

PH0016322

HB NO  
LTM

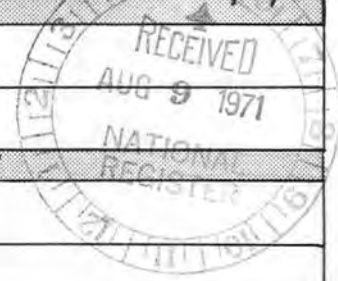
Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Mass.
COUNTY:	Middlesex
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
71,10,35,0012	10/7/71



**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
old Schwamb Mill

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION** Congres. Dist. 7

STREET AND NUMBER:  
17 Mill Lane and 29 Lowell Street at Mill Brook

CITY OR TOWN:  
Arlington

STATE Massachusetts	CODE 20	COUNTY: Middlesex	CODE 017
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust

STREET AND NUMBER:  
17 Mill Lane at 29 Lowell Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Arlington

STATE:  
Massachusetts

CODE:  
20

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Middlesex Registry of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Cambridge

STATE:  
Massachusetts

CODE:  
20

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Mass. Inventory of Historic Assets

DATE OF SURVEY: 1970  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Archives Museum, State House

CITY OR TOWN:  
Boston

STATE:  
Massachusetts

CODE:  
20

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: MASS.

COUNTY: MIDDLESEX

ENTRY NUMBER: 71,10,35,0012

DATE: 10/7/71

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Schwamb Mill at 17 Mill Lane and 29 Lowell Street, Arlington, consists of three structures on a one and one-half acre site. The most notable of the three is the main factory which stands beside Mill Brook; it still contains the antique machinery--unique face plate lathes, cutting tools, leather belt and wood pulley systems--used by five generations of the Schwamb family in custom-making picture frames. Parking space, formerly a mill pond, and a lane which bisects the property separate the main mill from two related buildings, a dry kiln and a wood storage barn.

The Schwamb Mill is the third structure to stand on this site, following a seventeenth century grist mill and the Woodbridge Spice Mill, which was in operation here by 1778. The Schwamb family converted the Woodbridge building into a woodworking shop in 1847; it was destroyed by fire in 1860 and the present mill, a close reproduction, was immediately built on the existing foundations.

The Mill is a 2½ story, wooden building set on a foundation of granite boulders and handcut brick, and has a simple pitched roof. The boulders are thought to have been put in place to strengthen the original grist mill. Tree trunk posts support the interior walls and floor timbers. The interior framing is original (1860) and in excellent condition, which is unusual for industrial buildings surviving from the pre-Civil War period.

A flat-roofed ell was added to the western side of the mill c. 1870. This three-story addition contains paint, glue and sanding shops. An office ell was added to the southwest corner of the mill c. 1900.

All exterior wall surfaces were originally covered with clapboards. They are pierced at random by entrance and loading doors and 6/6 double-hung, wood-frame windows. The roof was once sheathed with wooden shingles but is now covered by asphalt paper stripping.

The two other buildings in the Schwamb complex are the kiln (with sixty-foot tall brick chimney) where birch, poplar and basswood were dried and straightened before being made into frames, and a wood storage barn. The basement of the latter housed the water-wheel which once powered the mill's working machinery via a long, underground drive-shaft. When the mill was converted from water power, the wheel was replaced by a steam engine. In the 1930's the mill's machinery was adapted for electricity.

The buildings in the complex are structurally sound. The Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust, which now owns the mill building, hopes to purchase the barn, dry house and adjacent land. Plans are to remove the old wall covering on the Mill and replace clapboards and cornerboards, to install automatic heating equipment, to provide additional plumbing facilities, to insert new windows, and to renovate the storage barn.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**5. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry    | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |   |  |   |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Schwamb Mill is priceless as a document for the study of industrial culture. It is one of the few substantially complete examples of the family-owned craft industries which were once found throughout New England. During the nineteenth century, the Mill built a national reputation on the fact that it was one of the few places where one could have a picture frame made to his exact specifications. The firm's frames can be found not only in the private collections and major museums of the nation (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Gallery of Art, Washington) but also in the White House. Today, the Mill is the only factory of its kind in the United States, still using antique machinery--unique face plate lathes, cutting tools, leather belt and wood pulley systems--to handcraft oval, circular, irregular and rectangular frames.

During the seventeenth century a grist mill was built on the Schwamb Mill site. By 1778, the Woodbridge Spice Mill was in operation here, processing spices brought in through the East Indies Trade. In 1847, Charles and Frederick Schwamb, two of five brothers who emigrated from Germany, purchased the Woodbridge property. They turned the spice mill into a woodworking shop, using European techniques in handcrafting picture frames.

Fire destroyed the wooden mill building in 1960, but it was promptly rebuilt on the original foundations of granite boulders and handcut brick. Through five generations of Schwamb family ownership, the power for the Mill's lathes and saws came first from the waters of the nearby Mill Brook, then from steam made in the boiler of the dry kiln and, eventually, in the 1930's from electricity.

The Old Schwamb Mill is now being preserved as a living museum. Custom woodworking is being done in the traditional way, and Schwamb frames are still being shipped to galleries and frame shops throughout the country. A number of professional artists and craftsmen have set up studios and workshops in the Mill, forming the Millbrook Art Center, which offers a variety of courses aimed primarily at young people.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Arlington, Massachusetts, Old Schwamb Mill. Records of the Clinton W. Schwam and Co.  
 Hurd D. Hamilton. History of Middlesex County. Philadelphia, 1890.  
 Mahoney, Joan. "Preserved Arlington Mill May Be One of a Kind." Boston Sunday Globe, January 18, 1970.  
 Parker, Charles S. Town of Arlington: Past and Present. Arlington, 1907.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		42° 25' 30"	71° 10' 42"	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Richard W. Hale, Jr., Acting Chairman

ORGANIZATION: Massachusetts Historical Commission DATE: 7/12/71

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Archives Museum, State House

CITY OR TOWN: Boston STATE: Massachusetts CODE: 20

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: John F. K. Dawson  
 Title: Secretary of Commonwealth and Chairman, Massachusetts Historical Commission

Date: 7/12/71

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

Ernest A. Connolly  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

**OCT 7 1971**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:  
William S. [Signature]  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: **SEP 29 1971**



The Old Schwamb Mill, which the Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust is trying to save. The three-story mill on the right contains the unique face plate lathes and other antique machinery. The buildings across Mill Lane are the kiln, left, where lumber was dried and straightened before being made into frames and the wood storage barn, right, whose basement contained the steam engine that powered all the mill's machinery after conversion from water power and before conversion to electricity.

MASSACHUSETTS  
ARLINGTON

OLD SCHWAMB MILL

PHOTO: 1969 - SCHWAMB MILL PRESERVATION TRUST.

NPS Number 71 10 25 0012

Title: Old Schwamb Mill

Loc.

Middlesex Co

3-story mill, wood

drying kiln, storage barn

①

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Mass.	
COUNTY Middlesex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
71.10.25.0012	10/9/71

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Old Schwamb Mill

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

17 Mill Lane and 29 Lowell Street at Mill Brook

CITY OR TOWN:

Arlington

STATE:

Mass.

CODE

25

COUNTY:

Middlesex

CODE

017

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust

DATE OF PHOTO: 1969

NEGATIVE FILED AT:

Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

General view, 3-story mill, wood drying kiln and storage barn.

ⓐ

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE Mass.	
COUNTY Middlesex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 71.10.25.0012	DATE 10/2/77

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Old Schwamb Mill

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

17 Mill Lane and 29 Lowell Street at mill Brook

CITY OR TOWN:

Arlington

STATE:

Mass.

CODE

25

COUNTY:

Middlesex

CODE

017

3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:

U.S.G.S. Lexington, Mass.

SCALE:

1:24,000

DATE:

1956

4. REQUIREMENTS

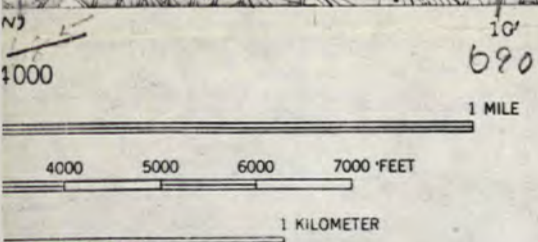
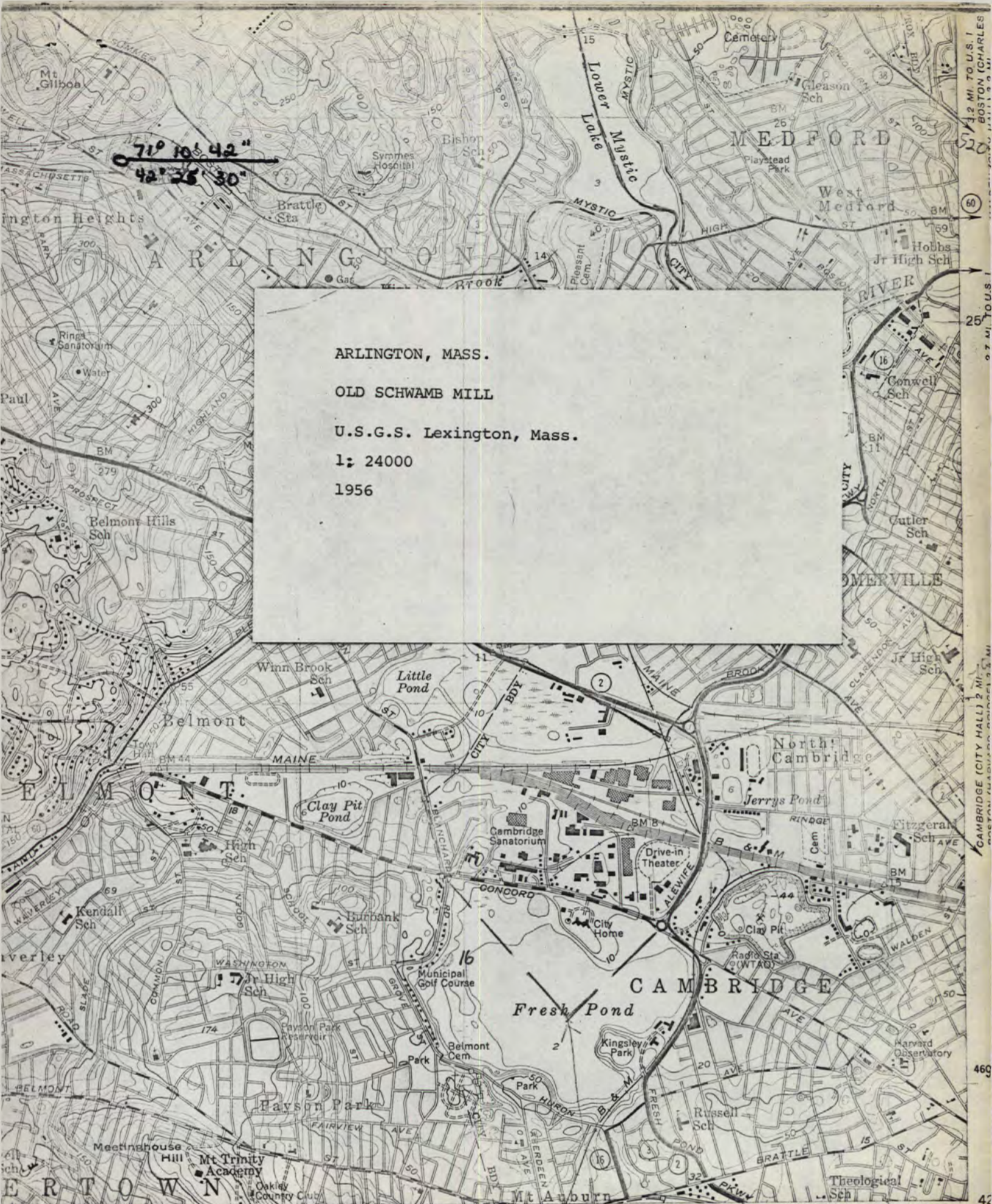
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.



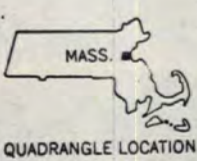
71° 10' 42"  
42° 25' 30"

ARLINGTON, MASS.  
OLD SCHWAMB MILL  
U.S.G.S. Lexington, Mass.  
1: 24000  
1956



M24 NW

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Heavy-duty \_\_\_\_\_ Light-duty \_\_\_\_\_  
Medium-duty \_\_\_\_\_ Unimproved dirt \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Route      State Route



68

1956  
LEXINGTON, MASS  
N 4222.5 - W 7107.5 / 7.5

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

green  
eg

3

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

Date Entered OCT 7 1971

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Old African Meetinghouse	Boston Suffolk County
<u>Old Schwamb Mill</u>	Arlington Middlesex County
Baldwin (Loammi) Mansion	Woburn Middlesex County
Twin Lights Historic District	Rockport vicinity Essex County

Also Notified

Hon. Edward M. Kennedy  
 Hon. Edward W. Brooke  
 Hon. Louise Day Hicks  
 Hon. Torbert H. MacDonald  
 Hon. F. Bradford Morse  
 Hon. Michael J. Harrington  
 AR -  
 Director, Northeast Region

State Liaison Officer  
 Hon. John F. X. Davoren  
 Secretary of the Commonwealth  
 Chairman, Massachusetts Historical  
 Commission  
 Office of the Secretary  
 State House  
 Boston, Massachusetts 02133

MCMeans:mm 9/30/71

BASIC FILE RETAINED IN HR

MS

**SCHWAMB MILL (25-72-00012-00). Arlington, Middlesex Co., Private ownership (Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust). Rare example of a craft industry complex that continues to produce picture frames in the original manner. Replacement of heating system, insulation, and removal of trees endangering the facility. \$10,150.00.**