

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name South Union School

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 21 Highland Street not for publication

city or town Southborough _____ vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Worcester code 027 zip code 01772

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Briona Simon

December 30, 2010

Signature of certifying official/Title Briona Simon, Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the
National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the
National Register
- removed from the
National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

South Union School
Name of Property

Worcester County, Massachusetts
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

EDUCATION/library

SOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium

RECREATION AND CULTURE/art gallery

GOVERNMENT/municipal building (offices)

OTHER (arts classes)

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick, cast stone

wood

roof rubber

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

South Union School
Name of Property

Worcester County, Massachusetts
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #_____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

Social History

Period of Significance

1911-1960

Significant Dates

1911-1912 (construction of South Union School)

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder (see continuation sheet)

Cooper and Bailey

Cooper, Frank Irving

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency (Massachusetts State Archives)

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository:

Southborough Public Library, Southborough, MA

South Union School
Name of Property

Worcester County, Massachusetts
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 4 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

A. 19 Zone	291290 Easting	4682440 Northing	C. Zone	Easting	Northing
B. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing
			<u>See continuation sheet</u>		

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathleen Kelly Broomer, Preservation Consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date December 2010

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Southborough, MA

street & number Town House, 17 Common Street telephone (508) 485-0710

city or town Southborough state MA zip code 01772-1662

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503. NPS Form 10-900
OMB No. 1024-0018 (Rev. 10-90)

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Southborough (Worcester Co.), MA

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7. Description

Narrative Description

South Union School, 21 Highland Street, Southborough (1911-1912, MHC # SBR.164, photos 1-8) is a Classical Revival-style school building, designed by Frank Irving Cooper of the Boston architectural firm of Cooper & Bailey. The school is located in a largely residential neighborhood, about midway between the village centers of Southville to the west, and Cordaville to the east. Occupying a hilly site at the northwest corner of Highland Street and Atwood Street, the school is set back approximately 200 feet from Highland Street, prominently positioned at the top of a circular driveway with an expansive lawn below. A monumental stair (ca. 1912, photo 1) of rubblestone and granite frames the view of the school from Highland Street, and provides pedestrian access from the driveway to the building's entries via two stone stair cases. The rubblestone wall that defines the east side of the east staircase extends along the easterly arc of the circular driveway from the stair to Highland Street. There is no evidence the stone wall was continued down the westerly arc of the driveway. The building's northeast corner is situated about 25 feet from Atwood Street, a residential street that post-dates the construction of the school and is developed with post-World War II residences. A narrow paved driveway behind the school, late 20th century in vintage, leads from Atwood Street to a paved parking area immediately west of the building. The remainder of the school parcel is wooded.

A brick building with cast-stone and wood trim designed in the Classical Revival style, South Union School is two stories on a raised basement, with a flat roof clad in rubber membrane. The building has a largely rectangular footprint, with a projecting, full-height frontispiece on the façade (south elevation), incorporating the two principal entries and much of the building's ornamental detailing. Exterior red brick elevations are laid in a pattern resembling five-course American bond: separating every five courses of stretchers is a course laid with alternating headers and stretchers, rather than the all-header course more commonly seen. The building has two rectangular chimneys or ventilation stacks that are brick-clad above the roof line and have chimney caps of standing seam metal.

The building divides horizontally into three principal parts, reminiscent of the base, shaft, and capital of a classical column. The raised basement, or the base, has a cast-stone sill below and a water table above, both described on the 1911 architectural plans as being of "granite composite" material. Windows in the raised basement, now either boarded or infilled with steel security screening on the exterior, contain six-pane wood sash. The building's two-story midsection, akin to the shaft of a column, incorporates banks of windows on two levels, containing 9/2 or 9/1 wood sash, with a cast-stone beltcourse near the bottom. The cornice and parapet wall, akin to the capital of a column, are constructed of wood. The parapet wall was rebuilt during renovations in the early 1950s and is now clad with vertical boards, creating a matchboard effect above the cornice. The flashing at the top of the parapet walls appears to be of more recent vintage.

The four elevations of the building are balanced, but not strictly symmetrical in their design, reflecting the organization of spaces on the interior (see below). Original architectural plans from 1911 describe the three floors of the school building as the basement, ground floor, and second floor. For consistency with current practice, the floors are described here as the basement, first floor, and second floor.

Dominating the façade (south elevation) is the projecting, full-height frontispiece (photos 1, 2, 7, and 8), displaying a 2-4-2 pattern of bays, with paired windows or double-door entries flanking banks of four windows at the center. Situated midway between the raised basement and the first floor, the entries feature solid wood doors divided into six panels. Each entry has a multi-pane, segmental-arched transom, a segmental-arched header of brick, and an oversized, segmental-

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arched, wooden door hood on decorative consoles. Lighting the stair halls above the entries are paired windows incorporating 9/1 wood sash, six-pane fixed transoms, and decorative brick corbelling beneath the granite composite sills. At the center of the façade, the four windows on the first floor have brick headers, 9/1 wood sash, and a wood pent-roof canopy above, which is clad in Ludowici tile and rests on ornamental consoles. At the second floor is another bank of four windows, here containing 9/2 wood sash. Windows retain the same sash configuration (9/1 or 9/2) shown on the 1911 plans. Set back from the frontispiece on the east and west ends of the façade are blind decorative panels composed of brick and cast stone.

Immediately east (right) of the frontispiece is a brick-clad elevator shaft (2003, photo 1), constructed to meet federal and state requirements for universal access. The design of the full-height shaft, which is set back from the front wall of the frontispiece, is compatible with the rest of the building in its brick wall pattern, blind brick and cast-stone decorative panels, and matchboard parapet wall. Wrapping the base of the two-bay by two-bay tower is a shielded entry incorporating a fixed steel window of six panes, a glazed-steel door for elevator users, and a solid steel utility door. The elevator shaft does not compromise the historic integrity of the school building.

The building's side elevations (photo 1 for east elevation, photos 3 and 7 for west elevation) are similar in materials to those on the façade, with brick walls, wood windows, wood cornice, and matchboard parapet wall. Cast stone detailing includes the sill, water table, and beltcourse. Basement windows are enclosed with wood panels. Each elevation displays a bank of five double-hung windows on each floor, with paneled wood aprons beneath the second-floor windows. All first- and second-floor windows contain 9/2 wood sash. Since the second-floor windows rise higher than the cornice line established on the façade, the height of the cornice line adjusts on the side elevations to frame the tops of the second-story windows.

Like the side elevations, the rear or north elevation (photo 4) originally featured banks of five windows on the first and second floors, containing 9/2 wood sash with paneled aprons beneath the second-floor windows. The cornice line adjusts to frame the tops of the second-story windows, as on the side elevations. The westernmost window bay on the second floor was converted to an exit, opening onto a fire escape on the exterior. The fire escape is believed to date to renovations in the early 1950s. The westernmost window bay on the first floor has been enclosed with a wood panel, and basement windows have been boarded or secured with screening. At the basement level is a small, one-bay by one-bay brick projection with a low-pitched hipped roof, containing a 6/6 wood window on the north side and a solid steel utility door on the west side. This entry provided access to the coal supply and furnace rooms at the rear of the basement.

Plan and Interior Finishes

South Union School was designed as a three-classroom school building with additional space on the second floor designated for an assembly hall, a domestic science room, and a local branch of the town's public library. On the first floor, the location of classrooms corresponds to the banks of windows on the side and rear elevations. Two classrooms, each approximately 21 feet wide and 29 feet deep, occupy the east and west ends of the building, respectively. A third classroom, approximately 31 feet wide and 21 feet deep, occupies the rear of the building, incorporating the windows overlooking the rear of the property. Last used as school classrooms in 1980, these rooms have been converted to town offices and art studios, with some partitioning of the original classroom spaces. A small kitchenette occupies the southwest corner of the original rear classroom.

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Remaining spaces on the first floor include the corridor (extending east-west through the middle of the building), plus entry vestibules and stair halls flanking two “wardrobes” or coatroom spaces, marked on the façade by a bank of four windows containing 9/1 wood sash. The first-floor corridor retains a floor-to-ceiling glazed divider (photo 5) that originally contained a door, removed at an unknown date. The multi-pane fixed sash in the divider corresponds to the sidelights and transom typically framing an entry. Wire glass replaced the original glass during the early 1950s renovations, per safety regulations then in effect. The coatrooms were converted to toilet facilities in 1951, and are still used as such today. Four interior bays on the south wall of the corridor—corresponding to the locations of the two former coatrooms and the flanking stair halls—retain plaster beams with decorative stepped corbelling at the corners. The stepped profile of the corbelling has been maintained, even with the subsequent infill of the bays to create the toilet facilities and meet fire code at the exits. Walls on the first floor and stair halls are plastered, and floors are covered in vinyl tile or carpet. Interior entries open onto the corridor from offices, studios, restrooms, and the stair halls contain replacement doors with metal casings. The elevator shaft with associated partition walls, constructed in 2003, opens into the southwest corner of what was originally the east classroom. The partitioning has extended the corridor at the east end of the building to meet the elevator door.

As originally built, the second floor comprised three principal spaces. Occupying the space above the west and rear classrooms and part of the first floor corridor, is the assembly hall (photo 6), designed for a seating capacity of 265 people. A plastered beam with stepped corbel corners, similar to those seen in the first floor corridor, marks the location of the original stage at the east end of the room, though the stage itself was removed at an unknown date. Separated from the assembly hall by the stage and one of the building’s two heating ventilation stacks is the domestic science room, occupying the space above the east classroom on the first floor and with the elevator shaft (2003) at its southwest corner. Wood casings on the entries between the two rooms are detailed with raised molding. Similar casings survive on the glazed divider in the first floor corridor. Windows in the assembly room and domestic science room retain original wood sash, moldings, and sills. To darken these spaces for art exhibits and performances, large fiber wallboards were installed over the windows in the assembly room (lower sashes only) and the domestic science room (upper and lower sashes). These applied boards, which cover the window moldings and leave the window sills exposed beneath, are a reversible alteration. Similar boards also have been installed over the chalkboards. Both rooms retain plaster walls and wood floors. In addition to the ornamental door casings, these rooms retain wood baseboards and picture moldings (horizontal strips of molding placed high on the walls from which pictures were hung, using oversized S-hooks and long lengths of wire).

On the second floor at the front of the building, and marked on the façade by a bank of four windows containing 9/2 wood sash, is the room that housed the former Southville Branch Library from 1915 to 1953. This room has since been partitioned into a small kitchen, with three window bays, and a second-floor rest room, with the westernmost window bay. Windows of the former library have casings with the same raised wood molding design seen on the doors between the assembly hall and domestic science room. The building’s 1911 architectural plans indicate the library originally had two doors that opened directly into the flanking stairhalls. Today, the kitchen entry is off the assembly hall, and contains a five-panel wood door that apparently was re-used from another location in the building. The original entry into the east stair hall has been infilled, and the original west entry was remodeled for access to the restroom, though the entry remains in its original location. Bookcases built for the branch library were removed to the town’s main library in 1954. The kitchen space, which encompasses the larger part of the original library space, has plaster walls, a vinyl tile floor, and kitchen cabinets of relatively recent vintage.

The basement houses building utilities, storage rooms, and spaces associated with the arts center, including a kiln area, a dark room, and private studios. Walls in the basement are exposed stone, brick, or concrete block, some with a rough

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plaster finish. There are some wood partitions and hollow-core doors in the art spaces. The present concrete floor was poured during the early 1950s renovations. The ceiling is generally unfinished, though some acoustic tile is present. Six-pane wood sash remains in the basement windows. Doors at the stair halls and utility rooms have metal casings. The base of the elevator shaft (2003) is located adjacent to the east stair.

South Union School was last used as a school during the 1979-1980 academic year. Renovations between 1980 and about 2003 include installation of new interior doors with metal casings, partitioning of portions of the first-floor classrooms, and installation of fiber wallboards over second-story windows on the interior. In addition to construction of the hydraulic elevator in 2003-2004, accessibility improvements include renovation of the restrooms on the first and second floors. The rubber membrane roof also dates to this period. An evaluation of the building fabric undertaken in 2007 by preservation architect David M. Hart, AIA, provides recommendations for repair, restoration, and conservation, most notably repairs to original wood windows and other wood and cast-stone components, as well as repointing of brick walls, chimneys, and the masonry stairs.

The monumental stair (photos 1 and 7) and adjoining wall are not proposed for repair at this time. Both are constructed of rubblestone with granite caps, and retain pairs of square posts at the head and foot of each staircase (four square posts defining each staircase, eight posts total). The stairs are concrete. Currently in fair condition, this structure has been patched with concrete, particularly where pieces of the original granite caps have deteriorated or been removed.

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are known on the school property, sites may exist. Two sites are recorded in the general area (within one mile), both located around the periphery of Hopkinton Reservoir, approximately one-half mile south of the South Union School. Indian Brook, a tributary of the Sudbury River, was dammed to form Hopkinton Reservoir. Environmental characteristics of the school property generally represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of Native sites. The school is located in glacial till uplands on a well-drained, south-facing, 15 to 25% slope of a glacial drumlin. Soil types in the area are classified as sandy and very stony. The Sudbury River flows from west to east, less than 1,000 feet south of the school. The town of Sudbury lies within the Sudbury/Merrimack River drainage. While the drainage characteristics and proximity to wetlands described above are favorable for the presence of ancient Native American sites, excessive slope and very stony soil characteristics reduce the overall site sensitivity for this location. Given the above information, school and roadway construction, utilities, and landscaping, a low potential exists for locating significant ancient Native American resources on the school property.

A low potential also exists for locating significant historic archaeological resources on the school property. It is unlikely that significant archaeological resources associated with the school exist that cannot be investigated through documentary resources. No outbuildings associated with the school are known. Historic land use of the property has not been identified prior to construction of the school in 1911.

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8. Statement of Significance

Narrative Statement of Significance

A well-preserved school building designed in the Classical Revival style, South Union School, 21 Highland Street, (1911-1912, MHC # SBR.164, photos 1-8), has been a significant presence in Southborough for nearly a century. The red brick school represents the consolidation of public schools in Southville and Cordaville, two formerly industrial villages in the south part of Southborough, between which the new school was constructed. Associated with an early 20th-century effort to provide up-to-date municipal facilities in the villages, comparable to those available at the town center, South Union School also incorporates spaces for a public assembly hall and a branch of the public library. Architect Frank Irving Cooper, of the Boston architectural firm Cooper & Bailey, was a leader in the nationwide movement in the early 20th century to standardize the planning and construction of school buildings. Retaining integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, South Union School meets Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places at the local level.

Southborough is a suburban community on the Boston-Worcester corridor, located at the eastern edge of Worcester County, approximately sixteen miles east of Worcester and twenty-eight miles west of Boston.¹ The town is bordered by Marlborough on the north, Framingham on the northeast, Ashland on the southeast, Hopkinton on the southwest, Westborough on the west, and Northborough on the northwest. Originally encompassing the southern part of Marlborough and known as Stony (Stoney) Brook, Southborough lies within the Sudbury River drainage basin, with the Sudbury River forming the town's southern boundary. Stony Brook was one of two major brooks that once traversed the northern and central portions of the town and provided small water-powered mill sites. With the creation of the Metropolitan Water Commission, the western portions of Stony Brook were engineered to become an open channel for the Wachusett Aqueduct in 1898, and over 1,200 acres in the northern part of town were flooded to form the Sudbury Reservoir. [Narrative History, 1; MHC town report]

Separating from Marlborough (1660), Southborough was incorporated as an independent town in 1727. In 1786, Southborough annexed from Framingham a narrow, 300-acre parcel along the Sudbury River at Southborough's southern boundary, known as the Fiddleneck for the way the land protruded west from the Framingham grant. Further realignments of Southborough's boundaries occurred in 1835, with a modification of the western boundary with Westborough, and in 1843, when 82 acres in the northern part of town were annexed to Marlborough. Southborough's gently undulating terrain and rich, gravelly loam supported the agricultural productivity that carried the town's economy well into the 20th century. [Narrative History, 1-3; MHC town report; Historical Data]

While scattered farmsteads characterized much of Southborough's settlement into the 20th century, four village centers had formed by the 1840s. In the northern part of town, the Colonial-period meetinghouse location (from 1727) became the town center, located on the main east-west route through Southborough between Boston and Worcester (now known as Main Street/Boston Road or MA Route 30). At the town's mid-section was Fayville, a Federal-period turnpike village located on the Boston & Worcester Turnpike (1808-1809, now known as Turnpike Road or MA Route 9), which became the principal stage coach route through Southborough. Route 9 would later constitute part of the corridor for the Boston & Worcester Street Railway. [Narrative History, 1-19; MHC town report]

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¹ Unless otherwise referenced in the text, sources for this section are Southborough's *Annual Town Reports*, particularly the reports of the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee (and its special committees), the Superintendent of Schools, and the Trustees of the Fay Library, with years as noted. See **Section 9, Major Bibliographical References** for a complete list of sources.

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Southborough's two Early Industrial-period villages are Southville and Cordaville, located approximately one-half mile apart at the southern edge of town, along the former Boston & Worcester Railroad line. In 1835, the Boston & Worcester Railroad (later known as the Boston & Albany) established stops at both villages. The presence of the railroad, however, did not immediately spark industrial development. Southville in the 1840s was the focus of the town's greatest expansion during the Early Industrial period, boasting the first significant industry in the south part of town, the boot and shoe factory of John Hartt and his partners. Formed in the early 1840s and expanded in 1845 in conjunction with Harvey Newton, the business included a wholesale and retail boot and shoe outlet in Boston. Also in the 1840s, William B. Wood built a cotton and woolen clothing factory in Southville on the Sudbury River, producing kersey, a coarse cotton and woolen cloth marketed primarily in the South, and, by 1852, cotton batting. Worker housing spread north along Parkerville Road and west along Southville Road, with some clusters of residences on short side streets. A building boom soon followed easterly on Southville Road at Cordaville, where Milton Sanford built his own factory between the railroad tracks and the river in 1846. Incorporated in 1849 as the Cordaville Manufacturing Company, the factory produced cotton, jute, and woolen goods (mostly blankets). The factory burned in 1855 but was rebuilt. Sanford was responsible for the construction of many of the single and double houses on Southville Road, Cordaville Road, and adjacent side streets north of the factory, and named the village Cordaville in honor of his wife, Cordelia. He maintained a company store at 110 Southville Road (ca. 1850, MHC # SBR.172, later known as Fitzgerald's Store), near the intersection of the Southville and Cordaville Roads. The upstairs hall, known as Wilson's Hall, was a gathering place for residents of both villages. The first Roman Catholic Mass in Southborough was said in the hall in 1861, by which time a sizable Irish Catholic population resided in the two villages and were employed at the mills. Sanford sold his holdings in 1863 to a stock company, and the officers renamed the factory the Cordaville Mills Company, later known as the Cordaville Woolen Company. Blanket production increased during the Civil War era, contributing to the growth of the surrounding village. [Narrative History, 14-16; Noble, 147-197] Reflecting the growth of Southville and Cordaville during the Early Industrial period, the town of Southborough built three public schools in the two villages: Southville Primary School, 236 Parkerville Road (1860, MHC # SBR.128, now a residence); Southville Grammar School, 28 Highland Street (1870, MHC # SBR.165, now a residence); and the Cordaville School (ca. 1850s, demolished ca. 1910s), located at the site of 193 Woodland Road, near Cordaville Road (MA Route 85).

During the Late Industrial period (ca. 1870-1915), the Roman Catholic Church of St. Matthew, 105 Southville Road (1877-1879, MHC # SBR.166) was built to serve the Irish population that worked in the mills at Southville and Cordaville. By the late 19th century, the St. Matthew parish also included a small group of Italians who worked at the Cordaville Woolen Company. The church was situated between Southville Road and Highland Street, roughly midway between the two villages. The church also was just east of the Southville Grammar School (1870, see above) on Highland Street, which housed students in grades 5-8 from both villages. Placement here of both the public school and the church established this section of Highland Street and Southville Road as a small institutional focus by the late 1870s, easily accessible to residents of both villages at the southern edge of the town. Industrial enterprises at Southville and Cordaville continued to expand into the 1890s. At Southville, Harvey Newton, who ran the boot and shoe factory alone after the death of his partner, John Hartt, employed over 100 people. At Cordaville, a reorganized Cordaville Woolen Company also employed over 100 people. The 1898 Worcester County atlas shows that Cordaville, unlike Southville, was very much a "company town" at the end of the 19th century, with much of the real estate still held by the woolen mill corporation, including the company store. By 1907, the storekeeper and Cordaville postmaster was Thomas F. Fitzgerald, who later purchased the building. The town's last boot and shoe factories closed by the 1920s. The woolen mill at Cordaville closed in 1928, at which time the real estate was sold. [Noble, 197, 291; Narrative History, 24-25]

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In the first twelve years of the 20th century, the town of Southborough built new municipal buildings to serve residents of the town center, as well as the villages of Fayville, Southville, and Cordaville. Those buildings were, in chronological order, Peters High School, Main Street (1900, demolished 1962), a grades 1-12 school replacing an earlier school building on the same site; Fayville Hall, 42 Central Street (1911, MHC # SBR.263); Fay (now Southborough Public) Library, 25 Main Street (1911-1912, MHC # SBR.42); and South Union School. Also constructed during this period was a new Fayville School, 22 Oak Hill Road (1905, MHC # SBR.227, now a residence), replacing a school destroyed by fire the previous year. Collectively, these five buildings provided up-to-date school facilities for the four villages, and established town-owned public hall and branch library spaces, serving residents of the three villages lying south of the town center. The village hall at Fayville also provided space for the fire department.

Annual reports of the School Committee note that the community began discussing, as early as 1900, the possible consolidation of the public schools in the villages of Southville and Cordaville. The network of district schools in Southborough had been discontinued, and a townwide public school system had been established. [*Narrative History*, 21] Completion of the new Peters High School that year established a substantial school building at the town center, and there was a keen desire to provide a building of comparable quality in the southern part of town. In 1911, when South Union School was under construction, Southville Primary housed 25 students in grades 1-4, Southville Grammar housed 29 students in grades 5-8, and the Cordaville school housed 14 students in grades 1-4. Once vacated, these three school properties were sold, with two surviving as residences and the third replaced by an early 20th-century dwelling (see above).

At Town Meeting on March 6, 1911, the town appropriated \$500 for investigating the cost of constructing a school to serve the villages of Southville and Cordaville. The study committee expended approximately \$145, principally in payments to the architectural firms of Hubert G. Ripley and Warren & Gerrish for sketches and plans, and to James F. Bigelow for surveying the lot and producing site plans. At Special Town Meeting on May 24, 1911, the town voted to appropriate \$22,000 for the school construction. Francis D. Newton, Paul S. Lincoln, and John T. Burnett, members of the Board of Selectmen, noted in the board's 1911 annual report the significance of this project to the larger community:

The Town of Southborough, for the first time in its history, issued bonds, as authorized by a special town meeting, to pay for the new school house which is now being erected in the south part of the town. The amount issued was twenty-two thousand dollars in four per cent bonds, which are sold at a premium. These bonds are to be retired two thousand dollars annually, the same to be raised by taxation. This is according to the State law.

Daniel F. Harrington, Seth H. Howes, Frederick A. Flichtner, Augustus E. Wright, and John J. Henderson served on the building committee, and Frederick B. Van Ornum was Superintendent of Schools. The town expended \$229.50 to purchase land on Highland Street from the Cordaville Woolen Company. The building lot was situated at the small institutional focus on Highland Street, already established by the construction of the Southville Grammar School and St. Matthew's Church (see above).

It is not clear in the annual town reports why the town of Southborough did not contract with either of the architectural firms that had produced preliminary plans for South Union School in 1911. The same year, the town instead hired the Boston architectural firm of Cooper & Bailey to design the new school. Thomas P. Hurley of Marlborough was the builder. The South Union School had three classrooms on the first floor, as well as a domestic science room, a large

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public hall seating 265 people, and space for a branch of the public library, all located on the second floor. Two "wardrobe" rooms or coatrooms occupied the space between the stairhalls on the first floor, and toilet facilities occupied the corresponding space in the basement. Original plans from 1911 designate separate spaces at the west and east ends of the basement as indoor playrooms for boys and girls, respectively, though it is not clear if the spaces were ever used for that purpose. Known alternately as the "school in the south part of town" or the "Cordaville School" (on the 1911 architectural plans), the new school was generally known by 1915 as South Union School, representing the union or consolidation of the public schools in the south part of the town.

Architect Frank Irving Cooper (1867-1933) was the lead partner in the Boston-based firm of Cooper & Bailey, which operated from at least 1901 until Cooper established his own firm in 1914. A native of Taunton, Cooper was a graduate of the Chauncey Hall School and began studying architecture under noted architect H. H. Richardson. He went on to hold positions as a draftsman in the Boston architecture firms of Henry Van Brunt and Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge. [Withey, 138-139] After two years in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania designing industrial buildings, Cooper returned to Massachusetts to design the Bristol County Superior Court House, 9 Court Street, Taunton (1892-1894, MHC # TAU.23), and established a practice in Boston. MHC's MACRIS database includes approximately twenty buildings attributed to Cooper & Bailey, constructed from 1901 to 1914. In addition to South Union School, they include schools in Amesbury, Ashburnham, Attleboro, Billerica, Braintree, Easton, Georgetown, Great Barrington, Lexington, Middleborough, Newbury, Quincy, Rockland, Stockbridge, and West Boylston. The firm also designed the Fairbanks Memorial Hall (Town Hall), Ashburnham (1905, NRDIS, MHC # ASB.44); Georgetown Peabody Library, Georgetown (1907, MHC # GEO.22); a business block at 55-57 Pleasant Street, Newburyport (1903, NRDIS, MHC # NWB.353); and Oak Hill Chapel, 31 Nahanton Street, Newton (1905, MHC # NWT.3661). Little information has been located about Elmer S. Bailey. Boston city directories list Bailey and Cooper with the same business address in 1905 and 1915, but at different addresses in the 1920s and the 1930s. Further research is needed on Bailey and his architectural practice.

Cooper was an active member of the National Education Association, for which he chaired a committee on schoolhouse planning and construction. He advocated for the development of modern standards in the construction of schools, and the education of teachers, school superintendents, and town officials in recognizing the need for those standards. Cooper also encouraged cities and towns, in the planning of new school buildings, to hire local architects who specialized in school design. He served as an architectural consultant to municipal Boards of Education and School Committees throughout New England, participating in the design of public halls, college buildings and dormitories, administration buildings, and about 200 elementary, intermediate, and high schools. In 1914, he organized the Frank I. Cooper Corporation, based in Boston and Hartford, Connecticut. Cooper's later commissions of note include the public library in Medford as well as Clark Pathological Laboratory at Amherst College, Amherst. He also designed high schools in Adams, Malden, and Plymouth, Massachusetts; Hartford, Connecticut; and Bristol, Rhode Island. Cooper was a former member of the Boston City Planning Commission and a Mason (the Masons presided over the laying of the cornerstone at Cooper's 1892 Bristol County court house). He was also affiliated with the Boston chapter of what was then known as the American Society of Heating and Ventilating Engineers, serving as president of the chapter in 1912-1913. [Withey; MACRIS; see separate section in bibliography for additional sources]

South Union School opened in December 1912. The new three-classroom school served 67 children in grades 1-9, as the ninth year was then part of the elementary grades. In 1913, the school district integrated its ninth grade with the high school program. Like other public schools in Southborough during the period, South Union School had multi-age classrooms, grouping together the students in grades one through three, four through six, and seven through nine (later eight). Longtime teachers of these classes at South Union School were, respectively, Mary J. Reagan, a graduate of

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Framingham Normal School; Julia F. Gleason, also a graduate of Framingham Normal School; and Grace M. Ellis, a graduate of Middlebury College. Miss Gleason, known after her marriage as Julia Gleason McDonald, later became principal of the school.

The Southville Branch Library opened on the second floor of South Union School on June 9, 1915, under the care of Miss Hazel R. Clark. The reason for the delay between the opening of the school and the opening of the branch library is not detailed in annual reports, but perhaps may be attributed in part to the opening in September 1912 of the new Fay Library building at the town center. Another branch library operated out of Fayville Hall. Each branch library was open two hours per week: Southville on Saturday evenings, and Fayville on Tuesday and Saturday afternoons. By contrast, the main library at the town center was open sixteen hours per week: in the afternoons from Monday through Saturday, as well as Wednesday and Saturday evenings.

Discussion of establishing a branch public library in the southern part of town appears to have started by 1907, when at Special Town Meeting the town considered appropriating funds to refurbish the upper room in the Southville Primary School (see above) for use as a public hall. The matter was referred to the School Committee for study. In endorsing the idea, the School Committee observed in its 1908 annual report that the hall would make "an excellent place for a distributing room for a branch of the public library, for which we believe there is a growing demand and is badly needed in that section of town." The Trustees of Fay Library concurred, noting in their 1910 annual report that better library service could be provided to the residents of Southville and Cordaville through the opening there of a branch library, rather than the system, already in place, of transporting books from the Fay Library at the town center. In 1911, for example, the main library delivered a total of 535 books to the south part of town, which were distributed from the "School House Hall" that had been renovated for community use. This number climbed to 849 books in 1913, following the opening of the new Fay Library building in September 1912. At the new Southville branch library, where the permanent collection consisted of "two selections of books comprising five hundred volumes each," circulation for June through December 1915 amounted to approximately 17% of the total books and magazines circulated by the library system in 1915. Figures from the 1920 annual report of the Library Trustees show circulation from the Southville branch comprised 12% of the total items delivered that year, while the Fayville branch circulated 15% of the townwide total of 11,984. Mrs. Howard Hunt served as librarian at the Southville branch in 1930, according to library annual reports.

Through the late 1920s, total enrollment at South Union School ranged from 67 to 86 students in three classrooms. In 1927, following two years of requests from the South Union School, the town's School Committee arranged for manual training classes for the seventh- and eighth-grade boys enrolled at South Union. This involved transporting those students to the town center one afternoon per week for instruction at the Peters High School building (see above). Girls in the seventh and eighth grades at South Union were offered domestic science classes in a second-floor classroom designated for that purpose. In 1928, the school district implemented a six-year high school academic program for grades 7-12 (later evolving into separate junior high school and senior high school programs), though seventh and eighth graders residing in the southern part of town continued to attend South Union School until the mid 1940s.

The School Committee's 1926 annual report noted that increased attendance in the lower grades at the town center and South Union was overtaxing classroom facilities, and necessitated the hiring of "helper teachers." The town maintained three schools, with the Peters High School building at the town center housing grades one through twelve, the South Union School housing grades one through eight, and the Fayville School housing grades one through three. The shortage of classroom space, often described in annual reports through the years as the "housing problem," contributed to a

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temporary spike in the enrollment at South Union School during the 1929-1930 school year, when 121 students were enrolled. To relieve the “housing problem” at the town center, the school district transported to South Union the fourth graders living in Fayville as well as other children who resided south of the Boston & Worcester streetcar line (now known as Turnpike Road or Route 9). At South Union, the district established a separate 4th grade class, and for the first time operated four separate classrooms rather than the three classrooms the building was designed to house. A report by principal Julia Gleason filed with the School Committee’s annual report described the changes, but did not note which room at South Union had been converted for use as the fourth classroom. Enrollment at South Union returned to earlier levels, with three classrooms in operation, following completion of Peters High School Annex, 19 Main Street (1930, MHC # SBR.43, now the Southborough Police Station), providing additional classroom space for the elementary population schooled at the town center.

Further research is needed on the community (*i.e.*, non-school) activities based at South Union School during World War II. A historic photograph shows a small, wood-frame structure constructed on the roof of the school for use as an aircraft warning observatory. [Noble, 310] Volunteers for the town’s Ground Observer Corps staffed the observatory, which was removed at an unknown date. The Red Cross apparently occupied the school’s Domestic Science Room during the war, according to a passing reference in the 1947 town report. The Southville Branch Library saw steady activity during the war years. Figures published in the 1945 annual report of the Fay Library trustees show that circulation at the Southville branch, with 4,654 items circulated, comprised 16% of the total circulation for the town’s three libraries, and library attendance at Southville, with 1,641 persons, comprised 14% of the total library attendance in the town.

Southborough’s population rose nearly 80% between 1940 and 1960, to just over 4,000 people. Another two-thirds increase occurred by 1980, when the population numbered 6,193. By the end of the 20th century, the population was nearly 8,500, more than double the 1960 figure. After over 250 years as an agricultural community, Southborough evolved in the second half of the 20th century from a rural to suburban town. [*Narrative History*, 36]

In the immediate post-World War II years, the town of Southborough operated four school buildings. Peters High School and the adjacent Peters High School Annex housed the elementary school population at the town center, as well as the townwide junior high and high school programs. Fayville School continued to operate as a grades 1-3 school with one teacher. South Union School became a grades 1-6 school in a three-classroom configuration: grades 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6, with one teacher for each classroom. Total enrollment at South Union climbed from 65 students in 1945 to 90 students in 1950. By 1947, 60% of the students at South Union School took lunches to school, so the vacant classroom on the second floor (previously used as a domestic science room and known during World War II as the Red Cross Room) was converted into a lunchroom.

Postwar population growth in Southborough demanded maximum utilization of all school spaces during the early 1950s. Short-term measures were implemented to relieve overcrowding while the town finalized plans to construct the Albert S. Woodward Memorial School (28 Cordaville Road, demolished and replaced in 2004), a new elementary school that opened in 1955 at the town center. Returning to the practice employed in the late 1920s, the town in 1951 began transporting some elementary students from the town center to South Union School. Enrollment at South Union peaked in 1953 with 148 students in grades 1-6. Both the assembly hall and the branch library at South Union were converted to emergency classroom use. In his 1953 report as Superintendent of Schools, Roger K. Poole commented on the loss of the assembly hall at South Union:

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By removing the assembly hall from its ordinary use as a place for physical education classes, assemblies, dramatic presentations, etc., the educational program of the South Union School will be severely handicapped until the new building is opened and the assembly hall can be returned to its original purpose. This action has also deprived the south community in the town of its best hall for general community purposes. We shall be glad when it is again available.

Unlike the assembly hall, which eventually was returned to its original use, the Southville Branch Library closed permanently. Final circulation figures show the branch library recorded 867 visitors in 1952, and its circulation of 2,761 volumes comprised approximately 10% of the total circulation for the three libraries that year. The Southville collection was returned to the main library in the summer of 1953, and the branch library's bookcases were removed and installed at the Fay Library at the town center in 1954. With the closing of the Southville branch library, the town maintained only one branch library, at Fayville Hall. Further research is needed to determine when the Fayville library closed.

South Union School underwent a four-year renovation in the early 1950s, as part of an effort by the town to upgrade its older school buildings before commencing construction on the Woodward Memorial School. Rooftop parapet walls were replaced with the existing parapets and a new roof was installed. Utility systems were upgraded, including installation of a new oil-fire heating system, new electrical panel, and new plumbing, as well as construction of new toilet rooms in the former coatrooms on the first floor and a separate toilet room for teachers on the second floor. Blackboards were converted to "sight-saving" green chalkboards. A new concrete floor was poured in the basement, where a "thoroughly modern" school cafeteria was established to serve over 100 children daily. Safety improvements included construction of additional fire exits, installation of an electric fire alarm system and emergency lighting, and replacement of ordinary glass with wire glass where required by safety regulations.

The opening in 1955 of Woodward Memorial School led to a re-organization of Southborough's public schools at the grades one through eight levels. Fayville School on Oak Hill Road was closed. South Union School housed some of the grades one through three classes; the others were divided between Peters High School Annex, at the town center, and the new Woodward School. The balance of the school population, grades four through eight, was housed at the Woodward School. Within a year, the town's fourth graders had to be returned to South Union and Peters High School Annex due to overcrowding. In another development, the town of Southborough closed Peters High School in 1959. High school students from Southborough joined their counterparts from Northborough at the new Algonquin Regional High School, 79 Bartlett Street, Northborough. The Peters High School building, Main Street (1900) was demolished in 1962. The Southborough fire station (1978) currently occupies the site.

Until an addition was completed on Woodward School in 1961, South Union School housed students in grades one through four, with 148 children enrolled in 1960. This enrollment for four grades matched an earlier postwar peak in 1953, when South Union School housed six grades. A temporary partition erected to create classrooms out of the assembly hall at South Union was removed in 1961. Principal Margaret E. Cronin noted in her 1961 report that the school's physical education, music, and intensive reading classes made daily use of the hall.

During the 1960s, the Southborough school district continued to move from a system of neighborhood-based elementary schools toward the present elementary system, in which each school building houses designated grades. Facilitating this re-organization were the openings of two new elementary schools, the Mary E. Finn School, 60 Richards Road, in September 1965, and the Margaret A. Neary School, 53 Parkerville Road, in September 1970. With the opening of Neary

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School, Peters High School Annex was closed as a school, and re-opened the following year to house the Southborough Police Station. About the same time, the school district created a separate middle school program, with the goal of establishing Woodward Memorial School as a middle school for students in grades 6-8.

South Union School closed briefly in the early 1970s, and then re-opened in September 1973 as the town's kindergarten center, with 119 students enrolled. The school district started providing kindergarten classes in September 1970, "ahead of the State deadline of September 1973" mandated by the Commonwealth for the creation of kindergarten classes in the public schools. Initially, Southborough's kindergarten classes were located at Finn School and Neary School. The re-opening of South Union School to house a centralized kindergarten was partly due to the need to create additional classroom space for older children at Neary School. Centralizing the town's half-day kindergarten at South Union, as opposed to placing older (full-day) children at the school, had the added advantage of eliminating the need to establish a hot lunch program at South Union, or transporting South Union students to Finn School for lunch. With declining birth rates and student enrollments in the 1970s, the kindergarten center at South Union School closed at the end of the 1979-1980 school year. Kindergarten classes were moved to Finn School, which then served as the town's K-2 school. Today, the town of Southborough maintains four schools with the following grade configurations: Finn School (see above), for pre-school through grade one; a newly constructed Albert S. Woodward Memorial School, 28 Cordaville Road (current building 2004), housing grades two and three; Neary School (see above), for grades four and five; and P. Brent Trottier Middle School, 49 Parkerville Road (1998), for grades six through eight.

In 1981, the vacated South Union School became the home of the Southborough Arts Center, with the Southborough Cultural Arts Council (SCAC) renting the building from the town's School Committee. Founded in 1980, the SCAC oversees Arts Center programming, which includes events, exhibitions, and classes. In addition, SCAC awards and administers grants annually to individuals and groups involved in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences. These grant monies come to the SCAC from the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), a state agency funded by the state legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts. The main sources of income for the Arts Center are memberships, private donations, and business sponsorships.

Per vote of 2001 Annual Town Meeting, control of the former South Union School building was transferred from the School Committee to the Board of Selectmen. Work conducted in 2003-2004 (see **Section 7, Description** above) was undertaken to bring the building into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition to the Arts Center, the building now houses the offices of the town's Recreation Department and Facilities Department.

(end)

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(end)

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the accompanying sheet 3 of the Town of Southborough assessor's maps.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the parcel continuously associated with the South Union School since its construction in 1911-1912.

(end)

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Photographs

Historic Name: South Union School
Location: 21 Highland Street, Southborough (Worcester County), MA
Photographer: Kathleen Kelly Broomer (Photos 1-6), Kate Matison Photography (Photos 7-8)
Date: Fall 2008
Location of
Digital Images: Southborough Historical Commission, Southborough, MA

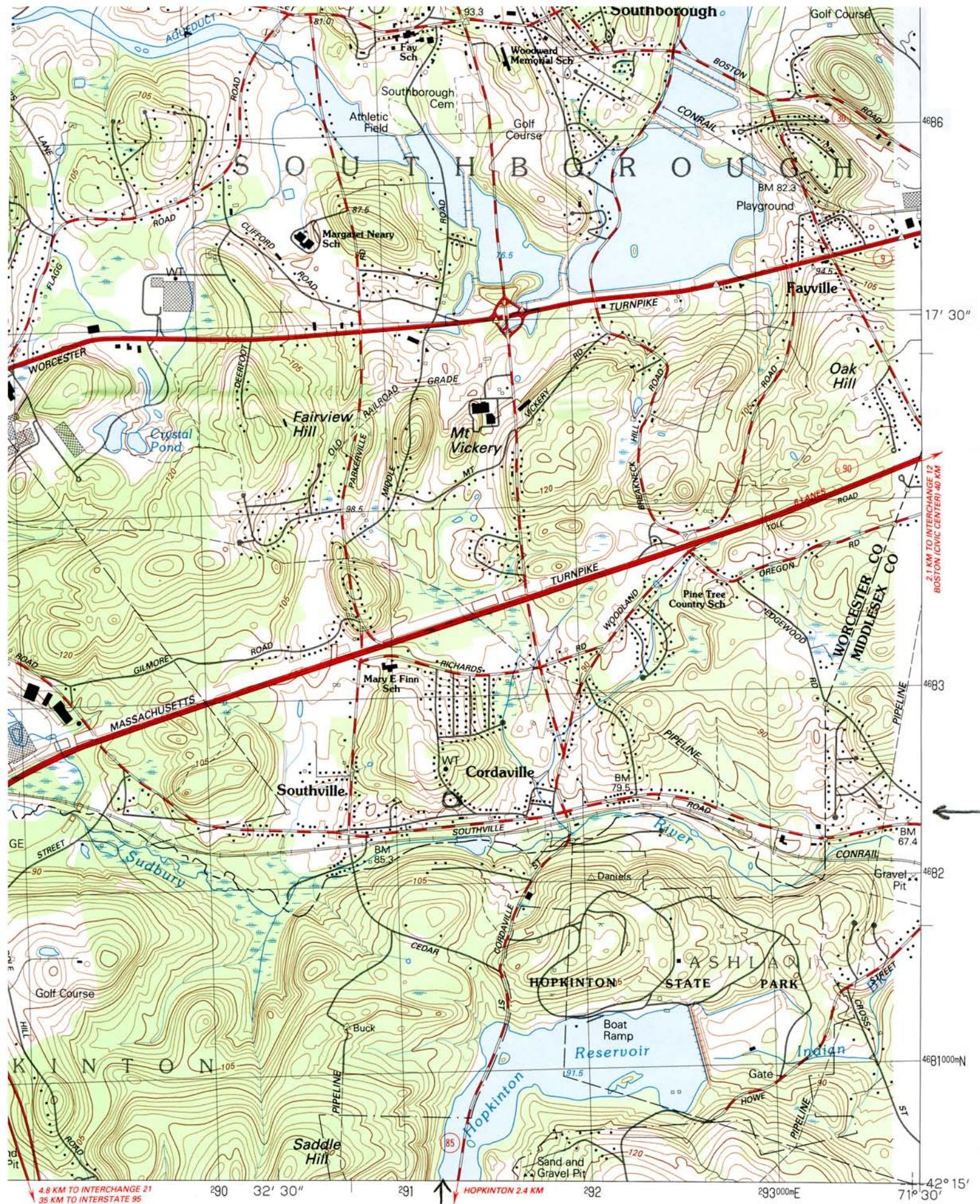
Photo # **View**

- 1 South Union School, façade (south elevation) and monumental stair. View NW.
digital file name: MA_Southborough (Worcester County)_SouthUnion1
- 2 South Union School, detail of façade frontispiece. View E.
digital file name: MA_Southborough (Worcester County)_SouthUnion2
- 3 South Union School, west elevation. View NE.
digital file name: MA_Southborough (Worcester County)_SouthUnion3
- 4 South Union School, rear (north) elevation. View SW.
digital file name: MA_Southborough (Worcester County)_SouthUnion4
- 5 South Union School, first floor corridor showing glazed divider. View NE.
digital file name: MA_Southborough (Worcester County)_SouthUnion5
- 6 South Union School, second floor assembly hall, looking NE toward original stage location.
digital file name: MA_Southborough (Worcester County)_SouthUnion6
- 7 South Union School, façade (south elevation) and monumental stair. View NE.
digital file name: MA_Southborough (Worcester County)_SouthUnion7
- 8 South Union School, detail of façade frontispiece. View N.
digital file name: MA_Southborough (Worcester County)_SouthUnion8

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South Union School, Southborough (Worcester County), MA



1. South Union School, façade (south elevation) and monumental stair. View NW.



2. South Union School, detail of façade frontispiece. View E.

South Union School, Southborough (Worcester County), MA



3. South Union School, west elevation. View NE.



4. South Union School, rear (north) elevation. View SW.

South Union School, Southborough (Worcester County), MA



5. South Union School, first floor corridor showing glazed divider. View NE.



6. South Union School, second floor assembly hall, looking NE toward original stage location.

South Union School, Southborough (Worcester County), MA



7. South Union School, façade (south elevation) and monumental stair. View NE.



8. South Union School, detail of façade frontispiece. View N.