

AREA

C

FORM NO.

229

Town Acton

Address 568-576 Massachusetts Ave

Historic Name Mead Block

Use: Present commercial

Original commercial

DESCRIPTION

Date 1922

Source Phalen

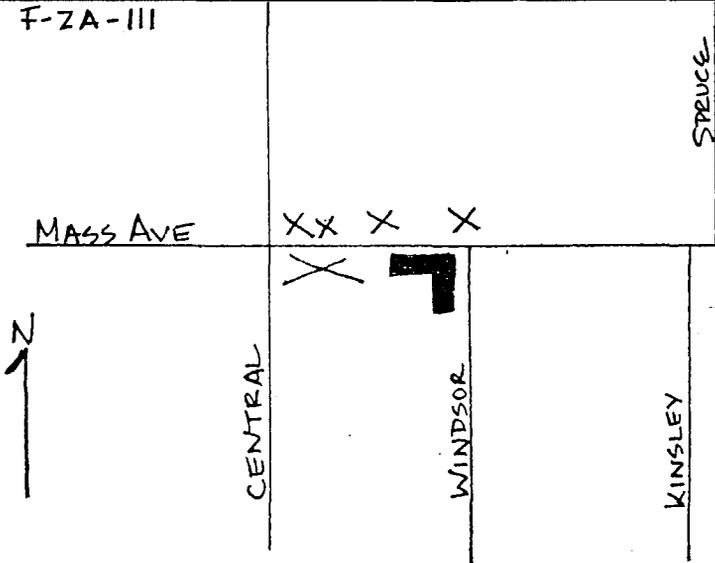
Style Classical Revival

Architect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric brick

Outbuildings none

F-ZA-III



Major Alterations (with dates)

fenestration (late 20th c)

Condition Good

Moved no Date

Acreage less than one acre

Setting Corner site in the heart of

West Acton's commercial village.

UTM REFERENCE

USGS QUADRANGLE

SCALE

Recorded by Schuler and Johnson

Organization Acton Historical Commission

Date March 1990

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

See Inventory Continuation Form

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

See Inventory Continuation Form

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Phalen, History of the Town of Acton.

AHS Files/ Photo Collection

Vital Records

Newsclipping, "West Acton's Growth Years, Fires Prove," AHS.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: ACTON	Form No: C-229
Property Name: 568-570 Massachusetts	

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

568-570 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE / ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Designed to suit its corner location, the Mead Block is a two story flat-roof brick commercial building with Classical Revival styling typical of the 1920s. It is the only well preserved brick commercial block in Acton dating from the early part of the century.

With its main facade (north) fronting Massachusetts Avenue, the building wraps the corner onto Windsor Street, at its west end, and onto an alley on the east end. A series of pedimented parapets rise from the corbelled cornice, one marking the center of the Mass. Ave and Windsor Ave facades, and one at each corner. The corners are articulated by two story clipped bays with recessed entrances; each entrance is flanked by paired storefront windows. Second story windows are decorated with rough faced lintels and sills. One over one sash has been replaced by narrow paired one over ones or filled.

The Massachusetts Avenue facade is a symmetrical composition consisting of brick piers separating storefront windows and entrances topped by transom windows (many of which are now filled). The storefronts, originally single pane glass, now contain multi-pane glass. On the second floor, four 1/1 windows are flanked by two polygonal bay windows. Rough-faced granite lintels and sills adorn the windows and the storefronts. A series of raised brick panels wrap the building just below the cornice. The panel at the west corner is filled with granite and incised with lettering reading "Mead Block."

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: ACTON	Form No: C-229
Property Name: 568-576 Massachusetts	

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

568-576 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE / HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Mead Block was constructed in 1922 after a devastating fire in the commercial center of West Acton that same year. The fire destroyed a barber shop, storage shed, tenement house, garage and hotel. As part of the refurbishing of West Acton following the fire, George Varnum Mead and Effie Wright Mead built the Mead Block on the site previously occupied by the Windsor Hotel. In 1922 the Mead Block housed the West Acton post office, a cafe, a store and five apartments. A variety of commercial ventures have occupied the building including the Atlantic and Pacific Tea company in the 1930s. Currently, the block includes a real estate office, deli, hair stylist, and model train store. Behind the new building, the Meads erected a four unit apartment building on Windsor (see 11-17 Windsor).

The erection of the Mead Block was one of several major improvements to West Acton village carried out by George and Effie Mead in the 1920s. In 1926 the Mead moved George Mead's childhood home from the triangular property, bounded by Massachusetts Avenue and Arlington streets, and presented the land to the town for creation of a public square. The house was moved to 5 Spruce Street where the Mead business was located (see 5-9 Spruce). George V. Mead was one of three sons of Varnum Balfour Mead (1832-1908) one of three Mead brothers who ran A.O.W. Mead and Co., the successful produce marketing business, during the latter half of the 19th century. George, who also worked in the family business, lived in Somerville and built the house at 18 Wright Terrace as a summer residence (see form).

begun with the arrival of the railroad, in 1845, the commercial development of West Acton vilalge was closely associated with the prosperity of the surrounding apple industry and the growth of local manufacturing. During the latter half of the 19th century, West Acton's industries included cider mills, produce marketing, pail and churn manufacturing, cigar making, overall manufacturing, and other enterprises. Before the railroad, the "village" at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue (Harvard Turnpike, 1799), Arlington Street (1735), and Central Street (1766) was a sparsely settled outpost known as the "west part of town."

Staple to Inventory form at bottom