

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SBR.941
Historic Name:	Southborough Town Common
Common Name:	Burke, James W. Square
Address:	Main St Common St
City/Town:	Southborough
Village/Neighborhood:	Southborough
Local No:	54-6
Year Constructed:	
Architect(s):	
Architectural Style(s):	
Use(s):	Common
Significance:	Community Planning
Area(s):	SBR.AG: Southborough Town Center SBR.A: Main Street Area
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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FORM H - PARKS AND

LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Massachusetts Historical Commission

USGS Quad

Area(s)

Form No.

Forms within

Marlborough

A

941

928-929; 942-945

(ASSESSOR'S MAP #54-6)

Town Southborough

Place (neighborhood or village) _____

Southborough centerAddress Main and Common Streets

(Parcel 54-6)

Historic Name Southborough Town CommonOwnership: ☐ private ☒ publicType of Park or Landscape Feature
(check one):

- ☐ park ☐ farm land
☒ green or common ☐ mine or quarry
☐ garden ☐ training field
☐ boulevard/parkway
☐ other _____

Date of Construction from 1727; enclosed
mid-19th C.Source Town Reports; NobleLandscape architect noneLocation of Plans noneAlterations/Intrusions (with dates) Reducedfrom several acres through 18th, 19th C.s;Condition goodAcreage less than one acreSetting In heart of the center, on N. side ofMain (Rte. 30) Municipal buildings, church,burial ground to N.; 19th C. houses to S.**RECEIVED**

JUL 03 2000

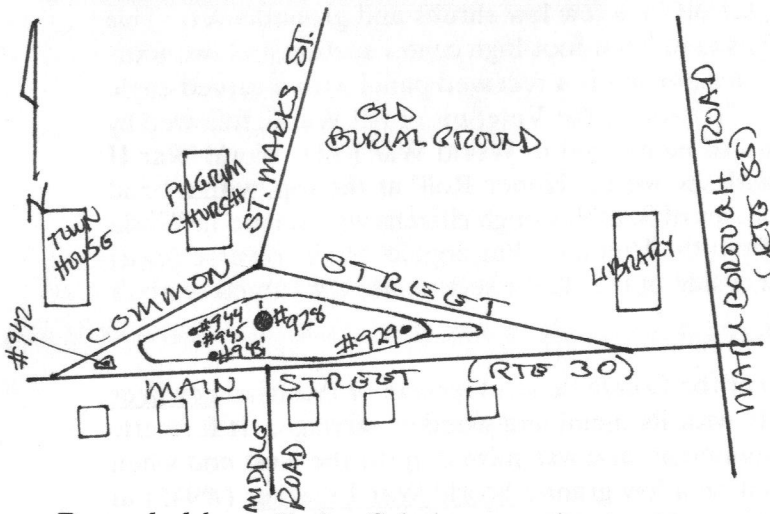
MASS. HIST. COMM



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Inventory forms have been completed. Label streets,
including route numbers, if any. Attach a separate
sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate north.

Recorded by Forbes/Schuler, consultantsOrganization Southborough Historical Comm.Date March, 2000

PARKS AND LANDSCAPES FORM

VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT [x] *see continuation sheet*

Describe topography and layout. Note structures such as bandstands, gazebos, sheds, stone walls, monuments, and fountains. Note landscaping features such as formal plantings, agricultural plantings, and bodies of water. If possible, compare current appearance with original.

As is true of many New England towns, what was once a much larger plot of open, common land at the center of Southborough has been reduced to a small island at the intersection of several streets. Still a treasured open space in front of the **Old Burial Ground** (#801), **Pilgrim Church** (#31), and the town's main municipal buildings, however, the **Southborough Town Common** is a well-maintained 200-foot-long, narrow grassed triangle dotted with trees and monuments. Some mature maples, beeches, and oaks stand on the common, and several young deciduous trees have been planted in the latter part of the twentieth century. A few maples near the center section appear to remain from what were once two north/south rows, and a few taller trees near the perimeter indicate that trees were once planted all around the edge of the triangle. (Many trees here were lost in the 1938 hurricane.) An iron pipe railing on short, square granite posts curves around the northern, Common Street side. Along Main Street the railing gives way to a fieldstone retaining wall that runs the length of the streetfront, broken only by a set of granite-block steps in the center, and, near the west end, a simple rectangular, granite watering trough (#943), about 5 1/2-foot-long, bearing the carved date "1875" in its south side.

The focal point of the Common is the 1866 Soldiers Monument (#928), a simple eight-sided obelisk of Fitzwilliam granite on a compound square base which stands opposite the foot of St. Mark's Street in the center of the triangle, surrounded by a circular bituminous walk which branches north to an opening in the railing, and south to the Main Street steps. On each side of the pedestal above the inscriptions is a tapered triangular panel which adds a hint of Gothic to the monument. In each panel is a carved image--crossed cannon on the north, crossed swords on the east, a bugle on the south, and an anchor on the west. The names of the men from Southborough who died in the Civil War are inscribed in the four main faces of the pedestal, and around the lower course of the pedestal are four phrases: "erected by the citizens of Southborough", "in Memoriam", "our country's defenders", "Rebellion 1861." The south face of the pedestal base reads "1866", the year of the monument's construction.

The other large granite war memorial on the common is the 1971 monument to the Veterans of All Wars (#929), which stands at the east end of the triangle, set off by a few low shrubs and groundcover. This is a three-part monument of rectangular tablets, composed of a ten-foot-high center section and two four-foot-high outer sections. On the upper part of the center portion is a recessed panel with a carved eagle holding an olive branch. Below it, an inscription reads "Tribute to the Veterans of All Wars", followed by three stars, "Supreme Sacrifice", and the twelve names of men killed in World War I (1), World War II (10), and Vietnam (1). Each side section is carved with the words "Honor Roll" at the top, with a band of oak leaves to either side. Below are inscribed the names of Southborough citizens who served in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. Names from the Vietnam War appear on the reverse (east) side of the north tablet. In circular fields on the reverse side of the center section are the carved symbols of all the armed forces.

A third major monument, located on the west portion of the Common, is a German or Austrian howitzer (#944) which was captured in World War I, complete with its metal and wooden carriage. It formerly occupied the position of the Veterans of All Wars monument, and was moved up to the west end when that memorial was erected. A bronze plaque mounted on a low granite World War I marker (#945) in front of it reads "Captured World War I German Howitzer, 155 mm. Donated 1919 by American Legion Post 132. Restored 1991". . . . "in memory of all World War I veterans." Also included are the names of the restorers: Roland Currier, R. E. Jarvis Co., Ted's of Fayville, and the Southborough Highway Department.

[X] Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET**Community****Property**

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Southborough

Town Common

Area**Form No.**

A

941 (see Data Sheet)

VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT, cont.

At the outer ends of the Common, each end of Common Street is marked by an iron street sign, with raised letters on an oblong field--possibly dating to about 1930. Other identification markers include a rectangular rough granite tablet sign (#942) standing on its own small island at the west foot of Common Street, painted with black arrows and the words "Town of Southborough, inc. 1727" on the east face, and arrows with "Framingham, Wellesley, Boston", and "Marlborough Hudson, Concord" on the west. Near the east end of the Common is a tall flagpole. A small grassed triangle extends several yards east from the east end of the railing and Veterans Monument--an area which is now commemorated as James W. Burke Square, and so marked by a new street sign.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE [x] *see continuation sheet*

Discuss history of use. Evaluate the historical associations of the landscape/park with the community.

The Southborough Town Common dates back to 1727, the year the town was incorporated, when a three-acre, nearly square piece of common land for the building of the town meetinghouse was voted by a meeting of the new parish in September of that year. The exact site for the meetinghouse was settled on in November, next to a small plot that had already been cleared for a burial place. Over the next several decades a succession of buildings and structures were built on the three-acre common, including the meetinghouse, a schoolhouse (1732-34), and three successive animal pounds. Several acres to the north were reserved as open space for use as a training field. In 1728, a short road was laid out north from the Boston Road (today's Main Street/Route 30) to the front of the meetinghouse. That road would have passed directly through today's Common. When the common was finally surveyed in the 1880s, it was found to have grown to nearly six acres. The committee who did so were of the opinion that at least two additional north-south strips, one of them an old roadway, as well as all the area south from Common Street including what is called the Common today, were never part of the original common land.

Nineteenth-century maps indicate that, as was typical of New England town centers in the first half of the 1800s, the Southborough common was then a broad, undesignated open space--neither a road nor a landscaped property. Probably alternately muddy and dusty, for many decades it remained simply the area around the meetinghouse, later joined by the first Town Hall, where all manner of vehicles, animals, and pedestrians passed through in the course of going about their business.

It would not have been until at least the 1830s that the trend toward beautification or village improvement reached Southborough. At the time the first Town Hall was built in 1840, part of the common may have been fenced to keep out traffic and animals, or planted with grass and trees. The efforts were accelerated in 1858, the year the remodeled Second Meetinghouse was rededicated as the Pilgrim Church. That spring, Henry H. Peters, one of the town's major benefactors of the time, contributed maple saplings from his property, and on the first of May squads of citizens (including Joseph Burnett), planted them as street trees along Main Street, and on what was coming to be regarded as a village green in front of the church.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET**Community****Property**

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Town Common

Area**Form No.**

A

941 (see Data Sheet)

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

In the romantically-inclined mid-Victorian era, which believed in the restorative powers of nature, parks, cemeteries, and beautiful natural and landscaped settings within a community were valued as places of contemplation and remembrance. Thus it was fitting and appropriate that, when Southborough citizens were planning a monument to honor their townsmen killed in the Civil War, the memorial was conceived of as a centerpiece for a landscaped Town Common. The granite obelisk that still dominates this green space, the Soldiers Monument (#928,) was designed by Alexander R. Esty (architect of both the Town House [#30] and St. Mark's Church [#29])), built by E. F. Meany of Boston in 1866, and dedicated, with an address by the Hon. Samuel Appleton and the singing of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, on New Years Day, 1867. The part of the common where the monument was located was also enclosed with a wooden fence at that time, and a retaining wall and stone steps were constructed along the south side.

The construction of the monument and the fence sparked an ongoing dispute between the Town and the Pilgrim Church, however, which claimed that they had been built on church land. The conflict simmered for years, and in the mid-1880s someone removed the north section of the fence. The town replaced that part of the fence, and eventually the rest of it, with iron.

An unusual memorial was added to the common in 1919, when members of the Leo L. Bagley post of the American Legion donated a captured Austrian (some sources say German) howitzer (#944) to honor Southborough's soldiers of the First World War. Later, the patch of land at the east end of the common near the intersection of Common, Main, and Marlborough/Cordaville Roads was dedicated as James W. Burke Square. James Burke was the first American from Southborough killed in World War I. He joined the Canadian forces, and died in 1915.

The granite monument to the Veterans of All Wars (#929) was erected in 1971. At that time, a wooden memorial, the World War II Honor Roll (#930) to members of the armed forces from Southborough, which had stood on the lawn just west of the Fay Library since 1945, was demolished.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES:

Maps and Atlases: 1870; 1898.

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

Town of Southborough: Annual Reports (various dates, including 1867).

Report of the Committee on the Common, 1887.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Southborough

Town Common

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Area

Form No.

A

941 (see Data Sheet)

DATA SHEET

<u>MHC #</u>	<u>Historic resource</u>	<u>Date</u>
941	Southborough town common	enclosed mid-19th century
942	granite sign	unknown
943	watering trough	1875
944	World War I howitzer	ca. 1915-19
945	World War I marker	1991
928 (see B. Form)	Soldiers Monument	1866
929	Veterans of All Wars Monument	1971



View northeast



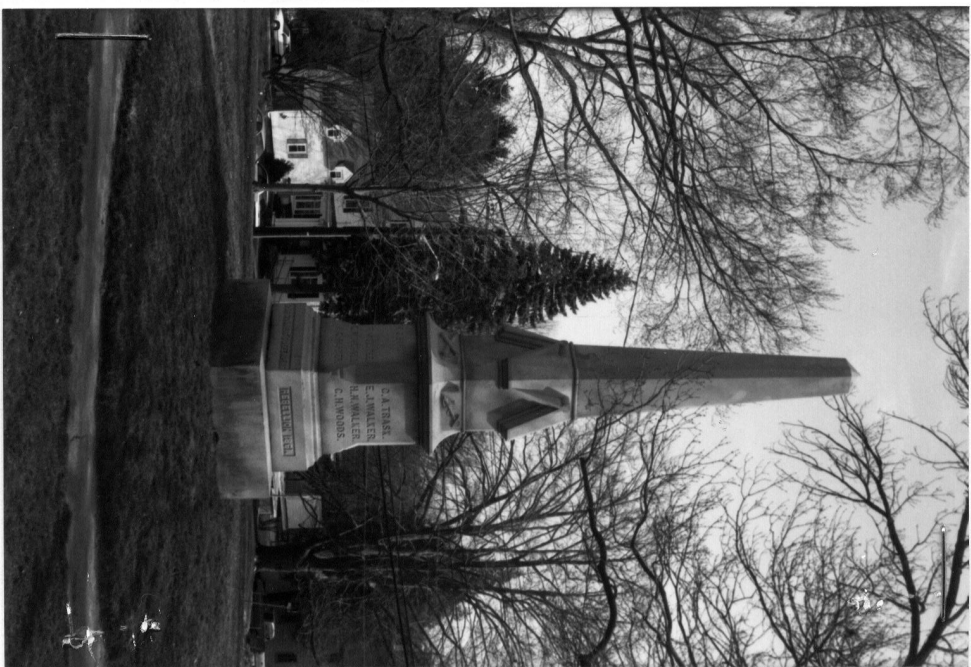
Veteran's monument



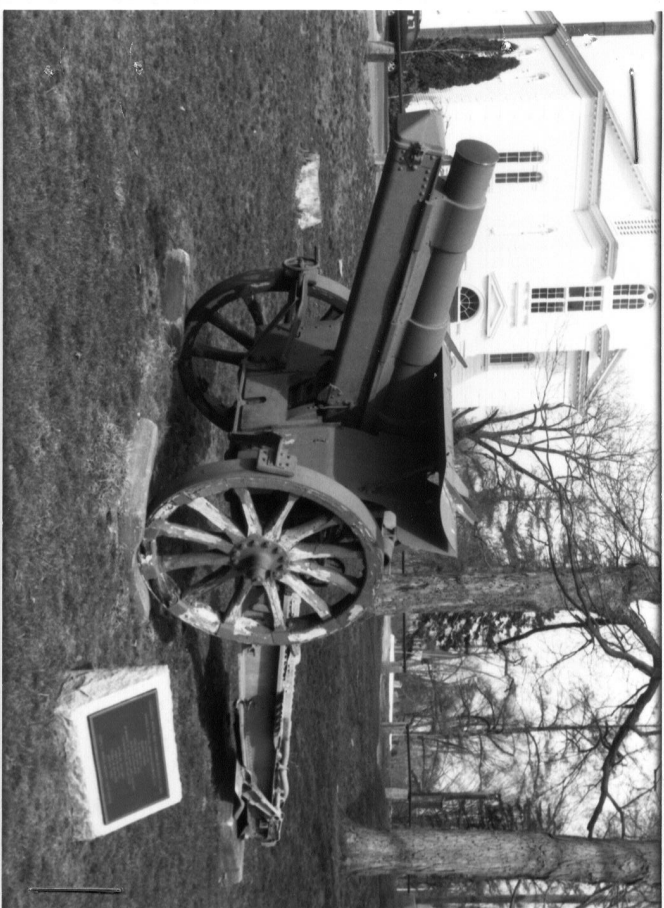
Watering trough



Veteran's monument



Soldiers monument



Howitzer

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community

Property Address

Southborough

Town Common

Area(s)

A

Form No(s).

941; 929, 942-945

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible only in a historic district
☒ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Statement of Significance by Forbes/Schuler, Consultants

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Southborough Town Common meets Criteria A and C of the National Register at the local level, both individually and as a contributing part of a district encompassing the historic residential and institutional meetinghouse center of the town. Dating to 1727, the year the town of Southborough was founded, and utilized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a place of commemoration, contemplation, and remembrance, the Common fulfills Criterion A for its significance throughout Southborough's history. As an illustration of town planning and design through its monuments, objects, and landscaping, the Common also meets Criterion C.

The Common retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.