

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC William Cullen Bryant Homestead

AND/OR COMMON

William Cullen Bryant Homestead

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Bryant Road

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Cummington

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

First

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Massachusetts

025

Hampshire

015

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
___DISTRICT	___PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	___AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	___UNOCCUPIED	___COMMERCIAL ___PARK
___STRUCTURE	___BOTH	___WORK IN PROGRESS	___EDUCATIONAL ___PRIVATE RESIDENCE
___SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	___ENTERTAINMENT ___RELIGIOUS
___OBJECT	___IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	___GOVERNMENT ___SCIENTIFIC
	___BEING CONSIDERED	___YES: UNRESTRICTED	___INDUSTRIAL ___TRANSPORTATION
		___NO	___MILITARY ___OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Trustees of Reservations

STREET & NUMBER

224 Adams Street

CITY, TOWN

Milton 02186

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Hampshire Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Northampton

STATE

Massachusetts

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

none

DATE

\_\_\_FEDERAL \_\_\_STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The William Cullen Bryant Homestead, Cummington, Massachusetts, stands at a high elevation in the Berkshire Hills with a sweeping view of the Hampshire Hills to the east. Of the 478 acres once associated with the Homestead, 188.57 acres of pasture, orchard, and woodland remain intact. The major portion of this property is a 152.01 acre parcel, roughly L-shaped, sloping northeast and south from the Homestead. A separate parcel of 36.56 acres lies northwest of the Homestead and at a higher elevation.

The original portion of the Bryant Homestead was built by the poet's maternal grandfather, Ebenezer Snell, in 1783. Dutch Colonial in style, it appears to have consisted of a 1 1/2 story main block with gambrel roof and a 1-story rear ell. It was in this house that Bryant spent his childhood and adolescence.

The present plan and style of the Homestead are the result of changes made to the frame and clapboard house by Bryant between his repurchase of the property in 1865 and his death in 1878. Shortly after the repurchase, Bryant raised the original sections of the house and built a new ground floor beneath them. At the same time, he added a 1-story gambrel-roofed study, a replica of his father's medical office, at the southwest corner of the front facade. At a later date, a 1 1/2 story ell, gambrel-roofed with shed dormers and a 1-story side porch, was attached to the northwest side of the existing rear ell.

The architectural style of the house is now essentially Victorian but shows some Oriental influence in its detailing, particularly in the flaring eaves of the gambrel roof, the ogee hood set into the eaves at the center of the front facade, and the ornamental latticework of the 1-story porches along the southeast (front) and northeast elevations of the main block. All of the eaves are supported by simple carved brackets. Windows are primarily 4/4 sash with louvered blinds, some of them topped by flared hoods set on brackets.

A small, 1-story wooden outbuilding, possibly an icehouse, stands immediately northwest of the rear ells; Oriental influence shows again in the pagoda-style cupola which rises from the center of its gabled roof. About 100 yards further northwest stands a modern, 1 1/2 story, gambrel-roofed cottage, used as a residence for the Homestead's administrator. Opposite it, across a discontinued country road, is a large barn with storage sheds attached at either side; the barn dates from the period of Bryant's ownership but the sheds are of more recent origin.

Though some portions of the Bryant property are rented annually by local farmers, much of it is gradually returning to a state of nature. Hiking trails, many of them blazed by Bryant, who habitually took 10 and 15-mile walks, are open to visitors to the Homestead.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1799; 1865-1878

BUILDER/ARCHITECT not known

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1799, Dr. Peter Bryant moved his family to the Bryant Homestead, a house which his father-in-law had built at Cummington, Massachusetts, in 1783. There Bryant's son, poet and editor William Cullen Bryant, spent his childhood and adolescence, under the influence of the natural beauty of the Berkshire Hills and the conservative principles of western Massachusetts. The first version of "Thanatopsis", Bryant's best-known poem, was written at the Homestead when he was seventeen.

The Homestead was also William Cullen Bryant's summer home from 1865 until his death in 1878. Much of the present appearance of the 27-room frame house is the result of alterations and additions made by Bryant during that period; its furnishings also reflect the poet's second residence there. Since 1929, the Homestead and the 188.57 acre farm associated with it have been the property of the Trustees of Reservations. The house and grounds are open to the public from June through September annually.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

William Cullen Bryant was born at Cummington, Massachusetts, on November 3, 1794, and, at the age of 5, moved with his family to the house built in 1783 by his maternal grandfather, Ebenezer Snell, also in Cummington. Bryant was educated in district schools, then studied Latin and Greek with tutors, and in 1810 passed an examination for admission to the sophomore class at Williams College.

Forced to leave Williams after one year for lack of funds, Bryant read and then practiced law, first at Plainfield and then at Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He continued to write, however, and, when he left the Berkshires in 1825 for a literary career in New York, Bryant had already been hailed as the leading poetic genius of the nation. Bryant, Irving, and Cooper became the contemporary literary trinity, the first authors of genuine talent produced in America.

From 1825 until 1829, Bryant was co-editor of the New York Review and Athenaeum Magazine. In 1829, he became editor of the New York Evening Post, and remained in that position until his death in 1878, bringing to it a combination of scholarly literary qualities and journalistic ideas previously unknown in the New York newspaper field. In addition to his sound leader-

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Godwin, Parke. A Biography of William Cullen Bryant (1883).  
 Pattee, Fred Lewis. American Literature Since 1870.  
 Spiller, Robert E. The Cycle of American Literature (1955).

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 188.57

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>18</u>	<u>668510</u>	<u>4704920</u>	B	<u>18</u>	<u>670900</u>	<u>4704170</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<u>18</u>	<u>6619810</u>	<u>4703150</u>	D	<u>18</u>	<u>6619520</u>	<u>4703210</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The National Historic Landmark designation for the William Cullen Bryant Homestead includes the Homestead itself, the icehouse, the barn, and the remaining 188.57 acres of the Bryant property, as owned by the Trustees of Reservations in separate parcels of 152.01 and 36.56 acres each; included in the boundaries but excluded from the designation is the modern administrator's cottage. Specific Landmark boundaries are shown in red on the attached copy of an 1875 survey map, to which modern road names have added.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by J. Walter Coleman, Historian, 7/20/61

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Historic Sites Survey</u>	<u>2/14/75</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L. Street, N.W.</u>	<u>202-523-5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington, D.C. 20240</u>	

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS \_\_\_\_\_

NATIONAL \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL \_\_\_\_\_

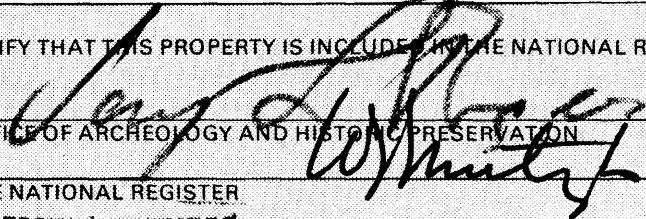
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE N/A National Historic Landmark

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
	DATE <u>12/12/76</u>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE <u>12-6-76</u>
ATTEST:	
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)	

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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

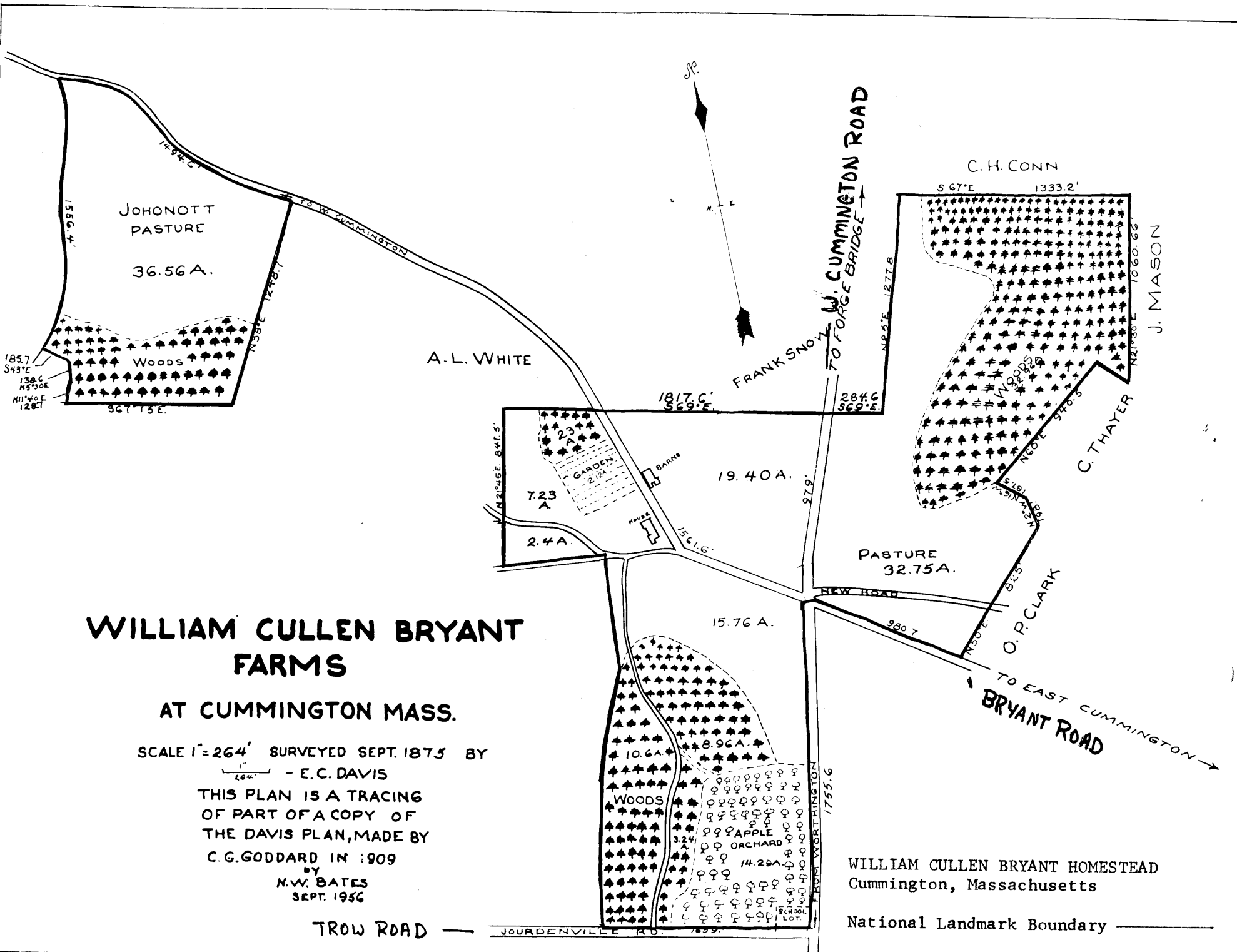
ship in the journalistic realm, Bryant continued to write and to exert tremendous influence as a critic in American literature and public affairs. Though Bryant moved beyond conservative beliefs and used the Post to give eloquent support to Jacksonian, free trade, and eventually abolitionist views, he never lost touch with the nature experience of his early years at Cummington in which his poetic talent had its flowering.

The Bryant Homestead had been sold in 1835 but the poet bought it back in 1865 and altered it to serve as a summer home. He raised the two original sections of the house and built a new ground floor beneath them. At the same time, Bryant added a 1-story study, the exact replica of Dr. Peter Bryant's office. At a later date, a long ell was attached to the northwest side of the house. Bryant also made changes in the Homestead grounds, replacing the apple orchard with evergreens and planting some 1300 apple trees, 200 pears, numerous cherry and plum trees, plantations of berry bushes and other shrubs (not all of which remain).

Bryant had hoped that the mountain air of the Bershires would improve the failing health of his wife, Frances Fairchild Bryant, whom he had married in 1821. Unfortunately, she died before the initial alterations to the house had been completed, but Bryant continued to spend summers there with his family until his own death in June, 1878.

The Homestead remained in the Bryant family until 1929, when the poet's grand-daughter, Minna Godwin Goddard, donated the property to the Trustees of Reservations, a privately-administered charitable corporation founded in 1891 to preserve places of natural beauty and historic interest in Massachusetts. In 1930, the poet's daughter, Julia Sands Bryant, increased the Homestead's endowment and Conrad C. Goddard donated Bryant memorabilia and furniture; much of the latter dates from Bryant's repurchase of the Homestead. By arrangement with the Trustees, Mr. Goddard and his wife continued to spend summers at the Homestead until 1967.

**Note:** The National Historic Landmark boundaries for the Homestead represent the maximum extent of the property acquired by Bryant during his second residence there, transferred intact to the Trustees of Reservations in 1929.



# WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT FARMS

AT CUMMINGTON MASS.

SCALE 1" = 264' SURVEYED SEPT. 1875 BY  
 E.C. DAVIS

THIS PLAN IS A TRACING  
 OF PART OF A COPY OF  
 THE DAVIS PLAN, MADE BY  
 C.G. GODDARD IN 1909

BY  
 M.W. BATES  
 SEPT. 1956

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT HOMESTEAD  
 Cummington, Massachusetts

National Landmark Boundary