

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUL 21 1987  
date entered SEP -3 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Congress Street Fire Station (preferred)

and/or common Boston Fire Museum

2. Location

street & number 344 Congress Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Boston

N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts

code 025

county Suffolk

code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Boston Fire Museum, Inc.

street & number 344 Congress Street

city, town Boston

N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts 02210

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Suffolk County Courthouse

street & number Pemberton Square

city, town Boston

state Massachusetts

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
title BLC Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date June 1987  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town 80 Boylston Street, Boston

#310

state Massachusetts

## 7. Description

Congress Street Fire Station, Boston, Massachusetts

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	(see text)	

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Congress Street Firestation is located in the midst of a district of 19th and early 20th century wharf buildings, all owned at one time by the Boston Wharf Company. This large collection of low scale warehouses and industrial buildings is directly across the Fort Point Channel from Boston's Central Business District. The fire station is located on the corner of Farnsworth Street, a short dead-end street, and Congress Street, a major roadway which begins at Government Center, transverses the Central Business District, goes over Fort Point Channel and ends in South Boston. The main facade of the building stands directly on the line of Congress Street; the western facade stands on the line of Farnsworth Street.

The development of the Boston Wharf Company area occurred throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Originally, the area was dominated by mud flats; filling began in the 1830s and was completed after the Great Fire of 1872, when much of the fire's debris was dumped in this area. Approximately 90% of the buildings still standing were constructed before 1920. Today, many of these buildings which stood vacant for many years are used as artists lofts and are being converted to offices and condominiums. One block west on Congress Street, at the edge of Fort Point Channel is a large renovated warehouse which houses the Boston Children's Museum and the Computer Museum.

The fire house is trapezoidal in plan, thirty feet long in front and 47 feet long in the rear. It is approximately 86' deep. The building is 2 1/2 stories high with a simple flat roof. A copper shed on the roof is visible from the street. An indistinguishable structure, perhaps pipes for a canopy, is visible in an 19th century photograph of the building; they are no longer extant. The walls are constructed mainly of brick, and feature granite details and trim. The structure is erected on piles and the foundation is stone.

The main, or south elevation is divided into three parts. The first story is composed of two engine bays, separated by one heavy granite pier and flanked by two pilasters. The garage-type doors are not original, and were most likely installed accomodate new fire fighting equipment. The pier and pilasters are each constructed of five massive rusticated granite blocks and topped by carved composite capitals. A simple stone cornice separates the first from the second floors.

continued

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Congress Street Fire Station, Boston, Massachusetts

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

The second floor has four window bays set in pairs on either side of the center. The window bays are divided into three parts: on the bottom are inset brick panels; in the center are rectangular two over two sash windows; and at the top are inset, multi-paned windows. The sections are divided by plain stone lintels, and a stone stringcourse serves as the window sills. The corners on the second floor are articulated with rusticated quoins. The third floor is separated from the second by a cornice with bracket-like modillions.

An unusual pediment and chimney combination is the focal point of the third story. The triangular composition projects slightly from the wall surface, which is covered with red tile shingles made to look like a mansard roof. The pediment is distinguished from the wall by brick pilasters. Within the pediment there are three bays: the outer two house eight over eight double hung windows, while the central bay is filled in with brick. An ornate chimney stack rises from a foliated base at the center of the pediment and projects several feet above the roof. The chimney is constructed of brick and is composed of five small cylinders on each side which allude to chimney pots. The corners of the third floor are articulated by projecting piers which have foliated bases and decorative brickwork.

The side elevations are much less ornate than the front. The first story of the north elevation is composed of eight rectangular, two over two double hung windows, which are spaced asymmetrically, and two plain doors on either end. Six of the windows are single bay, while the third and fourth windows form the northeast corner are double bays. Below the double bay windows is infill brick, which suggests that there may once have been a side door or loading bay. Each window has a granite sill, and a granite stringcourse serves as the window lintels. The windows on the second floor are also spaced asymmetrically. They are similar to those on the first floor except for a small, multi-paned window over each double hung window. A corbelled brick cornice which supports a copper cornice creates a false roofline. The plane of the brick wall continues above the corbelled cornice and is divided into 3 sections vertically, by small brick pilasters.

The south elevation contains no windows. The original elevation, which was probably without windows, appears to be covered by a brick wall of a building which is no longer standing. The ghosts of the structural elements of this building are evident on the brick wall. There is a small parking lot directly to the south of the building.

continued

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Congress Street Fire Station, Boston, Massachusetts

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page

2

The rear elevation contains an asymmetrical grouping of windows and doors. There are only four glazed windows, the other window openings have been covered with wood. Although the windows have various sizes and shapes, they are all defined by heavy granite sills and lintels. The rear elevation faces a wide paved driveway

The plan of the interior is relatively well intact. The garage bays on the first floor have not been changed, and house several fire engines and other fire fighting equipment. The upper floors are suspended from the roof by an elaborate wooden truss system, allowing for an open space on the first floor with no column supports. There appears to be exhibit and meeting space on the second floor, and storage space on the third.

The exterior of the structure has sustained very few alterations during its conversion from a working fire station to a museum. The unusual fenestration of the main facade has not been changed, although the fenestration of the north and rear facades seem to have undergone some changes. Alterations to these facades appear to have occurred earlier than the change of ownership. The building appears to be in very good condition, but could use cleaning.

The Congress Street Fire Station covers the entire lot, therefore the archaeological potential for the site is greatly diminished.

## 8. Significance

Congress Street Fire Station, Boston, Massachusetts

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1891 Builder/Architect Harrison H. Atwood, Architecture

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Congress Street Fire Station possesses integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship. It has local significance as an excellent example of civic architecture, designed using a creative combination of styles including Romanesque and Panel Brick, and is the best preserved 19th century fire station in South Boston. It is an unaltered example of the work of an important City Architect, Harrison H. Atwood, and is significant for its role in community development. It thus meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places on the local level.

The Boston Fire Department was founded in 1678, making it one of the oldest fire departments in the nation. The Boston Fire Department can claim the first fire alarm box system in the United States, designed in 1851 by a doctor and fire buff, William F. Channing. Hand drawn pumps were used for almost two centuries until 1859, when a horse-drawn steam fire engine was first acquired for Engine Company No. 8. In 1910, fire engines became motorized, and in 1921, a high pressure hydrant system was completed.

This building at 344 Congress Street was the 75th structure built or acquired by the Boston Fire Department for use as a fire station. It was the first and only fire station built in the Fort Point Channel section of South Boston, and its construction coincides with the rapid development of this area as a major warehouse location during the last few decades of the 19th century. Completed in early 1891, the building was occupied by the newly organized Engine 38-39 on May 31, 1891. An 1897 photograph from the Bostonian Society Collection shows Engine 38, an Amoskeag self-propelled steam fire engine with wharf buildings and a dock in the background. Engine 38 was disbanded on February 4, 1947. Ladder 8 moved here temporarily from September, 1952 to September, 1953. Then, in 1953, Ladder 18 moved here from Pittsburgh Street.

The station was deactivated on November 11, 1977. Since that time it has been under development as a Fire Museum, first by the Museum of Transportation with the assistance of the Boston Sparks Association Inc., and then exclusively by the Boston Sparks since transfer of the deed in May, 1983.

The Boston Sparks Association was founded in 1938, in order to organize the many local "fire buffs" into a formal association. In 1955, the Boston Sparks Association formally received its charter from the International Fire Buffs Association. In 1960, the Sparks Association formally became associated with the Massachusetts Division of the Salvation Army, manning their Disaster Service Mobile Canteen Truck.

continued

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Boston South

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UTM References

A 

1	9	3	3	1	2	4	0	4	6	9	0	3	9	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

see assessor's map

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol Huggins, Boston Landmarks Commission, with Betsy Friedberg, Director National Register

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date March 1987

street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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 Valerie A Talmage

Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 15, 1987

For NPS use only

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

Patricia Andrews date 9/3/87  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Betsy Friedberg date 9/3/87  
Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Congress Street Fire Station, Boston, Massachusetts

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

1

Prior to moving into the former headquarters of Engine 39 and Ladder 18, the Sparks Association operated out of 112 Dartmouth Street from 1943 to 1968, and 99 West 4th Street from 1969 to 1983. Early in 1983, a fire destroyed the building on West 4th Street and the Sparks Association's collections. Since May 1983, the Sparks Association has made efforts to restore the firehouse and rebuild their collections. Their exhibits include a hand-drawn and hand-operated pump "Columbia" from 1863, two self-propelled "Christie" steam pumpers from 1889 and 1892, a hand drawn American LaFrance laddertruck from the turn of the century, a spring-raised water tower from 1902 with a 1924 American LaFrance tractor, and a 1945 Ward LaFrance pumper (former Engine 54). Many small artifacts, pictures and memorabilia are also on display.

City Architect Harrison Henry Atwood (1863-1954) went to school in Charlestown, studied law, and practiced architecture at the office of S.J.F. Thayer and George A. Clough, Boston's First City Architect. Atwood was also a member of the lower house of the Legislature, 8th Suffolk District between 1887-1889. During his term as City Architect, Atwood designed the fire stations at 16 Harvard Avenue in Allston, 60 Paris Street in East Boston, 157 Harrison Avenue in downtown Boston, 3089 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain and 5 Boston Street in South Boston. His most noted building is at 176-178 Commonwealth Avenue in the Back Bay; two houses served by three entrance arches whose style evolves from Romanesque to Flemish Baroque. Also attributed to Atwood are: the Bowditch School in Jamaica Plain, Prince Primary School in the St. Botolph area, Adams Primary School in East Boston, the Horace Mann School for Deaf Mutes, the Municipal Building in Roslindale, the East Boston District Court and numerous houses in Dorchester, including his own at 61 Alban Street.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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Congress Street Fire Station, Boston, Massachusetts

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

1

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Boston Directories 1893-1900.

Boston Public Library, Architects File.

Boston Sparks Association Pamphlet, (Boston, 1983).

Bostonian Society "Fire Collection," two historic photographs.

Building Permits, City of Boston, 344 Congress Street.

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Herndon, Richard, Boston of Today, (Boston, 1892).

Lyndon, Donald, The City Observed, A Guide to Architecture in the Hub,  
(NY, 1982).

Southworth, Susan and Michael, A.I.A. Guide to Boston, (Conneticut, 1984).

Werner, William "Location of Boston Fire Stations Past and Present",  
(Boston, 1970).

Werner, William, History of the Boston Fire Department and Boston Fire

Congress Street Fire Station  
344 Congress Street  
Boston, MA  
BRA Map 13E-24N  
Scale 1" = 100'



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Congress Street Fire Station  
Suffolk County  
MASSACHUSETTS

Substantive Review

Working No. JUL 21 1987  
Fed. Reg. Date: 8/2/88  
Date Due: 8/20/87 - 9/4/87  
Action:  ACCEPT 9-3-87  
 RETURN  
 REJECT

Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Substantive Review:  sample  request  appeal  NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Best preserved 19th-century fire station in South Boston. Eclectic design by City Architect Harrison W. Atwood was the first and only fire station built in North Point Channel area of S. Boston

Recom./Criteria Accept A+C  
Reviewer Swzek  
Discipline Architectural History  
Date 9/13/87  
see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below represents important municipal construction effort.

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

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> 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

Congress Street Fire Station  
 Suffolk County  
 MASSA CHUSETTS

**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: \_\_\_\_\_



CONGRESS STREET FIRE STATION

344 CONGRESS STREET

BOSTON, MA

CAROL HUGGINS

FEBRUARY, 1987

OBLIQUE VIEW, MAIN FACADE (SW)

# 1 of 3



NO PARKING  
ANY TIME

CONGRESS STREET ELEVATION FILE

344 CONGRESS STREET

BOSTON, MA

CAROL HUGGINS

FEBRUARY, 1987

MAIN (SOUTH WEST) ELEVATION

#2 of 3



FARNSWORTH St

BOSTON FIRE DEPT

CONGRESS STREET FIRE STATION

344 CONGRESS STREET

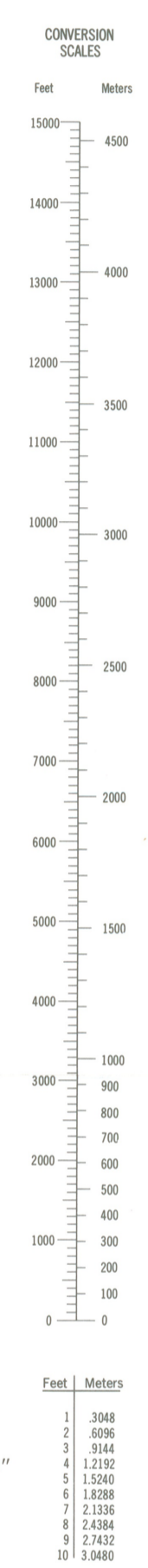
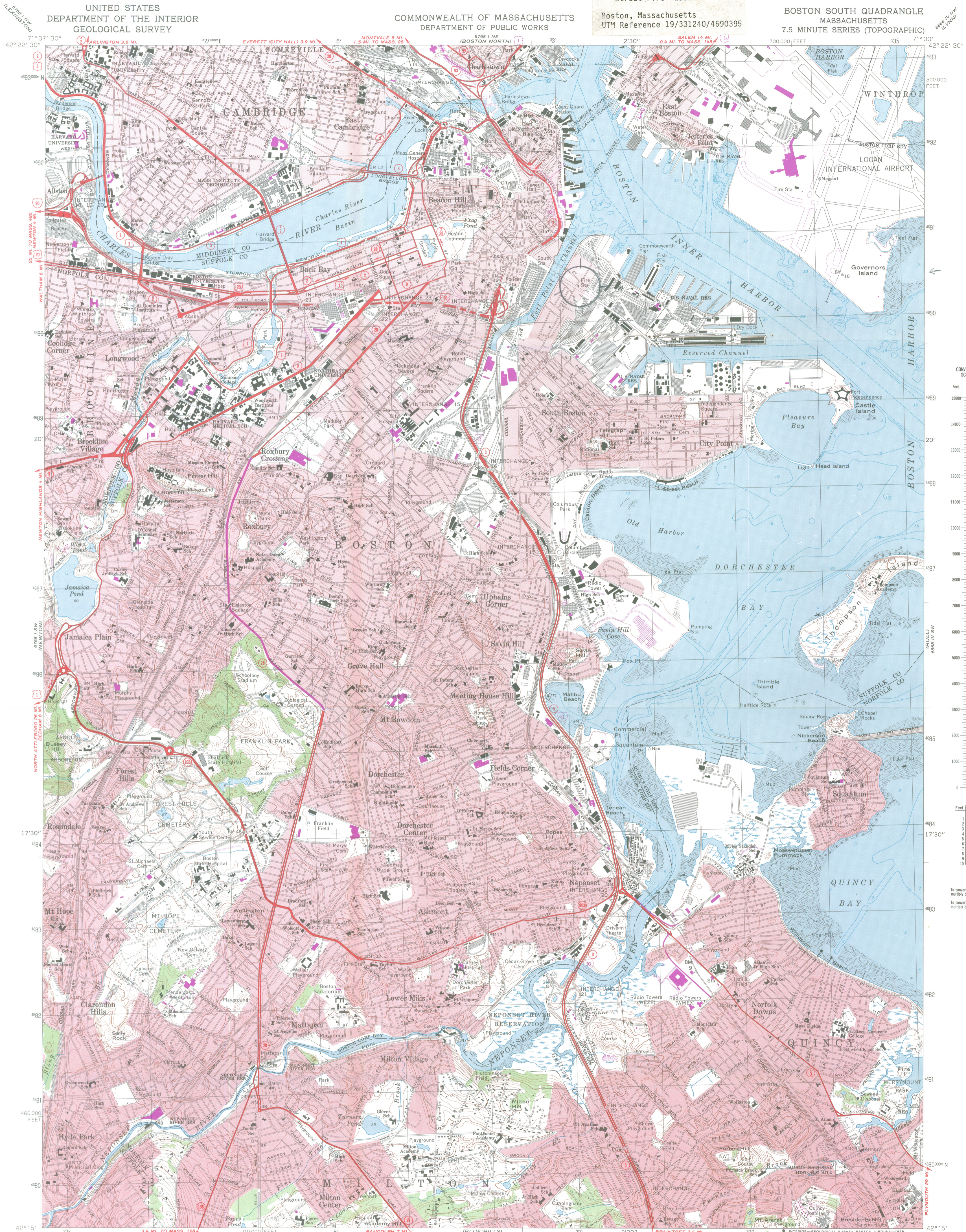
BOSTON, MA

CAROL HUGGINS

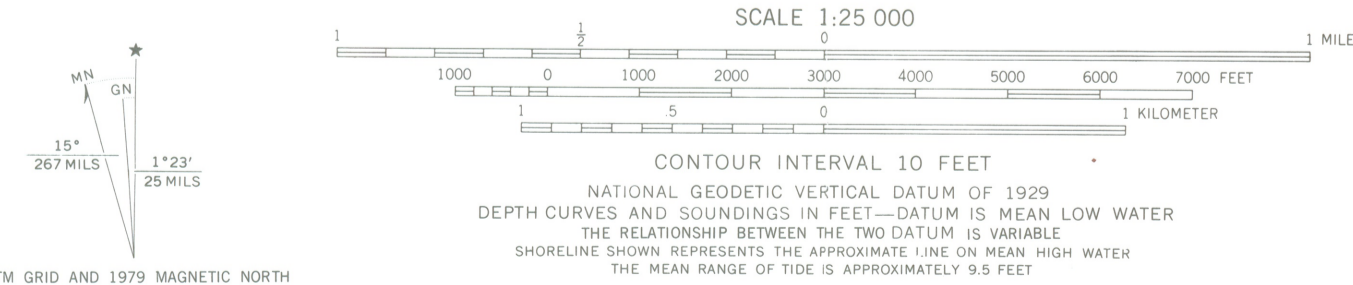
FEBRUARY, 1987

NORTH WEST ELEVATION

#3 of 3



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,  
zone 19  
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information supplied  
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway, hard surface  
Secondary highway, hard surface  
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface  
Unimproved road  
Interstate Route  
U. S. Route  
State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of  
the National or State reservations shown on this map  
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of  
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other  
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.  
N4215—W7100/7.5  
1970  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
AMS 6768 I SE—SERIES V814



P685 548131

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of the Secretary of State  
Michael Joseph Connolly, Secretary

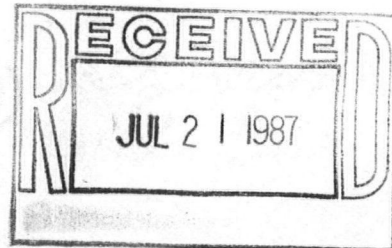
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Valerie A. Talmage

Executive Director

State Historic Preservation Officer

July 12, 1987



Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

Two Boston properties are being submitted:

Congress Street Fire Station, 344 Congress Street

New Riding Club, 52 Hemenway Street, HPCA #0618-84-MA-85-0799

Concord, Mott Shaw, Thomas Estate, 317 Garfield Road, HPCA #10297MA

Southbridge, Southbridge Town Hall, 41 Elm Street

Waltham, Lawrence, Phineas House, 257 Trapelo Road

All have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination form.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg  
National Register Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

BF/lis

Enclosure