

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name John Robbins House

other names/site number Robbins "Lottery" House

2. Location

street & number 144 Great Road (MA Rtes 2A/119)

N/A not for publication

city or town Acton

N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts

code MA

county Middlesex

code 017

zip code 01720

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Betsy Friedberg for 6/5/03
Signature of certifying official/Title Cara H. Metz, SHPO, Massachusetts Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson R. Beall

7/25/03

John Robbins House
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
2	0	buildings
1	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
4	0	Total

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)

DOMESTIC: single and double dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: granite, fieldstone

walls WOOD: weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

7. DESCRIPTION

Setting.

The John Robbins House stands on the west side of Great Road (Mass. Routes 2A and 119) close to the street on a broad, shallow lot. A large lawn with a pile of rocks marking where an 18th-century barn (Map #3) once stood occupies the area north of the house. South of the building are a large vegetable garden with a ca. 1920s farmstand (Map #2) and a variety of trees and shrubs. A fragment of an east-west fieldstone wall south of the house near the road marks the line of an old farm lane. Another length of wall lines the southwest edge of the property along the road. (Map #4)

The north-south roadbed of the former Framingham & Lowell Railroad parallels the Great Road directly behind the Robbins property. West of the railroad embankment is Ice House Pond, a long body of water on Nashoba Brook, created by a dam about 500 yards southwest of the house that was associated with a sawmill complex built by John Robbins' father, Joseph, in 1788. West across the brook are woods, open meadows, a playing field, and Acton's oldest and largest cemetery, Woodlawn Cemetery.

The house is one of the last residential properties on what gradually became a long commercial strip over the course of the second half of the 20th century, extending through Acton west from the Concord line to Littleton Common. Today, the character of Great Road in the immediate vicinity of the Robbins House is a disparate mix of modern commercial complexes and a handful of pre- and post-1960s houses converted to business uses. Directly across the street, a shopping plaza is presently being developed on 20 acres that were divided out from the Robbins farm in about 1930.

Exterior description.

Completed in 1800, the 42 by 36-foot main block of the John Robbins House is a large, four-square late Georgian/early Federal dwelling, two stories high, capped by a shallow-hipped, asphalt-shingle roof. Two large painted brick chimneys rise from the inner portions of the side planes of the roof. The building is elevated slightly above the level of the road atop a granite-block foundation on a low earthen terrace which extends into a small forecourt enclosed by a picket fence in the form of a balustrade. A 14 foot deep two-part, one-story leanto spans the south two-thirds of the rear of the house, to connect at the southwest house corner with a long one-story, side-gable-roofed chaise house/woodshed. Across the rear west wall of the chaise house/shed is a much later leanto, added in two sections between 1950 and 1960.

Giant order Roman Doric (Tuscan) pilasters, set on granite plinths and surmounted by a full cornice, define the corners of the main house block. The wood-frame building is clad in wood clapboards

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

which reduce gradually in their reveals toward the lower part of the walls, where they end at a broad water table.

The main block has two principal facades. The east elevation, the proper "front" facing the road, is a formal symmetrical five-bay arrangement. (Photo 1) Its focal point is a generously scaled center frontispiece, also with Tuscan pilasters, and with an entablature enriched with dentils and modillions. (Photo 5) The entry has a large six-panel door under a five-light transom. The windows, both here and throughout most of the house, are 12-over-12-sash, in plank frames with molded edges. Most are fitted with wood louvered blinds dating to the early 19th century.

The secondary south facade, facing the circular, unpaved driveway, is also of five bays, but is less formal in its arrangement. The windows toward the rear of the house are placed closer together than the two at the front. The south side entrance is in a one-story hip-roofed enclosed porch occupying the middle bay—a feature common in late 18th-century domestic architecture in the Acton/Concord area. The south door, located in the east face of the entry, is a large six-panel type, surrounded by a molded architrave. A window centered in the south wall of the entry is 8-over-12-sash. West of the entry is the bulkhead door to the cellar. Between the two, at foundation level, is a surviving section of the brick gutter which formerly ringed the base of three sides of the house but was mostly covered over in the 1920s.

The north side of the house is two bays wide. The west rear wall of the house, on which the pilasters do not return, is three bays wide at the second story. The rear leanto is composed of two sections. Its north part, projecting from the center of the main house wall, is a 1967 rebuilding of the original leanto of 1799-1800, measuring 14 by 14-feet. It stands on the original fieldstone foundation, and has one 6-over-9-sash window in the north end, and two 6-over-9's on the west side. The section to its south, under a continuation of the leanto roof, is built over the original well. It was probably at one-time an open "piazza" forming a sheltered work space and an open passage to the chaise house/woodshed.

In the early 1920s, the original leanto was taken down and replaced by a smaller tarpapered structure on a frame of railroad ties, sections of telephone poles, and some existing timbers. The 1967 reconstruction was based on considerable existing evidence, using as much of the original material as was practical. At that time the rear piazza over the well was enclosed as a summer porch, with four large four-pane storm windows over a low clapboard wall, and centrally placed panel-and-glass door. The two heavy late 19th-century semicircular wheel brackets now embellishing the corners of the latter section were relocated from a former door hood on the chaise house. (Photo #4)

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

Chaise house/woodshed, ca. 1800 (Photos 2-4)

Extending south from the enclosed piazza, on slightly lower ground, is the combined chaise house/woodshed. This is a long narrow 1 1/2-story structure with a side-gabled roof, built partly of timbers, sheathing, and paneling from the ca. 1745 Wooley House, which had stood across the road. (Other reused elements of the earlier house, including hardware, paneling, and doors, appear in the cellar and in some rooms of the main house.) The long east wall, facing the driveway, (Photo 2) has a single 6-over-9-sash window toward the north end, with a 4-panel Victorian door just south of it. A six-pane window occupies the walled-in former opening of the woodshed, but the elliptical-arched doorway of the outer chaise house end, fitted with double-leaf carriage doors, still occupies the south part of the wall. The positions of the interior spaces—a utility room at the north end, a woodshed in the center, and the chaise house in the south end, are demarcated on the exterior by vertical and horizontal trim boards, presently picked out in white against the red walls. The horizontal sheathing of the east front, which was originally exposed, was uncovered in the 1960s when later clapboards were removed. The rest of the structure is clapboarded.

The south and north ends of the chaise house/woodshed each have one 6/9 window in the gable peak. (Photos 3 and 4) Extending to the rear are two shed-roofed leanto additions of the 1950s. The northernmost, a room about 20 feet square, with two 8-over-12-sash windows in its north wall, was built first, in about 1950. Its rear wall has an asymmetrical arrangement of one 16-pane window and a panel and glass door. Three small multi-pane windows are placed high in the wall of the later south section. The south end of the latter leanto has a 6/9 window and a horizontal-panel and glass door.

Other exterior alterations. Aside from maintenance repairs, including the restoration of the front cornice in the 1930s, the exterior of the main house block remains substantially as first built. The windows are original throughout, and all but a few of the louvered blinds first hung in about 1835-40 remain. The clapboarding of the north, east, and south walls is almost entirely original; the west rear wall was largely reclapboarded in about 1850. With the exception of a brief period in the 1950s and 60s, when the back of the house was painted white and the blinds black, the color scheme has always been as it is now—white for the elevations visible from the street and red for the back and the chaise house, with green blinds.

The only major repairs to the main house have involved the rear leanto (described above) and the reinstallation of the balustrade around the front terrace. The balustrade, originally framed into the house but removed about 1900, was rebuilt in 1973 following evidence found on the site and in legal descriptions of the property. Its design—flat 1 1/2- by 3/4" pickets set into bottom boards and a molded upper rail, with square posts with molded caps—was also based on the recollections of those who remembered the original. The only part of it not replaced was an arched rose trellis over the front gate. In the late 1980s the purple Welsh slate roof—either the original roof or a 19th-century

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John Robbins House
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replacement—was replaced with asphalt shingle, and in the 1990s a small wooden landing with stairs and a simple balustrade was built over the existing granite slab steps for safer access to the south entry.

Interior

The basic Federal "four-square" plan of the main house consists of a wide central hallway bay, containing front and rear stairs placed back to back against an intervening wall, flanked by two principal rooms at the front of the house and two at the back. The front and back rooms are separated by the two chimneys, which serve four fireplaces on each floor, one in each room. Passageways or large closets occupy the spaces between the chimneys and the outer walls at both stories. As indicated by the fenestration on the exterior, the front rooms are a few feet deeper than the rear rooms. (See Sketch Floor Plans)

Like the exterior, the interior of the house, finished in three distinct stages as rooms came into active use, remains largely unchanged. The broad front stair hall and the rooms south of it were completed in 1800 with finely executed late Georgian/early Federal woodwork derived from William Pain's *Practical Builder*. (See photocopied plates from the Boston edition, 1792) The four- and six-panel interior doors are typical of the turn of the 19th century—with raised panels on one side, recessed panels on the other. Throughout the house a large amount of the early hardware remains—hinges of several types, Norfolk latches, iron spring latches with small brass knobs, etc., and the front door bell that is operated by a pull with connecting wires and springs.

The stair hall, (Photos 8 and 9) between the two front rooms has a generously proportioned two-run staircase with scrolled tread ends and a molded rail set on square, diagonally-positioned dowels. The newel posts are 3-inches square, with molded tops. A low dado of wide horizontal boards with molded chair rail rings the lower part of the walls. The upper, plastered wall surfaces of the stair hall retain unrestored stenciling done probably in the 1830s by the itinerant artist Moses Eaton, Jr. (1796-1883). Originally from Hancock, New Hampshire, Mr. Eaton, who learned his craft from his father, spent many years traveling throughout New England, New York, and as far west as Ohio, decorating the interiors of his day. Extant examples of Eaton's work in Massachusetts are still being identified. Among them are stencils in the Lemuel Fales/Rufus Bullock House in Royalston (NR 1976), the George Hosman House in West Newbury, and the Caleb Wheeler, Jr. House in Bolton. The stenciling in the Robbins House is still largely intact on the unpainted surface of the plaster. The design, executed in green and red, consists of large-scale foliate motifs aligned vertically between stripes of short diagonal green lines, with upper and lower vine and leaf borders. The main alteration to the stair hall is an opening, fitted with a small reused two-panel door, that was cut through the back wall of the stair landing for easier access to the upstairs back hall in about 1945.

The low dado is also present in the south entry and in the southeast parlor. Other than the front stair hall, this is the only room in the house with this type of dado, and the only one to have low window

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seats. In the south part of the west wall of this room is a pair of 6-panel doors—one to the south entry and one to a shallow china cabinet with pull-out desk or tea table. The center of the wall is occupied by a fireplace with an elaborate mantel with full entablature and cornice. The frieze is carved in intersecting circles, and flanked by gouge-work capitals which are a simpler substitute for the foliate-carved capitals shown in the Pain illustration. (See Photo 7, and Pain, Plate 47.) The cornice at the top of the wall in this room is the most elaborate in the house, consisting of a crown molding of heavy Georgian proportions over a frieze embellished with gougework triglyphs. The louvered interior blinds in the parlor window reveals were installed in about 1850, replacing former paneled shutters. At about the same time, the brass doorknobs were replaced with rosewood ones.

The spacious southwest kitchen is in unusually original condition for a house that is two hundred years old. Although a sink, countertop with drawers, and wooden wall cabinets were installed along the south part of the rear wall in the mid-20th century, the rest of the room retains its early 19th century appearance. The east wall of the room is dominated by the very long fireplace (now filled in), which has a wide wood surround embellished with Federal moldings and a shallow, molded mantel shelf. (Photo 10) The brick bake oven is still in place north of the plastered-over firebox, its opening covered by an ornamented cast-iron door. A 42-inch-high dado covers the lower part of the painted plaster walls, and a simple horizontal trim board, about four inches wide, rings the upper parts of the walls about two feet below the ceiling.

The northeast rooms on the first and second stories, finished about 1830-35, contain a combination of simple ca. 1800 Federal trim with transitional Federal/Greek Revival detailing of a type that was still popular in Acton until about 1840. The mantel in the lower room, apparently used as a second, northeast parlor, which has raised-panel pilasters and capitals, retains its original painted surface variegated in black, gold, and green to resemble marble. (Photo 11.)

The first-story northwest room, separated from the southwest kitchen by the basement stairwell and enclosed rear stair, may have begun as a partially-finished summer kitchen. It was apparently updated in the 1830s after Elbridge and Charlotte Robbins were married and had come to settle here in the house with his parents. The reduced brick fireplace in this room has angled side walls. (Photo 12.) Like its southwest counterpart, the fireplace has a wide wooden surround embellished with an architrave and a molded mantel shelf. Here the adjacent bake oven and the ash pit below it are concealed by a single wooden door with a long raised-field panel. The fireplace is flanked by two 4-panel doors—the one to the north leading to the northeast parlor, and the one to the south opening into a china closet. The simple casings on the room's corner posts, the dado, the four-panel doors, and the horizontal trim board placed high on the walls are all similar to the 1800 finish of the south kitchen. One whimsical detail is the trefoil-shaped ventilation holes cut in the upper panels of the door to the rear leanto. (Photo 13)

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

An early spearheaded Suffolk latch on the door to the china cabinet south of the fireplace was probably the front door latch to the original farmhouse on the property, the old Wooley House of ca. 1745. It was formerly used on the south entry door of the Robbins House. The china closet contains a pass-through to the front room.

Second story.

Of the two south chambers, finished in 1800, the southeast chamber is the more elaborate. A crown molding rings the top of the wall, and the shallow fireplace has an elegantly carved surround with a molded architrave and an entablature that includes a fretwork band in the "wall of Troy" pattern. (Photo 14) The fireplace of the southwest chamber has a similar architrave, but a simpler, shallower mantel shelf. The north part of the firebox was filled in, and a Franklin stove installed, probably in the 1830s. (Photo 15)

The north chambers, like the rooms below them, were apparently finished during the Greek Revival period. The mantelpiece in the northeast chamber, (Photo 16) has pilasters of similar proportions to those in the northeast parlor, but with recessed, rather than raised panels. Completed last of all, in about 1850, the northwest chamber and a small room (converted to a bathroom in 1929), off the second-floor back hall have very simple Greek Revival detail.

Rear leanto: interior.

As described above, the structure of the original rear leanto was rebuilt in the 1960s. At that time a small lavatory and laundry room were installed in the south part. The remainder is a large paneled room, now used as a den. The leanto as built in 1799-1800 was 14 by 14-feet, apparently a single large room that was used as a buttery, sink room, or other utilitarian space. It is referred to in Elbridge Robbins' 1891 inventory as a "pantry." The interior was wood-sheathed on all sides, and had exposed ceiling joists. Sometime in the middle of the 19th century the leanto room was divided into two spaces, and the ceiling was plastered. At about the same time, the well area between the leanto and chaise house was enclosed, and a wood floor, supported on reused timbers, was installed over the well area. Today that south section is used as a summer porch.

Chaise house/woodshed interior.

The long southwest combined chaise house and woodshed, built about 1800 or slightly later, incorporates materials reused from the first house (ca. 1745) on the property, including some timbers, sheathing, and paneling used as sheathing. (Other reused elements of the earlier house, such as some feather-edged sheathing and batten doors of the same material, are present in the cellar of the main house.) Originally containing a whitewashed utility room at the north end, with two arched-front sheds south of that, and a passageway to the rear privy along the west side (see Sketch Plan) the structure's interior arrangements, like the exterior, were altered somewhat in the mid-19th century. The stairs to the loft, formerly located against the front wall of the utility room, were relocated to the front wall of the middle woodshed bay when its opening was closed in. (See Sketch Plan)

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

The loft contains three pairs of dovescote openings—one on the east that is keyhole-shaped, and two made up of small arches on the south. Additions built in the 1940s and 1950s doubled the ground plan of the building by adding two leantos with very shallow-pitched roofs across the rear, the south one slightly lower in height than the north. (The north leanto was a small outbuilding that was moved to the site from Littleton.) Their intended function is uncertain. Today they are used for storage, and a space partitioned off at the rear center is a small bedroom.

Site features

A few features of the early landscaping around the house are still evident. At the east, north, and west sides of the house the sod terraces elevating the house well above the natural grade are still intact. That at the south side was mostly faced with a low mortared stone retaining wall in the 1920s. A pair of spruce trees formerly stood within the fenced front courtyard. The northern tree, apparently a late 19th-century replacement for an elm or other deciduous tree, died and was taken down in the 1980s. The southern tree was destroyed in the 1938 hurricane, and a new spruce, now about 25 feet high, was planted in its place some years later.

Along the fieldstone wall (Map #4) separating the south yard or driveway from an old farm lane is a very large lilac bush, believed to have been planted when the house was built. Just west of the end of the wall is a ca. 1920s farmstand (Map #2, Photo 7), which has been used for many years as a storage shed. It originally stood about fifty feet north of the house, closer to the road, and was moved to its present location in the 1940s. The unpainted, somewhat deteriorated wooden building has a shallow-pitched shed roof, vertical-board sides, and horizontal-board shutters spanning the broad front opening. The roof of the farmstand was extended to the rear in about 1970 to shelter lawn equipment. South of the farm lane, along the Great Road boundary, is another length of old fieldstone wall, and about thirty yards north of the house is a pile of rocks marking the site of the farm's original barn (Map #3), built about 1745 and demolished in 1922.

Recent additions to the property include a windbreak of pine trees planted in the 1930s along the north edge of the property and a line of tall hemlocks close to the north wall of the house, the circular gravel driveway in the angle of the house and chaise house created in the 1960s; and plantings of shrubs, fruit and ornamental trees and flower beds. Among the latter is a clump of tiger lilies which was transplanted to the front court in the 1970s to the front terrace from the site of the 1730s garden originally belonging to John Robbins' grandmother.

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are located on the John Robbins House property, sites may be present. Environmental characteristics indicate a high potential for the presence of ancient sites in the area. The house is located on a well drained, level to moderately sloping terrace within 1000 feet of Nashoba Brook, now impounded forming Ice House Pond. Nashoba Brook drains southeasterly to the Assabet River within the larger Concord/Merrimack River drainage. Given the above information, regional patterns of Native settlement, the small size of the nominated parcel (1.08 acres), and impacts related to construction of the adjacent railroad right-of-way, the house, and barn, a low to moderate potential exists for locating significant ancient Native American resources on the property.

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

A high potential exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the Robbins House property. Structural evidence may exist from barns, outbuildings, and alterations made to the house during various periods of renovation. A pile of rocks, possibly foundation remains, reportedly marks the location of a 1745 barn north of the house. The barn was originally associated with the Wooley Farm located across the road from the house. Most agricultural outbuildings associated with the Robbins Farm were located across the road. Construction and occupational related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may also exist on the property. The original well is reported under the southern part of the rear leanto attached to the present house, and the privy was located against the original exterior west wall of the chaisehouse. The locations of trash pits/areas are unknown. Stratigraphic evidence may also exist related to grading and/or railroad bed construction along the western property boundary.

(End)

John Robbins House

Name of Property

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 religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 # _____

Middlesex, MA

County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1799-1953

Significant Dates

1800

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

8. SIGNIFICANCE

The 1800 John Robbins House is significant as a well-preserved, stylish example of a rural Georgian/Federal farmhouse. Built for a locally prominent country "squire" and his family, it was the most sophisticated residence constructed in Acton at the turn of the 19th century. In a wider context, it is one of the most intact in a series of farmhouses located at intervals along the major regional highway (now MA Routes 2A and 119 through Acton) that led from Cambridge to southern New Hampshire in the early years of the republic. It is also significant as the farmhouse of one of the town's two largest and most prosperous 19th-century farms, and as one of Acton's four "Lottery Houses," built with the winnings of the Harvard College lottery of 1794-96. In its latter role, it is a striking manifestation of one type of state-sanctioned, institutional fundraising which resulted in the development of both early buildings at Harvard, and as a byproduct, significant real estate in the surrounding countryside. For all these reasons, the property meets Criterion A of the National Register at the local level. Dating to 1799-1800, the building is Acton's most sophisticated example of transitional Georgian/Federal architecture. It displays not only high-style exterior features such as the tall Tuscan corner pilasters and frontispiece, but also a wealth of intact interior finish work executed by highly skilled local and regional craftsmen. The interior detailing includes carved, reeded fireplace surrounds and chair rails dating to 1800, and paint schemes of the 1830s that include a marbled mantel and a stairhall with walls stenciled by itinerant artist Moses Eaton, Jr. Thus, for its architecture, the building meets Criterion C, also at the local level. The property maintains integrity of location, design, immediate setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Acton, formerly an outlying part of Concord and first known as Concord Village, was incorporated in 1735. It was a farming community and remained so until the middle of the 19th century, when the coming of the first railroad west from Boston began to inspire pockets of industrial growth in the south and west parts of town. Sweeping through the east part of Acton, a major regional thoroughfare, part of a colonial and early national highway system from Cambridge to southern New Hampshire, was the Great Road/Littleton Road, (today's MA Routes 2A/119). Several farms located along the route, including the John Robbins farm, were among the most prosperous in town for much of the 19th century.

John Robbins (1762-1836) was the son of Capt. Joseph Robbins, whose farmstead was located just west of Nashoba Brook facing today's Concord Road. Joseph Robbins had served in the French and Indian Wars, became a Captain in the local militia, and was chosen leader of Acton's East Militia in 1774. On the night of April 18-19, 1775, when alarm rider Samuel Prescott brought word that British forces were on the move, it was young John, a few hours shy of his thirteenth birthday, who galloped off from his father's house to warn the Captain of the Acton Minutemen that it was time to rally to march to Concord.

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

John Robbins worked his father's farm for several years before marrying a neighbor, Sarah (Sally) Jones, in 1791. Sally was the daughter of Oliver and Hannah (Wooley) Jones, and she and John first took up housekeeping in a small house that had belonged to her maternal grandfather, Joseph Wooley. Joseph Wooley died in 1787, and John Robbins purchased approximately half the farm he had owned on both sides of the Great Road adjacent to Joseph Robbins' homestead. The purchase from the Wooley heirs was made in two parts--one in 1790, the other in 1794. The Wooley house stood across Great Road from the nominated property, but the barn was located opposite the house, on the west side of the road. The former Wooley house, barn, and 63 acres are all recorded under John Robbins' name on the Federal Direct Tax census of 1798.

It is believed that work on John and Sally's second house at 144 Great Road (just south of the barn) began in 1799. They moved into their new home in 1800. Known locally as one of Acton's four "lottery houses," the building has its origin in the quarter-share of a Harvard College lottery ticket that John Robbins purchased in 1794. The combination of fortune and opportunity that led to its construction, and to the building of three other houses, has become the subject of local legend.

Harvard College lotteries

In the latter part of the 18th century and the early years of the 19th, lotteries were a popular fund-raising mechanism of institutions in Massachusetts. During a period that spanned several decades, the Massachusetts legislature looked favorably on lotteries, granting permission upon an applicant's petition, setting rules and guidelines for their operation, and appointing overseers for their management. After the Revolution, in the space of less than ten years, Harvard College held three lotteries to raise money for the construction and repair of college buildings and the acquisition of property. A fourth lottery, for which the state legislature granted permission to Harvard in 1765 for the building of a dormitory, never took place. The first lottery the college conducted was a small one, held in 1788 to raise 450 pounds to purchase Joseph Pope's orrery (planetarium). The last one, approved in 1806, two years before the legislature finally voted to forbid the sale of lottery tickets, was conducted to raise \$30,000 for the construction of two university buildings.

It was the middle lottery of 1794-1796 which John Robbins entered, together with three friends, each of whom purchased a quarter-share in one ticket. The 1793 petition of the Harvard Governing Boards, asking permission to raise lottery funds for a new building, had met with some opposition sparked by the recent decision by the National Convention of France to abolish lotteries "forever." In 1794, however, an act was passed granting Harvard permission to hold the lottery, and an eminent board of managers, including Benjamin Austin, Jr., Henry Warren, Samuel Cooper, John Kneeland, and historian George Richards Minot, was appointed. Tickets were priced at \$5 each, and were to be drawn in three sequential phases, or "classes." The largest prizes, up to \$10,000, were to be part of the second drawing, which began on April 9, 1795. The odds were good, as the chance of winning some prize was calculated as one in three. Although this lottery eventually broke down in an overly ambitious fourth phase, the total amount realized by the college in 1796 was just over \$11,000. Those receipts, combined with \$5,000 from Harvard's general funds, eight years' interest, and funds from the final 1806 lottery, eventually paid for the completion of Stoughton Hall.

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

John Robbins' new house

According to the most popular local story about the Acton lottery ticket, the purchaser (possibly John Robbins, but usually understood to be Abel Conant), had second thoughts about his extravagance and the sinful implications of gambling, and to assuage his reservations he persuaded three of his friends each to take a quarter interest. While the Act of 1794 specifically forbade the selling of fractional parts of tickets for a premium price, the practice of purchasing halves, quarters, and eighths of a ticket, even directly from a lottery office, was commonplace in all of the Harvard College lotteries. As a quarter-share ticket bearing only Abel Conant's name still exists, it is likely that each of the four Acton quarter-tickets was issued directly to its purchaser. The Acton ticket won one of the grand prizes—probably a second-place prize of \$5,000 drawn in the 1795 second-class drawing, which would have given each of the four men \$1250. The lasting result for the town of Acton is the quartet of handsome houses that each of the ticket-holders built with their winnings.

Two of the four buildings, the John Robbins House and the neighboring house built or enlarged by Calvin Heywood, were two-story hip-roofed dwellings, constructed within a half mile of each other on the west side of the Great Road. (The smaller, simpler center-chimney Heywood House, now converted to a commercial use at 160 Great Road, was originally located a short distance north of the Robbins House, at the corner of Great Road and Brook Street.) The house of Abraham Skinner is located in Acton Center, at 140 Nagog Hill Road. The fourth house, which had been begun before the lottery drawing, was the center-chimney house built by Abel Conant, which still stands in greatly updated form just west of the town center, at 562 Main Street.

By far the grandest of the four, and the most unaltered today, is the house built by John Robbins. Harold Phalen, quoting an 1876 newspaper article in his 1954 *History of Acton*, says "When built it was by far the best house in Acton and is excelled by very few even now." (Phalen, 214) The carpenter is unknown, although there is speculation that it may have been either Daniel Davies or Calvin Heywood, both of whom were housewrights of the time. Daniel Davies (Davis) is believed to have constructed the 1794 Middlesex County Courthouse in Concord. Whoever the builder may have been, it is clear that he was familiar with the recently published Boston edition of William Pain's source book for house carpenters, the *Practical Builder* of 1792. (See photocopies B and C, Plates 67 and 47 from the *Practical Builder*.) Although some of Pain's Georgian-inspired designs, especially those for mantelpieces and staircases, appear in simplified and adapted form in the Robbins House, in their greater delicacy of scale they are also more Federal in character than their source. (See Photos 6 and 14)

John and Sally Robbins took up residence in their grand new house once the southeast parlor was completed in 1800. According to the recollections of 19th-century Acton residents, the Robbins parlor was the most elaborate room in the most sophisticated house in town. D. Henry Scarlett, in a notebook of 1901-03, recorded a longtime observer's memory of the room: "The finish in the parlor was carved by hand. It took 100 days to carve it and the workmen got \$1.00 a day, which was

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

good wages then." (Scarlett, 57) It is likely that the combined southwest chaise house and woodshed were constructed next, using timbers, sheathing and paneling from the old Wooley House across the road, which was dismantled after the family vacated it. The old Wooley barn, however, continued in use north of the new house until 1922, when it was demolished. (See Map #3)

Capt. John Robbins, Esquire. The large, stylish house on the main road through East Acton reflected the status of its owner, who by 1799 was a Captain in the militia and a local magistrate, as well as a farmer. From an early age John Robbins held many town offices, and he became a prominent figure, known later in life as "Squire" Robbins, in both Acton's town affairs and its social life. By the time he purchased his share of the Harvard Lottery ticket he was already town Treasurer, a post he held from 1793 to 1808. He was Town Clerk from 1807 to 1820, and a Selectman from 1808 to 1817 and again from 1819 to 1820. As Town Moderator for twenty years, he was known for his stentorian voice. He was also a Justice of the Peace, Treasurer of the local Social Library, and was active in the preparations for Acton's Centennial in 1835, the year before his death

At the turn of the 19th century, John Robbins' farm, which by that time included the adjoining estates of both his father and his wife's grandfather, was one of the largest in Acton. It covered 230 acres on both sides of the Great Road, extending west to (and including most of) the land that later became Acton's Woodlawn Cemetery, and included a sawmill on Nashoba Brook, south of the present Concord Road, which had been built by his father. By 1811 John was leasing his father's former farm to his cousin, George W. Robbins, an arrangement which continued until 1876.

John Robbins died in 1836 and Sally in 1839. By then, eight of their ten children had died—all but one of them in their twenties, and at least two from consumption. While John Robbins' will reserved two rooms in the house for his daughter, Lucy, until her marriage (she married in 1850), and for his granddaughter Sarah Louisa Fletcher (who died in 1847) the farm passed to the eldest and only surviving son, Elbridge Robbins.

Elbridge Robbins' house and farm. Like his father, Elbridge Robbins (1810-1890) was an important local official. He served on most of the important committees in Acton, including three terms on the Board of Selectmen, and in 1880 on the first committee formed to build a public town library. He married Charlotte White in 1833, and it was apparently around that time that the house was fitted out to accommodate two households—that of Elbridge and Charlotte, and of Elbridge's elderly parents. Among the likely renovations of that time were the finishing of the northeast rooms in a transitional Federal/Greek Revival style, the stenciling of the center stairhall, and the installation or updating of the kitchen in the northwest first-story room. Even after John and Sally died, for the rest of the 19th

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

century the household was a crowded one, consisting of many family members, at least one domestic servant, and a succession of hired hands.

Elbridge and Charlotte had three children, Celeste, Elbridge Jones, and Luke. In about 1860, the two sons moved to Cambridge for a few years, where they ran a store. Luke enlisted as a seaman during the Civil War, and was killed at Galveston aboard "the Seminole" in 1865. Elbridge J. eventually returned to Acton, and established his own farm to the north of his parents', at 502 Great Road. After 1872, he lived south of his father's homestead, at 75 Great Road. Beginning in 1854, Celeste became a teacher in the Acton schools, and her evaluations by the schools' Prudential Committee were invariably complimentary. In 1856 the committee's report proclaimed her "Well-qualified, fond of the business, loving and pleasant, though sufficiently earnest and decided in the schoolroom. . . A kind word is better than a pretty face, but when they both come together, who can resist their genial influences?" Like all female teachers of her time, Celeste Robbins' career ended when she married. Upon her 1860 marriage to Luther Conant, Jr., (grandson of lottery-ticket holder Abel Conant,) she lived in the Conant Lottery House at 562 Main Street, until her untimely death in 1865.

Charlotte Robbins died of consumption in 1844, and in 1849 Elbridge married next-door-neighbor Mary Elizabeth Hapgood, by whom he had six more children. In the middle of the 19th century, the farm had reached 273 acres—73 improved, and 200 unimproved. It was the second largest property in Acton in acreage, and had by far the highest in value of any farm in town. In 1850 Elbridge Robbins grew more hay than any other farmer, and had the largest production of potatoes and Indian corn. He joined the Middlesex Agricultural Society in 1852, following his father, who had been one of the earliest members of that progressive, influential organization. Elbridge was a major dairy farmer at an unusually early date, with a herd of over 30 cows by 1851.

By 1865 the Robbins household consisted of eleven people. Elbridge and Mary were raising their six children, ranging from two months to fifteen years, and, like many farm families of their time, employed and boarded several Irish immigrants. The boarders in that year included an elderly laborer, a state pauper who worked as a farm hand, and a 24-year-old maid/housekeeper. In the post-Civil War era, the Robbins farm was one of the most diverse and productive in Acton. Taking advantage of the ready access to regional markets provided by two additional railroads, (the 1872 Framingham & Lowell and later the Acton, Nashua & Boston branch line passed side by side through the Robbins farm, directly behind the house,) Elbridge Robbins was not only a dairy farmer selling milk for market, but expanded into large-scale orcharding and market gardening, as well. His main rival in agricultural production was his daughter's father-in-law, the second-generation owner of the Conant Lottery House, Luther Conant. Elbridge Robbins was also a cattle broker, buying and selling livestock to the farmers in the greater Acton area.

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

Later history

After Elbridge Robbins' death in 1890, his real estate was partitioned into six parcels, including two pieces totaling three acres with the house and the old barn. To settle his estate the house and farm were bid in at auction in 1892 by his son, Chauncy B. Robbins (1850-1922.) Elbridge's widow, Mary, continued to live in the house with Chauncy until her death in 1902. By 1900 the farm had been reduced to 75 acres. The buildings on it included the Robbins house with the attached chaise house/woodshed, the old Wooley/Robbins barn north of the house, and on the east side of the road, a large mid-century New England barn with attached cowshed. Chauncy Robbins carried on his father's livestock business until 1905, advertising locally as a "Dealer in Live Stock. New Milch Cows a Specialty."

In 1903, Chauncy Robbins bought property in Boxborough, moved there a few years later, and in 1908 sold the family farm to his younger brother, Webster C. Robbins. Webster (1860-1917,) a dealer in horses, rather than cattle, already owned a farm nearby at 65 Great Road, and apparently leased out their father's former farm until his death. By 1910, however, either he or Chauncy had added two up-to-date structures, a silo and a windmill, directly across the road from the house. The property, with 75 contiguous acres, was sold out of the family in 1918 by the trustees of Webster Robbins' will.

In 1920, the Robbins Farm, further reduced to about 24 acres, was purchased by a Scandinavian-American family, Christian and Edith Jensen. They occupied the Robbins House until 1929, when they built a new farmstead with a shingled Dutch Colonial farmhouse (recently demolished) on the land on the east side of the road adjacent to Elbridge Robbins' big cow barn. That property, which they divided out from the Robbins farm, was continued in agricultural production by the Jensens and their successors through the end of the 20th century. Later in 1929, the Jensens sold the Robbins House, with about 2 1/4 acres, to Martin F. Goodwin, a teacher and later Principal of Concord High School, and his wife, Clare. They grew asparagus, which they sold from the farmstand (Map #2,) which was at first located close to the street. During the fifteen years that the Goodwins lived there, the house was modernized by the installation of a bathroom on the second floor and kitchen cabinets in the southwest kitchen.

In 1944, William E. and Belle Hinckley purchased the house. They were antiques dealers, and through the 1950s and early '60s, sold antiques from the chaise house. In 1955 they subdivided the remaining part of the farm between Great Road and the railroad bed into sixteen narrow lots, with a large one in the center for the house. Mrs. Hinckley died first, and Mr. Hinckley died in 1964, leaving the house and two parcels north of it to his niece, Myra T. Carpenter, in his will.

Mrs. Carpenter, who lived for a few years in the house with her husband, Philip, sold the property in 1965 to Donald O. and Barbara G. Nylander, who moved there with three of their four children. They had recently founded the non-profit Iron Work Farm in Acton, Inc. to save the 1732 Jones

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

Tavern in South Acton (NR-Ind., 1986) from demolition. Several years later they led the organization's acquisition of the oldest house in Acton, the 1707 Faulkner Homestead (NR-Ind., 1971.) Until his retirement, Mr. Nylander was Vice-President of the Cambridge Savings Bank. He also served as Town Accountant of Acton for 21 years. Younger Nylander family members have shared their parents' dedication to the preservation and documentation of local and regional history and the built environment. Son Richard Nylander is an international authority on historic wallpaper and longtime Curator of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. His brother, architectural historian Robert Nylander, who resided in the Robbins House until his death on 1987, researched, supervised, and undertook much of the restoration work of the buildings and its setting. Employed for 22 years by the Cambridge Historical Commission, he researched and wrote significant portions of the ground-breaking city-wide Cambridge Survey of Architectural History, as well as numerous other works in the field.

Today, as commercial development continues to fill the remaining open land along the Great Road, and the construction of a large shopping plaza has begun on the Jensen farm on the east side of the road, the Robbins House survives as an important reminder of east Acton's past. Listing on the National Register will play a crucial role in recognizing its significance in Acton's history, architecture, and development.

Archaeological Significance

Although numerous ancient Native American sites have been recorded in the Concord, Sudbury and Assabet River drainages (which converge approximately two miles to the southeast), few sites have been systematically excavated in the area limiting their interpretable value and making surviving sites in the area potentially significant. Ancient sites in this area may contain information that clarifies their role in local and regional subsistence and settlement systems between sites along tributaries of the Merrimack River and along the primary Merrimack drainage corridor. Ancient sites in this area may be part of an interior socio/political network focused on the area around the convergence of the Concord, Sudbury and Assabet Rivers or at points along the individual drainages. Native sites in the vicinity of the Robbins House may also be part of a larger regional pattern with a primary focus on the Merrimack River, possibly at its convergence with the Concord River. Such locales have been recognized as regionally important settlement locations, sometimes cores, especially during later Woodland Periods. Ancient sites in this area may also contain information that can contribute to a greater understanding of regional trade patterns, particularly between interior and coastal locales. The Merrimack River and its tributaries represent a regionally important inland/coastal transportation corridor for both the ancient and historic periods.

Historic archaeological resources described above have the potential to contribute important social, cultural, and economic information related to the occupants and operations at one of Acton's two largest, most prosperous and diverse 19th century farms. Historical research combined with archaeological survey and testing may help locate barns, outbuildings, and occupational related features (trash pits, privies, wells) associated with the farm since ca. 1800. Careful mapping and identification of

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

these structures can be used to document the layout of the farm during its operation and relationship to local and regional patterns of farm organization and dispersal. During the post Civil War years the Robbins farm was reported as one of the most diverse and productive in Acton. Archaeological resources may contribute information that documents the extent that diversity in farm production was characterized by diversity or multifunctional use in the number of farm outbuildings that were present. Functional identification of outbuildings and analysis of occupational related features may also contribute an accurate measure of diversity on the farm and the extent manufacturing activities may have played a role in the farm economy. Various cottage industries may have supplemented farm income for members of the Robbins family or several Irish immigrants reported living on the farm in the mid-19th century. Historical sources, outbuildings and occupational related features may contribute important information related to living conditions for Irish tenants or boarders on the farm and the extent they lived separately or were integrated into Robbins family structure.

Historic archaeological resources may also contribute information that documents the reputation of the Robbins House as Acton's most sophisticated example of transitional Georgian/federal architecture and the best house in Acton when built. Additional historical research may produce documentary information or plans that describe materials and techniques used in the house construction. Physical examples of building materials, interior details, and construction features may also be recovered through archaeological excavations. The above information would corroborate and possibly contribute primary evidence on the architectural details of the house and its quality of design and construction. Historical and archaeological resources may also document the date when utilities (gas, electric, water, sewage) were installed at the house and the extent installation of those facilities may have influenced the appearance and quality of the house.

(end)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Books, articles, pamphlets, and files

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(Reprint of a William R. Scott publication, 1937.)

Government Documents

United States government

Federal Census--agricultural schedules, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880; population (household) schedule--1880.

Federal Direct Tax Census: 1798.

(continued)

John Robbins House
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.08 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19 301370 470600
Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Forbes, consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date May 2003

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Donald and Barbara Nylander

street & number 144 Great Road telephone 978-263-5646

city or town Acton state MA zip code 01720

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.).

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 the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Middlesex County Registry of Deeds: deeds and probate records; recorded plans 1900, 1940, 1955.

Massachusetts State census: 1865.

Town of Acton

Annual Reports; Assessor's Real Estate Valuations.

Vital Records.

Maps and atlases

Beers, F.W. *Atlas of Middlesex County.* New York: 1875.

Hales, John G. *Plan of the Town of Acton.* 1830-31.

Walker, George. *Atlas of Middlesex County.* Boston: 1889.

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(End)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Robbins House property are those recorded and shown on Acton Assessor's Map F4, Parcel 35-2.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property consists of the entire 1.08-acre parcel on which the Robbins House is located, and comprises the remaining portion of the original farmstead that was owned at the turn of the 19th century by John Robbins. It includes the three of the sixteen small parcels described on a 1955 subdivision plan filed by William and Belle Hinckley which are still under the same ownership as the Robbins House.

(End)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

RESOURCE COUNT

C= CONTRIBUTING NC=NONCONTRIBUTING B=BUILDING O=OBJECT SI=SITE ST=STRUCTURE

MAP#	NAME or DESCRIPTION	DATE	STATUS	TYPE
1	John Robbins House	1800	C	B
2	Farmstand	ca. 1920s	C	B
3	Site of Wooley-Robbins barn	ca. 1745-1922	C	SI
4.	System of fieldstone walls	pre-1900	C	ST

RESOURCE COUNT

Contributing

Noncontributing

Building	2	0
Structures	1	0
Objects	0	0
Sites	1	0
Total	4	

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number photo Page

John Robbins House
Acton (Middlesex), MA

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs 1-6 by Mark O'Neil, 1999, negatives in possession of Acton Historical Commission
Photographs and negatives 7-16 by Anne Forbes, 2001-2.

8 x 10" photographs

1. John Robbins House: view northwest
2. John Robbins House: view north-northwest, with chaise house/woodshed
3. John Robbins House: view northeast with attached sheds
4. John Robbins House: view east (rear)

5 x 7" photographs

5. John Robbins House: east entry, looking north-northwest
6. John Robbins House: southeast parlor, west fireplace wall

4 x 6" photograph

7. Farmstand, ca. 1920

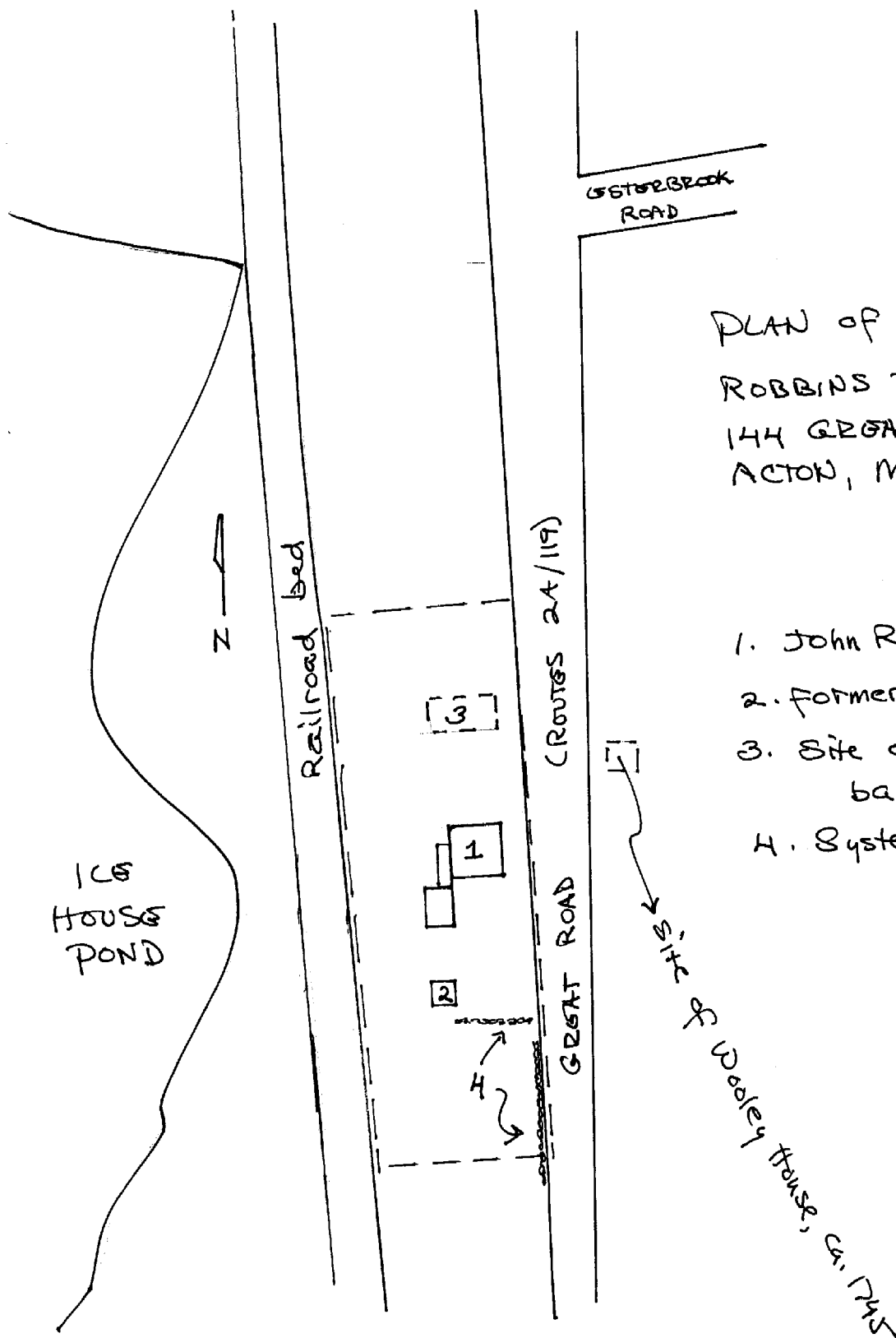
3 1/2 x 5" photographs

8. Stairhall, looking southwest
9. Stairhall, south wall detail
10. Southwest kitchen: east fireplace wall
11. Northeast parlor: fireplace
12. Northwest kitchen: east fireplace wall
13. Northwest kitchen: southwest doors
14. Southeast chamber: fireplace
15. Southwest chamber: fireplace
16. Northeast chamber: fireplace

Historic Photographs and illustrations (photocopies)

- A. View of Robbins House, looking north (late 19th century)
- B. William Pain, *Practical Builder*, Boston edition, 1793: Plate 67
- C. William Pain, *Practical Builder*, Boston edition, 1792: Plate 47

(end)



PLAN OF REMAINING
ROBBINS FARM
144 GREAT ROAD
ACTON, MA

1. John Robbins House, 1800
2. Former Farmstand, ca. 1920
3. Site of Wooley/Robbins barn, ca. 1745-1922
4. System of fieldstone walls, pre-1900

Site of Wooley House, ca. 1745

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Robbins, John, House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Middlesex

DATE RECEIVED: 6/12/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/09/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/25/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/27/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03000682

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 7/25/03 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



Robbins House - 144 Great Rd. Acton, MA,
Middlesex County

photographer - Mark O'Neil Oct. 1999

Neg. in ATC files, Town Hall, Acton #32

Front & Eastside view from Great Road

① view northwest



Robbins House, 144 Great Rd, Acton, MA, Middlesex County

Photographer - Mark O'Neil Oct, 1999 #34

Neg. in AHC Films, Town Hall, Acton

Carriage Shed & part of East side of House

② view north/northwest



Robbins House 144 Great Rd. Acton, MA, Middlesex County

Photographer, Mark O'Neil, Oct. 1999 #32

Neg. in ATC Files, Town Hall, Acton, MA.

Rear of Carriage House Addition from back yard
looking northwest

③ View northeast, with attached sheds



Robbins House - 144 Great Rd. Acton, MA, Middlesex County

Photographer - Mark O'Veil Oct. 1999 #30

Neg. in AHC Files, Town Hall, Acton

Rear of House showing addition & rear of shed, from
back yard

① view east (rear)



Robbins House, 144 Great Rd. Acton, MA
Middlesex County

Photographer - Mark O'Neil, Oct. 1999

Veg. in AHC Files, Town Hall, Acton
#13

Front Door facing Great Rd.

⑤ East entry, looking NNW

9050211 N2



Robbins House, 144 Great Rd. Acton, MA, Middlesex
County

Photographer - Mark O'Neil, Oct. 1999 #1A

neg. in AHC Files, Town Hall, Acton

584 0211 N-1 Parlor Fireplace

⑥ Southeast parlor, west fireplace wall



JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE
144 GREAT RD.
ACTON, MA

MIDDLEBORO CO.

⑦ FARMSTAND, 1920s



JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE

144 GREAT RD.

ACTON, MA

MIDDLESEX CO.

⑦ Farmstand, 1920s



8

JOHN ROBINS HOUSE
ACTON, MA

BC-01/20011351987 0111 N 1

Stairhall looking SW



9

JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE
ACIDON, MA

BC-01/2001L377987 0111 NH

Stairhall : South
Well detail



JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE
ACTON, MA

10 Southwest corner: E. fireplace wall

01/28011253987 0111 N 1



JOHN ROBBINS THOMAS
ACTON, MA

11

Northeast parlor: fireplace



JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE
ACTON, MA

12 Northwest Kitchen:
E. fireplace



13

JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE
ACTON, MA

BC-6142861F30J987 0111 444

Northwest Kitchen =

SW Doors



EROX

JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE
ACTON, MA

14

Southeast Chamber: Fireplace



JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE
ACAD, MA

15

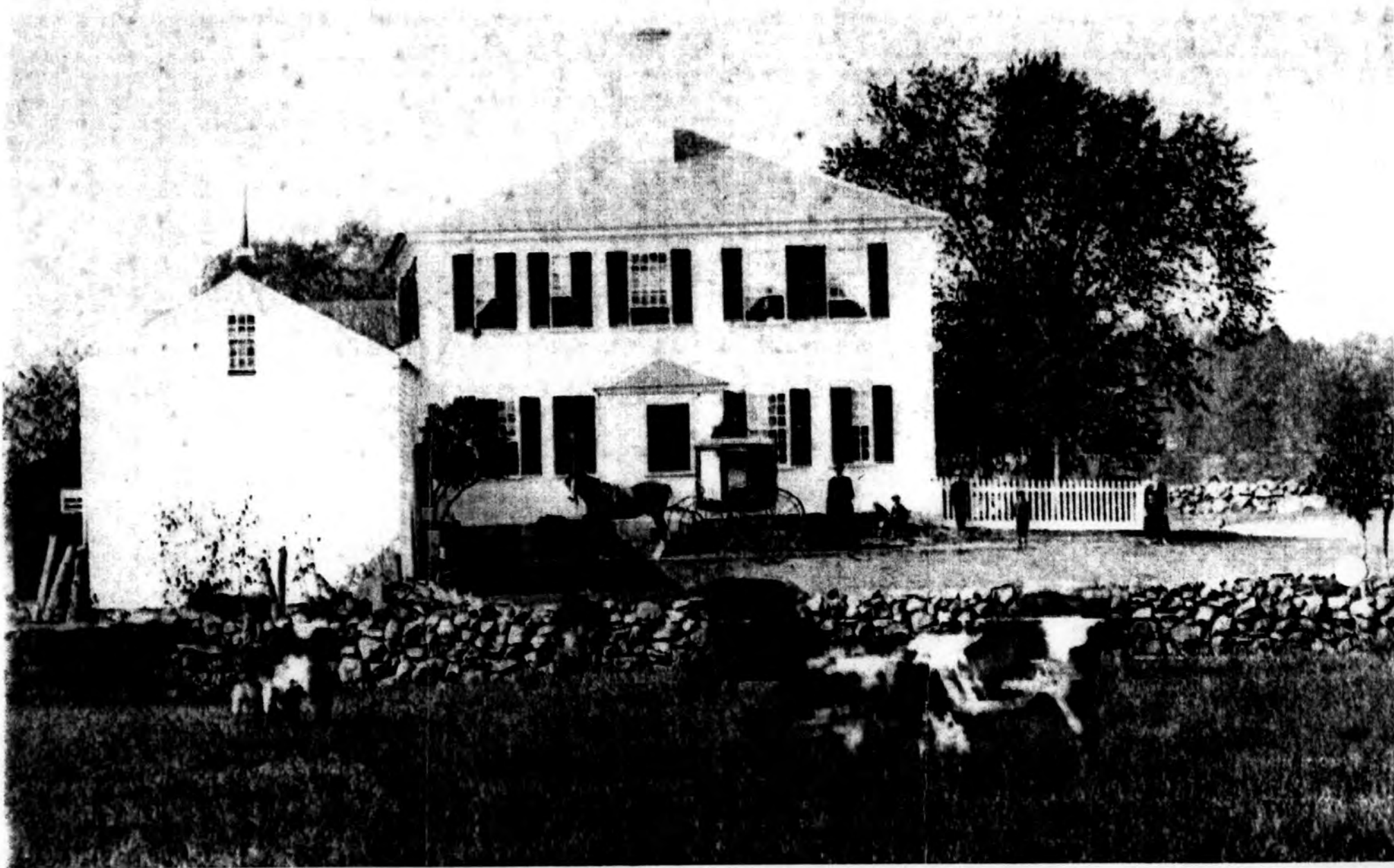
Southwest Chamber fireplace

01/2001L43J987 0111 14



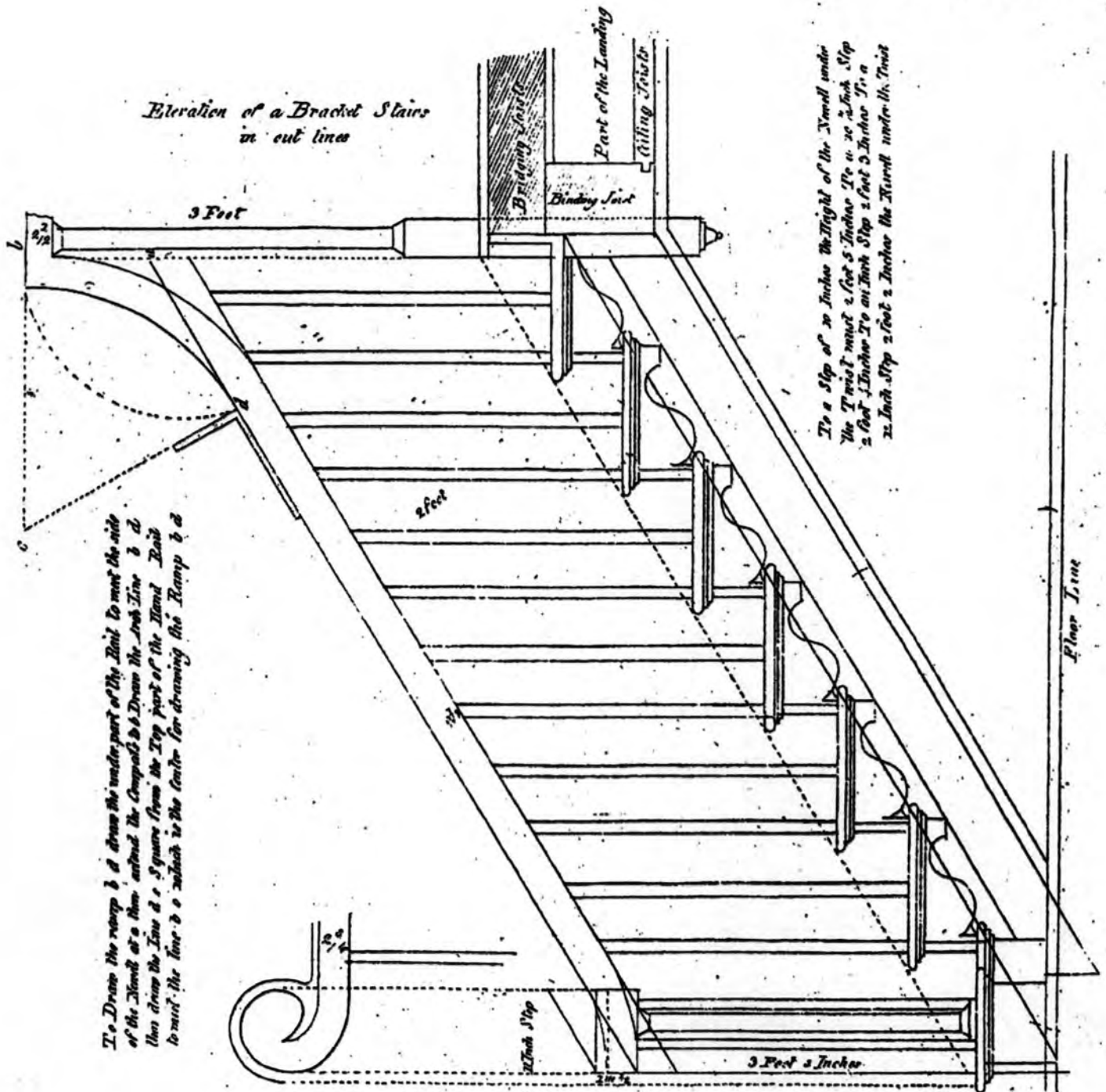
JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE
ACTON, MA

16 Northeast Chamber Fireplace



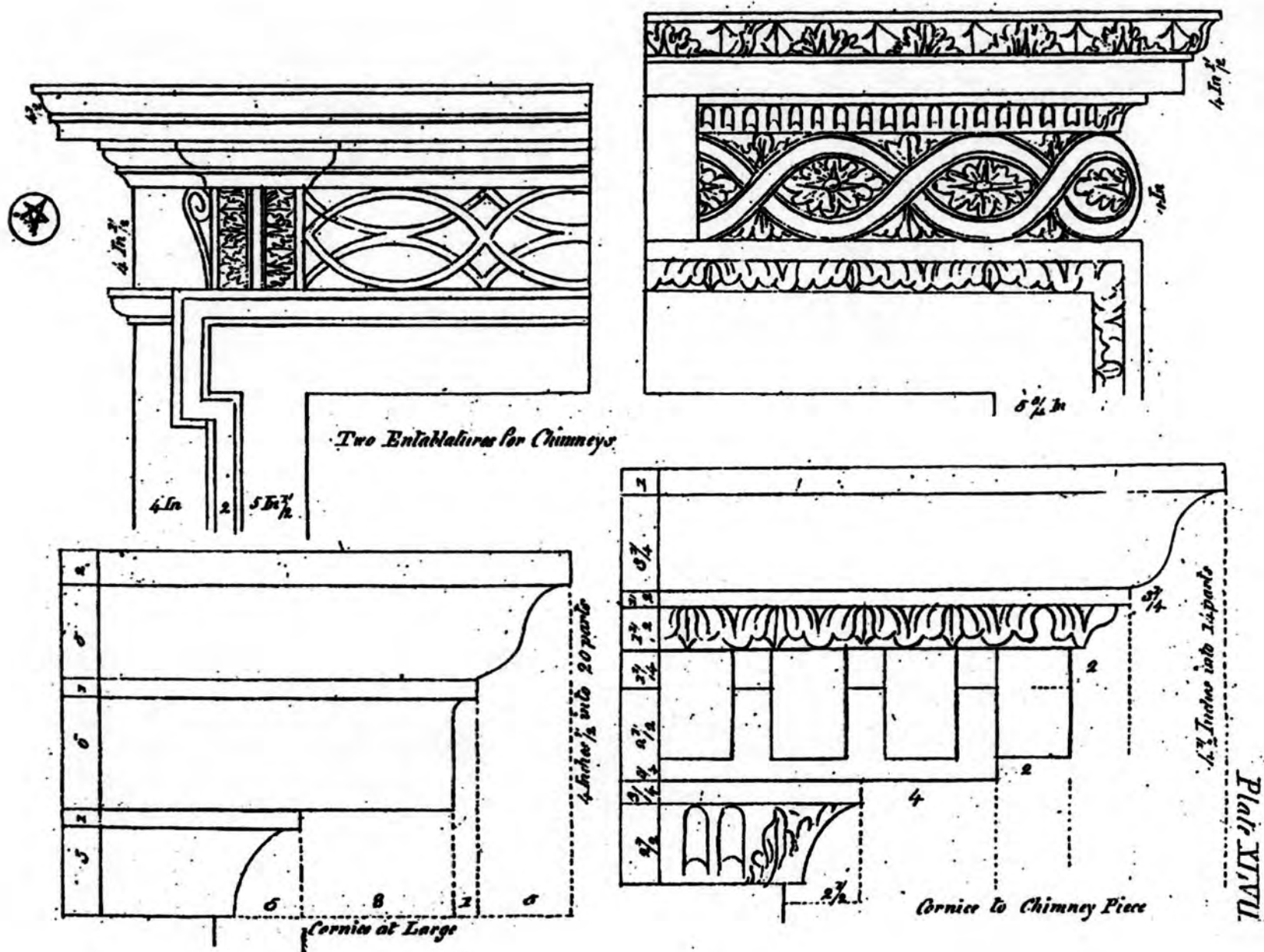
Ⓐ JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE, 144 GREAT RD., ACTON, looking north -

Late 19th century



(B)

Plate 67 from William Pain's *Practical Builder* (Boston: 1792),
the pattern for the stairs in the Robbins House



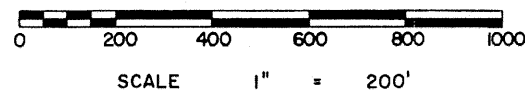
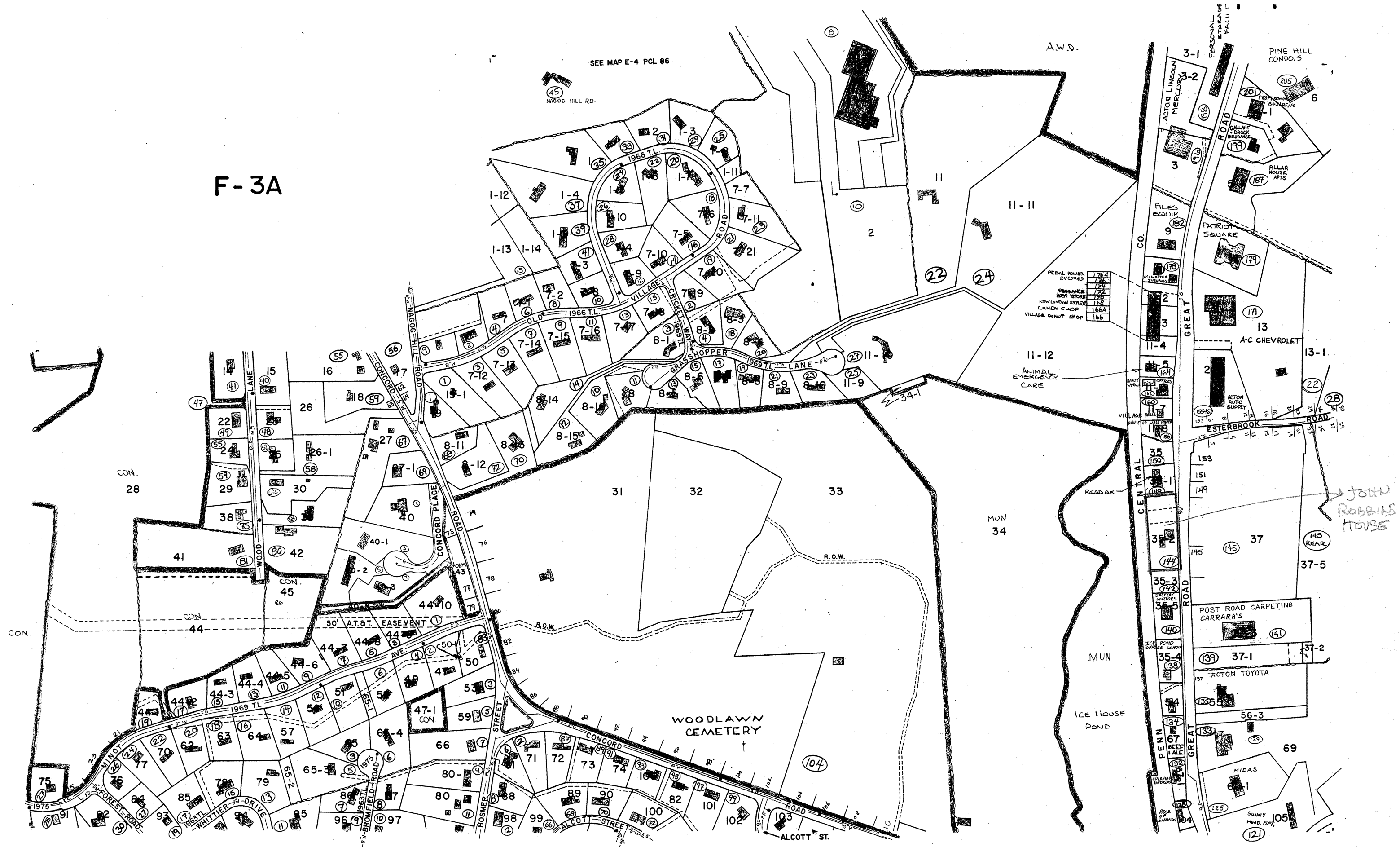
④

Plate 47, "Two entablatures for Chimneys," from William Pain's *Practical Builder* (Boston: 1792)

F-3A

SEE MAP E-4 PCL 66

A.W.D.



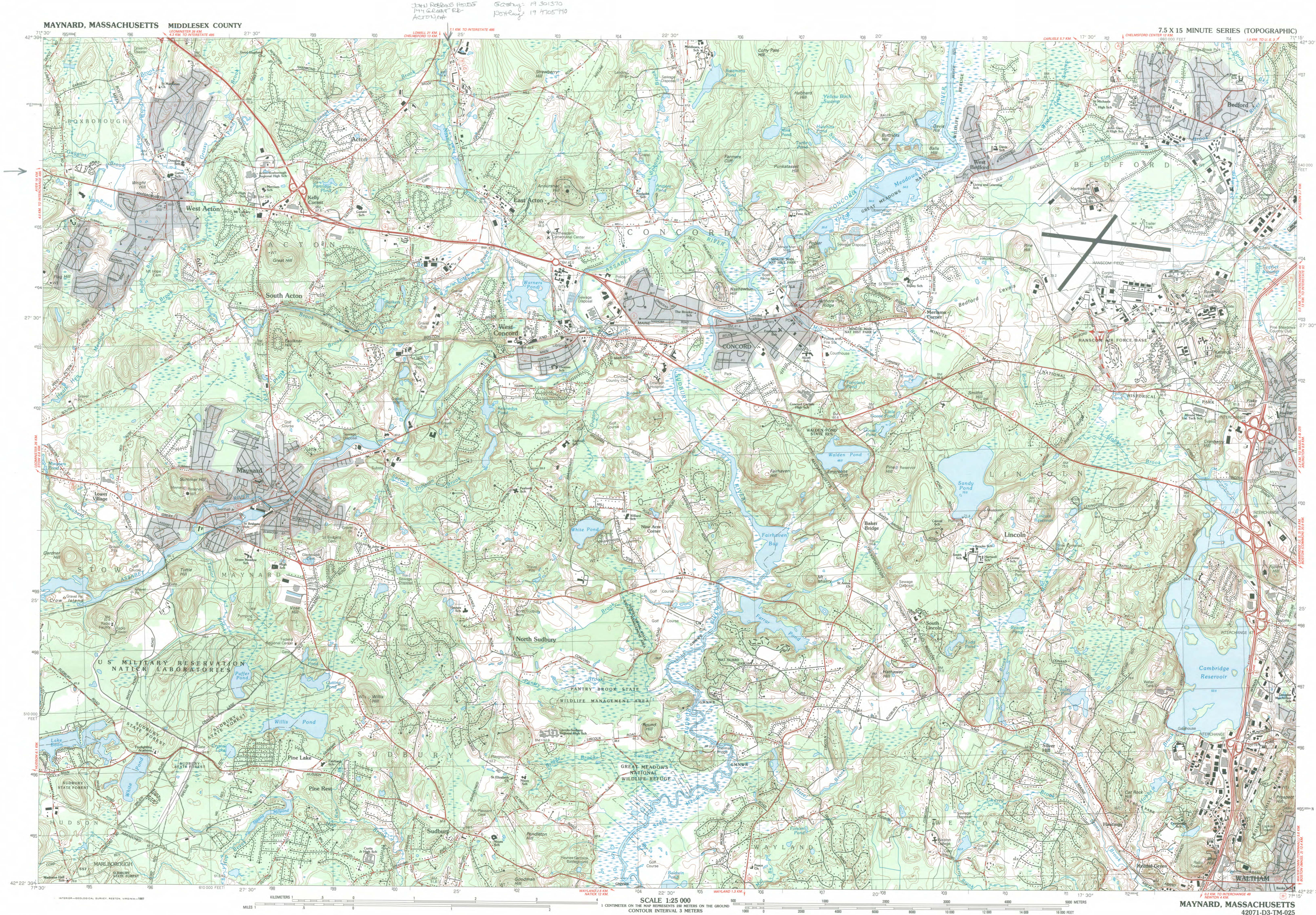
E-3	E-4	E-5
F-3	F-3A	F-4
G-3	G-4	G-5

TOWN of ACTON

F-4

JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE
144 GREAT RD.
ACCON, MA





Maynard

MASSACHUSETTS

1:25 000-scale metric topographic map

7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

1987

42071-D3-TM-025

Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Massachusetts Department of Public Works

Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies

Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1978 and 1981. Field checked 1978. Map edited 1987

Supersedes Maynard and Concord 1:25 000-scale maps dated 1965 and 1970

Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 19

10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone

1927 North American Datum

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 6 meters south and 41 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER

OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.5 METER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

CONVERSION TABLE		DECLINATION DIAGRAM	ADJOINING MAPS		
Meters	Feet		1	2	3
1	3.281		1	2	3
2	6.562		4	5	
3	9.843		6	7	8
4	13.124				
5	16.405				
6	19.686				
7	22.967				
8	26.248				
9	29.529				
10	32.810				
To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808		UTM grid convergence (km) and 100' grid declination (MM) at center of map. Diagram is approximate			
To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.3048					

ISBN 0-607-23457-3

9 780607 234572

Topographic Map Symbols	
Primary highway, hard surface	
Secondary highway, hard surface	
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface	
Unimproved road, trail	
Route marker: Interstate, U.S., State	
Railroad: standard gage; narrow gage	
Bridge: drawbridge	
Footbridge; overpass; underpass	
Build-up area: only selected landmark buildings shown	
House; barn; church; school; large structure	
Boundary:	
National, with monument	
State	
County, parish	
Civil township, precinct, district	
Incorporated city, village, town	
National or State reservation, monument	
Land grant with monument; found section corner	
U.S. public lands survey; range, township; section	
Range, township; section line: location approximate	
Fence or field line	
Power transmission line, located tower	
Dam; dam with lock	
Cemetery; grave	
Campground; picnic area; U.S. location monument	
Windmill; water well; spring	
Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cave	
Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation	
Contours: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression	
Distorted surface: strip mine; lava; sand	
Bathymetric contours: index; intermediate	
Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream	
Rapids, large and small; falls; large and small	
Submerged marsh; marsh; swamp	
Land subject to controlled inundation; woodland	
Schub; mangrove	
Orchard; vineyard	

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

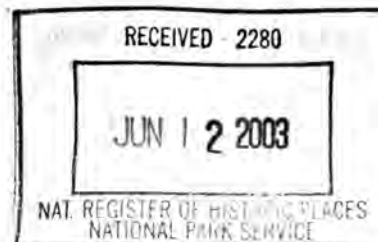
1987



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

June 2, 2003

Ms. Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th floor
Washington, DC 20005



Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

John Robbins House, 144 Great Road, Acton (Middlesex), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Anne McC. Forbes, consultant
Donald and Barbara Nylander
Peter Grover, Acton Historical Commission
Peter Ashton, Acton Board of Selectmen
Roland Bartl, Acton Planning Board