

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Browning's Beach Historic District

other name/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number: Card's Pond Road

not for publication: N/A

city/town: South Kingstown vicinity: N/A

state: RI county: Washington code: 009 zip code: 02879

## 3. Classification

Ownership of Property: ~~multiple~~ private

Category of Property: district

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Property name Browning's Beach H.D., Washington County, S. Kingstown, RI

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Fredrick C Williamson  
Signature of certifying official

16 July 1997  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic:	<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub:	<u>single dwelling</u>
Current:	<u>DOMESTIC</u>	Sub:	<u>single dwelling</u>

Property name Browning's Beach H.D., Washington County, S. Kingstown, RI

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification:

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne, Shingle Style  
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENT/Bungalow/Craftsman

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation STONE roof WOOD/shingle  
walls WOOD/shingle other ASPHALT/shingle

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

X See continuation sheet.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: locally

Applicable National Register Criteria: \* A + c (a.a.)

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE  
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: ca. 1895-ca. 1905

Significant Dates: ca. 1895 ca. 1905

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder: Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

\* See "SLR" attached.

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### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 97000952 Date Listed: 09/05/97

Browning's Beach Historic District Washington RI  
Property Name County State

N/A  
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*[Signature]*  
Signature of the Keeper

9/5/97  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

3. Classification: Ownership

Although there are multiple owners, they are all "private."

8. Statement of Significance: Criteria

Criterion A applies to the documented significance of the property under the area of "Entertainment/Recreation."

This information was confirmed with RISHPO staff by telephone.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without attachment)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of Property: 20 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
A	<u>19</u>	<u>285460</u>	<u>4583600</u>	B	<u>19</u>	<u>285690</u>	<u>4583590</u>
C	<u>19</u>	<u>285670</u>	<u>4582940</u>	D	<u>19</u>	<u>285380</u>	<u>4582820</u>
E	<u>19</u>	<u>285350</u>	<u>4583200</u>	F	_____	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:  See continuation sheet.

The properties contained within the district include the land area of South Kingstown Assessor's plats/ lots: 91-3/6, 91-3/8, 92-1/1, 92-1/37, 92-1/37-01, 92-4/1, 92-4/3, 92-4/4, 92-4/6, 92-4/7, 92-4/8, 92-4/9, 92-4/10,

Boundary Justification:  See continuation sheet.

The district boundaries include the original residential compound as it was developed in the early 20th century and maintained to date with a common shared driveway access.

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/Title: Richard C. Youngken

Organization: Newport Collaborative Architects, Inc. Date: 4/97

Street & Number: 14 Pelham Street Telephone: 401-846-9583

City or Town: Newport State: RI ZIP: 02840

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## Description

Browning's Beach is a cluster of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century summer houses built on the edge of a barrier beach facing the sea. The district is characterized by the consistent architectural character of most of its buildings and by its unique physical location immediately adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean. A cluster of three wood-framed 1-1/2-story shingle-style houses and a bungalow is arranged in a linear fashion facing south along a barrier beach separating the ocean from Card's Pond, a coastal pond. The buildings are located in close proximity to the high tide line. Three of the beach houses within the cluster retain detached carriage house/garages of complementary architectural design. The approach to the cluster is along a narrow gravel road extending approximately 1300 feet from the main road, Card's Pond Road. A former stable, approached off the gravel road, is located on a peninsula in Card's Pond to the north of the cluster and to the west of the gravel road. A former beach cabana is located to the east of the gravel road to the north of the cluster.

Each of the four beach houses is a derivative of the late nineteenth-century Queen Anne, shingle-style and arts-and-crafts design vocabulary popular at the time for seasonal resort and domestic architecture. The primary residential buildings and their dependencies survive with considerable exterior and architectural character and are representative examples of the style, exceptional in their survival along the ocean's edge.

## Contributing elements:

### CARD'S POND ROAD

- 392 A Mares Nest (ca 1905): A rambling single-story, gable-roofed, former stable block with a 2-1/2-story gable-roofed end block recently converted into a residence.
- 392 B Noyes-Bontecou/Red House (ca 1900): A 2-1/2-story, high gable-roofed, shingled Queen Anne style house with a corner tower. Along the west side is a recessed porch, partially enclosed. Interior features include extensive use of match board wall paneling, a brick and beach stone fireplace surround and a garret nursery.
- 392 C Noyes-Bontecou Carriage House/ Garage (ca 1900): A 1-1/2-story, gable-roof, shingled building with shed dormers and

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end-gable porches. The latter are supported by elaborate shingled brackets. The north-facing porch has a hipped roof.

- 392 D Webster-Dawley-Harris/ Green House (ca 1905): A 1-1/2-story, high cross-gambrel-roofed, shingle style house with recessed porches and hip-roofed dormers. A side porch has been enclosed with multi-paned windows. There is a second-story enclosed sleeping porch. Interior features include extensive match board wall paneling, a brick fireplace and a garret nursery.
- 392 E Webster-Dawley-Harris Carriage House/ Garage (ca 1905): A 1-1/2-story, gable-on-hip-roofed, shingled building with shed dormers and balustraded decks.
- 392 F Webster-Kenyon-Duval/ Blue House (ca 1905): A 1-1/2-story, chalet-roofed, shingle style house with a recessed porch in the ocean-facing end gable. Features include flared shingled water tables, eye brow dormers, shed dormers, and shingled porch supports.
- 392 H Knight-Bontecou Bungalow (ca 1905): A 1-1/2 story, flank-gable, chalet-styled bungalow with recessed porches and shed dormers. The exterior is sheathed in decorative board-and-batten work. There are cobble stone chimneys and the building has a cobblestone foundation. Interior features include extensive wide board wall paneling, decorative exposed interior wall studding, heavy wrought iron door fittings with craftsman details, and interior stair hall windows of stained glass.
- 392 I Knight-Bontecou Carriage House/ Garage (ca 1905): A 1-1/2-story gable-roofed garage with an attached 2-level apartment. The exterior is sheathed in decorative board-and-batten work. There is a small gable-roofed second story porch projecting from the roof. The chimney is cobblestone.
- 392 J Browning's Beach Cabana (ca 1905): A single story, multi-bayed, gable-roofed, shingled structure resting on piers which has been enclosed and reused as a seasonal residence.

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Shed (before 1945): A small single-story, gable-roofed shed located near the Beach Cabana.

Non-contributing element:

392 G Beach House (ca 1950): A single story, flat-roofed, International Style house, with a walk-out basement. It was constructed on the site of an older beach house demolished after the 1938 hurricane.



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### Photographs

3. Photographer: Richard C. Youngken
4. Date: October 1996
5. Location of negatives: Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, 150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903

The above information pertains to all photographs.

6. View: Looking west to 392 B Card's Pond Road, Noyes-Bontecou/Red House.
7. Photo #1 of 7
6. View: Looking east to 392 D Card's Pond Road, Webster-Dawley-Harris/Green House.
7. Photo #2 of 7
6. View: Looking west to 392 D Card's Pond Road, Webster-Dawley-Harris/Green House.
7. Photo #3 of 7
6. View: Looking southwest to 392 D Card's Pond Road, Webster-Dawley-Harris/Green House.
7. Photo #4 of 7
6. View: Looking east to 392 H Card's Pond Road, Knight-Bontecou Bungalow.
7. Photo #5 of 7
6. View: Looking north to 392 I Card's Pond Road, Knight-Bontecou Carriage House/Garage.
7. Photo #6 of 7
6. View: Looking north to 392 C Card's Pond Road, Noyes-Bontecou Carriage House/Garage.
7. Photo #7 of 7

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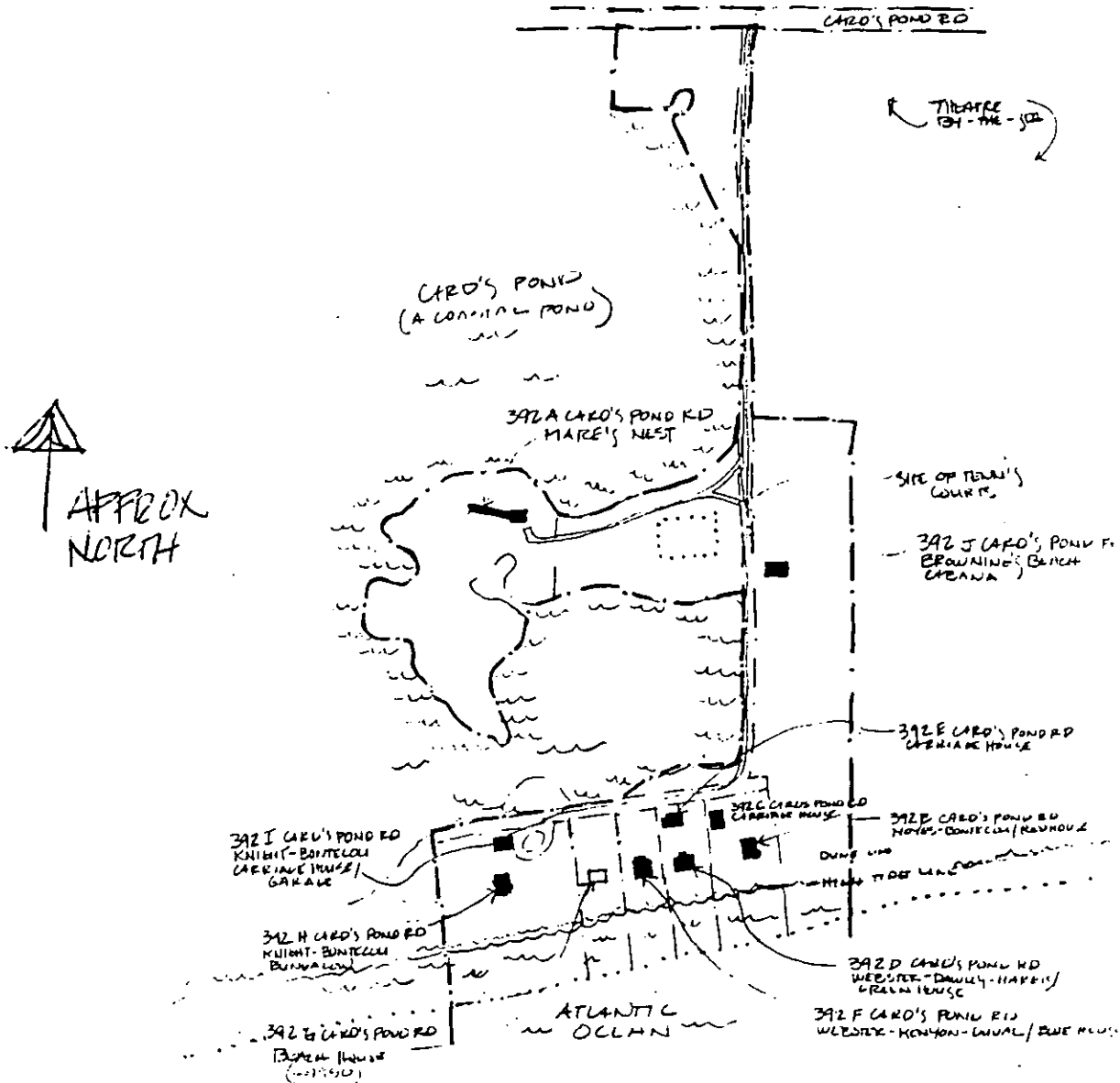
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### Sketch Map



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### Significance

The cluster of summer beach houses at Browning's Beach is significant as a surviving remnant of Rhode Island coastal summer resort domestic architecture popular throughout the region during the late 19th and early 20th century. Originating as a remote and private enclave for several prominent Rhode Island families, the complex was designed as an integrated social unit for summer seaside recreation with a communal boardwalk along the ocean dune, a beach cabana, and a shared water system, stable and driveway access. Social activities on the nearby beach facing the Atlantic Ocean and Rhode Island Sound were associated with a beach cabana which housed changing rooms for bathing. Similar summer colonies both large and small existed along Rhode Island's southern shores and barrier beaches until the 1938 hurricane's high winds and tidal surge destroyed them. The cluster of summer beach houses at Browning's Beach remains with exceptional architectural integrity as a representative survivor illustrating the architectural taste and social character of the owners.

The summer colony was developed at the turn of the century by the Knight, Webster, Lapham-Treat, and Noyes families. These families were either closely connected through family or through business associations, particularly associations with prominent Rhode Island textile manufacturing interests.

Both the Rhode Island Knight family and the Lapham-Treat family had interests in Rhode Island textile manufacturing. Webster Knight, the eldest surviving son and heir of the B.B. and R. Knight Rhode Island-based cotton mill combine built the western-most beach house and garage ca 1905. His neighbor to the east was Elizabeth Treat Babcock, the daughter of Centerville (RI) Cotton Mill owner Enos Lapham. Her son, Robert B. Treat inherited the cotton mill and an interest in the beach property. Browning's Beach owners were predominantly Rhode Island families, living during the off-season in the greater Providence area.

Although the novelty of building beach-front summer homes was expressed elsewhere simultaneously along Rhode Island's open Atlantic shoreline such as at Weekapaug, Watch Hill, and Little Compton, few seasonal dwellings of the scale and community-related complexity possessed by Browning's Beach now survive. Many similar dwellings were damaged and destroyed in the 1938 and 1954 hurricanes. The extremely close proximity of these cottages to the surfline and the continuing erosion of the shore has created a historic setting unparalleled elsewhere on the Rhode Island coast. Much of the ocean front development had also been undertaken by

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interests from out-of-state, including families from New York and Philadelphia, not Rhode Island families. Of early summer ocean-front beach houses in South Kingstown, these are the only examples to survive.

Summer-home architecture within the immediate region had been confined to the conversion of large farmhouses into seasonal dwellings or the construction of large shingle-style houses along Ocean Road, Earles Court and Gibson Avenue in Narragansett, mirroring similar enterprises in Watch Hill, Jamestown, and Newport. The conversion of farms to summer estates in South Kingstown is similar to the trend in Middletown, Portsmouth and Little Compton. Much of this architecture is protected from the direct exposure to surf and sea through careful siting on protected rock embankments, small embayments and the locations along Narragansett Bay. The summer beach houses at Browning's Beach are an alternative response.

The impetus to develop a seasonal retreat at Browning's Beach most likely came from the growing interest at the turn of the century in sea bathing, health-related attributes of the sea air, seaside recreational activities and possibly the conversion of the George Browning farm complex nearby in the late 19th century into a summer boarding house and inn. The earliest known construction of a dwelling on Browning's Beach occurred in 1895 with the construction of the Noyes-Bontecou House by Katharine H. Noyes, wife of Dr. Robert F. Noyes, who purchased the beach property from George Browning in 1894. The community well site was located nearby. Within 10 years the beach front was fully developed, with each of the individual lots in private ownership with a shared driveway and water system. The choice of the Queen Anne, shingle and bungalow styles reflects popular 19th-century architectural taste. At Browning's Beach the low forms, shingled skins, steeply pitched gabled and gambrel roofs, and weathered images are similar to the ancient inland farmhouses of the Colonial and early 19th century periods. The intentional siting of the beach houses seaward of their dependencies on the protective inland edge of the dune provides an exposed basement for storage and service and positions the front of the houses to face the sea. Primary interior rooms face onto protective oceanside porches with direct access to the dune and beach for social activities directly related to the ocean. The boardwalk connecting the beach houses ran along the inland dune top giving access to every porch and oceanside front door.

The architecture is reflective of a life of shared amenities at Browning's Beach. It was seasonal. The children had nurseries in the attics. There were accommodations for servants in the carriage houses/garages. The boardwalk connected the houses and their seaside

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porches along the front. The deeds covered shared driveway access and well water. Each of the houses had an attic cistern for water storage and pressure. The shared stable was located nearby. There was a shared tennis court and a beach cabana with changing rooms.

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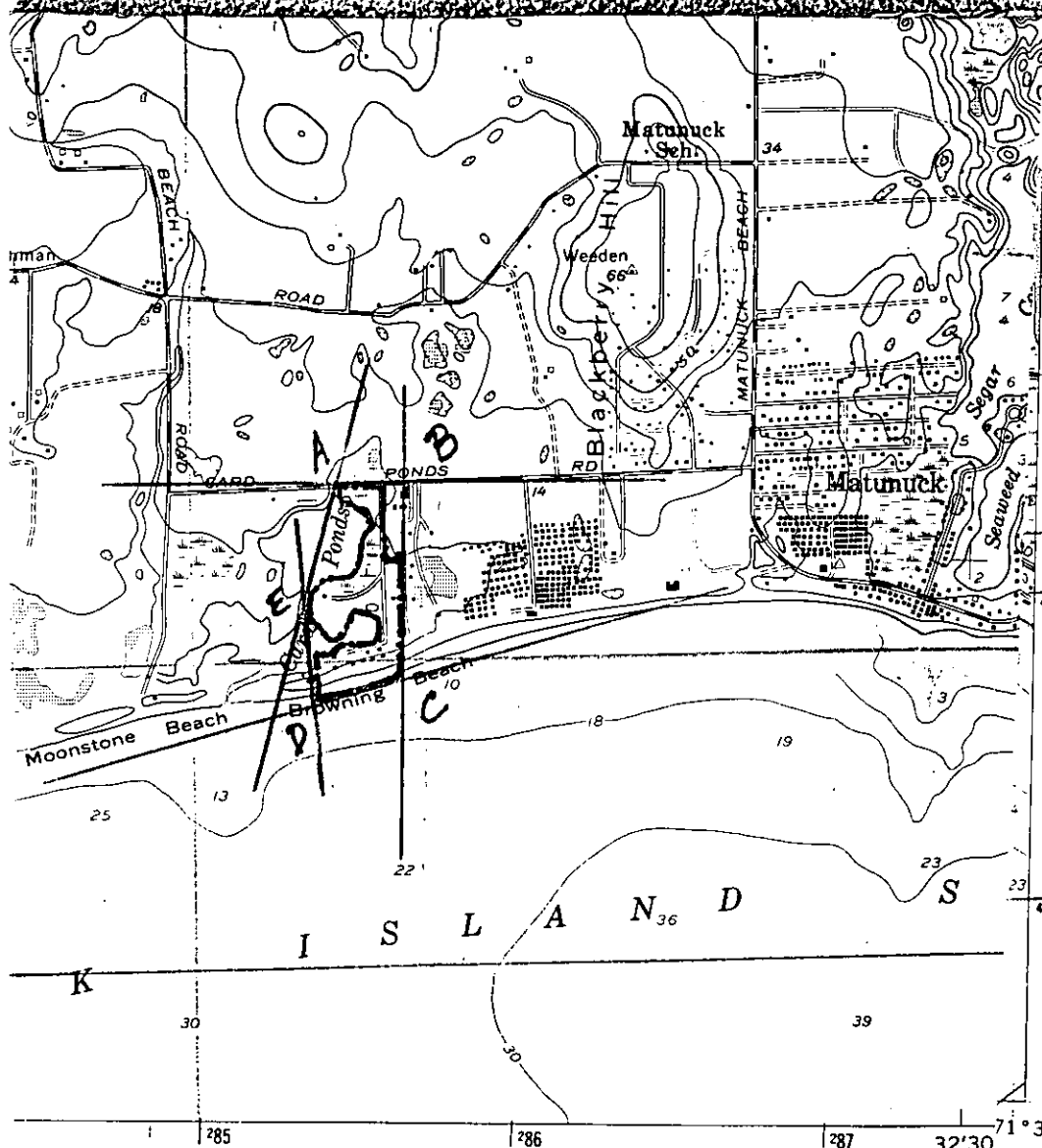
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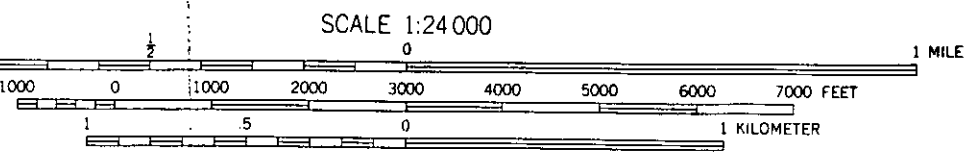
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- Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Preliminary Survey Report, Town of West Warwick. Providence, RI, 1987.
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- Woodward, William McKenzie, Primary research on Browning's Beach, Fall, 1996.



Browning's Beach  
 Historic District  
 Washington County  
 South Kingstown, RI

A 19-285460-4583600  
 B 19-285690-4583590  
 C 19-285670-4582940  
 D 19-285380-4582820  
 E 19-285350-4583200



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
 DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
 SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
 THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 3.1 FEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 OLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

1975  
 /815



Browning's Beach Historic District  
Washington County  
South Kingstown, RI  
Photo # 1 of 7





Browning's Beach Historic District  
Washington County  
South Kingstown, RI  
Photo #2 of 7



Browning's Beach Historic District  
Washington County  
South Kingstown, RI  
Photo #3 of 7



Browning's Beach Historic District  
Washington County  
South Kingstown, R.I.  
Photo #4 of 7



Browning's Beach Historic District  
Washington County  
South Kingtown, RI

Photo # 5 of 7



Browning's Beach Historic District  
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South Kingstown, RI  
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