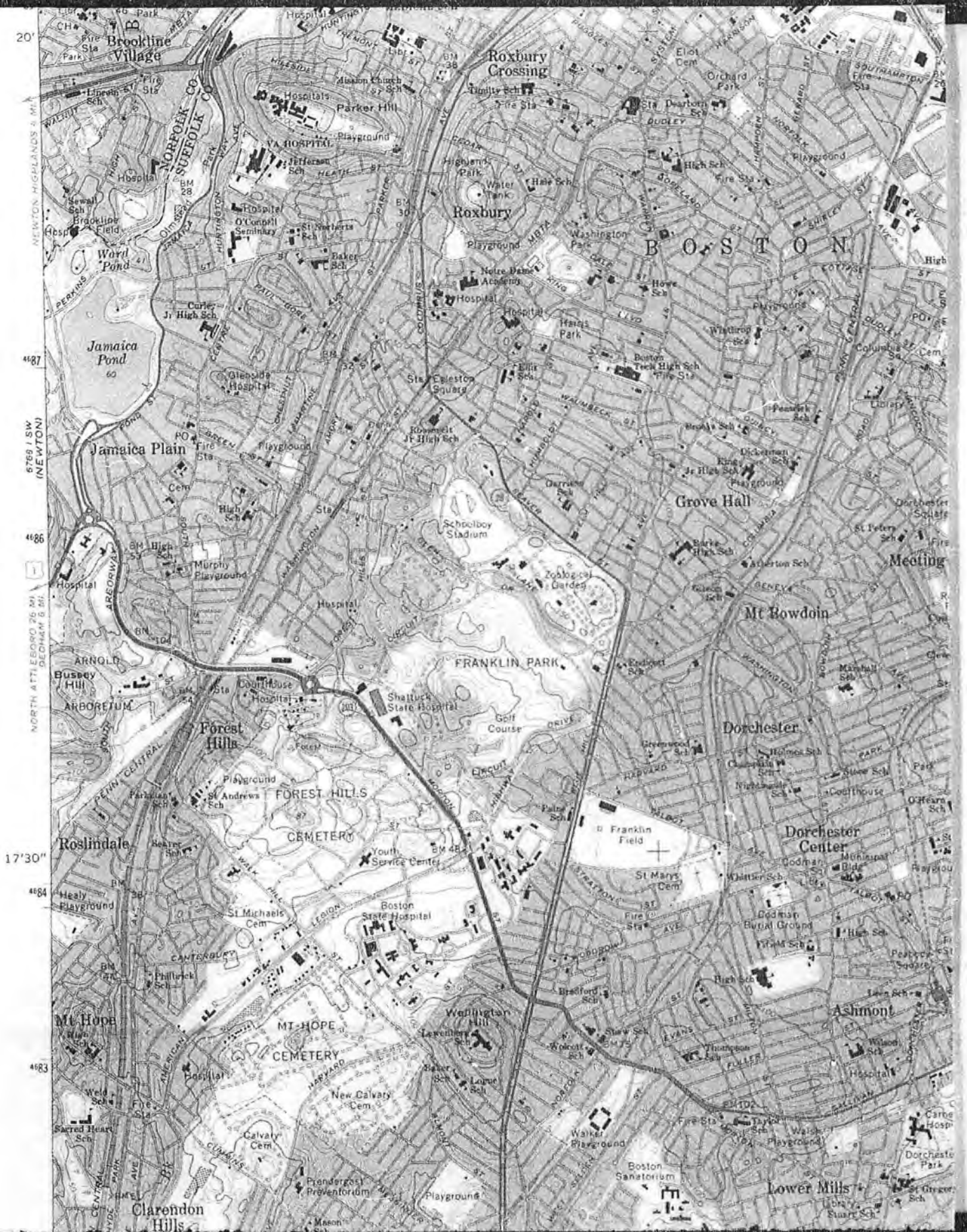
BOSTON SOUTH QUADRANGLE
MASSACHUSETTS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

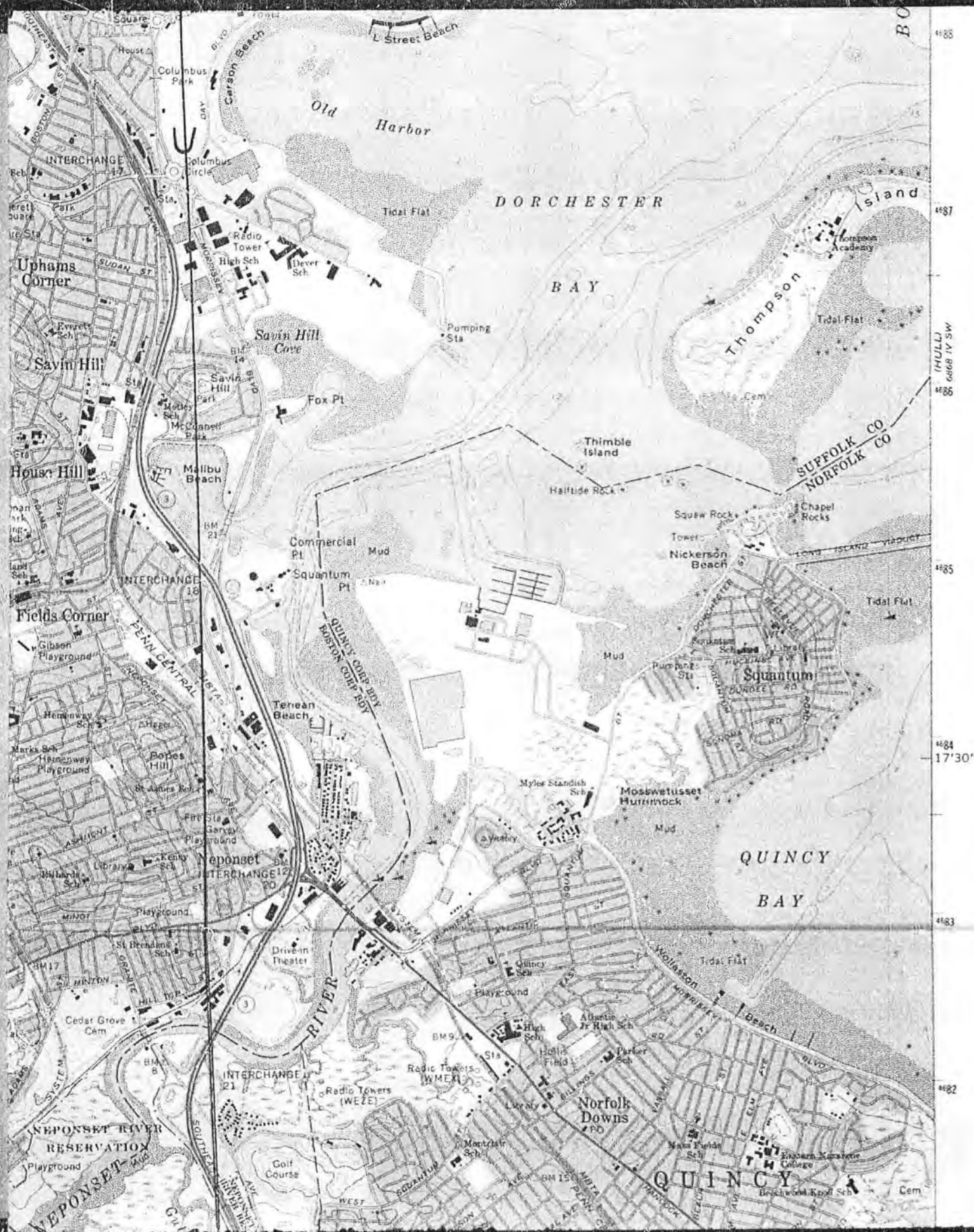
6868 IV HW
(L-VNN)

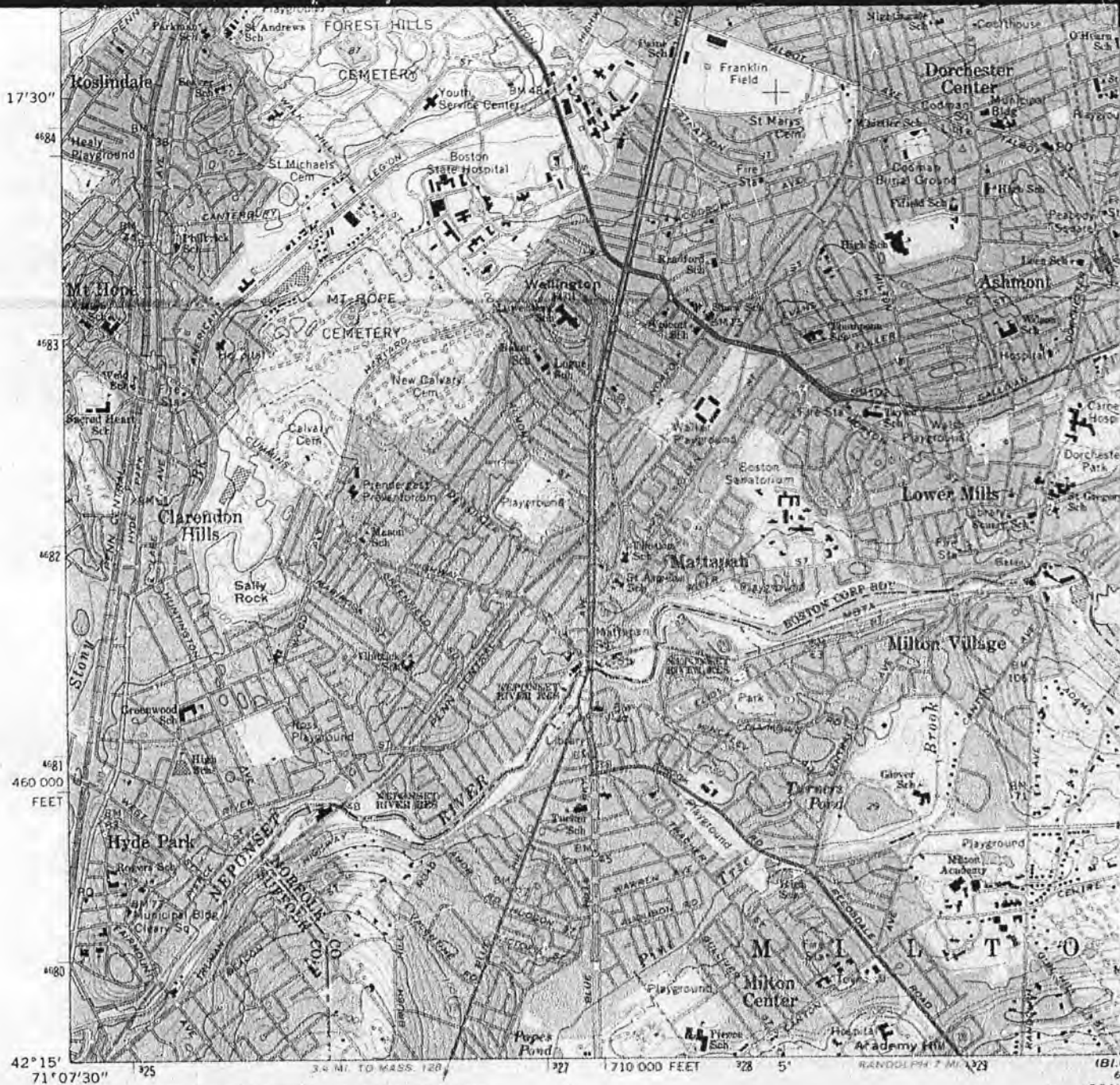


Commonwealth Pi
165 Northern A
Boston, Massac

Scale: 1" = 2
UTM REFERENCE:
19/331890/4690







Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey

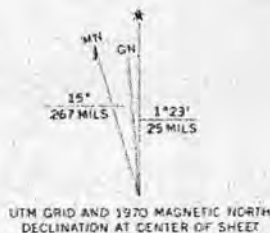
Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970

Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 246 and 248 (1971). This information is not intended for navigational purposes

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone
1,000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 19, shown in blue

Boundaries in tidewater areas from information supplied by Massachusetts Department of Public Works

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



CONTOUR 11

DATUM 15

DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE MEAN RANGE OF

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH N/
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC M



**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

August 10, 1979



Mr. Ronald Greenberg, Acting Chief
Registration Branch
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
440 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20243

Dear Mr. Greenberg:
Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

Boston	Commonwealth Pier Five
Beverly	Beverly Depot
Newton	Winslow-Haskell Mansion

All of these properties have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Please note that the owners of Commonwealth Pier Five have applied for a grant under the Maritime Preservation Grant Program.

Sincerely yours,

Christine Boulding

Christine Boulding
Survey Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

encl.

MASSACHUSETTS

Date Entered

OCT 10 1979

Location

Boston
Suffolk County

NR Byers/bjr 10/11/79

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

NAME: NAME:		STATE: MA	FED. REG. PENDING: 8.28.79 EXTENDED TO:
Commonwealth Pier Five		COUNTY: Suffolk	DATE RECEIVED: 8.16.79.1972
STATE: MA			DATE RETURNED TO SHPO OR FED. REG.:
LOCATION:			DATE RETURNED TO N.R.:
STREET & NUMBER: 165 Northern Ave.			DATE SENT TO CONGRESS: 10/16/79
CITY, TOWN: Boston			
DATE LISTED IN N.R.: OCT 10 1979	CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 9th		
☒ SN ☐ FN ☐ NHL ☐ NPS ☐ HABS ☐ HAER			
REMARKS: <i>for Edward M. Kennedy</i> <i>for Paul M. T. Longo</i>			
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATIONS CONTROL			FHR-8-257 (11/78)

Form No. 10-300a
(Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	AUG 16 1979
DATE ENTERED	OCT 10 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Boston firm which designed these two stations, may also have been responsible for the design of the Pier head house, although no architect is named in contemporary Port Authority documents.