

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received **OCT 13 1983**

date entered

1. Name

historic Seth Boyden House (preferred)

and/or common Oakwud

2. Location

street & number 135 Oak Street N/A not for publication

city, town Foxboro N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts code 025 county Norfolk code 021

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☐ N/A in process	☐ yes: restricted	☐ government
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☒ no	☐ military

4. Owner of Property

name Roy O. Greep and Eunice E. Greep

street & number 135 Oak Street

city, town Foxboro N/A vicinity of state Massachusetts

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Norfolk County Registry of Deeds

street & number High Street

city, town Dedham state Massachusetts 02026

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Inventory of the Historic Assets
title of the Commonwealth, #17 has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1967 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston state Massachusetts

7. Description

Seth Boyden House, Foxboro, Massachusetts

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Seth Boyden House stands on the crest of a hill facing west and is surrounded by 13 acres of undeveloped land. Set back 100 feet from Oak Street, the dwelling is shielded from the main thoroughfare by a retaining wall and an informal garden. On the grounds of the property, in addition to the main house, is a gazebo constructed in the early 20th century which lies in the southwest portion of the grounds. A pond and stream are also located on the property to the southwest of the main building.

Constructed at the end of the 18th century and substantially added to in 1836, this brick, two-story, Federal style farmhouse stands on its original foundation of large, cut granite blocks. Although its L-shaped plan is not unusual, its asymmetrical elevations combined with a hip and lean-to roof as well as a large off-center chimney, render this a most unique structure for its period of development. Fenestration throughout the building is of 6/6 sash and the brickwork consists of a finely drawn common bond.

The building's western elevation is its principal facade. The first story has a typical five-bay, center entry configuration, but due to the sharp and long pitch of the northern roof slope, it is only four bays on the second level, with windows on the first floor capped with flat brick arches.

The slightly longer southern elevation is asymmetrally organized and largely obscured by a 1½-story ell added in 1836. This clapboarded ell features a flat roof with a simple spindle post balustrade and has an entrance on its western end. Fenestration on this facade of the main building is placed asymmetrally.

The four-bay northern elevation exhibits only one story, due to the pitch of the lean-to roof. Additions made early in the 20th century include an enclosed sunporch and patio placed on the western end of this elevation.

The eastern elevation has undergone a number of alterations over the years. This is primarily noted in window replacement and the bricking in of an original entry.

On the interior, much of the original decorative detail remains. Of note is the front staircase, which is finished in vertical pine sheathing with a very finely wrought decorative bead. The hand rail, part of the sheathing, is curved to follow the staircase wall. Also of interest are the two first-floor parlors which have Federal period mantles and cupboards above the fireplaces.

In the cellar, evidence indicates the existence of two tunnels which may have led to a barn to the southwest of the house and to the Borden workshop to the south. Neither of these buildings remain standing, but three sides of a cellar exist on the site of the barn.

To the southwest of the house lies a secondary structure of note. This is a small rustic gazebo built early in the 20th century and constructed of roughly cut branches.

8. Significance

Seth Boyden House , Foxboro, Massachusetts

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/
☒ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800–1899	☐ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☐ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates late 18th century **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Seth Boyden House retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship. Significant for its unusual architectural design as well as for its association with the Boyden family, whose members were prominent locally and regionally in the 18th and 19th centuries, the property meets criteria B and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

A number of aspects of the house's design contribute to its architectural distinction. With its date of construction attributed to the late 18th century, both the building's Federal style and use of brick as a construction material are most unusual for a rural farmhouse of this period in southeast Massachusetts. The roof design is also most unique in its asymmetrical combination of a hip with a side lean-to.

According to local records, the Boyden family owned farmland in Foxboro as early as 1737 and continued to be affiliated with the property and farm through the early 20th century.

Seth Boyden (1715-1777) was the first member of the family to own and farm the land in Foxboro. During his lifetime he enlarged his holdings to 600 acres, although only 13 acres encompass this nomination. Boyden family tradition indicates that Seth Boyden first built a small log cabin next to the big rock on which the gazebo now stands, and then planted an orchard. His son Seth, II (1764-1840) came into possession of the farm after his father's death. During his lifetime, Seth II filled various roles which included that of a blacksmith, inventor of a machine for splitting leather, and as a local politician who served as selectman, representative to the General Court, and Justice of the Peace. It was during his period of ownership that the present brick Federal house was constructed.

Of Seth Boyden II's ten children, two achieved recognition and prominence in American industry during the early 19th century. Although the two sons, Uriah and Seth, III, left home at an early age, they probably returned to the town periodically, as the house remained in the Boyden family until 1922.

Seth Boyden, III worked primarily in Newark, New Jersey and carried out extensive experimental work on malleable iron castings, the manufacture of patent leather, and the design of locomotive steam engines. He was also proficient in the fields of chemistry, astronomy, electricity and botany.

(Continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 13

Quadrangle name Mansfield

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UTM References

A

1	9
Zone	Easting

3	1	6	7	0	0
Northing					

B

1	9
Zone	Easting

3	1	6	5	0	0
Northing					

C

1	9
Zone	Easting

3	1	6	3	2	0
Northing					

D

Zone	Easting

Northing					

E

Zone	Easting

Northing					

F

Zone	Easting

Northing					

G

Zone	Easting

Northing					

H

Zone	Easting

Northing					

Verbal boundary description and justification Please refer to the attached assessor's map, page #58, lot #1766. The boundaries coincide with those of the present ownership and include all of the historic buildings, gardens, and stone walls, comprising a portion of the land owned by Seth Boyden.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mari L. Myer, Program Assistant, with Mary Elizabeth Pyne,
Historic Properties Research

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date July, 1983

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

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

Ratna L. Warburton 9/30/80

title State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission

date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

11/10/83

for Melrose Bay
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Seth Boyden House,
Foxboro, Massachusetts Item number 8 and 9 Page 1

Uriah, the younger of the two brothers, lived in Lowell, Massachusetts most of his life, where he achieved prominence for his design of water turbine wheels for several large cotton mills. The "Boyden Wheel" was such an innovation that it changed the process by which the mills were built. As a result of his success as an engineer, Uriah's expertise in this field was sought by firms in Boston, Lawrence, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Later in his life, he conducted pure scientific research in such fields as water power and hydraulics, heat and its effect on substances, chemistry, magnetism, and sound. He also left a large endowment (\$185,000) to Harvard University for the establishment of an astronomy observatory in South Africa and was a generous benefactor in his home town, where he contributed to the construction of the local library, Memorial Hall (NR 1983).

The land surrounding the Seth Boyden House should be considered to contain subsurface archaeological resources associated with over two hundred years of human occupation. Identification and research guided excavation of these resources, which may include structural remains, trash deposits, and landscaping and land use evidence, may provide significant information to our understanding of rural lifeways in the 18th and 19th centuries. Research using archaeological techniques may also address specific questions concerning the location and construction date of an earlier house said to have been built near the present gazebo, a firmer construction date for the present house, and the use of the two tunnels.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Authalet, John P. "Seth Boyden . . . One of America's Greatest Inventors," The Foxboro Reporter, May, 1978.
- Bett, Robert E. History of the Malleable Iron Industry. Unpublished ms.
- Boyden, Wallace C., Merrill N. Boyden, Amos J. Boyde. Thomas Boyden and his Descendants. Privately printed, Boston, 1901.
- Hunter, Louis C. Waterpower, A History of Industrial Power in the United States: 1780-1930. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1979.
- Interview with Michael Testa of the City Clerk's Office in Neward, New Jersey, September 22, 1982, regarding Seth Boyden, III.
- Lane, Clifford W. This Was Foxboro. Rea-Craft Press, Inc., Foxboro, Mass., 1966.
- McKay, James A. An Eminent Engineer. Unpublished ms, 1982.
- Seth Boyden, the Inventor. Advertiser Printing House, Newark, N.J. (author unknown), after 1880.
- White, John H., Jr. A History of the American Locomotive: Its Development 1830-1880. Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1968. pp.181,200.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Boyden, Seth, House
Norfolk County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. OCT 13 1983
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-5-85
Date Due: 11/10/83 - 11/27/83
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 11/10/83
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

- ☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Entered in the
National Register

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

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

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ applicable criteria
☐ justification of areas checked
☐ relating significance to the resource
☐ context
☐ relationship of integrity to significance
☐ justification of exception
☐ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
☐ Photographs
☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Seth Boyden House
135 Oak Street
Foxboro, MA

Photo by Betsy Pyne, Nov. 1982
Negatives on file with Betsy Pyne

View looking West.
Photo #1 of 7



Seth
135
Foxboro
Nov
South
Seth Boyden House
135 Oak Street
Foxboro, MA

Photo and negative: Betsy Pyne,
Nov. 1982

View looking south
Photo #2 of 7



Seth Boyden House

135 Oak Street

Foxboro, MA

Photo and negative: Betsy Pyne
Nov. 1982

View looking north

Photo #3 of 7



Seth Boyden House
135 Oak Street
Foxboro, MA

Photo and negative: Betsy Pyne
Nov. 1982

View looking east

Photo #4 of 7



Seth
135
Foxboro, MA
NOV

Seth Boyden House
135 Oak St.
Foxboro, MA

Photo by Betsy Pyne, Nov. 1982
Negative on file with Betsy Pyne

South photo # 5
View looking south

Photo #5 of 7



Seth
135 Oak
Foxboro
Nov 1982
View from the house looking in
Seth Boyden Property
135 Oak Street
Foxboro, MA

Photo and negatives: Betsy Pyne
Nov. 1982

View from the house looking southwest

Photo #6 of 7



Seth Boyden Property
135 Oak Street
Foxboro, MA

Photo and negative: Betsy Pyne
Nov. 1982

Photo #7 of 7

View from the house looking west/
southwest. Gazebo on large rock.

Site of first Boyden cabin.



10A 36,136 sf

3A 6,300 sf

#1766

#5356

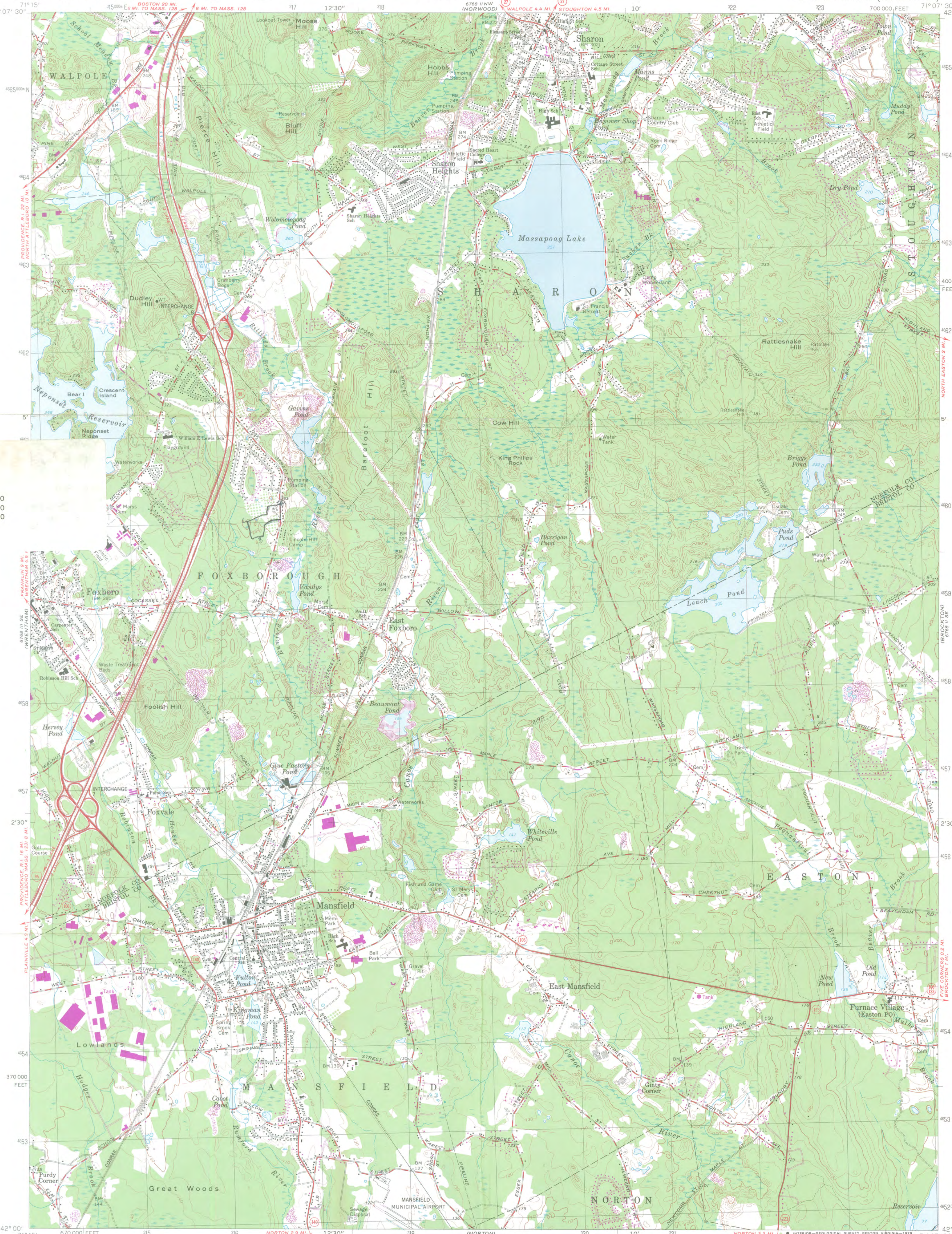
5356

1775

OAK ST

SETH BOYDEN HOUSE
FOXBORO, MASS.

Scale 1" = 80 ft.
Date 1981
lot # 1766
Page # 58
N
A



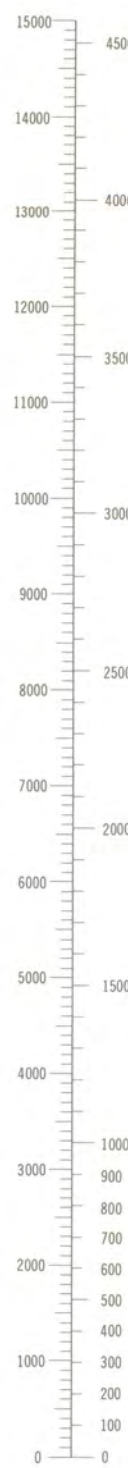
Seth Boyden House
Foxboro, MA

UTM References:

A 19 316700 4660200
B 19 316500 4659840
C 19 316320 4660020

CONVERSION
SCALES

Feet Meters



Feet Meters

1	3048
2	6096
3	9144
4	12192
5	15240
6	18288
7	21336
8	24384
9	27432
10	30480

To convert feet to meters
multiply by 3048
To convert meters to feet
multiply by 3.2808

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey

Topography by planetable surveys 1936. Revised 1964

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum

10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,

mainland zone

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,

zone 19

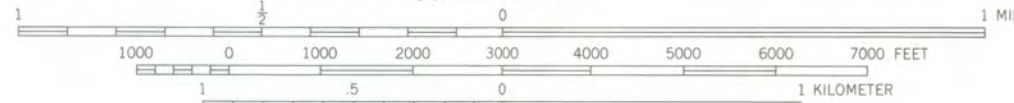
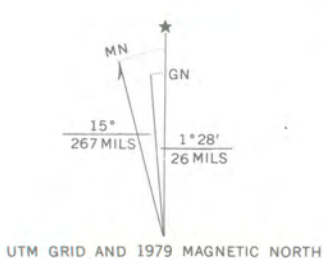
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where

generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with State of

Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1977 and other

source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty Light-duty
Medium-duty Unimproved dirt

Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route



MANSFIELD, MASS.
N4200-W7107.5/7.5

1964
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6768 II SW-SERIES V814

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

on this map
The Seth Boyden
House is the
Square which is NOT
colored in. The old
barn which is no longer
standing is shown as
a black square