

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wilson's Diner (The Diners of Massachusetts MPS)
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 507 Main Street not for publication
city or town Waltham vicinity 017
state Massachusetts code MA county Middlesex code 027 zip code 02454

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith B. McDonough 7/29/99
Signature of certifying official/Title Judith B. McDonough, Executive Director Date
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall 9/22/99
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Wilson's Diner
Name of Property

Waltham, Middlesex County, Massachusetts
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	building
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Twentieth-Century Commercial Architecture:

The Diners of Massachusetts

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Barrel Roof Diner

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls porcelain enamel

roof rubber

other steel

wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Wilson's Diner
Name of Property

Waltham, Middlesex County, Massachusetts
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1949-1960

Significant Dates

1949

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Worcester Lunch Car Company

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

The Diners of Massachusetts MPS
Wilson's Diner
Waltham (Middlesex Co.), MA

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7. Description

Wilson's Diner, 507 Main Street, Waltham is a very well preserved and late example of the traditional barrel-roofed diner form in Massachusetts. Manufactured in 1949 as #819 by the Worcester Lunch Car Company, Wilson's Diner displays the form for which the company is best known. It is the only diner in Waltham.

The diner is located on U. S. Route 20 at the eastern edge of Waltham's downtown business district. Surrounding development is a mix of commercial and residential uses. The diner is immediately adjacent to the sidewalk and has a paved parking area to the west. A concrete block kitchen wing connects the rear of the diner to the southeast corner of the house at 509 Main Street. While the house to the rear is sizable in scale, the diner's physical connection to the house is not immediately apparent when the diner is viewed from the street. For the purpose of this nomination, the house is a noncontributing building.

Wilson's Diner is ten bays wide and three bays deep, on a brick foundation, with a rounded hipped roof clad in rubber membrane, and porcelain enamel wall panels in light blue and pale yellow. Integral entries with short staircases are located at either end of the diner. These entries retain original stainless steel doors with sunburst motifs. Windows have single-hung sash and transoms above. Signage for the diner appears on the wall panels and in a rooftop-mounted sign. Running along the east side of the concrete block kitchen wing is a long, narrow, wrought iron porch on a high concrete foundation; this porch, which provides exterior access to the kitchen wing, was built sometime after 1950 and before 1972 [Sanborn maps]. This porch does not compromise the integrity of the diner and is not clearly visible from the street, due to the narrow distance between the diner and a fast-food restaurant on the adjacent property to the east.

Remarkably intact on the interior, Wilson's Diner has a full-length marble counter with center staff entrance. Seating includes eighteen steel counter stools with blue porcelain enamel accents, and wooden booths at the windows along the south (front) wall. The light blue and pale yellow color scheme of the exterior is carried to the interior in the tiling of the counter apron, floor, and south wall, all of which also display accents in steel and black tile. The end walls and most cabinetry have a wood finish, the barrel ceiling is Formica, and the back bar is steel. Centered on the steel hood behind the counter is a steel-rimmed clock that reads *WORCESTER DINERS*. The seat coverings of the stools and booths were recently replaced with bright blue vinyl.

Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric sites are located on the nominated property, it is possible that sites are present. One site is recorded in the general area (within one mile) of the diner. In general, however, environmental characteristics of the property, especially its distance of over 1000 feet from the nearest wetlands, are not locationally favorable for most types of prehistoric sites. Most prehistoric sites in the region are located in close proximity to streams, ponds and wetlands within the Charles River drainage. Given the above information, the small size of the parcel (less than 0.5 acres) and installation of the diner, addition, paved parking area, adjacent house and utilities, a low potential exists for locating prehistoric resources on the property. A low potential also exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the Wilson Diner property. No potential historic period archaeological resources have been identified for the property prior to installation of the diner and the related facilities listed above. No information is also currently available for the non-

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

The Diners of Massachusetts MPS
Wilson's Diner
Waltham (Middlesex Co.), MA

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contributing residence connected to the rear of the diner, however, the small size of the parcel and construction impacts from extant structures and related facilities precludes the possibility of surviving archaeological resources on the property.

(end)

8. Statement of Significance

Wilson's Diner is a fine and late example of the traditional barrel-roofed diner produced by the Worcester Lunch Car Company, the state's premier diner builder and a major force in the design and construction of Massachusetts diners prior to World War II. As a postwar example of the Worcester company's handcrafted work, Wilson's Diner illustrates the diner form most closely associated with the history of Massachusetts diners since the 1920s. Locally Wilson's also is significant for its associations with Chester and Alice Wilson, whose interest in serving Waltham residents and travelers on U. S. Route 20 produced not only Wilson's Diner but also a "tourist home" across the street. Wilson's Diner retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. For its clear associations with a burgeoning automobile culture in Waltham and in Massachusetts following World War II, as well as its form and its high degree of architectural integrity, Wilson's Diner meets Criteria A and C and Criteria Consideration G of the National Register of Historic Places at the state and local levels.

The Worcester Lunch Car Company delivered Wilson's Diner to Waltham on March 24, 1949. Chester M. and Alice Y. Wilson, the original proprietors, settled in Waltham in the mid-1940s, according to city directories, when they took up residence at 480 Lexington Street. They first opened Wilson's Diner in 1946 at 3 Carter Street, a property located south of the common in the city's downtown business district. The Carter Street building (now demolished) had existed since at least 1939, and had served as a restaurant or lunchroom under at least two prior owners. When the Wilsons relocated their diner business to Main Street in 1949, the immediate vicinity encompassed several stores, houses, a shoe repair business, the St. Joseph's church complex, offices, and a rest home. City directories indicate the only other diner operating in Waltham at the time was the Monarch Diner at 789 Main Street (removed or demolished). By 1955, a third diner—Banks Square Diner—was operating in the storefront commercial block at 979 Main Street. At that time, the city also had nine eating establishments with "lunch" or "luncheonette" in their names.

Between 1955 and 1958, the Wilsons opened Tourist Haven, a tourist home at 500 Main Street directly across the street from the diner. The house survives and now has storefront additions at the ground floor. The Wilsons were associated with Tourist Haven until at least 1969, according to directories. However, they apparently sold the diner business by 1960, at which point Fred Marcell of West Newton became the proprietor. Marcell may be the same as J. Fred Marcell who is listed in the 1960 city directory as the owner of Waltham Compass Company and City Hall Jewelers, both in Waltham. About 1964, the business was sold to Costas J. Moraites of Medford, who operated the diner through the 1960s under the name of John & Nicholas Inc.

Wilson's Diner is the only diner extant in Waltham. One of the later examples of a Worcester lunch car in Massachusetts, Wilson's Diner suggests a desire on the part of the Wilsons for the traditional diner form to house their business. This traditional form failed to compete successfully, however, with the larger stainless steel diners then available from several out-of-state manufacturers. The Worcester company sold its last new diner in 1957, eight years after delivering Wilson's Diner, and closed in 1961.

(end)

Wilson's Diner
Name of Property

Waltham, Middlesex County, Massachusetts
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one-half acre

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19	316310	4694860	3.		
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.			4.		
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
			_ See continuation sheet		

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathleen Kelly Broomer, consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date July 1999

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Veronica Wilson

street & number 78 Lincoln Street telephone 781-899-0760

city or town Waltham state MA zip code 02454

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503. NPS Form 10-900 OMB No.

1024-0018
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

The Diners of Massachusetts MPS
Wilson's Diner
Waltham (Middlesex Co.), MA

Section number 9/10 Page 1

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Gutman, Richard J. S. *American Diner Then and Now*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993.
Diner Finder Deluxe: Massachusetts. Watertown, MA: Coffee Cup Publications, 1991.
Polk's Waltham City Directory (1939, 1943, 1948, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1960, 1964, 1965, 1969). Boston: R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, years as noted.
Worcester Lunch Car Company Record Books: 1914-1967. File cards with information for service, ca. 1950s.
Worcester Historical Museum.
Sanborn fire insurance maps for Waltham: 1938 (corrected to 1950), 1972.
Waltham building department, building permits.

(end)

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the accompanying detail of the City of Waltham's assessors' map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire parcel that has been historically associated with the diner.

(end)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Wilson's Diner
NAME:

MULTIPLE Diners of Massachusetts MPS
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Middlesex

DATE RECEIVED: 8/09/99 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/24/99
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/09/99 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/23/99
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 99001126

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 9/23/99 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



BREAKFAST • LUNCH • DINNER TAKE OUTS!
Wilson's DINER

Wilson's

BOOTH SERVICE

BOOTH SERVICE

Wilson's Diner
507 main street
Waltham, Middlesex County, Mass.

~~HE~~ View NW
1998

Photo: KK Broomer

Neg: MHC



Wilson's Diner
507 main Street
Waltham, Middlesex County, Mass.

Interior view E

1998

Photo: KK Broomer

Neg: MHC



WILSON'S DIRECT
 507 MAIN STREET, WALTHAM
 THE DINING OF MASSACHUSETTS, INC.

CITY OF WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
 MAPS PREPARED BY
CANTHEM Autometric
 WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

CONTROL BY SCOTFIELD BROTHERS, REGISTERED LAND SURVEYORS
 AND PATHEON COMPANY
 CONTROL BY STEREOPHOTODIAPHRAMETRIC METHODS
 DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY APRIL 1974

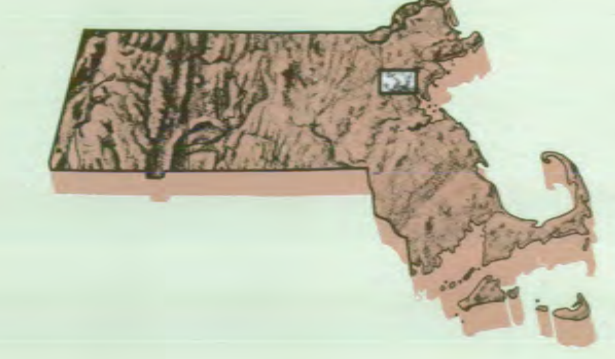
SCALE 1:1200 (1 INCH = 100 FEET)
 0 100 200 300 400 FEET

- LEGEND
- ROADS
 - PAVED
 - UNPAVED
 - RAILS OR TRAILS
 - RAILROAD
 - BRIDGES
 - WATER
 - UTILITY
 - LIRES
 - FENCES
 - WALLS
 - STONE
 - SETBACKS
 - CITY BOUNDARY
 - RIVERS
 - STREAMS/RITCHES
 - QUAYS
 - LAKES/PONDS
 - SWAMP
 - TREES
 - HERDS



Boston North MASSACHUSETTS

1:25 000-scale metric
topographic map



7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE
SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names



Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Massachusetts Department of Public Works
 Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies
 Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1978. Field checked 1979. Map added 1985
 Supersedes Boston North and Lexington 1:25,000 scale maps dated 1971
 Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS chart 13272 (1982)
 This information is not intended for navigational purposes
 Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 19
 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, maintained since 1927 North American Datum
 To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 0.9 meters south and 41 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks
 Three may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
 CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER
 OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.5 METER
 DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN METERS
 DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
 SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
 THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2.9 METERS

THIS MAP COMPLEYS WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
 DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

Meters	Feet	DECLINATION DIAGRAM	ADJOINING MAPS
1	3.2808		1 2 3
2	6.5617		4 5
3	9.8425		6 7 8
4	13.1234		
5	16.4042		
6	19.6850		
7	22.9659		
8	26.2467		

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

UTM grid convergence (GM) and 1985 magnetic declination (MD) at center of map
 Diagram is approximate

ISBN 0-607-23443-1
 9 780607 234435

Topographic Map Symbols

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road, trail
- Route marker: Interstate, U. S., State
- Railroad: standard gage; narrow gage
- Bridge: drawbridge
- Footbridge; overpass; underpass
- Build-up area: only selected landmark buildings shown
- House; barn; church; school; large structure
- Boundary:
 - National, with monument
 - State
 - County, parish
 - City township, precinct, district
 - Incorporated city, village, town
 - National or State reservation; small park
 - Land grant with monument; found section corner
 - U. S. public lands survey; range, township, section
 - Range, township, section line: location approximate
- Fence or field line
- Power transmission line, located tower
- Dam with lock
- Canal; grout
- Campground; picnic area; U. S. location monument
- Windmill; water well; spring
- Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cove
- Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation
- Contours: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression
- Distorted surface: strip mine, lava, sand
- Bathymetric contours: index; intermediate
- Personal lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream
- Rapid, large and small; falls, large and small
- Submerged marsh; marsh, swamp
- Land subject to controlled inundation; woodland
- Stead; mangrove
- Orchard; vineyard

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request

Wilson's Diner
 307 Main Street
 Waltham, MA 02154
 617-251-4674