

PH0016047

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Massachusetts
COUNTY: Middlesex
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE AUG 14 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:
Billerica Town Common District

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Same

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Bounded by Cummings St., Concord Rd., and Boston Rd.

CITY OR TOWN:
Billerica

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Fifth

STATE: Massachusetts CODE: 025 COUNTY: Middlesex CODE: 017

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Comments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Museum <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Town Common			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Public and Private

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Billerica

STATE:
Massachusetts

CODE:
025

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Middlesex County Registry of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:
Gorham Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Lowell

STATE:
Massachusetts

CODE:
025

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth

DATE OF SURVEY: 1966, 1973 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Massachusetts Historical Commission

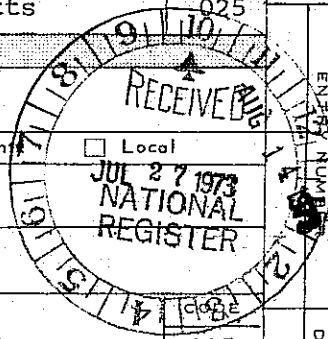
STREET AND NUMBER:
40 Beacon Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Boston

STATE:
Massachusetts

CODE:
025

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: Massachusetts

COUNTY: Middlesex

ENTRY NUMBER: 1001

DATE: AUG 14 1973

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Billerica Town Common District encompasses about twenty acres, including the Town Common and properties fronting on the roads bounding it, i.e., properties on Concord Rd. from no. 1 to no. 31, on Cummings St. from no. 1 to no. 6, and on Boston Rd. from no. 414 to no. 446. At no. 446 the district includes a portion of the rear lot line of said property to a distance of 285 feet from the front lot line. The Common is the focal center of the district. Encircled by wide roads and containing many fine old shade trees, the Common is a triangular tract of land over two acres in size and is ornamented with various monuments and memorials (most c. late 19th century) of local importance. At its southern end is a small, octagonal, wooden bandstand (1890) with Moorish influence detailing; while to the north, near the mouth of Andover Road, is a granite watering trough with stick style canopy. (1881).

The buildings surrounding the Common are a diverse and mixed group including residential, commercial, religious, and civic structures, ranging in date from the late 18th to the late 19th century. Styles represented are the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, High Victorian Gothic, and Colonial Revival modes.

The earliest structures in the district are three Federal houses: no. 432 Boston Rd. (1796), no. 1 Concord Rd. (1804), and no. 381 Boston Rd. (1811). These houses are all of substantial size and share a basic square parti that includes a five bay width to each side, hipped roof, and central entrance on at least two sides. No. 432 Boston Rd. is now partially converted to commercial use and the west front has been altered including the removal of the entrance from the center to the left side. The south elevation, with its center entrance, remains basically unchanged as does the hipped roof with tall end chimneys. A similar house, no. 381 Boston Rd., is in excellent original condition with simple exterior trim and decoration confined to the elliptical fanlight above the east entrance and the lunette above the south entrance. No. 1 Concord Rd. is the finest house in the district. Unlike the previous houses, it is clapboarded on two sides only; the north and south elevations are faced with brick. Decorative detailing extends around the house with a continuous modillion cornice and rusticated quoins at all four corners. The west, or main, facade contains a highly successful and beautiful doorway framed in clustered and panelled pilasters capped with hewn consoles and a dentil entablature. A keystone elliptical arch with recessed panelled spandrels, encloses a leaded fanlight and rests atop sidelights with leaded glass panes articulated in geometric patterns. Similar but smaller framed and fanlighted doorways are on the north and south sides. As in the other houses, a service ell extends from the rear elevation. The building is capped with a hipped roof and three bay monitor and is framed by tall, paired chimneys at the north and south ends.

The Town Common District contains three Greek Revival buildings, including two churches. The Baptist Church (1828, moved to present location from No. Billerica in 1844) is a very simple, clapboard structure of typical New England meetinghouse plan. It is rectangular with the principle entrance at the gable end and a small steeple capping the gable ridge above the

(Cont.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1655, 1660, 1707, 1797

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aborigine | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Billerica Town Common District contains some of the town's most significant buildings, and equally important, this ensemble of town common and surrounding buildings is a tangible record of the community's development and a cogent reminder of the role which the "common" played in the growth and evolution of the New England town.

The area around the Billerica Common was the earliest in the town to be settled. Several families from nearby Woburn moved here and founded the town, originally a part of Cambridge, in 1655. At that time a strip of land was set aside as "a common forever", of which the surviving Common is but a small part. In 1658, twenty-five families were here, and two years later the first meetinghouse was built at the southeast end of the Common. The original settlement buildings were clustered about this structure on the Common as a means of protection from the hostile environment. In 1707, the original ten acre Common was pared to its present two acres when the town's second minister, Samuel Ruggles, received the bulk of the Common land next to the meetinghouse in a town grant. The second (1694) and third (1738) meetinghouses continued to occupy the same location as the first, next to Rev. Ruggles' lot. This site remained the most important in the town through the eighteenth century, for not only was it the center of religious activity, but also, until a town hall was built in 1798, it was town meeting place, as well. On the Common, near the meetinghouse, was the "traying ground" where the Billerica militia mustered before marching to Concord to engage the British on April 19, 1775.

Post-Revolutionary prosperity altered the appearance of the Common. It was still the town center, but its function had changed from a place of safety and refuge for the early settlers to a setting for the town's most important public and domestic structures. Prosperous townspeople built new houses to replace the more primitive early structures. A new meetinghouse was built on land near the Common, and, when the old meetinghouse was removed, the Common's transfiguration to a pleasant, open park was complete.

(Cont.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Billerica Town Map, 1853.
 Hazen, Henry A., A History of Billerica, Mass., Williams & Co., Boston, 1883.
 "Historic Landmark", publ. by First Parish Church, Billerica, 1969.
 Hurd, Duane Hamilton, History of Middlesex County with Biographical Sketches of Some of its Pioneers, 3 vols., J. W. Lewis Co., Philadelphia, 1893.
 Kent, Louise Andrews, Village Greens of New England, M. Barrows, N.Y., 1949.
 Natural Resources Tech. Team of Middlesex County, Natural Resources Study of the Town of Billerica, Middlesex Conservation District, 1969.
 Robinson, A.G., Old New England Doorways, N. Y., 1919.

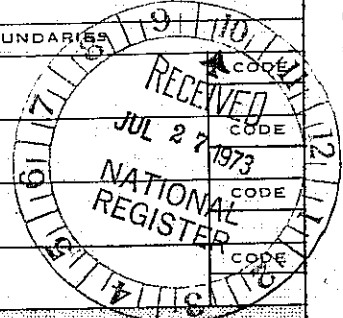
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	42° 33' 39.5"	71° 16' 16"				
NE	42° 33' 39.5"	71° 16' 02"				
SE	42° 33' 24.5"	71° 16' 02"				
SW	42° 33' 24.5"	71° 16' 16"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: approximately 2 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Alexander Cassie, Consultant for Elizabeth R. Amadon, State Survey Director

ORGANIZATION: Massachusetts Historical Commission DATE: May 15, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER: 40 Beacon Street (617) 727-8470

CITY OR TOWN: Boston STATE: Massachusetts CODE: 02108 025

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: John F. X. Davoren
 John F. X. Davoren, Secretary of the Commonwealth and Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission

Date: July 23, 1973

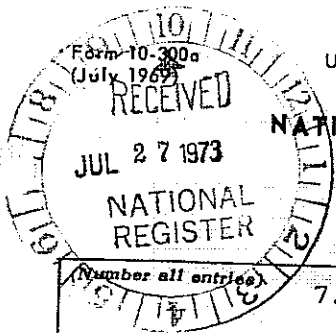
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert W. Utley
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 8/14/73

ATTEST: [Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: 8 8 73



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7. Description Cont. Billerica Common

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entrance. Corner pilasters and a prominent gable molding show the Greek Revival influence. Though the facade and steeple have been altered, and stained glass substituted for the original small paned sashes, the church's simple plan remains. The First Parish Church is a 1970 reconstruction of the original building, erected in 1797, altered to Greek Revival style in 1844, and burned in 1968. The new structure contains the original Doric portico and much of the original facade and steeple from the 1844 remodeling, making it an impressive and classic essay in the Greek Revival mode. The third Greek Revival building in the district is no. 414 Boston Rd., a large, clapboard house exhibiting mature Classical elements in its first story colonnade, roof cornice fascia band, emphatic gable ends, and pilastered cupola. Its street orientation, with the broad side of the house treated as the principle facade, is a concession to the Federal period houses of the district. A pair of nicely detailed bay windows on the west elevation are Italianate in style and probably date from the early 1860's.

The Masonic Temple on Concord Rd. was originally built as a store about 1850 and shows the influence of the Italianate style and of a later Colonial-Revival remodeling. It is two stories, of tripartite plan with clapboard sheathing on all exterior walls except the central bay of the east facade, which is matched board. Projecting eaves with corner brackets and classical window caps are Italianate. The central bay, with its four Doric pilasters rising a two-story height and terminating in a steep pediment with blank frieze and decorative oculus window, is the result of a remodeling for the purposes of the Masonic Lodge and was done early in this century. Two other mid-nineteenth century houses are at no. 1 and no. 6 Cummings St. No. 6 (1858) is a typical New England farmhouse. Built two stories high with clapboard exterior and gable roof, it is an austere building with no architectural trim or decoration except in the very simple covered porch. A barn and large ell are attached to the west side of the house. No. 1 Cummings St. (c. 1870) is a large house exhibiting aspects of the Italianate style in its three story, pentagonal bay projecting from the center of the facade, in the two story bay window on the north side, and in the wide, projecting eaves, supported at the bay and at the corners of the building by strapwork brackets. It is of wooden clapboard construction.

No. 446 Boston Rd. is a Second Empire style manse, three bays wide, two bays deep, and three stories high. It is clapboarded with a projecting entrance porch and bay above, and is well detailed with rusticated quoins at the corners of the porch and outside walls. The roof is a slate shingled, curved mansard, supported on paired brackets, with recessed dormers and a prominent central gable.

Two public buildings in the district are the Bennett Public Library and the Town Hall. The Library, on Concord Rd., is in the High Victorian Gothic style and is a small structure, of vaguely cruciform plan with a picturesque, gabled silhouette. It is constructed of red pressed brick with panel brick, sandstone, and jigsaw cut and turned wood trim. The roof is steeply pitched

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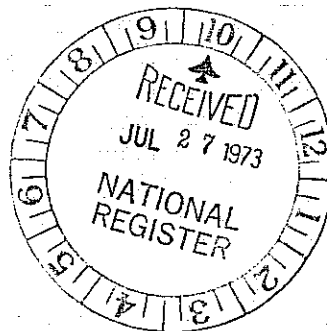
7. Description Cont. Billerica Common

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and covered with slate shingles and copper cresting. The east facade displays a large, stained glass rose window, and at the east crossing, the gable ridge is capped with a freely styled spire terminating in a copper pinnacle and weathervane. The interior has been altered very little since its construction, and the golden oak and ash wainscotting, as well as terra-cotta fireplace mantels and original furniture, remain in excellent condition.

Also on Concord Rd., is the Town Hall. The largest structure in the district, it was completed in 1895 near the site of an earlier town hall which burned in 1822. The present building is of brick with limestone trim done in the style of the late English Renaissance. It is composed in a classic 'H' plan, i.e. a long central pavillion with high hipped roof, flanked by strongly projecting, and much narrower, end pavillions. The east front of the main pavillion is embellished in the first story with a Palladian arched loggia, behind which open the main doors to the building. Above this, the second story contains a centrally placed Palladian window, flanked with two round arched windows on either side. A Wrenn-inspired cupola with a bell-roofed lantern surmounts this ensemble.

Other buildings in the district include a simple late nineteenth century wooden business block on Boston Rd. and a large modern business block on the corner of Boston Rd. and Andover Rd. and continuing to a separate three-story office building on the south side of Andover Rd.



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Significance Cont. Billerica

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From this time onward, many of Billerica's most prominent citizens settled in the district. No. 432 Boston Rd. (1796) was built by James Abbott, a town clerk and State Representative; no. 381 Boston Rd. (1811) was the home of Joseph Locke, lawyer and first Lowell Judge when that court was established in 1836; no. 414 Boston Rd. (1833) was the residence of mill-owner, Luther Faulkner; and no. 1 Concord Rd. (1804) was built for Dr. William Bowers, the town physician. The First Parish Unitarian Church (1797) and the Baptist Church (1828, moved to present location in 1844) also settled on land bordering the Common, as did the Town Hall (1845, present structure 1895) and the Public Library (1880).

The existing structures in the District all date subsequent to the Revolution and demonstrate a fine variety of New England vernacular architecture for the 110 years between 1790 and 1900. The Dr. Bowers House is an impressive country Federal mansion with beautifully scaled and detailed trim, and a much-published front entrance. The First Parish Church's reconstructed building, besides maintaining the strictest adherence to the original church design, contains the colonial pulpit and pews from the famous New Brick Church in Boston, where Ralph Waldo Emerson was minister. And, next door to the church, the Bennett Public Library is a richly ornamented and remarkably intact Victorian Gothic miniature with hardly an equal in the state. Apart from these singular structures, it is the traditions, the historical continuity of the Common itself, which provides a unifying setting for the diversity of building types and styles in the district and contributes immeasurably to a sense of Billerica's past.

