

93

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
10 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

Photos

12.8A facade

12.4A 2nd floor, southwest room

12.7A 2nd floor, southwest room,  
corner post, plate and end tie

Town North Reading 017

Address 235 Elm St.

Historic Name John Bickford House

Use: Present residence

Original residence

DESCRIPTION

Date 1735

Source deeds

Style First Period / transitional

Architect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric clapboard

Outbuildings 1985 small prefab barn

1985 small prefab barn

Major Alterations (with dates) east ell added

1986, kitchen ell c.1940, 19th c.? rear ell

Condition good

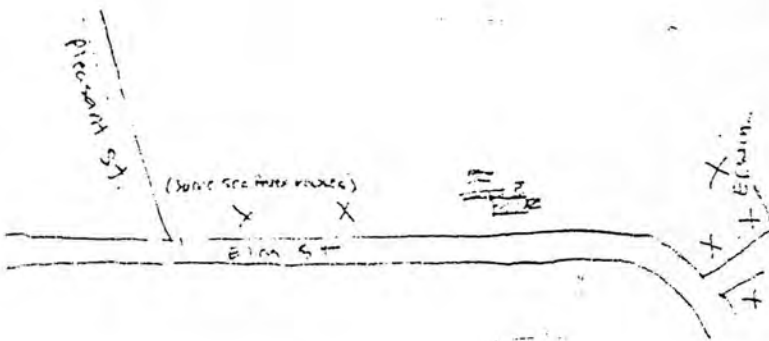
Moved no Date n/a

Acreage 7.2 acres

Setting surrounded by open land on road

with new residential development

etch Map:



Z E N

REFERENCE 19 / 330-350 / 4715-730

S QUADRANGLE Reading

SCALE 1:25,000

Recorded by Anne Brophy

Organization Boston University

Date December 1985

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: NORTH READING	Form No: 93
Property Name: John Bickford House	

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

SIGNIFICANCE

The John Bickford House retains integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship in its late transitional First Period frame and contemporaneous early Second Period finish, making it eligible under Criterion C as a well-preserved example of a transitional house. The unusual gambrel roof construction is worthy of further study which may yield important information on early gambrel framing methods under Criterion D. The combination of gambrel roof with First Period framing is relatively rare.

This unusual combination of old framing and more progressive roofing and finishing styles as late as 1735 is not common in the North Reading area. John Bickford, who purchased the land in 1733 and seems to have built the house in 1735, moved in that year from Salem to North Reading, and the late First Period details may be attributable to conservative Salem tastes. (Bickford's Salem connections even in North Reading seem to have been strong; he bought his land from his father-in-law (he married in 1724) Samuel Hayward, also formerly of Salem.)

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The John Bickford house is a 2 1/2 story, 5 bay, central chimney clapboarded structure 2 cells deep with an original gambrel roof. The main facade has six-over-nine windows with simple surrounds and a Greek Revival frontispiece with a heavy, flat cornice and fretwork pilasters framing rectangular side lights on either side of the door. A possibly 19th century 1 1/2 story shed whose roof continues the rear lower slope of the gambrel projects from the rear left bay, and extends slightly past the west end of the house. A simple door fills the south face of the shed projection. A one story 1940's kitchen ell projects from the right rear. A 1 1/2 story garage-shed as long as the house itself stretches from the west end of the shed addition. A 1 1/2 story 1986 "sun room" addition extends from the center of the east gable; it is clapboarded, and has a low brick foundation and long, single-light windows.

MAJOR FIRST PERIOD FEATURES

The house's combination of largely exposed and quirk-beaded frame, simple Second Period paneled fireplace walls, and unusual gambrel roof make it an excellent example of late transitional First Period architecture. The first floor rear rooms were altered in the 1940's, but the front rooms retain their original finish. Both rooms are approximately 14' wide by 17' deep, with very high ceilings. All first floor posts are covered with boxes. In the right-hand (southeast) room, the exposed longitudinal summer beam, chimney, end, front, and longitudinal chimney girts are quirk-beaded. The first floor southwest room has all four girts exposed and quirk-beaded.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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On the second floor, the front and rear girts and both end ties are exposed and quirk-beaded in all five rooms. The longitudinal chimney girt is beaded on both sides wherever it is visible in the front and rear rooms. The two summer tie beams, one on each side of the chimney, are also beaded. The two chimney girts, which extend the depth of the house, are beaded only on their outer edges. In the rear center room, the exposed inner (east) face of the left (west) chimney tie is roughly square finished while the outer face is smoothly finished with a quirked bead. The tie rests on a gently curving flared post which also has quirk beading on its outer/west side and is unfinished on its inner side. It is not possible to see the inner face of the other chimney tie, but it is likely to be similarly unfinished. This seems to be an interesting construction shortcut developed by carpenters with allegiance to both traditional and new building techniques. The unfinished inner edges are covered by boxes in the front stairwell, but left exposed and unfinished in the less important rear rooms. Another explanation may be that a new missing partition once covered the beam there. The four second floor corner posts are exposed, flared and quirk-beaded; all other posts have beaded boxes. The very wide pine floorboards on the second floor may be original.

In the attic, the unusual early construction of the gambrel roof is visible. The roof has a ridge pole but only a single curved piece of wood in each bay supporting both upper roof slopes by crossing under the ridge pole and joining on each side the rafters of the lower slope. This is unusual in a gambrel with as shallow an upper slope as this house has; (see a similar construction technique in the Timothy Johnson House at 18-20 Stevens St., North Andover.)

OTHER SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

As a transitional building, the John Bickford House exhibits well-preserved early Second Period details as well as considerable First Period finish. The chimney girt in the right-hand (southeast) first story room has simple applied molding beneath it running along the top of vertical feather-edged paneling which covers the fireplace wall. The deep but narrow fireplace opening is surrounded by bolection molding and surmounted by a simple mantel. An oven and ash pit open separately into the chimney stack in the wall to the right of the fireplace.

In the first floor southwest room, the longitudinal summer beam has molded boxing only on its sides, with the boxes projecting down past the bottom of the beam. The fireplace has a bolection molding surround larger than the recent opening. Two long horizontal raised-field panels surmount the fireplace. To the left is a narrow closet door with field panels, to the right, very deep vertical feather-edged sheathing. The other walls are wainscoted midway up in raised-field paneling.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: NORTH READING	Form No: 93
Property Name: John Bickford House	

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

On the second floor, all posts save the corner posts are boxed. The second floor southeast (right) room has elaborate molding applied to the beaded summer and chimney girt and around the room to create a cornice; the fireplace wall has vertical featheredged paneling with a simply molded mantel and fireplace surround larger than the present narrow but deep altered opening. The left hand (southwest) chamber has vertical raised-field paneling and two horizontal field panels over a simple mantel and bolection molding fireplace surround.

1/24/90

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

Name First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts TR  
State \_\_\_\_\_

Nomination/Type of Review	Date/Signature
81. White--Preston House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____
82. Whittemore House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____
83. Woodberry--Quarrels House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____
84. Woodbury, Peter, House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____
85. Bacon, Stephen, House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____
86. Bickford, John, House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____
87. Brewer, Moses, House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____
88. Brown--Stow House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____
89. Browne, Abraham, House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____
90. Buck, Ephraim, House <b>Entered in the National Register</b>	Keeper <u>Melrose Byers</u> 3/9/90 Attest _____

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Bickford, John, House  
NAME:

MULTIPLE First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts TR  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Middlesex

DATE RECEIVED: 1/24/90 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/07/90  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/23/90 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/10/90  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 90000177

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 3/9/90 DATE

Entered in the  
National Register

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_  
REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_  
DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

CLASSIFICATION

\_\_\_ count \_\_\_ resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

\_\_\_ historic \_\_\_ current

DESCRIPTION

\_\_\_ architectural classification  
\_\_\_ materials  
\_\_\_ descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect  
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- \_\_\_ summary paragraph
- \_\_\_ completeness
- \_\_\_ clarity
- \_\_\_ applicable criteria
- \_\_\_ justification of areas checked
- \_\_\_ relating significance to the resource
- \_\_\_ context
- \_\_\_ relationship of integrity to significance
- \_\_\_ justification of exception
- \_\_\_ other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

\_\_\_ acreage \_\_\_ verbal boundary description  
\_\_\_ UTM's \_\_\_ boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

\_\_\_ sketch maps \_\_\_ USGS maps \_\_\_ photographs \_\_\_ presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



82:4A

John Bickford House

235 Elm St.

No. Reading, MA

1st floor Buildings of E. Ma., TR

2nd fl. SW room

fireplace wall  $\frac{1}{3}$  tie

1985



John Buckford House

235 Elm St.

No. Reading, MA

1st Period Buildings of F. M. & TR

2nd floor SW. Room

corner post, plate,

end girt

1985

82:7A



82:9A

John Bickford House

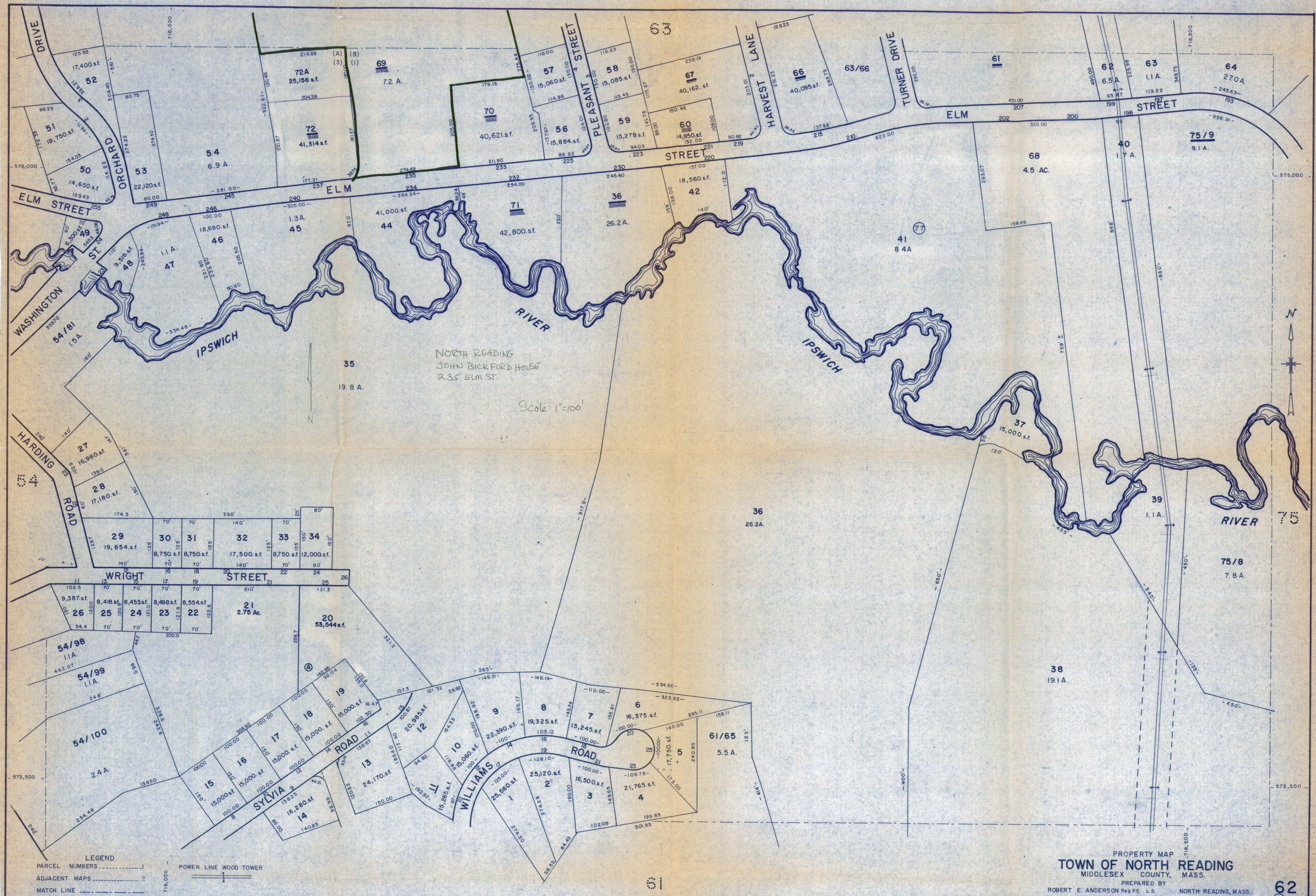
235 Elm Street

No. Reading, MA.

1st Period Buildings of E. Mass, TR

EXTERIOR S + W end

1985



NORTH READING  
JOHN BICKFORD HOUSE  
235 ELM ST.

Scale: 1"=100'

LEGEND  
 PARCEL NUMBERS ..... 1  
 ADJACENT MAPS ..... 2  
 MATCH LINE

POWER LINE WOOD TOWER

PROPERTY MAP  
**TOWN OF NORTH READING**  
 MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MASS.  
 PREPARED BY  
 ROBERT E. ANDERSON Reg. P.E. L.S. NORTH READING, MASS.  
 SCALE 1 INCH = 100 FEET ELEVENTH REVISION JAN. 1978



North Reading, MA  
 John Bickford House  
 235 Elm Street  
 Tap 62 Parcel 69  
 continued to Tap 63  
 Scale 1"=100'

PROPERTY MAP  
**TOWN OF NORTH READING**  
 MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MASS.  
 PREPARED BY  
 ROBERT E. ANDERSON Reg. P.E. & L.S.  
 SCALE 1 INCH = 100 FEET  
 REVISED BY BENCHMARK SURVEY  
 12<sup>th</sup> REV. OCT. 1989

Please refer to the map in the  
Multiple Property Cover Sheet  
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000281