

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

415-02552-331

Southbridge

STU.B

STU.72

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: Sturbridge

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Sturbridge Center

Photograph



Address: 331 Main Street

Historic Name: Southbridge and Sturbridge Street Railway Substation

Uses: Present: Bank

Original: Power House

Date of Construction: ca. 1898

Source: Board of Railroad Commissioners 1899

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Brick, Wood Clapboard/Brick and Wood

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: None

Major Alterations (*with dates*): conversion to bank, 1990 (including construction of carport on west elevation and interior renovations)

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .77 acres

Setting: The building occupies a roughly rectangular-shaped lot on the south side of Main Street at the intersection of Main Street and New Boston Road Extension. It is set back from the street in a mixed-use area between Route 20 and the I-84 underpass. A paved parking lot fills most of the parcel, and connecting driveways encircle the building.

Locus Map



Recorded by: L. Kline, G. Pineo, E. Giacomarra; PAL

Organization: Sturbridge Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): May 2018

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

STURBRIDGE

331 MAIN STREET

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Southbridge and Sturbridge Street Railway Substation (ca. 1898, STU.72) is a northeast-facing, Colonial Revival-style, one-story, two-bay-by-three-bay brick building on a brick foundation, with a low, one-story ell extending from the southwest elevation. Both sections have end-gable roofs covered in asphalt shingles, and the main section has two brick chimneys piercing its ridgeline. A gable-roof carport supported by square brick columns extends from the northwest elevation. A gable-roof hood with an open pediment supported by fluted columns shelters the main entrance in the northeast (facade) elevation. It is filled with a twelve-light wood door beneath a wood arch. Rectangular window openings with brick arches and stone sills contain nine-over-nine, double-hung wood sash.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Southbridge and Sturbridge Street Railway began in 1895 (*Boston Sunday Globe* 1895). Prior to that, residents in the area had planned to build a steam railroad between Southbridge, Sturbridge, and Brookfield but abandoned the project. The Southbridge and Sturbridge Street Railway was founded by Calvin D. Paige and Francis L. Chapin of Southbridge. Paige was the president of a cotton mill and on the boards of the Southbridge National Bank and the Southbridge Savings Bank. Chapin was on the board of the Springfield Five Cents Savings Bank (*The Banker's Encyclopedia* 1916:802). On August 28, 1896, the first electric trolley ran through Sturbridge from Sandersdale in Southbridge to Fiskdale at the west end of Sturbridge (Bicentennial Commission 1975:32).

The Southbridge and Sturbridge Street Railway Substation (ca. 1898, STU.72) was likely constructed in 1898 to provide power to the Sturbridge portion of the electric street railway line. The *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners* for 1898 included line item charges for new buildings "necessary for operation of railway," power station equipment, and electric line construction (Massachusetts Board of Railroad Commissioners 1899:664). Also in 1898, the railway company acquired Fairview Park in Sturbridge (no longer extant, originally located in a hollow behind the current Sturbridge Plaza shopping mall at 196 Main Street), which hosted concerts and plays and had open space for strolling. The park boasted ponds, an observation tower, and a gazebo. Trolley riders received free entrance to the park, and others paid a dime. Fairview Park was a popular destination, attracting over 1,500 people on August 24, 1899 (Burns 1988:66–67).

In 1902, the trolley carried 619,384 passengers and employed 15 people. A ride from Southbridge to Fiskdale took 45 minutes and cost 15 cents (Burns 1988:54). The trolley had two fleets of cars, six box passenger cars for use in the winter, and five open cars for the warmer months (Massachusetts Board of Railroad Commissioners 1903). In Sturbridge, the trolley stopped at Snellville, the Agricultural Fairgrounds, Sturbridge Center, Fairview Park, and a car house (Burns 1988:54).

In 1903, stockholders of the Worcester and Southbridge Street Railway; the Worcester, Rochdale & Charlton Depot Street Railway; the Southbridge & Sturbridge Street Railway; and the Worcester & Southbridge Development Company voted to consolidate the four organizations, along with Pinehurst Park and the Hotel Overlook. The consolidated company was named the Worcester & Southbridge Street Railway Company. The consolidation prevented the separate railways from closing due to financial concerns (*Boston Sunday Globe* 1903).

By 1910, Fairview Park was closed, following a police raid related to charges of public drinking and immoral conduct (Burns 1988:66–67). The consolidated trolley line continued operating but declined by 1916 with the advent of the automobile and jitneys, or private taxis (Robinson n.d.). The use of the substation at 331 Main Street immediately after the railway closed is unknown, but the building was converted into a bank (its present use) in the late twentieth century. A drive-up teller carport was constructed on the northwest elevation and the interior was renovated to accommodate banking services (WCRD 12925/337).

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Robinson, Charles M. "Jitneys Marked Beginning of End for Trolley Cars." Undated and unattributed news clipping, Joshua Hyde Public Library, Sturbridge, MA.

Wilkin, Agnes S. *Massachusetts Historical Commission Building Form B – Main Street Trolley Substation (STU.72)*. On file, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, MA, 1971.

Worcester County Registry of Deeds (WCRD). Book/Page (Year). 12925/337 (1990).

PHOTOGRAPH



Photo 2. Southbridge and Sturbridge Street Railway Substation, looking north.