

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAR 16 1982
DATE ENTERED APR 20 1982

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
National Musical String Company
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER *Pol. Rd.*
120 Georges *Road*
CITY, TOWN
New Brunswick
STATE
New Jersey
N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION
VICINITY OF
15th
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
15th
CODE
034
COUNTY
Middlesex
CODE
023

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	<i>N/A</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER <i>office</i>

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Twin City Properties
STREET & NUMBER
202 South First Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Highland Park
STATE
New Jersey
VICINITY OF
N/A

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Middlesex County Clerk's Office
STREET & NUMBER
Kennedy Square, Box 1110
CITY, TOWN
New Brunswick
STATE
New Jersey

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory - Middlesex County - New Brunswick, 1980
DATE
October 1977-February 1979
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Office of Cultural and Environmental Services
CITY, TOWN
Trenton
STATE
NJ
_FEDERAL STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The National Musical String Company factory stands on a site in part within the bounds of the City of New Brunswick, in part within the Township of North Brunswick. The nominated property on which the factory stands is bounded westerly by Georges Road, easterly by the right-of-way of the Raritan River Railroad, southerly by Mile Run, a small tributary of the Raritan River and southeasterly by a line between the railroad and Mile Run, in range with the easterly end of the factory building. The building is oriented parallel to the railroad line, because the railroad, built in 1891, predates the factory.

The National Musical String Company complex contains a 3-1/2 story, gable-roofed, brick factory, and its original, attached boiler house. An early addition increased the depth of the west end of the main building from four to seven bays; other brick additions have extended the east end, lengthening the building from 39 bays to 45. The original 39-bay south facade is a flat wall relieved by a central, projecting bay topped by a small hipped gable roof. The bay width is narrow, the fenestration regular, and the windows are articulated with sandstone sills and brick, segmented relieving arches. Four wide dormers are evenly spaced along the gable roof and a corbeled cornice accentuates the roofline. The structural system consists of heavy-timbered floor construction set into brick bearing walls and supported by central columns. Railroad loading facilities are located along the north side of the building. The small, rectangular, boiler house still contains its original Ruggles coal furnace and water pump. No other significant equipment and machinery remains in this building, and none of the interior spaces are significant.

A modern garage and a building formerly used by the company in its box-manufacturing operations, also stand on the property.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property encompasses those buildings built and used by the National Musical String Company from its inception through the early decades of the 20th century when it flourished as the world's leading producer of musical strings. Though beginning in the 1920's the company erected a large number of buildings to

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 type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1898

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Ben C. DeKamp

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The National Musical String Company, which operated in New Brunswick from 1897 to early 1979, was, by the first decade of the twentieth century and for many years thereafter, "the largest plant in the world devoted to musical strings," and the sole manufacturer of harmonicas in the United States. The factory was specifically designed to accommodate the processes of musical string manufacture.

The National Musical String Company (NMS) was founded in 1897 in New Brunswick by George Dow Emerson, who in 1898 constructed the present building, designed by a local architect, Ben C. DeKamp. Emerson himself designed the machinery that was installed, but soon sold the business to William R. McClelland. The building's great length and narrowness reflect both a serial arrangement of the procedures of string manufacture and a belt-drive power distribution system, remnants of which can be seen in the basement.²

The company was founded at a time when American production of fretted, stringed musical instruments was beginning to soar. Few instrument manufacturers, however, made their own strings; most bought their strings from NMS. NMS quickly became the largest string manufacturer, marketing strings for every class of stringed instrument, under its "Black Diamond" and "Bell Brand" brand names. The harmonicas manufactured by the company were also sold under the "Bell Brand" name. The company supplied strings for, among many others, such companies as the Nordheimer Piano Company, and the Lyon & Healy Company, one of America's leading manufacturers of guitars, mandolins and banjos. Retail sales in North America were handled through such outlets as the Montgomery Ward department store chain, as well as by music stores to whom they were distributed by C. Bruno & Sons Company, a leading musical distributor. NMS had foreign offices in London and Paris, and had foreign accounts from Africa, New Zealand, Germany, France, Australia, India, Japan, China, Canada, South America and Mexico, and its promotional literature was translated into French, German, and Spanish.³

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

New Brunswick Times; The City of New Brunswick, New Jersey, New Brunswick, 1909.

Records of the National Musical String Company, 1897-1979, in Special Collections Division, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.5

UTM NOT VERIFIED

QUADRANGLE NAME New Brunswick

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 546810 4480500

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Continuation Sheet

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert Craig, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Heritage Studies, Inc.

DATE

12/14/1979

STREET & NUMBER

R.D. #4, Box 864, Mapleton Road

TELEPHONE

(609) 452-1754

CITY OR TOWN

Princeton

STATE

New Jersey 08540

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE

LOCAL

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.

Deputy

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Laura Schmidt

3/27/81

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Tommy van Orsdel

DATE

4/20/82

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



National Musical String Company
Continuation sheet New Brunswick, New Jersey Item number 7

Page 1

Description (continued)

house mostly ancillary functions as well as their box manufacturing division on parts of their site that have not been nominated. Most of these buildings do not survive, but those few that do, do not possess architectural or industrial significance. The easterly boundary was selected to include the entire main building, including additions, within the nominated property.

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National Musical String Company
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Significance (continued)

At first, NMS produced catgut strings and wire-wrapped gut strings, but in 1926 the company acquired the Halstead Wire Company of Rome, New York, enabling NMS to establish a wire plating and drawing department, and thereby to produce wire-plated strings. This advance was part of a program by NMS to achieve self-sufficiency, or vertical integration, of its operations, which also witnessed the creation of a paper-box division, and an envelope division, to package their products. The box division eventually grew large enough, by producing boxes for candy manufacturers and others to require the construction of several additional buildings on the southern half of the site. One of these buildings still stands.⁴

In May, 1979, the "Black Diamond" brand name was sold to a Texas musical string manufacturer, and the other company assets were sold in June to the Kaman Musical String Corporation of Bloomfield, Connecticut.⁵

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1. New Brunswick Times, "The City of New Brunswick, New Jersey," (1909), 123.
 2. Obituary of George Dow Emerson, Daily Home News, (New Brunswick, July 7, 1936); original extant architectural drawings of the building identify DeKamp as the architect.
 3. Interview with Richard Marks, a dealer in old and rare stringed musical instruments, and owner of Instrument Finders, Inc., Hightstown, New Jersey. NMS recently deposited its archive with the Special Collections Department, Rutgers University Library (RUL), New Brunswick; the company sales books identify NMS's clients and distributors.
 4. RUL, National Musical String Company literature, 1929.
 5. Interview with William J. Goldfarb, a retail merchant of musical instruments since 1920, and partner of Goldie & Libro Music Center, New Haven, Connecticut.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



National Musical String Company
Continuation sheet New Brunswick, New Jersey Item number 10

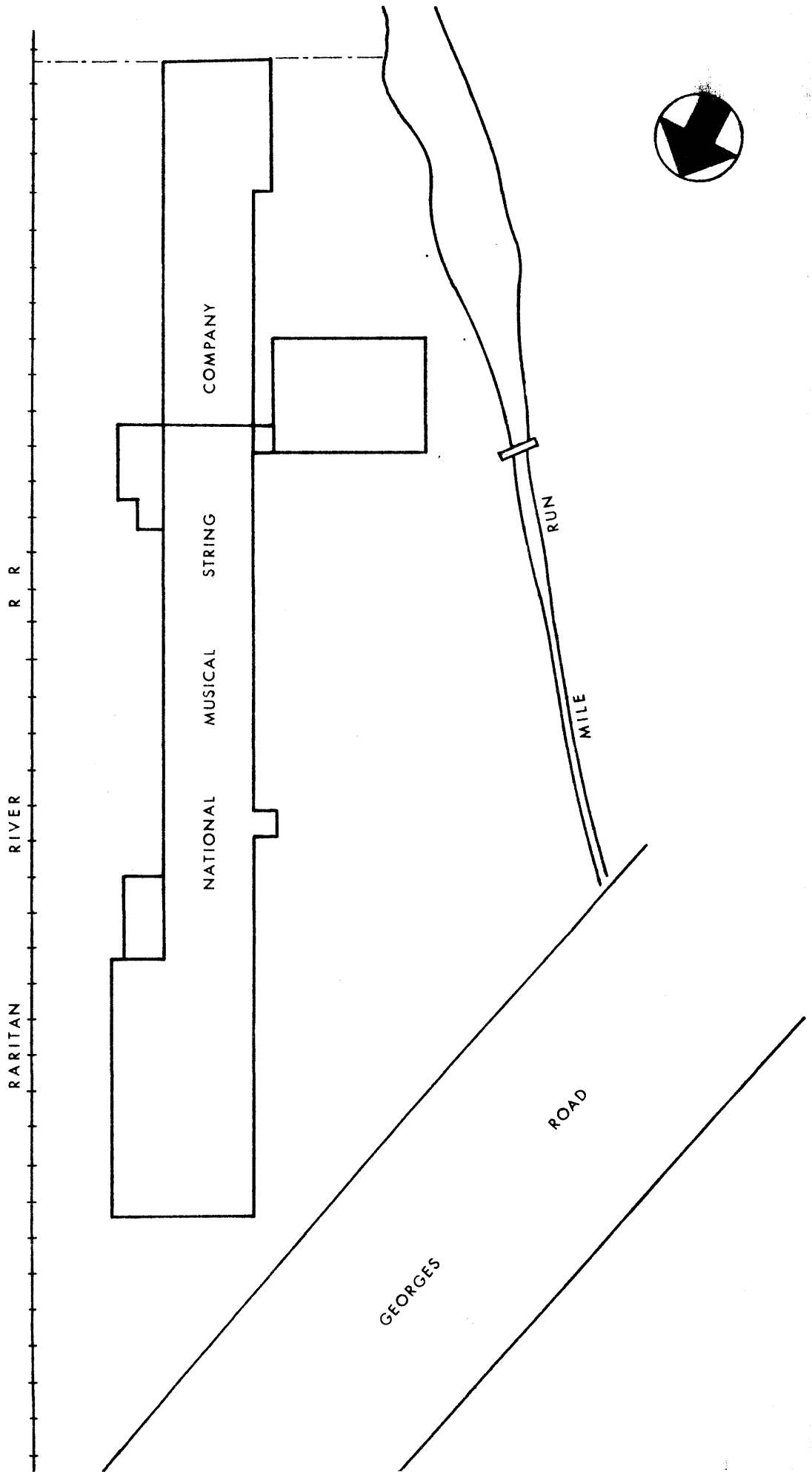
Page 1

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Nominated property includes all of Block 353.01, Lot 4 in the City of New Brunswick (0.544 acres) and extends south to the Township of North Brunswick on the easterly side of Georges Road (the westerly boundary of Block 194, Lot 4) to the southern boundary of the Mile Run and continues easterly approximately 425 feet encompassing the main building and the boiler house, then northeasterly approximately 100 feet to the southern boundary of the Raritan River Railroad right-of-way, thence northwesterly along said right-of-way to the aforementioned block and lot in the City of New Brunswick.

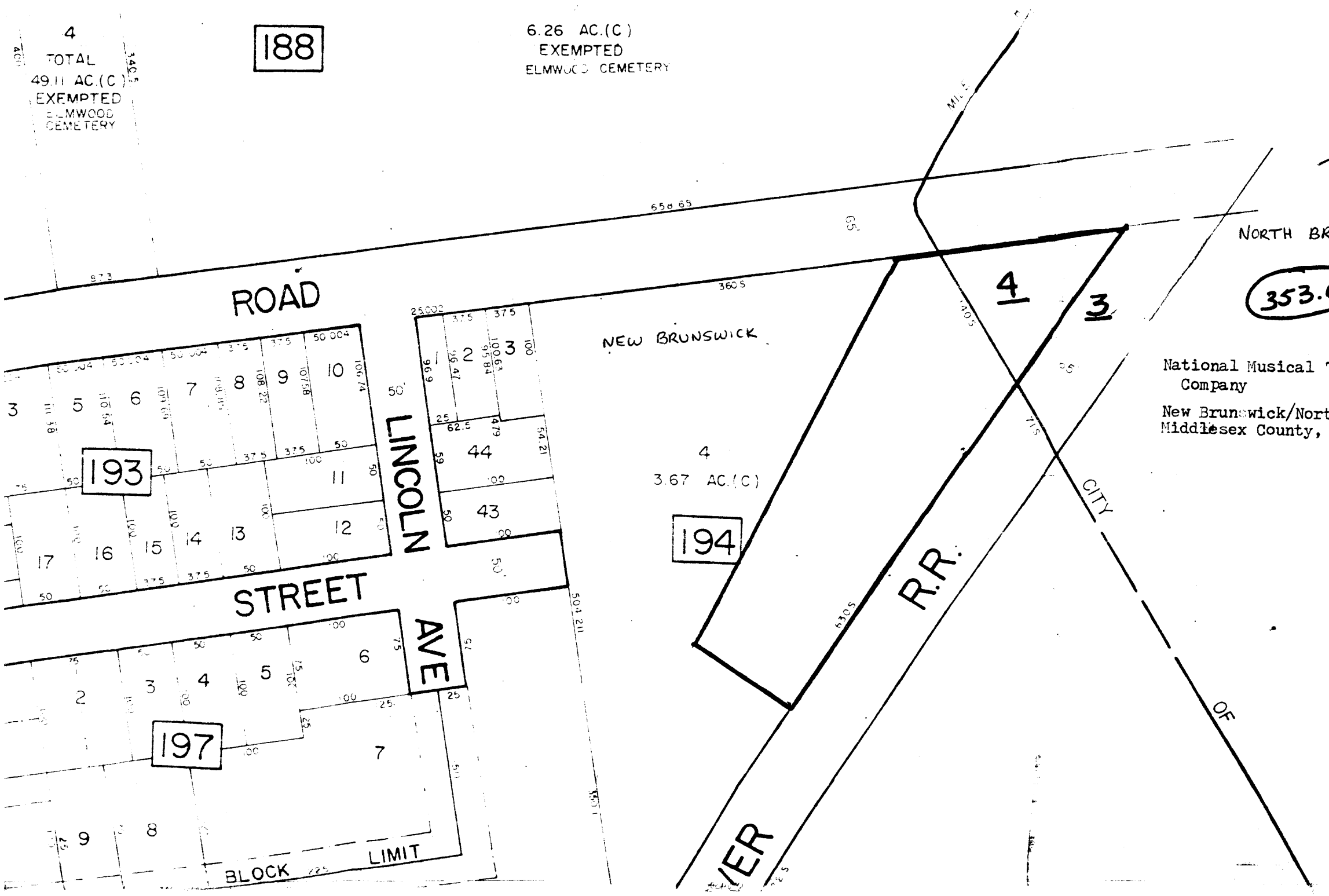
National Musical String Company
New Brunswick/North Brunswick NJ



188

6.26 AC.(C)
EXEMPTED
ELMWOOD CEMETERY

4
TOTAL
49.11 AC.(C)
EXEMPTED
ELMWOOD
CEMETERY



NORTH BRUNSWICK

353.01

National Musical String
Company
New Brunswick/North Brunswick
Middlesex County, New Jersey

194

193

197

BLOCK LIMIT