

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **MAR 19 1986**
date entered **APR 17 1986**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Gordon-Center House

and/or common Harford House

2. Location

street & number West Shore Rd., Route 314

N/A not for publication

city, town Grand Isle

N/A vicinity of

state Vermont

code 50

county Grand Isle

code 013

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <u>N/A</u> in process | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <u>N/A</u> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Jan Michael Harford

street & number P.O. Box 511

city, town Grand Isle

N/A vicinity of

state Vermont

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Grand Isle Town Clerk

street & number RR # 1, Box 388, Hyde Road

city, town Grand Isle

state Vermont 05458

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Vermont Historic Sites
and Structures Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date August, 1980

federal state county local

depository for survey records Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Montpelier

state Vermont

7. Description

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Harford House is a Federal style, 2½ story smooth ashlar and coursed rubble structure with a slate roof and two interior end chimneys. It is 5 x 2 bays with a long, 6 x 2 bay clapboard wing adjoining it to the north and a small gable-roofed, 1½ story clapboard ell projecting from the east side of the wing. Built in 1824, the house has a central hall plan and retains some of its original Federal details, although the interior was substantially remodeled around the turn of the century. The character of the exterior of the house remains essentially intact, including a distinctive central door with oversized keystone arch. Situated on a ten acre parcel of rural land, the eaves-front house faces west towards Route 314 overlooking Lake Champlain and the ferry dock. The property also contains two large barns dating from the nineteenth century and three other outbuildings all located to the northeast of the house.

The stone house is constructed of ashlar, coursed Isle La Motte stone on the west and south facades. The east and south walls, which are not visible from the road, are random rubble. The joints between the stone are difficult to discern because the cement repointing that overwashes them is very close in color to the stone.

The primary entrance to the house is on the west, eaves-front facade which is approximately 38 feet from the center line of Route 314. This facade is five bays across with a centrally located recessed arched entry on the first floor. A two-step stone stoop leads to the front door. Particular details which highlight the front entrance include recessed panelled reveals, a plate glass semi-circular fanlight over the door and a large keystone on the wall over the arch with the date of the house carved in it. The stained oak door dates from the late-nineteenth century and has two horizontal panels below, topped by a large plate glass fixed light in the upper half.

The east facade is three evenly-spaced bays across and has a rectangular-shaped, centrally located recessed entry. A horizontal, rectangular-shaped recessed panel caps the door rather than a transom light which may have originally been in that location. The late-nineteenth century oak door on the east facade has two vertical panels topped by a horizontal recessed panel on the bottom half and plate glass in the top part of the door. A small, gable-roofed shed with stairs leading below grade to the cellar adjoins the southern part of the facade.

The windows in the stone building are all evenly spaced, matching 1/1 lights with the exception of the south facade where there are two quadrant windows in the gable and a small, new 1/1 window centrally located between the two original windows on the first floor. Except for the small window, all the others rest on stone sills which project out about two inches from the wall. On the west and south facades shutters frame each window and large splayed stone lintels cap the tops.

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The lintels on the south and east facades are randomly shaped and difficult to distinguish, but some appear to be rectangular and others are splayed. Since a clapboard wing adjoins the north wall of the house, the windows are irregularly placed on this facade, with only one window in each story and no quadrant windows in the gable.

Two interior end chimneys constructed of coursed ashlar stone and crowned by decorative splayed caps, rise above the ridge of the gabled slate roof. A molded returning cornice details the roof eaves and an aluminum gutter and downspout are attached to the west and east cornices.

The post and beam white clapboard wing adjoining the stone house dates from about the same period as the house. Structural evidence within the house indicates that the roof was raised around the turn of the century making it a 2½ story structure. The north half of the wing is unfinished barn space and the south half is part of the living area of the house and includes a large kitchen and family room on the first floor. The west facade of the wing is contiguous with the west wall of the stone house but the roof height is lower and the wing is longer and narrower than the house. The structure rests on a stone foundation and has a slate roof and molded returning cornice with fascia board below. Three bands of slate in the center of the roof's west slope are laid in an imbricated, fish-scale pattern, probably dating from when the roof was raised. An offset, brick chimney with a corbelled cap rises from the ridge.

The west facade of the wing is six bays across. The 1/1 evenly-spaced windows have plain wooden trim capped by a shallow projecting wood drip edge. At the southern end of the facade on the first floor, two slightly wider 1/1 windows flank a five-panel door with recessed panels on each side. A denticulated cornice crowns the door and windows.

The north facade is two bays wide with two, 2/2 windows on the second floor and one, 2/2 window and a door on the first. The four-panel door has a reproduction eighteenth-century wrought-iron handle and latch.

On the three bay, east facade there are fewer windows and they are irregularly placed. A small, one-room ell projects from the south end and a wide, vertical board, sliding barn door is located near the center of the wing. Two 1/1 windows on the second story are located on either side of the gable roof of the ell but there are no other second floor windows on that facade. On the first floor, there is one, 1/1 window on the south side of the ell next

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to a door leading from the ell porch to the wing. Two paired, casement windows are adjacent to the north side of the ell, followed to the north by the sliding door and one long horizontal window with 8/8 lights. This window is mostly hidden behind the sliding door when it is open.

The small 1½ story ell projects east from the wing and is 3 bays across by one bay wide. The room was added c. 1900 as a cream room where the farmer would leave milk to let the cream rise. It has a slate roof and brick interior end chimney at the east end. The south side has two, 2/2 windows and a one-bay deep porch tucked under the wide overhanging roof which is supported by two simple turned columns. The east facade has one small, 2/2 window offset in the gable. On the north facade, two, 2/2 windows flank a vertical board, wooden door with cross bracing. The interior of the room has narrow, wooden floor boards and built-in cabinets made of match-bead boards.

The stone part of the house is "Georgian" in plan with four main rooms on the first floor and a central entrance hall and stair on the west side. The hall extends only half way through the house and terminates in the middle of the stairwall with a door leading into the parlor behind. The hall is flanked by a parlor to the north and a bedroom to the south. Behind the parlor and stairs are located a larger parlor to the northeast and another bedroom in the southeast corner of the house.

Although the floor plan is typical of the early-nineteenth century, most of the interior details such as the woodwork and stairs date from the extensive remodelling done around the turn-of-the-century. Most of the woodwork is oak and maple and highly varnished. The recessed windows and five-panel doors on the first floor have splayed panelled reveals and molded architraves with bullseye corner blocks. A wide spindle screen spans the opening between the two first floor parlors and another one spans two arched openings on the second floor. The only fireplace on the first floor of the stone house is on the north wall of the northwest parlor. It is Colonial Revival in style and has a rectangular opening with a marble surround, colonettes supporting a mantle shelf, and a central tablet with garlands in low relief. The varnished wood staircase also dates from the remodelling and has a large turned newel post with a square base and top. Matching smaller ballusters lead straight upstairs.

A family room and kitchen comprise the two finished rooms on the first floor of the wing. The family room has a heatilator-type fireplace on the south wall with some Art Deco style designs which probably date it from the 1930's. Previous residents of the house say that the heatilator covers an old kitchen fireplace.

The only remaining rooms in the house with Federal details are on the west side of the second floor. The recessed windows in these rooms have Federal style stepped architrave moldings surrounding them. The splayed reveals are plaster above the sill level and wood below. Beneath each window is a flat rectangular wood panel which is set off by a groove cut around it. A fireplace in the master bedroom is also Federal style and has a shallow reeded pilaster on each side of the marbleized surround. A reeded cornice of parallel grooves crowns the pilasters just below the mantle shelf. Local legend holds that the three rooms on this side of the house were once one large ballroom. The bullseye corner blocks on the closets between these rooms indicate that the partitions were added when the house was remodelled.

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The five barns and outbuilding located on the property date from the mid-nineteenth century through c. 1930 and convey the evolution of the agricultural use of the property from the nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth. The structures are numbered on the enclosed map and their description is as follows:

1. This slate-roofed, 2x2 bay garage/barn was constructed around 1900. It is a 1½ story, eaves-front, clapboard structure facing west towards the house. An overhead garage door with a horizontal row of windows in it gives access into the building from the northern half of the west facade, while a sliding barn door opens adjacent to it on the southern end of the facade. A track for a sliding door appears over the opening for the overhead door, indicating that the garage door replaced an earlier sliding door in that location.
2. Located immediately behind the garage to the east is a one story, early-mid twentieth century barn, two bays wide with a standing seam metal roof and novelty siding. This building is entered through a narrow sliding barn door on the north facade which is flanked by two 9 light fixed glass windows.
3. To the east or rear of numbers one and two lies a small shed or milk house, 1 x 2 bays, with novelty siding. The roof on this early twentieth century building was recently removed and the new "flat roof" covered with standing seam metal.
4. This large gable-front barn dates from the late-nineteenth century and was once used as a carriage house and horse stable. The main facade, which is clapboard, faces south and has two gable-roofed bays spanned by a long, 2 story eaves-front section. The 2½ story western gable-front section of the south facade has a sliding barn door on the first floor, with a hayloft door above it. The eaves-front section adjoining the gable ends has horse stalls within and two large open rectangular bays on the south facade for carriage entrance. The eastern gable-front section is the same height but narrower than the western section. The eastern section has a door centered on the first floor, but no other openings. The roof on the structure is standing seam metal, and the north and east facades are vertical board siding instead of clapboard.
5. What was once the largest of the barns on the property lies to the east of number 5. It is a 2½ story U shaped structure with two gabled sections running east-west, and until recently, connected by an eaves-front section between which formed a contiguous west wall. This middle eaves-front section was torn down because it was so deteriorated. The slate-roofed barn was constructed around the mid-nineteenth century and was used for storing hay and animals. The building is sheathed with vertical boards and novelty siding.

8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1824, c.1900 **Builder/Architect** not known

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The significance of the Harford house and property lies in their close association with the development of the ferry from the western shore of Grand Isle to Cumberland Head, N.Y. Since c.1796 a ferry has been operated from the same location that it occupies today and until 1941, the property on which the present day Harford house stands was also held by the owner of the ferry property. The house is also architecturally significant as one of a unique group of stone buildings that characterize Grand Isle county's historic architecture.

The first ferry owner of record, Benjamin Bell, purchased lot 139 which included the present Harford property and ferry area, around 1787. Bell established a ferry at the landing sometime prior to 1796. When his nearest neighbor opened a competing ferry in that year, Bell petitioned and won from the General Assembly the sole right and license to operate a ferry to Cumberland Head, N.Y. The ferry was quite profitable since it offered then, as it does today, the most direct and fastest route for vehicles going to New York. His business prospered and by the time of his death in 1820, Bell had purchased three other adjoining lots totaling 256 acres of land. In his will, he left to his wife Elizabeth and son Hazen the land, three dwelling houses, barns and the ferry wharf and boats.¹

Hazen continued to operate the ferry although he apparently did not possess his father's business acumen. Numerous mortgage notes and warranty deeds in the Grand Isle town records indicate that Hazen fell heavily into debt. In September, 1822 he sold lot 139 to Elisha Boardman and later in 1823, his mother Elizabeth sold the remaining lots to Boardman as well as the right to run the ferry.²

It is difficult to state definitively who actually built the stone house on lot 139 near the ferry. Local tradition holds that Hazen Bell started building it and in doing so, exhausted the family fortune. The date on the house reads 1824 which was during the time that Boardman owned the property, and implies that Boardman at least completed the house, even if he did not start its construction. Boardman sold all the property in February, 1827 to two men from Troy, N.Y. The deed refers to "the Bell Farm" on which my stone house stands...³

No record of ownership for the property has been discovered for the years between 1827 and the mid 1850's when Norman Gordon bought the property although it is likely that the ferry continued to operate. Gordon bought adjoining property, lived in the stone house and operated the ferry and lighthouse on the end of the dock. The ferry landing became known as "Gordon's Landing" and the steamboats which plied Lake Champlin touched there regularly. When Gordon died in 1877 he left the "home farm", dock and buildings to his daughter Jane (Jennie) and her husband, Derastus I. Center.⁴ The Centers continued to operate the ferry as well as run a prosperous

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 9.8 acres

Quadrangle name Plattsburgh N.Y.-VT.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

| | | | |
|---|------|-------------|---------------|
| A | 1 8 | 6 3 1 7 5 0 | 4 9 4 9 3 7 5 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| B | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| C | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| D | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| E | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| F | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| G | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

| | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| H | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property consists of two parcels of land adjoining Route 314. The property on the east side (Parcel A) is approximately 9.3 acres and the property to the west (Parcel B) is .5 acres. Parcel A is basically rectangular in shape. The west side of

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| | | | | |
|-------|-----|------|--------|------|
| state | N/A | code | county | code |
|-------|-----|------|--------|------|

| | | | | |
|-------|-----|------|--------|------|
| state | N/A | code | county | code |
|-------|-----|------|--------|------|

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frances Brawley Foster

organization Consultant

date August 30, 1984, Revised Sept. 1985

street & number Box 929

telephone 802-862-1223

city or town Burlington

state Vermont 05402

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Vermont Division For Historic Preservation

date 3/12/86

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Director of the
National Park Service

date 4/17/86

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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farm and apple orchard. Between c.1900 and 1930, they opened their home in the summers as a guest house, which may account for the extensive remodelling which occurred around the turn of the century.

After her husband's death, Jennie Center continued the ferry operation with her son Everett. In 1922 she leased the dock to Horace Corbin and granted him exclusive ferry rights. In return, he paid her three cents for each vehicle which boarded the ferry.⁵ Jennie died in 1935, leaving the ferry property and stone house to her son Everett. In 1941 he and his wife Bertha sold seven acres including the ferry docks and appurtenances to Horace Corbin who later resold it all to the Champlain Transportation Company in 1948.⁶ The Centers remained in the stone house across from the ferry until 1974 when it was sold to the Harfords.

In addition to its long association with the ferry, the Harford house is one of twenty-two identified historic stone buildings that characterize virtually all of the extant early nineteenth century architecture in Grand Isle County. The only stone structure in Grand Isle town, the Harford house is most similar in its form and detail to several examples in nearby Alburg. This group of Federal stone houses are plainly detailed when compared to other Georgian plan houses of the era in Vermont and display distinctive front entrances that lack sidelights and are crowned by a fanlight often with an oversized keystone. Herbert Wheaton Congdon, Vermont architectural historian, refers to these entrances as a typical "'Island' doorway, arched and a little wider than most, but lacking any adornment."⁸ The unique use of the oversize keystone may be the influence of the regency style popular in nearby Montreal during the early nineteenth century.

The Isle La Motte stone used in constructing the Harford house and other early 19th century buildings in the county is a gray limestone, loaded with fossils of the creatures that once inhabited this maritime environment. Lake Champlain, which nearly surrounds the island towns of the county, was a salt water sea in prehistoric times. Five quarries on Isle La Motte furnished building stone as early as 1788. Its use in Isle La Motte and neighboring towns left a legacy of local stone buildings that constitute an important example of a local building tradition that relied on indigenous material. The Harford house is the only extant example of this tradition in Grand Isle Town, one of five towns that comprise the county.

Since c.1796 the Harford house and property have been associated with the ferry which runs to Cumberland Head. Although the ferry property is now separately owned, the wharf is still known by many as Gordon's Landing and the large stone house across the street remembered as the longtime home of the Gordons and Centers who owned and operated the ferry for almost seventy years. This historic association and the house's architectural merit as a good example of local stone building tradition, make the Harford house a significant landmark in the region and the state.

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Footnotes

¹Grand Isle Town Records, v. 2, p. 412.

²Ibid., v. 2, p. 423.

³Ibid., v. 7, p. 327.

⁴Ibid., v. 5, p. 231.

⁵Ibid., v. 9, p. 599.

⁶Ibid., v.13, pp. 33, 461.

⁷Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey of Grand Isle County ,
conducted from 1980 through 1982.

⁸Congdon, page 25.

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Noone House, 1968. (First published 1940.)

Hemenway, Abby Maria ed., The Vermont Historical Gazetteer, vol.2, Burlington, Miss A.M.
Hemenway, 1871.

Stratton, Allen L., History of South Hero Island, Being the Towns of South Hero and
Grand Isle, Vermont, 2 vols., N. Hero, Allen L. Stratton, 1980.

Town Records, Grand Isle Town Clerk's Office, Grand Isle, Vermont.

Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey of Grand Isle County, conducted from 1980
through 1982.

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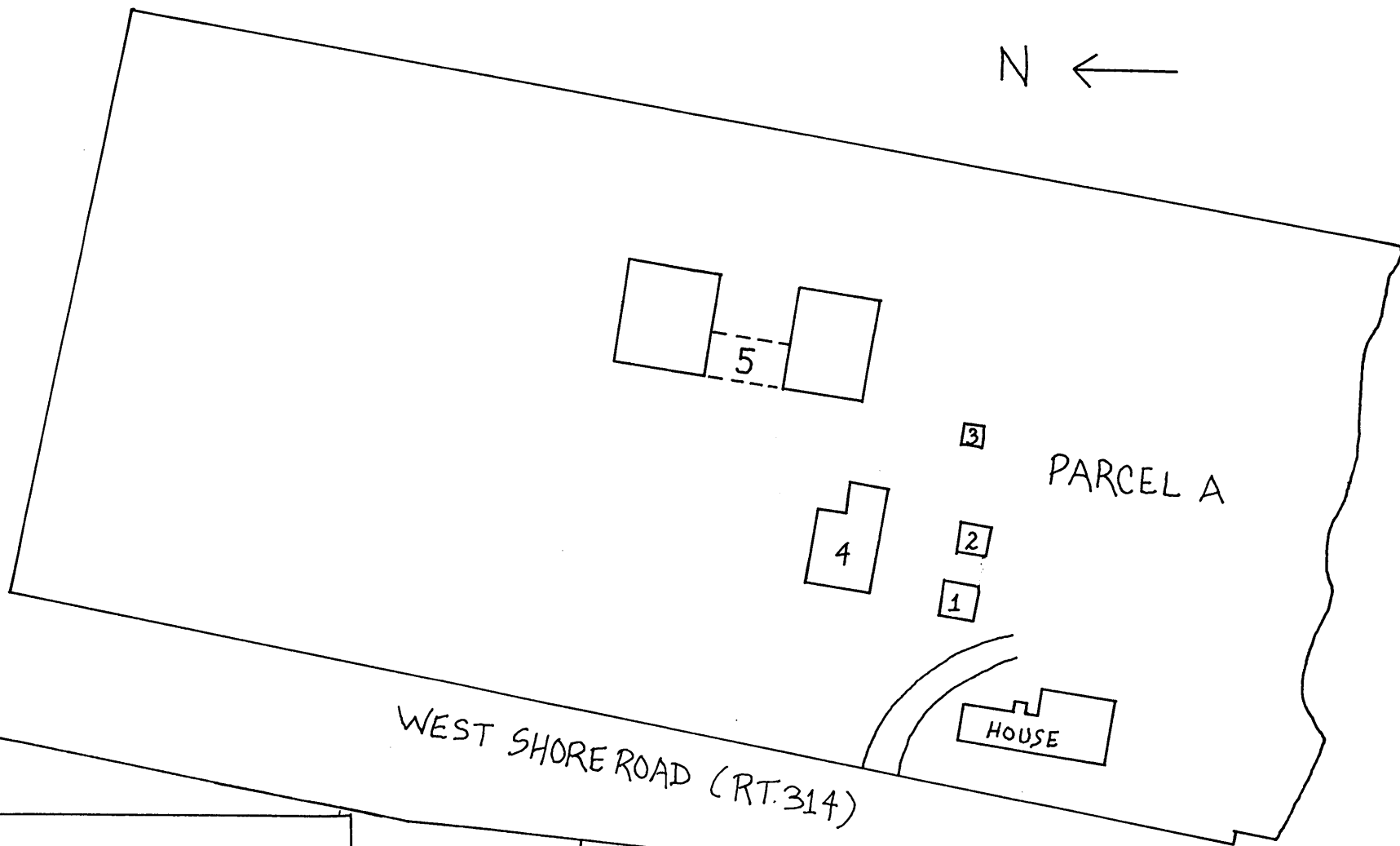
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west side of Parcel A borders Route 314 and follows the road northeasterly for approximately 922 feet; thence turning to the right 90° and proceeding southeasterly 430 feet; thence turning to the right 90° and proceeding southwesterly 959 feet; thence turning to the right and following a brook northwesterly approximately 440 feet to the point of beginning.

Parcel B is also basically rectangular in shape although its western boundary curves in slightly as it follows the low water mark of Lake Champlain. Starting at the southeast corner of the lot, the property line extends westerly towards Lake Champlain approximately 91 feet; thence turning to the right and proceeding northerly along the lake shore approximately 550 feet; thence turning to the right and proceeding easterly 107 feet; thence turning to the right 90° and proceeding southerly 500 feet to the place of beginning.

Said property is only a portion of the original lot #139. The property no longer includes the ferry landing which is across the road. The original context of the house on the property has nonetheless remained much the same since its original construction. The nominated property consists of the land now in common ownership with the historic buildings and is sufficient to convey their original context and protect them. The ferry landing, located along the lakeshore to the south of the nominated property, does not retain its historic fabric and is not included in the nomination.

The deed is located in the Grand Isle Town Clerk's office: volume 24, page 443, recorded September 26, 1974.



HARFORD PROPERTY
(GORDON-CENTER HOUSE)
GRAND ISLE, VT
NOT TO SCALE

PARCEL B

LAKE CHAMPLAIN

FERRY LANDING