

FORM A - AREA

Assessor's Sheets USGS Quad Area Letter Form Numbers in Area
219, 220 AA

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Massachusetts Archives Building
Boston, MA 02125

Town: Groton

Place: Farmers Row, Joy Lane, Shirley Road

Photographs

X See continuation sheet

Name of Area: Surrenden Farms

Current Use: Residential/agricultural

Construction Dates or Period: c. 1680-1964

Overall Condition: Good-excellent

Major Intrusions and Alterations: 1 modern or rebuilt residence; few modern materials; some demolished residences

Acreage: Approximately 340

Sketch Map

X See continuation sheet

Recorded by: Sanford Johnson

Organization: Groton Historical Commission

Date (Month/Year): 10/07

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community. See Continuation Sheet X

Introduction

The Surrenden Farms Area comprises a rural landscape with scattered houses and farms located between the southerly segment of Farmers Row and the Nashua River. The Groton School is adjacent to the north of Surrenden Farms and will be addressed on a separate Area Form in the future. The area, which is 36 miles west of Boston, consists half of open agricultural land and half of forested land. Building styles represented including the Federal, Dutch Colonial Revival, Ranch and Cape Cod. A great deal of the area's character is derived from the three well-preserved farmhouses with outbuildings located amid farm land which is elevated above the Nashua River to the west. The area is one of the town's most well-preserved agricultural parcels and retains strong associations with the residential and agricultural history.

Development

Groton was founded in 1655 by residents from Woburn, Boston and elsewhere as one of the state's westernmost frontier towns. Disputes with Native Americans were common and persisted into the 18th century, slowing the settlement process. Subsequent agricultural activity proved successful and allowed local farmers to prosper, encouraging the Federal Period development of farms and later of estate properties in the area and along nearby Farmers Row (MHC Area ###) as well as the nearby Groton School on the northern boundary of Surrenden Farms. Most buildings are contributing elements and continue to associate the area with its historic trends of development. The area retains much of the appearance it had during the mid 19th century.

Streetscape

Shirley Road bisects the area and is the location of three agricultural residences, and a single modern Ranch style house north of Shirley road accessed by Joy Lane. Land adjacent to Shirley road is mainly large hayfields with views toward the west and southwest. Wooded land is visible to the north and south.

Selected Descriptions

The house at **194 Shirley Road (MHC #41)** is a 5x2-bay, 1 1/2-story, side-gabled Cape Cod house with a 1-story side-gabled addition at the west side that connects to a side-gabled, wood clapboard shed with 3 garage doors. The façade of the main block has a central enclosed hip-roofed entry porch articulated with and entablature and pilasters and sidelights flanking the door. Additional details include the symmetrical fenestration in the façade of the Cape Cod mass and molded cornice. Windows are mainly 6/6 double-hung sash with plain trim although fixed 6-pane sash exist in the shed and addition. The main entry is through the central porch; 2 secondary entries exist in the south elevation of the shed. Two brick chimneys rise from the roof of the main block and a third from the roof of the addition. The attached shed has 3 modern roll-up garage doors, a pedestrian door and a 6/6 sash. A large modern gable-roofed metal detached barn is located southwest of the house. The house has been altered with the application of vinyl siding but retains many of its original design features; the setting is rural and the 191 acres parcel includes large open fields with post and rail, fences and views of Mount Wachusett.

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The house at **133 Shirley Road (MHC #42)** is a complex of agricultural buildings that has at its core the Federal style 5x1-bay, side-gabled, 2 1/2-story house that is enlarged at the rear by a 2-story perpendicular ell of three bays and an east side open porch; a second rear addition of 2 bays is also visible from the east side. The ell has a 1-story screened porch at the west elevation which connects to the side-gabled carriage barn. Also present are the detached wood clapboard barn and 2 additional wood clapboard sheds. Details on the house include the symmetrical fenestration in the façade, closed side gables, corner boards, and molded cornice. The center entry has sidelights and a hip-roofed open porch with entablature supported by 2 Doric columns. Windows are 2/2 double-hung sash with beaded trim. Two brick chimneys rise from the rear slope of the roof and 1 from the ridge of the rear ell. The attached 2-story carriage barn has 2 bays accessed by folding or swinging doors and 2 pedestrian doors. A central gabled dormer lights the upper floor while small fixed sash and a 2/2 double-hung unit light the west side elevation. The detached barn west of the house is larger than the carriage barn, has rolling vehicle doors with a double row of transom lights, 6/6 double-hung sash, pedestrian doors and mow doors in both gable ends; gable returns, corner boards, a wide frieze, molded cornice and square roof ventilator are also present. Four pairs of fixed 6-pane sashes light the north elevation and the detached small gable-roofed building behind or south of the house is clad in wood clapboards and lit by 6/6 sash. The chimney at the south side wall suggests its possible use as a shop. The very well-preserved house and outbuildings occupy a scenic parcel of open land with views of Mount Wachusett

The house at **162 Shirley Road** is a Dutch Colonial Revival style house with a side gabled gambrel roof and three bays across the façade. The 2-story form is articulated with a molded cornice, gable returns and corner boards. The full-width front porch is integral to the front slope of the roof which, over the porch, has a distinctive curved pitch.

A second house at **102 Joy Lane** is located north of the Cape Cod house at 194 Shirley Road. The building is a one-story Ranch style design carried out in brick with eight bays across the façade and a ridge-hipped roof clad in slate shingles. This property is placed amid landscaped gardens with retaining walls of brick, curving stone stairways that provide access to terraces oriented toward the west and views of Mount Wachusett. Additional structures include a greenhouse now partially dismantled, a tennis court in disrepair, a hip-roofed two-bay garage in brick, and what appears to be a guest house clad in vertical flushboard detached from the main residence but located nearby.

Landscape Features

The Surrenden Farms Area is characterized by its far-ranging westerly views toward Mount Wachusett and other eminences of central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Large open fields comprise most of the property and reach west to the Nashua River. Agricultural activity beginning in the Colonial Period has continued in the area and thus the appearance of farms fields and pastures remains predominant. The bank of the Nashua River at the southwestern edge of the property is the site of a horse cemetery consisting of around

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20 granite stones placed on end in a row overlooking the river. No inscriptions are visible on the grave markers.

Conclusion/Comparison

The Surrenden Farms Area is one of the town's largest intact agricultural landscapes that, as a result of the recent purchase by a group of owners including the town, Groton School, and the Trust for Public Land, will remain a well-maintained rural resource. The area occupies a special position among historic resources in the community, one that may only be comparable to Gibbet Hill and Angus Hill at the Deacon Hall-Gibbet Hill Farm on Lowell road (MHC #157). Numerous other sections of town contain prominent agricultural landscapes but lack the size, open space and level of preservation of Surrenden Farms.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:

Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how the area relates to the historical development of the town. See Continuation Sheet X

Introduction

During the Period of First Settlement (1620-1675), the town's European residents clustered around the intersection of the modern day Main and Hollis Streets in Groton Center with a small number of additional residents scattered over the town. Those not living in the central village were most likely to be on Farmers Row as it was laid out around the same time as the Main Street-Boston Road corridor and was also a county road by 1673. In an attack by Native Americans on Groton farmers in 1704, John Davis of Shirley Road was killed while taking in laundry, indicating the settlement of the Surrenden Farms Area by that time. The 1832 Butler map of Groton indicates there were in the area at least seven houses, mostly farms, owned by Phineas Gould, Benjamin Moors, Jacob Pollard, Amos Farnsworth, Thomas Farnsworth, Eben Wright and the Widow Hopkins. The population would increase slightly during the later 19th century with the influx of a religious sect of Millerites and would then revert to a small agricultural enclave of around three farms that bordered on the campus of Groton School, founded in 1884. The area retains much of its late 19th century appearance.

Pre-Industrial Period 1675-1830

The population of the town of Groton at the beginning of the Colonial Period was around 60 families according to Dr. Samuel Green's research in the 1880s and 1890s. Due to violent attacks on the European settlers by Native Americans fighting for King Philip in the spring of 1676, the entire town except five garrisons was burned and the whole of the population decamped, many to Concord, for a period of two years. Returning in the spring of 1678, the Europeans renewed their efforts to settle the town and were successful in attracting 40 families (approximately 200 people) by 1680 and 300-350 people by 1692, although growth

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continued to be slow due to the unstable relations with warring Native Americans. The number of residents in 1765 given by the Massachusetts Historical Commission Town Report is 1443 in 242 families and 174 houses, signifying an increase in the rate of settlement after stabilizing relations with Native Americans around 1730.

Of the 174 houses in the town, perhaps as many as 5 existed in the area of Surrenden Farms. Caleb Butler, author of the 1832 map of the town, indicates in his field notes for the map that all five houses within the current boundaries of the Surrenden Farms area were considered old, a comment that suggests the houses were in existence during the Colonial Period. The southernmost farm on the map is depicted as the home of Thomas Farnsworth, about whom little is known. The house is no longer extant. At the site of 194 Shirley Road (MHC #41) lived Major Amos Farnsworth during the Colonial Period. Major Farnsworth (1754-1847) marched on Concord and fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775 among other engagements according to Butler's history. The Colonial house depicted in 1832 has been replaced with the current house. The house at the site of 133 Shirley Road (MHC #42) was also described as old in 1832 and was replaced subsequently with the existing building around 1840. Two additional houses were depicted on the 1832 map and described as old. These are no longer extant and were located south of the corner of Joy Lane and Shirley Road and near the site of 364 Farmers Row, now a part of the Groton School. The population remained around the same during the Federal Period as it was during the Colonial.

The principal economic activity on the Surrenden Farms land was agriculture. Aspects of farming that residents were engaged in included cattle-raising, hay and crop-growing and general husbandry on a subsistence level. Beginning c. 1790, there arose a focus on hop culture in this part of Groton, a crop that remained profitable until the 1840s. Production increased throughout the Federal Period until by the end Groton was a center of the trade for surrounding towns where it was also grown (these included Westford, Pepperell, Dunstable, Littleton, Tyngsborough, Townsend, Harvard, Shirley, Lunenburg and Boxborough). Henry Woods and the Groton-based Massachusetts Hops Company were notable dealers in the crop until the trade moved west to New York State in the Early Industrial period.

Early Industrial Period 1830 - 1870

Population of the area was around five households at the beginning of the period including one occupied by the Widow Hopkins on Farmers Row. At that time, a majority of area residents were involved in agriculture as a means of making a living. Crops were mainly for subsistence although some were undoubtedly shipped to Lowell and other cities via the Fitchburg Railroad after 1848. Fruit would have been a particularly common cash crop. Butler noted in his 1847 history of the town that the predominant crops were corn, barley, oats, potatoes and rye but hay was the chief crop for market. Apples, peaches, cherries, plums and pears were becoming profitable to sell in Lowell with the growth of that city from the 1820s. Butler mentions that hops were grown here but were no longer as profitable as they once were. Hop growers included J. Richards and Alva Cushing on farms now demolished but located in 1856 on Shirley Road halfway between Farmers Row and Joy Lane. Also, yeast and yeast cake made from dry hops were kept in a yeast house between Shirley

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Road and Farmers Row until around 1860 when Midwestern produce displaced the New England variety. In the area of the Groton School, there were several small-scale industrial shops that are now demolished or moved away. A hoop shaving shop was owned by Walter Keyes and a blacksmith shop by Henry Moody and later Joseph H. Richardson where ship irons and jack screws were made. A shoe shop also existed on Shirley Road as did an additional shop of unspecified use, all depicted on the 1856 Walling map.

An interesting segment of the local population, profiled in detail by Edward A. Richardson in his 1911 publication, "The Community", was the membership of the Millerite sect who occupied land on both sides of the northern boundary of the area. From 1846-1856, adherents of the Adventist religious principles of William Miller numbered around 50,000 nationwide and believed in the second advent of Christ and the end of the world between the vernal equinoxes of 1843 and 1844. Disappointed in March of 1844, Mr. Miller revised his estimate for the timing of the world's end based on new mathematical formulae taken from numbers mentioned in the various books of the Bible to occur in October, 1844, when, to the chagrin of those who had neglected daily farm chores or actually given away their property, the status quo prevailed. The local leader of Millerites in Groton was Benjamin Hall, a native of Westford who moved to Groton around 1840 and bought a farm of 120 acres along the Shirley Road where he established his "Community", the name that the location of the Millerites' neighborhood would retain for several decades after their demise. The original place of worship was in Groton Center on Willowdale Road in the "Polliwog Chapel", since destroyed by fire. Through the sale of parts of his farm to fellow believers, ownership of the Community was dispersed and expanded to around 12 households. The 1856 Walling map of Middlesex County shows approximately a half dozen residences, a hoop shop and blacksmith shop with in the area. Many residents made homes of former farm outbuildings and all are now moved away or demolished. Residents named Moody, Hale, Parker, Keyes, Davis and Fitz are depicted on the 1856 map and described in Richardson's history of the Community. The core of the settlement was located near the stables of the Gardner House on the Groton School Campus but extended south into the Surrenden Farms Area. Also nearby was a building with a tall roof that functioned as wood shop, meeting house, hall and school, an arrangement that lasted for around six of the ten or so years the Community existed. In 1856, Benjamin Hall moved away, eventually settling in Wisconsin and drawing around 25 Groton Adventists there. The hall was taken down in 1878.

Architecture

The house at **194 Shirley Road (MHC #41)** was occupied during the period by Major Amos Farnsworth (1754-1847), a Revolutionary War veteran who marched on Concord and fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775 among other engagements according to Butler's history. He was chosen a deacon of the First Parish Church c. 1798. He was taxed in 1830 for ownership of \$2,300 in real property, an average sum for Groton. This increased to \$3,000 in 1847, the year of his death. Subsequent owners were Nathaniel Davis in 1856 who census schedules reveal to have been a yeoman born c. 1801.

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The house at **133 Shirley Road (MHC #42)** was owned by Jacob Pollard in the 1830s-1850s. Tax records from 1847 indicate that Mr. Pollard had \$3,400 in real property and \$5,850 in personal assets, a larger than average amount of wealth for Groton. Census schedules reveal him to be a farmer, born c. 1790. Non-population Census Schedules from 1850 show he had 111 acres and a farm worth \$4,000. During the Pollard's ownership, farming was the predominant activity on the property and included apple growing. Large orchards are still visible. The barn burned on May 16, 1877 according to Richardson. A subsequent owner was John Keating who is listed in the 1888 resident directory as a farmer.

Late Industrial Period 1870-1915

Road development in the Surrenden Farms Area during the Late Industrial Period consisted of the creation of Joy Lane, the area's northwestern boundary. Economic activity slowed after the small shops operated in the Millerite Community had been demolished or moved away by 1880. This left husbandry, dairying, fruit growing and some crop culture to occupy the residents. The number of residents appears from the 1875 Beers atlas to have remained around eight households, including those owned by long term residents named Farnsworth and Pollard. Houses that are no longer standing were located in 1875 on the west side of Shirley Road and the south side of Joy Lane. Families in this part of Surrenden Farm included the Dickinsons, Hacketts, Rynns and Whitneys. Buildings were either moved from this area, demolished or lost to fire by the early 20th century. One such house appears to have been located south of Shirley Road until c. 2000. The site retains the driveway, some ornamental plantings and a small outbuilding of unknown use.

Architecture

The house at **194 Shirley Road** was owned in 1875 by Solomon Achorn who, according to tax records, owned 3 horses, 2 cows, 3 swine and 48 sheep, a larger than average flock and an orchard in 1880 of 150 trees which was typical for Groton. Charles H. Joy, a brother in law of James Lawrence of **44 Farmers Row (MHC #89)**, was the owner depicted on the 1889 Walker atlas. He was taxed in that year for ownership of \$30,000 in stocks and cash, 8 horses, \$1,500 in carriages and \$3,000 in furniture, a great deal more than most other people in Groton. Tax records also show that he owned this property as a secondary residence, probably to house his farmer or employees and he lived at the future site of 102 Joy Lane in a building valued in 1889 at the very high rate of \$10,000, which has since been demolished (this is likely the site of the c. 1964 Danielson-Campbell House at 102 Joy Lane). It contained 30 rooms and was landscaped by members of the Frederick Law Olmsted landscape architecture firm. It is possible that the existing stone and brick retaining walls and landscaped terraces are the result of this construction effort. The Boston directory for 1885 lists a Charles H. Joy of Marlborough Street who was a dry goods merchant in business with men named Lincoln and Motley at 15 Chauncy Street.

The house at **133 Shirley Road** was owned by the Pollards until at least 1877 and later by John Keating. Mr. Keating is listed in the 1888 resident directory as a farmer. Tax records indicate a herd of 12 cows which is

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slightly above average. Additional barns and smaller outbuildings were built, probably in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Early Modern Period 1915-1945

The Early Modern Period brought few changes to the area other than limited residential development and some additional faculty and staff housing for employees of the Groton School near the northern boundary of Surrenden Farms. The local economic activity continued to function on an agricultural base with the existing farms at 133 and 194 Shirley Road continuing to raise livestock and crops. The 1939 WPA maps depict mainly orchards and hayfields being grown in the area as well as a poultry farming activity at 133 Shirley Road. The population of the area appears to have increased due to construction of residential buildings along Shirley Road, including two on the western edge of the area and two in the northern section. These have all been removed except the residence at 162 Shirley Road. Land use underwent little change during the period however horses began to serve a recreational rather than agricultural purpose. The Groton Hunt Club was established in 1922 by the Danielson family and sponsored fox hunts through the town and surrounding region. Horses for the hunt were kept at the farms on Shirley Road, a frequent starting point for the annual event that took place on Thanksgiving until around 1964.

Architecture

The house at **164 Shirley Road** is a Dutch Colonial Revival style residence that appears for the first time on historic maps in 1939 when it is labeled as a non-agricultural residence in good condition. Assessor records give a construction date of 1932. It is presumable that since the house is between estates belonging to the Danielson family that they were the owners and housed employees there.

Modern Period 1945-2000

Modern construction is scarce in the area that continues to be dominated by large hayfields and forested land. Ownership by a single family through most of the 20th century and into the 21st has provided the parcels with a measure of protection from development. The parcel owned by the Groton Water Department on the bank of the bend in the Nashua River is the site of a horse cemetery consisting of around 20 grave markers which, according to local historians, was put to that use in the mid 20th century after the livestock of the Groton Hunt Club became superannuated. A modern house was built on the site of the former Achorn property north of 194 Shirley Road at 102 Joy Lane c. 1964. By that time, the house, depicted as a private estate on the 1939 map, was owned by Richard E. Danielson. Mr. Danielson was president of the Atlantic Monthly from 1940 until his death in Groton in 1957. He was a veteran of both world wars and Master of Foxhounds of the Groton Hunt Club from 1922-1936. It appears from recollections of local historians that this Ranch house replaced the ten bedroom mansion and occupies grounds landscaped by the Olmsted firm. Archives at the Olmsted center being under revision, documentation is not available at this time. The greenhouse, garage and several sheds

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along with additional landscape features were added around 1964 of subsequent to that date. The parcels comprising Surrenden Farms, so named by the town for the title given to the area by Mrs. Danielson, have remained in agricultural use as hay baling ground.

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Recommended as a National Register Historic District. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement Form.*

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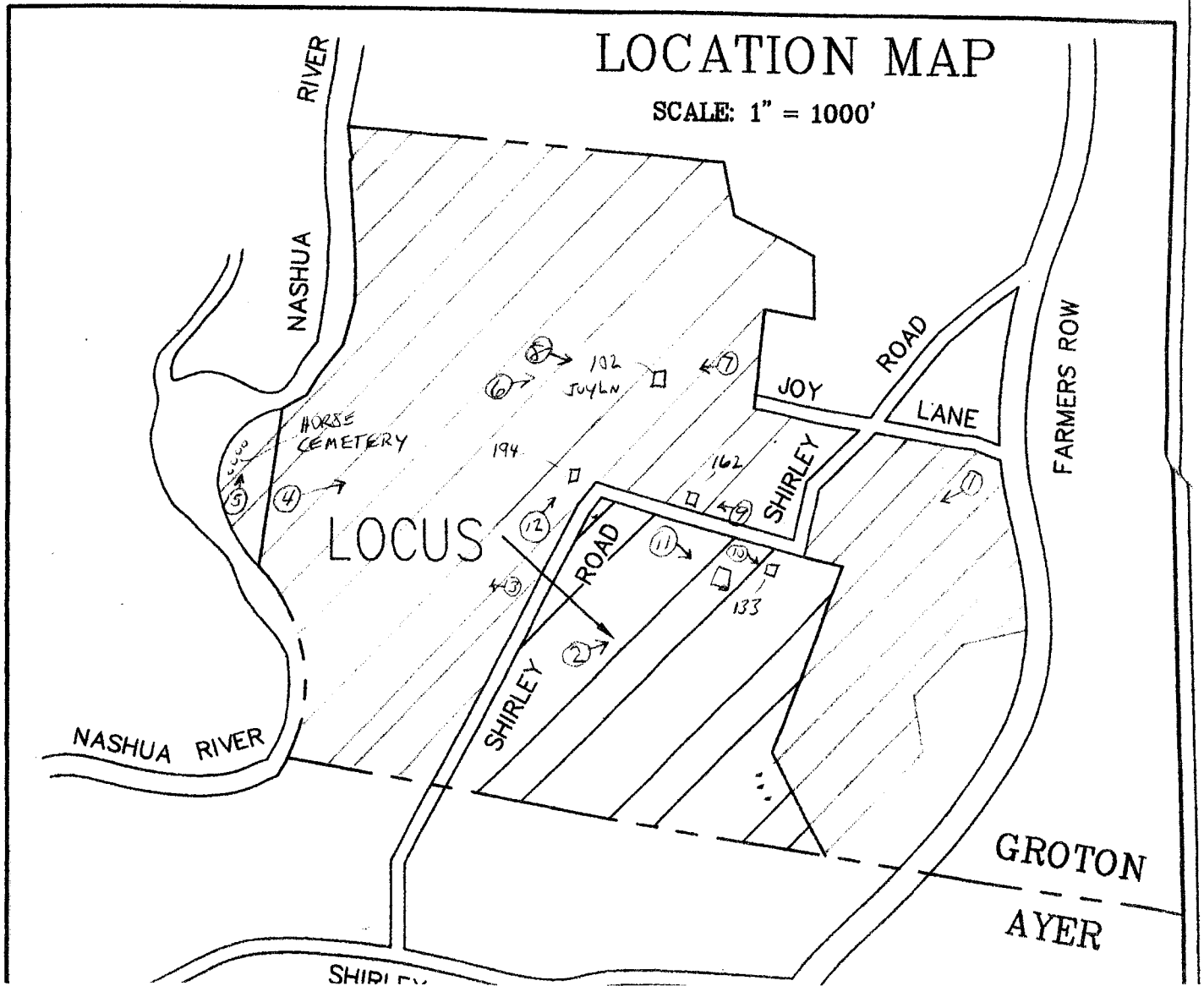
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Sketch Map

North Toward Top

→ photos



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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

Individually eligible

Eligible only in a historic district

Contributing to a potential historic district

Potential historic district **X**

Criteria: **X** A B **X** C D

Criteria considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of significance by: Sanford Johnson

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The area of Surrenden Farms is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at the local level. The scattered collection of agricultural residences is associated with the events and activities surrounding the development of the agricultural and leisure component of the town's economy. It is a representative example of a small farm enclave with well-preserved buildings and views to the west that take in the hills of Central Massachusetts and of Southern New Hampshire. It continues to bear a strong connection to its past through its surviving historic cultural resources such as houses, barns and fields. Also, the Colonial Revival, Greek Revival and Victorian Eclectic design elements that survive are evocative of the period of significance, 1680-1956. Well designed farmhouses, a modern residence with significant landscape elements, fieldstone walls, post and rail fences, farm fields of ten to fifty acres, represent the distinctive design characteristics of farm villages in New England.

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Photos



#1 West view past 133 Shirley Road



#2 East view

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#3 West view



#4 East view

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#5 Horse cemetery



#6 102 Joy Lane, west elevation

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#7 102 Joy Lane, east elevation



#8 102 Joy Lane, garden terrace

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#9 162 Shirley Road, east elevation



#10 133 Shirley Road, west elevation

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#11 133 Shirley Road, Barn, west elevation



#12 194 Shirley Road, south elevation

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
Groton

Property Address
Farmers Row, Shirley Road, Joy Lane

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Massachusetts Archives Building
Boston, MA 02125

Area(s) Surrenden Farms
Form No. AA

Surrenden Farms Area Data Sheet

MHC	Map/Lot	Address	Style/Form	Outbuildings/Secondary Structures	Historic Name	Date	Uses: Present
42, 227-230	220 33	133 Shirley Road	Federal	19 th c. Barns, sheds		c. 1840	Residential/ agricultural
484	219 8	164 Shirley Road	Dutch Colonial Revival	Detached garage, c. 1932		c. 1932	Residential
41	219 8	194 Shirley Road	Cape Cod	Detached barn, c. 1980		c. 1840	Residential/ agricultural
802	219		N/A		Horse Cemetery	c. 1900	Funerary
485	219 8	102 Joy Lane	Ranch	Greenhouse, sheds, garage, tennis court	Danielson House	c. 1964	Residential