

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No: SBR.Y
Historic Name: Park - Main Street Business District
Common Name:
Address:
City/Town: Southborough
Village/Neighborhood: Southborough
Local No:
Year Constructed:
Architect(s):
Architectural Style(s):
Use(s): Commercial District; Residential District
Significance: Architecture; Commerce; Community Planning
Area(s):
Designation(s):
Building Materials(s):



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Assessor's Sheets

54, 55

USGS Quad

Marlborough

Area Letter Form Numbers in Area

Y

53-55; 275; 519-530



Southborough
(neighborhood or village)

Southborough center

Part of Area Park/Main St. Business

Present Use District commercial, residential

Construction Dates or Period 19th-mid-20th centuries

Overall Condition fair/good

K 16-20 22-25
L 2, 5-8 10, 13
O 2-3

Main Street,
view east of
South side
from #6.

Major Intrusions and Alterations

large late-20th C. brick commercial building at 11 Main St. (#275)

Acres approximately 10 acres

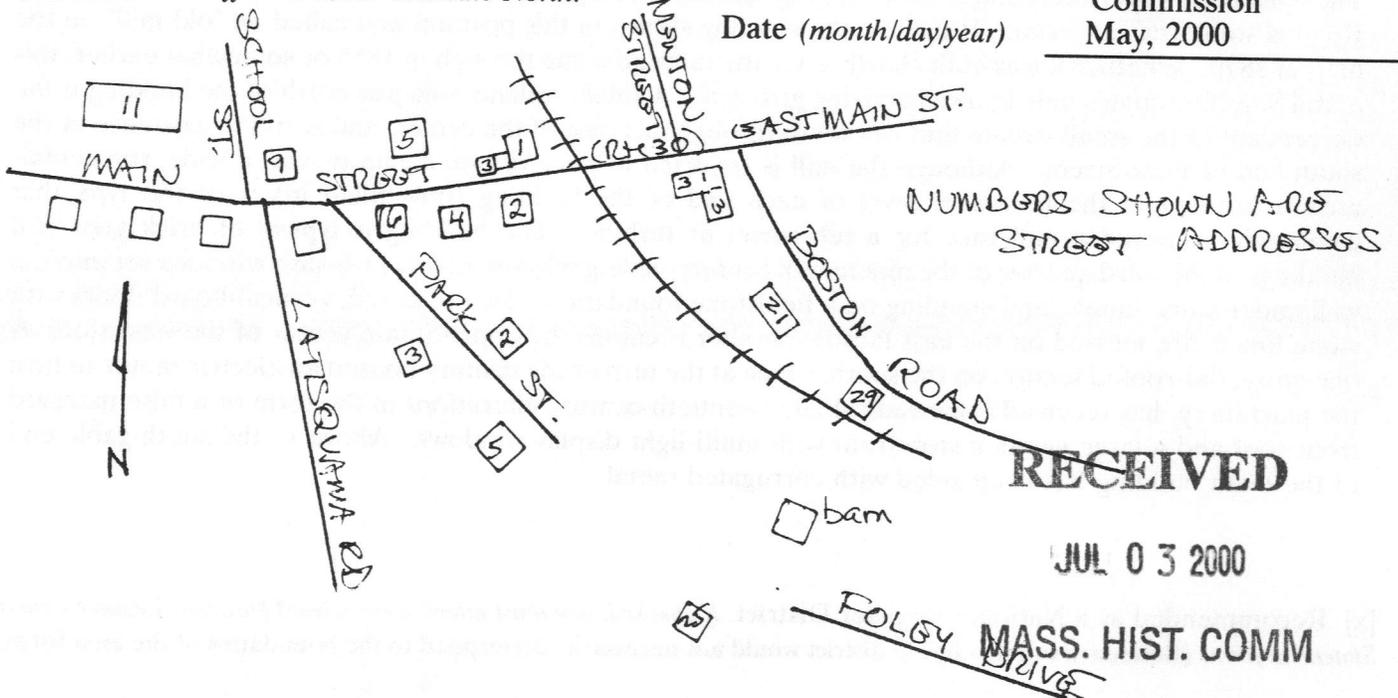
Recorded by Forbes/Schuler, consultants

Organization Southborough Historical Commission

Date (month/day/year) May, 2000

Sketch Map

Draw a 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. Attach a separate sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate North.



AREA FORM

SBR. Y

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION [x] *see continuation sheet*

Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.

This area consists of a cluster of small-scale commercial buildings, intermixed with a few residences, in the east part of Southborough center. The buildings occupy lots near the old railroad crossing on the first block of Main street, on Boston Road, and on the short, diagonal Park Street. The commercial structures represent a variety of types and construction dates, ranging from a handsome two-story nineteenth-century brick grist mill through several small early-twentieth-century brick and stucco buildings with Colonial Revival detailing. Two of the latter were originally institutional--the 1927 Southborough Fire House, and the 1964 Southborough Center Post Office--both of which were converted to commercial uses in the late twentieth century. The five residences include an early-nineteenth-century Cape Cod cottage, a side-gabled 2 1/2-story Greek Revival house of the 1840s, a cross-gabled late-nineteenth-century house, and two gable-front houses of the early twentieth century. There are a few vacant lots within the area, including the site of the Southborough Center Railroad Station between Park Street and the railroad, and the former location of an old woodframe industrial complex of attached buildings at the northwest corner of East Main and Newton Streets.

The oldest building in the district is the small 1 1/2-story, side-gabled **Flagg/Buck House** at 1 Main Street., which was moved from a location a short distance further west sometime between 1831 and 1856. Of generally Cape Cod cottage proportions, it is five- by two bays, with the low roof and 9-over-6-sash windows extending into the cornice that are characteristic of the Federal period. It is still clad in clapboard, and stands on a granite-block foundation. It is altered by later side- and rear additions, and by a twentieth-century panel and glass door, but retains its typical Federal trim of narrow corner posts, water table, and shallow cornice with bed molding. The house is attached by a northwest extension to a 1 1/2-story cross-gabled building, 3 Main Street, which may incorporate, as its earlier western, stuccoed gable-front section, an early-twentieth-century cobbler's shop. That part of the building has a 2-over-2-sash window high in the front gable, and two large 6-over-1-sash windows in the facade of its hip-roofed, one-story storefront.

Another residence, the **Francis Walker House** at 6 Main Street (see Form #54) probably dates to about 1840. This is a single-pile, 2 1/2-story, five- by two-bay house of the Greek Revival period, with pedimented side gables and a sidelighted, four-panel center entry.

The construction period of the 2 1/2-story grist mill/feed- and grain store of **C.B. Sawin & Son** at 21 Boston Road is somewhat uncertain. It may be the building shown in this position and called an "old mill" on the map of 1870. Whether it was built shortly after the railroad came through in 1855 or somewhat earlier, this is still Southborough's only known surviving grist mill. A small wetland area just north of the building is the descendant of the small stream that ran south through this part of the center, and is still in existence at the south end of Park Street. Although the mill is reported to have run on steam power, a wide, segmental-arched opening at the basement level of each end of the building (now filled in) is of the type that commonly sheltered a mill race for a tub wheel or turbine. The building is typical of brick grist mill buildings of the third quarter of the nineteenth century--side-gabled, with 6-over-6-sash windows set into the wall under stone lintels, and standing on a fieldstone foundation. Two recessed, vertical-board doors with stone lintels are located on the east facade; another occupies the approximate center of the west side. A one-story, flat-roofed section on the south, which at the turn of the century housed an electric motor to turn the machinery, has received some radical late-twentieth-century alterations in the form of a false mansard front roof and a large wooden storefront with multi-light display windows. Above it, the south gable end of the main building has been sided with corrugated metal.

[x] Recommended as a National Register District. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form. (Boundaries of an eligible district would not necessarily correspond to the boundaries of the area form).*

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community Property

Southborough Park/Main St.
business district

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Area(s) Form Nos.
Y 53-55; 275; 519-530

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, cont.

The Sawin grist mill was undoubtedly sited where it is because of the proximity of the Agricultural Railroad. On the west side of the tracks, another railroad-related building, standing just west of the site of the late-nineteenth-century railroad station (removed after World War II), is the ca. 1890 house built for the station master and telegraph operator, at 2 Park Street. Today clad in both vinyl and clapboard, this is a two-story cross-gabled building with a steeply-pitched roof, broken on the west side of the south section by a steeply-gabled wall dormer. While it has undergone some radical alterations, including window replacements, the installation of oversized modern shutters, a wooden fire escape, some loss of trim, and a one-story north addition, it still retains much of its original character. The roof eaves are unboxed, and it has a flat-roofed porch on square posts on the west side of the south section. An 80-foot-high windmill once stood behind the house. It pumped water for both the house and railroad station, which had a water storage tank in the attic.

At least three other buildings on Park Street were apparently standing by 1912, and probably by 1900. The most unusual is a one-story, hip-roofed rubble **barn or stable (#520)**. Though altered by additions of corrugated metal on the east and north, its original, cross-hipped form is evident on the south and west. The roof, now clad in standing-seam metal, still displays prominent exposed rafter ends at the broad, low eaves. Several turn of the century panel-and-glass walk-in doors remain. An octagonal wooden cupola atop the west ell of the building may date to later in the century.

The stone barn stands on the property of the house at 25 Foley Drive. Foley Drive is a late-twentieth-century subdivision street which terminates at the south edge of the area. That house, which has been altered by considerable window replacement, and by the addition of a glassed-in sunroom and the enclosure of a porch across its east facade, is a tall, 2 1/2-story gable-front, clapboarded building on a rubble foundation, probably built about 1900.

Just north of the Foley Drive property is another house, at 3 Park Street. Apparently converted to a dwelling from the late-nineteenth-century, two-story barn which is shown behind the house at 4 Latisquama Road as early as 1898, this is a broad, 2 1/2-story gable-roofed building with a sidehall entry in the northeast corner of its north gable-end. Clad in wood shingle, it has small 2-over-2-sash windows, and a hip-roofed porch along the east side, where a second, vestibuled entry is located.

The rest of the buildings in the area all began as commercial or institutional structures, and all date to the twentieth century. The earliest of them, although its form has been altered by the addition of a front-gabled roof and a hip-roofed storefront extension, is the former **First National Grocery Store** at 4 Main Street. It was built in about 1905 as a one-story, flat-roofed, wood-frame variety store, a form which it retained into the middle of the century.

A large, square rusticated-concrete-block building with a wood-frame gabled roof at 5 Park Street has always been an auto repair garage. Probably constructed in about 1920, it replaced a former wood-frame livery stable. A flat-roofed, four-bay south extension of flat concrete block probably dates to the middle of the century. (Cont.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community	Property
Southborough	Park/Main Street business district
Area(s)	Form Nos.
Y	53-55; 275; 519-530

Massachusetts Historical Commission
 220 Morrissey Boulevard
 Boston, Massachusetts 02125

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, cont.

An early-twentieth-century wood-frame, three-story rectangular business block at the southwest corner of Boston Road and Main Street, the **Masonic Block**, burned down in 1914. Within a few years it was replaced by the handsome L-plan **Newton Building**, today's 1-3 Boston Road/1-3 Main Street. This is a stylish stucco building with a steep gabled roof and a collection of large stuccoed chimneys. While some of its windows and distinctive round-arched entries have been filled in or altered, it retains its diagonal corner entrance, and, on the east side, the general pattern of its band of multi-light transomed windows.

In 1927, the town built its first major **firehouse**, at 5 Main Street. Typical of the era, this is a square, hip-roofed, one-story brick block, with three large segmental-arched openings across the facade, and an octagonal belfry in the center of the roof. The building was designed by Charles Baker, an architect from Marlborough who had a practice in Boston, and designed many municipal buildings in the Marlborough/Southborough area, including the **Fayville Baptist Church** and the **Peters High School Annex**. Although the present long northwest ell is a relatively new addition, it occupies the position of an original ell of similar proportions. The large front doors have been replaced with multi-pane glass storefront windows.

Although it has been repeatedly updated with new gas pumps, windows, and doors, the concrete-block filling station at 29 Boston Road, now **Falconi Brothers**, still has the box-like form of a World-War-II-era filling station and oil company. One story on the street, but two stories on the west, railroad side, it is the rear that retains some original features, such as large-pane multi-light windows with brick sills.

At about the same time, the low, side-gabled brick restaurant at 2 Main Street was constructed. Now McCarthy's Restaurant, it was once a soda fountain and variety store, or "spa."

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE [x] *see continuation sheet*

Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how this area relates to the historical development of the community.

The ten-acre area at the foot of Main Street is significant as the main commercial area that grew up in the center of Southborough. While some neighboring communities had developed densely-built downtowns or vigorous business districts at their town centers by 1900, Southborough's has always been small, and one of a number of village districts about equal in size that included the center of Fayville and a minor corridor along Southville Road in the south part of town.

Pre-1900 development

Until the Civil War era, the section of Main Street east of the cluster of houses around the 1806 Second Meetinghouse, Town Hall, and the Pilgrim Church was a relatively sparsely settled area, with only a few farmhouses and outbuildings located east of the intersection of North and South Streets (later School Street and Latisquama Road.) The little house at 1 Main Street, which dates to at least the early years of the nineteenth century, was moved from the east corner of Main and School Streets by **Edmund Flagg**. The Agricultural Railroad had been built through the area in 1855, coming northwest out of Framingham on its way north to Marlborough center, but it sparked little immediate building activity short of a small early depot just south of Main Street. A grist mill opposite the depot on the east side of the railroad was also built at about that time.

(cont.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community	Property
Southborough	Park/Main Street business district
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Massachusetts Historical Commission
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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

The earliest business and industrial activity here was centered around some artisans' shops along the railroad. By 1870, Francis Walker had a blacksmith shop near his house at 6 Main Street (see Form #54). He also worked as a wheelwright, and may have been the one who started the grist mill. Also, a harness-maker was working out of a building on the north side of Main, adjacent to the east side of the railroad--possibly the location of both of Francis Walker's shops. Under its later owner, John Sealey, that complex of buildings eventually grew to include other manufacturing establishments, including a wagon shop. The grist mill grew, as well. It was acquired by miller Charles Sawin, who had taken over the old Sawin Mills west of Deerfoot Road from his father, Moses. At the end of the century the Boston Road mill was steam-powered, and run by Charles's son, Henry, as Charles Sawin & Son, grist-mill operators, and dealers in hay, grain, and feed. As was typical along railroads that passed through the centers of towns, coal was also sold from at least one building on a railroad siding. A long coal shed was built attached to the north end of the grist mill, with grain storage above the coal bins (burned ca. 1950), and another was located on a siding on the west side of the tracks.

By about 1885, the early depot was replaced on the same site by a stylish brick Queen Anne/Stick-Style passenger station, with half-timbered gables, a porte-cochere, and long, open-sided passenger shelters along the tracks. It was large enough to have room for a baggage office and a turn-of-the-century custom shoemaker, Martin Davis. A freight house stood on a siding a short distance south of the station. Also in the latter part of the century, the railroad company built the small house at 2 Park Street for the station master and telegraph operator.

At the end of the century, the area underwent a significant reconfiguration, when the grade crossing south of Main was eliminated. Park Street, which originally crossed the tracks south of the grist mill as part of what is now Boston Road, became a dead-end, and the upper end of Boston Road was re-routed north past the grist mill to end at Main, at a point nearly opposite the foot of the 1890 Newton Street, which was laid out northward to connect with Marlborough Road. The new arrangement facilitated the opening of the Deerfoot Creamery and sausage plant on the east side of the railroad just north of the area in 1897. It was also associated with the 1890s development of new streets and house lots to the east by Francis Newton, Oren Walker and others (see Area Form Z--East Southborough Center) and especially, with the establishment of a streetcar line from Framingham to Marlborough Junction.

Post-1900 development.

The coming of the electric trolley at the turn of the century brought increased business to the area, and led to the construction of some early modern stores and business blocks. A livery stable on the east side of Park Street, which at first did most of its business renting horses and carriages to railroad passengers, and later served trolley passengers, was operated in the early twentieth century by Charles Hawkins, and later by Irving Smith, who was also a horse dealer.

In the first decade of the century, what had come to be known as the Sealey Block--an expansion of the old wood-frame building complex north of Main Street on the east side of the tracks, housed a variety of enterprises. John Sealey's blacksmith shop still occupied the east part, but there was also a plumbing and heating shop, run by George Hall. (Cont.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Y	53-55; 275; 519-530

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

A major addition to the area was made in 1904, when a large, stylish three-story wood-frame business block was built opposite the Sealey Block on the south side of Main Street, at the corner of Boston Road. Called the Masonic Block, it housed the St. Bernard's AF and AM hall on the top story, and a variety of offices and enterprises in the rest of the building. In the year the Masonic Block opened, the first floor included the relocated Post Office, Burdett & Barnard's drug store, and Archibald & Schnare's general grocery and hardware store. Occupying offices in the building were railway express agent Charles Fairbanks, (who also sold insurance and served as Postmaster and Justice of the Peace), insurance and real estate agent Francis Dexter Newton (the developer of the building, who was also Deputy Sheriff), and the medical office of Dr. J. Lowell Bacon.

Anticipating business from both railroad and streetcar riders, in 1907 Robert Burnett remodeled and enlarged the old Taylor farmhouse on the west corner of Main and School Street into an inn, which he called the Southborough Arms. For over sixty years, most of its patrons were the families of boarding students at Fay and St. Mark's Schools.

By 1906 a one-story variety store had been built at 4 Main Street. The proprietor was Miss Ellen Ward. A cobbler's shop was located at 3 Main Street, set back from the street.

Another major change took place in 1914, when the Masonic Block burned down. Francis Newton replaced it with a business block of a very different type--the one-story, gable-roofed, stucco building still standing at the Main Street/Boston Road corner today, which he called the **Newton Building**. Like its predecessor, it still housed the post office (under Postmaster Robert H. Howes), the drug store, (by then Newton & Howard), Schnare's store, and Charles Fairbanks' office, where he was now selling insurance. In about 1915, the Knights of Columbus acquired the little house at 1 Main Street, and moved there from their former quarters on Newton Street.

By about 1920, the house at 2 Park Street was occupied by stationmaster and telegraph operator **Charles Watkins** and his family. At the Sealey Block, the harness shop, or leatherworks, was run by Hinky Davis, and in the two-story west section was a printing shop under James O'Leary, called the Southborough Print Shop, as well as a laundry, run for many years by John Berry. In the 1920s it also housed a grocery, penny candy, and newspaper store run by George Morrison. By 1925 the wood-frame livery stable had been replaced by the large, square concrete-block auto-repair garage which still stands at 5 Park Street. In the 1920s and 1930s it was one of several buildings in the area, including the Newton Building and a freight house, owned by James DeMone. After a period of ownership by Philip Harding, it was known for much of the century as Ted's Garage.

In 1927, the town built its first true firehouse at 5 Main Street, under the direction of Chief Patrick Brock, adding garages for the Highway Department on the north side the next year. The building was designed by Charles M. Baker of Boston (formerly of Marlborough). By 1932, the building at 3 Main Street had apparently been built or enlarged, and housed Fitzgerald's News & Coffee Shop. By the mid-1930s, Miss Ward's variety store was occupied by a true grocery store, part of the First National chain. Around this time, the Knights of Columbus adapted the old Buck house at 1 Main Street for their meeting rooms, and the drug store had become Southborough Drug, under Hugh McCann and John Falconi. In 1946, the news and coffee shop, by then Holland's, moved into the new building at 2 Main Street. (Cont.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Southborough

Park/Main St.
business district

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Area(s)
Y

Form Nos.
53-55; 275; 519-530

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

Most of the other significant changes to the area have taken place since 1960. An era ended in 1964, when the remaining dilapidated sections of the Sealey Block were demolished; (the blacksmith shop had previously been torn down for the construction of a gas station.) The same year, a new Southborough Post Office was built at the east corner of School and Main Street, and in 1969, the Southborough Arms was destroyed by fire. The large Southborough Professional Building at 11 Main Street was built in its place the next year. In 1979 the Fire Department moved out of the firehouse to new quarters, and the building was sold for commercial purposes in 1984.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES [] *see continuation sheet*

Maps and Atlases: 1857, 1870, 1898. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps: 1912, 1925, 1932/1945.

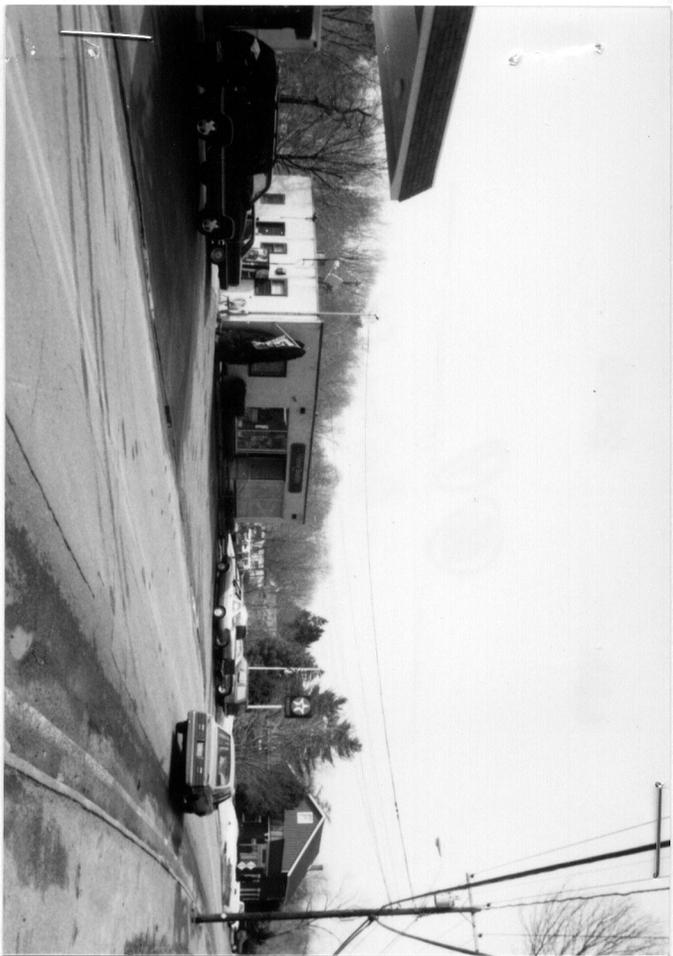
Noble, Richard. Fences of Stone: a History of Southborough, MA. Portsmouth, NH: Peter Randall, 1990.

Old Southborough, a Photographic Essay. Southborough Historical Society, 1981.

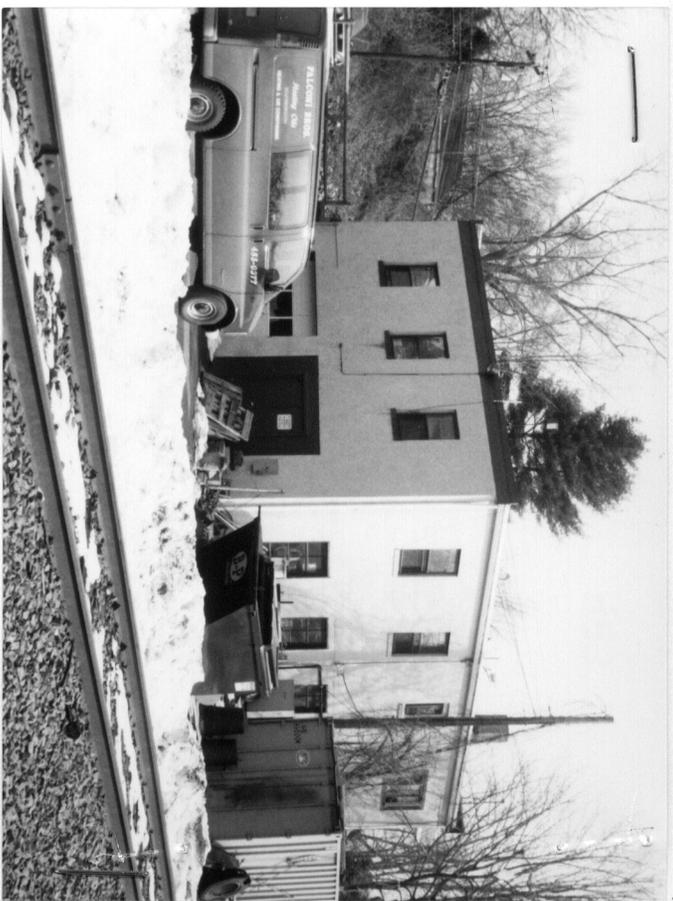
Simpson, Louise. Old Houses in Southborough. Unpublished manuscript, 1904.

Town of Southborough: Assessor's Reports, various dates.

Southborough directories: various dates.



Boston Rd, view north from #17.



17 Boston Rd.



21 Boston Rd north end



21 Boston Rd.



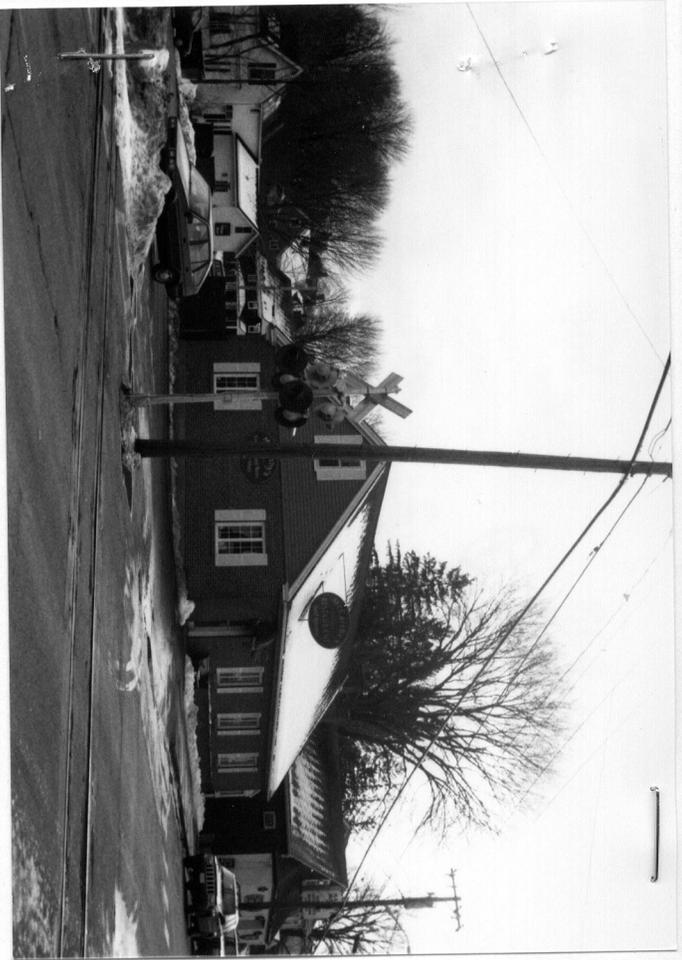
21 Boston Rd - north end



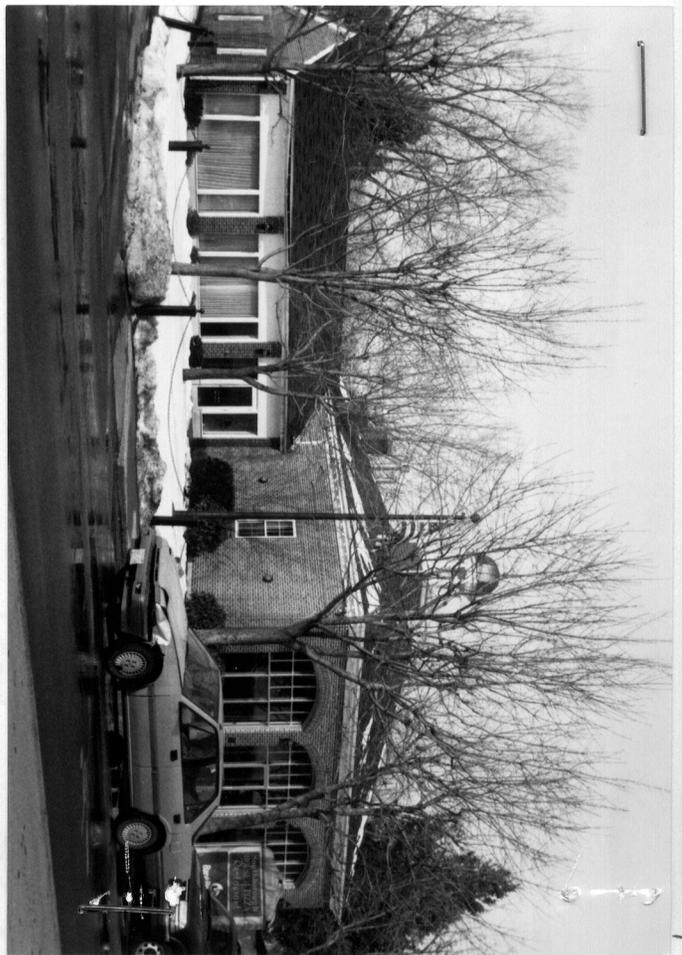
3-5 East Main St.



Foley Drive



2-4 Main St.



7 Main St.



Main St - view east from #9

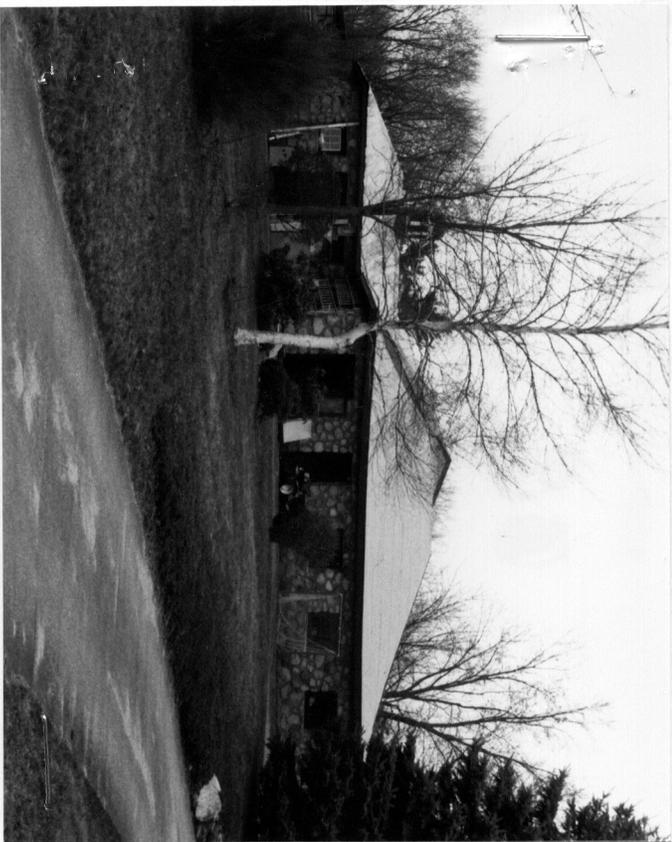


9 Main St.



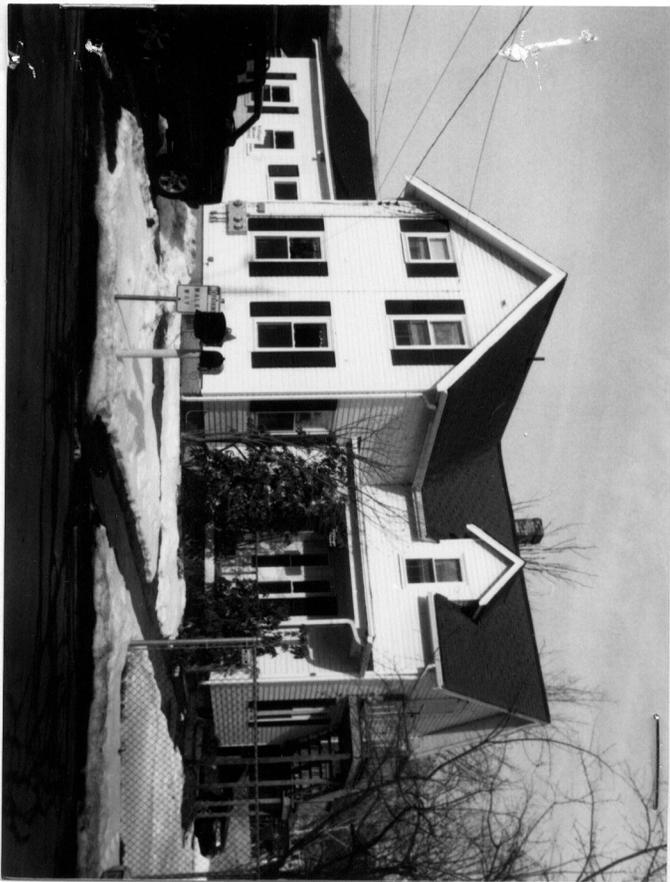
3-15 Main St.

Park St., looking south



Park St.

Park St.



2 Park St.



3 Park St.