

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received JUL 27 1987

date entered SEP 10 1987

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

1. Name

historic Matthew Bowen Homestead

and or common Plaine Hill Farm

2. Location

street & number Plaine Hill Road N.A. not for publication

city, town Woodstock N.A. vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Windham code 015

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Ruth Jensen (Woodstock Inn, L.P.)

street & number P.O. Box 98

city, town South Woodstock N.A. vicinity of state Connecticut 06267

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk's Office, Woodstock Town Hall

street & number Route 169

city, town Woodstock state Connecticut 06281

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

See continuation sheet.

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1987 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state Connecticut 06106

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Plaine Hill Farm, also known as the Matthew Bowen Homestead, is a large farm complex in a rural area just to the south of the historic residential center of Woodstock, a village in the hills of northeastern Connecticut. Composed of five buildings, three of which are contributing, the complex is located on the west side of Plaine Hill Road just below its intersection with Route 169, the main street of Woodstock. The two major contributing buildings are a large Federal/Georgian-style mansion built in 1816 (Photographs #1, 2) with mid-to-late nineteenth-century additions of two barns and a carriage house (Photographs #9, 11, 13), and a small Cape-style cottage, built in 1930, located about 250 feet to the south of the main buildings (Photograph #12). A small shed to the rear of this latter building is also contributing. The two non-contributing buildings postdate 1936: a small modern garage, located near the cottage, and a pumphouse to the northwest of the house. (See the schematic diagram of the property attached.)

Set well back from the road on a 14-acre parcel on the brow of a hill, Plaine Hill Farm faces almost due east, overlooking the valley below Plaine Hill Road and Route 169. The vee-shaped grassed area between these roads has remained undeveloped since at least the nineteenth century, as has most of the farmland below and east of Route 169 (not part of the historic property), thus preserving the panoramic view from the house.¹ The extensive landscaped grounds surrounding the buildings are set off from the bordering meadows and woodland by dry-laid stone walls to the south and west.

Originally constructed in 1816 by Esquire William Bowen as a five-bay Federal/Georgian-style house with a rear ell, Plaine Hill Farm has been enlarged and extensively remodelled twice in its history. By the Civil War, the main block of the house and its rear additions, the attached carriage house (then used as stables), and at least the larger cow barn were in place (Photographs #6, 7, 8). Although the original Georgian plan of the main block was retained, a full-facade wrap-around veranda was added in 1882 by Henry C. Bowen, with a turret at the southeast corner, and a two-story porch with a gable roof supported by columns, projecting from the northeast corner. Henry, who owned the house from 1878 to his death in 1896, the₂ grandson of Esquire William Bowen, may also have added the dormers to the carriage house.² During a second remodelling in 1928-29, the porch, veranda, and turret were removed; the gable roof was altered to its present steeply pitched, hip-roofed configuration with the existing chimney stacks extended up through the third story (the former attic). The main block was extended to the north one bay, creating the asymmetrical six-bay facade which exists today.

The main entrance, which remained in its original location during the remodellings (now the third bay from the left in the facade), has a large segmental-arched hood with modillions, a pulvinated frieze and fluted pilasters, framing a panelled Dutch door, all elements which may be original (Photograph #3). Similar arches are used throughout the interior of the house. The south side entrances to the main block and the southwest addition are Federal in style with simple Federal-style surrounds and/or leaded transoms (Photograph #9). One or both may date from 1816.

The carriage house, cow barn, and milking barn form a continuous 200-foot facade with the house. The carriage house, which connects the house to the barns at the extended rear ell, has broad, gabled dormers that still display the evidence of the Victorian period remodelling in the molding of the rake boards and the fascia (Photograph #10). The cow barn extends to the rear (west) 100 feet and is divided into three longitudinal bays. Its original timber framing is pegged at the mortise-and-tenon joints and supports a gable roof. While most of this building rests on a rubble foundation, the south wall is

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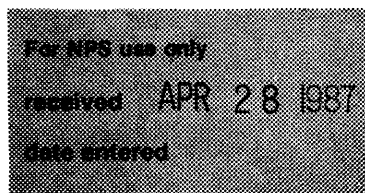
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Continuation sheet

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Page 1



Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic American Buildings Survey (Connecticut), 1969. (#11)

Historical and Architectural Survey of Woodstock, Connecticut, 1977.

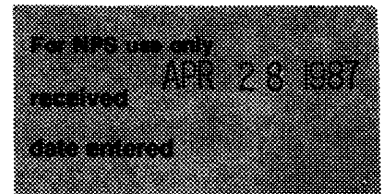
Works Progress Administration Survey, n.d. (#36)

Repository for Survey Records

Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street
Hartford, Connecticut

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Plaine Hill Farm

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supported by stone piers. The milking barn projects from the southeast end of the main barn at 90 degrees. A silo to the north of the cow barn, built of vertical planking held together by metal bands, has collapsed onto its stone foundation.

With the exception of the 1930 cottage, which has standard stud construction, the contributing buildings of the complex are all post-and-beam framed and set on rubble granite foundations. The house is sheathed with wood shingles, as are most of the walls of the two barns. The carriage house is clapboarded. The roof of the main block is wood-shingled with pedimented dormers on the north, east, and west sides; the gable roofs of the barns and carriage house are asphalt-shingled, as is the pyramidal roof of the cupola of the cow barn. The windows of the house generally have twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash, flanked by movable wooden blinds.

The interior of the house was extensively remodelled in 1929 by Richard G. Fisher, a Boston architect. The final drawings for the project document the changes to the floor plan and the use of Federal Revival-style detailing, returning the house to its original period. Major changes include the creation of a formal dining room with a fireplace from several rooms in the 1816 rear ell, the widening of the existing center hall to accommodate a new main staircase, and the replacement of several of the standard passage doorways with wide plaster or wood-framed arched openings. In the dining room, the most fully renovated room, reeding and dentil work are used extensively on the cornice, the doorway surrounds, and the fireplace wall on the north side of the room (Photograph #14). Fluted pilasters flank the doors and the fireplace surround, itself a typical example of the Federal style. The enframement on the chimney breast above the mantel previously contained a painting. The new staircase was relocated approximately six feet to the north with a semi-elliptical north wall (Photographs #15, 17). The south wall of the hall was removed in its entirety, opening up the room to the rear (southwest) parlor. Open plastered archways were added at either end (east and west) of the hall at this time. The balustrade of the new staircase, especially the spiral volute at the newel, is fully Federal in style. In the curve of the northeast wall at the second story, an arched opening was added in 1929 to light the stairwell (Photograph #16).

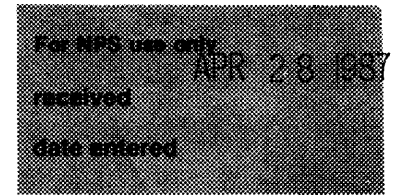
Surviving detail drawings indicate that several interior features currently in place were built to the architect's specifications, casework such as the cabinets with sliding shelves in the sewing/linen room on the second floor, and the panelled mahogany doors found in the dining room and as double pocket doors on either side of the entrance hall on the first floor. The pedimented portico planned for the main entrance was not built, but the raised granite and grassed terrace across the facade, which appears to be the remains of the older veranda foundation, was in fact part of the remodelling plan.

The eight fireplaces of the main block have remained in place, several with their original wooden Federal-style surrounds. New facings of hand-painted tile or embossed and moulded brass and copper were added in the Victorian period within these surrounds. For an example see Photograph #19. The black marble surround in the northwest corner room on the second floor is also a late nineteenth-century replacement (Photograph #18).

(continued next page)

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The unusual placement of the illustrated fireplaces, almost abutting a 90° wall, was the result of the widening of the central hall for the staircase.

Fisher's plan for the cottage also survives. Although it resembles a typical Cape-style cottage of the period, the interior plan of the "Farmhouse," as it was designated on the drawings, makes it clear that the building was used originally to house farm workers--and only later became the caretaker's residence. The plan called for five bedrooms, two of the dormitory type, and an outsize farm kitchen. The two bedrooms on the first floor replaced the parlor and dining room found in a more conventional layout.

8. Significance

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

Criteria A and C

Specific dates 1878 - 1937

Builder/Architect John Truesdell (builder)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Richard Arnold Fisher (architect-1928 remodelling)

Plaine Hill Farm, as it has been known since 1878, is a well-preserved farm complex of superior integrity. The architectural significance of its imposing Georgian/Federal-style mansion derives from the remodelling of 1928-29 which included a Federal Revival-style interior of exceptional merit, distinguished by the quality of its architectural detail and craftsmanship (Criterion C). The nineteenth-century barns and carriage house attached to the house and the separate farm cottage add to the significance of the complex, which is also historically significant for its association with three prominent members of the Bowen family who were committed to humanitarian causes and public service after 1878 (Criterion A).

Architectural Significance

In its final evolution, the mansion house at Plaine Hill Farm has achieved a distinctive and unique architectural character. Although it lacks the characteristically balanced facade typically found in the Georgian style, it is still quite reminiscent of this type of mansion commonly built of brick in the eighteenth century, an effect enhanced by its prominent location, steeply pitched hip roof, and landscaped grounds. Despite the scale and massing of the nineteenth-century barn and carriage house, the mansion remains the dominant architectural feature of one of the oldest agrarian properties in Woodstock.

Among the other nearby historic properties in Woodstock of similar scale and vintage, Plaine Hill was the only working farm.⁴ Most of the others are primarily residential in character; apparently none was used for agricultural purposes. They were single-family, detached houses on relatively small lots, which either never had outbuildings or have failed to retain them. These include several shallow-pitched, hip-roofed Georgian- or Federal-style houses on Route 169, such as the Danforth Lyon House on the east side of the road, the property just to the south of "Roseland" (a Gothic Revival-style building), and the Colonel James Lyon House on Joy Road, just to the west of the highway.

Further distinction is added to the house by its finely detailed Federal Revival-style interior, a reaffirmation of its original stylistic period. The remodelling plans were drawn by architect Richard Arnold Fisher, under the direction of Mrs. Herbert Bowen. Richard A. Fisher (1868-1932) was a noted Boston-based architect who specialized in domestic architecture. His best-known works in Boston included residences on Beacon Hill and the Lincolnshire Apartments on Charles Street.⁵ His house designed for Dr. Norton Prince on Beacon Street was featured in the February 1907 Architectural Review. Other houses designed by Fisher elsewhere in New England included several in Newburyport, Massachusetts, which were the subject of a monograph in the White Pine Series.

So exceptional was Fisher's work at Plaine Hill that the remodelled areas often cannot be distinguished from the original without reference to his plans. A case in point is the stairway in the central hall, the centerpiece of the house, which is purely Federal in its design and proportion. The archway above the stairs, the final solution to the

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 14.3

Quadrangle name Putnam

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>13</u> <u>3</u> <u>15</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>16</u> <u>4</u> <u>17</u> <u>5</u> <u>16</u> <u>10</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>13</u> <u>6</u> <u>14</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>16</u> <u>4</u> <u>17</u> <u>3</u> <u>17</u> <u>10</u>
E	<u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>13</u> <u>4</u> <u>14</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>16</u> <u>4</u> <u>17</u> <u>3</u> <u>19</u> <u>10</u>
G	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

B	<u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>13</u> <u>5</u> <u>15</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>16</u> <u>4</u> <u>17</u> <u>6</u> <u>12</u> <u>10</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	<u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>13</u> <u>5</u> <u>14</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>16</u> <u>4</u> <u>17</u> <u>3</u> <u>13</u> <u>10</u>
F	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
H	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

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

N. A.

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

Edited by John Herzan

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant, National Register Coordinator

organization Cunningham Associates date 9/15/86

street & number 98 Washington Street telephone (203) 347 4072

city or town Middletown state Connecticut 06457

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title John W. Shannahan, Director, CT Historical Commission date July 21, 1987

For NPS use only

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

for Patricia Lundy date 9/10/87
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Beverly A. Savage date 9/10/87

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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problem of lighting the stairwell, is clearly a product of the twentieth century, but integrated into the total design by the repetition of the arched door under the stairs at the first floor. Although the widening of the center hall to accommodate the new staircase adds to the elegance and openness of this space, the new north wall of the hall does encroach on two fireplaces, resulting in their rather awkward placement in the corner of the room. Fortunately, none of the largely original rooms which open directly off the hall was affected. The variety of materials used in the fireplace surrounds, a legacy from the Victorian period, add vigor and interest to the Federal ambiance.

The formal dining room, totally Fisher's design, demonstrates the quality of his work, particularly his care and attention to detail. Using some of the existing fireplace surrounds as a model and a departure point (compare Photographs #15 and 19), he carried this room much farther in his use of architectural detail, stopping short of excess, but maintaining the discipline of the Federal style. The craftsmanship displayed in this room is superior, of comparable quality to the original work. Combined with Fisher's accurate eye for detail and proportion, again this room could date from 1816.

Fisher's last contribution to the complex, the 1930 farmhouse, is less imposing, clearly a functional building from its original plan. By its placement and careful adherence to a colonial appearance, it is a subordinate structure as intended, but still contributes to the historic character of this working farm.

Historical Significance

The Bowens were proprietors of Woodstock in the seventeenth century. Wealthy farmers and merchants in the eighteenth century, they were the village gentry, the Colonial elite. By the nineteenth century, however, the family's prominence extended far beyond the narrow confines of this rural village in northeastern Connecticut. Members of an advantaged class who routinely had a classical education complete with the grand tour of Europe, the Bowens were exemplars of the late nineteenth-century social and intellectual elite who were imbued with a highly developed sense of social responsibility.

While Plaine Hill remained a working farm until 1982, by 1850 it had become a summer residence for members of the family who lived in Brooklyn, New York, and finally a retirement home for several others after careers in the diplomatic service.

The most prominent of these included Henry Chandler Bowen (1813-1896), New York silk merchant, prominent abolitionist, and founder of the anti-slavery journal, the Independent. He owned the property from 1878 until his death and renamed it "Plaine Hill Farm." Herbert Wolcott Bowen (1856-1927) and Gardner Richardson (1884-1972), the next two owners, were Yale graduates, as were most of the male members of the family, and had similar careers. Herbert Bowen, the third of Henry's seven sons, was consul or minister to Spain, Persia, and Venezuela from 1890 to 1905. After distinguished service in war relief organizations following World War I, his nephew Gardner Richardson (son of Herbert's sister, Alice Linden Bowen) was the commercial attache in Athens, Constantinople, and Prague. Herbert's widow, Carolyn, was responsible for the

7/27/87

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Section number 8 Page 3

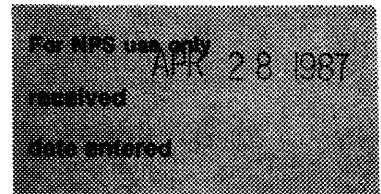
renovation of 1928-29. Gardner Richardson, who inherited the house, lived there until his death in 1972. Upon the death of his widow Dorothea in 1982, the property was willed to the University of Connecticut. In 1985 it was returned to the Richardson children, the former heirs, who in turn sold 14 acres (with the buildings) of the original 160 parcel to the present owner in 1986.

Notes:

1. O.W. Gray, Atlas of Windham and Tolland Counties (Hartford, 1869).
2. These alterations are depicted in a historic photograph which is reproduced in Clarence Winthrop Bowen, The History of Woodstock, Connecticut (Norwood, Massachusetts: Plimpton Press, 1930), facing p. 561. The explanatory note under the photograph attributes the alterations to Henry C. Bowen in 1882.
3. Alternatively the doorway may date from an undocumented remodeling in the early Colonial Revival period, about 1900. A 1928-29 date is not possible as Richard A. Fisher's plans (in possession of the Richardson heirs), the architect for remodeling at this time, show the existing doorway in place. He designed a pedimented portico for this entrance in 1928-29 but it was never built.
4. Based on the surveys of the town. See item 6:1.
5. Henry F. Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1920), p. 210.
6. Russell F. Whitehead, An Architectural Monograph on Old Homes of Newburyport, Massachusetts, White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs, vol. 3, no. 3 (St. Paul, Minnesota, 1917).

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Major Bibliographical References

Bowen, Clarence Winthrop. The History of Woodstock, Connecticut. Norwood, Massachusetts, 1926.

_____. The History of Woodstock, Connecticut: Genealogies of Woodstock Families, Vol. II. Norwood, Massachusetts, 1930.

Bowen, Edward Augustus. Lineage of the Bowens of Woodstock, Connecticut. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1897.

Gray, O.W. Atlas of Windham and Tolland Counties. Hartford, 1869.

Whitehead, Russell F. An Architectural Monograph on Old Homes of Newburyport, Massachusetts. White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs, Vol.3, No. 3. St. Paul, Minnesota, 1917.

Withey, Henry F. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased. Los Angeles: Henessey and Ingalls, 1920.

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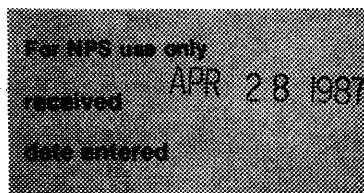
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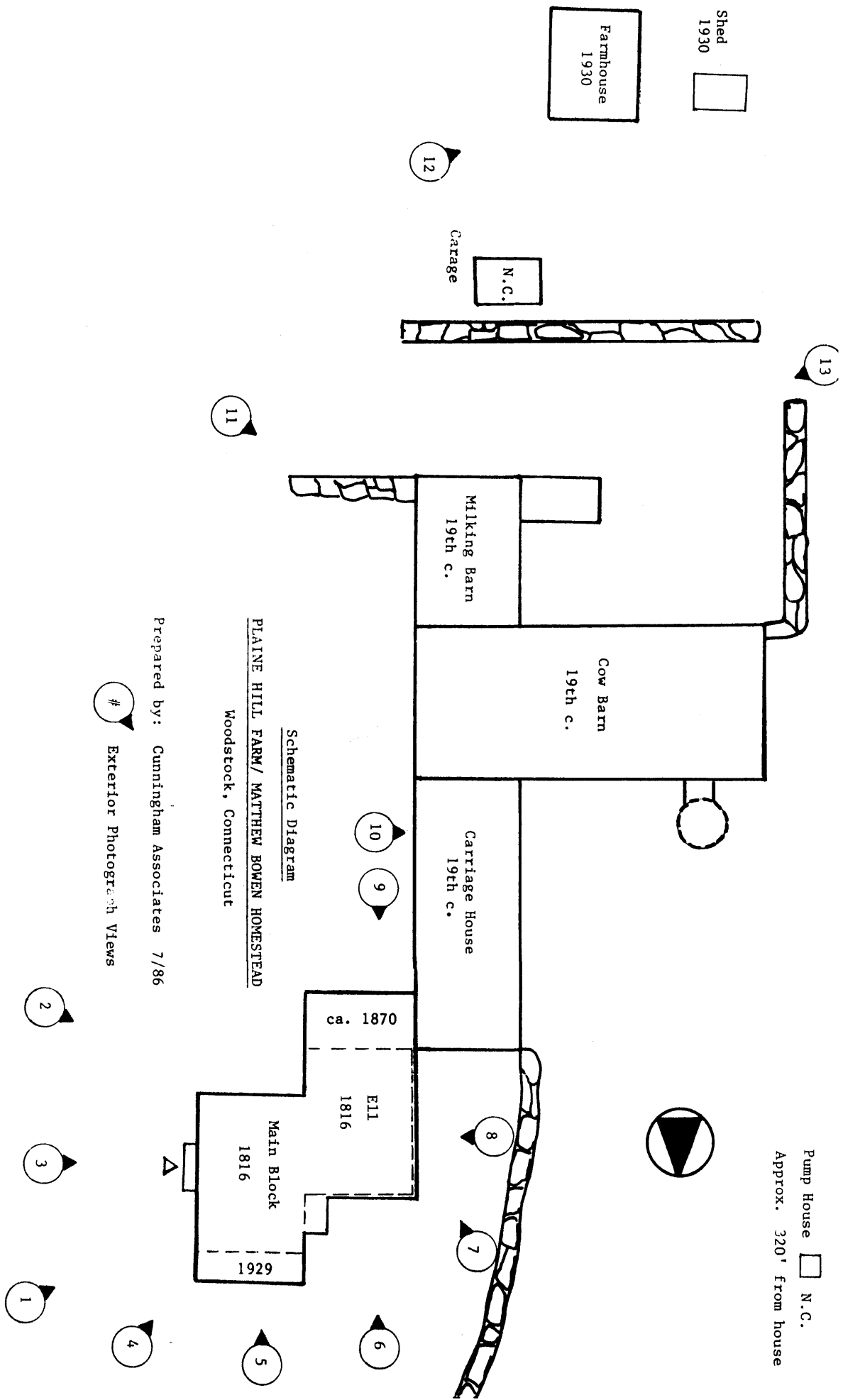
UTM References

A	18	253350	4647560
B	18	253550	4647620
C	18	253640	4647370
D	18	253540	4647330
E	18	253440	4647390

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The nominated property encompasses the historic nucleus of the property known as the Matthew Bowen Homestead and includes all the associated historic buildings of this farming complex from 1816 to 1936, as well as the surrounding meadow and farmland, thus maintaining the buildings in their historic setting. The property is described and recorded in the Woodstock Land Records (96:17; 149:134) and is identified on Map 5781: Lot 4B, Block 50 in the Woodstock Tax Assessor's Office.

Pump House  N.C.
Approx. 320' from house



Schematic Diagram
PLAINE HILL FARM / MATTHEW BOWEN HOMESTEAD
Woodstock, Connecticut

Prepared by: Cunningham Associates 7/86

Exterior Photograph Views

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
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- 11
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- 13