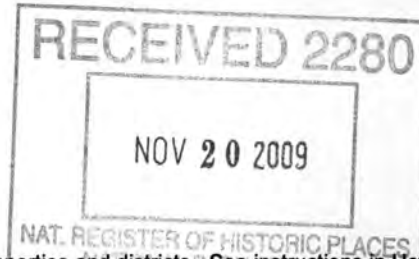


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Benjamin Thayer House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 200 Farm Street not for publication

city or town Blackstone vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Worcester code 027 zip code 01504

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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Brona Simon
Brona Simon, SHPO

November 13, 2009

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

Edson W. Beall

Date of Action

12.30.09

Benjamin Thayer 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	
2	0	building
1	0	sites
2	1	structures
1	0	objects
6	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

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)

COLONIAL: Georgian, Federal

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: granite, fieldstone

walls WOOD

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

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7. Description

The Benjamin Thayer House, located in the upper northeast quadrant of the town of Blackstone, in the southeastern part of Worcester County, MA, is situated on 9.44 acres. Farm Street is an old road that leads northwest from Woonsocket, Rhode Island to join with Blackstone Street north of the Thayer House. It is a rural road north of Blackstone Village, and only about one-half mile west of East Blackstone Village.

Blackstone is an inland town in the Blackstone Valley. It was part of Mendon, the town directly north, until 1845, when Blackstone became incorporated separately. To the west is Millville, which was part of Blackstone until 1917. Bellingham borders Blackstone on the east, and municipalities in Rhode Island – Woonsocket and North Smithfield – to the south.

The Benjamin Thayer House is representative of a late 18th-century farmhouse that was adapted over the years for succeeding generations of Thayers. The property retains architectural and historical integrity and is reflective of a period of development beginning at the time of its construction in the late 18th century and continuing to 1959, through which time the property has been in continuous use as a homestead. Several other resources on the property are contributing, including the two-car, shingled garage built in the 1950s; the large, granite stepping stones at the front and side entrances; the stone wall lining the road edge of the property; and the meadow behind the house, which is reflective of the farm's agricultural past. One noncontributing resource is the in-ground swimming pool built in the 1980s.

Setting

The Benjamin Thayer House is located on the southwest side of Farm Street about one-quarter mile north of Summer Street. Hop Brook crosses Farm Street just south of the Thayer House and runs west of the rear property line through land that once was part of this farm and that remains under ownership by family members of the present owners of the Benjamin Thayer House. The Thayer House is surrounded by modern residential development, with the Hop Brook Lane Subdivision along the southern property line (once part of this parcel) and other late 20th-century dwellings north of this property. On the northeast side of Farm Street there are a few mid to late 20th-century modest residences and one historic property – the Judge Francis Thayer House (207 Farm Street – MHC #299), a ca. 1875 Italianate dwelling - all on land that once was part of the large Benjamin Thayer farm.

The front yard of the Benjamin Thayer House is marked by a low stone **retaining wall** along the Farm Street property line. The wall breaks for the driveway entrance along the south boundary and for a stone footpath to the front door. The path leading to the front door has lilac bushes on each side of the single step at the road edge and **stepping stones** of single stone slabs set into the grass leading to the front door, where there is a large granite step. A tall stand of Norway spruce trees screens properties northwest of the Benjamin Thayer House. They are arranged in two rows running from Farm Street southwesterly along the northwest property line to the rear yard of the property. The house is situated about 50 feet from the road on a grassy plateau and faces northeasterly. Two large maple shade trees are located in the front lawn: one just behind the stone wall marks the edge of the driveway on the southeast corner of the property, and the other

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

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is set back from the road, near the southeast corner of the house. A large rhododendron shrub that has grown to a height of more than one story covers the northeast corner of the house. A low picket fence with cap rail and a central gate encloses a small entrance yard across the entire façade of the main house.

The rear yard contains a 1950s shingled **garage** with attached screened porch and an in-ground swimming pool (1980s) that is surrounded by a picket fence and accessed through gates or via the screened porch attached to the garage. An extension of the driveway passes behind the house to the garage, which is directly behind the side wing of the house. A small **well house** covers the old well on the southwest corner of the house.

The acreage of this parcel extends behind the house for over 1,000 feet. A wide **meadow**, dotted with single pine and spruce trees and a cluster of deciduous trees near the middle, stretches out behind the garage and pool. The rear of this parcel is wooded with a variety of deciduous trees. The meadow is an important component as a remnant of the agricultural past of this property. The rear property line is within the wooded area and is contiguous to open land and Hop Brook, which flows in a northwesterly direction only about 300' southwest of this property line.

Benjamin Thayer House

The Benjamin Thayer House consists of a five-bay, 2 ½ story, Georgian-style house with a single-story side wing on the southeast side, and a small, enclosed, rear-entrance porch. The house rests on a fieldstone (main block) and a scored granite block (side wing) foundation, sheathed in wood clapboards and topped with an asphalt shingle roof. Straddling the ridge is a brick chimney that is slightly off center (about two feet south of the centered entrance bay). The main house is two bays deep, and the side wing is three bays with an extended rear roof slope (a shallow version of a saltbox roof). Exterior features of the main block include: 6/6 sash set in slightly projecting plain wood frames with projecting molded lintels; a boxed cornice with narrow returns in the gable ends; an enclosed (boxed) molded eave overhang with second-story windows butting up to the overhang; flat narrow and unadorned corner boards; and a water table trim board just above the stone foundation. (Photo 1)

The house has four entrance doors. The centered entrance on the façade of the main block is an eight-paneled door with raised-field panels, set into a frame of flanking pilasters. These pilasters (replaced with three short boards on each side making up the height of each pilaster) frame the door and the six-light transom over the door and have molded projecting capitals that carry a heavily molded projecting lintel (two-part graduated molding separated by a bold ovolo molding strip). The door has a large Suffolk latch and is hung by three long strap hinges (on the interior). A large granite stepping stone marks this main entrance. The rear entrance, near the northwest corner of the house, has a modern storm door with an enclosed gabled-roof, five-foot-wide entrance porch. The side wing has two entrances as well: one in its southeast gable end facing the driveway leading from the road, and one in the rear elevation facing the driveway between the house and garage. The door in the gable end of the side wing has six raised-field panels each trimmed with molding. This late 19th/early 20th-century Colonial Revival door is set into a plain flat frame, has a simple glass storm door covering it, and a large wide granite stepping stone in front. The one in the rear of the side wing has Colonial Revival detail, with two strings of four small lights over three long, recessed panels. It is covered with a neo-Colonial storm door that is half glazed and half wood with an X-panel hung with long strap hinges. (Photo 2)

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Benjamin Thayer House
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The first-story interior plan (see attached floor plans) displays the common shallow, front stair hall in front of the chimney stack, with flanking parlors and an altered three-room space behind. There are three rear rooms. On the northwest end is a mudroom; in the middle is a long kitchen with fireplace at the rear of the central stack; and on the southeast end is an added staircase and passageway to the side wing. The walls between these three rooms across the back of the main block appear to be modern; however, evidence to where dividing walls may have been in this long space are not evident. The side wing has one small room, accessed from the southeast parlor, and one long room, accessed from the passageway that runs along the back of this wing. Evidence in the cellar indicates that the wing is likely to have been just one small room that was enlarged at a later date. Foundation and floor joists vary under the side wing, with a full cellar under the small room and only a crawl space under the remaining part (passageway and long front-to-back family room at the end of the side wing).

The second-story interior plan of the main block mirrors the first-story plan, with the shallow front stair hall, flanking chambers, and three rooms across the rear. The wall dividing the northwest and middle rooms is not coincident with the mudroom/kitchen wall; rather it is more to the south, creating a larger space in this rear southwest bed chamber than in the mudroom below.

The attic is accessed by steep stairs leading from the second-story stair hall. The space is open, with the exception of a small, built-in cedar closet in the northeast corner. Each pair of common rafters carrying the roof is joined with mortise and tenon joints that are pegged. Each pair, spaced at about three feet on center, is also braced with a one-by four-inch collar tie that is 9'8" long between the front rafter and rear rafter, set 4' 7" below the peak (rafter joint), and pegged to the rafter at each end. There are thirteen pairs of rafters, including one pair engaged at each gable end of the house; six are on the southeast side of the chimney and seven on the northwest side, accounting for the slightly off-center chimney when viewed from the road. The chimney rises through the attic space and is splayed on its front side with dimensions of four foot square from the collar ties to the roof and 5'6" along the sides of the chimney at the attic floor accounting for the splay, which is most visible when viewed from the sides. The chimney appears to have been rebuilt from the collar ties to the peak. Sheathing boards that are laid over the rafters are parallel to the main façade, running northwest to southeast, as are attic floorboards.

The cellar is an unfinished space with a foundation of large, boulder-like, whitewashed stones, much that has been reinforced with concrete. The foundation walls and the carrying beams and floor joist structure are consistent with 18th-century construction. There is a full basement under the main block and the small room of the side wing. Under the rear and end section of the side wing, there is only a crawl space. Most post and beam members are large in dimension (from eight to twelve inches) and horizontal members are mortised. Sills are laid on top of the stone foundation. Two large binding beams extend front to back and are separated from the stone-based chimney by about eighteen inches. A similar large structural member runs longitudinally along the back of the chimney between the two end sills of the main block. The sleepers (first-floor joists) are parallel to the front sill, extending between the end sills and these binding beams, and are two and one-half by seven inches, with a one and one-half foot, on-center span between each. Under the small room of the ell, the joists or sleepers are perpendicular to the main façade and extend between the large stone foundation along

(continued)

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the front and back of this space. Joists in the crawl space under the ell addition (hall and end room) are perpendicular to the rear wall of the house. The base of the chimney in the cellar is stone and wide. The chimney has two large structural beams running along the front and back of the chimney and extending to the transverse binding beams noted above. These two chimney framing beams are not mortised into the binding beams; instead they help to carry the transverse binding beams and are supported by large posts, and they are whitewashed. They are curved upwards on each end, similar to the bottom of a canoe. The cellar ceiling on three sides of the chimney base (all but front) has several boards set on an angle, extending between the stone chimney base and one of the large binding beams, each carrying the corresponding hearth above.

Architectural features of the interior finish, found in each room range from paneling to hinges and latches, articulate the early design as well as the function of the ca. 1790 dwelling. Three fireplaces on the first floor and two on the second are in rooms bordering the center stack, which takes up a large volume at the core of the house. Each fireplace is relatively shallow, except the kitchen fireplace (now the dining room), which is deeper and has a crane and a separate beehive bake oven outside the main fireplace. Plaster ceilings have been removed in all rooms, exposing joists and beams, none of which is chamfered or finished in such a way to indicate that they were exposed in the 18th and 19th century. In the front parlors, the summer beams run front to back as binding beams and are set only 18" away from the corresponding chimney girt with short joists between the two. Exposed corner posts are located in each corner of the two parlors and chambers above. Rooms have wide-board pine floors that run from front to back (perpendicular to the joists below), with the exception of the southeast parlor, which has a replaced narrow-board floor.

The front stairhall entry is six and one-half feet wide by four and one-half feet deep. The wide entrance door with eight raised-field panels as described on the exterior is hung by three long strap hinges. A six-light transom provides natural light into the stairhall. This entrance door is not centered in the stairhall, but is opposite the stairs leading to the second story at the northwest end of the entry hall. The stairs are partially enclosed with full walls, except for two short strings that have a newel post and three modestly turned balusters. The newel post at each end (first-story hall and second-story hall) has a round ball finial. Two other posts at the stair turns are square, with chamfering at the top. The walls of the first-story stair hall and the wall lining the stairs are covered with creased-molding wainscoting and plaster walls above the wainscoting. Doors between parlors and chambers and the two stair halls (up and down), as well as the doors to the attic and cellar, are four-panel Georgian doors. The doors between the parlors and entry hall and those between the chambers and stairhall have raised-field panels on both sides. (Photo 4) Each of the doors is hung by HL hinges – most are old, but some are replaced, reproduction hinges. The doors retain their Suffolk latches, except the cellar door, which has been changed to a Victorian door knob mounted on a decorative plate.

The parlors on each side of the stairhall are slightly different in size due to the off-center chimney, with the northwest parlor a foot longer than the southeast one. The northwest parlor has a shallow fireplace with tapered firebox, short crane, and brick hearth. The fireplace wall is paneled with feathered-edge pine boards. (Photo 3) The over-mantel consists of a long, raised-field panel over the firebox with a three-shelf nook flanked by raised field panels above the horizontal panel. Above the fireplace, the ceiling has vertical sawn boards that are laid on a slant between the chimney girt and summer

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beam supporting the hearth in the chamber above. The joists spanning the length of the room from the end girt to the summer have pulled away from the summer beam, exposing part of the mortise and tenon joint. This is a result of the once-crumbling foundation under the northwest end of the house. The two interior doors in the northwest parlor open into the room; they are set into slightly projecting molded frames, and are hung with HL hinges. The door to the stairhall retains its simple Suffolk latch; the door to the kitchen (rear wall of this parlor) has a Victorian doorknob on a decorative plate.

The southeast parlor retains the cooking fireplace with larger firebox than others in this house. Within the firebox is a crane, and a brick hearth lines the fireplace. To the side of the firebox is the exterior beehive bake oven with wood storage box under the bake oven. The fireplace wall has been removed, exposing the brick chimney, and the bake oven and wood box have lost their doors. The hearth under the oven and box has been changed from brick to a couple of large flagstones. Modern pine paneling has been added to three walls of the southeast parlor (dining room), and exposed posts, beams, and joists show the same configuration as those in the northwest parlor.

The rooms that run along the back of the chimney have been altered with modern-day kitchen appliances as well as window and wainscoting changes. The brick of the chimney is exposed, and the firebox opening has been filled with brick. A turn-of-the-century, wood-burning, Glenwood Home Grand cooking stove sits on a modern brick hearth in front of the fireplace.

Second-story historic architectural features are limited to the stairhall, the northwest chamber, and the middle rear room. The stairhall retains raised-field panel doors (to chambers and attic) with Suffolk latches, and a newel post topped with a round ball finial at the top of the stairs, all described above. In the northwest chamber, the small, slanted firebox is elaborated with 18th-century, raised-field paneling framing the fireplace. This over-mantel consists of four side-by-side, vertical panels over two side-by-side horizontal panels. Between the fireplace and the rear wall of the room, bookcases have been cut into the paneling. Crown molding trims the top of the walls around this room. The southeast chamber has been substantially altered with the application of modern pine paneling and removal of the fireplace wall exposing the brick of the fireplace. The middle rear room has an exposed ceiling with two-by-seven-inch joists and seven-by-seven-inch beams between every two joists. As with other ceilings, each joist shows nail holes where lath that carried a plaster ceiling was affixed. The larger beams appear to be hand hewn and the joists show vertical saw marks.

Other Structures

The two-car, gable-front garage, built in the 1950s, is on a slab foundation and is covered with wood shingles. Overhead doors have a string of lights (window panes) across the top of the doors. Windows have 1/1 sash. On the north side, there is a shed-roof, screened porch attached to the garage. This was added when the in-ground swimming pool was constructed in the early 1980s, and provides access to the pool deck through the garage, which is immediately adjacent to the pool. The garage is a contributing resource and the swimming pool is noncontributing.

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

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Landscape features that contribute to the architectural and historical significance of the property include the stone wall lining the frontage on Farm Street, the large granite stepping stones at the front and side entrances, and the small well house located on the southwest corner of the property.

Archaeological Description

While no pre Contact-period Native American sites are located on the property or in the general area (within one mile), it is possible that sites are present. Concentrations of Native American sites are known elsewhere in the region, especially in uplands bordering the Mill River floodplain approximately 1.5 miles north to northeast of the Thayer House, and to the southeast near the confluence of the Mill River and Harris Pond. Other Native sites in the region are located along the Blackstone River and its many tributaries. Environmental characteristics of the nominated property represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of Native sites. The Thayer House occupies a well-drained, level to moderately sloping stream terrace bordering Hop Brook, a tributary of the Mill River. The confluence of Hop Brook and the Mill River lies approximately one-half mile east of the Thayer House. The Mill River flows southerly to the Blackstone River approximately three miles south of the house. The entire town of Blackstone lies within the Blackstone River drainage. Given the above information, the size of the property (9.44 acres), and the extent of historic-period land use, a moderate to high potential exists for locating ancient Native American resources on the property.

A moderate to high potential also exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the Thayer House property, although many of those resources remain to be documented. Additional historical research, combined with archaeological survey and testing, may help locate and identify structural evidence of the barns, stables, and outbuildings that comprised the farmstead that was in continuous use from the late 18th to the mid 20th century. During the 19th century, a large barn existed on the northeast side of Farm Street. Historical and archaeological research might determine whether a second, possibly earlier, barn was also present on the same side of Farm Street as the house. Similar research might also locate occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) used during the same period of occupation and use. A small well house covers an old well at the southwest corner of the house; however, a second, possibly earlier, well may also exist. Construction features might also be present related to the initial construction of the Thayer House and later renovations.

(end)

Benjamin Thayer 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)

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

Ca. 1790-1959

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Blackstone Public Library, Blackstone Historical Society

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

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8. Statement of Significance

The Benjamin Thayer House is significant for its association with Blackstone MA's agricultural history and with one of the first families to settle in Mendon's South Parish – now Blackstone. The farmhouse is a good example of a late 18th-century dwelling, and retains some of its surrounding farmland. This farmhouse is the most intact of all other extant houses that belonged to the Thayer family. The Thayers owned much of the land west of Candlewood Hill in Blackstone for well over a century. The property is significant for a period beginning in ca. 1790, when this dwelling was constructed, to 1959, throughout which time it was in continuous use as the home of a farming family—first the Thayers and descendants, followed by the Andersons for twenty years, and then by the Goddards (1940) whose descendants still live here. The property retains integrity of location, design, workmanship, association, and feeling. The Benjamin Thayer House meets Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places and is significant at the local level.

Overview of the Development of the Town of Blackstone

Originally part of the 1667 Mendon grant to Moses Payne, Peter Brackett, and others of Braintree, Blackstone was known as the South Parish or South Precinct of Mendon from 1766, when a second meetinghouse was established at Chestnut Hill (now Millville). The South Parish was part of Mendon politically until Blackstone's separate incorporation in 1845. In 1917, Millville separated from Blackstone, leaving the town with an area of approximately ten and one-half square miles, as it is today.

From the early- to mid-1700s, centers with their own character evolved in Mendon's South Parish at Chestnut Hill, at East Blackstone (NRDIS-1995), which is along the Mendon Road (now Elm Street, east of Farm Street), and at Blackstone Village (NRDIS-Blackstone Manufacturing Company HD, and Farnum's Gate HD - 1995) on the Blackstone River. Transportation routes followed water courses and were cause for the location of the early settlement along Elm Street (linking Providence and Worcester), which parallels the Mill River, and along Main Street in Blackstone Village, parallel to the Blackstone River. In 1791 Mendon was divided into school districts, with seven in the South Parish. In the same decade, the Quakers established a meetinghouse (NRIND-1995) at East Blackstone, reinforcing the framework for this self-sufficient village center.

The fine, sandy loam of the upland hills and the water courses throughout Blackstone, such as Hop Brook, which flows through the original bounds of the old Thayer property, account for the successful agricultural economy of this area during the 18th and 19th centuries. The water courses were well suited as locations for forges and grist and saw mills; hence, the beginning of the industrial development, which was the key to Blackstone's development. In North and East Blackstone there were many 18th-century farms with rich soils for pastureland, and by the end of the 1700s, there were approximately 80 substantial farms listed in Mendon's South Parish, of which five had saw, grist, or fulling mills. One of the early sawmills was on the Thayer property, which at that time extended easterly across Farm Street to Forge Pond.

From 1809, early cotton mills sprang up in four locations on East Blackstone's Mill River and Quick Stream and in several locations in Blackstone Village; those in the village grew at a faster rate in part due to the transportation routes of

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 2

the 19th century, including the Blackstone Canal (NRDIS, 1995) of 1828 to 1848, and the railroads that first were built here in 1847.

While the village evolved into industrial centers, the upland farms of Mendon's South Parish (Blackstone in 1845) carried on the agricultural tradition of the community. The Thayer farm, where farming continued well into the 20th century, was no exception.

Thayers in Mendon's South Parish - Blackstone

Most of the Thayers in Blackstone (Mendon's South Parish) descended from Ferdinando Thayer (1625-1678) who had come to Mendon in the third quarter of the 17th century. Several of his children, including Josiah, Lt. Samuel, and Capt. Thomas Thayer, settled here and their descendants farmed the Five Corners and Candlewood Hill areas of Blackstone. A descendant of Capt. Thomas Thayer, who had settled in Mendon (of which Blackstone was a part), was Joseph Thayer (ca. 1727-1777). He and an unnamed wife had three sons – Joseph (1754-1821), Benjamin (1756-1811) and Nicholas (1758-1818) – all of whom settled in this part of Blackstone. At the end of the 18th century, each had farms along Farm Street and Blackstone Street and shared in two lots on Candlewood Hill northeast of this farm, on the east side of the Mill River (into which Hop Brook flows). Throughout the 19th century, Thayers owned many farms in Blackstone, and descriptions of the Benjamin Thayer House indicate that it generally was bound by, and near, other Thayer-owned land. Each of the historic maps – 1831, 1857 and 1870 – shows Thayer ownership of many other properties in the immediate vicinity of this house.

The Benjamin Thayer House has been owned by only a few families, with ownership passing from one generation to the next. Thayer ownership spanned the longest period, from ca. 1790 to 1920, with the exception of six years in the 1890s. The 19th-century owners of the property were Benjamin Thayer, his son-in-law (Alanson Adams), and later his nephew (Nicholas Thayer). For six years, the property was owned by a Herbert Short, whose relationship is unknown; however, it then passed back to the Thayer family until 1920. For the next twenty years it was owned by Andersons. In 1940, the property was purchased by the Goddards, whose descendants continue to own and live in the Benjamin Thayer House, nearly 70 years later.

The house was built by Benjamin Thayer (1756-1811) on land he purchased in 1790. He had married Elizabeth Cook of Cumberland, Rhode Island in 1779, and they had three children – recorded in Mendon's Vital Records (Usina born 178_ ; Urana born 179_ ; and Acenith (also spelled Asenith), born 1801). Two farm owners named Benjamin Thayer were listed in the 1798 Direct Tax Census; one with a single-story house and one on a lot that appears to be this Farm Street property (bounded on the east side by the road), which was a two-story house of 1,080 square feet and 24 windows. In 1790, Benjamin Thayer had purchased two parcels of land on the west side of the road from Woonsocket to Mendon (Farm Street), and at later dates continued to acquire nearby parcels assembling his 100+ acre farm. Thayer died in 1811, and his widow, Elizabeth, remained here (1831 map "Wid. Thayer") until 1835 when she split her husband's real estate among his heirs: one third to Alanson Adams, who had married one of their daughters, Asenith Thayer (1801-1849), in 1818; one

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

Section number 8 Page 3

third to Mark Kelly of Smithfield Rhode Island, who was married to another daughter, Lurana Thayer; and one-third to Nicholas Thayer (1790-1873), nephew of Benjamin Thayer. (There are no known records indicating marriage or death of Usina Thayer, first daughter of Benjamin and Elizabeth.)

The farm, including the family homestead, had passed to Alanson Adams – hence it became known as the Adams Farm. From Alanson and Asenith Adams, it passed to their son, James Adams (b. 1822), who was also the grandson of Benjamin and Elizabeth Thayer. The 1857 map shows that “J. Adams” lived here, and deeds of the same period confirm that this became known as the Adams farm (of about 100 acres), which had passed from Alanson and Asenith (Thayer) Adams to their son, James Adams, in two parts – land on each side of Farm Street. In 1856 (just before the 1857 map was published), James Adams conveyed his farm to Nicholas Thayer (1870 maps lists “N. Thayer” as occupant). When Nicholas Thayer died in 1873, the so-called Adams Farm, along with six other parcels of land, passed to Nicholas Thayer’s grandson, Francis Nicholas Thayer (1846-1935), son of Horace (b. 1822) and Nancy Jeffords Thayer (ca. 1824-1903).

The deed for the Adams farm stated that Nancy J. Thayer (Francis N. Thayer’s mother) had the right to stay in the farmhouse and land around as given to her in the will of Nicholas Thayer. At about this time, Francis N. Thayer built his Italianate house on the east side of Farm Street (207 Farm Street – MHC #299). He practiced law locally and became a Justice of the Blackstone District Court, but also farmed and was active in the local Grange. It is likely that his mother, Nancy Jeffords Thayer, stayed in this family homestead as was indicated in the will of Nicholas Thayer. A family burial ground had been located on the east side of Farm Street, near Forge Pond and the site of the old Benjamin Thayer sawmill. In the early 20th century, Francis N. Thayer had the bodies removed and reinterred at the Oak Hill Cemetery in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, possibly at the time of the death of his mother in 1903.

In 1894, the farm (now consisting of 45 acres, dwelling house, barn, and other appurtenances) passed out of the family to Herbert A. Short, who was listed as living there on the 1898 map. By 1900, Short was a widower living in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and had sold the property to Welcome Adams Thayer (1820-1914), who had been raised on the farm of his father Welcome Thayer (1786-1871), which was farther north on Farm Street. By this time, Welcome Adams Thayer, who had reached the advanced age of 80 years old, owned other farmland along Farm Street. In 1920, the farm passed from Mary E. Thayer (who was reported to be unmarried of Mendon in one account and as a widow and administrator of the estate of Ellis W. Thayer in another account) to Percy B. and Mary J. Anderson. This began twenty years of Anderson ownership. In 1926, the farm passed to Richard I. and Martha J. Anderson, and in 1940 the Federal Land Bank of Springfield took possession of the deed, selling the property to Edward and Lottie Goddard. Descendants of the Goddards have owned this house for the last 67 years.

Farming

Farming in Blackstone followed typical trends of the region, with an increase in market produce from the early 19th century and specialties for the second half of the 19th century such as butter, cheese, milk, hay, livestock, and some

(continued)

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

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orchard products. A strong local market for produce was created by the industrial growth in this town alone. By the mid 19th century, the industrial development of Blackstone had taken off with the establishment of the Blackstone Manufacturing Company – a large textile facility that built housing and commercial properties in addition to its manufacturing buildings. East Blackstone, too, supported minor industries.

The rich farmland along the Mill River, Hop Brook, and the rolling hills of the northern part of Blackstone hosted over 100 farms with most valued in the \$2,000 range in 1850. About 20% were valued at \$5,000 or more, including this farm – then the James Adams' 100-acre farm – where he had a horse and ten milking cows and produced some market produce such as peas, Irish potatoes, small orchard sales, and Indian corn and hay for the livestock. Many of the farms at this time were owned by other members of the Thayer family. Nearby was Welcome A. Thayer, who had a farm of similar size with 130 acres, two horses, six cows, two working oxen, and other farm animals. Ariel Thayer was another local farmer with 140 acres valued at \$20,000 – the farm with the highest value in Blackstone in 1850. (His daughter, Clarissa Thayer, had married Welcome A. Thayer in 1845.) In the same year, Nicholas Thayer had 164 acres, of which only 60 were farmed. By 1860, Nicholas Thayer's farm land had increased to 275 acres, of which 175 acres were improved (farmed) and 100 acres unimproved. He had acquired this family farm by then, which likely accounts for the increase in acreage and in produce. His farm was valued at \$7,000, and he produced butter, hay, rye, Indian corn, and Irish potatoes – the most common crops and produce in Blackstone at that time.

By 1870, Nicholas Thayer's farm had been reduced slightly in acreage to 250 acres but was still one of the more highly valued farms at \$10,000. He produced for market 500 pounds of butter, 20 tons of hay, and 300 bushels of Irish potatoes. At this time, there were only four farms that had a higher value – one being a farm owned by Blackstone Manufacturing Company.

The 1880 Agricultural Census information is inconclusive regarding this farm. Francis N. Thayer was listed as having a 100-acre farm – a dairy farm – where he produced for market 3,000 gallons of milk and 200 dozen eggs. However, in 1870 he also had a 100-acre farm where he produced 2,500 gallons of milk. In 1870, Nicholas Thayer was still alive, and this property had not yet passed to Francis N. Thayer, so it is unclear as to where his 1870 farm was. The only Thayer in the immediate area whose farm changed substantially from 1870 to 1880 was Welcome A. Thayer. In 1870 he had 165 acres, and in 1880 he owned 300 acres, which had a value of \$12,000 – the top five of 100 farms in value. All three Thayers – Nicholas, Welcome Adams, and Francis Nicholas – were dairy farmers with Nicholas, specializing in butter production and the other two in milk. During the 19th century, the farm included land on both sides of Farm Street, and a large barn (no longer extant). The barn is reported to have been on the northeast side of the road. Whether or not there had been a barn on the same side as the house is unknown.

Twentieth Century Changes

Farming declined in the region during the 20th century; yet the Thayers and Andersons (owners from 1900 to 1940) continued to farm. The farm had been reduced to land on the southwest side of Farm Street only by the time that the Goddards arrived here. They had purchased the property in 1940 and ran a poultry farm for a number of years. They also

(continued)

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

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refurbished the house soon after their purchase by removing a porch that had been added across the main façade (northeast elevation). The foundation under the northwest parlor had crumbled so that the joists were pulling away from the chimney girt. This part of the foundation was restored in the 1940s. As early as 1961, the Benjamin Thayer House had been set off from the larger farm of the first half of the 20th century onto a 10.64 acre lot; however, adjacent parcels continued to be owned by the Goddard family and descendants. A long multi-bay shed associated with this property ended up on a large parcel south of the Benjamin Thayer House. In the 1970s, another renovation took place in which the windows were replaced with new windows of the same pattern – 6/6 lights. Ceilings in each room were removed to expose the rafters (none of which is chamfered, which indicates that they were not likely to have been exposed previously); fireplace walls, too, were removed, exposing the brick of the chimney wall and firebox as well as the bake oven opening in the southeast parlor. At the same time, clapboards were also stripped and many were replaced. In 1986, the Hop Brook subdivision was approved on a parcel adjacent to this property; the long shed, referenced above, remained on one of the house lots of the subdivision. In 1995, a single house lot was carved from the 10.64- acre parcel, reducing the Benjamin Thayer House parcel to 9.44 acres. Within the last few years, all interior woodwork had to be stripped due to lead paint issues.

Archaeological Significance

Since patterns of pre Contact-period occupation in Blackstone are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Pre-contact sites in this area may contribute important information related to Native American subsistence and settlement patterns within the Blackstone River drainage, particularly in a transitional zone between the coastal lowlands and Worcester Plateau uplands. Potential sites on the Thayer farm property may contain valuable information related to the importance of upland sites along tributaries of that drainage system. Native American settlement in this area may focus on larger sites along the Blackstone River, possibly at the confluence of tributary rivers/streams or at fall lines. These sites may be related to larger sites and/or core areas along lower portions of the Blackstone River towards Narragansett Bay to the south, or towards the lower reaches of the Charles or Neponset Rivers to the northeast. Pre Contact-period sites in this area may contribute information that indicates the local and regional socio/political impact of Native social groups in these drainages, and how these relationships may have changed through time. This data could test commonly held beliefs pertaining to riverine drainage settlement hypotheses.

Historic archaeological resources described above may contribute important social, cultural, and economic information related to the early settlement of Mendon's South Parish (now Blackstone), the agricultural history of the town, and the inhabitants of the Thayer Farm. Historical and archaeological resources may contribute important information that identifies changes to the farmstead and its inhabitants as they adapted to changing economic and social conditions within the eastern Massachusetts region, Blackstone, and in the same family, the Thayers. Identification and mapping of barns, outbuildings, and occupational-related features may identify farmstead building patterns for the region and local area, as the Thayer Farm followed typical trends for the region, characterized by an increase in market products from the early 19th century and specialty products for the second half of the 19th century. Archaeological resources may also contribute important information that identifies characteristics of the changing mid 19th-century local market relationship for produce between farms in the Thayer House locale and industrial growth in Blackstone village and East Blackstone village.

(end)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Benjamin Thayer House
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Section number 9 Page 1

Books

Aldrich, P. H. *History of Worcester County, Massachusetts*, "Mendon" by John G. Metcalf, M.D. Philadelphia, 1879.

Barry, Hubert. *Memoirs*. 1983.

Atlases / Maps

Beers, F.W. *Atlas of Worcester County, Massachusetts*. New York, 1870. (Special Collections, State Library)

Metcalf, John G. *A Map of Mendon, Worcester County, Massachusetts Mendon South Parish*. Boston, 1831. (Special Collections, State Library)

Richards, L.J. & Company. *New Topographical Atlas of the County of Worcester, Massachusetts*. Philadelphia, 1898. (Special Collections, State Library or Worcester Public Library)

Walling, Henry F. *Atlas of Worcester County, Massachusetts*. 1857. (Special Collections, State Library)

Other Sources

Agricultural Census, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880. National Archives, Waltham, MA

Blackstone Birth, Marriage and Death Records 1845-2000. Blackstone Public Library.

Massachusetts and Maine Direct Tax Census of 1798. New England Genealogical Society, ed. Michael Gorn, Reel 14, Vol. 16, Mendon's Second Parish.

Vital Records to 1850 of Mendon, Massachusetts.

Worcester County Registry of Deeds.

(end)

Benjamin Thayer House
Name of Property

Worcester, MA
County, State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 9.44 acres

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19 290839 4657528
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 Gretchen G. Schuler, consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, National Register director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date November 2009

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 John & Sarah Leclaire

street & number 200 Farm Street telephone 508-883-4010

city or town Blackstone state MA zip code 01504

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.

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

Section number 10, photos Page 1

GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries follow lot lines for Parcel #38 on Assessors Map # 22. The entire property is in the town of Blackstone with frontage on Farm Street.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include the entire parcel that remains with the house – all once part of a larger Thayer Farm. The boundaries are drawn to include the main feature of this nomination – the Benjamin Thayer House – and its surrounding land.

(end)

Photographs

All photographs included with this nomination were taken in Spring and Summer 2006 by Gretchen Schuler, preparer of the nomination.

Photo #	View
1. Main façade	Looking westerly
2. Rear elevation	Looking north, northwest
3. Northwest Parlor	Fireplace wall, corner post, joists, door to kitchen.
4. Interior Doors	Second Story Chamber Doors

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

Section number data sheet Page 1

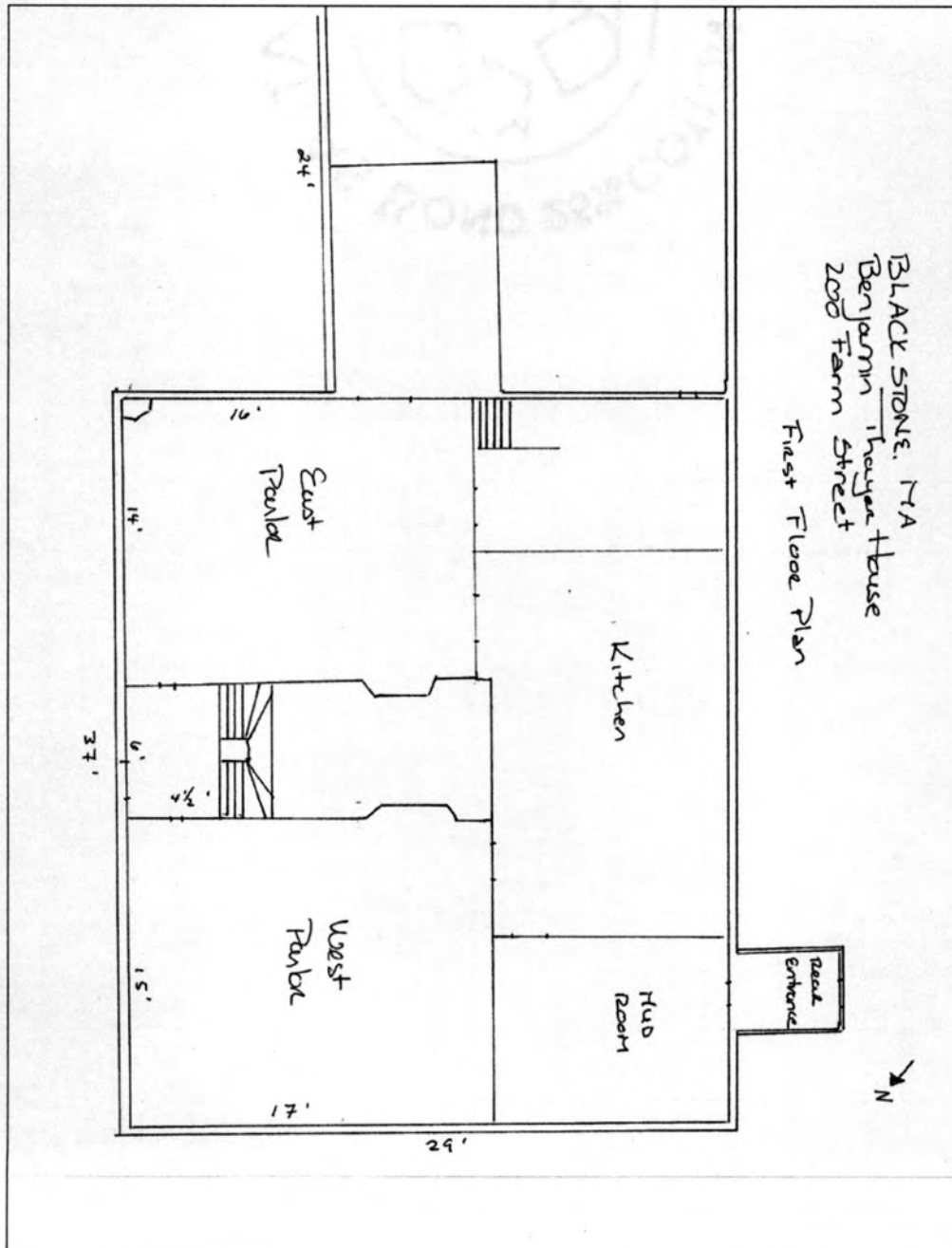
MHC #	Historic Name	Style	Date	Type of Resource	NR Status
300	Benjamin Thayer House	Colonial	ca. 1790	B	C
	garage		ca. 1950s	B	C
	Stone Wall		19 th c.	St	C
	Stepping Stones		18 th c.	Ob	C
	Meadow	Agricultural field	On going	Si	C
	Well house		20 th c.	St	C
	pool		1980s	St	NC

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Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

Section number plans Page 1

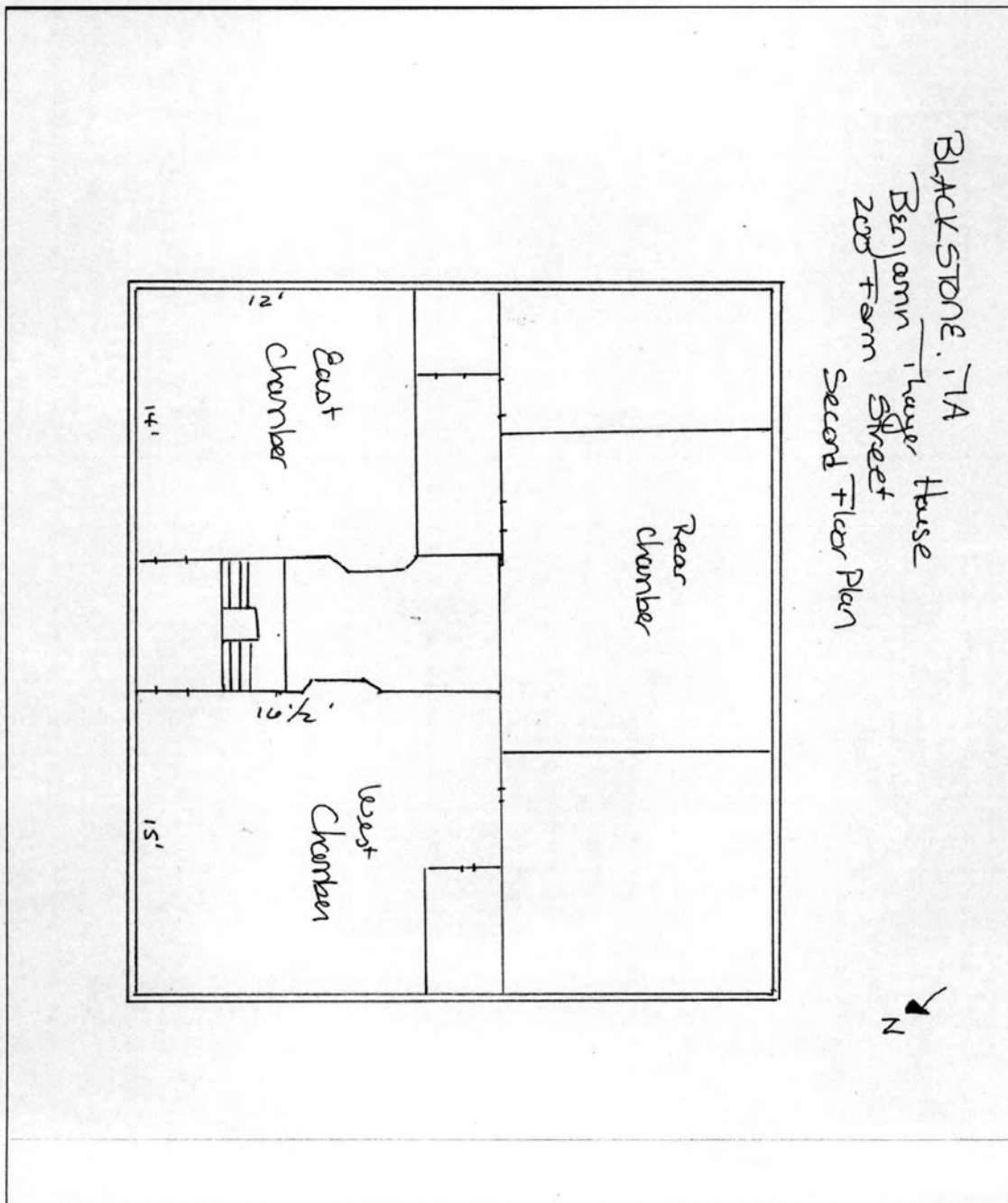


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Benjamin Thayer House
Blackstone (Worcester), MA

Section number plans Page 2



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Thayer, Benjamin, House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Worcester

DATE RECEIVED: 11/20/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/09/09
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/24/09 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/03/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09001174

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 12.30.09 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

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.



Benjamin Trayer Ho 200 Farm St

Worcester Co, MA

Photographer: Graham Schuck

Winter 2002

Main facade looking south west

Photo #1



Benjamin Thayer Hb 200 Farm St
Worcester Co. MA

Photographer: Gretchen Schuler

Winter 2007

Bear elevation looking northwest

Photo #2



Benjamin Thayer Ho 200 Farm St

Worcester Co., MA

Photographer: Gretchen Schuler

Winter 2007

Northwest parlor fireplace wall,
corner post, just. door



Benjamin Thayer Ho
Worcester County, MA

Photographer: Gretchen Schuster

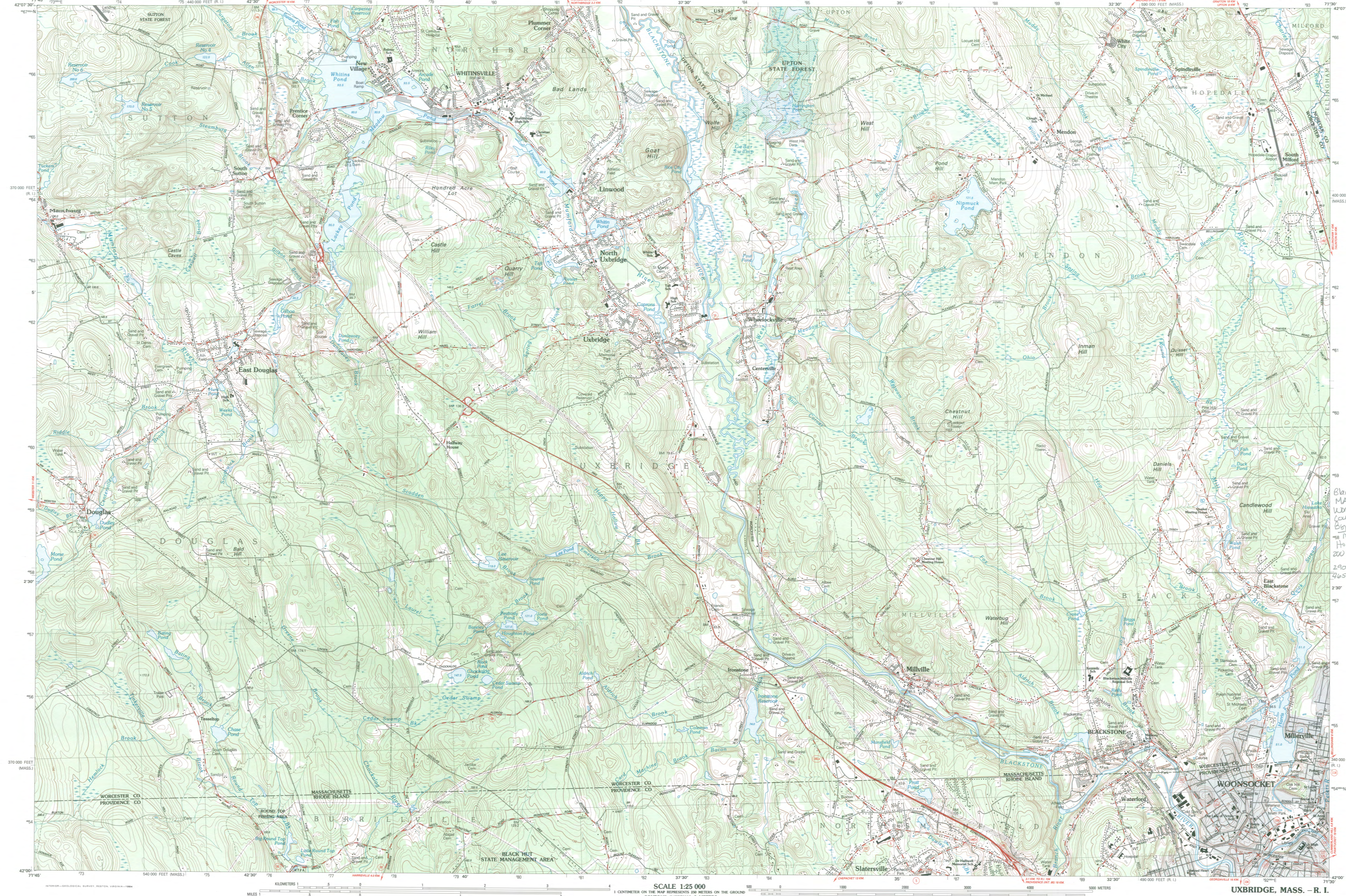
Fall 2006

Chamber doors to stairhall

Photo #4



UXBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS - RHODE ISLAND



SCALE 1:25 000
1 CENTIMETER ON THE MAP REPRESENTS 250 METERS ON THE GROUND
CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS

INTERIOR - GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA - 1984

Blackstone
Benjamin Thayer House

Uxbridge

MASS. - R. I.

1:25 000-scale metric
topographic map

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

1982

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
in cooperation with Massachusetts Department
of Public Works

Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1980. Field checked 1981. Map edited 1982
This area also covered by 7.5-minute, 1:25,000-scale
maps: Uxbridge and Blackstone dated 1969

Projection and 1000-meter grid, zone 19: Universal
Transverse Mercator. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on
Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone,
and Rhode Island coordinate system. 1927 North
American Datum

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 6 meters south and 40 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

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 COMPLES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225

CONVERSION TABLE		DECLINATION DIAGRAM		ADJOINING MAPS			
Meters	Feet	Diagram		1	2	3	
1	3.2808			4			
2	6.5615			5			
3	9.8423			6	7	8	
4	13.1230						
5	16.4037						
6	19.6845						
7	22.9652						
8	26.2460						
9	29.5267						
10	32.8075						

To convert meters to feet:
multiply by 3.2808

To convert feet to meters:
multiply by 0.3048

UTM grid convergence
(GTM) and 1983 magnetic
declination (MD)
at center of map
Diagram is approximate

1 Worcester South
2 Milford
3 Franklin
4 Waterbury
5 Cheshire (7.5')
6 Thompson (7.5')
7 Georgetown (7.5')
8 Andover

ISBN 0-16-07-23420-2
9 780607 234206

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 gage; narrow gage	.....
Bridge: drawbridge	.....
Footbridge; overpass; underpass	.....
Build-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; forest 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	.....
Commemorative stone area; U. S. location monument	.....
Windmill; water well; spring	.....
Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cave	.....
Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation	.....
Contours: index, intermediate; supplementary; depression	.....
Ripple, large and small; falls, large and small	.....
Submerged marsh; marsh, swamp	.....
Land subject to controlled inundation; woodland	.....
Scrub; mangrove	.....
Drainage; vineyard	.....

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission



November 13, 2009

Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW 8th floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Benjamin Thayer House, 200 Farm Street, Blackstone (Worcester), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure

cc: Constance Perrault, Chair, Blackstone Board of Selectmen
John and Sarah Leclair
Kelly Gillis, Blackstone Historical Commission
Gretchen Schuler, Consultant
Chair, Blackstone Planning Board