

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED OCT 27 1977

DATE ENTERED

DEC 6 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Jireh Luce House

AND/OR COMMON

Ritter House (preferred)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Beach Street

CITY, TOWN

Vineyard Haven

VICINITY OF Tisbury

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

12th

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE

025

COUNTY

Dukes

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☒ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☒ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☒ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Martha's Vineyard Historical Preservation Society, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

Box 95

CITY, TOWN

Edgartown

VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts 02539

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Dukes County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Edgartown

STATE

Massachusetts 02539

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Inventory of the Historic Assets of the Commonwealth

DATE

1977

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Massachusetts Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts 02108

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Ritter House is located on Beach Street in the Village of Vineyard Haven, the town center of Tisbury on Martha's Vineyard Island. The property comprises 1/6 of an acre and is surrounded by the commercial center of town. Vineyard Haven is the major port of entry to the island. Beach Street is the main street leading to and from Vineyard Haven harbor and the primary access in and out of town. A small shingled structure housing office space stands to the east of the house. A hotel and enclosed swimming pool stand immediately west. The fire station and a motel occupy land directly across the street. The property is landscaped with tall maple trees and low shrubbery.

The Ritter House is the only Federal period house remaining on this stretch of Beach Street. It is a 2½ story ridge roof building with a chimney rising at both gable ends. The five bay wide by two bay deep central hall plan house has an early two story ell addition projecting from the north (rear) elevation which forms a T-plan. The wood frame house is sheathed with horizontal weatherboards covered with clapboards painted white. The rear addition is shingled and also painted white. The cornerboards are plain. The entablature is molded and has cornice returns. Fenestration on the main house is 12/12 with much original glass remaining. Wooden window cornices are representative of a masonry jack arch. Fenestration on the ell addition is 2/2 with plain architraves.

The symmetrical facade faces south on Beach Street. The six panel center door is flanked by fluted pilasters which support a modillioned open triangular pediment above. The door is headed by a semi-circular fanlight which has been replaced with vertical panes of red and orange Victorian style etched glass. The first story windows are framed by louvered shutters. The east and west elevations each have two symmetrically placed windows on the first and second stories and a single window in the gable overhead. The north (rear) elevation has a second story doorway at its eastern end. This is a double wooden door with two vertical lights and a panel below on each side. The door is headed by three lights. It is presumed to have led to the roof of a small shed which has been removed. There is a skylight in the roof above.

The ell addition is two bays wide by two bays deep with a low pitched, almost flat roof. There is a narrow wooden door with a single rectangular light at the eastern end of the north elevation of the ell.

The interior of the house retains most of its original flavor. The woodwork and floors are almost all original. Floor boards are of varying widths and are painted. Walls are plastered. Each room retains wainscoting with molded panels and simple ornamentation. Each room has a fireplace with a mantel with a molded panel above and decorative moldings flanking it. Diamond shaped moldings are found in two of the rooms. Wide molded entablatures are also found, again with the diamond motif and dentils.

A bathroom has been added to the second floor. The ell houses the kitchen.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
☐ PREHISTORIC	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	☒ COMMUNITY PLANNING	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	☐ RELIGION
☐ 1400-1499	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	☐ CONSERVATION	☐ LAW	☐ SCIENCE
☐ 1500-1599	☐ AGRICULTURE	☐ ECONOMICS	☐ LITERATURE	☐ SCULPTURE
☐ 1600-1699	☒ ARCHITECTURE	☒ EDUCATION	☐ MILITARY	☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
☒ 1700-1799	☐ ART	☐ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER
☐ 1800-1899	☐ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ 1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☐ INDUSTRY	☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)
		☐ INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1796

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ritter House is significant as one of the few survivors of the great Vineyard Haven fire of 1883, and as a building which served as an inn and home to many prominent citizens during the 19th century. The house gains architectural significance through its simple Federal styling and well preserved interiors.

The house is situated on the first road to be laid out in Tisbury, originally called Quality Street. During the 19th century, the street was lined with homes similar to the Ritter House. All were razed, moved or burned in the fire. On August 11, 1883 the fire destroyed more than 60 buildings along Main Street. The Ritter House was the first saved along Beach Street, which adjoins Main Street. Local tradition holds that Dr. Charles Lane, the owner at the time of the fire, attired in frock coat and silk hat as usual, appeared just as the flames were about to reach the house and used his tall silk hat as a fire bucket to extinguish sparks on the roof.

The house was built in 1796 for Jireh Luce, born in Rochester in 1776. Holmes Hole, as the town was then known, was recognized as a separate parish of the town of Tisbury in 1796. The Vineyard was at this time recovering from economic disaster following the great losses of sheep and ships (the main 18th century sources of income) during the Revolutionary War. The development of Holmes Hole as a major Vineyard village occurred a century and a half after Edgartown and almost as long after Middletown, now called West Tisbury.

Rufus Spaulding arrived from Connecticut c.1800 and became the second owner of the house. According to Banks' The History of Martha's Vineyard, the Ritter House "...was an inn before 1800 to about 1812, being the residence of a village factotum, Dr. Rufus Spaulding, who was a doctor, postmaster, justice, village librarian, inn-keeper, and Master of the lodge of Masons." Spaulding was also elected selectman in 1803.

Later residents of the house included Stephen de Nerville, a French sea captain who married the daughter of an occupant and stayed in the house. Hanna de Nerville, who occupied the house in the second half of the 19th c., was married to Oric P. Branscomb; hence it became known as the Branscomb House. Gilbert S. Smith, another sea captain, purchased the house in 1902. Smith had gone to sea on a whaling vessel at age 14. During World War I the house was acquired by Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Ritter. Mr. Ritter was a long time principal of the Tisbury School. The house was saved from demolition in 1976 and is currently leased to the Martha's Vineyard School Committee for use as the Superintendent of Schools' headquarters.

The house preserves the dignity, beauty and continuity of almost 200 years of Vineyard tradition and history.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Banks, Charles Edward, M.D., The History of Martha's Vineyard, Vol. II, Boston, 1911.
Mayhew, Eleanor Ranson, Martha's Vineyard, A Short History and Guide, New Bedford, 1956.
Norris, Mrs. Howes, Sketches of Old Homes in our Village, Boston, 1921.
Tisbury Tercentenary Committee, 1671 Tisbury 1971, Oak Bluffs, 1971.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/6 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 366130 4590160
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Blaine Mallory and Joseph Orfant, National Register Editor

ORGANIZATION

(~~Marian R. Halperin, Historic District Commission~~ William Street)

Massachusetts Historical Commission

DATE

October 4, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

294 Washington Street

TELEPHONE

617-727-8470

CITY OR TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts 02108

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Elizabeth Reed Amadon

TITLE

Executive Director, Mass. Historical Commission

DATE

10/18/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12/6/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

12-5-77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Property Ritter House (Jimmie Lee House) Dukes

Working Number 10.22.77.1728

CONTROL

Maps

OK ^{pl} 10.27.77

HISTORIAN

Accept:
Franklin
11.8.72

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

HISTORIC NAME APPEARS TO BE A BETTER CHOICE
THAN THE EARLY 1800'S NAME.

I agree; but have you
ever tried to convince for or against?

ACCEPT
MAC DRUGS
11/7/77

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept
Leborich
11/8/77

BRANCH CHIEF

Herring
12.5.77

KEEPER

Wm
12/6/77

National Register Write-up

Federal Register Entry

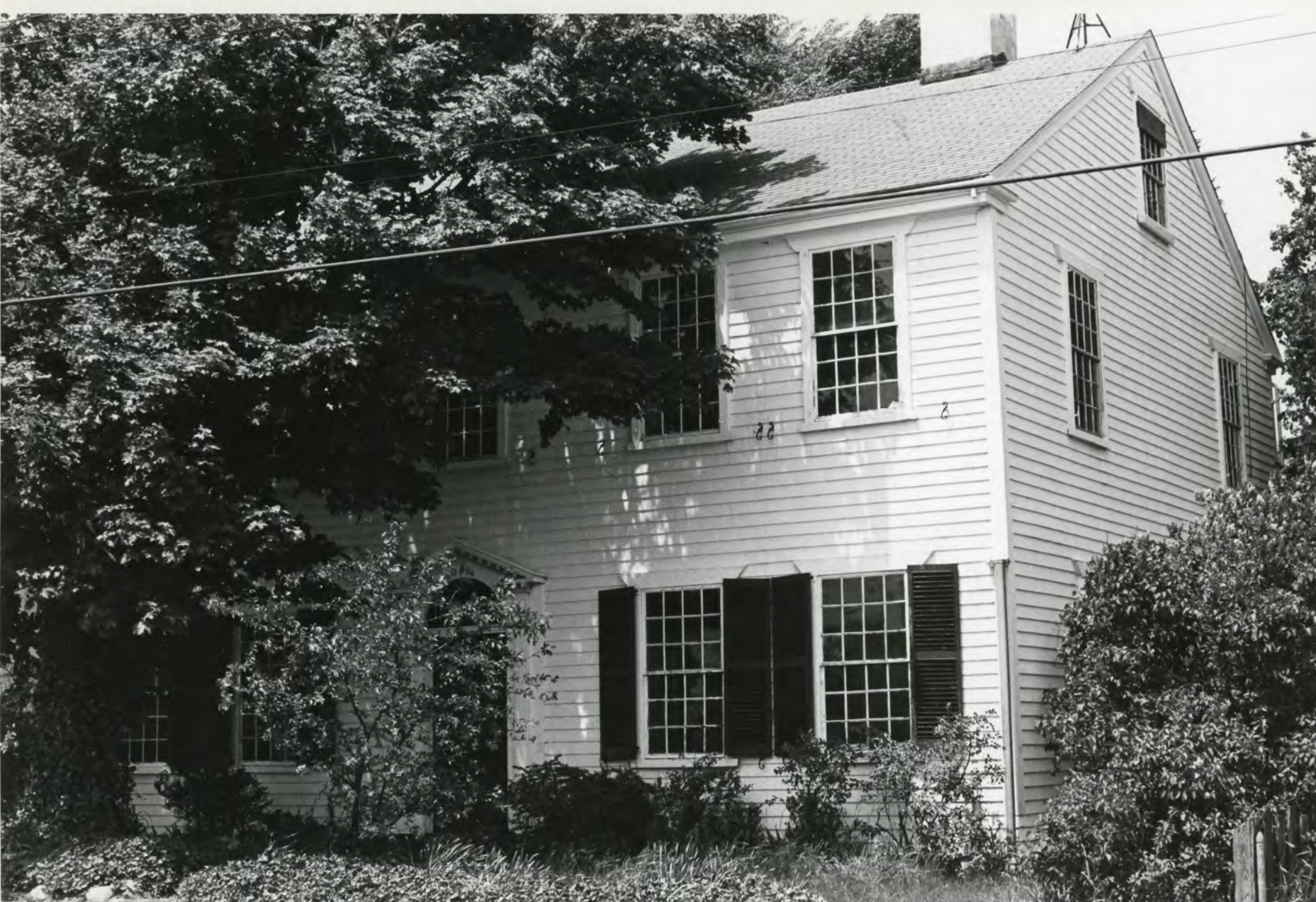
Send-back

Re-submit

Entered

DEC 6 1977

INT:2106-7A



Dukes County

Ritter House
Tisbury (Vineyard Haven), Massachusetts
1977

Alison Shaw

The Vineyard Gazette

Edgartown, Mass. 02539

#1 of 3

South facade and east elevation.

OCT 27 1977

DEC 6 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Sutkes County

Ritter House

Tisbury (Vineyard Haven), Massachusetts

1977

Alison Shaw

The Vineyard Gazette

Edgartown, Mass. 02539

#2 of 3

South facade and west elevation.

OCT 27 1977

DEC 6 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Dukes County

Ritter House

Tisbury (Vineyard Haven), Massachusetts
1977

Alison Shaw

The Vineyard Gazette

Edgartown, Mass. 02539

#3 *of 3*

North (rear) elevation of ell.

OCT 27 1977

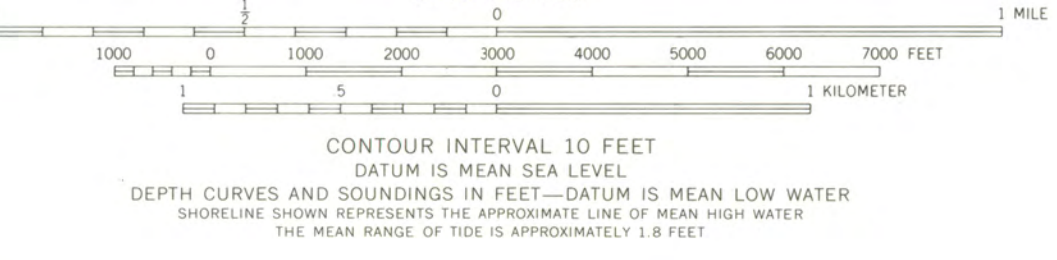
DEC 6 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Ritter House
Tisbury, Massachusetts
UTM Coordinates:
19/366 130/4590 160

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1939. Topography by planetable surveys 1942. Revised
from aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1972
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 260 (1971)
261 and 264 (1970), and 114SC (1972). This information is not
intended for navigational purposes
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system, island zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 19,
shown in blue
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information furnished
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface
Secondary highway, hard surface
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U. S. Route
State Route

VINEYARD HAVEN, MASS
N4122.5-W7035.7/7.5
1972
AMS 6866 1 NW-SERIES V814



ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

Date Entered DEC 6 1977

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Ritter House (Jireh Luce House)	Vineyard Haven Dukes County

Also Notified

Hon. Edward W. Brooke
Hon. Edward M. Kennedy
Hon. Gerry E. Studds
Regional Director, North Atlantic Region

State Historic Preservation Officer
Mrs. Elizabeth R. Amadon
Executive Director, Massachusetts
Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

880 Mott/js 12/14/77

NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

① NAME as it appears on federal register: Ritter House			② OTHER NAMES: Luce, Jireh, House			③ date of entry: DEC 6 1977		④ county code: 07	
⑤ LOCATION street & number Beach St.		city / town Vineyard Haven		vicinity of MA		state MA		county Dukes	
⑦ OWNER ☒ PRIVATE ☐ STATE ☐ MUNICIPAL ☐ COUNTY ☐ MULTIPLE ☐ FEDERAL (agency name)		⑧ ADMINISTRATOR:		⑥ NPS REGION: NA					
⑨ EXISTING SURVEYS ☐ HABS ☐ HAER ☐ NHL		⑩ FUNDED? ☐ YES ☐ NO		⑪ CONGRESS. DISTRICT 12th		⑫ SOURCE of NOMINATION ☒ STATE ☐ FEDERAL		if state who prepared form?	
⑬ WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ YES, NAME ☐ NO		⑭ WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? ☐ YES, NAME ☐ NO		⑮ ACREAGE		☐ LOCAL ☐ PRIVATE ORGANIZATION			
⑯ CONDITION ☐ excellent ☐ good ☐ fair		☐ deteriorated ☐ ruins ☐ unexposed ☐ unexcavated		☐ altered ☐ unaltered ☐ reconstructed ☐ excavated		⑰ features: INTERIOR ☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1 ☐ NOT INTACT-0 ☐ UNKNOWN-4 ☐ NOT APPLICABLE-7		EXTERIOR ☐ SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2 ☐ NOT INTACT-0 ☐ UNKNOWN-5 ☐ NOT APPLICABLE-8	
⑱ ACCESS ☐ YES-Restricted ☐ YES-Unrestricted ☐ No Access ☐ Unknown		⑲ ADAPTIVE USE ☐ YES ☐ NO		⑳ SAVED? ☐ YES		IS PROPERTY A HISTORIC DISTRICT? ☐ yes ☐ no			
㉑ AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ☐ ARCHEOLOGY-prehistoric-2 ☐ ARCHEOLOGY-historic-1 ☐ AGRICULTURE-3 ☐ ARCHITECTURE-4 ☐ ART-5		☐ ENGINEERING-11 ☐ ENTERTAINMENT-26 ☐ EXPLORATION-12 ☐ HEALTH-27 ☐ CONSERVATION-8 ☐ ECONOMICS-9 ☐ EDUCATION-10		☐ LANDSCAPE ARCH.-15 ☐ LAW-16 ☐ LITERATURE-17 ☐ MILITARY-18 ☐ MUSIC-19 ☐ PHILOSOPHY-20		☐ POLITICS/GOVT.-21 ☐ RELIGION-22 ☐ SCIENCE-23 ☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN-24 ☐ SOCIAL/CULTURAL-30 ☐ TRANSPORTATION-25		☐ RECREATION-28 ☐ SETTLEMENT-29 ☐ URBAN PLANNING-31 ☐ OTHER (SPECIFY) _____	
㉒ functions WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT: CURRENTLY:		㉓ dates of initial construction: major alterations: historic events:		㉔ CLAIMS: explain 'first' ☐ 'oldest' ☐ 'only' ☐		㉕ ETHNIC GROUP ASSOCIATION			
㉖ architectural style(s):		㉗ architect:		㉘ master builder:		㉙ engineer:			
㉚ landscape architect / garden designer:		㉛ interior decorator:		㉜ artist:		㉝ artisan:		㉞ builder/contractor:	
㉟ NAMES give role & date PERSONAL: EVENTS: INSTITUTIONAL:									

㊱ NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP