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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 Hill-Ross Farmstead (Underground Railroad in MA MPS)

other names/site number Ross Farm (preferred name)

2. Location

street & number 123 Meadow Street not for publication

city or town Northampton (Florence) vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Hampshire code 015 zip code 01060

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.)

Brona Simon

November 19, 2007

Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

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

Patrick Andrews

Date of Action

1/8/2008

Hill-Ross Farm
Name of Property

Hampshire, 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

_____ 1 _____ 5 _____ building _____ sites
 _____ structures
 _____ objects
 _____ 5 _____ 1 _____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

_____ 0 _____

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Underground Railroad in Massachusetts MPS _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

_____ DOMESTIC: single dwelling _____

_____ AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: storage _____

_____ AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility _____

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

_____ DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling _____

_____ AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: storage _____

_____ AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

_____ EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal _____

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____ STONE _____

walls _____ WOOD, Weatherboard _____

roof _____ ASPHALT _____

other _____ BRICK _____

Narrative Description

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

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Continuation SheetHill – Ross Farm
Northampton, Hampshire Co., MASection number 7 Page 1 **Narrative Description**

The nominated portion of Ross Farm is located on the north side of Meadow Street in the Florence section of the city of Northampton, Massachusetts. The eastern boundary of the 2.25-acre property is formed by the Mill River, which, as the name implies, was the power source for much of Northampton's early industry. Undeveloped fallow cropland south and west of the property sustains the farm's rural setting. The farm constituted almost 300 acres when it became the core parcel of a tract assembled by the Northampton Association for Education and Industry (NAEI), a newly formed Utopian communal society, in 1841. The site included a four-story brick silk factory on the Mill River downstream from (south of) the farm, in which the Association centered its community. The farm was not only a part of the manufacturing enterprise—many acres were planted with mulberry trees to provide a habitat for silk worms—but also was the source of the community's food. Following this acquisition, the farm became associated with two significant assistants on the Underground Railroad, Samuel L. Hill, a founder of the NAEI who resided there from 1841 to 1845, and Austin Ross, who owned the farm after the NAEI disbanded, and operated it as a dairy and tobacco farm from 1845-1902.

Today, the house is the only landmark surviving from the communitarian era, as well as the period of the Underground Railroad. As such, the nominated property contains one contributing building and five non-contributing buildings, which are listed in the table below. (See FIG 1 for site plan.) The noncontributing buildings have been so determined only because the Period of Significance for the Underground Railroad in Massachusetts MPS, under which this property is nominated, ends at 1865. No other resource types are associated with the property. Since the house and farm buildings have been separated from the agricultural land in 1972, the property has had a residential function. Although in separate ownership and excluded from the nomination, the farm land remains intact, preserving the historic agricultural setting for the nominated property.

Farmhouse

The farmhouse is the oldest building on the property. It was constructed ca. 1825 by Theodore Burt, whose father, Gaius Burt, had purchased the farm in 1798.¹ The two-story, center-chimney, side-passage-plan house embodies the characteristic form and construction methods of the period, as well as distinctive interior decoration in the late Federal style (PHOTOS 1 & 2). The entrance is positioned at the east side of the three-bay front (south) façade. Windows are aligned bilaterally (vertically and horizontally), but they are spaced in an unsymmetrical manner that indicates the interior separation of the entry and front room. The two-story, three-bay-façade, side-passage-plan house was a popular Federal-period dwelling plan form, but the fenestration pattern and large, square brick chimney positioned in the center of the ridge line of the roof relate the house to 18th-century New England architectural traditions. The house's wood frame was constructed largely of hewn oak timbers joined in the mortise-and-tenon method continued from the Colonial era. At its foundation is a shallow stone basement, and the wide span of the gable roof is supported by canted purlins braced to posts in the end walls.

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¹ "Historical Sketch of Florence," Hampshire Gazette, 2 April 1867.

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Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA**

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Narrow wood clapboards cover the three exposed exterior walls; the rear (north) wall is contained within a later addition. Much of the siding was installed in the mid-1900s when the roof of a mid-19th century piazza was removed from the front and sides. (A new gallery was added to the east façade at the same time.) The front door and its architrave were also introduced at this time, along with a brick stoop. This was a Colonial Revival restoration that attempted to approximate the original porch entrance. The replica wood 6/6 sash windows with a second insulating pane notched into the outside face were added recently in an effort to improve the historic appearance of the house, although original sash were 12/12. The asphalt-shingle roof and cast-iron gutters, downspouts, and leaders are also non-historic. The gutters are an unusual mid-20th-century “restoration” product that have survived and are attached to the fascia of the shallow eave.

The two-story, side-passage plan house was an appropriate dwelling for a farmer of the better sort. The compact plan is approximately 24 feet wide and 35 feet deep with a chimney stack in the center. The entry and passage is located in the southeast corner; the parlor occupies the rest of the front of the plan with a fireplace in the front of the chimney (FIG.2). The kitchen, with a hearth and bake oven, is positioned in the northeast corner of the plan, and contains roughly the same area as the parlor leaving a narrow section in the northwest corner about the same dimensions as the passage that contained a third heated room and a pantry. Thus the plan has an odd symmetry, with spaces of similar shapes in opposing corners.

The entry opens into a passage containing a straight run of stairs with a thin, turned newel post and a rounded hand rail and balusters dating from the construction period of the house (PHOTO 4). The passage is illuminated by a window at the front of the east exterior wall. There are additional doorways leading to the parlor in front of the stairs on the west wall and to the kitchen in the rear (north) wall. All the doors and windows have wide board architraves with corner blocks and thin sills and aprons. The boards have been hollowed and textured by planing, and the corner blocks have thin raised edges, leaving blank square hollows within. In the mid-1900s the entrance door was replaced and the parlor doorway was widened for a pair of French doors, although the historic surrounds were preserved. Plaster walls are intact, but the ceiling surface is gypsum board edged with an added thin wood crown molding. Original pine board flooring has been sanded and refinished, and the beaded-edge baseboards are original.

The parlor has two windows on the front (south) wall and one on the west wall. There are three doorways, the altered one leading to the entry, an intact doorway to the chamber in the northwest corner of the plan (with a 20th-century replacement door), and fully intact one for a shallow closet notched into the chimney space on the east side of the north wall. The door and window architraves in the parlor match those described in the entry. The fireplace is located in the center of the north wall between two doors. It has a brick firebox and hearth, and a plain Federal-style wood mantle with pilasters composed of the same hollowed boards as the architraves and a thin molded shelf (PHOTO 5). Plaster walls are intact. The ceiling is covered with 2 x 8 foot sheet iron panels embossed with a floral pattern and a metal cornice with a stylized egg-and-dart impression. This appears to be an early 20th-century feature. Beaded-edge baseboards remain in place, and the original pine board flooring has been sanded and refinished, as was done in the entry.

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In the kitchen a broad, plain wood mantel frames the brick face of the chimney in which there are openings for fireplace, bake oven, and, under the oven, a wood box (PHOTO 6). There are two doors on the south wall east of the brick hearth, one leading to the basement stairs and one to the passage, and two windows on the east exterior wall. A doorway in the north wall enters an addition made to the rear later in the 19th century where a new kitchen was introduced. As would be expected, doors and windows have traditional double architraves less stylish than those in the front of the house. Plaster walls and gypsum board ceilings are edged with added wood crown moldings and baseboards. The west wall was removed to combine the kitchen with the rooms in the northwest corner of the plan. The front part of this room section has a small fireplace with a brick hearth centered in the west side of the chimney stack; the wall is angled to provide space for the firebox. No mantel exists; in fact no original trim survives in the room at all. It appears that sometime after Austin Ross obtained title to the farm in 1857, the west wall of the house was bumped out with a one-story, flat-roof addition that nearly doubled the dimension of the northwest section. The new exterior wall contains one window on its narrow south wall, and two on the west wall. The common wall was removed much more recently, and new narrow-width maple flooring installed.

There may have been a one-story shed on the rear of the original house creating a saltbox form and providing pantry and other storage space, but any evidence of that was destroyed when Austin Ross later (ca. 1875) added the flat-roofed, two-story extension on the rear of the house. A historic photograph indicates that outbuildings, either existing or new, were connected to the east side of the house at this time. The exact date of this addition is not known, and it was largely reconstructed by Theodore Blauvelt in the 1950s. Food also was stored in a whitewashed stone basement under the original section of the house. The basement has limited headroom, even after Blauvelt lowered the floor level about a foot. Its initial shallowness likely was due to the high water table, and digging the floor down has resulted in water infiltration. The stone and brick base for the chimney occupies a large portion of the center of the room.

The second-story plan duplicates that below, and it has likewise been altered in the rear (FIG.3). The stair lands in a passage with small chamber partitioned in the front (now used as a bathroom). The best chamber is located above the parlor, and it is reached through a narrow passage sandwiched between the staircase and the chimney. Like the parlor, the chamber has a fireplace centered on the north wall with a simple wood mantel flanked by two doors, although in this case the doorway on the west side connects to the closet (PHOTO 7). The two doors and three windows in this room have modest double architraves. Gypsum board has either replaced or been applied over historic plaster walls and ceilings; a wood crown molding has been added. Original wide pine flooring remains in place, although the boards have been sanded and refinished. The dimensions of the rear rooms were altered when the two-story addition was constructed on the rear. The original dividing partition was removed, and a new one constructed to extend the side passage across the entire east side of the house. What was left of the room formerly in the northeast corner was joined to the one in the northwest corner. The remaining room retains most of its early woodwork; the wood crown molding was added during the alterations.

A ladder-stair to the attic runs up the north side of the chimney, concealed behind a doorway in the passage to the parlor chamber. Windows in the gable ends provide light, although the space in the center between the purlins and

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east of the chimney was enclosed by partitions plastered on the interior for use as a bed chamber. The 12/12 sash in the east attic window appears to date with construction of the house. The rest of the attic is unfinished. Log rafters hewn on their tops seem to be original; they are nailed to a canted hewn ridge beam at the tops and are supported midway along their run by canted purlins braced to posts in the end walls. Some of these rafters were later replaced with shorter sawn boards that overlap on the purlins. The inside sections of outriggers nailed to the underside of the roof to support exterior eaves are visible, but the eaves, added in the late 19th century, were removed when the house was “restored” during the mid-1900s.

Later 19th-century alterations made to the house

Samuel Whitmarsh bought the farm from Theodore Burt in 1834 and proceeded to plant mulberry trees and raise silk worms. He also built a brick factory on the Mill River on the south side of his nearly 300-acre tract to produce silk thread and cloth. (This mill was replaced by the present industrial building visible from the house, but outside the nominated property.) Whitmarsh lived in the house until he sold it, along with about 150 acres, to the Northampton Association for Education and Industry in 1841, and Samuel L. Hill lived here for a short time until he was able to move into a house he built in Florence in 1845. It is probable that neither man made any of the later additions and alterations visible in the house; these changes were made by Austin Ross and his family, who were proprietors of the farm from 1846 to ca. 1925. These changes included a two-story, wood-frame, flat-roof addition measuring 24 feet wide and 15 feet deep, built on a brick foundation at the rear of the house that contained a new kitchen on the ground floor; and bed chambers on the second story, and a one-story, gable-roof ell measuring about 44 feet long and 14 feet deep that extended perpendicularly from the east side of the rear addition, which probably contained a wood shed, stable, wagon house and privy (PHOTO 3). On the exterior, these additions were linked by a wide piazza with a flat roof that covered the full extent of the south and east sides of the house. Also, the one-story, flat-roof addition on the west side of the house, mentioned above, and a one-story, flat-roof mud room on the north side also were constructed by the Rosses. The perpendicular ell on the east side of the house was completely reconstructed by Theodore Blauvelt ca. 1950 with a concrete block foundation and 12/12 sash windows, and a two-car garage in the east end.

Hay Barn

Whatever barns and outbuildings that existed when Austin Ross made his appearance on the farm in 1846 are gone from the scene. The large hay barn with cow shed located just east of the house was constructed in ca. 1880 when the farm was in its heyday. It was conceived as a showpiece and was designed with a distinctive front façade and rooftop ventilator, ornamented in an Italianate style, and positioned near Meadow Street. It was reputedly built in two stages with the northern third being an addition, but construction techniques and materials in both sections are identical (PHOTOS 8 & 9). The long rectangular building measures approximately 50 feet wide and 130 feet long; it is oriented on a north/south axis with wagon doors at both ends. The south doorway has a pair of large batten doors hanging on a track mounted on the interior face of the wall. It is topped by a full transom in the fashion of the region, and a round window is centered in the gable above it. The entrance on the north wall has been altered from a

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configuration matching that on the front; instead of a window the gable contained a large hay door, all of which has been replaced. A second smaller doorway is located on the east side of the south façade and appears to have been the original access into the cow shed, which is a structure about 15 feet wide attached to the east side of the building, with a shed roof abutting the barn wall just below the eave of the barn roof. A larger hanging-track machinery door was later inserted on the south façade of the shed. The north end of the shed may have been extended; however none of the east wall contained within the shed has been painted indicating it was never exposed to the weather. The hay barn has vertical wood board siding without battens. It had a slate roof when constructed, which has been recently replaced with asphalt shingles.

The barn is framed with large square-section posts aligned on both sides of a center aisle tied together at the tops by beams crossing above the center aisle, with beams traversing the side aisles and connecting to roof plates at the top of wall posts. At the outside junctions the complex joints are braced in all three directions. The sills are mounted on a brick foundation. The broad span of the rafters is supported by canted purlins supported by the aisle posts and braced to crossbeams. All the structural members were milled with circular saws, and there is a mix of cut and wire nails consistent with the building technology of the 1880s.

The east side aisle has been enclosed with animal stalls and pens, many of which overlap into the cow shed. A floor has been laid over the tie beams creating an elevated platform where feed was stockpiled. The west side aisle is essentially open except in the front (south) end where tack and storage rooms have been created. Hay was stockpiled in the roof space supported by joists notched into the tie beams spaced across the center aisle. It was hoisted through the mow door in the north end of the barn, and transported through the space using a carrier running on a track fastened to the roof ridge. The large rooftop ventilator drew air entering the large end doors through the hay mass and out the louvered openings in three arched openings on all four sides to dry the hay and prevent spontaneous combustion.

Tobacco Barn

A tobacco barn measuring approximately 35 by 75 feet is located 150 feet north of the house at the western edge of the property near what was a neighboring tobacco field (PHOTO 10). It was constructed ca. 1880 during the period the Ross family owned the farm. The circular-sawn framing members are nailed together with cut nails and mounted on a stone foundation. The framing system of the tobacco barn is similar to the hay barn, making them contemporaneous. Typical of tobacco-drying facilities in the Connecticut River Valley, every other vertical board constituting the exterior siding on the long north and south walls of the building were hinged to their stationary neighbors so that the walls could be opened for ventilation. Twisted iron hook closures survive on many of the doors. Two ventilators on the ridge of the gable roof have been removed and roofed over. There are doors in the east and west gable ends for transporting the tobacco in and out of the building. Presently, the interior contains a few remnants of the characteristic drying racks and other components of the curing process.

Stables & Wagon House

A large stable facility indicates the extent of the activity occurring on the farm when it was created through the renovation of a tobacco barn at the turn of the 20th century (PHOTO 11). The farm was producing and delivering

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milk and it appears that this function, perhaps including a small dairy, was based in this building. Three swing vehicle doors (restored) are located on the west end of the building. Stall windows in the west façade suggest that at least a portion of this space was used for stables before it was altered into a garage in the 1950s. The upper-story windows are also a later addition. A finished room at the east end of the building had an office or work function, and there is evidence of there having been a shed extension on the east façade.

Corn Crib

A large corn crib is located directly behind (north of) the hay barn (PHOTO 12). It was likely built in the early 1900s. The building was constructed of 2x4 inch framing connected with wire nails and is elevated on poured concrete pylons. The long, narrow building has a gable roof and tapered sides typical of the form. The walls of the frame are covered with chicken wire to ventilate the interior and dry the corn. The unusual size of the building reflects the increasing importance of corn as a feed for dairy cows at the turn of the 20th century. The asphalt shingle roof has failed in a number of areas, and the building is in poor condition.

Farm Worker Dwelling

This two-story gable-roof building was constructed of concrete block ca. 1955 for Blauvelt Tobacco Farms, Inc. to house farm workers. It is a multiple dwelling with entrances on its south and east facades and fenestration comprised of paired window units. This building is considered noncontributing.

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are known on the Ross Farm or in the general area (within one mile), sites may be present. Native American settlement has been documented in the Connecticut River Valley for more than 10,000 years extending from the Paleoindian period to the present. Environmental characteristics of the property represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of ancient sites. The Ross Farm occupies a well-drained, level to moderately sloping riverine terrace and floodplain adjacent to the Mill River, which forms the eastern boundary of the property. Given the above information and levels of historic land use, a moderate to high potential exists for locating significant ancient Native American resources on the property.

A high potential exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the Ross Farm property. While land that included the Ross Farm was first granted in 1657, little evidence exists indicating the area was settled prior to construction of the Gaius Burt House in 1801. Structural evidence may exist from a sawmill built by Joseph Parsons in 1675; however, the precise site of that mill is unknown. The Parsons sawmill was built to the south of Broughton's Meadow, presumably along the Mill River, its power source. That location could place the mill on the nominated property. Structural evidence may survive from the Gaius Burt House, which was demolished in the 1870s. Burt's son Theodore, built the existing house ca. 1825 to the west of his father's house. Structural evidence may exist from a rear ell originally attached to the ca. 1825 house, demolished in the early 20th century for a two-car garage. Structural evidence of barns, stables, and outbuildings may exist related to both the elder Burt's 1801 house and the existing home. None of the outbuildings present when Austin Ross purchased the farm in 1825 are extant today. Archaeological evidence of occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may exist with both homes.

(end)

Hill-Ross Farm

Name of Property

Hampshire, 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)

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HISTORY

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

Ca. 1825-1865

Significant Dates

ca. 1825

1842

1849

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Samuel Lapham Hill Austin Ross

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Forbes Library, Northampton, MA

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Ross Farm at 123 Meadow Street in the Florence section of Northampton, Massachusetts, meets National Register criteria A, B, and C in the areas of architecture, and ethnic, social, and political history in association with its role in both the abolitionist and communitarian reform movements in antebellum Massachusetts. It is specifically significant for its association with the Underground Railroad in the Commonwealth. Between the construction of the house in about 1825 and the Civil War, two separate occupants, Samuel Lapham Hill and Austin Ross, engaged in documented efforts to assist fugitives from slavery. During Hill's occupancy, from 1841 to 1845, the property also was part of the complex of buildings and land owned by the Northampton Association for Education and Industry (NAEI), one of three Utopian communitarian groups organized in antebellum Massachusetts. Indeed, the Ross Farm is the only property still standing in Florence that was connected with the Association. Samuel L. Hill was a founder of the group and embodied the remarkable fusion of antebellum Utopianism and abolitionism. In 1845 Austin Ross purchased the farm from the Association, and he, his son, and grandson operated it for the next 80 years. Ross and his wife, Fedelia, who came to Florence after being excommunicated from their church in Chaplin, Connecticut, for their abolitionist fervor, were known for sheltering fugitives in their home. The house is also significant architecturally as a distinctive example of early 19th-century farmhouse architecture that evolved in plan and design during the Ross tenure, and as a documented example of a dwelling that harbored fugitive slaves making their way out of the south on the Underground Railroad. The property is nominated at a state level of significance in all these categories, and it fulfills the Registration Requirements defined in the Massachusetts Multiple Property Submission for Property Type #1, a dwelling that harbored fugitives on the Underground Railroad. It has also been listed with the National Park Service's *Network to Freedom*.

Northampton Association for Education and Industry and the Farm at 123 Meadow Street

According to historian Christopher Clark, the Northampton Association for Education and Industry was one of 119 communal societies established in the United States in the first six decades of the 1800s and one of forty-seven founded between 1841 and 1845.¹ Created in April 1842, the NAEI had been planned since 1841, the year that the Transcendentalist George Ripley founded the Utopian Brook Farm in West Roxbury, and Universalist cleric Adin Ballou created the Hopedale community in Milford. The "come outers"—people who withdrew from existing forms of civil and religious government—who founded each community aimed to develop functioning economic and social systems devoid of the perceived corruptions of the prevailing order. Association founders identified among these evils the increasing divergence of "intellectual and manual labor" in American society, the economic and social

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¹ Christopher Clark, *The Communitarian Moment: The Radical Challenge of the Northampton Association* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 184.

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inequity of the nascent industrial order, intemperance, the oppression of some at the hands of more powerful others, and dissension in American churches over slavery and women's rights. Yet, while abolitionists were among the founders of each community and each evinced some measure of commitment to abolitionism and equal rights, only NAEI articulated those commitments as among its bedrock principles.²

In large measure, the founders of NAEI shared a rejection of sectarianism and slavery, as well as of other forms of oppression. In a reminiscence NAEI member Frances Judd characterized the founders and later members: "all were earnest in the anti-slavery cause; many were deeply interested in non-resistance; all were temperance people and some had suffered expulsion from the churches for their course on anti-slavery and other matters."³ Seven of the eleven founders were abolitionists before founding the association, and seven were from northeastern Connecticut, an early hotbed of abolitionist sentiment.⁴ Chief among the founders was George W. Benson (1808-79), whose father had been a founding member of the Providence Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery (1790); a founder and officer of the Windham, Connecticut, Peace Society (1826); and the third president of the New England Anti-Slavery Society (1834). Benson Sr. had turned from his birthright Baptist faith to become a Quaker, but his son disdained religious affiliation on the grounds that it formed a "hindrance to this peoples advancement in Truth and holiness."⁵ George W. Benson's sister Helen married William Lloyd Garrison, the nation's leader in the cause of immediate abolition of slavery.⁶ Physician Erasmus Darwin Hudson (1805-80) had been active in both the Connecticut and American Anti-Slavery Societies and had lectured against slavery with Benson; in 1842, the year NAEI began, Hudson traveled the lecture circuit with fugitive James Lindsay Smith.⁷ The antislavery views of Northampton native Hall Judd (1817-50) had triggered his excommunication from two churches, and his wife Frances Birge Judd was, if anything, a more committed abolitionist than he was. Judd's father Sylvester, a newspaper editor and historian, had helped fugitives on their way north through the Connecticut Valley in 1838.⁸ NAEI founder Samuel Lapham Hill was a birthright Quaker who had been excommunicated for marrying outside the Friends and joined the Baptist

(continued)

² Clark, in Communitarian Moment, 46 and elsewhere, has made this argument, which appears to be supported by an analysis of the founding documents of Brook Farm and Hopedale.

³ Frances P. Judd, "Reminiscences," in Charles A. Sheffield, ed., The History of Florence, Massachusetts. Including a Complete Account of the Northampton Association of Education and Industry (Florence: by the editor, 1895), 116.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15, 26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷ James Lindsay Smith, Autobiography of James L. Smith (Norwich, CT: Press of the Bulletin Company, 1881), 62-67, describes their tour together and the reception they received in towns throughout Connecticut and Massachusetts.

⁸ In his notebook Judd wrote, "June 1, 1838. Bought pair of second hand pantaloons—gave \$2.25. Gave 50 cents to aid in transporting runaway slaves to Charlemont." Sylvester Judd Notebook, Number 1, June 1833-June 1841, 201, Forbes Library, Northampton, Massachusetts. Thanks to Steve Strimer of the Florence History Project for this information.

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church after he moved to Willimantic, Connecticut, to oversee a cotton mill there. Hill founded that town's Male Anti-Slavery Society in 1836. A year earlier, after a mob attacked the church during a lecture of abolitionist Wendell Phillips, whom Hill had invited to speak He left the faith and, according to his son, "never again allowed his great mind and heart to be trammelled by a church creed."⁹

The founders of NAEI chose Northampton in part because of their interest in silk manufacture, often characterized as a "craze" throughout New England in the 1830s. Whether it was specifically pursued for the purpose or not, the interest in silk manufacture is often tied to antislavery: unlike cotton, silk was a fabric produced by free, not enslaved, labor.¹⁰ Abolitionists who supported the "free produce" movement—that is, the purchase of goods not produced by enslaved people—customarily wore silk and linen as a protest.¹¹ For its part, Northampton's fertile Connecticut River Valley location had already been chosen for an avowedly antislavery business enterprise. In the spring of 1838 the abolitionist David Lee Child had begun to grow beets on an acre of land in the "meadows" in order to make free-labor sugar from their roots. In 1840 he leased twenty acres of land in Florence for the same purpose. The business failed to make a profit and thus to support Child and his wife, author and editor Lydia Maria Child, and by 1841 she had moved to New York City to assume editorship of the National Anti-Slavery Standard. By 1847 the Childs abandoned the beet sugar experiment altogether.¹²

New York merchant Samuel Whitmarsh had begun silk manufacture in 1835 on almost 300 of meadow in Florence. Part of this property was the 100-acre farm of Gaius Burt, who had settled in so-called Broughton's Meadow in 1798.

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⁹ Arthur G. Hill, "Biographical Sketch," in Charles A. Sheffield, ed., The History of Florence, Massachusetts. Including a Complete Account of the Northampton Association of Education and Industry (Florence: by the editor, 1895), 207; Clark, Communitarian Moment, 41.

¹⁰ Though some sources assert that "the Association saw silk manufacture as an alternative to cotton and the slavery system that supported its growth" (The Northampton Silk Route, brochure, Northampton Silk Project, 2002), research has so far found no NAEI founder who overtly stated as much. Nor has any evidence been found that NAEI members voiced an objection to the fact that George W. Benson went into cotton textiles after leaving the association.

¹¹ Abolitionist Deborah Weston was one of them. On 3 May 1839 she wrote to her sister Anne Warren Weston from New Bedford, "In the evening I took tea by invite at the Emersons, & as I wore my best silk gown, all the company thought very well of me—the Holmes were there, the Tim Coffins, the Mackies & Ellis Bartlett, Mr Emerson's assistant, who is an abolitionist." Ms.A.9.2.11, page 95, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library. On linen as a free labor good, see Deborah Weston, New Bedford, to Anne Warren Weston, 13 November 1838, Ms.A.9.2.10, page 69, BPL Antislavery Collection.

¹² The Childs had earlier contemplated moving to a free-labor colony that abolitionist Benjamin Lundy hoped to establish in Mexico. There they met George Kimball, who later told Child that "some wealthy gentlemen" in Boston would back him if he would produce beet sugar. Child went to Europe to learn the business and upon his return partnered with one Edwin Church, whose 1837 book on sugar beets recommended the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts as the ideal location for beet cultivation. See various letters of Lydia Maria Child between 1836 and 1841 in Milton Meltzer and Patricia G. Holland, eds., Lydia Maria Child: Selected Letters, 1817-1880 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 54, 72, 115, 117, 141.

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(Burt's farm eventually became the core of what is now known as the Ross Farm.) Burt built the first dwelling on the property (razed in the 1870s), and his son Theodore built the existing dwelling just west of the first house in ca. 1825.¹³ Whitmarsh planted acres of mulberry trees on the tract, and built a brick factory for the manufacture of "sewing silk" (thread) and, later, various types of ribbons and silk vesting.¹⁴ Later in the year Whitmarsh incorporated the enterprise as the Northampton Silk Company. In 1841 they sold the property and fifty additional acres to Samuel L. Hill. Just as Hill was completing the purchase, however, he and others created NAEI, and in keeping with the association's commitment to communal ownership, the farm became part of its common property.¹⁵ Eventually, the NAEI acquired the silk company's four-story brick factory, its Mill River dam and waterpower site, a sawmill, some small workshops and outbuildings, and several dwellings with land—including the Ross Farm—amounting to 470 acres.

In a circular aimed at recruiting members, the association stated its aim to organize the community "upon principles . . . the best calculated to fulfill the designs of God in placing man in this life." Existing educational and business institutions did not emphasize "the co-operation of man as an essential condition." For his own part Hill deplored "the competition so omnipresent and oppressive" of modern life. Association founders averred that contemporary society instead recognized "invidious distinctions [and] assigning the highest rank for other reasons than moral worth." The NAEI constitution stated the situation more critically. It decried the divide between those who did productive labor and those who merely lived on the labor of others—or, as it elsewhere stated, "extreme ignorance and poverty in immediate juxtaposition with the most insolent licentiousness." It excoriated the "systematically warlike" nature of governments everywhere and the fact that political parties were "notoriously and characteristically destitute of principle except the love of place." Finally, the constitution criticized American religion for having organized itself into "hostile sects" and for replacing "audible and visible forms for the inward power of truth and goodness." The association would instead seek "the union of spiritual, intellectual, and practical attainments" and "the equality of rights and rank for all," its circular declared. Among the seven constitutional principles the founders articulated was that "the rights of all are equal without distinction of sex, color, or condition, sect or religion."¹⁶

The NAEI operated a store, school, and common eating and living space for both families and single people who

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¹³ Both houses are depicted on a map of Northampton dated 1831.

¹⁴ It is unclear how many acres of the Ross Farm property was planted with mulberry trees. "Historical Sketch of Florence," Hampshire Gazette, 2 April 1867, stated that the trees covered one hundred acres of the later Ross Farm meadow, while Sheffield, *History of Florence*, 58, states that only fifteen acres of this meadow had the trees, at least initially.

¹⁵ "Historical Sketch," 25-26. The association owned seven houses—the Ross farmhouse, the original Gaius Burt cottage next door, the Benson, Adam, and Mack houses, and "White's cottage." All were occupied by NAEI families. In 1844, nearly eighty members lived in the boardinghouse. See Sheffield, *History of Florence*, 96.

¹⁶ See Sheffield, *History of Florence*, 69-77, where the text of the circular and constitution appears in full; Hill's quote appears in Clark, *Communitarian Moment*, 32.

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became members. The former Whitmarsh mill contained the store, the boardinghouse, and three rooms devoted to making, finishing, and packing silk. NAEI's silk growing department handled the trees and cocoonery; its agricultural department cultivated crops for the community's use.¹⁷ By early April 1842 thirty persons had joined the association, and by spring of 1844 NAEI had 120 members, the most it had at any one time. Over the four and a half years of its existence, NAEI attracted 240 members, and the association received at least 180 inquiries asking about or recommending membership for people who ultimately did not join. More than half of the association's total membership, historian Christopher Clark has noted, "had identifiable abolitionist connections or sympathies."¹⁸

Several members and visitors noted that the collective commitment to abolition and equal rights was not only a principle. The black abolitionist David Ruggles, who moved from New York City to Northampton in 1842 and became an NAEI member in the same year, wrote in the Albany North Star that the association "is founded on the high idea of the EQUAL BROTHERHOOD OF THE RACE. While the great majority of reformers are *theoretical* merely; the members of this Association are *practical*—endeavoring to live out the sacred principles of HUMAN EQUALITY."¹⁹ Frances Judd recalled that "when David Ruggles came here from New York to find a refuge, he was welcomed and treated as an honored friend, and so were many others."²⁰ When a New Bedford abolitionist wrote to ask about the admission of a man of color, NAEI secretary William Adam replied, "Of course, his color is not a disqualification but rather a recommendation to us."²¹ "It was a place to extinguish all aristocratic pretensions. There was no high, no low, no masters, no servants, no white, no black," Frederick Douglass noted after a visit to Florence in the early 1840s. "I found . . . that the men and women who were interested in the work of revolutionizing the whole system of civilization were also deeply interested in the emancipation of the slaves; and this was enough to insure my sympathy to these universal reformers."²² Clark has argued that association members embraced "black men and women among them as equals—one of the few places anywhere in the United States to do so in this period."²³ This aspect of the association irritated the Newburyport Watchtower, which described the Florence community as composed of "extreme Abolitionists, Come-outers, broken down politicians, negroes, ladies and children."²⁴ Still, Clark has suggested, NAEI's strict admission standards—a candidate had to be known and

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¹⁷ Other NAEI departments were lumber, cutlery, mechanical (which included shoe making), domestic (to take care of the boardinghouse and secure work for women), store, accounting, educational, and secretarial. Sheffield, History of Florence, 89-90.

¹⁸ Clark, Communitarian Moment, 2, 61, 66, 76.

¹⁹ David Ruggles to Editor of the Albany North Star, reprinted in Liberator, 24 May 1844.

²⁰ Judd, "Reminiscence," in Sheffield, History of Florence, 117.

²¹ William Adam to John Bailey, 13 February 1843, cited in Paul Gaffney, "Coloring Utopia: The African American Presence in the Northampton Association of Education and Industry," in Christopher Clark and Kerry W. Buckley, eds., Letters from an American Utopia: The Stetson Family and the Northampton Association, 1843-1847 (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 143.

²² Frederick Douglass, "What I Found at the Northampton Association," in Sheffield, History of Florence, 130.

²³ Clark, Communitarian Moment, 7.

²⁴ Ibid., 95.

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recommended by a member or a friend of the group—may have limited black membership. Only four people of color are known to have been NAEI members—Ruggles, Sojourner Truth (who began speaking publicly on abolitionism only after coming to Florence), and the fugitives Stephen C. Rush and George W. Sullivan.²⁵

Samuel Hill, the Ross Farm, and Fugitive Assistance

Samuel Lapham Hill came to Florence in the spring of 1841 and resided in the house on the former Burt farm. He, like Garrison, was adamantly nonsectarian and nonpolitical. Unlike the political abolitionists who split from the American Anti-Slavery Society to form the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in 1839, Hill refused to vote; he rather believed in the power of what Garrison termed “moral suasion” to eradicate slavery.²⁶ Committed to the association’s aim “to work out an improved state of society,” Hill became the NAEI’s first and longtime treasurer. In addition, he was for some time the assistant superintendent of silk manufacture there and began, with his Willimantic associate Hiram Wells, a machine shop to produce cutlery and metal goods the community needed. Northampton abolitionist Seth Hunt later declared that Hill’s name should “stand highest” on the list of “founders and upbuilders” of Florence; “he was a staunch friend of the poor and oppressed and a stout defender of free thought and the broadest religious toleration,” Hunt wrote.²⁷

Several examples of Hill’s assistance to fugitives from slavery have been documented, but his son Arthur Gaylord Hill, born in 1841 on the Ross Farm, recalled it to have been systematic even though he could remember few specific “incidents” when asked about the subject in the early 1890s. “A good many passengers stopped ‘five minutes for refreshments’ at my father’s, and conductors were often changed here,” A. G. Hill wrote in response to a query from local historian Joseph Marsh. “On a few trips I was either conductor or assistant conductor. Quite a number of the through passengers temporarily took up their abode in Florence, the balmy anti-slavery climate here proving very

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²⁵ Sullivan, admitted as an NAEI member in early November 1843, left the community in mid-1844; see Dolly W. Stetson, Northampton, to James A. Stetson, 26 July 1844, in Clark and Buckley, eds., *Letters from an American Utopia*, 49. Rush arrived in May 1843. William Lloyd Garrison wrote in the *Liberator*, 2 August 1843, that Rush was “a fugitive from the land of chains, whips and bowie knives, and six months ago stood under the lash of the driver as a beast of burden”; he was impelled to escape when he learned that, as Garrison noted, “Massachusetts had given succor and protection to George Latimer,” the fugitive who escaped from Norfolk, Virginia, to Boston in October 1842. Rush left NAEI in April 1846 but soon afterward asked to be readmitted. “I have tried the people out,” he wrote to Hall Judd on 7 July 1846, “but I don’t find no place like the association yet for I believe that they live out a principle that the world no nothing about.” Rush’s letter is bound into Records of NAEI, 4:26, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester. Thanks to Steve Strimer for this information.

²⁶ “Historical Sketch,” 25.

²⁷ Quoted in Sheffield, *History of Florence*, 205.

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attractive to them.”²⁸ Hill then stated that his father most frequently brought fugitives to “the Kingman’s in Cummington, but occasionally our living freight was delivered to a Mr. Crafts’ house in Whately.”²⁹

Three years later, Arthur Hill provided somewhat more specific detail about his father’s activity to Underground Railroad chronicler Wilbur Siebert. “Our station was on the line from Hartford going North, though sometimes we had passengers who would come up part way through the Hudson River Valley or diagonally across from the Pennsylvania line. Most of those who came to us came via Southampton (10 miles from Florence) and were brought to us by a Mr. Lyman (whose first name I do not recall) or some one of his neighbors. Our deliveries were usually made to a little circle of abolitionists at Cummington Mass, eighteen miles northwest of Florence, of which circle Mr Kingman was one of the centres. Sometimes our passengers were sent through Whately about ten miles north of Florence up the Connecticut River Valley, to a Mrs. Crafts.”³⁰ Whether Hill received fugitives at his home between 1841 and 1845, when he lived at the Ross Farm, as well as in the home he occupied at 33 Maple Street afterward, is not known. His son Arthur was only four in 1845 and surely did not begin to help his father until about 1850, though what he told Marsh and Siebert may have been based partly on stories recounting events before he was born or in his infancy.

Fugitive narratives and the retrospective accounts of fugitive assistants and their families strongly suggest that passage up the Connecticut River Valley was common among fugitives.³¹ Basil Dorsey, who escaped Maryland slavery in 1836, eventually reached the home of black abolitionist Robert Purvis outside Philadelphia; Purvis went

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²⁸ Arthur G. Hill, Florence, to Joseph Marsh, 31 January 1893, quoted in Joseph Marsh, “The ‘Underground Railway,’” in *ibid.*, 164.

²⁹ Richard Kingman operated a tavern on Main Street in Cummington, northwest of Florence; now 41 Main Street, it is a local historic site called Kingman Tavern. James M. Crafts, born in Whately in 1817, did not profess any direct fugitive assistance when he wrote to Wilbur Siebert in 1896. “Of course everything of the nature of assisting runaway slaves on their journey was kept very close,” Crafts wrote. “And young fellows were considered likely to be leaky. So we were not made the assistants in the keeping of secrets of that kind.—Yet I have distinct recollections relative to the fact that Mr Osee Monson was always credited with the honor of being the leader in assisting the poor black men to escape.” Crafts, Orange, MA, to Siebert, 24 July 1896, Siebert Notebooks.

³⁰ Arthur G. Hill, Boston, July 18, 1896, to Siebert, Siebert Notebooks.

³¹ Writing in 1900, Aella Greene of Springfield wrote that fugitives coming to the central Connecticut coast from New York City took one of “two routes of the Underground system” into Massachusetts and possibly Vermont and Canada. These routes converged at Northampton, and from there a “spur track” existed when it was necessary “to blind the pursuer of fugitives.” Greene wrote, “The runaways were sent over the hills from Northampton and Florence to Cummington, where they were kept in hiding until the hunters, supposing them gone forward up the valley had pursued them and had returned from their fruitless search in that direction and abandoned the quest and gone home.” Fugitives then recrossed the hills to proceed further north up the valley. Greene’s sources are, however, unknown. Aella Greene, “The Underground Railroad & Those Who Operated It—III: Well-Known “[Outlaws]” of Westfield, Northampton, Amherst and Other Towns—The Chester Branch, A [Bit] of the Way in Vermont,” *Springfield Republican*, 1 April 1900. This three-part series was reprinted in pamphlet form in 2006 by Collective Copies, Inc., in Florence.

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with Dorsey to New York and there placed Dorsey “in the hands of Joshua Leavett, the editor of The Emancipator, who sent him to Connecticut to find employment on his father’s farm.”³² The Leavitt farm was actually in Charlemont, Massachusetts, a valley town north of Florence. There Dorsey and his family lived until about 1844, when they moved to Northampton. In 1838 James Lindsay Smith fled from Northumberland County, Virginia, to New Castle, Delaware, and then to Philadelphia. Fugitive assistants there sent him “with a letter directed to David Ruggles” (who moved to Florence in 1842) of the New York Vigilance Committee, and Ruggles in turn sent Smith off with “two letters, one to a Mr. Foster, in Hartford; and the other to Doctor Osgood, in Springfield.” Smith took a steamboat to Hartford and another to Springfield, where he found his way to the home of Samuel Osgood, pastor of Springfield’s First Congregational Church. By 1842 he moved to Norwich, Connecticut, Ruggles’s native place, where he lived the rest of his life. Probably in 1839 or 1840, William Green, a fugitive from Maryland’s Eastern Shore, was taken aboard a vessel by a willing captain to Philadelphia and was sent on to Ruggles in New York; Ruggles likewise sent Green to Osgood in Springfield.³³ The presence of numerous fugitives in Springfield is at least suggested by the fact that fully 29.9 % of the city’s 1855 black population claimed slave-state birthplaces. Only in New Bedford, whose fugitive population is documented to have been substantial, was the proportion of southern-born blacks as high.

Arthur G. Hill noted that the NAEI members’ feelings about equal rights—“that the brotherhood of man included all of whatever color or shape of head,” as he put it—encouraged some fugitives to remain in Florence rather than continue their flight. “Here at any rate was a house of refuge for the ill-treated wanderer whether from Southern slavery or Northern barbarity,” he stated. “Many residents of color therefore soon made this their home and were fraternally greeted and guarded.”³⁴ In 1843 Sophia Foord, who taught the NAEI school for a time, noted in a letter to the fugitive assistant Robert Adams, then living in Pawtucket, “This is becoming or has already become quite a depot for fugitives—one left here on Thursday & another arrived the day following who will probably tarry a short time. He is quite intelligent, speaks of having been kindly treated by a Mrs Adams of Providence [illegible word] day last week, who it is presumed is your mother—He says the slaves escape so frequently that their masters say the abolitionists must have a rail road under ground, that many more would run away were it not for the belief they are

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³² Purvis quoted in R. C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania (Lancaster, PA: Office of the Journal, 1883), 356-61. “Basil Dorsey,” Hampshire Gazette, 2 April 1867, states that “gentlemen connected with the Anti-Slavery Standard sent him [Dorsey] to Northampton,” but the National Anti-Slavery Standard, the newspaper to which the Gazette must refer, did not begin publication until 1840, four years after Dorsey’s escape. See National Register Nomination Form for the Dorsey-Jones House, Northampton, Hampshire County, Massachusetts (2004).

³³ Smith, Autobiography; Narrative of Events in the Life of William Green (Formerly a Slave), Written by Himself (Springfield: L. M. Guernsey, 1853). Green was a Springfield resident at the time he published this narrative.

³⁴ A. G. Hill, “Florence the Meeea Sanctuary of the Colored Race,” Arthur G. Hill Papers, Forbes Library, Northampton, MA.

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taught to cherish that abolitionists at the North would beat them.”³⁵ Sixteen fugitives, fourteen by name, have so far been identified as Northampton residents, if only briefly, in the 1840s and 1850s.³⁶

Judging by the 1850 federal census, Florence appears to have been a more hospitable place for people of color than the rest of Northampton. Almost 37 % of Northampton’s black population lived in Florence, whose population was only 17 % of the total population of Northampton. People of color were 9.6 % of Florence’s total population, compared to 1.9 % of the population of the rest of Northampton. Only two of Florence’s fifty-six people of color (3.5 %) did not live in their own households (and both lived in the homes of former NAEI members), while thirteen of Northampton’s eighty-four people of color did (15.5 %).³⁷

Two instances of Samuel Hill’s assistance to specific fugitives who opted to remain in Florence have been documented. In 1852 Samuel Hill sold three acres of land to Basil Dorsey, a fugitive who had been living in Florence since 1844. However, in that transaction Hill reserved one acre, with its dwelling house, where the fugitive William Wright was then living.³⁸ The dwelling was the “oil mill house” that David Ruggles had purchased about 1846, and in which he had lived until some point before his death in 1849. Hill had come into possession of the house as one of the administrators of Ruggles’s estate, so it was clearly he who rented the house to Wright after it had been moved to South Street in Florence; it still stands at 47 Florence Road.³⁹ William Wright was one of the ten “fugitives from southern Slavery” who published a notice in the Northampton Courier urging town residents to attend public meeting

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³⁵ Sophia Foord, Northampton, to Robert Adams, 8 May 1843, private collection.

³⁶ Among them were Mary Sly, George Washington Sullivan, Stephen C. Rush, and Thomas H. Jones. Sly, said to have been born in either New Orleans or Natchez, worked for a time at the tavern run by Jeremy Warriner in Springfield; she escaped from her owner, a “Col. Trask,” and it may be at that time that she came to Florence, where she was listed in the 1855 state census. She had returned to Springfield by 1860. See an interview with Sly’s daughter, Mrs. Julia Lee, in “Passing of the Old Tavern: Uncle Jeremy Warriner’s Old Coffee House—Where He Entertained Such Notables as Kossuth and Jenny Lind,” Springfield Homestead, 6 February 1907; see also “Jerry Warriner’s Tavern,” Springfield Weekly Republican, 31 January 1907, 13; and Sarah B. Merrick (Warriner’s great niece by adoption), West Seattle, to Wilbur Siebert, 28 February 1907, Siebert Notebooks.

³⁷ Thanks to Steve Strimer for providing the range of households listed in the 1850 census that were Florence households.

Florence’s population of 580 persons included 56 people of color in that year.

³⁸ HCD 142:439.

³⁹ Steve Strimer, “Benjamin Barrett/David Mack/David Ruggles/Hannah Randall House: A Provisional Interpretation of the Evidence: 47 Florence Road, Florence, MA” (Manuscript, 6 July 2006. Hill later transferred the house and its one-acre lot to Hiram Stebbins, who in turn sold it to the African American laundress Hannah Randall. She, her daughters, and her grandson lived there until Randall died in 1883.

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on the Fugitive Slave Act in October 1850.⁴⁰ Wright was listed in the 1850 Northampton census as a fifty-year-old black laborer who stated his birthplace as Massachusetts, clearly a deliberate falsification. In 1850 Hill also helped Sojourner Truth, another former NAEI member, to purchase her own home in Florence, and he had his son Arthur copy Truth's narrative of her life, taken down by "a kind lady in another town," and printed it in pamphlet form.

"We expected to work out an improved state of society," Hill later said of NAEI, "and make ourselves and friends happier." In his life after the association disbanded Hill continued what he termed the "honest, earnest efforts for a better life" that NAEI members had begun.⁴¹ Facing stifling debt and, perhaps, growing discord, the NAEI began to unravel in the fall of 1845.⁴² In October George W. Benson resigned, and he and the association divided the common property. Benson purchased ninety acres and the four-story mill, which he quickly converted to a cotton textile mill with the backing of Northampton's Williston family, evangelical abolitionists whose assistance to fugitives has long been asserted.⁴³ The NAEI held the remaining 380 acres, the boardinghouse, several houses and workshops, the cocoonery, and the farm. Benson's purchase was designed to reduce the association's debt, but the enterprise proved no more tenable after the sale. NAEI disbanded in early November 1846, and Hill alone took on all of NAEI's liabilities, stock, and debt. He then developed a plan with his brother-in-law Edwin Eaton of Chaplin, Connecticut, to make it possible for former association members and others to own their own property and in so doing, Clark has suggested, be able to maintain some semblance of the social world they had created in Florence. Hill plotted lots in the modern-day center of Florence, sold building lots, and provided financing. "It was a strong desire of Mr. Hill," one local historian noted, "that every man of family should own his little home place, and his influence was thus extended. Many poor men have been helped by him in the erection of homesteads, and whenever he has deeded land for that purpose he has stipulated that no intoxicating liquors should be sold on the premises." In addition Hill hoped

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⁴⁰ "To the Citizens of Northampton," Northampton Courier, 15 October 1850. The signers were Basil Dorsey, William C. Randell, Joseph Wilson, George Wright, "Losenberry," John Williams, Lewis French, William Henry Boyer, Henry Anthony, and William Wright. Like William Wright, George Wright stated his birthplace falsely, as New York, in the 1850 census. Dorsey (Maryland), French (Virginia), Anthony (Maryland), Wilson (Maryland), and Williams (Kentucky) represented their birthplaces honestly. Randell, Losenberry, and Boyer do not appear as Florence residents in the 1850 census, and the 1855 state census shows only Dorsey and Anthony still in town.

⁴¹ Samuel L. Hill, Centerville MN, 2 February 1867, for "Historical Sketch," 8-9.

⁴² See Sheffield, History of Florence, 101, on the rumored sources of discontent among association members.

⁴³ According to Aella Greene, "The Underground Railroad & Those That Operated It," Springfield Republican, 8 April 1900 (reprint, Florence, MA: Collective Copies, 2006) J. P. Williston sheltered fugitives at his house on King Street in Northampton and at his expense paid to move those who wished to move further north, "by train or team." Greene stated that Williston sent fugitives to Levi Graves "and a Billings or two" at Hatfield and employed fugitives at his Florence cotton mill, including Basil Dorsey. Other sources asserting a prominent Underground Railroad role for Williston include letter of Henry Shepherd, Northampton, to Wilbur Siebert, 2 October 1896; F. Bonney, Hadley, to Siebert, 18 September 1896; Arthur G. Hill, Boston, 18 July 1896, to Siebert; and Boston Evening Transcript, 31 March 1926, Siebert Notebooks.

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to raise enough money through property sales to extinguish the association's debt. The plan was at least partially successful: as Clark has noted, "By the autumn of 1846 enough had been done to permit the community to end without a complete financial collapse."⁴⁴

Hill took over the association's silk business and, after some early difficulty, founded Nonotuck Silk Company (initially Nonotuck Steam and Silk Manufactory, incorporated in 1855) with Northampton's Samuel L. Hinckley as a silent partner. The company made machine twist, sewing, embroidery, rope, etching, color-fast knitting silks, and silk hosiery and underwear, and it is believed to have made the first thread for sewing machines. By 1867 Nonotuck Silk employed 137 people at its Florence factory and another 87 people at a plant in nearby Leeds. It became Northampton's largest employer and the state's largest producer of silk goods.⁴⁵ By 1892 it had plants in adjacent Haydenville and in Hartford, Connecticut, and employed eight hundred people.⁴⁶ With two other investors Hill also financed former NAEI member Hiram Wells in the machine business that became Florence Sewing Machine Company, which by 1867 employed nearly three hundred people; the popularity of its Florence model made it at least for a time one of the nation's leading sewing machine manufacturers.⁴⁷ Hill also invested in the button and daguerreotype case factory of Alfred P. Critchlow; Critchlow is stated to have employed fugitives to work in this plant. By the 1860s R. G. Dunn credit accounts state that Hill was at the very least "worth \$100,000."⁴⁸

With this substantial wealth Hill created four local institutions that bespoke his commitment to equal rights and social reform. With two other men he incorporated the Workingmen's Savings Bank of Florence. Like mechanics' banks and five cents savings banks, workingmen's banks offered low minimum deposits as a way to enable middling and working people to save and have their savings invested. In 1863 Hill and others founded Florence's Free Congregational Society, which aimed to accomplish goals much like those of the NAEI. Its articles of agreement stated, "We set up no theological condition of membership, and neither demand nor expect uniformity of doctrinal belief; asking only unity of purpose to seek and accept the right and true, and an honest aim and effort to make these the rules of life. And, recognizing the brotherhood of the human race and the equality of human rights, we make no distinction as to the conditions and rights of membership in this society, on account of sex, or color, or nationality."⁴⁹ In 1864 Hill contributed \$31,000 toward the \$33,000 cost of a new schoolhouse for the district, he funded an evening school for working adults and children, and in 1876 he founded one of the first kindergartens to be created in the

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⁴⁴ "Historical Sketch," 27; Clark, Communitarian Moment, 181.

⁴⁵ In the fall of 1852, when a separate post office was to be established in the district, residents assembled to choose a name. Dr. Charles Munde, who operated the water cure David Ruggles had established, suggested the name Florence, because that city was "the great silk emporium of Italy." See Sheffield, History of Florence, 107; Clark, Communitarian Moment, 206.

⁴⁶ "Historical Sketch," 26; Clark, Communitarian Moment, 162.

⁴⁷ Sheffield, History of Florence, 242; "Historical Sketch," 15; Clark, Communitarian Moment, 207.

⁴⁸ Clark, Communitarian Moment, 213.

⁴⁹ Clark, Communitarian Moment, 207; Sheffield, History of Florence, 147-48.

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United States. Like the Free Congregational Society, Hill stated that he would fund the kindergarten as long as it educated small children in a way “unmixed with ecclesiastical and theological exercises or influence” and remained open to all Florence residents “without distinction of race, nationality, or previous condition.”⁵⁰ Clark has stated of Hill, “Keeping in the background, he was rarely mentioned by visitors. But in time he quietly emerged as the community’s last main leader and principal arbiter of its fortunes,” the man “eventually to become most closely identified with the community and its local influence.”⁵¹

Austin Ross, the Ross Farm, and Fugitive Assistance

The Ross Farm had been part of the common property of NAEI since 1841, and with the association’s demise in July 1846 it fell to trustees Samuel L. Hill, Hall Judd, and Joseph C. Martin. At first they mortgaged 305 acres in six adjoining lots, including the farm, to the trustees of Amherst College, and in October 1849 Hill sold the farm to Abel Ross of Chaplin, Connecticut, who had moved to Northampton probably about the same time as his nephew Austin Ross. Austin Ross arrived in Florence in March 1845 and probably lived at the 123 Meadow Street property from the time of his settlement there: Hill had moved to a new house in 1845, and it seems likely that he did so to make way for Ross. Austin Ross purchased the property from his uncle in July 1857.⁵²

Austin Ross (1812-1902) and his wife Fidelia moved to Northampton to run the association’s farm. “When the water-cure was in operation,” one local history notes, “he supplied that establishment with from 50 to 75 quarts [of milk] per day.”⁵³ He continued dairying, to supply the village with milk, after the association disbanded and at any given time kept from twelve to twenty cows. Ross came from Chaplin to Florence about the same time as Joseph C. Martin, to whom he was related by marriage, and it is likely that he knew Hill and other NAEI members in Connecticut, where he had been an abolitionist. According to Clark, Hill and other Willimantic abolitionists were “in touch with a further group, in the small town of Chaplin, Connecticut, that fought a long battle over abolitionism and women’s rights within the congregational church before being forced to give up” and leave it. The antislavery movement in Chaplin had been, Clark has noted, “active and close-knit” and had existed harmoniously with the church until the schism in the movement in 1839-40. Martin, “one of the radicals,” and others actively opposed the Congregational minister’s efforts to keep women from speaking at revival meetings and his characterization of abolitionists as a “disorganizing” influence. Garrisonians, or “old organizationists,” argued for the involvement of women as equals in antislavery reform because equal rights for all was a main tenet of the movement; “new organizationists” held that any focus on women diffused the movement’s original focus on the plight of the enslaved. Chaplin abolitionists tried

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⁵⁰ Sheffield, *History of Florence*, 148, 156-57; “Historical Sketch,” 27; Clark, *Communitarian Moment*, 216.

⁵¹ Clark, *Communitarian Moment*, 166, 17.

⁵² HCD 114:269, 130: 325, 174:254.

⁵³ “Historical Sketch,” 30; Clark, *Communitarian Moment*, 188. How many acres Ross initially farmed is unclear; his purchase from Abel Ross in 1857 included 116 acres.

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to compel the church to take a formal stand against slavery until 1843, when they decided to “come out”; the church excommunicated them, and within months Martin moved to Florence. Martin became a member of the NAEI in April 1844, and nine months later Ross arrived. Clark does not mention Ross as among the Chaplin objectors, but it seems almost certain that he was. “In his early life he became an abolitionist,” the Hampshire Gazette noted in its 1901 obituary for Ross, “and was dismissed from the Presbyterian church on account of his anti-slavery sentiments.”⁵⁴ His uncle Abel was probably also among them: on 6 March 1841 later NAEI member Erasmus Darwin Hudson wrote, “Last evening went to Friend Hill’s with Geo. W. Benson, W. L. Garrison . . . after the meeting went home with bro Abel Ross and Charles L. Fiske who have been persecuted by their minister because they favor male and female equally participating in religious meetings.”⁵⁵

That Ross was an abolitionist is indicated by his financial support of the North Star, the antislavery newspaper Frederick Douglass began in 1847, and Douglass’s later Frederick Douglass’ Paper.⁵⁶ That he assisted fugitives was asserted in local histories and in numerous obituaries for both him and his wife. “His home was used as an underground rail-road, sheltering fugitive slaves in their flight to Canada where freedom waited him,” Florence’s Anna Pauline Friedrich recalled. “Mr. and Mrs. Ross were ardent abolitionists, and their home served as a station of the ‘underground’ railroad,” one 1902 obituary for Fidelia Ross stated, and Austin Ross’s Hampshire Gazette obituary the year before noted, “During the anti-slavery times he was a successful agent for the underground railroad, and many a slave was gotten into Canada through his assistance.” Ross’s antislavery impulse is also evident in his membership in the Free Soil Party (Ruggles, Basil Dorsey, and Critchlow were all members as well), and his commitment to equal rights is demonstrated by his charter and lifelong membership in Florence’s Free Congregational Society.⁵⁷

In his 1893 account of Florence’s role in the Underground Railroad, Joseph Marsh asserted one specific instance of Ross’s fugitive assistance.⁵⁸ He is said to have sheltered a fugitive whose last name was Wilson “about a year and a half in one of his chambers” and to have secured him work as a night watchman at the Greenville cotton mill (the successor to Benson’s cotton mill, which failed in 1850). Arthur G. Hill recalled a fugitive named William Wilson,

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⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 44; Christopher Clark and Kerry W. Buckley, eds., Letters from an American Utopia: The Stetson Family and the Northampton Association, 1843-1847 (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 152 n. 149; Austin Ross obituary, Hampshire Gazette, 28 January 1901.

⁵⁵ Hudson Family Papers, Special Collections and Archives, W. E. B. DuBois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Thanks to Steve Strimer for this excerpt.

⁵⁶ See the “Receipts” column in North Star, 25 January 1850, and Frederick Douglass’ Paper, 11 February 1853.

⁵⁷ Henry S. Gere, Reminiscences of Old Northampton: Sketches of the Town as It Appeared from 1840 to 1850 (N.p., 1902), 61-62; Obituary for Austin Ross, Hampshire Gazette.

⁵⁸ Marsh, “Underground Railway,” 167.

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but he did not state that he lived with Ross at any time. NAEI member Dolly Stetson referred to a James Willson in three letters to her husband in 1844 and 1845, but this Willson left the community in May 1845 because, she wrote, "he is not a good workman."⁵⁹ Because Ross did not move to Florence until March 1845, it seems unlikely that this man is the Wilson he housed for eighteen months.

It is possible, however, that the Wilson at the Ross Farm was Joseph Willson, one of the ten fugitives who signed the Fugitive Slave Act meeting call in October 1850 and who sold a lot he had purchased in 1848 only three days after that meeting.⁶⁰ Hill recounted Wilson's story twice, once referring to him only as Wilson and once as William Wilson; it may be that Hill simply recalled the man's first name incorrectly. One of Hill's reminiscences states that Wilson came to Florence "before the decision of Justice Taney and its results," which would have placed his arrival at some indefinite moment before March 1857, when U.S. Supreme Court Justice Roger Taney upheld a lower-court ruling that Dred Scott was not free even though his master had often brought him into territories where slavery was illegal. Hill wrote of Wilson, "He decided to remain here, became a laborer, lived on Nonotuck St., got together a little money, tramped back to Virginia to try to rescue his son from slavery. After a few months he appeared with his son. Leaving him he went back to get his daughter. He was captured and kept in slavery again for several months. He again escaped and arrived here with his daughter when the three started for Canada to happily breathe the air of freedom." In another account Hill noted that Wilson's son stayed behind in Florence during his father's second trip south because he was "confident that his father would again escape and decided to wait for him here. Sure enough, in a little while the old gentleman and daughter came, and after a short stay to rest and get a little money the whole party moved north to the queen's dominions."⁶¹ Whether this man or his son lived for some time with Ross, and whether Hill described the Joseph Wilson of 1850, is not known; no man of color by either name appears in Northampton censuses of 1855 and 1860.

The Ross Farm's Later Years

In 1870 the Ross household included Austin and Fidelia, as well as their son, Dwight, and his new wife, Mary. Their daughter, Martha, still lived "at home," although the Rosses' third child, Edson, had left the house. Two farm laborers also boarded with the family. Ten years later, Austin and Fedelia shared the house with two farm workers and a hired housekeeper. Both Dwight and Martha, who in the meantime had married local merchant Robert M. Branch, had separate households. Dwight and his family lived in a house on Meadow Street east of the Mill River; the Branches address is unknown. By 1884, Austin Ross had built a new barn to the property at 123 Meadow Street,

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⁵⁹ Dolly W. Stetson, Northampton, to James A. Stetson, 26 May 1844, 20 February 1845, 4 May 1845, in Clark and Buckley, eds., *Letters from an American Utopia*, 36, 86, 106.

⁶⁰ Joseph Willson purchased lot #4 in Bensonville Village lots on 12 October 1848 and was living next to Ezekiel Cooper, also an African-American from Maryland, at the time the federal census was taken in Florence in August 1850. Willson sold the lot on 26 October 1850. See HCD 125:307, 136:36.

⁶¹ Hill, "Florence the Meece Sanctuary of the Colored Race"; Sheffield, *History of Florence*, 166.

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but at more than 70 years of age, he had given over much of the day-to-day management of the farm and the milk delivery route to Dwight. In 1890 Austin conveyed title to the 122-acre farm to his son, and parents and son exchanged houses, with Dwight taking charge of the homestead. In 1901 Martha Jane Branch was deeded a lot of land on the southeast corner of Meadow and Prospect streets. Her address in 1900 was 48 Meadow Street, opposite her parents' retirement house at no. 61. Austin died the following year.⁶²

At Dwight Ross's death in 1917, his obituary described the Ross Farm as "one of the largest in the Connecticut valley," and it further noted that Dwight was known throughout the valley as "a tobacco raiser and for many years as a producer of milk."⁶³ When the 1910 census was enumerated, Dwight was a widower, and his son, Alfred L. Ross, and Alfred's wife, Florence, were living with him on the farm, with the son described as the "foreman." Dwight conveyed the farm to his son in 1915.⁶⁴ The 1920 census indicates that Alfred, his wife and two daughters were the farm's sole occupants following his father's death. The census recorded his occupation as "tobacco farmer." Ross sold the farm, which amounted to 122 acres of land, to Richard J. Whalen, a buyer and packer of leaf tobacco from nearby Hatfield in 1927. The farm carried a \$12,000 mortgage, and Whalen was financed by Hipple Bros. & Co., Inc. of Philadelphia, apparently a tobacco trader. Whalen became sole owner in 1928, but defaulted on his mortgage in 1931, which had been picked up by another tobacco trader, H. Duys & Co., Inc. in New York City.⁶⁵

In 1930, the farm was rented to Frederick J. Wentzel, a 29-year-old born in Massachusetts to German parents. He was listed as a "general farmer," although tobacco likely continued. Perhaps Wentzel had been operating the farm since Richard J. Whalen had purchased it in 1927. Alfred L. Ross was working as a laborer on a large tobacco farm in Enfield, Connecticut, when the census was taken that year. He was one of fourteen farm workers residing in a boarding house there while his wife and daughters resided in a rented home back in Florence. Their Massachusetts household also included two female boarders, an indication of economic hard times.

Wentzel was followed by Lawrence and Edna Pratt as tenants before H. Duys & Co. sold the property to Harry W. and Minnie B. Marsh of Hatfield in 1939. The Marshes moved to the farm and immediately sold a 4.38-acre parcel at the west side of the farm on Spring Street, and they sold a seven-acre parcel east of the Mill River in 1941 suggesting that they were covering losses on the farm with the sale of property.⁶⁶ Another tobacco grower, Richard H. Blauvelt, bought the farm in 1946; he also bought 17 acres of land on the south side of Meadow Street and opposite the farm. The following year, he sold both tracts to Theodore Blauvelt, either his son or brother. In 1955 Theodore Blauvelt conveyed the farm to Blauvelt Tobacco Farms, Inc. along with five other tracts located in Hatfield.⁶⁷ Theodore

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⁶² HCD 431:469, 551:62.

⁶³ Obituary for Dwight A. Ross, undated clipping in Branch scrapbook.

⁶⁴ HCD 711:299.

⁶⁵ HCD 834:161, 844:454, 871:369, 872:443.

⁶⁶ HCD 940:495, 946:123, 998:136.

⁶⁷ HCD 1000:394, 1012:354, 1204:58.

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Blauvelt and his family resided in the old farmhouse for 39 years, during which time he removed the piazza and other Victorian features it had accrued and “restored” the building closer to its original external appearance, at least frontally. Otherwise, the company used the existing buildings, adding only a two-story masonry building in which farm workers boarded. Blauvelt shut down the farm in 1972 and, after reserving the current 2.25 acres with the house and farm buildings for his use, sold the rest to Philip R. Cohn and Bradford R. Collins, who promptly filed a subdivision plan for 39 lots fronting on Meadow and Spring streets. (Six of these lots on Spring Street have been built on.)⁶⁸ The speculators defaulted on their \$80,000 mortgage and the Greenfield Savings Bank foreclosed on the property in 1977. The bank sold the farm acreage to Pyramid Corporation of Hadley, the builder of mega-shopping centers based in DeWitt, New York. Development plans did not materialize, and that land was sold to its present owner, Allard’s Farms, Inc., in 1978.⁶⁹ In 1986 Theodore Blauvelt sold the remaining 2.25-acre property to John Jay and Lois Shelley Schieffelin of Williamsburg, Massachusetts, and the Schieffelins sold it to current owners Alicia and Noon Hammarlund in 2002, who use it principally as their residence.⁷⁰

Architectural Significance

The original form, plan and appearance of the farmhouse built by Theodore Burt in ca. 1825 are still discernable, and as such, the existing house is a distinctive example of Federal-period rural architecture in Northampton and Hampshire County. Because of its date of construction, it is a transitional building that retains characteristics of 18th-century construction techniques (framing and center chimney) and façade proportions, while exhibiting early 19th-century innovations in room arrangement and decoration. The two-story, side passage plan form was modern and commodious, reflecting the better than middling status of its builder, Theodore Burt. Although exterior and interior surface materials have been renewed, the heavy timber frame, center chimney, and decorative woodwork have survived largely intact.

The interior plan is notable for its compactness and interesting symmetrical organization. An entry with staircase and a parlor occupy the public realm in the front of the house, with a large kitchen and small heated chamber in the rear. The front spaces have stylish woodwork in an up-to-date Federal style; the board architraves and parlor mantel have deeply profiled surfaces and simple geometric corner blocks. There were four chambers on the second story and a fifth in the attic. A significant distinction of the house is that fugitives from slavery were housed in one or more of these rooms during the period Samuel Lapham Hill and Austin Ross inhabited the house.

Samuel L. Hill is believed to have harbored fugitives in chambers in the house as they followed prescribed routes up the Connecticut River Valley on the Underground Railroad. His son, Arthur G. Hill, provided accounts of his

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⁶⁸ HCD 1615:18; also HC Plans 80:32 & 37.

⁶⁹ HCD 1977:347, 2018,232, 2046:66.

⁷⁰ HCD 2778:13, 6994:80.

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father's activity, but he did not specify whether these actions took place during or after the family resided at Ross Farm in 1841-45. However, if the Hills' activities are unproven, there are solid accounts of Austin and Fidelia Ross hosting fugitives in their home and assisting them safely north. Additions were made to the house after the Civil War, so the Underground Railroad activities would have taken place in the original section of the house.

Austin Ross was a successful farmer; his rich bottomland along the Mill River provided the basis for a productive farm that supplied the expanding industrial village of Northampton with fresh milk and dairy products. By 1860 his household included his wife and three children as well as a revolving coterie of farm laborers and domestic servants. He enlarged the house with the addition of a two-story service wing, with a new kitchen on the ground floor and bed chambers for hired help above. He also expanded the narrow room in the northwest corner of the ground floor with a one-story addition on the west side of the house to make it more functional. Farmhouses with barns connected to them by an intermediate building containing work and storage rooms became popular forms in the Connecticut River Valley in the 19th century, and barns with entrances in their gable ends are commonly positioned at the end of the linear alignment of house, connector, and barn. Austin Ross added a long ell perpendicularly to the east side of his new kitchen wing in a variant on the connected house and barn; but his barn, complete with its gable end front façade, was sited about 45 feet away. The ell contained a wood shed, stable, wagon house and, probably, privy. The large barn with a voluminous interior for storing hay was constructed later, and it would have replaced an earlier barn that may have been connected to the house and ell, but that is not known for sure. The barn is a modern type that was built throughout the valley in the last quarter of the 19th century as dairy farming became an important agricultural occupation, and increasing amounts of hay were grown and stockpiled for feeding and bedding cows through the winter months. These tall aisle barns were distinguished by their gable fronts with full transoms above the doors. A shed attached to the side of the Ross hay barn was where the cows were comfortably sheltered. Better barns had flush vertical siding, slate roofs, and highly ornamented rooftop ventilators, such as was the case at the Ross Farm. The barn was a far greater sign of Ross's fashionableness and status than the old Burt house in which he lived, although they had "improved" its appearance with the addition of shadowy roof eaves and a wide piazza on the south and east sides.

The addition of a tobacco barn (or two, the wagon house and stables originated as a tobacco barn) at this time illustrates the evolving history of the property and the Ross's' involvement in this regional agricultural innovation. Farm production gradually shifted so that tobacco was the principal crop. Dwight Ross's son, Alfred, was identified as a tobacco farmer after he assumed proprietorship of the property in 1920. The large tobacco barn on the property represents the type that was constructed throughout the valley, and now that tobacco growing is no longer a viable agricultural product, it is one of a diminishing number of intact tobacco barns in the region.

The Ross Farm is significant in a number of local historical and architectural contexts, with it role in the

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philosophical underpinnings and the practical operation of the Underground Railroad having state-wide significance. The house is a distinctive example of early 19th-century domestic architecture in the area, and its surviving barns and outbuildings illustrate the course of farming in the region over a period of more than a century.

Archaeological Significance

Since patterns of ancient Native American settlement in Northampton are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Many areas in the town are underreported, and few sites have been systematically excavated in the area. Native American sites on the Ross Farm property may contribute important information related to ancient subsistence and settlement patterns within the Connecticut River drainage and the importance of those activities along major tributaries of that drainage. During the Contact Period, an important regional core developed along the Connecticut River in the Hadley-Northampton locale. During this period, Native subsistence and settlement patterns focused on larger riverine village sites along the Connecticut River, with seasonal exploitation of nearby upland faunal and floral resources. Ancient sites on the Ross Farm property may contribute important information that identifies how these patterns evolved from earlier periods. Archaeological sites in the area may identify similarities between ancient patterns of subsistence and settlement along major Connecticut River tributaries, and later Contact Period patterns that focused on the Connecticut River with seasonal exploitation of the uplands.

Historic archaeological resources described above may contribute important information related to the early settlement and agricultural history of Northampton, 19th-century communal, utopian movements in Massachusetts, and the Underground Railroad movement in the Commonwealth. Additional historical research, combined with archaeological survey and testing, may locate evidence of the Parsons sawmill, whose precise location is unknown but may be located on the property. Archaeological resources from the site of the Parsons sawmill may contribute important information related to the early settlement of Northampton, the architectural characteristics of 17th century New England mills, and sawmill technology. The earliest documented archaeological resources on the Ross Farm property are potential resources associated with the Gaius Burt farmhouse (1801), including barns, outbuildings, and occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells). Historical and archaeological research at the Burt farmhouse may contribute important information related to the architectural characteristics of early 18th century farmhouses in Northampton, and the importance of agriculture in early Connecticut River Valley settlements. Important information may exist that identifies the internal configuration of the farmstead, its relationship to building patterns of farmsteads in other New England areas, and the focus and technology associated with agricultural production on the farm.

Additional historical research combined with archaeological survey and testing in the vicinity of the existing farmhouse may also contribute important information related to settlement, agriculture, manufacturing, and social evolution. Structural evidence of barns, outbuildings, and detailed analysis of the contents of occupational-related features, may identify structures and features that were used by the inhabitants of both farmhouses, or reused by residents of the existing house. Important information may exist related to the cultivation of silkworms, the operation of the

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Northampton Silk Company, and the social, cultural, and economic lives of the farm inhabitants. Occupational-related features may be stratified so that different occupations of the house and activities can be isolated through time. Outbuildings and occupational-related features may also contribute important information related to the Northampton Association for Education and Industry, a communal utopian organization created at a time when several similar groups were created across antebellum Massachusetts. Historical and archaeological information may exist that identifies the extent to which silk production supported the community. Building types, their organization, and artifact distributions may also exist that identify the extent the groups developed around a nondenominational, free religious society, abolitionist activities, and other ideals such as women's equality, temperance, vegetarianism, and peace.

Additional historical research combined with archaeological survey and testing may contribute important information related to the Underground Railroad in Massachusetts and the role the house and its inhabitants played in that movement. Between 1825 and the Civil War, two occupants of the house, Samuel Lapham Hill and, later, Austin Ross, engaged in activities to assist fugitives in their escape from slavery. During Hill's occupancy, from 1841 to 1845, the property was part of a complex of buildings and land owned by the Northampton Association for Education and Industry noted above. Austin Ross, a member of the Association, purchased the farm in 1846 and lived there until the late 1890s. The Ross family occupied the farm until ca. 1935. A significant distinction of the house is that fugitives from slavery were housed in one or more rooms of the house during both the Hill and Ross periods of occupancy. A further distinction of the Ross occupancy is that he was reported to have sheltered a fugitive for a year and a half in one of the house chambers. Documented occupancy of the house by fugitives for extended periods of time is important, since it increases the potential for their occupancy to be recognized in the contents of occupational-related features and possibly in the architectural characteristics of the house, barns, and outbuildings.

Since properties that harbored fugitives on the Underground Railroad are indistinguishable from similar buildings that were not associated with Underground Railroad activities, structural evidence of buildings in this type that survive in an archaeological context should also offer no additional evidence of their Underground Railroad association. Associated occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells), however, may contribute important evidence that documents Underground Railroad activities at these locations. Subsistence refuse and material culture items associated with fugitives may have been deposited in hidden areas to conceal the presence of fugitives at these locations. On the other hand, refuse and material culture associated with fugitives may not have been hidden at all but deposited in normal trash deposits. By the mid 19th century, trash deposits on residential properties may be more common in rural areas than urban settings. Hidden refuse deposits may characterize both urban and rural areas. Refuse deposits may contain evidence of africanisms or West African culture associated with Southern black fugitives that contrasts sharply with material culture items of Anglo homeowners or even northern blacks. Privies may also contain important macro-fossil evidence that indicates the presence of fugitives. Parasitic and floral evidence may exist that indicates an association with diseases and parasitic conditions specific to West Africa or the American south. Occupational-related features can be an important archaeological resource type on Underground Railroad sites, since they can occur with both extant buildings and on archaeological sites.

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Hill-Ross Farm
Name of Property

Hampshire, MA
County, State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.25 acres

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 18	691120	4689240	3.		
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.			4.		
Zone	Easting	Northing	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 Kathryn Grover and Neil Larson with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date November 2007

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 Alicia & Nooni Hammarlund

street & number 123 Meadow Street telephone 413-584-5887

city or town Florence (Northampton) state MA zip code 01062

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Verbal Boundary Description

The property is bounded on the east by the center line of the Mill River, on the south by the northern edge of Meadow Street, and on the north and west by surveyed lines. See attached property survey and tax parcel map. See City of Northampton Assessors Map #22B Parcel #006.

Boundary Justification

The boundary represents the nominated property, which contains the buildings associated with the historic and architectural significance of the resource known as Ross Farm. Related farmland south and west of the nominated property are in separate ownership and have been excluded as not crucial to representing the primary context of the property's association with the Underground Railroad.

(end)



DATA SHEET

**HILL-ROSS FARM, NORTHAMPTON (HAMPSHIRE), MA
(UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN MA MPS)**

Map ID	MHC No.	Component Name	Date of Construction	Resource Type	Status
A	NTH 153	Farmhouse	ca. 1825, ca. 1875	Building	Contributing
B	NTH 2436	Hay Barn	ca. 1880	Building	Non-contributing
C		Tobacco Barn	ca. 1880	Building	Non-contributing
D		Stables & Wagon House	ca. 1900	Building	Non-contributing
E		Corn Crib	ca. 1900	Building	Non-contributing
F		Farm Worker Dwelling	ca. 1955	Building	Non-contributing

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Hill - Ross Farm
Northampton, Hampshire Co. MA

Section number _____ Page _____

FIGURES

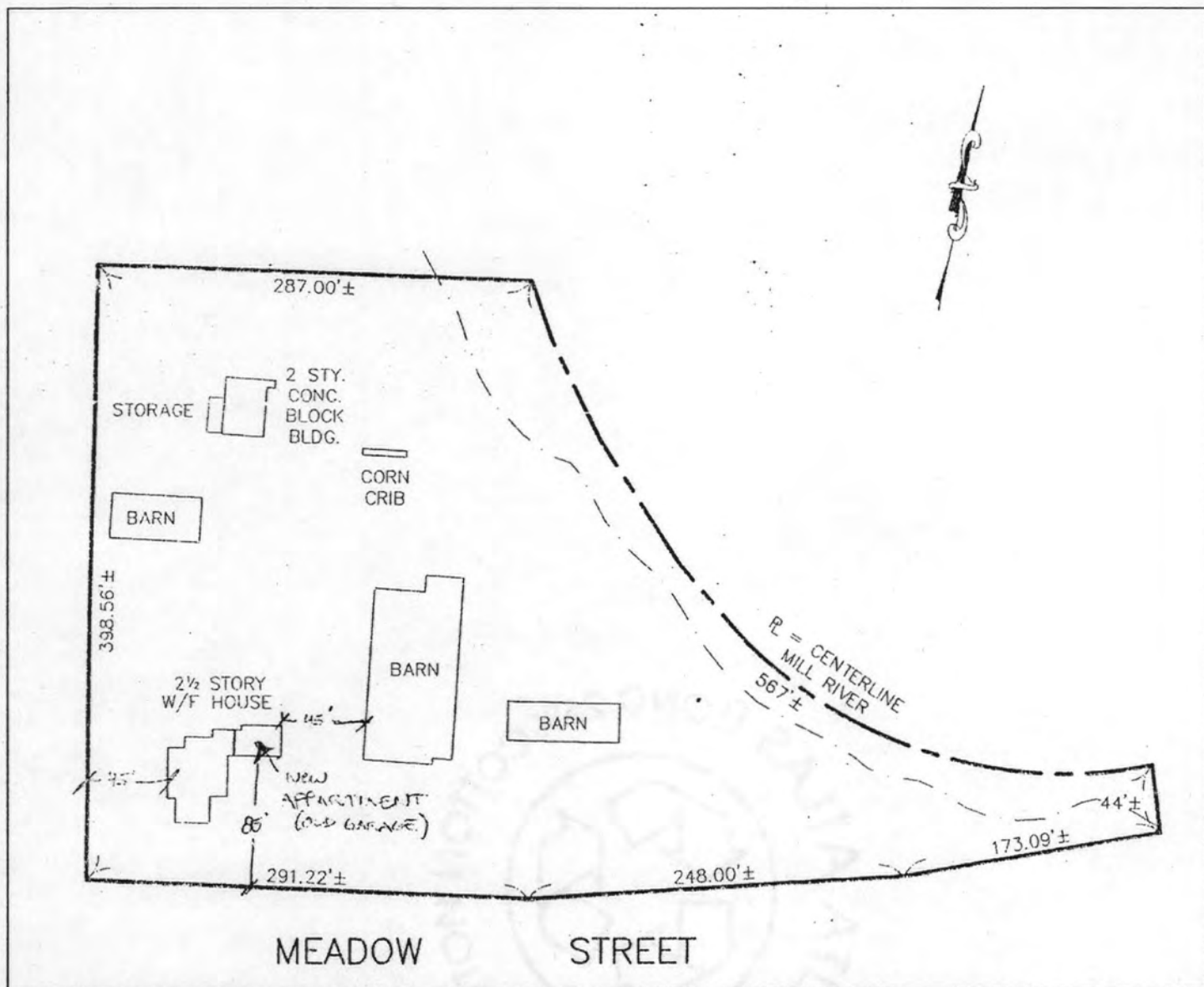


FIG.1: Site plan of nominated property. Letters correspond with entries on data list in Narrative Description (#7). Source: City of Northampton Assessor Property Files.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Hill - Ross Farm
Northampton, Hampshire Co. MA

Section number _____ Page _____

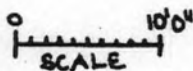
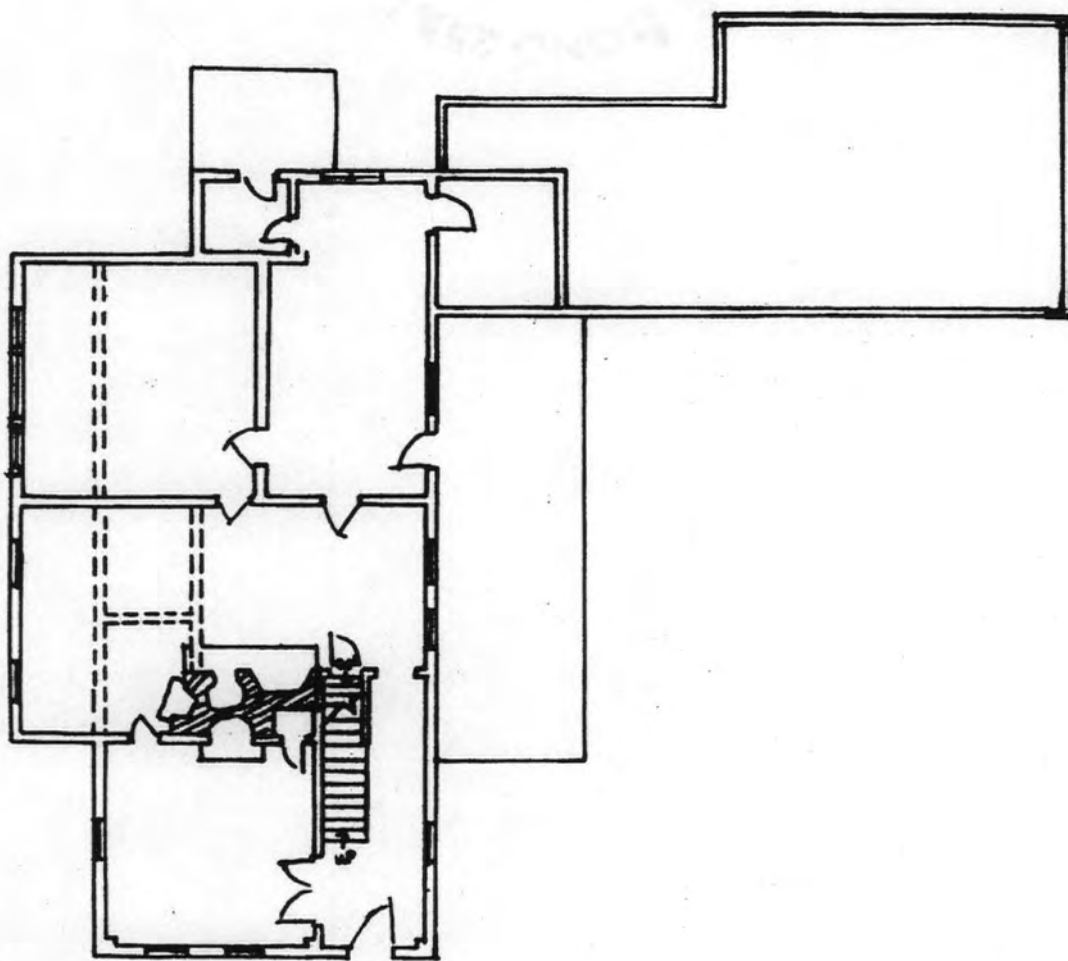


FIG.2: First Floor Plan. North at top of page. [Drawn to scale by Jill Fisher, Larson Fisher Associates, Woodstock NY]

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Hill - Ross Farm
Northampton, Hampshire Co. MA

Section number _____ Page _____

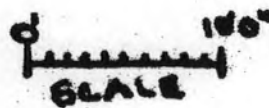
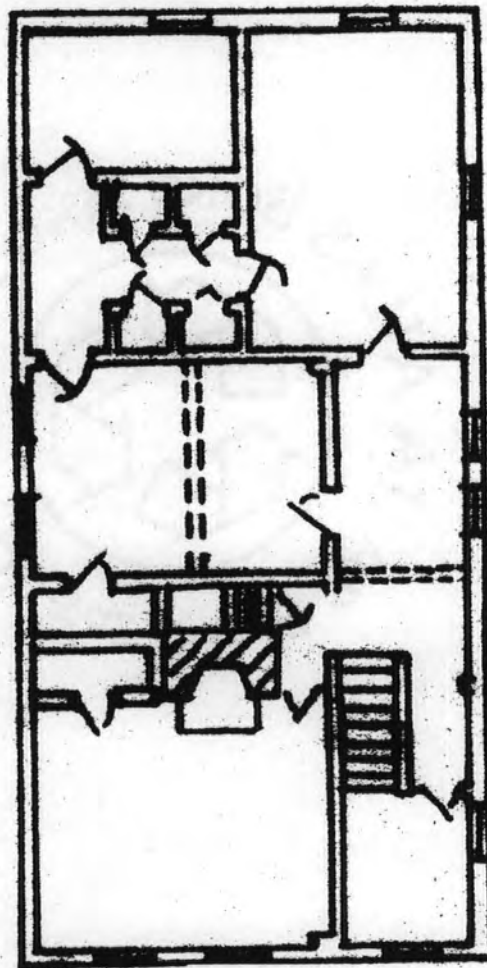


FIG.3: Second Floor Plan. North at top of page. [Drawn to scale by Jill Fisher, Larson Fisher Associates, Woodstock NY]

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Hill – Ross Farm
Northampton, Hampshire Co. MA**

Section number photos Page 1

Photographs

All photographs by Neil Larson, 2006.

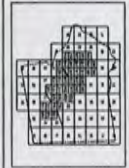
Film negatives with owner

Digital images scanned from negatives at National Register & Massachusetts Historical Commission

List of Photographs

- PHOTO 1: View of south façade of house.
PHOTO 2: View of house from southwest.
PHOTO 3: View of house from north.
PHOTO 4: Detail of stair in entry.
PHOTO 5: View looking northwest in parlor.
PHOTO 6: View looking south in kitchen.
PHOTO 7: View looking north in parlor chamber.
PHOTO 8: View of barn from southeast.
PHOTO 9: View of barn from northwest.
PHOTO 10: View of tobacco barn form northeast.
PHOTO 11: View of stables from southwest.
PHOTO 12: View of corn crib from southwest.

(end)



Northampton Assessors and Zoning Map



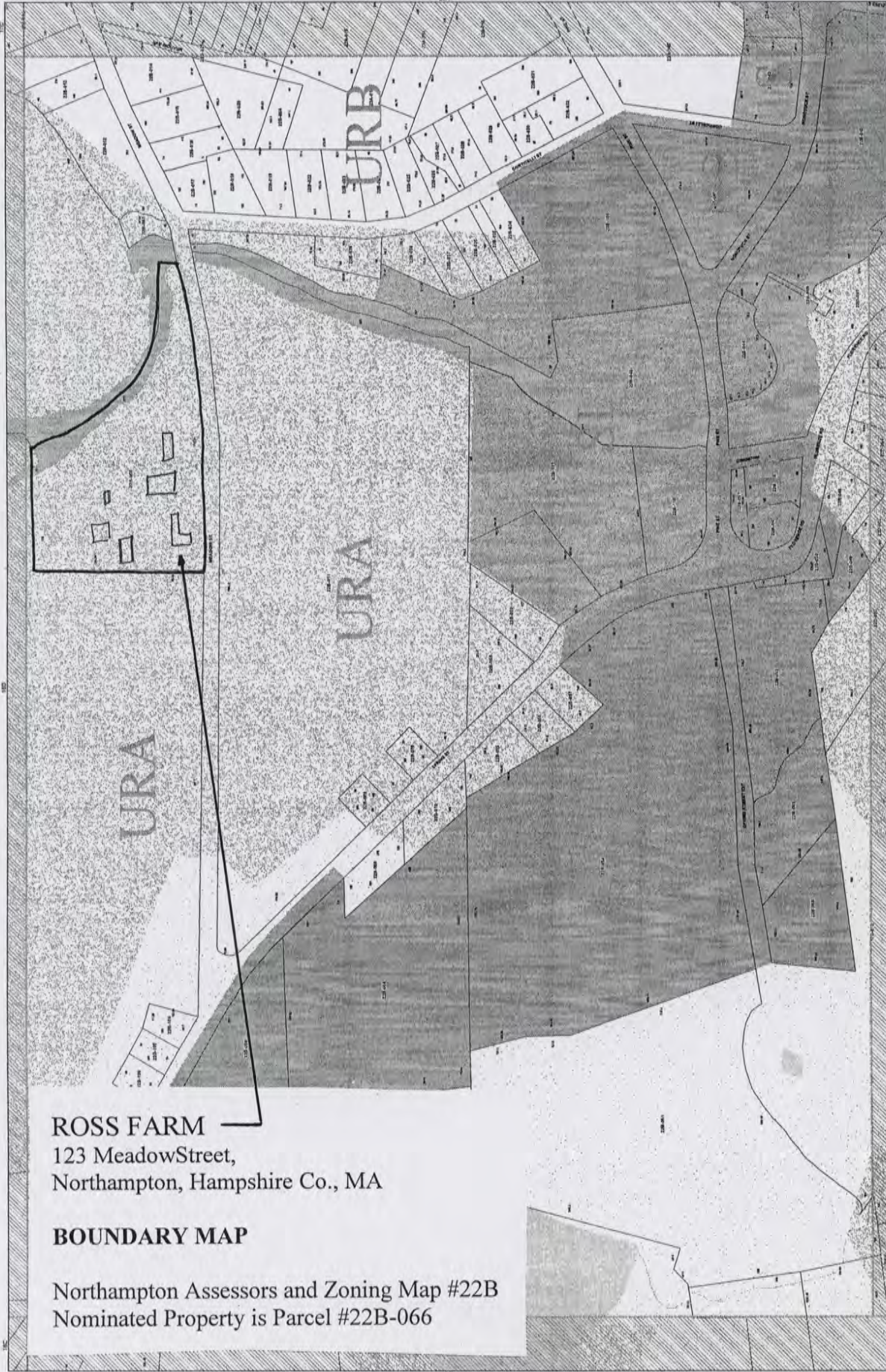
This map was prepared by the City of Northampton, Massachusetts, and is subject to change without notice. The information is current as of 01 January 2006.
www.northampton.ma.gov e-mail: CityClerk@northampton.ma.gov

Zoning Overlay

UR	Urban Residential
URB	Urban Residential
URC	Urban Residential
URD	Urban Residential
URE	Urban Residential
URF	Urban Residential
URG	Urban Residential
URH	Urban Residential
URI	Urban Residential
URJ	Urban Residential
URK	Urban Residential
URL	Urban Residential
URM	Urban Residential
URN	Urban Residential
URO	Urban Residential
URP	Urban Residential
URQ	Urban Residential
URR	Urban Residential
URS	Urban Residential
URT	Urban Residential
URU	Urban Residential
URV	Urban Residential
URW	Urban Residential
URX	Urban Residential
URY	Urban Residential
URZ	Urban Residential

Zoning Districts

GD	General District
CB	Community Business
CO	Community Office
EB	Employment Business
EE	Employment Executive
FE	Financial Center
FD	Financial District
FD-1	Financial District
FD-2	Financial District
FD-3	Financial District
FD-4	Financial District
FD-5	Financial District
FD-6	Financial District
FD-7	Financial District
FD-8	Financial District
FD-9	Financial District
FD-10	Financial District
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FD-44	Financial District
FD-45	Financial District
FD-46	Financial District
FD-47	Financial District
FD-48	Financial District
FD-49	Financial District
FD-50	Financial District



ROSS FARM
123 Meadow Street,
Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

BOUNDARY MAP

Northampton Assessors and Zoning Map #22B
Nominated Property is Parcel #22B-066

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Ross Farm

MULTIPLE NAME: Underground Railroad in Massachusetts MPS

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Hampshire

DATE RECEIVED: 11/26/07 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/17/07
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/01/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/09/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 07001360

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: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 1/8/08 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A, B, C
REVIEWER Patrick Andrus DISCIPLINE Historian
TELEPHONE _____ DATE 1/8/2008

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.



MA - Northampton (Hampshire County) - Hill-Ross 1.tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 1: View of south facade of house



MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross 2. tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 2: View of house from southwest



MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross 3. tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 3: View of house from north



MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross 4. tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 4: Detail of stair of entry



MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross S..tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 5: View looking northwest in parlor



MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross 6.tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 6: View looking south in kitchen



MA_Northampton(Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross 7. tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 7: View looking north in parlor chamber



MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross 8.tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 8: view of barn from southeast



MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross 9. tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 9: View of barn from northwest



MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross 10.tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 10: View of tobacco barn from northeast



MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross II. tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

PHOTO 11: View of stables from southwest

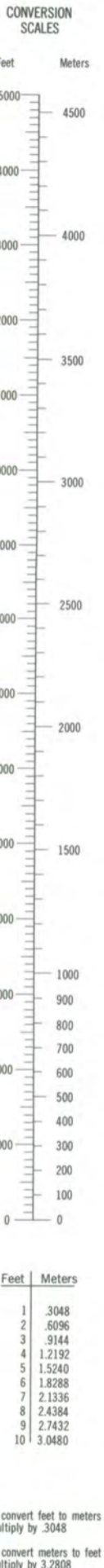
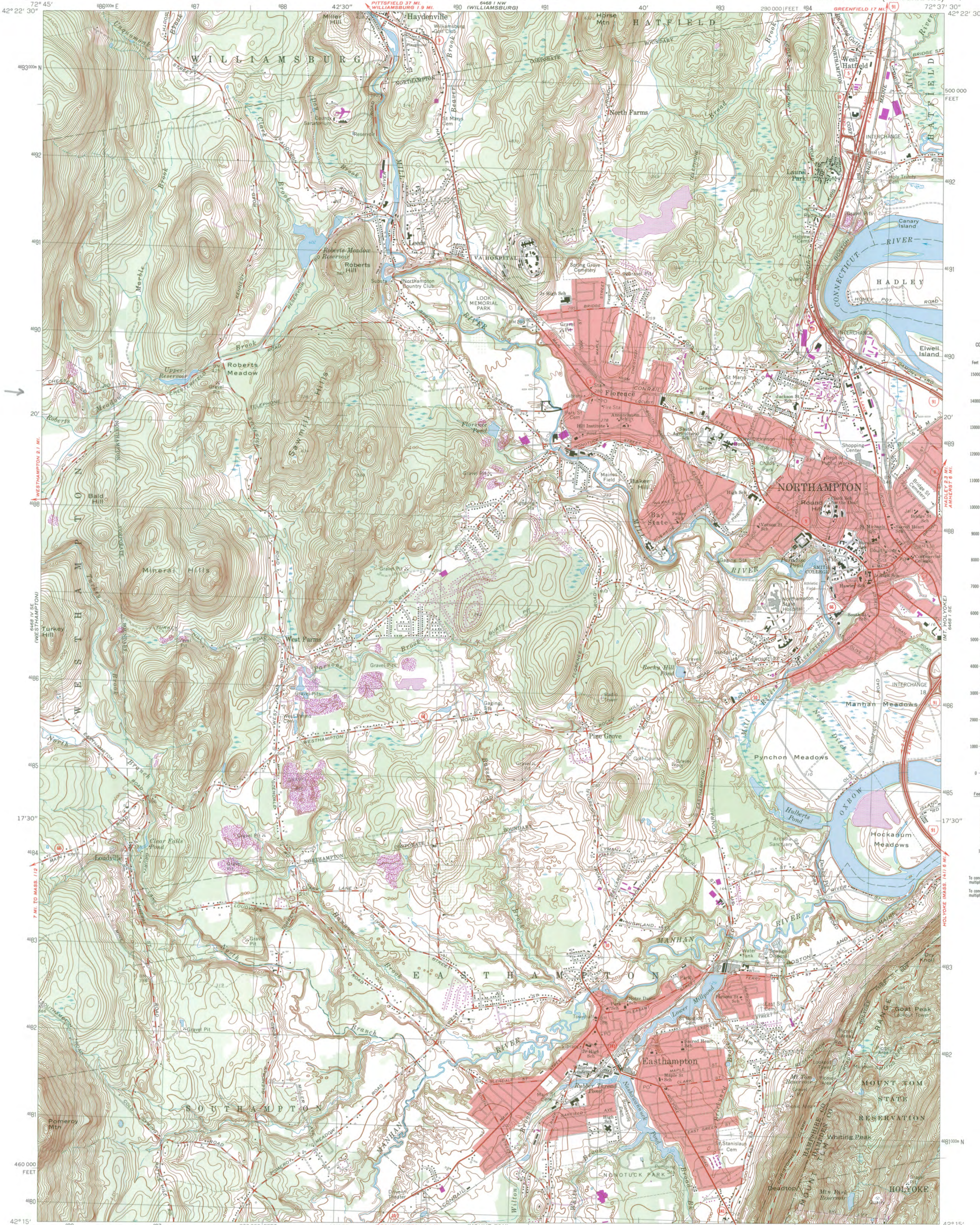


MA - Northampton (Hampshire Co) - Hill-Ross 12. tif

Hill-Ross Farm

Northampton, Hampshire Co., MA

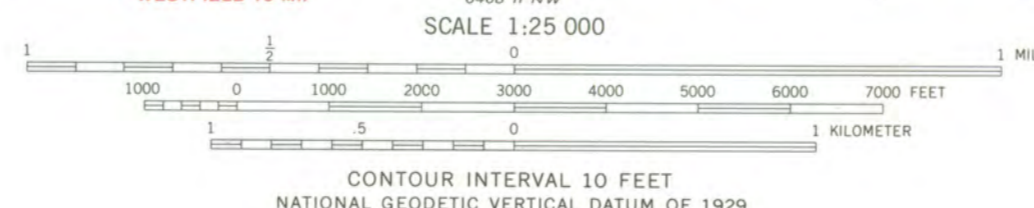
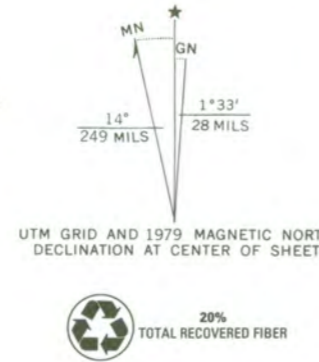
PHOTO 12: View of corn crib from southwest



To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.3048
To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808

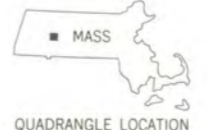
Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USCGS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1935. Revised 1964
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979



SCALE 1:25 000
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



EASTHAMPTON, MASS.
N4215—W7237.5/7.5

1964
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6468 1 SW—SERIES V814





The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

November 19, 2007

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:

Hill-Ross Farmstead, 123 Meadow Street, Northampton (Hampshire), MA
Underground Railroad in Massachusetts MPS

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Kathryn Grover and Neil Larson, consultants
Alicia & Nooni Hammarlund
Christopher Kennedy, Northampton Historical Commission
Mayor Clare Higgins, City of Northampton
Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Development