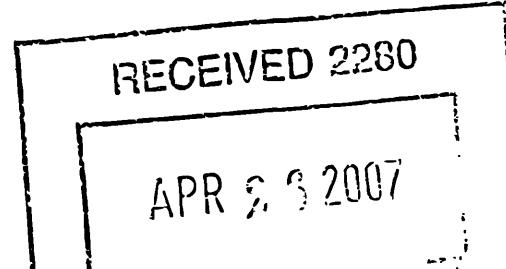


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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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 Borden Farm

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 2951 & 2967 East Main Road

not for publication \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Portsmouth

vicinity \_\_\_\_\_

state Rhode Island

code RI

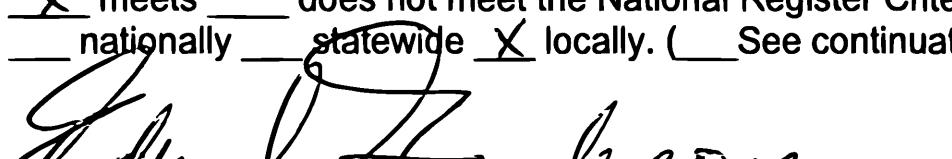
county Newport

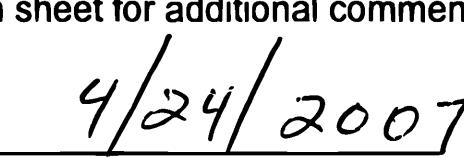
code 005

zip code 02871

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official

  
Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

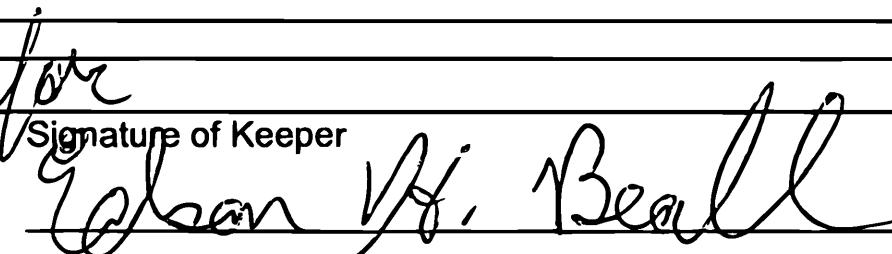
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the  
National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

  
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

  
6.5.07

## 5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	5	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district			sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site			structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure			objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object			Total
		6	1	

Name of related multiple property listing  
(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

0

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>DOMESTIC/single dwelling</u>	<u>DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding</u>	<u>COMMERCE/commercial storage</u>

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>Second Empire</u>	<u>foundation</u> <u>STONE, CONCRETE</u>
<u>Victorian Vernacular</u>	<u>roof</u> <u>ASPHALT; WOOD:shingle</u>
	<u>walls</u> <u>WOOD:weatherboard; shingle</u>
	<u>other</u> <u>BRICK</u>

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

## 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 a 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.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**  
ca. 1865 - 1900

### Significant Dates

ca. 1865, Main House constructed

ca. 1890 –1900, Barn, outbuildings and Farmhouse constructed

### Significant Person

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: RI Historical Society Library

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 6.22 acres**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing
1 <u>19</u>	<u>312850</u>	<u>4608570</u>
2 _____	_____	_____
3 _____	_____	_____
4 _____	_____	_____

 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.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Joanna M. Doherty, Preservation Consultantorganization \_\_\_\_\_ date March 2007street & number 62 Dexterdale Road telephone 401-831-6939city or town Providence state RI zip code 02906

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**Additional Documentation**

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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)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street &amp; number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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**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 to amend existing 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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**Narrative Description**

The Borden Farm in Portsmouth, Rhode Island consists of 6.22 acres on two lots the east side of East Main Road, near its intersection with Dexter Road, in a section of town once known as Newtown. The ca. 1865, west-facing, Second Empire-style Main House is set back approximately 50 feet from the street, with a semi-circular, gravel drive in front. A large, ca. 1890 English-style Barn is located to the northeast of the house. It is accessed via an earthen ramp that extends off the gravel drive and leads to the Barn's west-facing entrance. Three outbuildings stand to the east of the house: a ca. 1890 Shop, a ca. 1900 Granary and a ca. 1960, non-contributing building. A ca. 1900 Well House is located immediately to the south of the Main House, opposite a side entrance. To the rear of the lot, a few hundred feet east of the Main House, is a ca. 1900, Victorian Vernacular, front-gable Farmhouse with a 1962 ell. Once part of a 44-acre farm, the Borden Farm is today located in the midst of relatively dense suburban development. Mid-twentieth-century houses are located to the north, east and south of the property. A mid-twentieth-century shopping plaza is also to the north, facing East Main Road. East Main Road is a busy, north-south route characterized by a mix of commercial and residential use. Houses on the street date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and are mostly of a much smaller scale and exhibit less elaborate ornamentation than the Main House at the Borden Farm. In addition, very few properties on East Main Road include barns, especially of the scale of the Barn at the Borden Farm.

The landscape at the Borden Farm is mostly open and grassy, with clusters of relatively young, deciduous trees. Significant vegetation includes a large, copper beech tree and two large pine trees, all located to the south of the Main House. There are several pear trees to the north of the Main House, just in front of the Barn, which are remnants of an orchard. There are numerous stone walls, located both along property boundaries and within the grounds. Most are dry-laid and consist of a mix of flat and round fieldstone. A long stone wall that runs north-south, roughly bisecting the property, is constructed of flat stones, possibly slate or shale. Two stretches of wall that face East Main Road are mortared and are made up of stones of a more uniform shape and size, very similar to walls elsewhere on the street; according to the current owner, these may have been installed as part of a Works Progress Administration project. A semi-circular, gravel drive is located in front of the Main House. Its two entrances are marked by pairs of square, approximately 12 inch x 12 inch posts, roughly 3½ feet tall and featuring pyramidal tops. A gravel drive, which forms a semi-circle in front of the Main House, extends to the rear of the property, running between the Main House and the Barn, through the group of outbuildings and terminating at a parking area in front of the Farmhouse.

**Plat 31, Lot 32 (2951 East Main Road)  
*Main House***

The most prominent building at the Borden Farm is the Main House, a ca. 1865, 2½-story, wood-frame, Second Empire-style residence that faces East Main Road. It is set back approximately 50 feet from the street. The building consists of an approximately 38 foot x 30 foot main block, with a roughly 22 foot x 20 foot ell that extends off its

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southeast corner. Physical and documentary evidence indicates that the ell is not an addition but, rather, was built at the same time as the main block. The Main House rests on a high, stone foundation; has walls sheathed in wood clapboard and terminating in chamfered cornerboards; and is topped by an asphalt-shingled, mansard roof. There are three brick chimneys, corbelled at their caps, located on the north and south slopes of the main block and on the east slope of the ell. The building's deep eaves feature dentils and large brackets with drops.

The principal entry to the Main House is located in the center of the 3-bay-wide west elevation, within a 1-story, full-width porch. The entry is comprised of a double-leaf central entrance with a round-arched, etched-glass light in each door. An elliptical-arched, single-pane transom caps the entrance. The doors and transom are contained within a simple frame with brackets and a cornice. Four square, wood posts, with simple bases and capitals and chamfered corners, support the porch's flat roof. The roof's cornice is punctuated with simple brackets, less elaborate than those at the eaves of the main roof. There are two engaged posts where the porch meets the house. The porch has a classical balustrade, roughly 2½ feet tall, a plank floor and a plank ceiling, and is accessed by a two wide, wood stairs. Another entrance is located in the center bay of the 3-bay south elevation of the ell. It features a 2-panel-over-2-panel, wood door accessed by a set of stairs and located beneath a deep door hood with elaborate, scrolled brackets with drops. Relatively simple brackets are located along the cornice. The second bay of the 2-bay east elevation of the ell also features an entrance, accessed by a set of stairs – the first step of which is a large, fieldstone slab. The 2-panel-over-2-panel door is located beneath a hood with cornice brackets, as at the south entrance, though its support brackets are much less elaborate. The basement of the Main House is accessed through a 6-light-over-2-panel door on the south elevation of the ell and a plank door on the east elevation of the main block, both of which are slightly recessed within the thick, stone foundation.

The windows at the Main House, while sharing similar details, exhibit some variety and contribute significantly to the building's architectural character. On the main (west) façade, the first floor features full-height, paired, 1-over-1, double-hung, wood sash. Windows on the second floor of this elevation are also paired, 1-over-1, double-hung sash, set beneath deep, bracketed drip caps. A 2-story, projecting bay window is located in the first bay of the 3-bay south elevation of the main block. The building's roofline, including its dentils and brackets, is carried through at the bay widow's second story; a shallower cornice, with less elaborate brackets, separates the first and second stories of the projecting bay. Window sash within the bay are 1-over-1, double-hung, wood units. Perhaps most notable in terms of the building's fenestration are its eleven dormer windows, which pierce the lower slopes of the mansard roof. The 2-over-2-light, double-hung sash are topped by pedimented gables with bracketed cornices. Decorative wood scrolls are located at the base of the dormers' surround, resting on a paneled lower frame. Most of the remaining windows at the Main House are 2-over-2, double-hung, wood sash set beneath deep drip caps with simple brackets and resting on a bracketed sill. In a few locations – mostly on the ell – the windows have a shallower drip cap, with no brackets. Finally, the north elevation of the ell exhibits two oculus windows in its first bay, which light an interior stair.

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The exterior of the Main House at the Borden Farm has been altered very little and retains a high level of integrity. (One notable change involves a small greenhouse that projects off the foundation on the south elevation of the building's main block. Though the basic form of the greenhouse is still discernable, the glass has been removed and the structure sheathed in wood shingles.) Around 1948, the property owner divided the interior of the Main House into six apartments – two on each of the three floors. While this certainly altered the historic floor plan, many of the original walls remain in place and many architectural details are intact.

The Main House's principal entry, located on the west façade, leads to a center hall that remains largely unaltered from its original appearance. An open-string staircase of walnut or chestnut occupies the north side of the hall; it and the wall curve to the southeast as the stair climbs to the second floor. The classical balustrade terminates in a heavy, turned newel-post, and the outer string of the stair is bracketed. The floor in the hall is of wide, pine planks and the ceiling features a plaster medallion with a historic, hanging light fixture. Wide, ogee moldings of walnut or chestnut surround the doors. A doorway on the east wall of the hall used to lead to a large dining room, but is now a "dead" door, the dining room having been divided when the Main House was converted to apartments.

A door on the south wall of the hall leads to the living room of one of the first-floor apartments. This room, historically a parlor, features wide, pine flooring; original, unpainted baseboards; original, unpainted, ogee window and door trim of walnut or chestnut; a picture rail; an ornamental, plaster ceiling medallion with historic light fixture; and a marble fireplace. The kitchen, located to the east of the living room, has modern cupboards and vinyl flooring, but retains its historic beadboard wainscoting, a chair rail, and molding like that in the living room. The bedroom and bathroom occupy the building's ell; the molding in both rooms, though of the same wood as elsewhere on the first floor, is somewhat less elaborate in design, probably because the first floor of the ell was originally occupied by utilitarian spaces, such as a kitchen. (A fireplace with wood surround is located in the basement of the ell, in a space that was likely used as a summer kitchen.) Flooring in the bedroom is pine, while that in the bathroom is vinyl. The other first-floor apartment exhibits very similar details, including pine flooring throughout (except for the kitchen and bath, which have vinyl flooring); a marble fireplace and plaster ceiling medallion with hanging light fixture in the present-day living room; beadboard wainscoting and chair rail in the kitchen; and wide, ogee molding throughout, except for in the bath, which occupies a portion of the ell. A former doorway, now filled in but with its original trim intact, is located on the south wall of the bathroom; it used to provide access to a hallway.

The second floor of the Main House has a very similar layout to the first, with a center hall flanked by apartments, and the architectural details are also comparable. Wood baseboards and the wide, ogee molding are found in the hall and throughout both apartments, including in the rooms that are located in the ell. This suggests that the ell was constructed at the same time as the main block, and that the second-floor of the ell contained space that was used by the owners of the house, rather than servants. This second assertion is reinforced by the presence of a plaster ceiling medallion with historic lighting fixture in the present-day bedroom of the south apartment. Similar medallions are found in the second-floor hall and in the present-day living rooms of each of the second-floor apartments. Wood floors are located in all rooms, except for the kitchens and baths, which have vinyl flooring.

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The third floor of the building is accessed via a narrow stairhall, located behind (to the east) of the second-floor center hall or via a set of winder stairs, located in the northeast corner of the ell. Once home to servants' quarters, this floor was divided into two apartments around 1948. One apartment occupies the southern half of the main block and the entire ell, while the other occupies the northern half of the main block. As in the other apartments, floors are of wood or vinyl, and the original window and door trim is intact – though, not surprisingly, it is of a less expensive wood (pine) and, while curved, is less elaborate than the molding on the principal floors of the house.

***Outbuilding #1 / Granary***

Outbuilding #1 is a ca. 1900, small, rectangular-plan, 1½-story, wood-frame building located to the northeast of the Main House. The ridgeline of the gable roof, which is sheathed in asphalt shingles, runs east-west. The walls are clad in unfinished wood shingles, with the exception of those on the south elevation, which have been stained gray. The building features plain, wood cornerboards and simple window and door trim. The building rests on mortared stone piers, which lift it roughly 12 inches off the ground. (These piers were constructed in the late-1990s, replacing wood posts.) A pedestrian door, made of vertical planks and featuring long, iron strap hinges and an iron handle is located in the third bay of the south elevation. The west elevation exhibits a barn door, made of beadboard, which slides on an interior track with hardware manufactured by the New England Butt Company of Providence, and a loft door, also of beadboard and located in the gable peak. A beam projects from the wall, over the loft door, and presumably once incorporated a pulley for hoisting grain. The building has a total of five window openings, all of which have 6-over-6-light, double-hung, wood sash; there are two on the north and south elevations and one on the east. The first floor of the building is occupied by a single, open space. A winder stair in the northwest corner of the building provides access to the loft, which is also undivided. Floors are of wide, wood planks and framing members are mostly sawn. At least one beam, however, exhibits notches, suggesting that it may originally have been in a timber-framed structure and was re-used in this building. The original purpose of this building is unknown; the current owner remembers it being referred to as a "shop." Many of its features, however, suggest that it may have been built to store grain – notably the loft door with projecting beam and stone pier foundation, which encourages air circulation.<sup>1</sup>

***Outbuilding #2 / Shop***

Outbuilding #2 is a ca. 1890, small, rectangular-plan, 1-story, wood-frame building located to the east of Outbuilding #1. A low stone wall runs between the two buildings. The building rests on a fieldstone foundation, has walls clad in wood shingles that have been stained gray, and is topped by an asphalt-shingled, gable roof, with a ridgeline that runs north-south. An iron pipe chimney pierces the west slope of the roof. Ornamentation is limited to plain, wood cornerboards and simple wood door and window trim. There are two entrances to the building: a pedestrian door,

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Durant Visser, *Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 125-128.

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located in the first bay of the south elevation, and accessed by wooden steps, and a sliding door, made of beadboard and moving on an exterior track, located on the east elevation. Fenestration consists of two, 6-over-6-light, double-hung, wood sash (located on the south and east elevations), and a 4-light, fixed-sash window on the east elevation. Physical evidence and historic photos indicate that the fixed-sash window is located in a spot formerly occupied by a sliding barn door. The interior of Outbuilding #2 consists of one undivided space, with narrow wood plank floors, vertical plank walls and sawn framing members. The building's form indicates that it may have been built as some sort of shop; it is relatively well-lit and has a chimney that vented a pot belly stove into at least the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> An early 20<sup>th</sup> century inventory of the property indicates that, at the time, the farm complex included a shop, a blacksmith shop and a paint shop, among other structures. It is possible that Outbuilding #2 was one of the shops listed.<sup>3</sup>

***Outbuilding #3 / Shooting Range (Non-contributing)***

Outbuilding #3 is a small, rectangular-plan, 1-story, wood-frame building constructed ca. 1960 as part of a shooting range built by the owner at the time, who was the firearms instructor for the Portsmouth police force. It is a non-contributing resource within the Borden Farm. Its walls are sheathed in wood shingle and plywood. Its foundation was not visible at the time of this survey. The western portion of the building is topped with a shed roof, while the eastern half features a flat roof. A modern, steel door is located on the south elevation. Double doors constructed of plywood are located on the east elevation. There are only two windows: single pane, fixed-sash units on the west elevation.

***Well House***

The Well House is a small, rectangular-plan, 1-story, wood-frame structure located to the south of the Main House. Its style suggests that it was built during the same period as the other outbuildings at the Borden Farm (ca. 1900), though research has not confirmed this. Its gable roof and walls are clad in wood shingles. On the south and west elevations, round-arched window openings are filled with wood lattice. The north elevation features a 2-panel-over-2-panel wood door, the top of which has been cut to fit a round-arched opening. The building rests on a layer of flat stones, possibly shale or slate. A walkway, also of stone, runs between the Well House and the south elevation of the Main House.

***Farmhouse***

The wood-frame, Victorian Vernacular-style Farmhouse is located to the east of the Main House, far back on the property at the end of a long gravel drive. Its L-shaped footprint is comprised of a ca. 1900, 1½-story, front-gable

<sup>2</sup> Visser, 152-155.

<sup>3</sup> Probate Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Book 13, pages 150M-150U.

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main block, roughly 23 feet x 41 feet, and a 1962, 1-story, side-gable ell, which measures approximately 35 feet x 26 feet. A small, 1-story, hip-roof addition extends off the east elevation of the main block. The foundation at the main block is parged stone, while that at the ell and small addition is poured concrete. The roof is sheathed in asphalt shingle, while the walls are clad in wood shingles. Two chimneys pierce the roof of the main block (one on the south slope and one at the ridge), while the ell has an exterior, end chimney. Notable details include the building's simple cornerboards and fascia, and the cornice returns at the main block.

The principal entry to the Farmhouse is located in the first bay of the 3-bay west elevation of the main block. The entry is framed with simple trim and accessed by a set of stone steps. A side entry is located on the north elevation of the main block, and also features simple detailing. The ell is accessed via a recessed, covered entry in its west elevation, which houses a south-facing door. Another entry – also with a south-facing door – is located in the east elevation of the building's small, rear addition, and is housed within a recessed, covered entry.

Fenestration at the main block of the Farmhouse consists primarily of 2-over-2, double-hung, wood sash with simple trim and drip caps. The historic windows on the east elevation of the main block have been replaced with single-pane, casement sash. The ell displays a range of window types, including 6-over-6, double-hung, wood sash on its south elevation, and multiple-light casement sash, sometimes flanking picture windows, on its east and west elevations. The small addition also features multiple-light, casement sash on its east and west elevations.

The interior of the Farmhouse was divided into three apartments around 1964 – one on each of the two floors of the main block and one in the ell. The apartments in the main block share the same basic floor plan, with a stair hall located in the northwest corner, a bathroom in the northeast corner and a bedroom in between. On the south side of the apartment, a bedroom occupies the southwest corner, a kitchen is located in the southeast corner and a living room is located in between. The first floor apartment has access to the small addition, which houses a sunroom and covered entry porch. Interior finishes in the main block include simple wood casings, possibly original, and baseboards. The floors are carpeted or tiled. The apartment in the ell includes a living room at its southern end, with a bedroom to the north and, in turn, a kitchen to the north of it. The rooms are connected by a hallway running along their west side. Interior finishes are original to the 1962 construction.

**Plat 31, Lot 32-A (2967 East Main Road)  
*Barn***

The ca. 1890, west-facing Barn is located to the northeast of the Main House. It is an example of an English-style, eaves-front bank barn, with a high drive (essentially an earthen ramp supported by fieldstone retaining walls) providing access to the first floor of the Barn via an entry in the west elevation. Doors on the gable ends (the north and south elevations) provide access to the basement. It is an approximately 40 foot x 50 foot, rectangular-plan, 2½-story building. The Barn is not timber-framed but, rather, balloon-framed and is comprised mostly of sawn

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members fastened together by nails. (The framing includes a queen-post truss system, described below.) The end-gable roof, which is sheathed in composite tile shingles, is finished with simple fascia boards, and rafter tails are visible. A large, square cupola with vents is located in the center of the roof ridge. The cupola's pyramidal roof, which has slightly flared eaves, is covered in composite tile shingles. The Barn's exterior walls are sheathed in wood shingles, most of which are unfinished; those on the south elevation have been stained gray. The building features simple wood cornerboards. The Barn rests on a mortared fieldstone foundation, parged in some locations. On the main (west) elevation, the foundation is quite tall, though partly obscured by the high drive.

The principal entry to the Barn is located in the center bay of the 3-bay west elevation, at the terminus of the high drive. It consists of a pair of large, sliding doors, constructed of narrow, vertical planks and hung on an exterior track. When fully open, the doors would have accommodated a carriage; indeed, a large turntable is located just inside this entry. Approximately 16 feet in diameter and supported by a massive, octagonal concrete pier (visible in the Barn's basement), the turntable would have rotated a carriage 180 degrees so that it could be driven head-first out of the Barn. An iron plate on the turntable, partially visible at the time of the survey, reads "E. ERNSTS SONS / TURN-TABLE / BUFFALO / NY."

A single door occupies the center bay of the second story of the west elevation. Sliding on an exterior track and constructed of beadboard, the door provides access to the haymow. A pair of beadboard doors in the gable peak of the south elevation are inoperable, but replicate the original haymow doors in this location. A beam projects from the roof's gable, just above the south elevation haymow doors. The Barn's basement may be accessed on either the north or south elevations. The 3-bay north elevation features a large, beadboard door, sliding on an exterior track and located in the center bay. The south elevation includes two modern garage doors and one pedestrian door, which slides on an exterior track. (Historic photos indicate that the modern garage doors occupy openings once filled with hinged or sliding doors.) Fenestration at the Barn consists of 6-over-6, double-hung, wood sash windows with simple trim. Many of the window openings are not original, but, rather, have been added by the current and previous owners in order to provide more light to the Barn interior. Their symmetrical placement and simple sash are in keeping with the building's character.

The interior of the Barn has been divided into separate rooms in the basement and at the first floor level. Temporary partition walls, running north-south and comprised of studs and plywood sheathing, divide the basement into three long, narrow spaces. According to the current owner, the easternmost space once housed the farm's cows. Floors in the basement are either dirt or concrete, and the walls have exposed framing. Some large beams, which still look essentially like tree trunks, are present, as are sawn joists, roughly 16 inches on center and with x-shaped cross braces. As noted above, a large, octagonal, concrete pier that supports the first-floor turntable is located in the basement, along the wall that divides the center and westernmost spaces.

Like the basement, the first floor has been divided into separate spaces with temporary, studs-and-plywood partition walls. One large room occupies the southern half of the first floor, while the northern half is home to two additional

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spaces. All are accessed off a small vestibule just inside the Barn's main entrance. This level of the Barn exhibits unfinished wood plank floors, exposed-framing walls, two large wood beams and sawn joists that are approximately 10 inches on center, with x-shaped cross braces. (Presumably, the joists were closely spaced in order to carry the weight of hay above.) A set of stairs, accessed via the sliding door on the north elevation, occupies the northeast corner of the building.

The second story of the Barn remains undivided by walls, and consists of one large space, open to the high, gabled ceiling. It has an unfinished, wood plank floor and its walls have exposed framing. The most striking element in the Barn's second story is its queen-post truss system. Two tie beams run east-west across the building. Two queen-posts, with angle braces, sit on top of each of the tie beams, supporting a purlin above. Each of the tie beams is supported by four trusses, angled toward the center of the Barn. Three vertical iron tie rods run through each of the tie beams, penetrate the floor and connect with the large beams at the first floor ceiling.

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**Photographic Information**

The information for numbers 1–5 below is the same for each photograph:

1. Borden Farm
2. Newport County, Rhode Island
3. Joanna Doherty, photographer
4. April 2006
5. Original negative at:      Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
    150 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island

The following information is specific to the indicated photograph:

6. View looking northeast toward Main House and Barn
7. Photograph #1
  
6. South elevation of Main House
7. Photograph #2
  
6. Detail of Main House, showing dormer on south elevation of ell
7. Photograph #3
  
6. Interior of Main House, showing staircase in entry hall
7. Photograph #4
  
6. Interior of Main House, showing marble fireplace in living room of Unit #2 (first floor, north apartment)
7. Photograph #5
  
6. View showing west façade and north elevation of Barn
7. Photograph #6
  
6. View showing north and east elevations of Barn
7. Photograph #7
  
6. Interior of barn, showing queen-post truss system at upper floor
7. Photograph #8

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6. View looking north toward Barn (left), Outbuilding #1 / Granary (center) and Outbuilding #2 / Shop (right), showing stone wall
7. Photograph #9
  
6. View showing south and west elevations of Outbuilding #2 / Shop
7. Photograph #10
  
6. View showing west and south elevations of Outbuilding #1 / Granary
7. Photograph #11
  
6. View showing west and south elevations of Farmhouse
7. Photograph #12

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**Statement of Significance**

Historically part of a 44-acre farmstead, the Borden Farm has been owned by generations of the same family since the early 1700s. The property documents important aspects of Portsmouth's settlement and agricultural history. The buildings (houses, barn, granary, shop and well house) are valuable examples of Rhode Island's rural architecture. Of particular note are the Second Empire-style Main House, built by William Borden around 1865, and the Barn, a rare surviving example of an English-style bank barn, built by John L. Borden around 1890. The grounds of the Borden Farm – comprised of open fields crossed by fieldstone walls – illustrate important land use patterns in Portsmouth through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Though now surrounded by suburban development and reduced in acreage, the Borden Farm is an important marker, documenting the appearance of East Main Road before its character changed from rural highway to suburban commuter path. As a tangible reminder of Portsmouth's transformation from an agricultural village to a dense, suburban town, the property is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of community planning and development. The property achieves significance under Criterion C for architecture because of the Main House, which illustrates the adaptation of the Second Empire style for rural use, the rare English-style Barn and the smaller outbuildings, which are typical examples of their types. The Borden Farm as a whole, and its individual buildings, retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Its period of significance is ca. 1865 to ca. 1900, from the date of construction of the Main House to the last period of expansion, encompassing the construction of all of the remaining, contributing buildings.

The second oldest community in Rhode Island, the town of Portsmouth was founded in 1638 by religious dissenters from Boston, including Anne Hutchinson, leader of the Antinomian movement. With assistance from Roger Williams in Providence, two of Hutchinson's followers, John Clarke and William Coddington, acquired a land grant from the Narragansett Indian sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi. The group, under a compact that incorporated a "body Politic," established a secular government and settled on the northern end of Aquidneck Island, near the present-day Town Pond, which at the time offered a good harbor and access to Mount Hope Bay. In 1639, a struggle for power led Clarke and Coddington to leave for the southern end of the island where, with a group of followers, they founded Newport.<sup>4</sup>

From the beginning, Portsmouth's economy was agriculture-based; the area offered excellent soil, and nearby Newport – as well as cities as far away as Boston – provided a market for produce and other farm products.<sup>5</sup> Richard M. Bayles' *History of Newport County, Rhode Island*, published in 1888, noted that Portsmouth's soil "yields abundant crops" and is therefore "almost entirely under cultivation." Principal crops included potatoes, corn, oats, barley, hay, peaches, strawberries, pears and garden vegetables.<sup>6</sup> A *Gazetteer of the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island*, published

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Nebiker, *Historic and Archaeological Resources of Portsmouth, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report* (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, 1979), 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Nebiker, 8-9.

<sup>6</sup> Richard M. Bayles, *History of Newport County, Rhode Island* (New York: L.E. Preston & Co., 1888), 615.

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earlier in the century, commented on Portsmouth's dairy cows and sheep, and was particularly impressed with the town's apple orchards.<sup>7</sup> With little waterpower, Portsmouth saw few mills and industry was limited to the production of fish oil and fertilizer, sporadic coal mining and a copper works. Portsmouth remained largely agricultural well into the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup>

Among the earliest European settlers of Portsmouth was Richard Borden (ca. 1601-1671), described by one source as "a man of means, a surveyor, ...[who] acquired large tracts of land in Rhode Island and New Jersey."<sup>9</sup> Born in Kent, England ca. 1601, Richard Borden came to New England with his wife, Joan Fowle, and two children around 1635. A Quaker, he left Boston for Portsmouth in 1638 and was admitted as a freeman. The following year he was appointed, along with three others, to survey lands in Portsmouth. Richard Borden also reportedly served as Assistant, General Treasurer and Commissioner for the settlement.<sup>10</sup> Genealogical research undertaken for this nomination was limited, but it is presumed that the Bordens who built and lived at the Borden Farm on East Main Road are descended from this early settler of Portsmouth.

The earliest Europeans in Portsmouth located in an area to the north of present-day Sprague Street, stretching from the eastern shore to present-day West Main Road. Settlers were granted small house lots in this village center and plowing land in outlying areas; later, many chose to live on their farms. (Richard Borden's holdings reflect this pattern. He owned a few small tracts of land near the present-day Town Pond as well as a large parcel at Sandy Point.) A network of roads was in place by 1717, including "The King's High Rode on the East Side of the Island" and "The King's High Rode on the West Side of the Island" – present-day East and West Main roads.<sup>11</sup>

Settlement remained densest at the north end of the island into the 1700s, when the Town Pond began to silt in. Subsequently, in 1728 a new village called Newtown was surveyed and platted to the south, running along the spine of East Main Road from present-day Child Street south to present-day Church Lane. The streets of Newtown were laid out around 1740, although one source indicates that many of the roads quickly became overgrown or overtaken by farmers seeking to extend their property boundaries. After Newtown was laid out, the original settlement was essentially abandoned; nonetheless, the new village remained sparsely settled for some time, with most houses concentrated along East Main Road.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John C. Pease and John M. Niles, *A Gazetteer of the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1991 [reprint; originally Hartford, CT: William S. Marsh, 1819]), 307, 350-351.

<sup>8</sup> Nebiker, 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> Wilfred Harold Munro, *Memorial Encyclopedia of the State of Rhode Island* (New York: The American Historical Society, 1916), 298.

<sup>10</sup> Munro 1916, 298; Wilfred Harold Munro, *Memorial Encyclopedia of the State of Rhode Island* (New York: The American Historical Society, 1928), 285-286; Edward H. West, *History of Portsmouth, 1638-1936* (No publisher, no date [ca. 1936]), 20, 41.

<sup>11</sup> Nebiker, 3-4; West 1936, 7, 14; Edward H. West, "The Lands of Portsmouth, RI, and a Glimpse of Its People," *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections* 25, no. 3 (July 1932): 70.

<sup>12</sup> Nebiker, 5-6; John T. Pierce, *Historical Tracts of the Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island* (Portsmouth, RI: Hamilton Printing Company, 1991), 34.

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A map of early land grants indicates that a man named Joseph Borden was among those granted land in Newtown when the area was first platted. His parcel was on the east side of East Main Road, in the location of the present-day Borden Farm.<sup>13</sup> An 1850 map shows numerous houses clustered on the west side of East Main Road in Newtown, with just a few across the street, occupying relatively large lots.<sup>14</sup> Though none of the buildings is labeled, research indicates that one was occupied by Joseph Borden's widowed daughter-in-law, Sarah (age 84), and three of her adult children – William (43), Isaac (62) and Anna (54) – along with William's wife, Mahala (38) and their daughter, Catherine (16). William was a farmer with real estate valued at \$3,000, while his brother Isaac had real estate valued at \$3,500. The agricultural schedule from the 1850 state census shows that William owned a variety of livestock – 1 horse, 4 milch cows, 2 oxen and 13 swine – and that he produced Indian corn, potatoes, barley and hay, as well as market produce worth \$100, on 13 acres of improved land.<sup>15</sup>

The earliest map of Portsmouth to show a labeled house in the vicinity of the Borden Farm dates from 1860. The house, labeled simply "Borden," appears to be a little north of the current Main House, though the map may not be precise. Nonetheless, since the architectural style of the Main House suggests a later construction date, it is reasonable to assume that this was an earlier building on the Borden Farm property. By this time, William and Mahala's family had expanded, and included an 8-year-old son, John L. and a 6-month-old grandson, William B. Mott (the son of Catherine, who had died shortly after childbirth). The household also included a domestic servant (18-year-old Mary Sullivan, born in Ireland) and a farmer (24-year-old Horatio Meticam, born in Massachusetts). The 1860 state census includes limited information about the farm's output, though it is clear that onions, corn, hay, eggs and poultry were produced.<sup>16</sup> Notably, William's real estate was valued at \$3,500 while the value of Isaac's had increased to \$17,000, suggesting he may have purchased additional property, either near the Borden Farm or elsewhere. (Tax records from 1877 make it clear that each brother ultimately owned multiple parcels. In 1877, Isaac Borden's heirs owned six parcels, totaling almost 200 acres, while William Borden owned two properties – a 44-acre "homestead" [presumably the Borden Farm] and 16 acres of "neck land.")<sup>17</sup> Even more impressive was the value of William and Isaac's personal estates. William had \$7,000 in assets, while Isaac had an astounding \$40,000. Both men are listed as farmers, and it is not known where or how they acquired such wealth.<sup>18</sup>

Based on its architectural style, it is likely that the **Main House** at the Borden Farm was built at some point in the 1860s. The Second Empire style, though occurring in some areas as early as the 1850s, did not reach its peak in popularity until the following decade.<sup>19</sup> This was probably particularly true in less urban areas, such as Portsmouth,

<sup>13</sup> West 1932.

<sup>14</sup> Henry F. Walling, *Map of Newport County, Rhode Island*, 1850, on file, Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Providence, RI.

<sup>15</sup> Rhode Island State Census, 1850; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census for Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1850*; Vital Records of Rhode Island (Birth, Marriage and Death Records), on file, Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Providence, RI.

<sup>16</sup> Rhode Island State Census, 1860; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census for Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1860*; Vital Records of Rhode Island.

<sup>17</sup> Tax Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1877, available at [www.rootsweb.com/~rinewpor/](http://www.rootsweb.com/~rinewpor/)

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1860.

<sup>19</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 241-242.

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which were often slower to embrace new stylistic trends. It is possible that the house was built after the death of Sarah Borden in 1862. Her will is brief and not very detailed; most of her estate went to her son, William, though it is not known whether this included any assets that could have been used to construct a new home.<sup>20</sup> Regardless, it is clear from the 1860 census that William and his brother, Isaac, had become very successful, with substantial assets and a domestic servant and farm laborer in their employ. It seems likely that either could have afforded to construct a new residence, large enough to house themselves and staff, and in the latest style. Isaac would have been 75 years old at the time of his mother's death, and unlikely to construct a new home. William, however, would have been in his mid-50s and may have been planning for the future welfare of his young son, John, and grandson, William B. Mott.

Documentary research supports the argument that the Main House was built by William Borden in the 1860s. The 1870 Beers atlas shows a building, labeled "W. Boyden [sic]" in the location of the present-day Borden Farm, occupying a lot that stretches all the way back to present-day Water Street.<sup>21</sup> The Federal census from that year shows William Borden's real estate was valued at \$15,000 (up from \$3,500 in 1860), while his personal assets were estimated to be \$4,000. In addition to William and his wife, Mahala, the household included their grandson, William B. Mott (age 10); their son-in-law, John C. Mott (widowed upon Catherine's death); and a 26-year-old woman named Ruth J. Mott (presumably John Mott's wife). William's sister, Anna, had died in 1861, and his brother, Isaac, in 1870. While the 1870 census does not show John L. Borden in the household, he was there, working on the farm, as of 1875 and 1880. The family continued to employ household servants and farm laborers.<sup>22</sup>

Members of the Borden family witnessed enormous change in Portsmouth over the course of several decades on East Main Road. The Old Colony and Newport Railroad opened along the west shore of Portsmouth in 1864, and would operate passenger service until 1937.<sup>23</sup> Newtown, a recently-platted village when Joseph Borden, William's grandfather, was granted land there, became a thriving town center. By 1870, the village boasted a mix of residential and commercial development, including a paint shop, several stores, a post office and a market, as well as two churches.<sup>24</sup> It is in this context that the Main House at the Borden farm was constructed. According to the town survey by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, numerous residences were built in Portsmouth during the Late Victorian period, including examples of the Queen Anne, Stick and Shingle styles, as well as vernacular buildings. Relatively few of the homes from the period, however, could be characterized as Second Empire style; besides the Main House at the Borden Farm, the survey lists only a handful of other residences with a mansard roof, bracketed eaves and dormer windows, all hallmarks of the style. In addition to its architectural

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Borden, Last Will and Testament, Probate Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Book 5, p. 267.

<sup>21</sup> The footprint does not match that of the house exactly, but the map's depiction of buildings may not have been precise. D.G. Beers, *Atlas of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Philadelphia: D.G. Beers and Co., 1870).

<sup>22</sup> Rhode Island State Census, 1875; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census for Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1870; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census for Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1880.

<sup>23</sup> Nebiker, 9-10.

<sup>24</sup> Beers 1870.

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details, the form and massing of the Main House – with its 2½-story, 3-bay-by-3-bay main block and slightly offset ell – make it a typical example of the style, as interpreted in a rural setting.<sup>25</sup>

The Borden Farm remained in the hands of William Borden until his death in 1885. A map from that year shows the Farm, with a building footprint just like that of the Main House, labeled "Wm. Borden." The map indicates that William also owned a large property across the street, which is shown to belong to J. Thomas on the 1870 atlas.<sup>26</sup> He had purchased this property at some point before 1883, when tax records show him in possession of the 44-acre homestead, valued at \$11,000; 16-acres of "Neck land," worth \$500; and the Thomas farm, consisting of 38 acres and valued at \$4,500.<sup>27</sup> Upon his death, William Borden's property was divided among his heirs. His grandson, William B. Mott, received the "Joseph Thomas Farm on East Main Road" (the 38-acre property across the street from the Borden Farm), as well as half of the "Barrington Anthony farm" in Portsmouth (exact location unknown) and a house in Fall River, Massachusetts. The Borden Farm was left to his wife, Mahala, "for and during her natural life," at which point it would pass to their son, John.<sup>28</sup>

John L. Borden married Ruth Anna Barker on December 16, 1886, not long after his father's death. Ruth was the daughter of Christopher and Ruth Barker, and her father and grandfather were in the menhaden oil business. The ceremony took place at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, which had been built at the southern end of Newtown in 1833, suggesting that, unlike his ancestors, John Borden was not Quaker. Bride and groom were relatively old for their first marriage – John was 35 and Ruth was 31 – and they never had children. The Borden Farm appears to have been occupied by far fewer people than in William Borden's day. John's mother, Mahala, died in 1895. The 1910 Federal Census shows just John, whose occupation is given as farmer, and Ruth in the house.<sup>29</sup> John L. Borden was an active member of the Portsmouth community, serving as Chair of Portsmouth's Board of Assessors for many years. He was also among the first Trustees of the Portsmouth Free Public Library Association, which was established in 1897. He served as President for 26 years. In 1898, he donated a lot of land to the Library Association so that they could construct a building. The Library was dedicated on December 29, 1898 and still stands. It has been enlarged several times, including in 1920 and 1931, with additional support from John L. Borden.<sup>30</sup>

John L. Borden made a number of significant additions to the Borden Farm in the late 1800s, suggesting that the farm was quite active. An 1895 map shows the Main House along with three outbuildings. One of these seems to be the large, ca. 1890 Barn. There are also two other, smaller outbuildings, one of which is in roughly the location of Outbuilding #2 / Shop. (The other is no longer extant.) The Barn and the Shop reflect longstanding agricultural

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<sup>25</sup> McAlester, 241-242.

<sup>26</sup> Beers 1870; L.J. Richards, *Atlas of Newport, Rhode Island* (Springfield, MA: L.J. Richards and Co., 1885).

<sup>27</sup> Tax Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1883, available at [www.rootsweb.com/~rinewpor/](http://www.rootsweb.com/~rinewpor/)

<sup>28</sup> William Borden, Last Will and Testament, Probate Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Book 7, page 307.

<sup>29</sup> Bayles, 702; Nebiker, 9; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census for Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1910; Vital Records of Rhode Island.

<sup>30</sup> James E. Garman, *A History of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1638-1978* (Newport, RI: Franklin Printing House, 1978), 32, 46; Portsmouth Free Public Library, *Library News* 47 (Summer 2005).

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traditions as well as new trends in farm architecture. Well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, New England barn builders drew heavily on English design, constructing end-gable, rectangular buildings to house their animals, store animals' food and provide space for farm activities, such as threshing grain. Modifications to this familiar design included the substitution of sliding barn doors for hinged entries as well as the addition of windows for light and cupolas for ventilation, all seen at the Barn at the Borden Farm. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, many barns were being built with basements to collect manure or house animals. Some were built into hillsides or, like at the Borden Farm, a high drive was constructed to provide access to the Barn's raised first floor. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a growing interest in "scientific farming" encouraged the creation of multi-story barns, like that at the Borden Farm, which allowed for a greater separation of functions and activities. For example, cows might be housed on the main floor, with hay stored above and manure collected below. Smaller, specialized outbuildings were also constructed, such as the Shop at the Borden Farm. It was especially important to segregate activities that required a stove, such as blacksmithing, from other farm buildings, as they carried a risk of fire. Shops often had large doors, either hinged or on sliders, that allowed horses to enter and be shod inside. The Shop at the Borden Farm, with its 1½-story, front-gable form; windows for light; pipe chimney for ventilation; and sliding door, is typical of its type.<sup>31</sup>

By 1895, Newtown boasted a school, a Masonic hall, an International Order of Oddfellows hall, a bakery, a blacksmith shop and a store.<sup>32</sup> The village landscape would change significantly in 1898, when an electric trolley began running along East Main Road, with tracks on the east side of the street, right in front of the Borden Farm. Providing service between Newport and Fall River, Massachusetts, the line operated until 1925. A powerhouse, which supplied electricity for the trolleys, was located at the foot of present-day Power Street, just south of the Borden Farm. A car barn was located on East Main Road, immediately to the north of the farm.<sup>33</sup>

During this period, John L. Borden continued to expand and improve upon the Borden Farm. An atlas from 1907 shows that the circulation system – with a circular entry drive and curving road leading to the Barn and beyond – was in place by this time. There were three or four small outbuildings, in addition to those in place by 1895, located behind the Main House. Among these were a large greenhouse and a tall, wood-shingled, gravity-fed water tower, neither of which survives today.<sup>34</sup> One of the outbuildings on the 1907 atlas seems to be in the location of **Outbuilding #1 / Granary**. It seems likely that the **Well House** also dates from this period, though it does not appear on the map; it could have been considered too unimportant to include. Like the Shop, the Granary, the Well House and the other outbuildings that do not survive reflect the trend toward specialization in agricultural architecture.

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas Durant Visser, *Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 34-39, 40-48, 61, 83-86, 152-155.

<sup>32</sup> Everts and Richards, *New Topographical Atlas of Surveys – Southern Rhode Island, Comprising the Counties of Newport, Bristol, Kent and Washington* (Philadelphia: Everts and Richards, 1895).

<sup>33</sup> James E. Garman, *Traveling Around Aquidneck Island, 1890-1930 (How We Got Around)* (Portsmouth, RI: Hamilton Printing, 1996), 123; Nebiker, 10; Pierce, 39; L.J. Richards, *Atlas of the City of Newport and the Towns of Middletown and Portsmouth, Rhode Island* (Springfield, MA: L.J. Richards and Co., 1907).

<sup>34</sup> "Aquadneck's Towers," *East Bay Window*, 16-17 February 1972.

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Like the one at the Borden Farm, granaries were typically built on corner posts in order to encourage air circulation. In the second half of the nineteenth century, granaries to store oats for work horses became common; they were often 1½-stories tall, with a pass door, loft door and projecting beam on one of the gable ends, like the granary at the Borden Farm.<sup>35</sup> In addition to the outbuildings, the Farmhouse had been constructed to the east of the Main House, along with two nearby outbuildings, by 1907.<sup>36</sup> According to the current owner of the property, the Farmhouse was historically referred to as the “gardener’s cottage;” presumably it housed staff during John L. Borden’s tenure. A relatively simple, Victorian Vernacular-style building, it may have provided separate living quarters for a staff member and his family, on site but separate from the main house. A map from 1921 shows the Borden Farm unchanged since 1907, no buildings having been constructed in the interim.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the 1907 and 1921 maps indicate that John L. Borden also owned property immediately to the north, which included an eighteenth-century Cape, a large barn and another outbuilding. In 1967, the house was sold and moved to Middletown; it is not known whether it still stands there. The barn and other outbuilding do not survive.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout this period, Portsmouth Directories and census records give John L. Borden’s occupation as a farmer. It seems clear that his was a working farm, and that it served as the primary residence and provided a significant source of income for generations of Bordens. It is worth noting, however, that in Portsmouth in the late 1800s and early 1900s, several “gentleman’s farms” were established, in some cases by prominent Newport families such as the Vanderbilts. Gentleman’s farms, which employed extensive staff, supplied their owners with fresh food and provided a place to raise livestock for competition. The grounds of such farms might exhibit elaborate landscaping, and typically included specialized outbuildings, such as a blacksmith shop, pump house and carriage house, reflecting the wealth of the owners, their desire for self-sufficiency and their interest in modern “scientific” methods of farming.<sup>39</sup> Borden Farm differed from these gentleman’s farms in important respects, as noted above. John L. Borden’s wealth, however, did allow him to expand and improve upon his family farm in ways that are similar to the gentleman’s farms, constructing numerous specialized outbuildings as well as a cottage for his staff.

It is not known precisely when John Borden’s wife, Ruth, died. She is listed in the 1921-1922 Portsmouth Directory, but was gone by 1930, when the census lists John L. Borden, a 78-year-old widow living at his farm with Elizabeth Delmage, a 65-year-old, widowed servant who emigrated from England in 1900.<sup>40</sup> John L. Borden died just three years later, with no immediate family. Characterized as “a frugal man” and “never a man to display his wealth,” John L. Borden had a substantial estate at the time of his death.<sup>41</sup> His real estate was divided among friends and

<sup>35</sup> Visser 125-128.

<sup>36</sup> Richards 1907.

<sup>37</sup> Sanborn Map Company, *Atlas of Newport County* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1921).

<sup>38</sup> John G. Borden, personal communication, April 2006; “207-Year-Old Cottage to Be Moved 8 Miles,” *Newport Daily News*, 17 October 1967.

<sup>39</sup> James E. Garman, *A History of the Gentlemen’s Farms of Portsmouth, RI (Glen Farm, Sandy Point Farm, Oakland Farm and Others)* (Portsmouth, RI: Hamilton Printing, 2003), v-vi, 6, 43; Nebiker, 10-11.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census for Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1930*.

<sup>41</sup> James E. Garman, *A History of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1638-1978* (Newport, RI: Franklin Printing House, 1978), 46.

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relatives, while most of his other assets – worth over \$600,000 – were left to a few charitable causes. The Portsmouth Free Public Library received \$50,000, St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church received \$5,000 and the Cemetery Fund of the Monthly Meeting of Friends of Portsmouth received \$200. Newport Hospital received by far the largest donation – about \$500,000, which was used to build a large addition, called the Borden Building, in 1936.<sup>42</sup>

John L. Borden's real estate included more than the Borden Farm. In his will, he left his "so-called Sanford land and my Swamp Land both parcels located on...Water St. and my Neck Land so-called situate on Anthony Road" to William Penn Macomber. John Borden Anthony (relationship unknown) received "my Thomas Place so-called, containing one-half acre with a dwelling house thereon," located across from the Borden Farm – likely a portion of the property left by John's father William to his grandson, William B. Mott, in 1885. The Farm (including the property to the north, which included the eighteenth-century Cape) was left to a distant relative – Richard C. Borden, the grandson of John L. Borden's first cousin once removed, Alonzo. Orphaned after his father Raymond's death, in 1927, and his mother Emma's death, in 1930, Richard and his younger brother, Gerald, lived with relatives in Illinois.<sup>43</sup> A 1942 newspaper article says "As the story goes, Richard was made the heir...because he happened to bear the name of the first Borden who settled in Portsmouth over 300 years ago."<sup>44</sup>

Alonzo Borden was to hold the property in trust for his grandson Richard, just 14 at the time of John L. Borden's death, until Richard reached the age of 25. At that time, Richard would inherit the property, along with a maintenance fund of \$25,000. (If the property ever left the Borden family, the remainder of the maintenance fund was to go to the town for "the comfort and well being of the poor and needy people of said Town of Portsmouth.") Finally, John L. Borden stipulated "that my present farmer, George H. Brimmer have the privilege of remaining on the said Homestead Farm, for the term of one year from the date of my death, in his present capacity, and with not less than his present wage, if he so desires." Perhaps not surprisingly, given the size of the estate, John L. Borden's will was contested by, among others, nieces and nephews of his deceased parents. All appeals were withdrawn and discontinued in 1934, however.<sup>45</sup>

An inventory taken soon after John L. Borden's death provides some insight into the state of the farm in the early twentieth century. In addition to the Main House, ten structures are listed: the barn, a carriage shed, a shop, a toolhouse, a blacksmith shop, a paint shop, a water tower, a greenhouse, a corn crib and an "old barn." (Outbuilding #1 / Granary may be the "old barn," while Outbuilding #2 / Shop could be either the shop, blacksmith shop or paint shop.) The contents of the barn and other outbuildings were valued at about \$1,300 and included two cows, one horse, one pig, fifteen hens and thirty chickens. The inventory of the Main House is, unfortunately, not explicit

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<sup>42</sup> Howard S. Browne, M.D., *The Newport Hospital: A History, 1873-1973* (Providence, RI: Mowbray Company, Publishers, 1976), 63; "Newport Hospital is to Receive \$500,000," *Newport Mercury and Weekly News*, 1 September 1933.

<sup>43</sup> Probate Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Book 14, page 62.

<sup>44</sup> "Auctioneer 'Jim' Hall Has Big Day at Borden Estate in Portsmouth," *Providence Journal*, 1942 (exact date unknown), clipping in the collection of Nancy Lynn Borden Weida.

<sup>45</sup> Probate Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Book 13, pages 150G-150H1.

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about the configuration and uses of each of the building's many rooms, though it is clear there was a parlor, a living room, a dining room, a library and a den, as well as four bedrooms and space on the third floor. A basement kitchen and an "upstairs kitchen" are both mentioned, likely occupying the ell. The contents of the house were valued at \$1,500; notable items included a dining room clock worth \$75, \$36 worth of books and a piano in the parlor, estimated to be worth \$35.<sup>46</sup>

Alonzo Borden, John L. Borden's first cousin once removed, was a farmer who lived in Portsmouth his entire life. He died in 1936 while at the Borden Farm; a newspaper account says that he "dropped dead while picking apples." Alonzo's closest kin were his two grandsons (Richard, who was slated to inherit the farm, and Gerald), and two siblings.<sup>47</sup> Alonzo died intestate, and the property that he had held in trust for his grandson, Richard, became held by Harrison Fahrnkopf of Illinois, Richard's maternal uncle.<sup>48</sup> Aerial photographs taken in 1939 and 1941 show that the fields at the farm were plowed, suggesting that the property was being cared for during this period.<sup>49</sup> Although Richard C. Borden did not turn 25 until 1944, a directory from 1941 indicates that he was living at the property at that time. In 1942, Richard sold the contents of the house – "everything but the front stairway carpet" – at an auction, along with "engines, lathes, shafts, belting and other articles" in the blacksmith shop, and "butter churns, a mail box and a sitting-up bath tub" in the pump house.<sup>50</sup>

After taking possession of the farm, Richard Borden ran it as an inn / tea room called The Fair Oaks. A postcard advertisement from the period noted the large, airy rooms with modern conveniences such as outlets for electric razors, and "restful lawn furniture...under towering shade trees." A photograph shows the exterior of the house and barn looking much as they do today, and a pair of large trees at the street, which are no longer extant. It remained an inn until at least 1948, when the Portsmouth directory lists Richard Borden – now married to Marian – living at the property, which is identified as a "tourist home." Soon after, Richard Borden converted the Main House into apartments. It was at this time that the interior was divided into six units.

By 1959, Richard Borden had joined the Portsmouth Police Department. Changes at the farm during the 1960s include the construction of **Outbuilding #3 / Shooting Range** (a portion of which remains), the construction of an addition to the Farmhouse in 1962, and the demolition of some of the historic outbuildings, which had fallen into disrepair (some others, including the water pumping tower, were demolished in the 1980s).<sup>51</sup> Richard and Marian Borden divorced in 1964, precipitating some additional changes. Most notably, the property was divided into two lots; Richard retained the buildings with about six acres of land, while Marian received about 33 acres to the north, south and east of Richard's property. (Marian's parcel included the eighteenth-century Cape and its barn.) Tax

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<sup>46</sup> Probate Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Book 13, pages 150M-150U.

<sup>47</sup> "Alonzo Borden Dies in Portsmouth," *Newport Mercury and Weekly News*, 30 October 1936.

<sup>48</sup> Probate Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Book 14, pages 60-62.

<sup>49</sup> Rhode Island Department of Statewide Planning, aerial photographs of the State of Rhode Island, 1939 and 1941.

<sup>50</sup> "Auctioneer 'Jim' Hall..."

<sup>51</sup> Building Inspection Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island.

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records indicate that Marian had sold her 33 acres by 1966.<sup>52</sup> Soon after, the developer moved the historic Cape to Middletown, demolished its barn and constructed a housing subdivision. Also subsequent to the divorce, the Farmhouse, where Richard and Marian had lived, was divided into apartments.

During this period, Portsmouth was becoming increasingly suburbanized and experiencing dramatic growth. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the town's population remained relatively steady, hovering between about 2,400 and 3,000 residents. Between 1936 and 1950, however, the population increased from 3,603 to 6,578 and by 1965 it was well over 10,000.<sup>53</sup> Changing land use around the Borden Farm reflects the town's growth; by 1970, subdivisions had been built to the north, south and east of the Farm.<sup>54</sup> The construction of these subdivisions, along with a mid-1980s shopping plaza located immediately to the north of the Barn, reflects the changing landscape of Portsmouth in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Richard C. Borden had two children, Nancy Lynn Borden Weida and John G. Borden. He died in 1974, and the Borden Farm is now owned by his third wife, Cecelia, his son, John G., and John's wife, Susan. They continue to rent out apartments in the Main House and Farmhouse, having made no significant changes to the interiors since they were divided around 1948 and 1964, respectively. The Barn, which has been divided with temporary partition walls, and the two small outbuildings are also rented out, mostly as storage spaces. The grounds look much as they have for decades, with the historic circulation system, numerous stone walls, a variety of mature trees and some fruit trees in the location of a former orchard.

Despite some changes both within and outside of its boundaries, the Borden Farm exhibits a remarkable sense of continuity. The land has been in the Borden family since the area was platted in the early 1700s, as Portsmouth's "Newtown." The Main House has changed little, particularly on the exterior, since ca. 1865, when it was built by William Borden. Improvements made by William's son, John L. Borden, also survive – namely, the Main Barn, Outbuilding #1 / Granary, Outbuilding #2 / Store, the Well House and the Farmhouse. The grounds, too, have changed surprisingly little since the turn of the twentieth century, with the historic circulation system, numerous stone walls and even some historic vegetation still in place. The Borden Farm provides tangible evidence of Portsmouth's agrarian past, and is a notable survivor in the midst of a rapidly changing landscape.

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<sup>52</sup> Tax Records, Town of Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1964 and 1966.

<sup>53</sup> William M. Ferraro, *Lives of Quiet Desperation; Community and Polity in New England Over Four Centuries – The Cases of Portsmouth and Foster, Rhode Island* (unpublished dissertation, Brown University, 1991), 394, 521.

<sup>54</sup> Rhode Island Department of Statewide Planning, aerial photographs of the State of Rhode Island, 1970.

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the Borden Farm are shown on the attached sketch map. The nominated property encompasses 6.22 acres and includes lots 32 and 32-A on Assessor's Plat 31.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the nominated property encompass all of the land that was once part of the Borden Farm and which remains in the possession of the Borden family. Once consisting of 44 acres, the farm was divided in two in 1962. The northern parcel is now home to a commercial plaza, and is not including within the property boundaries. The 6.22-acre southern parcel (since divided into two lots, both of which are held by members of the Borden family) contains all of the surviving buildings associated with the farm.

