

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name PARSONS, SHEPHERD AND DAMON HOUSES HD

other names/site number HISTORIC NORTHAMPTON

2. Location

street & number 546, 58 AND 66 BRIDGE STREET not for publication

city or town NORTHAMPTON vicinity

state MASSACHUSETTS code MA county HAMPSHIRE code 015 zip code 01060

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination  
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brona Simon

April 25, 2001

Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
☐ removed from the  
National Register  
☐ other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 6/6/01

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

01-627



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name PARSONS, SHEPHERD AND DAMON HOUSES HD

other names/site number HISTORIC NORTHAMPTON

2. Location

street & number 46, 58 AND 66 BRIDGE STREET not for publication

city or town NORTHAMPTON vicinity

state MASSACHUSETTS code MA county HAMPSHIRE code 015 zip code 01060

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Brona Simon*

*July 20, 2001*

Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ☐ removed from the National Register
- ☐ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |



Parsons, Shepherd, Damon Houses HD  
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

### Period of Significance

ca. 1730-1951

### Significant Dates

n/a

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

### Cultural Affiliation

n/a

### Architect/Builder

Isaac Damon

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Historic Northampton

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Northampton (Hampshire Co.), Massachusetts

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7. Narrative Description

The Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District, Northampton, encompasses three properties owned by Historic Northampton, the city's local history museum and education center. Located on a principal artery through Northampton's commercial and institutional core, the historic district occupies 2½ acres in a historic residential setting at the eastern edge of the business district. The three contiguous building lots constitute part of an original Northampton home lot, laid out in 1654. All three historic houses occupy their original sites. Consistent in scale, materials, and setback from the street, the three houses reflect Northampton's residential development principally from ca. 1730 through ca. 1830. Their rear yards provide a continuous, coherent landscape across the three lots, with plantings that enhance the ambience of the historic environment. Resources in the historic district, most of them recently rehabilitated, are in excellent condition. Noncontributing resources—monuments, a gazebo, and fences—are small in scale and generally complement the district's historic character.

Nathaniel Parsons House

The Nathaniel Parsons House, 58 Bridge Street (ca. 1730, MHC #2125, Photo #1), is possibly Northampton's oldest residence. In its present form, the 2½-story, wood-frame house has a main block that is five bays across and two bays deep, with a broad side-gable roof, a center chimney located forward of the roof ridge, a center entry on the façade, and another entry on the east wall. The main block acquired its present form largely through a ca. 1795-1815 remodeling of the original ca. 1730 house. Three appendages to the main block are believed to have been constructed ca. 1815-1830. At the north end of the east elevation is a two-story, side-gabled lateral wing, one bay by one bay, with an interior end-wall chimney. Projecting from the north end of the west elevation is a one-story, side-gabled, two-bay by one-bay lateral wing, also with an interior end-wall chimney. At the eastern end of the north elevation is a one-story rear ell, two bays across and four bays deep, with a gable roof, chimney on the west slope, and a recessed entry on the east wall. Finally, there is a one-story, one-bay by one-bay shed-roofed addition off the rear wall of the ell. Throughout the house, the foundation is stone, cladding is weatherboard, the roofs are asphalt shingle, and the chimneys are brick. Windows contain 12/12, 6/6, or 2/2 wood sash.

The First Period core of the Parsons House (ca. 1730) most closely resembled the existing main block (ca. 1795-1815) in its façade organization and the two-room over two-room configuration of the front of the house. The house's characteristic First Period details included casement windows, probably diamond-paned; chamfered summer beams and exposed ceiling joists; exterior siding that abuts at the corners; molded horizontal sheathing in the kitchen; and a single-pile plan to which a full-width lean-to was added in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Addition of the lean-to created a second kitchen for the house; the first kitchen, which continued to be used as such until ca. 1800, occupied the front east room. Only one ca. 1730 detail demonstrated knowledge of the emerging Georgian decoration: plaster walls with a molded chair rail and baseboard in the parlor, or front west room. Two mortises identified above the front door suggest the existence of an early hood or pentice. [*Building Archeology Report, Nathaniel Parsons House*, n.p.]

During the Federal-period remodeling of the house (ca. 1795-1815), a second floor was added to the lean-to, requiring that the old side-gabled roof be replaced with one of almost twice its girth. A concomitant shift in the

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position of the new pegged, hexagonal ridgepole resulted in the present placement of the center chimney in front of, rather than directly on, the ridge. The remodeling transformed the original house from a single-pile plan to a double-pile plan. The present weatherboards were installed over the original siding (still intact underneath). Original siding included flush boards grooved horizontally in imitation of thin weatherboards on the façade; flush boarding on the rear elevation; and thin, narrow weatherboards on the two side elevations. The lean-to, subsumed in the Federal-period remodeling, was sided with wide rough boards. On the interior, the front hall staircase may date from the remodeling. The front east room of the house, originally the kitchen in the First Period (ca. 1730) dwelling, was converted to use as another parlor. The downstairs rooms and parlor chamber are known to have been plastered about this time because nearly all of the original window openings were altered and their surrounds re-used as lath. These rooms also received plaster ceilings, and new doors and woodwork. [*Building Archeology Report, Nathaniel Parsons House, n.p.*]

In the years following the remodeling of the main block, two lateral wings and a rear ell were built (ca. 1815-1830). The ell provided the house with a summer kitchen. The east wing, located at the eastern end of the former lean-to, created what may have been a dining room, as well as a parlor or chamber upstairs. The ell and east wing appear to be contemporary in construction. It is unclear whether the west wing is contemporary with the eastern additions, though this wing was built after the remodeling of the main block. Located at the western end of the former lean-to, the west wing encloses a single room with Federal-style woodwork, perhaps a parlor or office. [*Building Archeology Report, Nathaniel Parsons House, n.p.*]

An 1880s photograph of the house shows 2/2 sash in the windows of the main block and, at both the main and side entries, one-bay, hip-roofed porches with square posts. The 2/2 sash was replaced in the 1970s and the 1980s with the present 12/12 sash. The front porch had been replaced with a larger entry porch by the 1940s; this second porch was removed by the 1970s.

In 1941, Anna Catherine Bliss bequeathed the Parsons House to the Northampton Historical Society (now Historic Northampton). In the interpretation of Historic Northampton's three house museums, the Parsons House provides an overview of Colonial domestic architecture with its interior walls exposed to reveal structural and decorative changes over more than two and one-half centuries. [Historic Northampton web site]

### Shepherd House

The Shepherd House, 66 Bridge Street (ca. 1796, MHC #2071, Photo #2), is a fine example of a Federal-style house with a number of mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, revival-style features applied. The 2½-story main block is five bays by two bays with a side-gabled roof, twin interior chimneys at the roof ridge, a center entrance, and a center hall plan. The foundation is stone, the siding is thin weatherboards, and the roof is asphalt shingle. The weatherboarding is very similar to the siding of the Damon House (see below), which dates to the same period. Spanning the west (side) elevation is a one-story porch with columns, added ca. 1900. This Colonial Revival-style porch has a hipped roof of standing seam metal. There is a small half-shed addition spanning two bays at the western end of the north (rear) elevation. Windows contain 6/6 wood sash, probably replacements from later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A single window containing 12/12 sash on the east wall of the house may be a survival of the original fenestration.

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The house displays remnants of original Federal-period exterior ornament. These include the window trim, thin cornerboards, and a door on the west elevation opening onto the side porch. Windows on the first floor display window caps. The caps on the windows of the west elevation were removed ca. 1900 when the Colonial Revival-style side porch was added at that location. [*Building Archeology Report, Russell-Shepherd House*, pp. 3-4]

Remodeling of the house during the ca. 1830-1860 period created the Greek Revival-style raised cornice, which closed the gables on the side elevations, and the present Greek Revival front door and surround. Also dating to this period is the distinctive Gothic Revival portico, which is one bay by one bay with a low-pitched hipped roof, overhanging eaves, a decorated saw-tooth cornice, and pierced supports at the corners capped with decorative tracery. Paired attic windows in the gable ends probably were added in the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the attic was divided into finished rooms. An open woodshed attached to the house's shed addition is another mid-19<sup>th</sup> century addition, according to paint analysis. The side cladding is the same tongue and groove boards used to side the barn/carriage house on the property (see below), which suggests a connection between the two projects. [*Building Archeology Report, Russell-Shepherd House*, pp. 3-4] The present shutters on the house are early 20<sup>th</sup>-century in design, though late 19<sup>th</sup>-century photographs of the house show exterior shutters.

The Shepherd House was left to the Northampton Historical Society (now Historic Northampton) upon the death of Edith Carpenter Shepherd (1875-1969). Historic Northampton took title to the property in 1972. In the interpretation of Historic Northampton's three house museums, the Shepherd House illustrates the changing tastes and values of the Shepherd family, with artifacts and furnishings from many generations, including exotic souvenirs from the travels of Thomas and Edith Shepherd between their marriage in 1914 and his death in 1923. [Historic Northampton web site; Historic Northampton research]

**Isaac Damon House**

The Isaac Damon House, 46 Bridge Street (ca. 1813, MHC #2070, Photo #3), completes the trio of museum houses on Bridge Street. An excellent example of the Federal style, the main block of the house is two stories with a low-pitched hip roof, a pair of interior end chimneys, and a five-bay facade. The foundation is stone, the siding is weatherboard, and the roof is clad with asphalt shingles. The center entry features a one-bay by one-bay columned porch with a low-pitched hip roof and rooftop balustrade. The balustrade on the roof of the main block was recreated from the original and installed in 1999. Windows contain 6/6 wood sash. Both the window sash and the wood shutters are original or at least early (first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century).

An unusual feature of the house's plan and construction is the projection of the rear first floor rooms beyond the rear wall of the main block. This projection reads on the exterior as a one-story, hip-roofed appendage on the rear wall. Damon achieved this projection, and consequently the larger rear rooms, by constructing the second floor rear wall as a truss, a principle with which he would have been familiar from his church and other institutional construction (see **Statement of Significance**). The projecting bay on the east elevation contains a side entry, and the corresponding bay on the west elevation contains a window. [*Building Archeology Report, Isaac Damon House*, n.p.]

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Behind the house is a series of gable-roofed ells. The rear ell, approximately three bays deep, was originally one story, and a second story was added between ca. 1850 and 1866. The fenestration pattern of the upper floor does not correspond with that of the lower floor. This ell may have served originally as an ell or outbuilding for the house that previously occupied the site. Doubled sills between the main house and ell, which are clearly visible in the basement, suggest that the ell frame existed at the time the Damon House was built. The present kitchen added another bay to the ell before ca. 1900, and may have replaced a lean-to woodshed. Probably a pantry originally, the room was remodeled as a kitchen in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. [*Building Archeology Report, Isaac Damon House*, n.p.]

The ell was extended further in 1984-1986, when an auditorium and exhibit and collections space were added to the rear. This construction replaced a woodshed or carriage barn that appears in an 1866 photograph. The addition, four bays by about one bay, is one story, with an exterior end wall chimney at the northern end and an integral porch on square posts that spans the entire east elevation. At the time of construction, the roof of the kitchen was made continuous with the roof of the addition. A pedimented portico marks an entrance located where the original ell adjoins the kitchen-plus-new-ell. [*Building Archeology Report, Isaac Damon House*, n.p.]

A rooftop balustrade on the main block of the Damon House was present originally and was recreated in 1999 based on documentary evidence. Following the death in 1943 of Jennie Damon Smith, granddaughter of Isaac Damon, the Northampton Historical Society (now Historic Northampton) purchased the house. The Damon House contains Historic Northampton's administrative offices and a Federal-era parlor featuring Damon family furnishings and period artifacts. The museum and exhibition area at the rear of the house features changing exhibits and a permanent installation, *A Place Called Paradise: The Making of Northampton, Massachusetts*, which chronicles the city's history. [Historic Northampton web site]

Additional Contributing Resources

The Shepherd Barn/Carriage House, 66 Bridge Street (ca. 1840-1860, Photo #4) is located behind the Shepherd House. This 1½-story outbuilding has a fieldstone foundation and tongue-and-groove siding. The barn's side-gabled main block has a slate roof. Projecting from the façade at a right angle is a one-story shop, two bays across and one bay deep, with a gable-front roof clad in asphalt shingles. This shop has a multi-pane, glazed entry with a transom above, adjacent to a multi-pane oversized window. Entries in the main block include a vertical board double door with a transom on the façade (south elevation), pedestrian entries on the south and west elevations, and a large vertical board sliding door on the north (rear) elevation. In the interpretation of the museum buildings, the Shepherd barn, when completed, will house working blacksmiths and artisans, a display of antique signage, farm implements and tools, and a museum gift shop and visitors' information center.

The pergola (early 20<sup>th</sup> century) behind the Parsons House, 58 Bridge Street, is a simple wood structure, a single bay wide and three to four bays deep. The pergola appears in a 1939 photograph of the grounds in the collection of Historic Northampton.

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Noncontributing Resources

Recent additions to Historic Northampton's landscape enhance the educational value and historic character of this small district. Two monuments and the gazebo on the grounds of the Parsons House, 58 Bridge Street, are of recent vintage. To the right of the front door is the Parsons Monument (1973). This boulder has a brass plaque that reads "*In Memory of Cornet Joseph Parsons c. 1618-1683/A founder of Northampton/and his wife Mary (Bliss) Parsons c.1628-1711/12.*" On the east side of the house is the Bliss Family Monument (1986). The granite monument has an attached plaque inscribed "*To Our Children/The Bliss Family in America/2 August 1986.*" At the rear of the property is the gazebo (1999, Photo #5), an eight-sided, wood-frame structure with an asphalt shingle roof.

Wood fences in front of each of the three museum houses were installed in 1999 (see Photo #s 1-3, see also **Recent Rehabilitation Work** below). The designs were based on documentary evidence (historic photographs) from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The fences are considered noncontributing by virtue of their recent construction date.

Recent Rehabilitation Work

In 1999, Historic Northampton embarked on major restoration work for the Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon houses and the Shepherd barn. The restoration followed intensive study of the organization's buildings in 1992 by a preservation consulting team from the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA). SPNEA's building archeology reports for the three properties included paint analysis. Consequently, the three houses and the Shepherd barn were painted according to the consulting team's specifications. Fences were rebuilt in front of each of the museum houses, with the designs based on historic fencing as documented in late 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs of each house. At the Shepherd House, the fencing extends to the barn at the rear of the property. In addition, the original Federal balustrade on the roof of the Damon House was rebuilt.

Restoration of the buildings was part of a comprehensive buildings and grounds project that is still underway. Landscaping is intended to preserve the historic integrity of the grounds, nurture the historic plantings in place, and enhance the setting of the museum complex in a harmonious way. Replication of historic fencing (see above) was one element of the 1999 master site plan. Another was the construction of the gazebo (see above) to provide a focal point to the grounds and an outdoor performance space. [*The Weathervane*, Summer 1999, p. 2]

Archaeological Description

While no prehistoric sites are located in the district, sites may be present. Four prehistoric sites are recorded in the general area (within one mile). Environmental characteristics of the district indicate several locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, distance to wetlands) that are favorable indicators for some types of prehistoric sites. The district is located on a well drained, level to moderately sloping land surface. Wetland resources, however, are not located in close proximity (within 1000 feet) to the district, a locational factor that reduces the overall prehistoric sensitivity of this location. An unnamed brook originates approximately 2000 feet north of the district and flows northerly to the Connecticut River. The Connecticut River floodplain lies about the same distance east of the district. Given the above information, the size of the district (approximately 2.5 acres) and construction of at least 5 homes in the district, a low potential exists for the recovery of prehistoric resources.

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A high potential exists for the recovery of historic archaeological resources in the district. Structural evidence of the Joseph Parsons House, associated outbuildings and occupational related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may survive as archaeological resources within the district boundaries. The district was part of the original four-acre home lot granted in 1654 to Cornet Joseph Parsons. Structural evidence, builder's trenches and artifacts may also survive from remodeling conducted at the three extant homes in the district. West of the Nathaniel Parsons House (ca. 1730) at 58 Bridge Street, the Isaac Damon House (ca. 1813) at 46 Bridge Street is reported to have replaced an earlier (ca. 1770's) house on the same lot. Structural evidence of that house, its outbuildings and occupational related features may survive on the Damon House lot. Archaeological features may also be present indicating the extent to which an ell from the earlier house or an outbuilding were incorporated into the present house construction. Architectural details including hand hewn beams used in construction of the Shepherd House (ca. 1796) at 66 Bridge Street are also believed to belong to an earlier structure. Additional historical research combined with archaeological survey and testing can test for evidence of a potential earlier structure at this location

(end)

**8. Statement of Significance**

The Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District, Bridge Street, Northampton is a fine grouping of three historic properties that reflects growth at the heart of Northampton in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The district holds associations with some of Northampton's earliest and most prominent citizens, among them a founder of the community, farmers and local businesspersons, and the renowned architect-builder Isaac Damon. The district's three houses and barn retain their historic integrity to a remarkable degree, due partly to long-term ownership by the families with which they were associated, and partly to their acquisition and operation by Historic Northampton, formerly the Northampton Historical Society. Under the stewardship of Historic Northampton, the three properties comprise a campus of museum houses, administrative offices, exhibition space, a meeting and research facility, and outdoor gathering and performance spaces. Recent additions to Historic Northampton's landscape, including small-scale monuments, a gazebo, and replication of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century fencing, enhance the educational value and historic character of this small district. Retaining integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, the Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District meets Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places at the local level.

Northampton is an important civic, educational, and industrial center located on the west bank of the Connecticut River, New England's longest river and its principal drainage. Historically, Northampton has been the principal focus for settlement in the mid-section of the Connecticut River Valley, a broad central valley flanked by the Worcester Highlands to the east and the Berkshire Hills to the west. Situated twenty miles north of Springfield and fifty-six miles west of Worcester, Northampton is bordered by Williamsburg on the north, Hatfield on the north, Hadley and the Connecticut River on the east, Easthampton on the south, and Westhampton on the west. Mill River, a western tributary of the Connecticut River, cuts through Northampton from the northwest to the southeast. The Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District is located on Bridge Street, a segment of the regional artery known as State Route 9, which passes through the mid-valley from east to west and crosses the Connecticut River between Northampton and Hadley.

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Northampton experienced steady growth for much of its history, from its establishment as a town in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, to its incorporation as a city in 1883, and well into the 1920s. Nineteenth-century Northampton attracted visitors like Timothy Dwight, the Marquis de Lafayette, Henry James, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Swedish soprano Jenny Lind (1820-1887), who proclaimed the town the "paradise of America." Landscape painters such as Thomas Cole (1801-1848) of the Hudson River School thought the Northampton environs were the epitome of the picturesque, and the ideal middle landscape between the city and nature. [Historic Northampton web site]

Permanent European settlement of the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts began during the Plantation period (1630-1675), initially at Springfield in 1636 and, by the 1650s, spreading north through the valley's mid-section. In May 1653, twenty-four persons petitioned the General Court for permission to "plant, possess and inhabit" Nonotuck, later the town of Northampton. Aside from the Springfield vicinity, the Northampton area, including the neighboring towns of Hadley (1661) and Hatfield (1670), was the region's most important economic and political center. Extensive agricultural land of the mid-valley quickly enabled the area to become a major agricultural producer in Massachusetts. Locally produced grain, flour, malt, and pork were sent by cart and/or boat to Springfield, Boston, and Hartford, Connecticut, in exchange for goods or payment of taxes and debts. The importance of Northampton was underscored by its designation as a joint shire town, with Springfield, after 1661. [Regional Report, pp. 61, 65]

The Northampton area saw the most extensive Colonial-period (1675-1775) development in the Connecticut Valley. Much of the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was devoted to rebuilding and re-fortifying after King Philip's War (1675-1676). By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Northampton rivaled Springfield as the center of wealth and influence in the region. Like Springfield, Northampton was located at the junction of several major regional transportation routes, and included a vital ferry crossing over the Connecticut River. As new towns were established farther north and west, Northampton's importance as a distribution center grew. In addition, Northampton and its smaller neighbors, Hadley and Hatfield, controlled some of the best agricultural land in the colony and were major exporters of livestock, salted beef, and other agricultural products to Boston and many other markets. While Northampton grew as a trade and marketing center in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, religious fervor locally was quickened by the ministry of Jonathan Edwards, whose preaching sparked the religious revivals of the Great Awakening in the 1740s. [Regional Report, p. 80; Historic Northampton web site]

The Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District preserves a portion of Northampton's original town plan, which included a grid of home lots along the axis of Main Street and Bridge Street, as well as the Bridge Street burying ground (1663) to the northeast. The district encompasses part of the original four-acre home lot granted in 1654 to Cornet Joseph Parsons. The lot fronted the present Market Street, now the nearest side street west of the historic district. The present Bridge Street formed the southeast side boundary of the home lot.

Joseph Parsons was the chief agent in Northampton of John Pynchon, who largely orchestrated Northampton's settlement and whose father, William Pynchon, had established Springfield in 1636. Trade franchises and land ownership made Parsons a powerful figure in the region in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, and his estate was the highest probated in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Hampshire County behind Pynchon's. Joseph Parsons and his wife, Mary Bliss Parsons, resided in Northampton for over twenty years. Their house does not survive. Allegations made in 1675 by a Parsons neighbor led to the indictment, imprisonment, grand jury investigation, and subsequent acquittal of Mary

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Parsons for witchcraft. Joseph and Mary Parsons returned to Springfield in 1679 or 1680, and Joseph Parsons died in 1683. At that time, their son, Jonathan Parsons (d. 1694), inherited two acres of his parents' Northampton home lot. [Historic Northampton web site]

In 1709, Nathaniel Parsons (d.1738), a son of Jonathan Parsons, inherited the "housing and homelot" on Bridge Street upon the final settlement of his father's estate. The present Nathaniel Parsons House, 58 Bridge Street (ca. 1730, MHC #2125), is not believed to be the house occupied by Nathaniel's grandparents, but rather a house Nathaniel built about the time of his second marriage, to Abigail Bunce, in 1728. His brother, Jonathan Parsons, was a housewright by trade, and may have been involved in the construction of the later house. In its current form, the house retains fragments of Nathaniel's ca. 1730 First Period house within the main block, which is largely of later Federal-period construction. A 1992 investigation of the present house found no physical evidence that the older (pre-1709) house is incorporated in the present frame. [*Building Archeology, Nathaniel Parsons House*]

Encased within the existing main block of the Nathaniel Parsons House is a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century lean-to addition, which spanned the rear (north) elevation of the house. Construction of the lean-to provided the house with a second kitchen, in addition to the earlier kitchen that occupied the east room of the First Period house (and was used as such until ca. 1800). From the 1750s until 1785, two Parsons heirs owned the house jointly. The need for two kitchens has been explained as reflecting either a division of the house between two Parsons families, or the house's occupation by the Parsons family plus tenants or boarders. [*Building Archeology, Nathaniel Parsons House*]

During the Federal period (1775-1830), the Connecticut River Valley was the fastest growing region in Massachusetts. River towns such as Northampton were the dominant regional cores, their growth augmented by increased commercial and industrial development. There was considerable economic upheaval in the mid-valley during the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Following the post-Revolutionary War depression that led to Shay's Rebellion (1786) at Springfield to the south, both a revival of agricultural prosperity by the late 1790s and the beginning of successful manufacturing after 1800 provided a basis for renewed growth. Northampton grew rapidly during the rest of the period, at twice the rate of Hampshire County as a whole. The town retained its traditional role as the Hampshire County seat, after the 1812 realignment of the county's boundaries, due to the creation of Hampden County in the Springfield area to the south, and Franklin County to the north. [*Regional Report*, p. 93]

Like Springfield, Northampton began to acquire a more urban character during the Federal period, with defined civic, commercial, and residential areas. County and town institutional buildings were clustered at Meetinghouse Hill on the commercial Main Street. Northampton's commercial architecture grew in scale and density, with three-story granite buildings constructed by 1826. The town also gained a reputation as a center for architectural innovation, especially after construction on Meetinghouse Hill of the First Church of Christ, also known as the fourth Northampton meetinghouse (1810-1812, burned 1876, Asher Benjamin, architect, and Isaac Damon, master builder). [*Regional Report*, pp. 91, 93, 96]

The historic district acquired much of its present form during the Federal period. The Nathaniel Parsons House, 58 Bridge Street (ca. 1730, MHC #2125), was substantially remodeled with the addition of a second floor and

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construction of the rear ell, east wing, and west wing, all undertaken from ca. 1795 to ca. 1830. In 1807-1808, members of the Wright family acquired the property, after more than one hundred-fifty years of ownership by the Parsons family. One half of the undivided homestead changed hands three times in early 1807 before its purchase by Chloe Wright, wife of Daniel Wright. In September 1808, Ferdinand Hunt Wright, stepson of Chloe Wright, acquired the other half of the homestead. During his career, Hunt Wright was a cashier at the Northampton National Bank and served as postmaster. Wright descendants conveyed title to the property in 1941 to the Northampton Historical Society (now Historic Northampton). [*Building Archeology Report, Nathaniel Parsons House*; Historic Northampton research]

Also during the Federal period, the other two houses in the historic district were built on portions of the original Joseph Parsons home lot of 1654. About 1796, Seth Russell, a cordwainer, built a house on land he purchased from Nathaniel Parsons, a farmer and son of the Nathaniel Parsons referenced above. This Federal-style house, now known as the Shepherd House, 66 Bridge Street (ca. 1796, MHC #2071), was built to the east of the Parsons residence. In 1799, Russell sold the property, which he described in the deed as a house lot containing buildings. He continued to occupy the house, however, until at least 1802, after which a series of owners held title until 1856, when the Shepherd family acquired the property (see Early Industrial period below). To the west of the Parsons House, the Federal-style Isaac Damon House, 46 Bridge Street (ca. 1813, MHC #2070) apparently replaced an earlier house on the same lot. [*Building Archeology reports*] Built by the regionally important architect-builder Isaac Damon (1781-1862) as his own residence, the house is one of very few known examples of Damon's residential work. The property remained in the Damon family until 1943, when it was purchased by the Northampton Historical Society.

One of the most significant factors affecting the Federal architecture of not only Northampton but the larger Connecticut River Valley region was the rise of a group of important local architect-builders, led by Asher Benjamin (1771-1845) and Damon. Benjamin, a Greenfield, Massachusetts native who established an office in Boston as early as 1803, was active in the Massachusetts portion of the Connecticut Valley for only a few years. His most lasting impact on vernacular building, both locally and nationally, was achieved indirectly through the publication of his seven pattern books from 1797 to 1843. By contrast, Damon's impact on architecture in the valley was both direct and long-lived, since he practiced in the region for forty years. [*Regional Report*, p. 162; *Isaac Damon Exhibit*; Withey, pp. 51, 161]

A native of Weymouth, Massachusetts, Isaac Damon arrived in Northampton in 1811 to take over the job of master builder of the new Federal-style First Church (see above). Little is known of Damon's youth or education. He is believed to have started his career as a housewright in Weymouth. In 1810, he was involved in the reconstruction of Charles Bulfinch's Hollis Street Church. The church had been dismantled in Boston and shipped to Weymouth, where it was reassembled to house the Union Church of Weymouth and Braintree.

Damon's decision to move to Northampton in 1811, and to remain there, could be attributed in part to personal connections. His first wife, Jane (Jenney) Pratt of Weymouth, was related to Thomas Pratt, a carpenter/housewright who left Weymouth for Northampton in 1807. Jane Pratt Damon died in 1812 in Northampton. Damon married Sophia Strong of Northampton in 1813, and built his own residence at 46 Bridge Street (ca. 1813, MHC #2070) about that time. [*Isaac Damon Exhibit*]

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Isaac Damon played a major role in shaping downtown Northampton during the Federal period, and he was associated with the construction of many buildings that gave the town its nascent urban character. In addition to the First Church (completed 1812, burned 1876), Damon built two other buildings on Meetinghouse Hill, the Hampshire County Courthouse (1813, burned 1822, rebuilt 1823 by Damon *et al.*, demolished 1886) and the Northampton Town Hall (1814, burned 1818, rebuilt by Damon 1818, discontinued as town hall ca. 1850, demolished 1872). Damon built the town hall at his own expense on public land. The town used the hall and lobby while Damon rented out the space in the rest of the building. Other Damon-built municipal construction included a hay scale, located outside the Town Hall, and one of Northampton's early water lines, a series of hollow logs that brought water from a hilltop well to the houses of Main Street subscribers. In the 1820s, Damon served as fire warden, selectman, and assessor in Northampton. At that time, he also built a pair of granite-front commercial buildings across from the First Church, at 108 Main Street (1828, MHC #2128, NR) and 110-112 Main Street (1828, MHC #2272, NR). In addition to his house at 46 Bridge Street (see above), Damon reportedly built only one other residence, the John Hopkins House, 101 King Street (ca. 1830, MHC #642). [*Isaac Damon Exhibit*]

Following the completion of his earliest buildings in Northampton, Damon's fine reputation as an architect-builder spread quickly. He is perhaps best known for his church construction, and is credited with completing thirteen churches. Extant examples include: First Church, 50 Elm Street, Springfield (1819, MHC #218, NR); First Church, Blandford (1823, not inventoried); First Church, 488 College Highway, Southwick (1824, MHC #50); Johnson Chapel, South Pleasant Street, Amherst (1826-1827, MHC #722) at Amherst College; Second Church, 243 River Drive, [North] Hadley (1834, MHC #202, NR); Second Congregational Church, 177 Chestnut Plain Road, Whately (1843, MHC #6), and First Congregational Church, 41 Main Street, Hatfield (1849, MHC #141, NR). An 1816 Damon church in Westhampton burned in 1829, and it is currently unclear whether Damon also designed the replacement church building on North Road, Westhampton (1829, MHC #27). He also built Congregational churches in Greenfield (1819, demolished) and Granby, as well as, in Northampton, the First Baptist Church, Main Street (1829, damaged in fire 1863, demolished 1903) and the Methodist Episcopal Church, Center Street (1851, remodeled 1893, demolished 1913). [*Isaac Damon Exhibit*; *Regional Report*, p. 186; MHC inventory]

His other institutional commissions included county court houses and town halls. Between 1813 and 1848, Damon built the courthouses for all four counties in western Massachusetts: Hampshire County at Northampton (see above, demolished); the second courthouse for Berkshire County at 18 Main Street, Lenox (1815-1816, MHC #21, now the Lenox Library, NR), Hampden County at Springfield (1820, demolished), and the second court house for Franklin County at Court Square, Greenfield (1848, remodeled 1873, MHC #83, NR). Almost thirty years after building his 1814 Northampton Town Hall (see above), Damon built the Whately Town Hall, 196 Chestnut Plain Road (1843, MHC #16), near his Congregational church (see above), which was constructed the same year. [*Isaac Damon Exhibit*; *Regional Report*, p. 186; MHC inventory]

Damon's professional activity extended to land development, and he purchased and sold many properties in the Northampton area for the purposes of "improvement." This activity would lead him to insolvency by the end of the Federal period. His development efforts in Northampton were concentrated at the upper end of Main Street. In 1825, Damon completed the brick Masonic Hall, 25 Main Street (MHC #2059, reconstructed 1871 by William Fenno Pratt, NR) and laid out the road later known as Masonic Street. In 1826, the Farmington (Connecticut)

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Canal Company proposed a canal from New Haven, Connecticut to Northampton, to enter Northampton from Easthampton, cross upper Main Street, and continue along the current path of State Street. Drawing on local optimism about the canal, Damon invested heavily in the project. He renovated a former tavern along the route into a hotel to accommodate travelers. The sixty-room Mansion House (renovated 1828, demolished 1881) opened in June 1828. The canal itself did not open until 1835, and closed in 1847, ultimately proving to be a financial disaster for investors. [*Isaac Damon Exhibit*]

By November 1828, five months after the opening of the Mansion House, Damon was insolvent. With his money tied up in canal stock and land, and his property extensively mortgaged, he had amassed debts totaling \$48,000. Just one year before, Damon was Northampton's fifth largest taxpayer. Lyman Kingsley, Damon's brother-in-law, purchased the Damon House at 46 Bridge Street to protect the property from Damon's creditors, thereby enabling the family to continue living there. [*Isaac Damon Exhibit*]

In the years following his financial difficulties, Damon concentrated on bridge-building, which was the focus of his work during the Early Industrial period (1830-1870). Between 1831 and 1847, Damon built bridges throughout New England and upstate New York, and went as far south as Lexington, Kentucky to erect the piers for a bridge across the Ohio River. He is credited with having built twenty-five bridges, including two in Northampton (neither extant). Damon resumed regular building activity in 1843, constructed five buildings before his retirement in 1851 at the age of seventy. Isaac Damon died December 4, 1862 and is buried at the Bridge Street Cemetery, 156 Bridge Street (1661, MHC #803) northeast of this historic district.

For Northampton, industrial activity that had begun along the Mill River during the Federal period accelerated during the Early Industrial period. By ca. 1870, a series of industrial villages extended from Northampton into Williamsburg to the north, producing silks, woolens, and cotton as well as machinery and cutlery. Good railroad connections spurred this industrial growth and enhanced Northampton's traditional role as the distribution center for goods in the mid-section of the Connecticut Valley. Construction of the Connecticut River Railroad (1844-1847) established the railroad bridge over the junction of Bridge Street and Main Street, immediately southwest of the historic district. [*Regional Report*, Map 18, p. 108]

Despite its industrial development, Northampton also retained a reputation as the valley's center for social awareness and culture. There was strong interest in reform movements such as temperance, public education, and especially the abolition of slavery. The establishment of institutions in Northampton, including the Round Hill School (1823), Clarke School for the Deaf (1865), and Smith College (1871) helped reinforce the town's progressive image. Author George Washington Cable founded the Home Culture Clubs in 1892, and the Hill Institute sponsored one of the earliest kindergartens in America. Franklin Pierce, a graduate of the Northampton Law School, went on to the United States presidency. Northampton also was the home of Calvin Coolidge, who became Governor of Massachusetts, and subsequently President in 1923. [*Regional Report*, p. 108; Historic Northampton web site]

Northampton's relative affluence during the Early Industrial period is reflected in the volume of building construction during those years. Immediately southeast of the historic district, an affluent residential neighborhood expanded from its original Hawley Street axis to Pomeroy Terrace (1847) over the Connecticut

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River meadows. This neighborhood, developed from ca. 1850 to 1885, is considered one of Northampton's finest residential areas. Within the historic district, the Early Industrial period was largely one of remodeling at two of the houses, the Shepherd House, 66 Bridge Street, and the Damon House, 46 Bridge Street. At the Shepherd House in particular, the addition of applied ornament associated with the Gothic Revival and Greek Revival styles suggested a desire on the part of the owners to update the house's appearance as new residences were being constructed in the same neighborhood. A barn/carriage house (ca. 1840-1860) was added to the Shepherd property as well.

By the 1850s, all three houses in the historic district were in the possession of families whose descendants either bequeathed or sold the properties to the Northampton Historical Society (now Historic Northampton). The Parsons House, 58 Bridge Street, was owned by widow Olive Ames Wright and her minor children. In 1909, Arthur, Edgar, and Anna Catherine Bliss inherited their grandmother's house from their aunt, Anne Wright. Eventually, title to the property passed to Anna Catherine Bliss alone, and she in turn bequeathed the property to the Historical Society in 1941.

The house now known as the Shepherd House, 66 Bridge Street changed hands several times in the 1830s and 1840s before being acquired in 1856 by Susan L. B. Shepherd, wife of Henry Shepherd. Henry Shepherd worked at his father's store, then became a farmer. Beginning in the 1860s, he was superintendent of construction for the Western Union Telegraph Company. In 1885, Susan Shepherd conveyed the property to her son, Thomas L. Shepherd (1856-1923). Thomas Shepherd graduated from high school in 1875, apprenticed for three years at the Northampton National Bank, and then became an associate of J. G. Mackintosh Company, a Holyoke banking concern. He later became secretary of the Manufacturers' Trust Company of Holyoke. On the liquidation of that institution, after having worked in Holyoke for eighteen years, Shepherd went into business for himself in Springfield. He also served as co-receiver of the Taber Prang Art Company in Springfield before retiring about 1906-1907. In 1914, Shepherd married Edith Carpenter (1875-1969). Their travels in Asia before his death in 1923 are reflected in the house's interior decoration, particularly the furnishings and the hall wallpaper, which illustrates Chinese scenes. Following the death of Edith Carpenter Shepherd, the Shepherd property passed to the Historical Society, and Historic Northampton took title in 1972. [*Building Archeology Report, Russell-Shepherd House*; Historic Northampton research]

Architect-builder Isaac Damon's house, 46 Bridge Street, remained Damon's residence until his death in 1862, after which his wife (d. 1883) and children continued living there. Damon's granddaughter, Jane Damon Smith (1853-1943), was the last member of the family to live in the house. She was employed at the Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, retiring in 1937 after nearly 63 years of service. After her death in 1943, the Northampton Historical Society purchased the property. [*Building Archeology Report, Isaac Damon House*; Historic Northampton research]

The Northampton Historical Society was established in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before its acquisition of the Parsons house in 1941, the Society was headquartered at Memorial Hall, 240 Main Street (1872, MHC #792) in the downtown commercial district. The name of the Historical Society was changed in 1972 to Historic Northampton. The Historic Northampton Museum & Education Center is a local history museum and the repository of Northampton and Connecticut Valley history from the pre-Contact era to the present. The museum's wide-ranging collection encompasses approximately 50,000 objects, including documents and

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manuscripts, fine art, furniture, ceramics, glass, metals, toys, tools and implements, an important collection of textiles and costumes, and more than 10,000 photographs. [Historic Northampton web site]

Architecture

Each of the three houses in the Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District contributes to a better understanding of architecture in the Connecticut Valley. The core of the Nathaniel Parsons House, 58 Bridge Street (ca. 1730, MHC #2125), has been described as First Period construction because the First Period lasted considerably longer in the Connecticut Valley—perhaps as late as the 1750s—than it did in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. [*Building Archeology, Nathaniel Parsons House*, n.p.] The core of the present house was two stories on a single-pile plan, with a hall and parlor flanking a central chimney, and chambers above. Surviving components of this early construction include remnants of exterior siding that abuts at the corners; molded horizontal sheathing in the former hall (front right room); and a rear lean-to that was added in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. With its symmetrical five-bay façade, center entrance, center chimney, and side-gable roof, the Parsons House took the standard residential form seen in the Connecticut Valley in general, and Northampton in particular, up to 1775. [*Regional Report*, p. 152; *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Report*] Enlarged and re-sided ca. 1795-1815, and expanded further with the addition of the ell, east wing, and west wing ca. 1815-1830, the Parsons House is perhaps most significant for preserving a record of change that spans a century. [*Building Archeology, Nathaniel Parsons House*, n.p.]

The Parsons House also contributes greatly to an understanding of exterior and interior finishes from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century through the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Each of three distinct exterior siding materials survive, at least in part, beneath the present weatherboard. On the façade were wide flush boards scored horizontally to imitate thin weatherboards. This finish has been documented on only two other 18<sup>th</sup>-century houses, both in the Connecticut Valley. Thin narrow weatherboards survive in the gable ends. Unscored flushboards survive on the rear elevation. Both of these materials were conventional in this period. Two mortises above the front door indicate the presence once of an early hood or pentice, of which there are very few documented examples in New England. Similar hoods that were found on other Connecticut Valley houses seem to have been relatively plain. [*Building Archeology, Nathaniel Parsons House*, n.p.]

The Federal-period remodeling of the Parsons House brought a change in not only the building's roofline and massing, but also the finishing of most of the interior rooms. Previously, only the parlor (front west room) had been plastered, with short pieces of grass, rather than animal hair, used as a binder in the early plaster. The same room was finished with a molded chair rail and baseboard that the *Building Archeology* report describes as "early manifestations of what would soon become the standard Georgian room finish." Upstairs, both chambers were unfinished until at least the 1790s. According to the *Building Archeology* report, the lack of finish here adds to the growing evidence that many 18<sup>th</sup>-century rooms lacked interior walls until the Federal period, with only a single layer of weatherboarding, in this instance, protecting the room from the elements. The house also provides evidence, only now gathering, that water-soluble or distemper paints, rather than oil paints, continued to be used for interior woodwork into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, a number of decorative wall and woodwork finishes from the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been identified in recent studies of the house. These include three wallpaper patterns, each matched to a corresponding woodwork color; two distemper wall paints; and a fragment

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of a now-destroyed overmantel painting, also executed in distempers. Over a dozen early woodwork colors have been documented in the house, including a kitchen floor paint. [*Building Archeology, Nathaniel Parsons House, n.p.*]

While the Parsons House was substantially remodeled during the Federal period, the Shepherd House, 66 Bridge Street (ca. 1796, MHC ##2071), is an example of Federal-period design with a number of mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, revival-style features added. These features include the Gothic Revival-style portico (ca. 1830-1860), the Greek Revival-style cornice (ca. 1830-1860), and the Colonial Revival-style side porch (ca. 1900). Framing visible from the basement indicates the Shepherd House was built in one episode. However, the presence of large hewn beams and log joists, rather than sawn structural members, is not typical of houses of this late date and location. Between the two chimney bases in the basement is a crib of hewn beams, many still bearing Roman numerals, that are believed to have been reused from an earlier building. The interior provides a record of about seventy years of occupancy by members of the Shepherd family. Particularly well preserved are the front rooms and kitchen, which have sustained little change since the 1920s or earlier. [*Building Archeology, Russell-Shepherd House, p.2*]

Finally, the Isaac Damon House, 46 Bridge Street (ca. 1813, MHC #2070) is architecturally significant as one of the master builder's very few domestic buildings, constructed as his own residence. Damon's house is known to have replaced an earlier (ca. 1770s) house on the same lot. Though the roof framing on Damon's house has been dated to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, many of the timbers have been reused. Doubled sills visible in the basement of the original one-story ell indicate that the frame of the ell actually pre-dates the main block. This may have been a survival of the ell or an outbuilding of the earlier house. A particularly interesting feature in the plan and construction of the Damon House is the projection of the first floor rear rooms beyond the rear wall of the main block. This projection reads on the exterior as a one-story, hip-roofed appendage on the rear wall. Damon achieved this projection, and consequently the larger first floor rear rooms, by constructing the second floor rear wall as a truss, a principle with which he would have been familiar from his church and other institutional buildings. It is unclear whether this arrangement was seen elsewhere in the Connecticut Valley during the Federal period or was peculiar to this house. [*Building Archeology, Isaac Damon House, n.p.*]

### Archaeological Significance

Historic archaeological resources described above have the potential to contribute social, cultural and economic information for a portion of Northampton's residential settlement from the original settlement through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Additional historical research combined with archaeological survey and testing may contribute significant information on Northampton's first period of settlement and the history of land use at the original four-acre home lot granted to Cornet Joseph Parsons in 1654. The district encompasses a portion of that lot. Detailed analysis of historical and archaeological data may produce information that documents the location of Joseph and Mary Parsons original home built after 1654 and date of construction for the Nathaniel Parsons House (c. 1730) at 58 Bridge Street. That house is not believed to be the house occupied by Nathaniel's grandparents, but rather a house Nathaniel built about the time of his second marriage to Abigail Bunce in 1728. Archaeological testing can be used to test currently held beliefs about the date of construction for the house and the results of a recently conducted architectural study that found no physical evidence that an older house

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was incorporated into the present frame. Detailed analysis of the contents from occupational related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may also contribute significant information on the lives of the district's inhabitants reported to include some of Northampton's earliest and most prominent citizens. Information may be present that describes the dietary habits of individuals and families, religion, general health and occupations. Information may also be present that details the extent to which individuals and families in the district shared and benefited from Northampton's favorable trade and marketing relationship with Boston during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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*Isaac Damon, Master Builder* (caption text for exhibit). Historic Northampton, 1999-2000.

"Making history for Northampton: new museum complex to open in October." *The Weathervane* (A Newsletter from Historic Northampton). Volume 23, No. 1. Summer 1999.

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Parsons, Shepherd, Damon Houses HD  
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.5 acres

### UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 18 695590 4688070  
Zone Easting Northing

2. 18 695460 4687950  
Zone Easting Northing

3. 18 695420 4688000  
Zone Easting Northing

4. 18 695050 4688070  
Zone Easting Northing

x See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathleen Kelly Broomer, Consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date April 2001

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Historic Northampton

street & number 46 Bridge Street telephone 413-584-6011

city or town Northampton state MA zip code 01060-2428

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503. NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District  
Northampton (Hampshire Co.), Massachusetts

Section number 10 Page 1 photos

10. Geographical Data

UTM References

|   | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 18   | 695590  | 4688070  |
| B | 18   | 695460  | 4687950  |
| C | 18   | 695420  | 4688000  |
| D | 18   | 695050  | 4688070  |
| E | 18   | 695070  | 4688100  |
| F | 18   | 695520  | 4688140  |

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated district is shown on the accompanying detail of the City of Northampton assessor's map. The district encompasses 2.5 acres and has approximately 316 feet of frontage on Bridge Street.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the three parcels that comprise the campus of Historic Northampton.

(end)

Photographs

Historic Name: Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District  
(a/k/a Historic Northampton)  
Location: Bridge Street, Northampton, Massachusetts  
Photographer: K. K. Broomer  
Date: May 2000  
Location of Negatives: Historic Northampton, 46 Bridge Street, Northampton, MA 01060

| Photograph # | View                                                                                                 |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1            | Nathaniel Parsons House, 58 Bridge Street. View NW.                                                  |
| 2            | Shepherd House, 66 Bridge Street. View NW.                                                           |
| 3            | Isaac Damon House, 46 Bridge Street. View NW.                                                        |
| 4            | Shepherd Barn/Carriage House, 66 Bridge Street. View NE.                                             |
| 5            | Historic Northampton grounds. View SW from Shepherd Barn/Carriage House toward Damon House addition. |

***Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District***  
Northampton (Hampshire), Massachusetts

***District Data Sheet***

| <b><i>Assessor's<br/>Map/Parcel</i></b> | <b><i>MHC#</i></b> | <b><i>Historic Name</i></b>                                                                        | <b><i>Address</i></b> | <b><i>Date of<br/>Construction</i></b>                                                 | <b><i>Style</i></b>       | <b><i>Resource<br/>Type</i></b> | <b><i>Status</i></b>           |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 32A/175                                 | 2070               | Isaac Damon House<br>fence                                                                         | 46 Bridge Street      | ca. 1813<br>1999                                                                       | Federal                   | B<br>ST                         | C<br>NC                        |
| 32A/260                                 | 2125               | Nathaniel Parsons House<br>fence<br>Parsons Monument<br>Bliss Family Monument<br>Pergola<br>Gazebo | 58 Bridge Street      | ca. 1730<br>ca. 1795-1815<br>1999<br>1973<br>1986<br>early 20 <sup>th</sup> c.<br>1999 | remodeled<br>First Period | B<br>ST<br>O<br>O<br>ST<br>ST   | C<br>NC<br>NC<br>NC<br>C<br>NC |
| 32A/176                                 | 2071               | Shepherd House<br>barn/carriage house<br>fence                                                     | 66 Bridge Street      | ca. 1796<br>ca. 1840-1860<br>1999                                                      | Federal                   | B<br>B<br>ST                    | C<br>C<br>NC                   |

***Key:*** B=building, ST=structure, O=object, C=contributing, NC=noncontributing

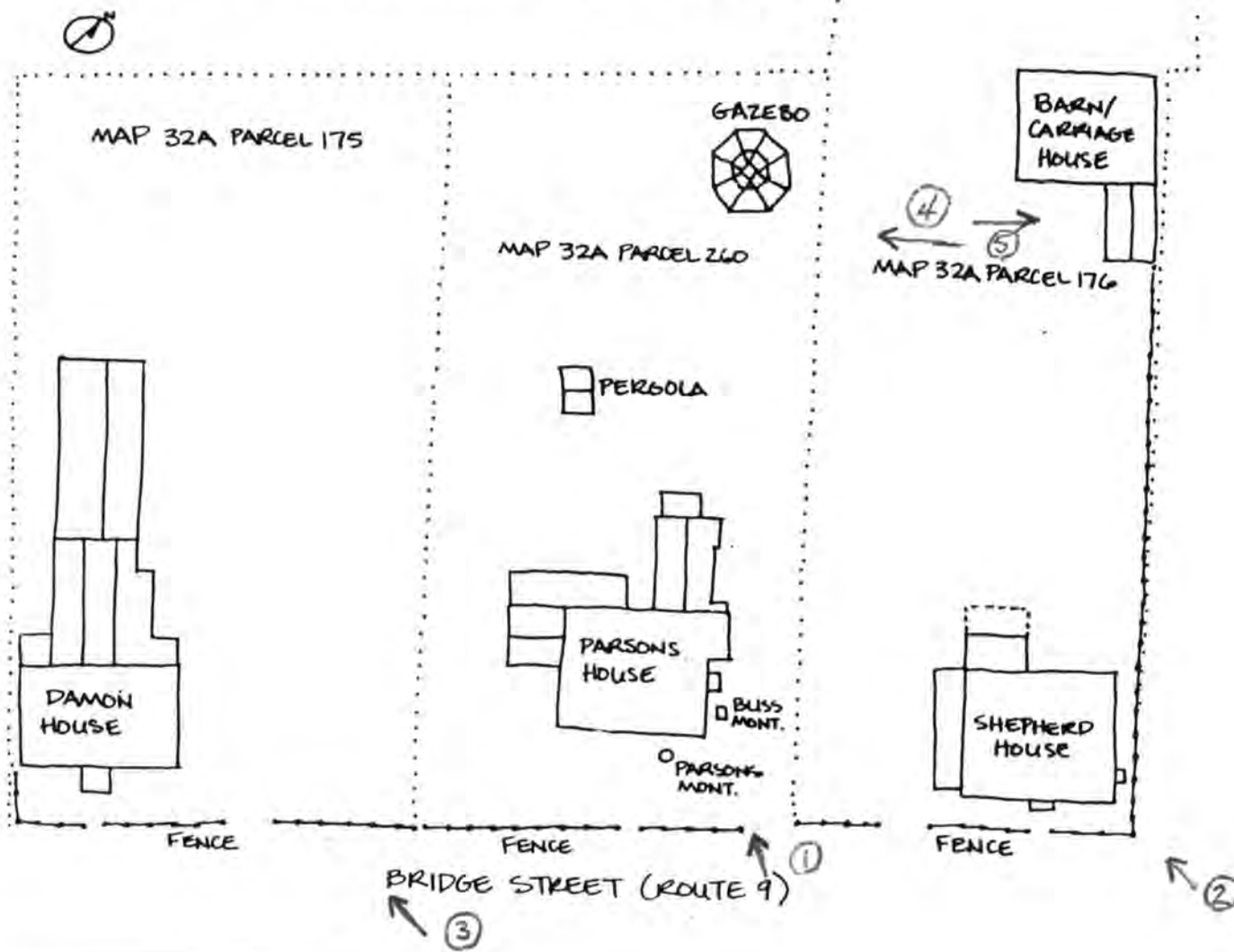
***Note:*** All three fences are noncontributing due to their construction dates. Their designs, however, are based upon documentary evidence.

***Number of resources within district:***

|              | Contributing | Noncontributing |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Buildings    | 4            | 0               |
| Sites        | 0            | 0               |
| Structures   | 1            | 4               |
| Objects      | 0            | 2               |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>5</b>     | <b>6</b>        |

PARSONS, SHEPHERD, AND DAMON HOUSES  
HISTORIC DISTRICT  
BRIDGE STREET  
NORTHAMPTON, MA

SOURCE: MASTER SITE PLAN STUDY, HISTORIC NORTHAMPTON, 1999



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Parsons, Shepherd and Damon, Houses Historic District

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Hampshire

DATE RECEIVED: 4/30/01      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/17/01  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/02/01      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/15/01  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 01000627

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      6/6/01      DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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



Nathaniel Parsons House  
58 Bridge Street, Northampton, MA

View NW

Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District  
(aka Historic Northampton)

Neg: Historic Northampton  
46 Bridge Street  
Northampton, MA 01060

May 2000



Shepherd House

66 Bridge Street, Northampton, MA

View NW

Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District  
(aka Historic Northampton)

Neg: Historic Northampton  
46 Bridge Street  
Northampton, MA 01060

May 2000



Isaac Damon House

46 Bridge Street, Northampton, MA

View W

Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District  
(aka Historic Northampton)

Neg: Historic Northampton

46 Bridge Street

Northampton, MA 01060

May 2000



Shepherd Carriage House/Barn  
66 Bridge Street, Northampton, MA

View NE

Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District  
(aka Historic Northampton)

Neg: Historic Northampton  
46 Bridge Street  
Northampton, MA 01060

May 2000



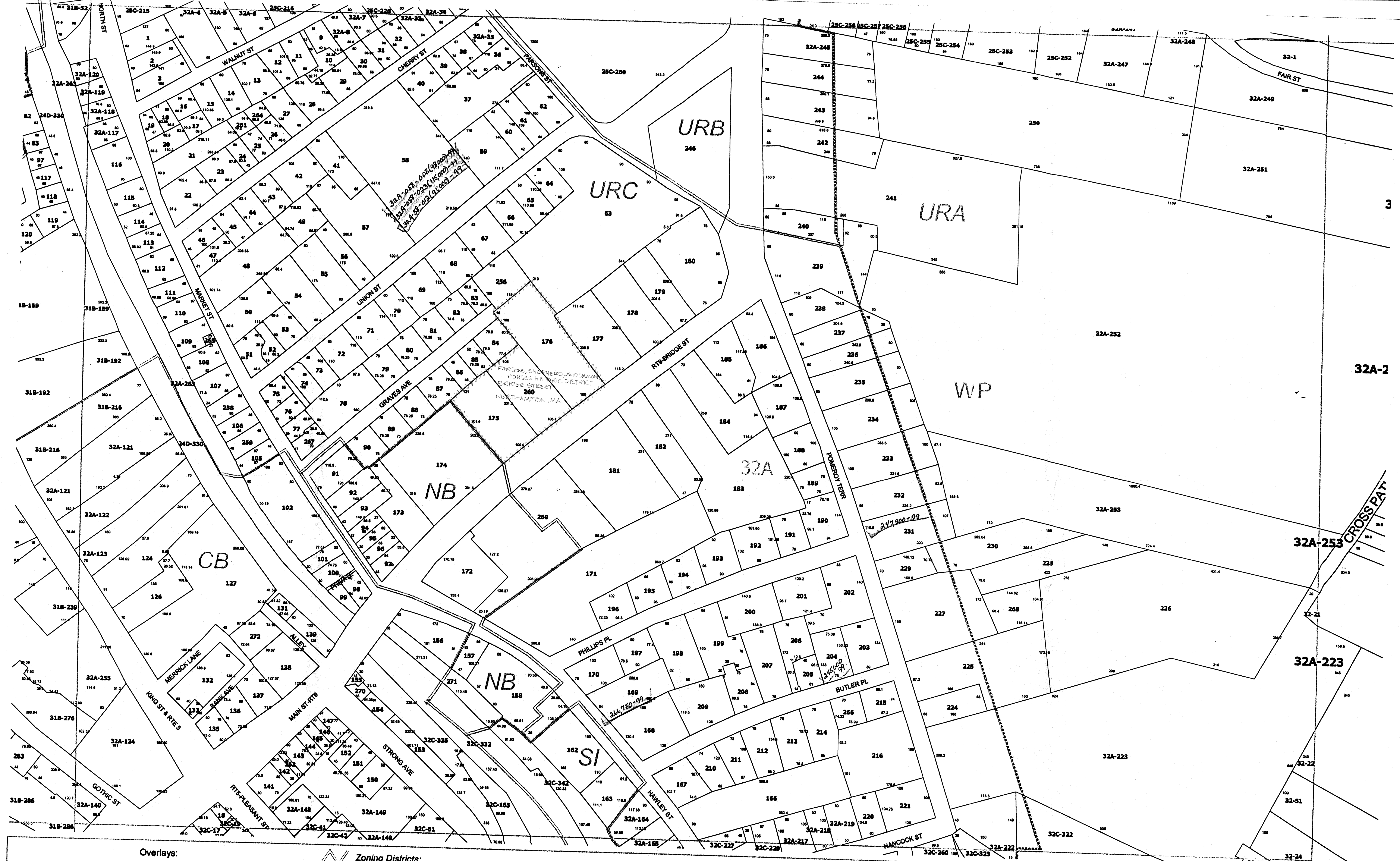
~~Sheep~~ Historic Northampton grounds  
View SW from Shepherd Carriage House/Barn  
toward Damon House addition

Parsons, Shepherd, and Damon Houses Historic District  
(aka Historic Northampton)

Neg: Historic Northampton  
46 Bridge Street  
Northampton, MA 01060

May 2000





**Overlays:**

- WSP-Water Supply Protection
- WP-Watershed Protection
- RI-Rural Incentive
- FFR-Farms, Forests & Rivers
- PV-Planned Village

**Zoning Districts:**

|                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| CB-Central Business      | M-Medical               |
| GB-General Business      | URC-Urban Residential C |
| HB-Highway Business      | URB-Urban Residential B |
| BP-Business Park         | URA-Urban Residential A |
| NB-Neighborhood Business | SR-Suburban Residential |
| GI-General Industrial    | RR-Rural Residential    |
| SI-Special Industrial    | SC-Special Conservancy  |

## Northampton Assessors and Zoning Map

Projection: MASS STATE PLANE NAD 1983 (meters). Parcel boundaries revised 01-01-98. These maps are not intended for use in conveying and they contain errors and discrepancies.

0 50 100 150 200 250 300 350 400 450 500 Feet

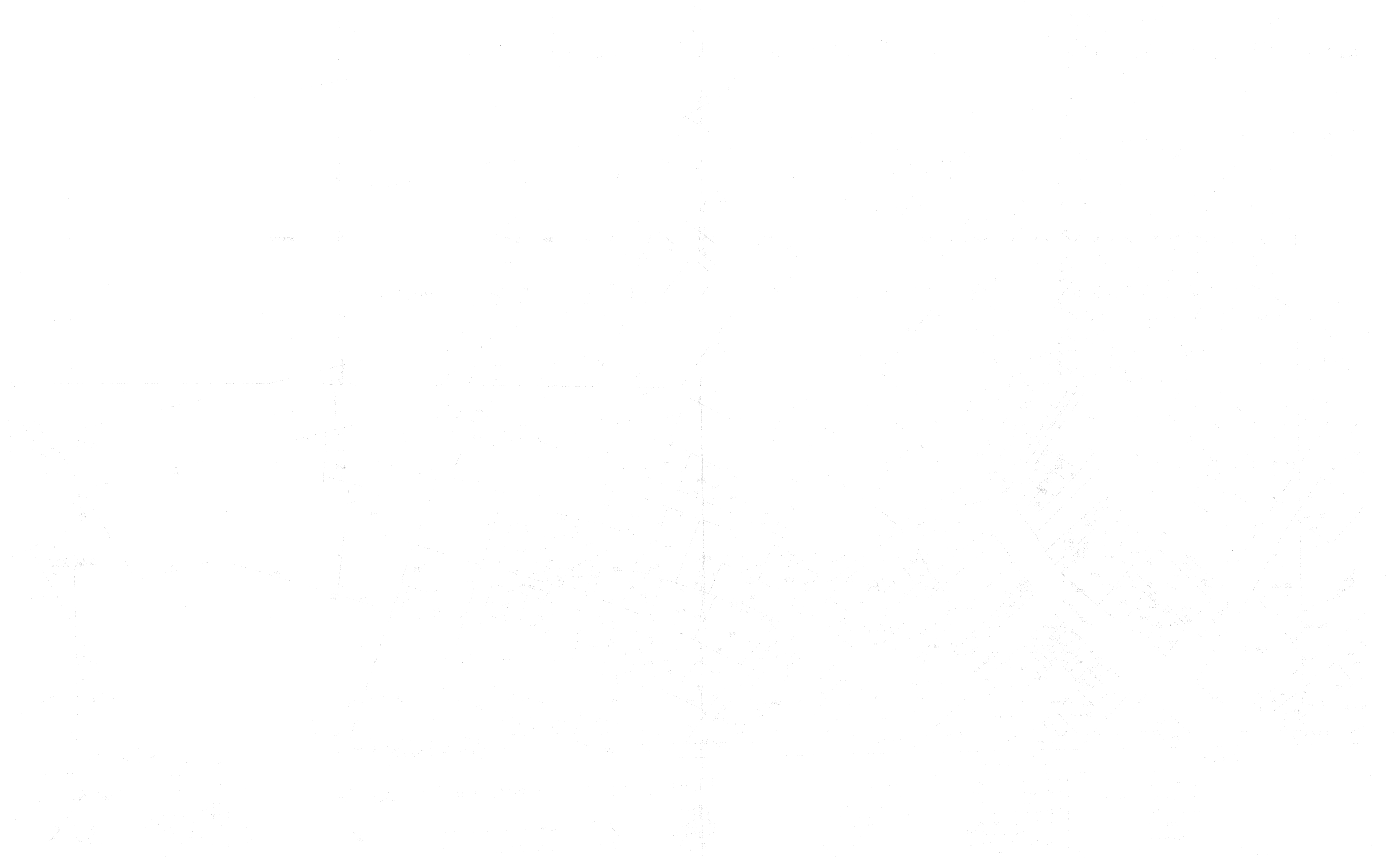
N  
W E  
S

Map & Sheet

# 32A

|    |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |
|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   |
| 9  | 10 | 11 | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20  | 21  | 22  | 23  | 24  |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28  | 29  | 30  | 31  | 32  |
| 33 | 34 | 35 | 36  | 37  | 38  | 39  | 40  |
| 41 | 42 | 43 | 44  | 45  | 46  | 47  | 48  |
| 49 | 50 | 51 | 52  | 53  | 54  | 55  | 56  |
| 57 | 58 | 59 | 60  | 61  | 62  | 63  | 64  |
| 65 | 66 | 67 | 68  | 69  | 70  | 71  | 72  |
| 73 | 74 | 75 | 76  | 77  | 78  | 79  | 80  |
| 81 | 82 | 83 | 84  | 85  | 86  | 87  | 88  |
| 89 | 90 | 91 | 92  | 93  | 94  | 95  | 96  |
| 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 | 101 | 102 | 103 | 104 |

PARSONS, SHEPHERD, DAMEN  
HOUSES HISTORIC DISTRICT  
BRIDGE STREET  
NORTHAMPTON, MA  
JUNE 2000





**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

April 23, 2001

Ms. Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Mail Stop 2280, Suite 400  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Parsons-Shepherd-Damon Houses HD, Northampton (Hampshire), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the properties included in the district were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg  
National Register Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Kerry W. Buckley, Executive Director, Historic Northampton  
Susan Well, Northampton Historical Commission  
Kathleen Kelly Broomer, Preservation Consultant  
Mary Ford, Mayor, City of Northampton



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

July 20, 2001

Ms. Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Mail Stop 2280, Suite 400  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Technical correction, Parsons, Shepherd and Damon Houses Historic District  
Northampton (Hampshire), MA (NPS# 01000627, listed June 6, 2001)

Dear Ms. Shull:

Please correct the street address for the above named National Register District.

The correct numbering for the district is: 46, 58, 66 Bridge Street.

A revised page one of the nomination form is enclosed with the correct address noted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brona Simon".

Brona Simon  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Kerry W. Buckley, Executive Director, Historic Northampton  
Susan Well, Northampton Historical Commission  
Kathleen Kelly Broomer, Preservation Consultant