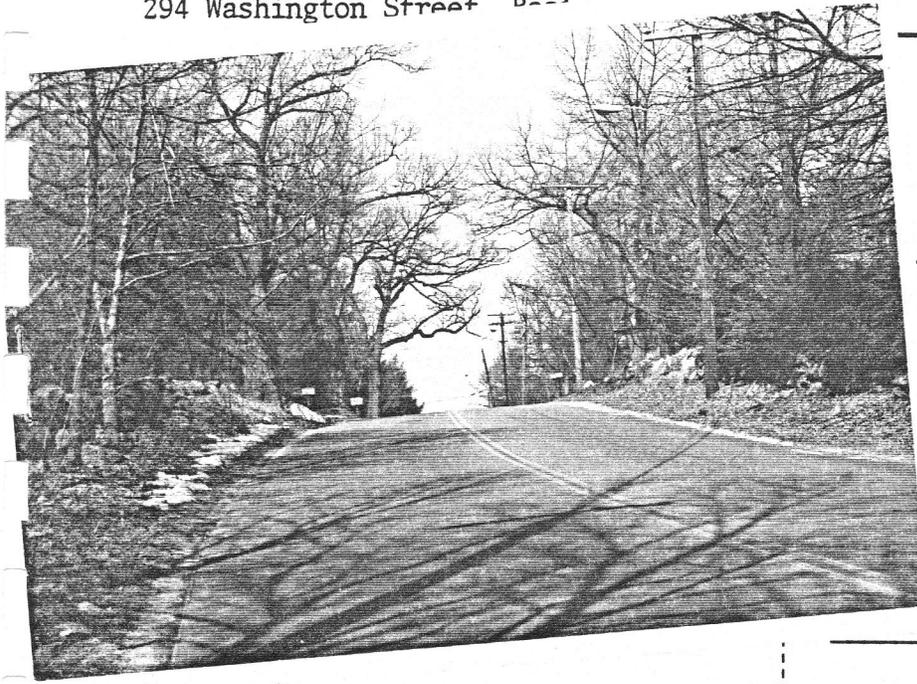


FORM A - AREA

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
294 Washington Street

Form numbers in this area	Area letter
552-553, 556-563, 572	T



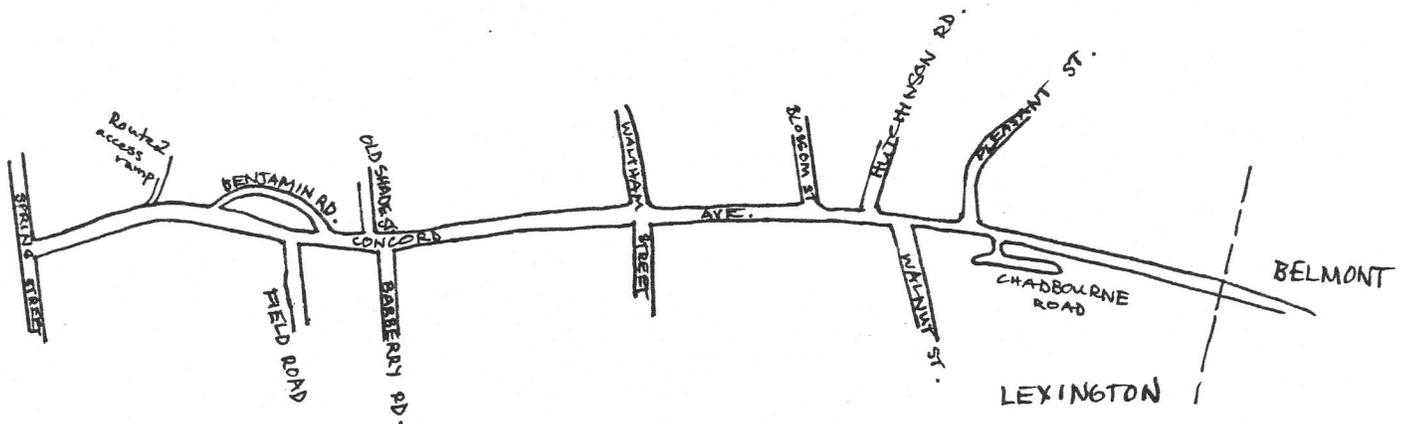
Lexington

of area (if any) Concord Avenue

date or period early nineteenth

y-present

Sketch map. Draw a general 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) and indicate north. (Attach a separate sheet if space here is not sufficient)



Recorded by Nancy S. Seasholes

Organization Lexington Historical Commission

Date February, 1984

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Describe physical setting, general character, and architecturally significant structures).

Originally the Cambridge-Concord Turnpike, Concord Avenue, except for a short section near Spring Street, is still in exactly the same location as it was when built in 1804. It also preserves much of its historic character: although it has been widened and much of it built up since World War II, the section near the site of the Parker pine, shown in the photo, still seems like a country road complete with the stone walls that once bordered <sup>it</sup> a number of the farmhouses that were built along the highway in its early years remain, enhancing the sense of an historic roadway.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Explain development of area, what caused it, and how it affected community; be specific).

The Cambridge-Concord Turnpike is one of the many such turnpikes built in the nation as well as in Massachusetts during the first years of the nineteenth century. Despite opposition from Lexington for reasons unspecified (Worthen 1946:50), the Cambridge-Concord Turnpike Association was incorporated in 1803 to build a road between Cambridge and Concord straighter than the circuitous one then existing through Lexington (see Old Shade Street and Ricci's Lane area forms). The Lexington section was laid out on virtually the same route Concord Avenue follows today and was apparently completed in 1804. Two tollgates were erected, one in Cambridge and one in Lincoln, and a system of tolls established, the amount determined by the type of vehicle and size of team or the number of animals driven. The turnpike was not very profitable: because it was built in a straight line it went over many hills (as it still does) rather than around them; and thanks to these hills as well as to poor maintenance an early stagecoach line was soon discontinued. In 1828 the stockholders petitioned the county commissioners to make the turnpike a county road. After the county took over some abutters moved their stone walls in as much as 10 feet, reducing the distance between walls to 50 feet in some places, far less than the 66 feet (4 rods) required by the turnpike. (A drawing of the Parker pine showing Concord Avenue before 1864 indicates that it was much narrower than 50 feet, but this may be the result of artistic license [Weiss 1864, I: facing 28]). Concord Avenue has since been widened, most recently in the early 1960s to make the pavement 30 feet wide, not too much different from the 22 feet required for the original turnpike.

(see Continuation Sheet)

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- Smith, A. Bradford. 1905. "The Concord Turnpike." Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society 3:110-116.
- Smith, A. Bradford. 1900. "Kite End." Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society 2:99-122.
- Weiss, John. 1864. Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker. New York: D. Appleton and Company. (Reprinted 1969, Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Lexington	Form No: T
Property Name: Concord Avenue	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Once the turnpike was built, it became a locus for new farmhouses, many of which are still standing. On Concord Avenue between the Belmont line and Spring Street, of the seven houses shown on the 1830 map, five are still there; of the 12 on the 1852 map, eight still exist and one has been reconstructed (see sketch map and relevant building forms.) A schoolhouse located by 1853 on the lot now 405 Concord Avenue has been moved and is now part of a house on Lincoln Street (see 376 Lincoln Street form). The structures that no longer remain are almost all in the section from Spring Street west, an area that has been seriously disrupted in the twentieth century by the building of the Cambridge Reservoir in 1897, Route 2 in 1933, Route 128 in 1951, and the rebuilding of Route 2 in the early 1960s. The noted Phinney/Webster Smith farm, for example, was on land now occupied by Raytheon Corporation, and the site of the Simonds Tavern, which was at the corner of Spring Street and old Concord Avenue and burned in 1915, is now under Route 2. Highway construction has also altered the course of Concord Avenue. When Route 2 was built, it followed the course of the old turnpike from the Lincoln line to a point about midway between Spring and Old Shade streets, just west of the present Benjamin Road; Route 2 then swung slightly north and Concord Avenue began as a fork off the highway. When Route 2 was rebuilt in the early 1960s, it was connected to Concord Avenue by access ramps and Concord Avenue itself was turned to run southwest, intersecting Spring Street opposite the Parker homestead.

Of all the historic personages who have lived in the vicinity of Concord Avenue, undoubtedly the most famous are the Parkers: Captain John, commander of the Minutemen in their historic confrontation with the British on the Lexington Green on April 19, 1775, and his grandson Theodore, the transcendentalist, reformer, and abolitionist (see 187 Spring Street and Parker monument forms). Theodore Parker was apparently responsible for saving a very tall double-headed pine that stood on a high point of Concord Avenue near the present intersections with Field and Benjamin roads (see photo). The tree was henceforth known as the "Parker pine" and was a well-known landmark. It was badly damaged by fire in the late nineteenth century, however, and had to be cut down; a summer house was built around the stump in 1915 but neither the house nor the stump remain today. Other noted families along Concord Avenue were the Wellingtons, important in Lexington's late nineteenth century dairy industry (see 177 Concord Avenue form), the Cutlers, also dairymen (see 503 Concord Avenue form), and numerous Smiths, after which this part of Lexington was known as "Smith's End" in the nineteenth century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Worthen, Edwin B. 1946. A Calendar History of Lexington, Massachusetts, 1620-1946.  
Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Savings Bank.

1830 map  
1852 map  
1853 map  
1937 map  
1955 map  
1964 map

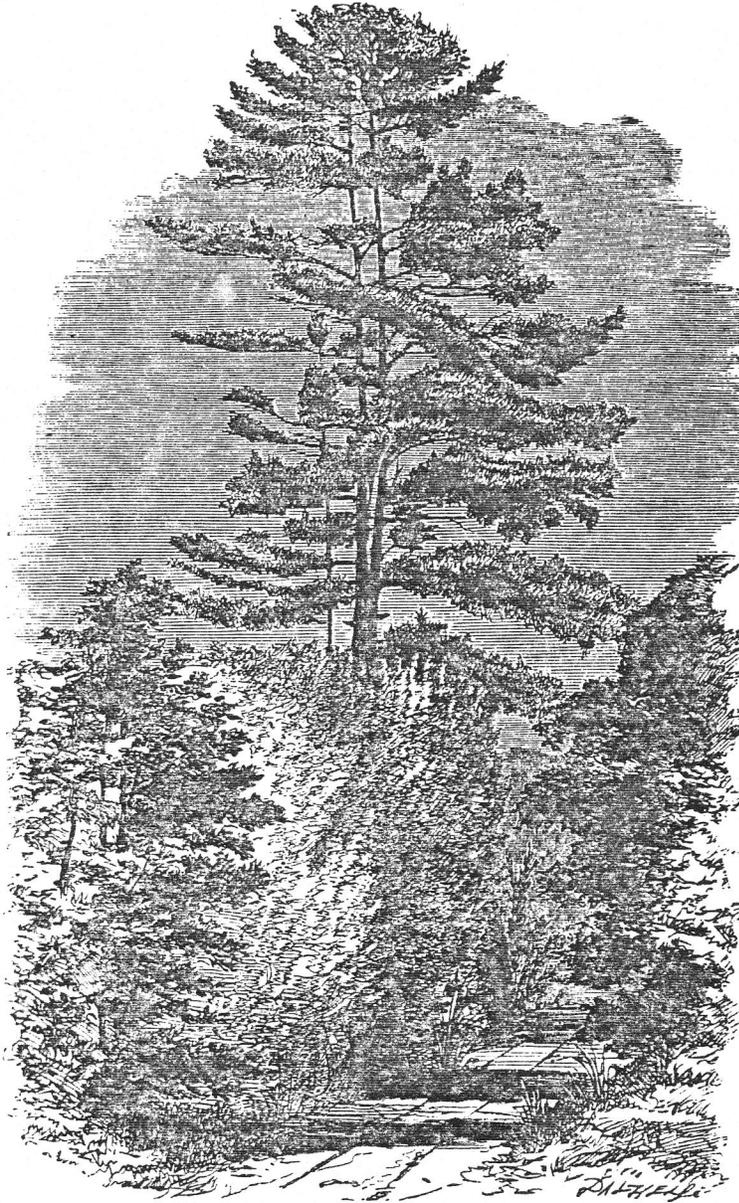
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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Lexington	Form No: T
Property Name: Concord Avenue	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.



PARKER PINE

from Weiss, John, Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1864; reprint Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), p. 29.

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