

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 6 1976

DATE ENTERED JUN 7 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Topsfield Town Common District

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATIONSTREET & NUMBER *High & Main St*
North Common, East Common, South Common, West Common, High St. Ext.,
Washington, Main, High, Howlett Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Topsfield

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Sixth

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE
025COUNTY
EssexCODE
009**3 CLASSIFICATION**

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTYNAME
Multiple

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Topsfield

VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts 01983

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Essex County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

32 Federal Street

CITY, TOWN

Salem

STATE

Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYSTITLE
Inventory of the Historic Assets of the Commonwealth
HABS (MASS-214, Parson Capen House)DATE
1973

1935, -36

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS
Massachusetts Historical Commission; Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Boston; Washington, DC

STATE

Massachusetts 02108

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE #9 in 1900

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Topsfield Town Common District is located in the center of the town of Topsfield. To the south of the district is the commercial area of town and on the other edges of the Common are scattered residential areas. The district encompasses the only remaining common land of the township and includes ten religious, civic and residential buildings. The area has well-cared for trees, shrubs and monuments, and has no intrusions or drastic alterations which detract from its appearance. The Topsfield Town Common is the core of the local historic district known as the Topsfield Common Historic District, established in 1974.

Among the buildings facing south onto the Common is the residence at the corner of Washington and Main Streets (#1). It is two stories and has a ridge roof pierced by two brick chimneys. The house is five bays wide and has a center entrance flanked by sidelights and surmounted by a large entablature. Windows have six-over-six lights, and the clapboard house is painted pale yellow. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were side covered porches on the south and east sides of the building.

The Emerson-Jordan House (#2) was built in 1808 and is three stories with a hip roof. It is white clapboard except for the westerly end which is red brick. There is a two-story ell attached to the east side of the house and a barn to the rear. The house is five bays wide and the center entrance has a fanlight and sidelights. Windows have black louvered shutters and two-over-two lights. A porch supported by four square posts extends the length of the facade, and four brick chimneys rise from each corner of the roof. The interior contains paneling by the noted Salem builder Samuel McIntire.

The Parish House (#3) was built in 1853 by Jacob Foster and John H. Potter. Potter, who had considerable local distinction as a skilled builder, also constructed the Town Hall. The Parish House is a two-story, white clapboard, ridge roof building with its gable end facing the street. The focal point of the facade is a slightly projecting three-bay section divided by three pilasters and surmounted by a pediment. The entrance is centered on the first floor of this section and flanked by a window on either side. On the second floor in each of the outer bays there are windows situated beneath arched moldings. The building is four bays deep and has a deep cornice. The original steeple was removed in the early twentieth century.

The oldest building in the district is the Parson Capen House (#4) (NHL) which was built in 1683 and reveals influences of sixteenth and seventeenth century English architecture. The two-story house has a steeply pitched roof with a pilastered brick center chimney. The building is covered with dark stained red oak clapboards and the roof is finished with wooden handdriven shingles, one to three feet long. There are overhangs with pendants on the front and gable ends. The parson Capen House was carefully restored in 1913 under the direction of George Francis Dow.

On the east side of the Common, facing west, is the Emerson Center (#5), a Federal mansion built in 1814. The two-story, white clapboard building is five bays wide and has a center entrance. The door has an elliptical fanlight and sidelights and is situated under a portico supported by slender columns. Windows have black shutters and six-over-six lights. At each corner of the hip roof is a tall brick chimney, and there is a balustrade around the edge of the roof. On the north side of the house is a red brick ell.

continued

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Topsfield Town Common District is significant as the earliest area of settlement in the town and as the center of town activity for three centuries. The district is also a showcase of architectural styles, from the Parson Capen House of 1683 to the Town Library of 1935.

Before recorded history the area now known as the Topsfield Common was roamed by Chief Massonment and his braves from the Aagauman Tribe. In 1630 English settlers pushed up the Ipswich River and established themselves in the area, which they named "New Meadows." In 1650 the Great and General Court gave the residents of New Meadows "ye power to be a towne" and approved the name Topsfield, after Toppesfield, England, the ancestral home of many prominent town residents.

Between 1630 and 1650 a training field was set up on what is now the Common and surrounding land. This field was used for training militia in early colonial times, and local Minute Men gathered here before departing for Concord and Lexington and later Bunker Hill. Troops also trained on the Common and at the Town Hall (#7) during both World Wars I and II. The American Legion headquarters were in the Town Hall for many years, and a monument stands across from the library as a memorial to those who fought in the Civil War.

The first meeting house in Topsfield was built in 1703 on the site of the present Congregational Church (#8), and a second meeting house was erected there in 1759-60. In 1842 this building was moved to Salem where it was rebuilt on Boston Street and used as a tannery. Town meetings and political rallies were later held in the downstairs hall (Union Hall) of the Parish House (#3) from 1853 to 1873 and in the Town Hall (#7) from 1873 until 1952 when space proved inadequate. Union Hall and the Town Hall were also used for dramatic presentations, concerts and lectures. After 1952 the Town Hall meeting room fell into a state of disrepair, but it was extensively renovated in 1975 as a Bicentennial Auditorium and once again serves as a center for educational and cultural events. Town offices and police headquarters are still located in the Town Hall, and the room to the left of the main entrance has been in continuous use as the town treasurer's office since 1873.

The house at the corner of Main and Washington Streets (#1) was built in 1832 and operated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Augustus W. Smith as a summer hotel. The house was known for some time as Smith's Tavern and is used as a residence today.

The Emerson-Jordan House (#2) and the Emerson Center (#5) were both associated with Topsfield's well-known Emerson family. Reverend John Emerson first built his house in 1733 and part of it was retained in the structure of the larger house built in 1808 by William Emerson. The Emerson Center was built in 1814 by Joseph Emerson and later belonged to his daughter Harriet Jane Emerson and her husband Charles H. Holmes. Holmes was the son of John Holmes, the first U.S. Senator from Maine. The house was sold to the Congregational

continued

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Dow, George Francis. History of Topsfield. 1940.
 Dupouy, Deborah. The Parson Capen House. 1970.
Topsfield Historical Society Collections. Vols. 1-31. (1895-1951)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 13.1 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	19	340200	4722920	B	19	340200	4722440
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	19	339740	4722760	D			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The district encompasses the property lines for buildings 1-6, plus 9 and 10, connecting back property lines by crossing Main Street, Howlett Street, and High Street. From the southwesterly corner of lot 6 the district boundary runs along the submerged School Brook to High Street Extension, thence along the center of that street to Washington Street, and thence easterly along that street to where the boundary of lot 1 begins.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Judy D. Dobbs, National Register Editor, and Curtis Campbell, Topsfield Historical Commission

DATE

April 1, 1976

Massachusetts Historical Commission

TELEPHONE

617-727-8470

STREET & NUMBER

294 Washington Street

STATE

Massachusetts 02108

CITY OR TOWN

Boston

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Elizabeth Reed Amason

TITLE

Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission

DATE

3/30/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

6/7/96

ATTENDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUPERVISOR
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

5-28-76

RBR for WJM 5/28/76

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED APR 6 1976

DATE ENTERED JUN 7 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 & 8 PAGE 1

#7:

The Town Library (#6) was built in 1935, using basic plans prepared in 1912 by Harold Field Kellogg. The brick classical revival building is two stories and has a two-story projecting portico supported by four columns. A large ell to the rear was added in 1974.

The Town Hall (#7) was built in 1873 by Topsfield's leading carpenter John H. Potter, using plans drawn up by Boston architects Lord and Fuller. The building exhibits characteristics of the Chateausque and Stick styles. It is covered with white clapboards and measures 80 by 46 feet. The facade is five bays wide and the side elevations are six bays deep. The rear portion of the Town Hall is two stories and the front quarter contains a third floor within the steep hip roof section. The central door stands under a 12-foot wide porch supported by paired columns and a clock tower rises above it.

Next to the Town Hall is the Congregational Church (#8), built in 1842 under contract to Mark R. Jewett of Rowley, Massachusetts. The Greek Revival church has two Ionic columns in antis and on its square tower is a tall spire and four pinnacles.

At the southeast corner of the district are two facing residences which serve as an approach to the district. The residence at 11 High Street (#9) is a white clapboard structure which was originally part of a larger house built in 1756. This portion of the house was moved from Main Street around 1900. The residence at 14 High Street (#10) is a white shingled early twentieth century structure with an attached garage at the east end.

#8:

Church on June 1, 1886, and served as a parsonage and now as offices and classrooms by the church.

The Parish House (#3) of the Congregational Church was originally built as the Methodist Church which dissolved in the early twentieth century. Today it serves as a parish house and a meeting place for local organizations.

Originally a small farming community, the town of Topsfield has experienced considerable growth in the twentieth century. In 1940 the total population was less than 1000. By 1961 there were 3550 residents, and today more than 5200 people live in Topsfield. Nevertheless, the town has retained much of its rural character, particularly in the Common area. Architecturally the district is distinguished by the variety of structures contained in it which still have most of their original detail. The most recently constructed building in the district is the Town Library (#6) (1935) which, although red brick and therefore somewhat incongruous with its neighbors, nonetheless draws its dignity and classical lines from the other buildings around the Common. The oldest structure in the district (1683) is the Parson Capen House (#4) (a National Historic Landmark) which is considered by many authorities to be one of the finest surviving examples of Elizabethan architecture in America. The Emerson-Jordan House (#2) and the Emerson Center (#5) are the two most handsome Federal structures in the Common area, and the former contains

continued

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

#8:

paneling by the noted builder Samuel McIntire. Additional stylistic variety is provided by the Town Hall (#7) and the Greek Revival Congregational Church (#8). The bell in the church tower is inscribed "Revere and Company, Boston, 1817" and was originally in the meeting house which stood on the site before 1842. Together the buildings surrounding the Common represent through their fine architectural quality the growth and development of the town of Topsfield.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED JUN 7 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 3

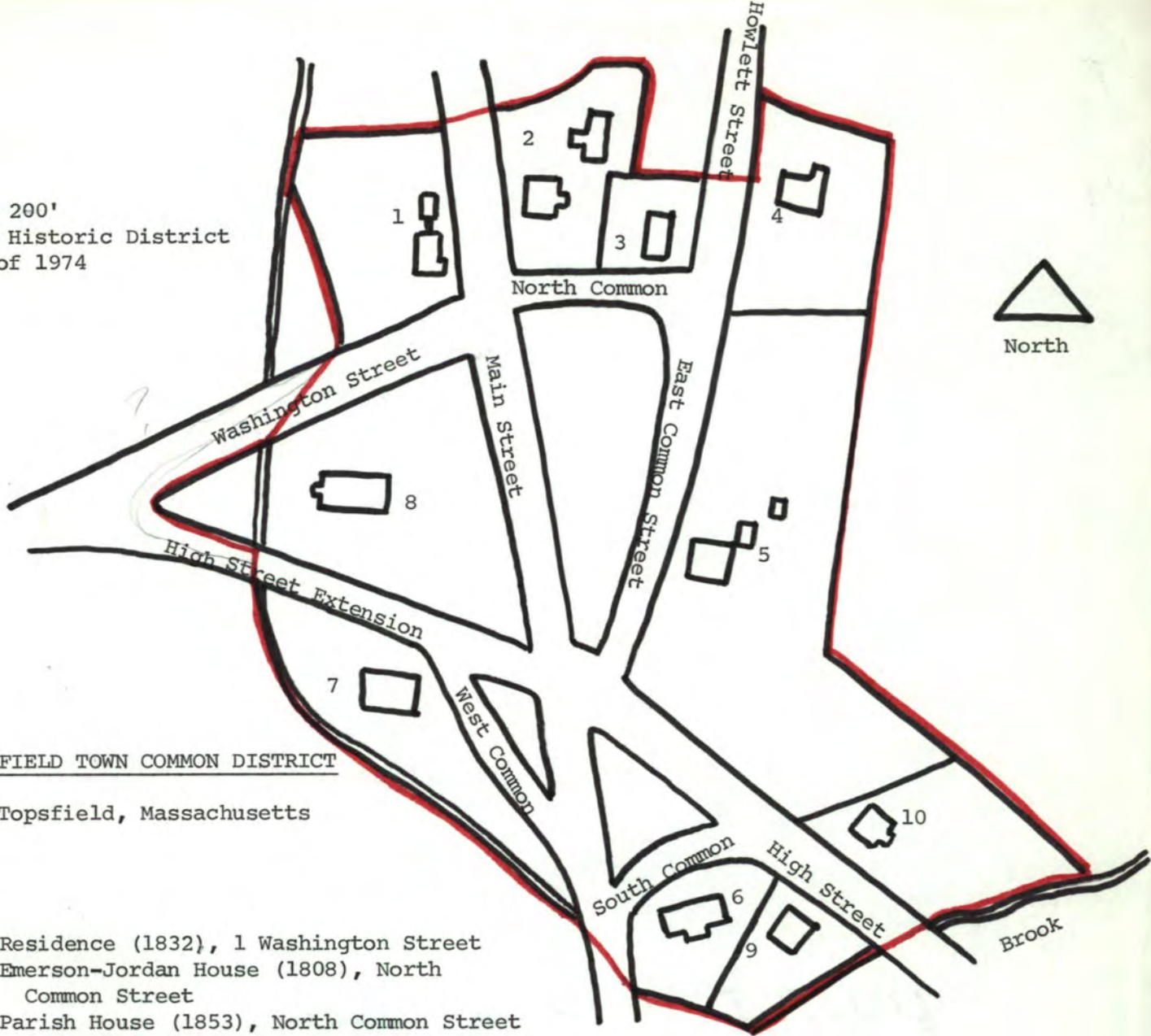
TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS
ESSEX COUNTY

Topsfield Town Common District

#10:

The district begins in the northwest corner at the back property line of #1 and runs easterly along the back (northern) property lines of #2, 3 and 4; thence south along the east property line and then in a straight line 450 feet along property #5 to a point where the boundary turns in a southeast direction and runs 200 feet, thence along the east property line of #10 to the submerged School Brook. The boundary follows the brook to High Street Extension, and crosses to the north side of High Street Extension where it runs west and then east around the corner of property #8, thence across Washington Street and along the west boundary of #1 to the point of beginning.

1" = 200'
from Historic District
map of 1974



TOPSFIELD TOWN COMMON DISTRICT

Topsfield, Massachusetts

1. Residence (1832), 1 Washington Street
2. Emerson-Jordan House (1808), North Common Street
3. Parish House (1853), North Common Street
4. Parson Capen House (1683), Howlett Street
5. Emerson Center (1814), East Common Street
6. Town Library (1935), South Common Street
7. Town Hall (1873), North Common Street
8. Congregational Church (1843), Main Street
9. Residence (1756), 11 High Street
10. Residence (c.1925), 14 High Street



Property Topsfield Town Common District

Essex

State Massachusetts

Working Number 4, 6, 76, 3018

TECHNICAL

Photos 6

Maps 2 *2 cont. sheets*

CONTROL

cm

OK 4.14.76

I'd like to know why #10 is included. Do these boundaries follow the local H D boundaries? A photo could include #6, 9 + 10 as long as they're taking one.

HISTORIAN

*CALL FOR ACCEPT
Livingood
4 May 76*

I would like to clear up w boundary description. No more + a photo (all well) do. I would also like a photo of bldg # 6.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Info rec'd - 5-25-76

*Accept
M J King*

ARCHEOLOGIST

Need more photos - (at least 1 of So. End of district). Without boundary justification we can't tell why they jog or if surrounding areas should be included.

OTHER

*Call
W. R. Luce
5/4/76*

HAER

Inventory

Review

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

*Accept
C012
5-25-76*

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

*Hurt
5-28-76*

National Register Write-up

Send-back

Entered **JUN 7 1976**

Federal Register Entry 7-6-76

Re-submit

INT:2106-74



Emerson-Jordan House (#2, left) and Parish
House (#3, right)

Topsfield Town Common District

Topsfield, MA *Essey Co.*

Curtis Campbell, photographer

1973

Topsfield Historical Commission, Town Hall,
Topsfield, MA

Facing north.

APR 6 1976

Photograph #1

DoE JUN 7 1976

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

9



Parson Capen House (#4)
Topsfield Town Common District
Topsfield, MA *Essex Co.*
Curtis Campbell, photographer
1973
Topsfield Historical Commission, Town Hall,
Topsfield, MA
Facing northeast.

Photograph #2

APR 6 1976

Doc JUN 7 1976

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

29

162



Emerson Center (#5)
Topsfield Town Common District
Topsfield, MA
Curtis Campbell, photographer
1973
Topsfield Historical Commission, Town Hall,
Topsfield, MA
Facing east.

APR 6 1976

Photograph #3 JUN 7 1976 Doc

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

P3



TOWN HALL

ERECTED 1873

POLICE

Town Hall (#7)
Topsfield Town Common District
Topsfield, MA
Curtis Campbell, photographer
1973
Topsfield Historical Commission, Town Hall,
Topsfield, MA
Facing west.

APR 6 1976

Photograph #4

JUN 7 1976 JUE

09

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Congregational Church (#8)
Topsfield Town Common District
Topsfield, MA
Curtis Campbell, photographer
1973
Topsfield Historical Commission, Town Hall,
Topsfield, MA
Facing west.

Photograph #5

JUN 7 1976
APR 6 1976
Doe

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

10



Town Hall (#7, left) and Congregational
Church (#8, right)

Topsfield Town Common District
Topsfield, MA

Curtis Campbell, photographer
1973

Topsfield Historical Commission, Town Hall,
Topsfield, MA

Facing west across the Common.

Photograph #6 JUN 7 1976²⁶⁶ APR 6 1976

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

65

66



Residence (#10), c. 1925

Topsfield Town Common District

Topsfield, MA

Curtis Campbell, photographer

1973 *Essay Co.*

Topsfield Historical Commission, Town Hall,
Topsfield, MA

Facing northeast.

Photograph #7

JUN 7 1976 Dec

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Residence (#9), 1756

Topsfield Town Common District

Topsfield, MA

Curtis Campbell, photographer

1973 *Essex Co.*

Topsfield Historical Commission, Town Hall,

Topsfield, MA

Facing southwest.

Photograph #8

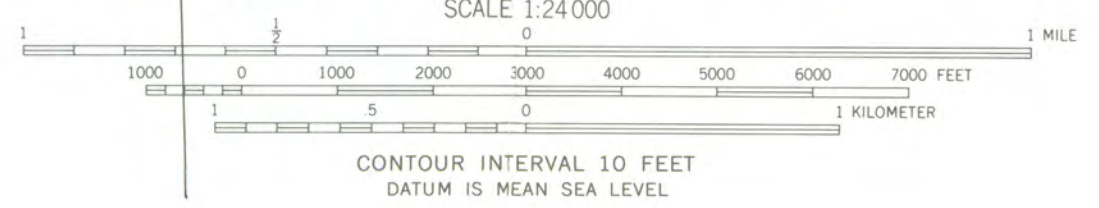
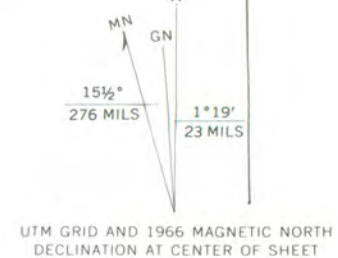
JUN 7 1976 doc

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



TOPSFIELD, MA:
Topsfield Town Common District
A 19/340200/4722920
B 19/340200/4722440
C 19/339740/4722760

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1942. Revised 1966
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 19, shown in blue



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

GEORGETOWN, MASS.
N4237.5—W7052.5/7.5

1966
AMS 6869 III NW—SERIES V814

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST





Secretary of the
Commonwealth

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of the Secretary

Massachusetts Historical Commission

294 Washington Street Boston, Massachusetts 02108

(617) 727-8470

1 April 1976

Mr. Charles Herrington
Chief, Registration
National Register
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Charles:

Enclosed please find three nomination forms for the following properties:

1. Marblehead: King Hooper Mansion
2. Plymouth: Bartlett-Russell-Hedge House
3. Topsfield: Topsfield Town Common District

These properties have been voted eligible by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (State Review Board) and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer, Elizabeth Reed Amadon.

Sincerely yours,

Pat

Patricia L. Weslowski
Survey Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

PLW/jdd

enclosures



DATE
5-6-76

TELEPHONE REPORT

TIME OF CALL
2:00

AM
PM

1. CALL TO: FROM (Name)

Judy Dobbs

2. ADDRESS (Tel. No. if needed)

MASS

3. SUBJECT, PROJECT NO., ETC.

Topfield Town Common District

4. DETAILS OF DISCUSSION

#10 was included to usually round out the district. Will send photo of S end which Judy says does end the district. Boundary description + justification is on its way.

NAME OF PERSON PLACING/RECEIVING CALL

TITLE

OFFICE



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

The Director of the National Park Service

Gary Everhardt

is pleased to inform you that the historic property listed on the enclosed sheet has been nominated by the State Historic Preservation Officer responsible for your State's implementation of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, P.L. 89-665 (80 Stat. 915), as amended. It has accordingly been entered in the National Register of Historic Places. A leaflet explaining the National Register is enclosed for your information and convenience.

Enclosures

RECEIVED

JUN 16 1976

MASS. HIST. COMM.



ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE **MASSACHUSETTS**

Date Entered **JUN 7 1976**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Topsfield Town Common District	Topsfield Essex County

Also Notified

Hon. Edward M. Kennedy
Hon. Edward W. Brooke
Hon. Michael J. Harrington
**Regional Director, North Atlantic
Region**

State Historic Preservation Officer
Mrs. Elizabeth R. Amadon
Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

L PR MMott/row 6/11/76

NOTE TO FILE

The Topsfield Town Common Historic District, Essex County, MA, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on June 7, 1976. The file, with the original signed copy of the form, has been missing from the National Register for a number of years. When the National Register records were first entered into the National Register Information System and assigned a NRIS registration number, the file was missing, so the district was not entered into the NRIS database at that time. The MA SHPO has sent us a copy of the district nomination form along with a copy of the National Register notice of the district's listing. The district will now be assigned a NRIS registration number and data collected into the NRIS database.

Patrick Andrus
Historian
National Register of Historic Places
10/22/2003

*File was found 7/22/08
copy was thrown away*

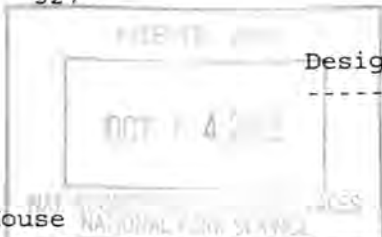
Town/Name/Address

Designation

Date

Props

Topsfield (cont.)



French, John - Andrews, Joseph House First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts, 86 Howlett Rd	NRIND NRTRA	03/09/1990 03/09/1990	3 3
Gould, Capt. Joseph House First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts, 129 Washington St	NRIND NRTRA	03/09/1990 03/09/1990	3 3
Gould, Zaccheus House First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts, 73 Prospect St	NRIND NRTRA	03/09/1990 03/09/1990	2 2
Lake, Stanley House First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts, 95 River Rd	NRIND NRTRA	03/09/1990 03/09/1990	2 2
Topsfield Common Historic District Main and High Sts to Towne St	LHD	05/14/1974	37
Topsfield Town Common Historic District Roughly centered on Topsfield Common, from North Common St to South Common St and from Washington St to High St	NRDIS	06/07/1976	10

RFP
TPP

Townsend

Conant, John House South St	PR Exp: LHD	07/26/1976 05/08/1978	2 2
Memorial Hall 272 Main St	LHD PR Exp:	04/28/1975 06/30/1998 	2 2
Reed Homestead 72 Main St	LHD PR Exp:	05/08/1978 04/29/1985 	1 1
Townsend Historic District I Roughly bounded by Main and Highland Sts, Rt 13 and including the Town Common	LHD	04/28/1975	47
Townsend Historic District II Main, South and Spaulding Sts	LHD	05/08/1978	21
Townsend Historic District III Canal, Main and Elm Sts	LHD	04/26/1983	59

TOW
IN

MO
H16

Essex

JUL 8 1976 New England Newsclip

Topsfield...

Common area now historic place

By RUTH HOUSTON

TOPSFIELD — The Topsfield Town Common District, nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, has been accepted. State Secretary Paul Guzzi, chairman of the commission, has been informed by Gary Everhardt, director of the National Park Service in the US Department of the Interior. It is significant as the earliest area of settlement in the town of Topsfield and as the center of town activity for three centuries. The district is also a showcase of architectural styles from the Parson Capen House of 1683 to the town library of 1935.

Before recorded history, the area, now known as the Topsfield Common, was roamed by Chief Masconomet and his braves from the Agawam tribe. In 1630, English settlers pushed up the Ipswich River and established themselves in the area which they named New Meadows.

In 1650, the Great and General Court gave the residents of New Meadows "ye power to be a towne" and approved the name Topsfield, after Toppesfield, England, the ancestral home of many prominent town residents.

Between 1630 and 1650, a training field was set up on what is now the Common and surrounding land. This field was used for training militia in early Colonial times, and local Minute Men gathered here before departing for Concord and

Lexington and later Bunker Hill. Troops also trained on the Common and at the town hall during both World War I and World War II. The American Legion headquarters was located in town hall for many years, and a monument stands across from the library as a memorial to those who fought in the War Between the States.

The first meetinghouse in Topsfield was built in 1703 on the site of the present Congregational Church, and a second meetinghouse was erected there in 1759-60. In 1842, the building was moved to Salem where it was rebuilt on Boston Street and used as a tannery.

Town meetings and political rallies were later held in the downstairs hall (Union Hall) of the Parish House from 1853 to 1873 and in the town hall from 1873 until 1952 when space proved inadequate. Union Hall and town hall were also used for dramatic presentations, concerts and lectures. After 1952, the town hall meeting room fell into a state of disrepair, but it was extensively renovated in 1975 as a Bicentennial Auditorium and once again serves as a center for educational and cultural needs.

Town offices and police headquarters are still located in

the town hall and the room to the left of the main entrance has been in continuous use as the office of the town treasurer since 1873.

The oldest building in the district is the Parson Capen House, built in 1683 and carefully restored in 1913 under the direction of George Francis Dow. It reveals influences of 16th and 17th century English architecture.

The house, at the corner of Main and Washington Streets, was known for some time as Smith's Tavern, having been operated in the 19th and early 20th centuries by Augustus W. Smith as a summer hotel. It is now a private residence.

The Emerson-Jordan House and the Emerson Center were both associated with Topsfield's well-known Emerson family. The Rev. John Emerson first built his house in 1733 and part of it was retained in the structure of the larger house built in 1808 by William Emerson.

The Emerson Center was built in 1814 by Joseph Emerson and later belonged to his daughter, Harriet Jane Emerson, and her husband, Charles H. Holmes. Holmes was the son of John Holmes, the first US senator from Maine. The house was sold to the Congregational Church

June 1, 1886, and served as a parsonage.

Town hall was built in 1873 by Topsfield's leading carpenter, John H. Potter, using plans drawn up by the Boston architects, Lord and Fuller. The building exhibits characteristics of the Chateausque and Stick styles. The Congregational Church is Greek Revival style with two Ionic columns. On its square tower is a tall spire and four pinnacles.

The most recently constructed building in the district is the town library, built in 1935, using basic plans prepared in 1912 by Harold Field Kellogg. It is a red brick Classical Revival building, two stories tall and has a projecting portico supported by four columns. A large ell to the rear was added in 1974.

Originally a small farming community, the town of Topsfield has experienced considerable growth in the 20th century. In 1940, the total population was less than 1,000.

By 1961, there were 3,550 residents, and today more than 5,200 live in the town. Nevertheless, Topsfield has retained much of its rural character, particularly in the Common area.

The Topsfield Town Common is the core of the local historic

district known as the Topsfield Common Historic District, established in 1974. It encompasses the only remaining common land of the township and includes 10 religious, civic and residential buildings. The area is attractive and has well cared for trees, shrubs and monuments. There are no intrusions or drastic alterations to detract from its appearance.

Together, the buildings surrounding the Common represent through their fine architectural quality the growth and development of the town of Topsfield.

BRUSH FIRES

The effects to the hot dry weather are beginning to show on the fire department log.

Tuesday there were three

brush fires, all of which were extinguished in short order. In the afternoon there were calls to Perkins Row, opposite the Steward School and the at the opposite end of the street in the area of the 130's.

CONVALESCING

Dr. Thomas Grady, Parsonage Lane, is recovering from surgery recently performed at Hunt Memorial Hospital, Danvers.

When he returns to his practice later this month, he will be established in his new dental offices at 73 South Main St.

NEW RESIDENTS

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Ful have moved from Danvers to an apartment at 67R Central St.

NR Data Sheet

DATE: 4-30-76
Reviewer INITIALS: MJL

NR DOE
JUN 7 1976

NAME AS IT APPEARS IN FEDERAL REGISTER: Topsfield Town Common District

OTHER NAMES:

LOCATION:

STREET & NUMBER N, E, S, and W. Common, Washington, Main, High, and Howland Sts.

CITY/TOWN Topsfield

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 6th

STATE MASS

VICINITY OF

COUNTY ESSEX code 009

OWNER OF PROPERTY: (Circle) PRIVATE STATE LOCAL GOV'T MUNICIPAL COUNTY OTHER

ADMINISTRATOR (underline)

FEDERAL (AGENCY NAME):

NPS REGION: (CIRCLE) N. ATLANTIC MID ATLANTIC SOUTHEAST MIDWEST

SOUTHWEST ROCKY MOUNTAIN WEST PACIFIC NORTHWEST

FEATURES:

INTERIOR

Substantially intact-1
 unknown - 4
 not applicable - 7

EXTERIOR

Substantially intact-2
 unknown - 5
 not applicable - 8

ENVIRONS

Substantially intact-3
 unknown - 6
 Not applicable-9

Interior, exterior, environs not intact-0

CONDITION -

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED
 Unexcavated

UNALTERED
 ALTERED
 Reconstructed
 Excavated

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED Residence at 11 High St.
moved here, 1900
 Unknown

ACCESS -

Yes-restricted

Yes-unrestricted

No access

Unknown

historic district?

YES

NO

WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES NO

IF YES, NAME:

WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? YES NO

IF YES, NAME:

CONTAINS NHL + HABS

ADAPTIVE USE:

YES

NO

Saved?

YES

NO

FUNCTION(S): (use vocabulary words)

then- community

now- SAME

SIGNIFICANCE:

ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC

ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

ART

COMMERCE

COMMUNICATIONS

CONSERVATION

ECONOMICS

EDUCATION

ENGINEERING

EXPLORATION

INDUSTRY

INVENTION

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

LAW/Gov't/politics

LITERATURE

MILITARY

MUSIC

PHILOSOPHY

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

RELIGION

SCIENCE

SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER (SPECIFY)

entertainment

health

recreation

settlement

socio/cultural

urban & commun
planning

Claims

"first" YES NO

"oldest" YES NO

"only" YES NO

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Federal, Greek Revival, Chateaucque elements

architect/m.builder: Samuel McIntyre - interior of Emerson Jordan Hse
Hendri Egler - plans for Town Hall

engineer:

landscape/garden designer: Harold Field Kellogg, plans for Town Library

artist/artisan:

interior decorator:

builder/contractor: Jacob Foster - Parson House
John H. Foster - Town Hall
Mark R. Jewett - church, 1842

ETHNIC GROUP:

NAMES:

(label role & appropriate date)

personal Topsheld: Emerson Family
George Francis Dow - restoration, 1913

events Revolutionary War
Town settlement

institutional

DATES: DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (Specific date or 1/4 of century): 1630-1936

DATE(S) OF "MAJOR" ALTERATIONS: scrubbed throughout 19th/20th c.

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT DATE(S): 1600 - 1900
occupied by Indians - 16th, 17th c. 1st settled by English - 1630

SOURCE: (OF NOMINATION) PRIVATE STATE LOCAL GOV'T MUNICIPAL COUNTY

OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY:

ACREAGE: (to nearest tenth of an acre) 13.1

COMMENTS: (include architectural information here)

HABS - Parson Capen Hse
NHL MASS-214

10 structures ^{facing +} surrounding remains of town's original common ground. Includes the early medieval (1683) Parson-Capen Hse, Federal dwelling, the Greek Revival Parish House (1853) and Congregational Church (1842), and public bldgs.

Town focal point, includes 10 structures surrounding remaining portions of the town's original common ground; features the early medieval Parson-Capen House (1683), a Federal ^{style} dwelling, the Greek Revival Parish House (1853), and Congregational Church (1842) and public buildings. Excellent ^{arch} ~~arch~~ ^{and}

SIGNIFICANCE: (maximum two sentences)

~~Excellent~~ ~~architectural~~ ~~example~~ ~~of~~ ~~town~~ ~~common~~ ~~plan~~; ~~and~~ ~~early~~ ~~town~~ ~~settlement~~; ~~common~~ ~~used~~ ~~for~~ ~~training~~ ~~early~~ ~~town~~ ~~militia~~, ~~and~~ ~~as~~ ~~Revolutionary~~ ~~war~~ ~~gathering~~ ~~place~~ ~~for~~ ~~those~~ ~~before~~ ~~Lexington~~, ~~Concord~~, ~~and~~ ~~Bunker~~ ~~Hill~~ ~~battles~~.

Revolutionary war gathering place for those before Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill battles.