

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

RECEIVED
OCT 20 1988
NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property
historic name Chester Center Historic District
other names/site number

2. Location
street & number Skyline Trail at Lyman and Bromley Roads
city, town Chester
state MA code 025 county Hampden code 013 zip code 01011

3. Classification
Ownership of Property: [X] private, [X] public-local
Category of Property: [X] district
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (7, 1, 1, 9), Noncontributing (0, 0, 0, 0)
Total: 9

4. State/Federal Agency Certification
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. [] See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: Valerie Ann Tealmege
Date: 11/15/88
Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission;
State or Federal agency and bureau: State Historic Preservation Officer

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. [] See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification
I, hereby, certify that this property is:
[X] 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

6. Function or Use Chester Center Historic District, Chester, Massachusetts

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Education/school

Religion/religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

not in use/vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

New England Colonial

Federal

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls wood

roof asphalt

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Chester Center Historic District is a village covering approximately 15 acres in the town of Chester in the foothills of the Hoosac Range west of the Connecticut River. It is located in the upland, central portion of the town lying between the tributaries of the Westfield River, the West and Middle Branches, at the juncture of the town's primary north-south corridor. Its isolated, hilltop setting was the preferred location for meetinghouses in inland towns, and the meetinghouse village survives, intact. Only five buildings make up the district, the First Congregational Church, the town's burying ground, its first school, one house dating to initial settlement and two to the Federal period. All are well maintained and represent important examples of early New England architecture; each is described below.

First Congregational Church, 1840, Skyline Trail and Lyman Road. Chester's First Congregational Church is an exceptional example of the Greek Revival mode in ecclesiastical architecture, well known in the Commonwealth's rural communities. The frame meetinghouse is a gabled block of a single story, with entry into the gable end flushboard facade. That entry is recessed, and screened by Doric columns in antis, whose entablature extends around the church's cornice. Above the entry a two-stage belfry employs re-entrant corners and a dome lantern supported by eight columns. The nave plan interior is heated by two stoves on the sanctuary wall, and the balcony/choirstall is reached by two sets of curved stairs in the vestibule. The design is linked to the New Marlborough Church of 1839 attributed to Henry A. Sykes of Suffield, CT, who studied with Chauncy Shephard and Ithiel Town.

Chester Burying Ground, from 1769, Skyline Trail. The town's Burying Ground was provided for in the eight-acre lot set aside for public functions at the town's founding. Its earliest stone dates to 1769, and its stone wall dates to 1840, when the foundation for the church was reused here.

Rev. Aaron Bascom House, 1769, Skyline Trail at Bromley Road. This house is associated with the town's first settled minister. The large, two-story gable roof block conforms well to the eighteenth century houseform characterized by a large center chimney, and five-bay bilaterally symmetrical facade. Ornament focuses on the center entry with a simple entablature and sidelights, and the windows retain their 12/12 and 12/8 sash. The plan incorporates a total of 14 rooms, some panelled, clustered around the fireplaces, and a lobby entry.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Chester Center Historic District
Chester, Massachusetts

Searles House, 1787, Skyline Trail and Bromley Road. This small house is a story and a half, central chimney, hall and parlor house with a rear shed roofed addition. Its facade is a symmetrically arranged three bays with transom over the door, 12/12 sash, and small transom-like lights under the cornice to light the upper story. The screened-in porch on the west is a later addition.

Chester Centre School House, 1796, Skyline Trail at Lyman Road. This school is an unusual survival of a large 18th century school, two stories in height under a gable roof. The west or road front was changed when the school was used as a firehouse during the 1950s and 1960s, with the addition of a large garage door and rearrangement of the openings on the first floor. It retains however a small gabled ell housing a woodshed and double privy.

Dr. Anson Boies House, 1810, Skyline Trail and Lyman Road. This important house was built by Rev. Bascom for his daughter on her marriage to Dr. Boies. It is a large two-story hip-roofed block with a lower two-story ell to the west. Its bilaterally symmetrical facade incorporates many ambitious embellishments including a denticular cornice and coins; the building retains 12/12 sash. Its entry is a late and simplified variation of the flat-top Connecticut Valley doorway, incorporating full-length pilasters and a compressed entablature with pulvinated frieze. In plan it utilizes the fashionable combination of center passage and double interior chimnies. A porch once ran across the front of the house, and a later one has been added on the east.

Archaeological Potential

While no prehistoric sites are recorded within the district or in the general area, it is possible that sites are present. Chester Center is located in uplands between the West Branch and the Middle Branch of the Westfield River. Locally, the village is surrounded by numerous brooks and wetlands which would have provided seasonally varied resources attractive for native settlement and subsistence. The district size (15 acres) and the minimal historic development may indicate that sites still remain. Any surviving sites would be important in documenting patterns of prehistoric occupation within the town and in the Westfield River drainage.

There is also significant historic archaeological potential within the district. Much of the original 18th century village center still remains with little post 1840 development. Archaeological survey and testing could help to locate features (trash pits, privies, wells) associated with surviving structures, as well as structures which may have been destroyed. Any surviving archaeological remains could be important in defining the social, cultural and economic structure of the settlement prior to the coming of the railroad.

8. Statement of Significance Chester Center Historic District, Chester, Massachusetts

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

architecture
community development and planning

Period of Significance

1760-1842

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Henry A. Sykes, Suffield, Connecticut

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Chester Center Historic District is a small, well-preserved village of residences and institutional buildings dating between the town's settlement in 1763 and the coming of the railroad in 1842. It is located near the geographic center of the town of Chester, on and adjacent to land set aside for the community's public spaces and serving as its civic focus. The architecture of the village includes important examples of New England Colonial, Federal, and Greek Revival styles in an exceptional rural environment. The village retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places on the local level.

Chester is located in the Berkshire hills of western Massachusetts, an area not permanently settled by colonials until the second half of the eighteenth century. The French and Indian Wars of the period left the area open to attacks from hostile Native American groups until the Treaty of Aix LaChappelle was signed in 1763. That year a land division and auction divided the area of Plantation No. 9, one of ten plantations established by the General Court the year before to raise revenues. The primary investors laid out 100-acre lots in the area now known as Chester and Huntington, reserving a portion of centrally located lot number eighteen as the site for the meetinghouse and burying and training ground.

While some settlement might have preceded division, occupation began in earnest as purchasers moved to their large lots and began to cultivate the soil, raise cattle and sheep, and build their homes and farm buildings. Many of the settlers were Scots-Irish, and had resided previously in towns to the south and east in the Connecticut Valley. By 1765, the area included a population of 405, divided among about eighty families. The area was incorporated as the town of Murrayfield that same year. The meetinghouse was the focus for town civic as well as religious activities, and construction of the First Congregational meetinghouse took place between

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References Chester Center Historic District, Chester, Massachusetts

Hamlin, Talbott. Greek Revival Architecture in America. Reprint of 1944. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1964.

Hampden County Registry of Deeds.

Miller, Amelia F., Connecticut Valley Doorways: An Eighteenth Century Flowering. Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Occasional Publication No. 1. Boston: Boston University Press, 1983.

Zimmerman, Sarah et al. Chester Town Report. Typescript on file at the Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1982.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 15 acres

Quad- Chester Scale- 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>18</u>	<u>671210</u>	<u>4684130</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u>18</u>	<u>671300</u>	<u>4683780</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>18</u>	<u>671060</u>	<u>4683720</u>
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D	<u>18</u>	<u>670970</u>	<u>4684070</u>
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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the National Register designation for the Chester Center Historic District are outlined on the attached Chester Assessors Map. They run along the property lines for lot 40, 41, and 54, and include portions of lots 45 and 55, following a line of convenience approximately 200 feet behind the buildings on those lots.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Chester Center Historic District include all portions of the lots associated with the nominated properties. The district's boundaries are limited by the topography of its location. The district includes all the buildings situated on the summit of a hill (elevation 1,237 feet). Outside the district, the hill drops off sharply in all directions.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Chester Historical Commission with Claire Dempsey
 organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date July 13, 1987
 street & number 80 Boylston Street telephone (617) 727-8470
 city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02116

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1 Chester Center Historic District
Chester, Massachusetts

1763 and 1773. The meetinghouse was to measure 45 by 40 feet with 20-foot posts. At the same time a large imposing home was built for the town's first minister, Rev. Aaron Bascom, who was settled with the church in 1769. The minister received a portion of lot 18 with his settlement, while eight acres were set aside for the training field and burying ground. The earliest stone in the burying ground dates to 1769.

The town grew rapidly during the last years of the eighteenth century, totalling 1,542 residents by 1800. Settlement remained dispersed, however, as agriculture and husbandry continued as the primary livelihoods. Houses were constructed along the primary roads, and tiny hamlets grew up at mill sites along the Middle Branch at North Chester, Dayville, and Littleville, as well as at Chester Factories on the West Branch. At Chester Center, Zenas Searles built a house, in 1787, and the schoolhouse was constructed on public land at the edge of the burying ground in 1796. The meetinghouse was rebuilt in 1794, and as illustrated the next year was a two story structure with entry at the center of its long three bay wall. A third house was built in the village, in 1810, for the Reverend's daughter, a fashionable large dwelling.

The town experienced the prosperity that characterized the Commonwealth at large during the early years of the nineteenth century. In addition to the processing of wood products, the town became an important tanning center with the growth of the Hampden Leather Manufactory, and the Chester Glass Companies at the mill village that became known as Chester Factories. The expansion there, as well as at the Middle Branch villages, took place at the expense of Chester Village. The eighth Massachusetts Turnpike was constructed to bypass the old town center in 1800, and in 1842 the Western Railroad paralleled its route. The First Congregational Church was rebuilt in 1840 in an ambitious Greek Revival form but the focus of the town had shifted west. With the continued prosperity of tanning and the emergence of emery as a significant town export, Chester Factories became the functional civic as well as an economic center. The last town meetings were held in Chester Center in 1855. With economic development occurring in the mill villages, no additional building took place in Chester Village, and so it remains a remarkably intact example of small meetinghouse village of the early nineteenth century.

District Data Sheet
Chester Center Historic

<u>Map #</u>	<u>MHC #</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Date of Construction</u>	<u>Style</u>	<u>Status/Resource</u>
1	A1	First Congregational Church	Skyline Trail and Lyman Road	1840	Greek Revival	C/B
2	803	Chester Burying Ground Stone Wall	Skyline Trail	1767 1840		C/Si C/St
3	A3	Rev. Aaron Bascom House and office	Skyline Trail and Bromley Rd.	1769	New England Colonial	C/2B
4	A5	Searles House	Skyline Trail and Bromley Rd.	1787	New England Colonial	C/B
5	A6	Chester Center School House	Skyline Trail at Lyman Rd.	1796	Federal	C/B
6	A2	Dr. Anson Boies House and Barn	Skyline Trail and Lyman Rd.	1810	Federal	C/2B

KEY-Status

C is contributing

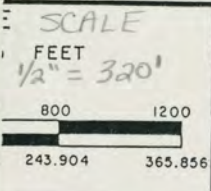
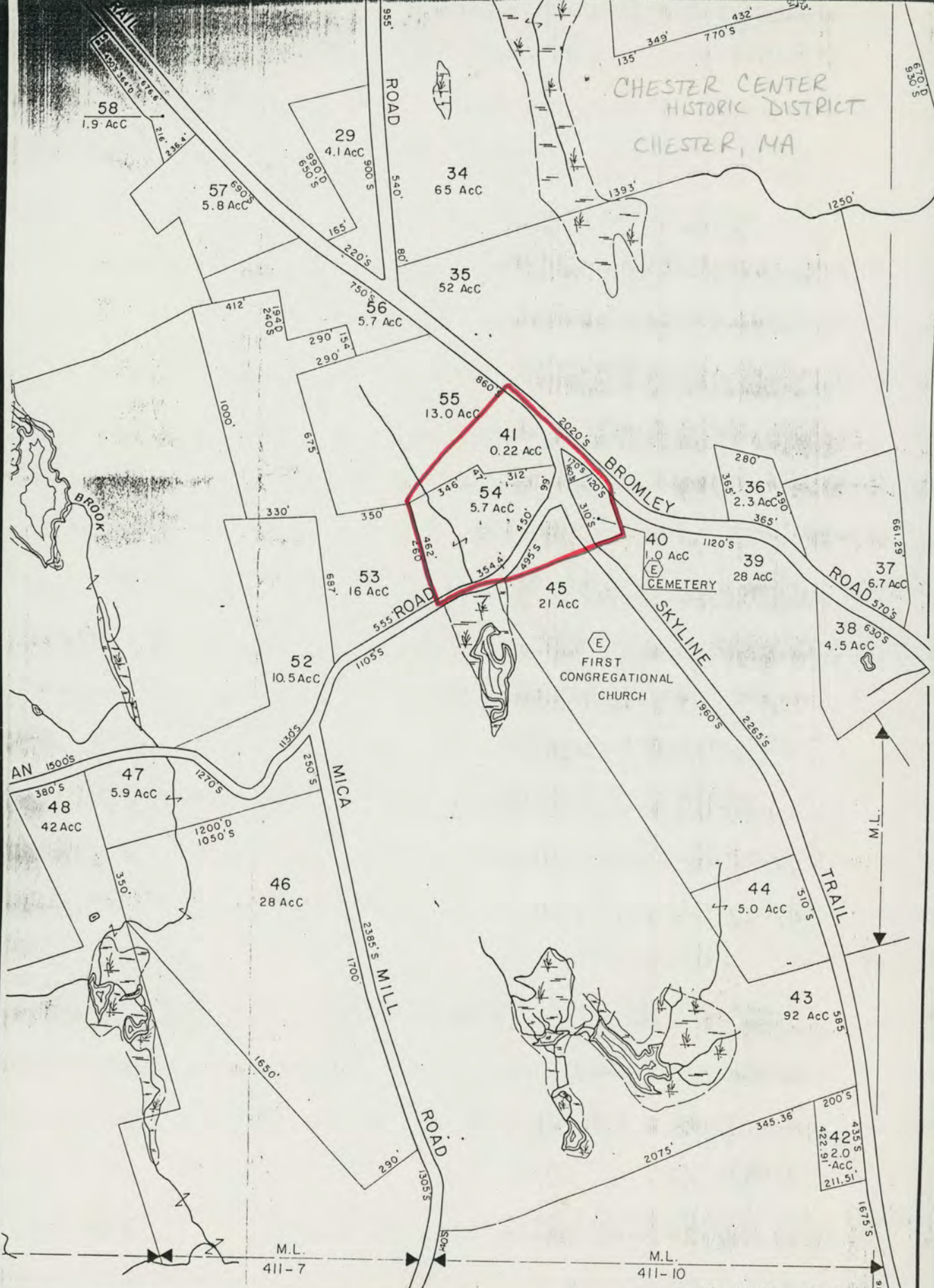
NC is non-contributing

KEY-Resource

B is building

Si is site

St is structure



ASSESSORS MAP
January 1, 1987
CHESTER

INDEX DIAGRAM

406	405	404
407		409
201		
202		
412	411	410

MAP NO.
408

NO PARCEL 10, 62

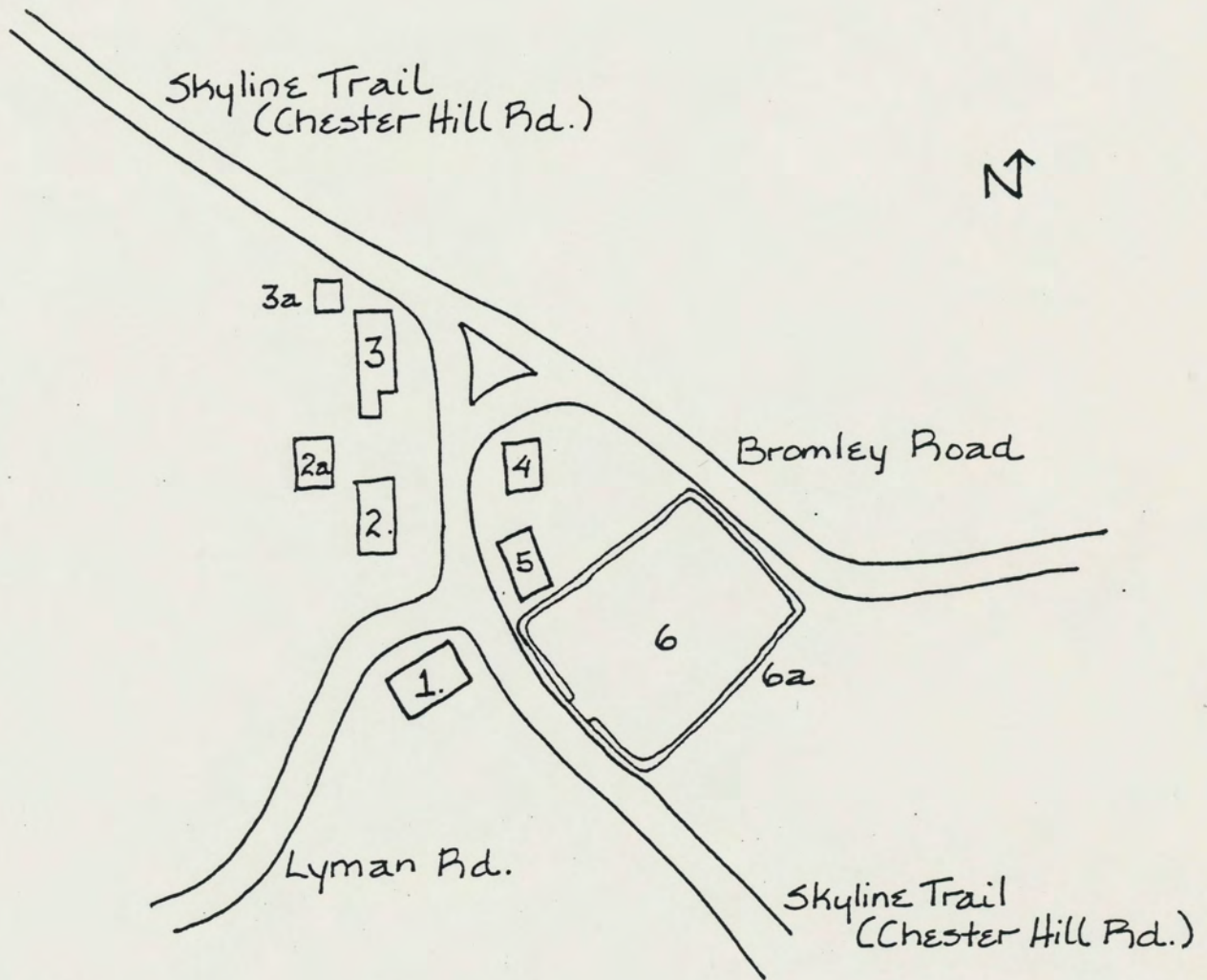
M.L.
411-7

M.L.
411-10

M.L.

9123

CHESTER CENTER
HISTORIC DISTRICT
Chester, MA



Sketch map showing proposed Chester Centre National Register district buildings and outbuildings.

NOT TO SCALE

88000161

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Chester Center Historic District
Hampden County
MASSACHUSETTS

JAN 25 1988

Working No. _____

Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-89

Date Due: 2/25/88 - 3/10/88

Action: ACCEPT 2-25-88

RETURN _____

REJECT _____

Federal Agency: _____

Entered in the
National Register

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
 Reviewer _____
 Discipline _____
 Date _____
 _____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
 _____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection



1853
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1st Congregational Church
Skyline Trail
Chester Mass.

View of north and east facades

1 of 5

Elizabeth Brabec
Chester Historical Commission
1986



Chester Center
School

Skyline Trail at Lyman Road, Chester, MA

2 of 5

View of west and south facades

Elizabeth Brabec

Negative - Chester Historical Commission

1986



PENNSAVER

1769

Reel Aaron Bascom Home
Skyline Trail and Bromley Road
Chester, MA

View of south and east facades

#3 of 5

Elizabeth Brabec
Negative - Chester Historical Commission
1986



Dr Arson Boise House

Chester Center

Skyline Trail and Lyman Road, Chester, MA

4 of 5

Southwest facade

Elizabeth Bibber

Negative - Chester Historical Commission

1986



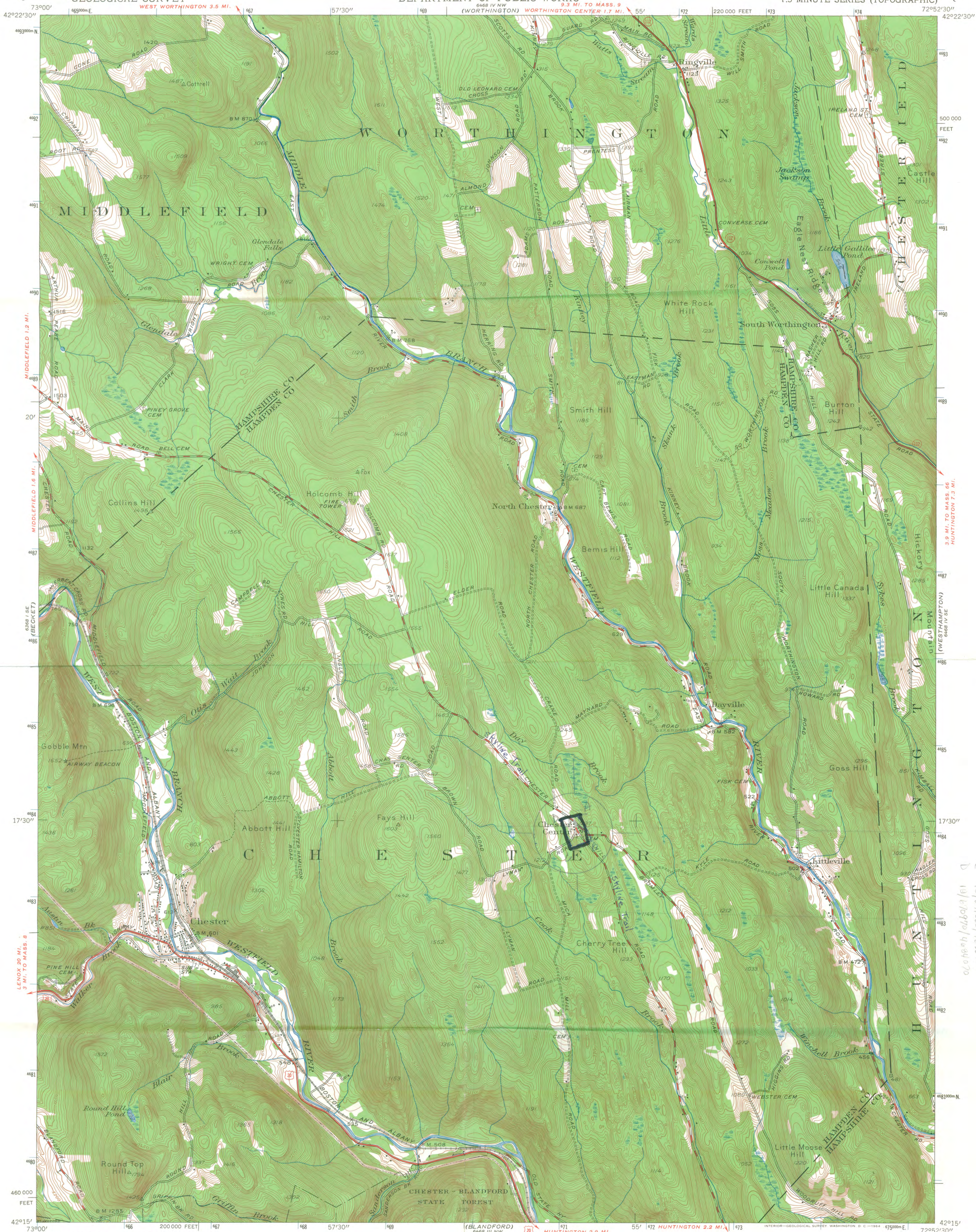
Searks House Chester Center
Skyline Trail and Bromley Road, Chester, MA

5 of 5

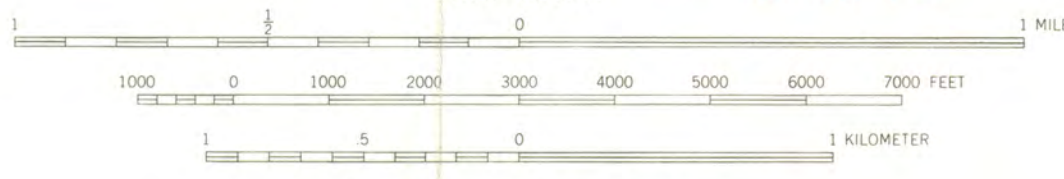
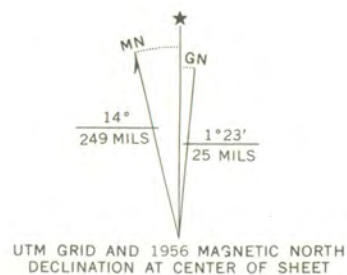
view of south & west facades

Elizabeth Brabee

Negatives - Chester Historical Commission
1986



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Harbor
and Land Commission
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1941. Topography by planetable surveys 1944-1945
Revised 1956
Polyconic projection, 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts (Mainland)
coordinate system
1,000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 18, shown in blue



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U. S. Route	State Route

CHESTER, MASS.
N 4215-W7252.5/7.5

1956

AMS 6468 IV SW-SERIES V814

CHESTER CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
Chester, Massachusetts
Scale 1:24,000
UTM Zone 18
Grid - Chester
A 18/671210/468130
B 18/671200/468130
C 18/671060/468130
D 18/670970/468130

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON 25, D.C.
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



P. 534 920 351

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of the Secretary of State
Michael Joseph Connolly, Secretary

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Valerie A. Talmage

Executive Director

State Historic Preservation Officer

January 19, 1988

Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the nomination forms for the following properties:

Chester, Chester Center Historic District, Skyline Trail

Needham, Israel Whitney House, 963 Central Avenue

Shirley, James Parker House, R.R. 1, Box 39 Center Road

They have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. No comments have been received to date.

Sincerely,

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

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

BF/es

Enclosure

JAN 25 1988