

PH0051756

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Massachusetts
COUNTY: Norfolk
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE DEC 3 1974

1. NAME	
COMMON: Gen. Sylvanus Thayer ^{House} Birthplace (use for publication) <i>(012 to change see control sheet)</i>	
AND/OR HISTORIC: Thayer House	

2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: 786 Washington Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Braintree		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 11th	
STATE: Massachusetts	CODE: 025	COUNTY: Norfolk	CODE: 021

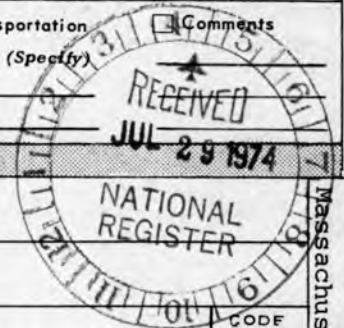
3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☐ Site ☐ Object ☒ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☒ Private ☐ Both Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☒ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
☐ Agricultural ☐ Commercial ☐ Educational ☐ Entertainment	☐ Government ☐ Industrial ☐ Military ☒ Museum	☐ Park ☐ Private Residence ☐ Religious ☐ Scientific	☐ Transportation ☐ Other (Specify) Comments:

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME: Braintree Historical Society			
STREET AND NUMBER: 786 Washington Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Braintree		STATE: Massachusetts	CODE: 025

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Norfolk County Registry of Deeds			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN: Dedham		STATE: Massachusetts	CODE: 025

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY: Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth			
DATE OF SURVEY: 1967 ☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Massachusetts Historical Commission			
STREET AND NUMBER: 40 Beacon Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Boston		STATE: Massachusetts	CODE: 025

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: Massachusetts
COUNTY: Norfolk
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☒ Excellent	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	☒ Altered	☐ Unaltered	☒ Moved	☐ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Gen. Sylvanus Thayer Birthplace was originally located at 1505 Washington Street and was moved to its present location at 786 Washington Street in 1958. The original 1720 structure was a 2-story 8-room center chimney ridge roof house, 5 bays wide and 1 deep. C. 1760 a rear lean-to was added and the central chimney was altered to make the large fireplace in the kitchen. Double hung windows replaced the original front leaded windows and clapboards were added over the exposed siding boards of the exterior. C. 1800 a closed hip-roof entrance porch was added to the facade, the door flanked by side lights and Doric pilasters. Between 1800 and 1820 the interior beams and corner posts were boxed in and the wallpapers changed. C. 1846 a 1½ story salt box shed, 5 bays by 3 bays, was added to the southern gable end of the structure. This extension was slightly enlarged for caretaker's quarters c. 1960. The house is covered with unpainted clapboard and red trim.

The interior retains its original sheathing, panelling and fireplaces. Original wallpaper has been found and duplicated. In the Keeping Room is the most unusual architectural feature of the house- a sunken Buttery with brick floor, brick cooling tank, and shelves lining the four sides.

The house sits on a broad residential street and is well landscaped with trees and shrubs. A split rail fence surrounds the back yard where a period herbal garden has been planted.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☒ 18th Century☐ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☐ 17th Century☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1720

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal☒ Education☐ Political☐ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☒ Engineering☐ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry

losophy

☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☒ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art☐ Architecture☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature

itarian

☐ Communications☒ Military☐ Theater☐ Conservation☐ Music☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE.

Gen. Sylvanus Thayer's birthplace and boyhood home stands as a memorial to the man known as the "Father of West Point" and as the originator of technological education in the United States. The house, an excellent example of its time and period, was begun in 1720 by Sylvanus' great-great-grandfather, Nathaniel Thayer. Sylvanus was born there in 1785.

Sylvanus Thayer made his primary contribution to American history in the field of education. It was he who brought the United States Military Academy at West Point to its high standards of excellence. As Commandant of the Academy for 16 years, from 1817-1833, Thayer placed an indelible stamp on the military life of our nation. The progressive educational methods he initiated, among them the honor system, are still in use at West Point and have been copied all over the world.

Thayer was sent overseas in 1815 to study the military systems of Europe and particularly the science of war as practiced in the army of Napoleon. He arrived in the English Channel 2 days after Waterloo and rode into Paris with the staff of the Duke of Wellington. On his return, Thayer brought with him the first extensive technological library in the United States, with which he established a college-level course in engineering at West Point, 50 years before any other such course.

In 1837 Thayer took charge of developing the defenses of the Atlantic seaboard; Fort Warren in Boston Harbor (a NHL) is one of the fortifications for which he drew the plans. Thayer was again in Europe in 1842, to study military fortifications and science on the continent. In 1853 he retired as Brigadier General to spend the closing years of his life in Braintree. Though too old for active service during the Civil War, Thayer returned from retirement to serve as military advisor for the Union Army.

Thayer had attended Dartmouth College for 4 years, leading his class, and was preparing his valedictory when he was called to enter West Point. He left immediately, saying, "When your country wants you it must not wait." Loyal to the school from which he had not graduated, Thayer established and endowed the Thayer School of Civil Engineering (for graduate study) at Dartmouth in 1867. He was also the founder of Thayer Academy, a preparatory school, and Thayer Public Library, both in Braintree.

Thayer sold the Birthplace in 1846 and it was subsequently the home of three other families. In 1957 the house was given to the Braintree Historical Society and moved to its present location. The building has been restored to the

cont'd

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. West Point Society of New England, Gen.Sylvanus Thayer, pamphlet,1960.
2. Dictionary of American Biographies, Chicago ,1970.
3. Braintree Historical Society, Gen.Sylvanus Thayer Birthplace, pamphlet,1974.
4. Records of the Braintree Historical Society.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

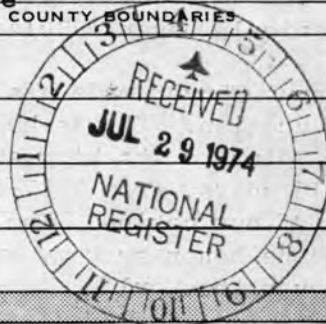
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE Degrees Minutes Seconds	LONGITUDE Degrees Minutes Seconds		LATITUDE Degrees Minutes Seconds	LONGITUDE Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 0 0	0 0 0		42 0 12	71 0 00	
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0		22 0 00	17 0 00	
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

less than 1 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



UTM
19/334510
4674400
CD

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Mindy Arbo, N.R. Editor, for Elizabeth Amadon, Acting Exec. Director		
ORGANIZATION Massachusetts Historical Commission	DATE 11/21/68	
STREET AND NUMBER: 40 Beacon Street		
CITY OR TOWN: Boston 617-727-8470	STATE Massachusetts 02108	CODE 025

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

Name John F. X. Davoren
Secretary of the Commonwealth
Title Chairman, Massachusetts Historical Commission

Date

7/24/74

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

Arthur M. ...
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

12/5/74

ATTEST:

Date

Burzio Emery
Keeper of The National Register
Nov. 27, 1974

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Norfolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	DEC 3 1974

(Number all entries)

Gen.Sylvanus Thayer Birthplace

8. SIGNIFICANCE

period of Thayer's boyhood and now serves as a community historical center. The Gen.Sylvanus Thayer Birthplace was certified as a Massachusetts Historic Landmark November 21, 1968.



PROPERTY Thayer, Gen. Sylvanus, Birthplace ^{House} STATE Mass.

WORKING NUMBER 8.29.74.1353

Norfolk

TECH REVIEW

PHOTOS 3

MAPS 1

CONTROL REVIEW

am
8.29.
74

OK

HISTORIAN

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN 8 rooms in a two story one bay deep house?
Call change to Nathaniel Thayer House
number of rooms?

~~change~~
~~change~~
Conference

ARCHAEOLOGIST This structure has been moved ~~to~~ to avoid highway
demolition per call to M. Arbo 9 Sep 74. She also
said Massachusetts would not be adverse to
changing 'Birthplace' to 'House'

Accept
M. Barnes
9 Sep 74

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

ACCEPT
Conference
Delovitch
11-20-74

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

M. Kruger
W. M. Kruger
11/27/74

National Register Write-up 1-13-75

Send-back _____

Federal Register entry 2-4-75

Re-submit _____

Entered DEC 3 1974

MEMORANDUM
OF CALL

TO:

Bill

☒ YOU WERE CALLED BY—

☐ YOU WERE VISITED BY—

Mindy

Orbes

OF (Organization)

☒ PLEASE CALL →

PHONE NO.
CODE/EXT.

☐ WILL CALL AGAIN

☐ IS WAITING TO SEE YOU

☐ RETURNED YOUR CALL

☐ WISHES AN APPOINTMENT

MESSAGE

in regard to the Thayer
House. The description
is correct, verified by
Abbott Cummings

RECEIVED BY

QJ

DATE

11/20

TIME

3:40

STANDARD FORM 63

REVISED AUGUST 1967

SA FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

☆ U. S. GPO: 1973-509-363

63-108

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

Date Entered DEC 3 1974

Name

Location

Thayer, General Sylvanus, House

Braintree
Norfolk County

Also Notified

Hon. Edward M. Kennedy
Hon. Edward W. Brooke
Hon. James A. Burke

Regional Director, North Atlantic
Region

State Historic Preservation Officer
Hon. John F.X. Davoren
Secretary of the Commonwealth
Chairman, Massachusetts Historical
Commission
40 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME

COMMON

Gen.Sylvanus Thayer Birthplace

AND/OR HISTORIC

Thayer House

NUMERIC CODE *(Assigned by NPS)*

DEC 3 1974

2. LOCATION

STATE

Massachusetts
STREET AND NUMBER

COUNTY

Norfolk

TOWN

Braintree

786 Washington Street

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

David Walker

DATE

1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT

photographer

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

West facade of house

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER





CREDIT MUST BE GIVEN IF USED FOR PUBLICATION

PHOTO BY
DAVID M. WALKER
235 West Street
Braintree, Mass. 02184

FORM 10-301 A
(6/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

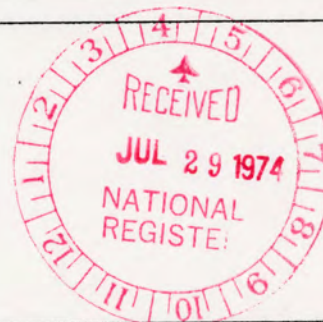
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME		NUMERIC CODE <i>(Assigned by NPS)</i>
COMMON	AND/OR HISTORIC	
Gen. Sylvanus Thayer Birthplace	Thayer House	DEC 3 1974
2. LOCATION		
STATE	COUNTY	TOWN
Massachusetts	Norfolk	Braintree
STREET AND NUMBER		
786 Washington Street		
3. PHOTO REFERENCE		NEGATIVE FILED AT
PHOTO CREDIT	DATE	
David Walker	1974	photographer
4. IDENTIFICATION		
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

The south side and east (rear) elevation, with back yard.

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER





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PHOTO BY

FORM 10-301 A
(6/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

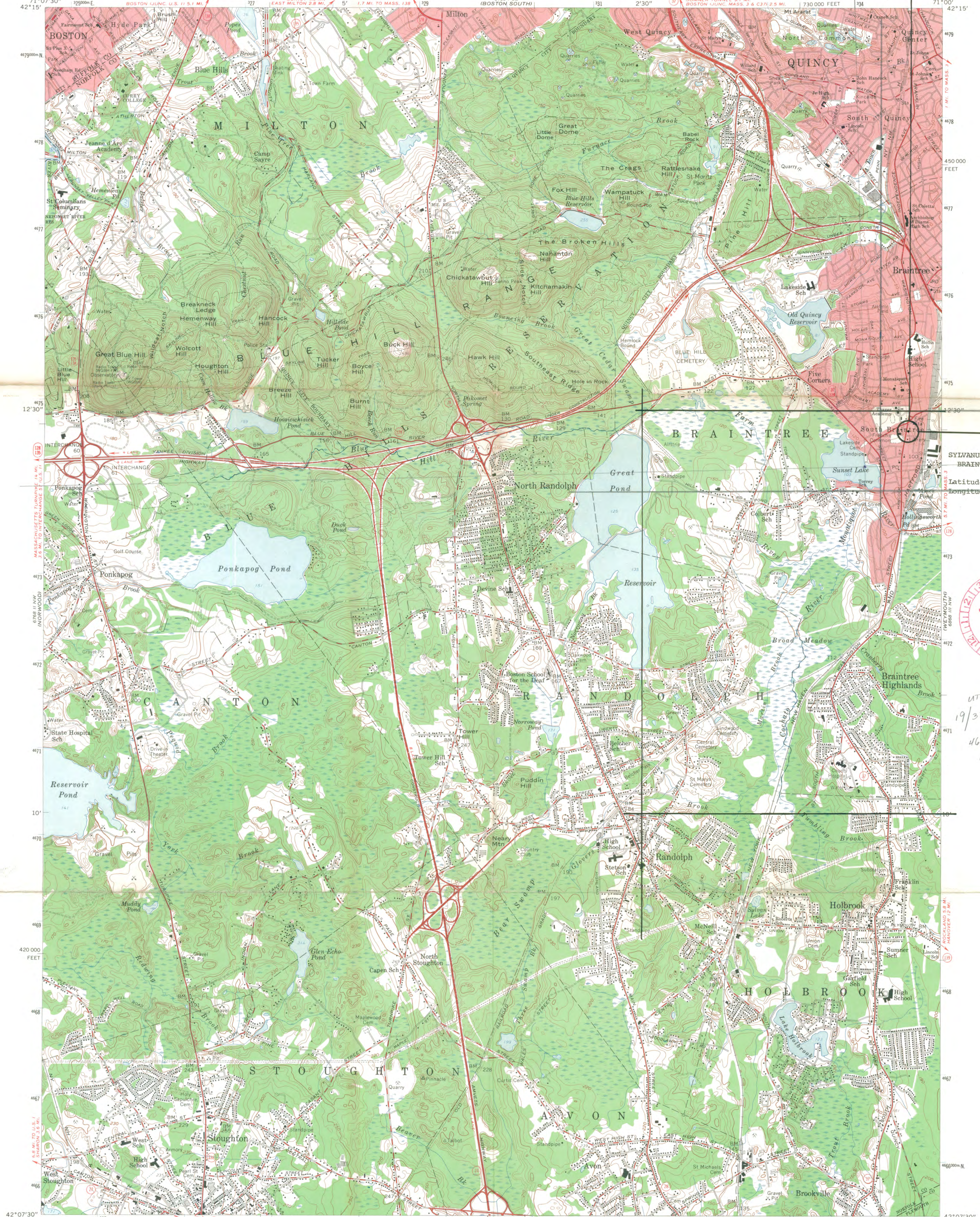
(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME		
COMMON	AND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE <i>(Assigned by NPS)</i>
Gen. Sylvanus Thayer Birthplace	Thayer House	DEC 3 1974
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STREET AND NUMBER		
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PHOTO CREDIT	DATE	NEGATIVE FILED AT
David Walker	1974	photographer
4. IDENTIFICATION		
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

East (rear) elevation

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



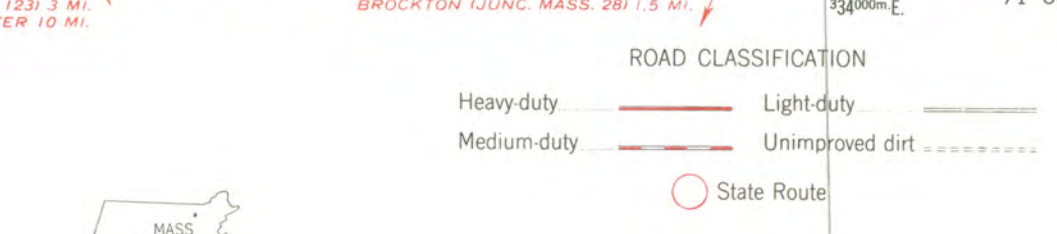
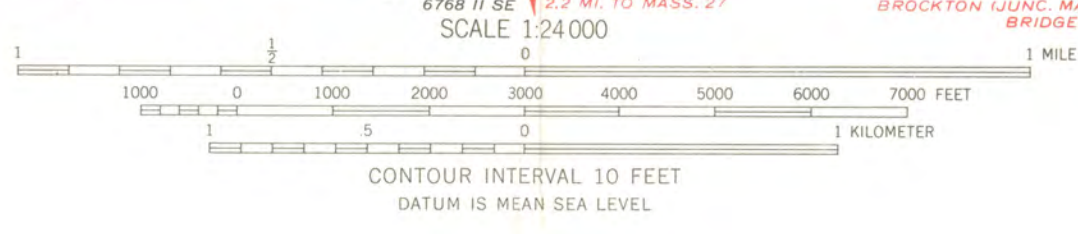
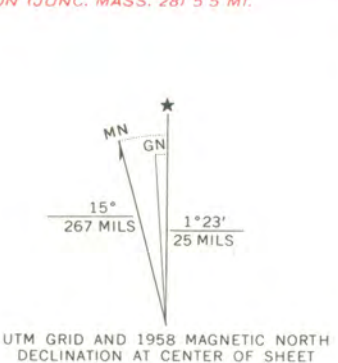


SYLVANUS THAYER BIRTHPLACE,
BRAINTREE
Latitude 42° 12' 22"
Longitude 71° 00' 17"



UTM
19/334 510
4674 400
C)

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, Massachusetts Geodetic Survey,
and Massachusetts Harbor and Land Commission
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs
Topography by planetable surveys 1936
Culture revised by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1957. Field check 1958
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 19, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only
landmark buildings are shown



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

BLUE HILLS, MASS.
N4207.5-W7100.7.5

1958

AMS 6768 II NE-SERIES V814

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM
(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

1. NAME		
COMMON Sylvanus Thayer Birthplace	AND/OR HISTORIC same	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS) DEC 3 1974
2. LOCATION		
STATE Massachusetts	COUNTY Norfolk	TOWN Braintree
STREET AND NUMBER 786 Washington Street		
3. MAP REFERENCE		
SOURCE USGS Blue Hills, Mass.	DATE 1958	SCALE 1:24,000

REQUIREMENTS: PROPERTY BOUNDARIES, WHERE REQUIRED, AND NORTH ARROW.

