

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Douglas (George) House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Tower Hill Road at Gilbert Stuart Road

CITY, TOWN

North Kingstown

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Rhode Island 02874

VICINITY OF
CODE

44

COUNTY

Washington

CODE

009

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Mr. and Mrs. Earle D. Taber

STREET & NUMBER

Tower Hill Road at Gilbert Stuart Road

CITY, TOWN

North Kingstown

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island 0287

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. North Kingstown Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER

80 Boston Neck Road

CITY, TOWN

North Kingstown

STATE

Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The house built in 1738 by George Douglas is a compact timber-framed and clapboarded structure two-and-one-half stories high, with a gable roof and an end chimney. Set upon a mortared fieldstone foundation, it is three bays wide and three bays deep. The massive fieldstone chimney at the north end of the house has a fieldstone oven that protrudes on the exterior at the first floor level. On the front of the chimney-top is a flat stone incised "George and Mary Douglas 1738." This great chimney, the exposed lower portion of which has a sloped, stepped topping, serves three of the original six rooms, where there are a wide cooking-fireplace in the old kitchen, a fireplace in the front parlor downstairs and another in the principal bedchamber on the second floor.

With the exception of a pilastered and pedimented doorway at the northern end of the west elevation, this house is devoid of exterior ornament; there are only plain, flat corner-boards and similarly plain fascia-boards in the gables: the protruded six-over-nine-pane windows have flat board enframements and only a narrow strip of board to cap them, without mouldings or cornices. Though now enlarged by rear extensions equally simple in style, the house as originally built was nearly square in plan, with three rooms on each floor, a minimal basement area (about 10 feet by 15 feet, the remainder only a "crawl-space") and a garret with one end window. There is a slight gabled two-story projection -- out as far (about 5 feet) as the great chimney-base -- at its north-east. Across part of the rear a one-story gabled kitchen extension was made, probably in the first decades of the XIX century, while further east is a harmonious addition made in the mid-1940's. Beyond this last is a plain narrow-stick trellis connecting to a late woodshed, and there is an inconspicuous modern clapboarded garage further back and to one side on the property.

The house site (which is about 3/4 of an acre now) is partially enclosed by a dry-laid stone wall along the east and a high stone retaining-wall across the west. On the flat, grassed area where the house stands there is a very large old round stone well-head which is still used, and there are some tall old trees and large and picturesquely-spotted clumps of shrubbery. Even though a major highway runs close to its front, the house remains in a somewhat rural setting, for there is still unbuilt-upon meadow land across Gilbert Stuart Road, to the rear of the house.

The main entrance at the north-west corner of the house, with its board-and-batten door showing two small glazed openings near its top, opens into a very small vestibule from which it is believed a narrow stairway, long removed, originally ran up easterly around -- or possibly between -- the flues of the chimney. From this vestibule a door opens south into the parlor which fills the remainder of the front of the first floor. The room has exposed ceiling beams, and the cornerposts are boxed by vertical planks which have thin corner beading. Here there is a wainscot of horizontal boarding finished with a simple rounded moulding. Doors and windows in this room, and the one-story mantel with two open cupboard spaces in the wall above, have plain but sharper architraval mouldings, and this trim appears to date from the latter part of the XVIII century rather than the first half, probably

See Continuation Sheet 1

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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

improvements made in the style prevailing forty or fifty years after the house had been built. Behind the parlor and filling the southeastern portion of this floor is a space which was originally one room (probably a bedchamber) but which was first cut into, early, when an upward staircase was introduced between it and the keeping-room, and which has more recently been divided to accommodate a small sitting-annex from the parlor, a cupboard and a lavatory. The greater part of the rear of the 1738 house is occupied by the old keeping-room, where is the great cooking-hearth with its heavy wood lintel, stone pavement and lining and its beehive oven at one end (which, as mentioned, forms a conspicuous projection on the exterior of the chimney). Here there are exposed beams and posts and a baseboard, but no wainscot -- all unpainted. The ceiling is of unplastered boards whitewashed between beams.

The second story is reached by a narrow, straight, enclosed stairway running up west from nearly the rear-center of the building. This stairway terminates in a small upper landing or hall from which opens the principal bedchamber above the parlor. Except for a fireplace faced with blue and white tiles, and the mantel with its moulded architrave and panelled frieze, the room is unornamented. Shelving set into the wall beside the fireplace may mark the place where the original stairway from the lower vestibule once emerged. Two smaller chambers also open from the stair-hall and, like the larger room, are without trim, having only plain board window and door enframements without any mouldings. On the second floor structural members are left exposed; doors have each two shallow recessed panels. Off the main chamber and above the small first-floor entry is a cupboard with one high six-paned window over the pedimented entrance. Upstairs and down, with the exception of the keeping-room, most woodwork has been painted a soft, greyed blue appropriate to the first and/or later XVIII-century period of the house, and plaster surfaces are white. Old, wide board flooring remains on both principal stories, as it does also in the unfinished garret.

The preceding paragraphs describe the confines of the 1738 house; though, as mentioned, a shallow southeasterly one-story ell was added later -- its gable-line perpendicular to that of the older structure. In this addition, which has a small central chimney suitable for a stove, the western part served as a narrow kitchen -- relieving the keeping-room of such use, and the eastern half is said to have served as a "milk-room" or cool pantry. (today, the western part serves as a passage and sitting-area and the "milk-room" portion has been adapted as an unobtrusive modern kitchen-gallery.) In the late 1940's a visually compatible one-story further extension was made at the rear to contain bed-sitting, bathroom and wardrobe accommodations, and at the same time the woodshed and garage were built.

See Continuation Sheet 2

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CONTINUATION SHEET

2

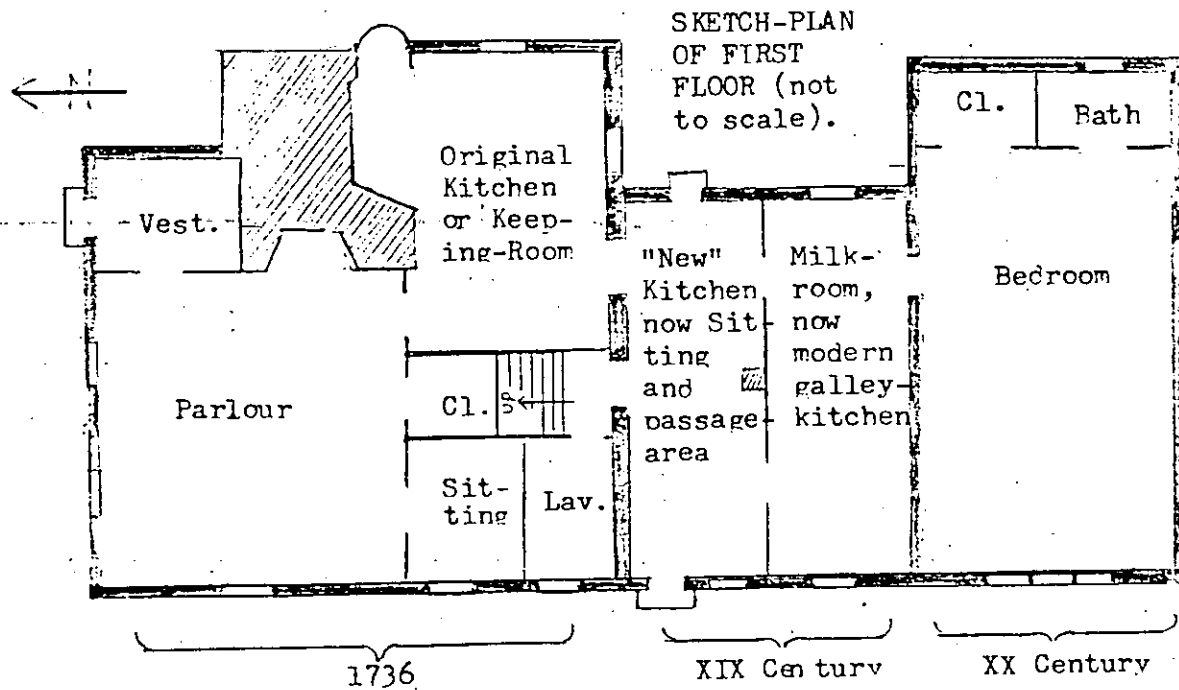
ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

3

Through careful restoration undertaken in 1945-1948 by Judge and Mrs. Ira L. Letts and performed by knowledgeable local artisans, the oldest part of the Douglas house now appears externally as it did when constructed. (The interior plan, trim and hardware remained unchanged, and sanitary and cooking conveniences were inserted without noticeable disturbance to arrangement or appearance.) Shingles were slapped on over the original narrow clapboards, a later porch and a modern front door were removed and the large paned sash replaced with six-over-nine double-hung sash. Judge and Mrs. Letts later sold the house to its present occupants, Mr. and Mrs. Earle D. Taber who maintain the house and its diminished surroundings with care. They possess a handsome collection of antique furniture, assembled over a period of forty years or more, which is strikingly appropriate to the rooms in which it is placed.



8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of the George Douglas house, in its particular locale and in the state of Rhode Island as a whole, rests primarily in its age, its construction and plan (especially its chimney), and its intact condition. No historic events or personages of outstanding significance are known to have been associated with the house, although it figured in at least one incident of local interest, recorded in Carl R. Woodward's Plantation in Yankeeland. Dr. James MacSparran, Rector of Old St. Paul's Episcopal Church (which used to stand nearby and was entered on the National Register July 7, 1973) recorded in his diary entry of August 29, 1751, problems with his slave Hannibal who had been out of the house the night before. For this act of insubordination, one in a chain of many, Dr. MacSparran had Hannibal flogged,

"upon which he ran and Harry after him as far as William Brown's. As they were returning he slipt from Harry naked as he was above the waist. Peter and Harry found him toward night at Block Island Harry Gardiner's, bro't him Home, and then carried him to Duglasse's where he had what is called Pothooks put about his neck . . . O that God would give my servants -- the Gift of Chastity."

This incident is revealing of a number of aspects of 18th century life and society in the South County. The prosperous and cultered existence of South County planters depended not only on the richness of their agricultural land, the ready availability of water transport, and their own perspicacity, but also, to some extent, on their use of slaves. Slave-owning in South County was much less widespread than in the Southern colonies and the planters generally owned only small numbers of slaves; but slavery was a significant aspect of South County's social and economic structure, one which is often overlooked. Dr. MacSparran's attitude toward Hannibal, in the context of this incident and others, is indicative of his attitude toward all his slaves. He considered them as his property to buy and sell; but at the same time he thought of them as human beings with weaknesses to be worried about and corrected, and souls to be prayed for.

See Continuation Sheet 3

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CONTINUATION SHEET 3

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The other reference in local history to the Douglas family is a warrant for the arrest of one Jeremiah Burlingame for assault on complaint of Charles Douglas, descendant of George Douglas, on July 15, 1828. This warrant was witnessed by Daniel E. Updike, son or grandson of Lodowick Updike, second owner of Cocumscussoc (entered on the Register February 23, 1972) and author of the original platting of the village of Wickford (also entered in the National Register, December 31, 1974).

Well-cared-for now, following a period of changes in ownership and a time of neglect, the George Douglas house remains substantially as he originally planned it as comfortable dwelling and as headquarters for those agricultural enterprises in which he was engaged upon his surrounding acres. Although the acreage and the out-buildings are gone, what most importantly exists is the preserved dwelling, displaying the large and projecting stone chimney which is a typical feature of Rhode Island's early architecture, and of which there are few examples now left in the state, though a number of such fortunately were recorded before demolition or ruin overtook them. Here there is an impressive survivor, strongly built for utilitarian purposes in 1738 and today admired for its picturesque and historical qualities -- so much so that the late photographer Samuel Chamberlain included a fine illustration of the house in one of his well-known "New England calendars."

In the beginning, Douglas was proud enough of his house and monumental chimney to insert in the latter the plaque with initials and date which has already been mentioned.

In the hands of his descendants, the house grew somewhat in size, in the same manner as several other of its South County neighbors did (e.g., the Palmer-Northrup house in North Kingstown, which is in the National Register, and the aforementioned "Cocumscussoc," which is listed therein as "Smith's Castle"). Such growth took place in a purely practical, inconspicuous, and "organic" way; extension was made as needed, but with economical and unconscious sympathy to the old structure, which was not "dressed-up" stylistically outside or in to the date of any newer addition.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Agnew, Dorothy: "Restoration in South County. Old Douglas House Is Restored for Posterity," in the Providence Sunday Journal, Providence, Rhode Island, July 13, 1947.

Woodward, Carl R.: Plantation in Yankeeland, The Story of Cocumscussoc, Mirror of Colonial Rhode Island (The Pequot Press, Inc., Chester, Connecticut, 1971).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3/4 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	9	2945110	4599380	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

Richard B. Harrington, Consultant, and Ancelin V. Lynch, Nat. Register Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

June 9, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island 02903

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC George Douglas House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Tower Hill Road at
Gilbert Stuart Road

VICINITY OF North
Kingstown

COUNTY Washington

STATE Rhode
Island

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Keith N. Morgan

DATE OF PHOTO March 1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO

General exterior view of house from the southwest

1



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Gilbert Stuart Road X VICINITY OF Kingstown COUNTY Washington STATE Island

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Keith N. Morgan DATE OF PHOTO March 1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

4 IDENTIFICATION

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PHOTO NO

Exterior protrusion of beehive oven, north side

2



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PHOTO NO

Hearth in Keeping Room

3



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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Corner cupboard in the Keeping Room

PHOTO NO

4



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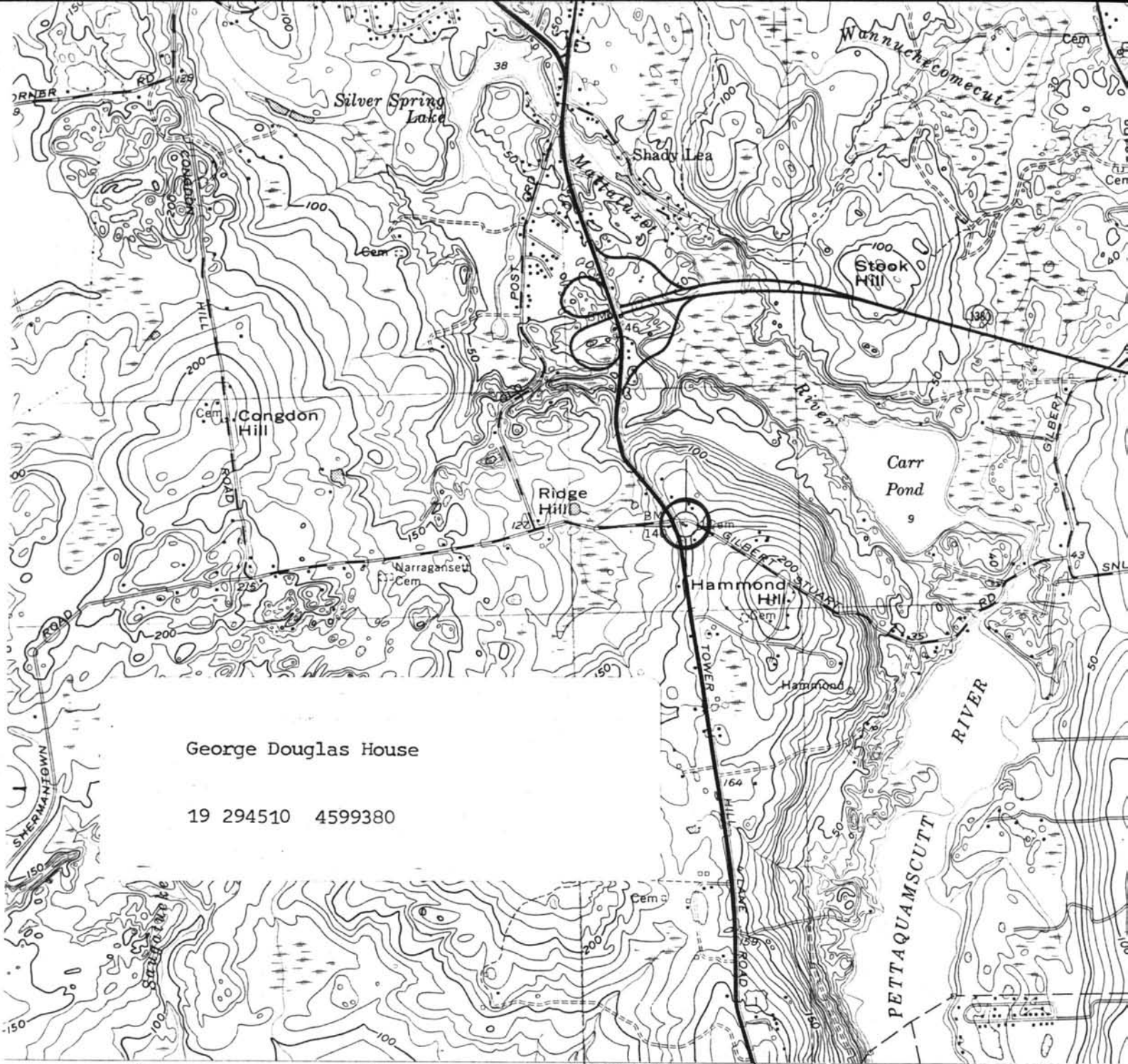
4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO

Fireplace in the Parlor Chamber

5



George Douglas House

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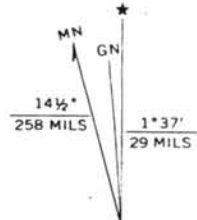
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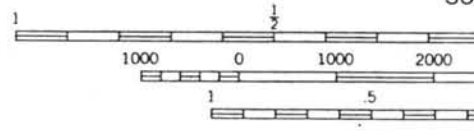
rography compiled from USC&GS chart 236 (1957)

ynonic projection. 1927 North American datum
 000-foot grid based on Rhode Island coordinate system
 30-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
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UTM GRID AND 1970 MAGNETIC NORTH
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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1 NAME

HISTORIC George Douglas House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN North Kingstown

___ VICINITY OF

COUNTY Washington

STATE Rhode
Island

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE U. S. Geological Survey

SCALE 1 : 24,000

DATE 1957; photorevised 1970

4 REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES