

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



1488

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 Frances H. and Jonathan Drake House (Underground Railroad in MA MPS)

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 21 Franklin Street _____ not for publication

city or town Leominster _____ vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Worcester code 027 zip code 01453

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

December 7, 2007

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

Date

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

*for
Edson H. Beall*

Date of Action

1.29.08

Frances & Jonathan Drake House

Name of Property

Worcester, MA

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1 building
 _____ sites
 _____ structures
 _____ objects
 1 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Underground Railroad in Massachusetts MPS

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID 19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: granite
 walls ASBESTOS

 roof ASPHALT
 other WOOD (trim)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 7 Page 1

Narrative Description

The Jonathan & Frances H. Drake House is located at 21 Franklin Street in the city of Leominster, in the northern district of Worcester County, Massachusetts. The Monoosnoc Brook, which forms the rear boundary of the nominated property, powered numerous factories along its winding route through the city. A large pond was impounded two blocks north of Franklin Street where cotton mills were once located. Because of its proximity to this industrial waterway, the Drakes' small, working-class dwelling is situated among other similar houses fronting on an irregular array of streets typical of early industrial communities. West Street, Leominster's major commercial and civic corridor is a long block away to the east of Franklin Street. The Fitchburg and Worcester Railroad was constructed southeast of the Drakes' residence. An 1870 map of Leominster indicates that the Drakes lived in the midst of a large working class neighborhood in the southern half of the city. Franklin Street is only one block long, connecting Union and Pleasant streets. The 29,581 sq. ft. Drake House lot has a 116 ft. frontage on the north side of the street and extends 346.3 ft. north to the center of the Monoosnoc Brook, which wraps around the rears of most of the Franklin Street properties. This is a portion of the 1.43-acre parcel Jonathan Drake purchased in 1848, from which he subdivided a 22,244 sq. ft. lot and sold in 1850.¹ A 10,450 sq. ft. dog-leg portion of the Drake lot along the Monoosnoc Brook has been more recently sold off. The nominated property contains one contributing building, the Drake House, built in 1848, and one non-contributing building, a concrete block garage at the rear of the property that was built after the property was no longer in the Drakes' ownership. The front section of the lot containing the house is landscaped with lawn and ornamental trees. There is a paved driveway on the easterly side of the property that extends north past the house as an unpaved track that connects with the garage located a good distance behind it. The rear section of the lot has become overgrown with trees.

The Drake House is a 1½-story, front-gable wood-frame workers cottage typical of those constructed by the thousands in New England factory towns from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century (PHOTOS 1&2). It has three bays on the ground level of the front (south) façade, with an entrance in the westernmost bay, and a pair of windows centered in the gable space above. The raking edges of the gable roof are finished with wide frieze boards and soffits in the suggestion of a Greek pediment, reflecting the Greek Revival taste prominent in domestic architecture in the 1840s. In this image the entrance is set slightly *in antis* within a trabeated

(continued)

¹ The initial purchase is recorded in a deed between Er. Balch, grantor, and Jonathan Drake, grantee, dated 9 March 1848 (Worcester County Deeds, 432:411). On 8 May 1850 Drake conveyed the subdivided parcel to Horatio Kendall (463:370).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 7 Page 2

architrave, and the doorway is flanked by sidelights divided by flat pilasters. This is the limit of visible ornament from this period. A photograph dated 1884 shows the front of the house without the existing porch and a slightly pedimented header over the entrance. In the image a large group assembled in front of the house block the view of any features at ground level; however, a woman is evidently standing on a raised platform at the doorway that was removed when the present porch was constructed in the early 1900s (FIG.1).² The photograph also shows the house exterior covered with wood clapboard siding, painted a light hue, and dark-colored louvered blinds on the windows. The blinds were removed and the exterior envelope covered with asbestos cement shingles. This alteration was likely made by long-term owners named Hutcheon, before the property changed hands in 1960. The eave woodwork was encased in metal some time after. Door and window surrounds remain intact.

Fenestration on the side walls remains intact in its irregular spacing, reflecting the room plan within (PHOTOS 1&2). Originally there were two single-window dormers in the roof on each side to illuminate and ventilate attic rooms in the interior and rear of the plan. All but one of these were removed and replaced with larger shed-roof wall dormers added by the Hutcheons in the 20th century. The one remaining historic dormer is located at the north end of the west side of the roof. A small awning window has been added to the west wall beneath this dormer (both windows illuminate bathrooms within), and a picture window was added to the west wall of the rear ell when the kitchen was renovated.

The kitchen occupies the rear of the house, and its east wall is recessed from the main house by a few feet to reflect its subsidiary role in the design of the house (PHOTOS 1&3). The exterior door on the east wall originally exited onto a platform similar to that once on the front, but in the early 1900s the existing enclosed porch was added and the attic space raised to two stories and pushed out over it. A one-story extension was added to the rear of the kitchen at a later date, but still before 1960 (PHOTO 3). It has an exterior door as well as a doorway connecting it to the stair landing in the rear of the kitchen.

There is a full basement under the entire house with the exception of the later rear addition, which has its own independent crawl space. The main basement was constructed of large granite blocks typical of the region and the period, and the upper portion of it utilized long horizontal slabs that are exposed above ground level. The roof was originally covered with wood shingles, but it is now covered with conventional three-tab asphalt shingles. What were likely original box gutters in the eaves have been roofed over and seamless metal "K" gutters added to the drip edge. The two brick chimneys that serviced a combination of fireplaces and stoves in the house are extant. They both have acquired stone caps in more recent years.

(continued)

² Image courtesy of the Leominster Historical Society

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 7 Page 3

The interior plan of the house is irregular and shows the influence of progressive domestic planning on builders of the period. Traditional axial room plans came under attack by domestic reformers such as Andrew Jackson Downing, who promulgated new ideas for room arrangement in popular journals and books. The Drake House represents how this elite activity filtered down to the design of homes of the lesser sort. (Tastemakers like Downing frequently included laborers "lodges" in their publications in an effort to address the full range of lifestyles.) In this way, the plan of the Drake House is innovative, diversified but compact, and reflective of the improved living conditions becoming available for the industrial working class (FIG.2).

The entry is distinguished by its doorway and staircase with balustrade (PHOTOS 4&5). The turned newel post and handrail were either made of a prime wood or painted to resemble one before they were painted their present white. The space is illuminated by the sidelights flanking the front door; the window was added to the door later, probably when the porch roof was added, and the interior light levels were considered inadequate. Plaster walls and ceiling are intact. An odd drawer is built into the wall cavity between the windows. The entry's wood plank floor is covered with square asphalt tiles, which extend into the private sitting room or chamber at the rear of the passage. This latter room had a fireplace (which is now enclosed within the walls of an enlarged bathroom enclosed at the rear end of the room in 2005) and two windows in the westerly exterior wall. In addition to the one leading to the entry, the room also has doorways connecting to the dining room and the kitchen. A closet was created in the space under the stairs, which is one feature supporting its use as a bed chamber (PHOTO 5).

The parlor is located in the front of the house on the east side of the entry. Plaster walls and ceilings are intact. There are two windows on the front wall and one window on the easterly exterior wall. These 6/6 sash windows and their simple board trim are original to the house, as are the sash and trim of all the remaining windows on the main floor of the house. There is a fireplace on the northerly wall, although its appearance has been altered. The wood flooring is intact, including the cut-out for a trap door under the westerly front window (PHOTO 6).

The trap door located against the front wall was clearly constructed with the original floor. The opening is framed into the floor structure using the same materials and joining techniques as the rest of the floor. It is 39 in. long and 30 in. wide, and extends from the sill mounted on the front wall of the stone basement to a cross beam nailed to the floor joists forming the sides. Sawn floor joists measuring 2 x 8 in. are spaced on 16 in. centers, and to create the hole, one joist was shortened and nailed to the cross beam; a mortise in the sill, intended to hold a tongue cut into the joist end, remains empty in this location. The trap door is constructed of layers of sub-flooring and finish flooring consistent with the rest of the floor. The boards are held together by two battens measuring 3/4 x 3 in. nailed near the outside edges. The sub-flooring used on the underside of the door is not aligned with that underlying the rest of the floor, indicating that continuous

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 7 Page 4

pieces of sub-flooring were not later cut to create the opening. The finish flooring on the top is in line with the rest of the floor in an effort to make it less discernable in the room. The door rests on $\frac{3}{4}$ x 3 in. ledgers are nailed to the inside faces of the joists forming the sides. No marks for hinges or handles are visible. A ladder likely may have rested against the exterior stone wall to aid movement through the door, although no evidence of it remains.

A dining room is located at the rear of the parlor. It is connected to the entry by a narrow vestibule that also links to the parlor. It was built without a fireplace; instead there is a space on the southerly wall for a stove, which vented into the chimney located in the dividing partition between the dining room and the parlor. The void to the easterly side of the chimney is filled with a closet to store dining room equipment; a glass-front cabinet was later built into this space at the same time a corner cupboard was constructed in the northeasterly corner of the room near the doorway leading to the kitchen. The windows and doorways in the dining room have the highest level of decoration in the house, all having slightly pointed headers (PHOTO 7). Plaster walls and ceilings are intact; the floor is covered with pressed board underlayment. Two drawers surmounted by a niche three feet tall are built into the wall cavity between the windows on the east wall.

The kitchen stove was inserted in a brick chimney stack shared with the chamber behind the entry. This space was modernized some time after 1960 with the addition of new flooring, cabinets, and a picture window in the westerly wall. The door and window on the easterly exterior wall are intact and connect to a glazed porch added to that side. Stairs to the attic and basement are enclosed at the rear (northerly end) of the room. A doorway connects the attic stair landing with a small room added to the rear of the house. The plan and most of the historic features of this room are intact even though its kitchen fittings and surfaces have been upgraded.

The second story was originally divided into three bed chambers, a large one in the front of the house with two large windows, and two smaller rooms under the eaves of the roof in the center of the house with single small dormers. A large open storeroom or workshop occupies the attic above the kitchen ell. The front chamber remains intact with its Greek Revival-style wood mantel denoting the stove location (PHOTO 8). The historic configuration and finish of the two middle rooms were altered with the additions of large dormers in the early 1900s, even though their original dividing partition remains intact. The smaller and more constricted attic space over the kitchen (where Jonathan Drake may have maintained a shoemaking shop) has likewise been enlarged. One original dormer remains on the westerly side of this section where it services a later bathroom enclosure, and the attic stair with a fence around the opening is also intact. The easterly side of this room was greatly enlarged when a dormer was erected and pushed out to the outer edge of the kitchen porch. Changes are such as make it impossible to discern any historic function.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 7 Page 5

The roof structure is intact as built with sawn square rafters nailed to a ridge board, except where the three shed dormers were later raised, although these reused many of the rafters they removed. The granite basement walls are intact, as are the stone and brick chimney bases and hearth supports. Any historic flooring or partitions have since decayed and been removed. An early coal-fired, cast-iron furnace with voluminous sheet-iron plenum has been removed and a new furnace recently installed. A hot water radiator system has heated the house since it was installed in the 1950s.

The 1884 photograph shows what appear to be fruit trees along the easterly side and in the rear of the yard (FIG.1). These have not survived, although there are mature shade trees in the front and on the westerly side of the house. The rear of the lot has grown up into woods restricting access to the Monoosnoc Brook. A three-bay garage is located over 100 feet behind the house. It looks to have been constructed in the early 20th century with concrete blocks on three sides and a wood frame front façade containing three pairs of swinging doors. A shed roof slopes to the rear. It does not contribute to the property's significance

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are known on the Drake House property, sites may be present. One ancient site is located in the general area (within one mile). Site 19-WR-370 is located approximately 1,000 feet west of the nominated property in a similar environmental context as the Drake House. Environmental characteristics of the property represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of Native sites. The house occupies level to moderately sloping topography on an outwash plain within 1,000 feet of wetlands. Monoosnoc Brook forms the rear or northern boundary of the property. A large wetland is also located immediately south of the house. The area lies within the Nashua/Merrimack River drainage. Soils in the area are generally excessively drained; however, some areas are also classified as an urban land complex, where soils have been altered by filling and/or grading for buildings, parking lots, and other urban structures. Given the above information, low site densities in the region, and construction of the house, outbuildings, and installation of utilities on the small lot (0.68 acres), a low to moderate potential exists for the recovery of ancient Native American resources on the Drake House property. Any ancient sites that were located on the property were destroyed by historic land use after 1848. Intact ancient Native American resources may survive at the rear of the lot bordering Monoosnoc Brook.

A moderate potential exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the Drake House property; however, that potential remains to be demonstrated. In spite of the fact that maps as early as 1870 do not show barns, stables, or outbuildings on the Drake House property, structural

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

**Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA**

Section number 7 Page 6

evidence of these buildings may survive. Similar houses in the neighborhood have small barns and outbuildings. Occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may also survive on the property. No archaeological resources specifically identified with Underground Railroad activities have been identified with the Drake House property.

(end)

Frances & Jonathan Drake House

Name of Property

Worcester, 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
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
- SOCIAL HISTORY
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Period of Significance

1848-1865

Significant Dates

1848 1851 1857

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Frances H. and Jonathan Drake Shadrach Minkins

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Leominster Historical Society

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 1

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Frances H. and Jonathan Drake House at 21 Franklin Street in Leominster, Massachusetts, meets National Register criteria A and B in the areas of ethnic, social, and political history for its role in the antislavery movement and the Underground Railroad in Massachusetts, and its association with the Drakes, who actively assisted African Americans escape slavery, and the notable fugitive Shadrach Minkins. The property also is architecturally significant and meets National Register criterion C as a distinctive example of a type of dwelling involved in the Underground Railroad network. The property is nominated at a state level of significance in all these categories, and it fulfills the Registration Requirements defined in the Massachusetts Multiple Property Submission for Property Type #1, a dwelling that harbored fugitives on the Underground Railroad. The Drake House is documented as a stop in the 1851 flight of the fugitive Shadrach Minkins, the first fugitive in New England seized by federal marshals under the authority of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The saga of his apprehension by slave agents in Boston and the subsequent effort to conduct him safely to Canada is one of the most important in the history of the Underground Railroad in Massachusetts and, in its time, one of the most infamous. The lives of Jonathan and Frances Hills Drake, who sheltered Shadrach Minkins and other lesser-known fugitives in this house and were active in antislavery organizations and activities, illustrate the reach of radical abolitionism into the North's small towns and the particular mechanisms by which the movement spread. Though in relative terms a great deal is known about abolitionism in urban areas, little is known about its presence and its overall reception in village and rural places. The Drakes were working-class people, and their house, built in 1848, exemplifies the modest dwelling type in which many fugitives from slavery would have boarded on their route to freedom and the type where most lived if they chose to remain in Massachusetts. The Drake House retains sufficient integrity of location, setting, association, feeling, design, workmanship, and materials to convey its significance within the Underground Railroad context. Its period of significance extends from 1848, when the house was built, until 1865 when ratification of the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. The property remained in the Drake family until the death of Frances Drake in 1900.

The Drakes

Frances Hills Drake (25 October 1814-22 September 1900) was a native of Leominster. Her maternal grandfather, Silas Hills, was one of the men who brought the comb-making industry from Newbury, Massachusetts, to Leominster about 1775.¹ The city has been a center of comb manufacturing to the current day. Drake's paternal grandfather, Edward Wilder (about 1761-1833), moved from nearby Lancaster to Leominster by the time he married in 1783. He was a farmer, but his son William, Frances Drake's father, was a blacksmith. On 25 September 1837 Frances Hills Wilder married Jonathan Drake (1804-17 Jan 1897), a shoemaker from Hampton, New Hampshire, who moved to Lowell about 1830, and then to Boston.² The Drakes lived in Boston until after the birth of their first child, Mary Adeline, on 1 November 1838. The 1840 federal census shows "John" Drake as a resident of Leominster.

(continued)

¹ Smith Hills, the father of Silas, came to Leominster in 1774 and bought what in the 1880s was called the Josiah Hills place. The family manufactured combs for seventy-five years "in the little village then called 'Manchester,' now Pleasant Street," not far from the Drake house. "Hills Family," *Leominster Enterprise* (weekly), 5 September 1883.

² "Life's Work Over: Death of Leominster Old Time Abolitionist," clipping from unidentified newspaper, Leominster Historical Society. Thanks to Linda Pinder for making this and other of the society's Drake materials available.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 2

Jonathan Drake was a shoemaker, and despite his wife's long and fairly prosperous heritage in Leominster, the couple sometimes struggled to make ends meet. "Formerly it has been in my power for many years to do something pecuniarily for the cause," Frances Drake wrote to Boston-area abolitionist Ann Warren Weston in 1848. "This year I cannot give a cent honestly. For myself I can bear poverty. For the sake of others I wish I had an abundance."³ In 1862 she sought an income from her work in distributing antislavery tracts throughout her region and seeking funding for the cause. In a letter to abolitionist Wendell Phillips, Drake stated her hope "thereby [to] secure to myself some compensation for my labor while my husband is struggling to rescue our little home from a heavy mortgage, & still be able to share it with the slaves advocate as we have ever been happy to do." In a later letter she told Phillips, "Nothing but absolute poverty could have induced me to accept compensation for any AntiSlavery labor."⁴

How the Drakes came by their commitment to abolishing slavery is unknown, though Frances Drake's aunt and uncle, Edward and Sarah Wilder, were like them members of the Leominster Anti-Slavery Society. Perhaps a political sentiment within the family in which she grew up predisposed Frances to such advocacy. However that may have been, in socioeconomic terms the Drakes typified the persons whom abolitionists felt most likely to join their ranks—farmers, manufacturers, tradespeople, and other skilled workers whom they termed "the bone and muscle of society." The profile of Leominster's best-known abolitionists coheres with this characterization—they were comb manufacturers, blacksmiths, physicians, shoemakers, and people of similar socioeconomic position. Frances Drake noted as much in a letter to Boston abolitionist Maria Weston Chapman in 1843. "I have given a publick notice to all persons in our town who feel disposed to aid the Mass A.S. [Anti-Slavery] Fair, to meet at our house Tuesday 20 inst. I have also made a contract with the Shopkeepers to receive from the farmers such articles of produce as they may see fit to give to the cause. . . . It will be impossible for us to send anything that will be very ornamental, as we have only the poor, common people who will aid us, and they do not understand doing only plain needlework."⁵

Forceful opposition to abolitionism was triggered largely by those whom abolitionists labeled the "head of society," the lawyers, clergy, office holders, bankers, and larger merchants. Historians and contemporaries called them "gentlemen of property and standing" who collectively feared that immediate emancipation would weaken their grip on social power. An analysis of cities that experienced anti-abolition riots in the 1830s determined that manufacturers and tradespeople uniformly made up a greater share of abolitionist than they did anti-abolition forces; conversely, "high-ranking" commercial and professional men were more prominent among anti-abolitionists. Physicians and teachers, professionals of lower economic standing, tended to be abolitionists.⁶ Frances Drake's description of resistance or outright hostility to the cause in Leominster tends to support this characterization (though several of the town's leading factory owners were ardent abolitionists). "There is another class, which I consider by far the greater enemy to contend with," she wrote to Mrs. Chapman. "They are our clergy & our physicians & the most influential

(continued)

³F. H. Drake, Leominster, to Ann W. Weston care of the *Liberator* office, Boston, 17 Nov 1848, Antislavery Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, Boston Public Library, Ms.A.4.6A.3 p. 50 (hereafter cited as BPL Antislavery Collection).

⁴F. H. Drake, *Liberator* Office, to Wendell Phillips, 5 April [no year, but probably 1862]; F. H. Drake, Leominster, to Phillips, 25 May 1862, Crawford Blagden Collection of the Papers of Wendell Phillips, Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter cited as Phillips Papers).

⁵Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Mrs. Chapman, 11 June 1843, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms.A.9.2.18 p. 58.

⁶Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 131-55.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 3

among our church members. . . . I have spent a day and a half and all I could get was two dollars 25 cts. Every person I called on was an avowed abolitionist & what is more were all persons of standing, & much property, who would not hesitate to contribute ten, or twenty dollars if called on, for the support of some sectarian school or church. Why all this unwillingness to aid this glorious missionary enterprise?"⁷

Between 1800 and 1850 the population of Leominster almost doubled, but at its peak it scarcely exceeded 3,000 people. At no time before 1865 did more than five people of color live in the town. Leominster was not only overwhelmingly white, but its population consisted largely of farmers, comb manufacturers, and comb makers. People of color tended to settle in Massachusetts ports, either along the coast or on its major rivers, where dock work and crew positions were relatively available to them. Factory work, which paid better on the whole, was largely foreclosed to people of color, while farm work was scarce, seasonal, and poorly compensated. Yet even among both inland and coastal towns its size all over the state, Leominster had far fewer people of color than average by 1865.⁸

Still, for its size Leominster appears to have had a large number of abolitionists. At least thirty-eight residents subscribed to William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper the *Liberator*—including Jonathan Drake, whose run of the paper was later donated to the local historical society—and in 1841 there were 136 members of the Leominster Anti-Slavery Society, half of them women. According to local historian William E. Emerson, the society had been founded three years earlier after several residents—including Jonathan Drake, Joel Smith, Jacob Puffer, and Isaac Cowdrey—heard Wendell Phillips speak at the Leominster Town Hall that summer. Phillips's call for "immediate unconditional emancipation" compelled the men to commit themselves to abolitionism and to form the local society.⁹

That a good share of Leominster's abolitionists were radical is indicated by two incidents. Among the 1,144 Massachusetts citizens who petitioned the state legislature in March 1848 "for a peaceable secession of Massachusetts from the Union" were 206 Leominster residents. The *Liberator*, which reported on the petition, cited no town with more signers, and Leominster petitioners represented 18 % of the whole.¹⁰ An even stronger indication of radicalism was the formation of a local Anti Man-Hunting League in 1855. A statewide Anti Man-Hunting League was initiated in Boston that year to identify, forcibly capture, and detain those slave owners or agents who came to Massachusetts to retrieve fugitives from slavery. "The League was commenced in 1855 immediately after the rendition of the slave 'Burns': and when State and Court streets formed one continuous line of soldiers from the Court House to the end of

(continued)

⁷ Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Maria Weston Chapman, 6 August 1843, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms.A.4.6A.1 p. 86.

⁸ In 1860 nineteen other Massachusetts towns had population sizes comparable to Leominster's (3522), ranging from 3200 to 3800. In 1865 the average number of people of color in these towns was fourteen; Leominster was home then to only three. The towns were Amherst, Braintree, Bridgewater, Canton, Dennis, East Bridgewater, Harwich, Holliston, Ipswich, Millbury, Provincetown, Rockport, Salisbury, Southbridge, Stoneham, Ware, Watertown, and Wrentham. Wakefield was also in this category, but no figures exist for its 1865 black population. For more on the role maritime work and existing black populations played in the distribution of people of color in Massachusetts, see Kathryn Grover and Neil Larson, "The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts: A Context Statement" (Massachusetts Historical Commission, 2005).

⁹ The manuscript membership list of the local society has been transcribed in Mark C. Bodanza, *The Coming Crucible: A Play Recounting Important Events of the Anti-Slavery History of the Town of Leominster, Massachusetts* (Leominster, MA: by the author, 2004), A41-43. On the society's formation see "Anti-Slavery Reminiscences," in William A. Emerson, *Leominster Traditions. Incidents, Anecdotes, Reminiscences, Etc., Connected with the History of Leominster, Mass., and Vicinity* (Leominster: Press of C. H. Hyatt, 1891), 96.

¹⁰ *Liberator*, reported in *North Star*, 17 March 1848.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 4

Long Wharf," league president Henry I. Bowditch wrote to an unidentified Leominster resident in 1884. "We had drills in Boston, generally every two weeks for some time and even to the commencement of the Civil War. I have a number of the billies (loaded with lead) which a mayor of Lynn procured for us. . . . We were in 'dead earnest'; and if another slave hunter had dared to show his face in Boston we would surely have carried him out of the city and would have kept him in one of our Leagues (or perhaps in several, the same day if necessary)." Unlike the Boston and other Massachusetts Vigilance Committees, which aided fugitives usually by nonviolent means, the Anti Man-Hunting League aimed to thwart slave hunters forcibly. The Boston league had twenty-nine or thirty affiliates across the state with more than 380 members. With thirty residents in its local league, Leominster had the largest membership of any league except Boston. Leominster's league was the first to subscribe \$25 toward the ownership of the yacht *Moby Dick*, one of two vessels the Boston Vigilance Committee member Austin Bearse used to determine the presence of fugitives in vessels moored in Boston harbor and to bring them secretly to shore.¹¹

Emerson asserted that Jonathan Drake was a member of the Leominster Anti Man-Hunting League, though he was never shown as one of its officers. A self-described Jacksonian Democrat, Drake refused to vote in any presidential election after Jackson's in 1832. His disdain for parties and the political process was shared by many abolitionists, chief among them William Lloyd Garrison. Drake's collection of antislavery tracts and newspapers has been preserved in the local library and historical society, and his 1897 obituary reported that a poem about the radical abolitionist John Brown was recited at his funeral.¹² But he was not by any means a prolific correspondent. His wife Frances, however, wrote many letters to Boston abolitionists that detail her views and activities on behalf of abolitionism, document her involvement with Shadrach Minkins and at least one other fugitive, and offer a rare insight into the character of antislavery sentiment in the towns and villages of Massachusetts.

Frances H. Drake was, like her husband, a committed Garrisonian abolitionist. When the antislavery movement was split in two in 1839—over such issues as whether political action to end slavery could be efficacious, whether women and their oppression should be heard as legitimate issues within the movement, and what role the churches and clergy played in abolitionism—she remained solidly in favor of using "moral suasion" to end slavery, was committed to woman suffrage, and shared Garrison's view that the churches impeded rather than forwarded abolitionism. Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Wendell Phillips, Parker Pillsbury, and Stephen and Abby Kelley Foster were all guests in her home, and she displayed likenesses of them on the walls of her 21 Franklin Street home.¹³

Three years after the national schism, Frances Drake disavowed her membership in the Leominster Anti-Slavery Society because of its apparent leanings toward the non-Garrisonian wing (often referred to then as the "new

(continued)

organization"), embodied in the commonwealth by the Massachusetts Abolition Society and nationally by the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. She was steadfast in her devotion to the "old organizations" Garrison

¹¹ Henry I. Bowditch [sic], Boston, to "Sir," 24 April 1889, Leominster Public Library Valuable Collection. In this letter Bowditch stated that he had a "trunk" of papers related to the league, but only a portion of what must have existed has been preserved at the Massachusetts Historical Society. See "Book 9: List of Affiliated Leagues & Officers," H. I. Bowditch, 1855-56, Bowditch Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. The rendition of the fugitive Anthony Burns took place in Boston in May 1854. The Leominster Historical Society has in its collections a leather whip believed to have been part of the local league's equipment.

¹² "Jonathan Drake," *Leominster Enterprise* (weekly), 22 January 1897. In his antislavery library were such titles as "Anti-Slavery Tracts. No. 7. Revolution the Only Remedy for Slavery," which probably bears his wife's signature, and Charles Stearns's "The Way to Abolish Slavery" (Boston, 1849). These two tracts are in the collections of Leominster Public Library. Many thanks to local history librarian Jeanne Levesque, who made us aware of this Drake material and assisted in answering many queries.

¹³ "Mrs. Frances H. Drake," *Leominster Enterprise* (weekly), 25 September 1900.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 5

had helped to found, the Massachusetts (later New England) Anti-Slavery Society and the American Anti-Slavery Society. In 1842 she told Maria Weston Chapman how the split had affected even Leominster's antislavery sewing circle.

Two years since, Miss Abby Kelly was with us. She proposed we should form a Society to be called the A.S. Sewing Society... some half a doz of us commenced labouring for the American society... all who were friendly to the slaves were invited to join. Before many weeks the society numbered thirty but soon, we were called upon to alter our constitution to suit the wants of the new organization. At that time I withdrew, choosing to labor singly and alone, for the old school than collectively for both parties. I believe they are very active and engaged in their way. My sympathy is not with them.¹⁴

A year later she asked Chapman about her idea to form a new "Leominster Garrisonian AntiSlavery Society" in the belief that "Garrison" would assure that the society's name "will not be taken from us by any other society, as it is so odious to many persons. Any one who does not love the cause well enough to unite with us under this title, can stay away," she wrote. "We once formed a society of ladies, and took the name of the Leom Female Anti Slavery Society, but, very soon sectarianism and new organization stepped [sic] in and took the lead, they being greater in numbers. I for one, am determined to labour only with those who are purely old organizationists and for this reason I withdrew a year since, from the original society."¹⁵ She termed those who supported the new organization "that stupid class of abolitionists whom I have ever called mute suasionists."¹⁶

In her own town and region, Frances Drake fought what she perceived to be the collusion between churches, antislavery religious leaders, and political action, a combination she believed a ruse to uphold those existing structures of authority that took no real action to end slavery. "The package containing the silks together with your note was duly received," Drake wrote to Chapman about the town's work for the upcoming annual antislavery fair. "I fear we shall not be able to accomplish much fancy work, as our society numbers now only five working women. The sectarians have been advising some of our society not to work for the Mass Society, saying their only object was to pull down every good institution in the land &c. They have laboured diligently & done the work effectually, all those who were not thoroughly abolitionists, or were deficient in moral courage, were so foolish as to be influenced by them & were so ungenerous as to even send in some work unfinished." Drake complained about how most of the antislavery women of Leominster chose to support the clerical effort to aid fugitives who had resettled in Canada. "They think they must do something for the cause, as they claim to be antislavery, so they devote their whole energy to Canada Mission," she told Chapman. "How long think you before they will abolish slavery if they go on with the work in their way?"¹⁷ She castigated the Unitarian church members, women in particular, of her town for refusing "to

(continued)

¹⁴ Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Mrs. Chapman, 18 December 1842, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms.A.9.2.17 p. 149.

¹⁵ Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Mrs. Chapman, 11 June 1842, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms.A.9.2.18 p.58.

¹⁶ Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Mrs. Chapman, 31 October 1843, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms.A.9.2.19.64.

¹⁷ Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Mrs. Chapman, 31 October 1843, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms.A.9.2.19.64.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 6

do any thing [for antislavery] saying they should be so doing lend their influence to destroy the church & the sabbath."¹⁸

Drake's correspondence indicates that she felt the circle she could most influence was women, and it was among them that she devoted her efforts as an agent of the state antislavery society. In 1844 she delivered copies of Chapman's abolitionist serial *Liberty Bell*, Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society annual reports, and other literature to women in nine towns in her section of the state, and afterward she reported to Chapman on the size and strength of the female antislavery societies in those places. The attitudes she often encountered about "women's sphere," however, galled her.

Many good & true hearts would take hold of the work in good faith if they knew what to do. In several towns where I proposed forming a [antislavery sewing] circle the ladies had never seen a circular, or the *Liberator*, & knew nothing about the fair. I assure you, they were really grateful for the little information I gave them on the subject, & said, 'After all we can be useful. We wish to aid the cause, & if we can do it in this way, we will work in earnest [*sic*].' I am sure women generally back in the country do not know their rights, & privileges in this cause. . . . I trust the day is coming when woman will be fitted for higher duties (nay, she is already fit, could she be allowed to act out her noble nature) than superintending the dinner pot & washtub & submitting [*sic*] to the abuses & whims of tyrant man. . . . When I see kindhearted & intelligent women made to believe they have no other duties than their own domestic affairs, I cannot hold my peace. This is true here as well as elsewhere, they give me as an excuse for not aiding the fair, 'My husband (he is not worthy the endearing name) thinks it is mens work to liberate the slave & womens to take care of their own affairs.' As it happens I feel the affairs of the slave are as much mine as his, so I do not depart from duty in this matter.¹⁹

A year earlier Drake wrote to Chapman, "It is perfectly astonishing to hear really intelligent people ever saying, 'I wonder what those few women think they can do to abolish Slavery.' 'I don't think it is womans sphere to be making such efforts to accomplish that which belong not to them, but to men high in office.' And everything of this kind we have to reply to almost daily, to such people."²⁰

Drake was equally if not more offended by the contradictory positions of many antislavery people in her region, who believed in freeing the slaves of the South but were repelled by racial intermingling—especially intermarriage, or "miscegenation," as it was then termed—in the North. In July 1843 Charles Lenox Remond (1810-73), a native of Salem who was the first person of color to lecture on the abolitionist circuit, spoke in Leominster on two successive evenings. According to Drake's *Leominster Enterprise* obituary, she and another local woman escorted Remond to the town hall, and after his talk Remond accompanied Drake back to her home. This behavior triggered "the 'ire of the public," the newspaper noted, and the next night a mob assembled outside the hall. "After the commencement of the

(continued)

¹⁸ Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to "Friend Phillips," 26 September 1847, Phillips Papers.

¹⁹ Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Mrs. Chapman, 22 June 1844, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms.A.9.2.20 p.43.

²⁰ Frances H. Drake, Secretary of the Leominster Society, to Mrs. Chapman, 6 August 1843.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 7

lecture sticks, stones and stale eggs were thrown through the window," and threatened violence after the lecture "made the night hideous," the *Enterprise* stated. The hostility toward Remond in the town is attested by an 1846 bill he submitted for his services on the circuit, which included an expense of \$25 dollars "for horse 'cobbed' by a mob at Leominster."²¹ Drake herself described her experience with Remond shortly afterward in a letter to Chapman.

One church member has said that I was the means of keeping some fifty ladies from joining [*sic*] the society, the question was asked by the answer was because I was so familiar [*sic*] with coloured people when they come here, Charles & Carline Remond visited us a few weeks since & I rode with them & walked with them. This was more than would be abolitionists would be. 'Ladies' said I could be just as good an abolitionist, and desire the slaves freedom just as well, and still not treat nigers [*sic*] so familiarly. If I prevent ladies from joining the society who are no more antislavery than to merely wish the slave to be free from the whip, and still be in the most degraded condition imagineable by the scorn & neglect of his would be superior white bretheren [*sic*]—I think such antislavery of but little service to the coloured man as such. They have no hearts to feel for their wrongs in other respects than that of being beaten. Heaven knows this is bad enough but what is it compared to the servitude of the mortal mind? I am informed some really intelligent ladies have said they were willing to do anything for the cause, but did not wish to become members of any society to which I belonged, as I carried my views quite to [*sic*] far for respectability [*sic*], in being disposed to treat the coloured people as my equals. They thought the blacks should have their place & keep in it. One lady to test my principles asked me if I would marry a coloured man. I answered very frankly (as my nature ever prompts) yes, if he was just as worthy in every respect as a white man ought to be. You can have no idea what a talk it has made all over town.²²

In its racial attitudes Leominster as a whole typified the general response to abolitionism of the sort Drake, Garrison, Phillips, and Remond espoused. Drake wrote Chapman that the local Unitarian minister gave her a dollar for the cause but only if accompanied by the warning, "I cannot consistently do anything for the mass society so long as they send out such men as [John] Collins & Remond. What I give must go to individuals of better principle than they are." Local abolitionist Lydia Loring Walker, a *Liberator* subscriber and a member of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, felt the antipathy toward such lecturers had more to do with their steady denunciations of American churches, as she explained in a letter to Boston abolitionist and fugitive assistant Francis Jackson. Walker, whom Frances Drake included among the "three or four in the midst of us who are of the true stamp, zealous active vigilant," seemed to share this view.

Much prejudice exists here against some of the Officers of the N.E. A.S. Society and they feel that some of the Lecturers who have visited this town, have been very personal in their remarks: they will not hear the Church, the Clergy, &c &c denounced thinking it foreign from the subject which they wish to hear advocated. Were the subject of Emanci[p]ation and the Freedom of the Slave the theme of the lecturer, all would cheerfully attend, and freely lend their aid to the work but they say, 'I will

(continued)

²¹ Charles Lenox Remond, Salem, to Mrs. Chapman & Messrs. Garrison, Quincy, Jackson, & Phillips, 6 January 1846, Phillips Papers.

²² Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Mrs. Chapman, 6 August 1843, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms.A.4.6A.1 p.86.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 8

not contribute toward the support of such Lecturers[.] I will be a friend to the cause, and do what I can to spread it; but as long as everything is mix'd up with what we consider the principal object, I will give my aid where I think best.' . . . Could we be favor'd with good & reasonable lecturers I think the cause would progress rather than retrograde. I must confess I was pain'd during the late Con[ference]. in Boston to listen to such ranting as Fosters and some others. I was sick at heart and thought, how little are we doing towards helping the poor Slave!²³

Frances Drake was aware that many local people considered Garrisonian abolitionism a series of "reasonable views" and that abolitionists were "few poor & despised." Yet she carried on her work in a relative hinterland despite the surrounding antipathy and indifference. Her correspondence, relatively abundant for an abolitionist outside Boston, bespeaks the fact that she was outside this urban circle, which determined the contours and tone of the movement in the Commonwealth. Her isolation from the heart of the movement did seem to distress her. "I have a letter by me which I received from you some four years since, in reply to an invitation I gave you to speak here," she wrote to Wendell Phillips in 1847. "Husband & self were at that time alone comparatively speaking, in our efforts for the slave, and be assured dear Sir, that letter was more than gold or silver to us, every word spoke volumes of cheer and encouragement to our tried souls. If I have ever been really useful in the cause I may thank you for it. . . . While those around us were pointing the finger of scorn we felt we had the sympathy of the good & true, though they were far distant."²⁴

The Shadrach Minkins Incident

Frances Drake's role in aiding the escape of Shadrach Minkins is her best-known legacy, and through it she put herself at greatest risk. Minkins was the first fugitive in New England seized by federal marshals under the authority of the Fugitive Slave Act of September 1850, which greatly stiffened the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793. The earlier act permitted any southern claimant to take a fugitive in the North without proof of the fugitive's identity or the right to a jury trial and imposed a fine of \$500 on anyone known to have harbored a fugitive. To countermand the law, Massachusetts and several other states enacted "personal liberty laws," which required definite proof of an alleged fugitive's identity and sometimes secured trial by jury. The 1850 act voided these state laws. It required proof of identity, and required claimants to secure a warrant for the arrest and rendition of a fugitive, but it allowed no appeal of the court hearing validating a fugitive's identity, authorized federal marshals to assist fugitive claimants, and to command the cooperation of any citizen in their apprehension, continued to deny trial by jury, and heightened penalties for fugitive assistants and uncooperative law officers. Passage of the Fugitive Slave Act outraged abolitionists all over the North, and some vowed to protect fugitives forcibly, if necessary, and at any personal cost.

Determined to prove that the 1850 act had teeth that the 1793 law failed to display, federal officials began to work to enforce it. Minkins was the first demonstration of their intent. In mid-February 1851 Norfolk slave catcher John Caphart came to Boston with an authorization from Minkins's claimant to take the fugitive. Patrick Riley, the assistant federal commissioner in Boston, and eight deputies arrested Minkins while he waited tables at Boston's

(continued)

²³ Lydia L. Walker, Leominster, to Francis Jackson, 15 July 1843, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms.A.9.2.18 p. 85.

²⁴ Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to "Friend Phillips," 26 September 1847, Phillips Papers.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 9

Cornhill Coffee House. Though they planned the arrest for early morning, Minkins was actually taken and brought to the adjacent Boston Court House about noon. Within the hour a crowd of angry abolitionists, largely men of color, crowded into and around the courthouse. The presiding judge postponed the hearing to prove Minkins's identity for several days, but as the courtroom cleared a crowd of men of color surrounded Minkins, and the fugitive activist Lewis Hayden and others managed to extricate the fugitive and bring him to the black neighborhood on Beacon Hill's north slope. There Minkins remained for several hours while Hayden secured a cab, and he then took Minkins to the home of abolitionist Joseph Lovejoy in Cambridge. Hayden then returned to Boston, hired a wagon, and with fellow black abolitionist John J. Smith took Minkins at night to the town of Concord. Minkins stayed several hours in the home of the blacksmith Francis Edwin Bigelow, who hired a carriage and brought the fugitive to the Leominster home of Jonathan and Frances Drake.²⁵

Leominster does appear to have been on a fugitive escape path, though not well documented, through north central Massachusetts to points northward. The Fitchburg Railroad, with Boston at its southeastern end, opened to Leominster's North Village in February 1845; a spur through Leominster connecting the Nashua & Worcester and the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroads was built about the same time; and the Fitchburg & Worcester Railroad, opened to passenger traffic in February 1850, ran the entire length of Leominster.²⁶ The Fitchburg Railroad connected with the Cheshire Railroad, which by 1847 opened to Bellows Falls, Vermont; there the Central Vermont Railroad ran to Burlington. In 1850 Oliver Patch, later a member of the Leominster Anti Man-Hunting League, was depot master for the Fitchburg line.

Concord's Henry David Thoreau regularly took fugitives to Concord station to take the Fitchburg Railroad; Ann E. Bigelow, to whose home Lewis Hayden brought Shadrach Minkins, recalled in 1893 that "as soon as the slave arrived in any free state horses and friends were ready, we knew not how—they came here going north—more passes on the F.R.R. than any other. From Worcester they went to Leominster, on B & A [Boston & Albany] bearing north & east getting on F.R.R. (Fitchburg R.R.)." The abolitionist Joshua Titus Everett recalled the railroad as part of a fugitive's route from Princeton and Westminster, Massachusetts, which abutted Leominster on the south and west. "In the north part of the county [Worcester] we constructed a number of unseen highways, over which the poor slave was helped on to Canada," he recalled in 1893. "Yes, fleeing to Canada to escape the infernal clutches of the slave-holder! I remember one very fine young woman about thirty years old, with her babe nearly a year old, brought to our depot in Everettville by an Abolition friend in the part of our county south of our depot. . . . After giving her a good dinner and some things she wanted, we helped her on to another depot, and so she got on to Canada."²⁷ The abolitionist Elizabeth Buffum Chace, whose Valley Falls, Rhode Island, home was on the Providence & Worcester Railroad line, recalled receiving fugitives who had reached a southeastern Massachusetts port by trading vessel and directed from New Bedford to her sister's home in Fall River, and then to Chace. From there, friend Robert Adams of Fall River took fugitives to the Providence & Worcester depot, where they would transfer to "the Vermont road"; there they met "a Unitarian minister named Young" (probably Joshua Young, who lived in Burlington from 1852 forward), who would aid them in their flight to Canada. Chace wrote, "I used to give them an envelope, directed to us, to be mailed in

²⁵ Much of this description of the Shadrach incident is derived from Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1997).

²⁶ William A. Emerson, *Leominster Massachusetts Historical and Picturesque* (Gardner, MA: Lithotype Publishing Co., 1888), 66-69.

²⁷ Ann E. Bigelow, dictated to Ann E. Damon, to Wilbur Siebert, December 1893, in "The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts," vol. 2, Material Collected by Professor Wilbur H. Siebert, Houghton Library, Harvard University; *Old Anti-Slavery Days. Proceedings of the Commemorative Meeting, Held by the Danvers Historical Society, at the Town Hall, Danvers, April 26, 1893, with Introduction, Letters and Sketches* (Danvers: Danvers Mirror Print, 1893), 89-90.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 10

Toronto, which, when it reached us, was sufficient by its postmark to announce their safe arrival, beyond the baleful influence of the Stars and Stripes, and the anti-protection of the Fugitive Slave Law.²⁸

According to historian Gary Collison, one account of Minkins's escape held that he took the Fitchburg Railroad and was "taken off the train in Leominster, just outside Fitchburg, where authorities were suspected to be waiting," but that he traveled there in Bigelow's hired carriage is a "near certainty."²⁹ Collison also noted that "the last firsthand reports" of Shadrach's flight document his presence in Leominster. Three years later, in a letter to the Unitarian minister and abolitionist Theodore Parker, Frances Drake stated that she and her husband "had the honor of sheltering Shadrach while his persuers [sic] were searching for him," and Concord's Franklin Sanborn recalled that Bigelow had told him "about 1867" of taking Minkins to the Drake house.³⁰

Several retrospective accounts maintain that the Drakes brought Minkins, dressed in women's clothing, to an antislavery meeting that was taking place that evening in Leominster. Kate Pope, the daughter of Leominster abolitionists Asher and Juliette Yeaw, stated that Minkins was dressed in the clothes of Frances Drake's "recently deceased mother," though in fact Mary Wilder had died twenty years earlier.³¹ Pope, born in Leominster in 1854, stated that her father told her that "Shadrack occupied a seat between Mrs. Drake and my grandmother, Susan Whitney Hills," who was Drake's cousin. An officer who had come to Leominster in pursuit of Shadrach found "no black man was there" due, Pope asserted, to the disguise. "The next morning," Pope wrote, "Mr. Joel Smith and my father got him away to Canada."³² Pope's account has not, however, been corroborated in any reliable accounts of the event. Minkins reached Montreal in late February 1851, and on 28 February he wrote a letter to an unidentified person in Leominster to report his arrival. One local chronicler, writing well before Frances Drake's death in 1900, stated that Minkins's letter was written to Frances Drake. "After his arrival there in Montreal Mrs. Drake received a letter from him which she now has in her possession," Gates wrote. "She has also a work box which he gave her on his departure to Canada." What has become of the letter is unknown, and it seems unlikely that Minkins would have carried such an article in flight.³³ An 1888 item in the Fitchburg Daily Sentinel stated that Minkins sent "a little article of Indian work" from Canada to Leominster in appreciation of the assistance he received there.³⁴ A beaded purse now in the collections of Leominster Historical Society may be the "Indian work" Gates

(continued)

²⁸ Elizabeth Buffum Chace, "My Anti-Slavery Reminiscences," 3 March 1891, in *Two Quaker Sisters from the Original Diaries of Elizabeth Buffum Chace and Lucy Buffum Lovell* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1937), 127-28.

²⁹ Collison, *Shadrach Minkins*, 159.

³⁰ Ms. Am. 1590 Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Theodore Parker, 2 September 1854, BPL Antislavery Collection, Ms. Am. 1590; Collison, *Shadrach Minkins*, 159.

³¹ Kate G. Pope, "Communication," *Leominster Daily Enterprise*, 21 June 1928; Leominster vital records; Moses H. Wilder, *Book of the Wilders* (New York: Edward Jenkins, 1878).

³² Pope, "Communication."

³³ The "work box" was likely a sewing box of some kind. Minkins after all had been in jail in Boston, and he was taken almost immediately by carriage out of the city. That he would have had a work box in jail seems dubious.

³⁴ Fannie P. Gates, "General Topics" notebook, Leominster Historical Society. The letter has not since been located. M. E. Crocker, probably Martha E. Crocker, stated in an 1888 Fitchburg Sentinel article, "After Shadrach had been in Canada a few months, he sent Mr. C. [Samuel S. Crocker, her husband] back a little article of Indian work to show that he was alive and also as a grateful remembrance of the kindness and help he received in the house of his suffering and peril. This little crude souvenir of anti-slavery and fugitive slave law days is still kept in the family." Crocker is said to have helped raise money for Shadrach while he was in Fitchburg and to have lent one of his workmen to carry Minkins on to Alvan Ward in Ashburnham. There is no contemporary corroboration of Crocker's role, but the fact of the souvenir seems to confirm it. See M. E. C., "The Fugitive Slave Law, and Its Workings," *Fitchburg Daily Sentinel*, 31 October 1888.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 11

described. Strangely, a recollection in the 31 October 1888 *Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* makes an identical claim with respect to Samuel S. Crocker, a Leominster native then living in Fitchburg. Written by Crocker's wife, the article stated, "After Shadrach had been in Canada a few months, he sent Mr. C. back a little article of Indian work to show that he was alive and also as a grateful remembrance of the kindness and help he received in the house of his suffering and peril. This little crude souvenir of anti-slavery and fugitive slave law days is still kept in the family." Gates also stated that the Fitchburg abolitionist Benjamin Snow, whom some sources claim sheltered Shadrach after he left the Drake house, "was in Montreal three or four years ago and saw Shadrack, who was keeping a restaurant there." Minkins died in December 1875. No evidence, however, documents Snow's assistance in Minkins's flight. Snow's daughter Martha, born about 1842, made no mention of it in her 1912 account of her father's activism, though she did recall that the house "became the stopping-place of all the fugitive slaves and reformers who came to Fitchburg."³⁵

Assisting Other Fugitives

The Drakes' participation in the Minkins rescue appears to have strengthened their commitment to fugitive assistance. In response to a printed plea sent around Massachusetts urging the formation of local vigilance committees, Frances Drake reported to Theodore Parker, "We have handed the circular to those who take a lively interest in the fugitive & will render such aid as may be required. Still they do not feel moved to organize as a committee. Husband bids me say, that we wish to be considered as a standing committee for the aid of fugitives, under any & all circumstances." She asked Parker to speak at the upcoming annual agricultural fair "in order to awaken a suitable interest in the minds of the public," and she proposed to pay his fee from a lecture admission charge.³⁶

Frances Drake's 1900 obituary stated that "In the little home of Mr. And Mrs. Drake many slaves escaped from bondage found rest, shelter and welcome, and with a 'God-speed' were started for the Canadian border." Other than Shadrach Minkins, however, only one other fugitive has been documented to have received the couple's aid. In the late summer of 1856 Wendell Phillips contacted Frances Drake about a teenage Cuban boy named Bernardo DeGomez, whose mother was enslaved in Cuba, where abolition did not occur until 1886. Bernardo had come to Massachusetts by 1849, under obscure circumstances; by 1852, he had clearly become Phillips's responsibility. Bernardo was first sent to live with a ship carpenter in Bath, Maine, but when the man left for California Bernardo had to find another home. Phillips advertised the boy's availability in the *Liberator*, and in January 1853 Phillips had Austin Bearse convey the boy to the home of Isaac E. Mayo in Harwich, Massachusetts. He apparently went on several trading voyages with Mayo, a master mariner, but on one voyage the boy had become ill, probably consumptive. In August 1856 Bernardo was in school at Harwich, but a physician did not expect him to live "more than till spring." Phillips sought to place the boy in the Utopian Hopedale community; unsuccessful, he then turned to Frances Drake. She wrote Phillips about her plans for Bernardo in a letter marked "secret."

I am truly grateful for an opportunity to oblige you at any time. . . . I have secured a boarding place for your charge in a most excellent family, in our neighborhood, only a man & his wife, with one gentleman boarder. They are willing to take the lad for a few weeks on trial, if he likes & they too,

(continued)

³⁵ Martha Snow Wallace, *My Father's House* (Boston: George H. Ellis Company, 1915), 3.

³⁶ Drake to Parker, 2 September 1854.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 12

probably he would remain with them if he should learn a trade. (Mr. John Bates is the mans name) Mr Joel Smith whom you know as an abolitionist is a comb manufacturer (near by Mr Bates) he says he will take the lad & learn him the comb trade if he would like to do so, or, if he would prefer, I presume we could secure a place in one of the Piano Shops.

The usual price of board here for lads is two dollars fifty, & for men, three dollars. Mr Bates will charge two fifty. His accommodations are all you would desire for yourself & a more discreet & worthy young couple would not well be found.

Soon as the lad should be able to work Mr Smith will give him employment to earn his board, if he should wish it.

Should you conclude to send him here, please write me how soon he will come. Could I know what train he would take I would meet him at the station, to relieve him of any embarrassment.

However Mr Robbins (the xpress man) would take him safely to our door, or to Mr Bates—just as you may direct.³⁷

Bates was a twenty-three-year-old comb maker and Vermont native, and Smith—whom Kate Pope identified as the man who accompanied her father on Minkins's journey onward from Leominster—was one of Leominster's leading comb manufacturers as well as an abolitionist. After an uninspiring apprenticeship with a New Hampshire carpentry, Smith returned to his native Leominster to apprentice in the comb business under Jonas Colburn, who was, like Smith and his brother Isaac, later a member of the local Anti Man-Hunting League. At one time or another he was partners with John Nourse, a fellow *Liberator* subscriber, league member Oliver Patch, and Bates. He was one of the founders of the town's antislavery society in 1838. Local historian William Emerson wrote in 1888, "At the home of Mr. Smith there was always a warm welcome for the fugitive slave. The story cannot now be fully told, but it should be said that in all the work of those hot and eventful years from 1840 to 1861, Mr. Smith bore earnest and honorable part."³⁸

Soon after Bernardo's arrival in Leominster, Frances Drake reported to Phillips that the boy was far more ill "than you had apprehended." Her own physician told her that "the only possible hope of his recovery was to live out doors, & have very nourishing diet, & create as healthy an action of the skin as possible." This prognosis must have precluded employment in any comb shop.³⁹ Drake reported soon afterward that Bernardo could scarcely walk. She told Phillips that she spent part of every day walking with the boy, "fitting on his compress," monitoring his cough, and teaching him at her home. As Bernardo's condition grew worse, Drake rode him two miles about town in a carriage every day,

(continued)

³⁷ Frances H. Drake, Leominster, to Wendell Phillips, 21 August 1856, Phillips Papers. Bernardo's story is told in twenty-one letters written between 1852 and 1857 in folder 268, Phillips Papers. Drake may not have considered having Bernardo live with her because her house could not accommodate more than her own family of five and the family of her husband's brother Dearborn Taylor Drake, who was definitely living there in 1850 and may still have occupied the house with them in 1856.

³⁸ Emerson, *Leominster Historical and Picturesque*, 181.

³⁹ In 1852 the local physician Caleb Cleeson Field, also an abolitionist and Anti Man-Hunting League member, studied seventy-five Leominster families and reported to the American Statistical Association that in comb makers' families "the children are sick more and die younger, on an average, than the children of other families in Leominster." He attributed the circumstance largely to the conditions in which comb makers lived—overcrowding "into small and unventilated tenements, over-heated by cooking or air-tight stoves," lack of outdoor exercise, and a "want of dietetic knowledge" indicated by the "gross, heavy and ill-prepared food" they ate. See Caleb C. Field, *Statistics of Comb-Making in Leominster, 1852* (Worcester, MA: Franklin P. Rice, 1893), a photocopy of which was provided to us by Mark C. Bodanza.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 13

which, she told Phillips, cost her twenty-five cents a trip. Bernardo nonetheless died in Leominster on 29 October 1856, at the age of sixteen. In the boy's *Liberator* obituary, Phillips wrote that Bernardo was "most kindly ministered to by devoted friends in Leominster, among whom was Mrs. Drake, who watched over him with the tenderness of a mother." Ten days later Drake wrote Phillips to thank him for his "generous testimonial" and to report her work as Bernardo's de facto executor. She wrote Phillips, "I cannot trust myself to utter what I feel so intensely as I do, the wrong visited on this victim of a twofold oppression."⁴⁰

Drake told Phillips that she had gone to Fitchburg to investigate markers for Bernardo's grave. "A very proper kind" made of white or grey marble, she stated, would cost between ten and twelve dollars, the lettering an additional 1.5 cents per character. Whether a stone was placed at Bernardo's grave at the time is unclear. Today, despite the fact that her will stipulated that the back of her own stone bear the name and dates of her daughter-in-law Fanny Mixer Drake, it is Bernardo DeGomez's name, without dates, that appears on the backside of the granite marker for Jonathan and Frances H. Drake in Leominster's Evergreen Cemetery.⁴¹

After 1856 the Drakes' activities cannot be surmised based on known evidence, but in 1893 Frances Drake herself claimed to have "assisted very many poor fugitives" for "twenty-five years during the anti-slavery agitation. The Latimers, the Bibbs, Wells Brown, Crummel, Douglass, Box Brown, Lunsford Lane, Wm. and E. Craft, Jackson, (Jeff Davis' coachman) Shadrach was with us several days while Boston police were scouring the country for him. Our work was all volunteer in a quiet way." Her recollection that Minkins stayed longer than a day is not corroborated elsewhere, though neither has it been proved false; her statement that he was being pursued was supported in several retrospective accounts by abolitionists who were in Leominster at the time, but it has not been documented in other sources.

Of the persons Drake identified as fugitives, all had indeed fled slavery except Alexander Crummell, who was born free, and Lunsford Lane, who managed through subterfuge to purchase his freedom in 1835. Of the others, some probably still bore fugitive status though they were not technically in flight; most of them probably visited during their rounds on the antislavery lecture circuit. Henry Bibb escaped from Kentucky slavery in 1837, married in Boston, and lectured throughout the region before resettling in Canada; Frederick Douglass escaped in 1838 and is said to have spent two weeks in Leominster studying English in 1841, the year he began speaking as an antislavery agent. Henry Box Brown escaped from Richmond in March 1849 and lectured for the American Anti-Slavery Society before fleeing to England in 1851. William and Ellen Craft escaped Georgia in 1848 and lectured throughout New England until slave agents newly empowered by the Fugitive Slave Act came to Boston in pursuit of them; abolitionists assisted the Crafts in their flight to Liverpool.

Two of Jonathan Drake's obituaries in 1897 state that the couple also befriended "James Jackson," a "hired slave" of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. "Jackson was coachman to Mrs. Davis at her Richmond home, and one day escaped to Washington where he made himself known to the United States troops and furnished them much valuable information relative to the confederate defenses of the city," one account states. The obituaries probably misnamed William A. Jackson, Mrs. Davis's actual coachman who, according to historian John Maurath, "gleaned

(continued)

⁴⁰ Drake to Phillips, 8 September, 2 October, and 17 November 1856, Phillips Papers; *Liberator* 26,45 (7 November 1856): 3:6.

⁴¹ Frances Hills Drake, Worcester County Register of Probate, Docket 26990 Ser B/Will, 1 March 1899.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 14

pertinent information, by eavesdropping on Davis' conversations in the home, and especially in the presidential coach. He first showed up with vital information at the Headquarters of the Army of the Potomac in May 1862. After the war, Mr. Jackson was debriefed by Union General Masena Patrick, and Jackson then disappeared into history."⁴² Nothing more has yet emerged about Jackson in Leominster, though it seems doubtful that he was technically a fugitive when he came to Massachusetts. Nor, probably, was George W. Latimer, who had escaped with his wife, Rebecca, from Norfolk to Boston by October 1842 but was freed by mid-November of that year. It is more likely that Latimer came to Leominster afterward while touring in support of the Latimer or "Great Massachusetts" Petition, which resulted in the passage of the Massachusetts personal liberty law in 1843.

The Drake House & Household

Jonathan Drake bought a lot in Leominster containing a little more than one acre of land from Er. [sic] and Susan Balch for \$270 in 1848. At the same time, he gave a mortgage to his wife's uncle, Edward Wilder, amounting to \$670, suggesting he built a house with the proceeds. Drake was listed in the deed as a cordwainer, and his name appears in the 1850 U.S. Census as a resident of Leominster and a shoemaker. His household included his wife, Frances H. Drake, and three children: Mary A., age 11 years, George G., 8 years, and Charles W., 5 years. In addition, Jonathan's younger brother, Dearborn T. Drake, and his wife and three young children were also boarding in the house.

The house was designed in the same manner of other comparable dwellings in the neighborhood, indicating that Drake hired a local builder to construct his home. It is a 1½-story wood-frame house with a three-bay front gable façade typical of better single-family, working-class dwellings in the region. Perhaps Frances's higher-status family had a role in providing the young family with a comfortable house. There were four rooms—parlor, dining room, kitchen and chamber—and an entry on the main floor and three bed chambers on the upper floor with a roughly-finished space over the kitchen. Perhaps Jonathan Drake's workshop was located in this undifferentiated second-story area. There is no evidence of a separate workshop, and it is possible that he was employed elsewhere, such as was indicated in the 1870 U.S. census. Similar houses in the neighborhood were generally accompanied by small barns, either connected to or disconnected from the house (some still survive), but none are depicted with the Drake house on maps as early as 1895. (The 1870 map of Leominster in the Beers Atlas of Worcester County did not illustrate outbuildings.)

When Shadrach Minkins and other fugitives were boarded in the house, they may have displaced the children in one of their second-story rooms, or occupied the back attic room. The latter room contained a stair, which would have provided a means of escape. These rear stairs connected to kitchen, which contained a rear exit, and the basement. The basement connected to the front of the house by a trap door in the parlor floor. This arrangement would have allowed fugitives two means of exit from the attic and basement in case authorities gained access to the interior of the house. However, no such incident was reported in the fugitive stories associated with the Drakes. Recent field studies have failed to verify the existence of specialized hiding spaces and escape routes in houses known to have harbored fugitive slaves in the period. It is believed that if a threat was perceived, fugitives were secreted in remote

(continued)

⁴² Frances E. Drake, Leominster, to Wilbur Siebert, 4 January 1894, vol. 13, Siebert Notebooks; John Maurath, historian, Missouri Civil War Museum, "Eggeling's Story," at <http://missouricivilwarmuseum.org/eggeling.htm>.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 15

and more private zones of the house, and that the prevailing social measures of restricting strangers to the entries and public spheres of houses were sufficient in preventing unwanted intrusion into protected areas. There are documented instances where protectors confronted slave catchers or mobs at barricaded entries or doorsteps, but accounts of these are rare.⁴³

It would have been only practical for people who regularly assisted fugitives to have identified protected areas, and planned escape routes in their homes. That few if any people of color lived in Leominster, and the negative reaction to the perceived familiarity of Frances Drake with Charles Remond, suggest that the Drakes may have felt to need to conceal activities in their own home. The trap door in the parlor floor represents that concern. It connects to what by traces of whitewash appears to have been a room in the front of the basement. Basements were sometimes reported as areas where fugitives were hidden when threats of invasion occurred; possible escape routes included exterior hatches and windows. In the Drake House the basement stairs were in the rear of the house as was a hatch door (now walled over); the trap door was a second means of ingress or egress that insured that no one would be cornered in that part of the house. The trap door is a rare surviving example of an escape mechanism built into a house associated with the Underground Railroad, which enhances the architectural significance of the property. The device was built into the floor when the house was constructed, suggesting that the Drakes came from Boston in 1848 with the intent to actively participate in the antislavery movement.

By 1860, Jonathan Drake's brother, Dearborn, had moved to Springfield, where he was employed as a sash and blind maker. The Leominster house was occupied by Jonathan and Frances Drake and their children Mary Adeline (age 22), George Gilbert (19), and Charles William (15), who were working to supplement the household income: Mary as a milliner and the boys as farm laborers. There would have been many empty spaces in the house for fugitives seeking haven to have been accommodated. By 1870, only Jonathan, then 66 years old and working in a Leominster boot and shoe factory, and Frances, 56 years, remained in the household. In 1880 the aging couple was still in residence, and they were raising their 12-year-old granddaughter, May G. Holt, their deceased daughter Mary's child.⁴⁴ When the well-known Worcester abolitionist Stephen Symonds Foster died in September 1881, Frances Drake and Joel Smith, "two of the old anti-slavery coloborers," attended his memorial service. A notice in the *Fitchburg Sentinel* stated, "They passed through in imagination the struggles of other days (when it cost something to befriend the slave) while they listened to remarks by the old veterans to the cause."⁴⁵

Jonathan Drake died on 17 January 1897, when he was ninety-two years old. Frances Drake died slightly more than three years later, on 23 September 1900. Chauncey W. Carter, her executor, sold the house and lot that year. The property changed hands frequently until 1908, when William E. and Agnes E. Hutcheon, proprietors of the Leominster Steam Laundry and Carpet Cleaning Works, purchased it. The Hutcheons rented the 21 Franklin Street house until 1924 when they moved in. (Prior to this they lived next door to their Pleasant Street laundry, just across Monoosnock Brook from the Drake house.) William Hutcheon died in 1932, and his widow remained in the Drake

(continued)

⁴³ A more detailed analysis of the architectural features found in houses documented to have harbored fugitives can be found in Grover & Larson.

⁴⁴ According to the 1870 census, Mary A. Drake married Joseph G. Holt, the son of Wilton, New Hampshire merchant Varnum S. Holt, and was living in Cambridge in 1870 where their only daughter May was born.

⁴⁵ "Leominster," *Fitchburg Sentinel*, 24 September 1881. Thanks to Linda Pinder of the Leominster Historical Society for making this article available.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 16

House until her own death about 1957. Most of the modest alterations made to the house—front porch addition, shed dormers, kitchen porch and rear extension, and asbestos shingle siding—were made during the Hutcheons' ownership. Yet, none of these seriously diminish the integrity of the Drakes' home. Few changes have been made since. In 1961 William D. Briscoe, who worked at the DuPont plant in Leominster, bought the house and remained there until 2004, when he sold it to current owner Peter Phillips.⁴⁶

Integrity

In spite of the alterations typical of 19th-century working-class dwellings in the region, the Frances H. and Jonathan Drake House retains important features in its plan, construction methods, and design that associate the house with them, their era, and the important role they played in the antislavery movement in Massachusetts. Even with changes to the exterior envelope and the addition of a large front porch and attic dormers, the Drakes would be able to recognize their modest house. Significant interior rooms still retain spatial and physical integrity and functional relationships, regardless of the inevitable addition of modern domestic amenities.

The Drakes' parlor would have been the focal point for numerous meetings and conversations held regarding their antislavery activities. Rooms within the house would have been used to harbor fugitive slaves, like Shadrach Minkins, as they made their journeys to freedom. The trap door located against the front wall of the parlor is a very rare instance of an actual escape mechanism existing in a house with documented associations with the Underground Railroad. The entry and the dining room were also places where visitors would have congregated. All three spaces were connected. It is not clear if the Drakes anticipated these added functions in the selection of their house design, or if the builder's plan was made to fit the function. Frances H. Drake came into contact with the full spectrum of society through her antislavery activities. She corresponded with well-heeled abolitionists and charismatic speakers, who she also may have entertained in her home. The entry and best rooms (parlor and dining room) would have conveyed the Drakes' civility as well as their limited economic status. The absence of pretension was consistent with their denial of the hierarchical class system that denied blacks and women their true dignity. Thus, in its present condition, the house embodies the humble means of the Drakes' daily life, and it effectively conveys the sense of the significant activities that occurred there.

Archaeological Significance

Since patterns of ancient Native American occupation in Leominster are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Ancient sites in this area may contribute important information related to the role and importance of upland/interior sites within local/regional Native American subsistence and settlement systems. Ancient sites in the district may contribute information that indicates the importance of sites in the Nashua River drainage to sites within the larger Merrimack River system. Ancient sites in this area could be part of a larger, possibly seasonal, settlement network of sites based along the Nashua River, the Merrimack River, or part of a specialized adaptation to local

(continued)

⁴⁶ In 1925 E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company acquired Leominster's Viscoloid Company, which had been founded in 1901 by four men, two of them Leominster comb manufacturers, from the merger of three Leominster comb factories. Originally called DuPont Viscoloid Company, it manufactured fancy hair ornaments out of celluloid and later made plastic toys. See Keith Lauer and Julie Robinson, "The History of Celluloid," 5 October 2005, at <http://www.plastics.com/articlelive/articles/1/15/The-History-of-Celluloid>.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 17

environments in the uplands of central Massachusetts and the Worcester Plateau locale. Many subsistence and settlement theories indicate Native socio/political/economic boundaries are based within riverine basins. Ancient sites in the district may contribute important information related to theories of riverine adaptations and the importance of ranked streams within the Nashua/Merrimack River drainage.

Historic archaeological resources described above may contribute important social, cultural, and economic information associated with a 19th century working-class family that played a major role in the antislavery movement and the Underground Railroad in Massachusetts. Historic archaeological resources may contribute similar important information related to fugitives who were hidden at these locations. Structural evidence from outbuildings, and detailed analysis of the contents of occupational-related features, may contribute important information related to domestic and economic activities associated with the working-class Drake family from the mid-19th century to early 20th century. Important evidence may exist that identifies the location and extent that Jonathan Drake conducted shoemaking on the Franklin Street property. Historical and archaeological information may also exist that indicates the role that comb manufacturing may have played in the economic lives of the Drake family. Silas Hills, the maternal grandfather of Frances Hills Drake, was one of the men who brought the comb manufacturing industry from Newbury, Massachusetts, to Leominster ca. 1775. Leominster grew to become a center of comb manufacture that continues to the present day.

Since buildings similar to the Drake House are indistinguishable from similar buildings that were not associated with Underground Railroad activities, structural evidence of buildings of this type that survive in an archaeological context or renovations to extant structures may offer no additional evidence of their Underground Railroad association. Associated occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells), however, may contribute important evidence that documents Underground Railroad activities at these locations. Subsistence refuse and material culture items associated with fugitives may have been deposited in hidden areas to conceal the presence of fugitives at these locations. On the other hand, refuse and material culture associated with fugitives may not have been hidden at all but deposited in normal trash deposits. By the mid-19th century, trash deposits on residential properties may have been more common in rural areas than urban settings. Hidden refuse deposits may characterize both urban and rural areas. Refuse deposits may contain evidence of africanisms or West African culture associated with Southern black fugitives that contrasts sharply with material culture items of Anglo homeowners or even northern blacks. Privies may also contain important macro-fossil evidence that indicates the presence of fugitives. Parasitic and floral evidence may exist that indicates an association with diseases and parasitic conditions specific to West Africa or the American south. Occupational-related features can be an important archaeological resource type on Underground Railroad sites, since they can occur with both extant buildings and on archaeological sites.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 9 Page 1

Major Bibliographical References

Ancestry.com. U.S. Census Records, 1840-1880.

Bodanza, Mark C. *The Coming Crucible: A Play Recounting Important Events of the Anti-Slavery History of the Town of Leominster, Massachusetts*. Leominster, MA: by the author, 2004.

Boston MA. Boston Public Library. Rare Books and Manuscripts. Antislavery Collection.

Cambridge MA. Harvard University. Houghton Library. Crawford Blagden Collection of the papers of Wendell Phillips.

Collison, Gary. *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen*. Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Emerson, William A. *Leominster Massachusetts Historical and Picturesque*. Gardner, MA: Lithotype Publishing Co., 1888.

Emerson, William A. *Leominster Traditions. Incidents, Anecdotes, Reminiscences, Etc., Connected with the History of Leominster, Mass., and Vicinity*. Leominster: Press of C. H. Hyatt, 1891.

Grover, Kathryn and Neil Larson, "The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts: A Context Statement." Massachusetts Historical Commission, 2005.

Leominster MA. Leominster Historical Society. Manuscript Collections.

Leominster MA. Leominster Public Library. Valuable Collection.

Richards, Leonard L. *'Gentlemen of Property and Standing': Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*. London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Worcester & Leominster MA. Worcester County Registry of Deeds. Deed and mortgage records.

(end)

Frances H. & Jonathan Drake House
Name of Property

Worcester, MA
County, State

10. Geographical Data

Acree of Property less than one acre

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19 273140 4711200
Zone Easting Northing

2.
Zone Easting Northing

3.
Zone Easting Northing

4.
Zone Easting Northing

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 Kathryn Grover and Neil Larson, consultants, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date December 2007

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 Peter and Debra J. Phillips

street & number 225 Pleasant Street telephone 978-833-6508

city or town Leominster state MA zip code 01453

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number 10 Page 1

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel is located on the northerly side of Franklin Street, beginning in Franklin St at the southeast corner at land now or formerly owned by Walker

- thence by line of Franklin 116 ft. to corner at land now or formerly owned by Chase
- thence northerly 147.09 ft to corner
- thence easterly 23.79 to corner
- thence northeasterly 98.72 ft to corner
- thence northwesterly 30 ft to corner
- thence northeasterly 127.1 ft to center of brook
- thence by line of brook in easterly direction to land now or formerly owned Walker
- thence by this land southwesterly 346.3 ft to place of beginning

Containing 29,581 sq ft; subject to an easement to city of 18 Aug 1938 [551:398] to repair and clean brook.

See attached City of Leominster Assessors Map #13, Lot #9.

Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel represents the property containing the Drake House and provides an appropriate setting for its significance. Two neighboring lots subdivided from the original one-acre, 26.5 rod parcel Jonathan Drake purchased in 1848 are not included. A 22,244 sq. ft. lot adjacent to the east side of the nominated parcel was subdivided and sold in 1850. It contains a house and yard not relevant to the significance of the Drake property. A 10,450 sq. ft. lot along the Monoosnoc Brook without built features was sold off more recently. The remaining 29,581 sq. ft. parcel contains the Drake House and its historic setting.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number images Page 1

Figures



FIG.1: Historic photograph of Drake reunion, 1884. [Courtesy of Leominster Historical Society]

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number images Page 2

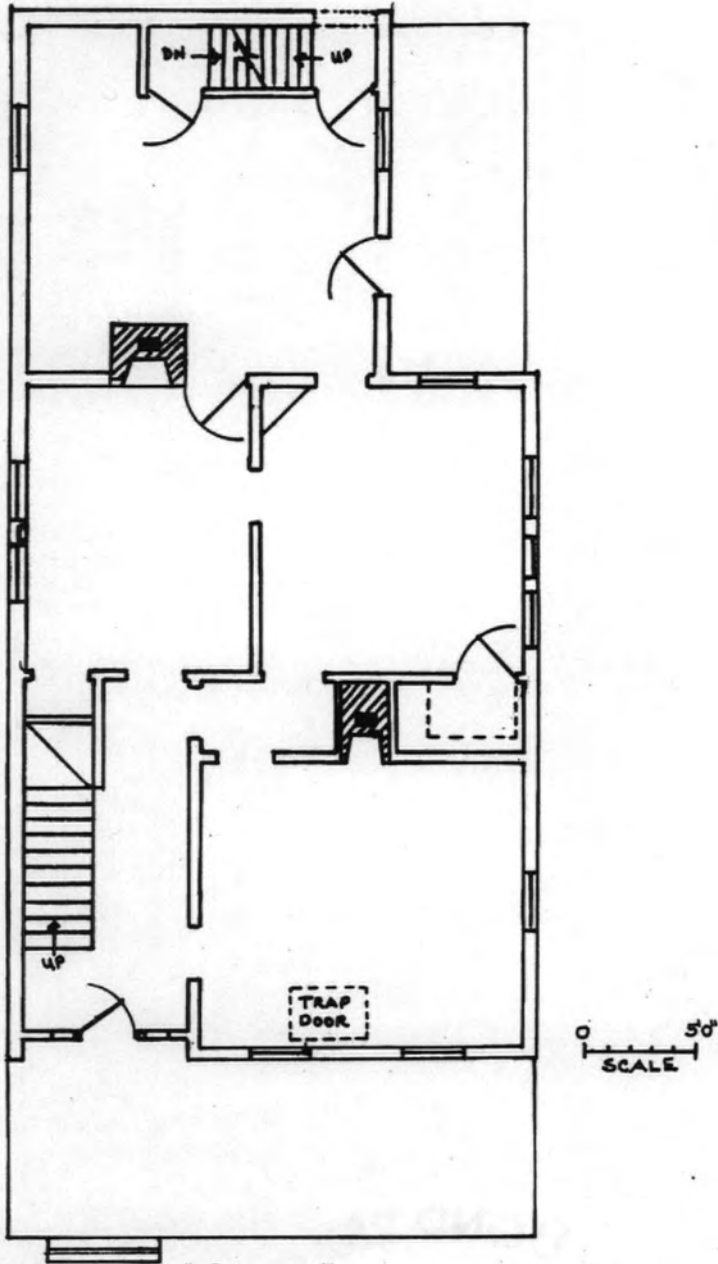


FIG.2: Drake House, First floor plan. Scale drawing by Jill Fisher, 2007.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Drake House
Leominster (Worcester), MA

Section number photos Page 1

Photographs

All photographs by Neil Larson, 2006.

Film negatives with owner

Digital images scanned from negatives at National Register & Massachusetts Historical Commission

List of Photographs

PHOTO 1: Exterior from southeast

PHOTO 2: Exterior from southwest

PHOTO 3: Exterior from northeast

PHOTO 4: Interior, staircase

PHOTO 5: Interior, view of entry

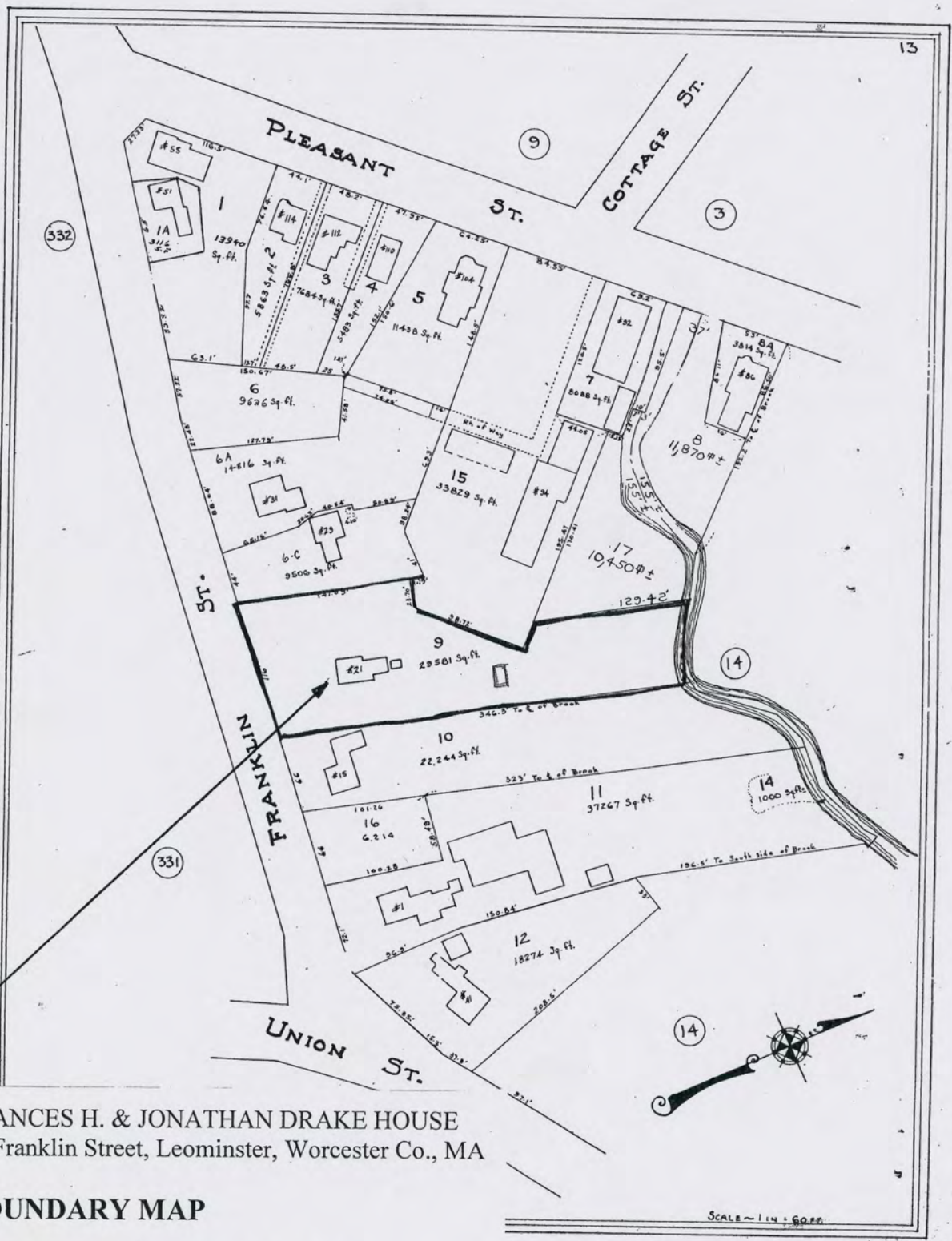
PHOTO 6: Interior, detail of trap door in parlor

PHOTO 7: Interior, dining room

PHOTO 8: Interior, mantel, 2nd floor

PHOTO 9: View of rear yard north of house with 3-bay garage in background

(end)



FRANCES H. & JONATHAN DRAKE HOUSE
 21 Franklin Street, Leominster, Worcester Co., MA

BOUNDARY MAP

City of Leominster Assessor Map #13
 Nominated property is Lot #9



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Drake, Frances H. and Jonathan, House

MULTIPLE NAME: Underground Railroad in Massachusetts MPS

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Worcester

DATE RECEIVED: 12/17/07 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/11/08
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/26/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/30/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 07001488

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 1-29-08 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**red in the
National Register**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



MA - Leominster (Worcester County) - Drake1.tif

Frances H. & Jonathan Drake House
Leominster, Worcester Co., MA

PHOTO 1: Exterior from southeast



MA - Leominster (Worcester County) - Drake 2.tif

Frances H. & Jonathan Drake House
Leominster, Worcester Co., MA

PHOTO 2: Exterior from south west



MA - Leominster (Worcester County) - Drake 3.tif

Francis H. & Jonathan Drake House
Leominster, Worcester Co., MA

PHOTO 3: Exterior from northeast



MA - Leominster (Worcester County) - Drake 4.tif

Frances H. & Jonathan Drake House
Leominster, Worcester Co, MA

PHOTO 4: Interior, staircase



MA - Leominster (Worcester County) - Drake B..tif

Frances H. & Jonathan Drake House
Leominster, Worcester Co., MA

PHOTO 5: Interior, view of entry



MA - Leominster (Worcester County) - Drake 6.tif

Frances H. & Jonathan Drake House
Leominster, Worcester Co., MA

PHOTO 6: Interior, detail of trap door



MA - Leominster (Worcester County) - Drake 7.tif

Frances H. & Jonathan Drake House
Leominster, Worcester Co., MA

PHOTO 7: Interior, dining room



MA - Leominster (Worcester County) - Drake 8.tif

Frances H. & Jonathan Drake House
Leominster, Worcester Co., MA

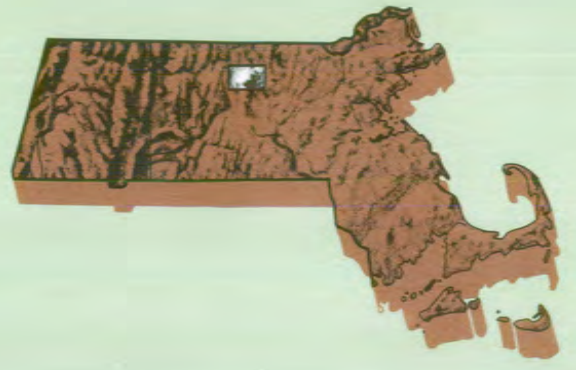
Photo 8: Interior, mantel, 2nd floor



MA - Leominster (Worcester County) - Drake9.tif

Frances H. & Jonathan Drake House
Leominster, Worcester Co., MA

PHOTO 9: View of rear yard north of house
with 3-bay garage in background



7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names



GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

1988

Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Massachusetts Department of Public Works
 Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies
 Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1960. Field checked 1981. Map edited 1988
 Supersedes Fitchburg 1969 and Gardner 1970 1:25,000-scale maps
 Projection and 1000-meter grid, zone 19
 Universal Transverse Mercator
 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone. 1927 North American Datum
 To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 6 meters south and 39 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks
 There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map
 Gray tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
 Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fences and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is uncheckd

CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
 CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER
 OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.5 METER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

| Meters | Feet | DECLINATION DIAGRAM | | ADJOINING MAPS | | |
|--------|---------|---------------------|---------|----------------|---|---|
| 1 | 3.2808 | | 35 DEGS | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2 | 6.5617 | | | 4 | 5 | |
| 3 | 9.8425 | | | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 4 | 13.1234 | | | | | |
| 5 | 16.4042 | | | | | |
| 6 | 19.6850 | | | | | |
| 7 | 22.9659 | | | | | |
| 8 | 26.2467 | | | | | |
| 9 | 29.5275 | | | | | |
| 10 | 32.8084 | | | | | |

To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808
 To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.3048
 UTM grid convergence (utm and true magnetic declination (MD))
 Diagram is approximate

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
 DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

Topographic Map Symbols

| | |
|---|--|
| Primary highway, hard surface | |
| Secondary highway, hard surface | |
| Light-duty road, hard or improved surface | |
| Unimproved road, trail | |
| Route marker: Interstate, U. S. State | |
| Railroad: standard gauge, narrow gauge | |
| Bridge: drawbridge | |
| Footbridge; overpass; underpass | |
| Built-up area: only selected landmark buildings shown | |
| House; barn; church; school; large structure | |
| Boundary: | |
| National, with monument | |
| State | |
| County, parish | |
| Civil township, precinct, district | |
| Incorporated city, village, town | |
| National or State reservation; small park | |
| Land grant with monument; found section corner | |
| U. S. public lands survey: range, township, section | |
| Range, township, section line: location approximate | |
| Fence or field line | |
| Power transmission line, located tower | |
| Dam; dam with lock | |
| Cemetery; grave | |
| Campground; picnic area; U. S. location monument | |
| Wellhead; water well; spring | |
| Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cave | |
| Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation | |
| Contours: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression | |
| Distorted surface: strip mine, lava, sand | |
| bathymetric contours: index, intermediate | |
| Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream | |
| Rapids, large and small; falls, large and small | |
| Swamp; marsh | |
| Saltwater marsh; land subject to controlled inundation | |
| Woodland; scattered trees | |
| Scrub; mangrove | |
| Orchard; vineyard | |

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request

