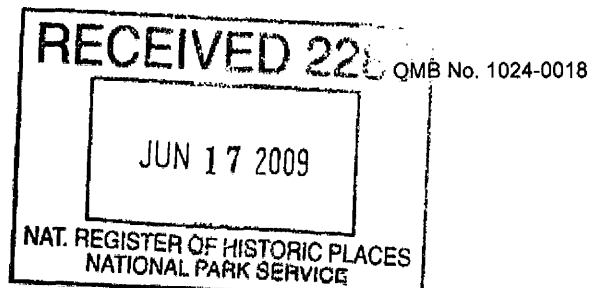


576



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 Borders Farm

other names/site number George Phillips House

2. Location

street & number 31 - 38 North Road not for publication

city or town Foster vicinity

state RI code RI county Providence code 007 zip code 02825

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Edward Sanderson 6/10/2009
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission
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 the 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
 See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- other (explain)

Edson H. Beall 7-29-09
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Borders Farm
Name of Property

Providence County, RI
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
8	1	buildings
3		sites
2		structures
		objects
13	1	total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Agriculture/Subsistence
Domestic/Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Agriculture
Domestic/Single Dwelling
Recreation/Museum
Education

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Early Republic/Federal

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation stone
walls wood/weatherboard

roof asphalt, wood
other brick chimney

Narrative Description

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

Borders Farm
Name of Property

Providence County, RI
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 a 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

Bibliography

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 36) 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.)

Agriculture

Period of Significance

1840-1959

Significant Dates

1840

Significant Person

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Phillips, George

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository

Borders Farm
Name of Property

Providence County, RI
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 199.7

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	9	2	7	1	0	6	5	4	6	2	9	2	8	5
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
2	1	9	2	7	2	1	4	1	4	6	2	9	8	9	1

3	1	9	2	7	1	8	4	7	4	6	2	8	8	8	5
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
4	1	9	2	7	1	2	7	3	4	6	2	8	8	3	3

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 Joan and Richard Youngken with Richard Greenwood

organization Youngken Associates date 02/11/08

street & number 38 Sea View Avenue telephone 401-789-5805

city or town Wakefield state RI zip code 02879

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Borders Farm Preservation, Inc.

street & number 31 North Road telephone 401-647-5689

city or town Foster state RI zip code 02825

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 2050

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

7

Page

1

DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTION

Setting

Borders Farm Historic District consists of a pair of contiguous farms containing 198.5 acres of rolling open fields and woodland that extend along both sides of North Road from its intersection with Balcolm Road for a almost three-quarters of mile to the west. The George Phillips Farm forms the eastern portion of the district, and the Allen Hill Farm forms the western. The Phillips Farm complex, which includes the farmhouse, barn, turkey house, well house and privy, occupies a picturesque rise of open land on the north side of the road; the house faces another set of open fields across the road. The Hill farmstead includes a pair of houses and a wagon shed on the north side of the road and a barn and shed on the south side. On both farms the fields on either side of the road give way to woodland which forms the northern and southern borders of the district. The area surrounding the farms is rural, with scattered dwellings and open fields separated by stretches of forest. There are eleven historic resources on the property including seven buildings, two structures, and two sites.

Phillips Farm, 31 North Road

George Phillips House

The George Phillips House is a five-bay-wide, four-bay-deep, 1-story, flank gable-roofed, center-chimney, clapboard-clad farm house with a sawn timber frame, vertical plank sheathing and single-story gable-roofed ells projecting from the east gable end and the north (rear). The east ell was originally two bays long; it was extended another three bays in the late 20th century. The north ell, which extends north at the east end of the north elevation, is four bays long with a stone end wall incorporating a fireplace and chimney, and a single shed-roof dormer on the west flank of the roof. Built in 1840, the house is a late expression of the vernacular Federal style that characterized Foster's period of great growth.

The historic core of the house has a rubblestone foundation with exposed facing courses of large dressed granite blocks. The rear ell's foundation has been rebuilt in concrete and the recent extension of the east ell also has concrete foundations. The roofs have recently been reshingled in wood. The center chimney is brick with a corbelled top and it contains a white stone inscribed with the date "1840". Below the roof, the stack and the fireplaces are built of stone with facing stones of Nipmuck gneiss and lintels of quartzite. There is a small brick chimney slightly off center on the north slope of the roof that was installed for a kitchen stove in the early 20th century. Windows are primarily double-hung, two-over-two wood sash in plank frames with simple caps. There are a pair of small six-over-six, double-hung sash windows remaining in the east ell; the same type of

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

7

Page

2

sash was used in the rear ell and has since been replaced in kind. The front doorway, which is set in the center of the symmetrical five-bay façade, has a five-paneled door with four-pane sidelights in a crossetted surround, flanked by paired, reeded pilasters with a wooden fan in the transom. The entry is sheltered by a gable-roofed portico with an elliptically-arched ceiling, supported by slender, tapered Tuscan wood columns on short bases, set on a large granite slab. The cornices of the portico, house, and ells feature a drilled quarter-round molding that reflects the influence of carpenters' pattern books of the period.¹ Both this enriched cornice treatment and the portico design are features found elsewhere in Foster, but generally on houses built earlier in the 19th century.

The house has a plan similar to the five-room plan commonly found in 18th- and early 19th-century center-chimney houses, though in an alternative configuration most commonly seen in western Providence and Kent Counties, with the cooking fireplace in one of the front rooms rather than in the usual rear location. There is a shallow front stair hall in front of the chimney with an enclosed three-run stair that is now entered through a four-panel door. The treads and risers are of curly maple and the balustrade at the top of the stairs features turned newel posts and slender square balusters set at an angle. The parlor, which occupies the southwest corner, is finished with a chair rail and a Federal mantel framing the stone fireplace. The original kitchen in the southeast corner has a fireplace with a cast iron Franklin fireplace set in the stone firebox and a brick bake oven with a cast-iron door². The walls are finished with a horizontal beaded-board wainscot four boards high, and a peg rail.

On the back, the plan originally included a room without fireplace in the northwest corner and a room with fireplace in the center. In the northeast corner there was once a pair of small rooms, each lit by a single small window in the east end, and a narrow hall that led to the rear ell. These small rooms and hall were combined to create a new kitchen in the early 20th century with the addition of the large, cast iron, wood-burning cook stove (patented 1902) that remains, fully functional. In the mid-20th century the kitchen was refurbished with cabinets and a sink and the doorway opening to the original kitchen was widened.

The east ell, which originally served as a pantry for the original kitchen, was extended in the mid- to late 20th century to create a five-by-two-bay wing containing a large office space with garage space in the basement. A bathroom has been installed in the north half of the original two-bay section. The south half, which retains an exterior paneled door and full-height board paneling, serves as a hallway to the eastern extension.

¹ See Asher Benjamin, *The American Builder's Companion* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969 reprint of the Sixth Edition of 1827). Plate 26.

² The Franklin fireplace appears to have been installed shortly after the house was constructed. A wood-burning parlor stove has since been installed in front of the fireplace.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

7

Page

3

The north ell, which housed a large summer kitchen served by the fireplace in the north end, is at a lower level with two exterior doors. The north gable wall surrounding the fireplace was rebuilt in stone in the mid-20th century restoration of this room. The fireplace was rebuilt using the original stone lintel, crane and oven door. The summer kitchen has exposed ceiling joists and retains some original wide-board wainscoting and full-height flush-board paneling like that in the east ell.

The second floor contains four (originally five) chambers. The front chambers, which occupy the southeast and southwest corners, are entered through doorways with four-pane transoms set in angled partitions at either end of the shallow hall at the top of the stairs. The front chambers each have a low, shallow fireplace with a stone lintel and similar Federal mantels. They also feature wrought-iron hooks set in the ceiling for suspending bed hangings. The chamber in the southeast corner connects through a doorway to a chamber in the northeast corner. A partition has been removed on the west side of the chimney to combine the southwest and northwest chambers into one large room. A fourth room, on the north side of the chimney, is reached from the rooms on either side and lit by a low window in the north wall. This room contains a steep gangway to the unfinished garret, which features sawn rafters and ridgepole. The second floor rooms are finished with plaster walls and peg rails, except for the low kneewalls on the north and south which are finished with vertical flush boarding.

The house contains the majority of its interior finishes including plaster and board walls, original band moldings on the door and window frames, four-panel and board-and-batten doors with cast iron thumb-latches and hinges, and wide plank floors.

Carriage Barn/ Cow/ Dairy Barn:

This large barn north of the Phillips House is a 2-story, gable-roofed, weatherboard-sided, frame structure, eleven bays long and two bays wide with a single-story shed-roofed addition across its south front. Originally a carriage barn, this building was expanded with the shed-roof lean-to ca 1950 for use as a dairy barn, following the destruction by fire of the original dairy barn to the west. Stanchions for the cattle and a milk room were installed. By the early 1990s, the barn was further renovated for use as an antiques storage barn by raising the roof, adding a new cupola and a second floor, and removing the stanchions and milk room. The barn's rubble-stone cellar is accessed at grade on the east side through double-leafed outward swinging barn doors.

Turkey Shed

A single-story early-20th century, weatherboard-sided frame structure with an end-gambrel roof that contains a single room for turkeys lit by small fixed sash windows.

Privy

A late-19th century, weatherboard-sided frame outhouse with a flank-gable roof and a board door with strap

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

7

Page

4

hinges.

Well House:

The well house is a small gable-roofed structure in the northwest corner of the Phillips House yard. The roof is supported by rectangular posts. There is wide horizontal flush-board sheathing enclosing the bottom half and the end gables; the top half is open with the original well pulley system hung from the roof. An old school bell, once at Foster's Maple Rock Schoolhouse, is mounted on the exterior south-facing gable end. The well has been encased in concrete, the opening in the wellhead is capped by the cast-iron cover of the boiler for the saw and shingle mill that stood near the road.

North Road Dry Bridge/cow tunnel:

A stone slab culvert encased in concrete that forms a livestock passage under North Road, approximately 200 yards west of the farm complex. The bridge structure dates from the 19th century and was reinforced with concrete in the mid-20th century.

Abijah Sweet's Onion Patch:

This rectangular onion patch enclosed by dry-laid stone walls remains a distinct landscape feature although it is grown up with trees.

Peach Orchard Lot

This large open field now kept in hay contained a peach orchard until the 1938 Hurricane destroyed it.

Old Farm House Cellar Hole:

A cellar hole and stone foundation walls tentatively identified as the site of an original 18th century farm house on the Phillips Farm. It is located in the woods just south of the hayfield on the south side of North Road.

Sawmill Site

The site of a steam sawmill that was located on the north side of the woodlot on the southern border of the farm. This mill was probably established by John Bowen to harvest the timber from the nine-acre lot he leased from Emily McGinty from 1914 to 1920. The field just north of this site is traditionally known as the Sawmill Lot.

Old Road

An unpaved road running roughly parallel to North Road and bisecting the southern side of the Phillips Farm

Other Unmarked Sites

Although they are not marked by visible remains, there are several other known building sites on the Phillips

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

7

Page

5

Farm. They include the site of an early house built with footings rather than a full foundation in the area just west of the barn and torn down by Charles Borders, Sr. A steam-powered saw and shingle mill was located near the small pond immediately southwest of the Phillips House. An earlier barn used for hay by the Borders family was located near the road in the large field west of the Phillips House yard.

House, 37 North Road

A mid-20th century L-plan single-story frame residence with a main block with an end-gable roof and a projecting front porch and a set-back side wing with a hip and gable roof. The house is set back from the road on a two-acre lot set off from the Phillips Farm in 1914; the lot is bounded by stone walls on the east and west and by tree rows on all four sides. Non-contributing

Hill Farm, 41 North Road

Allen Hill Farm House I

The Allen Hill House is a five-bay-wide, three-bay-deep, 1-story high, flank gable-roofed, center-chimney, timber-framed and clapboard-clad farm house. Built in the late 18th century or early 19th century, it is a modest example of the vernacular Federal style, with a symmetrical facade with a central doorway framed by sidelights. It has a low stone foundation, asphalt shingled roofs, a slender brick chimney and, below the roof, a stone stack and fireplaces. It has a five-room plan with a shallow front stair hall. The stone fireplaces in the southwest parlor and the north center room are in their original configuration with plain wooden mantels; the fireplace in the southwest room has a ca 1840 Franklin fireplace of the same type as the one in the Phillips House. In the southeast room, the fireplace was rebuilt in the early 20th century with an ornamental fieldstone finish. There are six-over-six, six-over-two and two-over-two double-hung wooden sash windows and four-paneled doors. The interior walls are finished with both plaster and vertical flush boarding. The windows in the southeast room have mid-19th century molded lintels and sills, elsewhere the doorways and windows have plain board trim.

The house has been enlarged with several additions dating from the late 19th or early 20th centuries. A single-story shed-roofed porch extends across the front of the house; supported by Tuscan columns, it is an early 20th century addition. There is a one-story flank-gable-roof ell on the east end that contains a single large room; a one story, shed-roof addition on the north and a single-story polygonal bay on the west end that enlarges the room in the northwest corner.

Allen Hill Farm House II

A small building next to the Allen Hill House, five bays wide and one bay deep, one story high, with a flank

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

7

Page

6

gable roof. It has a stone foundation that is a recent improvement of its original low foundation. This timber-framed, clapboard-clad building contains a single room with exposed hewn ceiling joists and wide oak board flooring. Remains of a chimney base found under the building indicate that there was once an interior chimney on the center of the west elevation but there is no remnant inside. It has a roughly symmetrical façade with a center entry and a shed-roofed hood. The double-hung sash windows are 20th century replacements in the original window openings. It is traditionally held to be a house that predates the larger Allen Hill House; its plan and configuration suggest it was built as a workshop rather than a residence in the late 18th century or early 19th century.

Allen Hill Carriage Shed

The carriage shed is a late 19th-century, two-bay, single-story, wood-framed, gable roofed building with a sawn frame and board-and-batten siding. Originally used for the storage of wagons, it has an open bay facing North Road to the south and a smaller side bay with a simple doorway. It is currently used as a garage and for storage.

Allen Hill Barn

The barn is an extended, T-plan, timber-framed, gable-roofed structure clad in board and batten. There is a small lean-to shed on the west side formerly used as a milk house. The original section, which forms the northern end, is a three-bay English barn with hewn timber frame. Charles Borders, Jr. built the large, wood-framed southern extension in the early 1970s. During the same period, the original barn roof was reinforced with additional rafters. The barn is now used for housing livestock and farm equipment in the southern section and hay in the north. An enclosed barn yard extends southwest of the barn. At the southern end of the yard is a natural boiling spring that serves to water the cattle.

Allen Hill Farm Shed

A one-and-a-half-story end-gable-roofed frame building clad with board and batten, it abuts the barn on its northeast corner. This building began as a late-19th-century equipment shed, one story high. In the mid-20th century, the roof was raised to create a loft. It is now used for farm vehicle and equipment storage.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

7

Page

7

List of Photographs:

The information in numbers 1 through 5 is the same for Photographs 1 through 17, as follows:

1. Borders Farm
2. Foster, Providence County, Rhode Island
3. Richard Youngken, photographer
4. 2007
5. Original digital files stored at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission
150 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

The information for numbers 6 and 7 for each photograph is listed below:

6. George Phillips House and Barn, view looking northwest
7. Photograph 1

6. Fields on North Road, view looking east
7. Photograph 2

6. George Phillips House, view looking northeast
7. Photograph 3

6. George Phillips House, detail of front porch, view looking northwest
7. Photograph 4

6. Carriage Barn, well house, view looking northeast
7. Photograph 5

6. Cow Tunnel under North Road, view looking southeast
7. Photograph 6

6. Allen Hill Farm House I, view looking north
7. Photograph 7

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

7

Page

8

6. Allen Hill Farm House II, view looking west
7. Photograph 8

6. Allen Hill Farm Barn, view looking southeast
7. Photograph 9

6. George Phillips House interior, view of Old Kitchen fireplace and stove looking northwest
7. Photograph 10

6. George Phillips House interior, view of parlor fireplace wall looking southeast
7. Photograph 11

6. George Phillips House interior, view of summer kitchen looking north
7. Photograph 12

6. George Phillips House interior, view of southeast chamber fireplace looking west
7. Photograph 13

6. Allen Hill Farm House II interior, view of small fireplace in back parlor looking south
7. Photograph 14

6. Allen Hill Farm House II interior, view of parlor fireplace wall looking east
7. Photograph 15

6. Allen Hill Farm House II interior, view of front stair looking north
7. Photograph 16

6. Allen Hill Barn interior, view of the roof framing looking northwest
7. Photograph 17

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

8

Page

1

SIGNIFICANCE

Borders Farm Historic District is significant under National Register Criterion C at the local level as a well-preserved example of the landscape of small family farms that typified northwestern Rhode Island in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Composed of two adjacent farms that became combined under one ownership, the district possesses the characteristic attributes of the region's agricultural holdings during this period when dairy and poultry husbandry predominated among a variety of farming activities. The district features farm cottages, barns and other outbuildings, set in a patchwork landscape of barn yards, gardens, tilled fields, hayfields, pasture, ponds and woodlots bounded by stone walls and farm lanes.

FOSTER'S AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The historical development of Foster is marked by a relatively late beginning and slow initial progress in the early 18th century. These lands at the headwaters of the Pawtuxet River's northern branch were in the territory conveyed by the Narragansett sachems to the English colonists through a 1659 purchase by the proprietors of the original Providence colony, and a 1662 purchase by a group of Providence and Newport residents who formed the Westconnaug Company. However, settlement of the lands was delayed until 1708 when the two groups of purchasers finally resolved their conflicting claims. By 1731, colonization had progressed to the point where the new town of Scituate (which included present-day Scituate and Foster) was established; in 1781, the town had grown sufficiently to prompt the separation of Scituate's western half as the new town of Foster.

After the disruption that attended the American Revolution, Foster experienced a period of intense growth and agricultural development that lasted through 1820. The town's population increased from 1,763 residents in 1782 to 2,900 in 1820 and its physical character was transformed as farmers cleared and improved more land, millers and other artisans developed water-powered shops along the town's many streams, an improved system of local roads connected to several new turnpikes, and a number of well-defined hamlets sprang up, providing centers for social, commercial and other community functions.

By 1820, this development had reached the limits set by the town's allotment of natural resources, and an era of contraction began. The town's population began to decline sharply, losing 7.9 per cent between 1820 and 1830 and 18.4 percent in the next decade. For the rest of the 19th century townspeople continued to leave in search of better farmland or the opportunities offered by industrialization and urbanization. Although Foster lacked enough good agricultural land, industrial water-power sites or raw materials to support a large population, it did have them in sufficient supply to retain a smaller number of residents who made productive use of these resources by practicing a blend of small-scale agriculture and industry for markets both in and outside the local community. The result was largely a perpetuation of the patterns of settlement and land use that were set in the

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

8

Page

2

decades after the Revolution, but with a gradual abandonment of the lands that were ill suited to farming due to steep slopes, rockiness or poor soils. As reforestation occurred on these marginal lands, timber harvesting re-emerged as an economic activity.

The approach to farming that typified Foster in the 19th century was a conservative one with roots in the colonial tradition. With productive cropland at a premium, Foster farmers, like those elsewhere in the rocky New England uplands, emphasized animal husbandry, using less fertile land for pastures and hayfields where they could graze livestock such as cows and sheep. These herds were supplemented by swine and poultry including geese, turkeys and steadily growing numbers of dunghill fowl or chickens. For field crops they grew Indian corn and potatoes for both human and animal consumption with smaller amounts of other root vegetables and grains, such as turnips, oats, rye, buckwheat and barley. Some fertile land was reserved for vegetable gardens and orchards and fruit patches were commonly parts of their farms as well. With so much of their land limited in its productivity, Foster farmers favored moderately large farms; in 1865, one third of the town's farm were in the 50- to 100-acre range and another third in 100- to 200-acre range.¹

As was true elsewhere in New England, the economic character of Foster's farms ranged from ones run primarily to support the farm family to those where prosperous owners managed their operations like a business, investing their capital with an eye toward market demand, hiring labor and adopting scientific and technological improvements. In between were the farmers who raised some farm surpluses for sale or exchange and those who supplemented farming with another trade.² Production for market was prevalent in Foster though limited by its geographical isolation as well as the fertility of the land. While the mill villages along the Ponagansett and Moswansicut Rivers in Scituate increased the opportunities for local marketing, Foster lacked a convenient rail connection to the more-distant urban markets in the vicinity of Providence. This isolation seems to have kept Foster's farmers focused on produce that could stand a longer trip to market at a time when their counterparts closer to the city had begun emphasizing fresh milk and garden produce for the urban market.

Produce in this category included butter and cheese, cattle for slaughter, wool in the years before the Civil War, poultry and eggs, fruit and orchard products, and some market vegetables, such as onions. The relative importance of these products changed over time. Most notably, the weak market for wool reduced the town's sheep flock in the decades after the Civil War while chickens and eggs grew in importance.

With the introduction of the mechanical cream separator in the 1880s and the 1902 establishment of the Providence and Danielson Railway, an electric interurban car line through Foster, the town's dairy farmers

¹ Edwin M. Snow, MD, ed. *Report upon the Census of Rhode Island, 1865* (Providence: Providence Press Co., 1867). P. 6.

² Howard S. Russell, *A Long Deep Furrow; Three Centuries of Farming in New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1976). Pp. 408-409.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District		Foster	Providence County, RI
Name of Property		City/Town	County and State
Section Number	8	Page	3

moved away from cheese production and marketed more fresh milk and cream by the early 20th century.³ Although the railway ceased operation in 1919, trucks and automobiles were able to sustain the farmers' connections to the urban market. The formation of the Foster Farmers Local in 1917 also provided the farmers with a cooperative entity to market their milk and purchase supplies.

Farming remained the dominant activity in Foster through the second half of the 19th century, but as the town's population continued to decline, so did the number of farms. In 1865 Foster had a population of 1,873 people and 311 farms; by 1905, the population was 1,160 and there were 258 farms.⁴ Concern about abandoned farms statewide (there were forty-one of them in Foster in 1900), prompted the State Board of Agriculture to advertise the available properties. One result was the arrival of a large number of Finnish families who took up farms along the town's western border between 1919 and 1926.

In the second quarter of the 20th century, the town experienced a slow rise in population brought on by some new farmsteaders as well as ex-urbanites seeking country homes. The second half of the 20th century saw a steady increase in the latter group, as exurban residential development replaced agriculture as the dominant land use in town. By the close of the 20th century, the number of farms had shrunk to just under thirty, where it remains today. As well as several tree farms, they include poultry farms and a number (including the Borders Farm) that continue to maintain the traditional landscape of cropland, hayfield and pasture while raising beef, dairy cattle, horses, sheep and goats.⁵

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BORDERS FARM

The development of the Borders Farm Historic District reflects the general trends in the development of agriculture in Foster. From the late 18th through the early 20th centuries, the district was maintained as two separate farms, with the eastern farm associated with George Phillips and his descendents and the western farm long in the ownership of the family of Allen Hill.

George Phillips (1788-1858), the son of Captain Abraham Phillips whose farm was located to the northeast on Foster Center Road, moved into the district as a young man, assembling a farm on North Road through a series of purchases between 1808 and 1821. In 1817, George, in partnership with William Stone and Benjamin Bennett, Jr., acquired a half interest in a sawmill established by the Hopkins family on a stream near the intersection of Salisbury and Balcolm Roads, directly north of his farm. Phillips and his partners improved this

³ Rhode Island Bureau of Industrial Statistics, *Bulletin III, Agriculture* (Providence: E.L. Freeman, 1908).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ RI Department of Environmental Management/Division of Agriculture, *Directory of Rhode Island Farms* (Revised August 2007) <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/agricult/pdf/ridirectory.pdf>

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

8

Page

4

mill privilege, most likely to accommodate a turning shop. Phillips operated this mill in addition to farming his North Road holdings for much of his life. He turned the operation of the mill over to his son George W. Phillips (1822- 1891) by 1850, but continued to farm his land. In January, 1858, he transferred the 150-acre farm and a nearby lot of about twenty acres in two undivided halves, one to his son George W., and the other to his daughter Sylvania (1825-1888) and her husband Abijah B. Sweet (ca 1819-1900); later that year George Phillips died.

The documentary and the material records show that George Phillips had achieved a moderate prosperity in his career. The agricultural schedule of the 1850 US Census records that he had 100 acres of improved land and another 80 of unimproved land, all valued at \$3500. He had a herd of five milch cows, four other cattle, two working oxen, a horse and four swine, all valued at \$355. The major products of the farm for the past year were 100 pounds of butter and 300 pounds of cheese, 100 bushels of Indian corn, 400 bushels of Irish potatoes, 20 tons of hay and \$15 of market garden produce. Phillips had sufficient wealth to build a new house in 1840. Although it wasn't especially large, perhaps reflecting the size of his family, the house was finished with a high level of architectural detail, some of which may have been produced in the Phillips mill. No record of the farm's outbuildings from this period survives, but it is apparent that it must have contained one or more barns and other sheds.

After George Phillips's death, George W. Phillips and the Sweets continued to maintain their shared interests in the farm. Their joint tenancy may have been assisted by the fact that George W. Phillips was married to Mary Sweet, Abijah's sister. George W. continued to work in manufacturing and in 1867 he acquired the former John Randall blacksmith and wheelwright shops on Howard Hill Road, about two and a half miles away to the southeast. He ran this combined operation for the next sixteen years, carrying on blacksmith and foundry work and manufacturing carriages with a workforce of six to seven men. Around this time, the Sweets seem to have become the primary tenants of the North Road farm.

The character of their agriculture varied little from that practiced by George Phillips as indicated by the agricultural schedules of the 1860 and 1880 US Censuses. Similar numbers of the same type of animals were being raised and similar crops being grown through this period. One notable change was the addition of orchard products to the farm's yield in 1860. The value of the orchard products was only \$15 in that year, but by 1880, they reported an orchard of 150 trees covering two acres. The family also added a cider mill during this period; located southwest of the house on North Road it is no longer extant.

Sylvania Phillips Sweet died in 1888 and her undivided half interest in the farm passed onto her sons Edwin and Byron Sweet. They in turn sold it to their sister Emily (1852-1921). Four years later Emily acquired the other

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

8

Page

5

half interest in the 150-acre farm from her father, Abijah Sweet.⁶ Shortly after she secured ownership of the farm, Emily married James Henry McGinty (1859-1942), the son of a Scottish stone mason who moved to Foster around 1851. Their son, Charles Abijah McGinty, was born in 1895. James McGinty continued to farm the land with a general rather than specialized focus. His son Charles helped on the farm as a boy but also worked as an auto mechanic when older.⁷ Emily also took advantage of the growth in the farm's woodlot by selling John Bowen a lease to harvest timber on nine acres in the southeast corner in 1917. Bowen, who agreed to complete the cutting in three years, apparently set a steam sawmill next to his lease area to carry out the harvest.⁸ She also sold off a two acre lot near the western edge of the farm to Lillian Brown, an actress from Providence in 1914. A house subsequently built on this lot forms the district's non-contributing resource.

Upon Emily Sweet McGinty's death in 1921, the farm passed to her son Charles who in turn sold 38 acres of the farm, including the Phillips House, livestock barn, and carriage barn in the fall of 1923 to Charles M. Borders, Sr. and his wife Caroline of Swansea, Massachusetts. On this acreage Borders operated a dairy farm on a rather modest scale, beginning with only a few cows. The farm also produced corn, potatoes and eggs, primarily for family use, and peaches from an orchard on the south side of the road. Borders increased his herd to 65 head with the help of his son, Charles M. Borders, Jr., selling the milk to H.P. Hood Dairy. The Borders father and son continued to supply Hood, as well as a few neighbors, with milk for over 70 years. They expanded the farm acreage on the south and north sides of North Road during the next decades to approximately 140 acres, close to its original 19th century size. Charles Borders, Sr. supplemented his farm income by driving a school bus and serving as the town's Roads Commissioner.

Charles Borders, Jr.'s recollections of life on the farm as a young man include the loss of the dairy barn west of the house to fire in the late 1920s, and the renovation of the carriage barn to accommodate the herd. His father employed farmhands who lived in the second-floor rooms in the main house. They raised pigs behind the barn, and Caroline Borders maintained a large vegetable garden near the house. She preserved much of the farm's foodstuffs, canning over a thousand jars of produce, sausage and other meats yearly in the summer kitchen, which also had a smoking chamber in its fireplace. Orchard fruit, root crops, and joints of smoked meat were kept cool in the farmhouse cellar.

Ice needed to refrigerate the milk was cut on the property's ponds and stored in an ice house (no longer extant) located behind the carriage house. Charles Borders, Sr. acquired electrical service in 1938, bringing an end to hand-milking and the need for the ice house. The dairy barn was modernized with milking machines and refrigeration, capital investments that solidified their specialization as a dairy operation.

⁶ Foster Land Records, Mortgage Book 2, Page 461, 1888; Land Evidence Book 18, Page 7, 1892.

⁷ US Census Records, 1910, 1920.

⁸ Foster Land Evidence Book 24, Page 31, 1917.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District		Foster	Providence County, RI
Name of Property		City/Town	County and State
Section Number	8	Page	6

Charles Borders, Jr. assumed ownership of the farm in 1953, following his father's death in 1947. He continued the dairy operation and made some additions to the farm, reconfiguring the ponds on the property to improve drainage, and most significantly, acquiring additional acreage, including the Allen Hill Farm.

Allen Hill (1804-1881) was the son of Captain Jonathan Hill, wheelwright and housewright of Foster. Jonathan Hill assembled this farm in a series of purchases between 1796 and 1817. Allen Hill acquired the farm after his father's death, purchasing his brother's share in 1843.⁹ Allen Hill was primarily a farmer, but he had additional skills in carpentry, perhaps as a shop joiner.¹⁰ He operated his farm on North Road for the majority of his career with a modest degree of success. The documentary evidence on his farm in the Schedules of Agriculture for the US Censuses show that it fluctuated somewhat in size and value, from 109 acres and \$1600 in 1850 to 65 acres and \$1100 in 1860 and 78 acres worth \$1000 in 1880. Through the decades the amount of improved land he maintained stayed essentially the same, with 50 acres reported in 1850 and 20 acres tilled and 30 acres of permanent pasture and orchard in 1880.

In 1850 he had a herd of four milch cows, five other cattle, two working oxen, and a horse, all valued at \$275. The major products of the farm for the past year were 100 pounds of butter and 300 pounds of cheese, 75 bushels of Indian corn, 125 bushels of Irish potatoes, 12 tons of hay, 20 bushels of oats and \$12 of market garden produce. In 1860, his herd dropped to just two milch cows and his crop yields fell accordingly; he produced 100 pounds of butter and 130 pounds of cheese. By 1880, he still had a couple of milch cows, but had moved into poultry, with a flock of 26 chickens that produced 250 dozen eggs, and apples, with a one-acre orchard containing 50 trees. At his advanced age, he also hired farm help for three weeks during the growing season.

In 1881, shortly before he died, Allen Hill sold his approximately 65-acre farm with a "dwelling house, barn and other buildings" to his son Albert F. Hill for \$1000.¹¹ Albert, who was a builder residing in Warwick, retained ownership of the property until 1912, when he sold it to the actors Martin and Lillian Brown of Providence. The Browns maintained this as a country residence until 1935. Thomas Borden subsequently owned the property from 1936 to 1949 when he sold it to Charles and Dorothy Crocker. In 1961, the Crockers sold the property, which had continued to be used as farmland with few changes, to Charles and Margery

⁹ Foster Land Records, Book 10, Page 335. August 23, 1843.
¹⁰ See Richard Slaney, "A.Hill" (<http://www.netris.org/RIToolmakers/HILL,A/HillArticle.html#topofimages>, July 19, 2000) for a discussion of the Allen Hill collection of molding plans.
¹¹ Foster Land Records, Book 14, Page 648, 1881.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District		Foster	Providence County, RI
Name of Property		City/Town	County and State
Section Number	<u>8</u>	Page	<u>7</u>

Borders in 1961.¹² Charles Borders adapted the farm to be used in conjunction with his existing operation, while renting out the Hill House.

Borders discontinued dairy farming after 1993 and began to raise beef cattle instead. He built a large addition on the Hill Barn to house the herd and he modified the dairy barn to provide storage for a large collection of antiques. He continues to raise cattle; he currently has twenty head. He no longer grows corn for fodder, but has converted most of the former cropland to grassland, maintaining seven fields for pasturing and cutting hay, which is stored in the Hill Barn. One small field is still tilled and used to grow vegetables.

Charles Borders, Jr. and his wife Margery shared a strong desire to preserve their property and the historic character of farm life in Foster. In 2003, following Margery's death, Charles and others interested in the preservation of the farm established Borders Farm Preservation, Inc. (BFPI) to preserve and maintain the farm as a non-profit, educational farm and museum, "dedicated to the preservation of mid-20th century New England farm life...and to maintain the grounds as farm and open space." Charles donated the farm to the BFPI, and they sold the farm's development rights to a consortium of public and private agencies including the Nature Conservancy, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Champlin Foundations, and US Department of Agriculture. The proceeds of the sale have funded an endowment for the property's preservation. To further the mission, BFPI has elected to use a small portion of the property to raise peppers, tomatoes, summer squash, and butternut squash for distribution to a local food bank and to the Rhode Island Food Bank. BFPI recently received a state historic preservation grant to restore the Phillip's House's wood shingle roof.

¹² Foster Land Records, Book 14, Page 648, 1881; Book 22, Page 153, 1912; Book 26, Page 154, 1935; Book 27, Page 195, 1936; Book 28, Page 315, 1949.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District

Foster

Providence County, R.I.

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

9

Page

1

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District

Foster

Providence County, R.I.

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

9

Page

2

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District

Foster

Providence County, R.I.

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

9

Page

3

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm Historic District

Foster

Providence County, R.I.

Name of Property

City/Town

County and State

Section Number

10

Page

1

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property includes the land and buildings formerly associated with the George Phillips and Allen Hill Farms that were combined under the ownership of Charles Borders Sr. and Charles Borders Jr. between 1923 and 1961. The farm property is bounded by stone walls and fences on either side of North Road in Foster, Rhode Island, and it is characterized by open fields along the road, backed and framed by woodlots. The walls and fences follow the lot lines of the property. One non-contributing resource, 37 North Road, is included; it is a single house on a lot surrounded by historic farm fields.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property includes all of the historical acreage of Borders Farm now owned by Borders Farm Preservation, Inc., and described as Tax Assessor's Plat 8, Lots 9,10, and 12, as well as Plat 8, Lot 11, a non-contributing resource surrounded by the historic resource (a total of 199.7 acres) in the Town of Foster, Rhode Island.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

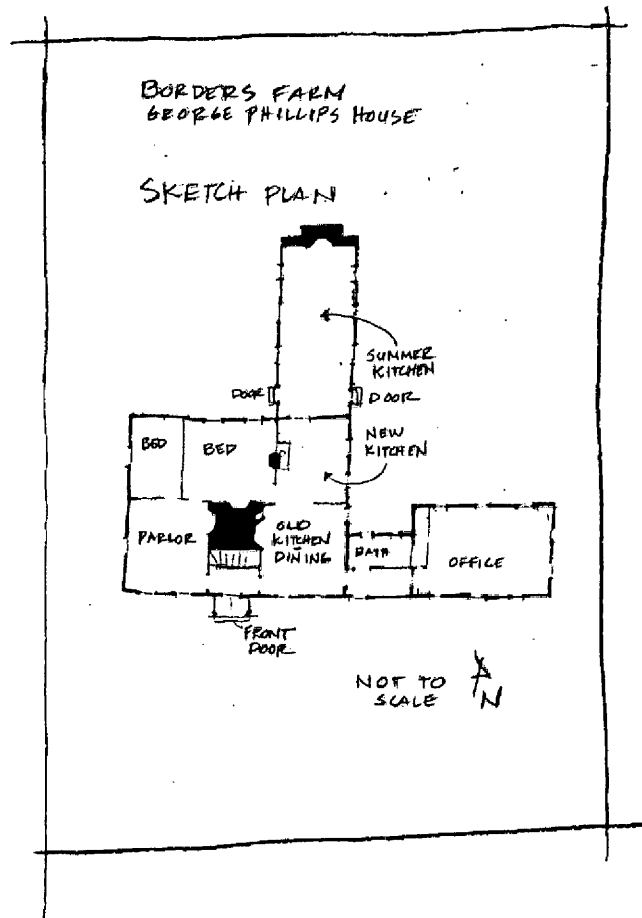
City/Town

County and State

Section Number

Page

1



Borders Farm: George Phillips House
Sketch Plan: First Floor

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

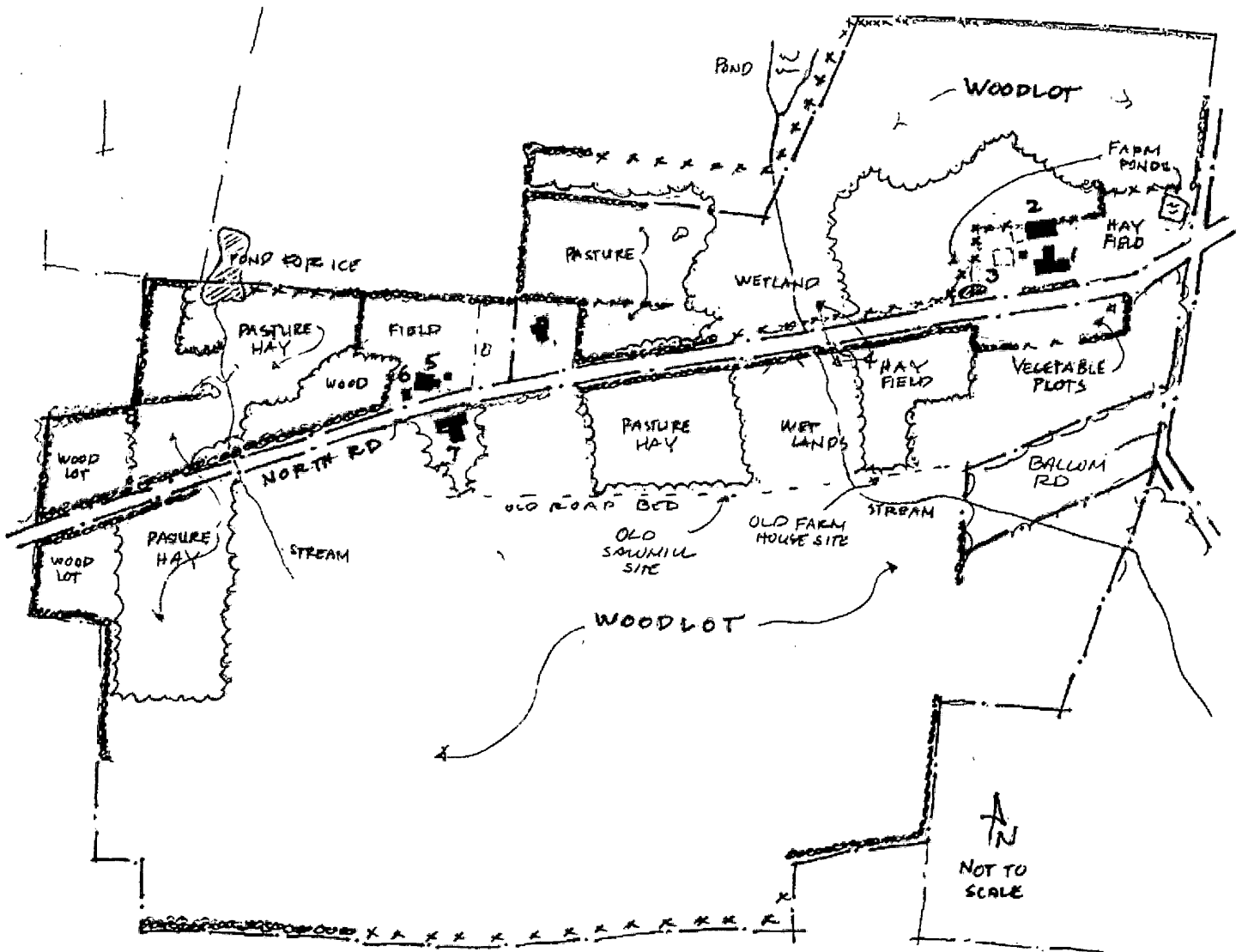
City/Town

County and State

Section Number

Page

2



Borders Farm

Sketch Plan Key:

Phillips Complex

- 1) George Phillips House
- 2) Carriage Barn/ Dairy Barn
- 3) Old Dairy Barn Site
- 4) Dry Bridge/ cow tunnel

Hill Complex

- 5) Allen Hill Farm House I
- 6) Allen Hill Farm House II
- 7) Allen Hill Livestock Barn

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Borders Farm

Foster

Providence County, RI

Name of Property

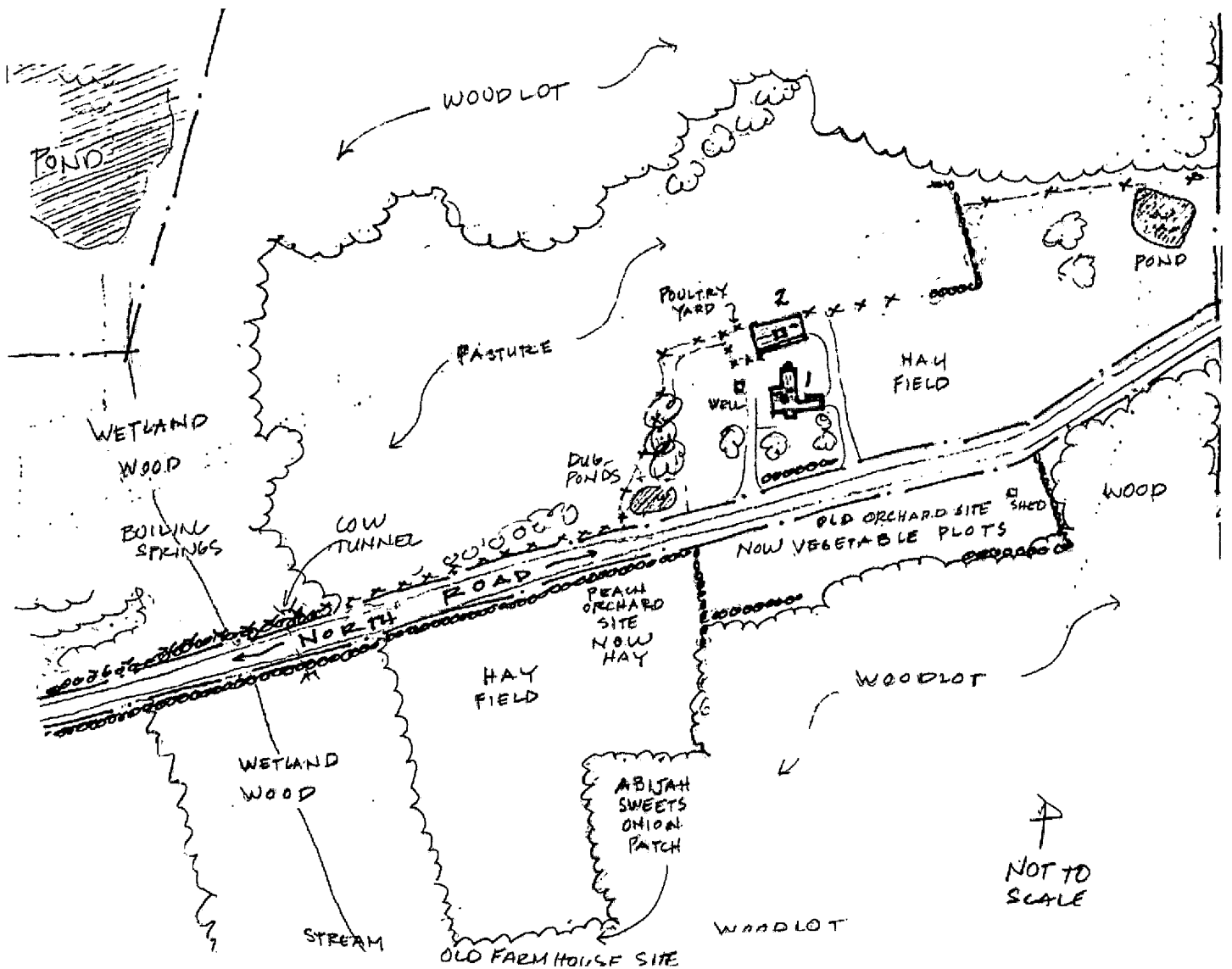
City/Town

County and State

Section Number

Page

3



Borders Farm

Sketch Plan Key:
Phillips Complex

- 1) George Phillips House
- 2) Carriage Barn/ Dairy Barn