

PROPERTY NAME

Topsmead, Litchfield, CT

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United States Department of the Interior, NPS

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NATIONAL REGISTER

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Topsmead

Other Name/Site Number: Topsmead State Forest

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 25, 46 Chase Road Not for publication: NA

City/Town: Litchfield Vicinity: NA

State: CT County: Litchfield Code: 005 Zip Code: 06759

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: x
Public-local:
Public-State: x
Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s): x
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

8

8

Noncontributing

 buildings
 sites
 structures
 objects
0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

[Signature] 10/14/93
Signature of Certifying Official Date
John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

- Entered in the National Register [Signature]
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

11/19/93

[Signature] Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling
AGRICULTURE field/outbuilding

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Current: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: museum, outdoor recreation

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:

LATE 19TH AND 20 CENTURY
REVIVALS/Tudor Revival/
Colonial Revival

Materials:

Foundation: CONCRETE
Walls: STUCCO, WOOD, METAL/
aluminum
Roof: STONE/slate, membrane,
ASPHALT
Other Description: _____

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Topsmead is the name of the Tudor Revival summer house designed in 1924 by Richard Henry Dana for Edith Morton Chase and for Topsmead State Forest, which comprises the 511 acres she assembled to go with the house. Sited two miles east of the village of Litchfield, at elevation of 1230 feet above sea level, the house is approached from Buell Road by a 1,500-foot drive (Figure 1), and looks out over a grassy meadow (Photograph 2) to the Litchfield Hills. The house is indeed at the top of the meadow as the name suggests.

The structure is not the first on the site. It was preceded by a rustic cabin with attached garage built in 1917. (Photograph 1) The fabric of the cabin was incorporated in the larger structure, the fireplace and chimney in particular being carried over as important components in the new work.

The present two-story house is a solid structure of stucco walls with half-timbered gables under a slate roof. The roof line is defined in an H shape formed by the main ridge and two full cross gables at the ends, with a wing to the west which is the high-ceilinged living room. The gable ends are half-timbered with brick nogging. The front (south) elevation faces a circular drive. The recessed front door, under the north cross gable and a second-floor oriel, is obscured by euonymous. A first-floor pent roof connects the two cross gables, with banks of leaded casement windows at first and second floors. The central east-west slope of the main roof is in fact a pent roof as well, leading up to a flat central section that cannot be seen from the ground. A large rectangular chimney supporting four chimney pots rises from the east stem of the H. (Photograph 6).

The north elevation repeats the configuration of the south front, but in a more easily comprehensible view. The high living room is readily apparent to the west and a two-story dovecote is seen to the east. A second chimney rises from the western end of the flat portion of the roof. (Photograph 3) Shrubbery hides a central recessed porch or outdoor living room whose pent slate roof is supported by massive timber posts. (Photograph 4) The dovecote is connected to the house by a high stone wall, which forms

one side of a walled garden in the angle between the house and the dovecote. (Photograph 5) Gutters and leaders on the house are lead. (Photograph 7)

The front door of four wide beaded boards hung on strap hinges opens to a hall in which vertical wooden posts and the beamed ceiling, all of oak, have an adzed finish. There is a stone fireplace in the hall. Walls and ceiling are plaster with a rubbed finish; the floor is Moravian Pottery & Tile Works octagonal terra cotta tile. (Photograph 8, Figure 3) A great stone chimneypiece (from the original structure), flanked by bookshelves, projects into the living room to the west of the hall. (Photograph 9) Another chief feature of this room is the high ceiling, which is supported by four wooden trusses. A long bay window in the north wall affords a splendid view of the meadow. (Photograph 11)

To the east of the hall are the living porch, the dining room, and the kitchen. In the dining room the south wall has a fireplace with flat Tudor arch, surrounded by floor-to-ceiling paneling. An oriel provides a view of the walled garden. A door on the west wall opens to the outdoor living room. The kitchen, whose equipment, including porcelain sink on legs, built-in cupboards, and coal-fired range, is entirely original, connects by a back stairway to the maid's room above.

The front stairway with closed string and massive balusters ascends from the front hall in a switchback to a pleasant second-floor sitting area, which is part of an east-west hall and enjoys the oriel over the front door. (Photograph 8, Figure 4) In the largest bedroom at the west end of the hall, the slopes of the walls are determined by the roof gables. (Photograph 11) Two smaller bedrooms are located to the east, all three having windows to the north toward the Litchfield Hills.

Casual landscaping complements the design of the house. The gravel drive loops in front, while a small orchard of cropped apple trees is nearby at the northeast. A small parterred garden is connected by French doors to the living room while wisteria joins the euonymous as a climbing vine while lilacs and nandina dominate the foundation planting. A shed garage was added, c. 1940, in front of the house at the point where the curved drive branches off from the main long straight run. (Photograph 13)

Miss Chase added to the property from time to time and operated it as a working farm. Three of the houses acquired in this process were moved away, but one remains. A c. 1840 1-1/2-story Greek Revival frame structure, it now serves as the residence of the director of Topsmead State Forest. (Photograph 14) In its three bay front elevation the front door is off center to the east, but the central second-story window is centered. The second-story windows are narrow rectangles with three vertical panes, close to the eaves. A shed-roofed porch has been added on the west, a 1-1/2-story section added to the rear, and a large garage built beyond it.

The farm manager's house, known as 25 Chase Road, is located near the beginning of the drive, close to Buell Road. It is a c. boxy frame Colonial Revival structure (c. 1920s) with front porch and wing, well sited behind large shade trees. (Photograph 15) It is near two large barns (c. 1920s) and a garage (c. 1940s). The eight buildings on the property, all contributing, are:

House (1924)

Garage (c. 1940)

Director's House (c. 1840)

Garage (c. 1940)

Manager's House (c. 1920s)

Barn (c. 1920s)

Barn (c. 1920s)

Garage (c. 1920s)

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally:___ Statewide: x Locally:___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A___ B___ C x D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

Areas of Significance:	Period(s) of Significance	Significant Dates
<u>ARCHITECTURE</u>	<u>1924</u>	<u>1924</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Richard Henry Dana

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Topsmead, designed by a distinguished architect, Richard Henry Dana of New York City, for a wealthy client, Edith Morton Chase of Waterbury, Connecticut, is an excellent example of a country summer house in the Tudor Revival style. The overall composition and the multitude of details are faithfully carried out in the tradition of the Tudor Revival, and the entire property, in a good state of preservation, remains today much as it did in Miss Chase's lifetime.

Edith Morton Chase

Miss Chase (1890-1972) was the daughter of Henry Sabin Chase (1855-1917) whose father Augustus Sabin Chase (1828-1896) was a successful industrialist and banker. Henry Sabin Chase developed the Waterbury Manufacturing Company into the Chase Metal Works (Chase Brass & Copper Company), one of the largest and most profitable of the many metal fabricating industries in Waterbury.

Henry Sabin Chase purchased 16 acres in Litchfield shortly before his death in 1917. His daughter first built a small lodge, then the present house, and made a series of 24 acquisitions, which built up the estate to 511 acres. One small parcel in the center was never acquired. (Figure 1) Miss Chase, accompanied by two friends, the Misses Mary and Lucy Burrell, lived at Topsmead from May to November. The house was furnished with Tudor period antiques purchased in New York City and England, which remain in place.

During Miss Chase's lifetime the property was run as a commercial farm, featuring dairy products (cow stanchions remain in one of the barns), beef, hogs, sheep, chickens, and turkeys. (Photograph 13) Her farm manager lived in one of the houses purchased as part of the land acquisition program. He now owns the house and accompanying 16.85 acres. (See Figure 1.) Most of the balance of 494 acres is now woodland used for recreational purposes. The house, open to the public two weekends per month June/October, averages about 2,000 visitors annually.

Architecture

The first modest rustic lodge, called "A Shack for Miss Chase" on the October 1917 drawing, was built to the design of William E. Hunt (1873-1935) of Waterbury. (Photograph 1) Hunt studied architecture at Columbia before practicing in Waterbury with Walter Griggs in the firm of Griggs & Hunt, to 1914. The Hotel Elton, Waterbury (1905), was one of their more important commissions. Hunt later moved to Torrington, Connecticut, where he had designed the children's room addition to the Torrington Public Library in 1906.

Copious documentation at Topsmead includes snapshots of the lodge, numerous views of the 1924 "cottage" in course of construction, and correspondence from the architect to the client. Blueprints of the architectural drawings, including details for the hardware, etc., are dated March 25, 1924. Dana's design was a major exercise in the Tudor Revival style, emphasizing the feeling of weight of the stucco walls, half-timbered gables, and slate roof as they hug the ground in the traditional Cotswold manner. The lead gutters and downspouts, banks of leaded casement windows, and massive chimneys all contribute to the planned effect, taking full advantage of the hilltop site.

The interior is entirely appropriate to the period effect with its tile floors, stone fireplaces, adzed timbers, and high living room ceiling supported by wooden trusses. The plan thoughtfully provides for splendid views north to the Litchfield Hills from the living room, the living porch, and the three bedrooms. The dining room overlooks the walled garden. The dovecote beyond the walled garden was added by Dana or Fred A. Webster (about whom nothing is known) ten years after the house was built, while Webster designed the shed garage c. 1940.

Richard Henry Dana (1879-1933) was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the son of Richard Henry Dana, lawyer and civil service reform advocate, and grandson of Richard Henry Dana, author of Two Years Before the Mast. His mother was a daughter of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his wife, Ethel Natalie Smith, whom he married in 1911, was the daughter of the rector of Saint James Episcopal Church, New York City.

The architect, after attending Browne and Nichols School, graduated from Harvard in 1901 and from the Columbia School of Architecture in 1904. Two years at the Ecole des

Beaux-Arts (Atelier Redon) followed. His first year in New York City was spent as a draughtsman in the office of Delano & Aldrich, his second with Welles Bosworth, before entering into a partnership with Henry Killam Murphy which lasted 12 years. The firm designed 18 buildings in China and Japan, including Yale in China at Changsha. Dana served as visiting instructor in design at the Yale School of Architecture from 1908 to 1916, and received an honorary degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts from Yale in 1912.

From 1920 Dana conducted an individual practice in New York City. Among his commissions were buildings for Gunnery and Loomis (1916-1921) schools in Connecticut and the headquarters of the Colonial Dames in New York City. The bulk of his work, however, consisted of homes, usually in the country, for prominent clients, including Frank Altschul, Spencer Byard, William Lyon Phelps, Harold L. Pratt, Mrs. Ogden Reid, Edgar Stillman, and Paul Sturtevant. Dana designed houses in Bristol, Connecticut, for Townsend G. Treadway, Morton Treadway, and Edward Ingraham. He also did buildings for the Dalton School, New York; New Rochelle College; the Stanley Works, New Britain; and, in Waterbury, Saint John's Parish House (1921-1923) and the Young Men's Christian Association. His Waterbury work provided the opportunity for contact with Miss Chase.

Many of the houses were skillfully designed frame and brick structures in a Georgian Revival interpretation of the Colonial Revival style. The twin-chimney five-bay central-entrance arrangement with second-floor central Palladian window under a roof-line pediment was typical of this mode of his work. Appropriately, he served on the editorial committee for the seminal 1933 two-volume Great Georgian Houses of America.

A small number of his houses, however, were medieval in inspiration, in particular that for J.V. McDonnell in Greenwich, which had brick nogging in half-timbered walls and roof overhangs reminiscent of thatch in a manner sympathetic to Topsmead. His ecclesiastical work also was derived from masonry medieval precedent. At the same time, Dana was sensitive to progressive trends in the profession to the extent of embracing contemporary design. Shortly before his death he was preparing to sell his own Colonial Revival house in Washington, Connecticut, to move into a residence of contemporary design for which he had already drawn the plans.

Topsmead is an unusually well-preserved house exemplifying the work of a fashionable, sophisticated architect of the first quarter of the 20th century. His Boston/Columbia/Beaux-Arts background and training found full expression in his designs for clients who were his peers in education and social standing. Richard Henry Dana and his work made an important contribution to the history of architecture as skillfully practiced by and for the elite of the early 20th century.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Anderson, Joseph, ed. The Town and City of Waterbury. New Haven: The Price and Lee Company, 1896.
- Dana, Richard Henry. Obituary. New York Times, November 30, 1933.
- Dana, Richard Henry, Jr. Richard Henry Dana, (1879-1933). New York, 1965.
- Great Georgian Houses of America, vol. I. New York: The Editorial Committee of The Great Georgian Houses of American for the benefit of The Architects' Emergency Committee, 1933.
- The Hartford Courant. "Bristol homes a symbol of good times on Federal Hill." December 22, 1992, J-1:6, il.
- Litchfield Land Records. Volume 149, page 316 and 149/317,
- McCahon, Mary. Historical and Architectural Resource Survey, Statewide Historic Resource Inventory. Hartford: Connecticut Historical Commission, 1985.
- Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc ., 1970, reprint of 1956.

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: # _____

PROPERTY NAME

Topsmead, Litchfield, CT

United States Department of the Interior, NPS

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Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency - Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Topsmead State Forest office
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other: Specify Repository: _____

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 511

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A	<u>18</u>	<u>4624300</u>	<u>652470</u>	B	<u>18</u>	<u>4624300</u>	<u>653070</u>
C	<u>18</u>	<u>4623700</u>	<u>653350</u>	D	<u>18</u>	<u>4623210</u>	<u>653580</u>
E	<u>18</u>	<u>4622640</u>	<u>654070</u>	F	<u>18</u>	<u>4621940</u>	<u>653200</u>
G	<u>18</u>	<u>4622460</u>	<u>652740</u>	H	<u>18</u>	<u>4622600</u>	<u>652440</u>

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property is described in the Litchfield Land Records at volume 149, page 316. The nominated property consists of the acreage owned by Miss Chase at the time of her death. Note that a parcel surrounded by the nominated property is not included. See shaded area just east of "East Litchfield Road" in Figure 1.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the nominated property is drawn to include the acreage owned by Miss Chase at the time of her death.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: David F. Ransom
Org.: Connecticut Historical Commission
Date: December 28, 1992
Street/#: 59 South Prospect Street
City/Town: Hartford
State: Connecticut
ZIP: 06106
Telephone: 203 566-3005

Photographs

Photographs were taken by David F. Ransom in November 1992. Photograph 1 is a copy of a snapshot at Topsmead. Negatives are on file with the Connecticut Historical Commission.

Photograph 1
"A Shack for Miss
Chase," c. 1917

Photograph 12
Shed garage
View northwest

Photograph 2
Meadow and house
View southwest

Photograph 13
Barns
View southeast

Photograph 3
North elevation
View southeast

Photograph 14
Greek Revival house
View north

Photograph 4
Living porch
View south

Photograph 15
Colonial Revival House
View southwest

Photograph 5
Walled garden and
dovecote
View southeast

Photograph 6
Front elevation
View northwest

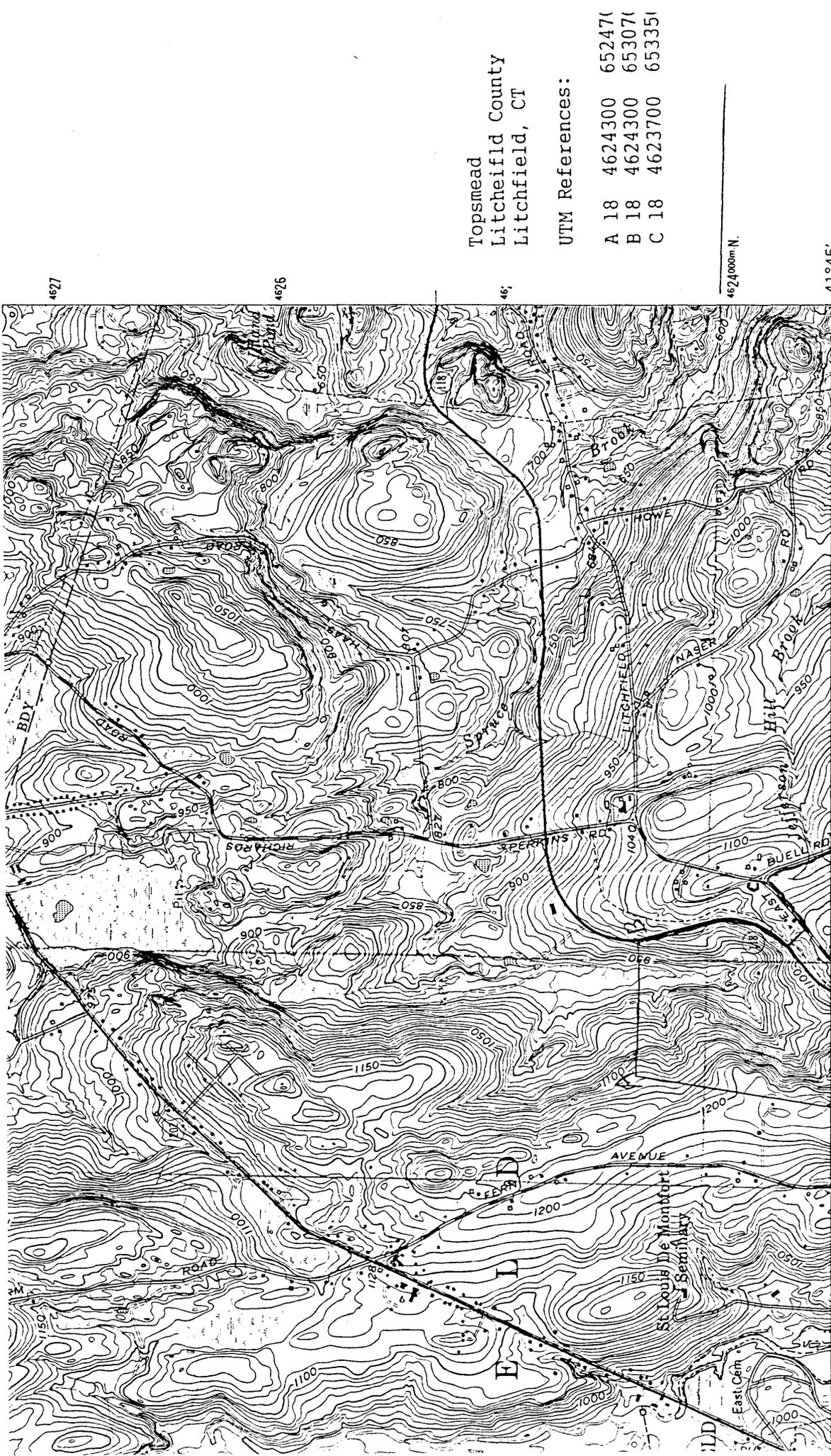
Photograph 7
Slate pent roof, lead
gutter and leader
View north

Photograph 8
Front hall
View southeast

Photograph 9
Living room fireplace
View southwest

Photograph 10
Living room
View northeast

Photograph 11
Large bedroom
View northeast



Topsmead
Litchfield County
Litchfield, CT

UTM References:

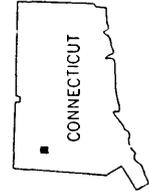
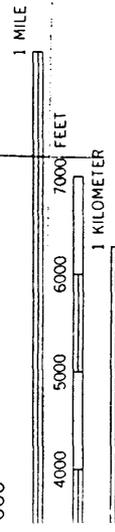
- A 18 4624300 652470
- B 18 4624300 653070
- C 18 4623700 653350

FIELD
EAST 5.7 MI.
73° 07' 30" W
41° 45' N
THOMASTON 8.2 MI. 652
LITCHFIELD (UNCL. CONN. 63) 1.5 MI. 654
INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1984
655000m E.

(THOMASTON)
6367 11 NE 13

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Unimproved road
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Route



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with State of Connecticut agencies from aerial photographs taken 1982 and other sources. This information not field checked

WEST TORRINGTON, CONN.

41073-G2-TF-024

1956

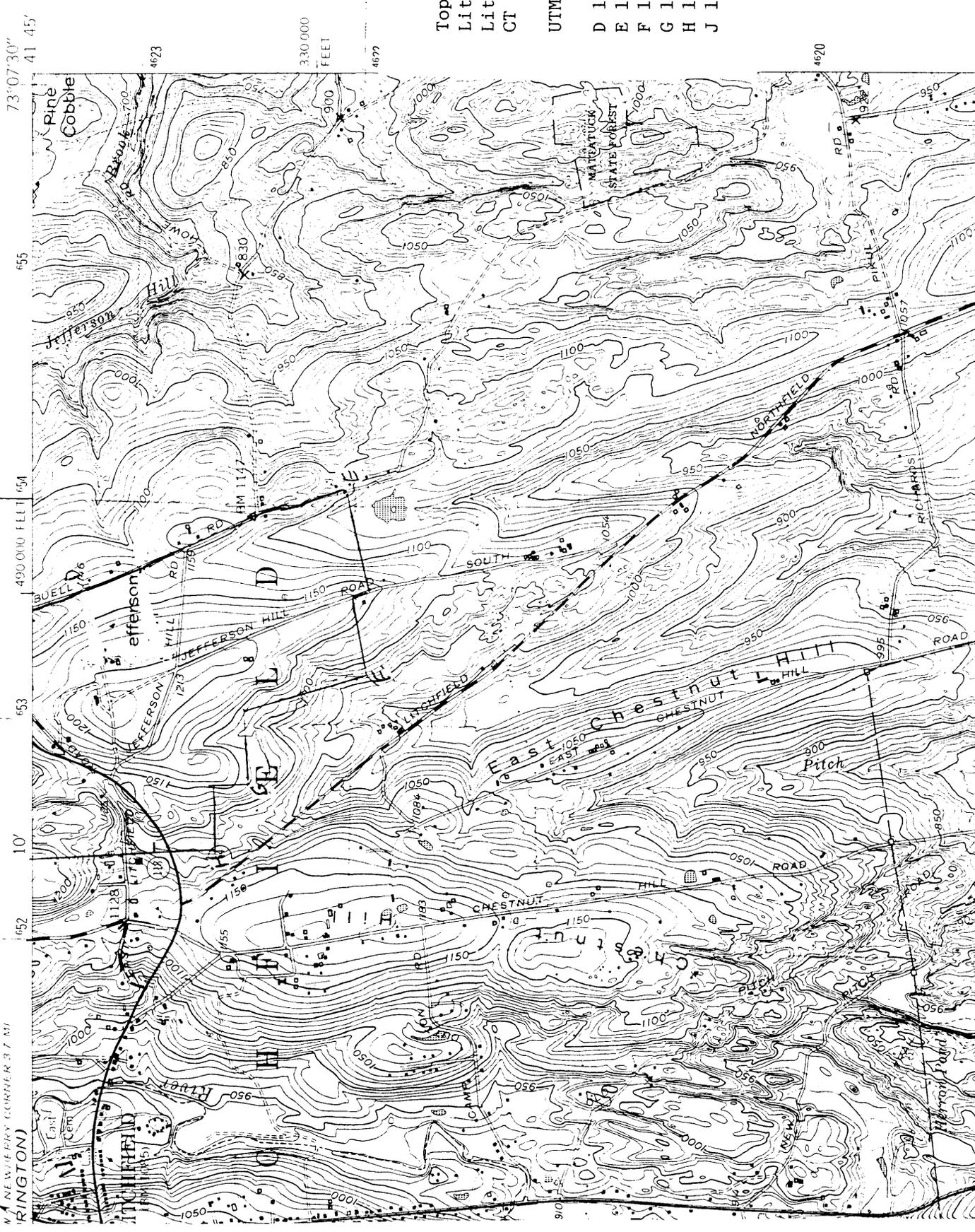
L 10 FEET
L DATUM OF 1929

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
-OGICAL SURVEY
RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

397156 (TORSINGTON)

LITCHFIELD QUADRANGLE
CONNECTICUT—LITCHFIELD CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

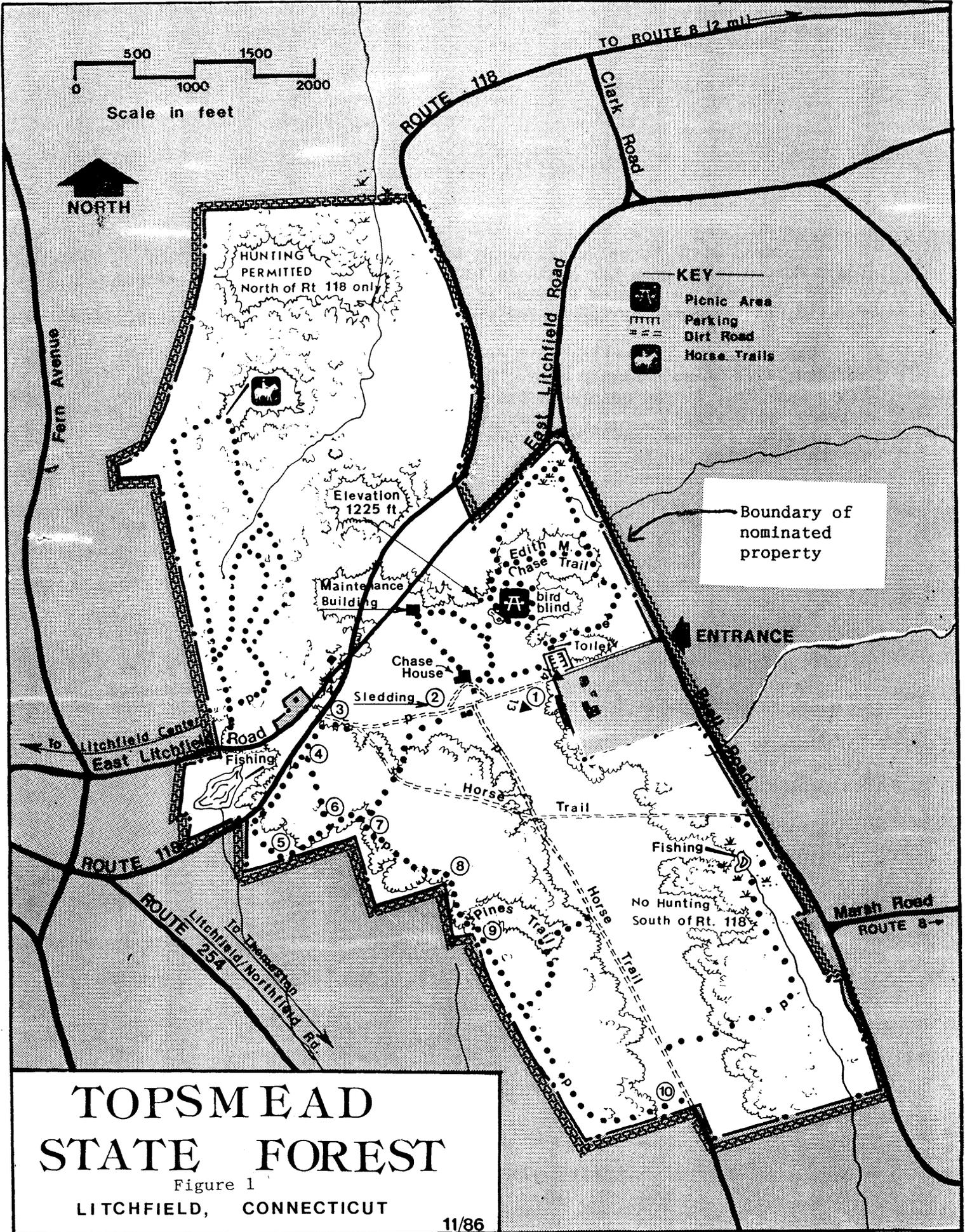
CONNECTICUT
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AGENCY CENTER
NEW HAVEN CORNER 3.7 MI
TORSINGTON



Topsmead
Litchfield
Litchfield County
CT

UTM References:

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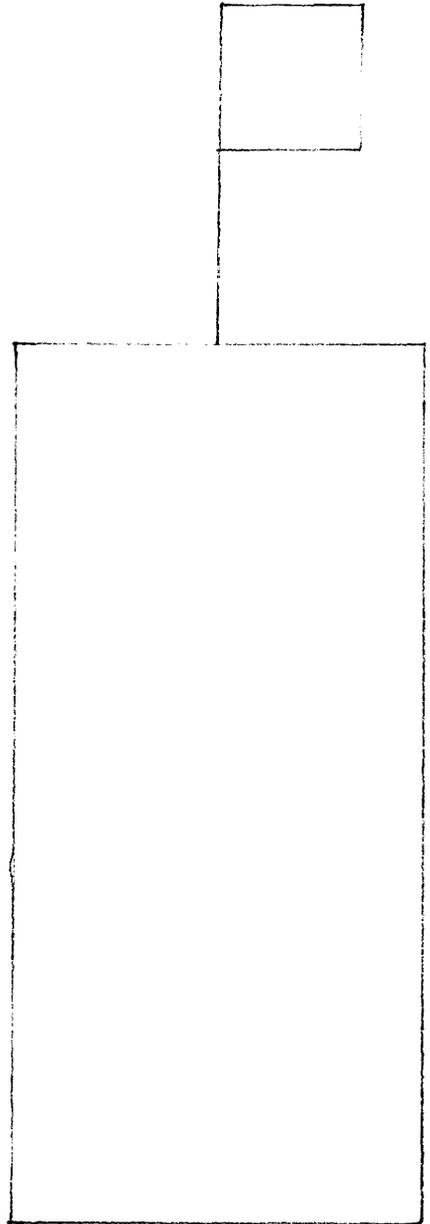


TOPSMEAD STATE FOREST

Figure 1

LITCHFIELD, CONNECTICUT

N ▲



4 ▲

5 ▲

7 ▲

9 ▲

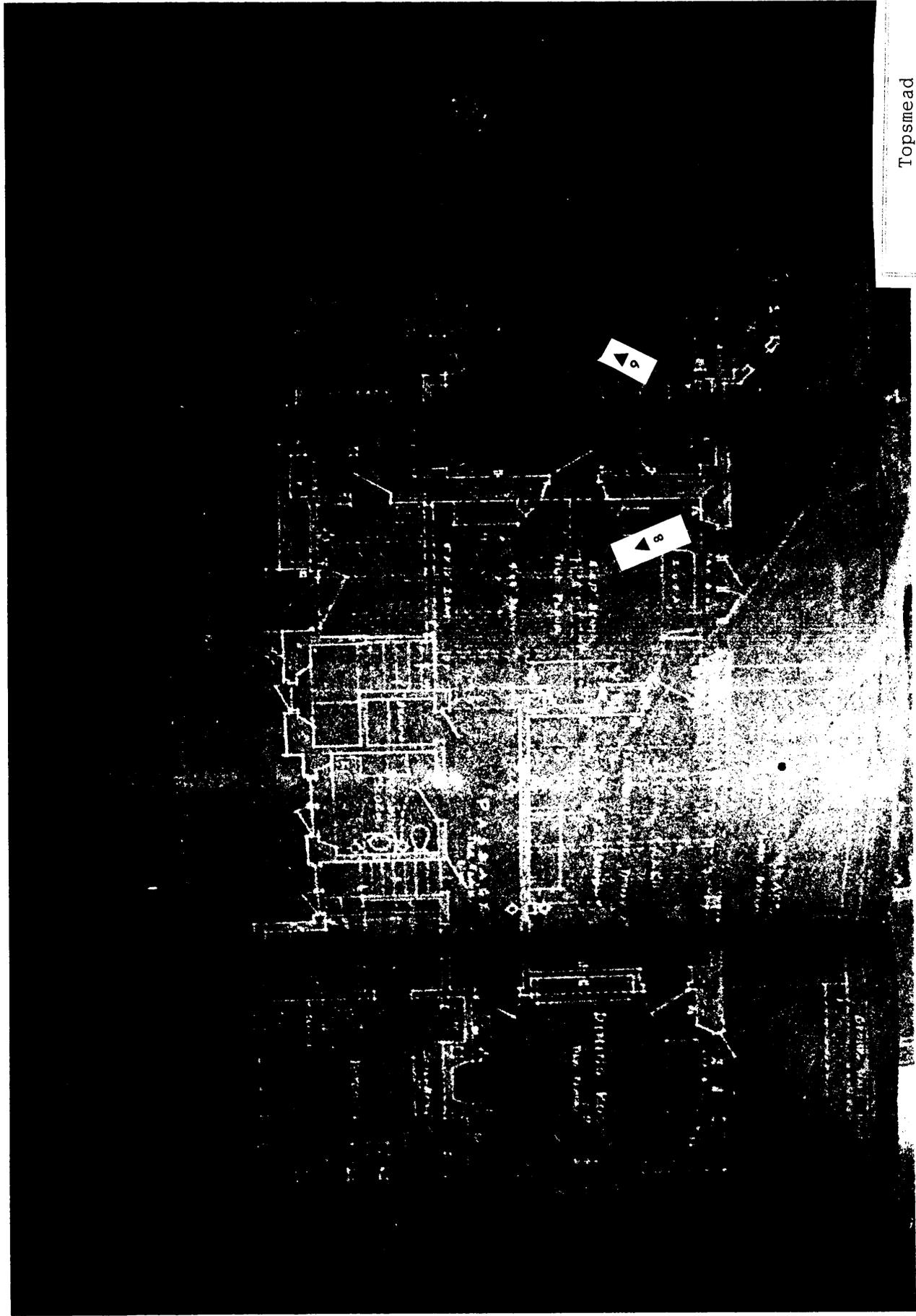


12 ▲

Topsmead
Litchfield, CT
Photo Key Diagram
Figure 2

3 ▲

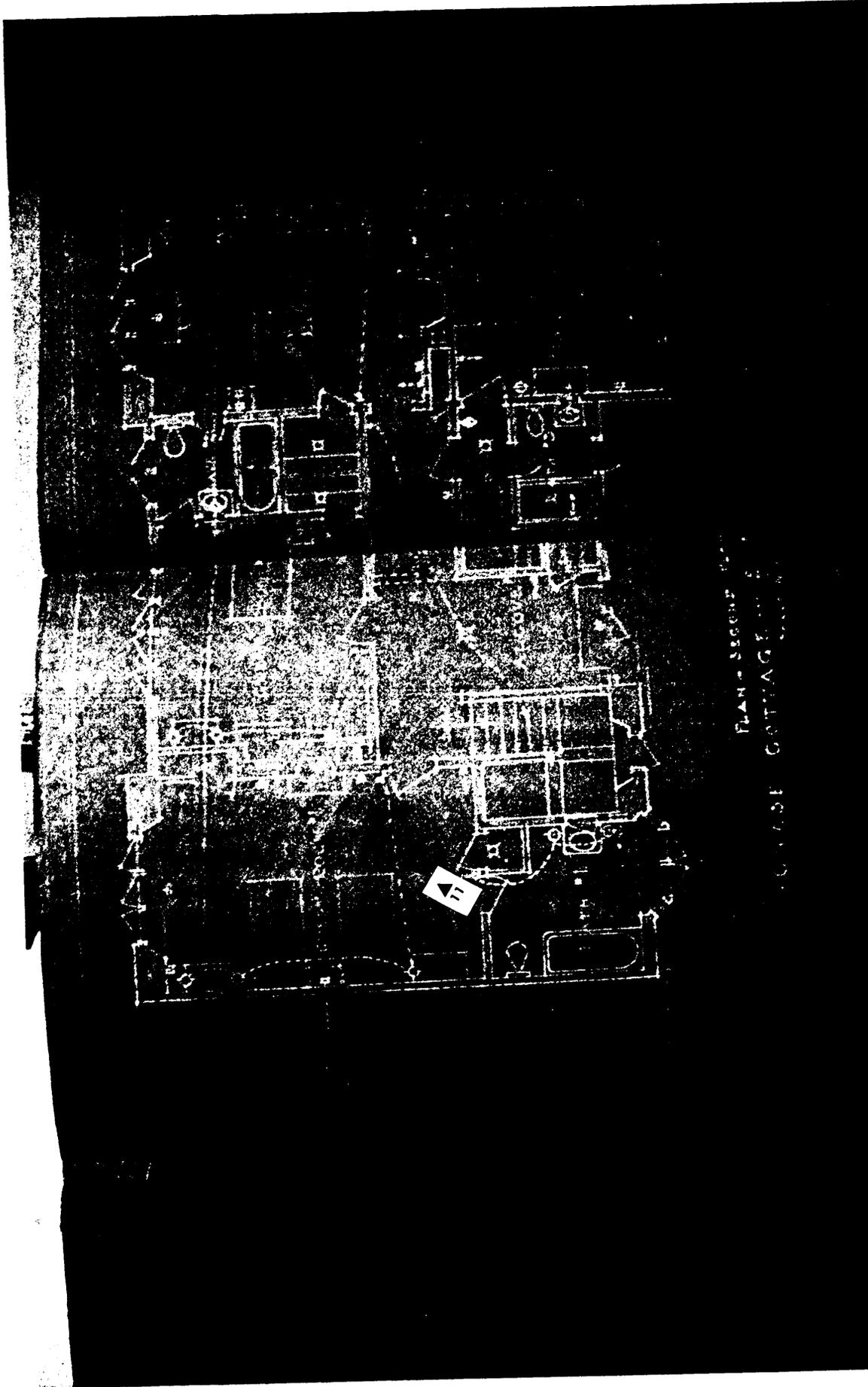
6 ▲



Topsmead
Litchfield, CT

First Floor Plan

Figure 3



PLAN - SECOND FLOOR
COTTAGE

Topsmead
Litchfield, CT
Second Floor Plan

Figure 4