

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAR 16 1982
DATE ENTERED APR 15 1982

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Lathrop-Mathewson-Ross House
AND/OR COMMON
Ross Farm

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Rd.
Ross Hill Road N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CITY, TOWN Lisbon N/A VICINITY OF Second - CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
STATE Connecticut CODE 09 COUNTY New London CODE 011

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Edward P. and Joan W. Friedland
STREET & NUMBER
Ross Hill Road
CITY, TOWN Lisbon N/A VICINITY OF Connecticut STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Lisbon Town Hall
STREET & NUMBER
Route 169
CITY, TOWN Lisbon STATE
Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
State Register of Historic Places
DATE
1981 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission
CITY, TOWN Hartford STATE
Connecticut

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Ross Hill Road runs east-west through farmland in the northern part of the Town of Lisbon in eastern Connecticut. The 18.3 acre homelot of the Lathrop-Mathewson-Ross House is located on the north side of the road, running from Phillips Road on the west to the right of way of the Providence and Worcester Railroad (later Penn Central, and Conrail) on the east. The surrounding land is still actively farmed in part, and in part is open fields and woodland. A predominating feature of this rural landscape is the wide, high, dry stone walls that line the roads and separate the fields.

The house, dating from before 1761, is a 2½-story, five-bay, twin chimney, central doorway, Georgian structure with gable roof and clapboard siding, on stone foundations (photo 1). It is a large house, originally 42 feet wide by 35 feet deep with a 7 x 21 foot lean-to at the northeast corner. A similar lean-to was added in 1824 at the northwest corner and the east lean-to was enlarged to a 21 x 45 foot two-story ell in the 20th century, giving the house a total of 5,100 square feet on the first and second stories.

On the facade the central entrance has a^a curved pediment and panelled door with side and transom lights. The 12-over-12 double-hung sash are of recent manufacture, carefully constructed with wood dowels to replicate earlier sash. While the fact that the facade has five bays is not unusual, it is worthy of note that the end elevations also have five bays. On the east end there are two windows in the attic, five windows in the second story, and a central (side) door flanked by two windows on each side at ground floor level (photo 2). The west end has a similar pattern but without fenestration in the central bay, for a total of ten windows (photo 1). Most of the clapboards on the west end, which is relatively sheltered from the weather, are joined with tapered, overlapping ends and have hand-wrought rose head nails, indicating that they are original.

The rear elevation has a central back door with four raised panels under five transom lights that is now obscured by the two-story 20th-century wing on the east. The 1824 added lean-to on the west is now a modern kitchen with a modern window. In the second floor over this lean-to there are a 12-over-12 window and a modern bathroom window.

The house is massively framed with twelve posts, four in each end and four on either side of the central hall, all cased and beaded. There are four summer beams, in the two front rooms upstairs and downstairs, all concealed behind plaster ceilings. The attic framing includes collar beams but no purlins. There is a smokehouse connected with the chimney in the attic. On both the first and second floors the floor plan consists of a central hall with two rooms on either side. The hall is a broad, gracious room with a handsome stairway, in pine, running up on the right side, toward the back (photo 3). The step ends have whale's tail moldings. There are three turned, cherry balusters per tread; they are numbered in sequence. The balustrade presently is in natural wood finish, but traces of the original earth green color are visible. There is a raised panel wall under the

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stairs, and a raised panel wainscot along the wall of the stairs opposite the balustrade. The doors between the hall and the four downstairs rooms are panelled on both sides, and have open box locks, that is, no cover over the mechanism (photo 4).

The east front room has a panelled fireplace wall with crown molding that breaks out over the fireplace and over a door that leads to a vestibule inside the east entranceway. The fireplace is all stone, including the hearth, cheeks, and lintel. The windows in this room have sliding shutters, with raised panels. The shutters move along a track on the chair rail, close to the wall. This arrangement requires that the window enframements be flat, flush with the wall. A further feature of the windows is that sections of the enframement, called "slip stops," can easily be lifted out, thereby allowing the sash to be removed.

The west front room, the parlor, has a smaller fireplace, and no shutters. The flooring in this room is narrower than elsewhere in the house and is thought to date from the late 1790's, in contrast to all other floors that are thought to be original. They are hard pine, except in the kitchen and halls where oak was used.

The kitchen was the rear east room. Again, the fireplace is all stone -- hearth, cheeks, and lintel. There is a bake oven at the right, approximately at the height of the lintel. The old plaster has been removed from this room to expose the wood walls, joists, and ceiling, thereby returning the room to its original appearance. When the house was built there was no plaster used, presumably for lack of lime, and the wood walls, joists, and ceilings were left exposed. About 60 years later, c. 1824, according to a letter from Jeffery Mathewson to his brother Angell, dated July 12, 1827, the walls and ceilings were plastered, with hair, and that plaster generally remains in place. (There is new plaster in the front of the upstairs hall, occasioned by the removal of a dormer as will be discussed later.)

The west rear room is the dining room. This room was fitted with new wood trim, and painted, at the same time the adjoining lean-to was built, as noted in Jeffery Mathewson's account book April 21, 1824. It has a stone fireplace in its south wall with molded mantel shelf surmounted by a large flat-panel overmantel, under molded ceiling cornice. Panelled doors to a cupboard and a closet are to the east of the fireplace, while a molded chair rail runs to the west to the door of a small, corner buttry. The top of the buttry door is glazed with a series of lights in a round arch, and the bottom has a flat panel. The west (exterior) wall has two 12-over-12 windows, the one toward the back with a four-panel flat sliding shutter, and the one toward the front of the house with a hinged interior shutter because at this point there is not enough room for a slider.

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On the second floor the east front room has a completely panelled fireplace wall (photo 5). This room also has a fine view to the east overlooking the Quinebaug River and on to Rhode Island. The west front room has no panelling, and the rear bedrooms are equally plain. The west back bedroom has no fireplace, while the east back bedroom has a brick fireplace with a stone lintel.

The 21 x 45 foot two-story ell added considerable square footage to the house in the 20th century. It is used for a storage and miscellaneous purposes.

Paint research has determined that the exterior of the house originally was painted mustard color, except for the back wall which was red. According to the 1827 letter from Jeffery to Angell Mathewson the roof also was painted red in 1824.

There once were 11 outbuildings on the property including barns, silo, ice house, piggery, horse-powered apple press, and a small schoolhouse. All that remain now are a corn house and a carriage shed (photo 6). The corn house, strengthened and made tight, is now used as an office, and the carriage shed serves as a garage.

The surrounding terrain has changed very little, and the big house stands today on its knoll on a country road overlooking its farmland very much as it did 200 years ago.

The house is supported by stone foundations. The cellar walls are fieldstone, laid up without mortar. The cellar extends under the entire main block. There are three niches in the cellar walls where a stone or two has been omitted. A possible explanation of the niches is that they were built to provide a resting place for a candle, when visiting the cellar. The floor, formerly dirt, is now poured concrete. The bases of the two stone stacks are important in the cellar. One chimney base has now been smoothed up with concrete. The chimney bases have open arches, built as the structural members to hold up the first floor hearths and fireplace floors and, it is thought, not filled in to solid walls simply to save time and materials. There is a boulder in one wall, suggesting that he who excavated the cellar decided to use what was there rather than try to move it.

The 18.3 acres associated with the house as the homelot in this nomination is less acreage than has comprised the farm that went with the house

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over the centuries, although the size of the farm has changed from time to time. The boundaries for the purpose of the nomination have been established as the two roads and the railroad on three sides, with enough depth to take in the pond, and go back to the woodland. While perhaps arbitrary to a degree, the acreage and boundaries selected are logical in that three of the boundaries are natural, visual lines, and it seems desirable in view of the long history of the place as a farm to include enough acreage to insure the rural sense of place that has always been associated with the house. Finally, the westerly boundary line is convenient as it was established by survey at a time in the past when subdivision temporarily was contemplated. Thus, all four boundaries are known fixed lines.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1761

BUILDER/~~ARCHITECT~~ Ezra Lathrop

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The rural character of the surrounds^{ing} of the Lathrop-Mathewson-Ross House has changed little since the house was built, c. 1761, and continues to provide an historic setting for its Georgian central-hall, twin-chimney design, massive mortise-and-tenon frame, and pre-Revolutionary War details. The integrity of the setting, materials, and workmanship remains unimpaired (Criterion C). Further interest is added by the extensive documentation that exists regarding the long association of the Mathewson-Ross family with the house.

The construction date of c. 1761 is established by a deed dated December 28, 1761 recorded in the Norwich Land Records, volume 16, page 89. (The area encompassed by the Town of Lisbon was then part of the Town of Norwich. Lisbon was not set off as a town in its own right until 1786.) On that date Charity Lathrop, executrix for the estate of her late father, Ezra Lathrop, deeded the property to Ebenezer Wallbridge. Thus far efforts to identify a transaction in the land records earlier than 1761 have been unsuccessful. Consequently, the position is taken that the house was built c. 1761, or before 1761.

The central hall, twin-chimney plan of the house, Georgian in style, is consistent with this date, as this plan made its appearance about 1750 and was in general usage by the time of the Revolutionary War.¹ The heavy framing, stone foundations, and stone chimneys are characteristic of the type and method of construction used in this period. The amount of original fabric remaining in place is unusually large and adds value to the house as an artifact of the Georgian period. Noteworthy in this respect, in addition to the basic framing itself, are flooring, panelling, hardware, and staircase.

The sense of place that emanates from the house and its surroundings is a function of the continuity of the character of the neighborhood's country roads, fields, and stone walls that has persisted over the centuries. The arrival of the Providence and Worcester Railroad, c. 1835, now part of Conrail and little used, and the application of a layer of macadam to the roads are about the only changes that have occurred. The setting and feelin of the house with respect to its surrounds easily transport a visitor back to the 18th century.

In some respects both the house and the farm did, for a period of time, have late-19th-/early-20th-century elements that have now been removed, and in this limited sense both now represent a degree of Colonial restoration.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

J. Frederick Kelly, Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963 (reprint of Yale University Press, 1924).

Federal Writers' Project, Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut, No. 14 and (1930's).

Mathewson-Ross family papers. Untitled manuscript at the Lathrop-

Mathewson-Ross House.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 18.3

QUADRANGLE NAME Jewett City

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24 000

UTM REFERENCES

A

19	250940	4612090
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B

19	250890	4611980
----	--------	---------

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

19	250930	4611820
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D

19	250860	4611700
----	--------	---------

E

19	250800	4611940
----	--------	---------

F

19	250550	4612020
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G

19	250740	4612210
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H

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is the home lot of the property described in the Lisbon Land Records at volume 23, page 45, with the boundary shown by the line on the attached sketch map drawn to a scale of 1" to 200'.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom, Consultant

April 15, 1979

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

203 521-2518

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

Connecticut

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

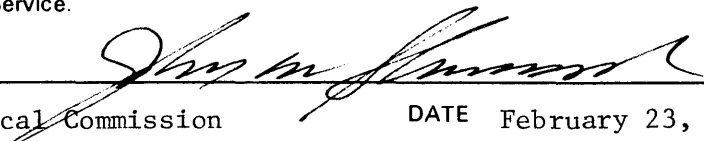
NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

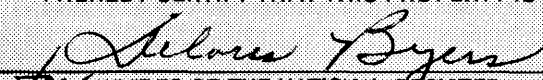


TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE February 23, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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



DATE 4/15/82

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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For the farm these changes were, first, the construction of barns and silo needed during the decades that the premises were operated as a dairy farm and, second, their subsequent disappearance. These added outbuildings were not Colonial (the corn house existed in 1791), and the fact that they no longer are standing adds strength to the present Colonial character of the surroundings.

The facade of the house was altered in the 19th century to conform with contemporary fashion. The Federal Writers' Project Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut, No. 14, (c. 1930's) describes the house, with accompanying picture, as having a projecting central gable over the entrance, and down-stairs bay windows on each side of the door, all with 2-over-2 windows. The accompanying photo² shows a front porch almost the full width of the house, a balustrade on the porch roof in front of the dormer, brackets supporting the gable, and scrollsaw openwork bargeboards under the gable eaves. All of these Victorian-era additions were removed in 1959 under the direction of the late Frédéric Palmer, restoration architect, who is well known for his work at the Buttolph-Williams House in Wethersfield (listed in the National Register of Historic Places) among many others, and for his long association with the Antiquarian and Landmarks³ Society of Connecticut. Palmer was guided in his work by an early photo³ of the house. The present doorway is carefully designed to replicate the original. The present 12-over-12 sash were designed by Palmer and installed under his supervision at this time. The removal of the central dormer required replacing a section of the front wall that was freshly plastered on the interior, as has been noted.

The Mathewson-Ross family owned and lived in the house for 158 years. Jeffery Mathewson acquired the property October 20, 1800. His descendent Almira J. Mathewson married George A. Ross, and their descendents held the farm until August 1958. Almira Mathewson Ross and her daughter, Kate Mathewson Ross, kept diaries, mother and then daughter, with daily entries spanning the 40 years from 1873 to 1913. These diaries are at the house, along with the last will and testament of Bucklin Mathewson (1795-1880), account books, correspondence, and a family tree prepared in 1870 that traces forebears back to 1480. There are a number of other memorabilia including an original wood grain bin, a bit of lace crocheted in 1838 by Cifuentes Battey Mathewson (wife of Bucklin), and similar artifacts. Bucklin Mathewson and George A. Ross represented Lisbon in the State Legislature, and Robert K. Mathewson (son of Bucklin and Cifuentes) was a Lisbon selectman.

The house, its contents, and its surroundings constitute as a whole a prime example of pre-Revolutionary war living, in the Georgian Colonial style.

1. Kelly, p. 17

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

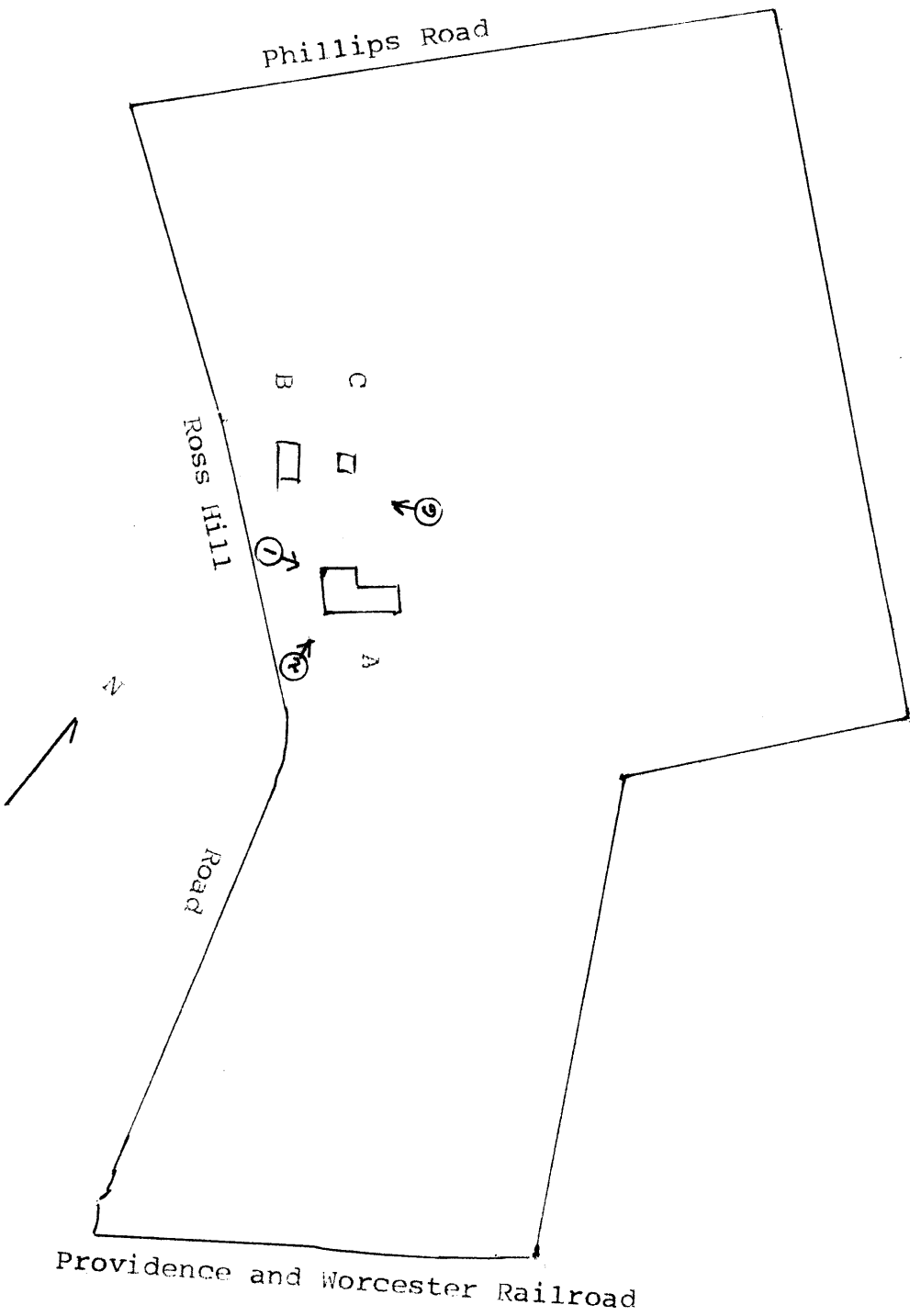
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2. This photo accompanys the Census of Old Buildings report form.
- 3, This photo is at the Lathrop=Mathewson-Ross House.



Lathrop-Mathewson-Ross House
 Lisbon, Connecticut
 Plot plan and photo key
 Scale: 1" = 200'

- A House
- B Carriage shed
- C Corn house