

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SBR.937
Historic Name:	Boston and Worcester Street Railway Abutments
Common Name:	
Address:	Parkerville Rd
City/Town:	Southborough
Village/Neighborhood:	
Local No:	
Year Constructed:	
Architect(s):	
Architectural Style(s):	
Use(s):	Abandoned or Vacant; Other Rail Related
Significance:	Transportation
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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FORM F - STRUCTURE

Assessor's number

USGS Quad

Area

Form Number

Marlborough

937

Massachusetts Historical Commission



including route numbers, if any. Show and name the inventoried object. Indicate north.

Town Southborough

Place (neighborhood or village) _____

Address or location Parkerville RoadHistoric Name Boston & Worcester Street
Railway abutmentsOwnership: ☐ private ☒ public

Type of Structure (check one):

☐ bridge☐ powderhouse☐ canal☐ lighthouse☐ dam☐ kiln☐ fort☐ gate☒ other (specify) stone abutmentsDate of Construction 1902-03Source CummingsDesigner/Sculptor unknownMaterials granite block

Alterations (with dates) _____

Condition goodMoved ☒ no ☐ yes Date N/AAcreage N/ASetting On wooded section of local north-south
road; residential area to south.Recorded by Forbes/Schuler, ConsultantsOrganization Southborough Historical CommissionDate (month/year) March, 2000**RECEIVED**

JUL 03 2000

STRUCTURE FORM

DESIGN ASSESSMENT ☐ *see continuation sheet*

Describe the design features of the structure, and evaluate it in terms of other similar types of structures within the community.

A pair of massive granite-block abutments, approximately 25 feet high, stand at the edges of Parkerville Road between Skylar and Fairview Drives. The abutments are slightly offset from each other, having been positioned to accommodate the diagonal crossing of the trolley line over Parkerville Road. Because the tracks crossed the road on the diagonal, the high banked roadbed through the woods at this location is still clearly visible in the winter months.

The stones of the abutments are laid with the "grapevine" mortar joints popular in 1902-1903, in even courses of large rough-faced blocks approximately 2 feet high by 4 feet long. The top course of blocks is set back about two feet. Just below it a ledge of longer blocks, up to 6 feet in length, form a slight projection which supported the bridge which carried the tracks over the road (demolished). The wingwalls of the abutments angle back into the hillside. The edge blocks of the northeast, southeast, and northwest wingwalls are stepped down against the bank they support. The southwest wall, however, continues for several feet flush with the earthen bank in what appears to be an addition or repair--this section is composed of stone blocks of random shape and size, and is laid with wide, incised mortar joints of quite a different appearance from the grapevine joints on the main abutments. Granite capstones form a continuous top edge to this section.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ☒ *see continuation sheet*

Explain the history of the structure, and how it relates to the development of the community.

Along with the fast-vanishing stretches of roadbed still visible in the woods of the southwest part of town, these abutments are the only surviving reminders in Southborough of the most significant regional transportation improvement of the turn of the century, the Trolley Air Line. This electric trolley line, the first high-speed long-distance line in New England, was built between Boston and Worcester by the Boston & Worcester Street Railway Company, organized 1899. This route was one of four that were operating between the two cities by 1903, the year the section through Southborough opened.

The main line entered Southborough from Framingham through Fayville at Boston Road, with a major stop at White's Corner at the foot of White Bagley Road on the old Boston and Worcester Turnpike. From there, a local trolley line that had opened in 1900 went north along White Bagley Road to the east part of Southborough center, turned west and north on Boston Road, Winchester Street, and Newton Street to Framingham Road, and continued up Marlborough Road to Marlborough Junction just over the town line, where continuing passengers switched to the Marlborough & Hudson trolley line.

After entering Southborough, the Boston & Worcester trolley tracks east of White's Corner ran along a right of way alongside, and at times in a "grassy reservation" down the center of the turnpike. West of White's Corner, the tracks to Worcester diverged from the old road, avoiding the excessive grades of the turnpike's western section, instead cutting a path southwest through open country to the Westborough line. This stretch passed under bridges at Cordaville and Middle Roads, but passed over Parkerville Road on a span supported by these abutments. The Parkerville trolley stop was located just west of the road.

☒ 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

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

Community	Property
Southborough	B & W Street Railway abutments
Area(s)	Form No. 937

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

The Trolley Air Line provided Southborough residents with convenient travel to both Worcester and Boston, operating at the highest average speed of any trolley line in Massachusetts, and offering more frequent service than the railroad. Limited express service to and from Boston was introduced in 1909, after which a trip from Southborough to Boston could be made in an hour and 25 minutes. Freight service was begun on the line in 1912.

The freight service was most successful during the World War I years, and passenger business along the line was fairly prosperous through 1918. Shortly afterward, however, buses began operating between south Framingham and Hudson via Fayville, and were soon running to Boston and Worcester. The trolley was no competition for buses and automobiles, and in 1925 the Boston & Worcester Street Railway Co. went into receivership, the first step to becoming completely motorized. It was sold to the Boston, Worcester, & New York Street Railway Company in 1927. The line to Hudson shut down in the late 1920s, and in 1930 the state began building a highway (Route 9) along the old route of the Boston and Worcester Turnpike, incorporating the Trolley Air Line right-of-way into the new road. Later that year the last trolley ran from Framingham to Worcester, the last Boston to Worcester trolley in January of 1931, and all service ended on the Trolley Air Line in June of 1932.

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

Allen, Kristina N. On the Beaten Path: Westborough, MA. Westborough: Civic Club and Historical Society, 1984.

Cummings, O.R. "The Trolley Air Line", Transportation, v. VIII, 1954.

Derrah, R.H. The Boston & Worcester Trolley Air Line. Boston: Bartlett Press, 1903.

Howe, Alfred K. untitled manuscript, 1960.

Interview with local resident, April, 2000.



View north



View south



View south

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community
Southborough

Property Address
B & W Street Rwy.
Abutments

Area(s)

Form No(s).
937

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 Anne Forbes, Consultant

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

Although they are a type of granite-block structure that was relatively common in their day, the granite abutments of the Boston & Worcester "trolley air line" tracks through the southwest part of Southborough are eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as a rare survivor of an engineering site and structure remaining from this well-known regional high-speed streetcar line which was built from Boston to Worcester in the early years of this century. Nearly all other evidence of the trolley air line along its forty-mile course has been obliterated by modern development. The abutments are also eligible under Criterion C as an illustration of the type of massive granite-block structure that was typical for railroad and trolley abutments of the period.

Although the overpass it once supported is gone, the property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.