

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA. 02108

Form numbers in this area	Area letter
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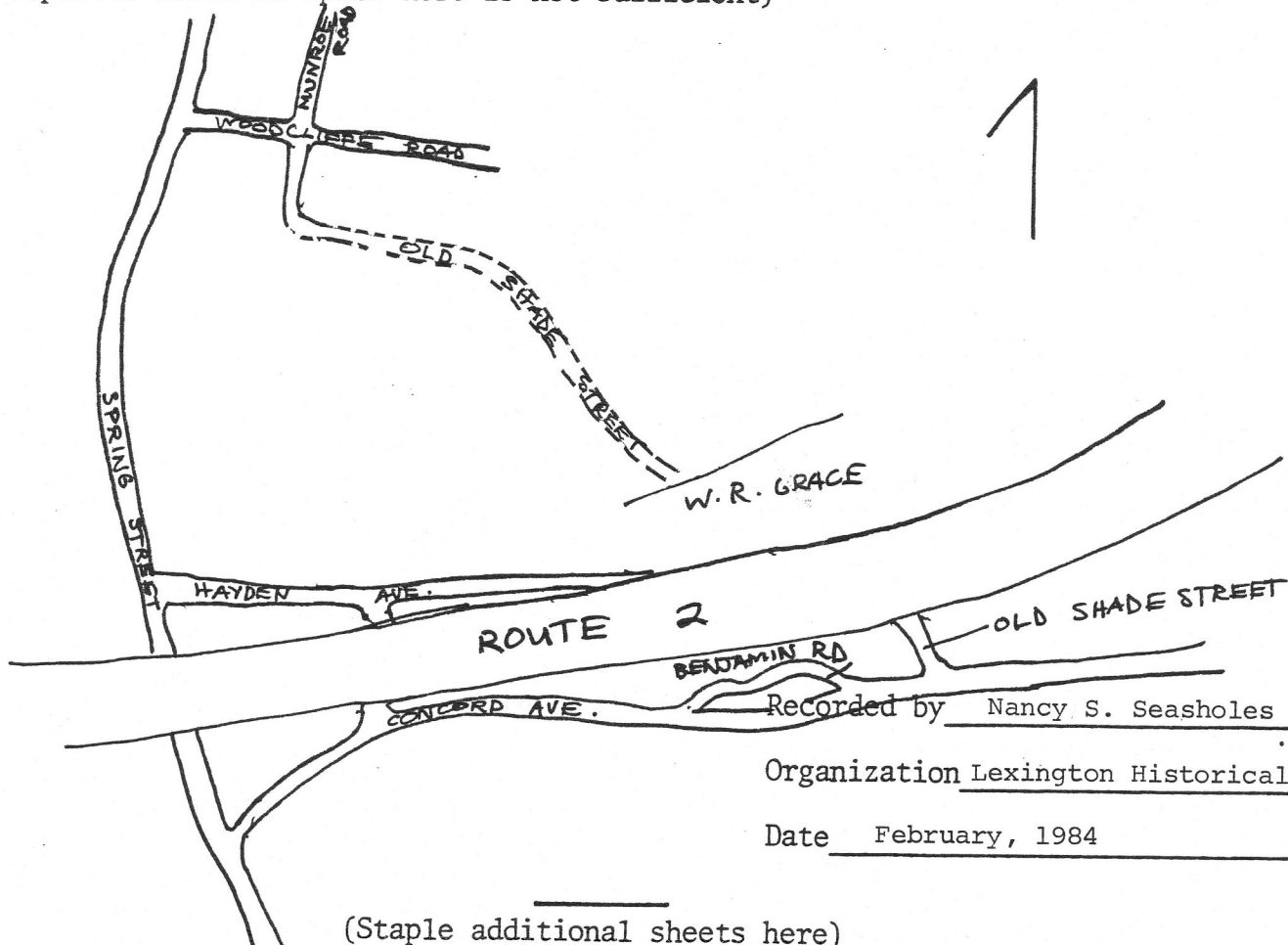
Lexington

of area (if any) Old Shade Street

1 date or period seventeenth-

eighteenth century

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

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

Part of the main road from Lincoln and Lexington to Boston in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most of Old Shade Street is now either blocked by felled trees, reduced to a path, or obliterated. The section closest to Spring Street, north of Route 2, however, is still clearly a road bordered by stone walls, just as it was historically. A major difference, however, is that today the terrain through which the road passes is wooded, whereas in the past it was probably open farmland. The section that remains south of Route 2 is still a maintained street serving four houses. It forms the west boundary of the lot on which the Cutler farmhouse stands (see 503 Concord Avenue form) just as it did historically when it was known as Cutler's Lane.

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

Old Shade Street is part of a road ordered laid out in 1660 between the southwestern part of Lexington and the Watertown (now Waltham) line, a reflection of the fact that in the seventeenth century southwestern Lexington was the most populous part of the town and most of its inhabitants came from Watertown. This road followed a route comprised of Old Shade Street, Cutler's Lane (now the part of Old Shade Street south of Route 2), an "old road" approximately on the route of present Concord Avenue, a no longer existing driveway at the corner of Concord Avenue and Waltham Street, Ricci's Lane (see Ricci's Lane area form), and Bow Street in Waltham. The Old Shade Street end connected with the town of Lincoln via Shade Street, Weston Street, Lincoln Street, and Mill Street, and altogether this road system served as a major route to Boston during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period when the best routes to Boston were via Waltham rather than Cambridge. In the nineteenth century new bridges were built from Cambridge to Boston, making the preferred routes from Lexington those through Cambridge, and Old Shade Street thus became less important as a major thoroughfare. It remained in use as a town road, however, and continued to be used as a street well into the twentieth century, even after the southeastern end was cut off in the mid 1930s when the original Route 2 was built. Old Shade Street was maintained as a street until the early 1960s when Route 2 was rebuilt and Hayden Avenue laid out; the road, which had apparently never been paved, was then allowed to grow over. The rezoning, in 1969, of the land along Hayden Avenue for offices and research parks signaled the final demise of Old Shade Street: the old roadway, now just a path, ends at the edge of the W.R. Grace property. Old Shade Street south of Route 2, the former Cutler's Lane, is still a town street, however.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Worthen, Edwin B. 1946. A Calendar History of Lexington, Massachusetts, 1620-1946, pp. 20, 43-45. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Savings Bank.

1937 map

1955 map

1961 map

1969 map